

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

1. WHERE DOES EZEKIEL FIT IN THE STORY OF THE BIBLE?

(a) God's covenant with Abraham

Genesis 22:18, "... and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

God chose one family... Rest of Bible = story of God keeping his promise to Abraham.

(b) Exodus: redeemed for holy worship

Exodus 19:5-6. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

Law of Moses / Mosaic covenant: 10 comms... holiness of God... a gracious covenant

(c) No presumption: covenant blessing... AND covenant curse

Leviticus 26:3-4, "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴ then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit

Leviticus 26:11-13, I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

Leviticus 26:14-16a, "But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, ¹⁵ if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, ¹⁶ then I will do this to you...

Deuteronomy 28:36,49-50,64, "The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone... The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young... "And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other..."

(d) The kings: mediators of blessing... and disaster

2 Sam. 23:3-4, The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴ he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

Solomon: immorality and idolatry

Rehoboam: rebellion... → division of kingdom in 930BC

Judah (and Benjamin) = "Judah"

Northern tribes = "Israel"... destroyed by Assyria in 722BC.

2 Kings 17:7, "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods."

(e) The last kings of Judah

Manasseh (r. 687-642):

Converted... but worst king of all (2 Chron. 33:10-20, 2 Ki. 21:1-18, 24:3-4)

Amon (r. 642-640).

Josiah (r. 640-609), godly reforms unable to undo decades of pagan decline.

Jehoahaz (r. 609), deposed by the Egyptians.

Jehoiakim (r. 608-598. See 2 Ki. 23:31-37).

605 Nebuchadnezzar takes 1st wave of exiles to Babylon, inc. Daniel and friends
598 Jehoiakim rebelled... Neb besieged Jerusalem & kills Jehoiakim... more exiles

Jehoiachin (r. 598-597. See 2 Ki. 24:8-17)...

Exiled with 3,000 others... including Ezekiel... to Jewish colony on Chebar Canal

Zedekiah (r. 598-586. See 2 Ki. 24:27-28)

Revolt against Babylon... Jerusalem torched... king's sons killed and Z blinded
(2 Ki. 25:1-21, Jer 52:9-11).

2. WHO WAS EZEKIEL, AND WHAT WAS HIS JOB?

(a) Ezekiel the man

1:1, "In the 30th year..." of E's life... should have been starting work as priest (Num. 4:3)

Personally affected by his ministry:

- First person: "I..."
- Personal cost of faithfulness

(b) The Old Testament prophets

OT books addressing the northern kingdom of Israel, prior to 722BC...
--

Amos, Hosea

OT books addressing the southern kingdom of Judah...		
---	--	--

BEFORE the exile (from c.800-597BC)	DURING the exile	AFTER the exile
--	-----------------------------	----------------------------

Joel, Micah, Isaiah,
Nahum, Zephaniah,
Jeremiah, Habakkuk

Lamentations,
Daniel, Ezekiel,
Obadiah

Esther, Ezra,
Nehemiah,
Haggai,
Zechariah,
Malachi

(c) God's mouthpiece... a covenant enforcer

2 Peter 1:21, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Not just fore-telling, but forth-telling:

"turn back to God! Remember the terms of the covenant!"

Ezekiel = warning of Jerusalem's destruction

See Ezek. 10:1-2, 18-19.

(d) Ezekiel: the spokesman who was NOT allowed to speak

49x “The Word of the Lord came to me...”

BUT:

Ezek. 3:22-27... 24:15-27... 33:21-33

Only speaks prophetic oracles...

No normal speech *with* the people of God...

No prayer *for* the people of God

Why?

Judgement will NOT be averted...

The exiles' spiritual state is SO serious

Accept God's judgement – that's your only hope

(e) Ezekiel's big message...

ABOUT Jerusalem... but NOT FOR Jerusalem. For them: there is NO HOPE.

But doesn't God always give a chance to repent?

E.g. *Jeremiah 18:7-10*, If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, ⁸ and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. ⁹ And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.

Except when He doesn't.

E.g. 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. ***

3. GETTING A FLAVOUR OF THE BOOK: READING EZEKIEL CHAPTER 16...

NEXT WEEK: AN OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL

HOMEWORK: READ CHAPTERS 1-12