

EZEKIEL (Teacher's Edition)

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AUTHOR-

The author, whose name means, “**God strengthens**”, is identified as “Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi” (1:3). He was probably a member of the **Zadokite** priestly family that came to prominence during the reforms of Josiah, trained as a priest during the reign of Jehoiakim, deported to Babylon during the second deportation (597 B.C.), and settled in Tel Abib on the Kebar Canal. His wife died and he was not allowed to **mourn her death**- all as a sign to the exiled Jews that Jerusalem **would not be spared** (24:16-24). His background as a priest and prophet (like Jeremiah) is manifested by his concern with the temple, sacrifices and **Shekinah** (the glory of God manifested in the temple).

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

He also tells us he began his prophetic ministry "in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity" (1:2). This was the king of Judah who was taken captive by Babylon about 597 B.C. This would place the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecies at about **593 B.C.** The last dates that he mentions in the book are the "twenty-seventh year" (29:17) and "the twenty-fifth year of our captivity" (40:1). So Ezekiel must have prophesied for at least **20 years** among the captives, until **573 B.C.** He probably wrote the Book of Ezekiel some time during this period or shortly thereafter.

ABOUT THE BOOK-

Ezekiel's incredible accounting of visions, dreams, encounters with the Spirit justify his label as the “**Charismatic of the OT**”. His messages and “prophetic pantomimes” were addressed to a **demoralized** remnant in exile. It informed them of the cause of not only their exile but declares the destruction of Jerusalem and its cause- their **sin and rebelliousness**. But Ezekiel goes beyond this to communicate both the future judgment on the Gentile nations God used to judge and the **future restoration** of Israel.

One of the greatest insights of the Book of Ezekiel is its teaching of **individual responsibility**. This prophet proclaimed the truth that every person is responsible

for his **own sin**, as he stands exposed before God. In Ezekiel's time the Jewish people had such a strong sense of group identity as God's Covenant People that they tended to gloss over their need as individuals to follow God and His will. Some even believed that future generations were held accountable for the sins of **their ancestors**. But Ezekiel declared: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (**18:20**). Every person must make his own decision! No person can depend on the faith of **any ancestors** to gain entrance into God's kingdom.

Ezekiel also paints a beautiful picture of the future age in which God will rule triumphantly among His people. Although God's people were suffering at the hands of a pagan nation when Ezekiel prophesied, better days were assured. The **repentance** of the **faithful remnant** among the exiles would result in recreation of Israel from dry bones (37:11-14). The Holy Spirit would then quicken them to a new life. This emphasis on the Holy Spirit in **regeneration** anticipates the NT teaching, especially in John. After the dry bones came together, God would establish His universal rule among His people through a descendant of David (37:24-25). This is a clear reference to the **MESSIAH**, a prophecy fulfilled when Jesus was born in Bethlehem more than 500 years later. The followers of Jesus became the "new Israel," or the church—those who seek to follow God and carry out His purpose in the world.

Having mentioned John above, it is worth noting that allusions to Ezekiel are found more frequently in the Book of Revelation than any other New Testament book. The living creatures of Ezekiel 1 reappear in Revelation 4:6-9. The throne of God (Ezek. 1:26-28) is described similarly in Revelation 4:2-3. "Gog, the land of Magog" (Ezek. 38:2) becomes "Gog and Magog" in Revelation 20:8. The Temple vision of Ezekiel 40-48 has several parallels in Revelation 21-22, with its focus on the Holy City Jerusalem and the river flowing from the throne of God. Jesus' frequent reference to Himself as the Son of man is generally considered to have its origin in Daniel 7:13, but he may have appropriated it from the 93 times God addressed Ezekiel as "son of man."

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF EZEKIEL (BASIC THEMES)-

If ever there was a book that deals with **excuses** people give for sin, a society that **rejects** moral absolutes, and the **error** of believing once you are saved you are free from spiritual and moral responsibility, it is this great book. Here are some of the insights that deal with "accountability and the Kingdom":

We are accountable for our attitudes. The declaration, "This is a rebellious house/people/nation": occurs over **20 times!** The root of rebellion and sin is identified as a fundamental attitude of "**bitterness**" as the Hebrew word translated rebellion is the same word. People excuse their sins by blaming those who made them unhappy, uncomfortable, inconvenienced or who corrected them (like parents, spouses, friends, organizations, etc). The idea is this: the bitterness of

resentment that ignited the rebellious/sinful action is presumed to be the right of the rebel and the true fault lies with the object of the resentment. Ezekiel's diagnosis: "They are obstinate and stubborn." (2:4)

