

# **The Book of Ezekiel**

Daily Readings by Mike & Josie Smith



**Ezekiel's Vision by Raphael, c. 1518 AD**

## Introduction

Written by an exile carried to Babylon before the final assault on Jerusalem, Ezekiel uses prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to dramatize God's message to His exiled people. Though they are like dry bones in the sun, God will reassemble them and breathe life into the nation once again. Present judgment will be followed by future glory.

## The Author

The opening three verses name Ezekiel the son of Buzi as receiving the visions of God recorded in chapters 1–3. From there on, the book continues in the first person, no doubt referring to the same prophet Ezekiel. The unity of style, the phrases peculiar to Ezekiel (frequent to this book), and the constant attention to his great themes have convinced most scholars that the book is the result of Ezekiel's encounters with God. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest who was called to be a prophet of the Lord.

## The Date

Ezekiel was carried off to exile in Babylon after the city fell a second time to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. His first vision is probably to be dated in the year 593–92 BC and the latest date given for an actual oracle is probably 571–70 BC, making his ministry about twenty years long. The book as we now have it was probably completed shortly thereafter. The thirtieth year (1:1) is probably Ezekiel's age when he received his call, the age when priests entered fully into their temple duties.

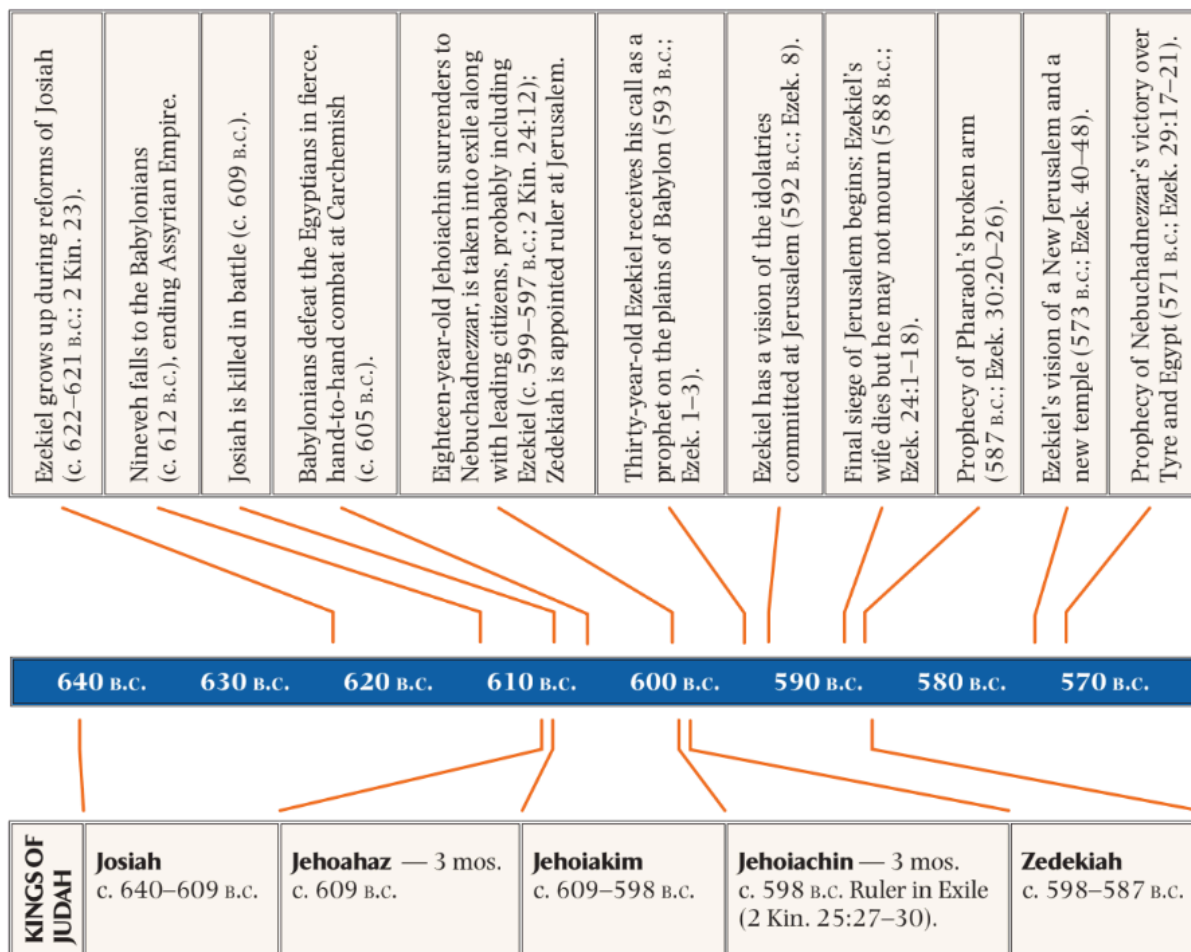
## An Overview

EZEKIEL AT A GLANCE						
Focus	Commission Of Ezekiel		Judgment On Judah	Judgment On Gentiles	Restoration Of Israel	
Reference	1:1 — 2:1 — 4:1 — 25:1 — 33:1 — 40:1 — 48:35					
Division	Ezekiel Sees The Glory	Ezekiel Is Commissioned To The Work	Signs, Messages, Visions, And Parables Of Judgment	Judgment On Surrounding Nations	Return Of Israel To The Lord	Restoration Of Israel In The Kingdom
Topic	Before The Siege (c. 592–587 B.C.)			During The Siege (c. 586 B.C.)	After The Siege (c. 585–570 B.C.)	
	Judah's Fall			Judah's Foes	Judah's Future	
Location	Babylon					
Time	c. 592–570 B.C.					

