

GOD PUTS EZEKIEL BACK ON THE WALL

God called him to be a spokesman in chapter 3; now He repeats His calling in chapter 33.

Ezekiel is a watchman on the wall. If he sees danger on the horizon it's his duty to sound the alarm. If he falls asleep, or gets distracted, and fails to blow his bugle the blood of the people will be on his hands. If he's faithful to issue a warning, but the people refuse to listen, then he has delivered his own soul. In other words, the watchman is responsible for sounding the alarm, not for how the people respond.

Guys, we too are watchmen on the walls. God has placed certain people within the walls of our lives – within the sphere of our responsibility. It's our job to speak the truth, and warn them of the dangers of rebelling against God. Those people may think we're *off the wall*, but God has us *on the wall* to be their watchman.

At first glance you'd think the job of a watchman was easy, but not so. Constant vigilance can be exhausting. It's so easy to get distracted.

For example, by fall of 1941, Japanese aggression was a threat all across the Pacific rim. But on December 4th, Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, said to America, "Whatever happens, the United States Navy is not going to be caught napping." Of course, three days later the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Staying vigilant is easier said than done. Remember Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall, and so can you.

That's why from time to time we need to get refocused. That's why God calls Ezekiel a second time. He wants to remind him of his strategic mission.

I've noticed when we're clapping, singing a song, worshipping the Lord it's so easy to get off beat – out of sync. The worship leaders have to stop and gets us all back on beat. It's also easy to get out of rhythm with the will of God. This is why God has to get us back on beat, and re-commission us.

Devotion Box - God's Work, Don't Sweat It

God says of the priests in 44:17-18, "whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat."

God wanted the priests ministering in a garment that breathed – nothing heavy that would cause them to perspire. God wanted us all to know that His work is *no sweat*. As Jesus put in Matthew 11:30, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." *God's work done God's way never lacks God's supply*. When ministry becomes a burden it's because we're doing it in our own efforts. *Don't sweat it* – trust God.

YOUR KINGDOM COME

Chapters 40-48 are glorious visions that take us even further into the future. Remember the elements of the New Covenant: regathering of the Jews, *regeneration* of their hearts, and the *reestablishment* of God's kingdom.

Chapters 36-37 describe the regathering of the nation. Chapters 38-39 forecast the event that stirs a regeneration in the people's hearts. Now chapters 40-48 discusses the reestablishment of the God's kingdom on the earth.

In His model prayer Jesus taught us to pray,

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The ultimate answer to that prayer won't occur until Jesus returns to earth and establishes God's kingdom.

Revelation 20 tells us Jesus will return, and reign for 1000 years. We call that future period *the Millennium*, or *Kingdom Age* – and that's the subject of the last portion of Ezekiel.

Chapters 40-43 describe a *new temple*.

Chapters 44-46, a *new worship*.

Chapters 47-48, *new boundaries*.

A FOUNTAIN FLOWING DEEP AND WIDE

Chapter 47 is a description of the Millennial topography of Jerusalem. In verse 1 Ezekiel sees a spring bubbling up from the threshold of the temple. He follows it southward – and the farther he goes the deeper the river becomes.

Deep and wide, deep and wide – it's a fountain flowing deep and wide.

The river flows from Jerusalem all the way to the Dead Sea, and brings healing to it's waters. Amazingly, *the Dead Sea* will become a fisherman's paradise. Trees grow on the banks of the river that have healing in their leaves. In the Millennium rather than take medicine, all you'll have to do is grab a salad bar.

JESUS AND VERY DRY BONES

In Ezekiel 36:24 God tells us, "I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you..." This is the New Covenant God promised Jeremiah, and Jesus paid for on the cross.

The New Covenant consisted of three promises. And it's vital you understand these promises for they constitute the remainder of your Bible...

- 1) God would *regather* the Jews to the land.
- 2) He would *regenerate* their hearts.
- 3) He would *reestablish* His kingdom.

When Rabbi Nicodemus came to Jesus by night – the original "*Nick at nite*" – these promises were on his mind. The Jews had been *regathered* from Babylon, and he was expecting the reestablishment of God's kingdom to Israel. But Jesus told him he'd forgotten the spiritual feature of the New Covenant. In John 3:3, He said, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

You need to be sprinkled and cleansed with the water of God's Spirit. He wants to put in you a new heart – one compliant to God, and compassionate to others.