We are accountable for our sins. The proverb "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" was an attempt to deflect personal accountability by basically pleading the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4)- that the sins of the parents has a long term effect on the children. "I couldn't help it! I got it from my parents!" But Ezekiel underscores the reality that there are no second-hand commandments- every commandment begins with at least an implied "You". The direct answer from God on this: "The soul who sins will die!" (18:4)

We are accountable to pursue holiness until the day we die or we will die in our sins. Ezekiel deals with the attitude that once a person is righteous, it no longer matters what they do. What matters with God is not past decisions but present heart condition.

Nowhere does God allow us to have a flippant attitude of our sins. A wicked person who turns to God will be saved; a truly righteous person who treats the grace of God as a license for sin will die in their sin. (Ezekiel 18:21-32 & 33:12-20)

Before concluding this section, I must mention that the message of "the soul that sins shall die" is proclaimed with a major emphasis of divine grace- God will cause the rebirth of the nation!

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

I think there are many key words we can use, but I went a different direction than I think most would go. However, this should make sense in light of the discussion above: Israel's future restoration. Remember that this was the basic purpose of the book, reminding a rightfully judged people as to the behavior that led to their destruction but holding out hope for their future.

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)

My key verses and chapter deal with the key overall theme of the book- the restoration of Israel. This speaks not just to Israel, but ultimately we see in these key texts that it speaks of the New Covenant. My key verse is: Ezekiel 36:24-28 and my key chapter is: Ezekiel 37.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- The term son of man was used by Jesus and in this we may also see Ezekiel as a type of Christ
- The office of prophet speaks to Jesus
- The falling of the Spirit on Ezekiel (11:5) and enabling him in ministry is similar to what Jesus experienced in Luke 3:21,22 & 4:1, 18-19

- The vision of the lord as the Divine Shepherd who gathers the scattered flock (Ezek 34:11-16) speaks of Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16)
- The restored sanctuary whose head is king, priest and shepherd, descendant of David (37:22-28) speaks of Jesus and the restored tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16)
- In Ezekiel 17:22-24 the sprig of cedar planted on the mount by God Himself and becoming a refuge providing fruit for various birds speaks to Messiah Jesus who save and nurture all peoples

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- The prophetic office and the prophecies themselves are gifts of the Spirit
- The visions, signs and prophetic pantomimes are done through the Spirit
- Everywhere, Ezekiel mentions the Spirit lifting him or coming upon him or God speaking to him
- Ezekiel 37 deals with the Spirit's role in rebirth
- Ezekiel 36:26 speaks of the Spirit being IN us and creating a new heart- this parallels Titus 3:5,6 and John 7:37-39
- The glory of God in the temple was the presence of the Spirit
- The river in Ezek 47 that brings life everywhere it goes is the river of the Spirit
- Ezek 39:29 speaks prophetically of the days of Acts 2

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Ezek 9:3,4

Never have a light attitude about sin. God marks those who grieve over it in them and around them. Ask God to give you a broken heart over sin.

Ezek 22:26-29

God will judge leaders who try to be popular with their culture by watering down the message so that people will find it more palatable. Determine to never lower the standard of the Word. Preach and teach about sin and the difference between the clean and unclean.

Ezek 22:30-31

Determine to stand in the gap by praying for your generation. Understand the power of intercession: it can prevent judgment.

Ezek 24:13,14

God has a definite limit! It is important to understand that judgment is cleansing in nature, and God will purge His church of its sins by dealing with us.

Ezek 44:4-16

Those who seek to flow with the kind of religion that people want to have versus the true faith given us in the Word will never have true intimacy with God. Determine that intimacy with God is better than popularity with people. Resist popular trends and stand firm.

Ezek 47:1-12

The power of God grows greater the further we bring the gospel to people. Don't be a receiver- be a giver and understand that God will back you up and cause healing to flow through you into the nations. Accept the fact that you will bear lasting fruit as you go! Also, God has made plenty of room for all kinds of ministries, so do not be territorial but have a kingdom mindset.

The Parables of Ezekiel

A parable is a truth wrapped in a memorable story or word picture. It could be fictional, dramatized, or the result of a vision. Jesus gave much of His teaching through parables (see "The Parables of Jesus Christ" at Luke 8:4). So did several of the Old Testament prophets, including Ezekiel.



