



Ezekiel

Chapters 12-32

The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

Earthly and Heavenly Realities

The difficulty of a people in bondage to exile is to see the bigger picture of God's salvation. Suffering can produce a narrow finite vision. Ezekiel's prophecies provide not only a larger redemptive historical context and meaning, but they also draw back the curtain between the earthly and the heavenly.

His visions and oracles describe earthly events, yet Ezekiel see the spiritual battle and warfare behind them. Last week we looked at Ezekiel 1-11, where the earthly attack of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was described as a spiritual judgment by Yahweh's war chariot.

The prophet will see the vision of Yahweh spiritual presence returning to Jerusalem as he describes the restoration of the earthly Jerusalem in heavenly terms in chapters 40-48.

These two chapters form the over arching movement of Ezekiel's prophecy. In chapters 1-11, Yahweh comes to his temple on the day of Atonement takes Ezekiel on a guided tour of the Judged Temple and then departs. In chapters 40-48, Yahweh comes to his temple on the day of Atonement and takes Ezekiel on a guided tour of the restored Temple and does not depart.

"And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There." --Ezekiel 48:35

These two realities unfold in the larger structure of the book. As typical of many Hebrew writings, the outline of Ezekiel can be discerned as following a chiastic A B A' structure.

The central turning point of the book is a judgment of the nations (25- 28:10; 29-32)and specifically the Fallen Angel (28:10-19).



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Literary Structure³⁹

Ezekiel: Heavenly and Earthly Realities		Chapters 1-48
A	YHWH Comes: Judges Temple and Departs	1-11
B	Oracles of Judgment	12-23
C	Jerusalem Besieged	24
D	Oracles against the Foreign Nations	25-28:10
E	Judgment on the Fallen Cherub	28:11-19
D'	Oracles against the Foreign Nations	29-32
C'	Jerusalem Falls	33
B'	Oracles of Restoration	34-39
A'	YHWH Comes Restores Temple and Remains	40-48

My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations. They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.¹⁰ Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash,¹¹ say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall! --Ez. 13:8-11

The Prophet is revealing to the exiles in Babylon that there is more to the story than what they currently see. The actions and speech of Ezekiel points beyond their present situation to incredible hope in the Sovereign and reigning King of Heaven is ordering all things in heaven and on earth to submission under one head.

Oracles of Judgment (12-23)

In these chapters, Ezekiel prophesies judgment on Jerusalem and its 'prince'. Its people have rejected the true prophet of YHWH preferring the voice of the false prophets who preached "Peace" when there is no peace (13:10;16).

Jerusalem is under severe judgment. Even if there were three righteous men, Job, Daniel and Job, the city would still be destroyed while only they would be saved (14:12-23).

³⁹ Richard M. Davidson, *The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 75



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Jerusalem is compared to a useless vine (15) and a faithless bride (16). Yet despite the uselessness and faithlessness of Israel, the Lord promises to renew the "everlasting covenant":

⁵⁹ "For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, ⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and I give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. ⁶² I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ⁶³ that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord GOD." --Ez. 16:59-63

The Lord has a larger plan for his people to restore and glorify his name. He will return to this theme in chapters 34-39--the restoration oracles. Here it is a hint that there is more to the story than severe judgment.

Ezekiel then tells a parable about two eagles and a vine. The parable is about the judgment on Israel's kings and princes. Jehoiachin (twig) and his son Zedekiah (the seed) are taken into exile by the king of Babylon (the first eagle). Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle who was left to reign in Jerusalem turns to Egypt and king Hophra (the lesser eagle). This appeal to Egypt will prove to be a disastrous mistake (17:17).

The mysterious conclusion of the parable is the announcement of what would seem to be a third Eagle, the Lord God himself who will take a "young tender twig and plant it." Here is a prophecy of the Messiah who will restore the kingdom (17:22-24; cf 37:24-28).

*Thus says the Lord GOD: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain."
--Ez. 17:22*



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The call is to individual personal responsibility and repentance. The prophet encourages children to NOT follow in their parents footsteps but to repent and do right. Our parentage is not fate. "The soul who sins shall die."

"Yet you say, 'Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. --Ez. 18:19

The Lord takes no pleasure in the death of anyone! So, repent and live! (18:32)

Ezekiel laments over the rebellion of Israel's 'princes' (19) The remaining oracles of chapters 20-23, There is a building fire and an unsheathed sword against Jerusalem (20:45-21:32). Jerusalem is a city of blood and dross (22). Samaria and Jerusalem are like two sisters that "played the whore" (23).

All of the chapters declaring judgment build toward the vision of the siege of Jerusalem in chapter 24. The Lord will judge his own sanctuary.

'Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the yearning of your soul, and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.' Ez. 24:21

Ezekiel is told that he will be mute until he receives word from "a fugitive" reporting the news of the destruction of the Temple (24:25-27).

This section parallels chapter 33 where Ezekiel hears word from a fugitive: "The city has been struck down." Ezekiel's mouth was again opened. (Ez. 33:21-22)



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Judgments Against the Foreign Nations (25-32)

The literary structure of this section on Judgment of Israel's surrounding neighbors works as a parallel with the focus being on the judgments against the "princes" of Tyre and Egypt.

Ezekiel 25-28:10	Ezekiel 28:20-32:32
a. Oracles against first four Levantine nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (25)	a' Oracles against last Levantine nation: Sidon (with implications for Israel) (28:20-26)
b. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A): Introduction (26:1-6)	b' Judgment oracle against Egypt (A): introduction 29:1-16)
c. Babylon sent as agent of divine judgment on Tyre (26:7-11)	c' Babylon sent as an agent of divine judgment on Egypt (29:17-30:19)
d. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A): restatement (26;12-18)	d' Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A): restatement (30:20-26)
e. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B): Tyre descends to the Pit (26:19-21)	e' Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B): Pharaoh and Egypt descend to the Pit (31:1-18)
f. Lamentation for Tyre (27)	f' Lamentation for Pharaoh and Egypt (32:1-16)
g. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B): prince of Tyre descends to the pit (28:1-10)	g' Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B): Egypt and Pharaoh descend to the Pit (32:17-32)

The central section between these two parallel prophecies of judgment against Tyre and Egypt is the central hinge of the entire book of Ezekiel. The "King" of Tyre is none other than the fallen cherub from the Garden of Eden. Here we have unveiled the root source of all the problems. The evil one has been at work in Israel and their neighbors. God will judge him!



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Lament over the Fallen Cherub (28:12-19)

*"You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
sardius, topaz, and diamond,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle;
and crafted in gold were your settings
and your engravings.
On the day that you were created
they were prepared.
14 You were an anointed guardian cherub.
I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God;
in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.
15 You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created,
till unrighteousness was found in you.
16 In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub,
from the midst of the stones of fire.
17 Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.
18 By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your trade
you profaned your sanctuaries;
so I brought fire out from your midst;
it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.
19 All who know you among the peoples
are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever."*

--Ez. 28:12-19