

## The Book Of Ezekiel

### Getting acquainted.

Where is God? When generally ask when things drop out from under us, the answer we fear is that God has abandoned us and want nothing to do with us.

Our response might be anger, God is not fair, or denial that anything is wrong in the first place. Perhaps we even vacillate between all three of these responses.

This is the situation facing Ezekiel and his fellow exiles in Babylon. Their world has been upended after they have been included in the first wave of deportees from Judah following Nebuchadnezzar's initial invasion of the land.

The message of Ezekiel is not only for exiled Israelites. For all who have put their faith in God and the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the answer to the question, where is God?"

Who was Ezekiel-His name means - "God strengthen" - (30:25)

God is strong" (1:3; 24:24)

"God makes hard" (3:8).

Ezekiel was the Son of Buzi.

Among the Jews taken in captivity by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in his second invasion of Judah (597 B.C.) when he was about 25 years old.

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, was a priest as well as a prophet (1:3). He was about 30 years of age when he began his Prophetic ministry to the Jews gathered there in Babylon (1:1). For six years he told of the coming fall of Jerusalem, and this takes up one-half of the Book — 24 Chapters.

\*The Central message - "They shall know that I AM the Lord." Seventy Times is written in this book."

- The Structure of the Book

(1) The Call and Commission (Chp.1:3) about 30 years old he heard God's call to be His prophet.

(2) Judgement on Jerusalem— (Chap.4–24)

(Chap. 4-7)— Prophetic of Judgement

(Chap. 8-11) — Reason for Judgement

(Chap. 12-24) — Symbols and messages of the Lord God in this Book

(3) Judgement on the Foes of Judah — (Chap.25-32)

(4) Israel's Resurrection — (Chap. 33-39)

(5) Israel in the Land During the Kingdom age — (Chap.40-48)

\* The Call and Commission Of Ezekiel (1-3)

A. The Vision Of God's Glory (1:1-28)

The call and commission came in the form of a vision.

“I saw - I felt - I heard”

The thirtieth year of Ezekiel was related to the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s exiles by the same day of the month and probably the same month.

His deportation became the focal point of all dating within the Book.

King Jehoiachin was taken captivity along with 10,000 other Jews.

(3) The word of the Lord Came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi.

He was the stated recipient of the vision.

#### \*B. The Description of the Vision (1:4-28)

##### a. The Living beings

\*The vision of (vv.4-28): comprises the divine confrontation of Ezekiel’s commissions.

(4) Ezekiel saw the signs of judgement in the whirlwind and fire followed by four cherubim with four faces. Saw four figures resembling living beings.

(Rev. 4:6-8) Each had four faces — a lion — an ox — a man — an eagle

When the Son of God became flesh, He is pictured in Matthew as the lion; in Mark, the ox; Luke, the man; John, the eagle. (Ezekiel 1:10)

(5) Four living creatures having the likeness of a man. (13) Likeness of living creatures.

(6) Every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

The wings were joined together (9,23) two covering each side of each being and the other two spread for movement, touching the wings of the other living beings. (11,23).

When they fluttered, they sounded like a great thunder of rushing water - like the voice of the almighty.

The rapid movement was like flashes of lightning (14).

These creatures only moved under the control of the Holy Spirit.

#### \*C. The Wheels and their Movement (1:15 -21)

There was one high and awesome wheel beside each of the four living creatures. (15-17) that had the general appearance of a sparkling precious stone — “chrysolite “with the rim full of eyes (v.18; Rev. 4:6j.

(15) I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces.

(19) when the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved .... where the spirit would go, they would go.

All were under the direction of the Spirit.

#### D. The Expansion (1:22-28)

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of The Lord.

(Exod 19) (Dan.10 ) and (Rev.4 ) also should cause the reader to see the entire vision as a manifestation of God's glory.

God revealed His magnificent person to Ezekiel to prepare him for ministry.

The Lord would continue to appear to Ezekiel in the same fashion throughout the book to encourage him that he was a servant of the almighty God.

The manifestation of the Lord's glory formed a backdrop for the announcements of judgement that Ezekiel would make.

- The Judgement on Jerusalem - (Chaps.4-24).

