ROUTE 66
Session Number Seven
Wednesday, February 5, 2014
The Major Prophets
Tonight: EZEKIEL

Brief review:

The “route” is our road to Glory and our eternal home. The “66” are the 66 books of God’s Word what shines a light on our journey.

So far we have surveyed the Torah (or Pentateuch - 5 books): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Number, Deuteronomy.

We have traveled through the Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

We have glanced through the Poetic Books (Books of Wisdom): Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

Last week we began our tour of the Major Prophets and reviewed Isaiah and Jeremiah (who also gave us Lamentations following the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 B.C.

Tonight we look briefly at two giants of the Old Testament, Ezekiel and Daniel.

EZKKIEL

We could well title this book, How To Deal With Catastrophe. In his late 20's, somewhere, Ezekiel was one of the Jewish captives taken by King Nebuchadnezzar’s army to Babylon (600 miles to the East - current day Iraq). This captivity took place in 597 B.C., several decades before the final invasion and destruction of the Holy City by Babylon’s forces.

Was Ezekiel a true prophet? Well....consider his prophecies! They have been almost all fulfilled (several yet to come). I was a boy of 11 when his Chapter 37 came to reality, the return of the Jews to the homeland of Israel. Chapters 38 and 39 cannot be far off in our future.

As we studied last week, the prophecy of Jeremiah came true in horrible and startling detail as the armies of Babylon ransacked Jerusalem, leaving behind destruction beyond
description. There are actually 3 attacks, the third one being the clincher. Thousands
upon thousands of Jews were taken to Babylon as prisoners/slaves, where they would
remain for decades, far away from their beloved Eretz Israel, Jerusalem and Mount Zion.

We can learn of the distress of these captives as we read:

Psalm 137:1-9

Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept
as we thought of Jerusalem.
[2] We put away our lyres,
hanging them on the branches of the willow trees.
[3] For there our captors demanded a song of us.
Our tormentors requested a joyful hymn:
"Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!"
[4] But how can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?
[5] If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget its skill upon the harp.
[6] May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth
if I fail to remember you,
if I don't make Jerusalem my highest joy.
[7] O Lord, remember what the Edomites did
on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem.
"Destroy it!" they yelled.
"Level it to the ground!"
[8] O Babylon, you will be destroyed.
Happy is the one who pays you back
for what you have done to us.
[9] Happy is the one who takes your babies
and smashes them against the rocks!

Now....contrast that drastic passage with the opening verse of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 1:1

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar
River in Babylon, the heavens were opened to me, and I saw visions of God.

The “Kebar” River was actually a grand canal off the River Euphrates which served as an
irrigation source. Apparently, the captive Jews were quartered here ostensibly to work
the lands (at which they are ingenious as shown in present-day Israel). The Kebar - or
Chebar as it is also known - was quite a long way from Babylon where Daniel would
make his home for many years; thus it's possible that Ezekiel and Daniel never met
(although I believe that Ezekiel must have seen and heard Jeremiah years earlier when the
latter was prophesying of the coming invasion and destruction).

The First Seven Chapters

As you read the very first chapter thoughts of space travel, aliens and flying saucers come
to mind. However, Ezekiel's vision had nothing to do with those things but rather the
glory of God and His throne (as Ezekiel made very clear in verse 28:

Ezekiel 1:1-28 [New Living Bible]

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar
River in Babylon, the heavens were opened to me, and I saw visions of God. [2] This
happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. [3] The Lord gave a
message to me, Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, there beside the Kebar River in the land
of the Babylonians, and I felt the hand of the Lord take hold of me.

[4] As I looked, I saw a great storm coming toward me from the north, driving before
it a huge cloud that flashed with lightning and shone with brilliant light. The fire inside
the cloud glowed like gleaming amber. [5] From the center of the cloud came four living
beings that looked human, [6] except that each had four faces and two pairs of wings.
[7] Their legs were straight like human legs, but their feet were split like calves' feet and
shone like burnished bronze. [8] Beneath each of their wings I could see human hands.
[9] The wings of each living being touched the wings of the two beings beside it. The
living beings were able to fly in any direction without turning around. [10] Each had
a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left
side, and the face of an eagle at the back. [11] Each had two pairs of outstretched
wings—one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of
it, and the other pair covered its body. [12] They went in whatever direction the spirit
chose, and they moved straight forward in all directions without having to turn around.

