

## 26 - Ezekiel

Ezekiel

Key Verse:

### INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was a priest and a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. When the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem in 597 BC, they took the best people of the land to Babylon to live in exile. Ezekiel was among these. Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem to minister to the people there. God called Ezekiel to be his prophet and speak his word to the exiles. The Babylonian captivity ended in 539 BC, when Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon.

The hope of the exiles had been to return to Jerusalem and worship God in his temple. But this was not to be. In 586 BC, while Ezekiel was living in exile in Babylon, Jerusalem was razed and the temple destroyed.

God's hope, however, was not in the corrupt city of Jerusalem, nor in the temple, but in the faithful remnant of his people who were in exile. Ezekiel 11:16 is a key verse. It says that though the exiles have no temple, God himself is their sanctuary. God told Ezekiel about the fall of Jerusalem and about the death of his wife, the delight of his eyes, at the same time. He is told not to mourn for his wife, and not to let the people mourn for Jerusalem (24).

Chapters 1-24 (written before 586 BC) are about God's judgment against Jerusalem; 25-32, God's judgment against seven nations; 33-48, the hope of all nations--the coming Messiah.

### EZEKIEL'S VISION AND CALL

Ezekiel 1:1-2:9 (Sun.) Nov. 1

Key Verse: 2:4,5

#### 1. Ezekiel's vision (1:1-28)

Ezekiel was living as an exile in Babylon. God showed him a wonderful vision of the Holy, Sovereign God. He saw a vision of a living chariot in which God himself was riding. The four living creatures represent the strongest, wisest, and most beautiful of the living things which God has created--man, lion, ox and eagle. The Lord, radiant and glorious, was not in the temple in Jerusalem. He was riding in his great chariot to visit his people in exile.

#### 3. Ezekiel's call (2:1-9)

God called Ezekiel to be a Bible teacher to the exiles. They were stubborn and rebellious, but Ezekiel must not be afraid; he must not compromise. He must speak God's word. Whether they listened or not, they would know that a prophet had been among them. God gave him a scroll containing his words.

Prayer: Lord, in the worst and most corrupt of times, help me to look up and see a vision of you. Help me to receive your word and teach it faithfully to the people of my times.

One Word: God visits his people and calls his servant

## YOU MUST WARN THEM

Ezekiel 3:1-27 (Mon.) Nov. 2

Key Verse: 3:18

### 1. Eat the scroll (1-15)

God told Ezekiel to eat the word of God. Then God sent him to speak the words of God to the exiles. Even though he would have no language problem, the people would not listen to God's word because they had closed their hearts. God's servant must eat, digest, and obey God's word. God would give him a head as hard as flintstone so that he could hold on to God's word stubbornly. He must not be afraid and he must not compromise. Ezekiel was overwhelmed. He went to his mission field with a troubled spirit, but the strong hand of the Lord was upon him.

### 2. The prophet is accountable to God (16-27)

After seven days God came to him and appointed him to be a watchman. He must warn wicked people that they would die if they did not repent; he must warn the righteous men to be faithful--or else! If he failed to warn the people about God's sure judgment, then he would be accountable to God for their blood. If he warned a man and that man did not listen, the man would be responsible for his own sins.

Prayer: Lord, help me to eat your word and speak it without compromise. Help me to be a watchman.

One Word: Don't rebel; obey God's word

## A DRAMATIC PROPHECY ABOUT JERUSALEM

Ezekiel 4:1-5:17 (Tue.) Nov. 3

Key Verse: 5:7,8

### 1. A living parable of a siege (4:1-17)

God told Ezekiel to demonstrate the siege of Jerusalem to the exiles. His purpose was to lead them to repentance. He drew a picture of Jerusalem--the homeland for which they longed--on a clay tablet. Then he "besieged" the city he had drawn. This was to demonstrate God's judgment on the city, and also, God's desire to show mercy. He lay on his left side for 390 days to bear the sins of Israel and for 40 days on his right side to bear the sins of Judah. The personal defilement

God commanded was too great even for Ezekiel, so God made a few changes. But the lesson is clear: Sin utterly defiles people; it makes them despair, hate the sight of each other, and waste away. We must repent to live.

## 2. Because they rejected God's word (5:1-17)

Jerusalem had been blessed by God. She should be an example for all nations. But she had rejected God's word and turned to idols. So God punished her severely as a warning to all godless nations.

