

EZEKIEL THE PROPHET OF GOD'S POWER(OMNIPOTENCE) – Teacher Mabel

Son of Buzi a priest and was married 24:18 was one of the exile prophets. He lived by R. Chebar in Babylon.

He was called by God to deliver God's message. His name "Ezekiel" meant "omnipotent" (all powerful).

Though he prophesied in exile, he also had special interest in the course of events in Jerusalem. He was a prophet of God's judgment over Judah and a prophet of hope to the exiles.

Ezekiel witnessed a number of unique visions after his call to be a prophet. His visions are full of symbolism which is intended to express spiritual truth which goes beyond simple human understanding.

THE MAIN THEMES OF EZEKIEL.

1. Judgment upon various nations that oppressed and misled God's people. This pointed to the unlimited powers of the Lord.
2. The theme of the Remnant shall return Ezekiel talked about God's readiness to forgive and restore those who would return to him in true repentance. God's aim was to save and preserve a remnant of his people so that his true love for them and his divine plan for them may be seen.
3. The theme of individual responsibility of sin Ezekiel made it clear that one who sin was to die.
4. Ezekiel also stressed the fact that God was above all the gods of Babylonians(Transcendence of God, God is beyond all limitations). This was against the belief that since Babylon succeeded in capturing God's people and destroyed their treasured city then were more powerful than Yahweh.
5. Ezekiel also emphasized the fact that God was omnipresent like was not bound by any geographical, cultural and social boundaries. This stemmed from the ideology at that same time that God was only worshipped only at Jerusalem.
6. Ezekiel also looked forward to the rest of the nation of the original twelve tribes. Each being given their rightful portion of the land the temple would be rebuilt.

THE FIRST VISION 1:1-28 VISION BABYLONIANS BELIEVED THAT THEIR GODS LIVED IN THE FAR NORTH.

So God's manifestation of his presence from that direction indicated that his power was greatest greater than any power which might be attributed to the gods of Babylon the exiles entered Babylonia through the same direction.

God's manifestation in Babylon was intended to reveal the exiles that was omnipresent.

At the centre of the storm Ezekiel saw that what looked like four living creatures. The creatures represented God's creation and they: each creature had four faces and four wings. They also had four human hands, one under each wing. Each living creature represented the unique traits possessed by each creature which were all part of God's nature.

- (i) A lion face at the front is the king of the beasts (masterful).
- (ii) A human face in front, man is unique and very intelligent.
- (iii) A bull's face at the left. It is believed to be strong.
- (iv) An eagle's face at the back. The chief of the birds of the air and is believed to be very swift.

Each creature faced four directions and so the group could go wherever they wished without having to turn. This symbolized that God's presence was not limited to only one place but was to be experienced anywhere.

Among the creatures there was something that looked like a blazing torch constantly moving. This portrayed the glory of the Lord.

Above the heads of the creatures there was something that looked like a dome made of dazzling crystal and above the dome there was something that looked like a throne with a figure that looked like a man.

It seemed to be shining like bronze in the middle of the fire. It shone with a bright light that had in it the colours of a rainbow. This was the dazzling light that shows the presence of the Lord.

The creatures also had rims of the wheels were covered with eyes. This portrayed that God is all seeing.

In summary the vision refers to the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence of God, God is powerful, all knowing and over all controller.

Ezekiel had to take the message to the people whose lives had become meaningless to them.

He had to try to communicate to them that God was their God, who had come to save them.

The vision also proved the fact that Ezekiel was used by God to turn the hearts of the people of God.

EZEKIEL CALL TO BE A PROPHET 1,2-3:15 AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

The Lord called him by using a special title, "mortal man" the little distinguished man from God. Man is a human being as contrasted with God.

Ezekiel faced downwards on the ground. This was a sign of respect to the Lord.

God's spirit entered him and raised him to his feet. This gave him power to speak for the Lord.

