

EZEKIEL

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BACKGROUND

Ezekiel, a priest, was among the 10,000 Jews taken captive to Babylon along with King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. An earlier exile, which included Daniel, had occurred in 605, and another group would be exiled in 586, when Jerusalem fell.

In about 592, the "fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity" ([Ezekiel 1:2](#)) and six years before Jerusalem's final doom, the Lord called Ezekiel to prophesy to the still rebellious exiles in Babylon ([Ezekiel 3:1-7](#)). Ezekiel's ministry in Babylon overlapped the latter part of Jeremiah's ministry in Jerusalem; Ezekiel probably began his ministry soon after Jeremiah's letter to the captives arrived in 593 (see exposition on ^s[Jeremiah 29](#)).

Ezekiel's ministry covered at least 22 years, from 592 to 570 (compare [Ezekiel 1:2](#) and [Ezekiel 29:17](#)). His recorded prophecies come from two distinct periods of his ministry:

- From 592 B.C. till about 585 B.C., shortly after Jerusalem's fall, he prophesied concerning that event ([Ezekiel 1-24](#)), God's judgment on other nations ([Ezekiel 25-32](#)), and God's future plans for Israel ([Ezekiel 33-39](#)).
- Then, after several years of silence, he again prophesied concerning God's plans for Israel ([Ezekiel 40-48](#)). While Ezekiel, like Isaiah, had in view both the restoration of 538 and the final great return during the Millennium, he focused primarily on the Millennium.

AUTHOR

See [Background](#). The book claims Ezekiel as its author ([Ezekiel 1:1-3](#)). It is written from a priestly point of view, which fits Ezekiel. Nearly 90 times in the book, the Lord addresses Ezekiel as "son of man" (see exposition on ^s[Daniel 7:9-14](#)).

DATE

See [Background](#) and [Unique Features](#). The date and circumstance of compilation of Ezekiel's prophecies is unknown.

LOCATION

Ezekiel apparently lived in his own private dwelling among the exiles in a place called Tel-abib, by the Kebar River, about 50 miles south of Babylon ([Ezekiel 1:1](#); [Ezekiel 3:15, 24](#)).

PURPOSE

To explain to the captive Jews in Babylon:

- that their captivity and the destruction of their homeland had resulted from their rebellion against God and their lack of true holiness
- that God, in his mercy, intended to restore them to true holiness; they would be a new and holy people, living in a new and holy city and worshiping in a new and holy Temple

UNIQUE FEATURES

- Ezekiel employs more visions, visual-aid attention grabbers (like shaving the head), and word pictures than any other OT writer. He tells six parables ([Ezekiel 15](#); [Ezekiel 16](#); [Ezekiel 17:1-21](#); [Ezekiel 17:22-24](#); [Ezekiel 19:1-9](#); [Ezekiel 23](#)).
- Like Haggai, he gives precise dates for his prophecies, underscoring their historical accuracy. Except for the "thirtieth year" noted in [1:1](#), these dates are calculated from the exile of Ezekiel and Jehoiachin in 597. (Using 586 as the date of Jerusalem's fall, a date of 597 for Ezekiel's exile can be calculated from the information given in [Ezekiel 40:1](#).)

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

2 Samuel

- While 2 Samuel presents King David and God's covenant with him, Ezekiel speaks of David—or one of his descendants—ruling in some way in the Millennium ([Ezekiel 34:23](#); [Ezekiel 37:24](#); some interpret this figuratively as the Messiah).
- In 2 Samuel, David fought to keep the 12 tribes together; during the Millennium, there will be no such disunity ([Ezekiel 37:15-28](#)).
- Both discuss preparations for a Temple, 2 Samuel for Solomon's Temple and Ezekiel for the millennial Temple.

Haggai

- Both speak of the millennial Temple ([Ezekiel 40-42](#); [Haggai 2:9](#)).
- Both speak of an earthquake or a "shaking" in Israel ([Ezekiel 38:19](#); [Haggai 2:6](#)).

Revelation:

- Both Ezekiel and John saw visions of future events.
- Both Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 2:8-3:3](#)) and John ([Rev. 10](#)) were instructed to swallow a scroll containing words they were to proclaim.
- Gog and Magog ([Ezekiel 38-39](#)) provide the imagery for John's description of the final rebellion of God's enemies ([Rev. 20:8](#)).
- John's vision of the New Jerusalem and the River of Life ([Rev. 21:1-22:5](#)) has marked similarities to some of Ezekiel's visions of the millennial city ([Ezekiel 48:30-35](#)) and the river flowing out of its Temple ([Ezekiel 47:1-12](#)).

OUTLINE

1. PRESENTING THE PROPHET OF GOD ([Ezekiel 1-3](#))

1. The vision of God: Creatures, chariots, wheels ([Ezekiel 1](#))

2. The voice of God: Ezekiel's call ([Ezekiel 2-3](#))

II. JUDGING THE NATION OF GOD ([Ezekiel 4-24](#))

A. Symbols of the siege ([Ezekiel 4-5](#))

B. Sermons on the judgment ([Ezekiel 6-7](#))

C. Scenes of sin at the Temple ([Ezekiel 8-11](#))

D. Signs, sermons, and stories of judgment ([Ezekiel 12-24](#))

1. The baggage and the trembling ([Ezekiel 12](#))

2. False prophets and idolaters ([Ezekiel 13-14](#))

3. The fruitless vine ([Ezekiel 15](#))

4. The adulterous woman ([Ezekiel 16](#))

5. The two eagles ([Ezekiel 17](#))

6. The sour grapes ([Ezekiel 18](#))

7. The lions and the vine ([Ezekiel 19](#))

8. Israel's repeated rebellions ([Ezekiel 20](#))

9. The sword of judgment ([Ezekiel 21](#))

10. The furnace of judgment ([Ezekiel 22](#))

11. The two adulterous sisters ([Ezekiel 23](#))

12. The boiling pot ([Ezekiel 24:1-14](#))

13. The symbolic death of Ezekiel's wife ([Ezekiel 24:15-27](#))

III. JUDGING THE ENEMIES OF GOD ([Ezekiel 25-32](#))

A. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia ([Ezekiel 25](#))

B. Tyre ([Ezekiel 26:1-28:19](#))

C. Sidon ([Ezekiel 28:20-26](#))

D. Egypt ([Ezekiel 29-32](#))

- IV. PRESENTING THE SHEPHERD OF GOD ([Ezekiel 33-34](#))
 - A. The watchman ([Ezekiel 33](#))
 - B. The worthless shepherds ([Ezekiel 34:1-10](#))
 - C. The worthy Shepherd ([Ezekiel 34:11-31](#))
- V. RESTORING THE NATION OF GOD ([Ezekiel 35-37](#))
 - A. Preparation for restoration: Edom destroyed ([Ezekiel 35](#))
 - B. Explanation of restoration: Land and hearts renewed ([Ezekiel 36](#))
 - C. Vision of restoration: Dry bones rejoined ([Ezekiel 37](#))
- VI. DEMONSTRATING THE WRATH OF GOD ([Ezekiel 38-39](#))
 - A. Invasion of Gog and Magog ([Ezekiel 38](#))
 - B. Victory over Gog and Magog ([Ezekiel 39](#))
- VII. REVEALING THE MILLENNIUM OF GOD ([Ezekiel 40-48](#))
 - A. The millennial Temple ([Ezekiel 40-42](#))
 - B. God's glory in the millennial Temple ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](#))
 - C. Worship in the millennial Temple ([Ezekiel 43:6-46:24](#))
 - D. The millennial river ([Ezekiel 47:1-12](#))
 - E. The millennial land ([Ezekiel 47:13-48:35](#))

TIMELINE

605 B.C.:	Daniel with 1st exiles to Babylon
597 B.C.:	Ezekiel in 2nd exile
592 B.C.:	Ezekiel begins ministry, in Babylon
586 B.C.:	Fall of Judah
581-580 B.C.:	Jeremiah's last prophecy, Daniel begins ministry
570 B.C.:	Ezekiel's last prophecy

[Ezekiel 1:1-3](#) *His eventful 30th year.* Ezekiel noted that the vision that began his prophetic ministry occurred in about 592 B.C., five years after he, along with King Jehoiachin and others, had been taken captive in 597 (compare [Ezekiel 1:2](#) with [Ezekiel 40:1](#)). "Of my thirtieth year" probably refers to Ezekiel's age. As a priest, this would have been the normal age for him to begin his ministry.