Prayer: Lord, give me a repentant heart; cleanse me from sin and help me obey you.

One Word: Sin leads to death; repent!

## THEN THEY WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD

Ezekiel 6:1-7:27 (Wed.) Nov. 4

Key Verse: 6:13a,7:27

### 1. God is grieved (6:1-14)

God longed to bless his people, but they grieved him by their adulterous hearts (9) and their lusting after foreign idols. He punished them by the swords of foreign armies. These armies demolished the idols and slew the people in front of the pagan altars. God did these things so that his people would know that God is God, loathe themselves for the evil they had done, and repent (7,10,13a,14b).

### 2. The end has come (7:1-27)

The day of God's judgment will surely come. He will judge all people according to their conduct and by their own standards (3,4,8,9,27). He will destroy them from the outside with the sword and on the inside with plague and famine (15). On the day of God's wrath gold and silver will be worth nothing (19). In all these things, God's purpose remains the same: to let all people know that he is the Sovereign Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to grieve you, but to worship and love and serve you.

One Word: Know that the Lord is God

## THOSE WHO SHARE GOD'S GRIEF

Ezekiel 8:1-10:22 (Thur.) Nov. 5

Key Verse: 9:3,4

## 1. A heart-breaking visit to Jerusalem (8:1-18)

In a vision, the glorified Jesus lifted Ezekiel by the hair and brought him to Jerusalem. He was shown one detestable thing after another. He saw a statue of the Canaanite fertility goddess in the entrance of the temple of God. Sexual immorality was practiced in the very temple of God. He saw elders and priests secretly worshiping at their own private shrines. They thought that God didn't know what was going on! He saw a woman weeping for the Babylonian fertility god. He saw young men turn their backs to the temple and worship the sun. The Lord grieved and he was angry.

## 2. The glory departs from the temple (9:1-10:22)

The Lord did two things: first, he sent a man to mark the foreheads of all those who shared his grief over the detestable things being done. Those who bore his mark were spared; everyone else was killed. Second, the Lord got in his chariot and rode away to visit the exiles. Those who grieved with him for Jerusalem and the temple became the remnant who were spared.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to grieve for the things that make you sorry.

One Word: Love God; share in his grief

I WILL GIVE THEM A HEART OF FLESH

Ezekiel 11:1-25 (Fri.) Nov. 6

Key Verse: 11:19

## 1. Those who gave wicked advice (1-15)

The people left in Jerusalem after the exile thought that they were the meat in the pot, while the exiles were useless bones and garbage. But this was not true. The leaders gave wicked advice. They did not preach repentance, but taught false security. They did not live by God's word nor teach the people to do so.

## 2. I will gather you from the nations (16-25)

The exiles who repented and remained faithful to God, even though they were far away from home, would be gathered by God and returned. God would give them new and undivided hearts. He would take away their hard hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh that were alive and responsive to the word of God. They would return and clean up the city.

Prayer: Lord, give me an undivided heart. Take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh, so that I can love you and obey your word.

One Word: Not a heart of stone but a heart of flesh

## A PROPHET WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH

Ezekiel 12:1-13:23 (Sat.) Nov. 7

Key Verse: 13:21

### 1. The Exile enacted (12:1-20)

When people are rebellious, they are blind to truth. They do not want to repent, so they deliberately close their ears to bad news. Ezekiel dramatized King Zedekiah's attempted escape. This happened when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem (2Ki 25:1-7). Zedekiah was captured; his eyes were put out and he was brought in chains to Babylon. God punished his people so that they might know that God alone is the Lord, repent, and worship him. Ezekiel's dramatic enactment of a man going into exile made God's message clear.

### 2. Woe to the false prophets (12:21-13:23)

Rebellious people are one problem; lying prophets another. Prophets who ignore the word of God and follow their own spirits cannot but tell lies. The walls need drastic repairing, but they only whitewash them. They say "peace", when there is no peace. God will deal with them.

Prayer: Lord, take away my rebellious heart and give me a learning mind.

One Word: God punishes in order to save

## IDOLS IN THE HEART

Ezekiel 14:1-23 (Sun.) Nov. 8

Key Verse: 14:5

### 1. Should he inquire of me at all? (1-11)

When a man sets up an idol in his heart he loses the privilege of seeking God's wisdom and help. A prophet should not co-operate with one who sets up an idol in his heart and puts a stumbling block before his face. God wants to recapture the hearts of his people. Idols of the heart anger him. He wants his people to worship him and let him rule their hearts. He is God; he must be first.

