

# Ezekiel: A Chapter by Chapter Study

## Introduction

Ezekiel was among the Jewish exiles during the time of Daniel and the Babylonian conquest and rule. There is not much mention of Ezekiel other than the book that bears his name. He is thought to be of high intelligence due to his knowledge of not just Jewish scripture and tradition, but of history, culture literature, and even shipbuilding.

Ezekiel can confirm the most dates out of any other Old Testament book making it one of the most historically accurate and even referenced sources from that time period. It matches corresponding Babylonian recordings and even astronomy. Most Jewish priests served for a 20-year term starting at the age of 30. Ezekiel served for 22 years from April 593 BC to 571 BC. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC.

The book of Ezekiel can be broken down into 3 parts. Chapters 1-24 prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem, chapters 25-32 tell of the judgement of the nations by God, and chapters 33-48 prophesy of the restoration of Israel both physically and spiritually. Just as Jeremiah was the prophet of warning, Ezekiel would be the prophet of punishment. There are many similarities between the two prophets in dealing with the children of God. It is important to note that the original text of the book of Ezekiel had no chapter markings. It was one long text. Chapters and verses were added later for reference. The book of Ezekiel should be looked at as a single epic telling.

## Chapter 1

### V1-3

The Babylonians overtook Judah and carried away captives in 3 waves. The first wave was in 605 BC during the initial attack and is when Daniel was taken to Babylon. The second wave in 597 BC when the temple was looted and the third in 587 BC when Jerusalem falls and whatever Jews remained were cast into exile. Ezekiel was taken in the second wave. His calling as a prophet begin July 31, 593 BC.

### V4-21

The reference to a whirlwind or tornado from the North is significant because north is often associated with God's judgment through enemies of Israel.

The four faces have been debated over many centuries. One possible theory is that these were representations from the four camps of Israel in the wilderness. Numbers chapter 2 discusses the formation of these camps. Although not in the Bible, there is evidence that the four camps had banners so the Jews would know where to assemble. Judah's flag had a lion, Ephraim had an ox, Reuben had a man and Dan had an eagle.

*What images do these descriptions stir up in your mind? Does this vision sound familiar to other visions such as Daniel or the Revelation of John?*

### V22-28

This description of God and His angels is one of the most descriptive in all of the Bible. Some modern skeptics even use this as proof of visitation by aliens!

The first chapter of this book does nothing more than to introduce God to Ezekiel in a vision. God doesn't even say anything until the next chapter!

## **Chapter 2**

### **V1-10**

This describes the calling of Ezekiel by God himself for a divine purpose and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God is using Ezekiel to speak to His people and tell them why these calamities are happening. The downfall of the Jews is the will of God and serves a purpose.

Just as Jeremiah was the call of warning from God, Ezekiel would be the call of punishment from God. The Jews were stubborn people just as they were with Jeremiah, but God would still use a prophet to talk to His people whether they listened or not. Again, paralleling Jeremiah, God warns Ezekiel that the Jews would reject his teachings and prophecies, maybe even violently.

## **Chapter 3**

### **V1-15**

Read Psalm 119:103. This discusses the metaphorical description of "eating the scroll". Most scholars believe that this describes Ezekiel "memorizing" or "taking to heart" the instructions of God. Some scholars think that Ezekiel may have eaten the scroll in his vision, but that it is still a representation and not a physical command to eat paper.

Just as the Jews are stubborn and difficult, God would make Ezekiel even more stubborn and difficult for the Jews to rebel against.

At the end of the vision, Ezekiel is bitter. There is no clear reason given as to why he is so, but some believe it is because he was in the very presence of God and now, he is among the people to be punished and he must be the messenger.

The period for the consecration of a Jewish priest is 7 days. Whether this time of waiting and reflecting by Ezekiel was intentional or coincidental is not specified.

This marks the end of the vision and God's calling of Ezekiel.

### **V16-21**

This section puts a responsibility on Ezekiel. As a messenger of God, there are duties to be performed and if these duties are not fulfilled there are consequences to be paid. This passage is used by many to define the responsibilities of pastors, teachers and church leaders that they have a message from God to give to their flock. If that message is not delivered, their lack of salvation may be on your hands. Abuse of this station by those who judge others as worthy or unworthy to hear the message of God will not be tolerated.

### **V22-27**

This marks the third time Ezekiel refers to the hand of God being upon him (1:3 and 3:14). God tells Ezekiel to isolate himself in his house. It is not clear whether God is telling Ezekiel to be silent or if God afflicts him with some form of muteness, but regardless Ezekiel is not talking during this time period. When God is ready, there will be plenty of talking. Hence, the next 45 chapters.

## Chapter 4

### V1-3

*What is the brick or tablet for? What is the iron plate for?*

Chapter 4 begins with God telling Ezekiel to give a demonstration of his prophecy. The clay tablet or brick was often used to draw blueprints of a building or city. Along with his clay tablet he was told to build an army with a battering ram and lay siege to the likeness of Jerusalem. And then he was to have a plate between himself and the city. This would represent God staying separated from His people. It does not say exactly when Ezekiel prophesied this, but it is most likely 593 BC. Jerusalem fell in 588 BC.

### V4-8

Ezekiel was to ritually act out the years of inequity. The description of this acting out is very vague and there is much disagreement as to how it was carried out. Some scholars think that this acting out was just done for a certain period of time each day while others think it was a much more strict and longer period of time only taking breaks for eating and relieving one's self. There is one school of thought that believes Ezekiel ate a little portion of the tablet each day, spreading it out over the total 430 days.

There is also no exact description of why this many days was required, which corresponds to years. The leading theory is that the reign of kings from Rehoboam to Zedekiah is 394 years, but Rehoboam walked with God briefly for approximately 3 to 4 years.

Ezekiel would use his right arm as a symbol of God striking out against Jerusalem. Ezekiel being restrained for this period represented the helplessness of the Jews under the wrath of God.

### V9-17

This food to be eaten was a representation of rationing what was available while a city was under siege. It was typical to mix coarse grain with fine grain in order to make the grains and bread last longer. The twenty shekels of bread came out to about 8 ounces. The measurement of water would be just over a pint. This would be all the food Ezekiel would eat daily for the duration of this demonstration.

Not only would the food be scarce, but it would be cooked using excrement as fuel for the fire! Originally, God commanded Ezekiel to use human waste, but Ezekiel respectfully objected, and God allowed him to use cow-patties instead.

*What was the purpose of this?*

The siege of Jerusalem was coming, and this was a demonstration to that end. Food would be scarce, fuel for fires would be used quickly and all that would be left was cow-patties and, eventually, human excrement. This was not an uncommon fuel, but it was not preferable.

## Chapter 5

### V1-4

This section is a new acting-out of a prophesy of judgement against Jerusalem.

*What is the significance of cutting the hair and beard?*

To the Jews, the loss of hair can be a sign of mourning or a sign of disgrace, depending on the situation. In this case, it was both. Also, for a Jewish priest, shaving was forbidden. It would mean a loss of status or position. A priests' hair was a mark of consecration to the service of God.

*What is the significance of using a sword?*

Instead of shaving his beard or head, Ezekiel used a sword which would be much more inaccurate, difficult to use, and possibly even painful. This was a demonstration of the coming battle from the Babylonians who would destroy Jerusalem.

*What is the significance of weighing the hair for equal distribution?*

Hair is extremely lightweight as an individual strand and it takes a large amount to be of any significance to tip a scale. Trying to equally divide a bundle of hair would be tedious. This is a display of the justice of God. God's judgement is accurate and meticulously thought out.

The divided hair was to be equally burned, stuck with the sword and scattered to the wind. When dealing with large amounts of hair, there are inevitably some that manage to escape. Ezekiel was to painstakingly gather those lost hairs and either sew them into his garments or burn them in the fire. All of this was a demonstration of prophesy as to what was going to happen to the Jews. The few hairs gathered in the hem could either represent those that managed to safely escape to other lands or could represent those that have escaped the wrath of God's judgement.

Just like in the times of Jeremiah, there were those that were prophesying the deliverance of Jerusalem by God. This was a stark contrast to those false prophets.

## **V5-12**

This is the declaration of Judgement against Jerusalem by Jehovah.

