

Old Testament Core Seminar

Class 22
“Ezekiel”
Old Testament Overview

Introduction

- Isaiah warn Judah's King Hezekiah about the Assyrian army, while assuring him of God's care.
- Jeremiah, 100 years after Isaiah, urge Judah and Jerusalem to follow the Lord's direction by surrendering to the Babylon.
- And Jeremiah's lamentations ie of one who was in Jerusalem during its siege and fall.
- We encounter Ezekiel who lived at the same time as Jeremiah.
- His ministry was actually in exile in Babylon.
- The Babylonians took the Israelites to Babylon in several waves,.
- Ezekiel was in an earlier waves – probably in 597 B.C., along with the royal family and other leading citizens of Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem was entirely destroyed a decade later, in 587 B.C.

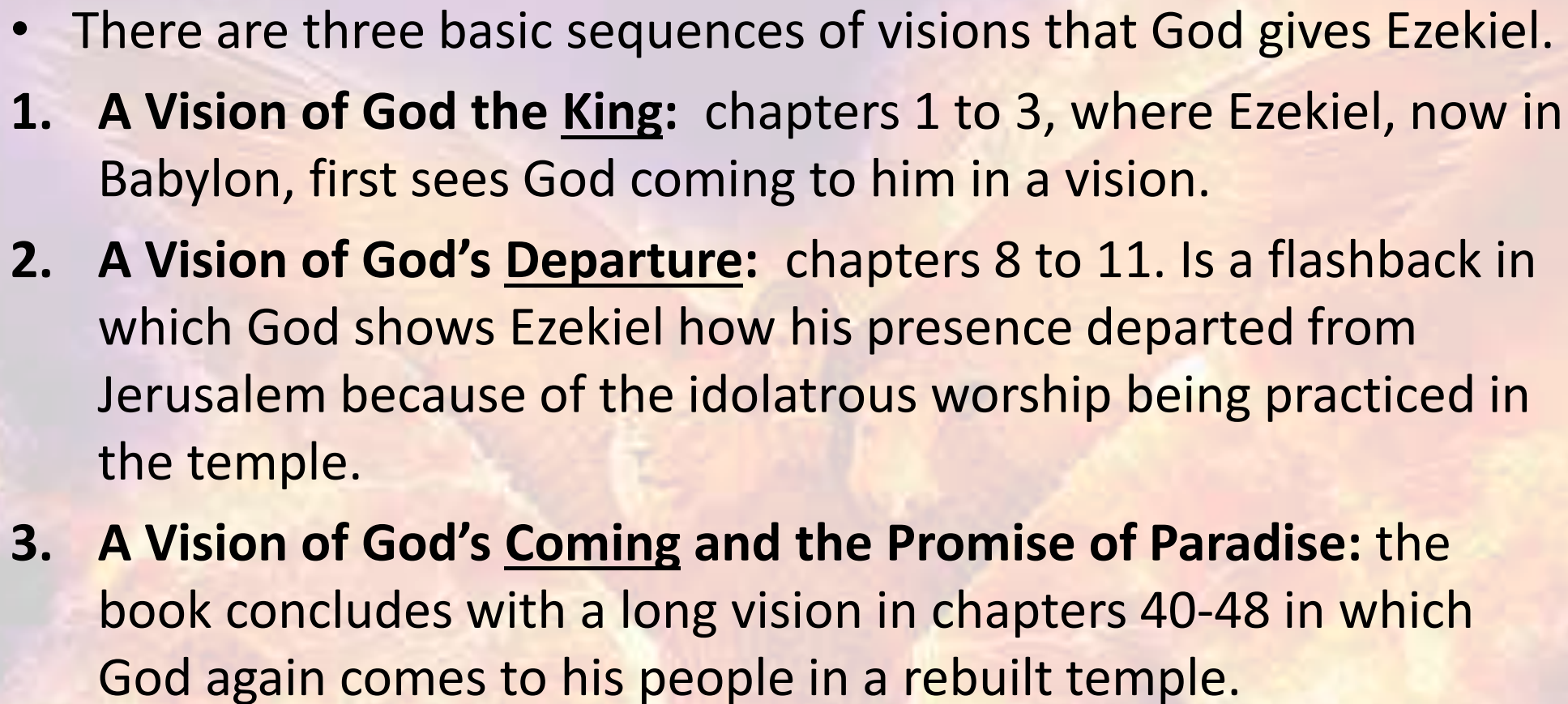
- Ezekiel had been trained as a priest in Jerusalem, and knew the religious life of his people well.
- He may have even heard Jeremiah preach in Jerusalem, though neither prophet referred the other.
- In exile, away from the temple, what would his service be now?
- Many Jews worried that God would now be inaccessible.
- Wrong! God had prepared this young priest to be his special mouthpiece to the Jews in exile.
- Interesting fact: This book has been regarded as so strange that Jewish rabbis would often not allow young men to read Ezekiel until they were 30 years old, lest they become discouraged at the difficulty of understanding the Scriptures and so despise them.
- But it is not really that hard to understand - Ezekiel's structure is even clearer than Isaiah or Jeremiah's.

