

INTRODUCTION:

Ezekiel went to Babylon in the second deportation in 597 B.C. Four years later he began a prophetic career that was to last more than twenty years, all of it in Babylon. He had the helpful habit of dating many of his prophecies, and most of the messages about contemporary events were delivered before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The New Jerusalem section in chapters 40—48 held out hope for restoration of the land and the temple after the exile. Of all the prophets, Ezekiel was probably the most colorful. He used pantomime, would cry and wail and slap his thighs, ate a scroll, and did many other unusual things to burn his messages into the minds of the people. Some of his visions are unusually arresting in their graphic details. From Ezekiel we get a picture of a holy, transcendent God whose name and glory must be protected. By contrast, Judah had sunk to the depths of depravity in national apostasy. God had to punish His people because of His hatred of idolatry, but He never ceased to love them. Not only was Judah’s sin a national one, but Ezekiel stressed individual responsibility for one’s own sins to an extent unparalleled in the rest of the Old Testament. Ezekiel forms the important background for many passages in the New Testament, but this is perhaps true more of Revelation than any other book. Material from most of Ezekiel’s chapters is quoted or alluded to in all but one chapter in Revelation. Some of these references will be provided in the following pages to illustrate the close apocalyptic connection.

PROPHET EZEKIEL:

The name Ezekiel means “God strengthens.” Ezekiel was one of the greater Old Testament prophets, a son of Buzi, and of priestly family (Ezekiel 1:3). He grew up, until beyond the years of childhood, in the homeland, probably at Jerusalem in the environment of the Temple, during the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. He was carried captive from Judah with Jehoiachin (597 B.C.), 8 years after Daniel’s deportation (Chronicles 33:21; 40:1; 2 Kings 24:11-16). Josephus says that he was a youth at the time. He lived with the Judean exiles on the Chebar, a canal in Babylonia, probably at Telabib (Ezekiel. 1:1, 3; 3:15); married probably as early as the 6th, at least by the 9th year of the captivity, and had a house (Chronicles 8:1; 24:1, 18).

Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry began in the 5th year of Jehoiachin’s captivity, 7 years before the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, while he was dwelling on the

Chebar (Ezekiel 1:1-2). He was then in his 30th year (1:1), the age at which Levites entered upon service (Numbers 4:3). The theory that the 30th year does not refer to Ezekiel's age, but is a date reckoned either from the accession of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, or from the reforms of Josiah, fails in view of Jeremiah 25:1, 3; 2 Kings 23:36; 25:2-6; Ezekiel 1:2. Though an exile in a foreign land, Ezekiel had freedom to utter his prophecies and was resorted to for advice by the elders of the people (8:1; 14:1; 20:1); but his words were not followed faithfully (33:30-33).

BOOK OF EZEKIEL:

Ezekiel's place in the Hebrew Scriptures is directly after Jeremiah. The prophecies are arranged nearly, though not quite, in chronological order, and they are dated according to the years of Jehoiachin's captivity in which they were delivered. The book falls into 3 divisions:

1. Prophecies delivered before the capture of Jerusalem, foretelling its overthrow for its sins. In the 5th year the priest is called to the prophetic office and prepared for his work by a vision (1:1 to 3:21), and then is directed to prophesy, by symbolical actions and their interpretation, the destruction of the city (3:22 to 7:27). In the 6th year, are denunciations of Judah for idolatry (chapter 8); symbolical departure of Yahweh from the Temple because of its profanation (9:1 to 11:13); comfort, the exiles are still God's people, He will be a sanctuary to them (9:16), restore them to the land of Israel (9:17), give those who reform their lives a new heart (9:18-21). Unbelief and adherence to false prophets are the reasons for Yahweh's forsaking His city (chapters 12 to 14); the event is certain (chapters 15 to 17), but the repentant shall enjoy God's favor (chapter 18). Lamentation for the princes of Israel (chapter 19). In the 7th year, it is prophesied that, because Yahweh's name has been profaned in the sight of the heathen, He will punish the people, but will afterward restore them for His name's sake (20:1-44); the doom is certain, the transgressions are to come to remembrance before God (20:45 to 23:49). In the 9th year, the siege of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the people are symbolized by a caldron (chapter 24).

2. Prophecies of judgment against the nations: in the 9th year, against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia (chapter 25); in the 11th year, against Tyre and Sidon (chapters 26 to 28); and in the 10th, 27th, and 11th years, against Egypt (chapters 29 to 32).

