

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 33

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This is Doctor Elaine Philips in her Old Testament, History, Literature, and Theology course. Lecture number 33.

Well good morning, I think it's about time to start. We haven't tried *boqer tov* for a while and this is definitely a *boqer tov* morning, isn't it. (*boqer* 'or, yes that'll do).

You can read the announcements, so if you have anything to do with the makeup exams, whether your doing a real live authentic make up exam or whether you want to retake something that you may not have done as well on please make note of the time, the place, etc. And then those of you who want to retake, if your going to do that then you need to let me know by Friday. And 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 is a faculty member, but she is a remarkable pianist. You know 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. You really shouldn't miss her. The Brahms Second Piano Concerto is one of the most remarkable piano concertos there is. Michael Monroe who teaches in our Music Faculty as well has got a really neat blog up, it's about twenty-five minutes as he's interviewing her about how she went about preparing to get ready for this performance. And it's absolutely fascinating. So at any rate I would encourage you to be there and then if you would like something more coral the symphonic choral

is doing their last concert Sunday night over at Gordon Conwell. That means you need to get a ride over there, but, you also get chapel credit. So if your just sort of scrambling for those last chapel credits, then it will be worth more than just chapel credit, I guess. Alright, so think about those kinds of things. And since we've just been maundering on here about singing let's sing [singing]

That'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 your presence with us, we're thankful for your indwelling presence in our hearts. We're thankful for your Holy Spirit, who revives us and renews us and challenges us. We thank you that the same things come via your word. And so we pray that as we study together it will be worship in the presence of your word and worship of you. Father, we would ask for one another at these days of the semester, which are difficult. We 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 level. 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 could possible 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 who are 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. What do you think of Ezekiel? What's the most memorable thing? I mean presumably those of you who have just come to Christ before you came to Gordon, maybe you haven't dabbled in Ezekiel. But if you grew up in Sunday school, there is just something that is associated with Ezekiel that all kids know. Yes, Chelsea. I'm sorry say that again.

Well that's very true too and that is 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.

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? The bone, and bones, and dry bones. Bones, and bones, and...anyways I won't go on. Excise that one from the tape. At any rate, and we're going to talk a little later on about chapter 37 and this remarkable vision that Ezekiel has that is symbolic of the restoration of Israel after some very horrible things have happened to them. So there is that.

Why is, oh dear how did that ever sneak in there? Excise that like too. That sort of interrupts and keeps from following the train of thought doesn't it. Alright.

Why is Ezekiel called a watchman? He is called a watchman. Does anyone know? 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. 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. Alright, that'll be important. Oh 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 are not living twenty-five hundred years ago and then have no relevance whatsoever. As we watch their lives, what they have to go through, the circumstances that are so grim. 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 dies. You know he's living through some difficult times. He watches his wife die and God's going to tell him something with regards to that and the symbolic nature of that and the fact that he's not going to be mourning.

But also they are not only models for faithful living, but they are also models for faithfully speaking. And that's going to get us to our watchman issue a little bit later on. Now just by way of introduction, setting the framework here, review history, things we've already said. But things we need to know, things we need to 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. No they came and took waves of exiles. So starting in 605 which is going to have an impact with regards to Daniel, next time, and also in 597. 587 is the destruction of the temple. And even after that we learn that Nebuchadnezzar is continuing to move these people around and take them into exile. This is a truly tumultuous time--think 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, you know this if you've read chapter 1. 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 in ways that we can't even begin to understand, Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem. In fact, in chapter 8 it 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 regards is you know this is all. This next little bit is trivia, but you can hang onto it for fun. Ezekiel's name means *Yahazak El*, "let the lord" or "let God grasp." *hazak* means "to grab, grab hold of." And that's what his name comes from. 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 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 observance and measuring and so forth and so on. So definition, a revelation, specifically details 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 is 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.

