

EZEKIEL



Welcome to the book of Ezekiel!

To begin your study of Ezekiel, meditate upon the content of the book reflected in the overview chart below. As you consider each section and the title we have chosen, decide how each one relates to the theme "Exiles, Ruined, and Restored." The imagery and unorthodox style of Ezekiel in the communication of his message makes him unique among the prophets. As you read, contrast and compare Ezekiel's style and message with that of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

EZEKIEL **Condemnation/Restoration**

CONDEMNATION IN CAPTIVITY 12:1-16	RESTORATION AND CONSOLATION 36:1 - 37:28
1-20	21-36

"Seek the ancient paths and find rest for your souls." 14:2

Also note the Scripture references listed within the overview chart above. Take this opportunity to investigate each one, looking for the relationship between the section titles and key verses. Use these passages as "guideposts" to unlock the book. What have you learned thus far about the book of Ezekiel?

In chapters 1-20 we see the effects of sin as it brings ruin to the people of God. Ezekiel's prophetic call is for the express purpose of condemning Judah and the other surrounding nations. Often in the prophets restoration and ruination are considered side by side. Chapters 21-36 express God's power and heart to restore and console God's people as they find their way back to the Father.

Open your heart as you read!

Are you embracing sin in your life that is in the process of ruining you? Take the time to meditate upon the imagery that Ezekiel uses to convey his message as you seek to extract principles of ruination by sin and restoration by Grace. It is incredible that God can be so filled with long-suffering love!

KEY BACKGROUND on the book of Ezekiel

AUTHOR

Ezekiel, a priest (1:3) and a prophet (1:2; 29:17). He ministered during the last days of Judah's decline and downfall. He was taken captive to Babylon with Jehoiachin (1:2; 33:21) in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar (597 B.C.; see 2 Kings 24:14). While Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem, Ezekiel prophesied among the exiles in Babylon. Ezekiel used prophecies and parables, signs and symbols to dramatize God's message to His exiled people.

The book is full of the personal experiences of the prophet. He shut himself up in his home, bound himself and was struck dumb (3:24-26); he was commanded to lie on his right side and then his left side for 430 days (4:4-8); he ate bread prepared in an unclean manner (4:12); he had to shave his head and beard (4:1); he was not permitted to mourn at the death of his wife (24:15-24); and he lost his speech (24:27). God intended Ezekiel to be a sign to Israel in the experiences of his life (24:24).

DATE

593-571 B.C.

OTHER BACKGROUND

Ezekiel's main idea is hard to miss for he repeats it more than 30 times! Skim through chapter 6 and see how often it can be identified. Give up? "You shall know that I am the Lord...they shall know that I am the Lord...Then shall you know that I am the Lord...They shall know that I am the Lord" (6:7, 10, 13, 14). God repeatedly told Ezekiel that He was acting in a particular manner so that people would know "I am the Lord." In many of our churches we talk about ourselves and our problems more than God and His solutions. Because of this sad situation in Christianity today, Ezekiel could just as easily be prophesying about us, declaring judgment on God's church and previewing His ultimate glory so that "we may know that He is the Lord."

The book can easily be divided chronologically into three sections: Before Judah's Fall (chapters 1-24), during Judah's Fall (chapters 25-32), and After Judah's Fall (chapters 33-48).

Why Study the Book of Ezekiel?

1. You'll discover insights from the breakdown of a society, learning that true solutions are moral and spiritual rather than political and economic.
2. From Ezekiel you can discover how to be a better communicator of truth. He is one of the most gifted, unpredictable, and effective communicators in the Scriptures.
3. You may discover ways to handle differences with others.



Ezekiel Chapter Chart

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Reading One "Ezekiel is Commissioned" Read 1:1 - 3:27

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		
3		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How did God reveal Himself to Ezekiel?
2. Review the vision of the Glory of God (1:4-28). Isolate each description and try to determine the symbolism about God and His dealings with men. (Example: There were faces on all four sides...God can see all things at all times.)
3. What was Ezekiel's mission? What does God say about the inevitable response of the people?
4. Compare Revelation 10 with Ezekiel 3:1-10. What do you learn?
5. What was the exiles' response to Ezekiel? What choices did they make?
6. What are some repeated words and phrases in chapter 3?

What about today?

Do you ever spend time thinking about the Glory of God? Use the imagery you have studied today to meditate upon God's incredible character! How do you feel about the fact that God will ruin those who sin? What should be our two-fold response to ruin and restoration (see Revelation 10 and Ezekiel 3:1-10)?

My feelings about the concept of judgment:

Reading Two "The Judgment Sermons" Read 4:1 - 7:27

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
4		
5		
6		
7		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How would you have felt if God had requested a similar posture from you?
2. What was the reason for the "Dung object lesson"?
3. What were to be the elements of God's justice?
4. What was the reason and purpose for this judgment?
5. What do we learn about the "disaster"?

What about today?

How would these sermons (and their object lessons) be received today? What immediate application would they have? Are you as willing as Ezekiel was to follow God's Word? Has God ever asked you to do something that seemed from your perspective to be pointless or foolish?

