

## Part six: the messages about Israel's punishment and future restoration (33:1–39:29)

- During the period covered by the first twenty-four chapters of his book, his main concern was with Jerusalem as it was and as it had been. From chapter 33 onwards, he is mainly interested in what it will be. (John Taylor)
- 1) **Bad news:** a message about individual responsibility and Yahweh's justice (33:1–20) (cf. 3:16-21; 18:1-32)
  - a) Duties of the watchman—33:1-9
    - Ezekiel is responsible to sound the warning; he is not responsible for how the people respond. (FSB)
    - i) The effective watchman—33:2-5
      - (1) He is taken by the people and made their watchman. He is not a volunteer. (33:2)
      - (2) No qualifications are mentioned. However, as Daniel Block points out, more important even than keen eyesight and skill with the horn would have been a reputation for integrity and reliability.
    - ii) The ineffective watchman—33:6-8
      - (1) Notice that the watchman (Ezekiel) is given to them by God. (33:7)
      - (2) “Surely die” [lit. “dying you will die”] is the same expression as Gen. 2:17; 20:7; Ezek. 3:18; 33:14. (33:8)
    - iii) The effective watchman—33:9
  - b) The necessity of repentance—33:10-16
    - i) “Rot away” echoes Lev. 26:39 and Ezek. 4:17. (33:10)
      - (1) All hope is gone; their faith has been crushed; the darkness is overwhelming. For the first time they admit their own guilt as the cause of their suffering. ... But is this confession repentance, or little more than a cry of pain? (Daniel Block)
    - ii) God's pleasure (33:11)
      - (1) God takes pleasure (Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Prov. 21:1; Is. 42:1, 21; 53:10; Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Luke 2:14; 10:21; John 8:29; Rom. 14:18; 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:10; Heb. 11:6; 2 Pet. 1:17)
      - (2) God does not take pleasure (33:11; cf. Is. 1:11; 66:4; Ezek. 18:23, 32)
  - c) Accusing the Sovereign—33:17-20 (cf. 18:25-30)
    - i) While it initially appears easier to illogically judge God by human standards and to blame Him for one's problems, the reality is that people are justly punished for their own sins.
    - ii) They complain about being at the mercy of God, whose ways they interpret as arbitrary, nonsensical, and without principle. (Daniel Block)
    - iii) After nearly a decade of listening to Ezekiel's teaching, this reaffirms the inability of the hardened human heart to comprehend the things of God. (Daniel Block)
- 2) **Bad news:** a message on the eve of Jerusalem's fall (33:21–33) [Jan. 585 BC]

- a) The timing—33:21
    - i) A journey from Jerusalem to Babylon took @ 4-5 months.—33:21 (cf. Ezra 7:8-9)
    - ii) Jerusalem fell and the temple burned on August 14, 586 BC. (cf. 2 Kings 25:8)
  - b) The fulfilled prophecy of 3:26-27 and 24:25-27.—33:22
  - c) God’s Land—33:24 (cf. Gen. 12:1; 17:8)
  - d) Sin and judgment—33:25-29
    - i) God’s knowledge of their sins according to His standards in the Law—33:25-26
      - (1) Eat meat with blood (Gen. 9:4-6; Lev. 17:10-16; 19:26)
      - (2) Worship idols (Ex. 20:4-5)
      - (3) Shed blood (Ex. 20:13)
      - (4) Violence as a way of life (Num. 35:33; Deut. 19:10)
      - (5) Commit abominations (Lev. 18)
      - (6) Defile the neighbor’s wife (Ex. 20:14, 17; Lev. 18:20)
    - ii) The Sovereign’s judgment against them—33:27-29
      - (1) Compare the specific judgments of Lev. 26:22, 25
  - e) The sinful perception of Ezekiel’s preaching as mere entertainment—33:30-33 (cf. 2:5)
    - The danger of listening to a teacher of God’s word with no intention of obeying God’s word. (Cf. Isaiah 29:13; James 1:22-25)
    - i) Note well their three-fold theological assumptions. (33:30) (Daniel Block)
      - (1) Yahweh exists, even after the destruction of the temple.
      - (2) Yahweh speaks, even in Babylon.
      - (3) Yahweh has Ezekiel as His spokesman, even if we don’t obey Him.
    - ii) Ezekiel’s externally successful ministry. (33:31-32)
    - iii) More than a spiritual entertainer. (33:33)
    - iv) Three implications (Daniel Block)
      - (1) Messengers of God are not called to success but to faithfulness.
      - (2) Appreciation for literary flair and rhetorical skill may camouflage a hardened heart.
      - (3) Those who are God’s spokesmen may find security in God.
- 3) **Good news:** shepherds and sheep (34:1–31)
- The term “shepherd” applied to Israel’s political leaders. (cf. 2 Sam. 5:2; Ps. 78:70-72; Jer. 23:1-4; 25:34-38) but probably to prophets and priests as well (cf. Is. 56:11; Jer. 23:9-11).
  - Emphasis on “My flock/sheep” @ 15x (34:6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 31)
- a) Yahweh’s evaluation of Israel’s self-oriented shepherds—34:1-10
    - i) Fulfillment of Lev. 26:33 (34:1-6)
      - (1) Their shepherding malpractice included economic exploitation, cruel neglect, oppressive domination, and the failure to protect.
    - ii) Yahweh’s rescue of the flock from the shepherds (34:7-10)

