

Preaching from Ezekiel

Lecture 1: Overview of Ezekiel & General Tips on Preaching

Who is Ezekiel and what is his Message?

1. The Story of Ezekiel
 - a. Imagine a 30 year old who has already experienced difficulty as he saw his nation go from stability to turning away from God and experiencing upheaval
 - b. He is living in a refugee camp on the outskirts of Babylon in the ruins of an old city (3:15).
 - c. This should be a joyous time in his life, as a young married. But instead he is displaced from his home.
 - d. So he takes a walk along the Kebar River to clear his mind and to contemplate his situation.
 - e. There, while he is praying, he has an incredible vision where sees God in his radiance, holiness, and glory. He falls to his feet.
 - f. God calls him in this vision to be His prophet to His people.
2. The Strange Ministry of Ezekiel
 - a. He lay on his side for over a year (390 days) and then on the other side for 40 days (4:1-8).
 - i. He ate only a small piece of bread each day (4:9).¹
 - b. He cut his hair with a sword and burned a third of the hair, cut up the other third, and the final third he scattered to the wind (5:1-4). He dug a hole in the wall (12:7).
 - c. Rabbis would not let young men under 30 read the book because of its graphic imagery (particular chs. 16 and 23).
 - d. He had visions. He was suspended between heaven and earth (8:3). His wife died and God told him he could not mourn (24:15-27).
 - i. He sees graveyards (ch. 37). He struggles with depression (3:15). He tells parables (ch. 15).
3. The Context of Ezekiel's Ministry
 - a. Josiah was king when Ezekiel was born and brought stability to the nation of Israel.
 - b. When Jehoiachin, Josiah's grandson, became king, he became nervous about the emerging strength of Babylonians.
 - c. He tried to revolt with the help of the Egyptians. Babylon crushed them and dragged off 10,000 Israelites (2 Kings 24:8-17) (First deportation).
 - i. Ezekiel was a part of this group because he was the son of a priest.
 - d. This group of exiles, or refugees, were wrestling with a lot of theological questions:
 - i. Where is God?

¹ The ingredients for this bread are used today for "Ezekiel bread" which can be bought in stores. See for example http://www.foodforlife.com/about_us/ezekiel-49.

- ii. Why are we in exile?
 - iii. What will happen to our countrymen in Jerusalem?
 - iv. Does God care about us? Is God here or still back in Jerusalem?
 - v. What is God doing? What does the future hold?
 - e. Ezekiel's job was to walk alongside these exiles and help them process these questions.²
 - i. Pastor – help the exiles understand the situation that they are in: God is judging them for their sin.
 - ii. Evangelist – help prepare them for the future: repent and change their hearts.
- 4. The Center of Ezekiel's Ministry
 - a. Ezekiel was the son of a priest (1:1-3).
 - i. He grew up around the temple. He studied the pattern of sacrifices, OT stories, and what it means to be a mediator for God's people.
 - b. Ezekiel's training shows up in his message and ministry.
 - i. He speaks a lot about the temple. Two visions of the temple dominate the book (chs. 8-11 & 40-43).
 - ii. He acts as a mediator for God to the people and people to God.
 - c. The key connection is the center of His message revolves around **the nature of God.**
 - i. His messages speak to who God is, what is He up to, and what He desires.
- 5. The Main Theme of Ezekiel's Message
 - a. Throughout the book, there is a key refrain: "so that you will know that I am God." Used over 50x.³
 - i. It is a purpose statement that expresses the reason for God's actions.
 - b. In the book of Ezekiel, God is doing a lot. He calls a prophet. He brings judgment. He invites repentance. He offers restoration. He promises resurrection.
 - i. Key question of the book: Why is God doing all of this? "So that you will know that I am God."
 - c. God wants to be known. **He wants Israel and the rest of the world to know.** God does all that He does for the sake of His name being known.
 - i. "The overall purpose of everything that Yahweh does is that people should come to know that 'I am Yahweh.'"⁴

² Wright uses these ideas of pastor and evangelist. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and New Spirit*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001): 29-35.