This is why we know the New Covenant wasn't fulfilled historically. Yes, God *regathered* the Jews from Babylon – but they rejected Jesus, and remained in their sin. God postponed the reestablishment of His kingdom to Israel.

Instead, the Romans came in 70 AD, and once more scattered the Jews among the nations where they've remained til today. In the interim, God has given an opportunity to the gentiles to embrace Jesus and become part of the New Covenant. Today you and I can be born again!

But now in modern times God has reset the table. Israel

has been regathered to the land once more. And this time, through Great Tribulation events, the Jews will turn to Jesus – and God will finally establish His earthly kingdom in Israel.

In chapter 37 Ezekiel is taken to a valley full of decaying bones. It's a huge graveyard. The bones have been there a long time. Verse 2 says they're "very dry". Ezekiel prophesies over these bones, and to his amazement the skeletons began to rattle and reassemble bone to bone – then flesh and sinews covered the bones.

It was a miracle. With one command from God this graveyard of skeletons is transformed into actual corpses – but their bodies are still dead and lifeless.

On May 15, 1948 a miracle took place. In Tel Aviv, Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, declared to the world the reestablishment of the ancient nation of Israel. It was the fulfillment of the first portion of Ezekiel 37 – after nearly 2000 years the *very dry bones* were reassembled into a recognizable people and nation.

But life has yet to be breathed into those bones. Today, Israel is a secular state. The Israeli people have yet to receive the spiritual regeneration promised in the New Covenant. This requires a distinct and separate act.

In verse 10 Ezekiel speaks to the breath, or Spirit, to enter and animate the corpses, "I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."

God predicted the restoration of Israel would take place in two phases: First, a secular state would form. After which, spiritual life will be breathed into the people. On God's time table, we currently are between these two phases of the prophecy.

Devotion Box - Lessons From Ezekiel 33

Sin's Waste

Chapter 33:10 mentions *sin's waste*, "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' The expression "pine away" means "to waste away, or wither". And that's what sin does – it eats away at your self-respect, your virtue, your health, your sanity. It wears on a person and robs them of their best years. Sin diminishes a person's ability to enjoy life. Live in sin and you'll *pine away*.

God's Wish

God also shares His wish with Ezekiel in 33:11, Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' Notice, God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God isn't a sadist who sits in heaven and get His jollies by watching people squirm. God would much rather forgive and heal than judge. 2 Peter 3:9 says, the Lord is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." God brings judgment not because He wants to, but has to. Our sin forces His hand.

Keeping Current

Keep your relationship with God current. In 33:12-20 the Lord talks about the man who's lived a righteous life, but blows it and refuses to repent. That man will be judged. On the other hand, there's a wicked man who's rebelled his whole life, but he repents and God receives him.

What matters to God is not yesterday, but today! Don't describe your walk with God 10 years ago – where do you stand today? What's the state of your heart this moment? Repentance is an ongoing attitude, not a one time act.

I'll never forget the day my dad and I were playing golf. We were on the 9th Tee at Mystery Valley when we were joined by another golfer about my dad's age. Play was backed up so the two older men got into a conversation I'll never forget. At a point in the conversation the man asked my dad, "What do your sons do for a living?" My dad answered, "*They're both pastors.*" The man was surprised, "Wow, I bet you're proud of them?" My dad never hesitated. He said simply, "*So far.*" He sent me the subtle reminder yesterday is not what counts. It's how I live today.

THE COMEBACK KIDS

In Ezekiel 36-37 God makes amazing promises to Israel. He will gather scattered world Jewry from the gentile nations, replant them in their ancient homeland, and re-establish His kingdom in Israel.

Over the years so-called scholars have doubted the literalness of these promises. Roman Catholic theologians denied their literal fulfillment and applied them spiritually to the Catholic church. In 1589 when Francis Kett began to preach a literal rebirth of Israel the church burned him at the stake.

