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Bible Study

“Almost Everything You Need to Know About ...”



Ezekiel

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I. KEY FACTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

- a. **Name of the book:** The book of Ezekiel. **The Prophecy of Ezechiel**, one of the major prophetic books of the Old Testament.
- b. **Position in the Bible:** • 26th Book in the Bible and the Old Testament • 4th of 17 books of Prophecy (Isaiah - Malachi) • 4th of 5 major prophets (Isaiah-Daniel) • 40 Books to follow it. Chapters: 48; Verses: 1,273; Words: 39,407
- c. **Author:** Ezekiel
- d. **When written:** Probably completed by 565 B.C. Ezekiel received his prophetic call in the fifth year of the first deportation to Babylonia (592 BC) and was active until about 570 BC. Most of this time was spent in exile.
- e. **Recipient: The people of Israel**
- f. **Why it was written:** Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both exceedingly sinful and thoroughly hopeless. By means of his prophetic ministry he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance and to confidence in the distant future.
- g. **Key Verses:**

Ezekiel 2: 3-6, "He said: 'son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says." And whether they listen or fail to listen - for they are a rebellious house - they will know that a prophet has been among them.'"

Ezekiel 18: 4, "For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son - both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die."

Ezekiel: 28: 12-14, "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every

precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones."

Ezekiel 33:11, "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'"

Ezekiel 48:35, "And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE."

- h. **Theme:** 1. The main theme of the book appears to be threefold. First, God has let Israel reap the rewards of their sin through their captivity in Babylon (Ezekiel 23). Second, God will punish the nations who have wreaked havoc on Israel through their history. Third, God will restore the Israelites and return them home, giving them a hope that this captivity in Babylon will not last forever. 2. God's Sovereignty. God's total sovereignty is evident in his mobility. He is not limited to the temple in Jerusalem. He can respond to his people's sin by leaving his sanctuary in Israel, and he can graciously condescend to visit his exiled children in Babylon. God is free to judge, and he is equally free to be gracious.

II. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in three stages

- 1st - In 605 B.C., he overcame Jehoiakim and carried off key hostages, including Daniel and his friends.
- 2nd - In 597 B.C., the rebellion of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin brought further punishment. - He made Jerusalem submit a second time. - He carried 10,000 more hostages, including Jehoiakin and Ezekiel.

- 3rd - in 586 B.C., after a one-year and 17-month long siege, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem and brought ravage and destruction to all of Judah.

Three Deportations from Judah to Babylonia Ordered by King Nebuchadnezzar

These completed the breakup of the LORD's earthly kingdom.

Date & Reference	Davidic King in Jerusalem	Who Were Taken into Exile	Comments
605 B.C. Daniel 1	Jehoiakim	Mostly Daniel and other gifted youth, especially of royal and noble families—chosen to be trained in order to help make Babylon great.	Also taken: vessels from the LORD's temple.
597 B.C. 2 Kings 24:14–16	Jehoiachin	About 10,000 including King Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, warriors, and many craftsmen to help in Babylonian building projects.	Jehoiachin was the last Davidic generation to rule
586 B.C. 2 Kings 25:4–21	Zedekiah	King Zedekiah and nearly all the Jews remaining (many died in and after the long siege, Ezek. 24:1–2).	Also destroyed: God's capital city and temple.

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III. Let's talk about Ezekiel!

- Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest who was called to be a prophet of the Lord.
- Ezekiel: Was born in 622 B.C.; He was 17 when Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C.; Was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. when he was 25 yrs. Old, before Babylon's final assault on Jerusalem.

- Ezekiel lived among the Jewish exiles in Babylon at a settlement along the river Chebar called Tel-abib (Ezekiel 3:15), less than one hundred miles south of Babylon.
- The invading Babylonians brought about ten thousand Jews to the village in 597 BC, including Ezekiel and the last king of Judah, Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:8-14).
- Prophesied from 592 B.C. to at least 570 B.C. (an active ministry of some 22 years).
- Ezekiel received his prophetic commission when he was 30
- Ezekiel overlapped the end of Jeremiah's ministry and the beginning of Daniel's ministry.
- A part of Ezekiel's work was to remind the generation born during the Babylonian Captivity:
 - The cause of Judah's current destruction.
 - Of God's coming judgment on the Gentile nations.
 - The people being restored back to Jerusalem.
- Ezekiel shows the full circle of judgment upon the nations that surround Judah: Ammon, Tyre, Moab, Sidon, and Philistia
- In 572 B.C. some 14 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel returns in a vision to the fallen city (40- 48) where he is given specific specifications for:
 - The reconstruction of the Temple.
 - The reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem.
 - The reconstruction of the land.

