



Future Blessings for Israel → Ezekiel 33-48³

This last major division of the book focuses on the restoration of Israel's blessing.

- Israel would be judged for her sin (Chapters 1-24),
- The surrounding nations would also be judged (Chapters 25-32).

But Israel will not remain under judgment forever.

God had set her apart as His special people, and He will fulfill His promises to her.

- Chapters 33-39 comprise words of restoration and hope
- Chapters 40-48 present details of the restored community.

Outline of Ezekiel²

Chapter	
1-3	The Call of the Prophet
4-24	God's Judgment on Jerusalem (Given before the siege of Jerusalem)
25-32	God's Judgment on the Nations (Given during the siege)
33-48	The Restoration of the Jews (Given after the siege)
33-36	They return to their land
37	They experience new life and unity
38-39	They are protected from Gog and Magog
40-48	The Millennial Kingdom

Ezekiel 33-48 → Figurative or Literal ???⁴

Some interpret Ezekiel 33-48 symbolically.

They take the descriptions 'spiritually' and apply them to the church today rather than literally to Israel in the future.

We've been interpreting Ezekiel's prophetic words literally up to this point.

What in the text would indicate that he is now switching to figures and symbols?

Taking these prophecies literally accomplishes the purpose for which God gave them,

the encouragement of the people of Israel."

A WARNING TO THE EXILES 33:1-20

5

This message is undated.

It may have come to Ezekiel about the same time as those in *chapter 32*, in the last month of 585 B.C.

If so, Ezekiel received it about two months after God gave him the six messages recorded in *33:21-39:29 (cf. 33:21)*.

When the exiles learned that Jerusalem had fallen, Ezekiel's messages changed.

Before then he called the people to repent (*chs. 4-24*) and proclaimed several messages of judgment on the nations that opposed Israel (*chs. 25-32*).

After that event his messages were more encouragements that God would restore Israel to her land (*chs. 33-48*).

The message in *33:23-33* is a strong call to the Israelites to repent and to recommit to obeying the Mosaic Law.

Heed the watchman Ezekiel 33:1-9

7

This part of Ezekiel's message of warning to the exiles is similar to *3:16-21*.

Yahweh recommissioned Ezekiel to his prophetic task (*ch 2-3*).

Ezekiel's original ministry of judgment was completed.

God appointed him as a 'watchman' for a second time.

His message still stressed individual accountability and responsibility, but the focus was now on the Lord's restoration of Israel.

Ezekiel 33

6

THE WATCHMAN CHAPTER

Ezekiel was forbidden to speak to his people any more about their future until he got the message that Jerusalem had indeed fallen.

That imposed silence lasted for seven years!

During that time, Ezekiel spoke prophecies of judgments on the surrounding nations, as we have seen in chapters 25-32.

Ezekiel 33:1-2

8

*1] Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2] Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:*

God reverts to the commission that he gave to Ezekiel at the beginning of his ministry.

He likens him to the watchman of a city.

The Lord told Ezekiel to speak to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

He was to tell them that if the Lord brought war on a land and the people of that land appointed a watchman for them, they would be responsible if they did not heed his warning.

Ezekiel 33:3

9

3] If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

Watchmen stood on the towers of walls in ancient cities and scanned the horizon for approaching enemies.

If they saw one coming, they would blow their trumpet, usually a shophar (ram's horn), to warn the people who were farming the lands to take refuge in the city.

- OT References:

2Sa 18; 2Kgs 9; Jer 4:5-6; Hos 8:1; Amo 3:6; Hab 2:1.

- “Sounding the trumpet” was an Old Testament phrase.

Paul uses the same idiom in the context of spiritual gifts and witnessing which we should be more concerned with (*1 Cor 14:8*).

Ezekiel 33:4-6

10

*4] Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, **his blood shall be upon his own head.***

*5] He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; **his blood shall be upon him.** But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.*

*6] But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but **his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.***

Ezekiel had been appointed as a watchman by God and had warned them; the false prophets had not.

The citizen would be responsible for his own death if he failed to heed the warning of the watchman.

If the citizen responded to the warning, he could seek safety and save his life.

If the watchman failed to warn the people, he was responsible for their deaths.

The figure of blood being on one's head comes from sacrificial practice where the offerer places his hands on the head of the victim symbolizing the transfer of guilt from the offerer to his substitute.

Ezekiel 33:7

11

7] So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

Ezekiel receives God's confirmation of his appointment as the watchman of the people (*3:17-21; Is 21:6-9, 56:10; Je 6:17; Hab 2:1*)

- If Ezekiel failed to warn the people that they would die for their sins, God would hold him responsible for their deaths (*Ge 4:9; 9:5*).
- If Ezekiel warned the sinners of the consequences of their iniquity and they disregarded his warning, they would die, but God would hold them, not Ezekiel, responsible (*Acts 20:26*).

Ezekiel *had* warned them; the false prophets had not.

Chapters 4-24 contain the warnings that he delivered concerning the judgment that God intended to send on Judah and Jerusalem for the people's sins.

Ezekiel 33:8

12

8] When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Warning others of the consequences of judgment inherent in sin is never a popular assignment.

