

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

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Ezekiel

Theme: Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon during the entire period of his ministry, which began seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and which ended about fifteen years after that event. Like that of Isaiah his message was one of denunciation and consolation. "The central point of Ezekiel's predictions is the destruction of Jerusalem.

Before this event his chief object was to call to repentance those living in careless security; to warn them against indulging the hope that, by the help of the Egyptians, the Babylonian yoke would be shaken off (17:15-17); and to assure them that the destruction of their city and temple was inevitable and fast approaching.

After this event, his principal care was to console the exiled Jews by promises of future deliverance and restoration to their land; and to encourage them with assurance of future blessings." - (Angus Green).

We shall sum up the theme as follows:

The departure of GOD's glory from Israel in prospect of coming judgment; and the return of His glory in prospect of future restoration.

Author: Ezekiel. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest as well as a prophet. He was carried captive together with King Jehoiachim by Nebuchadnezzar about ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He made his home at TelAbib in Babylon. There he ministered to the exiles who, for the most part, resisted his words, clinging to the false hope of a speedy return.

Tradition tells us that he was put to death by one of the exiles whom he had rebuked for idolatry.

Scope: The historical events recorded in this book cover a period of 21 years from about 595 to 574 B. C.

CONTENTS:

- I. The Prophet's Call (Chs. 1-3).
- II. The Fate of Jerusalem and the Nation (Chs. 4-24).
- III. Prophecies Against the Nations (Chs. 25-32).
- IV. The Restoration of Israel (Chs. 33-48).

I. The Prophet's Call (Chs. 1 to 3)

We shall notice here:

1. Ezekiel's vision, (chap. 1). Like that of Isaiah, Ezekiel's call was preceded by a vision of the glory of the Lord (Compare Isaiah Ch. 6). The living creatures mentioned in this chapter are the Cherubim, an order of angelic beings whose ministry seems to be, in relation to mankind, the guardianship and vindication of GOD's holiness (See Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18-22; Numbers 7:89; I Samuel 4:14; II Samuel 6:2; I Kings 8:6, 7; II Kings 19:15, Psalm 18:10; 80:1; 99:1; Revelation 4:6-8).
2. His commission and message (2:1-3:9).
As in the case of Isaiah, Ezekiel's message was one of condemnation to a disobedient people.
3. His responsibility (3:10-21). He is appointed as a watchman over the house of Israel, with a solemn warning against neglect of duty.
4. His second vision of the glory of the Lord (3:22~27). Ezekiel was not to begin immediately his ministry of preaching, but was to refrain from speaking till so instructed by the Lord. He was to abide in his house until he received from the Lord the revelations concerning Israel's fate.

II. The Fate of Jerusalem and of the Nations (Ch 4 to 24)

1. Ezekiel has been commanded by the Lord to be silent until instructed to prophesy (3:26, 27); but though silent concerning oral messages, he is commanded to speak to the nation by means of symbolic actions, or signs (Chs. 4-6), as follows:
 - (a) By a tile and an iron pan Ezekiel acts out the siege of Jerusalem (4:1-3).
 - (b) To signify the punishment that Israel was to bear for the period of 390 years in which they had sinned (from Jeroboam's establishment of idolatry till the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar); and Judah's punishment for her forty years' iniquity (beginning at Josiah's covenanting, II Kings 23:3-27, and ending at the events recorded in Jeremiah 52:30), Ezekiel lies on his side a day for each year of that period of idolatry and sin (4:4-8).
 - (c) To signify the famine that is to prevail during the siege, he is to eat his bread by weight and drink his water by measure (4:9-17).
 - (d) By the sign of the cutting of the prophet's hair is symbolized the destruction of the people of Jerusalem by famine, pestilence, and the sword (5:1-17).

2. A series of messages predicting desolations upon the land and judgments upon the people (Chs. 6, 7).

3. A vision of the destruction of Jerusalem (Chs. 8-11).

(a) One of the causes of its coming destruction - the idolatry of its inhabitants (Ch. 8). The beast worship of Egypt (v. 10); the immoral rites of the worship of Tammuz (v. 14); Persian sun worship (v. 16).

(b) A vision of the slaughter of the people and the sealing of a faithful remnant (Ch. 9).

(c) A vision of the scattering of the altar fire Over Jerusalem, perhaps symbolic of the burning of the city (Ch. 10).

(d) The departure of GOD's glory from Jerusalem - a sign of coming judgment (Ch. 11).

4. By the signs of Ezekiel's removing as a fugitive and his partaking of his food as if in time of famine, is set forth the nearness of Judah's captivity (Ch. 12). Then follows a denunciation of the prophets who falsely predict peace and a speedy return from captivity (Ch. 13), and of those leaders who with insincere motives inquire of the Lord concerning the same matter (Ch. 14).

5. Israel's worthlessness is set forth under the figure of a burning vine (Ch. 15), and her faithlessness under the figure of a harlot (Ch. 16).

6. In the parable of the great eagle is shown the punishment of Zedekiah's treachery in breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, and in calling the aid of Egypt in rebelling against him (Ch. 17).

