

Ezekiel: Jesus our Glorious Shepherd

- I. Chapters 1-3 Ezekiel's call and close encounter**
- II. Chapters 4-24 Judah's judgment**
- III. Chapters 25-32 What comes around goes around**
- IV. Chapters 33-48 A hope and a future**

Ezekiel a priest and a prophet during Judah's darkest days, (the 70 year Babylonian captivity), wrote these words while in captivity to his fellow countrymen as God shared through him three specific things:

- That what they needed now was a fresh glimpse of God's glory and goodness.
- That the reason for their captivity was rebellion and a move away from their relationship with their God
- That God will judge the nations that have destroyed them and will restore their relationship with Him.

III. Chapters 25-32 What comes around go's around

In this section Ezekiel addresses those who are rejoicing over Israel's fall as he predicts that Judah's fate will soon be theirs. In a clockwise depiction Ezekiel speaks of the nations that surround the nation such as Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Tyre. The wickedness of these nations was equal or superior to that of Judah and just because God hadn't yet judged them didn't mean that he wouldn't. Peter said as much in 1 Peter 4:17 when he wrote, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"* From chapter 26-28 Ezekiel speaks of the fall of Tyre and specifically of the "Prince of

Tyre” in chapter 28 and though he wrote of a physical prince of Tyre it is as though he picked behind the curtain to the invisible spiritual realm and who it is that is behind the evil in the world. Ezekiel says of this Prince of Tyre in 28:2-4 *“Because your heart is lifted up, and you say, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,’ Yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you! With your wisdom and your understanding you have gained riches for yourself, and gathered gold and silver into your treasuries”*. It is no wonder that it is hard to determine Ezekiel’s prophecy as to whether it speaks of a man or satan as pride and arrogance is seen in both. In Ephes. 2:2 Paul described the evil influence of satan upon the unsuspecting people of this world saying that all *“once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience”*. Ezekiel again takes up a view of the Prince of Tyre in 28:12-17 saying of him, *“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of*

your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.” Saints, out of every turn we see the same evil portrait be that of satan and his cohorts are the pride of our fallen flesh. How I long for Christ esteem and true godly humility that will be in heaven.

Then in chapters 29-32 Ezekiel speaks of Egypt’s humiliation as it will continue to exist but as the lowliest of earthly kingdoms. Egypt is always a symbol of the world and fallen humanity and we too exist but only as a faint dim spectacle of what our Creator had designed. Dear ones it is only by dying to our faint flicker of light that He will place the flame of His glory inside our clay pot and we will shine as He has designed!

IV. Chapters 33-48 A hope and a future

The prophecies in this section were given after the overthrow of Jerusalem to offer hope to the captives. Prior to this those in captivity held out hope that they would soon return to their home land and after the destruction they felt that all was lost. So God speaks to the nation in captivity that just as judgment was certain because of their rebellion so was restoration certain because of God’s goodness. Through out these 15 chapters Ezekiel writes of the blessings to come as God will restore and regather the people from the four corners of the world to repatriate the land that He had called them too. Ezekiel writes of a time when the Glory of the Lord will come back into a rebuilt temple.

Folks, there will inevitably be seasons in our life when our expectations won’t be realized, times when what we longed for doesn’t materialize. During such times it is easy for us to think that “*all hope*” is lost, that our present captivity is a permanent prison where we shall never again see the light of day. Saint’s, God does not take away nor does

He not meet our expectations that He hasn't something far more glorious that He desires to give us.

In Ezekiel 33:11 God speaks to the nation, *“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?”* Then in 33:13, 15, 17 God says, *“If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done.”* *“If he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die... Yet your countrymen say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just.”* Finally God rightly evaluates the nation in their captivity saying of them in 33:31 *“My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.”* In the 34th chapter God address the false shepherds of Israel saying of them in 34:2-5 *“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.”* And in the midst of this

statement God springs forth with a yet future Shepherd who will according to 34:11-12 “*Will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.*” God continues saying in 34:13-16 “**I will** bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and **I will** bring them into their own land. **I will** pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. **I will** tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. **I myself will** tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. **I will** search for the lost and bring back the strays. **I will** bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong **I will** destroy. **I will** shepherd the flock with justice.” And just how will God establish all this? Well in 34:23-25 God says He will do this by placing, “*over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety.*” God gives Ezekiel a vision of the dead coming back to life in the 37th chapter in the Valley of dry bones all of which come back together becoming alive again as “*sinews and flesh and breath comes back into them*”. In 37:13-14 God says that, “*Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it,*