Ezekiel was to prophesy to the stubborn people who had turned away from God the Jews in exile lived in poor and interable.

Conditions most educated and skilled people were used by Babylonians to work but this enabled them keep up their knowledge and skills. Some Jews believed that their God was defeated and powerless.

They blamed what happened to them on their sinful ancestors so such people would find it difficult to understand without Ezekiel witnessed and even to accept his teaching about individual responsibility of sin.

Ezekiel was commanded to eat a scroll. This portrayed that he was to observe take in the message he was to receive.

God's were for him as well and given in a unique way.

The scroll was written on both sides. Something which was unusual as one side was normally used. This symbolized the great responsibility and burden of the prophet's task in being the spokesman of God.

On the scroll were writings, cries of grief were written there, wails and groan. This was a manifestation of doom.

The scroll also tasted as sweet as honey. This portrayed the joy Ezekiel experienced in his new relationship with God. It also focused on the good message to the exiles(future restoration) of the kingdom to its former glory.

Ezekiel was commanded by God to speak to the Jews but none of the people would e willing to listen to God will make him as stubborn and as tough as they are firm as a rock and hard as a diamond. God was to give him strength and will be enable him accomplish his task.

God's spirit lifted him up and heard the loud roar of a voice that said "praise the glory of the Lord in heaven above."

He heard the wings of the creatures beating together in the air the noise of the wheels as loud as an earthquake. This portrayed the mighty power of the Lord's presence.

Ezekiel felt bitter and angry. This portrayed spiritual blindness and ignorance about of the behaviour of the Jews.

Ezekiel stayed with the exiles for seven days at Tel Abib besides river Chebar overcome by what he had witnessed the seven days were meant to prepare himself to begin his prophetic ministry

(period of consecration for a priest) Ezekiel was to renew his commitment. He was to serve God in Babylonia as a priest and a prophet in a new kind of ministry.

The call also manifested God's love for the people. He revealed himself to Ezekiel in exile.

The call also portrayed that God can call upon anyone irrespective of one's status.

After spending several days recovering from the experience of his vision. He received another message.

The privilege of being called to be a servant of God brought other responsibilities. Ezekiel who was commanded by God to be a watchman to other people. He had to commend those who were doing good and to condemn those who were sinning against the Lord. His duty was to warn others of the dangers.

Ezekiel witnessed the Lord's presence. He was instructed to go to the valley and there he witnessed the glory of God. The Lord instructed him to confine himself to his own house. He was also informed that he will not be able to talk (become incapable of speech until when the Lord would give him the power of speech). This meant that God was fed up with the people who would not listen.

Ezekiel was to speak to them in future. It was also intended to draw the attention of his fellow exiles to his strange behaviour to make them aware that Ezekiel would only speak to them in future as God directed him.

THE PROPHETIC SIGNS.

Before beginning to speak to his fellow exiles Ezekiel was commanded by God to perform several prophetic signs in the first sign he was to get a brick place, it in front and scratch lines on it to represent the city he was to put trenches, earth works, camps to represent the attack he was to set up an iron pan and set it up like a wall between Ezekiel and the city. Ezekiel was to face the city and this implied that he was the one besieging it. Ezekiel himself represented God whose will was that Jerusalem should be besieged and destroyed because of the sin of its people.

It is also believed that the iron pan represented the strength of the attacking.

2. LIE DOWN ON HIS SIDES 4:4-8

Ezekiel's sign involved the symbolic acceptance of the sin of the divided people of Israel and Judah. He was to lie down on his left side for 390 days to suffer on behalf of the people of Israel. He was also to turn on the right side and suffer for the guilt of Judah for 40 days the period indicated a longer time exile. It was believed that each day represented a year.

Ezekiel was to fix his eyes on the siege of Jerusalem, shake his fist at the city and prophesy against the city.

