

17-18 Bible Study #7

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Ezekiel (Cont)

- We left off in **Ezekiel:33:21** where we witnessed the actual events of the fall of Jerusalem and the temple
- One of the Jews captured by the Babylonians in the 3rd Exile escaped and fled to Babylon with the news of the fall of the city
- This ends the first half of the Book of Ezekiel filled with gloom and doom
- **Ezekiel 34** marks the beginning of the second half of the book
- As you would imagine it also contains visions, **but this time of the restoration**

Ezekiel (Cont)

- This is a similar pattern to what we saw in Isaiah
 - **Isaiah 1-39** was about destruction, punishment and chastisement with a few nice works sprinkled here and there
 - **Isaiah 40** and following was about “*comfort, comfort my people*”
- In **Ezekiel 34** the prophet begins to speak about **restoration**, after a few additional comments on chastisement
- For most of these prophetic books we see a turning point from bad to good, sometimes in the middle or toward the end of the text

Ezekiel (Cont)

- In Ezekiel we have a clear example of this pattern
 - **Ezekiel 1-33** is all about death and destruction for everyone but the **poor of the land**
 - **Ezekiel 34** begins the “good news” of the restoration
 - Look at what God calls Ezekiel to do *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 34:1-3**

- God tells Ezekiel to remind the leaders of people that their job as the shepherd was to take care of the flock
- But they had been living off of the flock without maintaining or properly caring for the sheep
- The shepherds of Israel had abused their job
- They had eaten the fatlings, clothed themselves in the wool, but not led or cared for the flock

Ezekiel (Cont)

- Those referred to as “shepherds” were the religious and political leaders of Israel
- They were the ones in charge of God’s people and they had failed to do their job by the oppressing the poor, living the high life, and worshiping pagan gods
- So God tells them that he will be their shepherd*

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 34:11-22**

- Here we are introduced to the promise of the **restoration** in which God will bring his people back to Israel
- God promises to search for his sheep who had been scattered abroad
- He will bring them back to their own land and feed them in good pastures
- **God, as their shepherd,** will feed them in justice *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 34: 23-25**
- God then promises to set over them his shepherd, “David”
- What does he mean by “my shepherd, David”?
- Obviously this is not David, but one of his descendants, one from the line of David, thus fulfilling **2nd Samuel 7** *
- So when the people are restored, God will restore the Davidic dynasty to rule over his people

Ezekiel (Cont)

- No one else may rule but one in the line of David
- In **Ezekiel 36** we find another famous vision of the restoration which should remind us of **Jeremiah 31:31f ***
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Jeremiah

- **Jeremiah 31:31-34**
- This is about a new covenant
- To “*walk in my statutes*” means you will actually be able to live by them
- It will not be like the one God made with their fathers at Mt Sinai which they broke
- This new covenant will be written in their flesh
- It will be written in their hearts
- This covenant will be written within the people themselves

Jeremiah (Cont)

- **Jeremiah 31** and **Ezekiel 36** share a vision in which the commandments of God will no longer be written on stone tablets, but in the new covenant his commandments will be written in the flesh of the people
- In the heart of man, by the power of the spirit of God
- **Ezekiel 34:25** is about a covenant just like the one presented in **Jeremiah 31:31** *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 36:24-27**

- “*My spirit within you*” is similar to what we find in the post-exilic prophet Joel, who has a vision of the spirit of God becoming unleashed upon all of God’s people (**Joel 2:28**) *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 36:35**

- We see that the restoration of the land will become like the Garden of Eden which becomes the primary image of the Promised Land
- The Holy Land is a preliminary, semi-restoration of the Edomic state of God dwelling among his people
- Thus, the restoration of the land of Israel will be described as a new Garden of Eden with a replanting of the Garden *



Ezekiel (Cont)

- In **Ezekiel 37** we hear about the “spirit” again in the famous passage about the “dry bones”
- We will see more and more of this image as we get further into the exilic and post exilic prophets who will talk about the restoration of God’s people with the spirit of God *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 37:1-5**

- Ezekiel has a vision about a bunch of dry bones in a land that was conquered by an enemy
- All the bones were laying on the surface of a field after the vultures had cleaned off all of the flesh
- In this vision the breath of God (or spirit) fills the bones with life, restoring the flesh and sinew reattaching all of the bones producing a full bodied re-creation
- This is obviously resurrection imagery by the power of the spirit
- But what does it mean? *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 37:11-14**

- It means the return of the people from Exile
- The people in the exile are hearing that it is over, but what are they going to return to?
- The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed
- There is nothing to go back to
- So Ezekiel, who is with them in Babylon, says that if a big field of dead bones can be raised up by God, then God can certainly raise the people of Israel up from their exile
- He can restore all of this *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 37:15-17**

- In this vision the northern and southern kingdoms shall become one kingdom again (as in the time of David and Solomon)
- Remember that Joseph is one of the references for the northern kingdom, also called Ephraim (the son of Joseph)
- The two nations will become one people and thus no longer divided *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 37:22 -28**

- One king shall rule over them (not Rehoboam and Jeroboam)
- Who will this king be?
- It will be a descendant of David
- This is covenant language promising that God is going to come and dwell among his people again
- Notice it does not say that their dwelling place will be with me
- Instead it says my dwelling place will be with you
- Eventually even the gentiles will come in *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 40:1-5**

- This event happens 14 years after the destruction of the Temple
- Ezekiel has a vision of the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple
- He is told to measure the dimensions of the temple

- **Ezekiel 41:17f**

- Here we see the images of Solomon's temple *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 43:1-7**

- The glory cloud of Israel comes to the temple from the East
- Ezekiel is in the temple looking east and he sees the Glory Cloud (Shekinah) coming toward the temple
- This should remind us of Ezekiel 10
- Again, it is not the people of Israel going to dwell with God
- It is God coming to dwell among his people
- This is the most important vision of Ezekiel with his final vision in **Ezekiel 44** *

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 44:4**

- This is an exact reversal of all the events he had spoken of before
- All is restored as Ezekiel is standing, looking at the temple filled with the glory cloud of God
- This is one of the reasons traditional Christians have built their church facing east
- From the earliest times Christians have always prayed facing east

Ezekiel (Cont)

- The Jews began to look toward the east for the return of the Glory Cloud
- The Essenes, (who wrote the Dead Sea scrolls), lived in the desert east of Jerusalem waiting for the return of the Glory Cloud
- By the first century the temple had been rebuilt and the people were looking east
- We will see more of this in the post exilic period

Ezekiel (Cont)

- This is why we see Jesus ascending from the Mount of Olives (East of the temple) to the Father
- The angel tells the Apostles at the ascension “men of Jerusalem, this Jesus who has gone up will return in the same way”
- The early Christians waited in their churches facing east for Jesus’ return

Ezekiel (Cont)

- They believed that Jesus came the first time from the east and will return the second time from the east as well
- This is why traditionally Christian churches have been built facing east to allow the faithful to pray facing in that direction

Ezekiel (Cont)

- **Ezekiel 47:1-12**
- This is one last famous image from Ezekiel concerning the new temple
- Many understand this to be the blood and water flowing from Jesus' crucified body establishing the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist
- This is the end of our study of Ezekiel
- We now **turn to Daniel** and the post exilic prophets