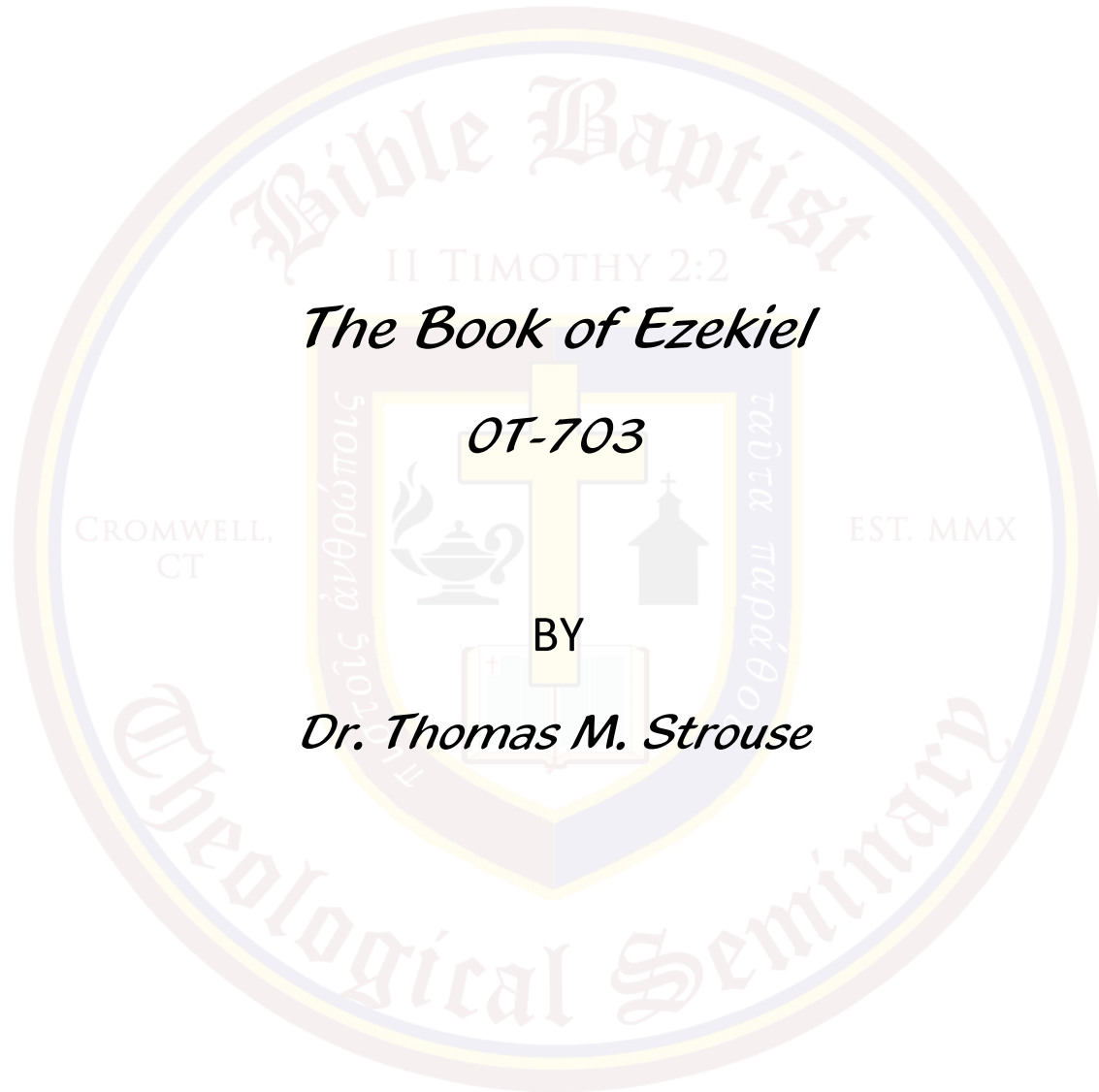


BIBLE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



CROMWELL, CONNECTICUT

The Book of Ezekiel

OT 703

Introduction

The Book of Ezekiel is the third prophetic book in the *Tanak*, giving the ministry and sermons of the prophet Ezekiel. The Lord raised up the major prophets of Jeremiah (in Jerusalem and Judea) and Daniel (in the Babylonian palace), along with Ezekiel (on the banks of the Chebar), to minister to the Jews and Gentiles, both warning and instructing them about Jehovah's sovereign will in using the Babylonians to judge Israel for her sins. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom failed to obey Jehovah and fell under His promised judgment through the Assyrians in 722 (cf. Dt. 27-28). The Southern Kingdom did not learn from her sister, and sinned grievously against the Lord, ultimately falling to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (586 BC). The first 24 chapters of the *Book* deal with Ezekiel's ministry and prophecies before 586 BC, the fall of Jerusalem. The next section records sermons against the nations (25-32), and then finally the last reveals the future restoration of Israel (33-48). The chronology of the *Book* focuses around the year of King Jehoiachin's captivity (597 BC). As the second to last king of Judah, Jehoiachin succeeded his father Jehoiakim and reigned for three months before his captivity (II Chr. 36:9-10).

Authorship and Date

The man Ezekiel ("God strengthens"), son of Buzi, is the key protagonist in the book by his name, who recorded his calling, ministry, and sermons. The Lord called him in the fifth year of Jehoiachin (592 BC), when he was thirty years old and ready for the priesthood (Ezk. 1:1-3). Therefore, he was apparently born in 622 BC. He was married but his young wife died when he was 35 years old (587 BC). He ministered for about 22 years (cf. Ezk. 29:17-21), and no record tells of his death (at 52 years or later). His prophetic ministry was for the exiles who were deported along with him in the second Babylonian deportation (cf. 605 and 597 BC). The Lord caused Ezekiel "to be dumb" for seven and a half years, not being able to prophesy until He opened Ezekiel's mouth. In the meantime, he acted out his messages with symbolism (Ezk. 3:26; 33:24).

The Last Kings of Judah

1. Jehoahaz (609 BC)
2. Jehoiakim or Eliakim (609-597 BC)
3. Jehoiachin (597 BC)
4. Zedekiah (597-586 BC)¹

¹Cf. II Chr. 36:1-21.

Outline

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I. His Prophecies Concerning Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (Ezk. 1-24)

His Calling as Prophet (Ezk. 1-3)