Believers have a duty to be 'watchmen' who warn those who are in the world and are without God of the destructive nature of sin and its final irrevocable result-death and hell (*33:1-33*).

Our responsibility is to warn and proclaim as persuasively as possible, but how the message is received is beyond our control.

If we do not issue the warning, we are held responsible.

We will have to answer to God for neglecting his duty.

Ezekiel 33:9-10

13

9] Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

10] Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?

Note the parallelism with *Leviticus 26:39-42*

And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Ezekiel 33:11

14

11] Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked**; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

“...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked...”: It is quite obvious from this verse that God does not want to judge. (18:23, 32).

Isaiah said that judgment was His *strange* work (*Isa 28:21*).

God wants to save them, and He is urging them to turn to Him and accept life.

He much preferred for them to turn from their sin and live (*2Pe 3:9*).

He appealed again to the people to do just that: to repent of their wicked ways and live (*18:30-31*).

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Regret – Remorse - Repentance

15

Regret is an activity of the mind;

Whenever we remember what we've done, we ask ourselves, 'Why did I do that?'

Remorse includes both the heart and the mind,

We feel disgust and pain, but we don't change our ways.

Repentance includes the mind, the heart, and the will.

We change our mind about our sins and agree with what God says about them;

We abhor ourselves because of what we have done; and

We deliberately turn from our sin and turn to the Lord for His mercy.

Ezekiel 33:12

16

12] Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.

He was saying that all the good deeds you might do will not compensate for your bad deeds.

To have adequate righteousness before God, you have to be blameless.

He that is guilty of one fault is guilty of all.

A “chain” of righteousness must have all the links effective...

Page 4 of 22

Ezekiel 33:13

17

13] When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

You have to stand in God's righteousness,
and that comes about through repentance,
and taking refuge in His mercy,
not by standing in your own righteousness.

Whatever you have done that is good before the Lord is not enough to offset your iniquities.

Right conduct of a usually righteous person does not exempt him from judgment if he sins.

The usually righteous person should not take God's promise of life for righteous living as a guarantee that he was exempt from punishment if he sinned.

Ezekiel 33:14-16

18

14] Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

15] If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

16] None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

God's warnings that the wicked would die because of their sinfulness also needs to be properly understood

They would die only if they failed to repent.

If the wicked turned from his sins and obeyed the Mosaic Law, he would not die (prematurely).

God would not hold his former sins against him.

He would receive his life as a reward for his righteous conduct.

Ezekiel 33:17

19

17] Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.

The children of Israel had another complaint.

They said that God was not fair in His judgment.

He judged everybody alike; yet there were some "good people" among the captives.

But it was really their conduct and their thinking that were not right.

Ezekiel 33:18

20

18] When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

This verse is not speaking about somebody losing salvation. God is saying that when one of His children gets into sin, He will judge him.

That is exactly what Paul said *1 Cor 11:31*.

And God says through John that there is a sin unto death (*1 Jn 5:16*).

He is speaking about a child of God.

What kind of death is he talking about?

He is talking about physical death.

Some Christians are judged for their sins by physical death.

Ezekiel 33:19

21

19] But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

God is righteous in what He does.

If a wicked man will turn to God, God will save him.

If a normally righteous person abandoned his righteous lifestyle and pursued sin, he would die for it.

But if a normally sinful person abandoned his sinful lifestyle and did what was right, he would live for it.

Ezekiel 33:20

22

20] Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

Everyone will have to stand before God for judgment some day.

If you are a child of God, He will judge you for the sins you have committed, but you will not lose your salvation but – you will lose the reward for the good you would have otherwise done.

2 Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

1 Cor. 3:11-15 [11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. [14] If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Ezekiel 33:20

23

20] Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

God assured the people that He would deal with each of them fairly, according to their own individual behavior.

God does not blame one person for another person's sins.

Whoever you are, you will have to stand before God for judgment some day.

If you are a lost person, if you have ignored or rejected Jesus, you have no claim on God whatsoever.

He has made that clear in the NT:

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 1 Peter 3:12

Ezekiel 33:20

24

20] Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

Many people refuse to take personal responsibility for their lives and chose rather to blame someone else for the way they live (e.g. a parent, employer, teacher, abuser, the devil, God).

We are not responsible for the actions of others,

We are responsible for how we conduct ourselves in our present condition even if our present situation is the result of the actions of others.

Restoration of the Promised Land to Israel

25

Ezekiel 33:21-39:29

The concept of the land is particularly significant to the six messages [33:21-39:29] delivered in that one night before the news of Jerusalem's fall reached the exiles in Babylonia [33:21-22].

Would the land be lost to Israel (33:21-33)?

It was the false 'shepherds' of Israel who had lost the land for Israel by leading the people astray from the truth.

The true 'shepherd,' the Messiah, would ultimately restore the land to Israel (*ch. 34*).

Those foreigners who had possessed the land of Israel and had oppressed her people would be judged and removed so that Israel might again possess her own land (35:1- 36:15).

Restoration of the Promised Land to Israel

26

Ezekiel 33:21-39:29

When God judged these foreign oppressors He would restore the people of Israel to the promised land (36:16- 37:14) and reunite the nation in fulfillment of God's covenants with her (37:15-28).