In recent times skeptics scoffed at the fulfillment of these promises. The 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica commented on the revival of the Hebrew language, "The possibility that we can ever again recover the correct pronunciation of ancient Hebrew is as remote as the possibility that a Jewish empire will ever again be established in the Middle East." Of course, today we are witnessing regathered Jews speaking a revived Hebrew language in their ancient homeland of Israel.

When Count Zinzendorf stood trial for his faith in Jesus, the infidel of Prussia, Frederick the Great, asked him, "Give me one infallible proof that the Bible is the Word of God?" Zinzendorf replied, "*The Jew.*"

No people group in the history of mankind has been exiled and scattered among foreign lands for 2000 years – survived countless persecutions, including the Inquisitions, Crusades, and Holocaust – yet managed to retain their identity, language, and religion – and be reunited again in their ancient land. Mark Twain once wrote, "The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dreamstuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts.... All things are mortal but the Jews; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

The secret is that Israel is the beneficiary of God's never-failing promises. It took 2500 years for Ezekiel's prophecies to be realized, but when God makes a promise he keeps it. No matter how preposterous it may seem – no matter how men may scoff – God's promises are always sure and certain.

The prophecy in chapter 36 is actually to the land of Is-

rael – its mountains, hills, rivers, valleys. Verse 5 tells us God is upset at the gentile nations who took the land God gave to His people, and claimed it for themselves. In verse 5 God calls it "My land". And He gave it to the Jews.

Today's 6 million Israeli citizens live in an area of just 8000 square miles – about the size of New Jersey – half the size of Switzerland. Whereas their 150 million Muslim neighbors occupy 5 million square miles – yet can't seem to find room for their Palestinian brothers. They want Israel to give up their land. It's ridiculous. The Muslims had no interest in the land the Jews now occupy, until the Jews returned and turned the desert into an oasis.

In verse 8 God says, "O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come." Prior to World War 1 the Turks ruled over the land of Israel. And Turkish kings placed a tax on a landowner's trees, making it in their best interests to chop down all their trees. The policy effectively denuded the land of its forests and foliage.

Since returning to the land the Jews have planted over 200 million trees. Their reforestation program now boasts of 150 acres of Israeli national forests.

Modern Israel has also become the bread basket of Europe. They export wheat, grapes, figs, oranges, bananas, cotton, peanuts, sugar beets. Today this tiny nation has grown a \$10 billion a year economy. Israel is an agricultural giant – the world's fourth leading citrus grower, and the third leading exporter of flowers.

Verse 35 quotes the nations of the world when they see the restoration of Israel, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden..."

In verse 10, we're also told God will "multiply men" on the mountains of Israel. In 1917 there were 25,000 Jews in Israel. Today the number is 6 million, and climbing. The leading source of immigrants are Russian Jews flocking to Israel.

God predicted a regathering of the people and a rejuvenation of the land. He sums up His promises to the mountains of Israel in verse 11, "I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings." In these last days God has glorified His name by rejuvenating His people.

Devotion Box - Are You Applauding or Applying ?

God gives to Ezekiel a revealing insight at the end of chapter 33:31, "So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them."

Remember Ezekiel performed skits to attract attention to the message. He was the theatrical prophet – and people enjoyed his antics. Ezekiel's ministry was good entertainment. People enjoyed his church, but enjoyment and discipleship are two different commodities. A person can *applaud and applaud* and never *apply*.

This can happen in a church. The music is fabulous. The jokes

are hilarious. There's drama and video and cappuccino. People come to be entertained.

That's the goal at a concert. And this is the illustration God gives Ezekiel. He says to the prophet, people come to hear you "as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument." You don't attend a concert to come away a better person. You go to enjoy and groove on the music. And that's why some folks come to church – for *entertainment*, not *transformation*.