### 2. I have done nothing without cause (12-23)

God is just; he promises to punish a country which is unfaithful. Even such righteous men as Noah, Daniel and Job could not save their countries by their righteousness--they could only walk with God and be saved themselves. God's punishment--sword, famine, wild beasts and plagues--have a purpose. Those who survive can know God, repent, and be saved.

Prayer: Lord, remove all the idols from my heart and help me to walk with you. Give the people of this land a spirit of repentance.

One Word: Don't have idols in the heart

## JERUSALEM IS LIKE AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE

Ezekiel 15:1-16:63 (Mon.) Nov. 9

Key Verse: 16:59,60

### 1. Jerusalem, a useless vine (15:1-8)

Because the people of Jerusalem were unfaithful to God they became useless. The fires of siege and invasion did not lead those who remained to repentance, and so now they were worse than useless.

### 2. An allegory of an unfaithful wife (16:1-63)

This chapter compares the people of Jerusalem to an unfaithful wife. God found them and cleaned them up when they were like an abandoned newborn baby. He cared for them until they grew up; he made a covenant of marriage with them and loved them until they became a powerful and beautiful nation, the envy of all of their neighbors. But they became proud (15) and turned to other gods, even sacrificing their children on pagan altars. They forgot the days of their youth (43). God punished them, but he still loved them (59,60). People forget God, but he does not forget his people.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember your great grace to me. Help me to be faithful to you.

One Word: Don't be unfaithful

## THE ALLEGORY OF TWO EAGLES AND A VINE

Ezekiel 17:1-24 (Tue.) Nov. 10

Key Verse: 17:24

### 1. The parable and its explanation (1-18)

The first great eagle was Babylon, who conquered Jerusalem and took many people into exile. The uprooted and replanted people flourished. The Babylonians appointed Zedekiah king in Jerusalem. He "stretched out his branches to Egypt for help." This was rebelling against Babylon (2Ki 24:20 ff). He lost everything, including his sons and his eyesight. (Read the lament in Eze 19.)

### 2. A covenant with the Sovereign Lord (19-24)

The Sovereign Lord is the one who controls history. Zedekiah did not suffer in exile just because he broke his covenant with the king of Babylon; it was because he broke his covenant with God. God would plant another shoot from David's family--a faithful man. It would grow into a great tree. This was a promise to send the Messiah. God is faithful to keep his covenant. A calculating pragmatist cannot be faithful to man or to God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful in my commitment to you and to your people.

One Word: God keeps his promises.

## THE SOUL WHO SINS WILL DIE

Ezekiel 18:1-32 (Wed.) Nov. 11

Key Verse: 18:4

### 1. Each is responsible for his own sins (1-20)

There is a sense in which children suffer for the sins of their fathers and forefathers, for God is the God of history. But God is just. Every person belongs to God, not to his parents or to anyone else. So, every person is responsible before God for his own decisions and actions. A child of godly parents must make his own decision of faith; a child of ungodly parents can also make a decision to live by faith.

### 2. God takes no pleasure in anyone's death (21-32)

God is eager to forgive anyone who comes to him with a repentant heart. But if a righteous man turns from his righteous life and deliberately sins, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered and he will die for his unfaithfulness. On the other hand, if a sinner repents and turns to God, he will be forgiven.

Prayer: Lord, give me a new heart and spirit every day, so that I may live a life that pleases you.

One Word: Repent and live

## A LAMENT FOR ISRAEL'S PRINCES

Ezekiel 19:1-14 (Thur.) Nov. 12

Key Verse: 19:14

### 1. The king who was taken to Egypt (1-4)

Israel was like a lioness with strong, promising cubs (Nu 23:24). But God's wrath was poured out on Israel because of her sins. King Josiah was a good man who tried to please God, but his sons

were evil. His first son, Jehoahaz, was an evil king. He was deposed by Pharaoh Neco and taken to Egypt, where he died (2Ki 23).

