

NOVEMBER 19

Ezekiel 39-40:27

Ezekiel 39

Vs. 1-6 It seems that the main action will take place in the mountains toward the Dead Sea and east of the Dead Sea.

Vs. 7-8 During the Tribulation, even though the power of the antichrist will grow and Christians and Jews will be persecuted, God will be active and will let people know that He is at work.

Vs. 9-16 This will be the cleanup of this demolished army. The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 1302, says that the references to locations are all around the Dead Sea. The burial place will actually be in modern-day Jordan. This is the same mountainous region where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Objection is usually taken to the mention of bows and arrows, etc., but after a couple years of devastation as described in Revelation, it will be interesting to see how functional anything is. As mentioned yesterday, Einstein was the one to say that the third world war would be fought with atomic weapons and that the fourth world war would be fought with clubs. God didn't need atomic weapons to destroy Egypt in Exodus, and He doesn't need them today either.

Vs. 17-20 Apparently all of nature will aid in the cleanup.

Vs. 21-29 This event will be known throughout the world, and I think it will give people a reason not to follow the antichrist. It will give many a reason to aid those who follow Christ. The understanding of the world, that God is protecting His own, will be what sets up the separation of the sheep and the goats at the coming of Christ. Most people will rise up in hatred toward God and anyone who names the name of Christ, but there will be many who will see "the handwriting on the wall" and will aid believing Israel and anyone who is a follower of Jesus.

Ezekiel 40

In preparing Israel for the Millennial Kingdom, God will judge Israel's enemies, and Israel as a nation will come to Christ. In these remaining chapters, God shows Ezekiel and Israel where the focal point of the planet will be during that time. It won't just be Jerusalem, but it will be the place where there is healing and where the glory of God resides, the Millennial Temple.

Vs. 1-4 According to the BKC-OT, p.1304, this day may have been the Day of Atonement, October 22, 573 B.C. If Ezekiel had been 30 when he was first called as a prophet, he would now be 55. Since the last time notation in Ezekiel 33:21, thirteen years have passed.

Now, one of the things to do here as you read is either to do a drawing, or look at the drawing of the Millennial Temple at the end of this document. ("The Millennial Temple," Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 1303.)

You'll also find a drawing of the entry gates.

V. 4 The mention to *look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart* sounds like verses from Isaiah 6:10 and Matthew 13:15.

Vs. 5-16 A cubit was normally about 18 inches, or the distance from the elbow to the longest finger. God used a special cubit here which was a cubit plus a handbreadth, so altogether, the stick was about 10.5 feet long. That's 6 inches above a basketball rim. This entire description is just walking through the east gate. Through the east gate you would walk across the outer court to the east gate of the inner court. Entering the inner court, you would walk straight to the altar, and beyond that, straight into the entrance of the temple, then into the Holy Place and then into the Most Holy Place. So then, the throne of God would face east and basically look through the

two east gates and to the Mount of Olives. It will be from the Mount of Olives that the Messiah will return to the city. So it is significant that the description begins here.

Vs. 17-19 This is a basic description of the outer court.

Vs. 20-23 Then they went from the east gate to the north gate.

Vs. 24-28 Then they went from the north gate, around the inner court, to the south gate.

James 2:18-3:18

I'm sure someone has written a book on this, but you wonder what it was like for James to grow up with Jesus as an older brother. Not only was Jesus an older brother, but He was also the firstborn. After Joseph died, Jesus would have had leadership responsibility with his brothers. Up to Jesus' 29th year, He was employed full-time as a carpenter and builder, helping make ends meet in the family. The point I'm getting to is that when Jesus was 29, he didn't just suddenly invent stories to use in His ministry. He probably had all the illustrations He used in ministry before His ministry. That means Jesus probably would have used these observations and stories with His brothers and sisters.

There is something about James' teaching that sounds like he grew up with someone who used a lot of illustrations. Not only that, some of what James says is very reflective of what Jesus said, and we know that months before Jesus' death, his brothers were still unbelieving. That means they didn't follow with Him as disciples and hear Him teach. But maybe they did hear Him teach for years of their lives as Jesus filled in for Joseph, dealing with family matters, taking care of disputes or just shooting the breeze with His brothers.

James 2:18-26

V. 18 The problem here is not how a person is saved (faith or works) but how true faith is seen. I would say this is a problem that every group faces, in that the understanding of some people is that faith can be private and hidden. Jesus didn't believe that. Jesus told His disciples on several occasions that no one lights a lamp and then puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but rather on a lampstand that all who enter may see the light. James himself might remember an occasion where he and his brothers went with Mary to seize Jesus. Jesus was surrounded by a crowd sitting around Him as He taught, so they couldn't get to Him. No sneak attack was possible. When Jesus was told His mother and brothers wanted to speak to Him, do you remember what Jesus said? After saying that His disciples were His mother and brothers, He said, *My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.* (Luke 8:21) Jesus would have agreed that faith without "doing" was dead.