³ See Walter Zimmerli. "Knowledge of God According to the Book of Ezekiel," in *I Am Yahweh*, trans. D.W. Stott, ed. W. Brueggemann (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1982): 29-98.

⁴ See Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (T & T Clark: London, 2000), 183.

- d. There is a two-stage process to this knowledge of God.
 - i. First, God is active with Israel. He engages His people through judgment, repentance, and restoration so that they will know Him.
 - ii. But, also, there is a watching audience, the nations. God must interact with Israel both in judgment and restoration so that nations will know Him.
- e. God judges and restores Israel not simply because He loves Israel, not simply because He hates sin, but because He wants His name to be known throughout the earth. (cf. Mt. 6:9-10).
 - i. **God has a theology of name!** God cares about how His name is used and who it is attached to.
 - ii. Israel had been dragging His name through the mud. Finally, God says, “Enough! No longer does my name get profaned.”
 - iii. So God acts. But He acts with this dual purpose: to correct his people but also for the nations to know that He is God.

Interlude: Why Preach on Ezekiel?

- 1. Background of my context: Southside Church of Christ
 - a. Urban church that found itself in a changing neighborhood. Church was declining.
 - b. Three key events that shaped the church toward a missional identity.
 - i. Decision to Stay
 - 1. Leaders decided to stay in the neighborhood and learn to minister to the neighbors instead of moving to out of the city.
 - 2. This occurred in the late 80s. Community ministries started to happen.
 - ii. Church Split
 - 1. The church split over worship issues and further decimated the church membership.
 - 2. The church realized they were focused inward and too rigid. They need to learn more grace and focus outward.
 - iii. A Lady Walked Across the Street
 - 1. Lady from Salvation Army First Choice, a drug and alcohol program, walked across the street to come to worship.
 - 2. Eyes were opened about open doors of mission. An addiction recovery ministry was started. Other community ministries started to begin (Jail, Neighborhood Schools, Clinic, Tutoring, Abused Women, etc.)
 - c. Vision statement: “A church of Mission, Mercy, and Transformation.”
 - i. Mission – Every person called and sent to be engaged in God’s mission.
 - ii. Mercy – Every person loved and welcomed into this community.
 - iii. Transformation – Every person changed and transformed by God’s Spirit.
- 2. Preaching in My Context

- a. Choose a theme each year that rolls off of our vision statement. That theme guides my preaching and teaching.
 - i. 2009 – Transformation – The Greatest Commandment (Mk. 12:29-31)
 - ii. 2010 – Mission – A Peculiar People (1 Pet. 2:9-10)
 - iii. 2011 – Mercy – Known for our Mercy (Mic. 6:8)
 - iv. 2012 – Transformation – Shaped by Scripture (Mt. 4:4)
 - v. 2013 – Mission – A Church that Shares the Story (Ps. 51:10)
 - vi. 2014 – Mercy – A Church where Grace Overflows (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - vii. 2015 – Transformation – A Community Becoming Like Christ (2 Cor. 4:17)
 - viii. 2016 – Mission – A Church Moved by the Mission of God (Isa. 52:8)
 - ix. 2017 – Mercy – A Church that Loves Like Jesus Loves (Jn. 13:34-35)
- b. In preparation for 2016 and becoming a church moved by the mission of God, we needed to learn about the God of mission: who He is and what does He want to do.

God on the Move

1. Ezekiel begins with a vision of God. (1:3-28)
 - a. He sees four living creatures with four heads: a human, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.
 - b. Above them there was a throne with a rainbow and a human-figure on it.
 - c. Below the throne there are wheels (1:15), with wheels intersecting wheels (1:16).
 - d. This would allow this throne-chariot to move in any direction at any moment.
 - e. Whenever the spirit goes, the throne-chariot goes (1:20-21).
2. The message of this vision is that God is not stationary. God is not contained to one place.
 - a. You cannot hide from God. Wherever you go, God can find you.
 - b. You cannot be isolated from God. No matter how dark a place becomes, God can go there.
 - c. You cannot restrict God. There is no jurisdiction or boundary that God cannot enter and rule.
3. What did this mean for the people of Israel and exiles?
 - a. God is on the move to bring judgment. Israel cannot hide from God anymore. God is coming to make justice.
 - b. God is on the move to offer hope. Despite the people being far from home, God has not left them. God is coming to invite restoration.
 - c. God is on the move to enact His reign. Even though Babylon is conquering Israel, God still reigns and is still in control. He still is active declaring His sovereignty.
4. The God of mission is a God on the move. What is the purpose of His movement? So that Israel and the rest of the world will know Him.

