

# God's Message to Us in Ezekiel 25-48 (Part 2)

*Halifax, NS*

9 September 2018, 2:00 PM

## **Introduction**

In our sermon series on God's Message to Us in Every Book of the Bible,

- I am preaching one or two sermons on every book in the Bible with the goal of showing you, in an overview fashion, how these books speak to us today.
- Last week we did the first of two sermons on Ezekiel.
  - We covered the first 24 chapters.

I did a fair bit of background to show you how Ezekiel fits in with the other two major writing prophets—Isaiah and Jeremiah—whose books we have already studied.

- In brief,
  - We saw that Isaiah was the earliest, starting his ministry in 740 BC and ministering for 59 years until 681 BC.
  - Fifty-five years later, Jeremiah came along. That would be in 626 BC, and Jeremiah continued to minister until just after the fall of Jerusalem (it fell in 586 BC so he continued until 585 BC or so).
    - The fall of Jerusalem was a very disturbing event because it was at Jerusalem that God had established His temple, showing that He dwelt with His people, and it was there that the descendants of David reigned—and it was from David's line and to David's throne that the Messiah would come who would save His people and reign forever.
    - God had conspicuously preserved Jerusalem, the temple, and David's line for several hundred years, but now He had left them to be destroyed.
  - The LORD gave both Jeremiah and Ezekiel that task of proclaiming to His people that the time had come that Jerusalem, the temple, and the throne of David would be destroyed, as Isaiah had prophesied many years before.
  - Ezekiel's ministry actually overlapped with Jeremiah's, beginning in 593 BC, before the fall of Jerusalem.
    - Only, Ezekiel did not minister in Jerusalem as Jeremiah did, but to those who had been carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.
    - He deported many of the leaders at Jerusalem in 605 BC, and 10,000 more of the people in 597 BC when Ezekiel was taken, but despite this, the people refused to believe that God would allow Jerusalem and the temple and the house of David to fall.
    - The message of Jeremiah in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylon was rejected until 586 when their words were fulfilled.
      - Ezekiel then continued his ministry until at least 571 BC when his last prophecy is dated.

Last week, we looked at Ezekiel before and up unto the fall of Jerusalem.

- This is the part that is more or less covered in the first 24 chapters where he is earnestly declaring to his fellow exiles, in some very interesting and memorable ways that God gave him, that Jerusalem will fall.

**I. Last week, I pointed out to you how Ezekiel shows us repeatedly that the God is the LORD, and we looked at what happens to His people when He withdraws from them.**

- A. God's presence with His people is the thing that makes them great.
- That is how it was for Israel, the church in the Old Testament, and that is how it is for us, the church in the New Testament.
- B. We saw that Ezekiel had a vision of God in His chariot departing from Jerusalem.
1. In Ezekiel 1-3, (in 593 BC), God appears to him in this magnificent chariot and commands him to proclaim the coming destruction of Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon.
  2. About a year later as recorded in chapters 8-10, Ezekiel has a vision in which he is carried off to Jerusalem and is shown all the idolatry and wickedness going on there.
  3. And in Ezekiel 10:18, he sees God on the chariot departing from Jerusalem—
    - God had left His temple because of their extreme wickedness and idolatry!
    - He will no longer defend His city, His temple, and the throne of David.
- C. But the people did not believe Ezekiel's message.
- They did the same thing we do today.
1. They minimised their sin and denied the severity of the judgment—
    - We don't like to admit that our sin is so great that we deserve to go to hell,
      - nor do we like to admit that God will send all those there—even church members—who have not come back to Him through faith in Jesus Christ.
  2. God told them that their sin was so bad that He would profane His sanctuary (let the temple be destroyed) because of them.
    - He says to Ezekiel in 24:22: **“Speak to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I will profane My sanctuary...” ’ ”**
      - To profane it means to treat it as any ordinary building instead of as His holy house.
  3. What many so-called Christians deny today is that the sin of us all, the entire church, is so great that God not only profaned His earthly temple,
    - but also that He profaned His only Son when He came to represent us—
    - As our head, He had to be punished on the cross where He was cursed and treated as unclean and where He was rejected because of our sin.
      - Just as the day came that God departed from the temple because of His people's sins, so the day came that God departed from His Son and rejected Him for a time because of our sins.

TRANS> That tells us how much we need to rely on Jesus.