In this autobiographical section, the prophet Ezekiel recounted his call and commission to the exiles. With great precision he recorded the time, his location, and the experience. He was thirty years old² in 592 BC, an exile on the banks of the Chebar River in Babylon, when he received divine visions and the hand of Jehovah. The heavenly vision of the throne room with the chariot/throne (cf. Rev. 4-5) contained the vision of the glory of the Lord (see Isa. 6:1-4),³ authenticating to Ezekiel the divine authority and power behind his significant call to minister to the exiles. The Lord God called him to a very rebellious nation, who would know that a prophet had been among them, whether they believed or not. The words of his messages depicted lamentations and woes, but as he ate of the scroll it was sweet to his mouth (cf. Rev. 10:8-11). The Spirit of God indwelt Ezekiel as he preached,⁴ warning the nation as a spiritual watchman of divine judgment. The Lord made Ezekiel mute,⁵ so that he could only preach when the indwelling Spirit permitted for the seven and half years leading up to the fall of Jerusalem (vide Ezk. 33:21-22). He was restricted in his home (Ezk. 3:25; 8:1) and communicated in part, by various dramatic behaviors (Ezk. 4:1 ff).

His Prophecies (Ezk. 4-14)

In a series of symbolic performances, Ezekiel began to dramatize the Lord's judgments on Judah and the reasons for judgment. For instance, Ezekiel received divine instruction to draw a picture of Jerusalem on a tile and lay siege against it to represent Jehovah's judgment on Israel (Ezk. 4:1-3). Next he was to dramatize the length of time for judgment, lying on his left side for parts of 390 days for judgment on Israel. Then, for Judah he was to lie on his right side for forty days, indicating a forty year judgment (Ezk. 4:4-8).⁶ His next parabolic enactment focused on the strict and defiled diet he was to consume for the duration of the judgment, indicating the accompanying famine (Ezk. 4:9-17). Using a barber's knife, he again enacted the destiny of the

²Several biblical leaders such as the Levites (Num. 4:43) enrolled in or responded to the Lord's call for service at thirty. Joseph reigned as co-vizier in Egypt, David became king, John started his ministry as forerunner, and the Lord Jesus Christ inaugurated His public ministry following baptism, all at the age of thirty.

³Apparently the LORD God had a "human" shape before the incarnation, although God was manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16) to accomplish His redemptive work for Adam's race (Heb. 10:10-11).

⁴The OT saints experienced temporary indwelling as they ministered with the word of God (Jn. 14:17; Ezk. 2:2 and 3:24; II Sam. 23:2; I Pet. 1:11 *et al.*).

