

Survey of the Bible **Ezekiel 1-24**

Our study this week brings us to the book of Ezekiel. Like the book of Revelation it is certainly prophetic in nature. Whenever we study any book of the bible it is important to consider the genre of the book to be able to get a sense of what God is telling us and how He is conveying that message.

For example, the book of Genesis is written in the style of Narrative History. Like any book we might read in this genre we expect it to be straight forward with certain facts, dates and stories to support the time period being presented.

This is why the first few chapters of Genesis must be understood as an historical account of the creation of the world and cannot have imposed on it a genre that is not there. And of course this is what some in the church have tried to do to promote the idea that the universe could not have been created in six literal days but came into existence over billions of years.

The only way this can be done to the text of Scripture is to impose the genre called poetic. If you can introduce the idea this was poetic language when God said He created on six successive days, each separated by evening and morning, to actually mean long ages instead of a literal historical rendering, then you can make the text say just about anything.

The Hebrew text in Genesis regarding the creation of all things is plainly written in a Narrative Historical style. This doesn't mean that Genesis does not contain portions that are poetic in nature, but the context makes it clear as to the intent of whether or not something is historical.

For example, in the book of Exodus we have a clear understanding that Moses was writing of the history of Israel as they exited Egypt to move toward the Promised Land. Certain events happened on certain days with successive historical events taking place. One plague followed another which led to the final plague of the killing of the first born, which led to the exodus, which led to the wandering and so forth.

This is Narrative history. But within that same history we can have poetry introduced that does not betray the history but highlights it in a worshipful way.

For example, when Moses and the Israelites were brought successfully across the Red Sea, as Pharaoh's army was destroyed, this was written as an historical account. And yet, when Moses and the Israelites made it to the other side we read this.

Exodus 15:1 ^{NAU} Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.

What style of language is a song?

It's poetic. And the last part of that first verse gives us this sense as we have what is called an anthropomorphism as God is depicted as a person who picks up the horses and the riders and literally throws them into the sea.

Do you see the poetic form here?

Does this in any way detract from the historical reality that Pharaoh's army drowned in the sea?

And so, even poetic language can convey truth of an historical nature. The same is true of other types of language that is conveying God's truths, be they historical, poetic, prophetic, parables and so forth.

Here's my point. As we come to the book of Ezekiel we will see different forms of language describing present or future history with the idea that all of God's word is revealing redemptive history as we move toward the final consummation of salvation found in Christ coming back for His people on the last day.

And so, as Jay Smith from the Bible Hub website says, "The book of Ezekiel is Narrative History, Prophetic and Apocalyptic in genre and even contains Parables."

So, you can have a variety of genres that all teach the truth that redemptive history is moving forward and we need to see it for what it is. So, let's begin with our text in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:1 ^{NAU} Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth *day* of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles,

Let's stop right there. Of the different genres we've looked at, what genre is being introduced here as we begin this book?

Historical narrative. In fact, the book of Ezekiel is one of the easiest to date in history because it has some of the most specific

time periods contained in the very pages of the book, like this one. And so scholars have accurately dated it at 571 BC.

Ezekiel is a contemporary of both Jeremiah and Joel who wrote during the time period of the exile into Babylon.

Because this is a survey of the Bible I am going to try and be more general in nature because this book contains a lot of detailed information from a prophetic standpoint. We'll try and touch on it but it will be to give an overview of what those prophecies entail.

Again, Jay Smith from the Bible Hub web site neatly summarizes the entire book in this way.

“It was written to announce judgment upon Judah, to allow them one last chance to repent. It also foretells of the coming deliverance of God’s nation from captivity in Babylon. It mainly discusses the events during the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel is a priest who is called by God to deliver His messages.”

And his message begins with a vision.

Ezekiel 1:1-4 the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.² (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile,³ the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.)⁴ 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.

Here the genre shifts to a more prophetic language as God conveys His truth to Ezekiel regarding Israel and what is to become of her.

The first chapter expresses the throne of God and His glory as Ezekiel sees the four living creatures in that glory. We'll see later that these living creatures are actually the Cherubim who are heavenly animals surrounding the throne of God.

It is interesting to note however, how prophetic language can be used to create all sorts of bizarre teachings when not compared with the entire counsel of God’s word.

