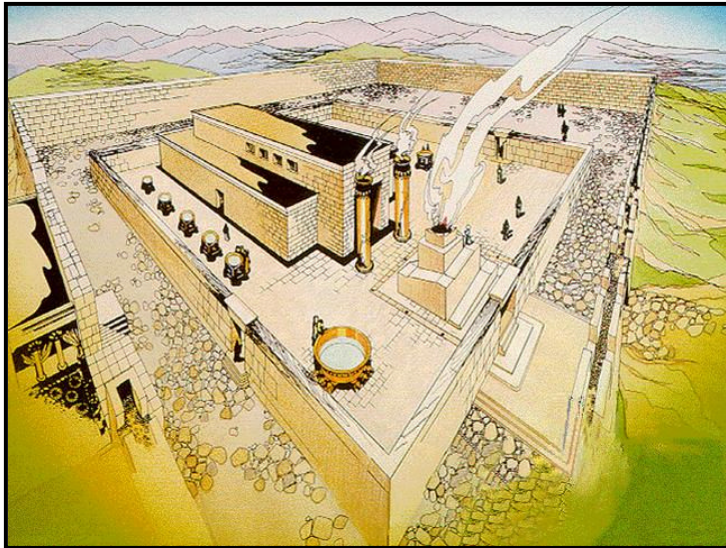




Ezekiel & The End Times



Introduction to Ezekiel and the End Times

The book of Ezekiel is one of the major prophets of the Bible along with Jeremiah and Isaiah. Ezekiel shares a kindred theme with Isaiah and Jeremiah. All three prophets deal with a disobedient people who have turned away from God, who are judged but promised restoration. Ezekiel gives us a detailed account of the events surrounding the restoration of the nation, and God's reign over the earth after the nation is restored.

To understand how Ezekiel relates to the rest of scripture, we need to understand the historical and theological background behind this amazing book of God's revelation.

Who is Ezekiel?

Ezekiel (*God strengthens*) is a priest, the son of a priest Buzi (Ezk 1:3), who was taken captive into the land of Babylon along with King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jerusalem's rebellion (2 Kings 24:14-16). Ezekiel was in the 5th year of his captivity, when at 30 he had visions of God in 593/94 B.C.



Ezekiel was part of the Jewish captivity living in Babylon at the time (593 B.C.), by this time Ezekiel had a house and a wife, he was settled with the rest of the captivity. His ministry was to the captives of Babylon, while Jeremiah had a ministry to the residents of Jerusalem, and Daniel was part of Babylonian government (Daniel 2)

Ezekiel's ministry started in the 5th year of his captivity (593 B.C.) and lasted to the 27th year of captivity (573 B.C.) Ezekiel. 29:17. Ezekiel according to tradition is buried along the Euphrates River near Baghdad.

Ezekiel's Background

Historical Background

The events in Ezekiel take place over 800-years after Moses lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and 300-years after Solomon built the Temple of God on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem (960 B.C.). In Ezekiel we are confronted with God's wrath against his people and His Temple. Ezekiel is God's witness in his judgment against the land of Israel and the Temple. The people of Israel (Judah) have profaned the Temple of God with their idols and abominations, thinking God did not know (Ezekiel 8). This was the culmination of Israel's apostasy, now God was about to judge the land and the people.

The Tabernacle and Temple

Central to scripture is God's plan of redemption, which was typified in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. In the Garden of Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8), humanity had fellowship with God. This all changed with the fall, death and sin entered, humanity was now fallen, separated from God. God established a plan of redemption, through the Messiah, God would restore lost humanity.

Sacrifice was a principle established by God, where the blood of another could substitute for the sins of the sinner. God demonstrated this when He killed animals to cover the nakedness of Adam and

Eve (Gen. 3:21). When God established his covenant with Abraham, he confirmed it was through sacrifice. The presence of God passed through the animals Abraham killed to confirm His relationship with Abraham.