Ezekiel 1:4-21 *Cherubs and wheels with the speed of light.* Amid a whirlwind and fiery cloud, Ezekiel saw four "living beings," each with four faces, empowered by the "spirit," moving "like flashes of lightning" ([Ezekiel 1:4-14](#)). These heavenly beings moved in tandem with four earthbound "wheels," also subject to the movings of the spirit ([Ezekiel 1:15-21](#)). Repeated words and phrases such as "like," "as if," and "awesome" suggest that Ezekiel was struggling to describe an indescribable scene. The living beings are later identified as cherubim (see exposition on [§][Ezekiel 10:1-22](#)).

Ezekiel 1:22-28 *The firmament and the Being above it.* Above the living beings and the wheels was a vast, crystal-like expanse, and from above the expanse came a sound "like the shouting of a mighty army" ([Ezekiel 1:22-25](#)). Ezekiel saw someone resembling a man, surrounded by the appearance of a rainbow, on a sapphirelike throne. He recognized it as the Lord himself and fell on his face in worship.

Ezekiel 2:1-7 *His mission: Reach the rebels.* God spoke to Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 1:28](#)), commissioning him to preach to the rebellious, stubborn Israelites, even if they wouldn't listen ([Ezekiel 2:1-7](#)). God assured Ezekiel that even if they didn't heed his words they would know he had been divinely sent ([Ezekiel 2:5](#)). On "the Spirit came into me" ([Ezekiel 2:2](#)) see exposition on [§][1 Samuel 9:27-10:8](#).

Ezekiel 2:8-3:15 *First assignment: Swallow this scroll and go.* In the vision, God handed Ezekiel a scroll, filled with words of lamentation and woe, and told him to eat it—signifying that he, unlike Israel, was receptive to God's word ([Ezekiel 2:8](#)). Again he told Ezekiel to take his word to the captives in Babylon and warned that they would not be receptive ([Ezekiel 2](#)). Ezekiel, however, would be strengthened to withstand them by the word of God he had symbolically received into his heart ([Ezekiel 3:8-10](#)). As the vision ended, Ezekiel found himself among the exiles ([Ezekiel 3:12-15](#)). For seven days he remained "overwhelmed" ([Ezekiel 3:15](#)) by his encounter with God.

Though the words on the scroll were bitter ([Ezekiel 2:10](#)), the scroll tasted sweet to Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 3:3](#)). Nonetheless, as he began his mission he felt bitter and angry—an understandable reaction as this sensitive priest considered the sinfulness of his people ([Ezekiel 3:14](#)).

Ezekiel 3:16-21 *A watchman to warn the wicked . . .* The Lord commissioned Ezekiel to be a "watchman" for Israel, to warn them when their sin invited God's judgment. If Ezekiel failed to give such warnings, God would hold him responsible (see exposition on [§][Ezekiel 33:1-9](#)).

Ezekiel 3:22-27 *. . . but speechless till God says speak.* God appeared to Ezekiel in another amazing vision, instructing him to remain in his own house in order to avoid danger from his opponents. He would be unable to speak unless the Lord allowed him to, thus ensuring that he would speak only God's message and not his own. This restriction on Ezekiel's speech would last until Jerusalem fell (see [Ezekiel 33:22](#)).

Ezekiel 4:1-17 *A brick, a meager meal, and a prostrate prophet.* God instructed Ezekiel to draw a map of Jerusalem on a large, flat tablet of soft clay. Then, using other visual aids, he was to act out the Babylonian siege against Jerusalem, showing the impossibility of escape from judgment (see [2 Kings 24-25](#); [Jeremiah 39](#); [Jeremiah 52](#)). He was apparently to perform this object lesson daily while lying on his side ([Ezekiel 4:4-8](#)). For 390 days he was to lie on his left side, representing the sins of Israel, the northern kingdom. Then he was to lie on his right side for 40 days, representing the sins of Judah.

While the exact meaning of the two numbers is not given, they equal the 430 years of Egyptian captivity (see [Exodus 12:40-41](#)). The greater time for Israel signified its greater sin.

While on his side, acting out the siege, Ezekiel was to eat a special kind of bread, baked over dried cow dung, symbolizing the famine conditions of Jerusalem's last days ([Ezekiel 4:9-17](#)). God had originally instructed Ezekiel to use human waste as fuel ([Ezekiel 4:12](#)). As a priest, Ezekiel knew the law concerning such things (see [Deut. 23:12-14](#)), so he protested the assignment and God relented, allowing him to use cow dung instead. The Lord's point in prescribing human waste had been to signify Israel's pollution by pagan nations in the exile ([Ezekiel 4:13](#)).

[Ezekiel 5:1-17](#) *A haircut burned, divided, and scattered.* Ezekiel shaved his head and beard and divided the hair into three parts. One part he burned, one he cut up with a sword, and one he scattered to the wind ([Ezekiel 5:2](#)), symbolizing Judah's triple doom of famine and disease, death in war, and exile ([Ezekiel 5:12](#)). God had set Judah "at the center of the nations" ([Ezekiel 5:5](#)) as a witness to them (see exposition on ^s[Isaiah 43:8-13](#)). Since they had failed in that mission, they would be punished in an unusually harsh way ([Ezekiel 5:9](#)) as a lesson to the other nations ([Ezekiel 5:15](#)).

[Ezekiel 6:1-14](#) *A message to the mountains.* Facing the mountains of Israel, Ezekiel prophesied that the whole land would be laid waste ([Ezekiel 6:1-7](#)). When that happened, Israel would "know that I am the LORD" ([Ezekiel 6:7, 10, 13](#)). Showing mercy even in judgment, God promised that a remnant of the nation would be spared from death and scattered throughout the world ([Ezekiel 6:8-10](#)). Ezekiel was to stamp his feet and clap his hands to get the people's attention concerning this prophecy ([Ezekiel 6:11](#)). The mountains were apparently addressed because they were the center of idol worship in Israel ([Ezekiel 6:3, 13](#)).

[Ezekiel 7:1-27](#) *Starvation, sword, and sacrilege.* Ezekiel repeatedly warned that judgment would soon come upon the land ([Ezekiel 7:1-13](#)). It would come upon the whole land ([Ezekiel 7:2](#)), and there would be no escape ([Ezekiel 7:9](#)). Everyday activities like buying and selling would cease ([Ezekiel 7:12](#)). Those outside the walls would be killed by the approaching armies, while those confined to the cities by the siege would die of famine and disease ([Ezekiel 7:14-18](#)). Disease would make the people too weak to fight ([Ezekiel 7:14, 17](#)).

Not only would the invading armies destroy the city and nation, they would defile the Temple, showing that God's favor was no longer with the nation ([Ezekiel 7:19-27](#)).

