


Note

Ezekiel – Part 1 & 2

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God created the world.	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	Adam & Eve	Gen 1~5
Before 3000 BC	Cain Abel Seth	Gen 4~5
Before 2500 BC	Noah	Gen 5~10
Before 2100 BC	Job Elihu	Job
About 2000 BC Era of Patriarchs	Abraham Isaac & Ishmael Jacob & Esau Joseph	Gen 11~50
About 1500 BC~ 1000 BC Era of prophets	Moses Aaron Joshua	Exo Lev Num Deu
	Joshua	Joshua
	Judges(Othniel Ehud Shamgar Deborah Gideon Tola Jair Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon Samson) Abimelech	Judges
	Ruth Boaz Naomi	Ruth
	Eli Samuel Saul David	1 Samuel
About 1000 BC Era of princes	Saul Jonathan David Absalom Solomon	1 Samuel 2 Samuel
	Solomon Jeroboam Rehoboam Ahab Elijah Elisha Jehu	1 kings
	Ahab Hezekiah Manasseh Josiah Elisha Jehu Elijah	2 kings
	Saul David Solomon	1 Chronicles
	Solomon Rehoboam Asa Jehoshaphat Jehoram Joash Hezekiah Josiah	2 Chronicles
About 500 BC Era of priests	Zerubbabel Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah	Ezra Nehemiah
	Esther Mordecai Haman Ahasuerus	Esther
	Isaiah Ahaz Hezekiah	Isaiah
	Jeremiah Baruch Zedekiah	Jeremiah
	Jeremiah	Lamentation
	Ezekiel	Ezekiel 

Summary

Ezekiel - Part 1 of 2.....3

Ezekiel touches on God’s judgement on Israel and His promise of eventual restoration. We learn about the incomprehensible glory of God; man’s sin and idolatry; and that He is a holy God who judges sin.

Nevertheless, He is a God of mercy and love, as demonstrated by His ceaseless pleading with His people to turn away from sin and return in obedience to Him. At the same time, God promises the people of Israel that He will purify them and give them a “new heart” that is sensitive to the Lord and His Word.

Ezekiel - Part 2 of 2.....19

We see how God gave Ezekiel the job of warning the people of Israel about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

When repeated verbal warnings did not work, God directed Ezekiel to act out six signs represented the siege of Jerusalem. These signs reveal that God is a storyteller who teaches truth through stories.

Beyond this, we learn that God judges sin; He not only judges His own people Whom He loves, but also those who take advantage of His people; and that God is present and in control in every crisis that we go through.

Transcript

Ezekiel – Part 1 of 2

Today, we come to what is possibly the most difficult Book in the Old Testament.

For many who have read this Book, they almost gave up in the first chapter. When they saw the kind of description that Ezekiel gave of what he saw, it's almost impossible to fully understand it.

And for many of us – like myself – when we cannot understand anything, we get very angry. We get very frustrated. Because we are used to reading textbooks. A textbook is graded according to our ability to understand. We also choose books that we can understand. And when we face a textbook with some things in it [that] we can't understand, we really feel like failures.

Now, the Bible is not a textbook. The Bible is a spiritual Book. There are many things in it that we, at our stage, in our spiritual life, are not even supposed to understand them. I mean, it's something that at a later stage of our Christian life, it'd be very useful for us. To know it too early may, actually, be a problem.

So, when we read a Book like Ezekiel, there are a lot of things we don't understand and we get jammed. And usually, we feel frustrated and give up. That's because we don't understand that this Book is very different. You can read it all your life and never fully understand.

There's always passages that even the greatest scholars would argue about. There are many in Ezekiel, that they would

argue about. I read all the commentaries and everybody comes up with a different explanation.

So, what do you say when you come to a passage like that? You just say, “Well, one fine day... Maybe God will reveal it to us. Maybe not even in this life, maybe in the next.”

Now, besides being very difficult to understand some parts, it seems very repetitive. Long and repetitive. Repeating, repeating... Especially as you read the prophecies. You’ve already read Isaiah. You’ve already read Jeremiah....Judgment, judgment... Warning, warning...

And we begin to get bored, “Oh, I’ve read this before.” But if you understand the audience to whom this was originally written, it was for a particular group of people - each time, a particular group.

Isaiah addressed people before the Assyrian army came and took over the Northern Kingdom. Isaiah was the prophet for his generation, warning them.

Then Jeremiah, during the actual siege in Jerusalem; he was begging them, “Please, please... Turn now, it’s not too late. You can turn now.” His audience were the people stuck in Jerusalem, as the Babylonians were besieging them.

Ezekiel is a prophet to another group of people, the Jews, who had already been taken out into exile. They were now in Babylon. And so, he's pleading with them - the same kind of plea that Isaiah did 100 years earlier. Jeremiah was pleading – he is contemporary – but in a different place, in Jerusalem. Ezekiel is pleading with the Jews now in exile, begging them.

So for you and me, reading one after another, it's like, “aren’t you saying the same thing to me?” No, it's God saying to

different groups of people. But for us, when we read it, we realize that God just keeps pleading, pleading... 1000 years, pleading with them, "Please stop your wicked ways." The love of God, the mercy and patience of God, just [keeps[MJ1]] going on and on.

When you watch a mother pleading with a son; a wayward son, you get so tired. But if you take your ear off the words a little bit and look at the heart of the mother, then you begin to feel the love of that mother.

I am afraid that, too often, we read the Bible looking at the words, forgetting the feel, the mood behind it. So please, as we read this Book, begin to realize, it's not long and repetitive. It is just showing us the love of God. Wherever the children of Israel were - whether they were in the North, 100 years before in Isaiah's time; whether they were in Jerusalem, still rebelling against God; whether they were in exile - God just keeps pleading with His children, never giving up, until it's a time of no return.

Now, another reason why most Christians have never read this Book, maybe a bit here, a bit there - a few favorite passages of dry bones, the watchmen on the wall, a few things you may have heard people preach - other than that, they know nothing about Ezekiel and don't want to read it is because it's full of judgment.

In fact, it's much harder than Jeremiah. Strong. Sword, famine, pestilence. That's what God will do, cast your dead bodies everywhere, before your foolish altars that you've made.[1] [MJ2] "You have bowed down to those altars, I'll cast your dead bodies at those."

These are things we don't like to read: judgment, especially judgment on God's people. Today's Christianity is very

different. The moment you become a child of God, it's blessing, blessing, blessing. Whatever you do; blessing, blessing, blessing. And to read this Book, it's almost unthinkable. It's such a horrible destruction to your "false idea" of God.

You see, you must understand why you read the Bible. Always understand why you read the Bible. Do you read the Bible to pick out verses that you can take, literally or unknowingly, out of context? So, you can receive comfort and blessing from God? Most people do that. I would say, over 90% of Christians do that.

Another group of people look at the Bible, not for self. The first group, [the] 90%, "I'm looking at the Bible for myself. What can I get from this God? What can I squeeze out of this God?"

