

26 – Ezekiel: Strange Visions in Captivity

- Ezekiel was a **prophet in captivity (in Babylon)** who ministered to the captives in very strange ways. This book is loaded with incredible stories, amazing prophecies and a startling look at the end of time.
- Ezekiel was a **priest and prophet**, like Jeremiah. His name in Hebrew is Yehezke'il, "God strengthens." He was about the same age as Daniel, and about 20 years younger than Jeremiah. Ezekiel was taken in the 2nd seige of Jerusalem, 11 years before the final overthrow. He lived in Babylon in the captivity in Tel Abib, the principal colony of Jewish exiles along the river Chebar. He had a 22-year ministry.
- Ezekiel's message is similar to that of his older contemporary Jeremiah who has remained in Jerusalem. Judah will be judged because of her unfaithfulness, but God promises her future restoration and blessing. Ezekiel places **special emphasis on the glory of Israel's sovereign God** who says, "*They shall know that I am the Lord.*" We hear this repeatedly throughout this book, and throughout the entire Old Testament.
- Ezekiel is a book of methodical style, careful dating, and diligent organization. It is **full of strange lessons**: He shuts himself up in his home; He binds himself; He is struck dumb; He was to lie on his right and his left sides for a total of 430 days; He ate bread that was prepared in an unclean manner; He shaved his head and beard, which was considered a shame in his particular calling. These were all at God's direction.

COMMENTARY: For the average reader of the Bible the Book of Ezekiel is mostly a perplexing maze of incoherent visions — a kaleidoscope of whirling wheels and dry bones that defy interpretation. This impression often causes readers to shy away from studying the book and to miss one of the great literary and spiritual portions of the Old Testament. (Walvoord and Zuck)

- The **destruction of Jerusalem was in 3 stages**: 605 – 606 BC: 1st Siege, carried off key hostages, including Daniel; 597 BC: 2nd Siege, further Jewish rebellion, more hostages taken (10,000+) including Ezekiel; 587-586 BC: 3rd Siege, more Jewish rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple, all Jerusalem. Jerusalem desolate. Isarel in captivity
- God gives Ezekiel an **overwhelming vision of His divine glory** and commissions him to be His prophet. His experience is similar to the experiences of Moses in Ex. 3:1–10, Isaiah in 6:1–10, Daniel in 10:5–14, and John in Rev. 1:12–19. Ezekiel is given very clear and precise instruction about his prophecies.
- Ezekiel is credited with **originating the synagogue style of worship**, which enabled the Jews to gather together in worship in Babylon, without their temple, which lay in ruins in Jerusalem. Even though the temple was rebuilt later, this "local assembling" method was continued, and is in practice today. The Jews currently do not have a temple, but meet regularly at local synagogues.

The Book of Ezekiel					
The Glory of God	Commission of Ezekiel	Judgment of Judah	Judgment of Gentiles	Return of Israel to God	Restoration of Kingdom (Millennial?)
1	2-3	4-24	25-32	33-39	40-48
Before Final Siege of Jerusalem (592 – 587 BC)			During Siege	After the Siege (586-570 BC)	
Fall of Judah			Judah's Enemies	The Future of Israel (Judah)	
Babylon					