- If our sins as God's people put Him on the cross, what will become of those who do not come to God through faith in Him?
  - What punishment, what torment, there will be for them!
- But we peeked ahead last week and we saw that although God's glory departed from the temple so that the temple was destroyed,
  - at the end of Ezekiel it is rebuilt and He returns...
    - Ezekiel ends with a vision of a restored temple and with the city named, **“THE LORD IS THERE.”**

- So it was with Jesus...
  - He was profaned because of our sins,
  - He was rejected by God the Father.
  - He was crucified, dead and buried,
    - but then God raised Him up again and has been with Him and with all who come to Him for salvation ever since.
    - THE LORD IS THERE, with His people who are truly with His Son.
- This is where I want to pick up this week.

## II. But first let me briefly mention what is in chapters 25-32.

- In those chapters, the LORD shows us that He is the LORD who reigns not only over His own chosen people, but who has ultimate authority over all nations.
- A. Through Ezekiel, He gives specific prophecies of what is to become of many of Israel's neighbours—
  - The prophecy in Ezekiel 25:7 against Ammon is typical of these: **Indeed, therefore, I will stretch out My hand against you, and give you as plunder to the nations; I will cut you off from the peoples, and I will cause you to perish from the countries; I will destroy you, and you shall know that I am the LORD.**
    - You see how He says that when this happens, then they will know that He is LORD, because He told them beforehand what He would do to them.
- B. Also, in this section, He often declares that one of these reasons He is bringing destruction to them is on account of the way they treated Israel, His people.
  - For example, in Ezekiel 26:23, He says of Tyre: **“Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’<sup>3</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you...’”**
    - This makes it clear to all that although the LORD severely judged His people, He still loved them.

TRANS> But now I want to move on to show you what is revealed about the church, the people of God, in chapter 33-48, after their temple has been profaned and restored...

- or if I may say, after Christ has been profaned on the cross and raised again.

## III. In chapters 33-48 we see what happens when God graciously returns to Jerusalem and restores His glory among them once again.

- A. In chapter 33, we see the promise that those who return to the LORD will live.
  1. Here, the LORD tells Ezekiel that He has made him His watchman.
    - a. It was the watchman's task to go up in a tower and look to see if invaders were coming, and if they were, he was to blow the trumpet to warn the people.
      - If the watchman did not blow the trumpet, he was culpable, but if he did and they did not regard it, it was their fault.
    - b. Look at Ezekiel 33:7-9 and you can see what the LORD says to Ezekiel:
      - Ezek 33:7-9: **“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. <sup>8</sup> When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked**

**man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”**

2. Do you see the great love of God in this?
  - He wants His people to be warned that they must return to Him as their God!
    - If they continue in their rebellion, they will die in their sin.
    - But if they will return to Him, He will have mercy on them!
  - He goes on to elaborate that He wants to restore them—even though people say it is not fair for Him to receive sinners—it is His delight to do so if only they will hear and return to Him.
    - Look at verse 10—it pictures them thinking there is no hope for them because of their sin—Ezek 33:10: **“Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: ‘Thus you say, ‘If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?’” ’ ”**
    - Now see what God says! Verse 11: **“Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’” ’ ”**
      - He goes on to insist that He will fully pardon all those who come back to Him.
3. What a beautiful thing this is for us!
  - This is what we call the free offer of the gospel.
    - It doesn’t matter what sins you have committed—if you return to the LORD, He will gladly receive you.
    - It doesn’t matter that Israel’s sins were such that God profaned the temple on account of them...
    - It doesn’t matter that their sins and our sins were so bad that when Jesus came to redeem us, He had to be profaned and crucified...
      - God did this in order that we might be saved, and if you go to Him He will not cast you out...
  - So have you? Have you come to Christ? Have you responded to God’s call?
    - Hear what He says to you: **Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?**

TRANS> Now let’s move on to see what God does when He returns to us to bless us—when He restores us...

- B. In chapter 34, we see that the LORD promises that He will become our shepherd.
  1. The chapter opens with a stinging indictment against Israel’s shepherds.
    - In 34:1-3, Ezekiel says: **And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.” ’ ”** And it goes on...

