

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 1-Five “W’s” & 1 “H” (Who, What, When, Where, Why & How)

Executive Summary:

The Book of Ezekiel provides a first-person account of the prophetic ministry of Ezekiel, a priest-turned-prophet during the Babylonian captivity. Centered on the River Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans, the text documents a series of divine visions and proclamations occurring between approximately 627 BC and 570 BC.

I. Biographical Profile of Ezekiel

Identity and Name

The name Ezekiel (*yekhezkael*) appears three times in Hebrew Scriptures. It is derived from the Hebrew words *khawzak* (meaning strong or strength) and *ale* (meaning God). Consequently, the name translates to "God who strengthens" or "the God who is strong."

Lineage and Role

Ezekiel's personal history is defined by his transition from the priesthood to prophecy:

- **Priesthood:** Before his prophetic calling, Ezekiel served as a priest. He was the twentieth priest in his line responsible for the officers of the priesthood, as referenced in the genealogical lists of 1 Chronicles 24:7-16.
- **Family:** His father was named Buzi.
- **Lifespan:** He is believed to have lived approximately between 627 BC and 570 BC, reaching roughly 57 years of age.

II. Historical and Geographical Context

Authorship and Timing

The text is written in the first person, utilizing personal pronouns and first-person verbs (e.g., "I saw visions of God"). This internal evidence highlights Ezekiel himself as the author.

- **The Calling:** Ezekiel received his call in the "thirtieth year," on the fifth day of the fourth month.
- **Chronology:** This coincided with the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile.
- **King Jehoiachin:** A king of Judah who ruled for only three months and ten days (Dec. 598 BC – March 597 BC) before being taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. He remained in captivity for 37 years before being released by Evil-merodach around 560 BC.

Location

Ezekiel's ministry took place during the Babylonian captivity in the land of the **Chaldeans** (*kaśdîmâ*).

- **Region:** Specifically, he was located in lower Mesopotamia between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.
- **Site:** The text places him at the **River Chebar** (also referred to as the Kebar River), near settlements such as Tel-abib and Nippur.

III. Themes of Divine Judgment

The book outlines a dual-track judgment focusing on both the house of Israel and its neighboring nations.

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Judgment of Israel

The proclamation against Israel is rooted in their "destructive active character." God describes the house of Israel as "stubborn and obstinate," warning Ezekiel that they would not be willing to listen to him because they were not willing to listen to God.

The "Rebellious House" and its Elements: The source context identifies specific Hebrew terms that characterize Israel's rebellion:

Hebrew Term	Translation/Association	Frequency in Ezekiel	Total in Scripture
<i>Ghilool</i>	Idol; "log"	39 times	48 times
<i>Shikoots</i>	Abomination; detestable	8 times	28 times
<i>Hamas</i>	Violence; physical destruction	6 times	60 times
<i>Zimmâ</i>	Lewdness; associated with sex work	14 times	29 times

Judgment of Nations

God's judgment extends to foreign nations based on their attitudes and conduct regarding Israel:

- **Moab and Seir:** Judged because they claimed the house of Judah was "like all the nations." God vowed to deprive Moab of its frontier cities (e.g., Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon) and give them to the "sons of the east."
- **Egypt:** Judged for prideful claims over the Nile ("The Nile is mine, and I have made it"). The prophecy declares Egypt will become an "utter waste and desolation" from Migdol to Syene for forty years, with its people scattered among the nations.

IV. Restoration and Future Deliverance

Despite the severity of judgment, the Book of Ezekiel concludes with a definitive promise of restoration for ethnic Israel.

The New Covenant

The restoration involves a radical internal transformation of the people:

- **Heart "Transplant":** God promises to remove the "heart of stone" and replace it with a "heart of flesh."
- **New Spirit:** A new spirit will be put within the people to enable them to walk in divine statutes and ordinances.
- **Relationship:** The core of the deliverance is the reconciliation: "Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."

Components of Restoration

The restoration is comprehensive, covering national, physical, and spiritual dimensions:

- **National Restoration:** The physical gathering of the people from the countries where they were scattered to live on the land given to Jacob (Chapter 37).
- **The Prince:** "David My servant" is prophesied to be their prince forever.
- **The Temple:** The restoration of the physical temple (Chapters 42-43).
- **Priesthood and Land:** The restoration of the national priesthood (Chapter 44) and the redistribution of the land (Chapters 45, 47-48).

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- **Everlasting Covenant:** The establishment of a "covenant of peace" and the setting of God’s sanctuary in their midst forever.

V. Literary Structure of the Message

The Book of Ezekiel follows a consistent logical progression in the delivery of its messages:

1. **The Divine Call:** The word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel, often through visions.
2. **Demonstration:** A physical or literary demonstration of the intended message (e.g., symbolic actions performed by the prophet).
3. **Declaration:** The formal announcement of judgment against Israel or the nations.
4. **Action:** The specific consequences or events that will occur as a result of the judgment.
5. **Restoration:** The certainty of forgiveness and the eventual restoration of ethnic Israel.