Number two, some read it for others. Those are usually Pastors who are looking for passages that are interesting, so they can preach to others. Later – tomorrow or the next session – I will show you some of those favorite passages taken from Ezekiel. These are taken by Pastors, for others: their flock.

So, most people read the Bible for self, some read it for others. But how must you read the Bible? Where is your focus? Self? Or to preach to my congregation? No, the focus is always "I want to know You, God. I want to know You, God."

And this God – let me tell you – is a God most Christians don't know. The God who judges. The Holy God. When He said, "Something, don't do." And you do and do and do; He will judge you. Whether you are His child or not. I'm not talking about eternal judgment, please don't confuse me. When we stand before God, all our sins are settled at the Cross. I'm talking about God punishing us, by causing us problems in this life, to help us turn back and be more Christ-like.

I'm not talking about losing your salvation, you can't. "Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." There's a world of difference. But it tells us that if I, as a child of God, continue to shame His name by sinning, God will punish me. And according to the Book of Ezekiel: he tells me, "My God judges and He is strict. His judgment is scary. Child of God, beware." This is not the God you hear in your devotionals. This is not the God you hear in your church. This is the God, the true living God that we do not know. And frankly, we do not want to know.

Just like the people in Israel. They knew prophets, like Jeremiah were prophets of God. They knew that! They're not saying, "He's a fake! He's a fake!" They don't. They knew him, but they didn't like to hear.

Ezekiel was the same. They knew he was a prophet. They didn't say, "Ah, should I listen to him? He may be telling the truth, or not." They knew he was a man of God. But they didn't want to listen to what he said, because it wasn't nice.

Same with us, when we have the Bible. As a Christian, you know it's the Word of God. Everybody who has the Bible knows it's the Word of God. But we don't want to read some Books, we don't want to! Why? We don't want to hear it. Same as the children of Israel. Same as the Jews. Right?

So, I hope that, after 2000 years, we realize the vast majority of Christians, who have a Bible with them, day in day out, still do not know God. They know another god, of their own imagination, of their own teaching, people have taught them.

When you come to Chapter 1, most people freak out, "My goodness, what is this? What is this image that Ezekiel

saw?"Ezekiel and Daniel – the next Book we're going to read – are full of apocalyptic literature.

What is apocalyptic literature? The word "apocalyptic" comes from the word "revelation". In other words, these things, unless God reveals them, no human can understand it. It is a mystery that must be revealed, then you can understand it.

So "apocalyptic" is about things [that the] human mind cannot figure it out, like the omnipresence of God, [the[MJ3]] mind cannot grasp that, the omniscience of God, [the] [MJ4] mind cannot grasp that. How do you grasp a thing your mind cannot figure out? Eternity, you cannot figure that out, until God reveals that He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. So, when a prophet saw something that God revealed to him, [an[MJ5]] "apocalyptic" thing, he saw it, but he didn't know how to describe it.

And God revealed it to him in a symbol... God cannot use words like "omnipresent", he wouldn't know what it means. "Omniscient", he wouldn't know what it means. God didn't come down and say, "I am omniscient!" to Ezekiel. No, He came down in a vision that, sort of, symbolizes omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence. And then, Ezekiel can understand some of those things and maybe, in a sense, figure out what God is saying. It's a struggle for us too, as we see these symbols, the apocalyptic symbols.

Chapter 1 is apocalyptic literature, very strange things. It's almost like you are trying to explain to a guy living in the most remote part of the world, he's never seen an aeroplane in his life, and you're trying to explain to him what an aeroplane is. How in the world would you explain that? You can't use the word "aerodynamics". You can't use the word "metal". He's never heard of that. You can't tell him that it's at the speed of 800 miles an hour. He doesn't know what in the world you're

talking about. All he knows, he can walk at 4 miles an hour, that's all. He's never seen anything up there (in the sky). He's never seen metal. How do you explain to him?

So, when you try to explain to this guy:

You say	The guy says
"It's like a <i>bird!</i> "	"All right. I figure that, birds can fly."
"But it's like a bird, it's so <i>big!</i> "	And then, "What's big?"
"Like a <i>mountain!</i> "	"Okay, I get it."

Metal, how do you tell him?

"It's made of something shining, it reflects." | "Oh, okay..."

"So, this bird is like a mountain, that reflects light." | "Whoa..."

"And it travels like lightning." That's the fastest thing he knows.

So, you say, "Wow, you describe a plane like that to a tribal guy?"

But that's the best... his little mind, his limited grasp of things, that's all he can get. So, what we are seeing is what God is showing of His omniscience, of things we don't grasp to a limited mind - mine, and yours, and Ezekiel's.

So, I hope you understand, when you come to apocalyptic imagery or symbolism, don't try to analyze it to the last bit.

"Bird?" "Mountain?" "Lightning?" "Shining?"

He's gonna get the mood of it, it's something up there (in the sky)! "Wow, it flies real fast! Wow, it's big!"

I hope that you understand these things, because once you try to analyze something our puny brain cannot, then we all go into all kinds of problems.

Now, you must remember, the Bible is, according to some people, 27% is prophecy. That's a lot. More than a quarter of the Bible is prophecy. According to some people – who know how to count things – 735 specific events are prophesied in the Bible. Some, many times over, like where Christ would be born, and how He would die, and so on. And you know what? According to these people, 81% of these prophecies have already been fulfilled specifically. So, for prophecy, there's still about 20% not fulfilled. And those are the things that baffle us. It's like this tribal guy trying to figure out the bird. And we all have different versions of the bird in the sky.

Maybe a good example of prophecy being fulfilled is Israel: Israel coming back in 1948. I mean, that's a prophecy repeated umpteen* times in the Bible. Exiled, but they will come back. Now, it's 2000 years. 2000 years the Jewish nation ceased to exist, after AD 70, when the Romans destroyed the Second

Temple and scattered the Jews. Assyrian, first time; Babylonian; then Romans. Scattered.

But what happened in 1948?

After 2000 years, a nation arose. Out of nowhere, literally; a language that was forgotten for about 2000 [years[MJ6]]... Nobody spoke Hebrew. They scattered, they spoke the language of wherever they were. They didn't even know the language, except in their Scripture. Except in the Old Testament. The language only existed – Hebrew – in their Old Testament. And the language revived again, after 2000 years. That's prophecy being fulfilled, in front of your eyes and my eyes. 90% of Christians are not even aware of that.

Ezekiel was born about 100 years after the Northern Kingdom had gone. He was, basically, a contemporary of Jeremiah. God put Jeremiah in the city of Jerusalem, to warn those there. God raised Ezekiel, to the other group of Jews who are in Babylon.

Let me explain to you how come it's like that.

