



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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### An Introduction to Ezekiel, Part 2

Elisha and his servant were held up in Dothan (the place where years earlier Joseph caught up to his brothers and they threw him in the pit). The Arameans were posed to attack the city because Elisha, because of his prophetic gift, was able to inform the King of Israel of the battle plans of the king of Aram prior to the battle (2 Kings 6:12)!! Because of this, the king of Aram sent his troops to kill Elisha.

On that fateful morning when the Aramean army had caught up to Elisha at Dothan, Elisha's servant woke early and was the first to discover that the city was surrounded and that they were trapped! Straightway he went to Elisha and said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15b)

The following verses explain what happened.

2 Kings 6:16-17, "So [Elisha] answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

We all realize that it would be wrong to believe that the same angelic host that accompanied Elisha and his servant also accompanies us! However, what we may not all realize is that we do NOT need a host of angels, for we have something far greater!

As we seek to understand the significance Ezekiel 40, we need to be familiar with a very important concept in Scripture which lies behind this passage: The Covenant Presence of God!

## The Covenant Presence of God

The Covenant Presence of God is a major theme that pervades Scripture. In creation we see the Covenant Presence of God.

Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."

How is it that something came from nothing? The answer is, "God was present... as such blessing, creation, growth occurred!" God was present at the beginning, and the result was this world.

We also read of the Covenant Presence of God at the end of this world:

Revelation 21:3, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them.'"

When the sun has set on this world, God still will be with His people and so will usher them into the eternal state! Not surprisingly then, this is a major motif of Scripture found throughout all Redemptive History!

As we have discussed this in the past, let's quickly review what is meant in the Bible by the Covenant Presence of God. First, we note that one of God's attributes is that He is Omnipresent. That means, that God is everywhere; or more accurately, everything is in the direct presence of God at all times. Now when we discuss the Covenant Presence of God we are NOT talking about His Omnipresence, BUT something more. God's Covenant Presence flows from His love, grace, and mercy. It speaks of the riches of His presence which results in

creation, life, health, growth, healing, and restoration (in the case of a fallen world). When God's Covenant Presence accompanied the people of God in the wilderness, it brought with it:

- Protection, Exodus 14:10, 14, 19-20, 24-25.
- Guidance, Exodus 13:18, 21.
- Great encouragement, Exodus 14:30-31.
- A sign of the uniqueness of God's people, Exodus 33:16.
- And ultimately fellowship, Exodus 33:9-10.

Throughout Scripture, the Covenant Presence of God brings with it spiritual fruit and progress which results in deep and abiding communion/fellowship. Notice what God promised Joshua:

Joshua 1:5, "...just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you..."

And what was the result?

Joshua 1: 5a, "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life..."

Joshua 1:5c, "...I will not fail you or forsake you."

The promise of this passage is tantamount to God saying, *"I will walk with you, and therefore I will defend, uphold, and strengthen you!"* When the Lord spoke to David, we read:

2 Samuel 7:8b-9, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be ruler over My people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name...'"

Here we see God's covenantal presence resulting in God "walking" with David which again resulted in great spiritual blessing. Solomon prayed this way:

1 Kings 8:56-57, "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant. May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us."

Speaking of God's saving activity among His people we read this:

Isaiah 63:9, "In all their affliction He [God] was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old."

Luke 7:16, "And fear gripped them all, and they *began* glorifying God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and, 'God has visited His people!'"

That is why when we read of Adam and Eve in the garden:

Genesis 3:8, “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”

We know something very bad has happened! God condescended to Adam and Eve to bless them AND Adam and Eve are now fleeing. This is the cost and consequence of sin! It robs us of God’s delight!

Recall the prayer of Moses after the rebellion of God’s people in wilderness.

Exodus 33:15, “Then he said to Him, ‘If Thy presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here.’”