[Ezekiel 8:1-18](#) *Tears for Tammuz—in the Temple!* 14 months after his ministry began, in about 591 B.C., Ezekiel was transported in a vision from Babylon to the Temple in Jerusalem, where he saw many things that deeply alarmed and offended him ([Ezekiel 8-11](#)). Just north of the altar gate he saw an idol ([Ezekiel 8:5](#)). Uncovering a secret inner room, he saw its walls covered with idolatrous drawings, and elders worshipping them ([Ezekiel 8:6-12](#)). Looking farther, he saw women weeping for Tammuz, a Babylonian deity, and 25 men worshipping the sun ([Ezekiel 8:13-16](#)). God's response to all this idolatry was to promise no pity or escape for the nation ([Ezekiel 8:17-18](#)).

[Ezekiel 9:1-11](#) *Sinners slain, mourners marked and spared.* As the vision continued, God summoned six angelic executioners to the Temple area. He commanded one of them to put a special protective mark on all those who still mourned over the sin and idolatry Ezekiel had just seen ([Ezekiel 9:1-4](#)). This done, the other men followed after him and killed all those without the mark, beginning

with the religious leaders in the Temple ([Ezekiel 9:5-7](#)). Ezekiel begged the Lord to spare some of the people, but he refused to do so.

As this was taking place, the "glory of the God of Israel" had begun to move toward the Temple door ([Ezekiel 9:3](#); see [Exodus 14:19-20](#); [1 Kings 8:1-11](#)).

[Ezekiel 10:1-22](#) *The glory cloud pauses, then moves.* The being who had marked those to be spared now prepared to spread the coals of God's wrath over the city ([Ezekiel 10:1-2](#), [6-8](#)). Meanwhile the glory cloud paused at the Temple door ([Ezekiel 10:3-4](#)), perhaps signifying that, though God had decided to judge his people, his ultimate desire was to remain with them.

Ezekiel described his vision in detail, noting that it was the same as the vision he had received at the beginning of his ministry ([Ezekiel 10:9-17](#); see [Ezekiel 1](#)) and that the "living beings" and the "cherubim" were one and the same ([Ezekiel 10:15](#), [20](#)). The glory cloud then moved from the Temple to the eastern gate.

Cherubim are among the highest of angelic beings (see exposition on [Ezekiel 28:11-19](#); exposition on [Genesis 3:22-24](#); [Rev. 4:6-8](#)). Golden carvings of cherubim were placed over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant (see [Exodus 25:18-22](#)), which represented the actual throne of God as seen here by Ezekiel. Apparently one of the responsibilities of the cherubim is to carry God's throne.

[Ezekiel 11:1-13](#) *No protection for false prophets.* The Lord brought Ezekiel to 25 men at the eastern Temple gate, including Pelatiah and other leaders, and identified them as those who had been giving false assurances of Jerusalem's security ([Ezekiel 11:1-3](#)). Comparing Jerusalem to a cooking pot that protects the meat within it, they confidently declared, "Is it not a good time to build houses?" ([Ezekiel 11:3](#)). Ezekiel responded that only those of their own people whom they had killed would be protected by Jerusalem's walls ([Ezekiel 11:7](#)). The leaders themselves would be led out of the city and killed ([Ezekiel 11:7-12](#); see [Jeremiah 52:24-27](#)). As if to underscore Ezekiel's warning, Pelatiah died even as Ezekiel spoke ([Ezekiel 11:13](#)).

The leaders' false sense of security may have come in part from their having survived the invasions of 605 and 597 B.C. (see [2 Kings 24:8-16](#)).

[Ezekiel 11:14-21](#) *New hearts for the exiles.* Apparently these ungodly leaders were saying that those taken captive in 605 and 597 B.C. (such as Daniel, and Ezekiel himself) were under God's judgment and therefore should be rejected ([Ezekiel 11:15](#)). God declared that, quite to the contrary, he would give those exiles his special protection ([Ezekiel 11:16](#)) and would eventually restore all believing Israelites to their homeland, giving them "tender hearts" (or "hearts of flesh") in place of their "hearts of stone" ([Ezekiel 11:17-20](#); see exposition on [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)). The self-confident Jerusalemites, on the other hand, may find themselves under God's judgment ([Ezekiel 11:21](#)).

[Ezekiel 11:22-25](#) *Suddenly the glory is gone.* As Ezekiel's vision of the Temple ended, the glory cloud of the Lord moved from the city to the Mount of Olives. God had finally removed his special presence from his people, preparing the way for judgment. ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](#) promises that God's glory will return to Israel during the Millennium.) (See exposition on the following passages: [Exodus 14:19-20](#); [2 Chron. 5:1-14](#); [Matthew 17:1-9](#).)

The spirit then led Ezekiel back to Babylon, where he told the captives of his visions of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 12:1-16 *"Pack your bags, and dig a tunnel!"* At God's command, Ezekiel packed his belongings, dug a hole through the city wall in Tel-abib, and went out through the hole, covering his face as though blind as he went ([Ezekiel 12:1-7](#)). Ezekiel was to explain to the exiles that his actions symbolized the hurried departure of a future group of exiles from Jerusalem, and the blinding of King Zedekiah ([Ezekiel 12:8-16](#); see [2 Kings 25:1-7](#)).

Zedekiah's departure from Jerusalem would transpire just as predicted ([Ezekiel 12:12](#); see [2 Kings 25:4](#)). [2 Kings 25:6-7](#) fulfills both Ezekiel's prophecy that Zedekiah would not see Babylon ([Ezekiel 12:13](#)), and Jeremiah's prophecy that he *would* see Nebuchadnezzar (see [Jeremiah 34:2-5](#)).

Ezekiel 12:17-20 *His last meal?* In another symbolic act, Ezekiel trembled while he ate, portraying the anxiety of Jerusalem's last days.

Ezekiel 12:21-28 *Life goes on?* Having heard many prophecies, both true and false, about Judah's future, many Israelites had become cynical, thinking they would never come true ([Ezekiel 12:22, 27](#)). Ezekiel was to warn, however, that the time had come for the fulfillment of all true prophecies ([Ezekiel 12:23-25, 28](#)).

Ezekiel 13:1-23 *"They're not builders! They're desert foxes!"* God condemned the prophets who had falsely promised peace ([Ezekiel 13:10, 16](#); see exposition on [§Jeremiah 6:10-21](#)) while doing nothing to repair the "whitewashed wall" of Israel's moral depravity ([Ezekiel 13:5, 10-16](#)). Such prophets were as useless as jackals ([Ezekiel 13:4](#)), content to live in decaying ruins. Also to be condemned were the false women prophets, who practiced sorcery ([Ezekiel 13:17-23](#)). Their wrong advice was hurting the righteous and helping the wicked ([Ezekiel 13:22](#); see [Exodus 23:7](#); [Proverbs 24:23-25](#); [Isaiah 5:23](#)).

Ezekiel 14:1-11 *The leaders: Most lawless of all.* Recognizing him to be a prophet, some of the elders in exile came to Ezekiel for advice. God refused to speak through Ezekiel on their behalf because, though they claimed to be seeking the Lord, he knew they were idolaters ([Ezekiel 14:3-4, 7](#)). God called on them to repent ([Ezekiel 14:6](#)) but foresaw only certain judgment ([Ezekiel 14:5](#)). Still, his ultimate desire was for Israel to be his people once again ([Ezekiel 14:11](#)).

Ezekiel 14:12-23 *Not even for Noah!* God declared he would not spare the land of Israel even if such righteous men as Noah, Daniel, and Job were living there. He would spare those three men, but no one else. The nation had already crossed over the line and must be judged. God would, however, spare a remnant of the faithful, who would then be a great comfort to Ezekiel and would help him see that God's judgment on Judah had been just ([Ezekiel 14:22-23](#)).