Alright, when there's suffering, incredible oppression from outside forces. Basically what are they doing? They're saying, dear God. We're suppose to be your people. We're your chosen people. We have promises from you, what's happening? Why is it we're being oppressed by, in this case, the Babylonians, later on its going to be Syrians, after that its going to be Romans. And there is this genre of apocalyptic literature you saw it with the Revelations of Saint John, and the oppression by the Romans, and the implications that 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 is going to triumph now and every time you turn around there is a 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 the 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, and 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 under the heavenly spheres. But Ezekiel has a different thread about it and so does Daniel. Fantastic images, you know if you had to draw chapter 1 of Ezekiel, what would you do? I'm going to show you some attempts in a moment. Alright and they're not my bad art, they are other people's good art. But stop and think about that description of these four creatures with four heads, one on each side. They have four wings, wheels within wheels that have eyes all around them. You know this is a fantastic image and likewise some of the imagery that Daniel is going to describe. Really extraordinary, it is not what you find when you walk around Gordon College, I would guess. Division of times, symbolic use of numbers, we're going to see that especially in Daniel. You 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, but it certainly does apply to the whole host of apocalyptic literature Pseudepigrapha that grow up in the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. This genre is not just in the Bible, there is just a whole wealth of Pseudepigraphic literature in between the Testaments. Come and take Introduction to Biblical Studies, where we are actually going to deal with that at some point.

Any questions on this in terms of, again if you've had this introduction in 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. I told you a moment ago that I would give you a little glimpse of some people's attempts to present chapter 1, with the Cherubim. Now

they are labeled Cherubim in chapters 8 through 10. But we have it in chapter 1 and you certainly see, lions 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. Of course, here’s Ezekiel falling down before them, and there is yet another attempt at a wheel within the wheel and the eyes around the wheel. But you know just as the words in Ezekiel chapter 1 are the attempt to describe something indescribable, because what is in the heavenly spheres is basically indescribable. So also these are attempts to represent in art form what the words represented and all . This is trying to deal with something that is completely ineffable. Well, we’re going to come back to the interpretation or at least talking about the interpretation of chapters 1 through 10 in a moment. But you know unlike Jeremiah, you remember we said Jeremiah’s hard to knit together because its not in chronological order and you’ve got one oracle here and another one there Ezekiel’s pretty orderly. So here is our basic outline of the book: chapters 1 through 24, focus in a very sobering fashion on Ezekiel’s messages from God about Jerusalem and the doom on Jerusalem--particularly with regard to the temple. And we are going to zero in on some of that in a little bit. It’s right at the end of chapter 24 that we are informed that his wife dies. And that is of course, his beloved. And that is 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, chapter 25 through 32, prophesies against foreign nations. Edom shows up, Moab shows up you know the whole string of the usual ones. But with a particular emphasis, unusual in Ezekiel. Alright? More expansive in Ezekiel is 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 is 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 chapter 33 through 48, are primarily restorative but in a very interesting way. And we'll talk a little bit about some of the visions that show up in that particular context as well. 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. And, 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. Some very interesting issues in terms of what temple this is and why it's restored the way it's restored. Alright. So, destruction and doom, pronouncement of judgment on foreign nations, and then lengthy promise of restoration.

Let's carry on a little bit and now begin to zero in on who this man is. Alright? 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 it in suspense. But he's the watchman. You see it, as I note for you, especially fleshed out in chapters 3 and 33. It is said twice, it said at the initial stage of the condemnation of Judah in Jerusalem and it also said at the initial phase of the restoration chapters, that is 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's addressing Ezekiel he says "son of man" do this "son of man" do that, "son of man" do this, that and the other thing. And so basically it's a way of saying respectfully, "hey you, pay attention, human being." He's referring to Ezekiel as a human being. And that is God's reference to him. Now the reason that I'm kind of hammering that home is because 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've going to come back to the "son of man" title on Friday. Daniel is going to use the same title but it going to have a remarkably different reference point and we're going to

try to put these two together. And again you've probably done all this when you did New Testament. But it is important for Ezekiel, when Ezekiel is called son of man, it has everything to do with his humanity as a prophet.