*What did the Jews do to deserve this punishment?*

It can be argued that some of the surrounding nations were far more sinister and disobedient to the Word of God than the Jews. But the main point of this judgement is that the Jews actually had God's commandments and chose not to obey them. This was God's chosen people and they turned away from what God instructed. No other nation on earth could say that. Some of them didn't even know there was a God! In chapter 3, Ezekiel gains the knowledge of these prophesies and the burden is put upon him to use that knowledge. Likewise, the Jews had the knowledge of God's commandments and chose to disobey. With great knowledge comes great responsibility. The disregard of that knowledge warrants great consequences.

*What does the term 'fathers eat their sons and sons eat their fathers mean?*

There is no metaphorical sense here. Some of the Jews would resort to cannibalism during this time of siege due to lack of food. God has never judged His people this harshly and it would be a long, encompassing wrath.

## **V13-17**

This would be the declaration of the reason for God's judgement. His anger is full, and He can bear no more. The wording used in verse 13, "...cause My fury to rest upon them," possibly means that this is a

permanent judgement. There is no term limit for this judgement. Given the history of the Jews and Jerusalem, it is not hard to believe. The Jews would still worship their God as an example to other nations. They would not curse His name for their own calamity, but they would accept the blame and punishment as a witness to the pagan nations.

## **Chapter 6**

### **V1-7**

*Why a judgment against the geography of Israel?*

There were many religions, including the worship of Baal, that had altars and idols scattered throughout the hillsides and valleys of Israel. God was wiping the slate clean in the Land of Milk and Honey. The scattering of the corpses and bones would be a defilement to those religions used with the bodies of the disobedient Jews.

### **V8-10**

This is considered to be one of the most powerful statements in the Old Testament. This shows the heart of God Himself and that it is broken by what has happened. God feels not only wrath, but pain and sorrow at what has happened and what is about to happen. Because of this and maybe even in spite of this, God still wants a relationship with His people and will allow a slow rebuilding process to begin even in the midst of this punishment.

### **V11-14**

God tells Ezekiel to pound fists and stamp feet while declaring the remainder of this chapter for emphasis that God is serious, angry and threatening.

## **Chapter 7**

### **V1-9**

In verse 2, the phrase, “An end!” is spoken. This is the climax of the previous chapters proclaiming that God is done with Israel. Just as God defended Israel against other nations, God would do the same to Israel itself.

*What is meant by a ‘unique’ or ‘singular’ disaster in verse 5?*

The disaster itself is not unique as Babylon had done this to many nations before Israel, but never before had the city of Jerusalem been plundered and burned with the walls being torn down.

### **V10-18**

Ezekiel is still trying to warn the Jews in every way possible that this is the end of God’s favor as the ‘chosen people’. At least in this manner.

*What does the phrase, ‘the rod has budded’ mean?*

This is a reference to the staff of Aaron that blossomed (Numbers 17) that showed God’s favor to Moses, Aaron and Israel. God’s favor has been replaced with pride.

Verse 13 says that the vision of the destruction is for everyone and it will not be averted or turned back. Another reference to the finality of this judgement.

*What does the phrase in verse 17, 'all knees will become like water' mean?*

The literal translation is 'knees will run water'. This is a euphemism for the people peeing themselves out of fear. This passage is another emphasis that not only would this be a final judgement, but a harsh and complete judgement.

Some translations include verse 19 in this section, others end this section at verse 18.

### **V19-27**

This section refers to how the materiel benefits that the Jews had will be of no use to them. Wealth, property, possessions and false gods would not help them survive the coming calamity.

*What words are used in verses 19 and 20 for 'refuse' or 'abhorrent thing'?*

NKJV: refuse, NASB: abhorrent thing, NLT: worthless trash, NIV: a thing unclean. The original Hebrew of this verse loosely translates to 'used tampon'.

The finality and harshness of judgement is emphasized here again in the closing. The Jews would get what they deserve.

## **Chapter 8**

### **V1-6**

This is a new series of visions that span over chapters 8-11. It begins on September 17, 592 BC. The captivity began in 597 BC, but Ezekiel didn't receive his first vision and begin his ministry until early 593 BC. This second vision likely occurred after his 430-day demonstration of Jerusalem being turned away from God.

In this vision, God takes Ezekiel by the hair and transports him to Jerusalem.

*What is 'the god of jealousy' mentioned in verse 3?*

The north gate of Jerusalem would be closest to the temple. Since this is the part of Jerusalem that Ezekiel is seeing, this god or idol of jealousy could be a reference to the idol that king Manasseh put in the temple (2 Kings 21:1-7). This would have been a low point in Jewish history as the temple was defiled with an idol, one of the worst abominations that the Jews could commit. But there was more to come.

### **V7-13**

Instead of the angels carved on the walls of the temple surrounding God's throne, there were carvings of various idols that Israel had worshipped over the years, including the animal cults of Egypt.

The 70 elders represent influential leaders of Israel that ignored what was going on around them, even participating in, and pretended that nothing was wrong. They continued to offer priestly services in the midst of idol worship. These elders pretended God wasn't watching or didn't care and turned away from Him.

There is not much recorded on Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan, but Shaphan is most likely Josiah's secretary of state (2 Kings 22:3). Ahikam, son of Shaphan, was a supporter of Jeremiah. Shaphan's family is usually held in high regard, so Jaazaniah would be a contrast to this standing.

## **V14-16**

*Who is Tammuz?*

This is the only mention of Tammuz in the old testament. Tammuz was a common pagan Mesopotamian deity. The worshipping of Tammuz was bad enough, but there were women in the holy place reserved only for priests that were worshipping another god.

The twenty-five men stood between the temple and the altar where the priests would normally stand to bless the people. Instead, they worshipped the sun as many of the neighboring countries did.

## **V17-18**

God then speaks to Ezekiel and lets him know why the judgement against Israel will be so harsh. All this pained God for so long that He could bear no more.

*What does the phrase, “put the branch to their nose” mean?*

This phrase only appears here and is extremely obscure. There is no exact determination of this meaning. It could be a reference to a cultural colloquialism during this time period. Some think it may be a reference to the Egyptian ankh, a symbol of life shown in carvings as held to the nose. Others think it may be connected to plants involved in the worship of Tammuz. There are various other interpretations, but no one is certain as to its meaning.

## **Chapter 9**

### **V1-11**

This chapter is short, but powerful. In this vision God apparently calls on seven angels for service. One angel is designated to mark the righteous people of the city, those that weep and groan for the turning away of the Israelites. The other six angels were to cut down those who were not marked, much like the Passover. Ezekiel wept aloud as he watched the judgement being carried out against his people. It is important to note that this judgement also pained God, but being just, He carried it out.

## **Chapter 10**

### **V1-2**

This vision is very similar Ezekiel’s first vision. Some think that this is the same scene in a different vision and Ezekiel had the frame of mind to describe it in more detail the second time around.

*Who is the ‘man clothed with linen’?*

This would be the same angel from the previous chapter that marked the faithful in Jerusalem to spare them from destruction.

As noted by the coals of fire being spread over the city, Jerusalem would be burned in 586 B.C.

### **V3-5**

*What is ‘the cloud’ that is in this vision? Where else in the bible does it associate God with a cloud?*

God’s glory and presence is often portrayed as a cloud. This same terminology can be found in various places throughout the bible: the cloud that led the Israelite in the desert, that met with Moses on Mt.

Sinai, and the cloud that received Jesus into Heaven after His resurrection. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, 1 Kings, Luke and Revelation all contain this description.

#### **V6-8**

There appears to be a difference in the type of cherubim described here. The angel clothed in linen could not touch the fire from God's throne, but the cherubim with the four faces could. Once the four-faced angel plucked the coals from the throne, he then passed them on to the other angel.

#### **V9-17**

*What is a beryl stone?*

The mineral beryl can actually be found in different colors, but one of the most precious colors is that of emerald. There is no definitive answer as to what color Ezekiel was referring to, though.

Read Revelation 4:6

In this description, Ezekiel reveals that these cherubim were full of eyes, as well, not just the wheels that had eyes all around. It is believed that this is the same type of beasts found in Revelation.

*What is the difference in this description from the angels in chapter 1?*

Chapter one describes the faces as a man, lion, eagle and ox. Here, the faces are of a man, lion, eagle and angel. There is no clear reason as to the difference here. Some think that the likeness of this particular angel is that of an ox. Others think that since this is an angelic being that each face is actually that of an angel and a substitute word was used for an unknown reason. But Ezekiel does say that these are the angels he saw in his first vision.