## 2. The kings who lived under Babylon (5-14)

King Jehoiakim was reigning when the Babylonians invaded. He was as evil as his brother. He tried to solve the problem of his nation's weakness by politics and he failed. God punished Judah for her sins (2Ki 24). His son, Jehoiachin, surrendered and was taken captive to Babylon, where he died. His roar was heard no more (9). Israel had had many great kings and promising leaders, but because of their sins the rich and fruitful country had become like a desert. There was no one fit to be a ruler. Every country needs wise, brave, faithful, and moral leaders.

Prayer: Lord, grant godly and courageous men to be the leaders of our country.

One Word: A lament for our country

## LIVE BY GOD'S LAW

Ezekiel 20:1-49 (Fri.) Nov. 13

Key Verse: 20:11

### 1. For the sake of his name (1-12)

Ezekiel reviewed history for the elders. God chose Israel; he promised to deliver them from Egypt and bring them to a good land. He told them to get rid of the idols of Egypt. They did not--but for the sake of his name, as a witness to the nations, he brought them out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai. There he gave them his law--the Bible--to teach them how to live. He gave them the Sabbath as a sign so that they might know God who made them holy. Whoever obeys God's law will live.

### 2. They rebelled and rejected God's law (13-49)

Again, he did not destroy them. For the sake of his name and because he had pity on them, he brought them to the good land. Still they followed idols--but he did not destroy them. He put them under laws that brought death instead of life (25); he scattered them among the nations. They were not missionaries there; they served the idols and followed the evil ways of the nations (32). So he punished them, and longed for their repentance, and hoped for their restoration.

Prayer: Lord, help me to obey your law and live. Let your name be honored.

One Word: Obey God's word and live

## THE SWORD AND THE SCEPTER

Ezekiel 21:1-32 (Sat.) Nov. 14

Key Verse: 21:13,27

### 1. Babylon, a drawn sword (1-17)

Because the priests and people of Jerusalem turned from God to idolatry, immorality and violence, God punished them. The Babylonian army, invading with swords drawn, was his instrument of judgment. False prophets clung to God's promise in Genesis 49:10, saying that the scepter of Judah would withstand the sword of Babylon. But the scepter of Judah was like a stick before the sword (10,13).

### 2. The rightful prince (18-32)

The king of Babylon would come to a fork in the road, seek a sign, then choose to destroy Jerusalem instead of Rabbah. The profane and wicked prince of Judah would take off his crown and be utterly humbled. The crown and scepter would be restored to Judah when Jesus the Messiah comes, for he is the one to whom it rightfully belongs (Ge 49:10). God keeps his promises.

Prayer: Lord, even in the worst of times your promises shine like gold. Help us to repent when we are punished.

One Word: The scepter is restored

## A MAN TO STAND IN THE GAP

Ezekiel 22:1-31 (Sun.) Nov. 15

Key Verse: 22:30

### 1. Utter corruption in Jerusalem (1-22)

When men forget the Sovereign God (12b), they become utterly corrupt. The exiles had hope in Jerusalem, but the people there were idolatrous, lewd, and immoral. They totally disregarded God's laws and offended the sovereign God. All the people had become like useless dross. God would make Jerusalem like a furnace and blow on the people until they melted (17-22). When God cleaned up things, both the sinful people and the exiles would know that God is the sovereign Lord (16,22).

### 2. God looks for a faithful man (23-31)

God looked for one faithful man who could build the wall and stand before God in the gap on behalf of the land, but there was no one. In every age and in every country God looks for faithful men who can stand in the gap. In Jerusalem, at that time, there was no one. Princes were conspirators; priests violated the law and profaned the Sabbath; officials exploited the people; the people oppressed the poor. So God would pour out his wrath.

Prayer: Lord, grant one man who can stand in the gap as your man. Make me that one faithful person.

One Word: A man to stand in the gap

A VERY PERSONAL SIGN

Ezekiel 24:1-27 (Mon.) Nov. 16

(Read as background 23:1-49)

Key Verse: 24:24

1. Total depravity and God's punishment (23:1-24:14)

The two adulterous sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, represent Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem). Ezekiel's language is too vivid for public reading. The promiscuous lives of these two sisters are a parable of the unfaithfulness of God's people. God hates sexual immorality and spiritual adultery. The people left in Jerusalem thought that they were much better than those taken into exile, but they were not. Soon the city would be destroyed and they would be taken. Jerusalem would become like an empty pot placed on the coals to burn away its impurities.

