

Introduction to Ezekiel – part 2

Introduction:

As we begin let's LISTEN to God's Word in Ezekiel 20:33-40. Here's God's message both of judgement and of hope. Then we'll PRAY.

In our previous session we considered the big message of Ezekiel: "God's church is to repent of presumption, idolatry and immorality. She's to welcome the terrifying judgement of a holy God. She's to look to the Lord alone for salvation and security."

Ezekiel's message was ABOUT the imminent destruction of Jerusalem. But it was not FOR the inhabitants of Jerusalem. For them, there was no hope of salvation.

Ezekiel's message was FOR his fellow exiles – taken away from the promised land into the Babylonian Captivity.

Ezekiel's message was one of *divine jealousy*: the legitimate and amazing passion of God for the people he loves, whose relationship is threatened by infidelity. The prophet's aim was to change his audience's perception of themselves, exposing delusions of innocence and showing them the reality of their situation.

God's Word addressed the sinful and treacherous exiles, calling upon them to repent of the same sins, of the same breaches of the covenant, in order to experience God's salvation and restoration.

In this session we're going to look at some distinctive features that run through the whole book of Ezekiel as he makes this impassioned plea. Then we're going to get a sense of the outline of the whole book – how it fits together.

1. The distinctive voice of Ezekiel¹

The Holy Spirit moved Ezekiel to a unique and extraordinary ministry, the aim of which was to penetrate the sin-hardened minds of his hearers. Notice these features:

(a) Varied forms of communication:

Judgment speeches are framed as: Legal addresses, disputations, figurative addresses, laments, woe oracles, interpreted sign-acts.

Salvation speeches come in the form of: straightforward pronouncements, figurative addresses, visions, literary cartoons.

(b) Powerful language

This is one of the most striking features of Ezekiel. He pulls no punches in his use of language. The abhorrence with which he views the syncretistic ways of his compatriots is reflected in the strong sexual and fecal language (chs 6, 16, 23) which modern translators tend to soften.

¹ Largely drawn from the introductory section in Daniel Block, *The book of Ezekiel chapters 1-24* (NICOT; Eerdmans).

His own heightened emotions are reflected sometimes in incomplete sentences, strange constructions and odd grammar.

(c) Repeated phrases

God is usually referred to as “the Lord Yahweh”: the sovereign God of the covenant.

Ezekiel is constantly addressed by God as “son of man”, never by his personal name. This phrase isn’t like the heavenly figure of Daniel 7. Rather, it highlights Ezekiel’s humanity. He is a mere human, in the service of the glorious and divine Lord.

His favourite title for the exiles of Judah is “house/family of Israel.” It expresses the nation’s family solidarity: they are one – and for most of his message they are united in guilt. Their past: in chapters 16 and 20 a bitter story is told. Their present: they are a household in revolt. Their future: amazingly, there *is* a future – after the exile he will bring remnant into the “bond of the covenant” (32:37).

Again and again we are given markers of: “the word of the Lord came to me saying...”, or “Thus has the Lord Yahweh declared”, or “the declaration of the Lord Yahweh.” It’s an indication that Ezekiel is a man entirely gripped by the Lord and only ever speaking the word of the Lord. Yes, he writes only in the first person – which is very unusual for an Old Testament prophet. And we do get a strong sense of the effect of the Lord’s calling upon this real human being. But Ezekiel is a man totally under the control of the Spirit of Yahweh. Only what God says and does matters.

Hence phrases like: “the hand of the Lord came upon me,” speaking of the overwhelming pressure that God exerts on the prophet. Elsewhere we read of the Lord’s literal and direct moving of the prophet: “and he brought/took/led me”

The key prophetic commands are contained in these words and phrases: “Say”... and “set your face toward.” Ezekiel must speak, and he must oppose – regardless of whether anyone listens.

Above all, Ezekiel holds out a vision of God: his wonder, his holiness, his graciousness and covenant-faithfulness, the powerful working of his Spirit, his desire not only to judge but bring new life, and his sovereignty in acting in history.

He wants us to “know” the Lord. The prophet speaks of knowing Yahweh more than 50 times: repeatedly he says things like, “And they will know that I am the Lord.”

