

# **Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature,**

## **Lecture 33, Ezekiel,**

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Well, good morning. I think it's about time to start. We haven't tried Boker Tov for a while.

This is definitely Boker Tov morning, isn't it? Boker or, right, that'll do. You can read the announcements. So, if you have anything to do with the makeup exams, whether you're doing a real live, authentic makeup exam, or whether you want to retake something that you may not have done as well, please make note of the time, the place, et cetera.

And then those of you who want to retake, if you're going to do that, you need to let me know by Friday. Again, I know this is going to sound really heavy-handed and perhaps a little bit pedantic, but if you're going to do that, please study hard.

How can I say that more emphatically? A couple more announcements that are equally important. These are for the musical types here. And I would encourage all of you to be musical types.

Do you know who Mia Chung is? How many of you know who Mia Chung is? She is a world-renowned pianist, and we have the privilege of having her as artist-in-residence. I mean, she's a faculty member, but she's a remarkable pianist even if you don't think you like classical music, Saturday night is something to go to.

Gordon students get in free, as you know. Gordon faculty get in free, Ted. And you really shouldn't miss her.

The Brahms Second Piano Concerto is one of the most remarkable piano concertos ever written. Michael Monroe, who also teaches in our music faculty, has a really neat blog up. It's about 25 minutes long, as he interviews her about how she prepared for this performance.

And it's absolutely fascinating. So, at any rate, I encourage you to be there. And then, if you would like something more choral, the Sinfonia Chorale is doing their last concert Sunday night over at Gordon-Conwell.

That means you need to get a ride over there. But you know you also get chapel credit. So, if you're just sort of scrambling for those last chapel credits, then it'll be worth more than just chapel credit, I guarantee you.

All right, so think about those kinds of things. And since we've just been wondering around here about singing, let's, it's a wonderful prayer to have in mind as we begin our time together. So, let's pray and beseech God's presence here.

Gracious Heavenly Father, tender Redeemer, most Holy Spirit of truth. Thank you so much that as we begin this time together, we know you're present with us. We're thankful for your indwelling presence in our hearts.

We're thankful for your Holy Spirit, who revives us, renews us, and challenges us. We're thankful that the same things come via your word. And so, we pray that as we study together, it would be worship in the presence of your word and worship of you.

Father, we would ask for one another at these last days of the semester, which are difficult. Pray for those who are weary. Again, we would ask for your strength for each one.

We pray for those who are ill. Please bring quick restoration. We pray for those who are out at the end of the leash where perhaps they shouldn't be, that you would reel them back in again and fold them in your embrace and bring them closely to you.

So help us to be faithful, to pray for one another. We would also pray earnestly for our leadership at various levels, college level, municipalities, national level, and international people as well who have such burdens on them. Please give them wisdom, because the problems that confront us all are much bigger than we can possibly handle.

So, we humbly beseech that you would bring your presence and your Holy Spirit to bear on these issues that confront us day by day. And Father, as we ask these things, we're thankful that you do hear and answer our prayers and that as your children, we can come to you in the name of Christ, in whose name we do pray, amen.

Well, we're going to be talking about Ezekiel today. There are actually two prophets associated with the exile. And so, Lord willing, on Friday, we're going to do Daniel. But today is Ezekiel.

We'll have to do a little bit of review just to kind of get ourselves on track. So, when you think of Ezekiel, what's the most memorable thing? I mean, presumably, for those of you who just came to Christ before you came to Gordon, maybe you haven't dabbled in Ezekiel. But if you grew up in Sunday school, there's just something that is associated with Ezekiel that all kids know.

Yeah, Chelsea. I'm sorry to say that again. Well, that's very true, too.

And that's an incredible symbolic event that happens. And we're going to talk about that a little bit later on. But yes, Ezekiel has to deal with the fact that his wife dies, and he's not allowed to mourn.

Is there anything else that you know about Ezekiel? Yes, the dry bones, the valley of dry bones. Did you ever sing, or have they quit singing the Bones song? Them bones in, bones in, dry bones in, bones in, bones. Anyway, I won't go on with that.

Excise that one, Ted, from the tape. All right, at any rate. And we're going to talk a little later on about chapter 37 and this remarkable vision that Ezekiel has that's symbolic of the restoration of Israel after some very horrible things have happened to them.

So there's that. Why is, oh dear, how did that ever sneak in there? Excise that like too. It sort of interrupts and keeps us from really following the train of thought, doesn't it? All right, why is Ezekiel called a watchman? He is called a watchman.

Does anybody know? Sarah. Ah, does it have to do with him being, it does have to do with his being a prophet. That's quite true.

But there's going to be something even more compelling about that designation. And I'm going to keep you in suspense, all right? If you get nothing else out of this lecture today, get the message that's associated with Ezekiel's being called a watchman. After that, you can go to sleep.

But hang on till that point. All right, that'll be important. No, don't go to sleep.

