

## **Synthetic Bible Studies**

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible  
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and  
Bible Expositions

By

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### **LESSON THIRTY-TWO**

#### **EZEKIEL**

While Jeremiah was preaching and prophesying in Judah, Ezekiel was engaged in the same service among the Jews who had been carried into captivity by the Babylonians in the siege of Jehoiachin (1:1-3). Like Jeremiah, he seems to have been of the priestly line, although never officiating in that capacity as far as we know. Unlike Jeremiah, however, he was a married man, and one of his most solemn and affecting symbol-prophecies was in connection with his wife's death (24:14-18).

Ezekiel's name means "*GOD is strong*," or "*hard*," and there is a difference of opinion as to whether it represents the prophet's natural or official character, perhaps both. Chapter 3, verses 8, 9, seems to favor the latter view, although in temperament also Ezekiel is apparently influenced more by zeal for GOD than sympathy for the suffering people, as was true of Jeremiah.

He began to prophesy in the period of Jehoiachin, as it would seem, and continued for several years after the final and complete captivity of his people (40:1).

The place of his earliest labors, the neighborhood of the river Chebar (1:1), was in upper Mesopotamia.

#### **Introduction to the Book**

The following transcribed from *Our Hope*, a monthly magazine devoted to Bible study, especially the prophetic word, will serve as an introduction to minuter analysis of the book to follow:

"The book of Ezekiel, like every other book, has perfect order in it. It is divided into three parts. The first part, chapters 1-24; the second part, chapters 25-32; and the third part, chapters 33-48.

"The first twenty-four chapters contain prophecies which were delivered by him before the destruction of Jerusalem. The sins of Judah and Samaria are vividly described and the threatening judgment announced.

"The second part contains the announcement of the judgment of seven nations and cities. These are: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Zidon and Egypt. These prophecies were given after the destruction of Jerusalem. The judgments upon these nations are prophecies of the judgment of nations in the day of the Lord. Read chapters 27, 28, and compare them with Revelation 18. Yet while Israel's enemies are destroyed and their destruction is announced, Israel's hope shines bright upon the dark background of divine judgment.

"The third part is the richest of all. It concerns the future. GOD will regather His scattered people. Again and again He says, '**I will, I will.**' The vision of the dry bones in the thirty-seventh chapter is most instructive. Israel's grave will be opened, the dry bones will come together and live; as a great army they will return to the land. The last enemy is Gog and Magog, in finest harmony with all prophecy, the one coming from the North. The judgment of GOD and his associates is described in chapters 38 and 39. The book closes with the grand description of the millennial temple, when Jerusalem's name will be '**The LORD Is There!**' "

I would change the above "introduction" only so far as to make four divisions of the book instead of three, ending the third part at chapter 39, and making a separate section of the description of the millennial temple. The latter doubtless belongs organically to the chapters immediately preceding, but for convenience of study perhaps it had better stand out by itself.

### **Analysis of Part One, Chapters 1-24**

The amount of attention given to some of the preceding prophets may warrant, even if it does not make desirable, a briefer treatment of the present one, especially since the drift of the discourses and their principles of interpretation in all the prophets, are the same.

In the chapters now under consideration, therefore, we have:

1. The prophet's call and commission set before us in series of four visions, chapters 1-3. Compare in this case Isaiah 6.
2. Four symbols of coming judgment, chapters 4, 5. The strangeness of this mode of teaching has worn off somewhat as the result of studying Jeremiah.
3. Two discourses containing rebuke, chapters 6, 7.

4. A vision of idolatry in Judah and Jerusalem together with a prediction of their punishment, chapters 8-14. In this case it is especially significant that each class in the community is singled out for its own peculiar share of the coming judgments, by chapters as follows: the city itself, chapter 10; the princes, 11; the king, 12; the false prophets, 13; the followers generally of the false prophets, 14. In the study of these chapters observe particularly the discrimination between the innocent and the guilty in chapter 9. There is much "food for reflection" in this. It reveals GOD's justice in such a way as to bring terror to the heart of the impenitent, but comfort to the humble. Particular attention is called to the departure of "**The Glory**," the symbol of the Lord's presence from the Temple and then from the city, in chapters 10 and 11, to which reference will be made again in a subsequent lesson.

5. Two symbols of iniquity, chapters 15, 16.

6. The riddle of the eagles and the vine, chapter 17. Our previous study of Isaiah and Jeremiah has prepared us to understand and appreciate the application here to Egypt and Babylon on the one hand, and Judah on the other.

