

## First Impressions of the Prophet Ezekiel and His Message

### Setting:

- Ezekiel ministered from 592-571 B.C. among his fellow Jewish exiles in Babylon who were deported with Jehoiachin, King of Judah, in 597.
- An apostate remnant of Jews remained in Jerusalem until its final destruction at the command of the LORD in 586 by the Babylonians.

### Personal Matters:

- In the year Ezekiel was apparently assuming the role of priest (according to his family line), the LORD called Him to be a prophet (1:1, 2:3-5, also Num. 4:3).
- In his first week of ministry, he was in a very upset state of mind (3:14-15) and apparently lost the ability to speak except when the LORD was speaking through him (3:26-27).
- Parts of his message included lying on the ground for many days tied up with ropes (4:4-8), and refraining from mourning when his wife suddenly died (24:16).

### Intended Audiences:

- Ezekiel's fellow exiles in Babylon who needed to come to terms with why they were in exile, why their relatives/friends in Jerusalem were not in a favorable position, and what needed to happen in order for all of them to be restored to their God
- Future generations of Jews in the Diaspora seeking hope in the midst of continued 'exile'
- Individuals/communities of the world in any age who suffer estrangement from the living God - particularly those who already have some knowledge of Him

### Primary Themes:

- The LORD's intention to destroy Jerusalem, from where His glory has departed
- The LORD's judgment on the nations for their pride and harshness to His people
- The LORD's restoration of Israel/Judah through a future Ruler and the return of His glory
- The LORD's commitment to make Himself known

### Basic Outline/Plan of Study:

Apr 10	1. Introduction / The LORD's initial vision and calling to Ezekiel (chaps 1-3)
Apr 17	2. Judah's demise and the LORD's departing glory from Zion (chaps 4-11)
Apr 24	3. Indications of a false existence (chaps 12-16)
May 1	4. Reality in full color: Allegories, Proverbs, Symbols, and Laments (chaps 17-24)
May 8	5. The LORD's judgment on the nations (chaps 25-32)
May 15	6. Later plans to protect and restore fallen Israel (chaps 33-39)
May 22	7. Return of true worship and the LORD's glory to Zion (chaps 40-48)

### Summary remarks from two Old Testament scholars (concerning the first half of the book):

"As drama, Ezekiel's words and actions gave 'shock treatment' to a nation made callous by sin against the Lord. His bold and provocative language was designed to scandalize and convict a people desensitized to the truth by a life of spiritual adultery. Meanwhile, his symbolic pantomimes served to underscore the urgency of the hour as Yahweh's wrath was about to be unleashed on Judah. Few heard the call of God. In fact, Ezekiel was likened to a skillful player/singer of love songs to people who loved to listen - but who refused to heed the warning of his message."

Hill, A.E. and Walton, J.H. *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 1991, Grand Rapids: Zondervan (p. 344)