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## The Life and Times



## Daily Readings

### Week 1

Day 1 Chapter 1:1-28

Application:

Ezekiel's vision emphasizes God's power and sovereignty despite being in a time of exile and uncertainty. In his 20 years of prophesying Ezekiel uses imagery from Mesopotamian literature that would have been known to his audience. Although Ezekiel would have seen images of the Babylonian gods in the land he was being held captive, in his vision he does not see God being limited to a specific location. In Mesopotamia there were two faced gods called Janus figures, but Ezekiel has a vision of God that shows that He is greater than the local gods. The four faces represent God's qualities such as strength and courage (lion), swiftness and divinity (eagle), diligent service and renewed fertility (ox) (Psalm 106:19-20) and nobility and

intelligence (human). In a way Ezekiel is struggling to fully describe the full majesty and glory of God in human terms. This should remind us that God is always greater than that which our language can capture. This first chapter is also a reminder that although often beyond our understanding, God is always in control despite our immediate situation. Even in times of trouble God still calls us to service and to put our trust in Him.

#### Day 2 Chapter 2:1-10

##### Application:

Here we see that despite an often negative or dismissive response God still requires his prophet to deliver the message. Even when it is unpopular we should still obey God by speaking the truth and challenging injustice. Remember that despite being a “son of man”, the eternal God uses Ezekiel to bring about His purposes and deliver His words to others. When God calls people to His service He also equips them to succeed. “God does not call those who are equipped, He equips those whom he has called.” - Oswald Chambers

#### Day 3 Chapter 3:1-15

##### Application:

Ezekiel is to eat and swallow the scroll which means to fully digest and understand God’s words which serves as a reminder to us to personally absorb God’s message before sharing it with others. The name Ezekiel means “God toughens” and he is told to deliver the message despite the opposition and hostility he will meet along the way. He is not to concern himself with whether they listen or fail to heed his message. Ezekiel is angry with the attitudes of the people and how they have failed to remain faithful to God and he sits for the customary period of mourning for the dead. This is a reminder to us to listen to God’s word and not to become hard hearted or obstinate choosing our ways over His.

#### Day 4 Chapter 3:16-27

##### Application

It would have been easy for Ezekiel to decide that his message was simply going to land on deaf ears and to give up before he started. The warning from God is that the people will die in their sin if they have no opportunity to hear and respond. The descriptions of the hand of God, the seizure of the mouth and the binding of the limbs are symbols of his calling to a specific prophetic role. The hand of God drives him on and he moves and speaks only when God gives him the message to deliver. This way the people knew Ezekiel was speaking with divine authority and not simply

speaking from his own thoughts. In the same way we need to ensure we do not give up too easily when things look difficult. We also need to ensure that when we share God's message with others we are "prepared to give an answer". We should always be ready and able to give a good response regarding our opinions, values and beliefs (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Day 5 Chapter 4:1-17

#### Application

Ezekiel engages in object lessons that remind us of the seriousness of sin and the need to strive to live a righteous life. It is also a reminder to obey God even in the small details that we don't always fully understand. Ezekiel eats a meagre diet with little water like the kind people would experience during times of great hardship and when under siege. This reminds us that life is not always easy and sometimes we suffer through our own fault, the fault of others and yet at other times it is just how life can be. Here we are reminded that God is aware of human weakness and He even adjusts his instructions to Ezekiel so he can maintain his integrity as a priest (Deuteronomy 23:12-14). All of the dramatic actions Ezekiel performs are warnings to the people of the harsh realities of their future brought about by their failure to live up to the covenant they made with God (Deuteronomy 29:24-29). Whenever the people fail, God is always ready to forgive and restore just as He is with people today (Deuteronomy 30).

## Week 2

Day 1 Chapter 5:1-17

#### Application

This chapter is a reminder that disobedience can result in negative consequences for the individual as well as the entire community. In these dramatic visual images we learn of God's holiness and justice. He cannot allow His chosen people to continue in their wilful rebellion and deliberate sin. It is a stark warning about compromise and allowing ourselves to become corrupted by our own desires and by those around us who would lead us away from God and cause us to turn against His ways. We need to take God's commands seriously and recognise the consequences of sin. We are to acknowledge God's sovereignty and guard against all forms of idolatry. In Christ our bodies are God's temple (1 Cor 6:19) and we defile it when we lie, gossip, love money and allow bitterness to overtake us. If there are things in your life that you know are deliberate acts of sin then make the decision to repent and ask God to forgive you today.

Day 2 Chapter 6:1-14

## Application

Most people today don't physically bow to idols but modern idolatry still exists in the form of materialism, career, entertainment and even relationships. Misplaced devotion is a timeless problem for God's people. God's judgement is meant to reveal his sovereignty and holiness and serves to bring people back to Him. We need to be careful that we aren't pursuing online validation via social media, worshipping individual fame and fortune or running after wealth and possessions. Ezekiel describes the idols around him with what seems to be a specially coined term that literally means "dung-gods". The phrase "Then they will know that I am the Lord" appears many times (65 times) in the book of Ezekiel as God demonstrates that His punishment is not to take revenge but to make it clear that the Lord is the only true and living God.

## Day 3 Chapter 7:1-13

### Application

Ezekiel's message in chapter 7 is that actions bring consequences. Failing to live responsibly whilst ignoring moral and ethical principles will not end well. In times of crisis money and possessions often become useless to us. What matters is how we choose to live and the decisions we continue to make. The key takeaway is that judgement will eventually come, our time is limited and we need to make the necessary changes in our lives so we can live with integrity each day.