#### **V18-22**

The point of this section is that God is leaving the temple and burning the city. The cloud of God's glory is seen leaving the inner courts, leaving the threshold of the temple and now leaving the outer courtyard.

### **Chapter 11**

#### **V1-4**

Continuing in Ezekiel's second vision, the glory of God has left the temple and the city and now God shows Ezekiel who is responsible. It is believed that these twenty-five men are the same men that Ezekiel saw worshipping the sun in chapter 8. There are two notable members in the midst that Ezekiel recognized immediately. Note: this is a different Jaazaniah than the one mentioned in chapter 8.

*What does the phrase mean, "the time is not near to build houses"?*

This is another obscure colloquialism found only in Ezekiel. Most believe that it is meant to define a time of potential safety or low risk, but it is unclear how it does so. The sentiment of the entire paragraph is that even though some of the Jews had been taken captive (scraps of meat on the floor), those that remained in Jerusalem would be fine (choice meat in the caldron).

### **V5-13**

Instead of safety in the city, God turns Jerusalem into the pot where the inhabitants would be cooked alive! And this would still not be the end. The ‘delivering you out of the midst of it’ meant that those that escaped the burning of Jerusalem would still suffer at the hands of their captives.

### **V14-21**

The Jews were in a state of flux during the sieges that took place in Jerusalem. Those that remained in Jerusalem thought themselves superior to those that had already been taken captive. Ezekiel was to tell them that this was not the case. God was judging His people and there would be dark days ahead, but God promised to sustain them even in exile. God also promised restoration, a complete renewal which included a renewing of the heart.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ezekiel mirrors this ‘renewal covenant’ that Jeremiah spoke of. God would once again restore His people after the dark days of this judgement.

### **V22-25**

At the beginning of chapter 8, Ezekiel is meeting with some of the elders in his house. He most likely revealed this vision to them immediately after coming out of his vision.

## **Chapter 12**

After his second vision is complete, Ezekiel is commanded to act out this prophecy. The reason for the drama on both Jeremiah and Ezekiel’s part is that the hearts of the Jews had been hardened. They had ears that did not listen and eyes that did not observe. Commentator John B. Taylor writes that the Jews objected to this prophecy of judgement because they had heard all of this before, there were other “prophets” who were saying God would deliver them, and the Jews found it hard to believe that God would judge His own people in such a way.

### **V1-7**

Ezekiel is to act out the exile of the Jews. He would carry only necessities with him in a traditional captive fashion of a bag of items over his shoulder, he would cover his face in the shame of being a conquered people and he would dig through a wall in the act of the desperation of escaping a city under siege.

### **V8-16**

God instructs Ezekiel on what to tell the people when they ask what he is doing and why he is acting this way.

### **V17-20**

Ezekiel is to act out the trauma that is to come. What would it be like to go through the desolation of a city during war? Think of World War II references that have seen war; Britain under bombing attacks from Germany, France being invaded and occupied by Germany, many of the Pacific islands that saw battles between Japan and the U.S. Living through that would be overwhelming and traumatizing.

### **V21-25**

*What is the meaning of this proverb that Ezekiel references?*

This was a saying among the Jews of that time that equated to, “the next day will be the same as before, pay no heed to the prophets of doom.” Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah and more all prophesied the judgement of God if the Jews did not repent. Instead of repenting, the Jews said that it hasn’t happened yet so it never will. God was about to counter that saying.

## **V26-28**

*How many times have you postponed the words of God?*

Both Ezekiel and God knew that the Jews would either reject the prophesies outright or say that the prophesies are for far off times. Ezekiel was to do his best to let them know that the time is now. They were living through it and the worst had not yet occurred.

## **Chapter 13**

### **V1-7**

*Who is God addressing in this section and why?*

The reason so many of God’s prophets had trouble reaching their own people was because of the false prophets of their time. There were those who, for personal gain, spoke to the people what they wanted to hear and falsified God’s words. Their retribution was coming as God calls them out directly.

*What does the term “foxes among deserts” mean (KJV v4)?*

This is more aptly translated as “jackals among ruins”. One commentator compared these false prophets to “animals that burrow among the ruins, helping nothing, adding nothing, and delighting in the destruction.”

*What does it mean to have “gone up into the breaches” (KJV v5)?*

During a time of war if a city was under siege, the warriors would fill in gaps in the city walls to ensure the opposing army didn’t gain entrance. Cowards would run the other way, which is what God is implying here.

### **V8-16**

*What does it mean in verses 10 and 14 to plaster over the wall with whitewash?*

Some translations go into more detail describing a weak or flimsy wall being painted to look good. This colloquialism is comparable to “you can polish a turd, but it’s still a turd.” God has promised to destroy this painted wall, this false sense of security that the false prophets have built up.

### **V17-23**

Of all the nations in the Old Testament time period, Israel held their women in higher regard than most nations. The OT references women several times as important figures which most nations would never do. God was singling out female false prophets because they were abusing the respect given to them.

*What are the magic charms and veils referenced in this section?*

It is not entirely clear as to this meaning, but the language Ezekiel uses here eludes to these women being more than just false prophets, but maybe they were practicing sorcery or witchcraft.

*What is meant by the reference to the hunting of souls?*

This is a reference to how the false priestesses turned people away from God and more towards the occult that they themselves practiced. Barley was used in Hittite and Syrian rituals of divination.

## **Chapter 14**

### **V1-11**

There is no clear description if this is referring to a specific instance or just visitation in general, but it is clear that Ezekiel had the ear of more than a few of his fellow priests, some of whom were idol worshippers in disguise. God promised that those coming to seek answers would surely get one. One commentator likened these priests as churchgoers with big bibles under their arms pretending to be holy but living out sinful lives when not within sight of the church.

In vv9-11, God again calls out false prophets that mislead His people. He takes this sin very seriously and is no longer content to sit and watch His name be slandered.

### **V12-23**

*Why invoke the names of Noah, Job and Daniel?*

God and Ezekiel are using names recognizable to all Jews. Noah and Job are obvious from scripture, but Daniel is a contemporary, alive during this time period. This speaks to how famous Daniel had become among his own people even early in his Babylonian captivity. God uses them specifically as an example to show that His wrath would not spare the people of Israel. Noah was a righteous man, yet God flooded the world. Job was a righteous man, yet his own children were killed. And Daniel being a righteous man was still a captive and could not stop his own people from becoming so. A few righteous individuals would not be able to spare the people as a whole.

## **Chapter 15**

### **V1-8**

*What point is Ezekiel trying to make in this chapter and why?*

There are many instances in the Bible of the Jews and, later, Christians being the “fruit of the vine” or a vineyard. In a vineyard, the fruit is the purpose. If there is no fruit, the vine is useless and is to be discarded. The Jews, once considered the fruit of God, were no longer fruitful. They were as useless as a dead vine. Ezekiel even points out that the only purpose a dead vine has is fuel for a fire.

## **Chapter 16**

### **V1-63**

This chapter is unique in many ways not only to the book of Ezekiel, but in the bible as a whole. This is the longest chapter in Ezekiel, although Ezekiel did not write this book in chapters. He did write this section in poetry format which doesn’t translate as well to English but is recognized as such in its original Hebrew. This is also an account of the history of the Jews as many of the events can be matched to actual important events in Jewish history, the marriage covenant in verse 8 pairing with the covenant on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:7-8 as an example. In Young’s Literal Translation of Ezekiel, the word “whore” is used in some form 21 times. There are 63 verses in this chapter meaning that the word appears in roughly one-third of the verses. Because of this and the imagery associated with this poem, it is Jewish tradition that this chapter not be read in public.

This poem can be broken down into the following sections:

- The birth of Israel (v1)
- God's favor on Jerusalem (v6)
- God's covenant with Jerusalem (v8)
- Israel acts like a harlot (v15)
- Jerusalem sacrifices their children to idols (v20)
- The depths of sin recounted (v27)
- Judgement against Jerusalem (v35)
- Recounting the consequences of the actions of Jerusalem (v44)
- A promise of restoration (v53)
- Recounting the covenant (v60)

## **Chapter 17**

### **V1-10**

Continuing in an artistic vein from chapter 16, this section is in the form of both a parable and riddle.

### **V11-24**

*What do the eagles and vine represent?*

The remainder of the chapter explains the riddle.

- The first eagle was Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.
- Lebanon represents Jerusalem.
- The high branch of cedar is the King Jehoiachin and other royalty.
- The seed and vine are the sons of the king, Zedekiah.
- The city of merchants is Babylon.
- The second eagle is Egypt, which Zedekiah tried to ally with in order to escape the grasp of Babylon.