Two halves:

- First 24 chapters, the Lord tells his people of his judgment on them.
 - The Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar will destroy Jerusalem which occurs in chapter 24 when the siege has begun.
 - Chapters 25 to 48 then contain more hope.

Second half:

- Begins with condemnations of the surrounding nations, specifically, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, and Egypt.
 - Word arrives in 33:21 that Jerusalem had fallen.
 - From that point Ezekiel begins to prophesy about hope and restoration for God's people.
- The book is mostly in chronological order - Ezekiel's prophecies stretch over a two decade plus period—from around 593-571 B.C.

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- There are three basic sequences of visions that God gives Ezekiel.
 1. **A Vision of God the King:** chapters 1 to 3, where Ezekiel, now in Babylon, first sees God coming to him in a vision.
 2. **A Vision of God's Departure:** chapters 8 to 11. Is a flashback in which God shows Ezekiel how his presence departed from Jerusalem because of the idolatrous worship being practiced in the temple.
 3. **A Vision of God's Coming and the Promise of Paradise:** the book concludes with a long vision in chapters 40-48 in which God again comes to his people in a rebuilt temple.

A Vision of God the King :

- Have you ever seen a child do something wrong and then receive a “time out” for punishment?
- The Babylonian exile was like a big time out for God’s people.
- A time out from the land, the throne, and the temple, all of which they had begun to misunderstand and even idolize.
- The Promised Land, the Davidic line of the kings, and the temple were all good gifts from him – which the people had misused.
- So God took them away by calling his people out to Babylon.
- Their timeout was 70 years so that they could refocus on what was important and why.
- While in timeout, God was faithfully with them.
- This is the idea of how Ezekiel’s vision begins, with God coming to his people apart from the temple, David, or the land of Israel.

- So the vision begins ... Read 1:1.
- The vision itself begins with a mighty wind:

Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. (1:4-6)

- Interesting creatures:

Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their workings was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims were full of eyes, all around the four of them. When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. (1:15-19)











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- And the voice:

A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings. And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. Ezekiel Sent to Rebellious Israel So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking. (1:25-18)

God is Not Like Us:

- Drawing Ezekiel's vision is an impossible task.
- What Ezekiel saw was that God is not like us.
- He is strange, other, and different than we are.
- We assume God is just like us. Ezekiel's vision shows He is not.
- Ezekiel described everything he saw ... using words "like" and "as if."
- God is not just holiness - he is holy and we must show reverence to God.
- Ezekiel did so by falling face down before God.

God is All-Powerful and All-Wise:

- Notice the rims of the wheels are covered with eyes (1:18).
- The 4 faces look in every direction (1:6,10,17).
- These things show God's omniscience—he sees everywhere.
- There is nothing he does not perceive. He is all-knowing.
- The fact that God can be on this chariot that moves in all directions shows that he is all-powerful - omnipotent.
- He can be in any place - omnipresent.

God is Not Limited by Circumstances:

- Ezekiel was amazed that he was seeing God at all ... not in Jerusalem or in the temple, but in exile.
- This assured Ezekiel that God would be with his people wherever they were.
- God is not limited to any one place. He cares for the whole world.
- The rainbow in verse 28, recalls God's covenant with Noah.

God Takes the Initiative:

- He is the one who comes to us.
- Verse 1:1 “the heavens were opened.” He chose to come down.
- Verse 3 “the word of the LORD came.”
- Verse 4 “I saw a windstorm coming out of the north.”
- Verse 25: “there came a voice.”
- Verse 28: “I heard the voice of one speaking.”
- Like Moses and the burning bush. Like Isaiah in the temple. Like Paul on the road to Damascus. So with Ezekiel. None of these men were out looking for God or initiated with him.
- This God takes the initiative. He comes to us.

God Communicates:

- The vision climaxes in a voice ... in words!
- If we wrote the script, we would have God's voice speak first, then the flash of light and color.
- Here, God's vision climaxes not with sights for the eyes, but with a sounds for the ears (1:28).
- This is why the God's Word is central in our church's gatherings.
- We need to take time to hear from God's Word because he speaks to us through his Word.
- God is committed to speaking to his people, to knowing them, and to having them know Him.

