

### SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson for April 4

**Golden Text.**—Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.—Ezek. 3:17

The Lesson as a Whole

Of all the prophetic books, Ezekiel is the one that has been most neglected. Many people are repelled by the marvelous vision of the opening chapter, and, finding it difficult to understand, proceed no further, and so lose the blessing they might have gained by a careful study of the entire book in dependence upon the Holy Spirit as teacher, who inspired the prophet to write it (2 Pet. 1:21). To the reverent student, the book presents no serious difficulties that may not be overcome by a careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture. Thus one may be preserved from a private interpretation which would not harmonize with the rest of God's revealed Word.

Ezekiel is primarily the prophet of the divine government. Throughout his book he dwells upon the fact that God is over all, working out His plans and carrying out His own decisions, in spite of Satanic efforts to thwart His purpose and annul His counsels. The Devil may be, and is, the god and prince of this present world system, but over and above all is the throne of the eternal Majesty, whose ways are past finding out, but who controls the destinies of Israel and the nations, working "all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

There is a very definite and intimate connection between this book and that of the Revelation. The living creatures of Ezekiel's visions and those of the Apocalypse are clearly one and the same, and the closing vision of the restored earthly city and temple in Ezekiel 40 to 48 corresponds to that of John's vision concerning the heavenly city the New Jerusalem, in which no temple is seen because the whole is one vast sanctuary where the redeemed shall dwell in unclouded light in the presence of God and the Lamb. Many other similarities and contrasts will be observed by the careful student who reads with reverence and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

**Verse 1:**—"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year.....I saw visions of God." It is not easy to decide what thirtieth year is referred to. Some consider it the thirtieth year of the dynasty of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, who founded the Babylonian Empire. Others take it as the thirtieth year of Ezekiel's life, the year when, had things been in order and he in the land of Israel, he would have entered upon his responsibilities as priest. But the important thing is the fact that he was called to the prophetic office and given visions of God that he might minister to his stricken people. To him it was given to look into the throne room of the Heavens, as it were, and to understand how the affairs of men and of nations were all under the hand of Him who occupies that throne in awful and sublime majesty.

**Verse 2:**—"The fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity." It was nearly five years after the carrying

away of this ungodly king, and in the fifth month of the year, that Ezekiel was appointed by God as His mouthpiece to Israel.

**Verse 3:**—"The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel." In a very special way he was set apart to the prophetic office, not by any human authority, but the hand of Jehovah was upon him.

**Chap. 3:11:**—"Go, get thee to them of the captivity." Ezekiel was sent of God, not so much to the Jews remaining in the land of Palestine, but to those who had been carried away already as captives. One might have supposed that their afflictions would have softened their hearts and exercised their consciences, but the prophet was not to expect this. He was to give them God's word whatever their attitude toward it might be.

**Verse 17:**—"I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel." Solemn are the responsibilities put by God Himself upon one whom He calls to be a watchman and to speak for Him to His people. Ezekiel was to give warning of coming judgments and to call his people to repentance.

**Verse 18:**—"His blood will I require at thine hand." Much depended upon the faithfulness of the watchman. If the people failed to heed his warning, the responsibility was theirs, but if he proved unfaithful he would have to account to God for their blood. It was this and the kindred passage in chapter 33, undoubtedly, that the Apostle Paul had in mind when he declared to the Ephesian elders, "I take you to record..... that I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26).

**Verse 19:**—"If thou warn the wicked..... thou has delivered thy soul." All that the messenger of God can do is to give out the Word in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Those who refuse it do so at their own peril, but the one who proclaims the truth is blameless.

**Verse 20:**—"When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity..... his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered." This is not dealing with the question of the salvation of the soul; but it has to do with God's government over men here in this world. It is law, not grace.

**Verse 21:**—"If thou warn the righteous..... and he doth not sin, he shall surely live." It is righteousness according to the Law of Moses that is in question, "which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Lev. 18:5). This, as we are told very plainly in the Epistle to the Galatians (chap. 3), is the very opposite of the Gospel and should not be confounded with it.

**Chap. 4:1:**—"Take thee a tile, and lay it before thee." Ezekiel was to take a burned brick or tile and draw the attention of the people to it in order that they might have their curiosity aroused as to what the prophet was illustrating. The tile represented the city of Jerusalem, which was again under siege by the armies of the Chaldeans, during the last day of the reign of Zedekiah.

**Verse 2:**—"Lay siege against it, and build a fort against it." This was to bring vividly before the captives what was transpiring in the homeland.

**Verse 3:**—"Take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city."

The unyielding wall of iron suggests the mighty power of the Babylonian army, against which the army of the Jews seeking to defend Jerusalem would struggle in vain. God had been very patient and waited long before visiting judgment upon a rebellious and gain-saying people. Now His long-suffering mercy had come to an end, and He was to act toward His people as an enemy, taking the part, as it were, of their foes in order that Judah might be chastised for her manifold transgressions.