Never again would a foreign power have dominion over Israel in her land (*ch 38-39*).

Ezekiel's last prophecy about the judgment coming on Judah and Jerusalem ended with an announcement that a fugitive would escape Jerusalem's destruction and come and report the city's fall to the exiles (24:25-26).

At that time God would open Ezekiel's mouth and he would be dumb no longer (24:27).

The messenger now arrives and God opens the prophet's mouth.

Ezekiel 33:21

27

21] And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.

On January 8, 585 B.C., the fifth day of the tenth month of the twelfth year of the Jews' exile from Jerusalem, word reached the exiles from refugees who had come from Jerusalem.

They announced that Jerusalem had fallen to Nebuchadnezzar.

This news reached them about five months after the city fell in 586 B.C.505

On the very day that this news was brought, Ezekiel's wife died, and he was prohibited to mourn for her (*Ezek 24:16-24*).

Dating Issues

28

"12th year, 10th month, 5th day": The reading of the Masoretic Text implies that the fugitive reached the exile one and one-half years after the fall of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's year in Israel began in the autumn,

Ezekiel, located in Babylonia following the Babylonian reckoning, began the year in the spring.

Thus the 11th year of *Jeremiah 39:2* is the same as the 12th year of *Ezekiel 33:21*, and so the news reached Ezekiel in January 585 BC.

Jerusalem fell in the 11th year, 4th month, and 9th day of the reign of Zedekiah (*Jer 39:2* parallels *52:5-7* and *2 Kgs 25:2*),

Jerusalem was burned a month later (*Jer 52:12-14* parallels *2 Kgs 25:8-10*).

Dating Issues

29

Eight manuscripts, the LXX, Lucian, and the Syriac read *eleventh year*.

Dating this oracle in the 11th year, 10th month, 5th day, permits it to fit in before *Ezek 26:1*, which may have been delivered in the 11th or 12th month of the 11th year.

The news would have come about five-six months after the fall of Jerusalem; i.e., about January, 585 BC

Cf. Ezra's journey, 108 days (*Ezra 8:31; 7:8, 9*).

[**Sources:** E. Auerbach (VT, X (1960) 69, 70, and M. Noth (ZDPV, LXXIV (1958), 133-157) have amassed data to show that in the late monarchy the year began in the spring.]

Ezekiel 33:22

30

*22] Now the hand of the LORD was upon me **in the evening**, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me **in the morning**; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.*

The Lord had spoken to Ezekiel the evening before the refugees arrived and gave him permission to speak to the people when they heard the announcement of Jerusalem's fall breaking the silence that God had imposed on him (*3:26-27; 24:27*).

Ezekiel was now free to devote himself to the pastoral work hinted at earlier (*Ezek 16:60; 17:22; 20:33*) in addition to his role as a prophet.

One tradition identifies the messenger with Baruch (*Jer 45:5; Baruch 1:2*).

Restricted Speech

31

Ezekiel 24:25-27 was where the Lord prophesied that he would be silent to Judah until Jerusalem fell.

From that point on (*Chapters 25-33*), He had given him no prophecy for Jerusalem;

instead He had given him messages for the surrounding nations.

It was about seven and a half years that Ezekiel had been under this constraint, but now he was free to speak.

God no longer makes Ezekiel remain mute about Jerusalem

Ezekiel 33:23-24 They still don't get it...

32

The Jews still in Judea were not listening to the whole counsel of God but were picking and choosing what they would obey (*vv. 23-29*).

The Jews in exile were listening to Ezekiel, but they were not responding (*vv. 30-33*).

If Israel was to profit from the messages of hope that Ezekiel proceeded to give them, all the Jews needed to respond to those he had already delivered by repenting.

The first message in this series prepared them for those that followed.

The first step on the road to hope was a change in their attitude toward God's word.

Ezekiel 33:23-24

33

23] *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

24] *Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; **the land is given us for inheritance.***

The few Jews who still lived in the waste places of the Promised Land were claiming that since God had promised that land to Abraham they were right in staying in it (*11:15; Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8; John 8:33, 39*).

“...**the land is given us for inheritance**”: They are ignoring the fact that there was a great deal of difference between Abraham and themselves.

Jeremiah told the Jews in the land to submit to the Babylonians (*Jer 40-44*).

But, these people do not believe God nor submit to His messenger or word.

So confident of their safety before the fall of the city (*Ez11:3-12*), they are charged with 6 specific sins which disqualified them for any inheritance.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

The lack of spiritual sensitivity and the smug self-interest evident in the quotation contrasts with Abraham's submission to and dependence upon God.

Ezekiel 33:25-26

34

25] *Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?*

26] *Ye stand upon your sword, **ye work abomination**, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?*

Since the Jews did not keep the Mosaic Law (*Ex 20:4-5, 13-14; Lev 17:10-14; 19:26*), did they have a right to possess the land?

God had promised the land to Abraham's descendants, but He had also told them that they could only occupy their land if they obeyed the law that He had given them (*Deu 27:28; 29:25-29*).

6 specific sins (*Ezek 8:6, 10-12, 15; 22:6, 9*) disqualified them.

