

EZEKIEL

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The situation of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was a priest who God then called to become His prophet, a similar situation as for Jeremiah, ([Jeremiah 1:2](#), and Zechariah, [Zachariah 1:1](#)).

Ezekiel was to be the spokesman for God with the Jewish exiles in the land of Babylon. His task was to rebuke and reprimand the Jews for their idol worship and sinful life, but in addition he was to also have revealed to him the glory of God and the future which was prepared for the Jewish nation.

A Levite wishing to become a priest starts training at twenty five years of age but the normal age for a priest to start in his working position of ministry was about thirty years old and retire at fifty,

[Numbers 4:1-3,23](#);

[Numbers 8:24-26](#),

Ezekiel was thirty when God called him to His work as a prophet. It would not be a good change for Ezekiel as generally a prophet was not liked by the people, it was dangerous to take on these tasks compared with the position of being a priest, as the priests were highly esteemed, respected and admired by the people. Ezekiel was born in Jerusalem in 622 BC during the ministry of Jeremiah and before the Jews were taken to Babylon. The Jews thought that their time in Babylon was to be short, encouraged by the many false prophets of that time, but Jeremiah's letter,

[Jeremiah 29:1ff](#),

Told them that they should settle down as God had decreed a seventy year stay for them in Babylon.

To help him in his ministry Ezekiel was given three experiences of the power and glory of the Lord. A common statement "*I am the Lord.*" occurs fifty-nine times in the book.

After the Jews had been taken to Babylon the people wondered if the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had deserted them, they had been given the promised land and a temple but now they were prisoners in Babylon, a pagan country. They felt that God was not now in charge of their events so the first duty of Ezekiel was to prove that God was still on the throne and controlling all the world events and people. The book of Ezekiel opens with him leading the people, as a priest, in a time of prayer. They were by the river Chebar(or Kebar), which flowed from the Euphrates river south of Babylon. It was on this occasion that Ezekiel is called by God from being a priest to become His prophet.

The Glory of the Lord, the first event.

God spoke to Ezekiel in the form of a vision, note how often we read the words "*the word of the Lord came....*" or "*the hand of the Lord,*" showing by whose authority the message is being given.

The storm, [Ezekiel 1:3,4](#).

Ezekiel sees a whirlwind coming from the north, it was surrounded by a great cloud containing fire and light. Ezekiel used the word "like" often as he describes his vision showing that God was giving "symbolic signs" to Ezekiel, using things that were showing the spiritual truth but were also familiar to the eyes and knowledge of Ezekiel, this could explain some odd descriptions of what he saw and the difficulty we have in interpreting what he describes.

The Cherubims. [Ezekiel 1:4-14](#).

Ezekiel sees living creatures coming out of the cloud, in [Ezekiel 10:15,20](#) they are identified as cherubims, which are heavenly creatures, as mentioned in,

[Genesis 3:24](#);

[Exodus 26:1](#);

[Exodus 25:18-22](#);

[Revelation 4:6-9](#) for example.

These creatures had a human looking body, four faces and four wings with legs like those of a calf. Their wings allowed them to move in all directions with ease. Each wing of the cherubims were touching its neighbour's wing so they must have been in a hollow square, each creature being at a corner.

The four faces are described in verse 10, the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.

"Man" is made in the image of God. The lion is the greatest of beasts from the forests, The ox represents the domesticated animal, finally the eagle is a great bird and was often used to represent God, see [Deuteronomy 32:11,12](#).

These also have connections with a promise made by God in [Genesis 9:8-17](#), God made this promise to Noah and the world, the people and animals, that He would never again destroy the world by a flood.

The creatures appearance were describe initially as like a fiery molten metal, glowing, then he said that they were like burning coal and being surrounded in fire, light and lightning.

The Wheels. [Ezekiel 1:15-21](#).

What Ezekiel is seeing is something for which he has great problems to describe, not having seen anything like it before.

Ezekiel can see that the wheels are associated with each creature, each wheel had an intersecting wheel, these wheels enabled the creatures in their movement. The wheels were yellow / green like the precious stone beryl, some feel that Ezekiel was speaking of an ancient stone called chrysolite, or gold stone, similar to a gold-coloured topaz.