## Day 4 Chapter 7:14-27

### Application

This second part of chapter 7 focuses on property, possessions and idols. Even those with great wealth, jewellery and property will find themselves unable to buy their way out of the coming judgement. The idols they have made will fail to rescue them from God's punishment. Their strength will fail and their courage will leave them when that day comes. Everything the people own including the temple will be taken from them when the Babylonian Empire overruns Jerusalem and the people are taken as captives to a foreign land. God's divine lease has been revoked and the land will be taken by force. Their love of money and the pride they have in their property and belongings will count for nothing. The gifts we have should not be used to amass personal gain at the expense of others or be utilised for immoral purposes. Placing our trust in material things can easily cause us to stumble when stock markets crash or global events take a turn for the worse. We need to be careful that the love of money does not lead us astray and into many sorrows (1 Tim 6:10).

## Week 3

### Day 1 Chapter 8:1-18

#### Application

Ezekiel is shown a number of things that are described as “detestable”. These include an idol in the temple, most likely an Asherah (the mother goddess of Canaan, Syria and Phoenicia), the personal shrines of the elders, images of creatures designed to ward off evil and bring protection and the adoption of foreign religious practices. These include the mourning of the god Tammuz, worshipping the sun and the worship of unclean animals. This shows us that the people of Judah have mingled in the religious thoughts and practises of their neighbours. Their reasoning is that God no longer sees them and has abandoned the land. We also need to be mindful of the creator rather than worshipping His creation. We ought to put our trust in God rather than in rituals, epic stories and lucky charms. Recent church history is a terrible reminder that even in sacred spaces, hidden sins can fester. Integrity and honesty are required and not just the appearance of outward conformity.

### Day 2 Chapter 9:1-11

#### Application

The moral decay in the land is rife in the city of Jerusalem and has reached even as far as God’s temple. Despite this there are those who have remained faithful and are grieved by what they see around them. These are marked on the forehead by the scribe similar to those described in the book of Revelation (Rev 7:3) to indicate their faithfulness to God. In the literature of the time this imagery invokes the idea of a treaty being concluded and it reflects the concept of a keeper of lists that determine who will live and who will die. God’s mercy is extended to those who are deeply saddened by sin. Hypocrisy and sin are often all around us but we can take heart that God sees and values a right disposition. For those who remain faithful there is hope. Those who are wise and understand the ways of God prove it by the way they live their life (James 3:13).

### Day 3 Chapter 10:1-22

#### Application

In Akkadian accounts the gods depart their temples in response to cultic and moral misdeeds that incur the wrath of the deity. For Ezekiel’s contemporaries this was not an unfamiliar tale of divine abandonment. Often the gods left as they were overcome by a stronger, more powerful god. Ezekiel does not follow this line of reasoning;

instead he declares that God has abandoned the temple, the land and the people because they are behaving in ways that are incompatible with His ethics and commandments. The mention of the East Gate may suggest that God is abandoning the religious community as well as the secular authorities. Unconfessed and unrepented sins lead to a hardness of heart and God's justice demands that sin be addressed. This is a reminder to regularly examine ourselves to ensure we are living a life that honours God and welcomes His presence (Matt 5:23-24) .

#### Day 4 Chapter 11:1-13

##### Application

The secular leaders claim they have created a safe environment but Ezekiel disagrees. Pelatiah means "the Lord is my deliverance" and his death signifies that God has ceased to be their deliverer and has now become their judge. Jaazaniah means, "Yahweh hears." In verse 8 God says that he has heard their evil thoughts and will take action. The people had experienced God as their deliverer from Egypt but now we hear that rather than rescue them He will hand them over to their enemies. The wicked in Jerusalem were advising the people to build houses in the land because the city defenses were strong and would protect them. The promise of judgement came upon them and their false sense of security would be little comfort to them. When Pelatiah dies Ezekiel asks if anyone will be spared within the borders of Israel. Fortunately for the people God's judgement comes with a promise of restoration and an opportunity to live according to His decrees rather than adopting the lower standards of the surrounding nations. For us today we can be assured that God forgives, restores and saves those who remain faithful to Him and live according to His ways.

#### Day 5 Chapter 11:14-25

The vision here once again shows the presence of the Lord departing the city thus leaving the rebellious people to their terrible fate. The text suggests that God has stopped on a mountain to the east, outside the city in order to watch the events unfold similar to Jonah (Jonah 4:5) or maybe to return to heaven. The mountain to the east is the Mount of Olives where, according to tradition, Jesus ascended into heaven. A person's arrogance and false sense of security does not exempt them from God's judgement. Even when people are lost in sin we can have hope in the fact that God does not abandon them entirely. In Egyptian beliefs the heart was weighed in judgement to determine if a person was able to enter the afterlife. During the mummification process a stone in the shape of a scarab beetle was placed on the heart to bring about the renewal of life and vitality. Here God says He will take away a dead heart of stone, a heavy heart, and replace it with a heart of flesh. Those devoted to images and idols will reap what they have sown. The promise to the remnant of faithful believers is that despite their exile and the fact that they are



currently dispersed, things will not remain this way forever. A time is coming when those whose hearts are stubborn and reject God will be replaced by hearts that are receptive and respond to the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:29, Hebrews 8:10). This chapter shows us that God has a plan for redemption and that His love is unfailing even in the face of rebellion (Jer 32:39).

