

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel means God is strong or the man God strengthens.

Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, a priest who prophesied to the exiles by the river Chebar, and third of “The Great Prophets.” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel)

After a prophetic ministry lasting for at least twenty-two years, tradition has it that Ezekiel was put to death by his fellow exiles because of his faithfulness and boldness in denouncing them for their idolatry.

Several aspects of the prophet’s life:

1. He was an exile (Ezekiel 1:1); so are we (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11).
2. He was an ambassador (Ezekiel 1:1; 2:1-6; 3:1-3) so are we (Ephesians ; 6:20).
3. He was a watchman (Ezekiel 3:17-20; so are we (Hebrews 13:17).
4. He was a sign (Ezekiel 12:1-7); so are we (1 Timothy 1:10).

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Daniel and Jeremiah.

1. In 606 B.C. the first group of captives was taken into Babylon. Daniel was in this group.
2. In the second deportation of 597 B.C. Ezekiel went into captivity.
3. In the third deportation of captives in 586 B.C. Jeremiah was still preaching among the people of Jerusalem.

For over 20 years, Ezekiel was the voice of God to the exiles in Babylon. His task was to keep these captives faithful to the Lord in a land of idolatry.

In all, about 10,000 people were deported at the time Ezekiel went into exile. (2 Kings 24:14) The primary colony appears to have been at Tel Abib, on the river Chebar. (Ezekiel 3:15)

The message and teaching of the book of Ezekiel is:

- A. DOOM. Jerusalem will fall; the people will be taken captive in Babylon.
 - 1. Chapters 1-24, judgment as a punishment for sin is stressed. Jerusalem must be destroyed.
 - 2. Chapters 25-32, foreign nations must be judged and destroyed before Israel can be restored.
- B. HOPE. God's people will be raised and restored to their lands; and ultimately made one under David; all the enemies destroyed and a glorious Jerusalem will be built on the ruins of the old.

Ezekiel is used by some religionists as proof that God's plan for the future includes the following.

- 1. Jews returning to Palestine in unbelief.
- 2. An imminent Russian invasion of Israel.
- 3. The reinstatement of the Old Testament, and animal sacrifice will be reinstated in the temple, shortly to be constructed in Jerusalem.

Science fiction buffs have scoured the book of Ezekiel in search of spaceships and extra-terrestrial beings who pawned themselves off as God. (Hal Lindsey, "Late, Great Planet Earth" and Chariot of the Gods)

Mormon's regard Ezekiel 37:15-23 as the prophetic allusion to the Book of Mormon (stick of Ephraim) being added to the Bible (stick of Judah).

The theme of Ezekiel is the ultimate victory of God's people. Ezekiel's prophecies are a gallery of word pictures interspersed with mini-stages upon which the prophet performed divinely inspired monodramas.

Ezekiel had a wife whom he tenderly cherished. It is likely that he married in Babylon. He may have chosen a wife in response to Jeremiah's letter.

Four years after Ezekiel's ministry began his wife died. There is no indication that any children were born to this union.

Ezekiel's visions occur in four sections of the book.

1. 1:1-3:15 is the vision of the magnificent throne-chariot of God.
2. Chapters 8-11 contain the prophet's vision of the terrible abominations practiced in the Jerusalem Temple.
3. Chapter 37 contains the vision of the valley of dry bones, the symbolism of the resurrection of the nation Israel following captivity.
4. Chapters 40-48 is a vision of a future temple in a new era.

The basic message of Ezekiel is that God is faithful to His eternal purpose.

Isaiah's focus is on the salvation of the Lord.

Jeremiah's focus is on the judgment of the Lord.

Daniel's focus is on the kingdom of the Lord.

Ezekiel's focus is on the glory of the Lord.

A special vision catapulted Ezekiel into the prophetic ministry, the vision of the divine chariot, the Merkabah, (Jewish).

Recently science fiction writers have subjected the Merkabah to the most detailed scrutiny in search of evidence that spaceships from other worlds have landed on this planet.

Often the discussion has centered on the mechanics of the Merkabah rather than the message which God is trying to communicate through this vision.

Chapter 1

Verses 1-3

Ezekiel was thirty years old when he received the divine call to be a prophet. Ezekiel's prophetic activity covered a period of twenty-two years.

Ezekiel was by the river Chebar when God called him into his prophetic ministry. Chebar was actually not a river, but an enormous irrigation canal.

Ezekiel was among the captives when he received his call. Daniel had preceded Ezekiel into captivity in 605 B.C. and had begun his prophetic ministry in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel spoke only to governments officials, Ezekiel spoke to the needs of the Jewish captives.

VERSES 4-28 (READ)

Ezekiel beholds God's throne chariot coming on a great storm cloud. The point of the vision is that God is arriving to be with his people.

Within six years Jerusalem would be destroyed by this "stormy wind coming out of the north."

Verse 4

God is saying that He would employ a ruthless foe from the north, the Chaldeans, to bring about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Accompanying the stormy wind was a "great cloud." From the cloud, fire was flashing forth. A radiant splendor surrounded the black storm cloud, the splendor of the glory of God. In the midst of the great cloud was something that appeared like polished bronze.

Ezekiel also observed from living creature emerging from the midst of the flashing cloud which supported the platform on which stood the throne of God. In the midst was something that looked like burning coals of fire.

The throne-chariot and guarding Cherubim are but an extension of Temple symbolism, the ark and its winged attendants in the Holy of Holies.

The Cherubim are four in number and suggests the idea of completeness and totality. This number stands for the created world, the four corners, the four winds, four wings, four faces, four hands, four sides, and four wheels.

Gold, sapphire, and polished bronze, are familiar images of majestic glory.

The thunder, lightning, and stormy cloud are symbols of power and judgment.