declares the Lord.” This was a vision of what God intends to do for the His people Israel which began in 1948 but has yet to be completed fully. Ezekiel looks out into the future in the 38th and 39th chapter at the signs that will usher the culmination of these things. It will be a time when Israel’s enemies will be met by heavenly forces upon the hills of Israel and be defeated once and for all. In chapters 40-43 Ezekiel sees the rebuilding of the temple during the millennial kingdom and in this vision he is given the specific details of the building. In the 43rd chapter Ezekiel sees something far greater than a rebuilt temple he sees the glory of the Lord returning to the rebuilt temple as we read in 43:2-5 *“I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.”* The chapters 44-46 we are given the specifics of the priests of the temple. Then in the 48th chapter we are given the division of the land for the 12 tribes during the millennial kingdom with the last verse telling us that *“The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on will be: the Lord is there.”*

I have waited to the last to share the words Ezekiel was given in the 47th chapter as he sees a vision of a river flowing from the temple. It is a **“River of Living Water”** there is no river adding to it thus it is the source and it has made it’s way past the altar of sacrifice and on out the south side of the temple and has surrounded the temple. Ezekiel is led through the waters until they come up to his ankles. Then a measurement is taken

and he is again led through the waters until they are up to his knees, where another measurement is taken and he is brought through the waters until they are up to his waste. Finally at the last measurement Ezekiel is given a measurement and this time in verse 5 he realizes that this river has grown to a place where it can not be navigated on foot as the water was too deep now the only way is to let lose control and swim but curiously Ezekiel declares that though you could swim with it you could not cross it.

Dears ones listen to this as I believe Ezekiel is speaking of the explorations of our relationship with God. There are several points that I wish to make:

1. Such a relationship **starts at the presence of God**, as we are told that the water flowed from the door of the temple.
2. That such an exploration must **always involve the altar of sacrifice** where we examine **two deaths**. The death of our Lord on our behalf as He was the Lamb of God slain for the sin of the world. Then our death to self, as no exploration of our relationship with God could go deeper apart from those two things.
3. Notice that time and again we are told the “*he brought*” and “*he led*” I believe that such a quest must be **led by and empowered by the Holy Spirit**.
4. I also notice that such a journey **involved a process** by which it was a series of choices of how deep a person wanted to go:
 - A. Ezekiel was first shown a river that took him **ankle deep**. A safe, shallow experience of God that is *cool but not out of control*. Just enough of God to “*get your feet week*” but not to much to be swept a way so that we can know him and yet still be very much in control.

- B. Next Ezekiel is brought to **his knees** in the living water. Oh how this speaks to me of prayer as Ezekiel is brought to his knees in his relationship with God. There are many who have been some what forced to go “*knee deep with God*” as life took us beyond what merely getting our feet wet would suffice.
- C. This led Ezekiel to be **waste deep** with God. Oh at waste deep one realizes the force and power of God as they experience the flow that is way beyond their control. In this you will experience weightlessness as the flow and power of God is far greater than the burden of life in this body. Yet a person who is waste deep is still planted on terra firma, still in control. And with that control still able to remove themselves from the waters edge back to so called safety.
- D. Finally, Ezekiel is brought to a place where the water is too deep for physical navigation, too deep to cross. All one can do here is let loose and go with the flow ride effortlessly under the Spirit's control as He navigates you through where He wishes to take you. This describes a relationship where a person is in over their head with God, as we are swept along in His grace, love and power.
5. Dear ones I make one last observation and that is Ezekiel describes that it is only in this last encounter with God that the “*River of God*” will take you to a place as he is told in verse 8 to the Sea where the waters are healed. He further describes this in verse 9 and 12 where “*Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there*”

and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.”

Where “Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing”

How deep do you want to go with the Lord? Oh that all of us would want to be in over our head and totally in His control so that “everything will live” and the “leaves will not wither nor the fruit fail and every month they bear”.