

Isaiah and Ezekiel

07 Isaiah 58–66

As we conclude the second and final major section of the book, Isaiah continues to call us to trust Yahweh, the true God, because he atones for and glorifies his people. In Isaiah 40–48, Isaiah recounts Yahweh's own breathtaking claims of majesty and supremacy; no nation or idol can compare with him. In Isaiah 49–57, Isaiah concentrates on Yahweh's secret weapon for the task of bringing justice and joy to Israel and the world, his suffering servant. In this final section, Isaiah's focus zooms in on the far future, a glorious end for his people through the work and reign of the Messiah and an ignominious end for those who stood against him.

3. Isaiah 58–66: Yahweh promises unending glory for believers and shame for rebels.

- 3.1. Isaiah 58: Yahweh pronounces Israel's fasting and Sabbaths hypocritical and promises joy in genuine worship.
- 3.2. Isaiah 59–62: Yahweh redeems Israel, separated from him by sin, to become his glorious bride.
 - 3.2.1. Isaiah 59: Your iniquity separates you from God; a Redeemer comes to turn Jacob back.
 - 3.2.2. Isaiah 60: Jerusalem will shine with righteousness, glory, and welcome to the nations.
 - 3.2.3. Isaiah 61: Through the Spirit-Anointed One, Israel will be restored to priesthood for the nations.
 - 3.2.4. Isaiah 62: Yahweh will be restored to his bride, his people, and they to him.
- 3.3. Isaiah 63–66: Israel will turn and trust, and Yahweh will come with judgment and salvation.
 - 3.3.1. Isaiah 63:1–14: Israel's Redeemer will crush his enemies and remind Israel of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness.
 - 3.3.2. Isaiah 63:15–64:12: Israel confesses sin and pleads with Yahweh her father for mercy and deliverance.

- 3.3.3. Isaiah 65: Yahweh agrees about his people's sin but still grants them a glorious future.
- 3.3.4. Isaiah 66: Yahweh reveals power to his servants but pours wrath on his enemies.

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08 Ezekiel—the Man and His Message

Before we dive into the text of Ezekiel it will be helpful for us to consider the life and times of the human author of this book. Remember that it is as we give attention to the text and reflect on it as it is written (with its language, historical setting, and structure) that the Lord will help us understand it.

1. Ezekiel was a priestly prophet.
 - 1.1. While Isaiah's lineage places him among Judah's royal nobility, Jeremiah and Ezekiel have priestly connections.
 - 1.2. Ezekiel lived as an exile. He would have left the land of Judah around 597 B.C., about 8 years after Daniel was deported to Babylon, and about 11 years before Jerusalem ultimately fell.
 - 1.3. The year marker, "In the thirtieth year," in Ezekiel 1:1, likely refers to his birth year. So beginning the book this way was a poignant reminder to his readers of his status as an exile.
 - 1.3.1. Ezekiel's priestly status explains his emphasis on ceremonial or ritual purity along with moral purity.
 - 1.3.2. His priestly credentials also make sense of his role in the visionary temple where, in ch. 43, he takes part in the reconsecration of the temple furniture.
2. Ezekiel's prophetic ministry produced mixed results.
 - 2.1. Like Isaiah, Ezekiel was called to demonstrate the message he delivered as well as speak it. He besieged a model of the city of Jerusalem by lying next to it (probably for part of each day) for over a year. He ate a diet that reflected the siege

famine back in Jerusalem (Ezek 4–7). He was commanded not to mourn the passing of his wife, for Judah would be forced to march after the loss of Jerusalem without adequate time and space for mourning (Ezek 24).

- 2.2. Ezekiel 30:30–33 shows that Ezekiel was superficially popular, like one of today's rock stars, "to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well." However, his effect was limited, "They hear your words but do not put them into practice."
- 2.3. Thus one of Ezekiel's chief emphases is the need for a new heart, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek 36:26).

3. Ezekiel's call is to hope in the promise of Yahweh's presence and thus pursue his holiness.

- 3.1. **Ezekiel 1–24:** In the first half of the book, Ezekiel's message is one of doom for Judah and Jerusalem. This section of the book is concerned mainly with how, even after Daniel and Ezekiel's deportations into Babylon, Jerusalem has failed to turn in repentance and loyalty to Yahweh. Because Jerusalem failed to pursue Yahweh's holiness, he deserts the city to destruction.
 - 3.1.1. **1–3:** Ezekiel is called to be a watchman.
 - 3.1.2. **4–11:** Cycle One: Ezekiel performs and predicts Jerusalem's siege.
 - 3.1.3. **12–22:** Cycle Two: Ezekiel performs and predicts Jerusalem's exile.
 - 3.1.4. **23–24:** Cycle Three: Ezekiel performs and predicts Jerusalem's ruin.

- 3.2. **Ezekiel 25–32:** The next section of Ezekiel is a series of oracles against the nations. God's covenants with Noah and Abraham uphold standards of behavior for all nations. (Some of these standards are built into our nature as his created image bearers.) But the nations rebel against these standards, and God holds them to account.
- 3.3. **Ezekiel 33–48:** Despite continued opposition against Israel in the last days, God will bring them into a bright and peaceful future. Starting with the report of the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel begins to point to Yahweh's future promises. Yahweh will grant them a new heart and restore them to holiness. He will again dwell with them in a new temple in a renewed land. Yahweh will save his people from enemies, renew them, and dwell with them.
- 3.3.1. **33:** The report of Jerusalem's fall arrives.
- 3.3.2. **34–39:** Yahweh will defeat Judah's enemies and restore her to the land.
- 3.3.3. **40–48:** Yahweh will reconstruct Judah's temple, and his presence will return to the land.