3. Prophecies concerning the restoration, delivered after the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. In the 12th year, the evening before the news of the fall of the city reached the prophet, the hand of the Lord was upon him, and the actual reception of the news marks the opening of a new activity on the part of Ezekiel (33:1-22). He is taught that, after the judgment, the people shall recognize that Yahweh is God, and that a true prophet has been among them (33:23-33); a good shepherd, even David, shall be raised up (chapter 34), their present foes punished (chapter 35), the people sanctified and restored to their land (chapter 36), revived as from the dead, their 12 tribes reunited (chapter 37), and their foes finally overthrown (chapters 38 and 39). In the 25th year, the reestablishment of God’s church is disclosed, being symbolically exhibited in the vision of the Temple enlarged and holy throughout, and the people cleansed and accepted by Yahweh (chapters 40 to 43), its holy services (chapters 44 to 46, the river of life issuing from it and making the desert to rejoice (chapter 47), and the distribution of the land among the tribes, and their common city known as the place where Yahweh is (chapter 48).

In this vision the Temple that Ezekiel had known so well in his younger days is quite changed in appearance. Instead of the little hill of Zion, he beholds a high mountain, crowned by the buildings of a new and grander sanctuary. An angel, with a measuring rod and line, is standing at the gate. The new Temple is modeled, indeed, after the old in its general arrangements, but is so located with reference to the habitations of men, and its courts and chambers are so disposed, as to safeguard the holiness of Yahweh, who is soon to dwell there, and impress upon the worshipers Yahweh’s separateness from both moral and ceremonial impurity. Many years earlier Ezekiel had seen in vision Yahweh leaving the old, desecrated Temple (10:18-19; 11:22-24); now the prophet beholds Yahweh returning by the same gate into the Temple and the glory of Yahweh filling the house, and he hears a voice from within saying: ***“This is the place of My throne...where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel for ever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile My holy name”*** (43:1-7). In the inner court, before the holy house, Ezekiel sees the altar of atonement provided for the new Israel and hears the declaration, ***“And I will accept you, says the Lord God”*** (43:13-27).

The worship of accepted Israel is now described to the prophet. In the new theocracy the reality will correspond to the divine ideal. The uncircumcised in heart or flesh will not enter into the sanctuary. The Levitical families who proved unfaithful of old will not be allowed to officiate at the altar; yet they will be given a place, albeit a humble one, in the Temple. The priests, the sons of Zadok, whose very name means righteous, that had remained faithful, will alone fill the high office of priest before Yahweh (chapter 44). An oblation unto Yahweh will be made of a portion of the land for the support of the services and ministry of the sanctuary (45:1-6). For the prince also suitable provision will be made from the oblation-land, enabling him to maintain the public services in the name of the people, and he shall not abuse his power by oppressing the people or encroaching on the prerogatives of the priests (45:7-12; 46:2, 16-18). The people likewise shall assemble in their own appointed place in the Temple, when they worship (45:9). All members of the theocracy, official and lay, know and perform the duties in reference to atonement that belong to them in their several places and relations. Ezekiel is next shown a river issuing from the Temple, swelling into a mighty stream, and bringing life and health to the regions of barrenness and death (47:1-12). The bounds of the land to be occupied by the restored community are described (47:13-20), and the location of the tribes (47:21 to 48:29); the oblation-land being divided between priests, Levites, the prince, and the city (48:8-22). The city belongs to all Israel in common (48:15-20), 30-34; and 45:6), and its name is Yahweh-Shammah, “the Lord is there” (48:35), symbolizing the central thought of the entire prophecy.

Ezekiel’s contribution to Israel’s thought. Ezekiel generally is regarded as the father of the later formal Judaism. We may accept the view that the description of the new Jerusalem in chapters 40 to 48 gave rise to the characteristic priestly regulations contained in Leviticus and Numbers and that with his presentation of a theocratic state he prepared the way for later accomplishing the reform of Judaism on the basis of the priestly document of the Pentateuch. The picture that is unfolded in these chapters is not an ideal that the prophet expected would be realized literally, but is purely symbolic; for in no other way is it possible to understand the high mountain of the new Zion, and the measurements, and the allotments of the land, which are geometrical and not geographical, and the healing waters that issue from the sanctuary and presently become

a mighty river, and the trees whose fruit is produced every month and whose leaves are for healing. Ezekiel’s enrichment of Israel’s thought, through these chapters and his other prophecies, is found in his spiritual teaching.

