

Ezekiel

I. The Main Idea of Ezekiel

Although God's people were being sent into exile, God's city was about to be reduced to ashes, and God's Temple had been abandoned by God, God was not defeated.

- As he had always been, God was sitting on his throne and was directing the events of history for his glory.
- Because of the people's rebellion, he was abandoning them and sending judgment upon them, but it was all according to his plan.
- In the future, he would restore them to their place and would make things better than new.

II. Outline of Ezekiel

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| ▪ Ezekiel 1-3 | Ezekiel's Vision and Call |
| ▪ Ezekiel 4-24 | God's Judgment on Israel |
| ▪ Ezekiel 25-32 | God's Judgment on the Nations |
| ▪ Ezekiel 33-48 | Israel's Future Salvation |

DeRouchie, ed. *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013), 405.

Ezekiel follows the same pattern as many other prophets:

- (1) Judgment is coming if you don't repent.
- (2) Since you didn't repent, judgment is falling on you.
- (3) But God is not done with you yet ... there will be a future restoration.

III. Interpretive Keys to Ezekiel

Genre: Mostly Narrative, Some Poetry

Historical Note:

- Ezekiel was taken into exile in 597 B.C., about 11 years before Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Although Ezekiel is in “the land of the Chaldeans [i.e., the Babylonians]” (Ezek. 1:3), he sometimes sees visions of things that are happening back in Jerusalem (for example, his vision of events in the temple in chapters 8-11).
- Sometimes his prophecies are directed to the Jews who are in exile with him and sometimes they are directed to the Jews who are still in Judah.

IV. Key Passages of Ezekiel

Ezekiel 4, 5, 12, 21, and 24 - Ezekiel's Dramas

- Ezekiel is given several instructions about role playing his prophecies. God has Ezekiel ...
 - o Re-enact the siege of the city in miniature form using a brick which represented Jerusalem (4:1-3).
 - o Lay on his left side for 390 days and then lay on his right side for 40 days, representing the period of iniquity of Israel and Judah, respectively (4:4-8).
 - o Cook his food over dung during that period to represent the ceremonially unclean food the Exiles will eat (4:9-15).
 - o Cut off his hair with a sword, burn a third of it, beat a third of it with a sword, and scatter the last third to the wind to represent the fate of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (ch. 5).
 - o Pack his bags, dig through a wall and carry his bags out by night to represent the Judeans going into Exile (12:1-16).
 - o Eat and drink with anxiety to represent how the Judeans will eat and drink after the destruction of the land (12:17-20).
 - o Groan in front of the people because of the upcoming news about the destruction of Jerusalem (21:6-7).
 - o Clap his hands together, representing God clapping His hands as He carries out His wrath on the nation (21:14-17).
 - o Not mourn for his wife when she died to represent how the people in Exile would not be allowed to mourn when Jerusalem was destroyed (24:15-24).
- This was done so that he would be a sign to the people (12:11; 24:24, 27).

Ezekiel 8-11 - Ezekiel's vision of God's glory leaving the temple

- Through a vision, God showed Ezekiel the physical and spiritual realities that were happening in the Temple back in Jerusalem.
 - o Chapter 8 – Physical Reality:

- The Israelites were worshiping idols and other gods, even within the Temple itself. Key phrase: "But you will see still greater abominations."
- Note: Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek. 1:3). As a priest, he had permission to go into the rooms of the Temple. So for this prophetic job, God didn't choose just any Israelite to be a prophet. He chose someone who was a priest so that his own laws would be upheld as he showed Ezekiel around the Temple.
- o Chapter 9 – Physical and Spiritual Reality:
 - God sends out an angel to execute judgment on the idolatrous people. Numerous people are slain.
- o Chapters 10 & 11 – Spiritual Reality:
 - The glory of God leaves the temple. God mounts his throne on wheels and starts moving east from the Temple building itself, through the Temple gates, and to the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 33-48 – Prophecies of Israel's Restoration and Future Glorification

- In this section, Ezekiel finally receives the message that Jerusalem has fallen (33:21-22). After confronting the sin of the people one more time, he is given a series of messages that provide hope to the suffering nation.
- This hope included a return to the land (36:1-37:14), a reunification of Israel & Judah with a Davidic king ruling over them (37:15-28), and God's protection against enemy forces (ch. 38-39).
- It also included a vision of a rebuilt temple which was bigger and better than even Solomon's temple (chs. 40-42), a return of the Lord's presence to the temple (43:1-12), and a reinstatement of a sacrificial system (43:13-46:24).
 - o The Lord's presence returns to the Temple from the same direction that it departed: from the east.
- And it also included a restoration, expansion and improvement of the land to Israel.
 - o First, there will be a river which flows out of the Temple and eventually changes the Dead Sea from saltwater to freshwater (47:1-12).
 - o Second, the full extent of the land that was promised to Abraham will be possessed by the Israelites (47:13-23). Each of the tribes will have a designated section of land to live on (48:1-29), and the name of Jerusalem will be changed to "Yahweh Is There" (48:30-35).
- Although some of these prophecies may have been partially fulfilled during the centuries before Jesus was born, it seems best to understand them as referring to a period which is still in the future, most likely during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ (however, that is a debated issue among Christians).

V. Messianic Elements within Ezekiel

Direct Prophecies

The Messiah as the Good Shepherd

- Ezekiel 34:23-31 "And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken. ..."

The Promise of the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Days of the New Covenant

- Ezekiel 36:26-28 "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God."

Type of Christ(?)

Ezekiel Called "Son of Man"

- The name "Ezekiel" only occurs 2 times in the book of Ezekiel. Instead, God calls Ezekiel "son of man" over 90 times in the book. This Hebrew phrase can be translated as "son or man" or "son of Adam" (cf. The Chronicles of Narnia). It emphasizes the fact that Ezekiel is a human being.
 - Ezekiel 2:1 "And he said to me, '**Son of man**, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.'"
 - Ezekiel 3:1 "And he said to me, '**Son of man**, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.'"
 - Ezekiel 4:1 "And you, **son of man**, take a brick and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, even Jerusalem."
 - Ezekiel 5:1 "And you, O **son of man**, take a sharp sword. Use it as a barber's razor and pass it over your head and your beard. Then take balances for weighing and divide the hair."
 - Ezekiel 6:1-2 "The word of the Lord came to me: '**Son of man**, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them.'"
 - Ezekiel 7:1-2 "The word of the Lord came to me: 'And you, O **son of man**, thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel: An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.'"
- Daniel uses the same phrase in a prophecy about Jesus: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him" (Daniel 7:13). This passage will be explored when we discuss the book of Daniel.
- Significantly, the title "Son of Man" was Jesus' most common way of referring to Himself. This phrase refers to Jesus almost 80 times in the Gospels:

- o Matthew 26:1-2 "When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the **Son of Man** will be delivered up to be crucified.'"
- o Mark 10:45 "For even the **Son of Man** came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- o Luke 19:10 "For the **Son of Man** came to seek and to save the lost."
- o John 3:14-15 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the **Son of Man** be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."
- When this phrase is used of Jesus, it is emphasizing his humanity, similar to how the phrase is used in Ezekiel. Just as Ezekiel was a fully human "son of Adam," Jesus too was a fully human "son of Adam."