

EZEKIEL, BRIDGE BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

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Ezekiel, prophet in exile, is perhaps destined in Biblical scholarship to remain in a foreign land. From time to time he has been transported by a venturesome scholar from dismal Babylonia to the scholastic elevations of Jerusalem. There he has glimpsed the world of scholarly scrutiny that Isaiah and Jeremiah have known so well. But he always seems to end up again in Babylonia. One may wonder if those three hundred barrels of oil were well spent by Chananiah ben Hezekiah when he composed his commentary on Ezekiel to prevent the book from sinking into canonical obscurity (*b. Sabb.* 13b). In fact, the prophecy of Ezekiel has largely been viewed as an apocalyptic resource. And we may admit the truth of that without disparaging the book in the least. In that respect the influence of Ezekiel on the NT has most readily been detected in the Apocalypse of John. Swete, in a list that he admits is not exhaustive, cites 29 instances of John's verbal dependence on Ezekiel in comparison to 27 on the Psalms, 46 on Isaiah and 31 on Daniel.¹ This verbal dependence is only minimally measured in direct quotations. Vanhoye lists three (Rev 1:15/Ezek 43:2; Rev 10:10/Ezek 3:3; Rev 18:1/Ezek 43:2),² but on this point there is no unanimity of agreement. The range of influence is largely in the area of imagery and phraseology. Yet there is ample consideration given to this matter in the commentaries and Vanhoye's study. Our interest runs in another direction.

An area that has had little attention is that of the gospels and the mind of Jesus or the messianic consciousness. Again we should observe that dependence is not quotational. Nestle has listed 16 different NT verses outside the Apocalypse that evidence Ezekiel's influence. Only two of those have an asterisk to indicate direct verbal dependence (2 Cor 6:16-17). Out of the sixteen instances only five (excluding parallels) are in the gospels, two in Matthew/Mark (9:36/6:34; 13:32/4:32), one in Mark only (8:18) and three in Luke (1:52; 13:19; 19:10).

Yet the influence of Ezekiel on the portrait and mind of Jesus³ as presented in the gospels can be easily detected. Indeed, among the prophets Ezekiel is as NT-oriented as any and more so than most. This proposal notwithstanding, we ought not to force Ezekiel to eat the NT as he so readily ate the scroll offered to him. Yet the mode and content of his message would seem quite pleasant to the NT palate, and if the process could be reversed we may conjecture that the

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¹H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) clii n. 1.

²A. Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre d'Ezechiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Bib* 43 (1962) 436-476.

³W. A. Curtis, *Jesus Christ the Teacher: A Study of His Method and Message Based Mainly on the Earlier Gospels* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943) 138, has suggested that Ezekiel and his book deserve to be more closely studied in relation to the mind of Jesus. He gives an impressive list of affinities between the life and message of Ezekiel and that of our Lord.

prophet would have found certain NT concepts and themes as sweet as the scroll he consumed.

I. THE PROPHET EZEKIEL AND JESUS AS PROPHET

A logical place to begin is the call of the prophet. The problematic "thirtieth year" of Ezek 1:1 has been variously interpreted. While any suggestion must remain conjectural, a prominent one is that this refers to the thirtieth year of the prophet's life. This view has particular significance in that under other circumstances this would have been the year he entered his priestly office⁴ (Num 4:3, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47). The place of the prophet's visionary call was by the river Chebar, and the attending circumstance is described: "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." In the oral portion of the call the prophet is commanded to stand on his feet, whereupon the Spirit entered into him and set him on his feet (Ezek 2:2). The baptism of Jesus yields striking similarities. Luke is careful to mention that Jesus was baptized when he was "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). The locale is associated with a river, the Jordan, while the attendant elements were the opened heavens,⁵ a voice, and the spirit (Luke 3:21-22 and parallels). In no other OT prophetic call do we have the associations with the "spirit" as we do in Ezekiel's experience. Further, we have no other instance in the OT where the heavens are opened to permit divine revelation.⁶ If the experience of Jesus at his baptism is viewed as the inaugural experience of his prophetic work, then the precedent for the attendant circumstances can be found in the inaugural vision of the prophet Ezekiel. While we may write off these affinities as mere coincidence, the intent of the gospels to demonstrate the prophetic function of Jesus⁷ cannot be dismissed so easily.

