

# Latter Days – Part One

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 12/8/2018

In today's sermon we will be looking at some materials that I've never before covered in sermons. We will begin a new survey of the Book of Ezekiel in order to see what God has in store for His people Israel. Much of this material was well covered 40 years ago – but since then it has been pushed to the back of the shelf. It is a big story – and it will take a few sermons to get through it. Our texts for today are the Books of Isaiah and Ezekiel. We will be looking into Isaiah and Ezekiel today.

Let's begin in the book of Ezekiel. Isaiah was a Prophet of God when Israel was going into captivity. Ezekiel came on the scene 133 years later. Ezekiel was a Prophet of God when Judah was going into captivity.

The world is hopelessly confused because they make no distinction between the Jews and Israel – Judah and Israel they are all one and the same to Protestant evangelists. TV evangelists believe that Israel has returned to the Promised Land – and that prophecy has been fulfilled by that. TV evangelists do not know that the tribes of Israel are still completely scattered around the earth! There are more Jews in New York City than in the entire nation in the Middle East.

Let's begin today at the end of the story when there will be a **restoration** of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel as they were in the Days of King David. That has not happened in thousands of years – and it will be a glorious reunion when it takes place. We know that the "house of Judah" and the "house of Israel" will be united and restored into one nation when Christ gathers His remnant. Ezekiel says:

Ezekiel 37:15 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezekiel 37:16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions [that would include Benjamin and Levi]: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

Ezekiel 37:17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. [All twelve tribes together]

Ezekiel 37:18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?

Ezekiel 37:19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

Ezekiel 37:20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

Brethren, keep in mind that Ezekiel is among the Jewish captivity in Babylon – and they are all aware that ten of the tribes of Israel were carried away long ago:

Ezekiel 37:21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

The prophet Jeremiah, who was contemporaneous with Ezekiel, prophesied:

Jeremiah 3:18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

The apostle Paul longed to see this day: Paul said:

Romans 11:12 Now if the transgression of the Jews meant riches for the world ...how much richer will the full restoration of Judah be?

Ezekiel 37:22 And I will make them [Israel and Judah] one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

Brethren, this is yet future when the Kingdom of God will be being established over all the earth.

Ezekiel 37:23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 37:24 And [the resurrected] David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

Where will all of this happen? Back in the Promised Land.

Ezekiel 37:25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever: and my servant David shall be their **prince** forever.

David is “prince” – why? Because Jesus will be King by then. Notice the New Covenant:

Ezekiel 37:26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

Ezekiel 37:27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel 37:28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

That is the end of the story – a beautiful climax to God’s Plan for Israel and Judah. Let’s come back from the Latter Days to the present day. Ezekiel tells us that before all this takes place, modern Israel will again go into captivity. That includes all Israel, the English speaking peoples of the world; the USA, Canada, England, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, France, South Africa, and the peoples of Judea, Australia, and more.

Brethren, it is time to stop thinking in terms of thousands of years. Time has come to the full. The **Latter Days** are upon us. There was a time in God’s Church when there was keen interest in watching, not only world events, but the state of God’s people, because Jesus Christ had said that people could predict the weather but they could not discern the signs of the times. The religious leaders of His day asked Jesus for a sign that He was the Messiah:

Matthew 16:2-3 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and overcast. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but you cannot discern the signs of the times?

The world is left in the **dark** – but **not** the Church of God: Jesus tells His people that they are different from the world. They are able to discern the signs of the times and not be caught unawares as others will be caught off guard:

1Thessalonians 5:1 Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you...

1Thessalonians 5:4 But, you brethren, you are **not in darkness**, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

There are enough details within the Scriptures to tell us precisely when events are shaping up for the coming of the Messiah. Today, we are talking about the time Israel went off in one direction and Judah went off in another direction. Judah did go back to the Promised Land – but Israel, to this day, has never gone back to the land of their fathers. It is good to review the Book of Ezekiel after 33 years – a fresh look is warranted. We used to preach Ezekiel a lot.

A crucial key to understanding Biblical prophecy is knowing the identity of modern-day Israel. The house of Israel has forgotten its identity. Because of sin – Sabbath breaking and Idolatry – God allowed the Nation of Israel, the ten northern tribes, to be taken captive and deported from the Promised Land. Israel has never returned from their Assyrian captivity.

Who was the Book of Ezekiel written to? That is a very important question. God gave Ezekiel the commission to prophesy about Israel’s latter days which would not come upon them for thousands of years after they had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

The attacks by the Assyrians on Israel began in 721 BC, and by 718 BC, Israel had been carried away captive. Without the Temple, without the Holy Land, without the Sabbath, without the Feast Days – Israel began to forget who they were – as they moved across the region to the north and to the west.

Israel traveled through the Caucasus Mountains and became known as Caucasians! Over the centuries they forgot who they were; they forgot their language, they forgot their God and their faith. We are America – the children of Manasseh. "Manasseh" means forgetful. The prophet Ezekiel's message is written to us today. A great deal of the Book of Ezekiel was written for the purpose of warning America and England of their coming captivity by a foreign power.

Isaiah 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

Isaiah 1:3 The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Israel doth not know – how true!

This week we saw a beautiful ceremony carried out. We laid to rest one of our former presidents. The music was fabulous, the uniforms were splendid, the pomp and circumstance were unmatched, the eulogies were superb, the trains and planes were majestic, the churches and cathedrals were gigantic!

And the president received due honor and respect from the religious leaders and national leaders alike – reflecting a life of giving and service. Many references were made to his being in heaven with the company of saints.

Isaiah 1:3 ...Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Isaiah 1:4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Isaiah wrote these words about Israel 130 years before Ezekiel came on the scene. As a point of reference, Ezekiel wasn't born yet. For Ezekiel, Israel's captivity was established history. It would be a lot like us thinking back to the Civil War. We all know that it took place, but it is way in the past.