Ezekiel was restricted on the amount of food to be eaten and water to take. He was allowed to eat 230 grammes of bread a day. He was also supposed to take limited amount of water (2 cup a day). This portrayed that there was to be scarcity of food and water during the time of the siege which will eventually bring the people to starvation.

3. BAKE BREAD ON FIRE(4:12-15).

Ezekiel was to build a fire out of dried human excrement, bake bread on the fire and eat. It was when exposing himself. This was something absolutely horrible to a priest who had always tried to avoid impurity of any kind. This sign meant that during exile the Israelites will be forced to eat food which the law forbids or even engage in dirty things in order to survive.

4. EZEKIEL HAD TO CUT HIS HAIR. 5:1-17

The Lord commanded Ezekiel to take a sharp razor and use it to shave off his hair and the beard. Shaving off the hair was a sign of mourning, he was mourning for the people and their city. Shaving off the hair showed that as the hair stands before a barber's razor in the same way no person would remain standing after the fall of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was also to weigh the hair on the scales and even divide it into different parts. He was to burn a portion of it in the city when the siege is over. This indicates that to the winds. This was also a sign of destruction. Ezekiel was to keep a few hairs and wrap them in his cloak. This portrayed that a few people were to be restored.

5. EZEKIEL WAS INSTRUCTED TO GET TWO STICKS 37:15 FF.

Ezekiel was instructed to get two sticks, write in one Judah and on the other Israel. Then he was to join them together so that they become one. This portrayed that the Lord will join Israel and Judah.

QUESTIONS:

How were the above signs fulfilled?

THE THEME OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY OF SIN 18:1 FF.

Ezekiel tried to challenge their historical misconception that they were suffering because of their parents' sin. They had a sense of corporate guilt like guilt stemming from the community as a whole. It was derived from a common saying that "the parents ate the sour grapes but the children got the sour taste."

Ezekiel's teaching challenges the exiles and assures them that God cares for each of them individually. Life is God's gift to each person, who by his ability has the right to choose between good and bad; the one who sins is the one who dies.

A righteous person is described as one who lives to law doesn't worship idols, is not guilty of sexual offences, does not cheat.

A righteous man who does not worship idols, eat sacrifices offered at dens, shrines, seduces another man's wife, doesn't cheat. Such a man will live.

If a righteous man turns away and resorts to evil ways, he will be punished.

A sinful man will be punished because of his sinful nature.

If an evil man turns away from his evil ways, he will die. God is ready to forgive the man who did evil but then man from it and chooses good.

If a righteous man produces a son who cheats, eat sacrifices offered at forbidden shrines, worships idols. An evil man son will not escape punishment because of the righteous of his father but the father will live.

If a sinful man produces a son who worships one God obeys the law, respects all the people. The righteous son will not be punished for the evil done by his father but a father will die.

If a righteous man has a son who lives according to the law doesn't worship idols is not guilty of sexual offences. Both will live and will receive God's blessings.

If a wicked man has a sinful (son both will die).

Ezekiel also illustrates the fact that God is a fair judge. Each one will be judged according to they have done. This implies that God knows each individual.

Ezekiel calls up on people to repent and encourage them get new and spirit.

Ezekiel was appointed by God to act as a watchman. He had to loan people and to encourage those who are doing right. Each individual will be accountable for his own sins the Lord is interested in seeing each one live.

THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL 34:1-31.

It is believed that this prophesy came from years before the fall of Jerusalem. The shepherds were the rulers of Israel while the sheep(flock) were the Israelites. God was going to denounce rulers of Israel because they were neglecting their duties. God is an enemy of unfaithful kings. A ruler was appointed with God's approval to be a servant of God.

The shepherds never tended to the sheep. They used to drink milk, wore clothes made from wool, ate the finest sheep but never attended to them.

Leaders never took care of the weaker sheep, heated those that were sick or even bandaged those that were injured.

They never bothered to even trace those that wandered over the hills. God was ready to replace them with a better shepherd. The ruler will have the exemplary attributes of king David. God will bring together the scattered people take them out of foreign countries and take them back to their land.