We've said this already, but I just want to remind you that as we're talking about all these prophets, it's really important for us to keep in mind that they're not living 2,500 years ago and that we have no relevance whatsoever. As we watch their lives, what they have to go through, and the circumstances that are so grim, we see that they are, as I've indicated to you here, really models for us. Models of the lives of faithful believers who are beleaguered in many ways.

Chelsea just mentioned the fact that Ezekiel's wife died. He's living through some difficult times. He watches his wife die, and God's going to tell him something with regard to that and the symbolic nature of that and the fact that he's not going to be mourning.

But also, they're not only models for faithful living, but they're also models for faithfully speaking and that's going to get us to our watchman issue a little bit later on. So, just by way of introduction, setting the framework here. Review of history.

These are things we've already said but things we need to know and remind ourselves of. We know that when Nebuchadnezzar came through, and the Babylonian armies marched in, they didn't just swoop everybody off in one fell swoop. Two swoops in that sentence.

No, they came and took waves of exiles. So, starting in 605, which is going to have an impact with regard to Daniel next time, and then also in 597. 587, the destruction of the temple, and even after that, we learn that Nebuchadnezzar is continuing to move these people around, take them into exile.

This is a truly tumultuous time. Think of refugees in a major way, but refugees that are being taken somewhere. So, probably not even refugees.

For Ezekiel, it means being exiled in 597. And therefore, as he's uttering these prophecies, and you know this if you've read chapter one, he is speaking outside the land. He's prophesying about Jerusalem from Babylon.

He's in a community that's already in Babylon, and yet he's got things to say to those folks about what's going on in Jerusalem, and what's fascinating about him is that in ways that we can't begin to understand, Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem. In fact, chapter eight says, And He grasped me by the hair of my head, and by the spirit took me to Jerusalem. And of course, what's really interesting in that regard, this is all, you know, this next little bit is trivia, but you can hang onto it for fun.

Ezekiel's name means Yehazak El, let the Lord or let God grasp. Hazak means to grab, grab hold of, and that's where his name comes from. Yehazakel is how you say it in Hebrew.

So, at any rate, that's just a little bit of background. Let's do another introductory thing that we need to work on a little bit here. When you took the New Testament, as most of you have, you studied the book of Revelation, and I think you probably studied the apocalyptic genre in conjunction with that, right? Is that true? So, I'm on the right wavelength here.

Apocalyptic means that you're revealing something. It's the Greek word that means that, and therefore, it's going to be talking about a type of literature that is making us aware of something that we would otherwise not know just by rational observing and measuring and so forth and so on. So, definition, Revelation, specifically of those events that will happen in the end times, although actually, that definition I should have expanded a little bit.

It also means to look at things that we normally don't see. Sometimes apocalyptic literature's looking way back. Sometimes it's looking into the heavenly spheres, and

of course, Ezekiel's going to do some of that, but it also has a strong focus on how things are going to unfold looking forward to the end.

Now, of course, what's interesting is that apocalyptic literature is a genre that's particularly evident when God's people are suffering. All right, when they're suffering, suffering incredible oppression from outside forces, you know, basically, what are they doing? They're saying, dear God, we're supposed to be your people. We're your chosen people.

We have promises from you. What's happening? Why are we oppressed by, in this case, the Babylonians? Later on, it's going to be Syrians. After that, it's going to be Romans, and there's this genre of apocalyptic literature.

You saw it with the revelation of St. John and the oppression by the Romans and the implications that they had for how they construed God's promises to them. So, you know, you wind it all together, and you say, here we are in these dreadful circumstances. What hope do we have? And the apocalyptic literature looks forward to hope at the end.

And so, of course, that is the first of the major characteristics of this type of literature. It looks forward to a time when good is going to triumph. Because even though it doesn't feel like good's going to triumph now, and every time you turn around, there's one more horrible thing going on, these folks had a profound sense that God would win the battle in the end.

And so, that's the first issue, in terms of characteristics of apocalyptic literature. Second one is, and we're going to see it in Ezekiel, we're going to see it in Daniel, particularly, we're going to see it in bits and pieces of Zechariah. There's a lot of visionary experiences, dreams and visions.

Now, we've had those before. Isaiah had a vision when he was in the temple into the heavenly spheres. But Ezekiel has a different thread about it, and so does Daniel.

Fantastic images. If you had to draw a picture of chapter one of Ezekiel, what would you do? I'm going to show you some attempts in a moment. And they're not my bad art, and they're other people's good art.

But stop and think about that description of these four creatures, four heads on each side, four wings, wheels, within wheels, they had eyes all around them. This is a fantastic image. And likewise, some of the imagery that Daniel's going to describe is really extraordinary.