It is interesting that Daniel, a fellow captive with Ezekiel and only about 35 at this time, was as well known for his righteousness as were Noah and Job.

Ezekiel 15:1-8 *"No fruit? Throw it in the fire!"* In a parable, the Lord compared Israel to a vine. The only value of a vine is to bear fruit. It is not good for building (too crooked), for furniture (too soft), or even for fuel (it burns too rapidly). Because Israel had borne no fruit (see exposition on [§Isaiah 43:8-13](#)), it would be burned as refuse. Christians, likewise, must bear fruit (see [John 15:1-8](#)). The vine was a common OT symbol for Israel (see [Psalm 80:8-18](#); [Isaiah 27:2-4](#); [Jeremiah 12:10-11](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 16:1-14](#) *Israel the orphan and beautiful wife.* The Lord compared Israel to a baby girl found abandoned in a field—which represents God's finding Israel in bondage in Egypt. God adopted the ragged little girl and raised her as his own, finally entering into a marriage covenant with her ([Ezekiel 16:8](#)), representing his giving Israel the law at Sinai. God dressed his wife in beautiful clothes and jewels ([Ezekiel 16:10-14](#)), representing the nation's glory days under David and Solomon.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 16:15-43](#) *Israel the proud harlot.* Sadly, Israel the wife soon became proud and spurned the love of God her husband, turning instead to play the harlot with foreign gods. All the wealth God had given her was now offered to her foreign lovers ([Ezekiel 16:17-19](#)). She was actually worse than a harlot, in that she paid her lovers rather than their paying her ([Ezekiel 16:31-34](#)). God would allow Israel to be abused and defeated by the very nations with whose gods she had committed spiritual adultery ([Ezekiel 16:35-43](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 16:44-63](#) *Sinful as Sodom, but still he'll save her.* It was obvious to everyone, said the Lord, that Israel was just as wicked as the nations around her. They were as sinful as their pagan forebears ([Ezekiel 16:45](#)), as sinful as the fallen northern kingdom (Samaria) that they despised ([Ezekiel 16:46, 51-52](#)), even as sinful as Sodom ([Ezekiel 16:46-50](#)). God would one day restore Judah ([Ezekiel 16:60-63](#)) but only after he had restored those other nations ([Ezekiel 16:53-55](#))! Then God would make a new covenant with his people, which would include atonement for all their sins ([Ezekiel 16:60-63](#); see [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); [Romans 11:27](#); [Hebrews 8:8-12](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 17:1-24](#) *Two eagles and a cedar.* Ezekiel told a parable with three major players: A first eagle, large and powerful, took the top of a cedar tree and carried it to a faraway land. Seed from the tree was planted, and a vine began to grow; as it grew it turned toward the first eagle. A second eagle then appeared, and the vine turned toward it instead ([Ezekiel 17:1-10](#)). Ezekiel applied the parable to Zedekiah's breaking of his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar ([Ezekiel 17:11-21](#)). Nebuchadnezzar had taken captive the "topmost shoot" of Israel's "cedar tree"—the best and brightest of her citizens—in 605 and 597 B.C. He had placed Zedekiah on the throne and God, through Jeremiah (see [Jeremiah 27](#)), had told Zedekiah to be loyal to that alliance for the protection of his people. But Zedekiah ignored that sound advice and broke the covenant by allying with Egypt (the second eagle) against Babylon ([Ezekiel 17:15](#)).

God considered this treason against himself ([Ezekiel 17:20](#)) and declared that Egypt would prove useless as an ally ([Ezekiel 17:17](#); see [Jeremiah 37:5-7](#)). He also declared that Zedekiah would die in Babylon ([Ezekiel 17:16](#); see [Jeremiah 52:11](#)).

God would, however, preserve a "tender shoot" from the top of the tree and replant it in Israel ([Ezekiel 17:22-24](#)). This "tender shoot," sometimes called the "Branch," represents Jesus the Messiah (see [Isaiah 11:1](#); [Isaiah 53:2](#); [Jeremiah 23:5](#); [Zech 3:8](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

Ezekiel 18:1-18 *Sour grapes and souls that sin.* Reciting a popular saying of the day, some Israelites were blaming their present suffering on the sins of their fathers, represented by "sour grapes" ([Ezekiel 18:2](#); see [Jeremiah 31:29-30](#)). God declared that, contrary to this popular wisdom, people were responsible for their own sins ([Ezekiel 18:4](#)). He gave several examples of sin and responsibility, implying that the present generation could not blame their problems on past generations ([Ezekiel 18:5-18](#)).

The Bible states elsewhere that God punishes "the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations" (see [Exodus 20:5](#); [Jeremiah 32:18](#)), which would seem to imply that children suffer for the sins of their parents. These passages may, however, simply mean that children tend to follow their parents' example (see exposition on ^s[Ezekiel 20:1-32](#)).

Ezekiel 18:19-32 *When the bad turn good and the good turn bad.* Not only are people individually responsible for their sins ([Ezekiel 18:19-20](#)), but repentance is always an option, even for the most wicked ([Ezekiel 18:21-23](#)). However, God warned, the righteous person who backslides will be judged ([Ezekiel 18:24](#)). He defended the rightness of his proclamation regarding personal responsibility ([Ezekiel 18:25-29](#)) and issued the call once more: Repent and live ([Ezekiel 18:30-32](#)). God takes no pleasure in the death of the ungodly ([Ezekiel 18:23, 32](#); see [2 Peter 3:9](#)). (See exposition on ^s[Ezekiel 33:10-20](#).)

Ezekiel 19:1-14 *Young lions and a strong vine.* Ezekiel lamented Israel's fate, comparing her to a lioness and a vine. The lioness lost two of her cubs to trappers. The first cub ([Ezekiel 19:3-4](#)) probably represents Jehoahaz, who was taken captive to Egypt in 609 B.C. (see [2 Kings 23:31-34](#)). The other cub may have been either Jehoiachin, taken to Babylon in 597 (see [2 Kings 24:8-15](#)), or Zedekiah, who would be taken there in 586 (see [2 Kings 24:18](#)).

Ezekiel then compared Israel to a vine that was destined to be thoroughly uprooted and destroyed by a desert wind ([Ezekiel 19:10-14](#))—probably a reference to the final Babylonian invasion. Some scholars see either the entire vine, or at least its "branches" ([Ezekiel 19:12](#)), as a reference to Zedekiah.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

Ezekiel 20:1-32 *Following their parents' example.* God told Ezekiel to remind Israel of the "loathsome . . . actions of their ancestors" ([Ezekiel 20:1-4](#)): When God had announced his plans to deliver Israel from Egypt, he commanded them to forsake Egypt's false religion. They failed to do so, yet "to protect the honor of [his] name," he kept his promise and delivered them anyway ([Ezekiel 20:5-10](#)).

During their wilderness journey, God provided for the Israelites' spiritual and physical needs, even though they still rebelled ([Ezekiel 20:10-26](#)). Even after entering the Promised Land ([Ezekiel 20:27-29](#)) and right up to the present day ([Ezekiel 20:30-32](#)), Israel had persisted in religious apostasy despite God's goodness. Therefore, God would no longer hear their prayers ([Ezekiel 20:31](#)).

Ezekiel 20:33-44 *"Then you'll finally recognize me!"* The day would come when God would reclaim his people from exile, weed out those among them who still rebelled, and bring them back to their homeland. Then, they would repent of their sins ([Ezekiel 20:43](#)) and would "know that I am the LORD" ([Ezekiel 20:38, 42, 44](#)).

[Ezekiel 20:45-49](#) *A forest fire and a weary audience.* Ezekiel's next prophecy of destruction used the imagery of a forest fire. Ezekiel noted that his audience was growing tired of his frequent use of parables.