2. Ezekiel's wife dies (24:15-27)

The destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC) marks a turning point. Ezekiel's wife died the day the temple was destroyed. Just as the joy and delight of Ezekiel's life was removed, so the joy and hope of the exiles was destroyed. He was told not to mourn, and the people were to do as he did. He and they could only turn to the Lord in silent, painful grief.

Prayer: Lord, help me to do as you command in both hard and easy times.

One Word: God's servant is a sign

THEN THEY WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD

Ezekiel 25:1-17 (Tue.) Nov. 17

Key Verse: 25:17b

1. A prophecy against Ammon and Moab (1-11)

The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (24:1,2) was God's discipline on his people to teach them that God is the Lord. Israel's neighbors were gleeful at her misfortune. The Ammonites and Moabites were descendants of Lot. The Ammonites gloated over the destruction of the temple and the exile of the Israelites. The Moabites said, "Judah's just like everyone else!" But God would also punish

these two nations by a foreign invasion. Then they would know that the God of Israel is the Sovereign Lord of the earth.

## 2. A prophecy against Edom and Philistia (12-17)

Edom bordered Judah on the southeast; Philistia was on the west coast. The Edomites were descendants of Esau. The Philistines were ancient enemies. These countries took malicious revenge on Judah. In the sight of God, revenge is always wrong. God is the only avenger (Ro 12:19). He would exercise his vengeance against these nations--so that they might know that he is the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, remove all malice and all grudges from my heart so that I may not be like the pagan nations.

One Word: God is the only avenger

## THE FALL OF BEAUTY AND ARROGANCE

Ezekiel 26:1-28:26 (Fri.) Nov. 27

Key Verse: 28:17

### 1. Tyre's destruction prophesied (26:1-21)

Tyre was the island capital of Phoenicia. The opportunists of this city had gloated when Jerusalem fell. But God would send the Babylonians to besiege and destroy Tyre.

### 2. A funeral poem for Tyre (27:1-36)

Tyre was a beautiful city. The rich merchants of the world brought their best wares to trade in this wealthy and powerful city. Tyre enjoyed the finest luxuries that the world could offer. Ezekiel compares Tyre to a magnificent ship (1-9); and her fall (25-26) to a shipwreck.

### 3. The king of Tyre (28:1-26)

The king of Tyre personifies pride and arrogance. His pride and his fall parallel that of Satan, that most beautiful and able of angels who forgot his position, challenged God, and was cast out of heaven. The king of Tyre thought he was a god. When power, wealth, beauty or wisdom make one proud, boastful, and corrupt, God will bring that one down to the ground.

Prayer: Lord, teach my heart to fear you; give to me and to our nation a spirit of repentance.

One Word: Pride goes before destruction

REMEMBER THAT GOD IS THE SOVEREIGN LORD

Ezekiel 29:1-30:26 (Sat.) Nov. 28

Key Verse: 29:16

1. The Lord is against Egypt (29:1-21)

Egypt was a symbol of security for many Israelites. Before the Babylonian invasion there was a strong pro-Egyptian party which encouraged Judah to resist Babylon and get help from Egypt (Isa 36:6). But Egypt was a broken reed--an undependable support. She represented a false hope, and God taught his people over and over to put their trust in him, not in Egypt (16). God would use the sword of Babylon to show the impotence of Egypt to the world. The horn (21) growing for Israel is a promise of the Messiah.

2. A funeral song for Egypt (30:1-26)

Egypt and all of her allies in northern Africa--"from Migdol to Aswan"--would fall by the sword. God would put his sword in the hand of the king of Babylon. God controls world history. The Egyptians, the Israelites and all the people of the world would know that the God of Israel is Lord of all the earth (29:6,9,16,21; 30:8,19,25,26).

Prayer: Lord, my trust is in you alone. My hope is in your promises. Give me wisdom not to be deceived by the false security of worldly power.

One Word: Know that God is Lord; trust him alone

## THE MIGHTY WILL FALL

Ezekiel 31:1-32:32 (Sun.) Nov. 29

Key Verse: 31:18

1. A cedar in Lebanon (31:1-18)

The cedars of Lebanon were famous for their height and beauty. Even the trees in the Garden of Eden could not rival them. Assyria was once like such a tree--but she was brought low. Pharaoh also was proud and powerful, and Egypt was the envy of all nations. But just as the majestic cedar of Lebanon would be cut down to fall ignominiously to the earth, so the Pharaoh would be killed with the sword and left to lie among the uncircumcised. The "uncircumcised" refers to those with no spiritual life and no eternal hope. Such death is tragic.