IV. The Importance of Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel pronounces judgment on both Israel and surrounding nations, but it also gives us a look into the future millennial kingdom that complements and adds to the vision of other Old and New Testament texts. Not only does the book present a striking picture of the resurrection and restoration of God's people (Ezekiel 37), it also offers

readers a picture of the reconstructed temple in Jerusalem, complete with the return of God's glory to His dwelling place (40:1–48:35). This latter section of Ezekiel's prophecy looks forward to the people's worship after Christ's return in the end times, when He will rule Israel and the nations from His throne in Jerusalem during His.

V. Our Favorite Songs and Stories from the book of Ezekiel

- Ezekiel chap. 1: Ezekiel saw the wheel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f69SLJPNRU>
- Ezekiel 37: 1-14: The dry bones
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exZ4exN3pK4>

VI. Outline

Ezekiel's book can be divided into five sections:

A. Ezekiel's vision and call: Chapters 1-3

Ezekiel sees the Lord and His glory. He is called as a watchman to the house of Israel to warn, reprove, and call them to repentance.

In Scripture the number four often relates to God's material creation in its many aspects. For example, "the four winds of the earth" (Rev. 7:1) stand for all winds; "the four corners of the land" (Ezek. 7:2) stand for all its parts.

These awesome creatures were later identified as "cherubim" (10:15, 20). The ending "im" is plural in Hebrew; the singular form is "cherub" (9:3; 10:4, 7, 9). After mankind's fall, cherubim had been stationed to guard "the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). In the Book of Revelation (4:6–8, et al.) John saw four of them around the heavenly throne.

Although they are creatures, they also represent God's attributes. For example, their number, speed, and ability to move without turning, point to God's omnipresence and omnipotence

The "expanse" in Ezekiel 1 was "over the heads of the living beings" (1:22), to serve as a platform.

“Go to the exiles, the sons of your people” (3:11). Neither the LORD nor Ezekiel could get pleasure from announcing judgment. But the message would help preserve a precious remnant within the audience. His commission as a watchman would be (a) explained in more detail in chapter 18 and (b) repeated under different circumstances in chapter 33.

B. Prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem: Chapters 4-24

The Lord instructs Ezekiel to use symbols to represent the wickedness of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel prophesies of the Lord’s judgments on Jerusalem and explains why famine, desolation, war, and pestilence will sweep the land of Israel.

Ezekiel 17: An Allegory about Eagles & Cedars

Reference for Item	Item	Reference for Meaning	Meaning
vv. 3–4	A great eagle plucked off the very top of a cedar in Lebanon and replanted it in a city of traders.	v. 12_____	The king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) took the king (Jehoiachin) and princes from Jerusalem to Babylon.
vv. 5–6	The eagle planted a seed that became a low, spreading vine.	vv._____	The Babylonian king made a covenant with one of the royal family (Zedekiah).
vv. 7–8	Though planted in a good place, this vine sought water from another great eagle instead.	vv._____	The one under covenant rebelled and sought military help from Egypt.
vv. 9–10	This perverse vine would be pulled up and would wither from the east wind	vv._____	This rebellious king would die in Babylon, and his soldiers be killed, with no help from Egypt.
vv. 22–24	The LORD will take the very top of a cedar and plant it on a high mountain. It	None	Not Given

C. Prophecies of God’s judgment on nearby nations Chapters 25-32

The Lord commands Ezekiel to declare the wickedness of the nations surrounding Israel and prophesy of their destruction.

D. A last call to Israel for repentance: Chapter 33

The Lord reproves the leaders of Israel for being poor shepherds over their people. The Lord will be a true shepherd to Israel.

