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Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

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Children are not raised by programs, governments or (in this country) villages; they are raised by two parents who are fervently, even irrationally, devoted to their children's well-being.

(James Q. Wilson, **The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families.** 11)

There is no knell so laden with tears of regret as the sound of the words too late.

(William Barclay, **The Gospel of Matthew.** 2:355)

We attribute to others what we find in ourselves. Very few people excuse their own sin without blaming God or someone else for it.

(H. Leo Boles, **A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew.** 483)

Real Christians seek service, not celebrity, and the glory is given to God (1 Cor. 3:6).

(Paul Earnhart, **Glimpses of Eternity: Studies in the Parables of Jesus.** 188)

QUESTION ON LEADING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Question

Would you please share with me your interpretation on what leading captivity captive in Ephesians 4 means? Thanks!

Answer

In Ephesians 4:8 the apostle quotes Psalm 68:18, a Psalm of David. In verses 17-18 David pictures the Lord as the conqueror of His enemies, who receives gifts from the conquered. Paul reverses the figure to picture, as in a Roman triumphal procession, the conqueror giving gifts to the Roman people from the spoils he has taken in war. Christ conquered Satan, the demons, and death and figuratively led them in the triumph procession as captives. Colossians 2:15 is parallel - "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." They no longer hold the power over mankind they had before Jesus died for our sins and rose triumphant from the grave (cf. Romans 5:9-10; Hebrews 2:14-15). The final triumph will occur at the general resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-26). The gifts He gave are the offices in the church that edify and unify us (Ephesians 4:11-16).

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it in a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

Perhaps this exposes my ignorance more than anything else, but I am truly awed by consideration of things that Christians may do which enhance the Father. For instance, Titus 2:10, we adorn the doctrine of God our Savior, by "not pilfering but showing all good faith." Indeed? That which makes the man of God "competent, equipped for every good work" (1 Timothy 3:17) can be adorned by such a one as I?

Then, our text for this study: Jesus said, when people see your good works they "give glory to your Father who is in heaven"!! We are looking now at the Creator of the universe, the One who made the worlds, who gave his only Son, that the world might be saved through him; and by our deeds He will be glorified?

The problem with men is, they "have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And having fallen short, they have no glory in and of themselves, and how can

they expect to glorify God?; again, Jesus said “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:8). Understanding that salvation is “by grace”, not by meritorious works, we at the same time understand that Christians are “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10); and that by our obedience of faith we show our faith, and glorify God.

The thrust of the passage is, let us everyone be searching for and receptive to occasions to do good works, to assist our neighbor, and our brother, for in such actions God is glorified.

70 AD - SOME PROBLEMS (Pt. 1)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The theory that “The End” came with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Roman Army under the command of Titus is a theory that is gaining some popularity. The idea is that “the end,” “Judgment Day,” and “the resurrection of the dead” all occurred when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem.

The theory is called by different names. Perhaps the most recognizable is what is used in this writing—“70 A.D.” It is also known as “Realized Eschatology.” “Eschatology” is defined as “the study of end times,” inasmuch as the adherents believe the “end times” were “realized” with the destruction of Jerusalem. This includes the second coming of Christ and the Judgment Day.

The theory has been popularized in more recent times by Max King and Kurt Simmons. Although these men have some differences, their core ideas are basically the same. According to the adherents of this doctrine, every Bible prophecy, including that of the resurrection of the dead, was fulfilled in 70, and every New Testament writing was also completed before this date. There are serious problems with this theory, and we want to examine a few of them in this article.

(1) The first problem to consider is the teaching that the resurrection took place when Jerusalem was destroyed. The idea is that during the early years of the existence of the church, it was persecuted and restricted, and thus did not realize its full power. But with Jerusalem’s destruction, the persecutions ceased, and the church was “resurrected” from the dead. The resurrection was only a figurative reference to the church’s revival. This means that there is no bodily resurrection of the dead. When individuals die, their spirit goes immediately to its eternal reward.

But in I Corinthians 15, Paul is responding to the fact that

some at Corinth were denying that Christ had been raised from the dead. But Paul said some 500 people had seen him, had seen his resurrected body. Notice vvs. 20-23:

“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming”

Paul goes on to say that we are going to be raised and changed. Vvs. 50-54:

*“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘**death is swallowed up** in victory.’”*

That certainly looks like a bodily resurrection to me. Paul says we are going to be raised from the dead, and that we will be changed to possess an imperishable, immortal body. Then we have John writing about our resurrection in I John 3:2:

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

If Christ’s “appearing” was the destruction of Jerusalem, then how in the world are we going to “be like Him”? And how in the world are we going to “see Him just as He is”?

If, as the 70 A.D. proponents claim, we are now in the resurrection (since Jerusalem was destroyed at that time, and we are now in the “resurrected” church), then we have to find some way to explain away Christ’s statement to the Sadducees in Luke 20:34-35. The Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection of any kind, tried to put Jesus in a box with their question about the woman who had seven husbands in succession. They then wondered whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Christ responded:

“The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the

dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.”

It should be obvious to anyone that marriage is alive and well on planet earth. But if we are in the resurrection, according to the logic of the 70 A.D. proponents, there should be no marriages now.

In Job’s distress and anguish, he made an interesting statement in Job 19:25-27:

“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!

