

EZEKIEL

Outlined Bible

Introduction: The book of Ezekiel is the beginning of a new phase in Israelite prophecy, and its form and characteristics differ in style from the books of prophecy we've studied thus far. Ezekiel relies heavily upon apocalyptic images whose meanings have been lost through the centuries. Even its original readers would read apocalyptic pieces for vivid impressions more than specific details. This genre was commonly used during times of political turmoil and persecution.

Name - The book is named for the prophet who wrote it.

Author - Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel was a member of a priestly family. (Ezekiel 1:3)
2. He was carried away from Jerusalem in the second wave of Babylonian captivity (597 BC) when he was 25 years old. (Ezekiel 1:2)
3. While in exile in Tel Abib, Ezekiel was called to be a prophet at the age of 30. (Ezekiel 1:1)

Purpose - Ezekiel has two purposes:

1. The book tells the "second wave" captives residing in Babylon that further and final judgment against Judah and Jerusalem is still forthcoming.
2. Like most of the inspired prophetic books, Ezekiel points to the glory and hope of the future, made possible through Christ.

I. Background of the book.

- A. To understand the book of Ezekiel it is helpful to be reminded of the stages of Babylonian captivity.
 1. The first siege by Babylon took place in 606 BC. Daniel and others were taken captive in this group.
 2. The second deportation occurred in 597 BC. Ezekiel was in this group and prophesied to the 10,000 captives-taken— during this conquest.
 3. In the third siege (586 BC) Jerusalem is sacked, the Temple destroyed, and most of the population taken captive.
 4. Through all of the above, Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem.
- B. The book employs the first person singular throughout.
- C. Ezekiel's prophetic work began in the fifth year of his exile (ca. 592 BC) and extended to at least the 27th year of the exile (ca. 570 BC). (1:2; 29:17)
- D. The apocalyptic style of the writing was used to vividly relate tumultuous times of great upheaval. It was loaded with imagery and symbolism familiar to early readers but largely lost on us today.

II. Message of the book. The message is the faithfulness of God.

- A. He is faithful in bringing consequence for sin. (1-32)
- B. He is faithful in keeping his covenant of blessing. (33-48)

III. Outline of the book.

- A. Prophecies prior to the fall of Jerusalem. (1:1-24:27)
 1. Ezekiel is called to serve as a "watchman to the house of Israel." (1:1-3:27)
 2. Through the use of symbols, the destruction of Jerusalem is forecast. (4:1-5:17)
 3. Ezekiel offers two specific oracles about the impending event. (6:1 -7:27)

4. In the sixth year of his captivity, Ezekiel receives a vision of the idolatry in the Temple and the destruction it will incur because of it. (8:1-10:22)
 - a. In that same vision, Ezekiel saw judgment come on the nation's leaders. (11:1-15)
 - b. He also foresees Judah's return to their homeland. (11:16-25)
 5. The destruction will occur because of Jerusalem's rebellion (12:1-28), false prophets (13:1-23), and idolatry (14:1-23).
 6. Allegories and metaphors depicting the punishment are offered. (15:1-18:32)
 7. Ezekiel laments over the princes of Israel. (19:1-14)
 8. Additional allegories and illustrations are used to symbolize Jerusalem's destruction. (20:1-24:27)
- B. Prophecies against other nations. (Ezekiel 25:1 -3 2:32, 35:1-15) Prophecies are specifically given about:
1. Ammon. (25:1-7)
 2. Moab. (25:8-11)
 3. Edom. (25:12-14)
 4. Philistia. (25:15-17)
 5. Tyre. (26:1-28:19)
 6. Sidon. (28:20-26)
 7. Egypt. (29:1-32:32)
 8. Edom. (35:1-15)
- C. Prophecies of the future. (Ezekiel 33:1- 48:35)
1. Ezekiel is called to be a "watchman." (33:1-20)
 2. He predicts Judah's return to their homeland. (33:21-34; 31; 36:1-38)
 3. The first prophecy of the Christ comes through Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones. (37:1-28)
 4. A prophecy against enemies of the church, "Gog" and "Magog," is given. (38:1-39:29)
 5. A "new Israel" is portrayed in divine splendor and under heaven's protection. (40:1- 48:35)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Prophecies fulfilled:

