

Introduction to Ezekiel

1) **Author:** Ezekiel

- a) Book states Ezekiel is author.
 - i) Dominant Autobiographical style supports this.
 - ii) Ezekiel is not mentioned in any other book of the Bible.
- b) He lives in Babylon and was part of the exile in 597 BC
- c) He is of a priestly lineage.
- d) God appoints him to be a prophet for the Jews in exile.

2) **Date:** Ezekiel contains more specific dates than any other OT prophecy book.

- a) There are 12 specific times referenced when Ezekiel receives a divine message.
- b) Ezekiel called July 31, 593 BC and last message received April 26, 571 BC.
- c) His ministry began 7 years before the destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC) and lasted 22 years.

3) **Audience:** Exiled Jews in Babylon. Contemporary of Jeremiah, similar yet separate audience.

- a) They were rebellious, stubborn, and hardened (2:3-8)

4) **Historical and Theological Setting:**

- a) God's people are in the midst of the judgment promised them for their disobedience.
- b) Ezekiel is warning the exiles about the pending destruction of the land (Jerusalem specifically) and the Temple.
 - i) These represent the physical markers of their identity as God's people.
 - (1) Land is part of the covenant made with Abraham
 - (2) The temple represents the presence of God among them
- c) Ezekiel calls them to repent and mourn their sin and the justice of God that is coming.
 - i) The people dismiss his warnings by:
 - (1) saying his prophecies are far in the future (12:27)
 - (2) By believing false prophets who promised "peace when there is no peace" (13:10)
 - (3) Pass blame to others (18:1-4)
 - (4) Questioning the justice of the Lord's judgment (18:25, 29)
 - ii) Part of Ezekiel's prophetic work is mourning for and on behalf of the people. (2:8-10)
- d) The driving force behind God's judgment upon the land and the temple was his desire and intention to be known and acknowledged as sovereign.
 - i) The phrase (or variations) "they will know that I am the LORD" appears approx. 65 times in the book.
 - (1) Almost all of Ezekiel's prophetic judgments contain the phrase.
 - ii) God's sovereignty is essential to His identity and glory
 - (1) Exodus 3:13-15; 33:18-19
 - iii) The book addresses two threats to God's Sovereignty and Glory
 - (1) Internally: Idolatry of his People
 - (2) Externally: The surrounding nations.

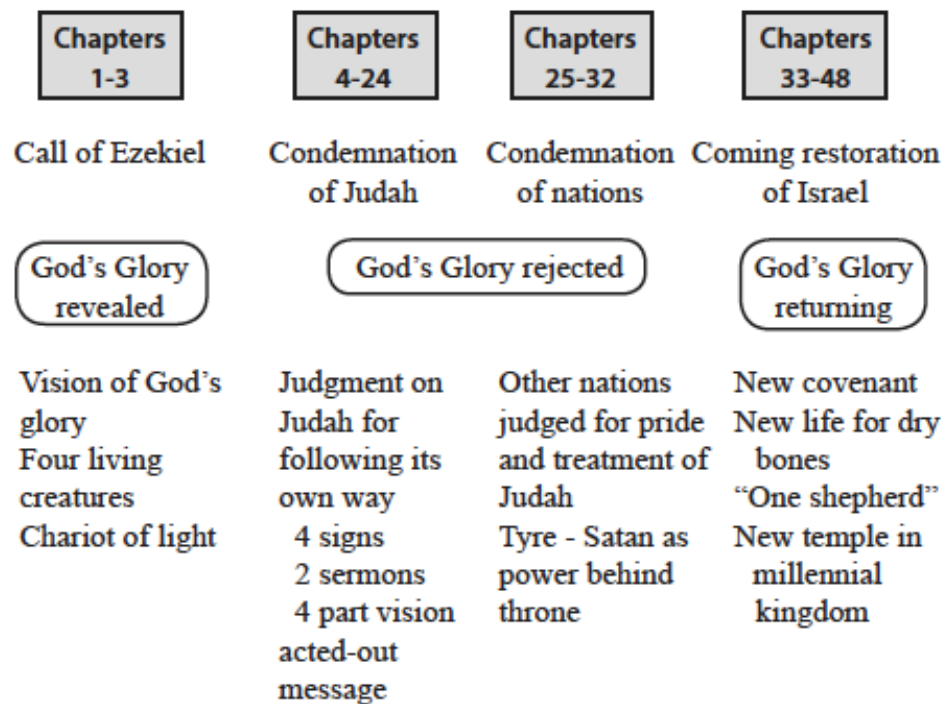
b. **Exilic** – (2 books)