Note that Job mentioned having flesh, even after his skin is destroyed. Could he be referring to the changed body that Paul mentioned in I Corinthians 15? He also said his eyes would see God. Whatever this new body consists of, it appears it will have eyes. Now, before you dismiss this as the dreams of someone who lived thousands and thousands of years ago, remember that this is the inspired word of God. A spirit does not have a body, so this certainly suggests a bodily resurrection.

A further consideration on this point is the meaning of “resurrection from the dead.” I don’t think we have to go to the dictionary to have a clear understanding of the meaning of the word “dead.” It is not an ambiguous statement. Thus it should be obvious that according to the 70 A.D. theory, the church was “dead” through its first three-plus decades of existence—from Pentecost to 70 A.D. They may say it was persecuted, and they may claim it did not have full power, but to claim that it was **dead** is beyond credulity. They may say, “Oh, we do not claim the church was actually dead, we just mean it did not have full power.” But how do you “resurrect” something that was not dead? You may revive someone who is unconscious or in a coma, but the term “resurrection” clearly refers to bringing someone or something back from the dead. Do you remember Christ, Lazarus, the widow’s son, Tabitha? We could go on and on, but you get the point. They were all **dead!** They were all **resurrected!**

It is truly amazing what this “dead” church accomplished. 3,000 responded to the gospel on one day (Acts 2:41); soon there were 5,000 men, not counting women (Acts 4:4); multitudes were added (Acts 5:14); the gospel had such an effect that when Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica, the Jews claimed that these men had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6); by the time Paul wrote to the Colossian church about 62 A.D., he stated that the gospel had

been “preached in all creation” (Colossians 1:26). If all that is what the “dead church” accomplished, perhaps we need more dead churches today.

(2) One of the prominent teachings of the 70 A.D. theory is that the Second Coming of Christ in Judgment took place at the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus his coming was a spiritual coming, and not a visible, personal coming.

There are many scriptures that clearly contradict this idea. As the disciples stood watching in awe as they saw Christ ascend into heaven, they were told:

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Question: What did the disciples see ascending into heaven? Was it not his body? Then, if Christ will come “in just the same way,” how should we expect to see him return? The obvious answer would be “in his body.” If not, why not? Hebrews 9:28 says that Christ “will appear a second time ...for salvation.” This certainly implies a bodily appearance, not a figurative coming in judgment on Jerusalem.

One of the first passages that came to mind when I was made aware of the 70 A.D. theory was Revelation 1:7:

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.”

That sounds suspiciously like Acts 1:9, where Luke describes Christ’s ascension when “a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Now, if “coming with the clouds” is not literal, does that mean that “ascending in a cloud” was not literal? Which is true, or which is not true?

Furthermore, his coming will be in a “body” which can be seen. We do not know what kind of a body, as intimated by 1 John 3:2, but it will be a body which we will see, not imagine. Peter’s description of the end is quite vivid and quite specific as to what will take place.

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we

are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:10-13).

It seems quite a stretch to claim that this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. In the first place, the destruction of the city did not come “like a thief.” Christ gave instructions to the faithful so they would recognize the signs of Jerusalem’s coming destruction, so they could flee the city and be spared the atrocities that were coming.

*“Therefore when you see the **Abomination of Desolation** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains...” (Matthew 24:15-16).*

Christ goes on in the chapter giving further information, and says in verses 33-34:

“So, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

He continues his discourse, telling them that the final coming will be as in the days of Noah, and as when a thief comes, for there is no warning. (Verses 36-44).

Therefore, the destruction of Jerusalem could not be “the second coming,” for there were clear signs foretelling Jerusalem’s destruction, but there will be no sign of the second coming in judgment. In fact, Jesus said even he did not know the hour of his second coming. Matt. 24:36:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

Going back to Peter’s description of the end, when “the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up,” it makes me wonder how it is that we are still here, that the earth still exists. Furthermore, why would Jerusalem’s local destruction be likened to the worldwide destruction in Noah’s time (Matthew 24:37)? That doesn’t fit.

And, if that description was only to a local event, the destruction of Jerusalem, how is it that such a cataclysmic upheaval was given no coverage in the news media? Surely the Roman Times or the Damascus Morning News would have made some mention of it. Of course, we know they didn’t have daily newspapers or nightly news telecasts then, but they did have many writers who recorded world events. The eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D. that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum, the Gallic Wars, the Maccabean Revolt in the 2nd Century B.C., and many other events of

ancient history were covered by Josephus, Strabo, Dio Cassius, Publius Tacitus and a plethora of historians. While the Roman occupation and destruction of Jerusalem were duly noted and recorded, there is no report that even remotely resembles Peter's description of the end.

Another point to consider is gleaned from Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica where he responds to some erroneous ideas that some had concerning the resurrection.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

If we interpret Paul's words as proposed by the 70 A.D. theory, the church was raised from the dead at Jerusalem's destruction, and then all the righteous saints were caught up into the air, where they continue to this day. Does that mean there are no righteous saints on the earth today? I will admit that I am not the greatest scholar, but I just can't make sense of the theory.

(3) As stated previously in #2, the Judgment and Resurrection have already taken place, according to the 70 A.D. theory. This presents some other problems with respect to the teaching of the Word of God.

