

Week of September 12-18

Ezekiel 37 Israel Comes to Life Again

Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones describes Israel's miraculous restoration. Ezekiel saw a valley full of dry, disconnected bones, representing the scattered people of Israel. However, suddenly the bones began to come together, and tendons and flesh appeared on them. The breath of life then entered the corpses, and an army of living beings stood in the valley. In the same way, the Lord would miraculously resuscitate the nation of Israel. He would deliver them from the grave of exile in foreign lands, place His Spirit among them, and settle them once more in the promised land.

It would also be a day of reuniting of Israel and Judah. The Lord told Ezekiel to take two sticks, one representing the Northern Kingdom and the other the Southern Kingdom, and hold them together in his hand. In the same way, the Lord would bring the exiles of both Israel and Judah back to the land and make them one kingdom again. He would raise a new David (Jesus) to lead them, establish a new covenant with them, and once more dwell among them forever.

Again, the underlying purpose of the whole history of Israel is revealed in the promise, "The nations will know that I am God."

Ezekiel 38 The Final Destruction of the Nations

Chapter 38 describes an invasion of Israel by distant nations, led by "Gog of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Ezekiel sees a time when the armies of these nations would attack Israel by surprise. The Lord would intervene in power and miraculously deliver His people. A mighty earthquake would shake the land, and the enemy armies would turn in panic on each other. The Lord would rain down hail and sulfur upon them.

Gog seems to be the end of all the dealings of God concerning Israel. He raises up this power to show the final judgment which is yet to come in His dealings with Israel and with the Gentiles.

The power designated by "Gog" is that of the north. Cush and Phut were on the Euphrates, as well as on the Nile. Persia is today's Iran. Togarmah is northeast of Turkey.

Whatever Gog's thinking might have been, it's clear that it is the Lord who brings his army out. Gog thinks he has worked out the whole scheme, but it is God who is in charge. The northern coalition of nations comes against Israel confident of victory, but the Lord destroys them.

Ezekiel 39 God Makes Himself Known to All Nations

Chapter 38 focuses on the army of Gog, but chapter 39 focuses on the leader of the army, Prince Gog of Magog. The KJV says one-sixth of the invading army will survive and be sent home humiliated. It is the Lord who brings Gog to Israel and allows him to try to attack His people.

God not only leads the prince, but also disarms him, so he is helpless before his enemy. Instead of slaughtering the Jews, his soldiers will themselves be slaughtered and become food for the birds and wild animals. The Lord won't stop with His judgment here, but will send a fiery judgment on the land of Magog!

The Lord gives three reasons for bringing Gog and his armies to Israel and then defeating them. First, the victory will show the **greatness** of the Lord as He displays His power. There is no evidence that the Israelites ever confronted the invading army. The Lord intervened and used rain, hailstones, and fire and brimstone from heaven! This victory will also reveal His **holiness** as He judges the sins of the leader from Magog. The wealth of Israel belongs to the Lord, and He shared it with Israel. The other nations have no

right to exploit it. Third, the victory will make the Lord known to the Gentiles, and the world will see that the **God of Israel is the only true and living God.**

God gathered the Israelites back into their land, but they were still not converted people. It will not be until they see their Messiah that they will hate their sins, put their trust in Christ, and become a regenerated people.

Ezekiel 40 – 42 Ezekiel's Vision of God's Future Temple among His People

The book of Ezekiel closes with a vision of a temple and its associated rituals. In chapter 40, the prophet is transported in vision from his home among the exiles in Babylon to Israel, where a divine messenger holding a measuring rod appears to him. The messenger gives Ezekiel a tour of the temple, measuring the various walls, gates, and courts. At one point, the glory of the Lord which was seen departing from the temple in an earlier vision is seen returning to the temple (chapter 43). Ezekiel's vision of the temple included many details and was given before the second temple was built, but there was no attempt by the Jews who returned from the exile to follow his design. It was a much larger and more impressive than either the second temple, or the previous one built by Solomon. To me, it is a little difficult to distinguish between the material and the spiritual in his description.

There are several different suggestions about the interpretation of this Temple. Some believe that what Ezekiel predicted was fulfilled when the exiles returned to their land. However, nothing that took place after the exiles returned from Babylon matches the details Ezekiel gives. Others interpret this section spiritually, explaining these prophecies as fulfilled in a spiritual sense by the church. Some believe these chapters describe a future, end-time kingdom, but they do so only symbolically. They believe the measurements represent spiritual truths concerning the coming kingdom but do not look for a literal Temple. Some see this passage as a prophecy that expects a literal fulfillment and building of the Temple in the future. To them, the descriptions have symbolic significance as well as literal, and some teach spiritual lessons. Lastly, some see Temple of the LORD" is Jesus himself. He is a house of prayer for all nations.