The clear brightness is symbolic of God's purity and truth, the rainbow of His mercy.

The wings represent the power by which all creation rises and falls at God's commands; the one spirit, unity and harmony of all God's works; the wheels, the universality of God.

The veiled bodies represent the inability of all creatures to stand in the presence of God.

The Cherubim are symbols, not likenesses. They are symbolic representations of heavenly beings.

What encouragement Ezekiel must have received from the vision. If heavenly beings serve God, how much more so should the sons of God!

Each of the living creatures had four faces which could see in all directions.

The shape of the faces differed on the four sides; the face of a man in front, of a lion on the right side, of an ox on the left side, and of an eagle behind.

The four symbolized the highest forms of life.

Man is supreme over all the creatures of God, and so is mentioned first. Man faced forward.

The lion is the king of wild beasts, the ox of domesticated animals, and the eagle of the birds of the heaven.

The living creatures were representative of all living beings.

The creatures had four wings. For the sake of modesty, two of these wings were used to cover the naked bodies of these creatures. The other two wings

were in the act of flying. They were so stretched out that the tip of each touched the wing tip of a fellow living creature on the right and on the left. This symbolizes their unity of purpose.

In addition to four wings, each creature had hands. The legs of the creatures were straight. The creatures did not bow, crouch, or lie down. They remained perfectly erect throughout the vision.

The feet of the creatures resembled the hoof of a calf, rounded enabling the creatures to move freely in every direction.

The fire symbolized judgment which at that moment was in the center of God's concern.

Under each of the living creatures was a wheel that permitted movement in any direction. This symbolizes that in all the uncertainties and tragedies of life, the Spirit of God is at work providentially directing all aspects of life.

The rims of the wheels were high, or huge in comparison to the entire chariot, and they were full of eyes.

The eye in the ancient world was a symbol of intelligence. God sees and knows what is happening throughout the entire world.

The significance of the wheels is that God is not restricted to heaven, and not to any particular spot on earth. God is omnipresent, He is not earth-bound.

Over the heads appeared to be a platform gleaming like ice. The ice was terrible in the sense of being awesome because of its glittering brightness.

The movement of the throne-chariot was directed by a voice from above the platform. The voice must be that of God.

The prophet, without hesitation, describes what he saw above the platform.

He who sat upon the throne had the likeness of the appearance of a man.

A radiant splendor characterized the whole being. This brightness was multi-colored, like the colors of the rainbow. This rainbow is more than a symbol of glory and splendor, it is also a symbol of mercy and promise as well.

Ezekiel was to preach about the coming storm of judgment; but he was to look beyond that dark hour to the dawning of a new day and the resurrection and restoration of the people of God.

Those who were captive in Babylon felt cut off from the Lord because geographically they were unable to participate in temple worship.

This vision gives evidence that God's presence could be experienced in a foreign land.

The whole vision of the throne-chariot and the Divine Presence had a marked effect upon Ezekiel. He fell to his face. He was prepared to hear the Word of the Lord.

Chapter 2

Verses 1-7

Ezekiel heard the call of God to prophetic service. He was told in no uncertain terms where and how he was to serve. Ezekiel's first command was to "stand upon your feet". It is service not servility which God desires. Ezekiel was not required to be successful, only faithful.

God told Ezekiel that his hearers would be thorns and thistles, and that he would be sitting upon scorpions. This represents that there would be ungrateful and irresponsible hearers and some would even threaten his life.

Verses 8-10

Following the call to service, God begins a process of education to prepare Ezekiel for the assigned task. A hand came forth from the throne-chariot containing a scroll. The scroll contained writing, God's authoritative Word for the children of God.

Chapter 3

Verses 1-3

God commands Ezekiel to eat this scroll. The Word of God must be internalized, digested, and assimilated by the one who would serve as God's messenger. Right after the command to eat, the scroll comes the command to go speak to the house of Israel.

Verse 14

After the departure of the throne-chariot, Ezekiel describes what happened to him: the spirit lifted me up, and took me away. This means that Ezekiel went forth among his countrymen.

Verses 16-21

Ezekiel learns that God had appointed him to be a watchman for the house of Israel.

A watchman is a responsible person appointed and charged with the task of sounding the alarm as the enemy approached. The watchman would warn his neighbors by means of a horn.

Those who failed to heed the warning blast were responsible for their own death; for if they had taken refuge or had fled the doomed land, they would have saved their lives.

If the watchman sees the danger and fails to sound the alarm, he is responsible for the death of those who were slain.

The principle applies to a spiritual watchman such as Ezekiel. The prophet can only clear himself before God by the faithful discharge of his duty of sounding the alarm.

In his capacity as watchman, Ezekiel was to wait and watch for the Word from the mouth of God and warn the people of the impending calamity.

Verses 21-27

God told Ezekiel to go out into the plain, the area between two mountains. There he saw a second vision of the glory of the Lord.

Ezekiel received a new command. He was told to shut himself within his house where he would be bound with fetters. The fetters were symbolic of self-imposed (or God-imposed restraint). It appears that Ezekiel's movements outside his house were to be severely restricted.

Divine restrictions were also placed upon Ezekiel's speech. His tongue would cleave to the roof of his mouth. This indicates that Ezekiel would only communicate with his fellow exiles at such times as he had a Divine communication to share with them.

Jerusalem fell six years later the restraints were removed from the prophet.
(33:22)

Chapter 4

Verses 1-3

In this chapter Ezekiel performs four dramatic scenes: the siege of Jerusalem, national sin, the siege famine, and the nation's fate.

First, Ezekiel was to sketch a diagram of Jerusalem on a brick and then to lay siege against the city.

The sketch was to contain a siege wall or assault tower. The siege was manned by archers that would attack the besieged city.

Next the sketch contained ramps or mounds, soil heaped up to the level of the walls of the besieged city.