The Scriptures teach that at the Second Coming, all will be raised from the graves. John 5:28-29:

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

I don't know how else to "interpret" that, other than what it clearly says. That certainly did not take place in 70 A.D. Can even one report be cited that mentions graves being opened after hearing God's voice in 70? John's record includes the evil also being resurrected. Now, if the 70 A.D. proponents say that refers to the evil Jewish nation, they have a problem with the wrong figure. "Evil" Jerusalem was not "resurrected" from the tomb, but was destroyed! But whatever or whoever the committer of evil deeds was in John's statement was resurrected and then judged.

We could also cite Acts 24:15 and I Corinthians 15:50-54, which speak in very clear terms of the bodily resurrection.

Matthew 25:31-46 gives a clear depiction of what will take place at that time. Note verses 31-33:

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

I wasn't aware that “all the nations” were present in Jerusalem, nor that they appeared before the Throne of God and were separated. Furthermore, we are informed there will come a time when

*“at the name of Jesus **every knee will bow**, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*
(Philippians 2:10-11).

“we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, And every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:10-11).

Did that happen at Jerusalem? If not, when will this take place?

A final thought on Christ's coming in final judgment on Jerusalem is this question. If the final judgment has already taken place, then there is nothing more to be done for either the saved or the lost, for the sheep have already been separated from the goats to their eternal destiny according to Matthew 25:46.

We must readily admit that the Lord did come in judgment upon Jerusalem, but it was not the literal, second coming. He came in judgment upon many nations in the Old Testament. He threatened to come in judgment upon the church at Ephesus if it did not repent (Revelation 2:5). But to make the condemnation upon the Jewish nation turned into a worldwide judgment coming at the end of this world is an unwarranted stretch.

IS IT A SIN TO DIVORCE?

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

Is it a sin to divorce? Fortunately, we can know Jesus' will on this matter because He was asked that very question in Matthew 19:3: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” He responded with a reference to the first marriage, when God joined Adam and Eve, and said, “Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate” (verse 6).

It was obvious that Jesus taught against divorce because the Pharisees referenced cases where God had approved of it in times past (verse 7). They were looking for ways to contradict what Jesus had just said about the permanency of marriage. Our Lord then explained why God permitted divorce within the Law of Moses, but said in verses 8 and 9:

“...but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

Jesus taught one exception to the rule of divorce: adultery. If a man is unfaithful to his wife, she may put him away for his adultery without violating God’s will on the permanency of marriage. The same is true for a man with an unfaithful wife. Otherwise, any other cause for divorce is unlawful to God and every marriage after such a divorce is adulterous.

Some will say that according to Paul’s teaching (1 Corinthians 7:10-11) a person may divorce for reasons other than adultery as long as he remains single. If that is what Paul taught, he contradicted the teachings of Jesus, who plainly said, “I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 5:32). There is no way Paul would have ignored this rule, especially since he spoke by inspiration (1 Corinthians 14:37). An honest examination of First Corinthians 7 shows he was addressing situations where people had violated God’s will on divorce and were either in subsequent marriages or unable to return to their true mate. Their only option, in being right with God, was to repent of those sinful marriages by remaining unmarried or be reconciled (verse 11). (This is what Jesus meant when He said some will make themselves eunuchs to go to heaven, Matthew 19:12. Some will have to forego marriage to be pleasing to God.) But, in no sense did Paul encourage people to violate or ignore Jesus’ prohibition against divorce. He was simply addressing an aspect of divorce that Jesus did not discuss in His earthly ministry.

Marriage is by God’s design and only He can set its policies. Those who want to redefine it to include unlawful divorce, multiple spouses, or same-sex partners are not acting within the authority of God. He has always expected people to respect His will on marriage (Ezra 10). Since Jesus taught “what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6), we can know He still expects people to fulfill their marriage vows. If we have violated that rule, we must do the right thing and submit to God’s will by discontinuing the sin. To ignore His will by remaining in marriages He considers adulterous, or by refusing to be reconciled when it is possible, is to welcome His judgment. Be not deceived.

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Sean P. Cavender | Raymore, Missouri, USA

As the apostle Paul introduces many of his epistles, he takes the time to praise the congregation for their strengths. Some local congregations had more to be praised for than others did, but usually he could find some good to complement the local church to whom he was writing. The opening of the epistle to the Colossians is no different. Paul first states, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” (Colossians 1:2). It is easy for us to look over these statements about the local churches that Paul was writing to because they are not addressed to us in the 21st century. However, we can learn several important lessons concerning the local church and how it is to be conducting itself.

First of all, Paul addresses his audience and plainly identifies them as “saints and faithful brethren.” The saints and faithful brethren are the constituents of the local church! The saints of the church are not voted on sometime after they have passed from this life. They are not even people who had performed some great miracle. Saints are members of the Lord’s church who have been forgiven of their sins, cleansed by the blood of Christ (Colossians 1:14; 2:11-13). A saint is a person who has been sanctified and set apart for the purpose of glorifying God in heaven (cf. Colossians 3:2, 3). Paul also identifies the saints as “faithful brethren.” All of the blessings of joy and fellowship that are available to Christians within the context of the local church are dependent upon their faithfulness. Those who complain about lack of fellowship, love, joy, care, and concern existing within the Lord’s church may need to first consider whether they are being faithful members of the Lord’s church. The blessings we desire will only be found when we are being faithful brethren.

Paul then goes on to identify several factors in the local church that Colosse needed to be praised for. These are all good characteristics that churches need to desire.