In the closing verses (v22), God promises to take one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out. The tender twig represents Christ.

## **Chapter 18**

### **V1-9**

*What is the meaning of the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge"?*

This is meant to be a complaint or even a dismissal of God's punishments. The idea is that the next generation has to suffer the consequences of the actions of the previous generations, that there is an injustice behind God's wrath. This same proverb also made appearances in Jeremiah 31 and Lamentations 5. There are several arguments that prove this proverb wrong. Most generations of Israelites followed in their father's footsteps as opposed to adhering to the teachings that they knew to be right. This proverb pushed the blame from themselves onto their elders for not making them do what was right.

### **V10-29**

God responds to this saying with the declaration that He is the Lord and that all belong to Him. But God also clarifies that the righteous shall live and the wicked shall die regardless of their heritage.

### **V30-32**

Ezekiel closes with a call to repentance. God doesn't want any to fall. He wants all to live!

## **Chapter 19**

### **V1**

This is a lamentation in song format, most likely to the beat of a funeral dirge. This is another example of Ezekiel using the arts to get his point across to the people of God. There are two sections to this song, one with lions and one with vines.

Lions were a very common animal in this area up until medieval times. The phrase "The lion of Judah" would have been as common as the modern terms "the Russian bear" or "the American eagle". The song is traditionally translated in this manner:

### **V2-4**

- The lioness represents Israel or Jerusalem.
- "She lay down among the lions" means that Israel took her place among the other nations.
- The first cub is Jehoahaz, son of Josiah.
- Jehoahaz's reign was short, but brutal, hence the reference to devouring men.
- The lion pit refers to the capture and extradition of Jehoahaz to Egypt.

### **V5-9**

- The second cub is King Jehoiachin.
- His reign was also brutal, yet authoritative and powerful as referred to by 'the noise of his roaring'.
- Jehoiachin rebelled against Babylon, so Nebuchadnezzar brought a multi-national army to squelch the revolt.
- He was captured and taken prisoner in Babylon and spent the rest of his life as such.

### **V10-14**

The second part of this song changes gears from lions to vines. Israel was once strong, powerful and had righteous kings. But when the kings turned away from God, the vine withered, and God cast His people into judgement and captivity. The fire that came 'out from a rod of her branches' refers to the corruption of the later kings, meaning the vine had become self-destructive. The 'no strong branch, a scepter for ruling' phrase calls out the fact that Zedekiah was the last line of Davidic kings until Christ Himself comes. From Zedekiah to Jesus, the line of David did not sit upon the throne.

## **Chapter 20**

### **V1-32**

The first half of this chapter takes place roughly two years after Ezekiel's first vision and sees some of the priests returning to Ezekiel. It is not clear why they are coming to Ezekiel or what they are looking for, but apparently, they wish to have God's ear. God uses Ezekiel to give them an oath and a command.

He vows not to answer them, and they are to turn away from their idols. God speaks through Ezekiel and tells the elders why He is not listening to them. He recounts the history of idol worship in Israel and says He has shown enough mercy. That time has passed, and God can no longer endure the sinfulness of His own people.

#### **V33-44**

The second half of the chapter is God promising a time of restoration, but not before punishment has been administered. God will punish, correct, transform and cleanse His people.

#### **V45-49**

The original Hebrew text ends chapter 20 at verse 44 and verse 45 begins chapter 21.

Ezekiel 'preaching against the south' was a reference to the fact that the place of Ezekiel's captivity was north of Jerusalem. Babylon would be the fire that God would use to burn the Jews.

The last verse is Ezekiel lamenting to God that his own people would not listen to him and that they turned away, dismissing his prophecies as stories or too complicated to comprehend.

### **Chapter 21**

This chapter is often called 'The Prophecy of the Sword'.

#### **V1-17**

- Verse 3: God's judgement would be against the people as a whole. This refers to current, earthly judgement, not eternal judgement.
- Verse 6: Sighing with a breaking heart or breaking loins would signify deep distress. In the Jewish culture of the day, the loins were regarded as the seat of strength.
- Verse 7: The prophets have spoken and given warning. Now when the deed actually happens, the people will know that they ignored God's warning and His wrath is finally and ultimately upon them. They shall be so scared that they will wet themselves.
- Verses 9-17 are in poem format. Destroying the scepter of My son means that everyone from the king on down would be under this judgement, the sword being a metaphor for God's final ruling.
- Verse 14: the sword doing double damage the third time indicates that Babylon had already invaded Jerusalem twice and the third time would be the breaking of the back of the Jews.

#### **V18-32**

- Verses 18-21 describe how Nebuchadnezzar consulted the cultish ways of his day to decide what to do next. God used those false signs to point him to destroy Jerusalem.
- Verse 26: removing the turban and the crown represent that God no longer recognizes the king as royalty.
- Verse 27: 'ruin' or 'overthrown' is repeated three times for two reasons. One, Babylon attacked Jerusalem three times and, two, three is the number of completion. The kingdom of the Jews would be over until the coming of Christ.
- Verses 28-32 are the first description of God's wrath against the aggressors of the Jews. The Ammonites were notorious for their mocking and mistreatment of Judah while Babylon attacked

them. Roughly five years after the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar obliterated the Ammonites. The kingdom of Ammon is modern day Jordan.

## Chapter 22

### V1-16

*What is the reference to the 'bloody city'?*

God asks Ezekiel to cast judgement upon Jerusalem who went from being a holy city to a bloody city with all of the sins that had been committed there. The pagan cities had committed more offensive acts, but none of those cities housed God's temple or fell under the commandments of God. There was more expected of the people of Jerusalem.

The majority of this section lists even more specific offenses against God including idol worship and sexual immorality. It ends with God calling out the offenders and warning of their impending doom.

### V17-22

*What is dross or slag?*

Dross is the impurities that come out of metal while being refined in the fire. Dross is worthless and discarded as soon as it cools. God let's His people know that He is the refining fire and that they have become worthless to him. The work of the Lord which the Jews were doing on Earth is no longer being accomplished.

### V23-31

The last part of this chapter goes over the offenses of the various people groups and how no one from the royalty, priests, prophets or anyone else has adhered to God's word.

## Chapter 23

### V1-35

- Oholah (Samaria) is the kingdom of Israel (Northern kingdom) and Oholibah (Judah) is Jerusalem (Southern kingdom) (v4). Oholah means 'Her own tabernacle' and Oholibah means 'my tabernacle is in her'.
- The Jews have been unfaithful since their captivity in Egypt (v8)
- Because Israel sinned against God, He gave her over to those that she followed (v9-10)
- Despite watching her sister fall, Judah followed in her footsteps and did even worse (v11-21)
- Because Judah had an example to follow and had the priestly line with her, her sins were counted more heavily against her (v22-35)

### V36-49

This section recounts the sins and punishments of the two kingdoms in the first section.

- The Jews even sacrificed their children to the idol Molech as a live burnt offering. (v37)
- When the Jews gave in to the idolatry of the cultures around them, those cultures celebrated with them (v42).
- Just as with most sin, it feels good for a while but eventually the feelings fade and the realization of what they've done will crash down on them (v45)

## Chapter 24

### V1-5

The date mentioned here would be much like “9/11” is to contemporary Americans, if not worse. For Jerusalem to actually fall would be devastating. This kingdom had been standing for hundreds of years. This date is also recorded in 2 Kings 25:1, Jeremiah 39:1, 52:4 and Zechariah 8:19. The date by modern calendars would be January 15, 588 BC, less than 5 years after Ezekiel’s first vision. This siege would last over 2 years until Jerusalem actually falls in April 13, 586 BC.

### V6-8

This section uses rust or scum from an old pot to indicate the blood being poured out on the ground. No choice meat would be selected meaning the punishment would be for everyone, not just a select few. The blood would not be covered by earth, which is an abomination and against Mosaic law.

### V9-14

Here, God is saying that all will be burned and consumed, including the pot itself. Jerusalem would fall by His design as a form of purification.

### V15-27

The Death of Ezekiel’s Wife. Ezekiel felt both anger and pity toward his fellow Jews throughout his prophecies, but this is the only mention we have of the love for his wife. The term ‘desire of your eyes’ shows how much Ezekiel loved and valued his wife. God told Ezekiel not to mourn publicly, but to ‘groan silently’ meaning Ezekiel would mourn, he just wouldn’t allow anyone else to see it. As a prophet, Ezekiel had a mission, and nothing was off limits. He had to be stern and sure of what God was telling him, even in the face of his wife’s death.