[13] The living beings looked like bright coals of fire or brilliant torches, and it
looked as though lightning was flashing back and forth among them. [14] And the living
beings darted to and fro like flashes of lightning.

[15] As I looked at these beings, I saw four wheels on the ground beneath them, one
wheel belonging to each. [16] The wheels sparkled as if made of chrysolite. All four
wheels looked the same; each wheel had a second wheel turning crosswise within it. [17]
The beings could move forward in any of the four directions they faced, without turning
as they moved. [18] The rims of the four wheels were awesomely tall, and they were
covered with eyes all around the edges. [19] When the four living beings moved, the
wheels moved with them. When they flew upward, the wheels went up, too. [20] The
spirit of the four living beings was in the wheels. So wherever the spirit went, the wheels and the living beings went, too. [21] When the living beings moved, the wheels moved. When the living beings stopped, the wheels stopped. When the living beings flew into the air, the wheels rose up. For the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

[22] There was a surface spread out above them like the sky. It sparkled like crystal. [23] Beneath this surface the wings of each living being stretched out to touch the others' wings, and each had two wings covering its body. [24] As they flew their wings roared like waves crashing against the shore, or like the voice of the Almighty, or like the shouting of a mighty army. When they stopped, they let down their wings. [25] As they stood with their wings lowered, a voice spoke from beyond the crystal surface above them.

[26] Above the surface over their heads was what looked like a throne made of blue sapphire. And high above this throne was a figure whose appearance was like that of a man. [27] From his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor. [28] All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining through the clouds. This was the way the glory of the Lord appeared to me. When I saw it, I fell face down in the dust, and I heard someone’s voice speaking to me.

We have another similar glimpse into the eternities in Revelation 4. If you and I could actually see the throne of God and had a strong glimpse of eternity, I believe one of two things would happen (or maybe both): we would either fall to our faces in terror or we would be so committed to God and His plans that our lives would be revolutionized.

The first seven chapters of Ezekiel deal with God’s glory and Ezekiel’s call. Take a look at that call in:

Ezekiel 3:17-19  [KJV]

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. [18] When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. [19] Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

So....what do you think? Should we take God’s challenge to take the whole gospel to the whole world seriously or not? If we do not, and heathen die without knowing, we
are to be held responsible. If, on the other hand, we have taken the message and it has
been rejected, we will not be held liable at the throne for we have “delivered the
message.” I find this one of the most challenging chapters in all God’s Word.

Chapters 8 - 24

In these chapters we learn of a rather un-known phenomenon (unless you have read these
passages). Way back in Exodus we learned of the construction of the Tabernacle in the
Wilderness. A small room in the actual Tabernacle was known as “the Holy of Holies.”
Here rested the Ark of the Covenant. The only person ever allowed in that room was the
high priest who once a year would enter with the blood offering for the nation.

The solo piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant (see picture
on following page). The Ark was a small chest which could be carried by four priests
using the staves on either side of it. Inside the Ark were a pot of manna, Aaron’s
budding rod, and the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

The lid covering the Ark was known as “the mercy seat.” On the lid could be found two
cherubim angels - their wings stretching toward each other. For centuries, the physical
presence of God - known as “the Shekinah Glory” - dwelt within those angels’ wings. That
presence separated the Jewish nation of Israel from the rest of the world. But we read in
chapter 10 that the Shekinah Glory left the Temple (which housed the Holy of Holies
following Solomon’s construction of it, replacing the Tabernacle) because of the nation’s sin
of idolatry: Ezekiel 10:18 Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold
of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

I believe that if the glory had not long since departed from the Temple that the Babylonians
could never have defeated that nation. It is a fearful thing when God’s presence leaves a
nation, a church or an individual. God had amply warned the people of the potential of the
glory leaving: 2 Chron. 7:19-22 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my
commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and
worship them; [20] Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have
given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my
sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. [21] And this
house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that
he shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and unto this house? [22] And
it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought
them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them,
and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.
QUESTION: Did the glory ever return? Yes. In the form of Jesus Himself as John testified in John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Chapters 25-32

In these passages Ezekiel prophesied of God's judgment on nations that persecuted Israel - Ammon, Jordan / Moab / Edom / Philistia / Tyre (current day Lebanon) and Egypt. All of these prophecies occurred.