[Ezekiel 21:1-32](#) *Swords, groans, strikes, and livers.* Using the imagery of a drawn sword, the Lord declared that complete destruction would come upon Judah and Israel. Ezekiel was to call attention to this warning with audible groans—no doubt further alienating an audience weary of his unusual preaching style ([Ezekiel 21:6-7](#); see [Ezekiel 20:49](#))! Once again God warned of the sharpened sword of approaching judgment ([Ezekiel 21:8-13](#)), this time instructing Ezekiel to "clap [his] hands vigorously" to accentuate the message ([Ezekiel 21:14-17](#); see [Ezekiel 6:11](#)).

The Babylonians would consult magical signs, including an animal liver, to decide whether to attack Jerusalem or Ammon and would on that basis choose Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 21:18-23](#)). God is sovereign even over the misguided religious practices of nonbelievers. In the coming destruction, the Davidic monarchy would be overthrown ([Ezekiel 21:24-27](#)) and would remain so until the coming of Messiah ([Ezekiel 21:27](#)). Although the omens had guided Nebuchadnezzar to Jerusalem rather than to Ammon, Ammon would not escape judgment ([Ezekiel 21:28-32](#)).

[Ezekiel 22:1-22](#) *Jerusalem: Crime capital of the world!* Jerusalem had become infamous for all the killings taking place there and had become odious to God because of its idolatry ([Ezekiel 22:1-5](#)). The kings had led the way in the crime wave, freely using their high position to kill whomever they pleased ([Ezekiel 22:6](#); see [2 Kings 24:3-4](#)) and to take advantage of people in other ways as well ([Ezekiel 22:7-12](#)). They would be punished ([Ezekiel 22:13-16](#)). Jerusalem itself would become a fiery furnace to purify them ([Ezekiel 22:17-22](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 22:23-31](#) *And no one even cares!* It seemed that all of Israel's leaders were hopeless sinners. While the priests profaned the Temple and ignored the Sabbath, political leaders took bribes, prophets spoke falsely, and the people committed robbery and mistreated the poor ([Ezekiel 22:26-29](#)). Not one righteous person could be found to stand in the "gap" in Judah's broken moral defenses ([Ezekiel 22:30](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 23:1-49](#) *The sins of the two sisters.* In still another parable, Samaria and Jerusalem were portrayed as two sisters who were prostitutes. The whole nation had been involved in spiritual prostitution in Egypt before the Exodus (see [Leviticus 17:7](#)). The northern kingdom, having never really repented of its sins in Egypt, would later become allied both politically and spiritually with Assyria ([Ezekiel 23:5-10](#)). On political ties leading to spiritual compromise, see exposition on [^s1 Kings 11:1-8](#) and on [^s2 Kings 16:10-20](#).

Judah became worse than her northern sister, prostituting herself to Assyria and Babylon, then rejecting Babylon and returning to her first illicit lover—Egypt ([Ezekiel 23:11-21](#)). Judah would be judged by her spurned lovers ([Ezekiel 23:22-30](#)). Because Judah's sin was the same as that of the northern kingdom, she would suffer the same punishment ([Ezekiel 23:31-35](#)).

Both north and south would be judged for their gross paganism ([Ezekiel 23:36-39](#); see [2 Kings 21:1-9](#)). Rather than waiting for the pagans to come to them, they had invited their influence ([Ezekiel 23:40-41](#)). They deserved the punishment prescribed by the law for both prostitutes and religious apostates ([Ezekiel 23:46-47](#); see [Deut. 13:6-11](#); [Deut. 22:22-30](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Six Parables in Ezekiel](#)

[Ezekiel 24:1-14](#) *The pot will boil, and boil, and boil.* On the very day that Babylon began its final siege of Jerusalem, God told Ezekiel to fill a pot of boiling water with the best meats and to cook it till the flesh fell off the bones. He then threw out all the meat and allowed the pot to bake itself dry to eliminate the remaining impurities. Likewise would the fires of the Babylonian siege cleanse Jerusalem of her moral impurity.

[Ezekiel 24:15-24](#) *Tearless at his own wife's funeral!* On that same day, God informed Ezekiel that his beloved wife would die the following day, but that he should show no grief over her death. When Ezekiel's wife died and his fellow exiles noticed his lack of grief, he explained that God was not grieving over the approaching death of Jerusalem, and neither should they ([Ezekiel 24:20-24](#)).

[Ezekiel 24:25-27](#) *"You'll hear the news and speak again."* When Jerusalem actually fell, a special messenger would be sent to Babylon to inform Ezekiel. At that time, Ezekiel's impaired speech would become normal again ([Ezekiel 24:25-27](#); see [Ezekiel 3:26](#); [Ezekiel 33:21-22](#)).

[Ezekiel 25:1-7](#) *Ammon: From glee and derision to gloom and doom.* Ezekiel prophesied against several nations involved in Israel's history ([Ezekiel 25-32](#)). Though recorded together, the prophecies were given at various times. Ammon, east of the Jordan and north of Moab, had shown devilish glee over Jerusalem's destruction, so it would be destroyed as well. (See exposition on [§Jeremiah 49:1-6](#).)

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[Ezekiel 25:8-11](#) *Moab: From scornful looks to scorched landscape.* The Moabites had scorned Israel's claims to be God's special people. Their cities would be wiped out, and then they would acknowledge Israel's God. (See exposition on [§Jeremiah 48:1-47](#).)

[Ezekiel 25:12-14](#) *Edom: Death to the pitiless butchers.* Because the Edomites had butchered helpless Israelites during the Babylonian invasion, they would be completely destroyed. (See exposition on [§Jeremiah 49:7-22](#).)

[Ezekiel 25:15-17](#) *Philistia: The "old hatred."* The Philistines, Israel's ancient foes, would also be destroyed. (See exposition on [§Jeremiah 47:1-7](#).)

[Ezekiel 26:1-6](#) *Tyre: From net worth to net spreading.* As soon as the people of Tyre heard of Jerusalem's fall, they rejoiced: As the premier sea traders of their day, they were eager to "become wealthy" with the spoils of Jerusalem and to take over Judah's "rich trade routes" ([Ezekiel 26:1-2](#)).

This commercial capital would itself be plundered. Invading armies would "scrape away its soil," making it "a bare rock . . . a place for fishermen to spread their nets" ([Ezekiel 26:3-6](#)).

[Ezekiel 26:7-21](#) *Details of Tyre's destruction.* The Lord declared specifically that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Tyre ([Ezekiel 26:7-11](#)), and that in fact happened in 572 B.C. The amazing fulfillment of [Ezekiel 26:12-14](#) would come 240 years later: Part of Tyre was on an island, and that part survived the 572 assault. In 332, however, Alexander the Great completed Tyre's destruction by using the debris from 572 to build a causeway to the island, which he then destroyed! Tyre has never been rebuilt, and in fact remains to this day a place for local fishermen to dry their nets! Tyre's horrible fate would cause her former trading partners to fear and mourn ([Ezekiel 26:15-21](#)). (See exposition on ^s[Isaiah 23:1-18](#).)

[Ezekiel 27:1-36](#) *His lamentation for Tyre.* Ezekiel lamented Tyre's fate, comparing Tyre to a ship. Goods from many lands had made Tyre one of the most beautiful cities in the known world ([Ezekiel 27:1-9](#)). 23 nations had traded with Tyre ([Ezekiel 27:12-24](#)). Yet the mighty ship of Tyre would finally sink ([Ezekiel 27:25-36](#)).