Ezekiel: The 6 W's and 1 H

Dr. Luther Ray Smith



A man with a long grey beard and hair, wearing a dark robe and a striped shawl, sits on a stone ledge. He points his right hand towards the left. The background shows a river, a small village with mud-brick buildings, and palm trees under a cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise.

First Question

Who is Ezekiel?



Who Is Ezekiel?

- The Meaning of Ezekiel's name

Ezekiel

יְחֶזְקֵאל / *yekhezkael*

- This name occurs 3 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- His name originates from two Hebrew words: *khawzak'* (חֹזֶק) meaning “strong” or “strength” and *ale* (אֵל) meaning God
- His name means “God who strengthens” or “the God who is strong.”

Who Is Ezekiel?

- The meaning of Ezekiel's name.
- Ezekiel, before he was called as a prophet of God to the Israelite people, he was a priest.
- He was the twentieth priest that was responsible for the officers of priest in his line.

1 Chronicles 24:7-16 NASB95

“...Now the first lot came out for Jehoiarib, the second for Jedaiah, the third for Harim, the fourth for Seorim, the fifth for Malchijah, the sixth for Mijamin, the seventh for Hakkoz, the eighth for Abijah, the ninth for Jeshua, the tenth for Shecaniah, the eleventh for Eliashib, the twelfth for Jakim, the thirteenth for Huppah, the fourteenth for Jeshebeab, the fifteenth for Bilgah, the sixteenth for Immer, the seventeenth for Hezir, the eighteenth for Happizzesz, the nineteenth for Pethahiah, the twentieth for Jehezkel (i.e., Ezekiel)...”

Who Is Ezekiel?

- Not much is known of his immediate family lineage other than his father is named Buzi (c.f., Ezek. 1:3).
- It is believed that Ezekiel lived approximately between 627BC-570 BC (57 years of age)

A man with a long grey beard and hair, wearing a dark robe with a white and black striped shawl, sits on a stone ledge. He is pointing his right hand towards the left. The background shows a desert landscape with a body of water, some buildings, and mountains under a cloudy sky.

Second Question

Who is the author of this book?



Ezekiel 1:1 NASB95

“...Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, **while I was** by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and **I saw visions** of God...”

וַיְהִי בַּשָּׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּרַבִּיעֵי בַתְּמִנְשָׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וַאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ־הַגּוֹלָה עַל־נְהַר כְּבָר וַנִּפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲרָאָה מִרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים

Both words are written in the first person. The word in red is written as a **personal pronoun**, where as the word in orange is a verb written in **the first person**. These are found all throughout the book of Ezekiel. This highlights that it is Ezekiel that has written this account was written by Ezekiel himself.

Second Question

Where is Ezekiel
at this time period?



Where Is Ezekiel?

- According to the biblical text, it would appear that Ezekiel was in the land of the Babylonians (or the Chaldeans) during the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Chaldeans

כַּשְׂדִּימָה / *kaśdîmâ*

- This word occurs 46 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- This word occurs 9 times in the book of Ezekiel.
- Refers to the land or the territory in the lower Mesopotamia region that lies between the Euphrates and Tigris river.

Ezekiel 1:1-3 NASB95

Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, *in the land of the Chaldeans* by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.).

Where Is Ezekiel?

- According to the biblical text, it would appear that Ezekiel was in the land of the Babylonians (or the Chaldeans) during the time of the Babylonian captivity.
- Additionally, Ezekiel mentioned that he was located by the Chebar river.

Ezekiel 1:1-3 NASB95

Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.).



Caspian Sea

0 100 Km

N

Tigris R.

Euphrates

Mediterranean Sea

BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

Nippur

Babylon

Chebar River

ZAGROS

Jerusalem

Tel-abib

Kebar River

JUDAH

Nile River

Persian

Third Question

When did Ezekiel write this book?



There is not an exact date given for Ezekiel's writing; however, we can produce an approximate time period based on some details...

“... (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of **King Jehoiachin's exile**, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him)...” (**2 Chronicles 38:9-10**)

Historical Facts

- King Jehoiachin was a king of Judah, and his reign lasted only three months (ruled from Dec. 598 BC-March 597 BC).

“...Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. At the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon with the valuable articles of the house of the LORD, and he made his kinsman Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem...” (2 Chron. 36:9-10 NASB95)

Historical Facts

- King Jehoiachin was in captivity in Babylon for 37 years, to which he was finally released by Evil Merodach (approx. 560 BC).

“...Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; and he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon. Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes and had his meals in the king's presence regularly all the days of his life; and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life...” (2 Kings 25:27-30)

Historical Facts

- It could be believed that Ezekiel had possibly wrote this book before his death recalling his calling from God and the message that was given to him.

Fourth Question

What is the book of Ezekiel About
and Why is the book of Ezekiel
written?



The Book of Ezekiel

Judgment of Israel

Observing the language of the book of Ezekiel God gave a proclamation of judgment based upon the destructive active character and activity of Israel.