He's also a priest. Chapter 1 verse 3 tells us that he was one of the priests. And this is extremely significant. Because it tell us something about his relationship with the temple. I'm going to suggest to you that just as Jeremiah was so, so broken in his heart over the broken covenant, so Ezekiel is going to have a particular pain and anguish as he sees what's happening with regard to removal of God's presence from the temple. That might explain why the restoration in chapters 40 through 48, is presented in such strong temple terminology. So hang onto 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 his identity, let's pick up on his call which is primarily chapters 1 through 3 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 his vision of God in a foreign land, I've already talked about that and I'm going to unpack the implications of the vision with the cherubim a little bit later on. But just keep in mind he's among the exiles by the Kebar river. "The heavens were open and I saw visions of God." And again we'll deal more with the implications of those visions. But his is extraordinary. You know most of our prophets have been in Israel or Judah or something like that and God speaks to them and they are 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 2 first. "I am sending you," verse 3, "to the Israelites a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me. They and their fathers have been in revolt against me, this very day." The Lord goes on to describe how stubborn and obstinate God's people are and that's not simple a description that is located simply back in the recesses of history. God's people continue to be stubborn and

obstinate, I would suggest and I include myself in that in that wonderful lot, we need the rebukes that God's prophets bring.

Chapter 3, verse 4: "Go to the house of Israel, and speak my words to them. You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel." In other words, Ezekiel isn't being told, "go to Spain, go to England, where nobody's going to understand anything about you or your religion." 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 are not willing to listen to me because they are hardened and obstinate. And here is the part that I think is really compelling. Verse 12 of chapter 3, "Then 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 in anger of my spirit." Not a happy camper prophet. "I went in bitterness and in anger of my spirit." And yet he goes. Remember Jeremiah wasn't excited about his task either. But these men are called they are truly called by God and they do what it is that God has them do and they speak what it is God will have them speak. And they are not easy issues and that does bring us to the watchman.

So chapter 3 I'm going to carry on and here's our unpacking of this little identity issue I was telling you about a moment ago. So let me read for you a little bit. 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 I speak 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. "But if you do warn the wicked person and he does not turn from his wickedness or evil ways, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself."

Do you get a sense that there is a sort of corporate responsibility among God's

people? And that's not just Ezekiel's message back there, but when we are 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 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...." In other words, somebody that you know, that is suddenly straying way off 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 and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself." There is a responsibility that is 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 statement from Matthew chapter 7 in context. Where several verses later on it says "take the moat out of his eye after you've taken the beam out of you own" and then a few verses after that it says, " You need to be able to distinguish between pigs, don't give to swine" and sorts of things. We suppose to be very discerning. But we are also suppose to be very concerned for the well being of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Very concerned. It has long term implications. Not only for that person but for me too. We're 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 waved their finger at me and said, "Don't judge. Jesus said don't judge." One of the ways to come back at that is gently, graciously, and with, believe me you 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 your 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 along our feeble and frail brothers and sisters because we are all feeble and frail and we all need rebuke from time to time. And as I said, notice, this shows up in chapter 33 as well. Its not just a one time shot. Ezekiel is told the thing twice. He's got to be concerned.

Well, let's carry on. Here is something to look at. This is the prelude to our venture into chapters 1 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 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 are called *kerub* or *kerubu* or *kerubim* or well you catch a cherub is the English of *cherubim* in Hebrew alright, so that sounds an awful lot like this. And there is some suggestion that what we are seeing as we read the descriptions of these Cherubim in Ezekiel and Revelation for that matter. There is some sense in which other cultures have the same idea of protecting the throne room of God. In this case it is protecting the divine throne room because those cherubim are under where the throne was, under where Ezekiel sees on the throne high and exalted the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God at the end of chapter 1.

Okay, now let's move on and talk about the visions themselves. I've tried to describe already, or 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, called Cherubim, in chapter 10, 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 lighting," verse 4, chapter 1, "surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like

glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight, their feet 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 is lots of representation and appearance kinds of things here but something that might have had the 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, was part of the cherub experience.

“Under their wings, four sides like a man,” and then it goes on to describe where ever 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. “We’re full of eyes on the rims ... and wherever the creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved and when the living creatures rose from the ground the wheels also rose.” That’s important. The 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 9. 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. And you can read that. Particularly evident in chapter 8. “The Spirit lifted me up between heaven and earth” and in verse 3: “And in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court where the idol that provokes his jealousy stood.” And chapter 8:

goes on to describe the really gripping nature of this idolatry. Its in the hearts and minds of even the most important of the religious leaders there. Verse 17 of chapter 8, “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 land with violence?”