## **Week 4**

### **Day 1 Chapter 12:1-16**

Assyrian reliefs found on monuments show captives carrying knapsacks of the bare essentials as well as showing how the invader breaches the city's defences such as digging through the walls. Ezekiel acts out the coming events but the people refuse to listen. They have hard hearts and ears that will not listen, making them both spiritually blind and deaf. Zedekiah here is described as a "prince" rather than the king which may show how little Ezekiel thinks of him as a puppet ruler. Zedekiah is blinded so that he does not see the land. This reminds us of Moses and his punishment for disobedience. The miserable survivors confess their sins not from a sense of remorse but rather from the recognition of their just punishment. God's judgement is not random or arbitrary but just and deserved. We need to be mindful that there had been plenty of opportunity to turn from their evil-doing but they had refused to take in what the prophets had warned them about. God is rich in mercy and slow to anger but also does not put up with wilful disobedience eternally. The time will eventually come when the wicked will be judged. The parable of the sheep and the goats emphasizes that true faith not only hears and digests the truth but is demonstrated through compassionate action toward others.

### **Day 2 Chapter 12:17-28**

#### **Application**

The second part of this chapter tells us that the land will be stripped because of the violence of all who live there. As God's people we are called to live in peace with each other and to love our neighbours. The early church was recognised as a people who loved and provided for each other. The message of the prophets is often one of judgement because the people have failed to care for the widow, the orphan and those in society who can't look after themselves. Greed, injustice and violence are never part of God's perfect plan. During the Passover the Israelite slaves were told to eat their food in haste and to be prepared for a quick exit from Egypt. Here Ezekiel tells them they will eat their food with a sense of anxiety because of what the Lord is going to allow to come upon them. They have failed to live up to the standards Moses passed on to them, they have failed to honour God and they have brought violence to the land of milk and honey. They have engaged in flattering divinations and false visions convincing themselves that they are safe and secure. The warning

is that whatever God wills to pass will always come to pass and their sense of security is misguided for God will not be mocked (Gal 6:7).

#### Day 3 Chapter 13:1-23

##### Application

Ezekiel turns his attention to the prophets. They have uttered false messages and shared their fake visions deliberately deceiving the people. They have declared peace and security but Ezekiel declares that they have merely built a flimsy wall and made it look good with whitewash. In reality it is not fit for purpose and will simply collapse when the going gets tough. You cannot hide structural problems with cosmetic solutions for too long. There are also female prophets that lead the people astray with lies and magic charms who took payment rather than encouraging people to turn from their wickedness. These people bend the truth so that they can become popular or increase their influence or power over others. We find people like this in our own day and need to know the truth of God's word so we do not fall victim to their lies. Just because something seems comforting does not mean that it is true. We need to be aware that we are not simply buying "snake oil".

#### Day 4 Chapter 14:1-23

##### Application

After the prophets we hear of the elders of Israel who should have been leading the people into God's truth and upholding the laws and statutes of Israel. Instead they have set up idols in their hearts. This may refer to a Babylonian practise of wearing amulets of the gods on their chests. They have displaced the God who brought them out of Egypt, gave them the promised land, made them a powerful force in the region and blessed them with prosperity. Like the prophets before them, God has rejected them because they have led the people astray. Even if three great spiritual heroes of old were to intervene it would be to no avail. When we run after pleasure, money and fame over the pursuit of God and of spiritual growth we are also in danger of idolatry. In our day we can't rely on the relationship that the church elders, the pastor or any missionaries we know have with God. We are responsible for working out our own salvation with reverence and with a desire to please God (Philippians 2:12).

#### Day 5 Chapter 15:1-8

##### Application

In this short chapter Judah is described as a useless plant, a vine that bears no fruit. The wood of the vine was no good for building and was thrown into the fire and burnt. Once a plant is uprooted it quickly dies and is no longer able to bear fruit.

Judah has become uprooted from its foundation in God and is no longer fruitful. Instead of being set apart from the other nations serving God as his covenant people, they fail due to idolatry and disobedience. In the gospel Jesus curses the fig tree as a metaphor for the temple in his own day. It also does not bear fruit but has become corrupt and self-serving and is eventually destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans. As Christians we are to be bearers of spiritual fruit such as reflecting Jesus' character and manifesting love, joy, peace and self control (Gal 5:22-23).

## **Week 5**

Day 1 Chapter 16:1-34

### **Application**

Jerusalem was raised from a lowly state to great glory as a beautiful bride who lives in luxury. Instead of being faithful to God Jerusalem prostitutes herself with idols and takes the gifts she has been given and uses them for idolatrous practices. Although forbidden, child sacrifice was taking place in the land and the people are accused of being promiscuous with Egypt and Babylonia to the point that even the daughters of her enemies (the Philistines) are shocked at how lewd her conduct has become. Worse than a prostitute, Jerusalem is described as being insatiable and always on the lookout for new lovers never becoming a wife or mother as she abandons her husband and kills her children. All this highlights the depth of Judah's fall and serves as a reminder to us of how easily we can be led into sin if we take our eyes off the Lord and allow ourselves to be filled with pride instead of using that which God has given us for His purpose.

Day 2 Chapter 16:35-63

### **Application**

Ezekiel draws on the cultic texts and festivals of the goddess Ishtar that were overtly sexual (v36). The stripping of clothes is a sign of divorce and shows that a wife abandoned by her husband is left with no means of support. Ezekiel has sent Jerusalem away as an unfaithful, humiliated wife because even though she knew better she ran after foreign gods and sank to new depths of depravity. Despite this God promises to remember the covenant He made with His people and vows to make atonement for all she has done. No matter how much we may have fallen into sin and fallen away from the Lord we can be assured that He has made atonement for us in Christ. The people of Ezekiel's day could not have fallen any lower yet still there is the promise of restoration and a reminder of the eternal covenant. No one is beyond the reach of God's love and forgiveness.