Among other things he contributed:

1. To understanding the nature of God. He removes as far as possible an anthropomorphic conception of God; “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (1:28). While others speak of Yahweh shepherding His people (Psalm 28), gathering the scattered flock of Israel (Jeremiah 23:3; 31:10), and tenderly caring for them (Isaiah 40:11), Ezekiel represents God as seeking His lost sheep (Ezekiel 34:11-16; cf. Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 19:10).

2. To the vision of the new Jerusalem: the high mountain (Ezekiel 40:2; cf. Revelation 21:10), the holy city, God’s tabernacle among men (Ezekiel 37:27; Revelation 21:3), the glory of God in it (Ezekiel 37:27; Revelation 21:11), having 12 gates (Ezekiel 48:30-34; Revelation 21:12-13), the river of life (Ezekiel 47:1; Revelation 22:1), and the trees on either side of the river, whose leaves are for healing (Ezekiel 47:7, 12; Revelation 22:2). As in Ezekiel, so in John the vision is symbolical.

3. But above all Ezekiel contributed to the spiritual conception of the Jerusalem of the future. Taking up a germinal teaching of Jeremiah, he lays the emphasis on individual responsibility (Ezekiel 18; 33:1-20) and on the renewed nature of the people and the holiness of the kingdom as the crowning glory of the coming time (11:19-20); 36:24-29). The spiritually regenerate Zion is henceforth definitely before the minds of God’s people as a noble idea and the great hope.

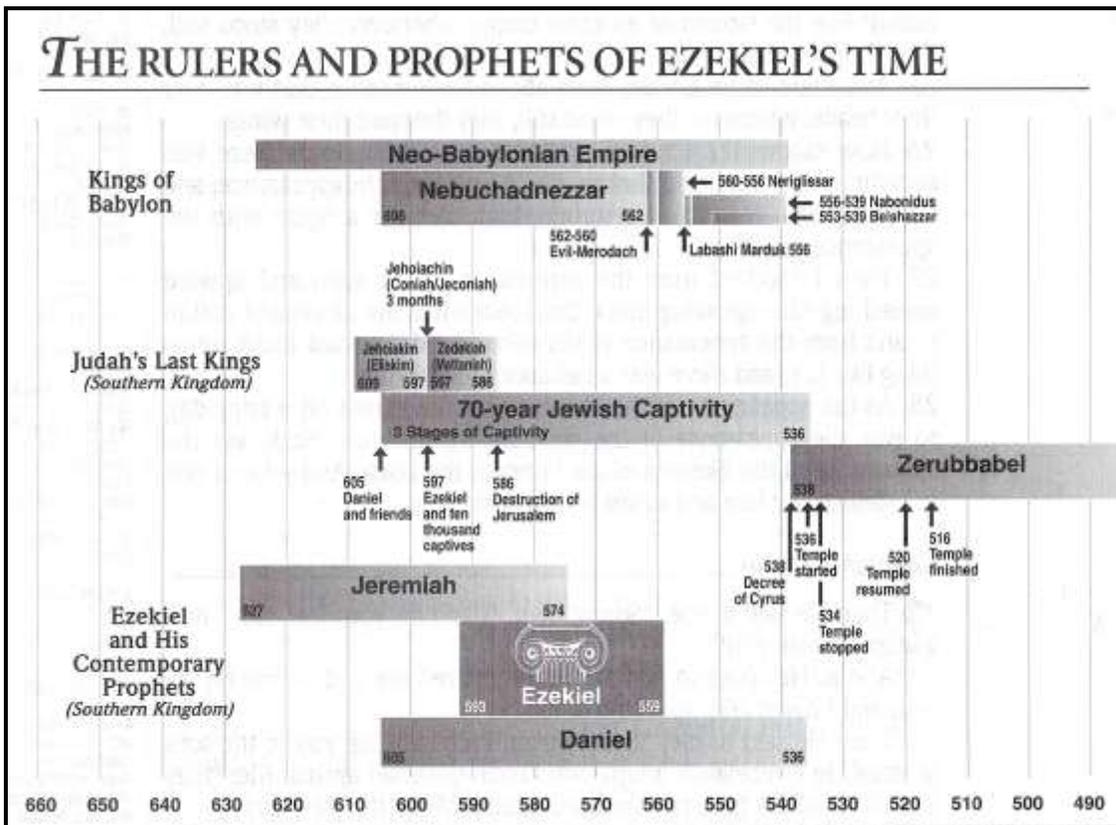
(Ezekiel’s Chronological Dating.)