“...**Ye work abomination**”: The verb has the feminine suffix.

This either points to the prominence of women in those rites (*Jer 44:15*) or

To the degrading vices which involved the loss of true manhood (*2Kgs 23:7*)

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Ezekiel 33:27

35

27] *Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.*

The Lord assured the people that the Jews who remained in the land would die there

Those living in the ruins of Jerusalem by the sword

Those living in the countryside by wild beasts, and

Those living in caves by disease.

Ezek 5:12; 14:13-20.

Ezekiel 33:28-29

36

28] *For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.*

29] *Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.*

God promised to desolate the land completely and to humble the pride of His people.

Even the mountains would be desolate, and travelers would not even pass through the land.

Then they would know that He is God, when He desolated their land.

The land remained desolate *until now*.

Something new is now in the *Ruach*...

Page 9 of 22

Ezekiel 33:30

37

30] Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

God told Ezekiel that the exiles were speaking to one another about him privately and publicly.

They were saying, Let's go and hear what Yahweh has to say to us through Ezekiel.

They came to Ezekiel the prophet and listened to what he said, but their heart remained bent on pursuing their lustful desires and personal gain.

The people are shaken, and they want to listen to Ezekiel now, but they won't follow through.

Ezekiel 33:31

38

31] And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

On the surface they appeared to be turning to the Lord.

They wanted to hear what the Lord had to say but had no intention of obeying Him.

Hearers, but not doers (**James 1:22-25**).

[22] But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. [23] For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: [24] For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. [25] But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Ezekiel 33:32

39

32] And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

Unbelief is willful.

The real problem is that people do not want to give up their sin.

They were willing to come and listen to what Ezekiel had to say, but it had no effect upon them whatsoever.

They listened to Ezekiel as they listened to entertainers, singers or instrumentalists.

Entertainers expect no response to their performances beyond applause,

God's messengers expect people to change.

The exiles admired Ezekiel for his content and delivery, but they did not put into practice what he told them to do (**James 1:22-25**).

They did not apply it to their own lives and change.

Get the point ?? So What !!

40

When we are fairly comfortable it is easy to listen to preaching and to critique the preacher but do nothing about what he has said.

It is essential that we ask ourselves,

What does God want me to *do* in view of what I have just heard? and then do it!

Where is the 'So what?' message for me, personally, in the word spoken?

What do I need to change to align my life with God's message?

Ezekiel 33:33

41

33] And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The false prophets of Israel have now been shown to be liars because the destruction of Jerusalem as prophesied by Ezekiel has become a reality.

Ezekiel was the *only* man who said that Jerusalem would be destroyed.

All of the false prophets said that it would not be destroyed.

The word of confirmation has come.

Jerusalem is destroyed.

Ezekiel is declared a true prophet.

When what Ezekiel said actually came to pass about the peoples own judgment for personal responsibility (*vv. 12-20*), they would know that a faithful watchman, a prophet and spokesman for God, had been in their midst, not just an strange entertainer.

Ezekiel Chapter 34 False and true shepherds

42

The Lord had said that the Israelites would not occupy the Promised Land because they had disobeyed the Mosaic Covenant.

This disobedience was clear from the behavior of:

- the people still in the land (*33:25-26*) and
- the Jews in exile (*33:31-32*).

In this message God lays the burden of responsibility for the Israelites' failure at the feet of their leaders (*13:1-14:11; 22*).

Ezekiel Chapter 34: The Wicked Shepherds

43

The concept of a shepherd was not just that of a spiritual leader; it was used of kings and leaders in general (*Ps 78; Isa 44 & 63; Zech 11 & 13*).

In the Old Testament, the shepherds of the people are always its kings and other civil rulers (*1 Kgs 22:17; Ps 77:20; 78:71; Jer 23:1-6*).

Those whom Ezekiel had in his thoughts were the tyrannous rulers of the house of David, like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah and their lieutenants.

You will even find the antichrist spoken of as the wicked shepherd, and see a physical description of him (*Zech 11:17*).

Ezekiel 34:1-2

44

*1] And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2] Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?*

The Lord gave Ezekiel a message for the shepherds (leaders, rulers) of Israel.

Ancient Near Easterners often referred to kings and leaders as "shepherds" (eg. *Nu 27:17; 2Sa 5:2; 1Kgs 22:17; Is 44:28; Je 2:8; 10:21; 23:1-6; 25:34-38; Mic. 5:4-5; Zec 11:4-17*)

Ezekiel 34:1-2

45

1] *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*
2] *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds **feed the flocks**?*

“...**feed the flocks**”: They had not given the people the Word of God.

This should still be the standard by which we judge a ministry. If a minister is not giving the Word of God, he is not ministering to the people.

“Little sermonettes delivered to Christianettes by preacherettes are not quite doing the job today.” J. Vernon McGee.

Ezekiel 34:1-2

46

1] *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*
2] *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?*

God pronounced judgment on them for three reasons.

First, they fed themselves rather than the people; they were selfish.

They were more interested in providing for themselves than for the people whom God had placed in their care (*John 10:11; 21:15-17*).

They exploited their followers.