It may seem harsh for God to call upon the death of His prophet’s wife to use as a symbol, but it was meant to be harsh. This would not be the first time God had used the death of a loved one for His purposes, but this is the only time that God commanded someone not to go into mourning. This is an unusual request for an unusual time. Ezekiel’s wife was a representation of the temple sanctuary. God was going to destroy Jerusalem and the temple that was in it. The Jews were not to mourn at this loss. It was commanded by God Himself. This was a punishment, a cleansing, and a renewal that even the prophet was not immune from.

## The Old Testament Wrath of God

To modern Christians, the punishments listed in Ezekiel and throughout the Old Testament can seem harsh. There is a reason for this: Christ has not come yet. We as Christians have had our sins forgiven. We can stand before God because Christ took our punishment for us. The Jews had the law. There were even provisions in the law (sacrifices) to make themselves clean again when they had been sinful. The Jews stopped performing these rituals and therefore had become unclean before God. His own people had become sinful and without remorse. There was no one else to take the punishment for them. They had been given warning after warning, chance after chance, and they still chose to sin. The punishment of sin is death. There was no Christ to die for them, so they had to bear the punishment themselves.

## Chapter 25

Chapter 25 begins God's judgment against those that oppose Israel. Even though God himself destroyed Jerusalem and punished the Jews, He took no pleasure in the surrounding territories' delight. Chapters 25-32 list the judgement of those nations.

Even though Ezekiel had said the day of reckoning had come for Jerusalem in chapter 24, there was no official confirmation of the destruction of the city until chapter 33. These next chapters take place in between the prediction and the confirmation.

It is also important to note that among all of the nations listed in these chapters that are destined for great retribution, Babylon is glaringly absent. Some commentators believe that this is due to the fact that God used Babylon for His purposes and that Daniel would have a heavy and positive influence over Nebuchadnezzar. Although Babylon would still fall during Daniel's lifetime, there is no prophecy concerning it from Ezekiel.

### V1-7

The Ammonites occupy what is modern-day Jordan. They are being punished for their lack of compassion towards Israel and Judah. They even pillaged the remains of both lands after the respective areas had been conquered.

*Who are 'the men of the east'?*

Verse 4 refers to men or sons of the east. There is some speculation, but the prevailing belief is that this refers to Babylon. Although not recorded in the bible, the Jewish historian Josephus records the Ammonites being overthrown not 5 years after the taking of Jerusalem.

### V8-11

Moab and Seir are related to the Jews. Moab came up from the descendants of Lot and his incestuous relationship with his daughters. Seir springs from the descendants of Esau. Ruth, the great-grandmother of David, was from Moab.

Moab would be destroyed by the Babylonians in the same battle that overthrew the Ammonites. Soon after they were conquered, their lands were overrun by Nabatean tribesmen and those nations ceased to exist.

### V12-14

Edom apparently helped Nebuchadnezzar take Jerusalem as a form of vengeance for previous encounters. There is even historical evidence that Edomites occupied Judah for a time after Judah fell. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed and conquered Edom, but a remnant kingdom remained up until 109 BC when it fell under siege of John Hyrcanus, the Jewish leader of the time from the Maccabean line. Those few Edomites that survived the conquest converted to Judaism which marked the end of the Edomites.

### V15-17

The Philistines had long been a thorn in the side of the Jews since roughly 1200 BC. The Philistines chiefly occupied the coastal territories near Jerusalem, and they fought many times over many centuries. It is believed that Nebuchadnezzar wiped out the Philistines at roughly the same time he conquered the Jews since they were in such close proximity to each other.

## Chapter 26

### V1-14

Ezekiel doesn't give a specific month, so it is difficult to tell exactly when this took place.

#### *Where is Tyre?*

Tyre is a great and ancient city of the Phoenicians in modern-day Lebanon. It was a major city of its day, even compared to the importance of London or Venice. Tyre was an ally of Israel during the time of David and Solomon and even supplied materials for the building of the temple. Tyre later broke a treaty with Israel and they had been enemies ever since.

Both Jerusalem and Tyre were major thoroughfares of their day and even competed for business on the trade routes going through them. Tyre would gladly see Jerusalem fall in order to claim the economic windfall.

The bible makes it very clear that Nebuchadnezzar was an instrument of God. The description in this section calls him directly by his name and title and calls upon the Babylonian army to do God's work not just on Jerusalem, but on the enemies of Jerusalem.

### V15-18

This is an artistic lamentation which describes how the surrounding cities will view the fall of Tyre. Imagine the destruction of New York or Los Angeles today. This is the shock and disbelief of the regions nearby.

### V19-21

This closing section is a metaphorical description of death or even "sheol," although Babylon did literally wipe the city from the face of the planet. Very little remains to be discovered and studied by archaeologists today.

## Chapter 27

### V1-9

Ezekiel uses a metaphorical comparison of a ship to describe the proud beauty of Tyre. The city was a marvel of its day, considered to be the pride of the Phoenician trade route.

### V10-25

This is an extensive list of the many different trading posts that Tyre had. It lists not only the people Tyre did business with but lists many of the goods being traded. Verse 13 mentions that even human trafficking took place for the slave trade.

### V26-36

Just as Ezekiel compared Tyre to a ship, the destruction would be equivalent to a ship sinking. A comparison could be made to the Japanese battleship Yamato. The ship was seen as a major accomplishment and the supreme power of the seas during World War II. The ship was sunk in a battle with the American Navy in 1945, just four years after her initial commissioning. Just as Japan was proud and ecstatic of their new ship, the region around Tyre recognized it as a jewel. Japan mourned the loss of their beloved ship for decades and it is still recounted in stories from the Japanese culture. The same sense of loss would engulf the region of Tyre.

## Chapter 28

### V1-5

This is believed to be directed at Ithobal II, the leader of Phoenicia at this time. His main sin was pride, thinking himself a god, wiser than Daniel and worthy of worship by his people. It is important to note the title given in verse 1, either 'prince' or 'leader' of Tyre. This will be contrasted in verse 11.

### V6-10

This section promises the Babylonian tool of God to wipe Tyre away. He would die a barbarian's death, an insult to the Phoenicians, and he would perish as a man, not a god.

### V11-19

*Who is the King of Tyre?*

Notice the transition from prince or leader to king. God is no longer talking to a human but is addressing Satan directly. This section is one of the few insights into who Satan was before his fall. God loved and honored Satan with glory and splendor, even granting a royal 'seal' of perfection, wisdom and beauty.

*What do the stones represent?*

The stones mentioned here are part of the collection of priestly stones found on a Jewish priests' breastplate.

*What is the description of 'settings and sockets' or 'timbrels and pipes' mean?*

These are references to musical instruments. Satan apparently was some sort of 'worship leader' before the fall. This section describes Satan as an anointed angel, a guardian of the throne, established by God as a leader in Heaven and had great freedom and authority in the heavenly realm. Verses 16-19 tell of how Satan fell and what caused it. This ties into the prince of Tyre with the 'abundance of trading' where dishonest business practices for personal gain can add up to a swelling of pride so great that you think you can rival God. The 'violence' mentioned is the first reference to some sort of battle in Heaven where God had to throw Satan out.

### V20-24

Sidon is mentioned here almost as an afterthought. Tyre and Sidon are often mentioned together as seen in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Joel, but Tyre had outgrown its close neighbor over the years and Sidon had diminished in population and importance during Ezekiel's time period. However, God still had unfinished business and Nebuchadnezzar would once again be used to execute the Lord's judgement.

*What is the importance of Sidon in relation to the sin of Israel?*

Verse 24 talks of a relief of Israel when the surrounding nations have been judged, but there is a reason that this verse is associated with Sidon. King Ethbaal of Sidon had a daughter who married King Ahab of Israel. This daughter's name was Jezebel. She was responsible for the universal restoration of idolatry in Israel which brought the Jews to their sin and out of God's favor.

### V25-26

These last verses in this chapter are a prelude to section 3 of Ezekiel starting in chapter 33. Although only two verses in length, this is a significant and even controversial section of the bible. God has

promised a restoration for Israel which many scholars agree has not yet been fulfilled. Some scholars think that the establishment of Israel in 1948 after WWII is either a fulfillment or a significant milestone towards the fulfillment of this promise. Although many Christians see the coming of Christ as an indication that God is done with Israel as a nation, these verses tend to show otherwise. Many believe God will still show favor to His nation before the end times.