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates

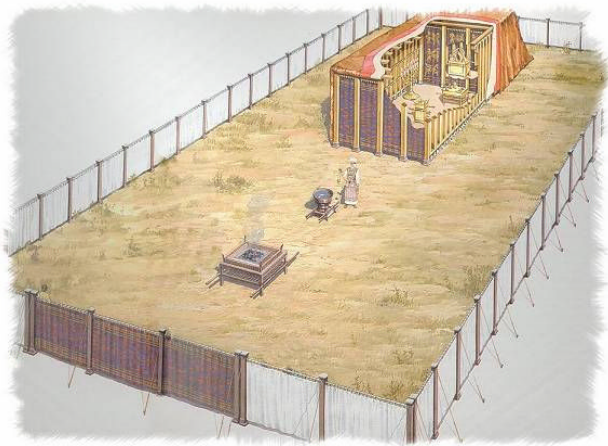
Genesis 15:17-18



The blood of the sacrifice was an illustration of the consequence of sin, resulting in death. When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, he established the Tabernacle, where the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could have communion with God. Through this sacrificial system of the Tabernacle and later the Temple, the Creator would reveal Himself to His fallen creation. The Lord led Israel out of Egypt in pillar of a cloud by day and pillar of fire at night. The nation could see the presence of God, as He led them through the wilderness.

21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.

22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people. **Exodus 13:21-22**



In the wilderness of Sinai, Israel rebelled against God, they complained about their circumstances, even though they were delivered from hard bondage in Egypt. Israel witnessed the parting of the Red Sea, the healing of the bitter waters, the plagues on Egypt and the very presence of God. The attitude and the ingratitude of the people angered God. God responded,

7 "And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?"

8 Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints

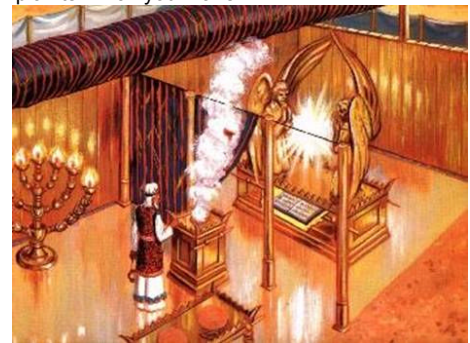
are not against us but against the Lord."

9 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your complaints.'"

10 Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

Exodus 16:7-10

The *Glory of the Lord*, the revealed presence of God, appeared in the cloud. Israel saw God Himself, called the Glory of the Lord. Israel's grumblings and complaints against God did not end this eventually resulted in the nation wandering Sinai for 40-years as the complaining and rebellious generation died off. In the wilderness, God established the Tabernacle so people could be restored to God for their sins, God would



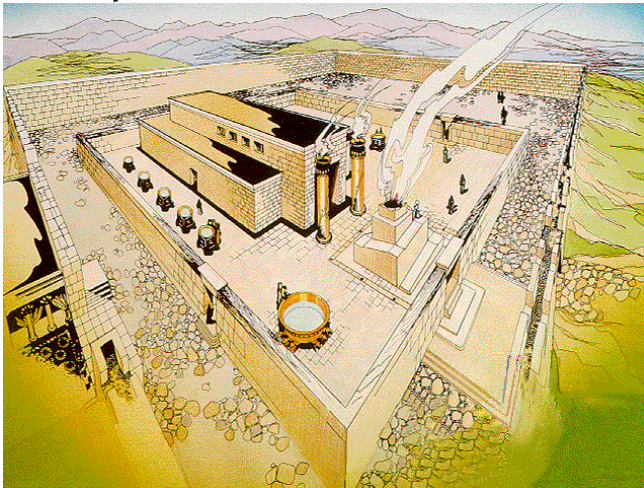
let Himself be known to the High-Priest, who would communicate God's will to the people, and the priest would intervene before God on their behalf (Leviticus 16). Like Adam and Eve, sin separated Israel from God; however the Tabernacle provided Israel the opportunity to atone for their sins and be restored to God, the *Glory of the Lord*.

The Tabernacle was a picture of Heaven, with the throne of God, called the *Mercy Seat*, located above the *Arc of the Covenant* which held the Law of God, the 10-Commandments. The Mercy Seat was between two carved Cherubs, the angels which surrounded the throne of God. The Arc was located in the area of the Temple called the *Holy of Holies*, only one time a year could the High-Priest enter this area to atone for the sins of the nation (Lev. 16).

After Israel entered the Promised Land, God established the Tabernacle as the central point where the nation of Israel was to have communion with God. This location became permanent, when David purchased the land of Mount Moriah, a part of Jerusalem, at the command of God as the place where God's Tabernacle was to dwell (I Chronicles 21). Like the Tabernacle, God gave specific instructions how His Temple was to be constructed, and what items were to be included (I Chronicles 28). When the Temple was completed by Solomon, the presence of God filled the Temple.