Ezekiel 1:15-16¹⁵ Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for *each of the four of them*.¹⁶ The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship *was* like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the

same form, their appearance and workmanship *being* as if one wheel were within another.

Ezekiel 1:19-20 ¹⁹ Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels.

Most of us have wondered about this strange scene in the opening verses of Ezekiel chapter one where whirling wheels are associated with these Cherubim.

There have been a lot of theories regarding the wheels in Ezekiel's vision including those of ufologists who insist these are pictures of alien space ships ascending and descending on the earth.

But when we view these wheels and Cherubim in light of the heavenly vision and where we see these Cherubim elsewhere the mystery seems less bizarre.

Remember, that the plans that David was given by God regarding the temple that his son, Solomon, would build for the Lord, included Cherubim.

O. Palmer Robertson in his book "The Israel of God" makes this observation.

"The key to understanding [these "whirling wheels" and their significance] appears to be found in the provisions made by David for Solomon's building the temple. Among other things, David left for Solomon "*the plan for the chariot, that is, the cherubim of Gold that spread their wings and shelter the ark of the covenant of the Lord*" (1Chron.28:19)

"In other words, a chariot with wheels was part of the paraphernalia of the ark. The wheels associated with the ark came to symbolize the fact that God's presence was mobile. It could not be presumed that He would always remain within the temple. So, the chariot with wheels proved a fitting symbol that anticipated Ezekiel's message."

It is in this setting that God tells Ezekiel his purpose is to send him to Israel for judgment as seen in the second and third chapters.

Ezekiel 2:3-7 ³ Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to

this very day. ⁴ "I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' ⁵ "As for them, whether they listen or not-- for they are a rebellious house-- they will know that a prophet has been among them. ⁶ "And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house. ⁷ "But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.

Ezekiel 3:7 ⁷ yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.

It is in this immediate context where God's heavenly presence is seen among the obstinate people of Israel.

Ezekiel 3:11-14 ¹¹ "Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'" ¹² *Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me,* "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place." ¹³ *And I heard the sound of the wings of the living beings touching one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, even a great rumbling sound.* ¹⁴ So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me.

From chapters 4 through 24 we have God's message of doom once again being pronounced upon the nation of Israel.

Ezekiel 5:7-8 ⁷ "Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you *and* have not walked in My statutes, nor observed My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you,' ⁸ therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations.'

But as always, God never leaves Himself without a remnant who will carry His name and even in the midst of this horrific judgment on Israel He says this.

Ezekiel 6:6-9 ⁶ "In all your dwellings, cities will become waste and the high places will be desolate, that your altars may become waste and desolate, your idols may be broken and brought to an

end, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be blotted out. ⁷ "The slain will fall among you, and you will know that I am the LORD. ⁸ "*However, I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries.* ⁹ "*Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations* to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

One of the interesting things about the judgment God has for Israel, according to the book of Ezekiel, is how it parallels the judgment God will inflict on mankind at the very end. And this is why it is so important to distinguish between the rebellious Israel being described here in Ezekiel with the Israel that is depicted as the remnant.

The Israel that Ezekiel is addressing is continually described as idolatrous, rebellious, wicked, haters of God and so on. And as such they will receive God's wrath and we see this in the seventh chapter.

Ezekiel 7:1-6 ^{NAU} Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ² "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on the four corners of the land. ³ 'Now the end is upon you, and I will send My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways and bring all your abominations upon you. ⁴ 'For My eye will have no pity on you, nor will I spare *you*, but I will bring your ways upon you, and your abominations will be among you; then you will know that I am the LORD!' ⁵ "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'A disaster, unique disaster, behold it is coming! ⁶ 'An end is coming; the end has come! It has awakened against you; behold, it has come!

Does anyone see a parallel of this event with an event in the New Testament?

Revelation 20:7-11 ⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and

the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

Did you notice the reference to Gog and Magog in verse 8? Gog and Magog are references to the peoples who were used by God to bring judgment on rebellious Israel. But they themselves will be judged by God for their own abominable ways in rejecting the one true God.

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 39:1** "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal;

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 39:6** "And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD.

The point that both Ezekiel and John make is that there will be a day where all peoples from every corner of the earth will face God's final judgment at the Great White Throne.