- b) Yahweh as the True Shepherd of the flock—34:11-24
- Cf. Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Ps. 23; 80:1; Ecc. 12:11; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Matt. 2:5; 9:36; John 10:1-18; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Rev. 7:17
- i) Yahweh's active, compassionate involvement—34:11-16
- Note the forms of "I will" used @ 12x.
  - (1) In contrast to the self-oriented shepherds. (cf. 34:4, 8)
    - (a) Cf. baqar ("care/seek") in 34:11, 12 with priests in Lev. 13:36; 27:33.
  - (2) He promises to accomplish six things:
    - (a) He will examine their condition.
    - (b) He will rescue them from their enemies.
    - (c) He will bring them out of exile.
    - (d) He will gather them from various countries.
      - (i) Neither the return from Exile (Ezra-Nehemiah) nor the modern reestablishment of Israel in 1948 fulfills this promise.
    - (e) He will bring them to their own land.
    - (f) He will shepherd the flock on their own land.
  - (3) Cf. the five descriptions of sheep and shepherding in 34:16 with 34:4.
    - (a) Strengthen, sick, injured, stray, lost
- ii) Yahweh's evaluation of the flock itself—34:17-22
- (1) The sheep are just as guilty as the shepherds.
  - (2) Despite the sin of the abusive and the victimized sheep, the Shepherd still responds in grace and mercy.
- iii) Yahweh's provision of the perfect Shepherd—34:23-24
- (1) Similar promise
    - (a) Cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:7; Ps. 89:33-37; Jer. 23:3-6; 30:9; Ezek. 37:24-28; Hos. 3:5; Zech. 14:9
  - (2) Two primary interpretations:
    - (a) This is the resurrected David
    - (b) This is Jesus the Messiah, the ultimate Son of David
      - (i) Cf. Mt. 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42; Lk. 1:32; 18:39; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8
  - (3) "Prince" and "king" are sometimes synonyms (cf. 1 Sam. 9:16; 2 Sam. 3:38; Ezek. 7:27; 12:10, 12; 19:1; 21:25; 22:6)
  - (4) Thoughts about this Shepherd: (Daniel Block)
    - (a) The Shepherd is neither self-appointed nor elected by the people but chosen by Yahweh Himself.
    - (b) The Shepherd is singular, not a dynasty.
    - (c) The Shepherd is David.
    - (d) The Shepherd will be the servant of Yahweh.
    - (e) The Shepherd will be in the midst of (over and among) His people.
- c) Yahweh's "covenant of peace" with His flock of Israel—34:25-31
- Cf. the covenant blessings of Lev. 26:3-13
  - This "covenant of peace" appears to be a byproduct of the New Covenant (Cf. Is. 54:7-10; Jer. 31:31-34)