- The Lord's obvious love for His people shines through in His anger against those who were supposed to be their leaders... whether they were kings or priests or teachers.
    - He wants these leaders to look after His church and they were not... the sheep were scattered because the shepherds were not looking after them.
2. So what is the LORD's solution?
- He Himself will become their shepherd!
    - Look at Ezekiel 34:11... **For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. <sup>13</sup> And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country."**
    - He goes on to speak of how He will protect them from predators and look after the sick and the injured ones.
3. This, of course, is what the LORD has now done in Christ, the Son of God, when He became flesh and came to us.
- Jesus, as you know, referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep.
  - And He zealously appoints men to serve as pastors and look after them.
    - These men often fail, as Israel's shepherds did, but by His mercy, He raises up those who are faithful to serve in His name and by His grace.
    - He tells us to pray for such men. He gives them to His people.
  - But ultimately, He is the shepherd who feeds us—the elders and ministers and deacons can provide care and minister the word, but it is Jesus who makes the word effective to speak into our lives and to bring us true faith and comfort...
    - It is also He who restores our souls and delivers us from Satan and from our own sinful flesh as well as the temptations of the world.
    - What mercy that God Himself should be our shepherd and care for us...
  - Ezekiel is assuring the whole church here in all ages that though we were driven into exile for our sins and our unfaithful shepherds were removed,
    - we will be brought back to the land and the day will come when He will be our shepherd.
      - That is what happened when Jesus came.

TRANS> What else will the LORD do when He restores us?

- C. In chapter 35, we see that the LORD will destroy our false brother Edom who is here referred to as Mount Seir.
1. This is the people of Esau, the brother of Jacob (remember that it was Jacob whose name was changed to Israel).

- God in His grace chose Jacob as the one whose descendants He would preserve over the years to be His people. He would keep on restoring them to Himself.
  - Esau, on the other hand, was left to go his own way.
    - He was a profane man who had no interest in the promises of God.
2. The great offense of the nation of Edom in Ezekiel's day was that they came against their brother Israel when the Babylonians had made Israel weak.
- They saw it as an opportunity to exploit their brother.
  - God says that He will destroy them for this... look at verse 4: **I shall lay your cities waste, and you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.**
    - And you see the reason... 35:5: **Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end...**
  - The LORD loves His people and He will not allow their own brother to treat them like that...
3. The principle here is that God will deal with our brothers who persecute us.
- What do I mean by our brothers?
    - I mean those who were once in God's covenant with us—who had the promises and covenants, but who rejected them and turned on us.
    - The worst persecutions have often come from those who once professed the LORD, and who still do in superficial ways.
      - It was the Jews themselves who hated our Lord and His followers...
      - And in the church, there were many faithful servants of the LORD whose blood was shed by the Pope and his minions.
    - The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was on account of apostate people in Israel rejecting Jesus and those who received Him... they were Edom.
      - And God will bring judgment at the last day against those in the church who have attacked their own brothers over the ages.
        - Ezekiel 35 teaches us that they will not be able go on with their hatred forever—they will be cast down to trouble us no more.

TRANS> Now let us move on to chapter 36 where we have one of the greatest blessings of all that the LORD promises to His church...

D. In chapter 36, we see that the LORD promises to bring us (His church) back from exile and to wash away all our sin.

1. In 36:17-19, He reminds them that He had cast them out because of their sins: **“Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. <sup>18</sup> Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. <sup>19</sup> So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.”**

- But the very fact of them being God’s people who were driven out of God’s land brought dishonour to God’s reputation—making the nations think that God was weak and unable to save them.
  - So verse 20 says: **“When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These *are* the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.’ ”**
- So because of concern for His own reputation, the LORD promised that He would restore them... in other words, it was not because they deserved to be restored.
- 2. But look at how He promises to restore them!
  - Look at 36:24-28: **For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. <sup>28</sup> Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.**
  - This came to full fulfilment when Jesus Christ came!
    - As we saw this morning in Mark, Jesus the Son of God is the One who baptises with the Holy Spirit!
      - No one else can do this!
    - When Jesus came into the world, God appointed baptism with clean water as a sign that the great day of baptism had come.
      - The Holy Spirit that Jesus baptises us with applies the benefits of Christ and His saving work to us...
        - He takes away our rebellious heart so that we come to Christ for salvation; and in uniting to Christ, our sins are pardoned because we are joined to Christ who shed His blood for us.
        - By Him, we are restored as His people and He becomes our God again, only this time in a relationship that once established, can never be broken.
          - This is indeed the very heart of the gospel.

TRANS> But the LORD is not done in showing Ezekiel how gloriously He will restore His people.