- a. This truth jolts us into boldness, bravery, adventure, and hope. We believe in a God who is on the move to bring about His will.⁵
- b. “They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps he has already landed,” [said Beaver]. And now a very curious thing happened. None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different....”⁶

General Tips

1. Encourage the congregation to read through the book as you preach it (Be sure to tell them to take short bites in reading, though!).
2. Utilize props/visual aids when appropriate in the sermons; after all that is how Ezekiel delivered his messages.
3. Provide a background sheet for members of the church who are confused about basic concepts like exile, the nature of a prophet, and Israelite kingdom.
4. Offer a take home study guide for parents to work through with children that provide notes, questions, and prayers inspired by the passages that you are preaching.
5. Utilize social media in sermon preparation and encouraging the church to engage the material (check out #ezekielsscofc).
6. Resist the temptation to draw applications from God’s rebuke of Israel to America. The more faithful parallel is God’s people today, or the church.
7. Find diagrams, drawings, or other pieces of art that help stir the imagination of the congregation when studying the visions.
8. Teach an in-depth Bible class as you preach or soon after, as there will be many details that you will pass over in your sermons that could use further exploration.
9. Encourage the church to do “extra-credit” and find ways to bring the message of Ezekiel home to them in various ways (e.g. poetry, building project, etc.).
10. Keep the focus of the preaching on God – who He is, His nature, His desires, and His will. That is what people want to hear: a word from God!

⁵ “For behind all our mission stands the unshakeable determination of God to be known throughout his whole creation as the living God.” Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 152.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 74.

Lecture 2: God comes in Judgment (Ezekiel 4-33)

Introduction

1. The first half of Ezekiel covers the first five years of his ministry when Jerusalem is still standing.
2. The exiles are curious why God has allowed them to be taken to Babylon. What is going to happen to their countrymen? Will Jerusalem survive? Can they back home eventually? Where is God?
3. Ezekiel's role is to explain that God is on the move to bring judgment on His people. Jerusalem is not going to survive. Now is the time to repent.
4. This section will look at three key passages that emphasize these messages with tips on how to preach them.

“The End Has Come!” Ezek. 7:1-14

1. Background of Text
 - a. Israel has lost touch with reality. They are not seeing clearly the current situation. So Ezekiel works to help them see what is going on.
 - b. He does this first by doing “sign-acts” (chs. 4-5)
 - i. Building a Jerusalem to scale
 - ii. Laying on his side
 - iii. Eating a biscuit
 - iv. Shaving his head
 - c. These acts are trying to explain that Jerusalem is not going to survive. Exile is coming for all of God's people.
 - d. This raises a critical question: why is God allowing this? Ezekiel's answer is that God is not allowing this; He is actually causing it (5:9).
2. Outline of Text
 - a. Three messages with same outline (vv. 1-4, 5-9, 10-27)
 - i. Pronouncement (What's happening)
 - ii. Explanation (Why is it happening)
 - iii. Result (Result of it happening)
3. Breakdown of Text
 - a. Pronouncement
 - i. Declares that something has arrived (vv. 2, 5, 10)
 - ii. What has arrived? The wrath of God
 - b. Explanation
 - i. “I will...” statements fill this section
 - ii. God is on the move.
 1. “I will unleash my anger...” (7:3)
 2. “I will judge you...” (7:3)
 3. “I will surely repay you...” (7:4)
 - iii. Why is God on the move in this manner? Notice the object of his movement.
 1. “Your conduct” (7:3, 4)
 2. “Your detestable practices (7:3)
 3. “The detestable practices among you” (7:4)

