

#21. EZEKIEL

1. **Ezekiel, a Zadokite priest, became a prophet to the Jews in Exile in 593BC.** He was a younger (age 30) contemporary of Jeremiah (who was about 50 at this time). Like Daniel, another contemporary prophetic voice, he was taken in captivity by the Babylonians (in 597BC. Daniel went into captivity in 605BC).

2. **The author of the book is Ezekiel himself (1:3; 24:24).**

- Like Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:1) and Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1; Nehemiah 12:16), he was both a prophet and a priest.

- Ezekiel's name means *strengthened by God*.

- Ezekiel and his wife were among 10,000 Jews taken to Babylon in 597BC (2 Kings 24:11-18). They lived on the Chebar River in a village named Tel-Abib (Ezekiel 3:15). They lived with freedom to farm the land and conduct business. Ezekiel apparently owned his own home (3:24; 20:1). The prophet tells us of his wife's death in 24:18. Rabbinic tradition asserts Ezekiel died a martyr's death in 560BC. Other scholars date his death earlier, usually about 571BC.

- Of particular interest to readers is Ezekiel's vision of the departure of the Spirit, or of God's Glory, from the Temple.
 - In 8:4, God looks with grief upon the idolatrous worship.

 - In 9:3 and 10:4, His presence (also seen as His Spirit and His glory) move to the threshold of the Temple.

 - In 10:18, 19, there is another movement toward the cherub near the Holy Place.

 - In 11:22, 23, the Glory departs, not to return until the time of Messiah's kingdom.

 - In 43:2-9 and 44:4, God's glory returns to The Temple in order to initiate either the Millennial Reign or the coming of the New Jerusalem to the earth.

- Ezekiel uses numerous *illustrated parables* to express God's message.
 - Ezekiel was bound and commanded to not speak (3:23-27).
 - Ezekiel used a clay tablet and iron plate as illustrative material (4:1-3).
 - Ezekiel lay on his side for a total of 430 days (4:4-8).
 - Ezekiel ate meager portions of food in an unclean manner (4:9-17).
 - Ezekiel shaved his head and beard (5:1-4).
 - Ezekiel dug through the walls of Jerusalem (12:1-14).
 - Ezekiel ate and drank with quaking and trembling (12:17-20).
 - Ezekiel taught the parable of the wood and the vine ((15:1-8).
 - Ezekiel taught the parable of the found baby girl (16).
 - Ezekiel taught the parable of the eagle and the cedar (17).
 - Ezekiel struck his hands together while holding a sword (21:8-17).
 - Ezekiel taught the parable of the furnace of refining (22:17-22).
 - Ezekiel taught the parable of the two harlots (23).
 - Ezekiel cooked a pot of stew (24:1-14).
 - Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn the death of his wife (24:15-24).
 - Ezekiel was not allowed to speak for a season (24:25-27).
 - Ezekiel taught the parable of the shipwreck (27).

- Ezekiel taught the parable of the unfaithful shepherds (34).
- Ezekiel saw the vision of the dry bones (37).
- Ezekiel put two sticks together and they became one (37:15-28).
- The Chronology of Ezekiel's ministry
 - Ezekiel grew up in the reforms of Josiah (622-621BC).
 - The Babylonians conquered the Assyrians (612BC).
 - Josiah is killed in battle (609BC).
 - Babylon defeated Egypt at the battle of Carchemish (605BC).
 - Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar (597-596BC).
 - Ezekiel received his prophetic assignment (593BC).
 - Visions of idolatrous worship in the Temple (592BC).
 - The final siege of Jerusalem began; Ezekiel's wife died (588BC).
 - Ezekiel prophesied about Egypt (587BC).
 - The fall of Jerusalem (586BC)
 - Ezekiel's vision of the New Jerusalem (573BC)
 - Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Nebuchadnezzar's victory over Tyre and Egypt (571 BC)
- In addition to Ezekiel, the leading prophets of this period were Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Daniel and Jeremiah.

3. The Date of writing was near the time of his death, probably in 571BC.

4. Key Chapters

- **Chapters 1-24** are primarily messages of impending judgment. These chapters give us some detail of Ezekiel's call, his visions of calamity, and the warning that judgment upon Jerusalem is certain. Remember that when Ezekiel began to prophesy from Babylon, the siege of Jerusalem had not yet begun.
- **Chapters 25-32** are oracles against foreign nations. They were admonished to humble themselves, for God's judgment would eventually touch them as well.
- **Chapters 33-48** are messages of hope for Israel. Both the people of God and their worship would be restored. In this section, the reader is left to ponder which of the messages concern the natural restoration of Israel and which may refer to a millennial timeline. It is also a challenge to discern what is figurative and what is literal. In either case, the promise of restoration is complete and certain. All Israel shall be saved!

