

A Peep into Ezekiel

D Reeve 10/20

Intro: Ezekiel is a large book - 48 chapters - much of which is about visions (high in symbolism) and future prophecy. There are many practical parallels along the way for us today. Ezekiel is often forgotten or put into the too difficult basket **but** it is **huge** in relation to future events and adds significantly to Daniel, Revelation, minor prophets, words of Jesus (Matt 24/25) etc. It has been described as 'an ocean and labyrinth of the mysteries of God'.

In history, Ezekiel comes between 593 and 571BC and is concurrent with Daniel, Habakkuk, Obadiah and maybe others **but** we are not told anything about their interaction or whether they knew each other etc. - all independent messengers of the Lord. It is believed that he knew Jeremiah and was influenced by his ministry. Timing - Between 1st and 2nd deportation of Judah - 2 Kings 24 - Jehoiakim taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon with all the people as 'remnant', 'refugees', prisoners', 'captives'.

Ezekiel was a priest (Zadokite) and had many visions - probably even more than John on Patmos (Revelation)! Several visions of the Almighty, vision of the wheels, vision of dry bones, visions of new temple, visions of future battles (including Armageddon on Chs 37 & 38) - eg 1:-1 - heavens opened and I saw visions of God.'

Key phrases include:

'The hand of the Lord was upon me' - denotes the 7 major prophetic themes.

'And the word of the Lord came unto me' - denotes the minor divisions.

He, Ezekiel, is often called - 'Son of man' - cf Luke - Jesus as 'Son of man'! Ezekiel was a true 'watchman' of God. He gave 13 prophecies and his theme is **'the glory of God in Israel'** - its presence (Ch 1-3), departure (Ch 4-24), absence (Ch 25-35) and return (Ch 36-48). God commissioned Ezekiel as a prophet empowered by the Holy Spirit - to speak to a rebellious people - words given him by the Lord - as a watchman over Israel - to speak only when the Lord told him - **what excellent characteristics for us to seek to follow today!**

NB It is critical to keep the Jewish nature of the book in mind and not confuse it by trying to spiritualize it to the church - Ezekiel did not know anything about the Church or Calvary etc! His visions and signs are explained in the text and have real life reasons and applications to the people of Ezekiel's day and also for future prophecy (typical of much Scriptural prophecy, it refers directly to the time of writing **plus** to future times and events - can be pieced together by careful and in-depth cross referencing)

Some Key Issues

Ezekiel - the sign prophet - (7 strange signs but with significance)

He did not speak until after Jerusalem fell but, instead, carried out symbolic acts:

- the tile - (4:-1-8) - 442 days - length of siege of Jerusalem
- defiled bread - (4:-9-17) - cooked food over dung - sign of Israel's defilement

- haircut - (5:-1-17) - burned 1/3rd, chopped up 1/3rd, scattered 1/3rd - but kept small part - preservation of the faithful remnant
- flight - (12:-1-16) - crawled through hole in wall at Babylon (flight of Zedekiah)
- stew scum - (24:-15-27) - showed how the Lord would purge dross from Judah
- fortitude - (24:-15-27) - wife died - little emotion - showing how Jews would be too stunned by the coming events to mourn
- two sticks - (37:-15-25) - 1 for Judah, 1 for Joseph - brought together = reunion of Israel via her own King

Secret corruption of Israel

Ezekiel was given the reasons for the departure of God's shekinah (dwelling) with His people:

- Canaanite Asherah worship (8:-1-6) - female deity (our modern permissiveness)
 - Egyptian animal deities (8:-7-12) - cf Aaron's golden calf and Rom 1
 - Babylonian 'Queen of Heaven' worship (8:-13-14) - cf RC and Mary worship
 - Egyptian Sun worship (8:-15,16) - created nature over the creator!
- ie - massive corruption and defilement of God's Temple - cf **we are God's temple!** So, the glory went up from the temple (9:-3-8), the glory rose up in a fiery chariot (10:-18,19)
Ezekiel prophesied Israel's scattering and re-gathering (11:-17-20)
NB. The glory departed via the Mount of Olives (Jesus will return in power and glory to the same spot! Acts 1:-11)

Lying Prophets and Elders! Chs 13 & 14

Prophecy out of their own hearts, own spirit - have seen nothing! (13:-2-3) -like foxes, speak vanity and lies - **woe to them and those who listen to them!** - Terrible consequences - beware of false prophets today!

Elders (of Israel) ch 14 - those with responsibilities had set up idols in their hearts and were stumbling blocks and were held responsible (punished) - **cf elders in the church today have awesome responsibilities to the flock.** These sins led to the terrible harlotry of Israel as a nation, desecration of the Temple and the consequential warnings and judgments to come (chs 15-24)

Prophecies against the Nations chs 25-32

Geographically, Palestine lies at the centre of the Eastern world - around were the circle of Nations God was going to judge for their attacks against His people.