The sketch contained camps, military detachments, which surrounded the city. To this sketch Ezekiel was to add battering rams, iron-clad beams transported by a wheeled tower.

An iron pan representing a wall of iron was to be placed between Ezekiel and the inscribed brick.

Ezekiel was then to assume the part of the attacking army. His actions would represent the point that God was fighting against Jerusalem.

When the crowd was ready to listen, Ezekiel gave the verbal explanation of his actions. (5:5-7:27)

Verses 4-8

Next Ezekiel reverses his role and is told to lie on his left side and then his right side. This symbolizes the apostate people of God. The left side represents the house of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, which had been carried captive in 752 B.C.

The right side symbolized the house of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, which was in its dying days.

The number of days which the prophet spent on each side symbolized the number of years which each kingdom had stood under the condemnation of God.

Since other activities are performed by Ezekiel during this period, the symbolic prone position must have lasted only part of each day.

Ezekiel was to lie on his left side 390 days. The 390 years would terminate with the fall of Babylon in 537 B.C.

The forty years of Judah's punishment is probably referring to the period of final deportation of the Jews in Babylon in 582 B.C., until their release from Babylonian captivity in 539 B.C.

Forty is a symbolic number, the period during which God's people' because of their sin, would be denied access to the Promised Land.

During the entire time that Ezekiel was lying on his side he was to fix his gaze upon the brick which depicted the besieged city of Jerusalem.

Verses 9-17

These verses symbolically tell Jerusalem how in captivity they would not be able to be so scrupulous about their diet.

Chapter 5

Verses 1-4

Ezekiel shaved his head and beard with a sharp sword. This sword symbolized the invading Chaldean army while Ezekiel symbolized Judah. Ezekiel's shorn hair symbolizes the population of Jerusalem.

A third of the hair was to be burned on the brick depicting Jerusalem. This symbolized those who would die in the horrors of warfare when the city was besieged.

Another third of the hair was to be smitten with the sword symbolizing the fate of those who tried to escape.

The last third was to be scattered to the wind symbolizing those to be taken into captivity.

A few of the hairs were to be bound in Ezekiel's garment symbolizing the remnant.

Verses 5-17

These verses explain the four symbols found in 4:1-5:4.

Chapter 6

Verses 1-14

Ezekiel zeros in on the places of idolatrous worship located in the mountains and valleys of Judah. These places would become desolate. The mountains are not geographical but theological symbols.

These places of worship contained an altar, standing stones, a wooden pole symbolic of Asherah, and a laver.

Verse 7

"You will know that I am the Lord" is used by Ezekiel about sixty times. God wants Israel to recognize Him as the only God.

Verse 11

Ezekiel was to clap his hand and stomp his foot. These were gestures of intense emotion and excitement, generated either by intense joy or sorrow.

Chapter 7

This chapter is designed to underscore the certainty and severity of the coming calamity.

Verses 1-27

Not only would the Jews be deprived of their material support, they would also be denied spiritual support. God would turn His face from them. Isaiah 59:1-2

Verse 23

Ezekiel made a chain which symbolized the coming exile.

God would employ the worst of nations against Judah.

The ruthless invaders would possess their houses and make to cease the pride of the monarchy and priesthood.

Chapter 8

Verses 1-4

A year and two weeks have elapsed since the call vision. Now Ezekiel recounts a new series of visions to show that the Divine judgments against Judah are completely justified.

As the elders of Judah sat before Ezekiel the hand of the Lord fell upon Ezekiel and he again saw the Divine personage who had appeared atop the heavenly throne-chariot.

The hand lifted Ezekiel by the hair and he was transported in spirit, not in body to Jerusalem.

Verses 5-16

These verses are a symbolic picture of the false beliefs in Jerusalem.

Verse 5

The idol of jealousy relates to the king and the people. The image of jealousy was outside the Temple courtyard—within the great court. This image may have been the image of Asherah which King Manasseh erected. (2 Kings 21:7)

The presence of the image in the vicinity of the Temple provoked the Lord to jealousy. The image was associated with the popular religion, for it was located outside the north gate of the temple in the great public court. The old Canaanite paganism was flourishing in Jerusalem. It may be that they were thinking of this goddess as the wife of God. (2 Kings 21)

Verses 8-10

The animal worship related to the elders.

The animal worship practiced by the leaders of the nation was probably adopted from the Egyptians.

Ezekiel was told to enlarge the hole in the outer wall of the Temple. This is a metaphor for searching out the truth.

Upon the walls of that chamber were representations of all manner of creeping things and beasts. Standing before the engraved images were seventy elders. To these pictorial gods, the elders were offering incense.

The elders were ashamed and practiced these pagan rites in the darkness; each in his own private cubicle.

The vision may have been setting forth the idea that some of Judah's leaders were looking to Egypt for spiritual and political support since they felt that God had forsaken the land of Judah. (verse 12)

Verse 14

The weeping of Tammuz involved the woman.

Ezekiel was next taken into the inner court in front of the northern gate of the Temple. Here he saw a group of women weeping for Tammuz. This is the only reference to this ancient Babylonian cult in Palestine.

Tammuz was the son and or lover of Ishtar. He was a vegetation god who was thought to die and go to the nether world each year in the fall, only to return to the land of the living in the spring.

As the vegetation withered and rivers dried up, the annual death of Tammuz was lamented with public dirges. Women joined Ishtar in mourning a dead lover in the intense drought of summer.

Tammuz worship involved sexual rites promoting the fertility of fields and herds.

If the women of the nation had fallen into the cesspool of filthy idolatry and false theology, could there be any hope for the nation?

Verse 16

The sun worship relates to the priests and Levites.

Ezekiel was brought from the northern gate to the eastern side of the Temple between the porch and the sacrificial altar to see those who were worshiping the sun.