7. The Lord's vindication of Himself against the charge that He was punishing the present generation for the sins of their fathers (Ch. 18).

8. A lamentation over the fall of the house of David (Ch. 19).

9. A review of Israel's history illustrating their faithlessness and the Lord's longsuffering and faithfulness, and teaching that His fidelity is a guarantee of their future restoration, even though that restoration must come through the purging fires of tribulation (Ch. 20).

10. By the sign of the sighing prophet and the sword of GOD, is again repeated the warning of Jerusalem's coming destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Ch. 21). Notice the prophecy of the overthrowing of the throne of David until Messiah come (vv. 26, 27).

11. An enumeration of Jerusalem's sins, which will bring her through the fiery furnace of affliction for her purification (Ch. 22).

12. Israel's and Judah's apostasy and punishment is set forth under the parable of Aholah and Aholibah, the two faithless and adulterous women (Ch. 23).

13. Jerusalem is compared to a boiling pot and her inhabitants to the bones and meat within, producing a vile scum; this is typical of the seething wickedness of the city (Ch. 24:1-4). The destruction of her temple, the pride of the nation, is symbolized by the Lord's taking away of Ezekiel's wife (24:15-20).

III. Prophecies Against the Nations (Chs. 25 to 32)

Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel has a message for the nations surrounding Israel (Compare Isaiah 13-23 and Jeremiah 46-51).

It is a message of judgment based in most cases on their treatment of Judah. The following nations are mentioned:

1. The Ammonites (Ch. 25:1-7).

- (a) The cause of judgment: their rejoicing at Judah's calamity (v. 3).
- (b) Form of judgment: Invasion and desolation.

2. Moab (25:8-11).

- (a) Cause of judgment: their insinuation that Judah was no better than the heathen who worshiped idols - an indirect thrust at the Lord (v. 8).
- (b) Form of judgment: invasion.

3. Edom (25:12-14).

- (a) Cause of Judgment: their attitude toward Judah in the day of their calamity (v. 12).
- (b) Form of Judgment: retribution at the hands of Israel.

4. Philistia (25:15-17).

- (a) Cause of judgment: their taking advantage of Judah's calamity to vent their old hatred upon them (v. 15).
- (b) Form of judgment: destruction.

5. Tyre (Chs. 26-28).

- (a) Cause of Judgment: rejoicing over Jerusalem's fall, an expectation of profiting by their loss (26:2); the blasphemous exultation of her prince (28:2, 6). Note: in 28:12-19, Ezekiel looks past the prince of Tyre, to the one who is empowering him - Satan, the GOD and prince of this world.
- (b) Form of judgment: invasion and destruction by Nebuchadnezzar and perpetual desolation.

6. Sidon (28:20-24).

- (a) Cause of judgment: they were a pricking brier to the house of Israel; i.e., they were the means

of ensnaring the Israelites into sin and the instruments for punishing them (Compare Numbers 33:55).

(b) Form of judgment: slaughter and pestilence.

7. Egypt (Chs. 29-32).

(a) Cause of judgment: the arrogance and pride of her king (Ch. 31); their promising help to Israel and then failing them in the emergency (29:6, 7).

(b) Form of judgment: slaughter, captivity, abasement among the nations, foreign oppression, destruction of idols, and permanent loss of native ruler.

IV. The Restoration of Israel (Chs. 33 to 48)

Up to this point Ezekiel's message had been that of impending doom for the city and captivity for the people. But now that his predictions have been fulfilled the element of consolation predominates in his prophesying.

1. Ezekiel's commission is renewed, and after the arrival of the news of the capture of Jerusalem, he is allowed to speak plainly to the people instead of preaching by means of signs and symbols.

2. A rebuke of the false shepherds of Israel who drive and oppress the flock, and the promise of the coming of the true Shepherd who will gather and feed the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Ch. 34).

3. The punishment of Israel's enemies, of whom Edom is representative, the gathering of Israel, their complete restoration to a restored land of Palestine and their conversion (Chs. 35, 36).

4. By the vision of the valley of dry bones is symbolized Israel's national death and resurrection; however, the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel are yet to be united under King David (either David resurrected or the Messiah Himself, the descendant of David) and as a whole bound to the Lord by an everlasting covenant (Ch. 37).

5. Chapters 38 and 39 record the attack of the Gentile nations on Israel after they have been restored to Palestine. Read in connection with these chapters Zechariah 12:1-4; 14:1-9; Matthew 24:14-30; Revelation 14:14-20; 19:17-21. Many scholars believe that Russia is referred to in 38:2; Meshech (Moscow), Tubal (Tobolsk). The truth of this opinion is strongly confirmed when we learn that the words "**the chief prince**" mean "*prince of Rosh*"; and Rosh, we learn from a great Hebrew scholar, probably refers to Russia.

6. The glory of the Lord which departed from Israel before their captivity, now returns to abide in the Millennial temple, of which we find a detailed description in chapters 40-48.

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