5. Key Verses

- **Ezekiel 36:22-28 NASB** "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. ²³I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. ²⁴For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. ²⁸You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God."
- **Ezekiel 37:1-6 NASB** The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. ²He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, *there were* very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, *they were* very dry. ³He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, You know." ⁴Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. ⁶I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.'"

- **Ezekiel 39:21-24 NASB** “And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them. ²²And the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God from that day onward. ²³The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword. ²⁴According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.”
- **Ezekiel 43:1-5 NASB** Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; ²and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. ³And *it was* like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions *were* like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. ⁴And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. ⁵And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.

6. Key People

- **Ezekiel** - author of the book, a prophet, and priest who preached to both Exiles and residents of Jerusalem.
- **Ezekiel's wife** - her death in chapter 24 was also a prophetic declaration concerning Judah.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** - King of Babylon; depicted more fully in Daniel's writings.
- **Leaders of Israel** - the leaders of Israel were constantly challenged by Ezekiel and Jeremiah for their failure to properly lead Judah during her most difficult times.
- **The Prince** - in Ezekiel 33:23, 24; 37:24, he is seen by Rabbi's and many Christian teachers as the Messiah. Others reemit as a civil ruler. The sacrifices in the new Temple should probably been as symbolic and therefore, may likely point to Messiah.

7. Key Places

- **Babylon** was the capitol city of Judah's opposing force, Babylon. By this time, both Ezekiel and Daniel are residents of Babylon.

- **Jerusalem** was the scene of almost all of Jeremiah's ministry.
- **Egypt** was a desired haven for many Jews, but in Ezekiel's day Jeremiah was advising against leaning on the strength of Egypt (Jeremiah 42, 43).

8. Key Themes

- ***The transcendent Glory of God***
- ***The recurring theme of the prophets: sin will separate us from God. Disobedience will cost you dearly. "Sin will take you further than you meant to go; cost you more than you were willing to pay; and keep you longer than you wanted to stay." - Eunice Chitty (1923-2005).***
- ***Civic and religious leaders must be faithful.***
- ***Worship will be perfected in God's presence.***

9. The Contents of Ezekiel

- ***Prophecies Concerning the Fall of Jerusalem (1:1-24:27)***
 - Ezekiel's background and preparation (1:1-3:27)
 - Signs of coming calamity (4:1-5:4)
 - Warnings of approaching judgments (5:5-7:27)
 - Visions of abominations in the Temple and city (8:1-11:25)
 - Explanations of judgment (12:1-24:27)
- ***Prophecies of Judgment Coming Upon Surrounding Nations (25:1-32:32)***
 - Upon Ammon (25:1-7)

- Upon Moab (25:8-11)
- Upon Philistia (25:15-17)
- Upon Tyre (26:1-28:19)
- Upon Sidon (28:20-24)
- Reflection: Yet Israel shall be restored (28:25, 26)
- Upon Egypt (29:1-32:32)
- ***Salvation is offered to Israel (33:1-33).***
- ***Prophecies of Restoration for Israel (34:1-48:35)***
 - The regathering of Israel into the Land (34:1-37:28)
 - Israel's enemies will be banished from the land (38:1-39:29).
 - True worship will be reinstated (40:1-46:24).
 - The distribution of the Land (47:1-48:35)

Worth noting

- Ezekiel portrays the siege of Jerusalem as the result of the departure of God's Glory from the city. This may represent the departure of The Holy Spirit himself. Though God is omnipresent, there is a sense in which the effectual working of His presence among a people may be lost.
- Israel's life revolved around two promises: (1) The Place which was symbolized by Jerusalem itself and (2) The Presence - symbolized by The Temple. The people could not fathom the possibility of losing both. Prophets and politicians alike failed to comprehend the message of impending judgment.

When reading the Books of Ezekiel:

- Ezekiel tells of the final failure by God's people under the Old Covenant.
- As with Daniel, the Prophet Ezekiel is preparing Israel for (1) regathering and (2) the appearance of Messiah.
- Remember Ezekiel writes from a heavily spiritual revelation. He has frequent contacts with the Spirit, dreams, visions, and mystical encounters that reveal him as both an ecstatic prophet and a classical writing prophet.