The Foundation of the Church

The foundation of every local church must be faith in the Lord and Savior who purchased the church with His own blood, “Since we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus...” (Colossians 1:4). Faith in Jesus as the Son of God must be acknowledged by those who would be members of the Lord’s body. This was the great truth that Peter acknowledged, and Jesus promised to make as the

foundation of His church (Matthew 16:16-18). Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the church (Ephesians 2:20).

As elementary as this may seem, we must make sure that we are beginning with the proper foundation. We cannot have an improper foundation and expect to build the church of Jesus Christ. We cannot follow after the teachings of men and expect to build the church of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12-13). We cannot follow after Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Alexander Campbell, etc. Our faith must be in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The Motivation of the Church

Paul then recognizes that the church in Colosse is filled with brotherly love. He wrote, "...and of the love which ye have to all the saints," (Colossians 1:4). The driving motivation of the Lord's church needs to be brotherly love! This is what the church in Corinth lacked (cf. 1 Corinthians 13). When there is no love for our brethren it will lead to division, cliques, embitterment, and strife (cf. Galatians 5:14, 15).

Love is not going to excuse or ignore wrongdoing. However, someone else's sin is not a reason for us to abandon love. Love must be present even when we preach the truth (Ephesians 4:15). Love is what ought to motivate a church to be like Christ (Ephesians 5:2). Love and compassion will unite the body of Christ (Colossians 3:12-15).

The Goal of the Church

The one, clear and obvious goal of every local church should be to go to heaven. Paul recognized the common desire and expectation of the church, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven..." (Colossians 1:5). As Christians who are working and striving through this life, the one thing we all can help each other do is to be with the Savior and Father in heaven for all of eternity.

Far too many times we think of the hope of heaven as something that we may be able to obtain if we are only lucky. We think of it in terms of luck, rather than confidence. Hope is not luck or wishful thinking; hope is a confidence and an assurance that we can have!

Look at how Paul uses the term "hope" in other places, such as in Philippians 1:20. He spoke of the work of preaching the truth of the gospel as an "earnest expectation," "hope," and "boldness." His desire was to ultimately glorify Christ through preaching, or being faithful to the point of death.

Do you talk about hope in the same terms that Paul used? Do we speak of our "earnest expectation" to be with Christ for eternity? Do we consider ourselves to have boldness in regards to where we will make our eternal home? This is what the word "hope" means. We don't need to think of

hope as mere luck or wishful thinking; we need to think of it as something that is our expectation!

The Growth of the Church

Each local church needs to make its spiritual growth a point of emphasis. This is what Paul desired for the church at Colosse, "...and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," (Colossians 1:9). The church at Colosse was in danger of being influenced by false teachers. Paul encouraged these brethren to remain rooted in Christ, built up in the faith, and established (Colossians 2:7, 8). He also warned of the false humility of false teachers (Colossians 2:18). Paul was concerned for the well-being of this church.

The way to battle and overcome false teachers is through knowledge of the truth and the will of God! The church must make spiritual growth a priority for its own well-being. Local churches are not to be influenced by false teachers, being carried away by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). And if you want to see the spiritual immaturity of a local church, just look at how they live their lives. When we learn the truth and grow up in Christ, then we are to put off that old man of sin (Ephesians 4:21, 22). Yet, those who are spiritually immature will allow that old man of sin to linger around and have influence in their lives. Spiritual growth must be an important part of the local church. Spiritual wisdom is essential in battling false teachers and in overcoming sin.

Conclusion

Paul's view of the local church ought to be what is implemented in each and every local church. The church at Colosse serves as a prime example for us to follow. A church that is built upon Christ, established in love, expecting to receive heaven as their eternal home, and that is filled with knowledge and spiritual wisdom is a church that we ought to be in. The local church is sufficient in helping us live faithfully, while offering us encouragement, love, and opportunities for growth.

HANDLING ARIGHT THE WORD OF TRUTH: DIVISIVENESS

Tanner Campbell | Rapid City, South Dakota, USA


What I have seen among many congregations, especially the ones without men qualified to be elders, is an overall passive quality. There will probably be a couple of individuals who get frustrated over this, especially when they see a problem that needs to be solved according to scripture. This is not a new issue within the church; a quick reading of the letters to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2-3) will demonstrate that this has been a

problem since the beginnings of the church. Note, for example, Revelation 2:14, where Jesus makes known that within the church at Pergamum there was a man holding to worldly teachings, and Revelation 2:20, where, in Thyatira, there was a woman who not only held to false teachings, but “seduced” others to turn aside from the truth. Jesus told these churches that He had this against them because of their allowance, or passiveness on the battlefield of truth. These examples are there for us today as we battle the same wars. In all warfare there will be hard decisions, there will be no ability to see how a decision will affect the future, but should these facts keep us from fighting the battle?

Let us consider what the scriptures teach: According to Galatians 5:20, divisiveness is specifically listed as one of the works of the flesh. This means that it is in direct opposition to the works and fruits of the Spirit, and therefore, divisiveness is a characteristic that is hostile to the purpose and work of the church. Paul also makes this point when he spoke very sarcastically to the Corinthians: “for you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!” (2 Corinthians 11:19). Paul is making the point that the Corinthians were not at all wise to bear with fools that infiltrate the church. He told them earlier: “do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6-7) The Corinthians felt that they were wise, but Paul tells them that it is foolish to allow a fool to turn the whole congregation over to Satan. Knowing this, what is the church to do when the works of the flesh collide with the fruits of the Spirit?