Not what you find when you walk around Gordon College, I would guess. Divisions of time, symbolic use of numbers, we're going to see that, especially in Daniel, you'll

see it, particularly when you study the book of Revelation as well. And then, although I would suggest that this does not apply to our biblical apocalypses, Ezekiel and Daniel, it certainly does apply to the whole host of apocalyptic literature, pseudepigrapha, that grew up between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

This genre is not just in the Bible. There's just a whole wealth of pseudepigraphic literature in between the Testaments. Come and take Introduction to Biblical Studies, where we're actually going to deal with that at some point.

Any questions on this in terms of, again, if you've had this introduction in the New Testament, you've seen this stuff before. So, I think I'm just reminding you. Are we good with that? Okay, let's carry on.

Told you a moment ago that I would give you a little glimpse of some people's attempts to present chapter one with the cherubim. Now, they're labeled cherubim in chapters eight through 10, but we have it in chapter one, and you certainly see the lion's head right here, eagle, the ox, which in chapter 10 is called the cherub, and then the head of a man. And you see all these wings, and you see the wheels and the chariot, and of course, here's Ezekiel falling down before them.

And there's yet another attempt, wheel within the wheel, and the eyes around the wheel. But you know, just as the words in Ezekiel chapter one are the attempt to describe something indescribable. Because what's in the heavenly spheres is basically indescribable.

So also, these are attempts to represent in art form what the words have presented, and all of it's trying to deal with something that's completely ineffable. Well, we're going to come back to the interpretation, or at least talking about the interpretation of chapters one through 10 in a moment. But unlike Jeremiah, remember we said Jeremiah's kind of hard to knit together because it's not in chronological order, and you've got one oracle here and another one there; Ezekiel's pretty orderly.

So, here's our basic outline of the book. Chapters one through 24 focus in a very sobering fashion on Ezekiel's messages from God about Jerusalem and its doom, particularly with regard to the temple. We're going to zero in on some of that in a little bit.

It's right at the end of chapter 24 that we're informed that his wife dies. And that's, of course, his beloved. And that's symbolic of the removal of God's glory from the temple because of the heinous idolatry that had gotten in there. And, of course, Ezekiel describes that at length because God has brought him there to see it.

The second section of the book, chapters 25 through 32, prophecies against foreign

nations. Edom shows up, Moab shows up, you know, the whole string, the usual ones, but with a particular emphasis, unusual in Ezekiel, all right? More expanded in Ezekiel, a particular emphasis on Tyre and the Prince of Tyre.

I'm going to say more about that particular allegory a little later on today, but the focus on the Prince of Tyre is rather important here and that's part of the bigger picture of Tyre itself. What's Tyre a major city of? What's the geopolitical area? Phoenicia, right. And of course, we've seen already how devastating the idolatry was that was imported from Phoenicia.

So, it's not surprising. Chapters 33 through 48 are primarily restorative but in a very interesting way. We'll also talk a little bit about some of the visions that show up in that particular context.

As Ezekiel describes the restoration, we not only have our marvelous picture of the dry bones coming to life, symbolizing the resurrection of God's people, but we also have the restoration of a temple. In fact, Ezekiel spends quite a bit of time talking about a temple and quite a bit of detail talking about sacrifices in that temple. So, it raises some very interesting issues in terms of what temple this is and why it's restored the way it's restored.

All right, so destruction and doom, the pronouncement of judgment on foreign nations, and then the lengthy promise of restoration. Let's carry on a little bit and now begin to zero in on who this man is. All right, he's the watchman.

Now, if you think I'm going to explain that now, sorry, it's coming in a moment. I'm keeping you in suspense, but he's the watchman. You see it, as I note for you, especially fleshed out in chapters three and 33.

It's said twice. It's said at the initial stage of the condemnation of Judah and Jerusalem, and then it's also said at the initial phase of the restoration chapters. That's kind of important.

We're going to come back to what the implications of that are in a moment. Ezekiel is also called son of man. And now, this is really important.

Over and over and over again, if you've read the text, you know that when God is addressing Ezekiel, he says, son of man, do this. Son of man, do that. Son of man, do this, that, and the other thing, right? And so basically, it's a way of saying respectfully, hey, you, pay attention, human being.

It's referring to Ezekiel as a human being, and that's God's reference to him. Now, the reason I'm kind of hammering that home is that I want you to have that, not somewhere tucked away in your notes, in the back recesses of your mind, but I want

you to have it handy because we're going to come back to the son of man title on Friday. Daniel is going to use the same title, but it's going to have a remarkably different reference point, and we're going to try and put these two together.

Again, you've probably done all this when you did the New Testament, but it is important for Ezekiel; when Ezekiel is called the son of man, it has everything to do with his humanity as a prophet. He's also a priest. Chapter one, verse three, tells us that he was one of the priests, and this is extremely significant because it tells us something about his relationship to the temple.

And I'm going to suggest to you that just as Jeremiah was so, so broken in his heart over the broken covenant, so Ezekiel's going to have a particular pain and anguish as he sees what's happening with regard to the removal of God's presence from the temple. And that might explain why the restoration in chapters 40 through 48 is presented in such strong temple terminology. So, hang on to that, it's going to be important.