4. "Their sins" (7:13)
 - iv. God is arriving with judgment because of their sin.
 1. "Jehovah Makkeh" (7:9) – God who strikes the blow.
 2. When sin is present among God's people, He acts!
 3. Babylon's attack was not simply political expansion but the arrival of an angry God.
 - c. Result
 - i. What is the reason for God's arrival of judgment?
 1. "Then you will know that I am the Lord..." (v. 4, 9, and 27).
 2. God's judgment upon Israel is redemptive. He comes with wrath with the hope of restoration.
 - ii. The exile was a spiritual wake-up call. It was God's attempt to shock His people back towards restoration.
4. Preaching Thoughts
 - a. This is a side of God that we don't talk about as much, but we need to. God When God's people wander away, God shows up.
 - i. Sometimes He causes certain things to happen to grab our attention. (e.g. Illness, Separation from Spouse, etc.)
 - ii. Sometimes He allows us to experience the consequences of our sins. (e.g. caught in wrongdoing, affair found out, etc.)
 - b. Sometimes God's people can be so out of touch with spiritual reality, only something shocking can bring us back.
 - i. This can bring embarrassment and humiliation, yet often it is in experiencing those feelings that bring contrition.
 - ii. Caution: This does not mean that one should ascribe all difficult events to the hand of God, or that a church leader should assume the role of God in doling out wrath.
 - c. When Jehovah Makkeh shows up, the proper response is repentance.

What's Really Going On Behind the Temple Doors (Ezek. 11:1-7)?

1. Introduction
 - a. The Problem of Being Oblivious
 - i. Do the Awareness Test.⁷
 - ii. When we are not focused on something, we can be oblivious to it.
 - b. Ezekiel's role was to help a spiritually oblivious people be able to see, that which from God's perspective was quite clear.
2. Leading up to the Text
 - a. 2nd Key Vision of the Book (chs. 8-11): VIP tour of the Temple
 - i. Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem to see what is really going on in the temple.
 - ii. God pulls back the veil of the temple to show him what really is going on.

⁷ See "Basketball Awareness Test: Moonwalking Bear," *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB_lTKZm1Ts.

- b. Four stops in the VIP Tour
 - i. North of the Gate of the Altar – Idol of Jealousy (8:5)
 - ii. Inner Room – 70 elders worshiping Animals (8:9-11)
 - iii. North Gate – Mourning for Tammuz (8:14)
 - iv. Inner Court – 25 Men Bowing Down to the Sun (8:16)
- c. Final Stop on Tour: East Gate
 - i. Because of the gross idolatry happening in the holy area, the glory of God leaves the Temple (10:4)
 - ii. Hardest Sight for Ezekiel: Glory of God Leaving the Temple
- 3. Breakdown of Text
 - a. 25 Israelite Leaders Outside the Gate
 - i. They are talking: “Will it not soon be time to build houses?”
 - ii. Disputed phrase
 - b. The city is cooking pot and we are the meat.
 - i. The leaders think they are safe because they are inside the city. They are like the meat in the pot.
 - ii. The exiles are outside of the city (pot) and they are not safe.
 - c. Leaders are oblivious to what has happened in the temple.
 - i. They assume God is with them, when God has left them.
- 4. Sermon Thoughts
 - a. How is it possible to assume God is with us when He is not? Is that possible today?
 - i. False Sense of Security: The Israelite leaders assumed they were safe because they had four things:
 - 1. Temple
 - 2. Davidic King
 - 3. Promised Land
 - 4. City of Zion
 - ii. Can we have a false sense of security because we have our “four things”? What is our list that we trust in?
 - b. The way to avoid being spiritual oblivious is to do a heart examination. How obedient are we to God?
 - i. What the Israelites needed was a heart transplant (11:19). To know the Lord, they needed not a Band-Aid, but outright surgery.
 - ii. A new heart transplant gives us new eyes, new heart, and a new mind to see reality the way God sees it.