When Nebuchadnezzar first came and conquered Jerusalem, he didn't destroy it. He took the elite. Why destroy a city when you conquer it and then burn it to ashes? What's the point? What do you get? Ashes. When you conquered the city, you want to own that city. So, he conquered it, without burning it, without anything. But he took the elite and deported them. That was the first deportation. Once you take the elite out, then the others don't give you so much problems. They're not smart enough, powerful enough to give you problems. So, when Nebuchadnezzar came, the first time he conquered Jerusalem, he sent out the elite, Ezekiel, Daniel. Both of them were in chains, walking out of Jerusalem in the first deportation. Then they went to Babylon. And they were exiled in Babylon.[2] [MJ7]

And then later, we read of the siege of Jerusalem. Then the burning of the city and the temple, when the remaining guys there, instead of being obedient to the Babylonians, started to ally with Egypt, etc. Then the Babylonians came and said, "These guys, we gave them a chance. They're so stubborn, just burn them down." That was the second time.

So, Jeremiah was in the city [of Jerusalem] [MJ8] with the people left behind by Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel and Daniel were taken out into Babylon. Ezekiel was the prophet in Babylon to the exiled Jews. I hope this helps you understand.

According to the Bible, Ezekiel was 25 years old when he was exiled. He was from the priestly line of Zadok; the priests' [line[MJ9] s] were hereditary. So, at 25, he was actually beginning his preparation to be a priest - to serve in the temple, in Jerusalem. Because at 30, they're allowed to serve. Remember,

Jesus went into public ministry at 30. Until then, you don't. You're privately learning things quietly. So, at 25, he was preparing, but he was captured and brought away.

For five years, he was in exile in Babylon. One thing about the Babylonians, they allowed them, basically, to live in their own Jewish communities. And so, he was in a community, by the river Kebar – spelled differently, sometimes spelled Chebar – the river, actually, it's not a river. There are two big rivers there, Tigris [and] [MJ10] Euphrates. Babylon is between the two massive rivers. Chebar was a canal that connected the two rivers. People built canals for irrigation purposes.

So, he was sitting by this canal called Chebar.[3][MJ11] His community was called Tel Aviv. Now, the biggest city in Israel is called Tel Aviv, but his community was the original Tel Aviv. Later, they renamed this place in Israel, Tel Aviv. While he was sitting there, at the age of 30 – 5 years already in exile – he was very sad, because it's his birthday. And usually, at the age of 30, he would be ordained as a full-fledged priest in Jerusalem. So, he's there, probably reflecting that “if I was in Jerusalem, I would be a priest”.

Then suddenly, he sees a vision. He sees something out of the sky. Unbelievable sight, like a fire coming down from the sky. And this is very much how God reveals His glory - how is God going to say, “I'm glorious.” It's very hard to explain that. But “awesome”, that's the word.

When you see this fireball coming down from Heaven, that's what they saw in Sinai, they trembled. When they saw this fire come down at Mount Sinai, the Jews said, “Don't let me go near, this is too scary!” Then when the Tabernacle was built, the fire came down. When the Jews were in the wilderness, they were led by a Pillar of Fire. That Fire from Heaven – so to speak – that doesn't burn but warms, and gives light, and gives awe-inspiration to people. That's how God symbolically shows His glory. And so, Ezekiel is there and he sees this glory, “Whoa! What's this?” He stares at it and it's like fire swirling around. There is lightning [coming] out of it, just like [at] [MJ12] Sinai.

And then, he looks carefully at this bright amber fire and he sees four figures. Four figures in the midst of the fire. And as he looks carefully, the four figures got four faces each. Each of the four figures had four faces: 1) face of a man, 2) face of a lion, 3) face of an ox, 4) face of an eagle. What in the world is that? And they had four wings each.

What do you think this four-four-four signify? Generally, four speaks of the entire world, the four directions: North, South, East, West. Somehow when you draw a map, you just can't help it, you say, “All the four corners of my country.” Because that's how our mind works. So, the number 4 often means

“the world” – I think – that's how I look at it, I don't know what other commentators say.

Now, when these four creatures, with four faces, with four wings, I think it simply means “all the created being[s] on Earth”. Every creature on Earth. Four wings, those wings look like angelic wings. So, it speaks of physical creation, spiritual creation. In other words, all of God's creation.

And then, these four things – whatever you call it – creatures, two wings of their four wings stretched out, touched the other creature. And their four wings – two wings, two wings, all there – made a platform. Made a platform...

Now, I'm trying to explain it the best I can, but honestly, you wouldn't really understand what I'm saying. And neither do I fully understand what I'm saying, and don't blame me because it's something I don't really [understand[MJ13]]... That's what Ezekiel tried his best to describe.

And they formed a platform by their wings. So, two wings are forming the platform, two wings still on their side, because they had four wings. And on this platform was [an] [MJ14] amazing sight. A throne! And on the throne was a – I would use the word “man-like” – being, there. But you couldn't really see him. Glorious! Probably, the throne of God, as best we can understand. Above His creation, that's how I see it. God above - all the creation of the world is just to glorify this amazing God.

And then, these four creatures were on – with the “on” not exactly on, but above – four wheels. Oh, my goodness, this is crazy now. These four wheels were massive and within the wheel was a wheel. Now we're getting more confused.

And on the rims of the wheel were eyes everywhere. Eyeballs on the wheel. And on the creatures' wings and under their wings, eyeballs everywhere. Oh, my goodness, what kind of sight is that? It's to teach us the omniscience of God; God sees everything. Eyes everywhere. Imagine that. You say, “Wow, you can see everything?” That's what God is trying to show; He's got a million eyes, He's seen everything you do.

And this wheel just went straight forward[4]. [MJ15] The Bible said – I don't understand how – it can go in any direction, but it kept saying that “it went straight forward, as led by the Spirit”. In other words, He can go anywhere He wants. Nobody can stop. You know, you can never drive straight. Nobody can drive straight. At some point, you'll hit a hindrance, you have to turn left; turn right; or go backwards. The shortest distance between two points is not a straight line. You try to drive in a straight line, you'll hit a lamppost or you'll hit a curb or you'll hit a ditch. But this one goes straight. In other words, anywhere,

anytime. Omnipresence of God. I think – again, symbolism – I don't know. This is awesome!

And then, a lot of other details: the hands of man under the wings.[5] [MJ16] It's things like that, you just read it and you'll say, "I wish... One day, I'll figure this all out." And I'll say, "Why didn't I figure it out before?" It's like the tribal man saying, "Why didn't I think of a plane before?"

Now, on the top of this, on the throne, he is commissioned. He can't be a priest, there's no temple in Babylon to be a priest [of[MJ17]]. There's no offerings, there's no altar. That's in Jerusalem, being besieged right now by the Babylonian army. It is very timely, all this. But he is no more going to be commissioned a priest, highly respected; he's going to be a prophet. He's going to be a prophet, having to do really tough work having to warn, and scold, and beg people who don't want to listen.

Have you seen how pathetic a mother is, when she's begging a kid and the kid just ignores her? She's pleading, she's crying. [He] [MJ18] ignores her. She's going on her knees, begging. Son said, "Get out of here! I'm tired of you, you nag me non-stop!" That's [the] [MJ19] life of a prophet.