- **Ezekiel** “God strengthens” (to exiles in Babylon)
593 BC - 571 BC

1. Introduction and Outline (found at the beginning of the book)

2. Structure and Major Divisions

- 48 chapters
- 4 major divisions



Ezekiel → **The revelation, rejection and return
of God's glory in Israel**

EZEKIEL

God's prophet among the exiles in Babylon

3. Book chart

224

Call of Ezekiel		Condemnation of Judah								Condemnation of Other Nations		Coming Restoration of Israel					
1	3	4								24	25	32	33			48	
- Visions of God's glory (1) 4 cherubim chariot of light - Word of God eaten by son of man (2) - Hand of the Lord was strong on me (3) "Whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them." (2:5) — God - give them warning from me (3:17)		Judah judged for: <u>idolatry, immorality, disobedience, shedding innocent blood, profane rulers, foreign alliances</u> "Is My way unjust? Is it not your ways that are unjust?" (18:25)								Judgment on: <u>Ammon</u> - rejoiced at Judah's distress <u>Moab</u> - said Judah just another nation <u>Edom</u> - vengeful against Judah <u>Philistia</u> - violence/scorn (25) <u>Tyre</u> - laughed at Judah's distress judgment (26) lamentation (27) destruction of prince (28) king (28) Satan as power behind Tyre (28:11-19) <u>Sidon</u> <u>Egypt</u> - because you said the Nile is mine (29) Judgment described (30-32)		Majesty of Israel Restored Ezekiel appointed as Israel's watchman (33) Jerusalem falls (33:21) False shepherd True Shepherd (34) Edom destroyed (35) <u>New Covenant</u> New heart (36) New spirit Forgiveness of sins "I will be your God"		Millennial Kingdom Reviewed "Declare all that you see" New temple (40-42) Glory returns thru East Gate (43) Memorial sacrifices and worship the right way (43-45) Priests/ Passover/ Sabbath/Festivals (45-46) River of life in new land (47) "The Lord is there" (48)			
		4 Signs Brick Lie on side Bread Scales to weigh hair One-third to die by sword and famine and one-third by scattering	2 Sermons Against mountains of Israel "So will I spend my wrath upon them." (6:12) But, "I shall leave a remnant." (6:8) "An unheard of disaster is coming." (7:5)	4-part Vision God's glory (8) Slay all who do not have my mark X (9) Jerusalem on fire (10) Glory departed from temple (11) Evil princes (11) Then I told the exiles	2 Signs 3 Sermons 3 Parables 1 Proverb a lament (19) I will perform it Baggage for exile (12) Eat with trembling (12) Woe to false prophets/ witches (13) Woe to idolatrous elders (14) "Noah, Daniel, Job" (14) Unfruitful vine (15) Adulterous women (16) Two eagles (17) Sour grapes (18)	Sermon to the elders of Israel No right to inquire I will protect My Holy Name I will judge; I will restore Fire/sword Sign of two sisters Boiling pot Death of Ezekiel's wife There was no one to stand in the gap (22:30)											
1	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	19	20	24	25	32	33	39	40	48
God's Glory Revealed		God's Glory Rejected										God's Glory Returning					

592 BC

"Thus they shall know that a prophet has been in their midst and that I am the Lord"

570 BC

DJM

4. Summary of content

Introduction

While Jeremiah prophesied before and during the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was an exilic prophet/priest in Babylon among the exiles from Judah having likely gone to Babylon in 597 BC with the second group of deportees. While Jeremiah had focused on the spiritual and material restoration after the exile, Ezekiel focused on the re-establishment of the religious system and the temple both after the exile and in the future millennial kingdom. Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon before, during and after the Fall of Jerusalem.

While Ezekiel ministered for over 22 years to the people in exile, to give them hope and encouragement, most of his prophecies dealt with things far in the future.