There are no doctrinal speeches or descriptions of the Lord’s nature. It’s in the narrative of history that His character is proclaimed. The exiles were commanded to stand back and watch Yahweh act in history – in judgement and in salvation.

2. An outline of Ezekiel

The book is easy to divide up. Chapters 1-33 are almost exclusively negative pronouncements of judgment on God's people for their infidelity. The book's turning point comes in 33:21 with the news that "the city has fallen" – which happened in 586BC. Then, in chapters 34-48 Ezekiel preaches a message of hope in which old illusions of false spirituality are destroyed and the Lord is making a new and holy people.

The small sections are also easy to identify. There are 50 smaller sections, 48 of which are introduced either by a date or by the phrase "The word of the Lord came to me."

On your handouts you'll see a full "**Outline of Ezekiel**", which I've drawn together from Daniel Block's and Thomas Renz' materials. This might be a real help as you get into Ezekiel for yourself.

But what we're going to do now is WATCH a graphic overview of Ezekiel produced by the excellent folk at the Bible Project. You can find their material online at www.thebibleproject.com

- They have a 7 minute summary of chapters 1-33: see <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/ezekiel-1-33/>
- And they have another 7 minute summary of chapters 34-48: see <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/ezekiel-34-48/>
- And they have a great infographic of Ezekiel which you'll see on your handout as well.

OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL (from Renz and Block)

JUDGEMENT: chapters 1 – 33

Judgement oracles part 1 (1:1 – 7:27). Presenting the case against Jerusalem.

1:1 – 3:21. Ezekiel's vision of God and commissioning by God

3:22 – 5:4. Five judgement "sign-acts": telling of the fact and the form of God's punishment.

5:5-7:27. Three prophecies of judgement: giving the meaning of the "sign-acts."

Judgement oracles part 2 (8:1 – 13:23). Answering objections, confirming the end of the city.

8:1 – 11:25. Could God really abandon his people? The glory of the Lord departs the temple.

12:1 – 20. A "sign-act": exposing the rebelliousness of the exiles.

12:21 – 13:23. Two disputations against cynics, and two prophecies against false prophets.

Judgement oracles part 3 (14:1 – 19:14). Challenging Ezekiel's exiles and his readers.

14:1 – 23. Two lectures: about idolatry... and how to survive God's punishment.

15:1 – 17:24. Israel is like a useless vine and a faithless bride.

18:1-32. A disputation: proving the justice of God's judgement – the sinful generation dies.

19:1-14. A lament for the failed line of David.

Judgement oracles part 4 (20:1 – 23:49). Summarising the argument, Jerusalem's end is near.

20:1-44. A history of revelation... and of rebellion.

20:45 – 21:32. Prophecies of the sword: the end is near.

22:1-32. Jerusalem: the inside story

23:1-49. The history of two promiscuous sisters.

A key chapter (chapter 24). Whose side are you on? God's... or Jerusalem's?

24:1-14. The boiling cauldron: the exiles aren't choice meat, but rotten and facing the Lord's fire.

24:15-24. The death of Ezekiel's wife and the coming death of Jerusalem: do not grieve.

24:25-27. Ezekiel's dumbness will be lifted when news of destruction reaches the exiles.

Oracles against the Nations (25:1 – 32:32). God is sovereign over pagan lands: don't fear or trust them.

25:1-17. Prophecies against Judah's nearest neighbours: condemned for malice against Judah.

26:2 – 28:26. Prophecies against Tyre: condemned for expecting profit from Judah's demise.

29:1 – 32:32. Prophecies against Egypt: 7th and longest... sinful self-sufficiency... don't trust Egypt again.

The turning point (chapter 33). The watchman has warned: news comes of Jerusalem's fall. Listen!

33:1-20. The watchman: his job and his appeal.

33:21-22. Turning point: the final word – * the fugitive brings news of Jerusalem's fall *

33:23-33. Final prophecy vs. the city... but whilst the exiles now listen they won't obey. Will they change →

HOPE: chapters 34 – 38

The leadership problem solved (chapter 34). The Lord's kingship re-established.

34:1-31. The Lord will shepherd his people.

Land and people transformed (chapters 35 – 36). The Lord restores and transforms.