Day 3 Chapter 17:1-24

## Application

The Assyrians took the kingdom of Israel captive in 722 BC. Now the Babylonian empire is the great power in the region and has destroyed Nineveh, the capital of Assyria (612 BC). A few years later Egypt joins Assyria in trying to overthrow Babylon but fails. The king of Israel sides with Babylon. His son allies with Egypt but they lose to Babylon also and he shifts loyalties to Babylon only to later rebel and side once again with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem and the king is taken into exile. Zedekiah is put on the throne in Jerusalem as a puppet king but he also chooses to side with Egypt and Jerusalem is put under siege for two years before the Babylonians destroy the city and burn the temple to the ground in 586 BC. A final deportation took place in 582 BC. We ought to be content with what we have rather than being ungrateful to our benefactors. We should not be grasping after things we cannot have or vying for control of a situation that may eventually lead to our downfall and ruin our friendships.

## Day 4 Chapter 18:1-32

### Application

Despite this proverb, also seen in Jeremiah (Jer 31:29) the sons are not responsible for their father's sins nor are they deemed righteous if their father is righteous. The people believed that they were being punished because of the behaviour of their ancestors. Each person is responsible for their own behaviour but we are promised that if a person turns from their sin they will be forgiven and their sins will be forgotten. God declares that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and would rather they repent and live. Likewise with us we should not delight in the death of wicked people but rather do all we can to see them come to salvation and to know God's forgiveness.

## Day 5 Chapter 19:1-14

### Application

This funeral song tells of the past kings of Israel and their failures. Jehoahaz was taken captive to Egypt in 725 BC (2 Kings 23:31-34), Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon in 598 (2 Kings 24:15) and Zedekiah was taken into exile in 586 BC. All of these "cubs" of the lioness Judah trusted in themselves rather than in God and suffered the consequences. They were cruel to the people and became prideful with their own sense of importance and power and failed to recognise the one from whom all power comes. When Pilate tells Jesus he has the authority to crucify him, Jesus points out that he only has this power because it has been given to him from above

(John 19:10-11. Paul also echoes this sentiment concerning Christ in his letter to the church at Ephesus (Ephesians 1:22-23))

## **Week 6**

### **Day 1 Chapter 20:1-26**

#### **Application**

God's patience and love is seen here as He continually withholds punishment giving the people opportunities to follow Him and keep the decrees. Eventually, due to their continual disobedience, God gives them over to their sin and its consequences. Under the new covenant Paul tells us to put the unrepentant and divisive sinner out of the church so they will be exposed to the consequences of their sin and hopefully see the error of their ways and turn back to God (Titus 3:10-11, 1 Cor 5:1-5).

### **Day 2 Chapter 20:27-49**

#### **Application**

Despite the clarity of the message the people accuse Ezekiel of speaking in riddles. This is often the case with people today when they are confronted with the message of Christ crucified. Rather than respond to the message they ridicule it claiming it to be nonsense. To the Jew it is a stumbling block because salvation doesn't come via weakness. To the Gentile it is nonsense because gods do not suffer the humiliation of the cross. The message of forgiveness and self denial is difficult for some people to hear. We should not be surprised when we encounter such negative responses from non-believers because Jesus is the "scandalon", the stone that causes people to stumble and the rock that makes them fall (Is 8:13-14).

### **Day 3 Chapter 21:1-32**

#### **Application**

There are times when difficult messages need to be given and we should not seek to avoid delivering them. Ezekiel has to deliver a difficult message that causes him to beat his thighs and chest in sorrow (a gesture of grief). Jerusalem has to be purified by fire because of its defilement. Ammon is also given a message of woe for the part they played and history shows that they too were subjugated and declined in power and influence. The description of the king of Babylon standing at the fork in the road to decide which city to attack might seem like a matter of chance (divination). However, the underlying message is that God is sovereign and can even use seemingly random events to accomplish His purposes. This can be a humbling reminder of our limited understanding of God's ways.

## Day 4 Chapter 22:1-31

### Application

In verses 6-12 Ezekiel lists the depravity that exists amongst the people reminding us of some of the same things that had taken place before the flood and in the lands of Sodom and Gomorrah. We hear of the same things happening in our own day even within the walls of the church. Living a life that pleases God and is in line with the teaching of Jesus leaves no room for these types of behaviours. We need to be on our guard so that we do not allow our minds to dwell on the kinds of thoughts that lead to sinful actions. All of us are tempted to fall into sin but we always have the choice to resist and to do that which we know to be holy and righteous (1 Cor 10:13). Living an upright life is a choice that we need to continually make. Be the person that can stand in the gap in the wall (v30).

## Day 5 Chapter 23:1-49

### Application

Ezekiel tells the story of two sisters that represent Samaria/Israel and Judah/Jerusalem. It is an indictment on Judah that they failed to learn the lesson of the kingdom of Israel and the exile they experienced under the Assyrians. The wickedness in Israel that led to their destruction was not only disregarded in Judah but became even worse. Judah was spared exile under the Assyrians but past grace does not give permission or license to sin. Adultery is a betrayal of the one to whom we have committed ourselves. Jesus describes the people of his own day as adulterous demonstrating that the people still do not seem to have learned the lessons of the past. Sin has the tendency to be progressive if left unrepented and unchecked. We need to be careful to learn the lessons of our past and not fall into the same trap again and again.

## **Week 7**

### Day 1 Chapter 24:1-27

Judah is described as a pot that cannot be cleansed and so will now be destroyed. There is also a difficult passage dealing with the death of Ezekiel's wife. God has him use what would be a time of grief and mourning as an object lesson to the people. This event marks a turning point in the book as Nebuchadnezzar arrives and God's profound sorrow is seen. The overwhelming nature of the national tragedy outweighs individual despair and broken-heartedness. Ezekiel's silent grief and unwavering obedience to God's command, despite his personal loss, serve as a powerful example of faith in the midst of unimaginable suffering. When we face tough times



we can use them as opportunities for dealing with sin and see them as an occasion for spiritual growth.