This area was sacred and only the priests had access. Twenty-five men were facing the rising sun and worshiping before it. Facing eastward, their back would be toward the temple.

This represented an outright rejection of God and the enthronement of the Babylonian god Shamash, the sun god. By their actions they were proclaiming that the gods of Babylon had defeated God.

Verses 17-18

Apostasy prevailed in the ranks of the priesthood as well as among the tribal leaders and women. Judah was ripe for judgment. God had no alternative but to deal with these people in fury. The day of grace was over; the day of wrath had come.

Chapter 9

Verses 1-11

Ezekiel saw in symbolic detail what would befall Jerusalem six years later.

A loud voice summoned six men to be Divinely appointed executioners. These angels symbolized the armies of Babylon that would crush Jerusalem.

A seventh angelic being was in the midst of the six. He was clothed in linen, the material used for priestly garments.

All seven entered the Temple courtyard and stood beside the bronze altar. Judgment and salvation come forth from the altar of God.

Ezekiel saw the glory of God move over the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

The man clothed in linen was told to mark the brows of all who sigh and cry over the idolatrous practices. The six were needed to execute the act of judgment, while only one was needed to administer the mark of salvation.

The mark to be placed on the brow of the faithful was a tav, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

In ancient Hebrew script the letter tav was a cross mark.

The judgment was to begin first at the sanctuary. (1 Peter 4:17)

Ezekiel sees the slain falling all about him in the Temple courtyard. He fell on his face in an intercessory prayer asking God if He would completely destroy the remnant. God said, "The true Israel would survive."

Chapter 10

Verses 1-8

It is time for the six executioners to expand their work from the Temple court to the rest of Jerusalem.

The man clothed in linen became the agent of fiery judgment. Jerusalem is to be destroyed by sword and by fire.

Ezekiel sees the throne-chariot empty, awaiting the moment when the Lord would once again occupy it.

The man clothed in linen scattered hot coals over the wicked city of Jerusalem. This symbolized judgment and purgation.

Verses 9-12

In verse 18, we see the throne-chariot ready for its Royal Rider. The glory cloud took its place again upon the throne and the departure begins.

The departure route was by way of the east gate of the Temple. The departure clears the way for the destruction of the city.

Chapter 11

Verses 1-13

The leading citizens of Jerusalem were convinced of the impregnability of the Holy City. Ezekiel was commissioned to smash this vain delusion.

Verse 6

The defiant attitude of the anti-Babylonian party would result in the streets of Jerusalem being filled with the slain by Babylonian swords.

The city walls would only serve to entrap and not protect. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were bound together in the city for slaughter.

Verses 14-21

All the exiles were looked down on and despised by those who remained in Jerusalem. They felt that because they were left in possession of the land and the temple this was evidence of God blessing them.

God speaking through Ezekiel rebuked the haughty attitude of the Jerusalemites. Ezekiel told them that God has something wonderful in store for the exiles. They would be spiritual persons upon their return. They would have a new heart, a new spirit, and a new life—a life of righteousness.

Verses 22-25

The throne-chariot paused at the eastern gate of the Temple court and then became air-borne. The heavenly chariot came down on the Mount of Olives before it ascended into heaven. (Luke 19:41-44) (Acts 1:9-12)

Ezekiel was transported by a spirit back to Chaldea. When he awoke from his vision, he began to reveal to his fellow-exiles all that he had seen and experienced. The prophetic purpose of the vision was to serve, not as a message to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but rather to those in Babylonian captivity.

Chapter 12

Ezekiel was commanded to demonstrate to the captives through symbolic actions the certainty of Judah's destruction.

Verses 1-16

In the parable of the fugitive he assumes the role of a refugee who tries to flee to a beleaguered city. This represented Zedekiah's escape efforts which would not be successful.

Verses 17-28

The second parable sets forth the hardships which Jerusalem will experience under siege. Meager rations of bread and water would be consumed in a state of fear and anxiety. Cowering in a corner, Ezekiel portrayed the terror that would haunt their lives.

Chapter 13

This chapter finds Ezekiel refuting the blasphemous proverbs of chapter 12:21-28 when some prophets were saying, "God is not going to destroy Jerusalem, but that there would be a last-minute Divine rescue".

These prophets had undermined the nation and had encouraged false security.

Chapter 14

In this chapter Ezekiel deals with two questions:

1. How can God punish His people for sins into which they had been led by men claiming to be prophets?
2. How could God destroy Jerusalem when there were still some righteous men within?

In answer to the first question, Ezekiel's answer is that false prophets could not and would not exist without people willing to patronize them.

In answer to the second question, Ezekiel answer is that Israel was beyond the help of any human mediation. A righteous soul here and there cannot be a lucky religious charm.

Chapter 15

Verses 1-8

Ezekiel continues his justification of God's judgment against Judah employing parables or allegories to paint a rather gruesome word picture of ingratitude, sin, and rebellion of God's people. Ezekiel first employs the useless vine. The vine did not provide fruit nor could it be used for wood. It was worthless. It was only good for a fire. This was Jerusalem.

Chapter 16

This chapter is a survey of Israel's history from the birth of the nation to Ezekiel's day.

God had nurtured Israel and when she reached the marriageable age, she became the bride of God. God treated His young bride tenderly. But the beautiful bride proved unfaithful and began to commit harlotry with foreign nations and their gods.

Verses 1-43

Because of her spiritual adultery, her abominable idols, and her revolting sacrifice of little children, God would bring judgment upon the land.

Verses 44-63

Ezekiel uses the allegory of the fallen sister to say that Judah was as sinful as the Northern tribe. Samaria was Judah's elder sister because she was larger in size and more populated. Judah acted more corrupt than Samaria and Sodom.