7. Six general discourses, chapters 18-22.

8. The siege of Jerusalem, chapter 24. During this period of three years, more or less, the prophet's lips seem to have been sealed with reference to his own people, not to be opened again until the results of the siege had been attained, and his people had, as a whole, been carried to Babylon. It is during this period that we find him prophesying with reference to the Gentile nations. Verses 15-27 refer to this silence.

### **Part Two, Chapters 25-32**

Perhaps enough has been said, in general terms, on the subject of these judgments on the Gentiles when we have met with it in the former prophets, to warrant our passing very cursorily over this division.

But your attention should be called very particularly to 28:11-19, which under a reference to the Prince of Tyre, seems to point ultimately to Satan or his fleshly embodiment or representative, the Antichrist. Compare Daniel 7:25; 11:36, 37; II Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:6.

This is the judgment of the authors of the Bible Commentary and many other expositors, and is strongly corroborated by the similar language found in Isaiah 14, which we dwelt on at the time, and where the name of the king of Babylon was substituted for that of the Prince of Tyre.

Those who would like a fuller consideration of the mysterious theme are directed to a lucid and interesting discussion in chapter 3 of Pember's *Earth's Earliest Ages*. He makes a distinction, very properly, doubtless, between the Prince of Tyre in the first ten verses, and the king of Tyre lamented in the following ones.

In the address to the prince there is nothing which could not be said to a human potentate; but the king is manifestly superhuman.

You will have noticed, and will notice again, more particularly in Daniel, similar blendings of the description of two persons or two events in one, where it is difficult to determine where the allusion to the first ends and that to the second begins, i. e., the precise point of departure. With regard to the first ten verses, therefore, there is no reason, says our author, why we should not apply them to the then reigning Prince of Tyre, whose name, as we learn from Josephus, was Ittiobalus, but the lamentation upon the king of Tyre does not so readily yield its meaning.

"There are assertions in the latter which could be true of no mortal, not even of Adam, of whom we are not told that precious stones were his covering, and who was not called the anointed cherub, and of whom we do not hear that he was upon the Holy Mountain of GOD, and walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Indeed, so far as we can see, there is but one being of whom some of these expressions could be used, viz., Satan, although the remainder may be explained of the Antichrist."

That is his opinion, indeed, that part of this prophecy in verses 11-19 is to be understood as spoken to the human, and part to the Satanic part of the Antichrist. Satan is a great counterfeiter. He has counterfeited the works of GOD, the wonders and signs He has wrought from the beginning, that, if possible, he might deceive the very elect. But his masterpiece is yet to come, when, at the end of this present age, he will rise to the alpine height of wickedness in counterfeiting the very person of the Son of Man.

There are more than mere intimations to show that the Antichrist, when he appears at the summit of his power, will be Satan himself, incarnated for the time in a human being.

### **Part Three, Chapters 33-39**

The discourses in this division as outlined previously were delivered subsequent to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and, as growing out of that fact, chiefly announce its restoration.

As in the case of all the other prophets, however, while this restoration may have a kind of foreshadowing fulfillment in the events of the return of Judah after the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, yet the text will not permit us to believe that it found its full and complete fulfillment then, but that it points forward to the millennial age.

A brief outline of this division might be given thus:

1. The prophet's lips are opened after their long silence concerning Judah and Jerusalem (33:21).
2. This event is followed by a discourse on the Shepherd and His flock (chap. 34), which suggests a similar one in Jeremiah already considered, and points us, beyond any manner of doubt, to the times of JESUS CHRIST, past and future.

Taking up this discourse more in detail, observe:

- (1) the charge against the false shepherds (vv. 1-6).

However this may have applied to the false teachers in the earlier history of Israel, every reader of the Gospels will observe its perfect fit to the scribes and Pharisees of a later period; nor is it any strain upon the fancy to say that it applies to false teachers of Israel now, and that it will continue so to apply in an increasing ratio of intensity down (or up) until the time of the crisis, which may be near at hand.

But following the charge against the false shepherds comes

- (2) the prediction of their punishment (vv. 7-10); and
- (3) the promise of blessing for the flock (vv. 11-22); and
- (4) the promise of the advent of the Good Shepherd (vv.23-31).