A review of the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel's rulers reveals a consistent string of corrupt leaders, and Ezekiel pointed out earlier that Judah was worse than her sister Israel (ch. 23).

Ezekiel 34:3-4

47

3] *Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.*

4] *The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

Second, rather than feeding God's sheep they slaughtered them; they were oppressive.

They had not restored those that needed restoring nor sought those that had wandered away and needed finding.

They had dominated God's flock rather than providing loving, self-sacrificial leadership.

Ezekiel 34:3-4

48

3] *Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.*

4] *The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

The primary responsibility of a leader is to care for the needs of those he leads, even if this requires sacrificing his own desires.

These unfaithful shepherds ate the best parts of the sacrifices rather than offering them to God.

They used the wool of sheep to make clothing for themselves rather than offering these animals as sacrifices to God.

Ezekiel 34:5

49

*5] And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became **meat** to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.*

Third, the rulers allowed the people to scatter over the earth instead of keeping them safely together; they were negligent.

The Israelites scattered because they lacked leadership and became prey for the enemies of God's flock.

"...**meat**" should be translated "food."

Ezekiel 34:6

50

*6] **My sheep** wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, **my flock** was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.*

The people wandered everywhere, but there was no one to seek them out and go after them and bring them to the safety of the fold. (*Matt. 9:36*).

"...**my flock**": Unfed sheep will scatter elsewhere.

These were still God's sheep.

God never relinquished His right to those that were under the shepherds...

Ezekiel 34:7-8

51

7] Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

8] As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

The Lord repeated His accusation against Israel's leaders and then announced what He planned to do about the situation (*vv. 9-31*).

These false shepherds needed to listen to God's word to them because they had let the Israelites become prey for their enemies, and rather than seeking the lost they had fed themselves.

Ezekiel 34:9-10

52

9] Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

*10] Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will **deliver my flock** from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.*

The Lord swore to oppose these shepherds, to hold them accountable for His sheep, to stop them from leading them further, and to rescue His sheep from their influence (*Matt. 20:25-28*).

"...**deliver my flock**": Now we are going to a Messianic prophecy...

Ezekiel 34:11-12

53

11] For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12] As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

The Lord promised to search for His wandering sheep Himself, to care for them, and to deliver them from the places where they had scattered in the days of their national distress (*Jer 30:4-7; Lu 15:4-7*).

Is this a reference to the re-gathering of Israel in our day?

There are several references to God as Israel's Shepherd in the Old Testament (e.g. *v 6; Ge 49:24; Ps 23:1; 80:1; Is 40:11; Jer 31:10; John 10:1, 16*).

The Good, Great, Chief Shepherd:

the Messiah (*Ps 22, 23, 24*).

"I will" occurs 18 times in vv. 11-29.

Ezekiel 34:13

54

13] And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

If the scattering were literal, and it is a historical fact, then the regathering must be equally so.

Some of the language goes far beyond the return from Babylon that they experienced under Ezra and Nehemiah.

The debates should have ended on May 14, 1948.

God would lead them out from among the peoples where they had gone and bring them back to their own land (*v. 4-6*).

He would nourish them on the mountains, beside the streams, and in the best (inhabited) places of the land (*Ps. 23:1; John 4; 6:31-35*).

Ezekiel 34:14

55

14] I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

They would enjoy good pasture and would experience rest in good grazing ground, the richest pasture in the land.

Obviously this is for a future time.

The land of Israel does not lie in safety as in a sheep fold since then and not yet, but it is being re-gathered in preparation for it.

Ezekiel 34:15-16

56

15] I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

16] I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

God said that He Himself would feed His flock and lead the sheep to rest (*v.3*).

He would seek the lost, return the scattered, heal the broken, and strengthen the sick (*v. 4, 6; Isa. 61:1-2; Mic. 2:12; 4:6-8; Luke 4:16-21*).

He would also destroy the fat, strong shepherds who had failed Him by feeding these leaders judgment.

Ezekiel 34:15-16

57

15] *I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.*

16] *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

Ezekiel, like the Lord, had a pastor's heart (*Is 40:11; Jer 31:10; Ps 23:1; 30:1; 95:7*).

The Lord identifies himself as the Good Shepherd.

In the NT (*Lk 15:3-7; Jn 10:10-16; Heb 13:20; 1Ptr 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17*).

This, of course, is Messianic (*Jn 10:14-16*).

Read that whole of *John 10* speaking of the Good Shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:17

58

17] *And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between **cattle** and **cattle**, between the rams and the he goats.*

"...**cattle**": Commonly used in the Old Testament of sheep rather than of kine (*Gen 30:34-42; 31:8-12*).

In *Gen 30:32* the same Hebrew word is used that Ezekiel uses;

I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire.

The Lord announced too that He would distinguish among the members of His flock, judging them individually (*Mt 25:31-46*).

Matt 13 (Tares); *25* (Sheep & Goats).

Ezekiel 34:18-19

59

18] *Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?*

19] *And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.*

Here the Lord viewed the leaders as sheep among His sheep rather than as shepherds.

They were, after all, also His sheep.

Some of these leaders had not only eaten good pasture and drunk clear water but had made it impossible for the other sheep to eat good food and drink good water.