## Chapter 29

### V1-7

The date here is January 7, 587 BC, one year after the siege of Jerusalem began. Egypt has long been an adversary of Israel since the days of Moses. This is an obvious calling out of a long-standing enemy. Jeremiah records the hope of Judah that Egypt might help them drive the Babylonians back, which was another offense against God. Instead of trusting their Lord, they looked to the help of their enemy! It is recorded that Pharaoh Hophra did attack the Babylonians while Jerusalem was the focus of Nebuchadnezzar, but to no avail. Nebuchadnezzar halted the siege on Jerusalem to deal with the Egyptians and he made short work of them. Once they were defeated, the siege of Jerusalem resumed.

*What is the great monster in verse 3?*

This is specifically translated as a crocodile. The Egyptian culture set the Pharaoh as lord over the Nile and the crocodile was a common symbol of the Pharaoh. Notice in the same verse that the Pharaohs were said to have created and owned the Nile. Despite the Egyptians having close relations with the Jews before the enslavement of Israel, the Hebrew God continued to be shunned by them for centuries. Not only did they ignore God, they treated the Israelites with contempt. God was about to bring the Egyptians to their knees once again.

*What is meant by putting 'hooks in your jaws'?*

This was a crocodile hunting reference of the time period. God would capture and dispose of this crocodile in a field for other nations to feast on. Hophra would be buried like an unwanted animal instead of a tomb as was the Egyptian custom.

### V8-16

In verse 11, it states that there will be a 40-year period of desolation. There has not been an Egyptian desolation of that length recorded throughout history, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. Some think this may be hyperbole referring to the amount of time the Jews spent in the desert after escaping the Egyptians, some think it happened and was not recorded, and some think it has yet to happen.

Verse 13 begins the promise of a limited restoration for Egypt. This is the only country other than Israel who is promised a form of restoration. When Egypt came under Greek rule, Alexandria became an important center for Judaism and Christianity, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 19:19-25.

### V17-21

Notice the change of years here from verse 1. This prophecy came much later to Ezekiel, but because it concerned Egypt, he placed it in this section, out of the chronological order in which he received it. This prophecy occurs on April 26, 571 BC. This is the last prophecy that Ezekiel wrote.

History recounts a roughly 15-year siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. This was the fulfillment of the previous chapters against that city. Tyre is believed to have spent most of its wealth in defense of itself either in supplies, mercenaries, or both. When the defenses finally gave way, the wealth was gone and Babylon was left with a desolate city, very little recompense for a 15-year battle. God saw fit to reward Nebuchadnezzar with the riches of Egypt instead. Egypt had interrupted the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem and although it was dealt with and rendered useless, Nebuchadnezzar had yet to deal with the insurrection. After Tyre, Egypt became the focus of Babylon.

*What does the 'horn of the house of Israel' refer to?*

The last verse records the reason for this prophecy. This was not just the super-power of its day conquering surrounding regions. Nebuchadnezzar was the tool of God and Ezekiel recorded this. Israel would once again be restored by God just as other nations fell by His will. God was in control all along.

## **Chapter 30**

### **V1-19**

This lamentation over Egypt is in a poetic format. The weight of these words cannot be stressed enough. At this time, Egypt had been the reigning power in the world for 2500 years. It had never fallen. It had lost battles, it had made treaties with other nations, but it had never been laid waste. So, for a single prophet from a broken Judah to declare the fall of Egypt would have been laughable.

Egypt had a huge sphere of influence and those allies are included in this judgement. This was a full judgement of Egypt and Egyptian influence, as Ezekiel also declared judgement against the leaders, politicians, religion and culture of Egypt. It is interesting to note that although the fall of Egypt began with Nebuchadnezzar, it was actually a ruler named Cambyses, son of Cyrus the Great (see the end of Daniel's lifetime) which cast one of the most devastating blows to Egypt. Cambyses led his army into Egypt following behind cats and dogs, holy animals of the Egyptians which their army would not attack. Cambyses defeated Egypt so thoroughly that the only remains of the city of Memphis from this time period is one toppled statue of Ramses.

### **V20-26**

This prophecy is given on April 29, 587 BC. It discusses a slow demise of Egypt, breaking first one arm and then, later, the other arm. This is accomplished by Pharaoh Hophra being killed in a civil war with Libya. Once Egypt was weakened by this internal struggle, Babylon entered in to take over a leaderless Egypt. This would still represent the beginning of the end for Egypt as they would be decimated over the next few decades.

These prophecies have been proven accurate by history, but at the time they seemed impossible. God knew what would happen and even made it happen. He raised Nebuchadnezzar up to do His bidding and be the instrument of His wrath. It is no wonder that God did not cast judgement against Nebuchadnezzar through Ezekiel but worked on him through the likes of Daniel and the other captives over a period of time. Nebuchadnezzar is the author of the fourth chapter of Daniel in which he praises the Hebrew God.

## Chapter 31

### V1-9

This prophecy takes place on June 21, 587 BC. This section is in poetic form and compares Egypt to a not-too-distant-history of Assyria who was conquered by Babylon. Ezekiel is using a once-mighty Assyria as an illustration for Egypt.

### V10-18

Assyria had been a far-reaching empire before it fell. Although Egypt is one of the oldest empires, Assyria rose to greatness with more power and influence. God is letting Egypt know that their fate will be similar. God made Assyria great and struck it down. He would do the same with Egypt.

## Chapter 32

### V1-8

This prophecy takes place on March 3, 585 BC, after the fall of Jerusalem and the Jews are aware of its demise. The chapter starts off saying how powerful and dangerous Egypt is, but despite that the end draws near.

*What does it mean to 'water the land with the flow of your blood'?*

Verse 6 has a double meaning. One, watering the land is typically a good thing. Bringing Egypt down would cause the surrounding regions to flourish. Also, the first plague of Egypt in Exodus was turning the Nile to blood.

### V9-15

*What does it mean that the hearts of many people will be troubled?*

Ezekiel is publicly prophesying the end of Egypt. When Egypt does eventually fall, it will be a credit to God that it was made known beforehand by a captive prophet. The devastation shall be so thorough that the watching eyes of neighboring countries will be in disbelief.

### V16-32

This lamentation is believed to come on April 1, 585 BC, but no month is given so it is not certain. It is most likely written in the same month as the date in verse 1.

The lamentation lists a multitude of nations that will be there to greet Pharaoh when he arrives in Hell.

*What does it mean in verse 31 that Pharaoh will be comforted?*

Ezekiel uses irony here to describe the one small comfort Pharaoh will have which is that he will be surrounded by the leaders of the ancient world that suffered the same fate.

## Chapter 33

### V1-9

Ezekiel spends these verses describing not only the duty of the watchman, but also the responsibility of those that hear the warning. This is very similar to chapter 3, but this is a public proclamation as opposed to the private calling in the earlier chapter. God is now letting the people know that their blood is on their own hands.

*How do you know if the watchman is to be trusted?*

Although there is no detail given here concerning the question, it is a relevant question. Just as there are characteristics of a true Christian, there would be characteristics of a true leader. Ezekiel's influence among his peers has already been pointed out. There would be little doubt of his righteousness concerning his prophesies, especially after some of those prophesies started coming true.

### **V10-20**

This shows another facet of God: He takes no pleasure in the punishment given out. Just like a parent must punish a child, God must keep us accountable. There should never be pleasure in the punishment of a child, but it still must be done.

*What is the point Ezekiel is trying to make here?*

Verse 12 is a powerful statement. Just as God forgives the sins of the wicked and allows them to move forward, our past righteousness does not wipe away future sins. We must put God first always to the end of our journey. It's not about our past. It's about where our path leads.

### **V21-29**

The date given here is January 8, 585 or 586 BC, depending on which transcript is read. Still, there is not enough of a variance of time to doubt the prophecy was given before word had arrived. Either six or seven years after Ezekiel's first prophecy, the first refugees from the fall of Jerusalem arrived to confirm what Ezekiel had been saying.