“It’s Time to Repent!” (Ezek. 18:21-32)

1. Introduction

- a. The temptation to Blame others
 - i. Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:12-13)
 - ii. Stanford University study – blaming spreads⁸

⁸ See “Workplace Blame is Contagious and Detrimental,” *FoxNews.com*, Jan. 20, 2010. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2010/01/20/workplace-blame-is-contagious-and-detrimental.html>

- iii. Brené Brown – Blaming is an attempt to cope with pain.⁹
 - b. This was the coping mechanism of the exiles when they heard Ezekiel’s message. When he preached, “This exile is happening because of God’s judgment upon sin.” They responded, “It’s not our fault.”
- 2. Israel’s Claim
 - a. The people were quoting a proverb (18:2): the fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth set on edge.
 - i. Explanation: Children are receiving the consequence for the parents’ actions.
 - b. This was the dominant thought of the Israelite exiles. We are innocent and bearing the brunt of sin of our forefathers.
- 3. Ezekiel’s Response: Case-Studies
 - a. Grandfather, Father, and Son
 - i. Imagine that a grandfather is righteous, and he has a son that is not righteous. Will this son live? No. (18:5-13)
 - ii. Imagine that this son has a son (grandson) and he lives different than his father. He is righteous, like his grandfather. What will happen to Him? He will live. (18:14-18)
 - 1. The exiles think they are the innocent grandson who is being punished for the evil father. But Ezekiel explains he would live if he were righteous.
 - b. Rationale: Our sinfulness/righteousness is not based on the actions of my father or grandfather. It is based on my deeds.
 - i. Certainly the sins of my father and grandfather influence future generations (ex. Divorce, abuse, etc.).
 - ii. When we stand before God, we will answer for our life, not for the life of our children or parents. (18:20)
 - c. Impact: The Exiles had no one to blame but themselves.
 - i. They were claiming that God was being unfair (18:25), but their claim was unfounded.
 - ii. They were responsible for their own situation.
- 4. Case-Studies of Hope
 - a. The reason that Ezekiel wanted the Exiles to take responsibility is: **once someone takes responsibility, there is possibility for change!**
 - b. Grandfather, Father, and Son
 - i. Imagine that the righteous grandson has a change of heart and becomes rebellious. Will he live? No he will not (18:24). This was Israel’s story.
 - ii. Imagine that unrighteous father has a change of heart and becomes righteous. Will he live? Yes, he will (18:21-23).
 - c. We are not dependent on our past. We can change.

⁹ See “Brené Brown on Blame,” *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8

- i. Caution: those who are righteous can fall away.
 - ii. Hope: those who are wicked can be redeemed.
- 5. Ezekiel's Prodigal Story
 - a. The reason why one can change is because of who God is.
 - i. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
 - ii. Why should I die when I know that my Father does not want me to? (Lk. 15:17)
- 6. Sermon thoughts
 - a. This chapter is Ezekiel's parable of the Prodigal Son
 - i. The reason why one can change from wickedness to righteousness is because of who God is.
 - ii. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (18:23, 32).
 - iii. No matter how far someone wanders away, they can come back
 - b. This chapter contains the tenderest moment in all of Ezekiel. God extends the invitation: "Turn and live!"
 - i. The Msg says, "Turn around. Clean house. No more rebellions. Make a clean break. Live." (18:32)
 - c. Use three people to illustrate the three people in the Case Studies.

Lecture 3: God offers hope (Ezekiel 34-48)

Introduction

1. During the first five years of Ezekiel's ministry, he was trying to explain to the exiles that God was judging His people. Don't expect for God to save Jerusalem because God has left the city.
2. During 587 (Ezek. 33:21), word got back to the exiles that Jerusalem had fallen. Now Ezekiel's role changed. Instead of preparing the people for judgment, now he began to prepare them for restoration.
3. Before Jerusalem fell, the exiles were asking, "Why us?" Now, the exiles were asking, "What's next?" Was there any hope for the future? Had God completely abandoned them? (33:12)
4. Ezekiel responds with some of the best and hope-filled material in Ezekiel 34-37. Christopher Wright calls this section, "The Gospel According to Ezekiel." God promises to bring renewal of God's people through a new Shepherd, giving them a new heart and Spirit, and resurrecting their dead bones.
5. The chapters after that (38-48) continue the theme of the promised restoration of God's people. This section will look at three texts from this section with thoughts on how to preach them.

