

project 4:4

one year one bible one church one lord

Signs and Visions from Ezekiel Lesson 34

August 22, 2010

PV Pleasant Valley Church of Christ

Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ “A body of literary works expressing the religious thought of the times in cryptic symbols and word pictures projecting the ultimate victory of God and His purpose.”



Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ Apocalyptic is from a compound Greek term:
 - ▶ “apo”—along side of
 - ▶ “kaleo”—to call
- ▶ The literal meaning is to “call along side of”, carrying the idea of placing one thing to the side of another, so that the first might be better understood.



Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ The following books in the Bible make heavy use of apocalyptic writing:
 - ▶ Daniel
 - ▶ Ezekiel
 - ▶ Revelation
- ▶ There are a number of the books of the Apocrypha and the pseudographic writings of the inter-testamental period which are largely apocalyptic in nature.



Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ This literary form uses figurative language, cryptic symbols, and word pictures.
- ▶ Figurative language is an appeal to the familiar, i.e., things, events, colors, etc. to portray situations, persons, actions, etc. under consideration.
- ▶ Making these “comparisons” should accomplish two purposes:
 - ▶ It would make clearer the events under consideration to those who were supposed to understand them.
 - ▶ At the same time it would “hide” these events from those who were not to know them.



Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ “It acts as a veil to shroud truth before the grossly carnal who have no sympathy with truth as well as provoking the interested to further inquiry.”
- ▶ During the exile, secrecy was indispensable. Judah’s captors allowed no freedom of speech, and were paranoid from many of the prophecies of God’s messengers.
- ▶ A symbol is “that which suggests something else by reason of relationship or association...a visible sign of something invisible.”



Apocalyptic Symbols

- ▶ Apocalyptic symbols are something else!!!
- ▶ “When we pass from prophetic to apocalyptic we seem to rise off the earth into a rarefied atmosphere. All is remote and abstract, and we feel that we are moving, not among realities but among ghosts and symbols.....There is no solid object which the mind can lay hold of, no idea which has any apparent relation to the facts of life. We are transported into a world which never existed and which could not possibly exist.”



Apocalyptic Symbols

- ▶ Due to this, ordinary rules of interpretation cannot be applied.
- ▶ Usually the words of a passage must be understood in their plain and natural sense, unless there is some reason to take them otherwise.
- ▶ In apocalyptic writings, the opposite is true: these symbols are to be taken figuratively unless there is overwhelming reasoning to regard them as literal.



Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ Characteristic of apocalyptic writers was a developed, elaborate system of cryptic symbols and figures for the expression of spiritual ideas. Certain conventions were followed. These writers faced the task of seeing the invisible and expressing the inexpressible in the context of a society which did not allow them plainness of speech. Hence, they introduced their message through composite creatures, shapes from the sea and desert and abyss, complete with magical trees and waters and names and numbers, often providing no machinery for guidance as to what they precisely signify.



Apocalyptic Literature

- ▶ What is being expressed in Ezekiel and Daniel (as well as some of the other “minor prophets”) is often not actual scenes of judgment, but rather principles of judgment. At other times, in these symbols, actual scenes of judgment do occur. Only subsequent history lets us know which are which.



Important To Remember

- ▶ These were messages given to people who were in extreme difficulties and who in fact saw no solution to their situation within the framework of human endeavor. They were always a minority group striving to serve God in hard times. Previous to these time, it seems that the prevailing view that “God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous” worked, but now in their distress that view no longer sufficed.



PROJECT 4:4

- ▶ Apocalyptic messages never flourished when life was easy and straight forward, but they made life livable for men under intolerable conditions. It is a veiled way of saying:
 - ▶ “All this I have seen and applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun wherein a man has exercised authority over another man to his hurt although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly. But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God.”

Eccl. 8: 9 - 13



Timeline

Date	Event
640 – 609	The reign of good king Josiah
627-586	The ministry of Jeremiah
612	Nineveh falls to Babylon
609	Jehoahaz's reign
609-598	Jehoiakim's reign
605	Babylonian conquest begins. Daniel is exiled
597	Ezekiel exiled to Babylon (23 years)
597	Jehoiachin's reign
597 – 587	Zedekiah is puppet "ruler" in Jerusalem
586	THE FALL OF JERUSALEM



About Ezekiel

- ▶ Born in 622 – 621 B.C.
- ▶ From a priestly family
- ▶ Taken into exile in 597 B.C.
- ▶ Began his prophetic messages in 591 B. C.
- ▶ Wife dies in exile, as part of God's way of showing His work in this period of their history.



Divisions of the Book

- ▶ Ezekiel's call to be a prophet (1-3)
- ▶ Coming destruction of Jerusalem (4-24)
- ▶ Judgment on surrounding nations (25-32)
- ▶ Prophecies of the return to Jerusalem (33-48)



Ezekiel's Mission

- ▶ Save the “remnant” from complete apostasy (good figs and bad figs)
- ▶ Correct false hopes of a quick return to Jerusalem
- ▶ Comfort the captives by assuring them that they will be allowed eventually to go home
- ▶ Emphasize personal accountability



Ezekiel's Message

- ▶ Judgment is inevitable
- ▶ God reigns!
- ▶ Good will triumph.



Application for Us!!

- ▶ What does Ezekiel say about personal responsibility and how should we deal with this?
- ▶ What do you see about God's wrath that most troubles you?
- ▶ What blessings can come from "captivity"?