V. 19 What a powerful verse and truth.

Vs. 20-25 These are great illustrations from the Bible.

Abraham's saving faith was shown in all he did.

Rahab believed and showed this by risking her life to hide the spies. Oddly enough, both Jesus and James were descendants of Rahab. This might have been a family story.

V. 26 There is no contradiction between Paul and James. Paul said that elders and deacons were shown to be faithful and qualified by their actions. Deacons were to be tested first.

Especially in times of stress and persecution, it is easy to hide in the quiet shell of a hidden faith. Faith bears fruit; it is active and bears witness by word and deed. Even Paul had to tell Timothy to get active in spite of his fear.

James 3

This is a very famous section in James. Just so you see what the contrast to a wild tongue is, look now at 3:13-18. It is easy to preach and talk, but what qualifies you to be a teacher is in vs. 13

and 17. What makes you one of those bad preachers is in vs. 14, 15 and 16. I think the need to be a known and vocal teacher in the church was the root problem behind this section. Paul also addressed the church's fascination with being the "mouth," when he taught about gifts in 1 Corinthians 14.

Also, in the synagogue there was a position of a visiting, informal, untrained teacher. Jesus as a "common man" taught in His local synagogue and in many other synagogues. Paul taught in synagogues all the time. Now in the church, that role was broadened and sought after. Everyone wanted to be a teacher, but as vs. 14, 15 and 16 show, the desire behind that ambition was to be known and acknowledged by others, not to feed the flock.

The men who were truly qualified were men of faith, and their faith showed itself in service and mercy, as in v. 17. You can imagine too, if the church and the believers were under stress, it was hard for some to be humble and submit themselves to leaders who told them what James was telling them. There are always people who want to be heard and rail against others.

Notice all the illustrations James used here. Also, notice v. 12.

Particularly if the church and the believers were in stress, they needed to watch their mouths. Spiritual maturity is seen in what we are when we are afraid and shaken. Most husbands and wives are civil with each other, until something goes bad, and the stress of the situation remains or increases. Good times do not show maturity. Hard times show what is in the heart. I think what occasioned this section on the tongue wasn't just a general situation, but the need under pressure for everyone to allow the Spirit to work a deeper control and Christ-likeness in them.

Vs. 1-2 These verses set up the context of the following discussion on the tongue.

Vs. 3-12 The tongue and the challenge of controlling it. Jesus used the illustration a lot. I'll bet James heard this growing up. *You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?* (Matt. 7:16) Interestingly, Jesus was talking about false teachers. I think that further helps define the context of James' teaching here regarding the tongue.

Vs. 13-18 The heart is the real issue behind the tongue.

Psalm 118:1-18

This is another one of those psalms that confirms that if you want the reality of being able to declare the faithfulness of the Lord and to testify to His *steadfast love*, you have to pay the dues. Look at what the psalmist endured. Look at what he learned as he waited on the Lord. That is all in direct proportion to the depth of his distress.

We only have part one of Psalm 118 today, but tomorrow we'll see two verses used to refer to the Lord in the New Testament. That means that it is good to read this portion today with the idea that what David is expressing might also have a prophetic connection to what Jesus felt or experienced.

Vs. 1-4 This is the declaration of praise because of God's *steadfast love*.

Vs. 5-7 We know that David faced enemies, but when you look at Jesus' ministry, He was constantly surrounded by aggressive enemies. In Luke 22:28, just before He died, Jesus said this to the disciples, *You are those who have stayed with me in my trials*. The word "trials" might sum up His entire ministry. (Verse 6 is found in Hebrews 13:6.)

Vs. 8-9 This is something all of us have to learn. God supplies people to help; but our true help, trust, and hope has to be in the Lord.

Vs. 10-13 David, the anointed king, was pursued and afflicted. So was Jesus.

Vs. 14-16 It is interesting that in this psalm tomorrow it will talk about Jesus, who sat down at the right hand of God.

Vs. 17-18 And in all of the unfairness, the writer (probably David) noticed that he was personally being disciplined in what he was going through. I think of the close call that David had in almost killing Nabal. God rescued David through Abigail and showed David what was in his heart. David knew that God was also teaching him through those tough times to be wise, show mercy, bridle his tongue and control his moods. In Psalm 119 we'll see how David brought his heart under control in those stressful, distressing times he was living through.

Proverbs 28:2

This is a very interesting thought, especially in any election year. What is interesting is that it is based on the hearts of the people, but we always yell at the elected leaders. It seems that if we understood the Word and our world and the Lord and the harvest, we'd just shut up and do our work, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. But faith in "word only" has a way of wagging its tongue at the situations of life, rather than doing the work of faith and mercy in the harvest.