35:1 – 36:38. The Spirit's initiative. For the sake of the Lord's name.

How the Spirit transforms (chapter 37). The gift of the Spirit.

37:1 – 28. A vision and a symbol of resurrection life.

Israel will be safe (chapters 38-39). Gog and Magog.

38:1 – 39:29. No other enemies will ever come from the north – a guarantee of the Lord's protection.

Ezekiel's third major vision of God's glory (chapters 40-48). A new people... and the Lord is there.

40:1 – 48:35. A new temple, law, land and city.

EZEKIEL

WHAT IS GOD'S GLORY DOING IN BABYLON??

5 YEARS AFTER EXILE...

"THE APPEARANCE OF THE SPARKS OF THE LORD'S GLORY" - PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S SIGNIFICANCE (SEE EXODUS 19:24-25)

1-11 ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL

1-3 ACCUSE ISRAEL OF BREAKING THE COVENANT AND WARN THEM OF IMMINENT DESTRUCTION

• LACK OF FAITH OF OTHER GODS • SOCIAL INJUSTICE

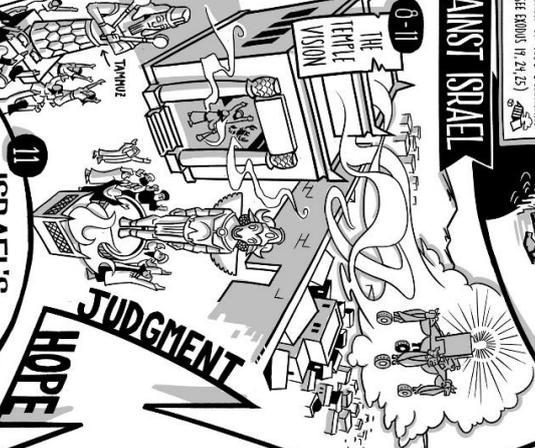
4-5 EZEKIEL'S SIGN ACTS



BAD NEWS: NO ONE'S GOING TO LISTEN.

ISRAEL'S HARD HEART

created by the Bible Project



6-11 THE TEMPLE VISION

11 ISRAEL'S IDOLATRY HAS DRIVEN GOD AWAY...

...BUT HE HAVEN'T ABANDONED HIS PEOPLE. A REMNANT WILL RETURN WITH ME, TRANSFORMED HEARTS.

JUDGMENT

HOPE

12-24 JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL

1 USE OF PARABLE & ALLUSION



EZEKIEL AS LAZYER



25-32 JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS

34-37 HOPE FOR ISRAEL



34 A NEW KING

35 A NEW LAND

36 GOD'S SPIRIT

37 VALLEY OF DRY BONES

38 A NEW? ISRAEL WITH A NEW HEART



39 RECALLS GENESIS 2:7

THE ONLY HOPE IS FOR GOD TO RECREATE HUMANS - LIVE + DIVINE BREATH

HUMANS TO LOVE GOD & OTHERS.

25-32 JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS

25-27 EZEKIEL AS AMMON HOAR



28-32 ALL BROUGHT DOWN BY BABYLON...



38-39 HOPE FOR THE NATIONS

40-48 HOPE FOR ALL CREATION



38 GOD DEFEATS THE NATIONS

39 GOD

ANCIENT KINGDOM

FOUR GENESIS TO

DESCRIPTION OF GOD-

DESCRIPTION OF KINGDOM

OF LIFE & SPIRIT

ARCHITECTURE OF

HUMAN REBELLION



THESE RIVERS ARE FULL OF STRENGTH & WISDOM ABOUT GOD'S EVIL

33 JERUSALEM HAS FALLEN!



FIRST BABYLONIAN ATTACK ON JERUSALEM (2KING 24:18-20)



40-48 HOPE FOR ALL CREATION

THE OPENING OF THE VISIONS?

1) LITERAL: ELEMENTS OF NEW TEMPLE

2) SYMBOLIC: DEFINITION OF GOD'S PRESENCE

AND HIS PEOPLE IN THE PRESENT KINGDOM

DEAD SEA VALLEY

NEW GARDEN OF EDEN: "THE LORD IS THERE"