#### The Heart of the Lesson

Ezekiel is the prophet of the divine government, which is often lost sight of by those who fail to realize that grace does not annul or set aside government. God has not vacated His throne as the supreme ruler over the nations, and it still remains as true of nations as of individuals that whatsoever is sown must be reaped. This is the great lesson Ezekiel sought to impress upon Israel and is the background for a true philosophy of history, explaining much that is going on among the nations in our own times, as well as throughout past centuries. Blessing comes with recognition of our responsibility to obey God. Disaster follows where this is ignored.

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### Only Four Oppose Province of Ontario Taxing Amusements

Only four members of the Ontario Legislature opposed a government bill to collect an amusement tax for relieving hospital costs, when the measure was brought up for second reading at Queen's Park last week.

Opposition to the bill came from Joseph Salsberg (LLP-Toronto-St. Andrews), A. A. MacLeod (LLP-Toronto-Bellwoods), Alex Parent (Ind. Essex North) and George Harvey (CCF-Sault Ste. Marie).

The two LLP-Communist members argued that the tax was one which hit the pocketbooks of the average earner.

Hon. Leslie Frost, provincial treasurer, pointed out that the 20 per cent. tax proposed by the Ontario Government, is the same as is now being collected by the Federal Government, and would mean no change in the present taxation. He emphasized that Ontario intends to take no action until the Federal Government vacates the field.

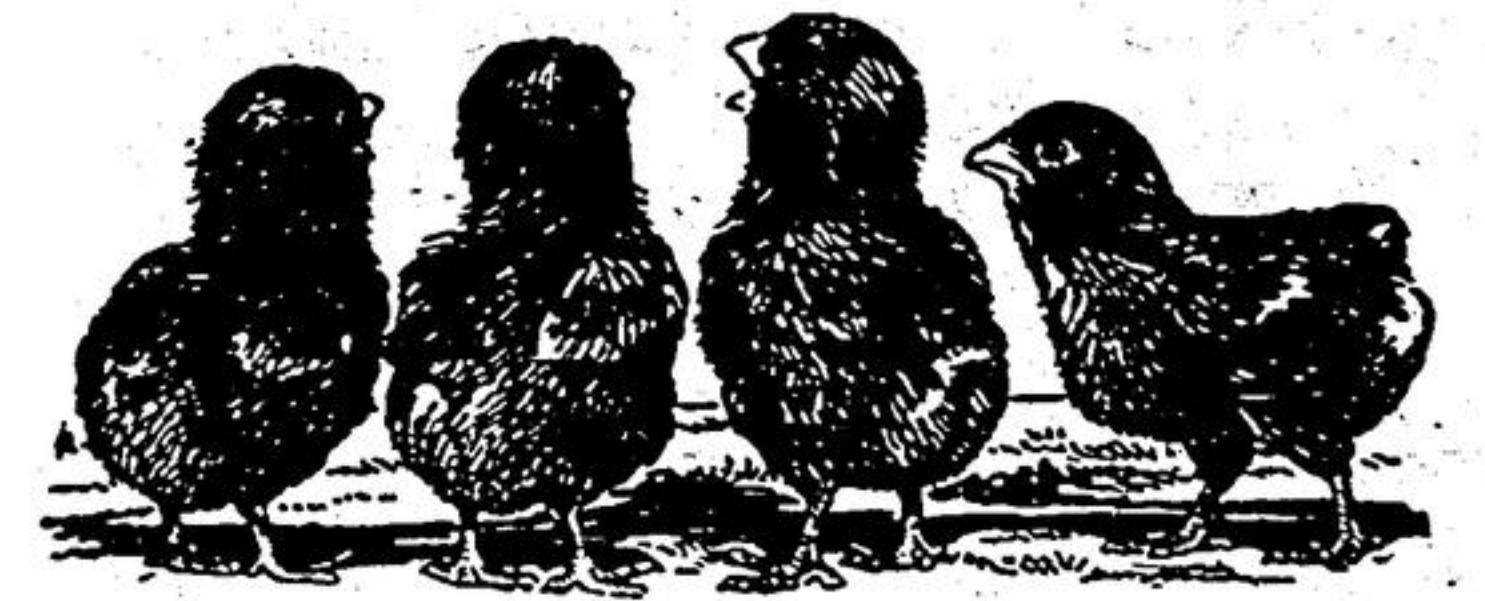
Debate on the government's bill to authorize the frequency change-over from 25-cycle to 60-cycle power took the form of questions, and did not become the live issue many had forecast.

Liberal Leader Farquhar Oliver declared he favored the change-over and limited his debate on the subject to questions on equipment and financing.

Alfred Hare who died in Toronto on March 22 was buried at Newmarket cemetery on Thursday afternoon. He is survived by his wife and by two sons Robert and John Hare.

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