Highlights

PART 1 Glory of the Lord; Commission of Ezekiel and coming Judgment Chapters 1-7	PART 2 Glory of the Lord; Compete Captivity of Jerusalem and Israel; Departure of the Glory Chapters 8-24	PART 3 Glory of the Lord; Judgment of Nations Ch 25-32	PART 4 Glory of the Lord; The Coming Kingdom Ch 33-48
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision of the Glory, Ch 1 ▪ Prophet's Call, Empowerment, Ch 2 ▪ Prophet's Prep; Office as Watchman, Ch 3 ▪ Judgment of Jerusalem, Ch 4 ▪ Sign of Prophet Shaving Hair, Ch 5 ▪ Sword to Fall on Jerusalem; Remnant Saved, Ch 6 ▪ Prophecy of Final Destruction of Jerusalem, Ch 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision of the Glory; Temple Defilement by Idolatry Explains its Destruction, Ch 8 ▪ Shekinah Prepares to Leave Temple, Ch 9 ▪ Shekinah Fills Holy Place; Leaves Temple, Ch 10 ▪ Prophecy Against Rulers of Jerusalem, Ch 11 ▪ Ezekiel Enacts Destruction of Jerusalem, Ch 12 ▪ Prophecy Against False Prophets, Ch 13 ▪ Prophecy Against Idolatry of Elders; Certain Destruction of Jerusalem, Ch 14 ▪ Vision of the Vine, Ch 15 ▪ Jerusalem Likened to Abandoned Baby, Adopted by God, "Wife" of God becomes harlot, Ch 16 ▪ Riddle of Two Eagles, Ch 17 ▪ Wages of Sin is Death, Ch 18 ▪ God's elegy over Princes of Israel, Ch 19 ▪ Review of Sins of Nation; Future Judgment and Restoration, Ch 20 ▪ King of Babylon to Remove Last King of Davidic Line Until Messiah Comes, Ch 21 ▪ Abominations of Jerusalem, Ch 22 ▪ Parable of 2 Harlot Sisters (Samaria, Jerusalem), Ch 23 ▪ Parable of Boiling Pot, Ch 24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, Ch 25 ▪ Tyre, Ch 26-28 ▪ Egypt, Ch 29-32 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recommission of Prophet, Ch 33-34 ▪ Restoration of Israel, Ch 35-36 ▪ Resurrection of Israel, Ch 37 ▪ Gog and Magog, Ch 38-39 ▪ Rebuilt Temple, Ch 40-42 ▪ Return of the Glory of the Lord, Ch 43-48

Chapters 1 and 10, Visions of the Throne. An amazing vision, these chapters align with others in scripture, such as Isaiah's vision in chapter 6, where he sees the Seraphim. Ezekiel describes similar types of creatures with 4 faces: one a lion, one an ox, one a man, and one an eagle. The same or similar creatures appear around the throne in Revelation chapter 4. In the book of Numbers, the camps lined up under the same flags (lion, ox, man, eagle). The four gospels have long been associated with the same images (Matthew=lion, Mark=ox, Luke=man, John=eagle). These visions confirm the cohesiveness of all scripture.

The Glory Departs, Chapter 10. Also in chapter 10 Ezekiel watches (in a vision, he saw this from Babylon) as the glory (Shekinah, literally "glory in the tent") leaves the Temple and returns to heaven just prior to the invasion of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This "glory of God" remained in heaven until it walked the earth as "glory in the tent" in the person of Jesus.