#### Day 2 Chapter 25:1-17

##### Application

The Ammonites and the Moabites were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham, while the Edomites were descendants of Esau, the grandson of Abraham. As blood relatives they should not have been antagonistic and hostile towards the Israelites. Now the time had come for these neighbouring nations to reap what they have sown. This teaches us that we should never take pleasure in the misfortunes of others. Instead, empathy and compassion should guide our response. God's judgment on these nations demonstrates that He pays attention to how people treat each other, especially when there are historical or familial ties. Jesus repeats this message in the parable of the good Samaritan where we are told to love our neighbours despite their differences (Luke 10:25f)

#### Day 3 Chapter 26:1-21

##### Application

Tyre, the capital of Phoenicia (modern day Lebanon, north of Israel) was a powerful, wealthy trading hub on the Mediterranean coast. Its downfall is linked to its arrogance and false sense of security. It had become a place of pride and self-reliance, overly confident in its own abilities and resources. Worldly success, fame and material possessions are fleeting and can often be lost as quickly as they are gained. When Jerusalem falls Tyre is found to be gloating and pleased with the potential riches that will come her way. Exploiting others and mocking their misfortune is not only callous but does not reflect the nature of God or Jesus' teaching on humility (Luke 14:7f).

#### Day 4 Chapter 27:1-36

##### Application

This section describes the great trade network that existed in the ancient world. The prosperity of Tyre relied on its relationships and interconnectedness with the surrounding nations. Tyre had control of the sea trading routes due to its ports whilst Judah had trade routes on the land. When Judah fell Tyre thought it would increase its gain. They were dependent on others just as others were dependent on them. In our own lives we need to recognise the importance of healthy relationships, our need for community and collaboration (Hebrews 10:25).

## Day 5 Chapter 28:1-26

### Application

The description of the king of Tyre is one of a man who sees himself as divine sitting on a godly throne. His sin is one of pride and Ezekiel condemns his attitude and his motivations. We need to recognise that boasting in our gifts, possessions and successes is a form of pride that leads to arrogance. These only produce within us a distorted image of ourselves. Proverbs 16:18 tells us that pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Lasting value is not found in worldly success but in a right relationship with God and others. We ought to strive to live with a sense of gratitude and a humble awareness of who we are in Christ.

## Week 8

### Day 1 Chapter 29:1-21

#### Application

The Pharaoh is also condemned as a prideful man who sees himself as being godlike in status. They saw themselves as the manifestation of the will of the gods and responsible for maintaining cosmic order. Egypt is also derided for being an unreliable and untrustworthy ally to Israel. God does promise to restore upper Egypt after a time of testing but they would never again be a worldly power. Israel had put their trust in the wrong people and relied on the wrong source of power. In 572 BC Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt and the people were exiled to Babylon. The Persian king Cyrus allowed those conquered by Babylon to return home after he had risen to power.

### Day 2 Chapter 30:1-26

#### Application

God is ultimately in control of the nations and even powerful nations like Egypt and Assyria are not exempt from His control. This prophecy extends beyond Egypt to include her allies such as Cush (Ethiopia) and Put (Libya). Regardless of our nationality or where we live we are to live righteous lives because God's standards of justice are universal. Pharaoh was described as a god and a "possessor of a strong arm" but here God says his arm will be broken and the king of Babylon will have his arm strengthened. Whilst nations make their own choices Ezekiel shows us that God is the one directing history.

### Day 3 Chapter 31:1-18

## Application

Just as Assyria, a mighty cedar, had been felled so now Egypt would face a similar fate. Once again we are reminded that success and influence do not last forever and that pride only leads to disaster. World powers are cyclical and they come and go often leaving a legacy of sorrow. It seems that one nation does not learn from the fall of another. The lessons of the past are not learned and history repeats itself. The fall of the mighty cedar should have served as a warning for individuals and nations alike. Our focus should be on lasting spiritual values and on God's Kingdom which will endure forever.

## Day 4 Chapter 32:1-32

### Application

No matter how powerful or mighty, no one can escape God's justice. Pharaoh is condemned for disrupting the peace and well being of the other nations. Divine judgement is inevitable on those who persist in unrighteousness and pride. Worldly strength is useless against the power of God. Rebellion and sin leads only to darkness and despair. Even after death the Egyptians find no comfort at being together and the rulers have been made to give up their crowns. Being killed in battle led to corpses being stripped, plundered and often beheaded. To be buried among the uncircumcised added insult to injury. These chapters combined show us that earthly rulers and world empires are impermanent, God stands against oppression and pridefulness and that our actions have consequences for which we will be held accountable.

## Week 9

## Day 1 Chapter 33:1-20

### Application

Despite acting as a watchman in the tower warning the people of Judah of the incoming enemy and pending judgement, the people refuse to heed the message. They blame God for the evils in society and refuse to turn from their wickedness. Yet the message of forgiveness is clear. If they will repent and stop their selfish, sinful ways God will show them mercy and spare them. This remains true today but as we have repeatedly seen in this book people prefer to mock the messenger as well as the message, preferring to love their money and worship false gods, refusing to accept the message of salvation. Our role is to share the good news of Jesus when the opportunity arises and not be disheartened if we are inevitably rejected.

## Day 2 Chapter 33:21-33

## Application

The people treat the prophet as a form of entertainment putting on the pretence of sincerity whilst having no intention of doing anything Ezekiel tells them. His words are lost on them and they choose instead to mock the words of God. They remain unrepentant whilst claiming the land now belongs to them. Only when it is too late will they understand that a prophet of God was warning them of their impending doom. The religious rulers of Jesus' day also refused his message whilst trying to trip him up and accused him of performing miracles with the power of evil. Don't lose hope as Jesus himself told us that we would be like sheep amongst wolves. There are always those amongst us who prefer to mock what they do not understand or reject that which hits too close to home.