There is no doubt that his ministry was viewed prophetically by his hearers (e.g., Luke 7:16; Mark 6:14-16; Matt 16:14; 21:46), but the question whether Jesus himself so viewed it is admittedly a different one. By implication his statement recorded in Mark 6:1-5 would suggest that he did. When the people were offended by his words and deeds, he phrased their offense and his activity in a prophetic vein: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could do no mighty works there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them" (Mark 6:4-5). Oscar Cullmann has validly distinguished between Jesus as a prophet and Jesus as the eschatological prophet. He concludes that the latter opinion was held by the people (Mark 6:14-16; 8:28; Matt 21:11; John 6:14) and not by Jesus and the disciples.⁸ Yet this opinion is difficult to accept. When John the Baptist sent an embassy of inquiry to Jesus with the question, "Are you the coming one or

⁴W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 52.

⁵R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the OT in St. Matthew's Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 29, has pointed out that Matthew assimilates the narrative of 3:16 to Ezek 1:1 (LXX).

⁶C. Mackay, "Ezekiel in the New Testament," *CQR* 162 (January-March 1961) 4-16.

⁷Matt 11:2-6; 21:46; 23:37; Mark 6:4, 14-16; 8:28; Luke 7:16; John 6:14.

⁸O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959) 36-37.

shall we look for another?" Jesus responded with what was certainly not a denial but would appear to be an affirmation: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (Matt 11:4-6). Thus the prophetic role of Jesus in the gospel tradition seems to be a highly significant one, and it may be no mere accident that the circumstances attending his baptism have striking affinities with the prophetic call of Ezekiel.

1. *The Mode of Communication.* The prophet Ezekiel employed the form of allegory and parable more than any other OT spokesman. Further, more than in any other prophetic book he had a journalistic interest in what the populace was saying and the current attitudes being expressed.⁹ Among these he has preserved a byword about his own reputation: "Then I said, Ah, LORD God! They are saying of me, 'Is he not a maker of allegories?' " (20:49).

Probably the most characteristic and identifying mode of teaching that Jesus used was the parable (Matt 13:3/Mark 4:2). In fact it perplexed his disciples so much that they questioned him about it: "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (Matt 13:10/Mark 4:10). Both Jesus and Ezekiel were identified by this method of communication, and the audiences of both seemed to have been offended by it. Among Ezekiel's allegories or parables is that of the useless vine (15:1-8), which serves to convey the message that the citizens of Jerusalem will be given over to destruction. While John's allegory of the vine is not parallel by any means, the figure is the same.¹⁰ Jesus' parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32) has been recognized as a satirical adaptation of Ezekiel's parable of the lofty cedar (Ezek 17:22-24).¹¹ The latter is eschatological in tone, and the parable of Jesus shares the common details of birds nesting in its branches. Further, the nature of the mustard seed, "the smallest of all the seeds on earth," answers to the feature of the "sprig from the lofty top of the cedar" in Ezekiel's parable. The divine act was designed to show that "I" the Lord "bring low the high tree and make high the low tree." Thus Jesus has made use of the parable to teach that

all cedars, including Israel's proud hope, will be brought low; and the insignificant tree, indeed the ephemeral mustard plant, will be made to bear Israel's true destiny. The Kingdom as Jesus sees it breaking in will arrive in disenchanting and disarming form: not as a mighty cedar astride the lofty mountain height but as a lowly garden herb. . . . It will erupt out of the power of weakness and refuse to perpetuate itself by the weakness of power.¹²

2. *The Knowledge of the Lord.* Another point that we may make is Ezekiel's use of the recognition formula ("You shall know that I am the LORD") in its variant forms. The statement is addressed to Israel in connection with divine judg-

⁹Ezek 8:12/9:9; 11:3; 12:22, 27; 13:10; 18:2, 25/29/33:17/20; 20:32, 49; 22:28; 33:10, 24, 30; 37:11.

¹⁰Other allegories are the abandoned infant (16:1-63), the eagles (17:1-24), the lioness and her whelps (19:1-9), the transplanted vine (19:10-14), the two sisters (23:1-49) and the ship Tyre (27:1-36).