And then I've already said he's a member of the second wave of exiles, so we're good with that. That's the identity. Let's pick up on his call, which is primarily chapters one through three.

And I know we looked at it a little bit when we were looking at prophets and the three representative samples that we did indeed have. He gets this vision of God in a foreign land. I've already talked about that, and I'm going to unpack the implications of the vision and the cherubim a little bit later on.

But just keep in mind, he's among the exiles by the Kibar River. The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. And again, we'll deal a little more with the implications of those visions.

But this is extraordinary. You know, most of our prophets have been, well, they've been in Israel or Judah or something like that, and God speaks to them and they're supposed to deal with their message there. Ezekiel is outside the land.

One of few prophets who was. Moses is another one who was outside the land when he was called. His mission, no surprise, is to speak to Israel.

I'm going to read you 3:14 in a moment. But before I do that, chapter two first. I am sending you, verse three, to the Israelites, a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me.

They and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. And he goes on. The Lord goes on to describe how stubborn and obstinate God's people are.



And that's not a description that's simply located back in the recesses of history. God's people continue to be stubborn and obstinate, I would suggest. And I include myself in that wonderful lot.

We need the rebukes that God's prophets bring. Chapter three, verse four. Go to the house of Israel, speak to them.

You're not sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language. You're sent to the house of Israel. In other words, Ezekiel isn't being told to go to Spain, go to England, or go somewhere that nobody's going to understand anything about you or your religion.

He says, go to your people, go to my people. Surely, if I had sent you to foreigners, they would have listened to you. But the house of Israel, God's people, is not willing to listen to you because they're not willing to listen to me because they're hardened and obstinate.

And then here's the part that I really think is very compelling. Verse 12 of chapter three. The spirit lifted me up, and it describes the rushing of the wings and all that.

Verse 14, the spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and anger of my spirit. Not a happy camper prophet. I went in bitterness and anger of my spirit, and yet he goes.

Remember, Jeremiah wasn't excited about his task either. But these men are called, they're truly called by God, and they do what it is that God has them do and speak what it is God will have them speak, and they're not easy issues, and that does bring us to watchmen. So, in chapter three, I'm going to carry on, and here's our unpacking of this little identity issue that I was telling you about a moment ago.

So let me read a little bit for you. If you've got your text, you can actually follow this. Verse 17.

Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. So, hear the word of the Lord, and give them warning from me. Verse 18, when I say to a wicked person, you will surely die, and you, Ezekiel, don't warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life.

That wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. Whoa, let me keep reading. If you do warn the wicked person, and he does not turn from his wickedness or his evil ways, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

Do you get a sense there's a bit of a corporate responsibility among God's people? And that's not just Ezekiel's message back there, but when we're living in community, God's people, and we see one of God's people doing things that are wicked, we don't just say, oh, that's between them and God. God will deal with them. That's not the message here, is it? And, of course, we're not going to be liked when we say to somebody, what you're doing is wrong.

It's wrong, it's leading to death, it's wrong. Interestingly enough, let's just keep reading a little bit. When a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die since you did not warn him.

Now, there's somebody that you know that's suddenly straying off way somewhere, and we don't do anything about it. Since you didn't warn him, he's going to die for his sins. If you do warn the righteous man not to sin, he does not sin, he'll surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself.

There is a responsibility that's on each one of us. Now, of course, I know what the temptation is. Jesus said, don't judge lest you be judged, and so, of course, I'm not going to get involved in that kind of thing, right? I mean, you hear it all the time.

But of course, you have to read that section from Matthew chapter seven in context, where several verses later on, it says, take the moat out of his eye after you've taken the beam out of your own, and then a few verses after that, it says, you need to be able to distinguish between pigs. Don't give to swine, sorts of things. We're supposed to be very discerning, and we're also supposed to be very concerned for the well-being of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I am very concerned. It has long-term implications, not only for that person but also for me, for the body.

Now, the thing that I found very handy, and I'll just pass this along to you, and then we'll move on. When people have sort of waved their finger at me and have said, don't judge, Jesus says, don't judge, one of the ways to come back at that gently, graciously, and with, believe me, you need to be as humble, we need to be as humble as possible in this, but simply to say, I'm not judging, but I'm trying to help you get ready, because someday you're going to face the judge, and it isn't going to be a happy prospect. So, just a thought.

Now, if you want to fall asleep, you can, but that is important. If you get nothing else out of today, please get that. The Gordon community is like any other community, and we have a profound responsibility to help our feeble and frail brothers and sisters because we're all feeble and frail and all need rebuke from time to time.

And, as I said, notice, this shows up in chapter 33 as well. It's not just a one-time shot. Ezekiel's told the thing twice.

He's got to be concerned. Well, let's carry on. Oh, here's something to look at.