[Ezekiel 28:1-10](#) *The king of Tyre: Deluded by success.* Tyre's king was proud of his nation's success. He attributed much of that success to his own wisdom, even considering himself a god ([Ezekiel 28:1-5](#)). But the true and only God would judge him ([Ezekiel 28:6-10](#)). [Ezekiel 28:3](#) is another indication of Daniel's fame, even as a young man (see exposition on ^s[Ezekiel 14:12-23](#)).

[Ezekiel 28:11-19](#) *The real king of Tyre.* As Ezekiel continued to describe God's judgment against the king of Tyre, he spoke in terms that many Bible scholars see as a picture of the fall of Satan. Like the king of Tyre, Satan became too proud of himself and was therefore judged. From being the "mighty angelic guardian," the most beautiful of all God's creatures ([Ezekiel 28:12-15](#)), he came to "a terrible end" and "all who knew [him were] appalled at [his] fate" ([Ezekiel 28:19](#)). (See exposition on ^s[Isaiah 14:1-23](#).)

[Ezekiel 28:20-26](#) *Sidon: Destroyed like her sister.* Sidon, a coastal commercial center about 20 miles north of Tyre, would be destroyed as well ([Ezekiel 28:20-23](#)). With its hostile neighbors destroyed, Israel would return to its homeland and live in peace ([Ezekiel 28:24-26](#)).

[Ezekiel 29:1-7](#) *Egypt: Pulled from the Nile for non-support.* In a prophecy given a year before the one against Tyre, Ezekiel dealt with Egypt, the superpower to the south ([Ezekiel 29-32](#); compare exposition on ^s[Jeremiah 46](#)). Pharaoh, the proud "monster" and ruler of the Nile, would be pulled from his river kingdom and left on dry land to be devoured by beasts and birds ([Ezekiel 29:1-5](#)). The judgment would come because, after enticing Judah into an alliance against Babylon, Pharaoh would fail to support them ([Ezekiel 29:6-7](#); see [Jeremiah 37:5-10](#)).

[Ezekiel 29:8-16](#) *Egypt's desolation and restoration.* Because of their king's pride ([Ezekiel 29:3, 9](#)), Egypt would be desolate and uninhabited for 40 years as its people went into exile ([Ezekiel 29:8-12](#)). Egypt would then be restored to its land but would never again be a major world power ([Ezekiel 29:13-15](#)). As future Israelites observed lowly Egypt, they would be amazed that they had ever looked to it for protection ([Ezekiel 29:16](#)).

Ezekiel 29:17-30:19 *"Egypt will pay Babylon for Tyre!"* Seventeen years later, in 570 B.C.—two years after Babylon had defeated Tyre—Ezekiel prophesied again concerning Egypt. God told Ezekiel that since Nebuchadnezzar had done God's will by defeating Tyre, and since his men had gained few spoils from their victory, God would allow them to conquer and plunder Egypt. Judah would be encouraged by the fulfillment of God's judgment on Egypt ([Ezekiel 29:21](#)). The Babylonians had laid siege against Tyre for 13 years, from 585 until they finally defeated them in 572, during which time the seafaring Tyrians probably shipped their wealth to their many seaport colonies.

Ezekiel went on to foretell the details of Egypt's destruction ([Ezekiel 30:1-19](#)). Egypt's current pharaoh was deposed and killed in 569, and Babylon invaded in about 568.

Though placed amid his other prophecies against Egypt, [Ezekiel 29:17-30:19](#) was Ezekiel's latest recorded prophecy, coming in 570, two years later than the prophecy of [Ezekiel 40-48](#).

Ezekiel 30:20-26 *Egypt's arms broken.* Ezekiel now recorded an earlier prophecy about Egypt, given in 586 B.C. God would break Pharaoh's arms, preventing him from even holding a sword. Meanwhile Nebuchadnezzar's arms would be strengthened, so that his sword (his armies) would be successful.

Ezekiel 31:1-18 *"Remember that great cedar?"* Two months later God spoke again, with an object lesson for the proud Pharaoh: Assyria had once been as great as Egypt. Indeed, Assyria the great "cedar" was the envy of all the other trees in the forest. Even the trees of Eden paled by comparison ([Ezekiel 31:1-9](#)). Because of Assyria's pride, God allowed foreign armies to destroy her ([Ezekiel 31:10-17](#)). Egypt, which was also a beautiful tree, would likewise be cut down ([Ezekiel 31:18](#)).

Ezekiel 32:1-16 *Not a young lion, but an old crocodile.* About a year and a half later, after Jerusalem had fallen, Ezekiel lamented the coming destruction of Egypt, outlining the trouble and dismay that was sure to come. Pharaoh may have imagined himself a strong young lion, but God preferred a more truly Egyptian analogy: Like a crocodile too old to fight back, Pharaoh would be pulled from the Nile and left to die on dry land ([Ezekiel 32:2-6](#); see exposition on [§][Ezekiel 29:1-7](#)).

Ezekiel 32:17-32 *When Egypt joins the nations in hell.* About two weeks later, Ezekiel offered a final lament for Egypt. Pharaoh and his beloved nation would be consigned to "the pit" ([Ezekiel 32:18](#); see [Ezekiel 26:20](#); [Ezekiel 28:8](#); [Ezekiel 31:16-17](#)), or "the grave" ([Ezekiel 32:27](#)), along with many other "outcasts" (or "the uncircumcised"). On the OT view of hell, see exposition on [§][Psalm 9](#).

Ezekiel 33:1-9 *The watchman, again.* In a message given either just before or just after Jerusalem fell, God stressed once again the duties of the watchman to warn people of their sin—a duty which by now Ezekiel had faithfully fulfilled (see [Ezekiel 3:16-21](#)).

Ezekiel 33:10-20 *The good, the bad, and the repentant.* For those who sincerely despair over their sin, it is never too late to repent ([Ezekiel 33:10-11](#)). God does not delight in judging his people ([Ezekiel 33:11](#)). Past righteousness won't save those who sin; past unrighteousness won't condemn those who repent ([Ezekiel 33:12-20](#); see exposition on [§][Ezekiel 18:19-32](#)).

Ezekiel 33:21-22 *He hears the news and speaks again.* As God had promised (see [Ezekiel 24:26](#)), a messenger arrived in Tel-abib to tell Ezekiel that Jerusalem had fallen. As God had also promised

(see [Ezekiel 24:27](#)), Ezekiel then regained his normal faculty of speech. (Jerusalem had fallen in December of 586 B.C.; the messenger arrived in Babylon about 10 months later.)

[Ezekiel 33:23-29](#) *"Abraham possessed it, but you're no Abraham!"* Favorably comparing themselves to Abraham, the Jews remaining in Israel after its fall were confident that the land was theirs to keep. But their ongoing sins meant that they, too, would be judged ([Ezekiel 33:23-29](#)).

[Ezekiel 33:30-33](#) *"Yes, he was a prophet."* Meanwhile, the exiles in Babylon were politely listening to Ezekiel but failing to heed his warnings. God assured Ezekiel that, as his prophecies came true, they would realize that "a prophet has been among them."

[Ezekiel 34:1-31](#) *Fat shepherds, scrawny sheep, and a Good Shepherd.* God indicted Israel's religious and political leaders, who cared more about themselves than about their people; they were like healthy shepherds watching over sickly sheep ([Ezekiel 34:1-6](#)) or like strong sheep taking advantage of weaker sheep ([Ezekiel 34:17-19](#)). As a result, their flock had been scattered ([Ezekiel 34:5-6](#)).

God would judge these uncaring shepherds ([Ezekiel 34:7-10, 20](#)) and would himself become their loving Shepherd ([Ezekiel 34:11-16](#)). He would "set one shepherd over them, even [his] servant David," who would be "a prince" among them ([Ezekiel 34:23-24](#)) and would also be their shepherd ([Ezekiel 34:25-31](#)). Ezekiel would make several more references to this prince, especially in [Ezekiel 45-46](#).