Titus 3:10-11, “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” (**English Standard Version**). This verse is clear on two points: first, one who is bringing in error is to be given a chance by the brethren for them to see the truth of the scriptures and be warned about their spreading of error. Then, after the second warning, they are to be rejected according to this text, and accursed (Galatians 1:6-10).

A reminder from Peter will also be good for us all, “but false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction” 2 Peter 2:1. Peter explains that false teaching is not necessarily evident from day one, but that false teachers will “secretly” bring in teachings that will destroy those who are willing to listen. Is passiveness worth our soul? Is it worth the soul of our brethren? Paul knew the answer to these questions and



that is why he did not take a passive stand against divisive people, but told the Corinthians “I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them” (2 Corinthians 13:2). Some would count Paul as a hostile and hateful person after reading that text, and other texts like it: “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!” (Galatians 5:12). But just as the Savior overturned the tables in anger within the temple, so Paul, and others who are willing to take a stand for truth, realize the necessity to keep that which belongs to God and Christ pure from divisiveness and all other forms of the flesh. They understand that this is war. “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete” (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

The scriptures are by no means silent as to our need to respond to divisiveness, and how we are to respond to it, under the authority of Christ. Add the following scriptures to our growing list:

Romans 16:17, “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.”

2 Thessalonians 3:6, “Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.”

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, “If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

2 Timothy 3:2-5, “For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.”

2 John 1:10-11 “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.”

Again, we see the scriptures are not silent. My question to

myself and to my brethren is this, although the scriptures are not silent in this matter, will we be? In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul told Timothy to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” In the old American Standard Version, it is translated “handling aright the Word of Truth.” All in all, if we want to be approved by God, we need to rightly handle the truth found in God’s word, always making a straight cut down the line. That means that we cannot tolerate error being spread within the church, nor can we be passive when a divisive individual seeks to force their own doctrines on the church. The scriptures are clear on these things and the power of God (2 Corinthians 10:4) will be with those who follow through with them.

ONE FLESH ... TRUE INTIMACY

Genesis 2:24-25; Ecclesiastes 4:12

from the e-book, "...And They Shall Become One Flesh..."
William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:24-25)

Understanding Intimacy

While studying the relationship of Adam and Eve in chapter one of the character studies section, we discussed briefly the need for intimacy in marriage, and the ideal circumstance which they found themselves in to maintain perfect intimacy. Their complete compatibility is without question, for prior to making Eve, God determined,

*...I will make him a helper comparable to him.
(Genesis 2:18)*

We are further assured of the unity which they were made to enjoy, as Adam declared of Eve,

*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called woman, because she was taken
out of man. (Genesis 2:23)*

Adam and Eve were as "one flesh" as would be possible for any couple! Today, we are not in the exact circumstance of this couple. Today's wives were not made from a rib taken from their husbands. However, God's declaration in Genesis 2:24 stands as God's law regarding marriage and intimacy in marriage.

Consider Merriam-Webster's definition of "intimate:

1 a : INTRINSIC, ESSENTIAL

b : belonging to or characterizing one's
deepest character

2 : marked by very close association,

contact, or familiarity (intimate knowledge of the law)

3 a : marked by warm friendship developing through long association

b : suggesting informal warmth or privacy (intimate clubs)

4 : of a very personal or private nature.

(**Merriam-Webster's Deluxe Dictionary**, Tenth Collegiate Edition, p. 966)

In our first chapter, we had identified five general areas in life which intimacy must be developed between husband and wife. They are: social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical. Let us consider each of these in light of the Scriptures.

A Socializing Couple

Socialization is important to establish and maintain good marriages. There are two levels of social interaction which ought to be considered; first between husband and wife, and then second, between the couple and others.

The LORD rebuked the men of Judah for having dealt with their wives "treacherously" (Malachi 2:14-16). The eventual end of the mistreatment of their wives would be divorce, but problems arose long before a divorce came into view. Where did the problems begin? Not sharing with one another, acting covertly, using deceit, etc. (all part of Strong's definition of the Hebrew word *bagad* - treacherously). A breakdown of the social fabric of the relationship took place. A successful marriage requires openness, togetherness, and mutual admiration.

Spousal interaction in public settings is just as important as in private. In the midst of discussing the virtuous woman, the statement is made:

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. (Proverbs 31:22)

The inference is that her reputation has affected him for good (cf. Proverbs 12:4; Ruth 3:11). She is not a social shadow; her husband understands the great value she is (Proverbs 31:10, 28; 18:22).

Emotional Equilibrium

Though women are commonly portrayed as the "emotional" gender, emotion is common to all. Perhaps it can rightly be said that women tend to express emotion more, or perhaps better stated, differently than men do.

Emotion is an essential component in any relationship; the appropriate attention to emotion is crucial for the success of a marriage. At the very base of the marital relationship is love. Eve was told

...your desire shall be for your husband... (Genesis 3:16)

Men are commanded to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25, 28-29, 33; Colossians 3:19). Building upon a mutual love for one another provides the appropriate setting in which other emotions are shared.

As inferred above, men often hold their emotions. Why? I suspect two reasons:

- God designed man to be more rational than emotional (Genesis 3:1, 6; 1 Timothy 2:14)
- Society characterizes emotion in men as weakness.