1. The Wood of the Vine (Ezek. 15:1-8)
Symbolized the way in which Judah had become useless to the Lord and now served no other purpose than to be burned up in judgment.

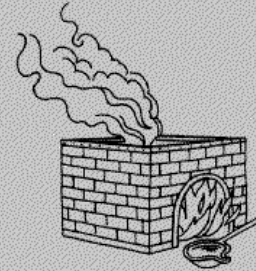


2. The Foundling (Ezek. 16)
Illustrated the nation's betrayal of God's love and compassion.

3. The Eagles and the Cedar (Ezek. 17)
Illustrated the foolishness of King Zedekiah, whose rebellion would bring Nebuchadnezzar's troops to destroy Jerusalem.



4. The Fiery Furnace (Ezek. 22:17-22)
Explained the way in which God was going to purify His people through the "heat" of the siege of Jerusalem.

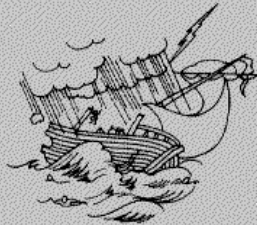


5. The Two Harlots (Ezek. 23)
Symbolized the spiritual adultery of Israel and Judah.

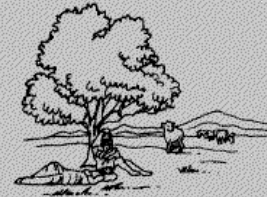


6. The Cooking Pot (Ezek. 24:1-14)
Symbolized the way in which God was going to "turn up the heat" on Jerusalem in order to cleanse it of its impurities.

7. The Shipwreck (Ezek. 27)
Illustrated the judgment that was going to fall on Tyre.



8. The Irresponsible Shepherds (Ezek. 34)
Signified the worthless leaders of Jerusalem and how God would deal with them.




9. The Dry Bones (Ezek. 37)
Symbolized the spiritual renewal of the nation of Israel.


Jeremiah and Zechariah were two other prophets who used parables to communicate their message. See Jer. 18:1-10 and Zech. 5:1-4.

The Life and Times of Ezekiel


1. Ezekiel grows up during reforms of Josiah (c. 622–621 B.C.; 2 Kin. 23).




5. Eighteen-year-old Jeholachin surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar, is taken into exile along with leading citizens, probably including Ezekiel (c. 599–597 B.C.; 2 Kin. 24:12); Zedekiah is appointed ruler at Jerusalem.




9. Prophecy of Pharaoh's broken arm (587 B.C.; Ezek. 30:20–26).




2. Nineveh falls to the Babylonians (c. 612 B.C.), ending Assyrian Empire.




6. Thirty-year-old Ezekiel receives his call as a prophet on the plains of Babylon (593 B.C.; Ezek. 1–3).




10. Ezekiel's vision of a New Jerusalem and a new temple (573 B.C.; Ezek. 40–48).




3. Josiah is killed in battle (c. 609 B.C.).




7. Ezekiel has a vision of the idolatries committed at Jerusalem (592 B.C.; Ezek. 8).




4. Babylonians defeat the Egyptians in fierce, hand-to-hand combat at Carchemish (c. 605 B.C.).



8. Final siege of Jerusalem begins; Ezekiel's wife dies, but he may not mourn (588 B.C.; Ezek. 24:1–18).



11. Prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's victory over Tyre and Egypt (571 B.C.; Ezek. 29:17–21).



640 B.C. 630 B.C. 620 B.C. 610 B.C. 600 B.C. 590 B.C. 580 B.C. 570 B.C.

Kings of Judah		JEHOAHAZ —3 mos. c. 609 B.C.		JEHOIACHIN —3 mos. c. 598 B.C. Ruler in Exile (2 Kin. 25:27–30)	
JOSIAH c. 640–609 B.C.		JEHOIAKIM c. 609–598 B.C.		ZEDEKIAH c. 598–587 B.C.	
Kings of Babylon					
			NABOPOLASSAR c. 626–605 B.C.	NEBUCHADNEZZAR II c. 605–562 B.C.	
Kings of Egypt					
PSAMMETHICUS c. 664–610 B.C.		NECHO c. 610–594 B.C.		PSAMMETHICUS II c. 594–589 B.C.	
			↓		
			HOPHRA c. 589–570 B.C.		