⁵The psalmist (i.e., Ezekiel [?]) asked for dumbness if he did not remember Jerusalem, saying, "*If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy*" (Ps. 137:6).

⁶The total of 430 years, starting with Jehoiachin (597 BC), would extend to 167 BC, the time of the Jewish Maccabean rebellion.

Jews in Jerusalem by shaving his head and beard and placing the hair in balances to weigh. Some Jews would be slain in Jerusalem, some killed in battle, some sent to exile, and a few protected as the remnant (Ezk. 5:1-17).

The Lord enabled Ezekiel to preach about the cause for judgment—the wicked practice of idolatry. He set his face toward the mountains upon which the idolatry was practiced and condemned the practitioners. Only a remnant would escape. Graphically, the prophet was to stamp his foot and clap his hands, emphasizing the Lord’s determined purpose in judging Judah for wickedness (Ezk. 6:1-14). Jehovah would allow a remnant of escapees to recognize and testify to the Lord’s veracity—“*they shall know that I am the LORD*”⁷ (v. 10). Next, the prophet emphasized the severity of the judgment with key expressions such as “*end,*” “*coming,*” “*sword,*” “*pestilence,*” “*famine,*” and “*sackcloth*” (Ezk. 7:1-27). In his house Ezekiel received a vision⁸ depicting the wickedness of the Temple practices. He looked through a hole in the wall and saw abominations, including “*the image of jealousy,*” women worshipping Tammuz, and twenty-five men (high priest and 24 courses of Levites [?]) worshipping the sun (Ezk. 8:1-18). The vision also revealed that God would use six executioners for judgment on the unrighteous, and a man with an inkhorn to mark the righteous in Jerusalem. As the glory of the Lord departed from the Temple,⁹ the seven began their respective tasks of marking the righteous or smiting the unrighteous (Ezk. 9:1-11). The marking scribe with the inkhorn scattered coals for the fiery consumption of Jerusalem, Ezekiel recorded (Ezk. 10:1-7). Further, the prophet identified cherubim in association with the throne-chariot of Jehovah, and revealed that the Lord had departed from the Temple (Ezk. 10:8-22).¹⁰ Ezekiel’s vision continued as he next saw the Lord’s judgment on the twenty-five leaders of Jerusalem who gave evil counsel to the people (Ezk. 11:1-13). The Lord encouraged Ezekiel, who in turn would encourage the exiles, about a regenerated remnant in the future (Ezk. 11:14-25). Next, the prophet dramatized the tragedies in the forced Babylonian exile, by removing his “*stuff*”¹¹ and revealing the judgment on the last Judean king Zedekiah (Ezk. 12:1-28). The Lord prompted Ezekiel to prophesy against the false prophets who promoted false deities or who falsified Jehovah’s message (Ezk. 13:1-16). He also preached against the false prophetesses and their practices of witchcraft (Ezk. 13:17-23).¹² The prophet’s preaching piqued a response from the hypocritical exiled leaders wanting to know about the future. Ezekiel predicted that even the presence of Noah, Daniel and Job in the city could not forestall the judgment (Ezk. 14:1-23).

⁷This expression occurs in Ex. 29:46 and 24x in *Ezekiel* in its 25x of OT occurrences.

⁸The Lord picked him up by the lock of hair (grown back by now) and transported him to see the Temple.

⁹The glory of the LORD departed from the cherubim in the Holiest of Holies (Ezk. 9:3) to the threshold (Ezk. 10:4), to the outer court (Ezk. 10:18-19), and finally to the Mount of Olives (Ezk. 11:23; cf. also 43:2-5).

¹⁰This is a second example of “*Ichabod*” (literally “no glory”) in the Scriptures (cf. I Sam. 4:21).

¹¹The noun כְּלִי occurs 5x in this chapter.

¹²Their occultic divination involved pieces of clothing to cast their spells.