2. A lament for Pharaoh (32:1-32)

Pharaoh was like a lion or a crocodile--but he would be caught in the net and thrown out to die. Egypt would fall under the sword of Babylon (11), and join the other nations--Assyria, Elam, etc.--which had perished because of their sins.

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, help me to serve you with a humble heart, knowing that you are the ruler of all people and nations. Help America to repent and turn to you.

One Word: The proud will be brought low

GOD WANTS ALL MEN TO BE SAVED

Ezekiel 33:1-33 (Mon.) Nov. 30

Key Verse: 33:11

### 1. The watchman (1-20)

A watchman must warn the people of danger. If he does not, he is held accountable for their blood. If they ignore his warning, they are responsible. God's servant is a watchman. He must teach God's word clearly, and warn men to repent and turn from sin. No one is saved by his past good record. We must cross the finish line. No matter how righteous we have been, if we trust our own righteousness and turn from God, we will die. No matter how sinful we have been, if we repent and turn to God, we will live.

### 2. Why Jerusalem fell (21-33)

Jerusalem fell because the people did not obey God's laws. They thought the land was theirs by right. They did not depend on God. Rather, they depended on their own righteousness. They regarded God's servant as one who sang love songs and played the flute beautifully--just to entertain them. They enjoyed Bible study, but never obeyed.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a faithful Bible teacher; help me to obey your word.

One Word: God wants all men to be saved.

THE TRUE SHEPHERD

Ezekiel 34:1-31 (Tue.) Dec. 1

Key Verse: 34:23

### 1. Lazy, selfish shepherds rebuked (1-10)

God rebukes the shepherds who only take care of themselves. The shepherds of Israel were selfish--they ate the curds, clothed themselves with wool, and slaughtered choice animals. They were lazy--they didn't take care of the weak or sick sheep or look for strays. How much sheep suffer under such shepherds!

### 2. God himself is their shepherd (11-19)

He would rescue them from the places where they were scattered and bring them to good pasture; he would settle disputes between one sheep and another; he would rule them with justice.

### 3. One Shepherd, David (20-31)

God promised to send the true Shepherd, a descendant of King David, to shepherd his people. He sent Jesus to be that Shepherd (Jn 10:11). Jesus is the source of peace and real blessing.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a good sheep of my Shepherd Jesus. Give me his shepherd heart for your flock.

One Word: God is our Shepherd

## I WILL GIVE YOU A NEW HEART

Ezekiel 35:1-36:38 (Wed.) Dec. 2

Key Verse: 36:26

### 1. A prophecy against Edom (35:1-15)

The Edomites acted as if God were not there and took advantage of God's people in the time of their distress. Now they would suffer, and would know that God is LORD.

### 2. For the sake of my holy name (36:1-23)

God spoke to the mountains of Israel, for the people were away in exile. They had failed to be a holy nation, and he had punished them. They were scattered among the nations of the world, but they had not served him as a kingdom of priests, a missionary people. Rather, they profaned the name of God wherever they went. God would bring them home for the sake of his holy name, for they were a bad influence.

### 3. I will give them a new heart (24-38)

God promised to give his people a new heart so that they could be his holy people and a kingdom of priests--and be blessed. Jesus came to keep this promise.

Prayer: Lord, take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh, a heart to love you and your people.

One Word: A heart to praise and love God

## THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Ezekiel 37:1-28 (Thur.) Dec. 3

Key Verse: 37:2,3

1. Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord (1-14)

Ezekiel had a vision of a valley full of the dry bones of a slain army. The Lord told him to prophesy to the dry bones, and the word of the Lord would bring them to life. God is the Creator who gives life to the dead. His word calls us, who were dead in our sins, to cross over from death to life (Eph 2:1; Jn 5:24).

2. One nation and one King (15-28)

God's word through Ezekiel was another message of hope to the hopeless exiles. The nation, divided after the reign of Solomon and now suffering in Babylonian captivity, would be restored and united. The promised Messiah, the descendant of David, would sit on the throne. This looks forward to the Messianic kingdom of Jesus, when there will be one shepherd and one flock (Jn 10:16).

