

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 3-Important Words and Phrases

Executive Summary

The book of Ezekiel serves as a critical prophetic record written during the invasions of Judah and Jerusalem. Positioned chronologically between the ministry of Jeremiah and the captivity of Daniel, the text addresses both contemporary and future judgments.

I. Historical and Literary Context

Ezekiel's ministry is characterized by its specific timing and relationship to other prophetic works. It is "sandwiched" between the ministry of Jeremiah and Daniel's captivity. The book functions on two temporal planes:

1. **Present Judgments:** Addressing the immediate era of Ezekiel, the fall of Jerusalem, and the exile of the people of Israel.
2. **Future Judgments:** Prophesying events yet to come in human history.

II. Linguistic Analysis and Divine Communication

- **The Word of the LORD (*debar-YHWH*)**

Ezekiel emphasizes the divine origin of his message more than any other prophet. The phrase "The Word of the LORD" (*debar-YHWH* in Hebrew; *logos kyrios* in Greek) appears 60 times in Ezekiel, compared to 51 times in Jeremiah.

A critical analysis of **Ezekiel 1:3** reveals an "infinitive absolute" structure of the verb *haya* (to come/be). This structure intensifies the verb "came expressly," indicating that the "Word of the LORD" was intentional and specifically focused on Ezekiel. Furthermore, the use of the Greek word *logos* identifies this communication as more than just information; it underscores the appearance of God in physical form (the pre-incarnate Christ) to communicate with the prophet.

- **The Title "Son of Man" (*bēn ādām*)**

While used 195 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, the title "Son of Man" appears 95 times in Ezekiel alone. Its meaning varies based on context:

1. **Humanity:** Contradistinguishing human nature from the nature of God (e.g., Numbers 23:19).
2. **Messianic Promise:** Potentially serving as a Messianic title referring to the "man of Your right hand" (e.g., Psalm 80:17).
3. **Prophetic Commission:** In Ezekiel specifically, God uses this title to address Ezekiel regarding his function and commission as a prophet to the nation of Israel.

III. Methodologies of Prophecy

- **Demonstrative Prophecy**

Ezekiel is noted for "demonstrative prophecy," where divine messages are physically acted out for the audience. These actions served as visceral signs to the people:

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 3-Important Words and Phrases

Action	Scripture Reference	Significance/Sign
Laying on a brick on the left and right sides	Ezekiel 4:1-8	Sign to the people of Israel
Cooking bread over excrement	Ezekiel 4:9-17	Symbolic of the conditions of the siege
Shaving beard with a sword and weighing hair	Ezekiel 5:1-4	Symbols of division and judgment
Speaking to the mountains of Israel	Ezekiel 6:1-3	Directing prophecy to the land itself
Packing bags and digging a hole	Ezekiel 12:1-7	Sign of going into exile
Eating bread with "trembling" and "anxiety"	Ezekiel 12:18	Portraying the terror of the coming judgment
The death of Ezekiel's wife	Ezekiel 24:15-24	A final sign to the nation of Israel

- **The Use of Parables (*māšāl*)**

The book employs parables eight times to highlight the judgment of Israel. The Hebrew word *māšāl* may be derived from *māšal*, meaning "to rule," suggesting that the audience is meant to be "ruled" or led by the cultural example provided in the story.

IV. The Rationale for Judgment

The book utilizes specific terminology to categorize the sins of Israel and the surrounding nations that necessitated divine intervention:

- **Abominations (*tô 'ēbā*):** Occurs 43 times; refers to disgusting or deplorable acts.
- **Iniquities (*āōn*):** Occurs 35 times; refers to perverse or depraved conduct.
- **Idols (*šiqqûš* / *'gillûl*):** Both terms occur 39 times each; translated as "detestable" or "idol."
- **Lewdness (*n'hšet*):** Occurs 11 times; associated with brass or immorality.
- **Violence (*'hāmās*):** Occurs 6 times; refers to cruelty.
- **Rebellious (*mārad*):** Occurs 4 times; signifies standing against a King or God.

V. The Central Purpose: Divine Recognition

The ultimate goal of the judgments, parables, and signs is the recognition of God's sovereignty. The phrase "...Then you will know that I am the LORD" appears 63 times in Ezekiel.

The Hebrew word for "know" (*yāda*) appears 99 times in the book (out of 900+ times in the entire Hebrew Scripture). In this context, "knowing" involves:

1. **Addressing Idolatry:** Contrasting real divine power with the deception of idols.
2. **Addressing Conduct:** Underscoring that the nation failed to follow the Law of Moses (doctrine) in their daily conduct, triggering divine justice.

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 3-Important Words and Phrases

VI. Structural Framework of Ezekiel

The book is organized into a clear trajectory that moves from current devastation to future hope.

Chapters	Primary Focus	Theme
1-3	The call of Ezekiel to be a prophet	Commission
4-24	Verdict and judgment concerning Jerusalem and Israel	Verdict
25-32	Verdict and judgment concerning surrounding nations	Judgment
33-38	Future regathering and restoration of Israel	Restoration
39-40	Defeat of "Gog of Magog"	Future Deliverance
40-48*	Restoration of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the 12 tribes	Final Glory

**Note: Restoration themes are also found in 11:14-21 and 16:60-63.*

VII. Summary of Divine Attributes in Ezekiel

- **The Verdict:** God's response to Israel's thinking and activity (Highlights **Righteousness**).
- **The Judgment:** God's wrath against Israel (Highlights **Justice**).
- **The Restoration:** God's regathering of the nation (Highlights **Grace and Faithfulness**).