Ezekiel 1:1-3

(1) Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. (2) (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, (3) the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.)

Comments:

The exile of King Jehoiachin was in 597 B.C., so Ezekiel’s call and first dated prophecy was in the summer of 593 B.C. Ezekiel, unlike many of the other prophet’s writings, is largely provided in chronological order and with references to dates. In verse 2 we see reference to when Ezekiel was first called by God. Verse 1 reveals that his call came in his thirtieth year. According to Numbers 4:3, men entered the priestly service at the age of thirty. His entire prophetic career was spent in Babylon. The chart below illustrates the time in which Ezekiel served in relation to other prophets, rulers and the exile.



(Ezekiel’s Call by God.)

Ezekiel 2:1-3

- (1) Then He said to me, *"Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!"*
- (2) And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me. (3) Then He said to me, *"Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day."*

Comments:

God’s normal way of addressing Ezekiel was with the phrase “son of man,” probably to emphasize his humanity over against God’s holiness. Jesus referred to Himself the same way, but with an entirely different meaning, so the Book of Ezekiel does not serve as the direct background for Jesus’ use of the phrase. In the Book of Daniel we will see the clearest background of the phrase “son of man” as it pertains to Jesus (Daniel 7:13).

(Ezekiel’s Odd Behavior.)**Ezekiel 2:8—3:3**

(8) *"Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you."* (9) Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. (10) When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.

(3:1) Then He said to me, *"Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."* (2) So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. (3) And He said to me, *"Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you."* Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

Comments:

Of all the prophets, Ezekiel was called on by God to perform more unusual acts in connection with his message than any others. On this occasion he ate a scroll, presumably because it had on it the words he was to utter (see Revelation 10:8-10 which follows). At another time, he acted out an after dark escape of some of his fellow countrymen back in Jerusalem (12:3-7). He used a type of shadowboxing to depict the Babylonian slaughter which was coming (21:14-17). At times during his preaching he would clap his hands, stamp his feet and cry, “Alas” (6:11), or as he cried and wailed, he would slap his thighs (21:12). As a sign to the people, he used a brick to represent Jerusalem and built a model depicting its siege (4:1-3). To represent the length of Israel’s and Judah’s punishment, respectively, he was bound with cords and lay on his left side for 390 days and on his right for forty days (4:4-8). During that first period, he consumed only rationed food and water, to symbolize the plight of those left in Jerusalem (4:9-17).

He also cut his hair, divided it into thirds and disposed of it in three different manners, to indicate the ways in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem would perish (5:1-12). All of this was at the direction of the Lord and helped reinforce his message.

Revelation 10:8-10 (*Compare to Ezekiel 2:8—3:3*)

(8) And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, *"Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."* (9) And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, *"Take it, and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."* (10) And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

(Positive Effect of the Exile.)

Ezekiel 6:8-10

(8) *"However, I shall leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries. (9) Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes, which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations. (10) Then they will know that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them."*

Comments:

One of the positive effects of the Babylonian exile was the fact that the Jews who returned to Judea were forever cured of their idolatry. Even in God's punishment He accomplishes good. Everything that God does serves His ultimate purpose of teaching His people how to be in a right relationship with God. Also, even though God was forced to punish His people because of their unfaithfulness, He never stopped loving them and preserved a remnant for the future when He would restore them, again to make them into a nation, and fulfill all the promises He has made to them.

(Corruption in the Temple with worship of animals.)

Ezekiel 8:7-12

(7) Then He brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. (8) And He said to me, "***Son of man, now dig through the wall.***" So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance. (9) And He said to me, "***Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here.***" (10) So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts and detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around. (11) And standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them, each man with his censer in his hand, and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising. (12) Then He said to me, "***Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'***"

Comments:

Among the incredible religious corruption in the temple, Ezekiel saw animal worship, which suggests Egyptian religion, since, of all the ancient Near Eastern peoples, the Egyptians were most closely associated with this practice. God's finding elders of the nation in a dark room thinking that He could not see them recalls Zephaniah's well-known statement, "***At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps***" (Zephaniah 1:12).

(The Mark of God to protect from Destruction.)