- Ammonites (25:-1-7) - Because you said '**Ahah against My sanctuary**' - God will avenge this perversity, envy and animosity against Israel
- Moabites (25:-8-11) - Pride and resentfulness to be judged accordingly
- Edomites (25:-12-14) - for taking vengeance and hating Israel
- Philistia (25:-15-17) - for vengeance, harassment and oppression on Israel
- Tyre (26:-28:-19) - for pride, crookedness, greed etc. (note the side reference to Satan - anointed cherub - in 28:-12-19)
- Sidon (28:-22-26) - for using others for their own advancement

- Egypt (29-32) - for being a deceptive seducer against Israel (7 oracles)

Note the attitude of the Nations surrounding Israel today - anti-Semitism - spirit of opposition to Israel (Matt 24:-9)

Future Kingdom of the Son of David - 33:-21- 36:-38

Ezekiel proclaims the message to the people but they do not listen - Ch 33. The leaders/shepherds all fail and the people are scattered but the Lord will re-gather them - Ch 34.

Ezekiel prophesied the restoration of Israel (Ch 36) and the restoration of the land. He used the 'valley of the dry bones' vision in Ch 37 to illustrate the re-birth and cleansing of Israel as a nation (no king **yet** - future).

The Great Tribulation (time of Jacob's trouble) is shown in Ch 38 with Israel attacked on all sides (see Joel 3:-1-2; 9:-17; Zech 13:-7-9; Dan 9:-27, 11:-36; 1 Thess 5:-2-3) but the Lord will defeat them all - The Battle of Armageddon will involve many Nations including Russia (Gog [the prince] and Magog [his land] plus Meshech [Moscow] and Tubal [Tobolsk] plus all their allies (like Libya [Put] Ethiopia [Cush], Egypt, Iran, Syria, Turkey etc). This will include the rise of the 'Anti-Christ' and his desecration of the temple ('abomination of desolation'). These will be terrible times, unlike and worse than any others yet seen on earth but Israel will survive and rise to supremacy. (NB the church is separate from all this and will be in heaven with the Holy Spirit). Ch 39 shows Israel in the Millennium (1000 year reign of Christ) - new kingdom beginning with cleansing of the land and salvation of all her inhabitants.

Rebuilding the Temple - Chs 40-48

Ezekiel is given all the intricate details for this Temple and also given a guided tour by the angel in these incredible visions. Before this, the Lord promises that He will be with His people (Israel) forever **but** this is dependent on Israel getting rid of their idolatry - **being ashamed** (43:-10) - ie repentance first! Ezekiel was told to **tell Israel all about the Temple** - its design, its regulations, its daily operations etc.

Ch 44 talks about the daily operations after the dedication and mentions the 'Prince' (Davidic 48:-21 - could this be Jesus Himself?) The Levites are responsible but not to come near (the Holy place) but should bear the shame **but** those of Zadok's descendants 'will stand before Me and sacrifice and teach Israel the difference between the clean and unclean (special remnant of the priesthood)

Chs 45 & 46 refer to the inheritance of the land for the priests, the special offerings, sacrifices and daily worship. **NB. Why sacrifices** (cf Heb 10:-4 - Christ - once for all)?

Commentators think that these sacrifices and offerings will be memorial, looking back to the cross as the OT offerings looked forward to the cross - ceremonial cleansing of the temple and not to forgive sins. In neither case the animal sacrifices had/have any power to put away sin. (Personally, I am looking for a better answer but I might have to wait until I get to heaven to find out - like some other queries I will have and no-doubt you have too. I am sure God has His reasons and there are many mysteries {to us} not revealed yet.

Ch 47 - Covers the period of the Millennial Kingdom - how God blesses Israel. The river of the sanctuary is very special - 1500 feet - ankle deep -> another 1500 feet - knee deep ->

another 1500 feet - waist deep -> another 1500 feet - big river - from perpetual spring - Joel 3:-17,18; Rev 22:-1,2 - river of life from the Lord outward and getting deeper as it goes - life giving and cleansing - fruit trees bearing different fruit each month plus leaves for healing (medicine) - how wonderful! The boundaries of Israel (future) are given in detail and divisions of the land (Ch 48) - the sanctuary in the centre (same as in the wilderness - tabernacle) - this is **Israel in the Millennium** and **the name of the city from that day** (ie future) **shall be 'The Lord is there'**.

Some believers claim this is **all spiritual and not literal**. **What do you think?**

- This Temple is much, much larger (all dimensions given - why?) than any others.
- This Temple will not be destroyed and will be built by the Lord - Is 4 & Zech 6:-13 the 'Branch' (Jesus) will build this Temple.
- 318 measurements are given and 37 unique architectural words are used (eg door posts) - you can see a 3D picture under 'Ezekiel's Temple in 'Google' - It is illogical to say that this or the other visions etc in Ezekiel are just spiritual - as physical details are supplied - specific countries, times /dates, explanations/meanings, detailed events etc. - many that have actually occurred already.

Peep at Ezekiel

This is just a brief summary/introduction of a wonderful book, Ezekiel. It has a similar pattern/plot to Revelation and compares with other major and minor prophecies. It must be understood as being predominantly Jewish. However, there are many valuable lessons to be learnt from the words spoken, behavior of Israel in a general sense etc and they can be applied to our generation today. We, like Ezekiel, can be true 'watchmen' (sent by the Lord) re the morals of our society and also in the sense of looking for future signs for Israel and the World as events unfold. Like Israel, we can wander off the pathway; get into various forms of idolatry, lose the presence of the Lord **but** via shame and repentance, return to Him and receive the manifold blessings of living on higher ground.