

A Survey of the Old Testament
Prophetic Books
by Pastor Richard H. Jones

#5 "Ezekiel"

I. COMMENTS ON THE PROPHET

Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens." He was a priest of the priestly family of Buzi (1:3). Ezekiel was taken captive during the second deportation of the Jews to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:12-15). The year was 597 B.C.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel. Daniel had been taken in Nebuchadnezzar's first deportation (606 B.C.) and served in the Babylonian royal court. Ezekiel however, when taken captive, settled with a company of Jews on the banks of the Chebar River at Tel-abib (3:15).

Ezekiel was commissioned as a prophet in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (1:2) and preached to his exiled brethren. Since the synagogues came after the captivity, Ezekiel was apparently used to gather the people in this fashion.

The last mention of his office is the 27th year (29:17) meaning he prophesied for at least 22 years. 87 times he is called the "son of man" and his favorite expression was "the hand of the Lord was upon me."

II. CONTENTS OF THE PROPHECY

The middle point of Ezekiel's ministry was the downfall of Jerusalem. The first 24 chapters were delivered prior to this fall, while the second 24 chapters were uttered after the fall.

Ezekiel's prophecy may be divided in a threefold manner: Chapters 1-24 prophesy judgment upon Israel and predict the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.); chapters 25-37 are prophecies against foreign nations, and chapters 38-48 are prophecies for Israel's consolation.

In addition to his prophecies of judgment upon Israel and the Nations, Ezekiel gave comfort to the exiles and spoke of the coming Kingdom of God. Before it, God will restore His people with a new heart (34, 36) after they are regathered (37), and put down Gentile powers (38, 39). Then the temple will be restored (40-43) with its service (44-46) and they will dwell with the Lord (47, 48).

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERIOD

In 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar had entered Palestine and taken captives to Babylon (Daniel was

among these). Jehoakim had reigned 11 years and his son Jehoiachin had succeeded him and reigned only 3 months when Nebuchadnezzar entered Judah a second time and deported captives to Babylon (Ezekiel was among these) in 597 B.C. Zedekiah had been set up as a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar and had reigned 5 years when Ezekiel received his prophetic call in Babylon.

To get the picture now, Zedekiah was king over Judah and vassal to Nebuchadnezzar. He had reigned the five years Ezekiel had been in captivity. Six years later, Zedekiah would rebel which would result in a final deportation and the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.). Ezekiel who had been taken captive in 597 had been in Babylon 5 years without a call. It was in this fifth year that Ezekiel was called and he would prophesy to God's people and the nations 6 years before the fall of Jerusalem. Afterwards he would prophesy for, at least, another 16 years (29:17).

The state of religious affairs in Judah had digressively gotten worse and worse. Manasseh had reigned 55 years and introduced every idolatrous worship imaginable. His son Amon furthered those corruptions. Although partial reformation took place under Josiah 640 - 689 it had not lasted. The Nation then rejected Jeremiah's message, treated him as a traitor and imprisoned him. This brought a prophecy of their judgment (Jer. 25:11). The people had been content to hear false prophets and priests tell them lies to sooth their sinful consciences. There had been no repentance for their sin. So now in the background of Ezekiel's prophecy, we see God's judgment upon His people to purge them with the fires of captivity.

IV. NOTABLE THINGS

- A. The "Glory of the Lord," spoken of in Ezekiel was the Shekinah Glory cloud symbolical of God's presence among His people. Note the departure of "the Glory" that Ezekiel saw (10:1-4,18,19; 11:23,24).
- B. Note the regathering of Israel is not their return from Babylon after the captivity, but yet future (37).
- C. Note when Israel is restored to their land it will be eight times as large as the twelve tribes possessed (Gen. 15:18 cp Ezek. 47:13-23).
- D. Note the Millennial temple (40-44) will be nearly 16 times as large as the old temple occupying about a mile square (48:10, 20,21). No such temple was built by Zerubbabel or Herod. Note also this temple is not in New Jerusalem for it has none (Rev. 21:22). It is not the temple of the New Earth, for the land where it is located is bound by the sea (Ezekiel 47:8) and there is no sea in the New Earth (Rev. 21:1). This temple then is a temple which will be on the earth during the Millennium. Now if the Lord is going to reign from Jerusalem, and the saints with Him, this makes the view of New Jerusalem hovering above the earth during the Millennium untenable.
- E. Note the features of the old temple lacking in the new: no Ark of the Covenant, no cherubim, no mercy seat, no candlestick, no show bread, no altar of incense, no veil, and no Holy of

Holies. The "Shekinah Glory" that departed at the time of the captivity will return (43:1-5) no shadows will be required.

- F. The priesthood will be re-established and the sons of Zadok will serve (Ezek. 44:15-31). While the Levites shall perform temple service, they shall be kept from priestly duties for their past sins (Ezek. 44:10-14).
- G. Note during the Millennial worship there will be a daily morning sacrifice, but no evening sacrifice (Ezek. 46:13-15). This sacrifice will apparently be a memorial to the death of Christ for Israel, like the Lord's supper is for the church now. Two feasts will also be observed, the Passover with no lamb (Ezek. 45:21-24), and Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-19).
- H. Note the key verse of 33:11.
- I. Note Russia's defeat in the middle of the tribulation (38,39).
- J. Note man's responsibility to a sovereign God (18,33).
- K. Note the creation of Satan and his sin (28:11-19).

V. PERSONAL LESSONS

- A. Serving the Lord calls for sacrifice. We can't live with sinful indulgences of the world and expect anything but judgment for sin.
- B. The closer to the Lord we live the harder the tests become, but the more grace we receive and the more glory He receives.

VI. MAP DURING MILLENNIAL REIGN

- A. Note the divisions of the land and the location of things during the Millennial reign. This map should be compared with the land map on the survey of the book of Joshua.
- B. Note the portions will be some 8 times larger than the original portions allotted under Joshua.
- C. Note the temple will be about a mile square in the midst of the Holy Oblation.
- D. Note the Holy Oblation will be some 50 miles square west of Jordan and divided into a portion for the Levites and a portion for the priests.
- E. Note Israel's rule will be administered through the apostles (Matt. 19:28).

- F. Note the size of this city, during the Millennium, differs from the New Jerusalem, after the Millennium. The New Jerusalem is much larger than the Millennial city (Rev. 21:12-14).

OUTLINE

I. JERUSALEM TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S CHASTENING (1-24)

- A. Ezekiel's visions of God (1)
- B. Call and Commission (2,3)
- C. Sermons with signs to Judah (4-24)

II. NATIONS TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S CHASTENING (25-33)

- A. Tyre and Sidon will be judged (25-28)
- B. Egypt will be judged (29-32)
- C. Responsibilities of men (33)

III. ISRAEL TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S CONSOLATIONS (34-48)

- A. Restoration to Palestine (33-37)
- B. Protection from God and Magog (30-39)
- C. Worship in Millennial temple and division of land (40-48)