The book is built around three main visions

- Glory of God revealed (1)
- Glory of God rejected (11)
- Glory of God returning (43)

Chapters 1-3 Call of Ezekiel (God's Glory revealed)

The call of Ezekiel was built around a vision of the glory of God which was so awesome as to almost be indescribable. The main elements of the vision included thunder and lightning, a chariot of light, four living creatures (angelic cherubim) and God on His throne. The "glory" of God is the full weight of the manifestation of His Holy character and perfections. Ezekiel is given the Word of God on a scroll to eat, digest and then deliver to the people. The "hand" of God was on Ezekiel. This vision of the glory of God is like the ones later described in chapter 3, 10 and 43.

Glory of God Revealed: Ezekiel's vision Ch 1-3

- 1) **Four Creatures** - Cherubim (as revealed in second vision CH.10:15-17)
 - a) Guardians (at entrance of Eden Gen. 3:24)
 - b) Attendants of God's throne
 - c) Depicted on Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:18)
- 2) **The wheels**
 - a) Possibly a picture of God's omnipresence (bisected wheels) and omniscience (covered in eyes)
 - b) Or depicting the speed and knowledge of the creatures as God's servant's. (more likely) 1:20
- 3) **The man on the Throne** (1:25)
 - a) "One in the Likeness of the glory of the LORD"
 - i) Ezekiel witnesses the glory of God away from the Temple and into the place of exile.
 - ii) previews the coming of God's presence in bodily form
(1) (Phil 2, Heb 1:3)
 - iii) Hint that God's presence with his people will no longer be tied to a building (tabernacle and temple) but that it will be an Incarnation.
- 4) **Ezekiel called as a prophet.**
 - a) Ez. 3:1 He is called to proclaim the words of God to God's people.
 - i) They will not listen (3:6-11)
 - b) He is called as a watchman
 - i) 3:17 He is to warn God's people of the coming destruction
 - c) He is confronted with the glory of the Lord (3:23)
 - i) He falls face down and needs the Spirit of the Lord to raise him back up.
 - d) His ministry is bound by the Lord.
 - i) He can only speak the words God gives him (3:26)

- (1) "unable to reprove them" what do you make of this?
- (2) Their salvation is directly tied to hearing the message of God.
 - (i) Who decides who hears?
 - (b) Does this idea translate into our ministry? Romans 10
 - (i) v. 8 The word is "in your mouth and in your heart"
 - (ii) v.9 What is the word? The gospel
 - (iii) v.14-17 the order of operations: we cannot believe unless we hear the gospel. we cannot hear the gospel unless it is preached.
 - (iv) V.19 God foretells through Moses of the gospel going to the Gentiles
 - (v) v.20-21 What does Paul say of Isaiah's message regarding the Gospel?

Chapters 4-24

Condemnation of Judah (God's Glory rejected)

Through a series of signs, sermons, visions, parables and acted-out messages Ezekiel delivered to the Jewish exiles in Babylon a four-fold message

- that Jerusalem would be destroyed
- that the 70 yr. captivity was the result of the people's and rulers' sins
- that God was with them in Babylon and they should not forget Him
- that there would be a remnant preserved through the captivity.

It was both a stern message of warning and also a strong message of hope. Significantly, in chapter 11 the glory of God is seen leaving the temple which signifies God's great displeasure over the sins of the people and that His presence cannot abide with sin. When Israel rejected God by sin and disobedience His glory departed. God's glory represented His provision, protection and presence. The glory of God returned in the person of Christ (see **Jn. 1:14**) but was partially veiled in His body. Once again the glory of God was rejected by Israel as Christ was crucified. The full glory of God does not return until the 2nd Advent of Christ.