¹¹R. W. Funk, "The Looking-Glass Tree Is for the Birds," *Int* 27/1 (January 1973) 3-9.

¹²*Ibid.*

ments (e.g., 6:7, 10, 14; 7:4, 27; 15:7; 20:38) and restoration and peace (e.g., 20:42, 44; 28:26; 36:11, 38). The purpose for his mighty acts was to reveal his true nature to Israel and bring them to a recognition of who he was. Further, the statement is addressed to the nations also. When they experienced his judgment they would recognize that he was the Lord (e.g., 25:5, 7, 11, 17; 26:6; 29:9; 38:16, 23; 39:6, 7), or when they observed his power to protect and restore Israel they would know that the Lord had done it (36:23, 36). Ezekiel's "You shall know" passages occur more than sixty times in the book. No other OT prophet put so much emphasis on a knowledge of the Lord as the normative relationship between man and God. In this regard the gospel of John is particularly interesting, for Jesus presents himself to his disciples so as to lead them to a knowledge of who he is and how he is related to the Father. The seven "I am's" are aimed toward that goal (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). In 10:14 he declares, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me." While Ezekiel 34 does not call the shepherd mentioned there the "good shepherd," the terms describing him imply that he is. In 34:23 the Lord says: "And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken." The prophet ended the shepherd passage with the declaration that when this occurs "they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the LORD God" (Ezek 34:30).

In answer to the question of the Jews concerning whether he was the Christ, Jesus replied: "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:25-27). Here the works of Christ bear witness to the fact of his messiahship, just as Ezekiel contended that the Lord's works would be the source for recognition of his majesty. Note also that Jesus challenges the Jews in 10:38 that if they do not believe him, then they should believe the works, "that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." The same idea—that faith in Jesus having failed, they should believe his works—is contained in John 14:11: "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves." Further, a knowledge of the relationship he sustained to the Father is anticipated in his promise of the Paraclete: "Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Jesus describes his own obedience in terms of this purpose, that the world might be brought to a recognition of his love for the Father: "But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14:31). And most significantly he describes eternal life in terms of the knowledge of God and his relationship to him: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Again in 8:28 Jesus uses the statement exactly as it is employed by Ezekiel. Speaking of his crucifixion he says, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me." The historical concreteness of the message

would produce a recognition of who he was. Ezekiel employs God's mighty acts in the same way. When they have been accomplished they produce recognition of the majesty and sovereignty of the Lord. As Zimmerli remarks, "Yahweh wills to be known, not in his being, but in his action."¹³

The point we are making is that Jesus used the same method and recognition formula in John's gospel as did Ezekiel to establish the recognition of his relationship to the Father. The goal of his life and work, as with the prophet Ezekiel, was to bring men to the knowledge of God. According to John's presentation the knowledge of Jesus' nature was to be gained in his actions.

3. *The Son of Man*. Another significant point in common is that of "son of man." God addresses Ezekiel by this title—*ben-'ādām*—rather than by his proper name. This is one of the features that makes him unique among all the OT prophets. While Daniel also used the phrase (7:13; 8:17), Ezekiel's use is definitely prior.¹⁴ And in only one of those instances (8:17) does it clearly have the same meaning as in Ezekiel. The interpretation of the vision offered in 7:15-18 would favor the identification of the first occurrence with Israel (cf. 7:18). There are obviously other sources that make use of the term (1 *Enoch* 37-71, 2 *Esdras*, 2 *Apocalypse of Baruch* and the *Sibylline Oracles* 5), but of these only 1 *Enoch* has generally been considered pre-Christian.

In recent years, however, with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls the dating of the *Similitudes* has undergone re-examination. Portions from all chapters of 1 *Enoch* have turned up among the Qumran materials except chaps. 37-71, which comprise the *Similitudes*. It is strange indeed that a community so apocalyptically oriented as the Qumran sect would not capitalize on such apocalyptic sources if they were in existence, as R. H. Charles and others believed. This has tilted the opinion of some scholars to a date in the first or second Christian century.¹⁵ Admittedly the *Similitudes* must carry most of the weight for positing a Jewish apocalyptic source for the first-century "son of man" concept as Jesus employed it. With this in mind Eduard Schweizer contends that Jesus took up the title just because it was not yet a stereotyped one, and he further finds that Ezekiel is the decisive source for it.¹⁶

Although the term "son of man" in 1 *Enoch* definitely has messianic associations (there is, however, some disagreement over whether the term is unequivocal

¹³W. Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 1-24* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 53.