The marriage relationship affords man an opportunity to share his emotions. A man both cheats himself and his wife if he will not share his inner most feelings with her.

The reverse of this (ie. the man being attentive to his wife's emotions) is actually commanded in Scripture. Paul stated that the married man is concerned with

...how he may please his wife...
(1 Corinthians 7:33)

This demands attention to her feelings and inner thoughts. In fact, Peter revealed that tending to his wife's emotional needs is required, lest we be guilty before God (1 Peter 3:7; cf. Isaiah 59:1-2).

Spiritual Similitude

At our very essence, we are spiritual beings. The Scriptures describe our bodies as simply a tent, an earthly house, that eventually will be put off (2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 2 Peter 1:13-14). It is therefore important for couples to have a focus, not just for this life, but for eternity.

The threefold cord of Ecclesiastes 4:12 has been mentioned in previous chapters. We need to have God at the core of our marriages. Too often, folks are joined "before God and these witnesses," and yet fail to have any room for God in their relationship. When Lemuel's mother gave him instructions about finding a virtuous wife, she pointed out,

Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
(Proverbs 31:30)

Though all are spiritually accountable as individuals, it is understood that we share a responsibility for one another in the faith (Galatians 6:1-2). If we are to help our brethren spiritually, then how much more are we bound to help our spouse, with whom we are "*one flesh*"? Husbands are to imitate Christ, who endeavoured to "*sanctify and cleanse*" His bride, the church, so that,

...she should be holy and without blemish...
(Ephesians 5:25-26)

Men are expected to nourish and cherish their wives,
...just as the Lord does the church...
(Ephesians 5:29)

This demands that men take spiritual leadership in the marriage, and lead their family in spiritual service before God.

Sadly, some men speak to or about their wives as though she were a child. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, we read:

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Can you imagine the Father speaking to or about the Son in a belittling fashion? Do we ever see Jesus speaking to or about His followers disparagingly? Neither should a man speak to or about his wife so as to minimize or diminish her. She is "*the glory of man*" (1 Corinthians 11:7). Woman was provided for man as "*an helper - as his counterpart*" (Genesis 2:20, YLT). She was given as "*a helper comparable to him*" (NKJV); not as a servant nor as a child, but as his wife.

Likewise, women need to speak with and about their husbands with respect, giving honour to them (Ephesians 5:33). It was in such a manner that Sarah acted toward Abraham (1 Peter 3:6), and that the virtuous wife is characterized (Proverbs 31:11-12, 23, 28). Mutual respect is indispensable in a successful marriage, and certainly so with regard to our conversation.

Physical Partnership

When the word "intimacy" is heard, most people tend to think about the physical aspect of a marriage. Certainly, there is a level of intimacy, physical in nature, which God has reserved for spouses to experience. However, it must be understood that for physical intimacy in a marriage to be as fulfilling as God intends it to be, diligent attention must be given to the items already discussed. Physical intimacy does not produce a good marriage; a good marriage produces physical intimacy.

The last thing mentioned about Adam and Eve, prior to the episode with the serpent, is that

...they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:25)

Certainly this speaks of their innocence, still being without sin; but does it also say something about the comfort which

a married couple ought to have with one another physically?

The Scriptures speak quite plainly when it comes to physical intimacy in marriage. Solomon told his son,

Drink water from your own cistern... Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. (Proverbs 5:15, 18-19)

The Song of Solomon is quite descriptive about the physical intimacy between the Shulamite woman and the beloved (Song of Solomon 5:10-16; 7:1-6). We see in them the same comfort which Genesis 2:25 describes in Adam and Eve - the physical intimacy which God intends to be fulfilled in the marriage relationship.

Paul commands that husband and wife not deprive one another, lest Satan gain an advantage in the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-4). When husband and wife do not render the affection due, a door is opened for temptation and sin.

MUSIC IN WORSHIP

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

What is almost invariably the first thing a visitor notices who has never been in a worship assembly of a church of Christ before? "Where's your piano?" "Are you folks too poor to buy some musical instruments?" No, we choose not to use any mechanical instrument of music. Why?

The popular attitude is "It makes no difference how we worship; after all, we all worship the same God." So, we inquire, is the use of instrumental music in worship acceptable to God?

What Difference Does It Make?

Does it make any difference how we worship God? Cain and Abel both offered sacrifices to God, but the Lord accepted Abel's worship but rejected Cain's (Genesis 4:3-5). Why? Because Abel offered a sacrifice by faith, but Cain didn't (Hebrews 11:4). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). So, Abel offered what God required, but Cain didn't. Did it make any difference how they worshiped?

Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron the High Priest and priests themselves, offered incense lit by "strange fire," fire not taken from the altar of burnt offerings (Leviticus 10:1-3; cf. 16:12-13). Rather than accepting their worship, the Lord consumed them with fire. Did it make any difference how they worshiped?

King Uzziah of the tribe of Judah went into the Temple to offer incense, and God struck him with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:3-4, 16-21). The Lord had specified that the priests of the tribe of Levi were to offer the incense (Exodus 30:7). He hadn't said anything about a priest from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14). Did it make any difference how they worshiped?

The Lord rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for vain worship because they taught as doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:7-9). Did it make any difference how they worshiped?