His Parables (Ezk. 15-24:14)

In a series of parabolic messages, Jehovah began to reveal His chastening love and concern for the wayward people. He began by giving the parable of the unprofitable vine to Ezekiel to preach. Judah was a wild and fruitless vine, chosen but un-useful in the vineyard (Ezk. 15:1-8). The next parabolic message likened the nation to an adulterous wife, provided for in youth, unfaithful in practice, condemned in judgment, and finally restored in the future (Ezk. 16:1-63). He then gave Ezekiel a parabolic riddle featuring two eagles, the first Nebuchadnezzar and the second the king of Egypt. Through their activity the Lord would bring down the high tree (Jehoiachin) and will plant the tender twig (Messiah) in Ezk. 17:1-24. Through the use of the proverb of sour grapes, Ezekiel repudiated the notion that the children were suffering for the sins of their fathers, and instead preached the necessity of individual responsibility (Ezk. 18:1-32). The Lord instructed the prophet to use the literary device of lamentation for the plight of the princes of Israel. He lamented the first lion¹³ (Jehoahaz) and the second (Jehoiachin), and predicted that they would be caught. The nation was likened to a vine plucked up by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezk. 19:1-14). When the exiled leaders came again to Ezekiel “*to inquire of the LORD*” (לְדַרְשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה), he reviewed their fathers’ sin in Egypt (Ezk. 20:1-9), in the wilderness (Ezk. 20:10-26), in Canaan (Ezk. 20:27-29), and now in the present (Ezk. 20:30-34), and then promised them a forest fire (Ezk. 20:45-49). Next, Jehovah revealed that He would use the sword of the Babylonians to destroy the Judeans, as Nebuchadnezzar would turn toward Jerusalem and away from Ammon (Ezk. 21:1-32). After reviewing Israel’s sins, the Lord likened the Jews to metal about ready to be refined in a smelting furnace (Ezk. 22:1-31). The next parabolic message used the allegory of two sisters, Aholah¹⁴ (Israel) and Aholibah¹⁵ (Judah), and their respective rebellion and punishment (Ezk. 23:1-49). Finally, Ezekiel acted out through the use of a boiling pot the Lord’s intensified judgment on Jerusalem as Nebuchadnezzar began his siege in 588 BC (Ezk. 24:1-14).

His Wife’s Death (Ezk. 24:15-27)

Then, through a very difficult sign, the death of his wife,¹⁶ Ezekiel was not to mourn but suffer silently, and this prompted the exiles to be puzzled. They were to follow his example, he answered, as Jehovah destroyed the Temple (Ezk. 24:15-27).¹⁷

¹³These men are dissimilar in nature and character to the Lion of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

¹⁴Literally, “His tent.”

¹⁵Literally, “My tent in her.” This refers to the Lord’s dwelling place in Judah (i.e., in Jerusalem).

¹⁶Quite often the prophets suffered personal hardships in their marriages, or lack thereof. Joseph married a heathen woman. Jeremiah could not marry. Daniel lived in celibacy as a captive his whole adult life. Hosea married a woman who turned out to be a harlot.

¹⁷In the day that the Temple fell, an escapee would inform Ezekiel, and God would remove his muteness (vv. 25-27).

II. His Prophecies Concerning Judgment on Foreign Nations (Ezk. 25-32)

Since Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations (Ezk. 5:5), the Lord promised to vindicate His people by judging their vicious and perennial enemies.

Judgment on Ammon (Ezk. 25:1-7)

The Ammonites¹⁸ rejoiced in and exploited Judah's loss to the Babylonians. Rabbah was their chief city which would be devastated¹⁹ because the Ammonites clapped their hands and stamped their feet celebrating Judah's loss (cf. Prov. 17:5).

Judgment on Moab (Ezk. 25:8-11)

The brother nation to Ammon (cf. Gen. 19:33-38), Moab likened Judah to all other nations suggesting that there was nothing special about Judah or Judah's God. This spiritual disrespect prompted divine judgment on Moab in fulfillment of the Lord's curse on any who curse Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3). Both Ammon and Moab fell to Nebuchadnezzar following Judah's fall in 586 BC.

Judgment on Edom (Ezk. 25:12-14)

Edom took vengeance on the Jews by helping to sack Jerusalem and set up road blocks obstructing the flight of the Jews (Obad. 1:10-14). The Lord God would reciprocate by taking vengeance on Edom's key cities, destroying from Teman to Dedan.²⁰

Judgment on Philistia (Ezk. 25:15-17)

Moving clockwise to the next heathen nation,²¹ the Lord condemned the perpetual enemy of Israel, the Philistines. They descended from Ham through Mizraim (Gen. 10:6-14) and caused problems for the Jews from at least the time of Samson (Jdg. 10-16). These rebels "*shall know that I am the LORD,*"²² the ultimate Judge said. In the end, re-united Israel will possess Philistia (Isa. 11:14).

¹⁸The progenitor of the Ammonites was Ammon, the son of the incestuous union between Lot and his second daughter (Gen. 19:33-38).

¹⁹Cf. Ezk. 21:20.