"A wheel in the middle of a wheel." The most common explanation of this description is that somehow each wheel looked like two wheels cutting each other at right angles, this would allow movement in any direction. These wheels appeared to have the rim *"full of eyes."*

These wheels were powered and directed by the Holy Spirit, as the "spirit" moved so did the wheels.

This movement also made the four creatures move.

Ezekiel was seeing a wonder, to him it was a very puzzling but amazing scene, he was full of fear and reverence for the object.

The Firmament [Ezekiel 1:22-25](#).

The Hebrew word *"rāqîa"* appears seventeen times in the scripture, for example [Genesis 1](#);

[Ezekiel 10:1](#);

[Daniel 12:3](#).

Here the picture is of a "platform" spread out above the heads of the four living creatures, it has the appearance of a crystal. What Ezekiel was seeing was a heavenly vehicle, like a chariot with four wheels, which could move very quickly, as directed.

Verse 24, when the creatures moved their wings it made the "noise of great waters" (a large waterfall), like the sound of a very large army on the move.

The Throne. [Ezekiel 1:26-28](#).

The throne is azure blue, with lightning flashing in and around it. Sitting on this throne is a "man like figure," above the waist it was *"the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around and within it; "* And below the waist *"the appearance of fire with brightness all around. "* A rainbow surrounds the figure, see also [Ezekiel 8:2](#). Ezekiel makes the remark that *"this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord,"* verse 28.

The rainbow reminds us of the promise made by God to Noah, [Genesis 9:13-17](#),

John also saw the throne and rainbow in [Revelation 4:3](#).

The figure was probably a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. See also [Revelation 1:12-16](#).

We now examine the set of messages which God gave to Ezekiel, the basic message being that *"God is still on the throne,"* However, the Jewish nation had turned their back on His worship and so were being punished. It was with the permission of God that the Babylonian's were able to capture the Jewish nation and it would be ultimately, as He planned, that the Medes and Persians would conquer Babylon and release the Jews.

The Book of Ezekiel reveals the glory and power of God to the Jewish nation, both those in exile and those still back in the Promised Land.

The Voice. [Ezekiel 2:1-9](#).

Ezekiel hears a voice and is so frightened he falls to the ground, The voice instructs him to stand, then calls him by the name *"Son of man"*. This title is used ninety-three times in the book of Ezekiel, it has the meaning of "mortal man" or just "man," The word is indicating the creature weakness and mortality in the presence of the glorified God. Note that the use of the name in [Daniel 7:13](#) is a Messianic title.

Jesus also used the title in various places, e.g.. [Matthew 8:20](#); [Matthew 11:19](#).

"The spirit entered into me," this is referring to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel was now about to receive his Prophetic office and orders from God. Ezekiel was informed that he was being given a difficult task, but the first instruction was to *"stand and listen"*. It is the most important fact that Ezekiel is obedient and listens to the Lord's word.

"Go and Speak. [Ezekiel 2:3-5](#).

His first task was to take the message from God, would this be a message of judgement or encouragement? The Jews are described as "rebellious" many times in this book, they refused to obey His word and worship Him, resulting in their present situation. The Hebrew phrase translated "a rebellious nation," is normally used to refer to a Gentile nation, but now the chosen people of God were acting in the same way as the Gentile nations and their true attitude towards God.

Be not afraid of them. [Ezekiel 2:6,7](#).

This message, when given to Ezekiel, would not have been very encouraging to him in his new task, he now knew that his future work was going to be very difficult, he was going to need great faith.

Ezekiel had just experienced the glory of God so he knew that all the necessary power was available for him and for the task he has just been given.

Open your mouth and eat what I give you. [Ezekiel 2:8 to 3:3](#).

God was instructing Ezekiel to take in the Word of God and "eat it like food." There appeared before him a hand with a scroll, that is a rolled up strip of paper with writing on. This scroll was filled with *"words of lament and mournings and woe."* We are not told of the contents of the scroll but Ezekiel was then instructed to eat the scroll, it tasted sweet, like honey.

Go tell them. [Ezekiel 3:4-27](#).