Now because the idolatry is so shot through, right even into the temple precincts into the temple itself. We have a horrifying thing happen. Use your imagination here. The cherubim are also a part of this, okay. He’s seeing the cherubim again, starting with chapter 10, and now verse 17. “The cherubim rose because the Spirit of the living God was in them.” Verse 19: “While I watched, the cherubim 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 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 and then its been in the temple, with Israel dwelling in their midst. They came to presume it would stay there forever. Did you catch it? It’s moving away. Notice again, verse 19. “They stopped at the entrance of the east gate at 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, and 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.”

I know I’m probably just using my imagination too much here. But it doesn’t just go “zip” and is gone because “I’m so mad.” You can see the pathos of God. It 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, its almost as if he can hardly bring himself to leave his people. And yet that’s what Ezekiel sees. Represented by the cherub, the great chariot in the

presence of the throne room of God. God has left the temple and that's what going to happen right before the destruction. The temple is 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 mean time. 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 for him but also for his audience. We have our restoration of Israel. We talked about this when we talked 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 of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them." Keep in mind, by the way, that bones are unclean. Right? I mean Ezekiel's a priest. This 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, "O sovereign Lord, you know." And the Lord said, "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 the 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 will come to life. Then you will know that I am the lord.'"

And so Ezekiel prophesied and indeed those things happened. And he even prophesized so that breath came into them. And they stand on their feet and they are 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; we're cut off.' Therefore prophesy to

them and say ‘this is what the Lord says, ‘O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them. I will bring you back to the land of Israel and then you, my people will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you back up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.’”

There is 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. The Temple’s gone, exile after exile. But there’s going to be a restoration. And the visions of the bones is indicative of that.

Now of course, this goes on. We don’t have a specific vision with regards 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 is going to invade and of course there is 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, in the valley of those who travel east toward the sea.... Gog and all his hoards will be buried there.” So there is 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 major vision experience Ezekiel has and it links right into the one 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 3. “He took me there and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand.” And they’re going to measure and measure everything. They’re going to measure the outer court, the gates, rooms. There are even rooms for priests. We’ll that’s kind of interesting.

What kind of temple is this? Do I ask that question up here? Yes, 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, well actually in 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 is we read Hebrews chapter 9 particularly, I don't see anything up here about Hebrews chapter 9 but I should. If we read Hebrews chapter 9, it said that Jesus is our once for all sacrifice. We don't need it anymore. If we do read Revelation, the verse that I've mentioned chapter 21, verse 22. Where it says, the apocalypse of John, Saint 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 seeing here--especially complete with a sacrificial system? It's kind of interesting. Let me read you a couple of more little items.

As I said, "rooms for priests" and it describes them in great detail. Describes in chapter 43, the end. "The altar" describes the Levites and the priest in chapter 44.

But here is the key and I know I'm going to race through this because we've got other things we need to do today. But in chapter 43, right at the beginning it says, verse 4, "the glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into 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 the utter tragedy of a generation and a half of Israelites, but now he is looking ahead and he is seeing it restored. And he is seeing it in terms as I said that are familiar to him, that 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 things about sacrifices

and altars and tables for sacrifices might be symbolic representations--just a suggestion. 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. [student question].

He's probably looking forward, yes 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 suppose to be the second coming of Christ, whether it's the new heavens and the new earth, I would probably go with the later. 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 is going to flow. And it's a river that has trees growing on it, the leaves of the tree are for healing of the nations. Okay? He measures this river and it gets deeper and deeper and deeper. Fruit trees of all kinds growing on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, their fruit will not fail. Every month they will bear and their fruit will serve as 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 way in which Ezekiel is 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. I'll run through these fairly quickly. Because you can read them and they are pretty self-explanatory. Right away in chapter 3 as he's given his commission, the commission is suppose 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 ingest the scriptures unless we've taken and chewed on them and then are able to use them. And that is 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 verse 24: “Go shut yourself inside your house. And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes, you’ll be bound” 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 will open your mouth and you will say to them; ‘This is what the sovereign Lord says’.”