Guys, it's a dangerous thing to simply be entertained by the Gospel. Our goal is not to be entertaining or boring – but to be compelling and persuasive. Our job is not to get people to *applaud*, but to *apply* – not to just *delight*, but to *disciple*.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - March 18, 2001 - The latest issue of Like Minds explains our building project and how you can get involved - Check out today's Announcement Sheet for our Calvary Connection Home Fellowships. - CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year.... Monday, March 26th 7:00PM — Annual Church Business Meeting... Tuesday, March 27th 7:30 PM— Ladies Night Out... Monday, April 2nd and 3rd— High School Youth Retreat...Wednesday, April 4th and 5th—Middle School Youth Retreat.
Next Bible Scan - March 25 - Daniel 1-6

"I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it..." - Ezekiel 37:14

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

THE BATTLE WITH GOG AND MAGOG

In chapter 38-39 Ezekiel takes the role of a war correspondent. He's sent to cover a battle, that according to verse 8, occurs in "the latter years". Between the regathering of the Jews (chapters 36-37), and the reestablishment of the kingdom (chapters 40-48) - a clash occurs on the mountains of Israel.

The invaders are named in 38:2, Magog, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. Ancient sources identify these names with the people north of the Caucasus mountains. The Caucasus are the natural boundary between Russia and the Middle East.

Rosh is probably the root word for Russia. Meshech is tied to Moscow. Any doubt that Russia is the leading perpetrator in this invasion is cleared up in verse 15, "Then you will come from your place out of the far north..." Take a globe and find Jerusalem, then follow the same longitudinal line northward, and it will almost dissect the city of Moscow. Russia is directly north of Israel.

In verse 4 God says to this northern coalition of nations, "I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army..." God will set a hook - an incentive that will overcome Russia's initial reluctance - turn her attitude around, and cause Russia to invade the land of His people. For years Russia has coveted Israel's fertile farmland, strategic location, and warm water ports - but the real hook may be the growing Muslim population of its southern provinces. Russia's Muslim ties make it extremely pro-Iranian, and pro-Iraqi. And I believe her alliance with the Muslim world will provoke her to attack.

Verse 5 lists the other nations who'll join the Russian invasion... Persia, or Iran; Ethiopia, which in 1984 became the first Marxist state on the African continent; Libya and General Daffy Qadaffi, an obvious anti-Semite; Gomer, a name tied to the Germanic people, who Hitler proved can be swayed by anti-semiticism; and Togarmah, or the Armenians, who live in northern Turkey. When Ezekiel wrote this chapter there was no connection between these diverse peoples. Today, they're all anti-Israeli, and pro-Islam.

According to verse 11 this northern coalition will attack at a time of apparent peace. They'll come on "unwalled villages". Remember, Ezekiel had never seen an unwalled vil-

lage. All ancient cities were protected by walls. Either he's describing a modern city, or a city at peace, or both.

God Himself will defend Israel. In verse 19 this invasion is thwarted by "a great earthquake". Verse 20 tells us the quake rocks the land of Israel, but it's shock waves are felt around the world. Verse 22 says the quake comes with *floods and hailstones* - as well as *fire and brimstone*.

Chapter 39:6 also mentions a judgment by fire, "I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands." The phrase "coastlands" is a Hebrew expression for "*distant lands*". Some Bible scholars fear that "*the coastlands*" refer to the United States. Our alliance with Israel could trigger Muslim retaliation against us.

Verse 9 mentions "bows and arrows", but those are King James interpretations. The Hebrew words mean "*launchers and piercing objects*". They could just as easily speak of SCUD missile launchers, and modern missile systems.

The earthquake God sends against this northern army wipes them out. It's interesting how the burials take place. Verse 14 says a special detachment is sent through the land to spot corpses. They don't touch the bodies. They flag them, then a burial team comes behind them, and disposes of the body. It could be that these bodies are contaminated with radioactive fallout. The earthquake that wipes out the invaders could be the result of a nuclear bomb.

And note the effect this deliverance has on Israel: 39:22, "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward." The defeat of God and Magog will help open the eyes of the nation Israel to their Messiah.

This is why I believe that more is involved here than just a nuclear explosion. If a nuclear bomb delivered Israel how would that convince them that God is fighting for them? A nuclear explosion may be a part of the conflagration, but I believe a direct act of God is what saves Israel.

And verse 29 tells us is a consequence of their faith - God pours out His Spirit on Israel. We know the one qualification for the power of the Spirit is repentance and faith in Jesus. I believe God's deliverance from this invading army will help convince Israel that Jesus is her Messiah.