This "prince" who is also a "shepherd" has been variously identified as Christ, as someone else from the line of David, or as a resurrected David himself (see [Ezekiel 37:25](#)). Christ's identity as the "good shepherd" ([John 10:11-16](#)) suggests that Ezekiel was referring to him. On the other hand, the reference to this shepherd's "sons" ([Ezekiel 46:16](#)) and the rules laid down for his conduct ([Ezekiel 45:9-46:18](#)) suggest someone other than Christ.

On [Ezekiel 34:17, 22](#), see exposition on [Matthew 25:31-46](#).

[Ezekiel 35:1-15](#) *"You want blood? I'll give you blood!"* To prepare the way for a restored Israel, its enemies would be destroyed. Mount Seir (Edom—see [Ezekiel 35:15](#)) is given as an example of those enemies. The Edomites descended from Jacob's brother, Esau, and had a "continual hatred" for Israel ([Ezekiel 35:5](#); see exposition on [Jeremiah 49:7-22](#)). The climax of their hatred came as they helped Babylon destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C. ([Ezekiel 35:5](#)). Since they evidently liked blood, said the Lord, he would give them more blood ([Ezekiel 35:6](#)). Edom had rejoiced at Israel's downfall; the whole world would rejoice when Edom fell ([Ezekiel 35:14-15](#); see [Malachi 1:2-5](#)).

[Ezekiel 36:1-15](#) *"Build bigger barns! You'll need them!"* Because they had delighted in and benefited from Judah's downfall, God would bring shame upon Edom and Israel's other enemies ([Ezekiel 36:1-7](#)). Meanwhile the Israelites will one day receive material blessings beyond measure ([Ezekiel 36:8-15](#)).

[Ezekiel 36:16-38](#) *"You'll also need a new heart."* God had driven Israel from its land because their sins had dishonored his name ([Ezekiel 36:16-19](#)). Yet even in exile they continued to dishonor him ([Ezekiel 36:20](#)). Therefore, not so much for their sake as for his own name's sake, he will one day restore them to their land, give them a new heart, and put his spirit within them, enabling them to obey him ([Ezekiel 36:21-28](#); see exposition on [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)).

While this promise will be fulfilled for the entire nation of Israel during the Millennium, its fulfillment is foreshadowed by the Spirit's indwelling of all believers in Christ.

[Ezekiel 37:1-28](#) *Israel's dry bones restored.* In a vision, Ezekiel saw a valley filled with dry bones. God instructed him to prophesy to the bones, after which they would come to life ([Ezekiel 37:1-6](#)). Ezekiel spoke as commanded, and the bones came together but had no life in them ([Ezekiel 37:7-8](#)). He spoke again, and the breath of the Lord came into the bones, and they became "a great army" ([Ezekiel 37:9-10](#)). God explained that the dry bones represented the scattered Jewish exiles. One day he will gather them from their "graves of exile" and bring them back to their homeland ([Ezekiel 37:11-12](#)). He will breathe his Spirit into them, bringing spiritual renewal ([Ezekiel 37:13-14](#)).

Ezekiel was then told to join two sticks together and explain that this meant Israel and Judah would one day be reunited under one king, "my servant David" ([Ezekiel 37:15-28](#); see exposition on ^s[Ezekiel 34:1-31](#)).

Following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, many Christians have come to interpret [Ezekiel 37:7-10](#) as a two-part prophecy: The physical restoration of Israel ([Ezekiel 37:7-8](#)) occurred in 1948; the spiritual restoration ([Ezekiel 37:9-10](#)) awaits Christ's second coming.

[Ezekiel 38:1-23](#) *God and the godless Gog.* The Lord then described a future attack on the restored Israel by an array of enemy nations ([Ezekiel 38-39](#)), led by "Gog of the land of Magog" ([Ezekiel 38:2](#)). These nations would join together to attack peace-loving Israel ([Ezekiel 38:8-16](#)). God warned, however, that he would use their attack on his people to bring glory to himself ([Ezekiel 38:16-17](#)), defeating them with natural forces and mutiny ([Ezekiel 38:18-23](#)).

References to a restored Israel ([Ezekiel 38:11, 14](#)) and to the "distant future" ([Ezekiel 38:8, 16](#)) suggest that the defeat of Gog will come during the Great Tribulation in the end times. Some identify it with Armageddon, at the end of the Tribulation (see [Rev. 14:14-20](#); [Rev. 16:13-16](#); [Rev. 19:17-19](#)). The book of Revelation mentions an attack by "Gog and Magog" at the end of the Millennium, which follows the Tribulation (see [Rev. 20:8](#)). Since many OT prophecies have dual fulfillments, Ezekiel could have had both events in view.

While some of Gog's coconspirators ([Ezekiel 38:5-6](#)) can be identified as modern-day enemies of Israel, the nationality of Gog himself is not clear. References to "Rosh" ([Ezekiel 38:2-3](#), NASB) and the "distant north" ([Ezekiel 38:15](#)) lead some to see a Russian connection. Josephus identified Magog with the area north and northeast of the Black Sea now occupied by Russia and other former Soviet nations.

[Ezekiel 39:1-20](#) *When Magog falls, the birds will feast.* God will "drive" Magog to its battle against Israel but will then bring sudden defeat upon it, bringing glory to his name ([Ezekiel 39:1-8](#)). So great will be the slaughter, it will take seven years to burn all the weapons and seven months to bury the dead ([Ezekiel 39:9-16](#)). Scavenging animals will have a feast ([Ezekiel 39:17-20](#); see [Rev. 19:17-21](#)).

[Ezekiel 39:21-29](#) *"All nations will know me."* Following Magog's defeat, Israel and all nations will acknowledge God ([Ezekiel 39:21-24](#)). Ezekiel repeated God's promise to restore Israel to their land and to pour out his Spirit upon them ([Ezekiel 39:25-29](#)).

[Ezekiel 40:1-4](#) *The man with the measuring rod.* Ezekiel ended his book with a vision he saw in 572 B.C. describing life in the Millennium ([Ezekiel 40-48](#)), which will center around the restored

Temple. As his vision began, he encountered an angelic messenger with a measuring rod, with which he would proceed to measure the Temple in great detail. Ezekiel was to note carefully what he saw and report it to Israel. (Though Ezekiel would have given these Temple plans to his fellow exiles before they returned to Judah, there is no indication that they used them in rebuilding the Temple at that time.)

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

[Ezekiel 40:5-46](#) *Measuring the Temple courtyards.* The angel began the tour of this future Temple by measuring the wall surrounding it. Taking to heart the admonition to pay close attention, Ezekiel noted that the measuring rod was six cubits long, but that each cubit was actually a cubit and a handbreadth, making the rod about 10.5 feet long ([Ezekiel 40:5](#)). The wall around the Temple courtyard will be one rod high and one rod wide. Ezekiel described the inner and outer courtyards and the various rooms and alcoves surrounding the Temple, including areas for preparing sacrifices ([Ezekiel 40:38-43](#)) and rooms for singers and priests ([Ezekiel 40:44-46](#)). There will be gates into the outer and inner courtyards on all four sides. Between the Temple and the western wall will be a large building of an unspecified nature ([Ezekiel 41:12](#)).