- i) Peace with animals—34:25
  - ii) Peace with creation—34:26
  - iii) Peace with oppressors—34:27
  - iv) Peace with animals—34:28
  - v) Peace with creation—34:29
  - vi) Peace with Yahweh—34:30-31
    - (1) Note the substitution of oppressors to Yahweh
- 4) **Good news:** Edom’s fall and Israel’s restoration (35:1–36:38)
- Note the parallel use of mountains in these two chapters.
  - a) Mt. Seir/Edom/Esau’s devastation—35:1-15 (cf. Gen. 12:3; Eze. 25:12-14)
    - Each section ends with “*Then you/they will know that I am Yahweh.*”
    - Edom’s long record of hostility toward Israel dates back to 2005 BC.
    - i) **Deliberate** devastation—35:1-4
      - (1) “Desolation and desecration” are *shemamah umeshammah* in Hebrew.
    - ii) **Long-term** devastation—35:5-9
      - (1) But see the promise of Amos 9:12.
    - iii) **Retributive** devastation—35:10-15
      - (1) Edom contemptuously coveted what Yahweh had given to Israel.
      - (2) Even those Israel was displaced, the Land still belonged to His people.
  - b) Mountains of Israel restored—36:1-38
    - This chapter presents the prerequisite regeneration which Israel must experience before they can enter into the promised blessings. This chapter must be understood to speak of a literal Israel, a literal land, and a literal regeneration, leading to a literal kingdom under Messiah. (John MacArthur)
    - i) Prosperity and honor to Israel after devastation and dishonor to her neighbors—36:1-15 (perhaps taking place before the spiritual restoration)
      - (1) Adonai Yahweh takes an oath to fulfill these promises. (36:7)
      - (2) Ezekiel echoes “I will turn to you” from Lev. 26:9. (36:9)
    - ii) Regathering—36:16-38 (outline based on Daniel Block)
      - The central issue is not the deliverance of Israel but the vindication of the reputation of Yahweh. (Daniel Block)
      - (1) The **crisis** for Yahweh’s honor; the need for regathering (36:16-21)
        - (a) Echoes Lev. 15:19-24; 18:24-28.
      - (2) The **recovery** of Yahweh’s honor (36:22-32)
        - (a) Yahweh’s name-sanctifying **goal** (36:22)
        - (b) Yahweh’s name-sanctifying **actions** (36:23-30) (cf. Jer. 31:31-34)
          - I will prove (36:23)
          - I will take, I will gather, I will bring (36:24)
          - I will sprinkle, I will cleanse (36:25)
          - I will give, I will put, I will remove, I will give (36:26)
          - I will put, I will cause you (36:27)
          - I will be (36:28)

- I will save, I will call and multiply, I will not bring (36:29)
  - I will multiply (36:30)
  - (c) The result of self-loathing, shame, and humiliation fulfills Yahweh's name-sanctifying **goal** (36:31-32)
    - (i) The present statement indicates that for those who have experienced divine grace, the memory of guilt deserving of judgment should not be suppressed. (Daniel Block)
  - (3) The **vindication** of Yahweh's honor (36:33-38)
    - (a) Yahweh honored among the surrounding nations (36:33-36)
      - Cf. Lev. 19:12; 20:3; 22:2, 32; Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22; 36:20-23; 39:7
      - Eden-like conditions during the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Is. 11:6-9; 51:3; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-15; Rom. 8:19-22)
      - (i) This guarantee comes from the Lord. His own honor is on the line to fulfill it in the normative sense of straight forward terms which speak of it (36). When He gets it done at a time and in a way that matches the literal specifications, people of the nations will know it was from Him. (James Rosscup)
    - (b) Yahweh honored among Israel (36:37-38)
      - (i) Note the shift in Yahweh's actions toward Israel's prayers. (cf. 8:18; 14:3; 20:3, 31)
      - (ii) The population increase in Israel, fulfilling Yahweh's promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:1-6; 17:2; Lev. 26:9), will result in Yahweh's glory.
        - The need for repopulation is real, because 2/3 of Israel will be removed at the end of the Tribulation. (Zech 13:8)
- 5) **Good news:** valley of dry bones (37:1-14)
- This is an illustration of the promises of Ezek. 36. (Cf. Lev. 26:40-46) Yahweh is lifting the curse of Deut. 28:25-26.
  - This is arguably the most familiar passage in Ezekiel.
  - Note the repetition (10x) of the word *ruach* (breath, spirit, Spirit, wind)
  - a) Israel's hopelessly (cf. 37:11) scattered, unclean, cursed lifeless bones (37:1-6)
    - i) Yahweh's power and skill ("hand") on display. (37:1-2)
      - (1) Cf. 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 25:14, 16; 33:22; 37:19; 40:1
    - ii) Ezekiel humbly and wisely bows to Yahweh's omniscience. (37:3)
      - (1) Humanly speaking, the answer is No.
      - (2) In light of God, the answer is "Only if You will it to be so." (cf. Deut. 32:39)
    - iii) Yahweh's commands to Ezekiel and the bones. (37:4)
    - iv) The sequence of assembly seem to refer to a regathering in unbelief and then full conversion. (37:5-6)
  - b) Ezekiel's obedience and the complete restoration of life (37:7-10)

