

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)

The LORD's initial Vision and Calling to Ezekiel (chaps 1-3)

1. The Initial Vision (chap 1)

A. Context (1:1-3)

"In the 30th year" = Ezekiel's age
Chebar canal → in Babylon

5th yr. of exile of Jehoiachin 592 B.C.

B. The Living Beings on Wheels (1:4-21)

Once God's hand comes upon Ezekiel
His life is never the same.

4 faces } Human face
"hybrid" } Lion face
BEINGS } Ox face

4 wheels connected to creatures (chariots?)

Moving in place. Wheels provide the movement.

C. The Expanse, (Throne,) and Glory of the LORD (1:22-28)

↳ "Platform" Struggling for human language to describe the grandeur in front of him - "like... as...". Appearance of the LORD Himself.

D. What is 'Glory'?

"heavy" "weight"

The "Heavies" = Important; Responsibility

Value. Beauty. Grandeur. Before Ezekiel talks about God's glory

2. Personal Instructions to Ezekiel (chaps 2-3)

departing - he SEES it.

If you get past the creatures & expanse you get to what the book is about →

THE LORD HIMSELF.

A. His audience (2:1-7)

Rebels who aren't going to listen.

B. Swallowing the scroll (2:1-3:11)

Book of Lamentations, mourning & woe.

He eats the scroll (in his vision) "Receive in your heart & hear w/ your ears."

C. Ezekiel's initial emotions (3:12-15)

He's starting to come out of the vision: "The spirit lifted me up..." Internalize the message

D. The role of a watchman (3:16-21)

Standing on city wall - sounding the alarm for city dwellers.

I went in bitterness in the rage of my spirit. I sat there overwhelmed for 7 days. What just happened to him HIT it emotionally.

E. Restrictions (3:22-27)

Give them warning from Me.

"Go shut yourself w/ your house." → literally.

You won't move around. Cords will be placed around you (literally) Any idea he was going to be out & mingling → No... confined.

3. Closing Thoughts:

A. Identifying with Ezekiel and/or his audience:

"Ezekiel, your life is no longer your own." If you are going to be my messenger, you are going to do what I tell you, say what I tell you.

B. Themes from the Book of Ezekiel in the NT:

- The mystery hidden for ages: 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:27)
- 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...' (1 Cor 6:19) be where I send you.
- 'You, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house...' (1 Pet 2:5)
- 'This is eternal life, that they may know You the only true God...' (Jn 17:3) You completely BELOW to ME.

C. 'This is not a dress rehearsal'

If we don't come to know God through Christ, we have missed the point of our life.

To know Him & to serve His purposes for His glory.

All the NT assumes we know Ezekiel & his message.

4. For Next Thursday: Please read chaps. 4-11. Pay particular attention to chap 8 concerning what's Christ is going on back in Jerusalem, and the subsequent movements of the LORD's glory in chaps 9-11.

the glory. I need to come inside & make you the person you need to be.

Ezekiel

3 deportations to Babylon

605 - Daniel - first deportation

597 - King Jehoiachin - Ezekiel Accepting

586 - King Zedekiah

4-
592 Ezekiel is called to be a prophet to fellow exiles

Given a lot of prophecies about crowd still in Jerusalem

The 2nd deportation gp. had a false hope that they were about to go back quickly.

Ezekiel's message: "That group is in big trouble."

Need to come to terms w. why they ARE IN EXILE.

There was an estrangement? Ezekiel is helping them find their way back

Theme: Making himself known is repeated 60x in the book.

Do any of us have aspirations to being the Lord's messenger in any way? Ch. 2-3 for folks contemplating that role.

Ezekiel is unusual. "One that doesn't apply to me..."

prophet → messenger... it applies to us.

You don't have to be a biblical prophet to learn concepts of being God's messenger.

- ① The Spirit... the Holy Spirit entering into him.
if God's Spirit isn't in me, I don't want to say anything on God's behalf.
- ② "I send you" → one who is sent.
The Spirit comes for the person to be SENT; not just make the messenger feel good.

- ③ Sending you to REBELS. We think God is sending us to those who want to hear. Not necessarily the case.
- ④ DON'T BE AFRAID.
- ⑤ DON'T WORRY ABOUT RESULTS. Your success is not measured on whether they listen to you or not. Success measured on obedience. Give the word. Leave the results to ME.
- ⑥ Internalize the message & let it change you before you give it to others. (Eat the scroll)
- ⑦ Emotional Reaction: reality of situation HITS him. Rage of spirit. 7 days feeling OVERWHELMED.

If ~~you~~ ^I say to wicked "You shall surely die" -
 If you don't warn him = I will require his blood of your hands.

Some take this as heavy guilt trip.
 ★ If God has given us a message & given us an audience -
 - one person or many people -
 and we don't... this is where it applies.

Typically as a messenger, you speak God was going to make ~~it~~ him MUTE, until God gave him a message.
 ★ No more chit-chat or normal conversation like you are used to.

learn from Ezekiel; might also identify w/ the rebellious audience.
 let God apply it as He wants.

