

6. Ezekiel

- Ezekiel, like Jeremiah and Zechariah, was both a prophet and a priest. He spent his early years in Jerusalem, until he was taken with other hostages to Babylon in 597 B.C. Ezekiel prophesied (his ministry began in 593 B.C.) for at least 22 years (1:2, 29:17-21) to the exiles in Babylon while Jeremiah prophesied to the Jews in Judah. In chapters 1-24, Ezekiel's message focused on Judah's forthcoming destruction because of her sin. After Jerusalem's fall, his message centered on Judah's future restoration. Chapters 33-48 contain many prophecies concerning the end times, including the rebirth of Israel, the Great Tribulation and the millennial kingdom. Ezekiel's prophecies are arranged chronologically, except for some prophecies in chapter 29.

*Ezekiel 11; Promise of restoration (11:14-20)

- When the Messiah returns, He will bring His people back to the land of Israel and make a new covenant with them (Jeremiah 31:31-34). "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them... Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (11:19-20).

*Ezekiel 20; Israel's unfaithfulness (20:1-32); Israel's future restoration, millennial kingdom (20:33-44)

- God's people rebelled against Him in Egypt (20:8) and in the wilderness (20:13). God resolved to pour out His wrath on them and He acted for the sake of His name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations (20:14, 22). When God brought the house of Israel into the land that He swore to give them, they would go to Bamah, high places where idolatrous worship was practiced (20:29). The Lord God declares, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you" (20:33). Jesus will be king over Israel and the whole earth during the millennial kingdom (Zechariah 14:9). Before that takes place, God will gather His people. "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered... and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face" (20:34-35). The phrases "mighty hand" and "outstretched arm" were also used to describe God's power in delivering His people from Egypt (Deuteronomy 4:34, 5:15, 7:19, 11:2; Psalm 136:12). At Jesus' second coming, God will once again rescue His people. God will apparently gather His people together in the wilderness and enter into judgment with them "face to face" just as He entered into judgment with His people in the wilderness of the land of Egypt (20:35-36). As a result of that judgment, "all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt" (Joshua 5:4) and did not enter the land that God promised them. In the same way, after the second coming, the Lord's judgment will result in only believers in Christ being able to enter the land of Israel (20:38). The rebels and those who transgressed against God will be purged (20:38). Refer also to Matthew 25:31-46 for a description of God's judgment on unbelievers following the second coming of Christ.

- The Lord God will make them pass under the rod and will bring them into the bond of the covenant (20:37). This pictures a shepherd holding out his rod and forcing the sheep to pass

under it single file for counting and examination (Jeremiah 33:13; Leviticus 27:32). The sheep that were his would be allowed to enter the fold, a place of protection. The "bond of the covenant" represents the fold. The "covenant" probably represents the New Covenant that the Lord will make "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31-34), which will be an everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 16:60). The Lord God declares, "for on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel... there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land... As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I shall prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations" (20:40-41). After the second coming of Jesus Christ, all His people will be gathered. During the millennial kingdom, all the house of Israel will serve the Lord. "And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers... Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake" (20:42-44).

*Ezekiel 28; King of Tyre (Satan) described (28:11-19); Israel's restoration and millennial kingdom (28:25-26)

- "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God... You were on the holy mountain of God... You were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub... and you will cease to be forever" (28:12-19). Satan is apparently being described in this passage, not the king of Tyre. Satan's downfall was his pride and unbelief in God, the root of all sin (1 Timothy 3:6; Isaiah 14:13-14). Notice that Eden, the garden of God, was located on the holy mountain of God, the future location of Jerusalem or Zion (Psalm 2:6, 48:1; Isaiah 27:13, 56:7, 66:20; Daniel 9:16; Joel 3:17). Israel's promised restoration and the millennial kingdom are described in the last portion of this chapter (28:25-26). Refer to Isaiah 23:15-18 and section 54 (The 70-Year Bible Prophecies) for information about end-time Tyre.

*Ezekiel 34; Restoration of Israel and the Millennium (34:11-31)

- During the millennial kingdom, the Lord will be Israel's God and David will be her prince (34:24). The LORD will make a covenant of peace with them and will eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely (34:25).

*Ezekiel 36; Israel restored, the New Covenant and millennial blessing (36:1-38)

- This chapter describes the restoration of Israel, the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and the blessings of the millennial kingdom following the return of Jesus. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God" (36:26-28). "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden'" (36:35).

*Ezekiel 37; Vision of the valley of dry bones and Israel's restoration (37:1-28)

- Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones that were revived illustrates the end-time restoration of Israel. The Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel... Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land (37:11-14). The following verses describe the Millennium and the new heaven and earth. "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd... David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people" (37:24-27).