10 And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord,
11 so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. **I Kings 8:10-11**

God continual presence and relationship was contingent on Israel's obedience, If Israel obeyed they would be blessed, but if the nation turned away from the Lord, then they would scattered and the Temple destroyed.



6 "But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,
7 "then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples.
8 "And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?'
9 "Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them;

therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them.' **I Kings 9:6-9**

The Temple became a sign of the nation's relationship with God. If the Temple was destroyed and the people cut off from the land it was because they turned away from God. Ezekiel lived at such a time, when the people turned away from the Lord God, they took God and His word lightly giving Him lip service. Ezekiel was called to witness against the nation.

Israel's Rebellion

In the year 1450 B.C., Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt; they entered the Promised Land about 1400 B.C. under the leadership of Joshua. For the next 400-years during the period of Judges, Israel struggled with the other nations and in their relationship with God. Through judges such as Samson, Gideon and Debra, God delivered His people. Later God singled out the sheep herder, David to be king over the nation.

Through David's family line God would send the Messiah who would redeem the world from their sins (Isaiah 9:6-7, II Samuel 7:12-14). After David died, the kingdom of Israel was split

into two-nations, Israel to the north, 10-tribes and Judah to the south. The nation of Israel was split, Jeroboam made an image of calf for the 10-tribes to worship rather than going to Jerusalem, lest he lose power (I Kings 12:28). For the next 300-years both Israel and Judah had competing kings, many of the kings turned the people toward the idols of the land, such as Ahab who worshipped Baal. Some of the kings remained true to the Lord such as Hezekiah and Josiah.

During this period God intervened by sending prophets and judgments on the land, Elijah battled the false prophets of Baal in the valley of Carmel (I Kings 18). There was a war for the soul of the nation. Israel was judged first, God sent the armies of Assyria to destroy the land and take the people captive, in their place other people were settled in the land in 722 B.C.

22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, 23 until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day. **II Kings 17:22-23**

Assyria would later invade Judah to the south; God spared Hezekiah from Assyrian defeat, Isaiah interceded for Jerusalem and the nation. All these defeats were judgments against the land, because the people were turning away from the Lord. At this point only Judah was left, but the time of the southern kingdom of Israel was limited because they had also turned away from God, but not to the extent of the northern kingdom.

When Judah did reach this point of judgment, three Major Prophets were there to testify to the sins of the nation, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Like Israel to the north, God used foreign nations to judge His people. Assyria judged Israel and Babylon judged Judah. The people caused God to judge the land; because they turned away from God and worshipped the gods of Babylon, Egypt, Moab and the Philistines.



17 "Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

18 "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger.

19 "Do they provoke Me to anger?" says the Lord. "Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?" **Jeremiah 7:17-19**

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel

Before Judah and Jerusalem were judged Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel lived in Jerusalem at the time, Jeremiah being the oldest. Babylon under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar three times attacked the city of Jerusalem, 605, 597 and 587 B.C. respectively. In 605 B.C. Daniel was taken captive to the land being about 14-years of age, at this same time Ezekiel the son of a priest was about 21-years of age and Jeremiah was in his mid 30's.

In 605 B.C. captive hostages were taken to Babylon to keep Judah in control, Daniel along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were of the royal line. Judah was to remain loyal to Babylon if they were to have peace, this was not to be. Judah rebelled against Babylonian rule, Nebuchadnezzar again invaded the land taking the King Jehoiachin captive to the land of Babylon along with others including Ezekiel in 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle. Jeremiah remained in the city of Jerusalem until it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C., when they rebelled again, rejecting the words of Jeremiah. Babylon destroyed the Temple and the city, tearing down its walls. Jeremiah wrote the *Book of Lamentations* witnessing the destruction of the people and the city.

Ezekiel settled in with the captives of Judah in the land of Babylon, Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem and Daniel was established in Babylon during this period of judgment on Jerusalem from 605 to 587 B.C. In the 5th year of his captivity, in 593 B.C., when Ezekiel was 30-years old when the *Glory of the Lord* appeared to him, by the Chebar River, where he lived with his fellow captives.

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.
Ezekiel 1:1