This is the prelude to our venture into chapters one through 10. As archaeologists have, over the last century and a half, made their way through very fascinating excavations, they come across things like this. Perhaps you've been in the British Museum, or other places where these things are as well.

These are huge creatures, huge creatures. You know, you can see that person's partial head right there, so you get an idea of how big these were. And there were pairs of them guarding the throne room of the king in Assyrian palaces.

And they're called kerubu, or karubu, or keruvim. Well, you catch it, cherub is the English of keruvim in Hebrew, all right? And so that sounds an awful lot like this. And there's some suggestion that what we see as we read the descriptions of these cherubim in Ezekiel, and Revelation for that matter, there's some sense in which other cultures have this same idea of protecting the throne room of God.

In this case, it's protecting the divine throne room, because those cherubim are under where the throne was, and under where Ezekiel sees on the throne, high and exalted, the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, the end of chapter one. Okay, now let's move on and talk about the visions themselves. I've tried to describe already, at least to a degree, some of what's going on in terms of the appearance of these things, but let me just read for you again, okay? Four creatures are called cherubim in chapter 10.

But get a picture of the majesty and the radiance of this. If you get nothing else, think fire and brilliance and radiance of a kind that can't even be described. An immense cloud with flashing lightning, verse four of chapter one, surrounded by brilliant light.

The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire were what looked like four living creatures. In appearance, their form was that of a man, but each had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight, and their feet were like those of a calf.

Now, let me just land on that for a quick moment. Do you remember when the Israelites built a golden calf way back in Exodus 32? And the suggestion was, I think I ran this past you very briefly, that as they were seeing the presence of God in the pillar of cloud and fire, maybe they saw vestiges, tiny little reflections of what seemed to be represented, and again, there are lots of representation and appearance kinds of things here, but something that may have had a kind of an appearance of a calf. And therefore, maybe they weren't building an Egyptian idol of some bovine type.

Maybe they had seen this base, if you will, of the actual throne of God, that in his condescension, accompanied them as they were going across the sea and into the wilderness, and they had the horrifying audacity to make an idol out of it, to represent it. That might be what's going on, because as Ezekiel sees this, the feet of the calf, part of the cherub experience. Under their wings, four sides, hands like a man, and then it goes on to describe, wherever the spirit goes, verse 12, they go.

Verse 15, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. The wheels, verse 18, are full of eyes on the rims, and wherever the living creatures move, the wheels beside them move, and when the living creatures rise from the ground, the wheels also rise. That's important.

Spirit is part of this. The spirit seems to be what moves this thing. And now, we're going to skip over to the end of chapter nine, recognizing that in between, we're going to look at some of the actions in between, but recognizing that in between, Ezekiel has been given visions of the hideous idolatry that has penetrated right into the temple, okay? You can read that, which is particularly evident in chapter eight.

The spirit lifted me up between heaven and earth, I'm in verse three, and in visions of God, he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the inner gate where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. And chapter eight goes on to describe the really gripping nature of this idolatry. It's in the hearts and minds of even the most important of the religious leaders there.

Verse 17 of chapter eight. Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the entire land with violence? Now, because the idolatry is so shot through right, even into the temple precincts and the temple itself, we have a horrifying thing happen. Use your imagination here.

The cherubim are also part of this, okay? He's seeing the cherubim again, starting with chapter eight. And now verse 17, the cherubim rose because the spirit of the living God was in them. Verse 19, while I watched, they spread their wings and they rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them.

They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house. And the glory of the God of Israel was there with them and above them. Now, if you're not catching what's happening yet, just stop with me.

God's presence has been in the tabernacle with Israel, dwelling in their midst. Then it's been in the temple with Israel, dwelling in their midst. They came to presume it would stay there forever.

But did you catch it? It's moving away. Notice, again, verse 19. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the Lord's house.

And then, if you keep reading in chapter 11, verse 22, the cherubim with the wheels beside them spread their wings, the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the Lord went up from within the city and stopped above the mountains east of it. It's almost, I mean, I know I'm probably just using my imagination too much here.

But it doesn't just go zip and gone because I'm so mad. You can see the pathos of God. Leaves the most holy place but pauses at the gate.

And in fact, it says that twice. Stopping there, grieving over what's going on in his sanctuary. And then, as it moves away and goes over the Kidron Valley and stops on the mountain east of Jerusalem, it's almost as if he can hardly bring himself to leave his people.

And yet, that's what Ezekiel sees. Represented by the cherubim, the great chariot, and the presence in the throne room of God, God has left the temple. And that's going to be, then, what happens right before the destruction.

The temple's destroyed, the presence of God is gone, but he sees this happening in this visionary experience. As I said earlier, that's probably why it's so important for him to see the restoration of the temple as he knew it, indicative of God's restored presence with them. But we've got a few things to do in the meantime.

Still talking about visions. As I said, we're going to unfold some of the other things as we go back and look at some of the other teaching tools. But Ezekiel, just like all the prophets, is engaging in things to catch his audience's attention.

