

THE BOOK OF
EZEKIEL

Introduction

When one mentions the study of the book of Ezekiel, instantly it is assumed the book is too difficult, that it is a most insurmountable task to comment on. However, it is a book in the Word of God and therefore we are called upon to study it. I am convinced that many who say that the book of Ezekiel is too difficult have not taken the time to thoroughly study it. Possibly they could not get past the first chapter, being overwhelmed by the first vision Ezekiel sees. Had they kept reading they would have found so many beautiful and amazing things on every turn of the page, fulfilled prophecies so accurate they boggle the mind.

As we go through Ezekiel together, we will need to remind ourselves to appreciate each little bit of knowledge and insight we get from the Holy Spirit of God and build upon that. Do not fall into the trap of the "I just want it all now" mentality. Bible knowledge is "precept upon precept, line upon line." With that exhortation in mind, let us look into this most amazing book of the Bible.

The Historical Setting:

It is imperative that you understand a little of Ezekiel's historical setting. The house of Israel is divided into two kingdoms, the northern consisting of ten tribes (*often referred to as Israel*) and the southern consisting of two tribes (*often, but not exclusively, referred to as Judah*). At the time Ezekiel is prophesying the northern tribes had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians more than 100 years prior. Israel (10 northern tribes, Samaria) were carried away by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, dissimulating the people of Israel among the Assyrian cities (II Kings 17:3-6; 18:9-12). 10 years later Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against Hezekiah king of Judah, first capturing the cities of Judah (II Kings 18:13). Hezekiah tries to appease Sennacherib by removing the gold from the temple, but to no prevail, so king of Assyria sends down to Jerusalem Rabshakeh, captain of the guard to discomfort king Hezekiah and the people through speeches made at the walls of Jerusalem (II Kings 18:17-35, 19:8-13). Hezekiah upon hearing the first of Rabshakeh's words sends men to inquire of Isaiah the prophet (II Kings 19:1-5). Isaiah informs king Hezekiah not to fear (II Kings 19:6-7). Upon hearing more words of the Assyrian general (II Kings 19:8-13) Hezekiah goes to prayer (II Kings 19:14-19). God hears the prayers of Hezekiah and through Isaiah the prophet that God will defend the city of Jerusalem (II Kings 19:20-34). And in that night an angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men. This miraculous

event caused Sennacherib to depart to Nineveh (II Kings 19:35-37).

This miraculous deliverance by God however would not be lasting for following the death of Hezekiah Manasseh begins to reign at the age of 12 he will reign for 55 years (II Kings 21). Manasseh did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and though other kings would rule over Judah it would be the acts of Manasseh that God would point to as the reason for the final destruction of Jerusalem (II Kings 24:1-4). It would be under the reign of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah that the final three sieges against Jerusalem would take place.

The Three Deportations of the Jews: The northern tribes having been taken away by the Assyrians, God now deals with the judgment on Jerusalem and the southern 2 tribes, Benjamin, and Judah. Under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians complete three sieges against Jerusalem, each time deporting Jews into the region of Babylon.

- 606 B.C. The Babylonians begin the first deportation of the Jews (*Daniel was in this group Daniel 1:1-2*) under the reign of Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:34- 24:6).

- 592 B.C. In the second deportation was under the reign of Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:6-16). As a young man Ezekiel was part of this second deportation, being then about the age of 25. He was deported to the Jewish assembly in the region known as Telabib by the river Chebar (*a canal off the Euphrates river.*) Ezek. 3:15

Five years after this deportation he is called to be a prophet of God at the age of 30. **Ezekiel is prophesying prior to, during, and following the final siege on Jerusalem.**

- 586 B.C. The third and final deportation and destruction of Jerusalem took place during the reign of Zedekiah (II Kings 24:17- 25:1-21). This final siege against Jerusalem lasted 2 ½ years and was extremely gruesome due to the stubbornness of Zedekiah and his false prophets. Rather than surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, as God told him to do, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, Zedekiah listened to his false prophets and held out. The results were a massive starvation of the people of God with the walls of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was within the walls of Jerusalem and records

the horrifying events in the Books of Lamentation and Jeremiah. The facts surrounding the starvation God's people play an important part to understanding the events of Ezekiel.

The Man Ezekiel:

- Ezekiel is one of the three that are known as the captivity prophets (*the other two being Daniel and Jeremiah*).
- Ezekiel was a priest (Ezekiel 1:3) but never served in that office because he was taken into captivity to Babylon during the second deportation in the reign of Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:12, 15). cf. Ezekiel 1:2 also called Jeconiah (I Chron. 3:16.)
- Ezekiel is taken to a Jewish settlement at Telabib (Ezek. 3:15) down by the river Chebar (see Psalm 137), which is a great canal of the Euphrates river, several miles south of Babylon itself. It was the agricultural center of Babylon. Telabib meaning "hill of corn ears".
- Though Ezekiel is in Babylon he is able to see events in Jerusalem through the power of the Spirit of God (Ezek. 1:3 cf. 8:1-4).
- Ezekiel is prophesying to the people of Jerusalem before, during and following the final siege on Jerusalem and deportation of the Jewish people. This event and all the details surrounding it are paramount to interpreting the Book of Ezekiel.
- Ezekiel is called upon to be a living parable. He is called upon to do many symbolic acts and similes to get the attention of the people (see Ezek. 5:1-2).
- Ezekiel prophesied of coming judgment against Jerusalem while false prophets told the people that God would destroy Babylon and set the captives free (see Ezek. Chapter 13)

Outline of the Book of Ezekiel

1-3 The Call of the Prophet

4-23 God's Judgment on Jerusalem

(Given before the siege of Jerusalem)

24-32 God's Judgment on Surrounding Nations

(Given during the siege of Jerusalem – see 24:1-2)

33-48 The Future Restoration of the Jews

(Given after the siege on Jerusalem)