¹⁴Dan 7:1 dates the vision in the first year of Belshazzar (554 B.C.) and 8:1 contains the date of the third year of the same ruler.

¹⁵J. C. Hindley, "Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch. An Historical Approach," *NTS* 14 (1968) 551-565, working from a literary viewpoint based on 1 *Enoch* 56, dates the *Similitudes* in the last quarter of the first or early decades of the second century A.D. His reasoning is that the chapter under discussion speaks about a Parthian invasion that is hostile to Judah. The most probable time in his opinion was during the years A.D. 115-117 when Trajan had advanced to the Persian Gulf and rebellion broke out in three areas to his rear (Media and Adiabene, Mesopotamia, and Seleucia). At that time, Hindley suggests, the Armenian or Parthian army proceeded into Roman Syria and for a brief time took Antioch. The *Similitudes* came out of that historical situation.

¹⁶E. Schweizer, "The Son of Man Again," *NTS* 9 (1963) 256-261, esp. p. 259 and n. 3.

cally a messianic title),¹⁷ the phrase in Ezekiel by contrast has no messianic overtones. By means of this title the Lord addressed the prophet and thus stressed his humanity as over against the divine majesty. Yet the use of the title impresses a particular stamp on Ezekiel's ministry. It suggests that he was singularly identified with those whom he served. He was commanded to bear the punishment of Israel and Judah by reclining on either of his sides for a specified number of days (Ezek 4:4-8). Although he was cognizant from the beginning that Israel was a "rebellious house" (2:3, 5) and would not listen to him (3:7), he stood under a divine injunction to bear the sins of the people to whom he ministered. Zimmerli, followed by Stalker, has made a case for the view that the phrase *ns'* 'wn is used in a substitutionary sense just as with the scapegoat that bears Israel's iniquities into the desert (Lev 10:17). At this point Ezekiel parts company with the other OT prophets, for they more or less stood outside of Israel and preached to her but did not give the impression of being one with her. Isaiah, for example, recognized his identification with an unclean people, and not until he was purged of guilt and set aside from them could he preach to them (Isa 6:5-8). Ezekiel's experience was different. To bear Israel's guilt means that "his own experience is now caught up in theirs, and that to some extent he embodies and represents them."¹⁸ He is further designated as a sign for Israel (Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27). Zimmerli has concluded that the Ezekiel tradition seems to have made its contribution to the shaping of the picture of the Lord's Servant who bore the sins of many.¹⁹ If we do not accept his post-exilic dating for Isaiah 53 and opt for a pre-exilic date, then Ezekiel takes his place as an intermediate link between the portrait of the Suffering Servant and the Servant himself as we see him in Christ. He is a stage on the way to the fulfillment of that prophecy. That is, Isaiah predicted the Suffering Servant and Ezekiel symbolically enacts the role, whereas Christ was the Suffering Servant in actuality.

The self-designation of Jesus as the Son of Man occurs frequently in the synoptic gospels. While its content there is clearly messianic, the form is already available in rather distinct outline in Ezekiel. As has been recognized, one of the primary eschatological functions of the NT Son of Man is judgment (Matt 25:31-46; Mark 8:38/Matt 16:27; Luke 9:26). Also a peculiar characteristic of Ezekiel among the prophets was his role as judge. In 20:4 he is addressed as son of man and commanded to judge Israel. A historical review of Israel's apostasy follows this injunction. In two other instances the Lord addresses him as son of man and orders him to judge the people: in 22:2 the city of Jerusalem, and in 23:36 the allegorical Oholah and Oholibah. In each of these three passages the title "son of man" is associated with the role of judgment. In this regard John 5:27 is quite expressive, for there Jesus says the Father has given him the "authority to execute judgment, because he is Son of Man." It may be worth mentioning that John does not use there the usual *ho huios tou anthrōpou* but *huios anthrōpou*, which is comparable to Ezekiel's *ben-'ādām*.