The evening before the arrival, God gave words for Ezekiel to speak but did not let him speak them until after the arrival. It was a rebuke to be given to those that felt entitled to own the land that was given to Abraham and the Jews. The small few that remained in Jerusalem had declared that they would rebuild. Ezekiel is telling the new refugees that this is not the case. It is interesting to note that Jeremiah is still in Jerusalem as a free man and he gives an account of those few that are left in the remnants of the city (Jeremiah 40-44). Those that remained were not Godly men, but they were scavengers fighting amongst each other over the scraps of Judah left by the Babylonians. These were the men that claimed to inherit the land of God. God would punish them by allowing the scraps that they fight over to amount to nothing.

### **V30-33**

With the arrival of the refugees, there was little doubt that Ezekiel was a prophet. The people paid attention to him even more so now, but their hearts were not changed. He was little more than an entertainer to them. There would be no blood on Ezekiel's hands as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. The blood on the hands of the Jews was their own.

## **Chapter 34**

### **V1-10**

*Who does the term 'shepherd' refer to?*

This is an intentionally vague reference to the leaders of Judah, both spiritual and political. God is condemning those who sought power but did nothing except build themselves up rather than serve their fellow countrymen. In some cases, they even served at the expense of the people rather than serve

for the people. Their poor leadership caused the people to stumble and seek guidance elsewhere. Those who were in need sought comfort in places they shouldn't be, and it caused their downfall. Leadership is a responsibility, not a luxury, and God would punish those who abused their power.

### **V11-22**

*What is the meaning of this passage?*

This is a clear description of the coming of Jesus, who will walk amongst His sheep and restore them individually rather than as a whole people. This is part of the new covenant with the Jews.

### **V23-31**

*Who is the 'one shepherd'?*

At first glance, this reference to 'David' appears to be Christ. But there is much debate if this is a reference to the actual King David. According to Isaiah 55:3-4, Jeremiah 30:8-9, Hosea 3:5 and even later in Ezekiel (37:25), David is to be given a place of honor as a prince in God's kingdom.

The remainder of this chapter shows the promise of comfort and glory for the Jews. They would no longer have to worry, go hungry, or be afraid. This would be of great comfort to those that just witnessed the fall of Jerusalem.

## **Chapter 35**

### **V1-15**

*Why judge Mount Seir?*

Mount Seir was a center piece of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau. They have been one of the oldest enemies of the Jews, even trying to block their entrance into the promised land after the exodus. This was not so much a judgement against a mountain as it was against the people who inhabited it.

Most scholars believe that Edom wanted to possess both Judah and Israel (the two nations in verse 10) and the Edomites did try to expand after the fall of both countries. They greedily sought to ravage what was left and grow their own nation. They cursed God and laughed at the Jews. And God struck them down for it. The cities of Petra and Teman are located near this mountain and both were laid to waste.

## **Chapter 36**

### **V1-21**

Just as with the judgement of Mount Seir in the previous chapter, God is speaking of the land of Israel but in a way that will have an impact on the people that inhabit it. This is the promised land that God gave the Jews, after all, so addressing the land is not far-fetched. The enemies claimed possession of Israel and Judah once the Jews were in captivity, but God is still God and He is the true owner.

Bearing the shame of the nations means that other countries and regions looked with disdain upon Israel, which is still true to this day.

God promises to bless Israel in an agricultural sense by having them produce branches and yielding fruit. Since 1948, Israel has turned what was once a wasteland into an agricultural model. Israel produces 95% of its own food and even exports produce to other countries. Verse 12 uses the phrase "My people

Israel". This is the first time in the book of Ezekiel that God embraces the Jews instead of rebuking and turning them away.

*What does the reference to 'the uncleanness of a woman' in verse 17 mean?*

This is a comparison to a marriage relationship. Just as a man shouldn't be with a woman during her menstrual cycle, God could not be with His own people because of their sin and impurity *all the time*. There was no relationship while God's people were disobedient. God had to punish the Jews for their disobedience. But this time had passed.

### **V22-38**

This section is a vow of renewal. This speaks heavily of the coming Messiah and how God will renew everyone. Notice how this renewal is not just for us, but for God's sake. To show us who He truly is, He will show us a love like no other. Verse 27 even speaks of the Holy Spirit and how God will always reside with us.

There is an intermixing that can be confusing of both the restoration of Israel and the promise of Heaven. This is simply part of the new covenant. Israel will be restored (and is being restored) and we as believers shall be restored in Heaven. The same terminology can be used to describe both promises, but they are still two distinct individual promises.

Ezekiel repeats the fact that this covenant is as much for God's own reputation as it is for each of us. No other religion has a god that has sacrificed himself and no other religion asks only to accept a gift to be saved.

## **Chapter 37**

### **V1-10**

Although Ezekiel doesn't come right out and say it, the mention of having 'the hand of the Lord' on him indicates that this is a vision, not an actual event that took place. It is important to note that not only the Jews, but most cultures of this time period considered an unburied corpse a disgrace or an insult.

When the bodies come to life in verse 10, the term 'exceedingly great army' is used in some translations. The original Hebrew reflects the phrase of a powerful host, great in numbers. This wasn't just the raising of the dead, but the raising of strong warriors, a powerful army, a force to be reckoned with.

*Why would God ask Ezekiel to prophesy over long-dead bodies?*

### **V11-14**

The meaning of the vision is revealed in this section. God will restore the entirety of the Israelites to the land of Israel. This prophecy has obviously not yet been fulfilled and its exact meaning is unclear as to whether God will actually raise dead bodies or simply restore Israel as a strong and powerful nation. Some think this may just be a metaphor for revival.

### **V15-23**

This is the illustration of the two sticks. One stick represents Judah, the two tribes of the southern kingdom, and the other represent Israel, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom which had been defeated and scattered some 150 years prior. This is God saying that will reunite the two kingdoms and they will be one under Him.

There are many people who believe that the ten tribes are lost, but this passage seems to indicate otherwise. Most scholars believe that the remnants of those tribes simply integrated into other cultures, including Judah.

There is another interesting side note concerning this passage. The Mormons believe that this passage indicates the joining of two scrolls, one being the bible and the other being the book of Mormon. There is no historical context for this, and Ezekiel is usually straight-forward with his teachings so there is little room for error and no reason to believe that this is anything other than what Ezekiel says it is.

## **V24-28**

Ezekiel continues with the prophecy of a unified Israel. As stated in chapter 34, David is king over this unified Israel in the promised land. As with chapter 34, there is some debate as to whether this is a reference to David or to the coming Messiah. Most scholars believe that the language is clear enough to indicate King David as this will pertain to a reunified and reborn Israel. There is a finality to this prophecy, an end to God's people straying and dividing their own kingdom.

## **Chapter 38**

### **V1-23**

*Who is Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal?*

Welcome to one of the most confusing and speculated sections (chapters 38 and most of 39) in the Bible. There are many different commentaries and few of them agree with each other. The only point that most agree on is that this prophecy hasn't happened yet but even that is not complete agreement.

- Gog is an unknown figure. There is a Gog mentioned in 1 Chronicles 5:4, but there is apparently no connection to this prophecy.
- Magog is listed in Genesis 10:2 and 1 Chronicles 1:5 but has never been referenced as an enemy of Israel to this point.
- There is much dispute as to whether 'Rosh' should be interpreted as 'prince of Rosh' as in a place or nation or if it is 'chief prince' as a metaphorical figure.
- There is one school of thought that believes this may be a reference to Russia (Rosh as Russia, Meshech as Moscow, and Tubal as Tobolsk).
- A few commentators believe that Gog may be a reference to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Jewish persecutor between the Old and New Testaments. This is not a highly regarded theory.
- Another speculative theory is that Meshech represent the Muslims and Tubal represents the Roman Catholics.
- The phrase 'in the latter days' (v16) seems to indicate that this prophecy will take place at the end of human history, but this is not completely agreed upon.

Despite the lack of knowledge and understanding about it, there are some definitive points to be taken from this prophecy.

- Gog will be a leader from the North who has not previously been an enemy of Israel.
- Gog will have many allies.
- Gog will be motivated by his own schemes but will be 'pulled' by God (v4, v10).
- This prophecy will happen far after Ezekiel's time.

- Gog, his armies and his allies will be a massive, well equipped army.
- Gog will attack Israel when the Jews are gathered safely in their land and prosperous.
- Other nations will watch with curiosity as to the outcome for their own benefit.
- God will defend Israel and defeat Gog for the sake of His glory.

This prophecy is often linked to Joel 3, Zechariah 14, Isaiah 29 and even Psalm 2.

## Chapter 39

### V1-24

This chapter begins much like the previous chapter, although this is still the same prophecy from God to Ezekiel. This is a common Hebrew literary technique to give an account of something and then repeat it with added detail.