"Them Dry Bones!" (Ezek. 37:1-14)

1. Entrance into the Text
 - a. Story of C.J. and Mariah of Parma, OH.¹⁰ As they were walking behind a shopping center, they happen along several trash items. Within those items they find human bones. They call the police.
 - b. Whenever someone finds human bones, it causes alarm.
 - i. Someone has died.
 - ii. The person's body has not been disposed of properly
2. Breakdown of Text
 - a. Ezekiel is placed in the middle of a valley full of bones.
 - i. Illustration of how horrific the environment was: Scene from Hotel Rwanda where Paul Ruesabagina's car starts driving over dead corpses.¹¹
 - ii. This means two key things:
 1. Many people have died.
 2. Their bodies have not been disposed of properly (a sign of God's curse, see Deut. 28:25-26)

¹⁰ See "Teenagers Find Human Skeletal Remains Behind Parma Toys 'R' Us," *Cleveland.com*, April 6, 2016, http://www.cleveland.com/parma/index.ssf/2016/04/teenagers_find_human_skeletal.html

¹¹ See "Hotel Rwanda: Shocking Scene of Massacre," *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZJYAOrqsA8>

- iii. This image represents: the people of Israel (37:11). A valley of dry bones was Israel in Exile. To be in exile was complete and utter death. It was to be under the curse of God.
 - b. God asks Ezekiel the question, “Can these bones live?” (37:3)
 - i. The question is not about possibility but of will.
 - ii. The keyword in this question is “these”. It is possible that God can bring bones back to life, but **will He bring these bones back to life?**
 - iii. Ezekiel does not answer God’s question because it is not his answer to give.
 - c. God tells Ezekiel to start preaching to the bones.
 - i. His message is to revolve around one word: Spring (*ruah*). The word is used 10 times in vv. 4-14.
 - ii. As he preaches, the bones start rattling. The resurrection process is two-fold (cf. Gen. 2:7). This is New Creation.
 - 1. Bones come together, tendons form, and skin appears.
 - 2. The Spirit comes into the lifeless bodies.
 - d. Ezekiel’s message is bad news and good news: we are dead, but God is going to breathe new life.
 - i. Fulfilled in Acts 2:38-41. Three thousand respond to the message and the Spirit (*ruah*) of God is given to them. New creation occurs!
- 3. Sermon thoughts
 - a. When have we been in the valley, like Ezekiel where all we see is death and hopelessness?
 - i. Christians have moments in the valley. Churches have moments of being in the valley.
 - ii. Whenever you are in the valley, all you smell is death, all you see is hopelessness, and all you feel is despair.
 - iii. The main question in the valley that we ask ourselves is: Can these bones live?
 - b. While Ezekiel preaches the word, the Spirit goes forth – as it is does today.
 - i. Ezekiel witnesses new creation as the pattern of Gen. 2 is re-enacted.
 - ii. God continues this new creation activity today among people who are spiritually dead.
 - c. The goal of this resurrection process is to be a witness: so that you will know that I am the Lord (37:14).

Satan’s Attack (Ezek. 39:21-29)

- 1. Introduction
 - a. What do you do when you are attacked?¹²

¹² See “Bear Attack Go Pro video,” *Youtube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eK0pO79YkvY>.