And God commissions him. God says, "I will make your face like a flint." [MJ20] [6] Forehead like a flint. Like a rock, hard. Because if you don't have a "thick skin" – this is not a "thick skin" it's "stone skin" – you can't be a prophet. So that was Ezekiel.[MJ21] That was his ministry. He had to be like a flint.

Now, his name actually means "God strengthens". He really needed that. Otherwise, how do you become a prophet? Though his name, Ezekiel, means "God strengthens", in this Book of Ezekiel, he's always referred to – almost every time, 80 over times – as "son of man". You know what? No other prophet ever had that title. In fact, the only One that's referred to as Son of Man repeatedly is Jesus Christ. Jesus referred to Himself as Son of Man. Can't imagine, Ezekiel had the same "title"? This is quite an honour!

So that's his job: to warn people, that they are going to face amazing judgment. Today's prophets, they usually prophesy something beautiful for you. Why hear that? False prophets are everywhere.

The first image we see of God, here in Chapter 1, is this incomprehensible glory of God. What do you learn in the Book of Ezekiel? How incomprehensible the glory of God is. We use the word "glory of God" but we honestly don't know it.

One day, [when[MJ22]] we get to Heaven, we will fall flat on our faces. That's exactly what happened to Ezekiel, he fell flat on his face. When Paul got to Damascus, he fell flat on his face. John, in the Book of Revelation, on the Island of Patmos, fell flat on his face. Today, when the "Holy Spirit" knocks

people out in Charismatic meetings, they fall backwards, just [as if] [MJ23] they fainted. When you see God, “really have the presence of God”, you fall frontwards. Basically, to bow before God. Not collapse, coma.

Now, I want you to note – when you listen to this [Book in the [MJ24]] Bible, particularly, listen to this phrase in slight variation. Listen carefully. “That you will know that I am the Lord.” - 74 times. It could be “that they may know that; I’m doing all this that they may know that I am the Lord”. “I’m doing all this that the Jews may know, that you may know, that I am the Lord. I’m doing all this that the nations may know that I am the Lord.”

So, God's doing all this for His own glory. People say, “How egoistical.” No. When God is that glorious and He wants you to know the glory of God, that's not egoistical. That's logical. Because the only One that's worth really admiring is God. All the rest, sports stars, film stars, great things... They come, they go. Great empires. Great inventions. Why? What glory is there? Nothing, right? Only one thing in the universe is glorious, that's the glory of God. “That they may know that I am the Lord.” When we read Ezekiel, it's not, “What do I want to know? What is God gonna do for me?” “That you may know that He is God.” All else are idols.

Now, he's given a scroll. God gives him a scroll. You know what's in the scroll? Warnings, judgments, lamentations. Not nice things, nothing nice in it. God said, “Eat it.” He ate it, it was sweet. It's kind of ironic. You mean, you read judgments, you read lamentations, it's sweet? When you read Ezekiel, all these things, is it sweet? Well, if you know what the Book is all about, it is the beautiful Book, it's not the judgements... Because in the judgments you see the patience, the love, the mercy, the holiness, the faithfulness of God. It's sweet.

Some while after that, Ezekiel was taken, in the Spirit, from Babylon, on a virtual tour hundreds of miles away. Now we have virtual tours, right? We can use our computer and do a virtual tour of Jerusalem now. You don't actually have to go. But that time, he had to be lifted by the Spirit, not go on his laptop. And he was brought to Jerusalem, on a virtual tour. God was going to tell him, “Just before I destroy this temple, I know you might feel that I may have overdone it. You may feel, ‘God, why are You doing this? These are Your people, God.’” So, God brings him to show the horrors that are taking place right then.

Even as the Babylonians are about to besiege them, they did not turn. Jeremiah's pleading, they did not turn. Isaiah's pleading, they didn't... They got worse and worse!

He was brought to the temple and he was shocked. At the door of the temple – the temple has one door only – was a huge idol. And the elders are praying

to this idol. Then God says, "You think that's bad? Better go and see what's inside."

And then, the tour guide – probably [an][MJ25] angel, brings him in. And he sees on the walls: pictures of all the creatures, creeping things, and animals of the world. And the elders, 70 of them, bowing and offering incense to the "animals", the cows, and the bulls, and the birds, and the serpents, whatever.... in the temple... of God, Jehovah God. Then, he was shocked.

Then God said, "You think that's it? I'm going to show you what the women are doing." And then, he goes to another room and he sees the women - all of them worshiping Tammuz. Tammuz is the god of springtime, the god of vegetation coming alive in spring. They believe, if they take good care of this god, their plants would grow in springtime. If you did not, the plants would dry up.

And then, God said, "You haven't seen it all!" And he goes to another part and he sees the elders' back towards God. Their backs towards the temple, their faces worshipping the sun. Worshipping the sun god. All this is taking place "in the temple of God" where people are saying, "We believe in Jehovah God. But really our faith, our hope, is in Tammuz, that he will give us good plants. Our hope is in the creatures, the bulls, that they will be fertile. Our hope is in the sun, that will give us beautiful crops for the year." They were worshipping Mother Earth, not Father God. Does that sound familiar?

Today, Christians are all talking about Mother Earth. There is no Mother Earth; there's a Father God who gives us things. Those are just His things, through which He blesses us. You don't worship the things, you worship the Creator, not the creatures. But it's the same today. We claim to worship Jehovah God but our hope is in Mother Earth continuing, producing good things. We worry about pollution... I'm not saying all these things are wrong, but realize, these are just things, which we do, rightly. Don't have the wrong concept that they give life, and hope, and future to our kids. Put it right in our brains, ok?

Anyway, all this is very depressing. But thankfully, there is a good thing - Ezekiel 11:19, otherwise I end with gloom. He tells them, they will return.

Ezekiel 11:9 ESV

And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Now, you see, the only hope is not all the rules, all the temples, all the priests; it's a new heart. And Ezekiel, in the midst of all the gloom and doom, says,

“One day, let’s hope God will give us one heart. A new heart, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that wants to obey God.”

I just want to add a little bit, in Ezekiel 11. And this may be a little bit of overreading here, I don’t know, I hope not. As he’s watching this glory of God, he’s like, “Whoa!” He’s brought on this virtual tour, he sees the glory of God over the temple.

And then, Ezekiel 11:23, “And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city. And the Spirit lifted me up...”[7] [MJ26]

What is the mountain on the east side of Jerusalem?

It’s called Mount Olives - Mount Olivet, in some Bibles. “Mount of Olives.” That’s where Jesus, 500 years later, rose up to Heaven. After 40 days of showing Himself, He rose up from there to Heaven. Here we see, the glory leaving the temple, going to the Mount of Olives, and also leaving. The Jews have rejected Jehovah God. So, He leaves Jerusalem, on the Mount Olives. And later, we see that glory goes on to Babylon, where the exiles are. Literally, God exiles Himself in Babylon to be with the exiles and await the return, a New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem. Jesus’ ministry was rejected, by the people - 40 days, showing Himself, and yet the people rejected Him. He leaves from Mount Olives... I don’t know whether it’s overreading, but it’s interesting. That little Mount, east of Jerusalem.

