

Week 37 Chronological

September 7: Ezekiel 34-36

Ezekiel is told to prophesy against the shepherds. They are the priests that are supposed to care for God's people. Instead, they abuse and exploit God's sheep for personal gain. God is going to take the flock away from them to prevent the shepherds feeding themselves from the flock. The LORD explains that just as a shepherd searches for the scattered flock, He will search for His people all over and bring them back home. God will lead them to rich pastures and they will be well fed. They will have peace and any dangerous animals will be removed from their presence.

Ezekiel is told to face toward Mount Seir. Mount Seir was the ancient name for the various mountain regions south of the Dead Sea and on both sides of the Rift Valley. This prophecy is against Edom, the land established by Esau. This group, though they are related to the Israelites, have maintained an ancient hatred against them. They will become a desolation and they will know that He is Yahweh.

God promises restoration to Israel's mountains and the restoration of her people. They had been performing terrible things in His sight, so He poured His wrath out on them. They were dispersed, but they will be brought back. This restoration is not meant to make them feel good about the awful things they did against The LORD. Instead, it is meant to make them feel shame for how they treated The LORD.

September 8: Ezekiel 37-39

God's Spirit leads Ezekiel to the middle of the valley. There are a lot of bones scattered around. God asks if these bones can live. Ezekiel responds that only God knows. The LORD tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, telling them to hear the words of The LORD. They are to rise up. Ezekiel prophesies as he is instructed and the bones begin to come together. Muscles, sinew, and flesh form on the skeletons. A vast army stands before Ezekiel. This is to signify the reunification of Israel. They will come back together as one nation, though they had been scattered. Though they were dead, just like these bones, they will live again. We were once dead in our sins, but God has made us alive again in Christ.

Gog most likely refers to Gyges, the king of Lysia. The reference goes beyond his kingdom, though, and speaks of a leader that will oppose Israel far off in the future. Israel will be peaceful and minding her own business, then the enemy will decide to rise up against her. God will not let this stand. Instead, He will take up arms against this attacker.

God will knock the arrow from their left hand and make their arrows drop. Fire will come against them. The death toll will be so high that they have to hire on men of a full-time basis to bury the fallen.

The LORD will display His glory to the nations.

September 9: Ezekiel 40-42

It has been 25 years since the exile began. God's hand is upon Ezekiel. God takes him to the land of Israel. On the slope was a structure that resembled a city. He meets with a man whose appearance is like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring rod. He explains that Ezekiel is there to report everything he is about to show him.

From there, we are given very detailed measurements for the new temple. The measurements for the outside walls and outer gates are provided, along with the measurements for the inner gates. The rooms for preparing sacrifices and the rooms for singers and priests are detailed. The inside and outside of the temple are described. The priest's chambers are as well.

This creates a bit of a conundrum. Will another temple be built in the future? Currently, the Dome of the Rock is located where the former temple once stood. Some say that the temple is allegorical and it is referring to a temple in heaven. However, Revelation disagrees with that assessment since it declares that there is no temple (Revelation 21:22). One day, it will be made clear. Until then, we can keep studying.

September 10: Ezekiel 43-45

Ezekiel witnesses God's glory return to the temple. His glory returned from the east. His voice sounded like the roar of water and the earth shone with His glory. The vision is similar to the one Ezekiel had seen when God came to destroy the city. His response is to fall facedown in worship. Ezekiel hears a voice telling him that God will reside in this temple. He will once again remain with His people. Israel and her kings will no longer defile God's sanctuary. Instead, they will treat it as holy.

Since the LORD God entered through the gate that faced east, it is closed permanently. Ezekiel is given instruction on the duties of the Levites and their privileges. The Levites had been in charge of the temple and its operation, but since the temple had been destroyed, they had not been needed. God also explains the duties of the priests.

As the people return and the land is divided into lots, the people must set aside a holy portion of land to The LORD. The tract will measure $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles by $6 \frac{2}{3}$ miles. God also gives instruction for what the people are to bring to contribute for the sacrifices.

September 11: Ezekiel 46-48

We finish up Ezekiel today. The east gate of the outer court was permanently closed, but the east gate of the inner court could be opened on special occasions such as the Sabbath and New Moon festival. On the Sabbath and the New Moon festival, the prince is to enter from the outside through the portico of the temple and the priest is to sacrifice his burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.

Ezekiel is brought to the entrance of the temple where water is flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. This river represents healing that is flowing from the temple to the land. There is an abundance of trees that points to the rich vegetation, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.

To close out Ezekiel, we are given the measurements of the city. The city is in the shape of a cube, just as the city is described in Revelation. The name of the city is “Yahweh Is There.”

September 12: Joel 1-3

Joel is one of the shortest book in the Old Testament. The first part describes a horrible plague that concludes with a plea for confession of sin. The second proclaims hope for the people that repent.

Joel addresses both the elders and the inhabitants of the land with a question meant to grab their attention. “Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors?” The devouring locusts came in and took what they wanted. The swarming locust came in and had their fill. Whatever they did not eat was taken by young locust. Whatever was left by the young locust was eaten by the destroying locust. This incident has caused a complete wipe out of their crops.

They are called to wake up from their drunkenness and weep at their state. The grapevine is dried up. The fig tree is withered. All the trees in the orchard are dried up.