It helps to put ourselves in a proper perspective when we delve into the Holy Scriptures. Ezekiel was one of the many Jewish captives taken into the subsequent Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar about 130 years after the northern kingdom of Israel went into captivity.

Brethren, note carefully – this is what we need to grasp to understand the Book of Ezekiel. The Book of Ezekiel was not written to the Jews among whom Ezekiel found himself. The Book of Ezekiel is written to us – today – modern America, England and the rest...

How do we know this? Though the ten tribes of northern Israel had long been dispersed, God gave Ezekiel this instruction:

Ezekiel 2:3 He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.

Ezekiel was clearly sent to the house of Israel – but not – as we will see – to the deported and captive ancient Kingdom of Israel. Ezekiel’s words have reached Israel today, but he never did go and preach to the “lost tribes of Israel.” All Israel today has the printed bible with the words of warning from Ezekiel.

Israel was not “lost” – Ezekiel knew where Israel had scattered to, just as the Jesus and the apostles knew nearly six-hundred years later: Jesus and the apostles knew where the northern ten tribes were – long after their deportation.

Matthew 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Matthew 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jesus was a Jew of the tribe of Judah. He came to the Jews in the flesh. The Jews of Christ’s day were very aware that they were only one of the tribes of Israel. Jacob their father had twelve sons. The Gospel message is intended for all twelve sons of our patriarch, Israel.

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

Israel had fallen in defeat, about 721-718 BC. The 10 northern tribes of Israel were carried away into captivity from the Holy Land by the fierce Assyrians. One-hundred and thirty years later the Jews [not Israel] were still in Judah and Jerusalem. Judah did not fall to the Babylonians until 586 (587-585). Young Ezekiel – of the priestly line – was among the captive Jews carried from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Ezekiel 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

God began to work with Ezekiel – but not so much for the captive Jews – but for Israel – far in the future. The Book of Ezekiel was written (Circa 592- 570 BC). God called Ezekiel the “Watchman” because he was to deliver the warnings for the protection of Israel. God gave these prophecies to Ezekiel for us today. There are a lot of facts and a lot of warnings in the Book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 3:17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman [lean forward and be a lookout] unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. (33:1-9).

The mostly English speaking peoples of the world are the latter day – last days – descendants of the house of Israel. The warning words of Ezekiel were written for our benefit, because ancient Israel never received them. Ezekiel lived and died among the Jewish exiles, having never presented his warning commission to Israel of his day. Notice who Ezekiel's message was for:

Ezekiel 3:1 Moreover He said unto me, Son of man...go speak unto the house of Israel...

Ezekiel 3:4 And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them...

Here is a very interesting point. God told Ezekiel that Israel would not listen or heed.

Ezekiel 3:7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.

How true that is today! The surprising thing is Ezekiel's message was not aimed at the Jews, but at the latter day House of Israel. That is America today! (England etc.) Ezekiel knew without a doubt that Israel would rise again! How did Ezekiel know? Isaiah lived more than a hundred years before Ezekiel. Isaiah was alive and prophesying while Israel was being carried away captive by Shalmaneser IV and Sargon II kings of Assyria.

There were no more kings of Israel after Isaiah – only kings of Judah. How did Ezekiel know without a doubt that Israel would rise again? The answer is because Isaiah – a Prophet of God – was receiving his prophecies while Israel was being taken captive. And God prophesied of Israel's return. Remember how even Jesus' disciples, and the people of Jesus' day looked for the restoration of Israel.

Acts 1:6 When [the disciples] therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Everyone knows that God set His hand to deliver Israel from Pharaoh in Egypt – that was Israel's first deliverance. But now, Israel has been taken captive by Assyria? Notice what Isaiah wrote about the time of Israel captivity:

Isaiah 11:11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

Who can say for sure where these strange sounding nations have migrated to today? Brethren, we need to be careful about assigning ancient names of places to modern day Israel – and then basing our understanding of prophecy on those determinations. There is a danger in doing so. Why? Because we can easily misinterpret the Scriptures. Where are the modern descendants of Israel? The ones we know of are scattered throughout the USA, Canada, England, Australia, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, France, South Africa... and so forth... Through Ezekiel, God is warning us today.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel poignantly tells us how our population is going to be carved up into little pieces. It is a horrible picture – almost to bizarre to contemplate. It is going to happen – make no mistake about that. It is not a matter of spending more money on our beefed-up military armaments and defense budget. None of that will save America and Great Britain.

But, it is a matter of drawing near to God and being the people of God – that is our only hope because two-thirds of our population will die in an initial onslaught by the enemy. You may have seen the Oak Ridge Boys singing “Amazing Grace” at the funeral this week. One of them had quite a head of hair and a beard. Picture Ezekiel having hair and a beard like that. God tells us what Ezekiel’s hair and beard symbolizes for our nations today.

Ezekiel 5:1 And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair.

Ezekiel 5:2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

So, initially, one-third will go alive into a future captivity.

Ezekiel 5:3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

God tells of a small remnant – 144,000 who will ultimately survive.

Ezekiel 5:4 Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

Remember that Israel of Ezekiel’s day has long been scattered so, God uses “Jerusalem” to represent all of His people Israel who have all gone astray.

Ezekiel 5:5 Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.

Ezekiel 5:6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.

Ezekiel 5:7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you;

Ezekiel 5:8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

The entire world will witness Israel's plight. It has never happened before:

Ezekiel 5:9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

Ezekiel 5:10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

Ezekiel 5:11 Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

It is the time of Jacob's trouble:

Ezekiel 5:12 A third part of thee shall die [hundreds of millions] with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

Ezekiel 5:13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.

End: Latter Days - Part One