Christ is the only hope of God's GLORY being in us.
 God's glory in us can't be manufactured. Christ being invited in is the only hope of God's glory indwelling us.

★ "Is God's glory comfortable in my body?" If we don't come to know God through Christ we have missed the point of our life.

The LORD's departing glory from Zion (chaps 4-11)

For the people back in Jerusalem

390 + 40 years

out of symbolic acts & into direct prophecies

About a year after he is called to be a prophet

The agitation of the beings is already in ch. 1 - the "wheels are in motion." But they don't start moving until ch. 9

1. Prophetic dramas portraying Jerusalem's coming judgment (chaps 4-5)
 - A. Laying siege to a brick (4:1-3) *Prophetic drama; symbolic act → what is going to happen in Jerusalem*
 - B. Tied up with ropes for 430 days (4:4-8)
 - C. Cooking/eating meager rations (4:9-17) *Jerusalem will be rationed w/ food/water*
 - D. Dividing cut-off hair (5:1-4, 12)
 - ↳ Humiliation $\frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{3}$ → to people of Jerusalem

Reason for the coming destruction (5:5-11)

They've been "so mean" to God.

Rejected God's guiding them in the right way. They are against me.

2. Prophecies of Jerusalem's coming judgment (chaps 6-7)
 - A. To the mountains of Israel (chap 6)
 - Elements of worship (1-5)
 - ONE place for Him to be worshipped. His Holy presence.
 - The 'broken' LORD (9)
 - "How I have been hurt (broken) after their adulterous heart."

Key phrase (7, 10, 13, 14): Ezekiel declares >60 times that through the LORD's judgments and restorations, Israel and the nations will come to know Him. Throughout the OT, this verb (heb. 'yada') generally indicates knowledge gained by intimate personal experience, such as in Gen 4:1 and 25:27. *Israel was 'married' to Israel.*

Punishment is not to be "DONE" with them but to bring their hearts back.

- B. The Day of the End is coming (chap 7)

It's REALLY close. Not far distant future.

Cast silver & gold away → idols or money.

3. Vision of the LORD's Temple in Jerusalem (chaps 8-11) In Babylon, Ezekiel is being supernaturally shown through a vision what is physically and spiritually taking place back in Jerusalem, where the LORD's glory is.

- A. Four indications of false worship in Jerusalem's temple area (chap 8):
 - Idol of jealousy (5-6)
 - Animal idols (7-12) *They think they are doing it in secret but it's open daylight to God's view. Not just leaders (men)*
 - Tammuz (14-15) *The women are involved too.*
 - The sun (16) *The men have their backs to the Temple. Worship of the heavenly bodies is NOT to be practiced.*

Movement of the LORD's glory from the temple (chaps 9-11)

The living creatures from chapter 1 are identified in 10:1-20 as being Cherubim, portrayed in Scripture as guardians of the throne and presence of God (Gen 3:24, Ex 25:18, 26:31, I Ch 28:18, Ps 18:10, Rev 4:6-11). In chaps. 9-11 they are actually conveying the glory of the LORD from Jerusalem, the city He established for His name. But now He is no longer worshipped there.

- 9:3
- 10:18-19 *The living creatures They are mentioned 13x in this ch. They are hybrid creatures. What happened to baby angels?*
- 11:23

Guarding the presence & throne of God. Not to be worshipped. Point to glory of God & convey it.

Local churches at large.

C. The departure of the LORD's glory in this text is a caution for the Christian, in whom resides the glory of God (1 Cor 3:16, 2 Cor 3:18, 5:5, Col 1:27). Also note corporate 'temple' themes in Eph 2, 1 Pet 2. While many people debate whether or not it is possible for God to remove His Spirit from a Christian, some more useful questions for us to consider may be:

- "How comfortable is the glory of the LORD in my life now?"
- "Who or what do I spend most of my time worshipping?"
- "Who/what do I view as the source, sustainer and primary motivation in my life at this time?"
- "Is the companionship I seek, the picture I look at, the book I read, the movie I watch, the music I listen to, etc.... tend to welcome or repel the presence of the LORD's glory in my life?"

Not "Is He going to leave me?" But "Is He comfortable or moving around?"

D. Words of Hope

- A mark on certain foreheads (9:4-6)
- Those are spared from being executed along w/ rest of the people.
- The LORD as 'sanctuary' (heb. mikdash, 11:16)

"Is He broken over my going after rival gods?"

The people I've removed - I've been their sanctuary.

- A different approach to idolatry (11:18)
- The gift of a new heart (11:19)

Stand apart. Refuse to compromise. Carry a sense of shame.

The returned from exile will REMOVE the idolatry. God doesn't take the images away - the people remove.

Not promising complete immunity.

GOD GIVES THE HEART to do HIS WILL & get rid of the idols. Desire to please the LORD.

That they may be my people and I will be their GOD.

Next week: As we go into the following lessons, we will discover issues that are crucial for the exiled people of Judah to process if they (or more accurately, their descendants) are ever allowed to return to their homeland and experience afresh the glory of the LORD. Please read chapters 12-16 and be looking for 'Indications of a False Existence'.

LORD, do whatever you want to do in my life.