Glory of God Rejected - Judah is Condemned Ch. 4-24

1. Ezekiel is used as an object lesson
 - i. Ch. 4 Siege of Jerusalem is Symbolized
2. God declares his judgment upon Jerusalem (**5:5, 8**)
 - a. God declares his judgment on the Mountains where the pagan sanctuaries were located.
 - b. Even in the midst of Judgment, there is a promise of mercy. (**Ez.6:8-10**)
 - c. God Declares his Judgment on the entire land of Israel (**7:5-9**)
 - i. The places that people would usually go for refuge are not safe from his judgment.
 - d. Ch. 8 and 9 God Judges the idolaters in the Temple. (**9:3-11**)
 - e. The Glory of the Lord Departs from the Temple (10:18)
 - f. Even though the glory of God (his presence) leaves the temple, there is hope. (11:16-17) God is their sanctuary.
 - i. As supported by the visions that Ezekiel has of God appearing like a man, this is pointing to the fact that the Temple was a type of something greater: Jesus. (**John 1:14, 2:19**)
3. God's new Covenant is declared. Ch. 11
 - a. While the central images of the Old Covenant (Jerusalem, Temple) being destroyed God promises a new Covenant. **Ez. 11:17-21**
 - i. This covenant promises to give its recipients a Heart of flesh and a new spirit
 - ii. Moses foreshadowed this In Deuteronomy 29 and 30, at the beginning of the Old Covenant
 1. 29:4 - God must give them ability to understand and obey, he hadn't done that yet.
 2. 29:22-28 - Their idolatry and rebellion are foretold. *The law was never intended as the source of salvation.*
 3. 30:1-6 - Moses foretells of God's restoration from his judgment where the people will obey after God makes it so they can obey - "circumcise the heart"
 - iii. Jeremiah expounds upon the New Covenant 31-34
 1. Hebrews reveals that Jesus is the mediator of this new Covenant. Heb. 7:22, 8:6, 9:15
 - b. God Continues to point out the guilt of his people with three Parables:
 - i. Ch. 15 - Jerusalem as a useless vine.
 - ii. Ch. 16 Jerusalem as an Adulterous Wife
 - iii. Ch. 17 Two Eagles and a vine.
 1. Jerusalem's guilt is summed up in Zedekiah's actions.
 2. v. **22-24** is the twist. The branch that God plants becomes fruitful.
 - a. (Is. 4:2, 11:1, Jer 23:5, 6)
4. Ezekiel's wife dies (ch. 24:15, 18)
 - a. The temple is destroyed at the same time 24:21

- b. Ezekiel is to be an example of them in how they are to mourn.

Chapters 25-32 **Condemnation of other nations**

As with Jeremiah, Ezekiel was not just a prophet to Judah but also to other nations. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt are all condemned for their sins and treatment of Judah. Egypt is especially singled out because of the many alliances which she made with Judah — Egypt trusted in herself and Judah often trusted in Egypt instead of God. God is “sovereign Lord” of the nations.

There is also an important denunciation of Tyre which includes an incredible description of Satan as the power behind the human throne. (see Chapter 28)

These messages of condemnation would serve two purposes

- to remind the other nations that God would also judge their sins
 - to encourage Judah that God would punish her enemies.
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Gods Judgment upon the Nations: Chapters 25-32

- 1) God dealt to the inward threat to his glory by dealing with the sin and idolatry of the people.
- 2) Now he is going to deal with the outward threat. The nations around Israel that rejoiced in its destruction (25:2-3)
 - a) Chapter 28 Is this a picture of Satan?

Chapters 33-48 **Coming restoration of Israel** (God’s Glory returning)

This last section is divided into two parts. First, in chapters 33-39, Ezekiel as God’s watchman reviews the fall of Jerusalem and then looks forward in hope to the time when God will restore the religious vitality of Israel and Judah through the new covenant. New life will come to the Jews’ spiritually dry bones and “our Shepherd” (Christ) will lead them. Before this future restoration, however, there will be a time of tribulation and war but God will prevail for the Jews against all the enemies. The Gog and Magog battle of **Eze. 36-39** is not the same as that of **Rev. 20:7-9**.

The “new covenant” will bring to the Jews (and Gentiles)

- a new heart
- a new spirit
- forgiveness of sins

and the Lord will be their God.

The second part of this section, chapters 40-48, details a then far future time when the temple would be rebuilt to serve as a focal point of worship during the millennial kingdom reign of Christ on earth as Messiah. The glory of God will return through the east gate at the second advent of Christ and temple worship will resume. It will, however, be as a memorial to the atoning, sacrificial death of Christ and provide the Jews with an opportunity to worship God as He always desired they would (see chart near Ezekiel 40 in the NIV/NASB/KJV or related resources in other Study Bibles).