Now, what have we learned in this short journey?

We learned the glory of God. Awesome. We cannot picture it, but maybe that little Chapter 1 will give you some idea.

We learned the holiness of God. He judges. He cannot be a holy God if He doesn’t judge sin. We always say “Holy God, Holy Bible, Holy Spirit”. But the God in our brain is not very holy. “It’s okay. Sin is okay. Hyper grace. Do whatever you like! It’s all settled at the Cross. Yeah, your penalty of sin is settled at the Cross.”

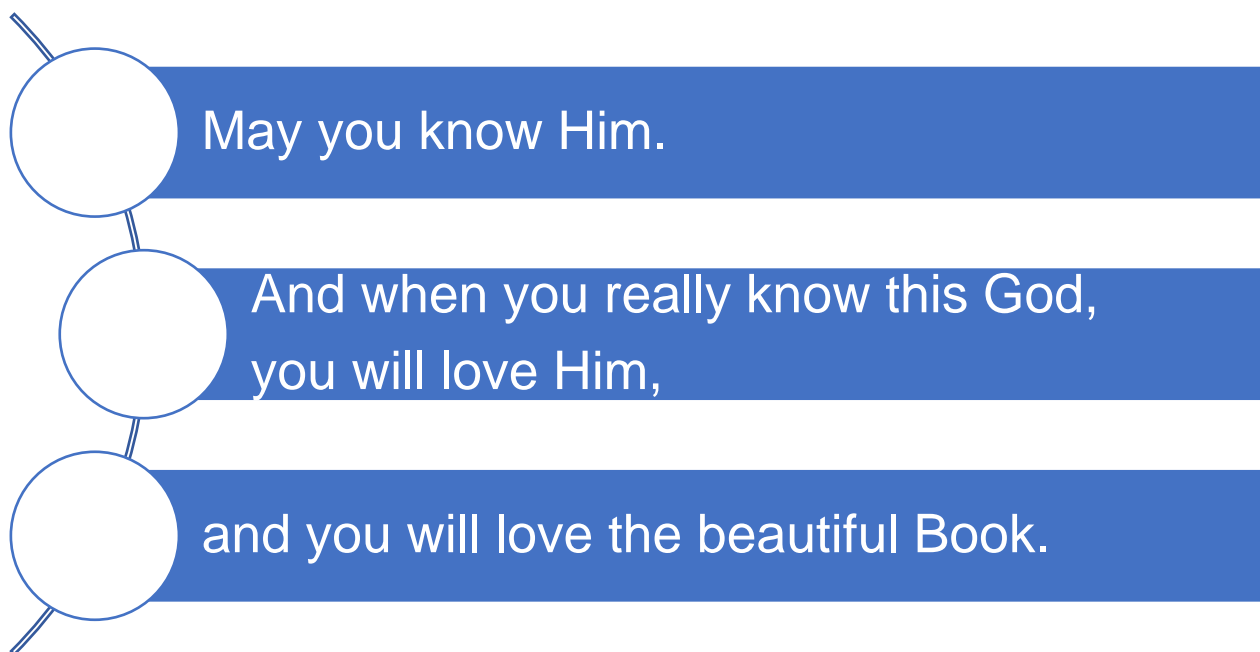
But God, on this Earth, wants to shape and mould you to Christlikeness, by teaching you holiness. Then you turn out. God didn’t just save us from sin, He saved us to Christlikeness! Get that clear in our head! Salvation is not for us to have a passport to do what we like. Salvation, for us, is to have a heart; to be like Christ. It’s not salvation from, it’s salvation to Christlikeness.

It’s a kindof a truncated salvation message, “Just save you, do whatever you like after that”.

Now, we learn also the mercy and love of God. The mercy of God, just hanging there, pleading, begging, until we get so tired sometimes. But you know what? God doesn't get tired. He still begs, He still bleeds. What kind of love is that? Long time ago, 1000 years, you still don't give up? Our love-a few hours, a few minutes sometimes. "Enough. You don't want to listen? Let it be, man! It's your problem, not mine." Right?

We also learned here, the sinfulness of men. How we love to ignore God. We choose to ignore God. Every time we open the Bible – let me tell you – see your sinfulness. You don't really want to know God. Honestly, you don't want to know God. Tell me that! Admit that. "I want to know my version of God." [It[MJ27]] shows the idolatry of man. Whatever Christians are, we look at things we can see: creatures, trees, plants, jobs, successful models - we idolize them. That's our hope, "I wish I could be like that. If my kids were like that, my future is secure." We love idolatry, just not in ugly statues.

So, I hope that this little reading of Ezekiel will give us a better idea of the true living God.



God bless you.

[1] Ezekiel 6:4-5

* umpteen = indefinitely many; a lot of

[2] 2 Kings 24:14-16

[3] Ezekiel 3:15

[4] Ezekiel 1:17

[5] Ezekiel 1:8

[6] Ezekiel 3:9

[7] Ezekiel 11:24a

[MJ1]Add in brackets: keeps

[MJ2]Place footnote 1: Ezekiel 6:4-5

[MJ3]Add in brackets: the

[MJ4]Add in brackets: the

[MJ5]Add in brackets: an

[MJ6]Add in brackets: years

[MJ7]Place Footnote 2: 2 Kings 24:14-16

[MJ8]Add in brackets: of Jerusalem

[MJ9]Add in brackets: lines

[MJ10]Add in brackets: and

[MJ11]Place footnote 3: Ezekiel 3:15

[MJ12]Add in brackets: coming and at

[MJ13]Add in brackets: understand

[MJ14]Add in brackets: an

[MJ15]Place footnote 4: Ezekiel 1:17

[MJ16]Place footnote 5: Ezekiel 1:8

[MJ17]Add in brackets: of

[MJ18]Add in brackets: He

[MJ19]Add in brackets: the

[MJ20]Place a footnote 6: Ezekiel 3:9

[MJ21]Time stamp: 30:10: Should be Ezekiel, instead of Jeremiah

[MJ22]Add in brackets: when

[MJ23]Add in brackets: as if

[MJ24]Add in brackets: Book in the

[MJ25]Add in brackets: an

[MJ26]Place a footnote 7: Ezekiel 11:24a

Ezekiel – Part 2 of 2

One of the hardest books to teach is the book of Ezekiel. There are so many things that I do not understand because it speaks of things to come. With my limited mind I can barely grasp things that are present, let alone things to come. I struggle whenever I teach this book. It's like a tribal person trying to explain to his fellow tribesmen about an aeroplane which they have never seen before. He would do his best to describe to them that an aeroplane is shiny and looks like a big bird. It flies with the speed of lightning. Although feeling nervous, he probably is going to do a very good job. In the same manner, I feel exactly like the little tribesman trying to describe things he does not understand. Do bear with me as I go through the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was given a difficult job of being a watchman by God. A watchman warns people of the danger to come. Basically, that was his first job. He had to tell them about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. I thought Ezekiel was already in exile and Jerusalem was already destroyed. Let me try to clear things a little bit.