Judah would actually become a comfort to her sisters, Samaria and Sodom, because if God restores Judah, He must also restore the two sisters who had sinned less.

Chapter 17

In this chapter Ezekiel turns his attention to King Zedekiah back in Jerusalem. This vassal king had committed an act of treachery against Nebuchadnezzar by breaking his oath of allegiance to Babylon in seeking military aid from Egypt.

Ezekiel now predicts the extinction of Zedekiah's dynasty and the fall of Jerusalem by the parable of a lowly vine.

Verse 3

The great eagle is King Nebuchadnezzar who like an eagle swooped down upon his prey to plunder and destroy.

Lebanon represents the land of Israel especially Judah.

The cedar represents Jerusalem.

Verse 4

The top of the cedar, represents the princes of the house of David. The topmost of the twigs was King Jehoiachin carried off into Babylonian captivity.

Verse 5

The seed of the land is Zedekiah.

The fruitful field represents Judah.

Many waters is a reference to Babylon.

Verse 6

The spreading vine of low stature is the Judean vassal state administered by Zedekiah. The second great eagle is Pharaoh Hophra to whom the vine (Zedekiah) turned for military aid in an attempt to free himself from the first eagle (Nebuchadnezzar).

Verses 11-24

Ezekiel explains the eagle parable in these verses.

Verses 22-24 are Messianic. The cedar—Messianic Jerusalem—the church of Christ —would be stately dignified.

Chapter 18

This chapter begins to deal with seven false attitudes.

Verses 1-20

In these verses Ezekiel develops his teaching that every individual is responsible for his own conduct before God. Sinful men always tend to underestimate their own wickedness and to blame their tribulations on others. So it was with Israel, they blamed their fathers.

Verses 21-32

Ezekiel carries his subject one step farther. Men are not locked in either genetically or environmentally to a life of sin. By God's grace and their own free will, they can change their character, conduct, and destiny.

Chapter 19

There is a time for a preacher to rebuke his audience, and there is also a time for him to weep with them and for them. In this chapter, Ezekiel becomes a sympathetic mourner.

Verses 1-9

Ezekiel laments the fate of Judah's last kings.

Verses 10-14

Ezekiel bewails the fall of Jerusalem.

Chapters 20-21

Eleven months elapse between chapter 19 and chapter 20. It is late in 591 B.C. and news of the Egyptian military victories in Africa spawned hope of deliverance among the Jews in Judah and in Babylon.

King Zedekiah was now looking to Egypt for assistance against Babylon. Zedekiah severed his alliance to Nebuchadnezzar. The question in the minds of the captives was, how would this affect Judah's fortunes?

Verses 1-29

In response to this unasked question Ezekiel speaks of the past corruption of the nation.

Verses 30-44

Ezekiel speaks of the future restoration of Israel.

Chapter 20 verse 45 through chapter 21:22

Ezekiel speaks of the imminent judgment of Jerusalem.

Chapter 22

Ezekiel is answering all objections which could be raised against his thesis that God must destroy Jerusalem. This chapter contains three oracles: verses 1-16, the bloody city; verses 17-22 the smelting furnace; and verses 23-31 the corrupt land.

Jerusalem's bloodshed and idolatry has caused their retribution to draw near.

The exile would purge the filthiness from Judah like a smelting furnace refines ore.

The population of the land was thoroughly corrupt from the leaders on down.

Chapter 23

In this chapter Ezekiel portrays the history of the sister kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They are allegorically compared to two wicked sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who were unfaithful to their lawful husband.

Samaria had already been punished for her unfaithfulness. Judah had failed to learn from the experiences of her sister kingdom, and was headed for the same fate.

Chapter 24

Nebuchadnezzar begins his attack against Jerusalem in the ninth year of Zedekiah.

Verses 1-14

The inhabitants of Jerusalem had used the image of a cooking pot to support their delusion of invincibility. Now Ezekiel gives the true interpretation to that image.

A pot filled with water and placed on the stove symbolizes the first stage of the siege of Jerusalem. The pieces of meat symbolize the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The boiling water is the destructive turbulence of the Babylonian siege.

Verses 15-24

A shocking announcement is made to Ezekiel on the day Jerusalem came under siege, your wife will die suddenly without being sick. There was to be no mourning on Ezekiel's part for his wife. His silent grief symbolizes the stupefying effect the fall of Jerusalem would have at home and abroad.

Verse 21

Just as Ezekiel had lost the desire of his eyes, the Jews were about to lose their Temple.

Verses 24-27

In the day the news of Jerusalem's fall was announced, Ezekiel would no longer be dumb.

The message he had been preaching for so many years would thus be authenticated. His mission as a messenger of God would then be accepted by his fellow exiles.

Chapter 25

Ezekiel now devotes eight chapters to oracles against foreign nations. First he speaks of small neighboring states of Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia.

The countries had tormented and mocked God's people. Their attitude toward Israel was also their attitude toward God.

Chapter 26

Verses 1-6

Tyre's sin was that she had gloated over the fall of Jerusalem.

Verse 3

God would bring many nations against Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar tried to capture Tyre for thirteen years with Alexander the Great succeeding in capturing the city after a seven-month siege.

Later Antigonus captured the city in 314 B.C., the Arabs in 636 A.D., the Crusaders in 1124 A.D., and finally the Arabs retook the city in 1291 A.D.

Verses 4-21

These verses amplify the fate of Tyre mentioned in the first six verses.

Chapter 27

Tyre is pictured as a beautiful ship stopping at various ports until it is so laden that she sinks into the depths of a stormy sea. Worldly wealth is transitory and self-defeating to those who worship it, is the lesson Ezekiel is teaching.