(1) Ezekiel preached to the Jews in Babylon that Jerusalem would be destroyed. He received this message through a vision (Chaps. 8 -11)

He saw in Chp.8 — Judah profaning the temple:

- verse 3 — Image of Jealousy
- Verse 7 -12 — Seventy Jewish elders offer incense to beasts.
- Verse 14-15 — Women weeping for Tammuz (Greek god).
- Verse 16 — Twenty-five men worshipping the sun.
- Verse 17-18 — The Lord says, "I will deal furiously."

Chapter 9 — A picture of judgement.

Chapter 10 — Departure of the presence of God from the temple.

Chapter 11 — The departure of the glory of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The doom of the city was stated.

(2) Ezekiel also preached and prophesied through symbolic actions (visual aids). They were done to impress the people and cause them to remember the message.

Some of the symbolic actions were:

- God caused him to be dumb — 3:26-27; 24:27)
- His posture in public (on side for days) 4:4-8.
- Sign of the brick (with drawing of Jerusalem) 4:1-3.
- Shaving of his hair — 5:1-7.
- Removal of household goods — 12:1-7.
- The death of his wife (no mourning) 24:15-27.

[Q]. Can you name some signs Jesus used to teach during His ministry?

Judgement on Foes of Israel — Chaps. 28-32

We shall pick out only one direct prophecy concerning these nations.

(1) The prophecy of Tyre — Chaps 26-28

Read 26:7-11 - This took place when Nebuchadnezzar overcame the city.

A further prophecy is in Verse 14-21.

This was fulfilled exactly, Alexander the Great some 250 years later.

(2) The Evil Force Behind Tyre — Satan — Chap.28

In (V.1-10) we see the reason behind the judgement of God upon Tyre.

The pride of the king of Tyre which is used by the Lord God to speak of the real sinister force, Satan himself.

God often spoke to Satan through another indirect source:

(Gen. 3:14-15) — He spoke to Satan through a serpent.

(Matthew 16: 23) - He spoke to the devil through Simon Peter.

Note in Ezekiel. 28:12-19 God spoke through Ezekiel to Satan through the king of Tyre. Here God describes the unfallen state of Satan.

\* “wisdom and beauty — (V. 12).

\* “you were in Eden — (V. 13 ).

\* “anointed cherub that covers” — (V. 14).

\* “perfect — till iniquity was found in thee” — (V.15).

\* “sinned — therefore I cast thee — out of mountain of God” — (V. 16).

(See Luke 10:17-18).

\*\* “thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty” — (V.17). [Pride]

Now read Isaiah (14:12-14).

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## 1). The Appearance Of the Lord’s Likeness (1-3:27)

### a. The Place of the Passage

After a brief biographical history note, Ezekiel begins with one of the most amazing depictions of the glory of God in the entire Bible. Full of strange and potentially confusing symbols, Ezekiel’s vision forms the foundation for his call and commission in (chapters 2-3) as the Lord’s prophet to the exiles in Babylon. But while the vision assures Ezekiel that God is still on the throne despite the exile, it also raises the question, “What is God doing in Babylon?”

Answering the Question is what the first section of the book (chs. 1-11) is all about.

- The Big Picture

Although God’s people are in exile, God still reigns and still speaks to them through His prophet, if they have ears to hear.

## 1. The Throne of the Lord’s Approaches (1:1-28)

As the book begins, Ezekiel is 30 years old, the age at which he would have been installed as a priest in the temple at Jerusalem (Num.4:3). Instead, something even more significant occurs he sees “visions of God” (Ezek.1:1).

In Ezekiel’s vision, four creatures not only fly but also are each stationed next to “a wheel within a wheel” (v.16). Above their wings, they carry and “expanse” on which sits a throne. This is a vision of God’s mobile chariot - throne that can go “straight forward” in any direction “without turning,” directed by God’s Spirit (v.12).

Ezekiel realizes that he has seen a vision of God, yet he calls it an “appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (Ezek.1:28). In other words, words, fail him in his attempt to describe God.

## 2. The Prophet Commissioned (2:1-3:15)

The last thing Ezekiel says in chapter 1 is that he “heard a voice speaking” (1:28). The culmination of the vision is not visual but aural. God’s voice call Ezekiel to prophetic ministry to a “rebellious house” (2:5).

[Q] What, then, is the significance of Ezekiel’s being commanded to eat a scroll with writing on both sides (2:8-3:3)?

The Lord draws a contrast between foreigners with difficult speech and the Israelites. The former would have listened to Ezekiel, but God knows that Israel will not listen (3: 4-7).

[Q] Why would God send a prophet to people He knows will not listen?