The first time the Babylonians went and conquered Judah and Jerusalem, they did not totally destroy the city. They basically took control of the city. They brought with them the elite people who had power in the city. They left the poorest people to keep the place for the Babylonian Empire.

Ezekiel was one of those who was taken out with the elite. He was a priest. Like what Jeremiah and Isaiah prophesied, Ezekiel warned the people that even though Jerusalem was there, the city will be burned (not just conquered.) But the horror of horrors will happen. The temple, God's house, will be burned. The remnant did not believe him. That's what Jeremiah told us before. Ezekiel has to convince them continuously that this is coming. The people responded, "No way! you prophets like to exaggerate."

God tells Ezekiel to continue the warning repetitively. You want to just stop reading because he keeps telling to the people the same thing. We must understand that he had to do the same thing over and over again because they didn't get it. It appears that history is repeating itself, doing very much the same things the prophets have warned before. You do not stop talking about something very important until they get it right. Otherwise, what's the point? And yet God said, "that's not enough. Keep telling them until the people understand the importance of this warning!"

In addition, God makes Ezekiel do certain signs. He had to act out six signs representing the siege of Jerusalem. I call it 'street drama.' He had to dramatize in public aside from telling them God's warnings.

First, Ezekiel was ordered to make a clay slab. On it has the portrait of Jerusalem and the temple and then build a siege against this portraiture of the city. It's like in the Main Street in Orchard Road, Singapore. PC goes down there and then builds this stuff and everybody walks by and wonder, "What is PC doing?" Ezekiel was not supposed to say a word. He makes battering rams and dramatize the whole thing which goes on for a while. Since you didn't get what I've been trying to tell you, I'm going to show it to you. The city is going to be bashed, slammed, and besieged by the Babylonians. It was a bit embarrassing for a priest like Ezekiel to do that.

Second, Ezekiel was ordered to lie on his left side for 390 days before the portraiture of Jerusalem He represents the Jews, lying and tied up for 390 days. That's over a year! Imagine me lying in Orchard Road on my left side for over one year, tied up not saying a word? Afterwards, he is then to lie on his right side for 40 days still tied up. "What was going on?" Actually, I am not quite clear about the 390 days. Forty different commentators give different reasons. Ezekiel is bearing the sin of the Israelites, like a scape goat, within 390 days for the northern kingdom and 40 days for the southern kingdom. According to the prophetic dialect, the 390 days signify 390 years. The 40 days represents 40 years for the southern kingdom. He looked ridiculous during those times he was tied up with the city next to him. Everybody just walking by. "What in the world this guy is doing and acting?" People have different reactions and remarks.

Third, after untying himself, Ezekiel is going to cook in front of the people the most pitiful of all meals. It is roughly about 0.2kilograms of food: bits of barley, beans and lentils, millet and emmer. He is supposed to cook it in their sight over dung. Priests are not supposed to touch dung but Ezekiel was just following orders. His food was barely enough-20% maybe of normal human consumption. He needs to drink 0.6 liter of water the entire day, sipping a bit of water. Next time the Babylonians come, they would burn the city, take control aggressively, starving the people literally to death. It shows how scarce the necessities of life during the siege. It shows how scarce the necessities of life were during the siege.

It was not yet enough for Ezekiel after all the drama. Fourth sign is, he stood in front of everybody and shave off the hair of his head and beard with a razor since he had not been shaving for a long time. He divided the hair into three portions. The first one third must be burnt in the midst of the city. This denotes that when Jerusalem was being besieged, multitudes will suffer as the city was going to be burned. Ezekiel, the prophet, knew and foresaw these things, like hundreds of miles away, through a vision. Ezekiel became an attraction like the Disney World. Everybody walks by just looking at him. In those days there was no television or CNN to see the latest news. If you want to see the latest news or just go and watch Ezekiel to see what is happening.

Another third part of the hair was thrown in the air and slash it with a sword violently like a madman. This represents that many Jews were slain by the sword during the siege. They burnt the place with great slaughter. The last one third was to be scattered in the wind, watching the hair fly everywhere. This signifies the carrying away of the captives, scattering them into the neighbouring countries.

Street drama! Do you think Ezekiel has enough embarrassment? No, the fifth sign is, he dressed up like a refugee, carries things at night that he might not be seen, crawls out of the wall to escape. This signifies how the last king of Israel, Zedekiah, and his family made their escape in the night but soon caught. His sons were slain before his eyes before they put out his own eyes. This account is recorded in the book of Second Kings.

The last sign Ezekiel had to do was not to show grief nor mourn when his wife, the desire of [his] eyes, died. The Bible does not mention if Ezekiel had kids. Nobody knows when his wife died. Normally you mourn when your wife pass away. We know how Jews mourn; they really know how to mourn. Ezekiel did not show grief, neither any loud lamenting for his dead wife. He was just sitting in stony silence. What happened? He was showing to the people in Jerusalem how they would respond to all the things that would happen. They were shocked. They were not able to respond. Obviously, their jaw dropped.

What do we learn from these signs?

Number one: Ezekiel had to warn God's people, Israelites very seriously. His words didn't work so he had to use actions. In other words, he had to warn the people with every available and possible means. Generally God shows in the Bible that we learn far more by seeing than by hearing only. That is the reason God always uses stories, which composed 70% of the Bible. God knows how we learn. God made us to read and teach facts. Facts can be easily forgotten or remembered. The modern way to teach is to supplement words with actions and pictures. Oftentimes, we just want to cram facts in our mind and memorize it for exam's sake and then forget everything. That's not my problem; I just want to pass the exam. God knows the way human brain learns is through stories that create mental pictures and images. When we hear the stories of Samson and David, we see them through our imaginations and the language processing part in the brain. We remember those things much better. God teaches truths through stories. Many Christians fail to really understand God because they feel that stories are not an effective way of teaching. God is a storyteller. If you want to learn about God, know His characters. Yes, God is holy; God is just; He is love but I tell you, God is a storyteller. Is that important? Yes, it is very important because Jesus was a storyteller. He never taught without a parable. That's what the Bible says. He was the number one storyteller. So, if you ask me, "What is God like?" God likes stories. Human stories.

Many of us know and hear many preachers. They go, point 1,2,3. They think they are serving God the way God likes it. That is how many theology schools like it because the message outline must have three main points. It is much easier than to write a composition. This is what I believe. God was using Ezekiel to deliver the message clear and understandable and the best way to do was to put it in a drama. The people were able to see what Ezekiel is doing and cannot get it out of their mind. Imagine seeing your pastor come to church every day but you do not hear a message from him. He is just lying on the floor tied up. What do you think? You go home and say, "Oh, that was an interesting message! Pastor, I like your message!" No, you go home and say, "Why is pastor doing that? What's up?" It would trouble you deeply far more than a preacher shouts on the pulpit and said, "Listen to me guys!" I hope all Christians understand that God is a storyteller, hence, do not minimize storytelling in groups. Testimony time, sharing God's working in your life, real things, real stories, real human stories tell a message about God.