The Jews had been warned for many years to turn back to the Lord, to listen to and take in His Word, then obey, but they ignored the message, now they were being punished by a period of seventy years in exile. Unfortunately, the false prophets were telling them that there will soon be a quick return to their country, [Jeremiah 29:15-32](#), this fact was not as planned by God.

The message Ezekiel was given had three actions:-

"Go."

The command was *"you go."* No one else was to take the message. Ezekiel was not allowed to alter the message and had to go to the *"house of Israel"* only.

"Understand."

The people were able to receive and understand the message, he was speaking their language, so they had no excuse.

"Obey."

God expects obedience to His Word, unfortunately the Jews history shows regular disobedience, consider

[Deuteronomy 9:7](#);

[2 Chronicles 36:11-21](#);

[Romans 9:1-5](#).

Many today hear the Word of God but chose to ignore it, which is actually an act of disobedience.

God promised Ezekiel power to take the message, [Ezekiel 3:8,9](#).

Time to go.

[Ezekiel 3:10-15](#).

Ezekiel is by the river Chebar and he is told to go to Tel-Abib, to another group of exiles. *"Then the Spirit lifted me up,"* and took him to the place. As he departs, Ezekiel he hears the cherubim's wings, the wheels and a thunderous voice as the glory of God also departs that place.

At Tel-Abib.

Ezekiel is taken by the Spirit to Tel-Abib, there he sits with the people for seven days, listening. He feels their disappointment, sadness and hatred for the Babylonian's. Unfortunately, they should be seeking the Lord, repenting, instead, they are planning revenge on their captors.

The "Watchman" title. [Ezekiel 3:16-21](#).

The job of the watchman was to warn of danger to the city, the scriptures often use this title, for example,

[Isaiah 21:11,12](#);

[Jeremiah 6:17](#);

[Hebrews 13:17](#).

In this passage we see that God told Ezekiel of His judgement on those doing wrong, the people must listen to the warning and turn from their sin, if they did not, then God sends a warning of the result. The message was that each individual was responsible, NOT their ancestors or others. God also warned what would happen to the messenger (watchman) who failed to take His warning to the people, verse 20.

See [Genesis 9:5](#);

[2 Samuel 1:16](#);

[Matthew 23:34-39](#).

The watchman was also warned that it was their duty to help / warn those who had turned from their sins or have not yet sinned and were still seeking to obey the Word of the Lord, *the righteous*. God has never given His people the right to sin,

see [Hebrews 12:1-11](#);

[1 John 5:16,17](#).

Finally a sign. [Ezekiel 3:22-27](#).

There must be a gap of time between verses 21 and 22, Ezekiel had been told to go to the people with the message, this he had done and they had not listened. Verse 22 onwards is the action by God as a result of their rejection of the message.

This passage starts with "*And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; " God takes Ezekiel off to a quiet place to talk with him. " Behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, "as at river of Chebar. "* Ezekiel was instructed to return to his house where he is to shut himself up, though at specific times he did leave,

[Ezekiel 5:2](#);

[Ezekiel 12:3](#).

He was never to speak to anyone except with the messages from God during the next seven years. When the news of the destruction of Jerusalem came, this command to "not speak" was removed, [Ezekiel 24:1ff](#).

Ezekiel's silence was a sign to the Jews that the Word of God must not be ignored. When God speaks, listen and obey,

[Matthew 11:15](#);

[Matthew 13:9,43](#).

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house," verse 27.

There is no evidence that Ezekiel was tied up as suggested by the words "*O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them.*" verse 25. However, he was "*bound*" by the sinful acts, and by the lack of interest in the message from God by the Jewish people, this restricted his movement until God released him.

The death of Jerusalem. [Ezekiel 4 to 7](#).

God gives a new message to Ezekiel, but he was not to use words because the people would not listen, instead he was to use an "*action sermon*," a visible message. It is possible that these strange acts by Ezekiel attracted the Jews to watch and so take in the message. The following two chapters describe four "action sermons" of Ezekiel to give the message from God to the people.

Jerusalem is under siege. [Ezekiel 4:1-3](#).