Judgment of Israel In Ezekiel

Then He said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, **but to the house of Israel**, nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; **yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.** Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, **though they are a rebellious house (Ezekiel 3:3-9 NASB 95)**

Elements of A Rebellious House

Idols

גִּלּוּל / *ghilool*

*48 times/Hebrew
Scriptures*

39 Book of Ezekiel

“log,” or “idol”

Detestable

*Corr. Hebrew word of
idol*: שִׁקּוּץ / *shikoots*

*28 times/Hebrew
Scriptures*

8 Book of Ezekiel

“abomination”

The Book of Ezekiel

Idols (גִּילּוּל/*ghilool*)

“...“Then you will know that I am the LORD, when their slain are among their **idols** around their altars, on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every green tree and under every leafy oak—the places where they offered soothing aroma to all their **idols**. (Ezekiel 6:13)...”

Detestable (שִׁקּוּץ/*shikoots*)

“...‘So as I live,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your **detestable idols** and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare. (Ezekiel 5:11)...”

Elements of A Rebellious House

Idols

גִּלּוּל / *ghilool*

*48 times/Hebrew
Scriptures*

39 Book of Ezekiel

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*28 times/Hebrew
Scriptures*

8 Book of Ezekiel

“abomination”

Violence

חַמָּס / *hamas*

*60 times/Hebrew
Scriptures*

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*“violence,” “physical
destruction”*

Ezekiel 8:17 NASB95

He said to me, “Do you see this, son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with **violence** and provoked Me repeatedly? For behold, they are putting the twig to their nose.

Elements of A Rebellious House

Lewd

זִמְמָה / *zimmâ*

*29 times/Hebrew
Scriptures*

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lewdness

assoc w/ “sex work”

Ezekiel 16:27 NASB95

“...Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct...”

The Book of Ezekiel

Judgment of Israel (Present and future)

God through the prophet Ezekiel gave a proclamation of judgment based upon the active character and activity of Israel.

Judgment of Nations (Present and Future)

God through the prophet Ezekiel gave a proclamation of judgment based upon the active character and activity of the nations activity and conduct, and attitude with respect to Israel's conduct.

Concerning Moab

Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,’ therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of its cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim, and I will give it for a possession along with the sons of Ammon to the sons of the east, so that the sons of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations. **Thus I will execute judgments on Moab,** and they will know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 25:8-11 NASB 95)

Concerning Egypt

“Because you said, ‘The Nile is mine, and I have made it,’ therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia. A man’s foot will not pass through it, and the foot of a beast will not pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years. So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands.” (Ezekiel 29:8b-12 NASB95)

The Book of Ezekiel

Judgment of Israel (Present and future)

God through the
Ezekiel gave a
proclamation of
judgment based upon
the active character
and activity of Israel.

Judgment of Nations (Present and Future)

God through the
Ezekiel gave a
proclamation of
judgment based upon
the active character
and activity of the
nations activity and
conduct, and attitude
with respect to Israel's
conduct.

Future Deliverance & Kingdom (Present and Future)

God through the
Ezekiel mentioned not
only the judgment of
Israel but the
restoration of Israel as
a nation and the
kingdom of God.

Concerning Deliverance of Israel

'Thus says the Lord GOD, "I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel." When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. (Ezekiel 11:17-20 NASB95)

Concerning Deliverance of Israel

“They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” (Ezekiel 37:25-27 NASB95)

Concerning Deliverance of Israel

“They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” (Ezekiel 37:25-27 NASB95)

Restoration of Israel

- The restoration of the nation (chap. 37:1-28).
- The restoration of the physical temple (chaps. 42-43).
- The restoration of the national priesthood (chaps. 44:1-31)

Restoration of Israel

- The restoration of the land of Israel (chaps. 45:1-25; 47-48:1-35).

Fourth Question

How is the book of Ezekiel written?



The Book of Ezekiel

God's call to Ezekiel to give a message to Israel or nation

- “The word of the Lord came to...” (c.f., Ezek 6:1).

- Visions to Ezekiel (c.f., Ezek. Chaps. 1-3).

The certainty of forgiveness and restoration of ethnic Israel

- (e.g., Ezek. 11:14-20, chaps. 37:1-28, 39:25-29, chaps. 40-48)

Physical or literary demonstration of the message

- (e.g, Ezek. 5:1-4, 24:15-27).

Declaration of the judgement to Israel (or the nations)

- (e.g, Ezek. 12:1-6, 22:1-31)

Actions that will occur due to the judgment of Israel (or the nations)

- (e.g., Ezek. 14:12-23, 25:1-17)

A man with a long grey beard and hair, wearing a dark robe and a striped shawl, sits on a stone ledge. He points his right hand towards the left. The background shows a desert landscape at sunset or sunrise, with palm trees, a body of water, and distant mountains under a cloudy sky.

The Book of Ezekiel

Next Up: Preliminary History