The phrase, "that you may know that I am the Lord", is repeated by Ezekiel about 74 times in various ways. Every now and then, you keep hearing that everything God does, even in judgment, is that you may know that He is God. Covid crisis - why?

that arrogant men may know that they are not God, they are not invincible, they do not rule; they do not make the laws of life, death, health, but only God does. He is in control in every event in life. God allowed nations to conquer and punish Israel. Why? They become proud! Remember David, the mighty king of Israel. There was a time in his life that he relied on himself. . God allows someone to come in and knocks you down, that you may know He is God. During this COVID crisis, there are friends I knew who never uttered the word, 'God', but now it is coming out from their lips. Leaders of nations thought they are in control. We are good and prosperous country. We provide jobs but God is God; they are not.

We go on to see chapters 25 to 32. These eight chapters talk about the judgment on the nations who oppressed God's people, Israel. It almost sounds so vengeful! When you read it and you don't understand the context, you ask why God is against the Philistines, the Moabites, Ammonites, and the Edomites? He is hammering them to the ground. The context is very simple. When the Babylonians came and conquered Israel for two and a half years, Israel became helpless. They left them weak, literally smashed them to the ground.

Consequently, the economy weakened. When the Babylonians left, the surrounding nations came to oppress the remnants. The Israelites were so weak. Philistines came and took advantage of them. Evil nations weaken other nations, taking advantage. This is how colonialism works and everything else works. For example: When China was weak, the whole of the Western world came in and just smashed it to smithereens. In like manner, the surrounding nations took advantage of Israel, horrendously tormented

and bullied them. They beat up the women and the children mercilessly and God said, "Oh, you think you can do that to my people? This is what I will do to each of these nations." He judged them heavily.

When the Babylonians first came to conquer Jerusalem, they think the poor people would be quiet, but the Jews did not do that. They are very stubborn people. When they came back for the second time, they besieged the city leaving the people in starvation. We read how the mothers cook their own babies and would not even share the baby's meat with their husbands. Unbelievable! Israel was defenceless from neighbouring countries and had taken advantage. God said, "You think you can take advantage of My people?"

Finally, in 587 BC. the Babylonians, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar II laid siege to Jerusalem, destroyed and burned the city and its temple to the ground. This is what Ezekiel had been warning them about. To the Jews, it's unthinkable. This is the house of God! They have not realized that the glory of God left because of the sin of the people for thousand years.

I read an interesting fact in a book regarding the phrase, "Hip Hip Hooray," which we often cheer or shout in various events. Do you know where that came from? H-I-P are the first three letters in Latin which means "Jerusalem is fallen". And it was a cry of all the nations around. Throughout history, Satan has always wanted to destroy Israel. Right from the time the Israelite babies were drowned in the Nile River until today, many nations are anti-Israel. In modern day, it is called Anti-Semitism, a belief or behaviour hostile toward Jews; discrimination against them. You talk about the Nazi, the Holocaust where 6 million Jews died? It's not yet over! It has not changed until today. Anti-semitism is still very strong in America and Europe. Many people still hate the Jews. In chapter 25 to 32, God takes vengeance on all these people. "You touch my people, I punish you. I have the right to punish my son but you do not have the right to hit my son." God punishes his children, as a father does, but nobody else has the right to punish Israel. Whenever nations 'touch' the Israelites, God will hit them.

Another character of God is, vengeance is His. If you touch His children, He will touch you. Don't fool around with Israel. He loves Israel even though they are rebellious people. They rejected him until today but He has not rejected them. That's the faithfulness of God. You touch Israel, you die.

There are two nations being zapped in chapters 25 to 32. The first one is the city of Tyre. It is a small city but prosperous because it became a trade centre like Singapore. It became proud because of its prosperity. The people and the king of Tyre became proud.

Ezekiel 28:2 ESV

Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus saith the Lord GOD: Because your heart is proud and you have said, "I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas," yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god.

Because they were so prosperous, they felt they were like God. Nothing can hit them. Invulnerable, invincible, like God up there. "Apart from everybody, I am different from everyone." God's anger is against Tyre.

The next one is Egypt. We read in chapter 29 verse nine that the pharaohs are filled with arrogance and pride.

Ezekiel 29:9

and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD. 'Because you said, the Nile is mine, and I made it,'

Imagine the king of Egypt said, "Nile River is mine, I made it." Somehow when you get successful, you think you made things. People think they made their company; they only made few decisions. If you have great health, you did not make yourself healthy.

Health comes from God. Life comes from God. Intelligence comes from God. Opportunities come from God. Resources come from God. You think you made those things? Great reminders for all of us today. We read and hear people say, "I made Singapore great. We made this country great!" Watch out! Watch your mouth; watch your thoughts. God is hammering those proud countries. God hates pride more than anything else. It is hard not to be proud. God allows you a little bit of success or a lot of success with His abundant grace, watch it! This applies even to a preacher or a man of God. You better be careful whenever you succeed in any undertaking. I always tell this to my young people, "Every time you are successful, be on your knees. Look up to God and say, Thank You, God, for allowing me to take part in this endeavour."

Chapter 33 is about Ezekiel being told he is a watchman, a person who is accountable for the public safety. If the people do not take warning, it is their own fault. The blame is not laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head. Their sin is on them. This message is not for Ezekiel; it is for us. We know the judgment called hell. We know that God is holy but many people are not aware of these things. So, it's our job to warn them or their blood will be upon our hands. We are responsible in a way. Ezekiel cannot say, "God, they won't listen so I don't want to say anything." Usually, that is our logic. That is not the problem. Whether they listen or not, your job is to tell and warn them as best as you can. A watchman is usually given a trumpet. When he sees trouble coming, he blasts his trumpet. Bring the message you are supposed to deliver as clearly as you can. Use your life to share God's warnings in His Word. In everything you do, warn people that God is a holy God and there comes a day of judgment.

I found something very interesting in chapter 33. It is how God's mind works.

Ezekiel chapter 33:11

Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

This is a fact that God has no pleasure seeing us suffer. He only asks us to repent; change your mind about what is right and wrong.

Look at verse 12,

And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins.

This verse tells us that God is more concerned about how we end than how we begin. Start life good, at the end you become proud and arrogant and God would judge you. There are those who started arrogantly but became humble in the end, God will bless. This is a very interesting thing about God's character: He wants to see how we end. A man can be often very bad and anti-God, but on his deathbed, he cries out to God. In one last breath, pleading for mercy, you know what God does? Often God just says, "Welcome!"

What, for 80 years you curse God, and in your last breath, if you humble yourself and acknowledge God, He will forgive and welcome you? How can you do that God? It sounds unjust. You read in chapter 33 that people say, "That's not right!" God says, "That's my way and my way is right." It's how you end. I always tell people, "Don't worry so much about your past. God is concerned how you turn now."