¹⁷D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 332-333. B. Lindars, "Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 22 (1975) 52-72, submits that Enoch is himself the Son of Man (p. 59; cf. *1 Enoch* 48:2-3).

¹⁸D. M. G. Stalker, *Ezekiel* (London: SCM, 1968) 65.

¹⁹W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (The Netherlands: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1969) 117, ET p. 165.

Thus the model as son of man that Ezekiel provides points in the direction of the Son of Man in the gospels. Moreover, it is a simpler model and therefore a more wieldy one than the complex form that we find in Jewish apocalyptic. The prophet was one with his people and an exemplar of obedience, never even once objecting to the stringent demands placed upon him by his God (except when the Lord instructed him to prepare his food on a fire fueled by human dung; 4:9-15).

II. EZEKIEL THE PRIEST AND JESUS

Ezekiel presents another side of a model that is unique among the prophets. In him both the offices of prophet and priest were juxtaposed. While the gospel writers do not develop the priestly character of Jesus' person and ministry, the concept is at least present and Hebrews fully develops it. Jesus himself quotes from Ps 110:1 to indicate the problematic nature of the Messiah's Davidic sonship (Mark 12:35-37). The psalm contains the only reference outside of Genesis 14 to the high priest Melchizedek, and the presupposition is that the psalmist was speaking of a priestly Messiah. "Sitting at the right hand" is connected with the idea of the priest-king after the order of Melchizedek. In Mark 14:62 when Jesus stood before the high priest and was questioned by him, he answered with a statement about the great High Priest, combining the thought of Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1. To the question, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61), he replied: "I am; and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Cullmann rightly concludes that Jesus considered it his task to fulfill the priestly office.²⁰

1. *Zeal for a Purified Temple.* We might point out that Ezekiel, like Jesus, had a zeal for a purified temple. The prophet was transported by vision to the Jerusalem temple and viewed the abominations perpetrated there (8:1-8). When in the following chapter destruction was decreed for Jerusalem, the Lord specified that the six destroyers begin their task at the sanctuary (9:6). Jesus also displayed his fervor for a pure sanctuary when he cleansed the temple and drove out the merchants. Interesting is the fact that John places such a cleansing at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, thus initiating his judgmental work at the house of God (John 2:13-22). Further, on that occasion John records the Jews' question of Jesus' authority: "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" And in keeping with the occasion Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." After the resurrection the disciples recognized that he had spoken of his body. Yet the fact that he referred to his resurrection in terms of a restored temple is significant. The prophet Ezekiel most probably introduces the precedent for the restored temple (37:26; chaps. 40-48). To view his new temple and community as limited to the historical restoration from the exile is to ignore the supernatural elements in the account—for example, the river flowing from the temple and transforming the Dead Sea (47:1-12), and the abiding presence of the Lord (48:35). The restoration under Zerubbabel no more exhausted the requirements of the prophecy than the return depleted the meaning of Isaiah's program of restoration (40, 43, etc.). On the other hand we must not assume that the prophecy went entirely unfulfilled in the post-exilic period. For the temple is real

²⁰Cullmann, *Christology* 89.

and represents a continuation of the religious life and hope of Israel. This prophecy is fulfilled in part by the historical restoration but its meaning is not exhausted by any means in the post-exilic events. As Davidson says, there is "so much of earth, so much of heaven" in it.²¹ Justice can only be done to the prophecy if we recognize this commingling of the historical and the eschatological.

2. *Resurrection, the New-Age Inaugural.* We must speak also to the idea of the resurrection as the inaugural event of the eschatological age. Most commentators recognize, and rightly so, that Ezekiel 37 speaks primarily of the resuscitation of the people Israel. Yet we can easily understand why the passage has come to suggest physical resurrection. Undoubtedly John had this in mind in his description of the two prophets and their resurrection in Rev 11:11-12.²² If however John speaks of the resuscitation of the gospel or the Church, then we still do not have the idea of personal resurrection.