Chapters 33 - 48

In these glorious chapters, God showed Ezekiel how He would restore Israel and also the coming Battle of Armageddon.

The Return: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, [2] And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. [3] And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. [4] Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these
bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. [5] Thus saith the
Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall
live: [6] And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you
with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the
Lord. [7] So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise,
and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. [8] And when I
beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them
above: but there was no breath in them. [9] Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the
wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from
the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. [10] So I
prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and
stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

[11] Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel:
behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.
[12] Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my
people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring
you into the land of Israel. [13] And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have
opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, [14] And
shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then
shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

I believe I have witnessed the fulfillment of that prophecy (1948) when the sovereign
state of Israel was declared by then Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion and sanctioned by
the U.N. and by President Harry S. Truman.

The dispersions of the Jews through history have been brutal indeed. This “scattering”
is known better as the Dispersions which means the scattering of Jews outside of Israel
beginning with the Babylonian efforts around 600 B.C. Today there are about 15
million Jews in the world and about one-third of them actually residing in Israel. But
prior to 1948, only a handful of Jews were allowed in “the land” because of the brutal
dictates of the British who at that time controlled the country. With very few
exceptions, such as the Balfour Declaration, the British have never been terribly
 hospitable to the Jews. The British Mandate (from the end of World War II in 1917
until the declaration that Israel would be a state in 1948) was a very difficult time. Even
then until the Six Day War in June of 1967 Jews were very limited in where they could go
even in their land. (I believe this is the very situation that President Obama and
Secretary of State Kerry would impose upon the Jews again with their concept of a two-
nation situation in the Holy Land.) The Palestinian Mandate makes it very clear that the
Palestinian leadership wants the Jews dead and buried in the Mediterranean Sea. On the
final page of these notes you will find a picture of Israeli defense forces standing in front
of the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) at the end of the Six Day War. It was the first time in decades that any Jews had been allowed to visit their most holy site - a situation that will occur again if our current administration has its way in Israel. The land of Israel if very small (you could place the entire country in the boundaries of Lake Erie). Dividing it is tantamount so national suicide.

Chapters 38 and 39 escort us to the future when Israel will be invaded:

Ezekiel 38:1-6

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [2] Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (Russia), and prophesy against him, [3] And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: [4] And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: [5] Persia (Iraq-Iran), Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: [6] Gomer (parts of Europe), and all his bands; the house of Togarmah (Armenia-Turkey) of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.

There will come a time - perhaps sooner than we think - early in the Tribulation period when our great ally Israel will be attacked. An amalgamation of nations will swoop down upon her, thinking her demise will be rather easy. Especially since Israel will be largely disarmed (because of the cunning of the Antichrist). However, these nations forgot what they have been forgetting for decades: God! Ezekiel 38:18-19 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. [19] For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

We don’t hear much about God’s fury. But chapter 39 gives us the parameters of His wrath against the invaders: it will require 7 months just to bury the dead and 7 years to dispose of the invaders’ weapons of war.

As you and I sit here tonight, the cast for this all-out scenario is already taking places on the stage. And Jesus is about to return!

I encourage you to read and re-read this complicated book of Ezekiel. Find a Bible you can readily understand a good Bible commentary. What Ezekiel prophesied over 2500 years ago is shaping up in our lifetime. It is an amazing book!
I will take the full hour next week to discuss the book of Daniel. This is another outstanding prophecy that we see being fulfilled in our days. In it we will see the final chapters in the lives of Satan, Antichrist - and even the church.
TV Reporter Dan Betzer interviews President Truman just six years after the President sanctioned Israel as a state.