- b. We worry about the moment when it will be our turn to be attacked. We live in fear wondering what will happen.
- 2. Context of Ezek. 38-39
 - a. Previous chapters point to renewal of God's people (new covenant). This passage prophesies about a moment after this renewal.
 - b. The prophecy concerns a king named Gog of Magog who gathers up an alliance of six other nations: Cush, Put, Gomer, Beth Togarah, Meshech Tubal, and Persia.
 - c. Their plan is to attack God's people when they least suspect it using great strategy and ammunition.
- 3. Confusion about Ezek. 38-39¹³
 - a. Two Key Questions: Who is Gog of Magog? When will this alliance attack?
 - i. Many interpreters have tried to identify Gog of Magog with various national enemies (Germans, Russians, etc.)
 - ii. Other interpreters connect this passage with Rev. 20: claiming this points to an end-time cataclysmic battle between God's people and various enemies.
 - b. The key is not **who** Gog is, but **what** Gog of Magog represents.
 - i. The trajectory of the passage says that after God's restoration of His people, there will be a time that they will be attacked.
 - ii. This happens all the time. God's people when they least expect it are often attacked by Satan (Eph. 6:12)
- 4. Breaking down the Text
 - a. The key question of Ezek. 38-39: What will God do when His people are attacked?
 - i. God responds in 39:25 by suggesting that He will have compassion on all the people of Israel (only time in Ezekiel when it is said that God will have mercy on His people).
 - ii. The attack of Gog of Magog will be no match for God's power and wisdom. The attack is a complete flop! (39:1-7)
 - b. Why does God rise up and protect His people?
 - i. The reason is not because of His love or hatred of evil. Rather, it is to display His glory among the nations.
 - 1. Zealousness for His name causes God to defend His people.
 - 2. 39:7, 21, 23, 27.
 - ii. God will use the attack of Gog of Magog as a platform to proclaim His glory to the nations.
- 5. Sermon Thoughts
 - a. The promise of God coming to the aid of God's people when they are attacked does not mean they will always be safe. Rather, it means that the final word for the church will be victory.

¹³ A helpful guide to understanding these two chapters is Chris Wright's chapter on this subject. See Christopher J.H. Wright, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2007): 183-198.

- b. God uses the attack of Satan as a platform to demonstrate His glory to the world.
 - i. A historical example: The Cross: Satan's attack of killing the Messiah has become the platform for God to declare salvation and love for all people.
 - ii. A contemporary example: Kent Brantly and Ebola.¹⁴ The attack of contracting Ebola while serving in Jesus' name became a platform for global attention to be drawn to the epidemic and his faith in Christ.
- c. Christians do not need to live in fear as whatever way Satan attacks, God is bigger than it, and He will use it for His glory (Rom. 8:38-39)

The Lord Comes Back (Ezek. 43:1-7)

- 1. Ezekiel's Situation
 - a. Now Ezekiel is about 50. This is the end of his ministry.
 - b. His ministry has been hard: rejected, bore pain, lost his wife.
 - c. This Ezekiel's final sermon to preach: God gives him good news to share.
- 2. Context
 - a. Three main visions (*ma'rot*)
 - i. Chs. 1-3 – The Call
 - ii. Chs. 8-11 – The Temple Vision
 - iii. Chs. 40-48 – The Temple Restored
 - b. Similarities in all three visions
 - i. Each begins with a date
 - ii. Each is at a critical time in Ezekiel's ministry
 - iii. Focuses on the Glory and Presence of God
 - c. Final vision takes place on high mountain (Ex. 19:3)
 - i. Restored Temple
 - ii. Restored Worship
 - iii. Restored People
 - d. Restored Temple (different than Solomon's)
 - i. Perfectly Symmetrical
 - ii. Much Bigger
 - iii. Certain Furniture Pieces Missing
 - iv. Empty
- 3. Breaking Down the Text
 - a. Where is God? The Exiles had experienced divine abandonment.
 - i. God had hidden His face from them.
 - ii. He had left their temple.
 - iii. He had removed Himself from their access.
 - b. Heartbeat of every exile: Will God return?
 - i. There is nothing worse than to be without the presence of God.

¹⁴ Kent and Amber Brantly, *Called for Life: How Loving our Neighbor Led Us into the Heart of Ebola Epidemic* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2015), 209-210.