The ordinary sheep had to get by with trampled grass and muddy water.

Ezekiel 34:20

60

20] *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.*

God would judge between the fat and the lean sheep,

Between those who fed themselves and kept others from eating

And those who had to exist on poor food and drink.

Ezekiel 34:21-22

61

21] Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

22] Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

Because some of God's sheep suffered at the hands of their fellow sheep who pushed and shoved them around,

the Lord would deliver even the weak,

but He would distinguish the two types of His sheep.

He would deliver His people from poor leaders as well as predatory nations.

Ezekiel 34:23-24

62

*23] And I will set up **one shepherd over them**, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.*

24] And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

The Lord promised to set **one shepherd over His sheep**, His servant David, who would personally feed them (*Jn 10:9; 14:6; Acts 4:12*).

Yahweh would be their God, and His servant David would be prince (Heb. **Nasi'**) among them.

Lord Himself assuredly promises it (*37:22-26*).

Ezekiel 34:23-24

63

23] And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

*24] And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant **David a prince among them**; I the LORD have spoken it.*

"...**David a prince among them**": The earth will be the eternal home of Israel and it appears that David will rule here on this earth throughout eternity.

The term 'prince' is may have been used to contrast with the 'princes' (ie: kings) of the Davidic dynasty who are denounced in earlier oracles (*7:27; 12:10; 19:1; 21:25; 22:6, 25*).

David will be a vice-regent (prince) of the King, the Lord Jesus.

David is also referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel (*Jer 30:9; Hos 3:5*).

Ezekiel 34:23-24

64

*23] And I will set up **one shepherd over them**, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.*

*24] And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant **David a prince among them**; I the LORD have spoken it.*

In a sense Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Son of David, is in view here, but the eschatological orientation of the whole passage removes the setting from the period of His earthly ministry in the first century to that of His second advent when He will come to sit on the throne of David.

Ezekiel 34:23-24

65

23] *And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.*

24] *And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant **David a prince among them**; I the LORD have spoken it.*

Messianic references to Jesus Christ as the son of David:

Jer 23:5, 30:9; Hos 3:5; Is 55:3-5; 2Sa 20:1; 1Kg 12:16.

Christ as the Good Shepherd (*Jn 10:14-18*) and the “Son of David” completely fulfills the promises found in:

2Sa 7:13; Jer 23:5, 6; Mic 5:2-5; Is 9:6, 7; Dn 9:25, 26; Mat 1:1; 22:41-45; Luk 1:31-33; John 1:43; 4:25; Ac 2:29-33; 13:22-23, Jer 30:9; Hos 3:5; Is 55:3-5; 2Sa 20:1; 1Kg 12:16

Ezekiel 34:25

66

25] *And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.*

The Lord promised to make a covenant of peace with Israel (*16:60; 37:26-28; 38:11-13; 39:25-29; Isa. 54:10*).

This is probably a reference to the New Covenant that God promised to make with Israel in the future (*Jer. 31:31-34*).

The word *peace* [Heb. *shalom*] is used to describe the harmony that exists when covenant obligations are being fulfilled and the relationship is sound.

It is not a negative concept, implying absence of conflict or worry or noise, as we use it, but a thoroughly positive state in which all is functioning well.

The provisions of this covenant that Ezekiel mentioned here included removing threats to the Israelites' safety from the land so they could even live at peace in its formerly dangerous parts, the wilderness and woods (*John 10:27-29*).

Ezekiel 34:26-27

67

26] *And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.*

27] *And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.*

God would make His people and the places around His hill (Mount Zion, Jerusalem) a blessing to others (*Ge 12:3*).

God's seasonal blessings on Israel, both people and land, would be like the rain, and He would send His blessings down in showers (*Ac 3:19-20*).

Fruit trees would bear abundantly, and fruits and vegetables and flowers would proliferate in the land (*Hos 2:22; Joe 3:18; Amo 9:13-14; Zec 8:12*).

Even the plants would be secure.

When God broke the yoke that held His people in captivity and freed them from their oppressors they would know that He is Yahweh.

Ezekiel 34:28

68

28] *And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.*

The Israelites would live in complete security.

They would no longer be a prey to the nations or to the beasts of the earth that previously devoured them (*Is 11:6-9*).

They would live without fear of molestation.

Ezekiel 34:29

69

29] And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.

Verses 25-31 are obviously Millennial.

They correspond to *Isaiah 65* and *Revelation 21*.

The concept of the plant being raised was an idiom used of the Messiah in *Isaiah 11*.

Jeremiah 23:5 speaks of the Messiah as the root out of the dry ground.

God would provide for them a place where they could put down roots, a place that would become famous.

Famines and the insults of the other nations would cease forever.

Ezekiel 34:30

70

30] Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD.

The Lord would be their God and they would be His special people in the fullest sense that the nation had ever experienced (*Rom. 11:25-27*).

Everyone would know that He was with them and that they were His Chosen People.

This covenant anticipates events and promises never realized in the first return of Israel from captivity.

When the people came back to the land after 535 B.C., they were under the control of every world-dominating power including Medo-Persia, Greece, and finally Rome until 70 AD when the nation was destroyed by Rome.