"Oh, but you know what? I was terrible!"

The world has that on your police record or whatever record you have. With God, NO! It is how you end.

I want you to learn the character of God because many people say, "How can He be like that?" In our human mind, it's not right; it's not fair! That is not how God works. You are not the one who decide; God decides what is right and wrong.

Chapter 34 is about shepherds who do not feed their sheep, a very common passage to admonish during an ordination of a young pastor. It is a message to the pastor to feed the sheep, taking care of those that are committed to their charge.

Many of you have probably heard about The Valley of Dry Bones which is the content of Chapter 37. It was brought into vision a whole valley of dry bones scattered around. God says, "Do you think those bones can arise?"

"I don't know. You can do anything," Ezekiel replied.

Then those bones arise and start coming together. The sinews, the flesh, the skin connected together, and the Holy Spirit of God breathe upon them and came to life. The Valley of Dry Bones is commonly preached in connection to a church being dead and then being revived. We spiritualize it and there is nothing wrong with that. But it

was meant particularly for the Jews, who was scattered as a nation and didn't know anything about God, but one day, God, by His mercy and grace, will gather them together and they will come and live for Him. God would not only restore them physically but also spiritually. This is the hope of Israel. This is what kept Israel for thousands of years which was already prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah. They hardly know the Hebrew language or anything about God. Then in 1948, there was a call to return. "Where did all these people come from?" They returned to Palestine and a new nation was born. A language comes out of the dust. After 2000 years, the Hebrew language is revived and a nation is revived. The prophecy of God is the hope of every Jewish's heart -One day they will go back to Israel. These are all written in Isaiah, "Return, return my people." As Gentiles, we read this word over and over again. Isaiah says it, Jeremiah says it, Ezekiel says it, every minor prophet says this. I'm tired, I'm tired. This repeated word 'return' sustains them. When you keep repeating something over and over again, people know that it is a serious stuff. It is not a statement; it is something critical and important.

In chapter 38 and 39 informs of a battle concerning Gog. God is fighting somebody called Gog. God against G-o-g! Who is Gog? You can find that somewhere in early genealogy in Genesis. I do not know if this is a real guy but I believe he is the archetype, the best model, of human rebellion. It shows all the armies coming together to fight against Israel when Israel returns. In this final battle, God wipes them all, however, it is not exactly the same as the battle in Revelation. Finally, it will be crushed when God comes back in the His New Heaven and New Earth. Perhaps, we should have better understanding with these chapters if it is revealed its interpretation but we are locked out of the real meaning. Even Bible commentators do not have anything much to say.

Chapters 42 to 48 talks about the architectural details of this mystical temple, which is very hard to understand. It describes how many feet long, how many rooms, and yet difficult to comprehend its meaning. It seems very perplexed and intricate! When I read commentaries, they all come up with different views and explanations about this temple. Some say, this temple is designed for the Jews when they come out of 70 years in Babylon. Obviously, the temple Ezra built is nothing compared to the temple described in Ezekiel Chapter 40 to 48.

This temple is glorious and massive. It is 15 times the size of the biggest Cathedral. The one that Zerubbabel built with some who went back to Jerusalem after the 70 years exile, was so pathetic. When it was completed most people cried. Those who wept remembered the glory of Solomon's Temple. Some prophets had to appease the people, "Do not despise the day of small things." Some people say that maybe this was the drawing given to Zerubbabel when he came back to build the temple but do not have the resources, courage, and faith to build. Personally, I disagree with this idea. I believe this is the literal temple to be built during the Millennium when Christ rules. It is going to be made literally inch by inch, as written in the book of Revelation.

In chapter 40, verse 39, there are animal sacrifices mentioned. To you and me who are Christians, we know Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice once and for all. There is no more sacrifice needed. It is repeated three times in Hebrews chapter 10, verses 10, 12, and 14, that Christ's sacrifice is once and for all. How come you have to offer animal sacrifices when Christ Himself, the ultimate sacrifice that satisfied the Father as the only payment for our sins, already shouted at the Cross, "It is finished?"

Do we still need to burn more sacrifices? Sounds weird, but a lot of Christians believe it is to build a temple where they can offer sacrifice. For what? Others would say, "No, this is symbolic. This is not really literal temple. It shows how gorgeous the temple should be, reflecting how wonderful Christian worship should be. Then why all the architectural details when it is symbolic like an apocalyptic image? The moment you go into detailed measurements, it's probably literal but then, animal sacrifices? I don't know. This is one reason why I find Ezekiel a very difficult book to understand; there are passages I do not know the real interpretation, whether literal or symbolic. Whenever we come to prophecy, please remember the rule: be humble; do not be so dogmatic. One day you will get a shock! In chapter 48 directions have been given regarding the distribution of the land back to the 12 tribes of Israel.

We end the book of Ezekiel with many questions; however, I learned several things. Number one, God judges. He is a holy God. Christians need to learn this truth. Many Christians believe in a God who does not judge. He is the Old Testament God. Really? You have not read the New Testament or Revelation yet? He is the same God. Sorry to spoil your day. God still judges. He hates sin but loves the sinners. Because he loves sinners, he judges sin. Judgment is part of God's love for us; just as I love my kids. If they go into drugs and do evil things, I will take care of them and let them know that what they are engaged in is wrong. I would slap them and hit them because I love them. Judgment is not the result of God's wrath; it is a result of God's love. This is the foundation that is quite hard to accept but true.

Number two, God not only judges his own people whom He loves but God judges those who take advantage of His people. You don't fool around my kids. Anybody who takes advantage of my kids I will deal with them, as the father, the best I know. This God is a faithful God. He restores His people however much they have rejected Him. God never rejects His children, whether they are Jews or born again Christians. If you are humble and turn to Him you cannot stop God from accepting you again. This is hard to accept from a human perspective but God is not like men.

The book of Ezekiel has a very unusual ending in
Ezekiel 48:34,35

On the west side, which is to be 4,500 cubits, three gates, the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is There.

What have you learned at the end of 48 chapters?

God is present in every crisis that you may know. He is God even during this COVID crisis. A lot of Christians ask, "Where are you, God? When there is a crisis, where are you God? When I am alone, where are you God?" God is there; He is everywhere. Our job is to be able to know and be aware that God is there in any crisis, at any moment of grief or silence. You must know the faithful God. He is the Lord Who is in control. He is on the throne and He watches over you.

Do you think these people in exile got it? I hope the overview that I shared about this book has helped you a little bit in spite of some passages that are not clear. Remember, you do not need to understand everything to learn something. There are passages in the Bible that appear strange and difficult to us for a reason or another. God concealed them at present but we will see the fulfilment in His time. Just keep on reading and trust God's Word. I didn't do a good job because I, myself, am pretty much confused. But one thing I am sure of, that in any crisis or even the worst situation I come to face with, God is always present; He is everywhere. I am not god; He is God.

God bless you.