A Vision of God's Departure:

- The second great vision in this book is a flashback of God's departure from the temple in Jerusalem.
- To some, Jerusalem was paradise.
- Once exiled in Babylon they realized Babylon was not paradise and neither was Jerusalem!
- They had tried to protect Jerusalem, thinking that holding onto Jerusalem was holding onto God. But that was wrong.
- God gave Ezekiel a series of visions showing Israel's sin and God's evacuation.
- God turned his people over to the care of the gods they loved.
- Chapters 6 to 24 are mostly prophecies against Israel because of its sin - God wants them to know exactly why he deserted them.
- "I will turn my face away from [my people]" (7:22) as in Jeremiah: "I will show them my back and not my face." (18:17)

- The core of God's complaint against his people begin in chapters 8 and 9 with a very specific vision of the idolatry being practiced in the temple itself.
- In chapters 10 and 11, the vision continues, but now Ezekiel sees God departing from the temple as the people had departed from the worship of God.
- The vision ends in chapter 11 as the Lord departs the city itself.
- Here's a sample of this vision

“The hand of the Sovereign LORD came upon me there. I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood” (8:1-3).

“And he said to me, ‘Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here.’ So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel” (8:9-10).

“Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me, and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me” (11:22-25).

- God uses the most graphic of language to charge Jerusalem with heinous unfaithfulness. He says to them (11:22-25):

"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be. You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them. You took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. Also My food which I gave you --- the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey which I fed you --- you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was," says the Lord GOD.

- Read 11:22-25.

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- God had warned his people through Moses that he would send them into exile if they were unfaithful to him.

“Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations” (Deut. 28:63-64).
- God’s people caused this unnatural separation, this divorce and now they would pay the price.
- In chapter 24 we read, “Son of man, write down the name of the day, this very day --- the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem this very day.”
- In chapters 25 to 32 and 35, the attention shifts onto the nations.
- As in Jeremiah, God’s justice is not confined to his people.
- The nation that overtook Israel was in trouble with God and He would judge them as well.
- Be certain, God alone is sovereign over all nations.

- God charges Israel once more for two reasons: the leaders are corrupt only taking care of themselves. (34:2) and the people themselves have ignored his Word:

"As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them."

- They would sit, hear, and enjoy God's Word and then ignore it!
- Their hearts were devoted to idols.
- They trusted in the wealth of their land, the politics of the Davidic line, and the temple itself.
- Ignoring God's Word – none of those things would save God's people.

A Vision of God's Coming and the Promise of Paradise:

