

### NAME

The name "Ezekiel" means, "God strengthens." In many ways Ezekiel spoke in the darkest days of Judah's history. Its only possible source of strength was God.

### AUTHOR

Mitchell:

Among writing prophets, Ezekiel stands out for his mystical and mystifying visions, his symbolic enactment of his prophecies, his emphatic repetitions, and his furious oratory. He reminds one a great deal of Jeremiah with his preaching and object lessons, but not in his personality.

The book seems to be filled with the glory of God. Ezekiel has been called the "prophet of the glory of the Lord." He saw the Lord's glory at his prophetic commissioning (chapter 1). He saw the shekinah glory leave the temple and saw the glory return in the future kingdom. Hence, he saw beyond the sufferings to the glory (cf. 1 Peter 1:11).

Note also (re: seeing future glory) that some of Ezekiel's visions reappear in the book of Revelation (see Halley page 382):

1. The cherubim (Ezekiel 1; Revelation 4)
2. Eating the book (Ezekiel 3; Revelation 10)
3. God and Magog (Ezekiel 38; Revelation 20)
4. The New Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-48; Revelation 21)
5. The river of the water of life (Ezekiel 47; Revelation 22)

### His Historical Situation (Mitchell):

Ezekiel was about 25 years of age when he was taken captive to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem the second time in 597 B.C. (Daniel was taken earlier in 605 B.C.). Ezekiel probably knew Jeremiah prior to his captivity. Jeremiah remained in the city and spoke to the people of Jerusalem who were not taken away to Babylon. Ezekiel spoke to the Jewish refugees in Babylon. Daniel spoke in the court of the king of Babylon. Daniel and Ezekiel could have known each other. Ezekiel certainly seems to have known of Daniel and makes mention of him in his book (Ezekiel 14:14,20; 28:3).

### His Person (Mitchell):

Ezekiel was a priest (1:3). But, before he had an opportunity to engage in any priestly functions he was hauled off to Babylon. A priest had to be 30 years of age to function and Ezekiel seems to have been taken captive before this. His home in Babylon was Tel-Abib (Hill of corn ears). It was located on the banks of the Chebar River (1:1; 3:15). He owned his own home and had a wife whom he loved very much. She died the very year that the final siege of Jerusalem began (24:15-18). Though he might have been a pupil of Jeremiah prior to his captivity, Ezekiel was quite different in temperament than Jeremiah. As noted previously, Jeremiah was tender-hearted and tearful, but Ezekiel was hard as nails. You couldn't pay him to cry! It simply shows that God can and does use all kinds of people.

### His Prophetic Method (Mitchell):

Ezekiel is in many ways the most colorful of the writing prophets. He did not hesitate to use rather bazaar methods at times to convey his message. He used a great many methods such as:

symbols, acting, visions, parables, and poems. He would do almost anything to get the attention of sin-hardened people. The hardness of the people necessitated such actions. He would at times act out his parables and do the craziest things. When Ezekiel did not get the attention of the people it was because of the hardness of their hearts.

### His Purpose (Mitchell):

Ezekiel had the difficult task of persuading the exiles to accept the fact that God was justified in sending the Jewish nation into captivity and destroying their city and temple. His task was doubly difficult because there were false prophets among the refugees who were telling them what they wanted to hear. Ezekiel tried to emphasize the corrective nature of God's chastenings.

### DATE

From NASB introduction to Ezekiel (also see Halley page 383 - Chart)

Since the book of Ezekiel contains more dates than any other Old Testament prophetic book, its prophecies can be dated with considerable precision. In addition, modern scholarship, using archaeology (Babylonian annals on cuneiform tablets) and astronomy (accurate dating of eclipses referred to in ancient archives), provides precise modern calendar equivalents.

Twelve of the 13 dates specify times when Ezekiel received a divine message. The other is the date of the arrival of the messenger who reported the fall of Jerusalem (33:21).

Having received his call in July, 593 B.C., Ezekiel was active for 22 years, his last dated oracle being received April, 571 B.C. (see 29:17). If the "thirtieth year" of 1:1 refers to Ezekiel's age at the time of his call, his prophetic career exceeded a normal priestly term of service by two years (see Numbers 4:3) (note that Jesus and John the Baptizer began their ministry at age 30). His period of activity coincides with Jerusalem's darkest hour, preceding the 586 B.C. destruction by 7 years and following it by 15.

OR - it may have been the 30th year of the Babylonian calendar, which began with the year in which Nebopolasar won Babylon's independence from Assyria (625 B.C.).

Halley notes (page 382): *"The pivot around which the book revolves is the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 586 B.C. Ezekiel's prophecies began six years before that and continued for 16 years thereafter, covering a period of 22 years."*

Ezekiel was in Babylon from 597 to at least 570 B.C. The Babylonian exile lasted from 605 to 535 B.C. (70 years).