Ezekiel 9:1-5

(1) Then He cried out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, "***Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.***" (2) And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each with his shattering weapon in his hand; and among them was a certain man clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar. (3) Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case. (4) And the LORD said to him, "***Go through the midst of the city, even***

through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.” (5) But to the others He said in my hearing, *“Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity, and do not spare.”*

Comments:

Here we have God making a distinction between those who will be punished and those who will be preserved. God orders that those who are to be saved be “marked” by His servant dressed in linen. Tradition says that the mark was the Hebrew letter “t” (Tav), which we pronounce as a “t”. The ancient Hebrew character resembled a slanted “t”, looking more like an “x”. It was the mark of ownership by God. The “t” closely resembles the cross, and the “x” is still used as a mark of ownership, i.e., “sign by the x.”

Revelation 7:2-4 (*Compare to Ezekiel 9:1-5*)

(2) And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, (3) saying, *“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”*

(4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

(The Visions of God will come True.)

Ezekiel 12:21-25

(21) Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, (22) *“Son of man, what is this proverb you people have concerning the land of Israel, saying, ‘The days are long and every vision fails’? (23) Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ ‘I will make this proverb cease so that they will no longer use it as a proverb in Israel. ‘But tell them,’ ‘The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision. (24) For there will no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. (25) For I the LORD shall speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I shall speak the word and perform it,’ declares the Lord GOD. ‘”*

Comments:

Israel’s proverb that God changed to one of His own was a challenge to the credibility of the visions He had sent. Peter encountered scoffers of the same kind as he dealt with the problem of the delay of Jesus’ second coming (2 Peter 3:3-4). Peter responds with assurance that God delays in order to be merciful but punishment will come (3:9-10).

2 Peter 3:3-4 (*Compare to Ezekiel 12:21-25*)

(3) Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, (4) and saying, *"Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."* ...

(9) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

(10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

(God Deals Justly with Individuals.)

Ezekiel 18:1-4

(1) Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, (2) *"What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, 'The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge'?"* (3) *"As I live,"* declares the Lord GOD, *"you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. (4) Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die."*

Comments:

One of the features of the religious thought of the Book of Ezekiel which stands out is individual responsibility for one’s own actions (3:16-21; 14:12-20; 18:1-32; 33:1-20). In this passage the Lord was disapproving of an old proverb in Israel and replacing it with one of His own: *“The soul who sins will die.”* To a far greater extent than in the religion of the New Testament, Israel had a group relationship with God. The Babylonian exile, in which Ezekiel himself was participating, was God’s judgment on a sinful nation, and many righteous people had to suffer alongside the sinners. Nevertheless, God now

wanted it emphasized that individual guilt and righteousness should not be swallowed up in the group, even when the group was the family. Depending on the stress laid, the law could be read either way. In the Ten Commandments God stated that He would visit “*the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations*” (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9), but in Deuteronomy 24:16, fathers and children are not to be held responsible for each others’ guilt. Therefore, by rejecting the old proverb, God was settling in Ezekiel 18 (and Jeremiah 31:29-30) any question anyone might have.

In Ezekiel 18:4 God speaks of the death of the soul. In Revelation 20:6 and 21:8 we are given a distinction between the death of the body (first death) and the death of the soul (second death).

Revelation 20:6

(6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 21:8

(8) *"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

EZEKIEL 37:

The 37th chapter of Ezekiel bears special attention. It describes the restoration of the nation of Israel as the miracle of life coming from death. Then it clearly defines this new nation as one nation no longer divided into two kingdoms as is the case with modern Israel. All of this immediately proceeds the coming, or from a Christian perspective second coming, of the Messiah who fulfills the Davidic Prophecy and rules over Israel. Thus the 37th chapter of Ezekiel directly links the restoration of national Israel with the coming of the Messiah and His rule.

(God will Restore His People—the Vision of Dry Bones.)

Ezekiel 37:1-14

(1) The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. (2) And He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. (3) And He said to me, ***"Son of man, can these bones live?"*** And I answered, ***"O Lord GOD, Thou knowest."*** (4) Again He said to me, ***"Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.'*** (5) ***Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. (6) And I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.' "*** (7) So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. (8) And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew, and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. (9) Then He said to me, ***"Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"*** (10) So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. (11) Then He said to me, ***"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'*** (12) ***Therefore prophesy, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. (13) 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. (14) And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD. "'***

Comments:

The return of Israel to her land is unique in all of human history. There are ancient peoples who have always occupied their lands, such as the Egyptians. But never have

they left their ancient boundaries only to return. Israel is the only nation that has ever been deported from her homeland, remained a distinct people while outside the land, and then returned to her original country. In Ezekiel 37:1-14 the prophet describes a valley of dry bones. These bones are the remains of a defeated army that was slaughtered and left unburied to decompose into a sun bleached pile of bones. This prophecy presents the most extreme picture of hopelessness imaginable. But when the Lord is involved, there is always hope. There is no question these “bones” present a clear picture of the depleted nation of Israel—Israel during the *Diaspora* (dispersion), beginning in 70 A.D. For God instructed the prophet ***“these bones are the whole house of Israel”*** (37:11). He then describes the miracle of their re-gathering as from the “graves” of antiquity. Gradually the bones came together, and the sinews and flesh came upon them. It was at this point of Israel’s gradual restoration that people like Thoodor Herzl, the Father of Zionism, began to call the Jews back to Israel. The “sinews and flesh” continued to come together as the Jews of the earth returned to Israel, to drain the swamps and transform the desert into a rose. On May 14, 1948, at 4:32 p.m., the State of Israel, after two thousand years, was reborn. This is not a picture of Christian regeneration, but of the restoration and then regeneration of national Israel.

(Former Divided Kingdom of Israel and Judah restored to One Kingdom.)

Ezekiel 37:21-23

(21) "And say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; (22) and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. (23) And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God."

Comments:

Not only will Israel be revived, but this renewal will remove the internal schism that resulted in the splintering of the nation in 931 B.C. into the two kingdoms of Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom) (1 Kings 11:26-40). Jews have been gathered into one nation again. That means there are no “ten lost tribes of Israel,” for God never loses anything. God is performing this awesome miracle to testify to the nations of the world of His boundless love for Israel as He sanctifies that nation prior to the Messiah’s coming, which is the second coming from a Christian perspective.

(The Davidic Kingdom and Coming of the Messiah.)

Ezekiel 37:24-28

(24) "And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. (25) And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. (26) And 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. (27) My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. (28) And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever."

Comments:

The final section of Ezekiel 37 looks forward to the Millennial kingdom (the 1,000 years of peace) and David’s role in that kingdom. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised that **“your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever”** (2 Samuel 7:16). In the Millennial kingdom, the Lord will rule over the entire globe. The chapter concludes with God’s promise to implement a covenant of peace with Israel—**“it will be an everlasting covenant with them”** (37:26). The covenant of peace will be commemorated by the Lord’s placement of His sanctuary **“in their midst forever”** (37:26). The sanctuary will be a testimony to the nations that the Lord has sanctified the nation and now dwells in their midst (37:27-28).

Revelation 20:6 *(The Millennium)*

(6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 21:2-3 *(Tabernacle of God among men)*

(2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,"*

(Gog and Future Invasion of Israel.)

Ezekiel 38:1-23

(1) And the word of the LORD came to me saying, (2) *"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, (3) and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. (4) And I will turn you about, and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords; (5) Persia, Ethiopia, and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; (6) Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops-- many peoples with you. (7) Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. (8) After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them. (9) And 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.'" (10) '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, (11) and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living*

Comments:

Many scholars believe that the invasion of Israel depicted in Ezekiel 38 will come from Russia and its allies. Gog is a word for “ruler,” which literally means “the man on top.” Gog is the “chief prince” of the land of Magog and the “prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal” (38:2). “Rosh” in the Hebrew is also an ancient name for Russia. Ezekiel puts extreme emphasis on the fact that Israel’s great enemy would come from the “uttermost north.” It is mentioned in Ezekiel 38:6 and 15, and again in 39:2. While the above text has been translated as “remote parts of the north,” the Hebrew word that qualifies “north” means either “uttermost” or “extreme north.” Any map will instantly verify that the extreme north from Israel is Russia.

Furthermore, both in Ezekiel 38:3 and 39:1, God says, “*I am against you*” to “*Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.*” All the other nations prior to Russia that God opposed were polytheistic, meaning, they believed in many gods. The first and second commandments are against polytheism—the worship of other gods. Is God against Russia because it has assumed the dominant position of “atheism”? Joseph Stalin said, “*We have deposed the czars of the earth and we shall now dethrone the Lord of heaven.*” There is no doubt that Russia’s atheistic government under Communism opposed God. Will it again in the future? Is Russia doing so now in the Middle East?

Who are “Meshech” and “Tubal” mentioned with Gog as those who God is against? Genesis 10:1-2 informs us that of the three sons of Noah, that Japheth would have sons named: “Gomer, **Magog**, Madai, Javan, **Tubal**, **Meshech** and Tiras.” Ethnologist—historians who track the migrations of people—tell us that after Noah’s flood, the Japhethites (sons of Jephath and their tribes) migrated from Asia Minor to the north, beyond the Caspian and Black Seas. They settled in the area of **Rosh** that we know today as Russia. The Greek name *Moschi*, derived from the Hebrew name *Meshech*, is the source of the name of city **Moscow**, capital of Russia.