No one can mistake the application of these last-named verses to JESUS CHRIST, nor can he mistake their application so far as the people of Israel are concerned, to a time not yet appearing in their history, but assuredly to come.

3. The discourse on the Shepherd and His flock is followed by another in which the blessing coming upon them is set forth by contrast with the judgments to fall upon Edom (chap. 35). We have already seen who the Edomites are, and dwelt on some of the reasons why they should be singled out for special punishment on the ground of their treatment of the covenant people.

4. We have next a discourse on the moral restoration of the nation of Judah (chap. 36). Study especially verses 25-38.

5. We have next, a discourse on their corporate or national restoration (chap. 37). It is the consistent declaration of all the prophets as we have thus far seen, that the national restoration of Judah depends upon their moral or spiritual restoration which must come first. They will look on Him whom they pierced, and mourn because of Him. A fountain for sin and for uncleanness shall be opened in the house of David. A new heart will be given and a new spirit put within them.

Then the prediction of this chapter, which is the prediction of a good many other chapters in this and in other prophets, shall come to pass.

Note that the resurrection spoken of here is not a resurrection of individual Jews, physically dead and buried, but a resurrection corporately, politically, so to speak, of the whole nation as a nation.

Note also that in that day, as we saw in Hosea, Isaiah and elsewhere, there will be a reunion of the ten tribes and the two, Israel and Judah, as one nation with the one King, the Messiah, who is sometimes called by the very name of David (vv. 15-25).

### **The Place of Russia in Prophecy**

6. We next reach an account of the destruction of the last Gentile power that shall come against Israel prior to her entrance upon perfect millennial blessing (chaps. 38, 39).

This Gentile power is thought by many expositors to refer to Russia and her allies at the time

spoken of, that time being coincident with the end of the present age and the introduction of the age to come. Perhaps the events referred to here may take place after the destruction of the Antichrist and the nations of the Roman Empire, at whose head he will appear.

This is anticipating a little what we are to learn from Daniel, but it seems necessary in order to introduce the present theme.

The arguments leaned upon to interpret these chapters of Russia are chiefly philological, as follows:

- The "**chief prince**" is translated in the Revised Version "*the prince of Rosh*," and in the Latin Version, I believe, "*the prince of Russ*," the similarity of which to the first syllable of Russia is apparent.
- "**Meschech**," in the same way, is taken to mean Moscow, and
- "**Tubal**," Tobolsk, capital cities of Russia.
- "**Gomer**" stands for Crimea,
- "**Togarmah**" for Turkey;
- "**Gog**" is the name of the highest peak of the Caucasus, and, indeed, the first syllable of the original word "Gogases."

It is out of the question to suppose that the prophecy has been fulfilled in any event which has yet happened to Israel because:

- (1) of the reference to the "**last days**" or the "**latter years**" (38:8);
- (2) because of the military combination spoken of which the history of the world has not yet seen (vv. 4-7);
- (3) because of the conditions existing in Israel at the time, when the people will be dwelling in their own land quiet and secure (vv. 8-12).

The result of the conflict is the defeat and almost entire annihilation of the attacking force (38:18-23 and 39:9, 10, 13, 22, etc).

To say that there are no difficulties in the way of this interpretation or application would be very foolish; but there is so much to favor it not only in the text itself, but in the history and spirit of Russia as compared with the western nations of Europe, and in the trend of current affairs as to seriously commend it to every thoughtful student of prophecy.

#### **Part Four, Vision of the Temple, Chapters 40-48**

To quote Dr. Andrews, "While all the prophets speak of the ultimate return of the remnant, and of the glory and blessedness of the Messianic kingdom, Ezekiel alone describes in detail the new order to be established. He was bidden to show the people the pattern of a new temple and of its ritual, and also to speak of a new division of the land. But the point to be especially noted is, that as he saw the departure of the visible glory of GOD from the first temple (9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22), so he sees its return to this, the last temple, i. e., the temple of the millennium (43:2-7).

Sometimes objections are made to this literal application of Ezekiel's vision, on the ground of the size of the building spoken of, the references to sacrifices and feasts, as if incompatible with

millennial conditions and worship and access to GOD, and certain topographical features of the city and surroundings. But these difficulties will not seem so great if it be remembered that neither Judaism nor Christianity as such is being spoken of, but a new dispensation, dealing with restored Israel on this earth, and involving changes of immense magnitude and of various kinds."

~ end of Lesson 32 ~

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