



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

Ezekiel

Chapters 1-11

And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll ... and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.... "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."... And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

--Ezekiel 2:9-3:3

A Rebellious House

The prophet Ezekiel was a righteous priest and prophet during the time of the Babylonian exile. Because of his own deportation into exile, his priestly service would be exercised through his prophetic ministry. His ministry was carried out in his life between ages 30 to 50, the working span of an active priest.

His prophecies not only spoke to the destruction of Jerusalem, but also to the Lord's judgment of the nations and coming restoration of his people Israel. His oracles were delivered between 593 BC and 573 BC. Yet many of his prophecies would not be fulfilled until the coming of Jesus Christ.

The book Ezekiel is priestly. It begins with a vision of the chariot war throne of God. The footstool of God's throne is the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. However, Ezekiel will witness the departing of God's glory from the temple and the chariot war throne ascending into war against Jerusalem and its people. The book of Ezekiel ends with a vision of restoration in a new temple and a return of the Lord's glory to his temple.

Literary Structure

Ezekiel	Chapters 1-48
The Call and Commission of Ezekiel	1-3
Oracles of Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem	4-24
Oracles of Judgment on the Nations	25-32
Prophecies of Future Restoration	33-48

The main purpose of the Book is to give the exiles of the Babylonian conquest an understanding of the depth of their sin and depravity which led to the long exile and offer them hope for vindication and restoration with a call to personal responsibility and repentance. God is not unjust in his judgments--they were a rebellious house who would not see or listen. Ezekiel's initial message was one of lamentation, mourning and woe.



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The Lord is holy. The people of God are called to be holy and set apart unto him. God's name will be glorified through a restored people who would bear his holiness on their personhood.

The Call and Commission of Ezekiel (1-3)

The prophet receives his call and commission while living in exile in region of Babylon. He was living among the exiles "in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal" (halfway between modern day Baghdad and Basra).

His vision is of the chariot war throne of God. God's throne is on the move in judgment. Ezekiel is called to speak the words of the Lord. While they will initially be bitter to the taste of the hearers, to Ezekiel the word of the Lord is tastes as sweet as honey and is to be inwardly digested.

Would that the people had received God's word in such a way! But the house of Israel is not willing to listen. They have a "hard forehead and a stubborn heart" (3:7). So the Lord has steeled his prophet against them in order that he might deliver his word to them.

Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. ⁹ Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." ¹⁰ Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. ¹¹ And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' whether they hear or refuse to hear." --Ezekiel 3:8-11



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Oracles of Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (4-24)

These chapters are a compilation of various dramatic enactments, oracles, visions, laments and parables of judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. They serve as an indictment against the "rebellious house".

Dramatic Warnings: Siege and Judgment on Jerusalem (4-7)

In Chapters 4-7, Ezekiel is called to dramatically enact judgment on Jerusalem. He called to lie on his side facing a model of Jerusalem. As he lay there he is enacting the siege of judgment through the instruments of the Babylonians.

He then is called to cut pieces of his beard with a 'sharp sword', the pieces of his hair symbolizing the sword of judgment which will fall in the form of pestilence and famine, death by foreign army, and death in flight and pursuit.

The Day of the Lord comes. "An end..the end is upon you". The rebellious house has tried the Lord's patience to the end. The day of judgment has arrived (7:1ff).

God's Glory leaves the Temple (8-11)

In this section, Ezekiel is taken on a visual tour of the depravity taking place within the Temple complex by the leaders of Jerusalem--greater and greater abominations. He sees idolatry of the worst kind--right in the foot of Yahweh's throne!

A man with a writing case will mark all who abhor the abominations as a reservation of the righteous remnant (9:1-11). Then avengers of the Lord will strike all who do not bear the mark--man, woman and child.

Ezekiel then witnesses the departure of the chariot throne of God from his temple (10). He again sees the vision of his initial call by the Chebar Canal. Only here he sees the glory of God leaving the rebellious people of God because of their abominations before him. As Ezekiel witnesses the awesome judgment on Jerusalem's people, the prophet cries out: "Ah, Lord GOD! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" There is hope of restoration to the exiled (11:13-17).

I will bring the sword upon you. I am the Lord, I have spoken. --Ez. 5:17

Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹ And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. --Ez. 10:18-19