The allies of Russia as listed in Ezekiel 38:5-6 include “Persia, Ethiopia and Put.” Persia is modern-day Iran. Ethiopia and Put, which is also known as Libya, are used in two distinctly different senses in the Old Testament. They were nations in Africa known as Ethiopia and Libya which would correspond to the area located in North Africa and south of Israel. This is the area inhabited by the descendants of Noah’s son, Ham.

One of Ham’s sons was Put. Ethiopia exists as a nation today southeast of Egypt. Put would correspond to modern-day Libya northwest of Egypt. These may be the same nations that will come to play as “kings of the north” (Persia and Russia) and “kings of the south” (Libya, Ethiopia and Egypt) in conflicts depicted in Daniel 11. In any case, it is clear and historical fact that Russia has been both involved and supportive of the military development of both Libya and Iran. It is important to note that Ethiopia and Libya were also states adjacent to Persia in what today is modern-day Arabia. Thus, Ezekiel’s reference could also be in reference to the Arab nations. What is consistent in both a geographical and religious viewpoint is that all of these nations are predominately Islamic today. This would align with other prophetic references that ultimately describe a confrontation between the sons of Isaac (Jews) and the sons of Ishmael (Muslims).

Revelation also speaks of Gog and Magog as being among those Satan will again rely upon when he released from his prison and gathers his allies against God’s people after the 1,000 years of peace.

Revelation 21:7-8

(7) And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, (8) and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, **Gog** and **Magog**, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

(God will Defeat Gog and its Allies.)

Ezekiel 39:3-4, 11-12

(3) "And I shall strike your bow from your left hand, and dash down your arrows from your right hand. (4) You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops, and the peoples who are with you; I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field... (11) And it will come about on that day that I shall give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off the passers-by. So they will bury Gog there with all his multitude, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog. (12) For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land."

Comments:

God will miraculously defeat the massive armies that come against Israel and the number of dead will be so great that it will take seven months to bury them. The following are several passages from Ezekiel regarding this punishment that have close parallels in Revelation.

(River of Blood)**Ezekiel 32:6**

(6) *"I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood, as far as the mountains, and the ravines shall be full of you."*

Revelation 14:20

(20) And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

(Sun and Moon Darkened)**Ezekiel 32:7**

(7) *"And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light."*

Revelation 6:12

(12) And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

(Birds gathered to Feast on Enemies.)**Ezekiel 39:17-20**

(17) *"And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field,' assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. (18) You shall eat the flesh of mighty men, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats, and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. (19) So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed*

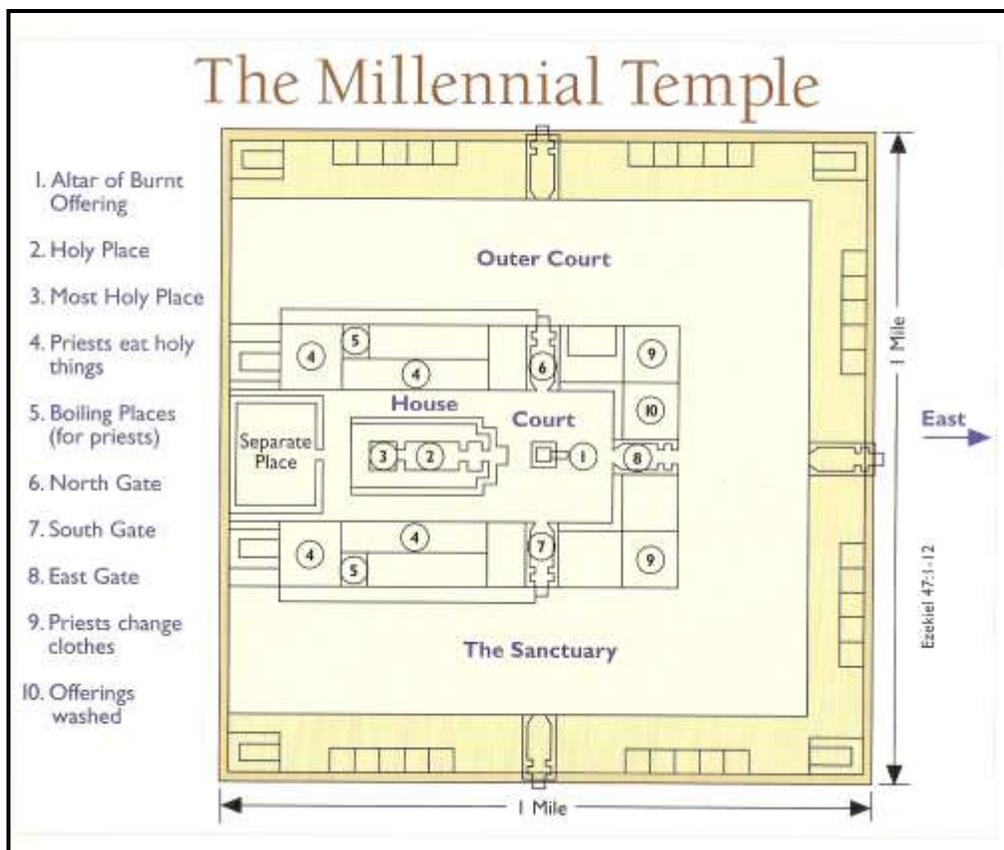
for you. (20) And you will be gluttoned at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war," declares the Lord GOD.