We live under the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13). Acceptable worship, true (real) worship, is "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). "In spirit" is with the right attitudes (cf. Romans 12:11); "in truth" is in harmony with truth, the Word of God (John 17:17).

What kind of music has God authorized in New Testament worship? Seven New Testament passages tell us the kind of music the Lord wants us to use in worship in this age (Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). All seven specify that God wants us to sing.

Yes, it does make a difference how we worship God. We must worship both in spirit and truth. To worship in truth the only kind of music we may use is singing. The only music in worship God will accept in this age is singing.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16).

An Examination of Arguments in Favor of Instrumental Music in Worship

When I preached in Northern New York, two young soldiers began attending with us, one from a Pentecostal background. They wanted to know why we didn't use instruments of music in our song service. I showed them the New Testament passages that authorize singing in worship and explained that no passages authorize playing on instruments. The Lord revealed the kind of music He wants in worship - singing. That leaves out playing instruments, since it's not authorized by the Lord.

They later returned confident they had the needed authority. The Psalms command us to play all kinds of instruments (e.g., Psalm 150). I explained that the Psalms are part of the Old Testament (cf. John 10:34; Psalm 82:6 and John 15:25; Psalm 35:19). The Old Testament was removed as law by

the death of Christ on the cross (Colossians 2:13-14), and we cannot appeal to it for authority (Galatians 5:1-4). In fact, David, who wrote many of the Psalms (2 Samuel 23:1-2), had more than eight wives and at least ten concubines, i.e., slave wives (1 Samuel 18:27; 25:42-43; 2 Samuel 3:2-5; 5:13; 15:16; 1 Kings 1:1-6). Shall we follow his example of polygamy? David also offered animal sacrifices to God (Psalm 51:19). We cannot take a running leap over the cross, land in the sheepfold with David, and play a harp in worship. He lived under the Old Testament, but we live under the New (Hebrews 8:6-13). Under the Old Testament the Lord commanded the use of instrumental music in worship (2 Chronicles 29:25), but the New Testament nowhere authorizes it.

Two young military couples in Northern New York argued that instrumental music is acceptable in worship because the New Testament doesn't forbid it. I asked them to find the passage that forbids polygamy, but they couldn't, because it's not in the Bible. Is polygamy therefore pleasing to God? No, because the Lord only authorizes a man to have one wife and a woman to have one husband (Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:2). And the only kind of music the New Testament authorizes for worship is singing (Colossians 3:16). We must have authority from Christ for all we do (Colossians 3:17).

So far as is recorded, instrumental music was first introduced among brethren in America in Midway, Kentucky in 1860 because the singing was so bad some decided they needed a melodeon as an aid to their singing (**Search**. 1:311-12). Are instruments of music just aids to singing, like song books and pitch pipes? When we use song books, or the leader gets the pitch with a pitch pipe, we do nothing in addition to singing. But instrumental music is another kind of music, which the Lord has not authorized (2 John 9).

But, preacher, don't you know there are harps in heaven (Revelation 5:8; 14:2; 15:2)? Well, if those harps were literal, and they're not, that wouldn't authorize instrumental music in worship on earth in the New Testament age. But if Revelation authorizes harps in worship, it also authorizes burning incense in worship (Revelation 5:8). Yes, I know the incense is symbolic of prayer, but the harps are symbolic of praise, just as the great, red dragon symbolizes Satan (Revelation 12:3,9).

Some go to the Greek and argue that singing psalms (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16) requires an instrument, since the root meaning of "psalmos" (Greek word for "psalm") originally meant "playing' a stringed instrument" (TDNT.8:491).

However, words change their usage over the years, and in

the New Testament the word just “means a Christian song in general” (TDNT. 8:499). We can read the Psalms found in the Old Testament (cf. Luke 24:44). Does that require an instrument? We’re specifically commanded to speak to each other in psalms (Ephesians 5:19). Does speaking require a musical instrument?

Some make a parallel argument on the Greek word “*psallo*,” translated “sing” (Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; James 5:13) and “making melody” (Ephesians 5:19). In ancient classical Greek it meant “to play a stringed instrument” (TDNT. 8:490), but by the time the New Testament was written it meant “to sing praises” (Mounce. 1313). The apostle Paul specified we are to make melody (“*psallo*”) in our hearts (Ephesians 5:19), demonstrating he uses the term figuratively to direct that our praise must come from the heart. No standard English translation of the New Testament includes the idea of plucking on a stringed instrument in the verses where “*psallo*” occurs.

We cannot walk by faith and use instrumental music in worship (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 10:17), we cannot worship in truth and accompany our singing with an instrument (John 4:24; 17:17; Matthew 15:9), we cannot have the unity of the Spirit by playing an instrument (Ephesians 4:1-6), and we cannot act by the authority of Christ with the use of instrumental music in worship (Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9). No, instrumental music in worship is not acceptable to God.

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INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

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Author

The book bears the name of its author (1:1-5), who, as Jeremiah and Zechariah, was a priest as well as a prophet (1:3). The name “Ezekiel” means “God strengthens.” Ezekiel’s claims to inspiration are striking. Forty-six times he asserts, “the word of the Lord came to me.” One hundred twenty-two times he introduces a statement with “thus says the Lord God” (cf. Ezekiel 1:3; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Date

Ezekiel is one of the most precisely dated of the prophetic books. He was called to be a prophet at the age of thirty

(1:1) in the fifth year of his captivity in Chaldea (1:2), i.e., 592 B.C. His last dated prophecy came in the twenty-seventh year of his captivity (29:17), i.e., 570 B.C. Thus, Ezekiel prophesied for at least twenty-two years.