[Q] What does this suggest about the purpose of Ezekiel’s ministry?

## 3. The Duty of a Watchman (3:16-27)

The responsibilities of a watchman are common to several prophets (see Isa. 21:6-9); Hos.9:8; Hab. 2:1). Watchmen are stationed on a city wall to warn of impending danger.

[Q] What is the particular emphasis of Ezekiel’s duty as a watchman? How does that duty affect his life?

The initial vision is reprised in (Ezek. 3:22-27).

[Q] How does God ensure that Ezekiel will be a faithful watchman, speaking only words God gives him?

[Q] What does this tell us about the importance of God’s words?

## Gospel Glimpses

He Who Will Hear, Let Him Hear. Ezekiel is told to preach “whether they hear or refuse to hear” (2:7). Jesus will echo the final verse of chapter 3 by concluding many parables, “He who has ears, let him hear” (3:27; compare Matt.13:9). Spiritual life comes by hearing God’s Word.

This passage of life does not depend on us or our efforts. Nor does it come only to the worthy and righteous. God speaks to sinners. His words of warning lead to repentance and life.

The fact that He speaks, rather than leaving us alone in our sin, is grace And if we hear, we will “surely live” (Ezek. 3:21)

SON OF MAN. Ezekiel is called “son of Man” (“son of Adam”) 93 times by God, marking him out a creature in the face of the Creator. He is filled with the Spirit (2:2), who enables him to hear, obey, and speak God’s Word. It is not surprising, then that, this title will be one of Jesus’ favorite self-designations.

As the last Adam, Jesus fully identifies with us in our humanity; but He is without sin, and so qualified to be our substitute. Anointed by the Holy-Spirit, Jesus not only speaks God’s Word to us, He is God’s Word, displaying God’s glory and bringing life to all who receive Him.

#### Whole Bible Connections

\*Theophany. God is a spirit, and thus is invisible. When he appears in visible form, in what is called a “theophany” we know that a major turning point in the history of redemption has come.

Each of the redemptive covenants in the O.T. Is accompanied by a theophany - (Gen. 15; Exod.19; perhaps 2Sam. 17), and in Ezek.1, the enactment of the covenant curses is accompanied by a theophany as well.

God speaks to many, but He appears only to a few—that is, until Jesus, who is the “radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature” (Heb.1:3).

With the establishment of the new covenant, God appears not in visions and symbols but in Human Flesh.

\*Cherubim. We often think of cherubim as small, pudgy boys with stubby wings. But the Bible portrays these angels as terrifying.

They first appear in (Gen.3) wielding a flaming sword and guarding the entrance back to Eden.

Their next appearance is in (Exod.25) guarding the Ark of The Covenant the footstool of God’s Throne, in the Most Holy Place. Their appearance here in Ezekiel is meant to remind us of both of their functions, as throne-bracers and guardians of God’s holiness. Their presence portends judgement.

It is only with the coming of Jesus that we finally see angels put down their swords and take up singing!

#### Theological Soundings

\*Glory - the Hebrew word for “glory” is kabod, meaning heaven or weighty. When referring to God’s physical manifestation, the term is usually associated with brightness and light. But God’s glory, His significance, is manifested through more than light.

It sum total of His perfections and attributes, His transcendence, His sovereign majesty, His holiness, and His merciful love. And yet, God’s glory is not an abstract idea. Paul tells us that we have been given “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2Cor. 4:6).

\* The God Who Speaks - Throughout Scripture, what sets God apart for idols is that He speaks. While idols attract the eye, they impart a false confidence to the worshiper. They are mute and can neither explain the past nor tell the future (see Isa. 41: 21-29).

Not only does the God of Scriptures create and govern all things by His Word (Gen 1:3; Ps.33:6; Heb.1:3; 11:3; 2Pet.3:5); His Word is the only means of Salvation (Rom. 10:8-17) and final standard of judgement (Rom. 3:19).

God's Word brings clarity to our confusion and light to our darkness. Life and death hang in the balance of hearing and receiving God's Word.

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## 2). A Promise of Judgement and Hope

### a. The Place of the Passage

In (Ezekiel 4-24), the prophet speaks an almost unrelenting message of impending judgement against Israel. This message begins (in chapters 4-11) not only with verbal warnings but also with sign-acts dramatizing the fate of awaiting Jerusalem and its people (chap.4-5).