## Day 3 Chapter 34:1-31

### Application

This passage is comparing the leaders of Israel, the bad shepherds, with the Good Shepherd. Sadly today we hear of church leaders who have become rich at the expense of those who make up their congregations. They have become fat on the very sheep they should have been protecting. God declares that He is against these wicked shepherds and will hold them accountable for their actions. This underscores the principle that leaders will be judged by a higher standard and that God cares deeply about how His people are treated. In contrast the good shepherd will protect his sheep, bring them home and care for them. There is also the promise of a future King David who will be the shepherd of a restored Israel and a new covenant of peace will be established (Jer 23:5-6). Peace here means fullness of life that is enjoyed in complete security. Something to look forward to!

## Day 4 Chapter 35:1-15

### Application

The core message revolves around God's unwavering commitment to His people Israel and His judgment upon those who act with malicious intent against them. Edom's origins were borne out of conflict and of disregarding spiritual inheritance (Gen 25:15f). The hand of friendship had been offered to Edom but they refused to take it. Edom took advantage of Israel's calamities looting Jerusalem in 586 AD and even shed their blood. They would need to be dealt with before Israel could know lasting peace. God takes the mistreatment of His people personally and will hold their enemies accountable for their long-standing animosity. Jesus teaches us that we need to forgive if we want to know God's forgiveness (Matt 6:15). Which is easier

- to forgive or to hold a grudge? Examine your heart and let go of any animosity or unforgiveness you have against others.

Day 5 Chapter 36:1-15

#### Application

The Canaanites had erected shrines to false gods on every hill so the message is directed towards the mountains. The surrounding nations have been used as a means to punish Israel but they will not escape their own judgement. God's standards apply to all, not just a select few. Individuals may see their own actions as justified, even righteous, but God examines the motives behind them: "All the ways of a man are clean and innocent in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs and examines the motives and intents of the heart and knows the truth." (Proverbs 16:1-3) We need to be careful not to see ourselves as better than anyone else lest we fall into the trap of self righteousness in our judgement of others.

### **Week 10**

Day 1 Chapter 36:16-38

#### Application

This message is one of restoration and hope not because the people deserve it but because God is holy and He keeps His promises. God will redeem His people even though they are scattered, broken and exiled. True restoration involves spiritual renewal and a turning away from sin. When God restores his people, he forgives, regenerates, sanctifies, and empowers them. Following God will result in tangible blessings and a fruitful life. Those who are in Christ know the Father's blessing and are given the Holy Spirit, the advocate, to overcome the world. (John 14:15-17)

Day 2 Chapter 37:1-28

#### Application

This is probably the most well known passage in Ezekiel. Can a nation that is dead and desolate, strewn with the dry bones of corpses ever be returned to life? Can a people scattered in exile ever return home? Will Israel ever live again in the promised land? With God all things are indeed possible (Matt 19:26). Although the nation is represented as dead, dry bones God has a plan that includes them beyond Babylon and has a promise for the future no matter how big the miracle might need to be. This became a reality in 583 BC when Cyrus allowed the exiled Israelites to return home. In v24f the promise of a Messianic ruler from the line of David is given

to the people and we see this fulfilled in Jesus. We can be confident that God also has a plan for our own lives now and in the future. The power of God's Spirit is such that even the inevitable death of our bodies cannot deny the life He gives. (Romans 8:11).

#### Day 3 Chapter 38:1-23

##### Application

Ezekiel speaks of a time in the future when a restored Israel will live in peace and security. The places mentioned by Ezekiel represent the extreme parts of the world showing that all of Israel's neighbours have turned against them. If they think that there will be easy pickings amongst God's people they will be met with earthquakes, hailstones, plagues and bloodshed from the Lord. Only that which God allows will take place. Here is a promise that God will be with His people and bring the attacks of the enemy to nothing. In Revelation we hear of Gog and Magog again as an attacking force led by Satan but once again God intervenes and the enemy is defeated (Rev 20:7-9) Take heart that the battle ultimately always belongs to the Lord.

#### Day 4 Chapter 39:1-29

##### Application

This message is intended to bring some comfort to the exiled Israelites as Ezekiel brings yet more promises of restoration and the defeat of her enemies. Some have suggested that Ezekiel is using a form of Mesopotamian cypher and when he speaks of Gog and Magog he is referring to Babylon using a secret code. This would mean that Ezekiel sees the nation who overthrew them and dragged them into captivity as not being exempt from God's judgment. In v25 God reverses His judgment on His people and promises to restore their fortunes and no longer hide His face from them. God promises to pour out His Spirit on His people and will live amongst them. This is true for us today as well as we are God's people and are assured that nothing can separate us from the Father's love (Romans 8:38-39).

#### Day 5 Chapter 40:1-27

##### Application

Ezekiel describes a temple that is the blueprint of future worship. God will return through the east gate, the same way He departed. The instructions and measurements are precise as they were with the tabernacle and Solomon's temple which tells us something of God's meticulous nature. All things are carefully



designed, planned and executed in contrast to the chaos that often happens in the world due to sin. Even if your life feels a bit messy and disordered at times and you are unsure what God is doing in your life, you can be certain that all things work together for good to those called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)

## **Week 11**

### **Day 1 Chapter 40:28-49**

#### **Application**

This chapter lays the groundwork for the final part of the book as the message shifts from prophecy to the vision of the new temple. Solomon's temple was destroyed due to defilement and corruption but here Ezekiel envisions a temple of pure worship untainted by idolatry or self serving priests. New chambers will be built for new priests who will fulfil their duties well. Orderliness and holiness are emphasised and there is a sense of anticipation as God has promised to return and to dwell once again amongst his people. The same is true of the church today. Disorder, chaos and self serving leaders have no place in true worship.