1. Certainly Ezekiel's prophecies against Judah came to pass as did the specific destinies of the other nations prophesied about.
2. A clear and classic example is the destiny of Tyre, the major city of Phoenicia. (Ezekiel 26-28)
 - a. The Lord said of Tyre, "I will bring many nations against you." (Ezekiel 26:3)
 - b. He said, "They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers." (Ezekiel 26:4a)
 - c. Further, "I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock." (Ezekiel 26:4b)
 - d. Ezekiel also prophesied, "... they will breakdown your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber, and rubble into the sea." (Ezekiel 26:12b)
 - e. The Lord continued, "I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fish nets." (Ezekiel 26:14a)
 - f. Finally, "You will never be rebuilt, for I, the Lord, have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord."
3. Shortly after this prophecy, King Nebuchadnezzar conducted a 13-year siege (ca. 587-574 BC) against Tyre.
 - a. He destroyed the mainland city.
 - b. The people fled to an island one-half mile away.
4. The city recovered and rebuilt until 332 BC when Alexander the Great came against it.
 - a. Once again, the people fled to the island.
 - b. Alexander had his army tear down the city (on the mainland) and laid the stones, timber, and soil into the sea, building a land bridge to the island.
5. The city was sacked again by one of Alexander's generals, Antigonus, in 314 BC.
6. Today, nothing remains of the ancient city of Tyre.
 - a. Where it stood is a solid rock.
 - b. To this day, fishermen spread their nets there.

7. Clearly the source of Ezekiel's knowledge of these events was God.
- B. The final 11 chapters (Ezekiel 38-48):
1. The last eleven chapters of Ezekiel are primary fodder used by dispensationalists.
 - a. Chapters 38 and 39 have been made to represent some world power and a great conflict ushering the end of time.
 - b. Chapters 40-48 are taken literally (not as the apocalyptic imagery intended) and supposedly calls for a physically rebuilt temple, the reinstatement of animal sacrifices, a priesthood, Old Testament festivals, etc.
 2. The inaccuracy of this interpretation should be readily evident.
 - a. It grossly underestimates the nature of Christ's finished atoning work. (cf. Hebrews 10:10-14)
 - b. It misuses the style or type of literature used in chapters 38-48.
 3. The chapters in question surely refer to the coming of the Christ and the covenant He will establish.
 - a. Ezekiel 37 closes with, "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant and I will put my sanctuary among them forever." (v. 26)
 - b. Chapters 38 and 39 used the names of Jewish enemies as symbols of the persecution and enemies Satan would hurl against the church.
 - c. Chapters 40-48 portray the beauty of worship and relationship through Jesus Christ.
 - [1] The "river from the temple" (Ezekiel 47) surely refers to the "stream of living water" Jesus offered. (John 7:38)
 - [2] The prince who serves as the gatekeeper (Ezekiel 44:1-3) is surely the one who has opened heaven's gate for us.
 - [3] The presence of the Lord promised in Ezekiel 48:35 is almost certainly a reference to His Spirit living in us.
 - d. In short, Ezekiel 38-48 is not a blueprint for future world events; it apocalyptically portrays the fruition of the covenant made with Israel (i.e. - the church).
- C. Personal accountability.
1. In our study of the prophets, we have seen several examples of collective responsibility.
 - a. A whole nation is punished for the severity and prevalence of sin within it. (e.g. - Judah)
 - b. We've seen examples of innocent people taken captive because of the sins of a group. (e.g. - Daniel, Ezekiel)
 2. But Ezekiel also gives us the example of personal accountability. (cf. Ezekiel 3:16-21; 9:4; 18:1-32)
 - a. It should be noted here that there is a difference between consequence and guilt.
 - [1] At times the innocent may bear some of the consequences from the actions of the guilty.
 - [2] However, guilt or innocence is always the result of personal choice.
 - b. Ezekiel 18 is a great chapter reflecting on the theme of personal accountability. (cf. Ezekiel 18:4b, 17b-18:30)
 3. This vital principle needs to be taught in every generation.
 - a. Jesus had to rebuke the idea of collective righteousness. (cf. John 8:39ff; Matthew 3:7-10)
 - b. We need to be reminded that **my own ultimate destiny comes through my personal choice.**
- D. The Valley of Dry Bones. (Ezekiel 37)
1. In what was surely one of the more frightening parts of his vision, Ezekiel saw old, dry bones come to life.
 2. This is obviously a prophecy of the Spirit of life that Jesus would breathe into the new Israel (i.e. - His church).

EZEKIEL

Summarized Bible

Ezekiel was one of many captives taken to Babylon during the second stage of the captivity in Jehoiachin's reign (597 BC). This was about eight years after Daniel had been carried to Babylon. (Dickson Bible)

Prophecies

In the first nine chapters Ezekiel sees many visions, some simple others very elaborate but all relate to the destruction of Jerusalem with captives being taken to Babylon in three stages. All or most of the visions referred to the total destruction of Jerusalem. Such as:

- The first is the four beings having the appearance of man but each with faces of a man, lion, eagle and ox and also wheels, legs, wings, burning coals, and fire.
- Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. (Ezek 4:2)
- I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations. Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. Therefore, in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers. (Ezek 5:8-10)
- I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the Lord have spoken. (Ezek 5:17)
- Because of all the wicked and detestable practices of the house of Israel, they will fall by the sword, famine and plague. (Ezek 6:11)
- I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity or spare you. (Ezek 7:3-4)
- Doom has come upon you — you who dwell in the land. The time has come, the day is near. (Ezek 7:7)
- I will bring the most wicked of the nations to take possession of their houses; I will put an end to the pride of the mighty, and their sanctuaries will be desecrated. When terror comes, they will seek peace, but there will be none. Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumor upon rumor. (Ezek 7:24-26)
- I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them. (Ezek 8:18)
- Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. (Ezek 9:4; 6)

Destruction

In chapter 10 a significant event is prophesied - the glory of the Lord will depart from over the threshold of the temple and stop above the cherubim. God has departed from the Temple. The time for destruction of Jerusalem is near. God has promised death by plagues, famine and sword. "In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siege works all around it. So, the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land." (2 Kings 25:1-3]

1. The first siege by Babylon took place in 606 BC. Daniel and others were taken captive in this group.
2. The second deportation occurred in 597 BC. Ezekiel was in this group and prophesied to the 10,000 captives-taken— during this conquest.
3. In the third siege (586 BC) Jerusalem is sacked, the Temple destroyed, and most of the population taken captive.

4. Through all of the above, Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem.
(from *The Outlined Bible* by Steve Flatt)

Judah was not the only nation God promised to punish, Ezekiel specifically mentions:

1. Ammon
“Behold, I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession, and they shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings in your midst. They shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you will know that I am the Lord. For thus says the Lord God: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel.” (Ezek 25:1-7)
2. Moab
“I will give it along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession.” (Ezek 25:8-11)
3. Edom
“I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast. And I will make it desolate.” (Ezek 25:12-14)
4. Philistia
I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I lay my vengeance upon them.” (Ezek 25:15-17)
5. Tyre
“Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock.” (Ezek 26:1-28:19)
6. Sidon
“I will send pestilence into her, and blood into her streets; and the slain shall fall in her midst, by the sword that is against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the Lord.” (Ezek 28:20-26)
7. Egypt
“I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you man and beast, and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste.” (Ezek 29:1-32:32)

Watchman

Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so, hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself. ... 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?” (Ezek 33:7-9)

“Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, 'The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.' If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done. And if I say to the wicked man, 'You will surely die,' but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right— if

he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live. ... I will judge each of you according to his own ways.” (Ezek 33:11-16; 20)

Comment: God’s nature is love, justice and mercy. He does not want any to perish. He is always ready to forgive whenever one returns to Him. The function of a watchman is basically that of a shepherd. A shepherd watches for predators; such as wolves and thieves. A good shepherd goes after a sheep that has wandered away. He builds a fence to protect them at night. This appears to be the function of leaders of those in Christ’s Body, His church.

Vision of the Future

Beginning in Chapter 37 visions are given. The following are personal interpretations of these visions. They may be right, partially right or totally wrong.

1. Valley of Dry Bones

Dry bones scattered may represent the lives of soldiers and residences lost during their captivity of the Babylonians. Their coming to life then would be their release from captivity and returning to the Promised Land. If applied to the New Covenant, people dead in sin given a new life, forgiven of sin, on their way to a new and better Promised Land, Heaven. (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

2. Two Sticks

Ephraim, probably the Northern kingdom, the rebellious ones who left God for idols. They represent all people who do not belong to God, whereas Judah represents those still loyal to God. So, I will make a new covenant with them, cleanse them of their sins establish one kingdom, Christ Church. Jesus of the lineage of David will be their king and my dwelling place will be with them. (Ezekiel 37:15-28)

3. Gog

Gog is the king of Magog north of Israel. Josephus identifies the Magogites with the Scythians. (Ant, I, vi, 1 - International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia) They were an ancient nomadic people of Eurasia. (www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=Scythians+) Some scholars believe Atilla was of the *Scythians*. *God and Magog* are also mentioned in Revelation 19:19 “The Adversary shall be loosed out of his prison, and he shall go forth to lead the nations astray, that are in the four corners of the earth — Gog and Magog — to gather them together to war.” Therefore, the prophecy represents all who are against God. (Ezekiel 38)

4. Measurement

Those in exile probably thought when they returned to “their Promised Land” the Temple would be a most splendid and beautiful place with God returning and residing therein. But the measurement would appear to relate it to the eternal dwelling place of God.

Key Points from Ezekiel

- Because of all the wicked and detestable practices, Israel will fall by the sword, famine and plague.
- God will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices.
- The glory of the Lord will depart from over the threshold of the temple and stop above the cherubim. When God departs from the Temple, the time for destruction is near.
- As a watchman, you hear the word of God and warn those who practice evil to turn back to God.
- The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. Therefore, one can abandon God.
- I will judge each of you according to his own ways.