²⁰Cf. "*To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste*" (Dt. 32:35).

²¹Their deities included Dagon and were snares to the Jews.

²²This expression occurs 51x in Ezekiel out of a total of 57x in the entire OT.

Judgment on Tyre (Ezk. 26:1-28:19)

Ezekiel predicted the overthrow of Tyre²³ starting with the Babylonians (585-572 BC). The length of material dedicated to Tyre demonstrated the significance of this ancient city. The prophet organized his indictment around a sermon against the city (Ezk. 26:1-21), a funeral lament for her fall (Ezk. 27:1-36), a sermon against the prince of Tyre (Ezk. 28:1-10), and a lament for the king of Tyre (Ezk. 28:11-19). The coastal city, along with Israel's other heathen neighbors, rejoiced in Judah's fall, signified with their collective "Aha" (אָהָה). The Lord likened Tyre to a majestic ship which would eventually experience shipwreck. The prince of Tyre (Ittobaal II) was extremely proud, "wiser" than his contemporary Daniel, but in the end would "die the deaths of the uncircumcised."²⁴ He apparently foreshadowed Satan,²⁵ originally beautiful and musical, who was the personage in the Garden who deceived Adam and Eve through the instrumentality of the serpent. Satan fell because of pride (I Tim. 3:6) and his wisdom became corrupt.

Judgment on Zidon (Ezk. 28:20-26)

Zidon, Tyre's lesser coastal neighbor, will receive pestilence and the sword as Jehovah judges her. Through this judgment the Lord God would receive glorification, Ezekiel prophesied. Then, during the Millennium Israel will be restored and have peace with her neighbors.

Judgment on Egypt (Ezk. 29:1-32:32)

Ezekiel preached six judgmental messages against the venerable enemy of the Jews, Egypt. The progenitor Mizraim²⁶ located his descendants in the fertile soil of the Nile, and historically Egypt became an attraction and plague to the descendants of Abraham. Through Joseph's involvement, the sons of Jacob grew to a great nation and finally escaped Egypt. Later, several Judean kings sought help from Egypt against Babylon. After the Battle of Carchemish wherein Babylon defeated Egypt (605 BC),²⁷ the latter attempted several times to entrap the Jews. Daniel predicted that the Ptolemies of Egypt would engage the Seleucids of Syria in warfare, causing the inhabitants of Palestine many vicissitudes of life (Dan. 11:5-20). Ezekiel's

²³The Hebrew proper noun צָר means "rock" and occurs 42x in the OT for the city.

²⁴The Hebrew expression מוֹתֵי עֲרֻלִים with the plural "deaths" connotes intensity.

²⁵In a parallel passage, Isaiah revealed that the adversary's name was Lucifer (הֵיִלֵל) who attempted to exalt himself above God (Isa. 14:12 ff.).

²⁶The descendant of Ham was the man Mizraim (Gen. 10:6), whose name ends with a dual suffix and means "two straits." In the providence of God, he settled in the territory around the Nile, the land of "two straits," presumably referring to the two ends of the Nile!

²⁷King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho II (II Chr. 32:20), and the latter's grandson was Hophra from whom Zedekiah sought aid (Jer. 37:5-7).

first sermon against Egypt occurred in 588 BC and dealt with the certainty of divine judgment on the dragon of the Nile (Ezk. 29:1-16). Ezekiel inserted his sixth chronological message next (Ezk. 29:17-30:19) for emphasis on Egypt's final destruction (571 BC). His second chronological message dealt with the initial defeat of Pharaoh Hophra (Ezk. 30:20-26). Next, Ezekiel prophesied that proud Egypt would fall like proud Assyria fell in 612 BC (Ezk. 31:1-18).²⁸ The fourth prediction of the prophet was his funeral lamentation for the land of Mizraim (Ezk. 32:1-16). His last chronological sermon predicted the final destiny of the Egyptians in their abode of the grave/hell (לִשְׂפֵיט). Awaiting the arrival of the slain Egyptians were other fallen nations including the Assyrians, Elamites, those of Meshach, Tubal, Edom, and Zidon. Pharaoh "shall be comforted" (נִנְחָם, a perverted comfort [!]) in seeing the other nations with him in hell!²⁹

III. His Prophecies Concerning the Restoration of Israel (Ezk. 33-48)

The Rebirth of the Nation (33-39)

The Watchman Ezekiel (Ezk. 33:1-33)

Ezekiel had been called by the Lord to be a faithful watchman (Ezk. 3:17 ff.). Through the years he had been that faithful watchman without blood on his hands, and now that Jerusalem had been smitten, an escapee reported this singular event and his dumbness supernaturally left him. He affirmed that the wicked sins of the Jews brought on this tragic destruction (Ezk. 33:1-33).