Moreover, the tractate *Megilla* (31a) of the Babylonian Talmud mentions the reading of Ezekiel 37 during the Passover as an affirmation of hope in physical resurrection. We cannot, of course, with certainty date that association. The point, however, is simply that the idea of reading the text as holding forth the hope of personal resurrection is not entirely foreign. With this in mind, J. Grassi sets forth the thesis that Matthew had Ezekiel 37 in the background when he set forth the position that the resurrection of Jesus opened up the messianic eschatological era and that its initiation was accompanied by the resurrection of the dead²³ (Matt 27:51-54). Just as in Matt 27:51 an earthquake is followed by the opening of the tombs (v 52), likewise in Ezek 37:7 there is an earthquake at the voice of the prophecy, and in v 12 the Lord says, "Behold, I am opening your tombs." The opening of the graves then is succeeded by the divine impartation of the Spirit (37:14). And it may not be without significance in this regard that in John 20:22 we see the risen Christ who "breathed" upon the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The Lord's instructions to the prophet Ezekiel were: "Prophecy to the spirit, prophecy, son of man, and say to the spirit, Thus says the LORD God: Come from the four winds, O spirit, and breathe upon these slain that they may live" (37:9). So we may suggest that Jesus, by his resurrection and the attendant revivification of many of the dead saints (Matt 27:52), inaugurated the eschatological era that Ezekiel predicted.

This being true, the eschatological era that Ezekiel described in terms of the restored temple (chaps. 40-48) and Jesus' statement on the occasion of the cleansing of the temple—that he would raise up the temple in three days (John 2:19)—is all the more illuminating. If the resuscitation of Israel in Ezekiel 37 is the inaugural sign of the eschatological era described in chaps. 40-48, then for Jesus the restoration of the temple (his bodily resurrection) was the countersign of the beginning of that era that the prophet Ezekiel foresaw.

3. *Ezekiel and the Paraclete.* The prophets were primarily spokesmen for God

²¹A. B. Davidson, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1906) 288.

²²Compare Rev 11:11-12 to Ezek 37:5 and 37:10.

²³J. Grassi, "Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-14 and the New Testament," *NTS* 11 (1965) 162-164.

to Israel, yet their functions included as well intercession for Israel to God. We therefore recognize the mediatorial aspect of their office. While Ezekiel intercedes for Israel in a very few cases, however, he assumes a role different from that of other prophets—a role that von Rad calls a “cure of souls” for the NT *paraklesis*.²⁴ He is made a watchman over Israel and is personally held responsible for those whom he fails to warn (3:17-21; 33:7-9). This is one instance among many where he stands in their place (others are 4:4-8, 9-17; 12:1-16; 24:15-24). He became a sign for Israel. This office entailed suffering—not the type that vicariously atoned for Israel’s sins but that drew the prophet body and soul into his experience and prefigured it.²⁵ In light of the degree into which he entered their experience and stood in their place, we may agree with Cullmann’s suggestion that the concept of the Paraclete is especially related to the priestly office.²⁶ Bruce Vawter²⁷ has appropriately recognized the Johannine Paraclete as a prophetic witness and a priestly functionary. And based on Jesus’ promise of “another” Paraclete (John 14:6), the implication is that Jesus occupied the office before the Holy Spirit was given. John in his first epistle so designates him as the “Paraclete.” Thus the prophetic and priestly functions are combined in the idea: one who witnesses of the Father to men and who also intercedes with the Father for men. As Vawter contends, ²⁸ Ezekiel is the only OT prophet who could have furnished this type of role for the Christ-Paraclete. This prophet-priest lived for his people, put himself at their disposal, stood in the breach for them and conveyed the Lord’s word to them. Thus he occupied a mediatorial office peculiar among the prophets. He not only conveyed God’s word to Israel and occasionally interceded to God for Israel but he was a stand-in for them, offering himself as their representative.

We have therefore seen a prophet and priest whose life and work point far beyond himself into the future. Only with difficulty can we write off the affinities of Ezekiel with the life and work of Jesus. While he was not *the* Son of Man, he was indeed oriented toward his appearance. His obedience, the vicarious nature of his ministry, and the content of his message set our faces toward the NT figure of Jesus and prepare us for the incarnate Son. Ezekiel builds a prophetic bridge between the Testaments and makes the passage far smoother than it would have been without him.

²⁴G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper, 1965), 2. 231.

²⁵Zimmerli, *Ezechiel* 117.

²⁶Cullmann, *Christology* 106.

²⁷B. Vawter, “Ezekiel and John,” *CBQ* 26 (1964) 450-458, esp. 455-457.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 457.