

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

Ezekiel

Who: One of four great Israelite prophets who include Isaiah (8th century B.C.), Jeremiah (7th century B.C.), and Daniel (6th century B.C.), Ezekiel prophesied by the river Chebar in Babylon during the first half of the Jewish captivity there (598-570 B.C.). The book by his name, between Lamentations and Daniel, is the 26th in the Old Testament.

Favorite title for Ezekiel: Son of man (over 90 times)

Primary role: watchman (3:17; 33:1-7)

Apocalyptic: Like Revelation, Ezekiel is sprinkled with mysterious actions, allegories, symbols, and visions. It climaxes in God's final intervention that overwhelms Israel's enemies and exalts her to glory.

Remarkable chapters

1 - The great vision. An angelic collage of man, lion, ox, and eagle wheels its way across the heavens in fiery splendor, revealing the glory of the Lord.

3, 18, 33 - Role of the watchman and responsibility of those who hear him; contrasts God's ways with man's ways ("is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?" — 18:25) and evildoers who die with the righteous who live ("The soul who sins shall die," 18:4).

13, 34 - False prophets seduce God's people with "peace" when there is none; failing pastors (shepherds) do not feed or care for the flock, and it is scattered.

16, 23 - Parables of unfaithfulness show that God loved and rescued Israel and adorned her with great favor, yet she repeatedly turned to other lovers and committed spiritual adultery.

24 - On the day Nebuchadnezzar begins his final attack on Jerusalem, Ezekiel's wife dies, symbolizing rupture of the marriage between God and Israel. But the prophet must not grieve. After this chapter and Jerusalem's fall in 587 B.C.,

the prophet announces only destruction to Israel's enemies (25-32, 38, 39) and restoration to God's people (33-37, 40-48).

28 - This prophecy against the king of Tyre, like that against Babylon in Isaiah 14, may be a parable of Satan's fall.

38, 39 - Last battle. A great company of nations (Gog, Magog, etc.) shall mount a latter-day attack against God's people restored to their land, but Gog and Magog shall be defeated and God's name hallowed among the nations.

Pictures of renewal

Ichabod means "The glory has departed" (1 Sam. 4:21, 22). Revival is needed for Israel because the Lord's glory has departed. The great vision pictured this glory (1:28; 3:12, 23), which later lifted from the temple and from the city (8:1-4; 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22, 23). This forms the photo negative for the following renewal pictures:

- Restoration of the land (36:1-15, 30-36). The mountains, valleys, rivers, and cities of Israel, which have been taunted and desolated by their enemies, shall again

be inhabited as a fruitful inheritance for God's people.

- Return of the people (34:13; 36:10-15, 24; 37:15-28; 38:8b; 39:25-28). Though Israel and Judah have sinned, divided themselves, and been scattered among the nations, God will bring them back to the Promised Land as one secure people.
- Renewal of human hearts (11:19; 36:16-32). Though the hearts, or spirits, of God's people are hard through the sin of idolatry, God will cleanse them by a heart transplant and put the spirit of obedience within them — all for His holy name's sake.
- Resurrection of dry bones (37:1-14). The Spirit (breath) of the Lord will blow across a valley of bones (representing Israel's hopeless condition), bringing new life and blessing.
- Reclamation of the temple (40—48). Here is a renewed Hebrew temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and lands. Rather than a literal fulfillment before or after Christ's return, this may portray God's kingdom in Levitical terms (Ezekiel was a priest, 1:3), which will become Christian terms in the final chapters of Revelation.
- Return of the glory (43:1-5; 44:4). The Lord's majestic glory that departed from the temple and Jerusalem will reenter Mt. Zion through the eastern gate.
- Refreshment of desert lands (47:1-12). A deepening stream of water will flow from the temple's eastern door across parched lands to the valley of the Dead Sea, healing whatever it touches and producing a fruitful environment wherever it flows.

Ezekiel in a sentence: After tragic chastening for Jerusalem and the Jews through their rejection of Yahweh's covenant, full restoration of God's glory is ahead for Israel, as well as punishment for her enemies.