Ezekiel 34:31

71

31] And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.

God clarifies so there is no uncertainty.

The sheep were His people, men, not real sheep.

He was describing His relationship to them as people using the figurative language of a shepherd and sheep.

Ezekiel 35 onward: Coming attractions

72

- *Ezekiel 35:1-36:15* describes how the foreign plundering nations would be removed and judged in preparation for Israel's return to her own land.
- The message in *36:16-37:14* provides a beautiful and descriptive account of God's restoration of Israel to her land.
- *Ezekiel 37:15-28* stresses the full reunion of the nation and the fulfillment of her covenants when this peace covenant is established.
- Finally, *Ezekiel 38-39* develops the concept of Israel's permanent and complete security in the Lord, for he would thwart the final attempt by a foreign power (Gog) to possess Israel's land and to plunder God's people.

Literally, Figuratively, or Both → Seriously

Some interpret the text literally but in doing so, deny the existence of many figures of speech.

For example, in Ezekiel 34 they might not recognize "shepherd" as a figure of speech but might conclude that God was speaking of the literal shepherds of literal sheep in Israel.

This is "wooden literalism," "letterism," or "literalistic" interpretation that seeks "a straightforward reading of the text.

Most interpreters of this type are premillennial in their understanding of the future.

Literally, Figuratively, or Both → Seriously

Another group interprets most portions of the text literally but believes the prophetic material is mainly symbolic and figurative, not to be interpreted in a normal, straightforward manner.

They depend on the New Testament to understand the meaning of the Old Testament rather than depending on the Old Testament to enlighten the New.

They tend to read New Testament revelation back into the Old Testament accepting it as the Old Testament fulfillment.

They understand some of the references to God blessing Israel in the future as being fulfilled in His blessing the church.

They do not look for an eschatological fulfillment of these promises in the Jews.

Literally, Figuratively, or Both → Seriously

Other interpreters also consider themselves literal but also try to recognize figures of speech where they occur in the text considering the understanding of the original readers, historical perspective, contextual clues, the progress of revelation, the analogy of faith, etc.

They seek to discover what the original readers understood when they read the text as a basis for understanding how we should understand it.

Many interpreters in this group use the terms "normal" or "serious" to describe their hermeneutics (principles of interpretation).

Most of these interpreters are also premillennial.

Literally, Figuratively, or Both → Seriously

This third group, for example, take the promises of God's regathering Israel to her land to not mean that God will eventually literally re-gather the Jews to the Promised Land.

Rather He will gather His people (ie. all the redeemed, the Church) to heaven, the 'land' that He has prepared for us.

They "spiritualize" the Old Testament prophecies while taking the rest of the Old Testament more or less literally.

Most interpreters of this type have no choice but to end up with an amillennial or postmillennial understanding of the future since the only alternative given the clear statements of Scripture eschatology is to 'Spiritualize' them, defrauding Israel of God's precise promises and claiming those promises for the Church to the exclusion of Israel.

Ezekiel 35: Judgment of Edom

77

Israel must be cleared of hostile neighbors before the blessings of the new age would begin (*Ezek 36:1-7*).

Ezekiel 35 is much more detailed than *Ezek 25:12-14* which was pronounced due to Edom's hostile behavior to Judah after 586 BC.

The desolation of Mount Seir and the restoration of the mountains of Israel are a striking contrast (*Eze 35:3-4, 7-9, 15; 36:1-6, 8*).

Edom was representative of all the enemies of Israel who wanted to take over her land. (*Ge 25:22-34; 27; 36:1; Nu 20:14-21; 24:15-19; 1Sa 14:47; 1Kgs 11:14-22; 2Kgs 8:21; 2Ch 20:1-23; 28:17; Ps 137:7; Is 1:11-16; La 4:21-22; Da 11:41; Amo 2:1; Oba 10-14; Mal 1:2-5*).

Edom was the nation that had longest and most consistently resisted Israel's occupation of the Promised Land.

Ezekiel 35:1-2

79

1] *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*
2] *Son of man, set thy face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it,*

“**Mount Seir**” = (*hairy*, covered with brushwood).

The highlands east of the Arabah, stretching from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akaba, were the home of Edom (*Gen 36:8, 9; Deut 1:2; 1 Chr 4:42*).

The Lord directs Ezekiel to prophesy about Mount Seir (Edom, *Ge 32:3; 36:8*), to “set your face against” it.

Why did God refer to Edom as “Mount Seir” when in the oracle against Edom in *25:12-14* He simply called it “Edom?”

Apparently He did so to highlight the contrasts between the mountains of Edom and the mountains of Israel, which He contrasted in chapter *35 and 36:1-15* (*cf. 36:1*).

Two oracles against Edom in one book also double the certainty of fulfillment (*Gen. 41:32*).

Ezekiel 35: Judgment of Edom

78

If God was going to give Israel her land in the future, as He promised in *chapter 34*, He would have to deal with Edom and all other nations that opposed Israel's possession of it.

God will deal with opponents to Israel who occupy or desire to occupy her land by prophesying the destruction of Israel's greatest antagonist representing all such powers (*Matt. 25:31- 46*).

