**EZEKIEL**

**“They Will Know that I am the Lord”**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

Let’s review our whole journey so far…
Our walk through the Bible began with the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) which established that God is the one who spun up the universe and that He is eternally in charge. It also explained that the universe was originally created with God-infused, life-giving goodness that was vandalized by Devil-initiated, decay, destruction and death.

In response, we saw that God established a plan to restore His creation to its original state. The centerpiece of the plan involved the coming of a Promised Child (Genesis 3:15) who would do what was necessary to accomplish the task. The coming of the Child was so vital that God went to the trouble of establishing a special nation for the Child to be born into. This nation was formed from the descendants of Abraham and became known as Israel.

The Pentateuch ends with the nation of Israel possessing a large population with a strong religious and cultural identity, as well as, a robust legal and governmental system. What they lacked was a national homeland.

We, then, traveled through the historical books of Joshua through Esther which described how God established Israel’s homeland and chronicled the development of the nation, culminating in the Golden Era of the Israel’s history and its eventual decline. The high point of their history occurred when the 12 tribes were united under the leadership of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. With the exception of Job, the wisdom and poetical books of the Older Testament were produced during this era. However, toward the end of Solomon’s life the political and spiritual condition of the nation began to erode. After his death the nation began its own tragic death-spiral fracturing into Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom was called “Israel;” the Southern Kingdom was known as “Judah.”

The Southern Kingdom of Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and was generally more faithful in its worship of the True and Living God – the One who promised to defeat the source of evil and restore His good creation. Judah’s faithfulness was inconsistent and would eventually dissolve into apostacy, but at least they tried.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was formed by an alliance of the 10 remaining tribes. They reinstituted Calf Worship and Baal Worship as a way to create national pride and unity – and their distinctiveness from Judah. There were a couple of leaders who immerged in the north who made some attempt to follow The Lord, but generally, the record shows a pathetic series of wicked kings and influencers.

A mantra that runs through Israel’s history was the need for the people to obey God’s instructions and commands. They were repeatedly told that if they were faithful in doing so, life would go well for them. And while there were seasons in which the people did so, a parallel theme of the historical narrative was their persistent failure to do life God’s way.

Like us ‘moderns,’ the ‘ancients’ were prone to think their opinions mattered more than The Creator’s. They tended toward self-justifying rationalizations that let them off-the-hook for their misbehavior, leading them to “do what was right in their own eyes” instead doing what He said. And, when they suffered the consequences, which God warned would surely come, they acted as if some strange and unexpected thing was happening to them. An extreme example of a consequence happened when God allowed the Assyrian Empire to conquer and remove the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel – assigning them to the dustbin of history.

With the book of Isaiah and Jeremiah, we entered the realm of the prophets. The first two books of the Major Prophets described how God used Isaiah and Jeremiah in an attempt to turn the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah from their sin so they might avoid the fate of the Northern Kingdom. But, alas, the people refused. Then, in the book of Lamentations we witnessed Jeremiah’s mournful reaction to the destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent removal of the people from the land into captivity in Babylon. Next up is the book of Ezekiel.

**What you need to KNOW:**

Prior to the complete destruction of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the Babylonians had been making incursions into their territory and had carried some of the people back to Babylon, specifically to a place called Tel Abib in modern day Iraq. While Jeremiah was still proclaiming his prophesies of warning and impending judgement in Judah, Ezekiel was delivering a similar message to the Jews who had been already exiled to Babylon. The Prophet Daniel was also operating among the exiles. Ezekiel’s assignment involved the people living in the countryside, while Daniel operated in the palace

Many of the prophesies in this book are forthtelling in nature, speaking into the lives of the people and the immediate and short-term historical circumstances. However, it’s interesting to note that there is a clear relationship between some of the material in this book with what the Apostle John would record centuries later in the book of Revelation. For example, there are clear parallels between the Cherubim in Ezek. 1 and Rev. 4; Gog and Magog in Ezek. 38 and Rev. 20, Consuming a Book in Ezek. 3 and Rev. 10; the New Jerusalem in Ezek. 40-48 and Rev. 21; and the River of Life in Ezek. 47 and Rev. 22. The are many examples in the Scriptures when prophetic utterances are made directly into a historical situation, but they also have a kind of double meaning that will find future fulfillment. The future meaning is often lost on the original hearer who can only discern what it meaning in the immediate context. Such is the sometimes complicated and mysterious relationship between prophetic forthtelling and foretelling. It’s important to remember that the prophesy always meant something to the original recipient, but that sometimes there was another layer of meaning that would be unknown to the original hearer.

The overall message of this book, and the overall theme of the Bible can be understood in a phrase that is repeated dozens of times in Ezekiel, “**They Will Know that I am the Lord.”** The Lord insists that we recognize that He is the one who spun up the universe and that He is eternally in charge.

**GET GOING!**

**You will see some strange stuff on this leg of our Walk Through the Bible. You won’t want to miss Chapters 1-3. The imagery and instructions associated with Ezekiel’s commissioning as a prophet are fantastic. Chapters 4-24 mostly have to do with predictions of the fall of the Southern Kingdom, which would conclude with the destruction of Jerusalem. After the fall of Jerusalem, Chapters 25-33 describe the coming destruction of the foreign nations, followed by the eventual restoration of Jerusalem and the return of the people to the Promised Land in Chapters 34-48.**