In this case, Ezekiel's given the vision, and he tells the people what he's seeing. That's the teaching mechanism. So, the visions are both for him, but also for his audience.

We have our restoration of Israel. Talked about this when we chatted about the bones, but skip over to chapter 37, and here it is. The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit, set me in the middle of a valley.

It was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them and kept in mind, by the way, that bones are unclean, right? I mean, Ezekiel's a priest. This is a place where he would be contracting ritual uncleanness in this context.

I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry, and God asked me, son of man, can these bones live? And Ezekiel has the wisdom to say, oh, sovereign Lord, you know. And then the Lord says, prophesy to these bones and

say to them, dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones.

I'm going to make spirit enter you. You're going to come to life. I'll attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin, and I'm going to put breath in you, and you're going to come to life, and then you'll know that I am the Lord.

And so, Ezekiel prophesied, and those things indeed happen, and he even prophesied so that the breath comes into them, and they stand on their feet, and they're a vast army. And then, of course, we have the interpretation of this vision. Verse 11, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.

They say our bones are dried up, and our hope is gone, and we're cut off. Therefore, prophesy to them and say, this is what the Lord says. Oh, my people, I'm going to open your graves.

I'm going to bring you up from them. I'll bring you back to the land of Israel, and then you, my people, will know that I'm the Lord. When I open your graves and bring you back, I will put my spirit in you, and you will live.

A tremendous, remarkable encouragement and hope in this visionary experience, given the fact that as Ezekiel is living and prophesying, their hope seems to have dwindled to absolutely nothing. Temple's gone, exile after exile after exile, but there's going to be a restoration, and the vision of the bones is indicative of that. Now, of course, this goes on.

We don't have a specific vision with regard to Gog and Magog, or Gog and Magog, depending on how you want to pronounce it, but it follows right after this, and so it's worth at least noting because in chapter 38, we have someone who is called Gog, or Gog, from a land called Magog, and he's a chief prince, and he's going to invade, and of course, there's going to be a fairly horrendous war in that context, but in chapter 39, verse 11, on that day, I'll give Gog a burial place in Israel. The valley of those who travel eastward towards the sea, Gog and all his hordes will be buried there, so there's going to be an end to them. Now, again, when you did the book of Revelation, and you got to Revelation chapter 20, I'm guessing that you addressed that connection as well.

At least I'm hoping that's true. Here's the third one, major vision experience that Ezekiel has, and it links right into the one that we were just talking about in terms of the departure. Ezekiel is given to see a new temple.

Pretty interesting. Let me read for you a little bit. Chapter 40, verse three.

The hand of the Lord is there. He took me, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod, and they're going to measure, and measure everything. They're going to measure the outer court, gates, and rooms.

There are rooms for priests. Well, that's kind of interesting. What temple is this? Do I ask that question up here? Yeah, I do.

What temple is this? This is not the rebuilt temple. The measurements are not such that it's the temple that got rebuilt that we're going to talk about next week when Ezra and Nehemiah are there. Well, actually, it's Haggai and Zechariah.

We have a second temple. It's rebuilt. It's not this one.

So, if it's an eschatological temple, looking forward to the end, why are there sacrifices? I thought if we read Hebrews chapter nine particularly, I don't say anything about Hebrews chapter nine up here, but I should. If we read Hebrews chapter nine, it says that Jesus is our once for all sacrifice. Don't need it anymore.

And if we do read Revelation, the verse that I've mentioned, chapter 21, verse 22, where it says, the apocalypse of John, St. John speaking, I did not see a temple in the city because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. So, what's Ezekiel saying here? Especially complete with a sacrificial system.

It's kind of interesting. Let me read you a couple more little items. As I said, rooms for priests.

It describes them in great detail. The altar is described at the end of chapter 43, and the Levites and the priests are described in chapter 44.

But here's the key. And I know I'm going to race through this because we got other things we need to do today. But in chapter 43, right at the beginning, it says, verse four, the glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east.

Then the spirit lifted me up, brought me to the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And so, to make a long discussion short, because it is a long discussion, my suggestion is that what Ezekiel is seeing in terms that he can understand because he's a priest, and he knows all the trappings of the temple that represent God's presence with them. In terms that he can understand, he is describing the return of the glory of God.

The verse that I just read to you says it. The glory of the Lord filled the temple again. He saw it removed, and it was an utter tragedy for a generation and a half of Israelites.

But now he's looking ahead, and he's seeing it restored. And he's seeing it in terms, as I said, that are familiar to him, and he knows this is representative of God's presence again. So maybe this is an easy out, but I would suggest that perhaps all the stuff about sacrifices, altars, and tables for sacrifices might be symbolic representations.

Just a suggestion. Got any questions on that? Believe me, you may not think it's a long discussion, but it is. Lots of ink has been spilled on this one.

