

Week 36

September 3 - September 9

2 Kings 25:27-30; 1 Chronicles 3:17-24; 8:29-9:1a; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4:5; Jeremiah 52:31-34; Ezekiel 29:17-30:19; 40-48; Daniel 4-9;

After Jesus healed the paralytic Luke noted that, "Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, "We have seen amazing things today!" (5:26). I am impacted that way when I consider the way God worked through His prophets and some of the tasks and miracles that were performed. The section this week focuses on visions, prophecies and interpretations, and not just seeing the display of the visions but the fulfillment of the visions.

September 3rd

1 Chronicles 8:29-9:1a; Ezekiel 40:1-37; Daniel 4. "Sincere God Sightings"

'Nezzar had a dream that terrified him. None of his "professionals" could interpret it for him. Then Daniel showed up. Daniel knew he could interpret the dream that no one else could. Was he proud? No. In fact, Daniel's reaction to the dream was that he was greatly astonished and perplexed for quite awhile and his thoughts terrified him (4:19). Although this was the ruler responsible for the captivity and destruction of his people Daniel had genuine compassion for him. Daniel had obviously forgiven the king and was now deeply concerned about his physical and spiritual welfare.

What did Daniel believe about the validity of the dream's interpretation? Did Daniel doubt the truthfulness of the interpretation? He was "terrified" because he knew its fulfillment was coming. The visions these prophets experienced were very real. They knew fulfillment was a guarantee which made it all the more powerful. Daniel describes his reaction during one vision; "My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. When I heard him speak, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground" (10:8).

September 4th

Ezekiel 40:38-43:27. "Always Fulfilled"

The visions God provided for His prophets varied in some degree as to their figurative or literal fulfillments, but their fulfillment itself was never in question. Ezekiel had a vision of the Temple that contained incredible detail. The only question that arises has to do with the time of its complete fulfillment. Was it the Temple Zerubbabel should have built or a Temple to be built during the millennial reign of Christ? However, there is also a symbolic possibility referring to the worship and reign of God (described as perfect honor and absolute holiness—43:9-12).

How much faith do you have in the fulfillment of future events? In hindsight we can observe the perfect fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, but to look ahead can we believe every other prophecy will be perfectly fulfilled? Prayerfully you answer a resounding Yes. Rom. 15:4, "the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled." Rev. 10:7, "God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled." Rev. 17:17, "the words of God will be fulfilled."

September 5th

Ezekiel 44-46. "Dirty Faces"

Ezekiel's vision reminds him of who is to be allowed in the Temple and how they must treat the privilege. Ezekiel was being reminded of the seriousness of entering into God's Temple. He was made aware of the rules of admission, conduct and dress.

I appreciate reading Ezekiel's response to seeing God's glory fill the Temple. It says he fell to the ground with his face in the dirt (44:4). Ezekiel knew the magnitude of what he witnessed, even in a vision. He also knew the significance of God laying down the rules. God did not want His people to forget who was allowed in His Temple and how they were to handle entering into His presence. Those who were allowed into God's presence were only those who had been circumcised in heart and flesh, in other words, only those who had entirely committed their life to Him (44:9). The Apostle Paul tells us that as believers our bodies are the Temple of God where His Spirit lives (1 Cor. 3 & 6). Have you come to take that for granted or does the thought of that make you fall to the ground with your face in the dirt?

September 6th

2 Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34; Ezekiel 29:17-30:19; 47:1-48:35. "Fishing the Dead Sea"

With the exception of a rare torrential rain, the Mojave River is always dry. Seeing a fisherman reel in a fish on the bank of that river would be just as amazing as seeing one caught on the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea level has many salt pillars at its south end. The Sea is 5-6 times saltier than our ocean, nearly 30% salt. In other words, if you let a cup of water evaporate, eventually almost 1/3 of it would still be full of just salty mineral. It's a fun body of water to float in. You start floating straight up and down before you get to your waist. The downside is that for health reasons you can't stay in it longer than about 15 minutes. Needless to say, there are no fish in it. So, to hear that one day fishermen will stand along its bank catching fish (47:10), well, that describes a miraculous transformation.

Is God in the business of miraculous transformations? Yes, and every one of us are examples of it.

September 7th

Daniel 5, 7-8. "Oh, To Be a Prophet"

King Belshazzar offered to reward Daniel greatly with purple robes of honor, gold chains and a promotion to the third highest in the kingdom just for interpreting the writing on the wall (5:16). Daniel's reputation preceded him. People knew he could do it. He could have opened a little shop called "Divine Daniel's" and have made quite the living interpreting people's dreams. Instead we read that Daniel told the king to "Keep your gifts."

Daniel was God's instrument to the people of his day. God gave Daniel visions explaining the future. Before you conclude, "Oh, that sounds great being a prophet!" let me remind you of some of Daniel's feelings from his visions in chapters seven and eight: "I, Daniel, was troubled by all I had seen, and my visions terrified me" (7:15). "I was terrified by my thoughts and my face was pale with fear" (7:28). "I became so terrified that I fell to the ground" (8:17). "Then I was overcome and lay sick for several days... I was greatly troubled by the vision" (8:27). Take God's words and work seriously.

September 8th

1 Chronicles 3:17-19a; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1; Daniel 6, 9. "Praying Powerfully"

People who knew Daniel knew that he was a man who prayed fervently. He prayed three times each day and regularly gave thanks to God. We are not let in on the details of what exactly he prayed for and about each time, that is with the exception of one instance in chapter nine.

The situation on Daniel's mind in chapter nine was the soon conclusion of the Israelites 70-year captivity. Because of the prophetic words recorded by the prophet Jeremiah, Daniel knew his people would soon be returning home. And what did it prompt Daniel to do? "I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and fasting. I wore sackcloth and sprinkled myself with ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed..." Within the next five paragraphs I counted over two dozen times Daniel uses the word "we," "us" or "our." Daniel identified himself as part of an entire nation who needed to confess their sins to God. Daniel looked inside first. Daniel's plea was answered (see 9:20-23). How committed are you to pray, and how well do you do at it?

September 9th

1 Chronicles 3:19b-24; Ezra 2:1-4:5. "How Big is Our God?"

It's fascinating to review the fulfillment of a prophecy. Isaiah (chs. 44,45,48) prophesied that God would use a man named Cyrus to guarantee the return of Israel's remnant and that Jerusalem and the Temple would be rebuilt. That was 150 years before Cyrus was even born! Now in 538 BC Cyrus releases the captives. What an exciting day it had to be as 50,000 Israelites headed home. That would be a wonderful event to remember and celebrate.

The Israelites celebrated the Festival of Shelters shortly after they settled in. What kind of things do we celebrate? Do we celebrate fulfillments to prophecy? We celebrate the birth and the resurrection of Christ, definite fulfillments to prophecy.

Part of celebrating God making good on a promise is the wonder of the fulfillment. How big does God have to be to make a vision or prophecy come true? How powerful does He have to be to make things come to pass in His specific timing? How compassionate does He have to be to care about bringing things to pass for our good? Are you gripped in wonder and awe of God?