### THEME

Type of Literature: Prophecy / Major Prophet

Halley (page 43): *"They Shall Know That I Am God"*

Mitchell: *"God's Glory Will Be Vindicated"*

Central message: *"The knowledge of the Lord is the key to hope."*

Emphasis: Knowledge of God / Hope for a better day

From Mitchell:

The expression, "*Glory of God*" occurs 19 times in the book (of these, 12 occur in the first 11 chapters). The key phrase to be found in the book is "*and they shall know that I am the Lord.*" This phrase occurs 66 times in the book with only slight variations. All are going to know by irrefutable demonstration that God is sovereign over all history and all peoples. They will know it in three ways:

1. By Jehovah's punishment of Jerusalem
2. By Jehovah's punishment of the Gentiles
3. By Jehovah's eventual restoration of His people

By all of this God's glory will be vindicated.

Key Word (Nelson's): The Future Restoration of Israel - The broad purpose of Ezekiel is to remind the generation born during the Babylonian exile of the cause of Israel's current destruction, of the coming judgment on the Gentile nations, and of the coming national restoration of Israel.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 36:24-26).

*"Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited'"* (Ezekiel 36:33-35).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 37 - Central to the hope of the restoration of Israel is the vision of the valley of the dry bones. Ezekiel 37 outlines with clear steps Israel's future.

Outline:

The Glory of the Lord is demonstrated in the manifestation of His sovereign power in three movements. The glory of God as seen in:

### I. The Condemnation of Judah 1-24

- 5,6 focus on three messages which clearly describe God's intent to judge, the cause of God's judgment, and the particular details of God's judgment (this is not pretty)
- 8-11 focus on four visions concerning abominations in Jerusalem
- 12-19 assure God's people that the clock is ticking and that these judgments will occur as a result of their conduct
- 20-24 emphasize the justice of God while giving hope - beyond all the gloom is the glory which awaits God's people who will trust Him

### II. The Condemnation of the Gentiles 25-32

- These predictions were made during the siege of Jerusalem (588-586 B.C.) Here we have the God of Glory seen in His dealings with heathen nations "*That they might know that I am the*

*Lord.*” God was against these heathen nations not only because of sin and idolatry, but because they mistreated the chosen people.

### III. The Restoration of All Israel 33-48

- These predictions were made after the siege of Jerusalem. They portray the events preceding the restoration of the kingdom to Israel and give a description of restored conditions.

### **RECIPIENTS**

God’s people - specifically those in exile - first of Jerusalem’s impending fall and then the hope of revival and restoration... and us.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

1. Ezekiel speaks of Israel in Egypt more than any other prophet.
2. Ezekiel alone informs us that Israel engaged in idolatry even while slaves in Egypt
3. Ezekiel gives us one of the few allusions to the original fall of Satan (Ezekiel 28:12-15, c.f. Isaiah 14:12-15)
4. Ezekiel alone gives complete details of the future kingdom temple

#### Note - Temples

1. Tabernacle
  2. Solomon’s Temple
  3. 2nd Temple - rebuilt under Zerubbabel
  4. Herod’s Temple - the Winchester Mystery house version of Zerubbabel’s temple
  5. Tribulation Temple - set up for the Anti-christ
  6. Kingdom Temple - heaven on earth?
5. Ezekiel put quite a heavy emphasis on the Holy Spirit (25 references to the Holy Spirit)

From NASB introduction to Ezekiel:

Ezekiel powerfully depicts the grandeur and glory of God’s sovereign rule and His holiness, which He jealously safeguards. The book’s theological center is the unfolding of God’s saving purposes in the history of the world - from the time in which He must withdraw from the defilement of His covenant people to the culmination of His grand design of redemption. The message of Ezekiel, which is ultimately eschatological, anticipates - even demands - God’s future works in history proclaimed in the New Testament.

### Ezekiel’s Temple (Nelson’s):

Ezekiel 40 presents a detailed plan for a new temple complex in Jerusalem. Some interpret this prophecy as an exact blueprint of a physical temple to be constructed in or near Jerusalem during a future millennial (thousand-year) period. Others view Ezekiel’s restored temple not as a blueprint, but as a vision that stresses the purity and spiritual vitality of the ideal place of worship and those who will worship there. Thus, it is not intended to refer to an earthly, physical fulfillment, but express the truth found in the name of the new city: THE LORD IS THERE (Ezekiel 48:35).

### The Restoration of the Land - Ezekiel 40 (Nelson’s):

The boundaries of the restored nation of Israel approach the boundaries of the land as it was under David and Solomon. However, the tribes are not arranged as they were historically when the land was divided under Joshua (Joshua 13-19). God will do something new in the restoration.

**RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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