Ezekiel's message is not, repent before it's too late, but rather, "It's too late; the end is here." (chap. 6-7). This study's section ends about a year later with another vision.

Ezekiel is given a tour of the temple in Jerusalem, where he learns the reason the glory of the Lord has departed from Jerusalem and has come to Babylon (chaps. 8-11). But the final word from God is not one of judgement. Rather it is one of hope, that after judgement therein will be grace for a remnant of the nation.

### b. The Big Picture

Because of Israel's unfaithfulness and idolatry, the Lord will judge His people. Yet because of His grace and faithfulness the Lord will become their sanctuary.

### c. Reflection and Discussion

#### 1, God agonist Jerusalem (4:1-5:17)

For over a year, God commands Ezekiel to enact the siege against Jerusalem like a boy playing with toy soldiers (4: 1-3), and then dramatize the experience of those inside the city, which was not fun and games at all.

Finally, the prophet dramatizes the final fate of the inhabitants, as he burns, slices, and scatters the hairs of his head. (5:1-4).

Through this the prophet is to remain mute unless God gives him something to say.

[Q] Why is "street theater" particularly appropriate for Ezekiel's audience?" (see 3:7).

Repeatedly in his sign-acts, Ezekiel plays the part of both God and the people.

Representing God, he passes the siege with "arm bared" (4:7) and weighs the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the scale (5:1).

As the people eat the rations of starvation (4:10-12).

[Q] As Ezekiel represents God, what is the significance of the "iron griddle" (Eze.4:8)?

[Q] As he plays the people, what is the significance of the "cords"?

The sign-act and motivation are explained beginning in (5:5). God declares that He will "satisfy" His wrath and has "spoken in Jealousy" (5:13).

[Q] How does (5:11) Help us to make sense of wrath and jealousy in God, emotions that are usually inappropriate in us?

### 1. The End Has Come (6:1-7:27)

Chapter 6 announces the judgement of God against the mountains of Israel.

[Q] What is occurring on the mountain that occurs God's wrath ?

God declares that the people's altars and idols will be "broken" and defiled by their own dead bodies (6:5-6), bringing the curse of (Lev. 26:30) to bear.

Then he declares that those who survive will remember how God was "broken" over their idolatry, using the same word.

[Q] How does this help us to understand God's feelings about sin ?

In (Ezekiel 7) the focus of judgement switches to the "land of Israel," and the background is no longer idolatry and the curses of (Lev.26) but rather social injustice and the prophecy of (Amos 8).

Five times in this chapter God says He will punish or judge Israel "according to your ways."

[Q] In light of (Amos 8) what "ways" are particular in view?

Chapter 6 & 7 of Ezekiel are punctuated by repeated variations of the statement, "You shall know that I am the Lord" (6:7; compare (6:10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9, 12), but that knowledge is not the result of repentance and faith.

[Q] What brings them to this knowledge?

[Q] How does such knowledge reveal the glory of the Lord?

### 3.The Glory of God Departs (8:1-11;25)

Just over a year after his first vision, Ezekiel has a second vision, one in which he is transported to the temple in Jerusalem.

[8] In Chapter 8, what does he see taking place there? Are we understanding this literally or spiritually?

In response to Israel's, idolatry God does to His own house and city what He did to the high places in (Chapter 6:) He defiles with the dead bodies (9:7).

But God also marks out and spares a remnant.



[Q] What distinguishes the remnant marked on their foreheads from those to be slaughtered?

[Q] Why is Ezekiel concerned that the remnant might not survive (9:8)?

In (9:3), “The glory of the God of Israel “moves from the Most Holy Place to the threshold of the temple. Then, chapter 10. “the glory of the Lord” mounts the chariot-throne seen in chapter 1 and moves to the “east gate” of the house of the Lord.

“Finally, in chapter 11, “ the glory of the God of Israel “ departs Jerusalem entirely, heading east, to Mount Olives.

[Q] Why does God depart in stages?

[Q] What does this reveal about God?

[Q] How does this help us understand God appearance in Babylon in chapters (1)?

For the second time, Ezekiel ask if God will make a “full end of the remnant” (11:13); compare 9:8).

In reply, God declares that the true sanctuary for God’s people is not the building in Jerusalem but the Lord Himself.

He promises to make His people fit to worship in that sanctuary.

[Q] How will He do so?

[Q] How has He already begun?

Gospel Glimpses

a. Sin-Bearer, Sin