### **Day 2 Chapter 41:1-26**

#### **Application**

The dimensions are identical to the temple described in 1 Kings 6:5-8 but it is different from Solomon's temple in some places to emphasise that this new temple is to be something less temporal. The inner sanctuary and the most holy place are clearly set apart, underscoring the need for reverence and awe when approaching God. This teaches us to have a deep respect for God's presence in our lives and in His designated spaces (whether physical or spiritual). Although under the New Covenant, believers have direct access to God through Christ, the imagery here reminds us of the unique holiness of God's presence. When we approach the Lord's table at communion do we have a sense of God's holiness and have we dealt with our own sin and made peace with others? Are we aware that we are on holy ground?

### **Day 3 Chapter 42:1-20**

#### **Application**

The holy garments worn by the priests are a symbol of having a holy heart as well as a sign that they are ministers for God. They were to separate the holy from the common. Matthew Henry points out that, "A difference is to be put between common and sacred things, between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances..." Do we

recognise that things of God are above the things of man and do we treat them as best we can with the respect that they deserve?

#### Day 4 Chapter 43:1-12

##### Application

The promise that Judah's exile is not to be God's final dealing with believers is seen here as He returns to inhabit His holy place. It is to be a place for God's presence alone and not to be connected with Israel's rulers or royal palaces as the previous temple had been. What about us? Are we actively seeking and welcoming God's presence in our individual lives, our families, and our church communities? Just as the temple was the designated place for God's presence, our hearts are now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). We should cultivate an environment where His presence is honoured and expected through prayer, worship, and obedience.

#### Day 5 Chapter 43:13-27

Before the full return of God's glory, there was a process of cleansing and preparation for the altar. This demonstrates the need for personal and corporate cleansing from sin and consecration to God's purposes. We need to continually examine our hearts and lives, repenting of anything that would hinder God's presence. In all He does God is holy therefore His temple was to be a holy place and His followers were to be a holy people. The instruction to be a holy people came from God via Moses (Lev 19:1-2). Peter repeats this in the New Testament (1 Pet 1:15-16). Now we who are in Christ are called a "royal priesthood" and "a holy nation". We have the opportunity to share the goodness of God with others because we have been called out of the darkness into His wonderful light." (1 Pet 2:9)

### **Week 12**

#### Day 1 Chapter 44:1-31

##### Application

Faithfulness to God is rewarded as the descendants of Zadok are returned to their status as priests in the temple. Zadok proved to be a steadfast and loyal supporter of King David and later anointed his son Solomon. When many others were turning away from God the "sons of Zadok" stayed to guard the temple and for this they are now the only ones allowed to minister and serve in the new temple. The Levites who went astray are demoted because of their sin. This reminds us of the necessity of purity and faithfulness for those who serve the Lord, the accountability for past actions, and the distinct roles and responsibilities within God's ordained order of

worship. James tells us that in our own time, not many people should seek to become teachers of God's word, emphasizing the greater accountability and stricter judgment that comes with this important role (James 3:1f).

## Day 2 Chapter 45:1-25

### Application

Ezekiel reinstates the Passover as a national event and also reminds the people to treat each other fairly rather than short changing each other. The princes of Israel are warned to do what is right and just. Throughout the scriptures we see that God is just and demands that His people are also right and just. Jesus said, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). This principle is a fundamental guide for just behaviour. We need to treat others with the fairness and respect we ourselves desire. If we seek to keep God at the centre of our lives, as the temple was at the centre of Judah, we will find that we will develop compassion, a sense of what is right and just as well as a desire to challenge oppression and to uphold the dignity of every person.

## Day 3 Chapter 46:1-24

### Application

The people were given instructions to enter and exit by specific gates to enable orderliness and to avoid confusion. God cares about the details of our lives and our devotion to Him. He desires our worship to be thoughtful, orderly, and from the heart. Our lives and our worship are not to be disorderly and chaotic but rather our steps are to be ordered and our paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). God does not bring confusion but peace when we actively trust, submit, and seek His ways. Our relationship with God is not just a weekly event but requires daily attention and commitment. Our spiritual lives should have a healthy rhythm and sense of purpose as we draw closer to Him and allow the Spirit to shape our hearts and minds.

## Day 4 Chapter 47:1-23

### Application

Just as the river flows God's work in our lives and in the world often starts small but has the potential for incredible growth and abundance. As we allow His Spirit to flow more freely, His blessings and influence can expand beyond their small beginnings. It encourages us to trust in the progressive work of God. This is also a powerful message of God's inclusivity and His heart for all people. In the Kingdom of God the barriers between Jew and Gentile are broken down in Christ, and all who believe

become part of God's family and heirs of His promises. When God's Spirit is at work, life flourishes in all its forms. This applies to our spiritual life, healthy relationships, vibrant communities, and even the restoration of creation. Jesus is for us today the source of the living water that leads to eternal life - "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:37-39).

Day 5 Chapter 48:1-35

### Application

In this new place there was to be equity and equality for all those who believe and follow the one true God. Ezekiel proclaims that God will remain in the temple and even give it the name "The Lord is there". The greatest hope and deepest longing of humanity is to dwell in the presence of God. This is the culmination of God's redemptive plan – not just a restored land or temple, but God Himself dwelling intimately and permanently with His people. Our ultimate fulfillment and security are found in His presence. It's a vision of the future that looks to the complete and perfect realisation of God's kingdom, where His presence will be the defining reality. In Revelation we are told, "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.'" (Revelation 21:3)

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