It is imperative that you and I understand that the Covenant Presence of God was graphically and gloriously portrayed and proclaimed when, at the completion of the Temple, the Lord descended upon the temple and entered into the Holy of Holies.

1 Kings 8:10-11, “And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”

God’s glorious presence in the Temple proclaimed NOT ONLY the majesty and glory of the Lord, BUT His stamp of approval, blessing, and promise! Such is the Covenant Presence of God!

To all of this we add a very important consideration. At the start of the theocracy, recall the warning God gave the nation.

Leviticus 26:14-17, “But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that shall waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you shall sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies shall eat it up. And I will set My face against you so that you shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when no one is pursuing you.”

From this we understand that the Old Testament nation of Israel was founded on a conditional basis! If God’s people as a nation proved faithful to the Lord, the nation would enjoy the Covenant Blessings of God. However, if God’s people as a nation proved unfaithful, they *as a nation* would forfeit the Covenant Blessings of God and so be wiped off the face of the earth!

God’s word is clear, never would God’s covenant promises given to the child of God at the time of Abraham be overturned! Speaking of the time when God would disown the nation on

account of their rebellion, this is what the Lord promised:

Leviticus 26:44-45, "...when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord."

What happened? The Nation rebelled against God greatly! It

- Rejected the worship of God to serve the Baals!
- Rebelled against the heart of the Covenant by taking advantage of the poor and needy rather than helping them.
- Even resorted to human sacrifice and perversities of the grossest kind!

When you read Ezekiel, you will note that Ezekiel highlights all of this and more in his rebuke to the nation prior to its fall! As such, as we approach 586 BC we would expect that the Nation of Judah would forfeit the Covenant Presence of God, which brings us to a second major theme found in Ezekiel, the imminent downfall of Jerusalem.

The Imminent  
Downfall of Jerusalem,  
Ezekiel 1:1, 2; 8:1;  
20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1;  
29:17; 30:20; 31:1;  
32:1; 32:17; 33:21.

The Loss and  
Recovery of the  
Covenant Presence of  
God, Ezekiel 40:1-4

We saw that the way

the book of Ezekiel was put together, it contains a Countdown to Judgment! In fact, we looked at each of the time-indicators of Ezekiel by which we ourselves saw/participated in the countdown (again, see the chart)!

Now, if you were keen in your observation, you noted last week that I left out the last date-reference in Ezekiel, a passage that brings us well beyond the fall of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 40:1-2, "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was taken, on that same day the hand of the Lord was upon me and He brought me there. In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me on a very high mountain; and on it to the south *there*

**Ezekiel's Chronology**  
Mostly taken from J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel, TOTC* p. 38.

Reference	Event Described	Ezekiel's Date			Date by Julian Calendar			King
		Day	Month	Year	Month	Day	Year	
	Ezekiel's Birth						623	Josiah's Revival
	Ezekiel Departed (~ age 26)						597	Zedekiah
1:1	Ezekiel's call	5	4	30	July	31	593	
1:2	Ezekiel's call	5	~4	5	July	31	593	
8:1	Vision of idolatry in Jerusalem	5	6	6	September	17	592	
20:1	Deputation of elders	10	5	7	August	9	591	
24:1	The siege begins	10	10	9	January	15	588	
26:1	Oracle against Tyre	1	~11	11	February	12	586	
29:1	Oracle against Egypt	12	10	10	January	7	587	
29:17	From Tyre to Egypt	1	1	27	April	26	571	
30:20	Pharaoh's broken arm	7	1	11	April	29	587	
31:1	Oracle against Pharaoh	1	3	11	June	21	587	
32:1	Lament over Pharaoh	1	12	12	March	3	585	
32:17	Pharaoh in Sheol	15	~12	12	March	17	585	
33:21	'The city has fallen'	5	10	12	January	8	585	
40:1	Vision of the new Jerusalem	10	1	25	April	28	573	

*was a structure like a city [Jerusalem].”*

The date referenced here was April 28, 573 BC, fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem! This marks the beginning of the last section of Ezekiel (40-48) in which God details the plans for a refurbished Jerusalem which would be established on this earth prior to the Final Judgment (we'll talk more about this later).