Ezekiel, without speaking a word, now acts out his sermon of prophecy, the "*tiles*" described here were probably soft clay tablets, these were in common use in Babylon to write on. Ezekiel drew a picture of Jerusalem, easily recognized by the people. He then took various objects and acts out the siege of Jerusalem, fortifications (structures to protect or stop the people), ramps to climb over the walls, and battering rams to break down the gates.

This event was to happen in 588 B.C. under the Babylonian army. Ezekiel then used an iron pan, which was used by the priests for offerings, [Leviticus 2:5](#); [Leviticus 6:21](#). He held it between his face and the tile representing Jerusalem, this was indicating a wall between God and the sinful people, no blessings from God, He was about to let the Babylonians destroy the city and His temple, see [Ezekiel 3:8,9](#).

Judah is judged. [Ezekiel 4:4-8](#).

Ezekiel was instructed to lie on the ground at a certain time each day, facing the model of the siege of Jerusalem. He was to be bound, but his arm free, there he was to eat a specific small amount of food as listed and prepared as described in verses 9-17. He was to lie on his left side for 390 days then on his right side for a further forty days. This was to show how long the city was to be ruined. The "*binding*" signified the future binding of prisoners and the arm of God being free to judge them.

Ezekiel was told by God that each day represented a year in the time of the Jewish nation's past history, this probably consisted of the 40 years in the journey to the Promised Land, then 390 years of rebellion against God. The question is, when does this 390 years start? Bible students feel it probably started when Rehoboam became king, when idolatry started and the temple was desecrated., [1 Kings 14:21ff](#). Whatever plan or time that God is working to does not really matter, but His sometimes apparent slow response shows how much patience He has with His children, but eventually He has to demand that sins are paid for. Worth noting the contents of [1 Peter 4:17-19](#).

No food in the city. [Ezekiel 9:9-17](#).

After God showed the future for Jerusalem through Ezekiel, He now tells of the coming famine for the people in the city. The grains and vegetables listed for Ezekiel to eat were a very poor diet, showing what types of food will be consumed by the people in Jerusalem during the siege.

The people occasionally use cow manure, mixed with straw, as fuel for their fires to cook with, but to use human waste excrement was a sign of the terrible situation because the people were commanded to keep away from human waste excrement, [Deuteronomy 23:12-14](#). God has allowed Ezekiel to actually use cow dung for the sermon as he did not want him to break the law and sin. Ezekiel was careful to keep to the dietary laws, however, in the future Jews would be forced to eat bread which was classed as defiled, according to the law, or starve. God warned them in [Deuteronomy 29:10-28](#), note verses 22-28 especially.

The final destiny of the people. [Ezekiel 5:1-17](#).

Ezekiel's fourth "action sermon" emphasizes the words *"I the LORD have spoken it."* God instructs Ezekiel to shave his head and face, often a sign of purification. In [Leviticus 19:27](#) ; [Deuteronomy 14:1](#); [Leviticus 21:5,6](#) the Jew is given instructions concerning care of their hair. For Ezekiel, a priest, to shave his head and beard would cause great attention, he also used a sword, instead of a normal razor, to carry out the hair removal, and this would show how serious the message from God was.

After removing of his hair as instructed Ezekiel was instructed to weigh the hair and divide it into three parts. One part was burnt on the tile which represented the sieged city, this signified that some of the people were to die in Jerusalem. The second division of hair was cut up with a sword and showed those killed by the Babylonians, the final third was split, one part was thrown into the wind showing how the Jews would be scattered into the world of Gentiles, while Ezekiel kept and hid a small part in the hem of his clothes, showing that God would care for the small remnant who would return to the Promised Land. Note that there was a final action, to remove the hair in the hem of the garment and then throw into the fire, showing there would still be danger for those left after the siege was over.

Why the punishment? [Ezekiel 5:5,6](#).

In these two verses God describes why He has to punish the Jews, why they were to suffer and die at the hands of the Gentile, the evil nation of Babylon. The Jewish Nation was His chosen people, they were supposed to be His witness to the world, His temple was the center of a much blessed nation, who had responsibilities, a light to the world, [Isaiah 42:6](#); [Isaiah 49:6](#); [John 4:22](#), and they failed the task, they were greater sinners than the Gentile nations. ..

The Result. [Ezekiel 5:7-17](#).