- i) Clearly this is a step of faith to communicate to scattered bones. Yahweh does not need Ezekiel's participation, but graciously uses him to accomplish His will.
- c) The interpretation of the illustration: Yahweh's sovereign Spirit (37:11-14)
  - i) Note the accurate, three-fold self-identification by Israel:
    - (1) We are completely dried up.
    - (2) Our hope has ceased.
    - (3) We are dispersed, i.e. separated from one another.
  - ii) A national, spiritual resurrection from a spiritual grave. (cf. Eph. 2:1-10)
    - (1) Cf. Is. 63:1-6; Jer. 33:14-16; Zech 12:10-14; 13:8-9; 14:2-11; Matt. 24:30-31; Acts 3:19-21
  - iii) Some have said that Yahweh is the ultimate Grave Robber who is after the bodies of His people Israel.
  - iv) Yahweh restates His promise of 36:27.
- 6) **Good news:** one future nation under one king (37:15–28)
  - The process appears to be as follows: (Daniel Block)
    - Ezekiel unites two pieces of wood in a physical union.
    - Yahweh unites two pieces of wood in a physical union.
    - Yahweh unites two kingdoms in a political and spiritual union.
    - Yahweh unites the unified nation with Himself in a permanent covenant relationship.
  - a) The two houses will be reunified under one King. (37:15-23)
    - i) The demonstration (37:15-17)
      - (1) "Stick" is simply a piece of wood, rough or finished.
      - (2) Judah (south) and Ephraim (north) were the dominant tribes in each kingdom. They have been divided since 931 BC, @ 350 years earlier. The northern 10 tribes have been in exile for @ 150 years.
    - ii) The interpretation (37:18-20)
      - (1) Cf. Isa. 11:12, 13; Jer. 3:12, 18; 23:5-6; Hos. 1:11; Amos 9:11
    - iii) The application (37:21-23)
      - (1) The seven-fold work of the sovereign Yahweh
        - These fulfill God's covenants with Abraham (Gen. 12), David (2 Sam. 7), and the New Covenant (Jer. 31). (John MacArthur)
      - (a) **Territorial restoration**
        - I will take the sons of Israel
        - I will gather them from every side
        - I will bring them into their own land
      - (b) **Political unification**
        - I will make them one nation in the land
      - (c) **Spiritual purification**
        - I will save them
        - I will cleanse them
        - I will be their God