Sarah. He's looking forward to what we would call the second coming. He's probably looking forward, yeah, I mean, it's a good question.

Is he looking forward to the second coming? He's looking forward to the presence of God restored in their midst in some way. Now, whether that is supposed to be the second coming of Christ, whether it's the new heavens and the new earth, I would probably go with the latter. Although, it's a tough one.

It's a tough one to figure out. Well, the other lovely thing about this is that from that temple, again, the symbolism is profound. There is a river that's going to flow. And it's a river that has trees growing on it.

The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations. He measures this river, and it gets deeper and deeper and deeper. Fruit trees of all kinds growing on both banks of the river that he's talking about.

Whether their fruit will not fail, every month they'll bear, and their fruit will serve for food, and their leaves for healing. That exact same imagery shows up in Revelation 22, as John is describing the new Jerusalem. Now, we need to move on.

That's the first bunch of, bad way of saying it, ways in which Ezekiel's communicating his message. God gives him these remarkable visions, and he reports those visions. The second teaching mechanism are symbolic actions.

It's not new. We've seen symbolic actions with Jeremiah. Clay pots, linen belts, baskets of figs.

Jeremiah's had those. We see it with Ezekiel, too. And I'll run through these fairly quickly because you can read them, and they're pretty self-explanatory.

Right away in chapter three, as he's given his commission, the commission is supposed to be based on the fact that he has ingested God's word. None of us will be prophets. None of us will have a prophetic voice unless we know the scriptures,



unless we've ingested the scriptures, taken them in, chewed on them, and then are able to use them, all right? And that's this picture.

Ezekiel takes in the word of God, and interestingly enough, after he has indeed chewed on that scroll, then the Lord says, guess what? You're only going to be able to speak when I tell you. You're going to be partially mute. Let me read it for you.

Go, shut yourself inside your house. Tie yourself with them; they will tie with ropes, okay? You'll be bound. And likewise, verse 26, I will make the tongue, your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth, so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them.

But when I speak to you, I'll open your mouth, and you shall say to them, this is what the sovereign Lord says. And what's interesting is, I would suggest the subtext here is that the people had heard lots of words. Words, words, words, words, words.

And, of course, they weren't listening. That's what God has said earlier on in the chapter. They turned off the words.

So as Ezekiel is not rebuking with words, he's going to teach with his actions. And this is the first one, taking in the Torah. But there's a bunch more.

Let's see what some of them are. He builds a model of Jerusalem. It's on a clay tablet.

And, of course, he's got a lie around it. 390 days on one side, 40 days on the other, symbolizing siege times. He also has to eat rations that are really slim.

If you read your NIV notes, he's basically on a hunger strike. Really slim, food and water. They're rations that are indicative of siege rations.

He's going through that particular action to show something. He also, again, remember a priest would not be particularly keen on slicing off his beard. That's shameful.

And yet Ezekiel's told to do that in chapter five. He's burning 1/3rd. He whips 1/3rd away with a sword.

And 1/3rd goes away with the wind. There's a tiny little remnant that's saved. And the Lord tells him how to interpret that as well.

If I can find it, this is what the Sovereign Lord says in chapter five. I will pursue them with a drawn sword.

Some are going to be burned with plague. But verse three, take a few strands of hair and tuck them away. Tuck them away.

They'll be saved as the remnant. Then, in chapter 12, this is after we have the vision of the departure of the cherubim. Then Ezekiel's told, pack up your stuff.

Go out as if you're going out to exile because that's exactly what he's doing. That's exactly what you're going to do. You're going to dig through the wall and take yourself through this wall, representative of the Israelites who are going to be taken into exile.

Packed up and taken into exile. And then, of course, the sad one is chapter 24. Verse 16: Son of man, with one blow, I'm about to take from you the delight of your eyes.

Yet don't weep. Don't shed any tears. Grown quietly; don't mourn for the dead.

Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet. So, I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening, my wife died. And the next day, I did as I commanded.

He's not to mourn for his wife. Likewise, God's presence was removed from the temple. And that was God's decree.

And they weren't to mourn. Let me read on, verse 21. Say to the house of Israel; this is what the Sovereign Lord says.

I'm about to desecrate my sanctuary. The delight of your eyes. The object of your affection.

Ezekiel will be assigned to you. And so, we're seeing that patterning back and forth there. And then at the end of that chapter, at that time, your mouth will be opened and you will speak.

And you'll no longer be silent. So, this partial mutinous has been removed at that point. Well, Ezekiel also utters some allegories.

So, visions, symbolic actions, and then the allegories. Chapter 16, long chapter. Long and tragic chapter.

Ezekiel describes Jerusalem wallowing in its blood, kicking about, totally unprotected. And so the Lord saves this child. And the child grows up.

But unfortunately, she turns into a woman of ill repute. Trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute is how it's described. And therefore, God will cast her off.