My thoughts about doing things that God requests that make no sense:

Reading Three "The Judgment Visions" Read 8:1 - 11:25

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
8		
9		
10		
11		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What gave Ezekiel his authority and motivation to speak?
2. What was the "idol of jealousy"?
3. How far had the leaders of the people gone?
4. What were the things that God wanted Ezekiel to see?
5. What is the role of "the man with the briefcase"?
6. What was the counsel of the elders and what does it teach us about the nature of ungodly counsel?

What about today?

We receive our authority to speak in God's Name from God alone. In what way does God give this authority today? What would be some "idols of jealousy" in your life? If we could accomplish an overview evaluation of religion today, what would be similarities and differences to what Ezekiel viewed in his evaluation? Do you know how to recognize and pursue godly counsel?

My thoughts about the idol of jealousy and its relationship to my life:

Reading Four "Judgment Messages" Read 12:1 - 14:23

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
12		
13		
14		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What did the signs of the baggage and trembling indicate?
2. What was the response of the people to these messages? Compare 2 Peter 3:3-9.
3. To what does a false prophet appeal for his/her authority?
4. What is characteristic of the false teachers' message?
5. Where were the elders' idols set up?
6. What is the point God is making with the three men – Noah, Daniel and Job?
7. How many "severe judgments" were to come?

What about today?

How would you compare the church of today's view of sin with those views of Ezekiel and the people? What do you know of your leaders' commitment to shun idolatrous living as described by Ezekiel?

My thoughts about discerning false teaching in my world:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Take each parable and proverb given in this section and write out possible interpretations as you further consider the ruin of sin.
2. Why does God think the adulterous woman should love Him freely rather than following after other lovers?
3. What made Israel's harlotry doubly detestable?
4. What do we learn about God's sovereignty from this segment?
5. What was the "loathsome thing" that Israel was saying in chapter 18?
6. What verse would you choose to summarize the lament of chapter 19?

What about today?

In what ways could we "pay our lovers harlotry" today? What are some "detestable things" that you find difficult to cast away?

My thoughts on things that are detestable to God:

Reading Six "Unfaithfulness Brings the Sword" Read 20:1 - 21:32

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
20		
21		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How was Israel's unfaithfulness evidencing itself?
2. Why did God act on behalf of Israel?
3. What did the forest fire represent?
4. What was the significance of the signpost?
5. Note the key verse we have chosen for the book (21:27). How does the verse reflect both major divisions and a theme of "casting away"?

What about today?

Israel was ruined by her unfaithfulness. In what ways are you faithful to your husband, Christ? We must take care not to be spoiled by the deceitful idolatry of this life!

My thoughts about faithfulness and unfaithfulness:

Chapter

Title

Key Verse

22		
23		
24		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways did Jerusalem "shed blood"?
2. There were different groups that had committed sin: prophets, priests and princes. Compare the characteristics of their sin.
3. Note 22:30. What was the "gap"? Why couldn't God find anyone to stand in the gap?
4. Who did the two sisters represent?
5. What did the two sisters' lewdness picture?

What about today?

No one is above sin. Prophet, priest and prince alike are vulnerable! What are the two or three prominent principles about sinning that spoke to your heart in chapters 1-24? How would you feel if you were Ezekiel?

CONCLUSION

The book of Ezekiel carries the prophetic message to a graphic degree! The service that counts is often the service that costs us something. Ezekiel paid dearly in real life sacrifices and sufferings. When obeying God's Word is going to cost us something, may we respond as obediently as Ezekiel!



EZEKIEL'S WINDOW TO THE FUTURE

Observe the following passages. What do they teach us about the future? (all are from Ezekiel)

Passage

Teaching

6:1-14

7:5-12

20:33-44

28:25-26

34:25-31

36:8-15

38:1-23

39:1-29

47:1-12

Here are some comparisons between passages in Ezekiel and the book of Revelation.

What are the similarities? What do they teach us?

Ezekiel

Revelation

1:1

19:11

1:5

4:6

1:10

4:7

1:22

4:6

1:24

1:15

1:28

4:3

2:9

5:1

3:1, 3

10:10

7:2

7:1

9:4

7:3

9:11

1:13

10:2

8:5

14:21

6:8

26:13

18:22

27:28-30

18:17-19

37:10

11:11

37:27

21:3

38:2-3

20:8

40:2

21:10

40:3

11:1

43:2

1:15

43:16

21:16

47:1, 12

22:1-2

48:31

21:12

EZEKIEL'S SYMBOLS

See if you can determine what each of these signs taught the people of God regarding their God and their sin...

Passage	Sign	What does it teach?
4:1-3	Brick	(Example – Jerusalem's siege and fall)
4:4-8	Prophetic Posture	
4:9-17	Famine	
5:1-17	Knife & Razor	
12:1-7	Moved House	
21:1-17	Sharp Sword	
21:18-23	Ruler's Sword	
22:17-31	Fiery Furnace	
24:15-27	Wife's Death	
37:15-17	Two Sticks	

What is the ethic involved? What are particular principles of growth that apply to how you meditate upon and evaluate your responses to each ethic?

What do you learn from other symbolic teaching in the book?

15:1-8	Vine
16:1-63	Faithless Wife
17:22-24	The Cedar
23:1-49	Two Women
24:1-14	Boiling Caldron
17:1-21	Two Eagles

Which two symbolic teachings could be considered parables?