Chapter 28

The prince of Tyre is the entire nation. The attitude of the prince was that of the city and vice versa. Their attitude was one of obnoxious haughtiness and national arrogance. The prince of Tyre is pictured as exalting himself to the position of God, his island fortress, his divine abode.

As a result of his pride, he would die in the attack. His island fortress would afford no protection. Sidon was also going to receive the same judgment as Tyre. Tyre and Sidon were “seaside partners in sin.”

Chapter 29 — Chapter 32

Ninety-seven verses are devoted to the fall of Egypt. Egypt had been involved in encouraging Judah’s final revolt against Babylon. The main point is that the final destiny of Israel was in the hands of God, not the hands of human monarchs.

Ezekiel emphasizes the pride of Egypt and the desolation which God would bring on her for her arrogance.

Chapter 29:17-20

Nebuchadnezzar was unable after thirteen years to capture Tyre but to compensate him for his service rendered at Tyre, God decreed that he should be given the land of Egypt.

God’s power prevails on earth. The fall of Pharaoh and his host would be another indication of this grand truth. All the mighty powers that terrorize the land will ultimately be brought to naught.

Chapter 33

Ezekiel's predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem had become a reality. No more threatening blasts from Judah. It was time for consolation. Hope had to be rekindled. A remnant had to be prepared for the restoration and rebirth of the nation.

In this chapter, Ezekiel emphasizes individual responsibility and the power and potential of repentance.

Verses 1-9

Ezekiel is instructed to be a watchman unto the people.

The "watchman's" responsibilities were discussed earlier.

The prophet can only clear himself before God by the faithful discharge of his duty of sounding the alarm. Whether or not the sinner heeds the prophet's call to repentance, the watchman has saved his own life.

Verses 10-20

These verses discuss the possibilities of repentance.

They set forth a great truth: a man's part does not of itself determine future relations with the Lord.

Verses 21-29

A fugitive from Jerusalem arrived in Babylon with the sad news that Jerusalem had fallen. The silence imposed upon the prophet was removed and Ezekiel was now vindicated as a true prophet.

Ezekiel was now authorized to open his mouth in a new service of utterances designed to prepare the captives for the future restoration.

Even the fall of Jerusalem did not cure the Jews of their rebellious conduct. The rebuilding of Judah was doomed to failure as long as they persisted in their sin.

Verses 24-28 (Read)

Those sinful survivors of Jerusalem's fall would not be the ones to rebuild Judah. Her pride in her position as a favored nation would cease.

Verses 30-33

Ezekiel's prophecies became the topic of conversation. For the first time, the exiles were anxious to hear the Word of God. They still had not surrendered their hearts to follow God's commandments. Their hearts were full of covetousness and their own selfish concerns.

Chapter 34

Israel's past sin and punishment stemmed largely from corrupt and selfish leadership. Ezekiel's first step for reconstructing the nation was the replacement of those worthless leaders.

God would place the head of His restored people a descendent of David and the people would enjoy peace, safety, and prosperity.

Verses 1-10

The needs of the weak, sick, straying, and lost sheep of Israel had been ignored. They had been ruled by force and left unprotected by their national leaders. They became prey to surrounding nations.

No leader made any effort to regroup the flock. They were simply abandoned.

National leaders are answerable to God. He holds them responsible for all losses sustained by the flock.

Verses 11-22

God's people would not be left without a shepherd.

The Good Shepherd Himself would take over direct responsibility. He would search out His sheep who hear and respond to His work. The Lord God takes the initiative in reclaiming His own. The age of re-gathering and restoration had begun.

Verses 11-16 (Read)

Verses 23-31

After the return from exile and the period of direct Divine supervision of the flock, God would set up a Shepherd over His people. This Shepherd must be the long, awaited Messiah.

A new covenant is a prominent feature of the Messianic age and in verse 25 it is called a “covenant of peace.” This entire section of Scripture relates to the new Israel of God—God’s present day chosen people. (Galatians 6:16)

Chapter 35

Verses 1-15

The first obstruction to restoration has been dealt with, that being the problem of corrupt leadership. Now Ezekiel deals with the second obstruction, the nations which oppressed God’s people must be judged and destroyed. Edom, as used here is symbolic of every nation which had oppressed Israel.

Verse 5

God declares that He will smite Edom because they had handed over the Jews to Babylon for execution. Not only did they deliver up the Jews to Babylon but they also occupied Judah and Israel when they were taken into captivity.

Verse 15

With the destruction of Edom, the enemy of God’s people, the whole earth would realize that God is just and mighty in the defense of His honor and His people.

Chapter 36

In this chapter Ezekiel speaks of the material and spiritual aspects of the restoration of Israel.

Verses 1-6

Three crimes have been committed against the land of Israel:

1. The Babylonians had made the land desolate.
2. The neighbors of Israel had cast covetous eyes upon the vacant land.
3. They spoke of contempt about the defeated Jews.

Verses 8-15

The end of the exile was nearing and God's people would once again possess their national inheritance.

As long as the returnees were faithful God would bless them. But even after their return to the land, the Jewish people fled to live up to their commitment of the Lord.

Verse 18

Ezekiel relates why they were dispersed among the nations saying it was because of their inexcusable impurity manifested in bloodshed and idolatry. The nations did not realize that Israel's punishment was just retribution for moral and religious shortcomings. They assumed that God was unable to protect His people.

Verses 22-38

Israel did not deserve or merit salvation from exile and restoration to their homeland. But it was necessary as part of God's long-range plan, to re-establish the Divine reputation.

The restoration would prove that the Babylonian captivity was not due to God's weakness.

Verses 26-27

The promises of Canaan's repopulation began to be fulfilled in the return of the Jews to Canaan in 538 B.C.

Chapter 37

Ezekiel has been promising God's people a bright future but these promises were met with much skepticism. Their faith had been shattered when the Temple was destroyed.