God wants to punish His people the Jews openly, He does it in front of the Gentile nations as a warning to them that God will also judge them one day.

God then describes the coming judgement, Death of one third of the Jewish people due to famine and pestilence, a second third by the action of the Babylonian army. God is Holy and cannot tolerate evil, it will happen, *"Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them."* verse 13. How sad that *"Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee,"* verse 14, a shameful nation to God. Note [Deuteronomy 28:32-44](#).

"I the LORD have spoken it." He will still fulfill His plan for the world.

Judgement of the Land, the first spoken message. [Ezekiel 6:1-14](#).

Ezekiel had been instructed by God not to speak except when God gave him a commandment to speak, in the following two chapters are two messages given by God concerning His judgement. The first in chapter 6 tells of the idolatry by His people and turning away from the Lord, this resulted in the sacred land being treated with dishonour and being made corrupt. They were desecrating the temple and the

Promised Land. The next chapter prophesied what will happen when the Babylonian's arrive. The watchman was issuing a warning to the people of the coming judgement and resulting disaster.

The places of idol worship are judged. [Ezekiel 6:1-7](#).

The Jews had defiled the Holy Land with their idolatry, therefore God was about to take it from them, see [Leviticus 25:23](#). The idols were to be destroyed and the people who worshipped them were to be punished, usually with death.

A small remnant were to survive. [Ezekiel 6:8-10](#).

The grace of God will save a small number but they will be scattered out into the world. These will remember their sins, repent and return to the Lord, they will become the future nation.

The weapons of destruction. [Ezekiel 6:11-14](#).

Ezekiel is commanded by God to emphasize his words by stamping his foot and clapping, these actions were to emphasize the coming famine, pestilence and the armies of Babylon. The reference to Diblath, verse 14, is an unknown location.

Again the message ends with *"and they shall know that I am the LORD."*

Destruction of the Land, the second spoken message. [Ezekiel 7:1-27](#).

The people had disobeyed the Law, as it had been given to them as part of the Covenant. God was not prepared to allow this conduct, so punishment was due and He allowed a number of the enemy nations to control the Jews, as recorded in Judges, after each period of chastisement the Lord released them, but they turned back to idol worship, finally He takes them away from the Promised Land.

Ezekiel gives the warning *"the end is come upon the four corners of the land,"* the land is about to be destroyed. The *"the end is come"* is used often in this message. The people had defiled the land, now it needed to be made clean.

Ezekiel paints a picture of the coming events in verses 10-21:-

The "rod hath blossomed,"

The fruit has now *"ripened,"* the Jews were about to reap what they had sown.

"The seller shall not return."

The background to this message is found in [Leviticus 25](#); [Deuteronomy 15:1-6](#). Every seven years the land is allowed to rest, debts are cancelled, the land is returned to the original owners. The price to be paid was dependent upon the number of years involved.

The message is a warning that instead of "release" and "return" the people were to become slaves and the land taken away until all the prophecies of [2 Chronicles 36:17-21](#) were fulfilled.

The Watchman. verses 14,15.

The people had been warned, but no defence of the city was available, outside the city was a terrible Babylonian army, inside was illness and famine.

"Doves of the valleys." verses 16-18.

Those who manage to escape are seen as "doves," frightened and alone in the mountains. These people were very scared, sad that they had sinned, wearing sackcloth and shaving their heads as a sign of sorrow and repentance. All they can do now is turn to the Lord.

"They shall cast their silver in the streets." verses 19-21.

In the years leading up to these events many Jews were getting rich at the expense of their poorer neighbour's now they were finding that their money was worthless, they could not carry it as they ran, so threw it away, for the enemy to collect as a "payment" for their troubles. Some had idols and they realized they were of no use, sin had made them rich but now comes their judgement.

"My face will I turn also from them." verses 22-27.

God has turned away from His people, even allowing His sacred place, the temple, which the Jews had turned into a place of sin, to be destroyed by the pagan soldiers. God was not satisfied with the worship and sacrifices made. The priests and leaders were actually worse, they did not stop the peoples failure to follow the covenant of God and instead lived an evil life. The political system was about to fail, they had failed to listen to the warnings from God through Jeremiah.