Now wait a second! I thought this book gave us a countdown to the fall of Jerusalem! It does! Why then does Ezekiel go beyond the fall of Jerusalem? Because as I just referenced, there is a second major theme of this book which goes beyond the fall of that city, it is the restoration of the Covenant Presence of God amongst His people! Yes, Ezekiel contains doom and gloom, but you must understand: God's providence at this time all had a greater purpose. To see that, I want you to look with me at a couple of passages in this book which bring out this important theme.

Ezekiel 1:4-5, 26-28, “And as I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. And within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form... [with this Ezekiel described these angelic beings with their four faces and two sets of wings who together with four sets of two interlocking wheels uphold a crystal-like platform on which the Lord sat upon a throne]... 26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was* a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.”

With this vision, Ezekiel is a man out of place and time, an exile in a foreign land (not Babylon but in the presence of God Almighty!). His introduction to God's presence is clear in its meaning for us: We humans fall face first in awe of the majesty and wonder when we are confronted by God! Yet God in His grace and compassion speaks to Ezekiel, and His Spirit lifts Ezekiel to his feet.

Ezekiel 2:1-2, “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!’ And as He spoke to me the Spirit ENTERED ME and set me on my feet; and I heard *Him* speaking to me.”

From this point on through chapt. 4, God calls Ezekiel to the prophetic ministry. Yet the calling comes after the God of creation first joined Himself to Ezekiel! From this, the one clear implication (which we'll see) is that Ezekiel could do the ministry to which God called and

equipped him because a glorious, holy, awesome Being accompanied him just as He had accompanied His people throughout all the time they sojourned in the Land of Promise! The Lord would be with Ezekiel as He had been with His people!

Yet on account of the nation's rebellion, God's presence was about to leave the nation of Judah forever! At some point, we will discuss this in detail, so we won't look at all the passages detailing the removal of God's Covenant Presence amongst His people. However, skip to Ezekiel 11.

Ezekiel 11:22-23, "Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. And the glory of the Lord went up [once and for all] from the midst of the city, and stood over the mountain which is east of the city."

The covenant presence of God that had been with the Nation of Judah, that had been responsible for countless blessing, in spite of their national rebellion, departed! What a shocking reality!

From this you must see that God's presence amongst His people was/is not a given! In light of this, as an exile Ezekiel spoke to the people of God in exile:

- Helping them to understand what went wrong (Ezekiel 12:3).
- Calling them to repent of their past (Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30, 20:4).
- Looking to the glorious future that was coming (Ezekiel 12:28).

So, Judah/God's People forfeited the Covenant Blessing of God. Yet that is NOT the end of the story. We come to a turning point in Ezekiel with Ezekiel 37.

Ezekiel 37:1-6, "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord [God's Covenant Presence continued with Ezekiel and so directed him in and through all things] and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. And He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, *there were* very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, *they were* very dry. [The bones represent the people of God as a fallen army, ravished and defeated in their battle against sin; we will in time examine this passage! Notice what God then asked...] And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord God, Thou knowest.' [wise answer!!!] Again He said to me, 'Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, "O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord" [notice what happened to this fallen army of God's elect when they received the word of the Lord...]. Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. [We are looking here at a re-creation!!! which resulted from the Covenant Presence of God that accompanies giving of His word...] And I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.'"

The Covenant Presence of God was NOT lost on the people of God. It most certainly would come again to the individual in the travesty and despair of their sin as they submitted to and so labored to fulfill the word of the Lord!

What a rebirth! What a glorious re-beginning! Ezekiel (and we through him) learns that there is NO *real, genuine* life apart from the presence of God in our lives. When the breath of the Lord accompanies an individual- His Covenant Presence- “the valley of weeping becomes a spring” (Psalms 84:6)!