God will look for the people and take care of them as a shepherd takes care of his sheep.

He will bondage those that are hurt and heal those that are sick.

God will feed them on pleasant pastures let them graze in safety in the mountain meadows, the valleys and all the green pastures of the land of Israel.

The Lord will judge each separate the good from the bad and also judge between the strong and weak people.

He will make an everlasting covenants of peace that will guarantee their security.

God will bless his people, he will bless them with showers of rain. Trees will bear fruits and bear fruits and produce crops. The people will live in safety, prosperity and freedom.

JOHN 10:1-11 PORTRAYS JESUS AS A GOOD SHEPHERD.

1. Jesus was ready to accept each and everybody. He has exclusive right to grant entry.
2. Jesus knew all believers and they also knew him.(10:3)
3. Provided security, he was the gate for the sheep, they had to believe and trust him.
4. He was ready to die for their sins. He was ready to sacrifice himself for the sheep.
5. Jesus was very ready to trace the scattered sheep, preach to them and unite them under one shepherd.
6. He gave his people courage to enable them withstand persecutions.
7. Jesus also works in the interest of his sheep. He cares for them, those that are hurt and heal the sick.
8. Those who accept his teachings are entitled to divine blessings.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES 37:1-14.

Ezekiel was led around the valley where the ground was covered with dry bones.

Ezekiel had to prophesy to them, they were to be covered with flesh and come back to life.

While he was prophesying the bones came together with a rattle flesh, got sinews and the skin covered them but they were dead.

He also prophesied to the wind breath entered the bodies, they came back to life stood up and were enough to form an army.

The bones represented the Israelites their hopes had dried up but God was ready to bring them out of the growers and take them back to their land.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISION.

1. It was a prophecy of resurrection of the dead. The Israelites were equivalent to a seed buried in the ground which develops into a plant. This portrays that God has power to create. An equally powerful transformation would be applied to Israel the dead nation would one day be revived and return back to their land.
2. The vision indicated that their restoration was God's work. It was Yahweh whose used the Babylonians to punish the Israelites because of their sinful nature.
3. The vision proved God's creative power as illustrated in the creation accounts the dry bones received life sinews, muscles. God is the sources of life.etc God is the source of life The vision portrayed God's special power. It was because of God's power that the bones joined together, got sinews end muscles.
4. It also portrayed the omnipresence of the lord .He appeared to Ezekiel in a foreign through the vision. This challenged the Israelites belief that God was confined in Judah and Israel.
5. It also portrayed the special love which God extended to his people in exile although they were sinful and in exile he still cared for them and wanted them to reform. God was to bring them back to their land.
6. The vision focused on the reality of life after death. The theme of resurrection is developed by Christ in the New Testament. It is more applicable to those who are ready to listen and accept the word of God with faith.
7. The vision focused on both spiritual and physical restoration. God would inspire them with the Holy Spirit to change their sinful nature and physical in the sense that he would give them new life as he covered the bones with sinews, muscles and the skin.
8. It was a source of life.

It showed that God could use any one to execute his will.

Manifested that Ezekiel was a true prophet because whatever he prophesied came to pass.

It showed a second chance.

It manifested strength because they were enough to form an army.

MESSAGES OF HOPE.

