

Lesson #34

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: Read Ezekiel chapters 1-6, 8, 22, 26, 28, 35, 37

BACKGROUND

Author: Ezekiel, contemporary of Jeremiah, Obadiah and Daniel; in his youth he knew Habakkuk.

- Levite from Judah; taken into exile when 25; called to be prophet at 30, married
- His ministry is to the exiles who are with him in the country of Babylon 2:5
- His message will be rejected; he is promised God's encouragement and strength
- He is called *son of man*, *dust*, *mortal man* 93 times to contrast his humanity with God's deity
- Tradition says he was killed in Babylon by Jews who resented his message against idolatry.

Date and Place of Ministry: he taught some 22 years in Babylon by the River Kebar from 592 – 570 BC

Theme: The Shechinah glory mentioned 18 times – God's visible presence (glory) seen in fire, cloud or bright light.

Purpose: to reveal God in His glory and character thru picture language and phrases

The name, *Sovereign LORD* or *Lord GOD* is used over 200 times

Scripture background: 2 Kings 24:18 – 25:26; 2 Chronicles 36:11-21; Jeremiah 21, 24, 28-29, 32-34, 37-44, 52:1-30

OUTLINE

Others will know that He is God... (*Then you will know that I am the LORD* used over 200 times)

... by His judgment on Jerusalem 1-24

God's visible presence appears in Babylon 1-3

God's visible presence departs from Jerusalem 4-24

... by His judgment on nations 25-32

... by His restoration of the Jews 33-48

God's visible presence returns to Jerusalem

HISTORICAL SETTING IN JUDAH

Politically and Economically: 605-570 BC

- In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar sent royalty from Judah to the government of Babylon, such as Daniel and his 3 friends.
- In 597, he returned and exiled king Jehoiachin, his immediate family plus 10,000 business and professional people. Ezekiel is included in this group. Nebuchadnezzar allows the exiles to settle in their own communities along the Kebar canal and the Euphrates River. Nine years later, king Zedekiah in Judah rebels and Babylon lays siege to Jerusalem for 2 years.
- In 586 BC, Jerusalem is destroyed and the nation of Judah comes to an end. Nebuchadnezzar takes king Zedekiah along with the rest of the Jews and exiles them to Babylon.
- From 585-573, Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to and then attacks the city of old Tyre.

Spiritually: In Jerusalem: outward sins of murder, idolatry, inhumanity and immorality 8:10-16; 22:3, 7, 11

In Babylon: inward sins of self will, belief they can choose the rules of right and wrong, hypocrisy 14:3; 33:31

EXPLANATIONS

Ezekiel

- Sees God's visible presence thru picture language in a dream

Storm and lightening - God's power

Angelic beings - God's deity and presence

Wheels - God's omnipresence (everywhere)

Eyes - God's omniscience (knows everything)

Fire - God's holiness and purity

Rainbow - God's mercy and faithfulness

God reveals Himself to Ezekiel

God is not limited to His temple in Jerusalem. He is also in Babylon. He can be worshipped there.

He wants to use Ezekiel, not as priest, but as prophet to give His message to the exiles. Ezekiel

spends the next 22 years revealing God to his people. He knows that a greater concept of God could change their lives.

- Tells exiles about events in Jerusalem ...

...to correct what their false prophets in Babylon are saying (within 2 years we will be back in Jerusalem)

...to correct what the wicked Jews in Jerusalem are saying



EXPLANATIONS continued**Exiles**

• What the wicked Jews in Jerusalem are saying

We are still in Jerusalem because of our goodness; the exiles were sent to Babylon because they were sinful.

The Jews in Babylon cannot worship God or pray because they do not have the Temple. 11:15

Ezekiel answers these false statements in chapters 8-11.

We have places God cannot see, so we can go there and do anything we want and get away with it. 8:12

God does know - Jewish leaders and people are guilty of idolatry, murder, inhumanity and immorality.

• The exiles' response in Babylon

Look how bad they are in Jerusalem; look how good we are in Babylon.

Not true. God sees their inward sin of self will, hypocrisy and belief they can decide what is right and wrong.

When Ezekiel gives God's message that Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed, the people say...

What God says will not happen 12:22

What God says will not happen in our lifetime 12:27

Ezekiel gives more predictions, parables and signs that it will happen in 5 years chapters 13-17

What God says is not fair; we are suffering for the sins of our ancestors 18:1-3

King Manasseh's sins had national consequences for the next 3-4 generations.

Consequences and blessings of individual exiles is now based on **their** obedience or disobedience.

God

• His judgments on nations - Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Egypt and the city states of Tyre and Sidon

• His judgment on Tyre

26:7-11 **587- 574 BC** the 13 year siege of Nebuchadnezzar on old Tyre

26:4, 12 **332 BC** Alexander the Great used everything from old Tyre to build a solid walkway to the island one-half mile out. He destroyed new Tyre in 332 BC. Today fishermen still dry nets on the bare rock. The present village is to the north of the old site (Old Tyre).

28:12-17 the most probable explanation of how Lucifer became Satan cf. Isa. 14:12-14

• His Restoration of the Jews 33-48

He will restore the land; He put the nation of Israel back on the map in 1948. chpt. 36

He will restore the Jews to the land; today Jews from over 160 nations have returned to the land. chpt. 37

He will restore the Jews spiritually, so as a nation, their faith is in Jesus their Messiah; not yet happened.

One of the first steps to bring it about, will be a future attack on Israel chpt. 38-39

Troops from Russia, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Germany and Turkey will attack, but God will intervene.

Jesus will set up His Kingdom when there is national conversion of the Jews.

God's visible presence will return to Jerusalem (Jesus Himself) 40-48

APPLICATIONS

1. The decisions of local, national, world leaders affect our lives. There can be national consequences and there is nothing we can do to change it. But as individuals, if we choose to obey, God will bring blessing into our life. It does not mean or guarantee we will be rich and comfortable. But it does mean God will give us what we need at the moment. His greatest blessings will always be spiritual – His strength; His wisdom and grace. We will have His comfort and a sense of His presence.

2. All of us start out with dreams and goals. But when we least expect it, something can happen to shatter our dreams. It may be a death, a broken relationship, a loss of health or finances. If we have been obeying God, it does not make sense. Obedience is supposed to bring blessing. If we have been involved in ministry, it is even more devastating if we lose our ministry. We can feel useless, without purpose or meaning in life.

The first thing God wants us to do is turn our focus on Him. We need a greater concept of **His** greatness, power, goodness, love and grace. Even if we do not sense His presence, He **is** with us in our situation. Like Ezekiel, we can experience more of God in the place where He has put us now, that we ever did in the past. He can take all our disappointments, losses and failures and from them bring new opportunities, blessings and ministry.

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise. Psa. 145:3 *Praise Him for **His** surpassing greatness.* Psa. 150:2

