PROPHET EZEKIEL

SPIRITUAL READING

Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7 - A watchman or a Lookout
Ezekiel 36:23 - Yahweh still the same powerful, just and caring God that he had always been.
Ezekiel 36:35-36 - God would take them back to Jerusalem and provide a new life there.
Ezekiel 37:1-2 - Valley filled with 1000s and 1000s of human bones, completely dried out and whitening in the hot sun.
Ezekiel 37:7-10 - Dead bodies came to life and the valley of death was filled with living men.
Ezekiel 37:11-14 - It was a means of explaining to the exiles that, although the Jewish nation was virtually dead, and dried up like the bones in the vision.
Ezekiel 37:1-10

Nevertheless, the Jews were depressed for having lost their country, their Temple. They felt forsaken by God. It is at such a time that Prophet Ezekiel comes on the scene and helps them to understand what they are going through.
DEVELOPMENT: Ezekiel fills the people with hope.

A) ***Ezekiel feels called to prophesy to the people in exile.***
Ezekiel was born in Jerusalem, but got deported to Babylon with the first fall of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.
He was a priest, and at the age of 30, in exile, he was granted a special vision of God and called to be a prophet. *He saw himself particularly as a watchman or a lookout.* Just as a lookout would warn of the advances of enemy forces and give his own army time to take action, Ezekiel warned his fellow Jews that God's judgment was coming. He offered them the chance to turn and accept the way of escape that God had provided. The first half of his book contains these messages he gave to the people before the final destruction of Jerusalem.

B) *His message of comfort, after the fall of Jerusalem*
After they heard of the fall of Jerusalem, many of the exiles became deeply depressed. All hope for the future seemed to have vanished. Every city in their homeland was in ruins. This was the time when Ezekiel's messages changed in tone and brought far more comfort and encouragement. Yahweh was still the same powerful, just and caring God that he had always been (Ezekiel 36:23). ***If each one of the exiles would repent and make his or her own choice to serve God and keep on serving him then, as Jeremiah had promised, they could join the new community that God as going to create from the old.*** What was more, they could be absolutely certain that God would take them back to Jerusalem and provide a new life there.

To bring his point home to the disheartened exiles, Ezekiel told them of one of his visions. He had seen a valley filled with thousand and thousands of human bones, completely dried out and whitening in the hot sun, so that the whole place had an atmosphere of utter desolation. Then as Ezekiel watched with a mixture of awe and

horror, the bones began to move about; they joined together into skeletons and were covered over first with muscles and flesh and then with skin. Finally the dead bodies came to life, and the valley of death was filled with living men. ***This strange experience had been very real to Ezekiel and it was a means of explaining to the exiles that, although the Jewish nation was virtually dead, and dried up like the bones in the vision, God still had the power to restore that nation to a completely new life.***

C) ***Ezekiel prophesied the restoration of the Temple :***

Since the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, the Jews in exile found themselves totally forsaken by God - they had nowhere to offer sacrifices. It is at this time in the exile that a new prayer-house emerged- the **SYNAGOGUE**

It shows how the Jews in exile tried to maintain their links with their origins, just like we do today. ***Because they had no Temple, they met in synagogues - but not for offering sacrifices; these could be offered only in the Temple. In the synagogues the Jews met for prayers and reading of the scriptures, generally on the Sabbath and feast days. And they longed for the day when they would get an opportunity to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.***

Although Ezekiel himself died before any of the Jews were able to return to Judah, ***he prophesied that the Temple of Jerusalem would be some how restored to them***. The synagogue would be only a temporary reminder of God; but he told them that he saw a vision in which he found the temple filled once again with the glory of God. As a result, there were many Jews who longed to get back to Jerusalem, although quite a few of them were happy also with their settled life in Babylon.