E. Prophecies concerning the future restoration of Israel Chapters 34-48

Ezekiel records his vision of Israel’s restoration after the exile and in the latter days. The Lord promises to gather the Israelites from captivity, return them to their promised lands, renew His covenant with them, and reunite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

OR

A. Ezekiel’s Ministry to Israel until the Kingdom Ended (chs. 1–24)

(that is, until the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.)

1. Ezekiel’s Inaugural Vision (chs. 1–3)
2. Prophecies of Full Destruction for Judah and Jerusalem (chs. 4–7)
3. A Vision of the End of the Lord’s Earthly Kingdom (chs. 8–11)
4. The Futility of False Optimism (chs. 12–19)
5. The History of Judah’s Corruption (chs. 20–24)

B. Ezekiel’s Oracles against Nearby Nations (chs. 25–32)

1. The Nearest Nations (ch. 25)
2. Tyre (chs. 26–28)
3. Egypt (chs. 29–32)

C. Ezekiel’s Ministry of Comfort Pointing to a Restored Kingdom (chs. 33–48)

1. Aspects Preparing for a Restored Kingdom (chs. 33-39)
2. Description of a Restored Kingdom (chs. 40-48)
 - Detailed Plans for the Temple and Its Inauguration (chs. 40–43)
 - Aspects of the Worship to Be Done in the Temple (chs. 44–46)
 - The Life-giving River that Will Flow from the Temple (47:1–12)
 - Divisions of the Land with respect to the Temple (47:13—48:35)

The priest/prophet discovered God was not confined to the narrow strictures of Ezekiel's native land. Instead, He is a universal God who commands and controls persons and nations. In Babylon, God imparted to Ezekiel His Word for the people. His call experience transformed Ezekiel. He became avidly devoted to God's Word. He realized he had nothing personally to assist the captives in their bitter situation, but he was convinced God's Word spoke to their condition and could give them victory in it. Ezekiel used various methods to convey God's Word to his people. He used art in drawing a depiction of Jerusalem, symbolic actions and unusual conduct to secure attention. He cut his hair and beard to demonstrate what God would do to Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

In Conclusion

- Ezekiel's entire prophetic ministry centered around the small, exiled community at Tel-abib, a people uprooted from their homes and livelihoods living out their days in a foreign land. Can you imagine the feelings of disorientation and confusion that accompanied these people? Even though many of the exiles were directly engaged in the sinful behavior that led to God's judgment, that would not prevent them from wondering why all this was happening to them.
- God didn't exile the Israelites primarily to punish them. God never has been nor is He now interested in punishment for punishment's sake. Rather, He intended the punishment or judgment in Ezekiel's day as a means to an end—to bring His people to a state of repentance and humility before the one true God.

- They had lived for so long in sin and rebellion, confident in their own strength and that of the neighboring nations, that they needed God to remind them of His holy nature and their humble identity in a most dramatic way.
- After centuries of warnings, prophetic messages, and invasions, God decided that more significant action was required—He had to remove the people from their promised land.

How do we apply this?

- We sometimes find ourselves in that predicament as well, asking “Why, Lord?” and waiting in silence for the answer. The exiles had to wait five years for God to send Ezekiel, and when God did, His prophet had a message that the people likely didn’t want to hear: God is the Lord of heaven and earth, and the judgment the people were experiencing was a result of their own sin.
- Ezekiel taught that: (1) God works through human messengers; (2) Even in defeat and despair God’s people need to affirm God’s sovereignty; (3) God’s Word never fails; (4) God is present and can be worshiped anywhere; (5) People must obey God if they expect to receive blessings; and (6) God’s Kingdom will come.
- The Book of Ezekiel calls us to join in a fresh and living encounter with the God of Abraham, Moses and the prophets. We must be overcomers or we will be overcome.
- Ezekiel challenged us to experience a life changing vision of God’s power, knowledge, eternal presence and holiness; to let God direct us; to comprehend the depth of and commitment to evil that lodges in each human heart; to recognize that God holds His servants responsible for warning wicked and righteous people who have strayed, of their peril; to experience a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who said that the new covenant is to be found in His blood.

- The book of Ezekiel reminds us to seek out the Lord in those dark times when we feel lost, to examine our own lives, and to align ourselves with the one true God. Will you consider doing so today?

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