By means of a vision Ezekiel responded to their despondency. In the vision Ezekiel learns that God's Spirit had the power to turn what looked like a host of skeletons into an effective army.

Verses 1-14

Ezekiel is carried in spirit to a valley littered with the bones of dead men. The bones were numerous and they were very dry, having lain exposed to the elements for many years. God asked Ezekiel a question, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel was told to prophesy to these bones, and bid them to hear God's Word.

God would resurrect those skeletons imparting a life-giving spirit to them if Ezekiel would prophesy to them. Ezekiel did and as he was prophesying he heard a sound erupting over the valley as the bones began to unite and flesh appeared on the skeletons. But still there was no life in the corpses. Ezekiel was told to prophesy to the breath. As Ezekiel prayed the breath of life returned to the corpses and they lived, rising to their feet.

Verse 11

The dry and disjointed bones are a sad symbol of the people of Israel. They had been destroyed and left desolate. They cried, "Our bones are dried up."

Verse 12

God said, "I will open your graves." Their graves represent them being in foreign lands where they were in captivity. Israel would be resurrected from these metaphorical graves and restored to Canaan. This would cause the people's faith to be restored.

Verses 15-28

Revived Israel would be a united nation. They had divided in 931 B.C. To symbolically portray this reunion, Ezekiel was to take the inscribed sticks and hold them end to end to make them appear as one stick.

Ezekiel was to explain that Israel and Judah would form a single kingdom. This reunification would be a divine act brought about by God.

Verses 24-28 (Read)

These cleansed and redeemed people would then enter into a new relationship with God. Their king would be “My servant David,” not David in the flesh, but the Messiah.

The book of Acts fulfills this promise.

Chapter 38

In chapters 38 and 39 some arch-enemy of God’s people invades and devastates the land of Israel. The new Israel of God would undergo testing. The time frame is the age of the Messiah.

Verses 1-13

Ezekiel is to address an oracle to Gog who is from the land of Magog. He was a prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. Gog should not be identified with any figure of history, but as a symbol of evil force.

Magog is identified as the ruthless Scythians who were famous for the practice of pausing to drink the blood of the first enemy soldier killed in battle.

Rosh is an unknown land or people, but Meshech and Tubal are people who lived in the mountains north of Assyria.

What Ezekiel is saying is that God’s people would face one last dreadful onslaught by the forces of evil, but they will not succeed because God is against evil.

Verses 14-23

The plan of Gog would utterly fail. God would cause an earthquake and panic causing the enemy soldiers to destroy each other. He would also employ pestilence, bloodshed, hailstones, fire, and brimstone to bring about the demise of Gog.

Chapter 39

This chapter gives a more vivid description of the overthrow of Gog.

Verses 2-6 (Read) In verse 6, fire is frequently used in the Old Testament to symbolize warfare.

Verses 9-20

Describing Gog's destruction Ezekiel uses three pictures.

1. So vast would be the multitude of the enemies slain, that the wood of their weapons would serve God's people as fuel for seven years.
2. It will take Israel seven months to bury all the bodies of Gog's soldiers.
3. The flesh and blood of the fallen men of Gog would serve as a sacrificial feast for the birds and beasts.

Verses 21-24

The overthrow of Gog would be regarded as a Divine act revealing God's judgment. The nations would be convinced that Israel's captivity experience was not due to any lack of power on God's part.

God hid His face from them, refusing to aid them against their enemies because they had broken faith with Him.

Verses 25-29

God's new relationship to His people would begin shortly. This favorable treatment of Israel would cause God's name to be revered by many people.

Verse 29

No more would God hide his face from them, they would enjoy fellowship with God. This glorious state of affairs would exist in the age of the Holy Spirit when God poured out His Spirit upon the house of Israel.

NOTE:

The strongest case can be made for equating Gog with Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus Epiphanes was a bitter opponent of the Jews in the second century before Christ.

The center of his kingdom was in north Syria, the city of Antioch on the Orontes River being his capital. To the east his territory extended beyond the Tigris River. To the north his reign extended over Meshech and Tubal, districts of Anatolia.

The ruthless assault of Antiochus against Israel and the divine protection of God's people in the midst of that assault is a major theme in the prophecies of Ezekiel's contemporary Daniel. (Daniel 8:9-27; 11:21-35) (Zechariah 9:11-17)

Antiochus' soldiers desecrated the rebuilt Temple by rubbing pig fat on the walls. The book of Revelation uses this period of affliction and woe as a symbol of the final attack of Satan and his hordes upon the church.

Chapter 40

The book of Ezekiel ends with a vision. These last chapters depict God dwelling in the midst of His people who have been re-established in their homeland.

An angelic figure conducts Ezekiel through the Temple area.

These chapters unfold in a vision of the rebuilt Temple, a reformed priesthood, reorganized services, restored monarchy, reappointed territory, and a renewed people.

This vision pertains to the church Christ established, the Lord's church, Christ's church. Ezekiel is preaching Christ. The Temple vision is an elaborate representation of the Messianic age.

Certain great truths are expressed in these chapters.

1. Worship will be central in the new age.
2. God will dwell in the midst of His people.
3. Blessings will flow forth from God.
4. Responsibilities as well as privileges would belong to God's people in the age to come.

Verses 1-4

The Temple vision happens fourteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem. (573 B.C.) Ezekiel, in a vision, is transported to Mount Zion where he is met by a supernatural personage, carrying a measuring reed. Ezekiel was to pay special heed to what he sees and hears because he must declare these truths to the house of Israel.

Verses 5-49

These verses describe the measurements of the Temple in cubits.

Chapter 41-42

These chapters continue Ezekiel's measurements.

Chapter 43

Verses 1-12

After the measurements, the angel brought Ezekiel to the east gate of the Temple where he saw an awe-inspiring scene.

