

Ezekiel: God's Strong Prophet

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Background - Ezekiel - Hebrew: יְחֶזְקֵאל , Y'hez'qel

1. Ezekiel, the son of Buzzi, born into a priestly (Kohen) lineage.
2. He was born around 622 BC, and received his first prophetic vision at the age of 30, about the time of Josiah's reforms.
3. Ezekiel is believed to be a descendant of Joshua through one of his daughters that married into the tribe of Levi. His father's name is Buzi meaning "my contempt."
4. Ezekiel and his wife lived on the bank of the Chebar River, in Tel Abib with other exiles from Judah. He had no children.
5. Ezekiel was called to be a prophet by a great vision of God and four wheeled Cherubim. For the next five years in Jerusalem, he prophesied daily and acted out the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in spite of great opposition.
6. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other prophets heard the fulfillment of their prophecies of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Babylonians.
7. Ezekiel was 52 years old when he had his final vision.
8. The chief of the Jews in the land of the Chaldeans killed him, because he rebuked him for worshiping idols. He was buried in the grave of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah.

B. Biblical and historical setting

1. 606 BC - First captivity, of which Daniel was a part
2. 597 BC - Second captivity, of which Ezekiel was a part
3. 586 BC - Destruction of Jerusalem
4. The captivity lasted 70 years from 606 to 536 BC.
5. The book of Ezekiel covers a 22 year period, starting 6 years before the destruction of Jerusalem to 16 years thereafter.

C. Contemporaries: while several of the prophets overlapped, it is unlikely that they saw each other.

1. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem
2. Daniel was in Babylon and lived among the rulers
3. Ezekiel lived in Tel Abib (Ez. 3:15) by the river Chebar among the common captives.

D. Method of prophecy

1. Apocalyptic visions are vivid descriptions of what the prophet saw; the images are representative, not literal
2. Ezekiel himself often became a living prophecy by engaging some strange activity; he would be told to do some odd thing in the presence of others, and when they asked what he was doing Ezekiel would explain the meaning
3. John's book of Revelation borrows many images from Ezekiel
 - a. The cherubim (Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4)
 - b. Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 28 and Revelation 20)

- c. Eating the book (Ezekiel 3 and Revelation 10)
- d. The new Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 21)
- e. The river of the water of life (Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22).
- f. Ezekiel and Revelation have similar themes.

E. Message

- 1. "They shall know that I am God" appears 62 times in the book
- 2. To inform Judah that the captivity will not be short
- 3. To prove God's judgment of Judah, showing them why they were in captivity.
- 4. To cause the people to repent of their sins and give them hope of an eventual restoration

I. EZEKIEL'S CONCEPTUALIZATION

- A. Ez. 1:1-28
- B. God is not bound to any one place, such as Jerusalem or the temple, but is present everywhere
- C. God is greater than any man can describe; Ezekiel had to resort to saying "it was like ..."
- D. God is awesome in power and glory, so much so that great beings of power humble themselves in His presence

II. EZEKIEL'S COMMISSION

- A. Ez. 2:1 - 3:15
- B. He was sent to a rebellious people
 - 1. They have always sinned - Jer. 3:25
 - 2. It was the reason for their exile - 2Kings 17:17-20
- C. The goal was to warn, but they would not listen - Ez. 2:4-5, 7
 - 1. Like Isaiah's commission - Isa. 6:9-13
 - 2. Rejection makes their sin firm - John 15:22; Acts 13:46
- D. He was instructed to not be afraid of them - Isa. 51:12; Micah 3:8
 - 1. The wicked are referred to as briars and thorns, worthless, but painful

III. EZEKIEL'S CONSTRUCTION

- A. He must listen carefully - Ez. 2:8, 3:10
- B. Being given a scroll to eat is a common Bible symbol of preparing a prophet
 - 1. Ez. 2:9 - 3:3; Jer. 1:9, 15:16; Rev. 10:8-11; Job 32:18-19

IV. EZEKIEL'S CHARACTER

- A. Ezekiel's duty is to speak God's words to Judah - Ez. 3:4
 - 1. The difficulty will not be in getting them to understand what Ezekiel is saying, but in their willingness to listen - Ez. 3:5-7
- B. Ezekiel must be more stubborn than the people - Ez. 3:8-9; Isa. 48:4; Jer. 5:3
- C. Ezekiel is brought by the cherubim to Tel Abib - Ez. 3:13-15
 - 1. Though incensed, Ezekiel sits silently among the exiles; seven days is the typical period of mourning - Gen. 50:10; Job 2:13
 - 2. God's word fills him, but he is not allowed to speak yet - Jer. 20:7-9

3. He is angry with his fellow countrymen, but at the same time is sorrowful about the message he must deliver
 - a. Rom. 9:1-3; Psalm 119:136, 137:1
4. Ezekiel's silent anger causes people concern. They think they have a mad man on their hands.

V. EZEKIEL'S CUSTODIANSHIP

- A. His purpose is to bring warning - Ez. 3:17-21; Isa. 62:6
- B. When warning the wicked,
 1. If not warned, he will die, and so will the watchman
 2. If warned, he will not listen, but the watchman has done his duty
- C. When warning the righteous,
 1. If not warned, he will die, and so will the watchman
 2. If warned he will turn, and the watchman has done his duty
- D. What are the implications for us today?

VI. EZEKIEL'S CHARGE

- A. He is to shut himself up in his home - Ez. 3:24
- B. The people will bind him with ropes - Ez. 3:25
- C. Ezekiel will not be allowed to protest - Ez. 3:26
- D. But he will speak God's words - Ez. 3:27
- E. The sign signifies the siege of Jerusalem - Ez. 4:8
- F. In many of these things, Ezekiel foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus
- G. He had many vivid messages and unusual methods of delivering them:
 1. Lying on his side in public and fasting, and then eating food prepared in an unclean manner - Ez. 4
 2. Multi-headed beings of power with wings and wheels - Ez. 1
 3. Shaving in public and scattering or burning his hair - Ez. 5
 4. The vision of the valley of dry bones coming back to life - Ez. 37

Conclusion:

- A. Ez. 37:21-27, 39:23-29