- (2) The results in the life of Israel
  - (a) They will no longer defile themselves
  - (b) They will be My people (cf. Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:27)
- b) A covenant of peace will be made. (37:24-28)
  - i) The king identified: My servant David (37:24a) (cf. Jer. 23:5; Ezek. 34:23)
  - ii) The obedience of the people. (37:24b)
    - (1) They will walk in My judgments
    - (2) They will keep My statutes and do them
  - iii) The people will dwell in the Land forever. (37:25-26)
    - (1) They will permanently inhabit the Land
    - (2) Yahweh will cut an everlasting covenant of peace with them
    - (3) Yahweh will give them the Land and multiply them and re-establish His Temple in the Land.
  - iv) The presence of God. (37:26-28) (cf. glory cloud departure in Ezek. 8-11)
    - (1) Yahweh's dwelling place [*mishkan*] will be with them.
    - (2) Yahweh will be their God, and they will be His people
    - (3) And the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies [*qadash*] Israel (cf. Lev. 22:32), when My Holy Place [*miqdash*] is permanently in their midst.
      - (a) Cf. the Temple in Ezek. 40-48
- 7) **Good news:** Yahweh as the Defender against Gog (38:1–39:29)
  - After foretelling the regathering of the Jewish people to their land (chap. 36), Ezekiel told of yet a future, and final, attack on Israel from which they will be rescued by the returning messianic King (chaps. 38–39). This attack by Gog will occur after the Jewish people are resettled in their land (38:8b) and living in peace (38:8c), although not yet knowing the Messiah (since they will come to the Lord after He delivers them from attack). It culminates in the Lord's victory over Israel's enemy and Israel recognizing Jesus as their Messiah (39:22). (MBC)
- a) Gog invades Israel during the Tribulation (38:1-16)
  - This is NOT the same event as the end of the Millennium in Rev. 20:7-8.
  - i) Identification (cf. Gen. 10)
    - (1) Person
      - (a) Gog, head leader (Rosh) of Meshech and Tubal
      - (2) Places (As of 2024, all these countries are Muslim countries.)
        - (a) Descendants of **Japheth**
          - *Magog* (lit. "land of Gog") [Turkey]; *Meshech* [Turkey]; *Tubal* [Turkey]; *Gomer* [Turkey]; *Beth-togarmah* [Syria]
        - (b) Descendants of **Shem?**
          - *Persia* [Iran]
        - (c) Descendants of **Ham**
          - *Ethiopia/Cush* [Sudan]; *Put* [Libya]
    - ii) Explanation

- (1) Gog's sovereign summons (38:1-9)
  - Yahweh's sovereign use of this military, spiritual coalition to accomplish His plan for Israel.
  - (a) Note Yahweh's sovereign **actions**: "*I will turn you about,*" "*I will put hooks into your jaws,*" and "*I will bring you out.*" (38:4)
  - (b) Note Yahweh's sovereign **commands**: "*Be ready,*" "*prepare yourself*" (38:7)
  - (c) Note Yahweh's sovereign **knowledge of the future**:
    - (i) Gog's activity: "*you will ...*" (38:8-9)
    - (ii) Israel's restored security (38:8)
- (2) Gog's evil motives to plunder Israel (38:10-13)
  - (a) Israel is comparatively defenseless and unprepared. (38:11)
  - (b) Israel is at the "center of the world" geographically, politically, theologically and spiritually. (38:12) cf. 5:5)
- (3) Yahweh's plan to thwart Gog's plan (38:14-16)
  - This is clearly an End Time event. (38:14, 16, 18)
  - Note the use of "My land." (cf. 36:5; 2 Chron. 7:20; Is. 14:25; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Joel 3:2)
  - (a) Despite the overwhelming appearance, Yahweh will repair His reputation by proving Himself holy before the eyes of the nations by defending His people. (38:16) (cf. 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 39:27)
  - (b) It does not mean that Gog is a luckless pawn in the hand of an all-powerful but immoral God. Gog freely acts according to the evil dictates of his lust for conquest and easy spoil, but behind everything in the universe (and especially as it relates to God's people) there is the controlling hand of God, who orders all things with a view to the ultimate vindication of his honour among the nations. (John Taylor, TOTC)
- b) Yahweh's guaranteed judgement and destruction of Gog (38:17-39:29)
  - i) Yahweh defeats Gog (38:17-39:8)
    - (1) Earthquake, mass panic, and meteorological catastrophes (38:17-23)
      - (a) Cf. Rev. 6:12-17; 11:19; 16:17-21; 19:11-21
      - (b) Note the synonyms of Yahweh's wrath, anger, zeal, and blazing fury. (38:18-19)
      - (c) Note the three-fold goal of Yahweh's actions. (38:23)
        - (i) To display His greatness (*magnify Myself*), His holiness (*manifest Myself as holy*), and His person (*make Myself known*).
    - (2) Restatement of Gog's defeat (39:1-8)
      - (a) The eight-fold description of Yahweh's actions (39:2-6)
        - (i) I will ... turn you around, drive you on, take you up, bring you against, strike your bow, cause your arrows to fall, give you as food, and send fire.
      - (b) The goal of Yahweh's actions (39:7)
      - (c) The certainty of Yahweh's actions (39:8)