Everyone should tremble because the Day of the LORD is coming. It will be a day of darkness and gloom. The LORD declares that they should turn to Him with all of their hearts with fasting, weeping, and mourning. The priests should weep and cry “have pity on Your people, LORD and do not make our inheritance a disgrace”.

God promises that one day they will be restored. He promises that He will pour out His Spirit on all humanity. Everyone who calls on His name will be saved. When the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem are restored, God will bring all the nations and take them to the valley of Jehoshaphat and enter judgment there. Israel will be blessed. Judah and Jerusalem will be inhabited forever. Their bloodguilt will be forgiven.

September 13: Daniel 1-3

Daniel has prophetic prophecies in it and this book is often studied in tandem with Revelation. This book deals with Daniel during the time of exile in Babylon. Even though the Israelites have been displaced, they continue to serve God and follow His ways.

In the third year of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. God hands Jerusalem over to Babylon, just as He said He would. Nebuchadnezzar has his chief court official set apart some of the Israelites for his service. They are to learn the language and literature of the Chaldeans. Daniel, the author of this book, along with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are chosen for this detail. They are given new names, Daniel is named Belteshazzar. The other three are names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. For some reason, Daniel despite given a new name, is remembered by his Hebrew name, but the other three are mainly remembered by their Babylonian names.

These four men have a special privilege. They are going to be given food from the king's table. Daniel realizes that eating the food and drinking the wine of the king will defile them. He approaches his overseer and requests that he and his friends be given water and vegetables. The overseer is worried at first because if Daniel and the other three do not grow stronger, he will be held accountable. The guard allows them to try it. After 10 days, the four looked healthier than all the others. These four decided to go against the grain and follow God's orders in a foreign land. God blessed them for their obedience and gave them knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that troubles him. He wants his men to interpret the dream for him, but he will not tell them what the dream was. If they were truly gifted with the ability to interpret dreams, surely they would know what the dream was without being told. They tell the king no one on earth can interpret the dream. Daniel approaches the king and reiterates that what he is asking is impossible for men, but God can do it. Daniel describes the dream and interprets it for the king. The dream has to do with the Babylonian kingdom and the weaker kingdoms that will follow it. Daniel is praised for his ability to interpret the dream.

Nebuchadnezzar erects a 90 foot golden statue and sets it up in Dura. He sends instructions that when the music plays, everyone will bow toward the statue. The officials assemble everyone and the music plays. Everyone bows with the exception of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They remain standing, refusing to worship anything other than God Almighty. They are brought before Nebuchadnezzar who threatens their lives if they do not bow. They will be thrown into the furnace. Their response is one of my favorite in all of the Bible. ***"If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."*** (That line "slaps" as the young people would say). Nebuchadnezzar has them bound and thrown in the furnace. Yet they do not burn. Instead, there is a fourth in the fire with them. Nebuchadnezzar has them come out of the furnace. God protected them to the point that their clothes did not even smell like fire or burning.

Sometimes we are going to walk through dark valleys. God will deliver us. Even if He doesn't, then we still should serve Him. His ways are better than the ways of the world.

September 14: Daniel 4-6

Upon witnessing the rescue of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Nebuchadnezzar makes a confession of faith about God Almighty. He proclaims that the Most High God's miracles are great, His wonders are mighty, and His kingdom is eternal. Despite this confession of how powerful God is, Nebuchadnezzar does not reject the false gods. He has another dream. This time he tells the dream to his interpreters and diviners, but they are stumped. He calls on Daniel. Daniel interprets the dream which bears a warning for Nebuchadnezzar. Unless he repents and follows God completely, he is going to suffer from lycanthropy, a disease that essentially makes him act like a wild animal. By the time a year had passed, Nebuchadnezzar was on the roof of the royal palace, feeling puffed up with pride and full of himself because of how splendid and great Babylon is. God metes out the punishment on Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride. He is

driven away from his people, he ate grass like a cow, and his body was drenched with dew. His hair and fingernails grew long and unruly.

Over time, Nebuchadnezzar regains his sanity and praises the Most High God. He is reestablished over his kingdom.

We fast forward about 23 years into King Belshazzar's time. Belshazzar gets drunk at one of his feasts and commands that the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem be brought to him. These vessels were set apart and holy to The LORD. During the feast Belshazzar hosts, he has the noblemen, wives, and concubines drink from these cups that were solely for The LORD. To make matters worse, they sing praises to the false gods. At that time, a hand appears and writes MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. Belshazzar has his men assembled to interpret, but they cannot. Daniel is summoned to tell the king what it means. Mene means that God has numbered his days, Tekel means he has been found deficient. Peres is the singular form of Parsin. It means that the kingdom will be divided between the Medes and the Persians.

That very night, the king is killed and Darius the Mede rises to power. His advisors tell him that he needs to issue a decree that says no one can petition any god or man. They can only petition the king. Daniel learns about the document, but rather than hide himself, he continues with his prayer regiment. When the advisors see it, they bring it to the king. Darius is not happy about hearing this, not because he is upset with Daniel, but because he does not want to have him executed. He has Daniel brought before him and says, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" Daniel is put in the lion's den. The king goes to bed that night, but cannot sleep. The next day he runs to the lion's den and calls to Daniel. Daniel is still alive; the lions have not harmed him. Darius honors God for protecting Daniel.

God can shut the mouth of the lion. Do we trust Him to care for us as we go through our trials and tribulations?