Revelation 19:17-18

(17) And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "*Come, assemble for the great supper of God; (18) in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.*"

EZEKIEL 40—48:

The remaining portion of the Book of Ezekiel is focused on the restored land of Israel. It describes a new temple (illustrated below), the worship which will take place there and the division of the land between the twelve tribes of Israel as promised by God to Abraham (see map on page-22). Some scholars believe that all of these events will take place during the Millennium or 1,000 years of peace which will immediately follow the return of Christ as depicted in Revelation 20.



The Millennial Temple, discussed in detail in Ezekiel 40:5—43:27, is destined to be perhaps the most beautiful and magnificent building in human history. This will be Israel’s final Temple, the focal point of the 1,000-year reign of the Messiah. Since, according to this view, the Millennium will be a time in which Israel will exalted and Christ will rule the world through a theocracy from Jerusalem, it makes sense that worship of Messiah will revolve around a temple. It is depicted as a glorious time when the “glory of the Lord” will return to the Temple (Ezekiel 43:1-5). In Ezekiel 10 he described the departure of God’s glory from the earthly temple. God departed the temple just as the people had departed from their worship of God. Now God will again dwell in the midst of His people (37:26-28), and Israel will fulfill her national calling.

There are many parallels between the temple described in Ezekiel and the new Jerusalem which will descend from heaven after the Millennium and after the “judgment” before the white throne of God (Revelation 20—21). The glorious temple described in Ezekiel 40—42 is one mile square with 12 outer gates. The new Jerusalem is described as 1,500 miles square with 12 gates, perhaps symbolic of the fact that all enter into it by means of the twelve tribes of Israel.



Revelation Parallels:

There are many parallels between the descriptions given in Ezekiel 40—48 and passages found in the Book of Revelation. Some of these are listed below for comparison:

(City on a Mountain)

Ezekiel 40:2

(2) In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me on a very high mountain; and on it to the south there was a structure like a city.

Revelation 21:10

(10) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

(Measured with a Rod)

Ezekiel 40:3

(3) So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway.

Revelation 11:1

(1) And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "*Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it.*"

(Square City with Wall to Separate the Pure inside from the outside Profane.)

Ezekiel 42:20

(20) He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.

Revelation 21:16

(16) And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

(Occupants of City clothed in White Linen.)

Ezekiel 44:17

(17) "*And it shall be that when they enter at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and wool shall not be on them while they are ministering in the gates of the inner court and in the house.*"

Revelation 19:18

(8) And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

(River that flows from God.)

Ezekiel 47:1

(1) Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the

water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.

Revelation 22:1

(1) And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

(Trees for Food and Healing.)

Ezekiel 47:12

(12) "And by the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

Revelation 22:2

(2) in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(City has Twelve Gates named after the Tribes of Israel.)

Ezekiel 48:30-34

(30) "And these are the exits of the city: on the north side, 4,500 cubits by measurement, (31) shall be the gates of the city, named for the tribes of Israel, three gates toward the north: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate of Levi, one. (32) And on the east side, 4,500 cubits, shall be three gates: the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one. (33) And on the south side, 4,500 cubits by measurement, shall be three gates: the gate of Simeon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zebulun, one. (34) On the west side, 4,500 cubits, shall be three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one."

Revelation 21:12, 18

(12) It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the **twelve tribes of the sons of Israel**.

References:

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