



Ezekiel: God Who is Sovereign

Memory Verse: Ezekiel 37:7-8 “So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.”

Background

Ezekiel is the 26th book of the Bible and the 4th book of the Major Prophets. The book was written around 565 B.C. by the prophet Ezekiel during the seventy year period of the Babylonian Captivity. Ezekiel, whose name means “God strengthens,” was a priest who was taken to Babylon when he was twenty-five years of age. He received his prophetic commission when he was thirty, and his priestly heritage was often expressed in his prophetic messages with topics such as the temple, the priesthood, the glory of the Lord, and the sacrificial system. Like many priests, Ezekiel was married. But when his wife died during his prophetic ministry, God prevented Ezekiel from mourning her in public to instruct the exiles not to weep over the impending destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The Short Story

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, deals with God’s judgment on Judah, His judgment of the nations, and His restoration of His people.

What’s the Big Idea?

In 572 B.C., some 14 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel returns in a vision to the fallen city where he is given specific instructions for the reconstruction of the Temple, the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem, and the reconstruction of the land.

God didn’t exile the Israelites primarily to punish them. God never has been nor is He now interested in punishment for punishment’s sake. Rather, He intended the punishment or judgment in Ezekiel’s day as a means to an end—to bring His people to a state of repentance and humility before the One True God. They had lived for so long in sin and rebellion, confident in their own strength and that of the neighboring nations, that they needed God to remind them of His holy nature and their humble identity in a most dramatic way. After centuries of warnings, prophetic messages, and invasions, God decided that more significant action was required—He had to remove the people from their promised land.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God’s purpose for the book?

The book of Ezekiel pronounces judgment on both Israel and surrounding nations, but it also provides a vision of the future millennial kingdom that complements and adds to the vision of other Old and New Testament texts. Not only does the book present a striking picture of the resurrection and restoration of God’s people (Ezekiel 37), it also offers readers a picture of the reconstructed temple in Jerusalem, complete with the return of God’s glory to His dwelling place (40:1–48:35). This latter section of Ezekiel’s prophecy looks forward to the people’s worship after Christ’s return in the end times, when He will rule Israel and the nations from His throne in Jerusalem during His thousand year reign. Ezekiel began with a vision of God in the plains of Babylon and ends with a vision of God returning in glory to a new temple - God in the midst of His people once again, never to depart.

Ezekiel reminds us that behind our personal pain, there is a God who wants to be known by us and by the people who observe us.

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Ezekiel 36:24-27 “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Why do you suppose the people thought they could escape God’s judgment by fleeing the land?
- In verse 3:24 God states that He will take/gather the people. What does this demonstrate with regard to His sovereignty?
- How is God’s promise to cleanse and purify His people in v.3:25 manifested in the work of Jesus?
- Consider/discuss John chapter 14:15-31 in light of v.3:26-27 and God’s promise of a new heart and spirit.

Practical Application

- Have you ever consciously or subconsciously felt you could flee or evade God’s presence in an area of sin? What have the ramifications of that been?
- How have you experienced God’s cleansing and purification (c.f. 1 John 1:9)? Has it been easy or difficult for you to receive? Why?
- Where has God renewed your heart through His Spirit? Where do you need renewal now? Will you seek it?

Hitting the Highpoints

- Ezk 1:4-14 “As I looked, I saw a great storm coming from the north....that flashed with lightning..”
- Ezk 18:4,5,9 “For all people are mine to judge—both parents and children alike. “
- Ezk 18:32 “I don’t want you to die, says the Sovereign Lord. Turn back and live! “
- Ezk 22:30-31 “I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land.
- Ezk 36:24-29 “For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land. “

Bonus Features

Where is Jesus? Not only does the book present a striking picture of the resurrection and restoration of God’s people in Ezekiel 37, it also offers readers a picture of the reconstructed temple in Jerusalem, complete with the return of God’s glory to His dwelling place in chapters 40:1–48:35. This latter section of Ezekiel’s prophecy looks forward to the people’s worship after Christ’s return in the end times, when He will rule Israel and the nations from His throne in Jerusalem during His thousand year reign.

Ezekiel, as is much of Israel’s history, is a snapshot of the whole human condition. God’s people and the nations are under the wrath of God because “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” and “God abhors sin”. However we do not have to remain in sin! God uses all times, both good and bad, both blessing and discipline, to bring us to him. He is the God of restoration, the God who can breath life into dry bones, even when the world says we are too far gone.

Personal Takeaways and Notes