- ii. Moses did not want to go to the promised land without God's presence (Ex. 32-34; 33:15)
 - c. The tour guide takes Ezekiel to the east gate (same place he was when he saw God's presence leave).
 - i. He stands and watches as the glory of God comes back to the temple.
 - ii. God speaks to Ezekiel (43:7) declaring, "This is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet."
 - iii. The Lord commits to being present among His renewed people.
 - d. The fulfillment happens in the coming of Christ (Jn. 1:14; Mt. 1:23).
 - i. God's presence dwell among His people again through Christ.
 - ii. Today, the church of Christ is the place of God's dwelling (1 Cor. 3:16-17)
- 4. Sermon thoughts
 - a. St. John of the Cross "The Dark Night of the Soul"
 - i. Often we question, "Where is God?"
 - ii. The Psalmists asked these same questions.
 - b. Today we do not have to question where God's presence is. It is found among the church through Christ.
 - i. In our dark night, we turn to the community of God's people because God's presence is here through Christ.
 - c. Why did God choose to return to His people? Because He wants His people and the rest of the world to know Him.

Appendix A: Sample Sermon Series on Ezekiel

The God who Desires to Be Known

Week 1: The God who Desires to Be Known (Ezek. 1:1-3)

Week 2: God Calls a Watchman (Ezek. 3:16-21)

Week 3: God Brings Disaster (Ezek. 7:1-9)

Week 4: God Pronounces Judgment (Ezek. 11:1-13)

Week 5: God Calls for Repentance (Ezek. 18:21-32)

Week 6: God Upholds His Name (Ezek. 20:39-44)

Week 7: God Becomes the Good Shepherd (Ezek. 34:11-16)

Week 8: God Gives a New Heart and Spirit (Ezek. 36:22-32)

Week 9: God Brings Resurrection (Ezek. 37:1-14)

Week 10: God Displays Glory Among the Nations (Ezek. 39:21-29)

Week 11: God Comes Back (Ezek. 43:1-5)

Focus: The first week lays the groundwork for the series, giving a brief overview of the ministry of Ezekiel and emphasizing the key idea that God is on the move in order to be known throughout the world. Each week focuses on a text where God is on the move doing an action so that His people and the world will know Him.

Appendix B: Brief Timeline of Israel's History and Ezekiel's Ministry

- 722 BC – Exile of Northern Kingdom (Israel) by Assyrians
- 640 BC – Josiah Becomes King of Southern Kingdom (Judah) [2 Kings 22:1]
- 622 BC – The Birth of Ezekiel [Ezek. 1:1]
- 609 BC – The Death of Josiah [2 Kings 23:28-30]
- 605 BC – Jehoiakim Burns the Scroll (Jeremiah 36)/Nobles (including Daniel) taken as hostages to Babylon [2 Kings 24:1; Dan. 1:1-2]
- 597 BC – First Deportation to Babylon (Ezekiel taken) [2 Kings 24:10-14]
- 592 BC – Ezekiel's Call to Ministry [Ezek. 1:1-3]
- 587 BC – Second Deportation to Babylon/Fall of Jerusalem [2 Kings 25:1-12/Ezek. 33:21]
- 571 BC – Ezekiel's Ministry comes to an end

Appendix C: Select Outline of Ezekiel¹⁵

- Ezekiel's Call Vision (chs. 1-3)
- Theater of the Doomed (chs. 4-5)
- Exit the Glory (chs. 8-11)
- History with Attitude (chs. 16, 23, 20)
- Who Then Can Be Saved? (chs. 14; 18; 33)
- Turning Point (chs. 24; 33)
- Then the Nations Will Know that I am the Lord (chs. 25-32)
- Gospel According to Ezekiel (chs. 34-37)
- Glory of God Revealed to the World and Restored to His People (chs. 38-48)

¹⁵ Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 7-8.

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Other Resources

Truth for Today World Mission School: Study Helps for Ezekiel
<http://www.biblecourses.com/English/StudyHelps/Ezekiel.aspx>

Generation Word: Ezekiel Temple Visions
<http://www.generationword.com/notes/bible-books/ezekiel-temple-visions.htm>