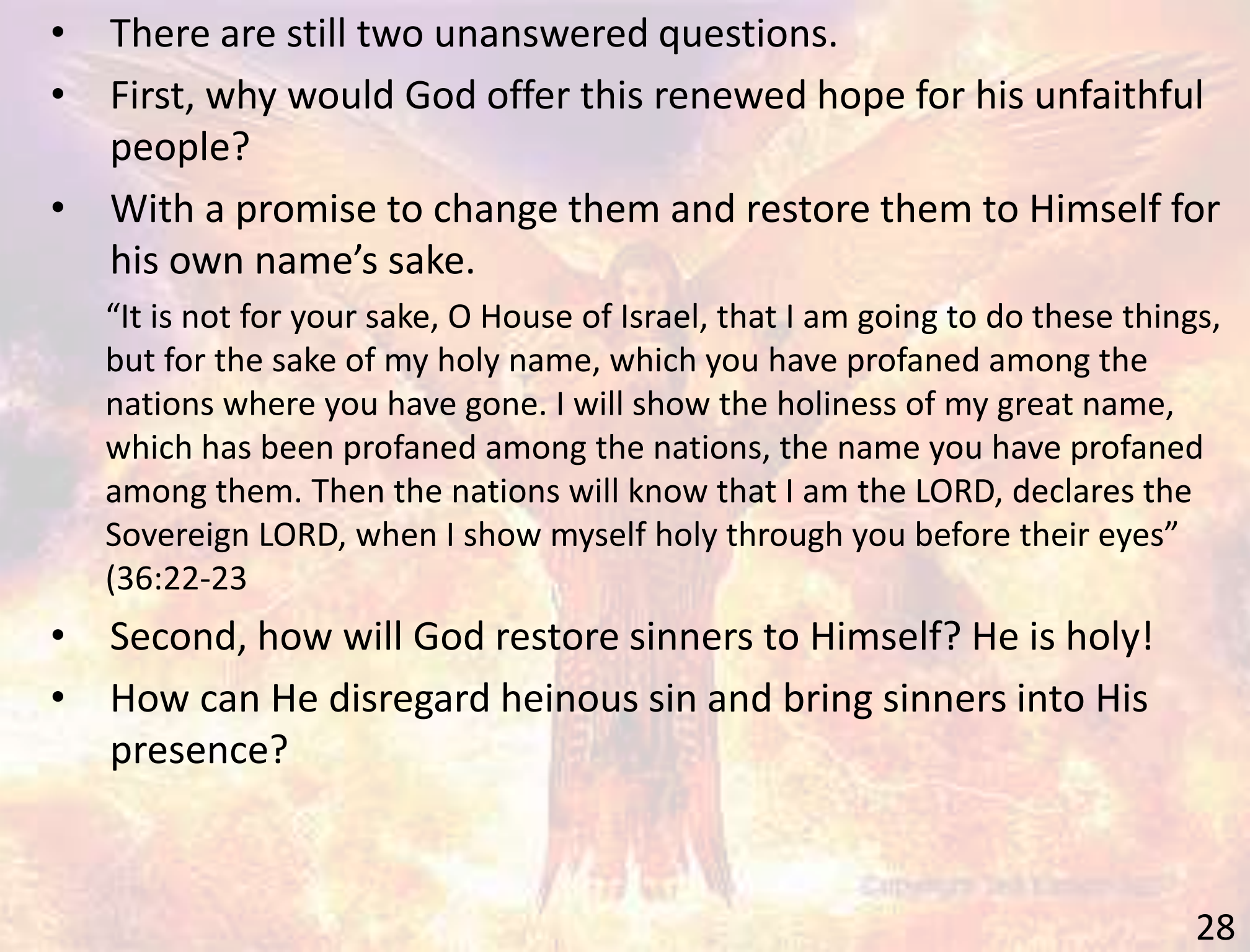
- The last section of Ezekiel's prophecy contains several more famous visions of hope. Read 36:24-28.
- Chapter 37 contains the vision of the valley of the dry bones. Ezekiel preaches God's Word, and the bones come to life!
- [Valley of the Dry Bones video](#)
- The last great series of visions in the book then occur in chapters 40 to 48, where God shows Ezekiel a new temple.
- Many consider the detailed vision of the temple as boring clutter.
- But he was doing what he was told to do. "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see." (40:4)
- His listeners would have been enthralled by this vision and its promise of complete cleansing and renewal and God's pledge to be with his people.

- Chapters 10-11 were about the Lord departure from the temple and the city – now he watches God return to his temple.

Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw --- like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. (43:1-5)

- He had prophesied the exiles would return to the land – here he promises the destroyed temple would be rebuilt and filled with the presence of God.
- God would once again be with his people – even as a river would flow out of the new temple (ch. 47).

- The purpose of this temple vision was to highlight a restored relationship of God with his people.
- The final verse of the book is very fitting
“and the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE.”
(48:35b).
- The book ends with the picture of God forever with his people.
- Ezekiel, in many ways, is the OT equivalent to the book of Revelation.
- In Ezra we learn that the exiles did return to the Promised Land and rebuild the temple ... yet we have no record of the glory of the Lord filling the temple!
- Centuries later Jesus will enter the temple in Jerusalem.
- And that final vision of the heavenly city in Revelation shows that communion with God would become even more intimate.
- As God’s people dwell with him forever!
- Each tribe is promised a portion of a renewed land. A land they still look forward to.

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- There are still two unanswered questions.
 - First, why would God offer this renewed hope for his unfaithful people?
 - With a promise to change them and restore them to Himself for his own name's sake.

“It is not for your sake, O House of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes”
(36:22-23)

- Second, how will God restore sinners to Himself? He is holy!
- How can He disregard heinous sin and bring sinners into His presence?

- Well, Ezekiel only shines a dim light on the answer.
- God will not simply disregard this sin, he will deal with it.
- Again and again, God calls Ezekiel the “son of man.”
- This son of man symbolizes the bearing of sin on his body when he lays on his side (4:4,5,6).
- In chapter 16, God promises a time “when I make atonement” for faithless Israel (16:63).
- God also promises a day comes when He would judge the people’s useless shepherds and:
“place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them” (34:23-24).
- On that day, he’ll also grant his people a “covenant of peace.”
- Who would this coming shepherd be? Jesus Christ, who did come and lay down his life for his sheep (John 10:15).
- He paid for the sins of all those who would repent and believe.
- He brought peace. Forgiveness, and reconciliation.