And what is interesting is, I would suggest that the subtext here is, the people had heard lots of words. Words, words, words, words, words. And of course, they weren’t listening. That is what God has said earlier on in the chapter. They turned off the words. So as Ezekiel is not rebuking with words he is going to teach with his actions and this is the first one, taking in the Torah.

And there is a bunch more, lets see what some of them are. He builds a model of Jerusalem, its on a clay tablet. And of course, he’s got to lay around it. Three-hundred and ninety days on one side 40 days on the other side symbolizing siege times. He also has to eat rations that are really slim. If you read your NIV notes, he’s on a hunger strike basically--really slim, food and water. They are rations that are indicative of siege rations. And he’s going through that particular action, okay, to show something.

He also, again remember a priest who would not be particularly keen on slicing off his beard. That’s shameful and yet Ezekiel is told to do that in chapter 5, he’s burning one-third, he whips one-third away with the sword, and one-third goes away with the wind. There is a tiny little remnant that is saved and the Lord tells him how to interpret that as well. If I can find it. This is what the sovereign Lord says. Chapter 5: I will pursue them with drawn sword. Some are going to be burned with plague but verse 3, “But take a few strands of hair and tuck them away.” Tuck them away they will be saved as the remnant.

Then in chapter 12 (verse 3) this is after we have the vision of the departure of the cherubim then Ezekiel is told, Pack up your stuff. Go out as if you are going

out to exile because that is exactly what you are going to do, you're going through the wall and take yourself through this wall that is 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 am about to take the delight of your eyes. Yet don't weep or shed any tears. Grown quietly, don't mourn for the dead. Keep your turban and fastened the 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 stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection.... Ezekiel will be a sign to you.'" And so we are seeing that patterning back and forth there. And then at the end of that chapter (verse 27), "at that time your mouth will be opened and you will speak. And you will no longer be silent." So this partial muteness has been removed at that point.

Well Ezekiel also utters some allegories, visions, symbolic actions, and then the allegories. Chapter 16 is a long chapter—a 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 grows into a woman of ill repute. Trusted in your beauty and in your fame to become a prostitute, is how it is described. And therefore God will cast her off.

Second one, chapter 17. So noticed we've moved from sort 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. Verse 2: "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 Jews and Jerusalem off to Babylon. And then there is another great eagle. Verse 7: “powerful wings, full plumage,” and that one represents Egypt. 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, carrying on the prostitute side of things, both Israel and Judah are represented as being adulterous sisters. And 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 we want to spend just a little bit of time on. The prophecy in Tyre starts in chapter 26. And its very clearly a prophecy against the city of Tyre. Its talking about how its going to be destroyed etc. 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, 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 of the cherub for so I ordained you.” Notice guardian and cherubim, 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 of the cherub, you were god among the fiery stones, you were blameless in all your ways.... till wickedness was found in you.” It talks a little bit about that. “So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O 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 have just read for you. The right answer is not Jesus, got that? But it might be something kind of spiritual. Yes, Chelsea? [Satan?] Maybe there is an underlying reference here to the malevolent force of Satan that is behind every evil power in the world. Alright, now a couple things to say and then we'll carry on with this. We didn't do this, I think, when we read Isaiah, because there was just, of course, too much to do in Isaiah. But Isaiah chapter 14 as its describing the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, it has the same kind of picture. Its Nebuchadnezzar but there is that one verse that talks about being cast down from heaven. Oh son of the dawn, morning star." So you've got this as well with regards 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 king Nebuchadnezzar and the Prince of Tyre. But its also making allusions to something else, I would suggest to you.

Well a couple more things to do and we can stop for the day. As with all the prophets its not all gloom and despair, although there is 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, is 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 a shepherd, my servant David. I will be their God my servant David will be prince among them."

But now let me turn over to chapter 36. Where he says, starting with 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 will gather you from all the countries and 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 forth coming. Alright, just listen for it. "I'll sprinkle clean water on you, you're going to be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 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 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." Ezekiel is 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 7 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 the exam, please let me know today or tomorrow. See you Friday.

This is Doctor Elaine Philips in her Old Testament, History, Literature, and Theology course. Lecture number thirty-three.

Transcribed by Haley Drelot
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