Now Ezekiel continues to prophesy which brings us beyond Ezekiel 37. His message is clear:

- (1) God’s people will unify under one Shepherd (Ezekiel 37:15–28),
- (2) God will oppose Gog and Magog- representatives of the fallen world in which we live- (Ezekiel 38:1–39:24), and
- (3) The Lord will restore the fortunes of His people (Ezekiel 39:25–29). What an incredible promise! And yet, God is NOT finished. The closing of this prophecy- the final prophecy- contains a proclamation of God’s plans for the rebuilding of a Jerusalem *in this current age...*

Ezekiel 40:1-4, “In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was taken, on that same day the hand of the Lord was upon me and He brought me there. In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me on a very high mountain; and on it to the south *there was* a structure like a city [it’s Jerusalem]. So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. And the man said to me, ‘Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show *it* to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see.’”

As Ezekiel watches, the man of bronze begins to mark out the dimensions of the new temple (Ezekiel 40:4–43:27), a restored priesthood (Ezekiel 44), and a land as an eternal inheritance for God’s people (Ezekiel 45–48).

We will discuss this in some detail at the end of our study of this book. For now, note, there is much debate as to the significance of the plans of this city as it related to God’s Redemptive program.

- Is this the temple that God’s people would rebuild when once they were restored to the land?
- Is this a description of the New Jerusalem in which someday all in Christ will dwell in eternity?

The answer is “No!” to both<sup>1</sup> (and I’ll explain that later again when we study this final section).



Truly, the Jerusalem described here is the Jerusalem of Gal. 4:26, the “Jerusalem above” which corresponds to the people of God in Christ in the world today! From this we see that Ezekiel 40-48 is a most glorious and encouraging passage packed with promises and assurances of God’s plan and design for His people in this current age! In light of this, notice one more passage... the close of this prophecy... the very last verse...

Ezekiel 48:35b, “...and the name of the city from *that day shall be*, ‘The Lord is there.’”

I’ll bet you never knew that.

- The name of the Kingdom of God of which we are apart is, “The Lord is there!”- **יְהוָה שָׁמָּה** (*Adonai Shemah*)!
- The name of the church you are attending today ultimately is, “The Lord is there!”- **יְהוָה שָׁמָּה** (*Adonai Shemah*)!
- The moment you were saved by the blood of the Lamb likewise your name was changed. When God and the angelic hosts behold you now, they think, “The Lord is there!”- **יְהוָה שָׁמָּה** (*Adonai Shemah*)!
- Accordingly, everywhere you go and at all times, the ONE characteristic that overwhelms and overpowers everything else is, “The Lord is there!”- **יְהוָה שָׁמָּה** (*Adonai Shemah*)!

Don’t ever forget the glorious promise that accompanied the coming of Christ. Gabriel spoke to Joseph, heralding the birth of Christ:

Matthew 1:23, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’”

Don’t ever forget the last promise Christ gave us as He sent us out into the world:

Matthew 28:20, “...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

That is where Ezekiel ended this prophecy; in effect, the same way he began it, by explaining how God’s presence is made known to people!

- It is in the Christ that God’s Covenant Presence is realized in a life today (cf. Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26)!
- It therefore is in submission to His word and will that we reap the benefits of His Covenant Presence in our lives (Ezekiel 37:1-6)!

What an incredible promise given to a people living in such tumultuous times as were the people of God in Ezekiel’s day! The end of the world as they knew it was NOT the end of God’s redemptive program! Man’s greatest good, his chief end, could still be found and enjoyed as the Lord drew near and they received Him!

Christian, today we bear the name of יהוה שמיה (Adonai Shemah), “The Lord is there!” May that name be more than a moniker... may it be our greatest joy, comfort, and inspiration!

End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the latter option, it is 1/2 correct!