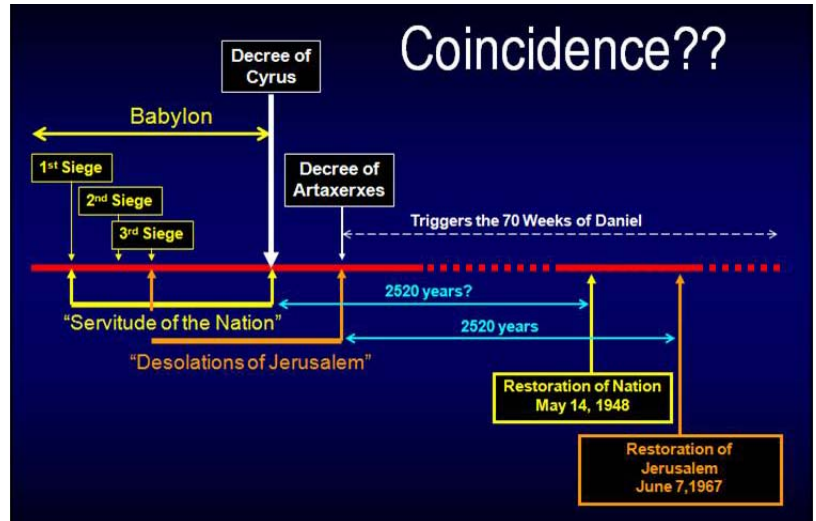
Judgment of Judah (chapters 4-24). Signs and sermons (4-7) point to the certainty of Judah's judgment. Judah's past sins and coming doom are seen (ch 8-11) in a series of visions of the abominations in the temple, the slaying of the wicked, and the departing glory of God. The priests and princes are condemned as the Glory leaves the temple, moves to the Mount of Olives, and disappears in the east. Chapters 12-24 speak of the causes and extent of Judah's coming judgment through dramatic signs, powerful sermons, and parables. Judah's prophets are counterfeits and her elders are idolatrous. They have become a fruitless vine and an adulterous wife. Babylon will swoop down like an eagle and pluck them up. The people are responsible for their own sins, and they are not being unjustly judged for the sins of their ancestors. Judah has been unfaithful, but God promises that her judgment ultimately will be followed by restoration.

Remarkable Prophecies, Strange Sign – Ch 4 (430 years of judgment?) (4:1-8),
 430 – 70 [Babylon] = 360 years are unaccounted for...however:

“And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.”

Leviticus 26: 18, 21, 24, 28

360 x 7 = 2520 years? 2520 X 360 days (God’s prophetic calendar) = 907,200 days. Through detailed equations for solar vs lunar years, calendar corrections, leap years, etc., we can actually extend this out in days to two specific dates in history that are remarkable. 1st Siege began the “Servitude of the Nation” (the captivity). 3rd and final siege began the “Desolations of Jerusalem” (19 years apart) (destruction of the Temple, city left in ruins, abandoned) We learn from Daniel these are 2 different events, each with a duration of 70 years. Scripture contains markers for determining these dates: the decree of Cyrus to allow the captives to go home to Israel, and the Decree of Artaxerxes to allow the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. These markers are also 19 years apart. Using the equations and the markers available for the beginning of these time periods (remember, they are two DIFFERENT periods of time) we can extend out the 907,200 days to come to...May 14, 1948, the **nation of Israel was restored**, and June 7, 1967, the **city of Jerusalem was restored to Jewish control. AMAZING!**



Ch 16, God’s amazing love for Israel, and her response as a harlot is vividly portrayed. Israel is the wife of God in the Old Testament. He saved her, cleaned her up, made her his wife, and she responded by playing the harlot, prostituting herself with other gods and disobeying her Husband.

Ch 23, Harlot Sisters: Oholah = Samaria (capital city of northern Kingdom of Israel) adultery with Assyrians and Egypt. **Oholibah = Jerusalem** (capital city of southern Kingdom of Judah) adultery with Babylonians and Egypt



Judgment of the Gentiles (ch 25-32) It is important to note that the judgments against Judah always contain a promise for restoration and coming glory restored to the nation, AND the judgments against the Gentiles do NOT contain this promise of restoration. Judah’s neighbors snicker, but will suffer the same punishment, without promise of restoration. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon (25 – 28); Disproportionate time on **TYRE** (28); Oracles against Egypt (29 – 32) Unlike the nations in chapters 25–28 that were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, Egypt will continue to exist, but as “the lowliest of the kingdoms.” Since that time it has never recovered its former glory or influence.

Ch 28, prophecies to the King of Tyre. It is clear that this is ultimately addressed to the Enemy (the one behind the King of Tyre). This chapter, along with Isaiah 14, Revelation 12 and Revelation 20 provide us vital information about the origin, ambition, destiny and ultimate end of Satan.