Life of Ezekiel

The prophet was among the captives taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar with King Jehoiachin of Judah in 597 B.C. (1:1). He was placed by the River Chebar (probably a large irrigation canal from the Euphrates) at Tel Abib (1:3; 3:15) not far from the great Chaldean capital, Babylon. He was permitted to have his own home (3:24; 8:1). Ezekiel was happily married to a woman he loved (24:16-18). On the very day Nebuchadnezzar began to besiege Jerusalem (24:1-2), the Lord told Ezekiel that his wife would die suddenly and that he was not to mourn for her (24:16-17). She died the very next day (24:18), and Ezekiel did as the Lord commanded (24:18). This was a sign of Jerusalem's impending destruction and how the people were to react (24:19-24).

It is interesting that the Lord characteristically addresses Ezekiel as "son of man" (cf. 3:17). Ninety-three of the one hundred seven Old Testament occurrences of this phrase are in Ezekiel. This was the characteristic manner in which Jesus referred to Himself, doing so in eighty passages. This phrase designates man with his human weakness in contrast with almighty God.

Role of Ezekiel

Three great Old Testament prophets were contemporaries with differing roles: Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. Jeremiah, the eldest of the three, was the prophet to the Jews in the land of Palestine. Daniel was the prophet in the court of Gentile kings and prophesied to mighty rulers of empires about world rule. Ezekiel was the prophet to the Jews in exile (3:4-5). He lived among the exiles as one of them (3:15). His role was to preserve a faithful remnant to God from among the Dispersion (33:10-11).

Ezekiel was "a watchman for the house of Israel" (3:16-21; 33:1-11). As such, he is a great example to preachers and elders today (cf. Acts 20:28-31). His role was to warn of impending danger. Despite two deportations, false prophets were still proclaiming false peace (13:1-3,10-11). He was not responsible for whether or not the people would heed the alarm (3:11). In fact, Ezekiel was warned that "Israel will not listen to you" (3:7), for they were "a rebellious house" (3:9). But he was to be just as stubborn in proclaiming truth as they were in opposing it (3:8-9). They would know that a prophet had been among them (2:5; 33:33). Indeed, the Jews liked to hear Ezekiel speak, but they would not obey his admonitions (33:30-31). God told Ezekiel

why: "But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted" (3:7).

Message of Ezekiel

The purpose of the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel was to prove to Israel and to the nations that He is the Lord God. Sixty-three times either "you shall know that I am the Lord" or "they shall know that I am the Lord" occurs in Ezekiel (cf. Harkrider, 5-6).

No biblical writer is clearer than Ezekiel in proclaiming individual responsibility. The Jews in exile claimed God was holding them accountable for what their fathers had done (18:2). Chapters eighteen and thirty-three are thorough refutations of this fallacy and marvelous defenses of the justice of God (33:12-20).

Chapter eighteen is perhaps the single most devastating blow to the whole system of Calvinism, which by implication denies individual responsibility, in the entire Bible. The message of Ezekiel in summary is: "The soul who sins shall die" (18:20). Each person is individually accountable to God for his own action. The Jews cannot rely on the temple or descent from Abraham. Neither Adam's guilt nor Christ's righteousness is imputed to (set down to the account of) others. Each person is individually accountable for his own life.

Method

Ezekiel is one of three Old Testament books, along with Daniel and Zechariah, that fits the category of "apocalyptic" literature. Revelation in the New Testament is also apocalyptic. This means that much of Ezekiel consists of symbols, allegories, and visions (cf. 1:1; 4:1-3; 17:2; 20:49). In fact, the book of Ezekiel contains more symbolic acts, parables, and allegories than any other Old Testament prophetic book (cf. 20:49). A number of Ezekiel's visions, such as his description of God on His throne (1:4-28) and the new Israel (chapters 40-48), have their counterparts in the book of Revelation.

Division

The book of Ezekiel is naturally divided into two parts - chapters 1-32 and chapters 33-48, with the fall of the city of Jerusalem marking the division (586 B.C.). At the outset of each division Ezekiel is commissioned to be a prophet (3:16-21; 33:1-9). Before Jerusalem's fall, Ezekiel warned a people with false confidence of impending destruction (cf. 5:5-17). After the destruction of the city, he comforted a broken people with promises of restoration (cf. chapter 37).

Outline

- I. The Call & Commission of Ezekiel - 1:1 - 3:21
- II. The Sin of Judah & Its Punishment - 3:22 - 24:27
 - A. The Doom of Jerusalem - 3:22 - 7:27
 - B. The Temple Abandoned By God - 8:1 -11:25
 - C. The Leaders Condemned - 12:1 - 15:8
 - D. God's Chosen People Condemned - 16:1 - 19:14
 - E. The Last Full Measure - 20:1 - 24:27
- III. Judgment Upon Gentile Nations - 25:1 - 32:32
 - A. The Border Nations - chapter 25
 - B. Tyre & Sidon - chapters 26 - 28
 - C. Egypt - chapters 29 - 32
- IV. Restoration & Salvation of Israel - chapters 33-48
 - A. Hope of Restoration - 33:1 - 39:29
 - B. The New Israel - 40:1- 48:35



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