Second one, chapter 17. So, notice we've moved from kind of a package of allegories, of symbolic actions, to stories and narratives. In this case, Jerusalem is like an eagle.

Actually, it's not like an eagle. The eagle comes along and takes it. I'll get it right in a moment.

In verse two, a great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers, and full plumage came to Lebanon. Lebanon is a code word for Jerusalem here. Taking hold of the top of a cedar, he broke off its topmost shoot and carried it away.

That first one represents taking parts of the Jews in Jerusalem off to Babylon. And then there's another great eagle. Verse seven, powerful wings, full plumage.

And that one represents Egypt. So, the best of what is Jerusalem is being taken off to one place or another. And he explains it as he goes on in terms of the devastation of Jerusalem and the vine of the Lord in that case.

Chapter 23 carries on the prostitute side of things. Both Israel and Judah are represented as being adulterous sisters. It's a fairly long description of that as well.

Israel has already gone into exile. Judah's about to go. Both are people who have prostituted themselves to idols.

And then finally, the Prince of Tyre. And this is where we want to spend just a little bit of time on. The prophecy against Tyre starts in chapter 26.

And it's very clear, a prophecy against the city of Tyre. It's talking about how it's going to be destroyed, et cetera. But then we get on to chapter 28.

Which says, son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, this is what the sovereign Lord says. In the pride of your heart, you say, I am a God and I sit on the throne of a God in the heart of the seas. Well, okay, you know, he's arrogant, prideful.

But then it carries on and says some further things. Verse 12, you were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were an Eden, the garden of God.

It talks about all the precious metals there. Verse 14, you were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. Notice guardian and cherub, we just talked about the cherubim and the roles that the cherubim played with regard to the presence of God.

You were anointed as a guardian cherub. You were on the holy mount of God among the fiery stones. You were blameless in all your ways till wickedness was found in you.

Talks a little bit about that. So, I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God. I expelled you, oh guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.

Your heart became proud on account of your beauty. So, I threw you to earth. Now, two things I want to say in this regard.

The first is this. This is a description of the King of Tyre. It's a poetic description of the King of Tyre.

That's first and foremost here. But what do you hear lurking underneath that description? Several verses of which I've just read for you. The right answer is not Jesus, got that? But it might be something kind of spiritual.

Yeah, Chelsea. Maybe there is an underlying reference here to the malevolent force, Satan, that is behind every evil power in the world. All right? Now, a couple of things to say, and then we'll carry on with this.

We didn't do this, I don't think, when we read Isaiah because there was just, of course, too much to do in Isaiah. But Isaiah chapter 14, as it's describing the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, has the same kind of picture. It's Nebuchadnezzar, but there's that one interesting verse that talks about being cast down from heaven.

Oh, the sun of the dawn, the morning star. So, you've got this as well with regard to the Prince of Tyre, but something behind it may suggest that horrible, most evil force and perhaps something that happened to it. We have Jesus in Luke chapter 10, verse 18, as you probably remember, saying, I saw Satan fall like lightning.

He's probably picking up on some of this imagery, which again is originally talking about Nebuchadnezzar and the King of Tyre, Prince of Tyre, excuse me, but it's also making allusions to something else, I would suggest to you. Well, a couple more things to do, and then we can stop for the day. As with all the prophets, it's not all gloom and despair, although there's a lot of that, especially for that context.

In this restoration section, chapters 33 through 48, we have the promise that David is going to be. Obviously, the house of David going to be renewed and restored. You can check those verses out. What I really want to focus on is what we see in chapter 36, which directly precedes our bones vision that we just described a moment ago.

By the way, the David stuff, verse 23 of chapter 34, I'll place over them one shepherd, my servant David. I will be their God, and my servant David will be the

prince among them. But now let me turn over to chapter 36, where he says, starting in verse 23. Actually, I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, because you have profaned it.

But God's going to restore, and here's how he's going to do it. I'll gather you from all the countries, I'll bring you back to your own land, I'll sprinkle clean water on you. I want you to hear the congruence here between water and spirit that's forthcoming.

Just listen for it. I'll sprinkle clean water on you, and you're going to be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols, and I'll give you a new heart, I'll put a new spirit in you.

I'll remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave to your forefathers; you will be my people and I will be your God. Do you hear some themes that we've been hearing all along? The same promise that Hosea gave, those folks that were not my people, represented by lo, me, are not going to be my people.

The same theme that Jeremiah had I'll put a heart in you that's going to be a heart of flesh, not a heart of stone. Jeremiah says I'll write my words, my law on their hearts. Okay, Ezekiel's picking up on these things as well, and he's also drawing in this wonderful confluence of sprinkling with water and cleansing and how that's bound together with the spirit.

I would suggest that John picks up on that at the end of chapter seven of the Gospel of John.

But we need to stop with that, so have a good afternoon. Again, announcements, if you need to or want to retake an exam, please let me know today or tomorrow. See you Friday.