Prayer: Lord, I was dead in sin, but your word called me from death to life. My hope is in your kingdom alone.

One Word: Can these dry bones live?

GOD WILL SHOW HIS GREATNESS AND HOLINESS

Ezekiel 38:1-39:29 (Fri.) Dec. 4

Key Verse: 38:23

1. A prophecy against Gog (38)

This event refers to the final judgment, and "Israel" to the new Israel, the redeemed people of God. Gog is the ruler of a powerful nation; he leads many nations in an attack on Israel. This invasion is to take place when the land is peaceful and unsuspecting (8,11). The Lord's anger will be aroused (18). There will be a great earthquake, and every creature on earth will tremble. The Lord will execute judgment on Gog and on the nations with him. Thus, he will show his greatness and holiness to all the nations of the world. When evil men attack God's people, he stands on their side.

2. Israel's restoration (39)

Israel will become a giant graveyard for the invading armies (1-20). Then the Lord will display his glory among the nations of the world, for they will realize that Israel's punishment was to lead her to repentance. God will bless his people.

Prayer: Lord, let me be among your people when you reveal your holy arm.

One Word: God is holy; God is almighty

## THE GLORY RETURNS TO THE TEMPLE

Ezekiel 43:1-27 (Sat.) Dec. 5

(Read 40-42 as background)

Key Verse: 43:7

### 1. This is the place of my throne (1-12)

The exiles' great hope was to return to Jerusalem and worship God in his temple, but the temple was destroyed when Jerusalem fell (40:1). In the 25th year of the exile Ezekiel had a great vision of a new temple, filled with the glory of God. When the Israelites put away their lifeless idols and their prostitution (both physical and spiritual), the Lord would come and live among his people forever. This prophecy could only be fulfilled by Jesus, for he alone can live with us forever (Jn 1:14; 2:19-22). Ezekiel was to write down the temple plan so that the people could consider it and repent.

### 2. The altar (13-27)

God's way of demonstrating the sinfulness of sin and its terrible consequences was by the sacrificial system. The altar and the blood sacrifices point to Christ, the perfect and final sacrifice for sin.

Prayer: Lord, you are holy, but I am unholy. Cleanse me from sin and dwell in my heart.

One Word: God dwells among forgiven sinners

## THE PRIVILEGES OF FAITHFUL PRIESTS

Ezekiel 44:1-31 (Wed.) Dec. 6

Key Verse: 44:15a

### 1. The entrance and exits to the temple (1-9)

Who can go into the presence of God? God himself entered by the east gate, so this gate was sealed forever. His Presence fills the temple with glory. All others must enter in the way he prescribes. The Prince may enter by a special gate. He may eat in the presence of the Lord and go and come freely. The Prince represents Jesus. The people were rebuked for allowing those uncircumcised in heart and flesh to enter the sanctuary. God opened the way into his presence through repentance and faith in Jesus (Jn 10:7).

### 2. Faithful and unfaithful priests (10-31)

Many priests, especially in Northern Israel, had compromised with idolatry. But the sons of Zadok had been faithful--even when all Israel had gone astray. They alone could now serve in the sanctuary (15-16). But they must serve God in his way. God himself is the inheritance of his servants.

Prayer: Lord, help me to come into your presence daily through repentance and faith.

One Word: Be faithful; repent; come to God

THE LORD IS THERE

Ezekiel 47:1-12 (Mon.) Dec. 7

(Read 45-48 as background)

Key Verse 48:35b

1. When we return (45-46)

The exiles longed to return home. When they returned, the land must be divided and resettled. The first priority was the Lord's temple and his priests (45:1-6). The king was assigned his own land; he was not to use violence or oppress the people; he must be a shepherd. The new land must be a place of justice and peace (7-12). Each one would worship God as a sinner needing forgiveness (45:13-25). Chapter 46 describes regulations for worship that teach respect for the Sabbath and order in worship. God's people must fear God.

2. A river of blessing (47:1-12)

The river flowing from the temple resembles the river of the Garden of Eden and the river flowing from the throne of God (Rev 22). It is a life-giving river. It makes the salty sea a body of life-sustaining fresh water. Its fruit is for food and its leaves for the healing. The word and the Spirit that flow from God's throne room bless the whole world.

Prayer: Lord, come and dwell in our midst.

One Word: The Lord is there