Nineteen years earlier Ezekiel had seen the glory of God leave the Temple (10:18-22; 11:22-24) but now he sees it returning to sanctify, the new structure as His holy dwelling.

After viewing the Divine throne-chariot, Ezekiel was whisked away into the inner court where he could see the glory of God completely fill the Temple.

The voice of God could be heard from within the sanctuary.

The former Temple had served as God's footstool; His throne was in heaven. (Psalm 132:7) The new Temple would be the throne room of God as well as His footstool. There He would dwell with His people forever.

In the new Temple age, God would no longer have His holy name defiled by disgusting idolatry by His people. The sanctity of the new Temple would be safe-guarded by a large area of outer and inner courts wherein the priests and other sacred personnel would dwell.

In the new age the people of God would be dominated by a new spirit, one which abhor idolatry. God can and will dwell forever in the midst of such a purified and regenerated people. Ezekiel was to describe the Temple of his vision to his fellow exiles. If the people were moved to repentance he was to give them all the details concerning the new structure.

Solomon's Temple occupied the slope of a hill, the future Temple was to crown the summit. It was to be considered "most holy."

Verses 13-27

Ezekiel focuses his attention on the center of worship, the altar.

In the Old Testament worship system, the altar was used two ways.

1. Burnt offerings were offered on it.
2. The blood was smeared on it

The altar would need to be consecrated so Ezekiel is told to assign the consecration functions to the Levitical priests who were descendants of Zadok.

Chapter 44

Verses 1-3

The angel takes Ezekiel from the inner court to the outer eastern gate. He found the gate shut because the glory of God had entered the Temple.

Verse 2

Never again would the gate be open, for God's glory would never depart from His Temple. No man would be permitted to enter the gate through which the Divine presence had come.

Verses 4-14

From the eastern gate Ezekiel was led to the northern gate. Here God gave Ezekiel the qualifications of those who might approach Him in His Holy Temple.

The menial Temple work formerly done by aliens must now be performed by the Levites as a punishment for previous transgressions. They had ministered to the people at idolatrous shrines becoming stumbling-blocks for God's people.

The Levites could not come near the Lord. They were restricted to functions in the outer court.

Verses 15-27

Only the sons of Zadok could minister before and within the sanctuary. They alone had remained faithful when the rest of the nation had gone into idolatry.

Verses 28-31

The Zadok priest's inheritance was the priesthood, not land tracts. Spiritual privilege is a greater blessing than material possessions.

Chapter 45

This chapter deals with the appointments of the sacred land to the Levites and the regulations concerning worship.

Verses 9-17

God appeals to the future rulers to abandon the greed and corruption of the earlier rulers who did violence to the helpless. They had used unjust measures.

Verses 18-20

Speaks regarding the New Year's celebration.

Verses 21-24

Speaks regarding the Passover.

Chapter 46

Verses 1-7

On the Sabbath day and on the new moon the eastern gate of the inner court was to be opened for the prince to enter. The prince would worship as the priests offered his sacrifices within his view upon the altar.

Verses 8-10

At the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles feasts the worshipers entered the outer court by one of the side gates and left by the gate on the opposite side. This made for an orderly flow of traffic across the inner court.

Verses 11-15

If the prince desired to offer a free-will offering on a weekday, the eastern gate of the inner court would be opened and then closed as he left.

Only on the Sabbath days was the eastern gate of the inner court left open so that worshipers might view the sacrificial ritual.

Verses 16-24

Ezekiel was taken by the angel into the priest's chambers where he was shown where the priests were to boil the meat of the guilt and sin offerings, and bake the meal for the meal offering.

Chapter 47

In his last vision Ezekiel observes the blessing which the people of God would enjoy in the new Temple age.

Verses 1-12

Ezekiel is taken back to the inner court and the door of the house where he sees a stream issuing forth from under the threshold. Ezekiel was led into the outer court. Here he saw the waters trickling. A little farther east he was directed to wade into the waters. They were ankle deep.

At two thousand cubits, the waters were knee deep; at three thousand cubits, waist deep, at four thousand cubits (about 1-1/3 miles) he had to swim across because the waters were so deep. The river increased in volume as it descended toward the Dead Sea.

As Ezekiel tested the waters, the river banks were bare, but now he observes a thick growth. These trees were not ordinary trees. They would bear a new crop every month. The leaves also had curative powers.

The prophet is informed that the rivers of life flowed far beyond the range of vision to the Arabah (deep depression through which the Jordan River flows) and the Dead Sea. In the Dead Sea, purified by the fresh water, fish would be found causing fishermen to flock to the once dead sea.

The main point of this illustration is that in the new age the Temple of God would be the source of life, healing, and fruitfulness.

Verses 13-21

God had promised the Patriarchs that the land would belong to their descendants. God keeps His promise. The land of promise would finally and forever belong to His people.

Verses 22-23

Proselytes who embraced the worship of the true God would have the same privileges as native-born Israelites. (Proselytes of the “gate” and proselytes of “righteousness”)

The unification of the Jew and Gentile in the kingdom of Jesus Christ is thus foreshadowed.

Chapter 48

This chapter deals with the division of the land among the tribes.

Verses 30-35

The New Jerusalem as envisioned by Ezekiel had twelve gates, three on each side.

The Jerusalem of the future would receive a new name. She shall be called YAHWEH-SHAMMA, God is there. God will never again depart from that holy city.

Ezekiel's description of the New Jerusalem is much like John's description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation chapter 21.

It had twelve gates, named after the twelve tribes of Israel. It also had twelve foundations which bore the names of the twelve apostles. (Revelation 21:12-14)
(Read)

Like his prophetic predecessor, John foresaw the day God would dwell with His people finally and forever. (Revelation 21:3) (Read)