Here, Gog attacks Israel, is defeated, and then Magog is destroyed. Israel victoriously plunders the remnant of Magog. In verse 11, Hamon-gog means 'multitude of Gog'. It will take seven months to rid the land of the dead corpses from the armies of Gog.

Verses 17-20 talk of a feast for the birds and scavengers of the land. It was common for a feast to be had after a glorious and successful battle as a celebration of victory. Since God alone won this victory, it would be nature that celebrated and feasted on the corpses of the dead. This indicates that no one else could claim the victory. This is also an insulting death to the enemy as their bodies were left exposed to the elements before being purged by Israel.

God's victory and glory is reiterated here in the closing of this prophecy.

### V25-29

This is a comforting and important statement to the Jewish people, especially now that Jerusalem has fallen, and they are in captivity. These words are the new promise from God that He will restore them wholly and He will never turn His back on them again. This is another prophecy of the coming Messiah and the Holy Spirit.

## Chapter 40

### V1-4

This vision comes to Ezekiel on April 28, 573 BC. It is the second to last vision Ezekiel receives.

The vision begins with God carrying Ezekiel to a spot overlooking Jerusalem where he is introduced to an angel with measuring instruments of the time. The angel tells him to remember this vision and record it for posterity.

For reference, a cubit in the Bible is about 52cm, or about 20 inches.

### V5-49

The remainder of this chapter is the architectural measurements of a new temple, one that has not yet been built throughout history. There are several significant facts about this temple that need to be addressed.

- There is no mention of a veil. With Jesus, separation is no longer necessary.

- There is no mention of the ark of the covenant.
- There is no mention of a high priest. Jesus is the high priest.
- There is no mention of silver and gold.

See link for visual description: <http://www.bibliaprints.com/index.php/key-bible-visions-illustrated-in-video-and-3d-renders>

## Chapter 41

### V1-26

Chapter 41 is the detailed description of the inner temple. There was a sanctuary which Ezekiel went into and there was the Most Holy Place which Ezekiel did *not* go into. Only the high priest may enter here.

The temple walls were thicker than the interior width. The altar mentioned here is an incense altar, not a sacrificial altar, hence its smaller dimensions. The décor of the temple utilized cherubim and palm trees, the cherubim representing security and the trees representing life and prosperity.

See link for visual description: <http://www.bibliaprints.com/index.php/key-bible-visions-illustrated-in-video-and-3d-renders>

## Chapter 42

### V1-20

This chapter is a description of the temple chambers. See link for visual description:

<http://www.bibliaprints.com/index.php/key-bible-visions-illustrated-in-video-and-3d-renders>

## Chapter 43

### V1-12

The east gate is where this vision began. This is the gate that God departed from in Ezekiel 11 and is now the gate through which He returns to the temple. It is no longer the radiant angel giving the tour doing the talking, but God Himself is addressing Ezekiel and all who will listen to Ezekiel. This temple represents a sense of completion and fulfillment. God's people will no longer stray because there will be no reason to.

### V13-17

This is a description of the sacrificial altar. See link for visual description:

<http://www.bibliaprints.com/index.php/key-bible-visions-illustrated-in-video-and-3d-renders>

### V18-27

These ordinances are the consecration of the sacrificial altar that sat before God and in the new temple. As a priest, Ezekiel would be qualified to perform these functions. The consecration is a form of purification. This altar must be cleansed of the impurities of the world before it could be used to perform holy functions. The consecration process takes seven days. On the eighth day it could then be used for its designated function.

*If this temple hasn't been built yet and Jesus has already come as the ultimate sacrifice, then why is there a need for a sacrificial altar?*

One school of thought is that this is a memorial function, not a salvation function. Hebrews 11, Psalm 51 and Habakkuk 2 all refer to the fact that the Jews weren't forgiven because of the animal sacrifices, they were forgiven because of their faith in God. The New Temple would offer sacrifices as a sort of remembrance of what we no longer have to do.

## **Chapter 44**

### **V1-14**

God enters through the east gate which is then sealed shut.

*Why is the East Gate sealed?*

Unlike previous temples, this temple would be one which God would never leave. It would shut behind God never to be used again. The north and south gates could still be used by those who would enter to perform services in the temple.

Verse 3 again mentions the prince. In chapters 45 and 46, it will be revealed that the prince is to offer a sin offering and that the prince has sons, which is what most scholars point to as proof that this prince is David or some other leader rather than Jesus.

The remainder of this section describes who can and cannot enter. Ezekiel is told to record this explicitly as history shows that this was not adhered to.

### **V15-31**

The Levites who once were the keepers of the temple are told that their special place is no more. They shall still be ministers in the sanctuary, but their past sins have reduced their once special standing. However, the line of Zadok stood out among the Levites. 2 Samuel 8 and 1 Chronicles 6 record that Zadok was faithful to David during the insurrection of Absalom and anointed Solomon as king in 1 Kings 1. Zadok's faithfulness would be rewarded in this new temple.

The remainder of the chapter describes the requirements of the priests.

- Clothing (vv17-19)
- Hair (v20)
- Drinking (v21)
- Marriage (v22)
- Teaching (v23)
- Judging (v24)
- Cannot be around the dead (vv25-27)
- Ownership of worldly possessions (v28)
- Meals (vv29-31)

## Chapter 45

### V1-6

Chapter 45 begins with the division of land among the tribes of Israel and a designated portion for the previously mentioned new temple.

<http://82.221.105.8/~theshini/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ezekiel45holydistrict.gif>

### V7-25

*What is a homer, ephah and bath?*

A bath is the equivalent of roughly 5.75 gallons. Bath is used to measure liquids and an ephah is used to measure dry goods. A homer would be roughly 10 baths or 10 ephahs. The word homer comes from the Hebrew word for “ass”. So technically 10 baths would be 57.5 gallons or an ass-load. That’s taken straight from the commentary. Welcome to the Bible. The purpose of the statements concerning the measurements in vv9-12 was to ensure that honest business practices were implemented. Scales were to be calibrated equally so there would be no cheating in the market and in the temple.

God continues to tell Ezekiel what can be used for sacrifices in the temple.

- The offering of the prince shall consist of wheat, barley, oil and a lamb.
- The “unintentional” atonement offering was performed for those that committed a sin without knowing any better. This was an all-encompassing sacrifice done to cover those that sinned without realizing it. This offering consisted of bull and it would be performed on a monthly basis.

The closing of the chapter commands the observance of Passover as a continued remembrance well into the future.

## Chapter 46

### V1-18

*What is the significance of the New Moon?*

The Prince’s offerings were to be made regularly, daily, weekly and monthly. The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, not a Gregorian calendar, hence why Easter and Hanukkah fall on different dates every year. The new moon would be a significant event in a lunar calendar.

These instructions not only state what and when, but even give directions on the flow of traffic for the people (vv9-11). The last part of this section describes what can and cannot be given away by the prince including provisions to not abuse the authority by taking from the people.

### V19-24

The remainder of the chapter describes the boiling places throughout the temple. The kitchens would be used for food preparation. This temple is to be a complete center of worship to include sacrifices, speaking and even eating. The Jews have always been taught to combine the spiritual and social activities.

## Chapter 47

### V1-12

The beginning of this chapter describes a growing river which started as just a trickle and then became a large body of flowing fresh water. Jerusalem has never had a river in all of its history, so this will be a good indication of when this prophecy is being fulfilled.

In some translations, it mentions the Arabah valley by name. This is the deepest valley rift in the world. It is deep and dry. The river shall run through this valley into the Dead Sea. The river would replenish everything it touched, making trees along the bank grow and providing unheard of sea-life in the uninhabitable, salty Dead Sea.

Verse 11 mentions that the swamps and marshes will not change, leaving some things as they are. It is believed that this is to provide minerals for the people in the region. Salt is a necessary seasoning and the Arabah Valley is a huge source of copper.

### V13-23

The remainder of this chapter describes the division of land among the twelve tribes and goes well into the final chapter.

## Chapter 48

### V1-9

This continues the division of the land discussed at the closing of the previous chapter.

### V10-20

This describes the land allotted to the priests.

### V21-22

This describes the land allotted to the prince.

### V23-29

This describes the land allotted to the remaining tribes.

### V30-35

This designates the city gates for the tribes of Israel. This vision ends with the declaration that the city shall be called, “The Lord is there.”

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