The Restoration of Israel: Chapters 33-48

- 1) 33: 21 News of Jerusalem's fall marks a turning point from mourning (the prophesied judgment) to Joy in the prophesied redemption.
 - a) The judgment has reached its zenith and is subsiding
 - b) V. 22 Ezekiel's voice is returned as a mark that the mourning period is over.
- 2) God desires in judgment is that people repent. 33:11-1

- 3) God will be their Shepherd.
 - a) 34:20-24 Who is this prince?
 - i) Jer. 23:5-6 (similar context of judgment upon the shepherds)
 - ii) Ez. 37:24-28
 - iii) John 10:11-18 Jesus is the Good Shepherd

- 4) All of the covenants united under the New Covenant: The Valley of Dry Bones
 - a) 37:24-26
 - i) Davidic - Promise of eternal king
 - ii) Mosaic - follow of the laws and decrees
 - iii) Abrahamic - The promise of land.
 - iv) These are all fulfilled in the New Covenant of which Christ is the mediator.

- 5) Prophecy against Gog Chapters 38-39.
 - a) Final epic battle in which God has great victory over the nations. This battle demonstrates two things:
 - i) God demonstrates that Israel's exile was a sign of God's Holiness (punishment of sin), not a sign of His weakness. (38:16, 23 39:21-24)
 - ii) God reveals that he is truly the Holy One. (39:25-29)
 - b) Rev. 20:7-9 (Gog and Magog symbolic of the nations rising against God's people)
 - i) This passage parallels Ezekiel in that it immediately proceeds the restoration of the promised land.
 - ii) It is God's final cleansing before he restores everything.
 - (1) (Noah and the flood).

- 6) The temple is restored. Ch 40-42
 - a) What does this temple represent?
 - i) The final restoration of God's relationship with his covenant people.
 - (1) 40:1-4 Ezekiel told to tell the exiles all that he sees of the temple restoration.
 - b) The Glory of the Lord Returns 43:1-5
 - i) Parallels his vision in Ch 1:25-28,
 - (1) the glory is no longer a pillar of fire, cloud of smoke
 - (2) It is in the form of a Man. (Heb. 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...")
 - ii) The Glory returns back from the direction it departed.

- 7) The temple is restored. Is this a literal temple or figurative?
 - a) **Literal** - this represents an actual temple that is rebuilt and utilized during the millennial reign of Jesus (Rev.20:1-6)
 - i) Became the dominant view of Evangelical Christianity during the 20th century with the rise of Dispensational Theology.
 - ii) This is supported by the extreme detail contained in the text describing the physical building and the renewed tasks.
 - iii) In this view, worship at the temple will be restored in the Millennial kingdom.
 - (1) In this system, the sacrifices are symbolic and memorial of Jesus' sacrifice
 - b) **Figurative** – The vision of the temple is figurative language pointing to the restoration of the presence of God in the New Heavens and New Earth
 - c) If it is figurative, it begs the question: "Why spend so much time on the details?"
 - i) This relationship is described in the language that the people of the day (and especially for Ezekiel as a priest) would have understood—a Jewish temple of magnificent proportions, with regular, perfect sacrifices, with the Messiah presiding, and with the glory of God visibly evident.
 - d) Support for the figurative view:
 - i) Many of the offerings described are sin offerings (43:19, 45:22). If this is a literal then the purpose for these sacrifices is not a memorial.
 - (1) Jesus eliminates the need for any further sin offerings
 - (a) Heb. 10:1-4 states that the sacrifices would have stopped if they cleansed sin
 - (b) Heb. 10:14 Jesus sacrifice is perfect making things holy forever.
 - ii) River flowing from the Temple
 - (1) Impossible dimensions, it gets infinitely deeper as it goes.

- iii) The divisions and boundaries of the land in Chapters 47 and 48 are idealized and not exact. Seems to indicate they are symbolic.
- iv) This passage has close parallels with end of Revelation, which describes the new heavens and new earth:
 - (1) Battle of Gog
 - (2) Rev. 21:22 Jesus is the replacement of a physical temple
 - (a) John 2:19-20 (Jesus refers to his body as the temple)
 - (3) Rev 22 River of Life flowing not from the temple building, but from the throne.

Whether figurative or Literal, the message is the same. God has not forsaken those whom he chose to save. He will wipe away all sin and make all things new.

Ez. 48:35 His new creation will be named forever THE LORD IS THERE!