E. In chapter 37, the LORD shows us that He will raise us from the dead.

1. He had Ezekiel go to a valley of dry bones... and to command the bones to live.
  - And when he does, the bones take on sinews and flesh and then breath, and they live and stand as a great army.
  - The LORD explains what this means—that the day will come when He will cause His people to arise out of their graves.
    - Look at v 11ff: **Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then**

**you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. <sup>14</sup> I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the LORD.’ ”**

2. This is what the LORD has in mind for all those who are His people.
  - When He raises us up, He will completely restore us...
    - Surely this final state is described in verse 24-28... **David My servant *shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.* <sup>25</sup> Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David *shall be* their prince forever. <sup>26</sup> Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. <sup>27</sup> My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>28</sup> The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.**
      - The language here should not be taken in a woodenly literal way.
        - *David* refers to Christ, *Jacob* refers to the entire church, *the land* refers to the inheritance of the whole earth, and *the tabernacle* perhaps refers to the resurrected saints with whom God will dwell.
  - What a glorious hope we have in Christ... we, who are part of this same church that was driven from the land for our sin and are to be raised from the dead to live with God forever.

TRANS> But what about our enemies?

- How could we enjoy eternity if Satan and those who are united with his cause of independence from God are still around to harass us?

F. In chapter 38-39, we are told that the LORD will wipe out oppressing nations.

1. These chapters speak of Gog and certain allies of Gog arising against Israel, the people of God.
  - With these prophecies which are filled with so much symbolism, it is hard to tell for sure whether this is speaking of final judgment or of a time before that when God will give dominion to His people before Christ returns...
    - But as this occurs after the resurrection from the grave spoken of in Ezekiel 37, it would seem that it is speaking of God at last judging all who oppose Christ and His kingdom.
2. It is clear, in any case, that God is going to judge the enemies of His church.
  - He is going to wipe them out and then everyone will know that He is the LORD.
  - And His people will be able to live in peace and to serve Him without harassment or fear in holiness and righteousness forever.
    - There will be a complete end to all of their enemies.

TRANS> And all of these things that we have seen lead to the great climax we have at the end of Ezekiel...

G. In chapters 40-48, Ezekiel is given a vision of a great temple and a great city that the LORD will establish for His people.

1. Remember that the temple is the house of God—it is where God dwells.
  - And temple and the city in which God promises to dwell is us—his people—who are redeemed by Jesus Christ.
  - Ezekiel has this vision of this great temple which in Revelation is called the Bride of Christ which comes down from heaven.
  - Look at where this is promised in Ezekiel 43:1ff: **Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. <sup>2</sup> And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice *was* like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. <sup>3</sup> *It was* like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions *were* like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. <sup>4</sup> And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. <sup>5</sup> The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>6</sup> Then I heard *Him* speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. <sup>7</sup> And He said to me, “Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places.”**
2. Hebrews tells us that Abraham and Moses looked for a city whose builder and maker is God, and it tells us that it is an eternal city, not made with human hands.
  - This is something much greater that they will receive in the resurrection.
    - It is what we are all waiting for.
    - But no one who is not reconciled to God will be allowed to enter this temple.
      - In Ezek 44:9, it says: **Thus says the Lord GOD: “No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who *is* among the children of Israel.”**
    - Chapter 47 speaks of the healing waters that will flow out of this temple and that will restore all things that have been destroyed by the curse.
3. But as has already been noted, the greatest thing of all about this city whose builder and maker is God is that God Himself will be there.
  - Look at the very last verse in Ezekiel... 48:35 and to see again that Ezekiel ends with what the end shall be for all of God’s people!
    - This city that shall be established shall be named “THE LORD IS THERE.” *Yahweh Shammah* in Hebrew.
  - God will be with us forever as our God and we will be with Him forever as His people—as His children who adore Him as our gracious Father who has redeemed us from all our sins.
    - Our joy will be full because He will be with us forever, and there is none so glorious, so wonderful, so excellent as He.

**Conclusion:** But now let us return to Ezekiel 33 where all these promises began.

- It is my duty, as it was the duty of Ezekiel, to warn you that unless you are in the LORD our Saviour, you will die in your sin.

- You will die without having the Lord as your shepherd and without having Him cleanse you from your sin.
- You will not rise from the grave to live before Him, but only to be condemned with Gog, nor will you be part of the eternal city and temple in glory.
  - But there is no need that any of you should perish, for the LORD Himself said:  
**Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?**