All who rebel against God, be they people who claim God or not, will be shown to be what they really are, Gog and Magog who make war against God, those who are at enmity with God.

This is the opposite for those who are not at war or enmity with God but are a peace with God through Christ.

Ephesians 2:14-19 ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; ¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

This people, who are brought into a peace relationship with God, are the remnant described in so many places of the O.T. and we see this same people being described again by Ezekiel in the midst of this judgment by God.

Ezekiel 11:12-13 ¹² "Thus you will know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you." ¹³ Now it came about as I prophesied, that Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, "Alas, Lord GOD! *Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?*"

Ezekiel knew that God would spare a people for Himself and he knew that only the grace of God would accomplish this among a people who have turned away from Him. But the only way that anyone would turn back to God is if God Himself did a work in them. And this is why we have that passage in Ezekiel as to how God would accomplish this.

Ezekiel 11:16-21 ¹⁶ "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.'" ¹⁷ "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'" ¹⁸ "When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. ¹⁹ *"And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,* ²⁰ *that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.* ²¹ "But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

Not one of the nation will come to God unless God does the kind of work in their hearts that will allow them to see their need for a Savior.

Until God personally touches their hearts they will continue to live in the deadness of their hearts. And this again is made clear to Ezekiel as he brings them this message of judgment.

Ezekiel 12:1-2 ^{NAU} Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² "Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.

God's word continues to remind Israel of her rebellious ways and in chapter 16 God reminds Israel how He came to her like a child thrown into a field to die and how He rescued her and as she grew He took her as His bride, but she became unfaithful and followed the ways of the world.

Ezekiel 16:46-48 ⁴⁶ "Now your older sister is Samaria, who lives north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lives south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. ⁴⁷ "Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or done according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they. ⁴⁸ "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.

And yet again, God holds out His mercy to those He will come to and restore them to the status of bride.

Ezekiel 16:58-63 ⁵⁸ "You have borne *the penalty of your lewdness and abominations,*" the LORD declares. ⁵⁹ For thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant. ⁶⁰ "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹ "Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, *both* your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. ⁶² "Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ⁶³ so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," the Lord GOD declares.

What everlasting covenant is God going to establish with Israel according to verse 60?

This is a covenant that is different than the covenant that God made to the nation that involved the law and spoke to a better covenant to come.

The writer of Hebrews makes this abundantly clear.

Hebrews 8:4-13 ⁴ Now if He, (Jesus), were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; ⁵ who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as *He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.* ⁷ *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.* ⁸ For finding fault with them, He says, "BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; ⁹ NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. ¹⁰ "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹¹ "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. ¹² "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE." ¹³ When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

What new covenant was the writer of Hebrews speaking of?

The covenant in Christ's blood. This is precisely what Ezekiel is addressing as did Jeremiah whom the writer of Hebrews quotes.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 ³¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those

days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

This is the same covenant blessing that God says He will bring on the house of Israel later in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 20:39-44 ³⁹ "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord GOD, "Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols. ⁴⁰ "For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things. ⁴¹ "As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations. ⁴² "And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers. ⁴³ "There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done. ⁴⁴ "Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD."

Who are the ones being described in verse 39?

Israel. Rebellious Israel.

Who has been receiving the judgment of God all throughout the book of Ezekiel?

Israel. Rebellious Israel.

Then who are the people described in verse 40 who serve God on His holy mountain?

The whole house of Israel.

So, what Israel are we talking about?

The remnant spoken of in verse 42. The same Israel that God Himself brings into the land. The same people who we are told will later surely listen to God, according to verse 39.

How is it possible that a people who will not listen to God will suddenly listen to God?

Ezekiel 11:19-20 ¹⁹ "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

This Israel is the Israel spoken of by Paul.

Galatians 6:14-16 ¹⁴ But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

This is why God can speak of redeeming Israel out of the bondage of Babylon and yet continue to heap condemnation upon Israel at the same time. He speaks of a future Israel that falls under the everlasting covenant that all the prophets spoke of.

Ezekiel is painting a picture of the world that is at war with God, including a people who name the name of God, who is also at war with God. This is the picture we see with Israel, Gog and Magog all coming under God's wrath at the end.

And next week we'll pick up in that section that deals with God's judgments upon all the other nations found in chapters 25 through 32.