1. The Lord will re-unite the two kingdoms again; Ezekiel illustrated it by joining two sticks together. They will have one king and will never again be divided into two kingdoms (37:15-22).
2. The Lord will give them a king like his servant David. The new ruler will have all the attributes of king David (34:23-24).
3. The Israelites were to rise again and even to regain their strength. According to the vision about the valley of dry bones. The bones joined together, got sinews, muscles and were even enough to form an army (37:1-14).
4. The Lord promised to be present in the land where they would go. This portrayed that the Lord still cared for them. (11:16)
5. The Lord will give them a heart and a new mind. He was to take away their stubborn heart of stone and was to give them an obedient heart [11;18-19]
6. God will humiliate the surrounding nations. The nations around will suffer scorn too [36;5-7]
7. The Lord was to accept the sacrifice that they would burn [20;41]
8. The Lord was to bless his people. The people and their cattle were to increase in number. The Lord was to make them more prosperous than ever etc [36;11-12]
9. The Lord was to pour out his spirit on the people of Israel and never again turn away from them [39;29]
10. Each tribe was to receive one section of the land [48;1-47]
11. The Lord will reveal himself to the people in Babylonia, just as powerful as he did in the past when they were his people in the land he promised them the Lord will continue to be with them. Show them his gracious love keeping his covenant with them, restoring them to their land and using them to show power to all nations.
12. Ezekiel also stressed the fact that the individual was responsible to God. Who desired he should live and not die. If people turned sincerely to God followed his laws, leaving their previous evil ways they would live a worthwhile life (18:1ff)
13. The Lord will make a covenant with them that will guarantee their security for ever [37;26-28]
14. The Lord will let some escape the slaughter and be scattered among nations where they will live in exile. There they will remember God and know that he punished them because of their faithless hearts. They will be disgusted because of the evil and degrading things they have done. (6:8-9).

MESSAGES OF DOOM

1. The lord will send a sword to destroy the places where people worship idols. Alters will be torn down and incense altars broken. All the people will be killed in front of the idols [6;3-4].
2. All the cities of Israel will be destroyed all their altars and their idols will be smashed to pieces [6;6]
3. The Israelites were going to die in war by famine and diseases. Those near will be killed in war. Those who survive will starve to death [6;11-12]
4. The lord will let foreigners rob them the law breakers will take all their wealth and defile it [7;21]
5. The priests will have nothing to teach the people and the elders will have no advice to give [7:26].
6. The city will not protect the people as a pot protects the meat in it. The Lord will punish the people; they will know that he is God.
7. False prophets were condemned, their names were not to be included on the list of the citizens of Israel, and they will never go back to their land.
8. The people will be disgusted of themselves because of their sinful nature.(3:31-32)
9. The Israelites will eat food which the law forbids when the lord scatters them to foreign countries, for example Ezekiel had to build a fire out of dried human excrement.

THE SINS WHICH THE PEOPLE COMMITTED.

- Defiled the lord's temple with disgusting things(5:11-12)
- They were proud of their wealth and were violate (7:10-11)
- They worshipped images and other un clean things(8:10-12)
- Committed murder (9:9)
- Leaders used to make evil plans and even used to give bad advice in the city.
- False prophets used to witness visions and made false predictions (13:7)
- Used to dishonor God because of strong desire for material things (13:19)
- Sacrificed their children to idols (16:21) yet God condemned human sacrifice.

- Failed to take care of the poor and underprivileged (16:49).they took advantage of the widows, orphans (22:7)
- Used to tell lies (22:9)
- Priests neglected their duties, they used to break the law, had no respect for holly places, never taught people the differences between clean and unclean things, ignored the sabath,witnessed false visions and made false predictions.
- Used o look at God as an entertainer.
- They used to look at the prophet as an entertainer.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BOOK TO CHRISTIANS TO DAY.

1. Christians should treat disadvantaged people fairly especially refuges, widows and orphans.
2. People should learn to persevere in case of problems.
3. People should trust in one God.
4. People should know that God is more powerful then any other force on the universe he managed to use the same route which the Babylonians gods used. He even revealed himself to Ezekiel and the exiles.
5. People should learn to accept their mistakes and should always Endeavour to repent.
6. People should believe in omnipresence of the lord as illustrated in the vision of the chariot throne.
7. People respond to God's call, He can call upon any one to carry out a task any time.
8. People should always listen religious leaders because they are God's spokesmen.
9. People should own their mistakes, be responsible for their mistakes as illustrated in the theme of individual responsibility of sin.