*Ezekiel 38-39; Ezekiel 38 battle (38:1-23, 39:1-29)

- The Lord's judgment during the Ezekiel 38 battle will be one of the most awesome displays of God's power that the world has ever seen. This battle represents an extremely significant end-time event for a number of reasons. First, when God's mighty power is displayed, He will be glorified and His holy name will be made known in the midst of His people Israel. The world will know that He is the Lord, the Holy One in Israel and He will magnify and sanctify Himself in the sight of many nations. Second, the whole world will be watching as the battle unfolds and this will provide the awareness and the opportunity for Gentiles and Jews to repent and turn to Christ for salvation before the Great Tribulation begins. Third, God's judgment will clear the way for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. Fourth, this event will be a reminder that all who oppose Israel and God's people will be judged.

- In the last days, "Gog of the land of Magog" (probably refers to Russia) and several other nations will come up against Israel with a massive force (38:1-6). These nations will include Rosh, Meshech, Tubal and Gomer (probably Turkey), Persia (Iran), Ethiopia (Sudan), Put (probably Libya) and Beth-togarmah (probably Syria). Other nations may also be involved that are included with "the many peoples who are with him" (38:22) and "those who inhabit the coastlands in safety" (39:6). God will prod Gog into leading the Ezekiel 38 battle; "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army" (38:4), and "I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up" (39:2). "After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely" (38:8; NKJV Bible). "You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you" (38:9).

- 'Thus says the LORD God, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwallled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls

and having no bars or gates, to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.' Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?'" (38:10-13). The invading force will attempt to capture the wealth of Israel, which is located at "the center of the world". "Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish" represent Israel's neighbors who are unwilling to get involved in this battle. In fact, not a single nation will come to Israel's aid.

- "It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog" (38:16). "'It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel, 'declares the Lord God,' that My fury will mount up in My anger. In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground. I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains, 'declares the Lord God.' Every man's sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone. I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD'" (38:18-23).

- "And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD" (39:6). God will severely judge the enemies of Israel, even distant nations that may think they are safe. "My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel" (39:7). The nations that are judged by God perhaps represent the three end-time horns (kingdoms) of Daniel 7:8 that are pulled out by the roots, and the battle may represent God's visit with end-time Tyre (Babylon the Great; Isaiah 23:17). "Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them. They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forest, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them, 'declares the Lord God'" (39:9-10). The fact that the weapons will be burned for seven years is a strong indication that this battle will occur before the seven-year Tribulation period. The destruction of Israel's enemies as a result of this battle will clear the way for the building of the Tribulation temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This battle probably occurs shortly after the rapture because if it happened before the rapture, many people would be expecting Jesus' immediate return. We know this cannot be the case because Jesus "is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (Matthew 24:44). Also the rapture is described as occurring unexpectedly, like a "thief in the night" (Luke 17:26-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). After the battle there will be so many

bodies, that it will take Israel seven months to bury all the dead "in order to cleanse the land" (39:12-16). The birds and beasts of the field will assemble to consume the fallen enemies of Israel (39:17-20).

- God will set His glory among the nations, "and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them. And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward" (39:21-22). The closing verses of this chapter describe Israel's restoration (39:25-29). "Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name' (39:25).

*Ezekiel 40-46; Messiah's (millennial) temple described (40-43); a new service of worship described (44-46)

- Chapters 40 through 46 describe in great detail the instructions for building Messiah's (millennial) temple (40-43) and for the service attached to it (44-46). The temple will be considerably larger than the three previous temples. People from all nations will come to the temple to worship during the Millennium (Zechariah 14:16). The glory of the Lord will return to Messiah's (millennial) temple. "Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory" (43:1-2). "And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house" (43:4-5). The return of God's glory to the temple (the house) after more than 2,500 years is probably associated with the dedication of Messiah's (millennial) temple, just as it was associated with the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:1-66, 9:1-9). For such a momentous occasion, why is there no mention of any type of dedication or ceremony in this passage? Perhaps some details of this special occasion may be found in Revelation 14:1-5. Apparently the 144,000 servants of God from the Great Tribulation will sing a new song at this temple dedication. Also in attendance will be Jesus Christ (the Lamb), the four living creatures and the 24 elders. The Lord said, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die" (43:7). The Lord announces that His temple must be holy and thus free from "harlotry" (temple prostitution) and separated from the graves and palaces of kings which were on the same hill as Solomon's temple (43:7-9; 2 Kings 23:7, 21:18, 26).

- Chapters 44 through 46 describe a new service of worship for Messiah's temple. Some of the details include who may minister in the temple, offerings, sacrifices, worship, festivals and feasts. Sacrifices will be offered as memorials of the finished sacrifice of Christ. .

*Ezekiel 47-48; Israel in the millennial kingdom (47-48)

- Chapters 47 and 48 describe the life-giving river emerging from Messiah's temple, the boundaries of the land and the division of the land of Israel.