

# Hope Re-ignited: Messages from a pagan land



## Ezekiel - Daniel - Zechariah

*God's people: faithfulness in exile - following the destruction of their kingdom and the exile of its inhabitants, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah show that there is hope - God's plans cannot be finally thwarted, God's people can be re-born.*

The alternative to dashed hopes, tragedy and catastrophe are often avoidance (pretend there is no problem) or despair (give up in the face of apparently overwhelming problems). These three prophets offer a different way.

## I Ezekiel

3 pictures - parables of society and the people of God in Ezekiel's day and ours.

### A) *The dryness of the Land* - Ch. 1 - 10

God's judgment on his people. Ezekiel called to kindle a new hope through dreams and visions passionately communicated to broken people.

### B) *The river of life* - Ch. 47

Going deep. Be cleansed and refreshed by the living water from the heart of God/the temple. Where ever the river flows there is life. Where the flow is resisted there is death - the marshes become saline (v. 11) but the living water works miracles.

### C) *The breath of God's Spirit* - Ch. 37

God's restoration/resurrection of the dead. Hope and life for dry bones. God can do the impossible. His breath gives life.

Ezekiel's prophecies point forward to New Testament themes of life by resurrection and the Holy Spirit.

John 3 v. 3 - 7 - water and the Spirit bring re-birth. John 4 v. 10 - 15- living water for changing lives.

Rev. 22 v. 17 - the water of life - flowing from Eden to revelation and to us.

## II Daniel

Daniel stands against the flow - 6 stories, 4 visions - soul survivor - obedience, integrity and perseverance in adversity. A wide screen vision of God's plans and sovereignty - political and futuristic.

- Chapters 1 - 6
1. Gifted by God
  2. Nebuchadnezzar's dream
  3. Four men in the furnace
  4. Dream of a chopped down tree
  5. Writing of a disembodied hand
  6. Lion's den

Overarching themes in chapters 1 - 6:

- Character* - contrast Nebuchadnezzar's capriciousness with Daniel's faithfulness.
- Witness* - varying responses to living in a pagan society - martyrdom for confrontation or co-operation/withdrawal. Who holds your destiny? - 'The powers that be' or God? 'But if not' - Ch. 3 v. 18 - faith and God's will.
- Leadership* - what features of leadership do Daniel and his friends display? -
  - Shepherds or cowboys
  - Waiting and watching
  - Standing out from the crowd
  - Declaring God's truth

Passion and resurrection in Daniel - compare Daniel 6 v 13 - 28 and Matthew 27 & 28 - Daniel/Jesus, the Son of Man - Daniel 7 v 13.

## III Zechariah

Zechariah reinvigorates God's people with his visions and messages - fresh vocabulary, energy and credibility released in hope and insight for a world that had no language to express the power and purpose of God.

- Return* - 1 v. 3, 2 v. 10 - Rejoice. - 2 v. 12 - 'I will dwell with you.' Reciprocal covenant relationship. Traditional predictive prophecy - 8 visions and accompanying oracles.
- Rebuild* - 4 v. 6 - 'Not by might but by my spirit' will come the restoration of Jerusalem - if you obey - 6 v. 15. Out of self pre-occupation into faith and renewal.
- Righteousness* - 7 v. 9 - 10 & 8 v. 16 - 19 - Render true judgement, seek peace, show kindness and mercy.
- Redemption* - 9 v. 9 & 16 - Behold your King and Saviour comes - triumphal entry (Matthew 21 v. 1 - 11), intervention, apocalypse now. The day of the Lord. Restoration of holiness, hope and identity for God's people - 13 v. 8 - 9. Gather in the redeemed - 10 v. 8. Come to the cleansing fountain 13 v. 1.