The Shepherds of Israel (Ezk. 34:1-31)

Next, he juxtapositioned the false shepherds of Israel to the true Shepherd Who restore them people to the Promised Land during the Millennium (Ezk. 34:1-10). The true Shepherd that God will set up will be the greater David Who will be over the lesser David during the Millennium (Ezk. 34:11-31).

The Preparation of the Land (Ezk. 35-36)

To ensure the Jehovah would give the land to the Jews, He must deal with all the surrounding nations poised to subjugate the Jews once again. The representative nation Edom (Esau) received Ezekiel's strong denunciation as any future threat. Although the descendants of Jacob's brother hated the Jews (Mal. 1:2-3), the Lord promised that He would vindicate His

²⁸Cf. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

²⁹The sense of this revelatory truth is that there are parallels in the physical realm and spiritual realm of the deceased. Just as burial sites group families and nations together, so likewise will be the proximity of nationals with their leaders in *Sheol*. After all, Abraham "was gathered unto his people" (Gen. 25:17; cf. 35:29; and 49:29) in "Abraham's bosom" (Lk. 16:22), and by implication NT saints may be assembled with their respective church members in heaven (cf. Eph. 3:21).

people by destroying Edom (Ezk. 35:1-15). In an encouraging message to the mountains of Israel, Ezekiel promised blessings for the nation, including the spiritual blessing of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31 ff.). The promised New Covenant provisions for the united twelve tribes will include spiritual cleansing, a new spirit, a new heart, the indwelling Spirit (cf. Jn. 14:17), forgiveness and forgetting of sins, possession of the land, and great fecundity of the land (Ezk. 36:1-38).³⁰

The Restoration of the Land (Ezk. 37-39)

Using the imagery of the valley of dry bones, Ezekiel predicted the spiritual revival and unification of the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. He acted out this prediction with the object lesson of uniting two sticks in his hand, symbolizing the reunion of Judah (SK) and Ephraim (NK). Finally, the Lord will have the two nations united and in the Promised Land under His rule and blessing (Ezk. 37:1-28). The prophet predicted the Gog and Magog uprising which will begin while Israel is living under the false peace of the Antichrist (Rev. 6:1-2) in the first half of the Tribulation. It will conclude with the battle of Armageddon at the conclusion of the Tribulation (Ezk. 38-39).³¹

The Blessings of the Millennium (Ezk. 40-48)

This section in Ezekiel's prophecy gives a comprehensive and coherent understanding to the Millennial reign of Christ. The Temple does not refer to Solomon's, nor to the Second Temple, nor to the "church,"³² but to the ultimate Temple in the Promised Land from which the Lord Jesus Christ will rule and reign for a thousand years on earth.

The Millennial Temple (Ezk. 40-43)

In the year 572 Ezekiel gave this message of hope from his divine vision. He began to describe the outer and inner courts of this New Temple. The details of the Millennial Temple are different from Solomon's, and once constructed, the glory of the Lord will fill this House (cf. I Ki. 8:10-11). The altar of burnt offering will be re-enacted, commemorating the Lord's once for all sacrifice on the cross (Ezk. 40-43).

³⁰Christ ratified the New Covenant with His shed blood (cf. Mt. 26:26-28), making the spiritual blessings available now to Jew and Gentile who meet the conditions of faith and repentance (cf. Rom. 3:23-25). At the outset of the Millennium the New Covenant provisions will be fulfilled on the new and united nation of Israel.

³¹Satan's final uprising against the Lord's people will occur after the Millennium when he is released from prison and ultimately defeated by Christ (Rev. 20:7-9).

³²The 115x ἐκκλησία occurs in the NT, it refers to an assembly of baptized believers in its theological usage (however, *vide* Acts 19:32, 39, 41).

The Millennial Worship (Ezk. 44-46)

His prophetic vision included details about the ministers, the support of the ministers, the offerings, special offerings, provisions for the prince, and places of offering preparation.

The Millennial Holy Land (47-48)

He saw a river coming from the Temple giving life to the land. As well, he recorded the boundaries of the land and revealed the division of the land among the twelve tribes. He concluded his visionary prophecy with the name of the city, appropriately *Jehovah Shammah*—“*the LORD is there.*”

FINIS

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