Edomite invasions of Israel following the Babylonian decimation of Judah also made Edom a major topic of interest in Ezekiel's day and a perfect symbol of all such enemies.

Edom was the prototype of all Israel's later foes.

The destruction of Edom would signal the beginning of God's judgment on the whole earth based on that nation's treatment of Israel (*Ge 12:3; Mat 25:32 >>*).

Ezekiel 35:3-4

80

3] *And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate.*

4] *I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.*

God announced that He was opposed to Mount Seir (*36:9*), would stretch out His hand in judgment against it (*6:14*), and would turn it into a desolate waste.

He would destroy its cities (*36:10*), and the Edomites would learn that He is God.

Petra and Teman were the main cities of Edom, and just as the prophecy indicated, they are now in ruins (*Jer 18, 49*).

Edom was subjugated by Babylon, then by the Medo-Persians, and in 126 BC the Hasmoneans compelled them to become Jews at which point they became known as Idumeans.

Herod was an Idumean.

Ezekiel 35:5

81

5] Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end:

He would do this because the Edomites had been enemies of the Israelites throughout their history (25:12; Gen. 12:3).

Edom represents the enemy of God in this world today.

Edom is the people descended from Esau, Jacob's brother.

Esau was Jacob's bitterest enemy, and the people of Edom probably hurt the people of Israel more than any other enemy they had.

Among other things, Edom had not helped their brethren Israelites in the time of their calamity, the time when God was punishing Israel, but had turned them over to their enemy, the Babylonians (2Ch 20:10; Ps 137:7; La 4:21-22).

Ezekiel 35:6-7

82

*6] Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto **blood**, and **blood** shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated **blood**, even **blood** shall pursue thee.*

7] Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth.

"Bloodshed" (Heb. *dam*, lit. blood) may be a play on Edom's name (Heb. *edom*, from *'adom*, "to be red").

"...**blood**": 4X in this verse.

The Lord swore He would turn the Edomites over to others who would shed their blood.

Since they had not tried to prevent bloodshed in Israel, they would experience bloodshed in Edom.

God would make Mount Seir a desolate waste, such a desolation that few people would visit it.

Ezekiel 35:8-9

83

8] And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword.

9] I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

The Edomites would fall slain in all parts of their land (6:3, 7).

What he was saying was that they would fall, and would not get buried.

For thousands of years, one of the worst things that could happen to you was to die but not be buried.

It was a form of ultimate shame, a form of disgrace.

They would never recover from this judgment, and their cities would remain uninhabited.

This was a harsher fate than even what God inflicted on Egypt (29:14) or Ammon (Jer. 49:6).

Then the Edomites would know that Yahweh is the only true God.

Ezekiel 35:10

84

*10] Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; **whereas the LORD was there**:*

"...**two nations**": Israel and Judah (Jer 33:24).

"...**whereas the Lord was there**": The Lord had withdrawn his visible presence from the Temple and the city (Ezek 10:18; 11:22, 23), but he had not renounced his right to the land (Ezek 36:5).

The Edomites wanted to take over the lands of both Israel and Judah even though they were the lands of Yahweh (36:12).

Ancient Near Easterners viewed the lands of nations as the domain of the gods of those nations and so, to take a nation's lands was to overcome its god.

In trying to take over Israel's land Edom tried to discredit God since "the Lord was there," it was His land (v12).

This involved failing to recognize Yahweh as the only true God (v13).

Ezekiel 35:11-12

85

11] *Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee.*

12] *And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.*

The sovereign Lord swore again (v6), He would deal with them with the same anger, envy, and hatred that they had demonstrated toward the Israelites (36:5-6).

People would know that He had done this when He judged them.

Ezekiel 35:13

86

13] *Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them.*

This would teach the nations of the world that the Lord had heard the hateful words that the Edomites had spoken against "the mountains of Israel" (v. 2, 3, 7, 15; 36:1, 4, 8).

By speaking against the Israelites the Edomites had spoken against Yahweh since He was their God, and the Lord had heard them (36:5; Mal. 1:1-5).

Ezekiel 35:14-15

87

14] *Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.*

15] *As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O Mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it: and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

The Lord would cause all the earth to rejoice when He made Edom a laughingstock in the world, just as it had rejoiced when Israel became desolate (36:5).

Mount Seir and all of Edom would become absolutely desolate (36:10).

The prediction has been literally fulfilled.

Edom was first subjugated by Babylon, then Medo-Persia, and then in 126 B.C. by John Hyrcanus the Hasmonean, who compelled them to become Jews.

There is no trace of the Edomites now, although their desolate cities can still be identified, as predicted by Obadiah (v. 18) and Jeremiah (49:13).

The Victorious Return

88

Jesus is the one who is "mighty to save."

This is linked to *Revelation 19*, where the Lord comes riding on a white horse and his vesture is dipped in blood (*Isa 34:2-5; 63:1-4*).

Notice that He comes from Edom.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. Isaiah 63:1-4

The whole scenario of what occurs at the time that the Lord returns is found in *Zech 12-14*.

A prerequisite condition to Jesus Christ returning is that Israel needs to petition Him to come back (*Hos 5:15*).