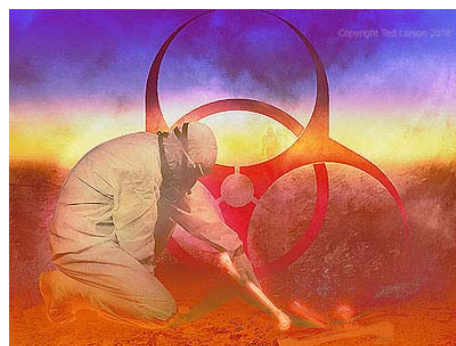
Ch 33-39 Restoration of Israel. The prophecies in these chapters were given after the overthrow of Jerusalem. Now that the promised judgment has come, Ezekiel’s message no longer centers on coming judgment but on the positive theme of comfort and consolation. Just as surely as judgment has come, blessing will also come; God’s people will be regathered and restored. Ezekiel is told that Jerusalem has been taken. Judah has had false shepherds (rulers), but the true Shepherd will lead them in the future. The vision of the valley of dry bones pictures the resurrection of the nation by the Spirit of God (37). Israel and Judah will be purified and reunited. There will be an invasion by the northern armies (Gog and Magog, ch 38-39), but Israel will be saved because the Lord will destroy the invading forces.

Chapter 37: The Dry Bones. A vision of the restoration of Israel (Brought back to life in the flesh. Later, breathed with the Spirit) *“The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people...”* Isaiah 11:11. The “second time” is following the great “diaspora” (the scattering) which followed the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. (Israel returned to her land also, even if only a remnant, 70 years after the beginning of her captivity in Babylon). This second time is being fulfilled now, beginning in the last half of the 19th century, and culminating with the rebirth of the nation of Israel in the first half of the 20th century (1948). The restoration of Israel continues today.



Why will Israel be Restored? *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. “And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.””* Ezekiel 36:22-24. God makes it clear He restores Israel “for My holy name’s sake” not because of anything Israel did or did not do. God’s reputation is on the line, and He will always preserve His own integrity. He NEVER breaks a promise. That is why Israel is restored. Initially she will be brought back to the land in unbelief, which is exactly as she is today, and has been (as a nation) since her rebirth in 1948. She will eventually come to belief in God’s Salvation (Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Christ), as seen in Zechariah 10-13. God always keeps His word precisely.

Chapters 38-39: Battle of Gog and Magog. God Himself intervenes to end the invasion of Israel by Magog and its allies (Persia, Cush, Phut, Libya, Gomer, Togarmah, Meshech, Tubal). The passage appears to anticipate the use of nuclear weapons. Left-over weapons provide all the energy for the nation Israel for 7 years. Professionals are hired to clear the battlefield. They wait 7 months; then clear for 7 months. Bury the dead east of the Dead Sea (downwind). If a traveler finds something the professionals have missed, he doesn’t touch it: he marks the location and lets the professionals deal with it. **An interesting verse:** *“And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD.”* (39:6) To whom does this refer? *The more you know about the details of the text in Ezekiel 38 and 39, and the more you know about the current geopolitical lineup, the more it seems that it this is getting into position to perhaps happen soon...*



Chapters 40-48: The Millennial Temple. These nine chapters are a highly detailed account of a temple, which has to date never been built. All nations worship there, some offerings and sacrifices are resumed (perhaps memorial only). The topography of Jerusalem is altered significantly. The inheritance of the tribes is very different than that detailed in Joshua. In 572 BC, 14 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel returns in a vision to the fallen city and is given detailed specifications of the reconstruction of the temple, the city, and the land (40–48). After an intricate description of the new outer court, inner court, and temple (40–42), Ezekiel views the return of the glory of the Lord to the temple from the east. Regulations concerning worship in the coming temple (43–46) are followed by revelations concerning the new land and city (47–48). A beautiful description of the river originating from the throne is found in chapter 47. Most think these descriptions belong to the Millennial Kingdom and the Temple that will be there during Jesus’ reign on earth. At the end of the book, some of these descriptions are very much like those found in Revelation 21 and 22.

