

Ezekiel

“Hope for Israel”

I. Introduction to Ezekiel

Ezekiel is the twenty-sixth book of the Old Testament and the fourth among the Major Prophets. The book has forty-eight chapters, but by word count it is second in size to Jeremiah, among the prophetic books and is the third largest book in the Bible. Ezekiel was included in the Septuagint and its place in the canon has never been seriously questioned in Christian circles.

Ezekiel is filled with some of the most fascinating and vivid prophesies of the Old Testament. Sadly, however, Ezekiel has been neglected by many, leaving it as a hunting ground for cultists. This book deserves our careful study if for no other reason than to silence the false teachers who misuse its teachings.

Ezekiel gets its name from its author and main character. His name means “God strengthens”. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the Old testament.. All we know about him is in this book.

He was a priest Ezekiel 1:3

He was married Ezekiel 24:16

He was taken captive at age 25 in 597 B.C. during the reigns of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah

He began his prophetic ministry at age 30

He was exiled to a settlement not far from Babylon called Tel-Abib

He preached for at least twenty-two years; lived well beyond the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

While Jeremiah pleaded with those who remained in Jerusalem, and Daniel sought to influence the heart of Babylon’s king, Ezekiel spent his time leading with those who lived in exile. Many false prophets still believed Jerusalem would not fall and Egypt would come to Judah’s aid. Ezekiel was God’s watchman, calling the people to turn back to God. His message was first to warn them of destruction, then to promise then restoration.

The book of Ezekiel is filled with imagery and glorious visions of God. He used drama, word pictures and parables to get his message across. The book begins with a vision of God and a call to ministry. It is followed up by a series of illustrations, parables, and visions, including:

Ezekiel lying on his side for 430 days,

Cooking his food with cow dung as fuel

Shaving his head

Being transported to Jerusalem by his hair

Seeing the saints marked by God

Watching the glory of God depart from the Temple

Illustrating what captivity looks like

His most famous visions take places in

Ezekiel 37, the dry bones coming to life

Ezekiel 38, Gog attacking Israel

Ezekiel 41, the description of the Millennial Temple

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II. Outline of Ezekiel

Ezekiel’s prophecies can be divided into two distinct sections. These divisions were so clear that the Jewish historian, Josephus wrote: “The prophet Ezekiel wrote two books.” In Section 1, Ezekiel might be called a Prophet of Doom and in Section 2, a Prophet of Hope. The basic outline divides the chapters as follows:

Section 1 Chapters 1 – 32 Before the fall of Jerusalem
These messages are characterized by a call to repentance.
Chapters 1 – 3 Ezekiel’s call to ministry
Chapters 4 – 24 Pleading with Judah
Chapters 25 – 32 Judgment on the nation

Section 2 Chapters 33 – 48 After the fall of Jerusalem
These messages are filled with promises of forgiveness, restoration and hope.
Chapters 33 – 48 Israel’s future and hope

Section 1

Chapters 1 – 3 Ezekiel’s call to ministry

After seeing a vision of God in Chapter 1, Ezekiel is commissioned to take the message of God to the children of Israel. To be successful he must:

- Eat the scroll Ezekiel 2:1 – 3
- Go Ezekiel 2:4
- Be steadfast Ezekiel 2:8 – 9

God explains Ezekiel’s responsibility, by comparing him to a watchman in Chapter 3.

Chapters 4 – 24 Pleading with Judah

These chapters are filled with parables and imagery as Ezekiel seeks to win the hearts of the people back to the Lord. Some of the more memorable appeals include:

- Chapter 4 Spending 420 days lying on his side to illustrate captivity
- Chapter 5 Shaving his head and putting the hair in three piles to show what would happen to those who resist God.
- Chapter 8 Being carried to Jerusalem, by the hair, to witness the wickedness of the inhabitants, God’s judgment, and the Glory of God departing from the Temple
- Chapter 13 A cry against the false shepherds (repeated in chapter 34). It is a message that should be carefully studied by all who enter ministry.

Chapters 25 – 32 Judgment on the nation

This area of Scripture focuses on the fall of the nations that surround Israel: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt. Perhaps the most remarkable story is regarding Tyre, an ancient Phoenician city, sitting on the Mediterranean coast, north of Israel. Ezekiel 26:3 – 9, 12 – 14, predicts its collapse. He speaks of many nations coming against Tyre, how Nebuchadnezzar will destroy the city, of the debris being thrown into the sea, of the rocks being scraped bare and of fishermen spreading their nets on the rocks that were once the walls and buildings of Tyre.

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After thirteen years of siege, Nebuchadnezzar broke through the walls of Tyre. The city was almost empty. The inhabitants had fled to a fortified island just off the coast of Tyre.

Two hundred years later, Alexander the Great would take the rubble of the old city and build a causeway out to the island and conquer the city.

The peninsula is a fishing village, today.

Section 2

Chapters 33 – 48 Israel’s future and hope

God promises to return His people to their land in Ezekiel 11:17. This promise was partially fulfilled when Cyrus allowed Zerubbabel to return and rebuild the Temple. This promise also had a future fulfillment in the last days when Israel would once again become a nation.

Chapter 37 This chapter illustrates how God will restore the nation of Israel, using the imagery of dry bones coming to life in verses 37:11, 14, and 21-22.

Chapters 38 – 39 These chapters take us further into the future to an End Times battle, where the forces of Darkness will inspire many nations to attack God’s people, Israel, and seek to destroy them. However, God will intervene on their behalf.

Chapters 40 – 48 Ezekiel takes us even further into the future, where the Millennial Temple will be built to celebrate the reign of King Jesus.

III. Why Study Ezekiel

Through the study of the book of Ezekiel, we learn of God’s future plan for Israel. Ezekiel’s writings also help us unlock the mysteries of the book of Revelation, and we learn about being called into ministry. Last, Ezekiel teaches the importance of:

Evangelism – the watchman

Pastors – the shepherd

Personal responsibility – Chapter 18 speaks to this characteristic, using a “false proverb”
“It’s not my fault” (18:4, 18:20)

IV. Type of Christ

He is the True Shepherd of Ezekiel 34:11. He will one day reign from restored Jerusalem.