[Ezekiel 40:47-41:26](#) *Measuring the Temple.* The inner courtyard, in front of the Temple, will be 100 long cubits (175 feet) square. In the center of this courtyard will be the altar (see exposition on ^s[Ezekiel 43:13-27](#)). Then comes the Temple, with its "foyer" ([Ezekiel 40:48-49](#)), its sanctuary or Holy Place ([Ezekiel 41:1-3](#)), and the Most Holy Place ([Ezekiel 41:4](#)). Surrounding the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place on three sides are three floors of 30 rooms each, which will probably be used for storage. On each side of these rooms will be a wall, six cubits (10.5 feet) thick on the first floor. As each successive level of rooms becomes wider, the wall will become thinner ([Ezekiel 41:5-11](#); compare [1 Kings 6:5-6](#)).

Ezekiel described the Temple's interior decorations ([Ezekiel 41:21-26](#)). Apparently the only furniture inside the Temple will be the altar of incense ([Ezekiel 41:22](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

[Ezekiel 42:1-20](#) *Other buildings and the big picture.* On the north and south sides of the Temple proper will be more priests' chambers, where the Temple garments are to be stored and the sacred portion of the sacrifices eaten ([Ezekiel 42:1-14](#)).

The angel then took Ezekiel out through the east gate and measured the entire Temple area ([Ezekiel 42:15-20](#)). The KJV and NKJV give the overall dimensions as 500 rods, or one mile square, in [Ezekiel 42:15-19](#), but in [Ezekiel 42:20](#) give the dimensions as 500 *cubits* or 875 feet square, which matches the dimensions previously given. The NLT and NIV avoid this apparent contradiction by following the Septuagint, which gives the dimensions as 500 cubits (875 feet) throughout [Ezekiel 42:15-20](#). The Temple area can be visualized, then, as being about the length of three football fields on each side.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

[Ezekiel 43:1-5](#) *Suddenly, his glory returns!* The glory cloud of God, which earlier had departed from the Temple through the eastern gate ([Ezekiel 10:19](#); [Ezekiel 11:23](#)), now returned through the same gate to take up residence in the Temple ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](#)). The departure of God's glory will not be permanent.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

[Ezekiel 43:6-12](#) *"I want to dwell with them, if only . . ."* Having returned to his millennial Temple, the Lord declared that the Temple symbolized his desire to dwell with his people forever, if only they would recognize his holiness and cease profaning his name ([Ezekiel 43:6-9](#)). Ezekiel was to teach the people everything he had learned in his vision, with the hope that this would lead them to true and lasting repentance ([Ezekiel 43:10-12](#)).

[Ezekiel 43:13-27](#) *The altar and its sacrifices.* God then described the altar and the ceremony of sacrifices related to it, which closely resemble those originally prescribed by the law.

Why there will be sacrifices in the Millennium is not clear, considering the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for sin (see [Hebrews 10:11-18](#)). Perhaps they will be a memorial of God's great work of salvation through Christ, to show

- the holiness of God
- the seriousness of sin
- the costliness of salvation
- the necessity of new birth

While sacrifices could serve such a commemorative purpose during the Millennium, this passage has led many scholars to conclude that Ezekiel's millennial Temple represents only a figurative shadow—shown to him in language he could understand—of the New Jerusalem described by John in [Rev. 21:1-22:5](#). The fact that the New Jerusalem will have no Temple would seem to support this view. Other scholars believe, however, that the "new heaven and a new earth" described by John will follow the Millennium, thus allowing for a literal Temple during the Millennium itself.

[Ezekiel 44:1-3](#) *The eastern gate: Do not open.* The Lord then brought Ezekiel to the eastern gate of the Temple and declared that it must remain closed, since that was the gate through which he had entered the Temple. Perhaps this was meant to be a guarantee that God's glory would never again leave his people. Special privileges regarding the eastern gate were granted to the "prince" (see exposition on [Ezekiel 34:1-31](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

[Ezekiel 44:4-31](#) *Millennial priests? Only those zealous Zadokites!* Specific rules will govern who can enter the Temple. Non-Israelites who do not love the Lord will be absolutely excluded ([Ezekiel 44:4-9](#)). Levites, because of their long history of unfaithfulness, will be allowed to minister to the people, but "they may not approach [God] to minister as priests. They may not touch any of [his] holy things or the holy offerings" ([Ezekiel 44:10-14](#)). Only the sons of Zadok, who had remained faithful during Israel's times of rebellion, will serve as priests ([Ezekiel 44:15-31](#); see [1 Kings 2:28-35](#)). They will teach the people about ritual holiness ([Ezekiel 44:23](#)), will be judges ([Ezekiel 44:24](#)), and will receive no land in the millennial kingdom, relying on offerings for their support ([Ezekiel 44:28-31](#)).

Gentiles will acknowledge God as Lord (see [Ezekiel 36:23](#); [Ezekiel 38:23](#)) and will be full participants in his ultimate plan of salvation (see exposition on [Isaiah 56:1-8](#)).

Ezekiel 45:1-8 *Special soil.* A parcel of land surrounding the Temple, about eight miles square, will be set aside for priests and Levites ([Ezekiel 45:1-5](#)), for the city of Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 45:6](#)), and for the prince ([Ezekiel 45:7-8](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

Ezekiel 45:9-46:18 *Religious rules for prince and people.* Ezekiel described various duties of the millennial prince and his people. The princes should set an example of honesty and fairness in financial matters ([Ezekiel 45:9-12](#)). The people are to give the prince a portion—much less than a tithe—to maintain the Temple ([Ezekiel 45:13-17](#)). As in the law, the bull used for the offering of atonement must be without blemish, recalling Christ's perfect sacrifice ([Ezekiel 45:18-20](#)). The Passover and the Festival of Shelters will both be celebrated during the Millennium ([Ezekiel 45:21-25](#)), as will the Sabbath and other festival days ([Ezekiel 46:1-11](#)).

While the outer eastern gate to the Temple area will be kept shut (see [Ezekiel 44:1](#)), the inner eastern gate will be opened on the Sabbath so that the prince can observe the sacrifices ([Ezekiel 46:1-8](#)). After he leaves, the gate will remain open till sunset. When he makes a freewill offering, however, the gate will be closed as soon as he leaves ([Ezekiel 46:12](#)).

On crowded feast days, the people—including the prince—are to leave through the gate opposite to where they entered, presumably to avoid congestion ([Ezekiel 46:9-10](#)).

The prince is to follow strict guidelines concerning his personal wealth and is forbidden to exploit his people ([Ezekiel 46:16-18](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

Ezekiel 46:19-24 *Kitchens for priests and people.* In a passage that would seem to fit better following [Ezekiel 42:14](#), Ezekiel described two kitchens close to the Temple, reserved for preparing the priests' sacrifices ([Ezekiel 46:19-20](#)); and four kitchens in the corners of the outer courtyard, for the sacrifices of the people ([Ezekiel 46:21-24](#)).

Ezekiel 47:1-12 *A river of life and healing.* A river of water deep enough to swim in will flow out of the Temple to the east into the Kidron Valley and on to the sea (presumably the Dead Sea). It will give life to trees along its banks, which will in turn provide nourishment and healing. The apostle John would describe a similar river in his vision of the New Jerusalem (see [Rev. 22:1-2](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

Ezekiel 47:13-48:29 *Territory for the tribes and Temple.* God then defined the geography of Israel's restored land, which was to be a permanent inheritance for them and for "the foreigners who have joined you" ([Ezekiel 47:22-23](#)). The land will extend from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Dead Sea on the east, and from north of Sidon in Lebanon to Kadesh in the south ([Ezekiel 47:15-20](#)). He specified the territories of the 12 tribes ([Ezekiel 48:1-7](#), [23-29](#)), which will surround the territory set aside for Jerusalem, the Temple, and the lands of priests and Levites ([Ezekiel 48:8-22](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Facts on the Millennial Temple](#)

Ezekiel 48:30-35 *The city's name: The Lord Is There.* Ezekiel's recorded prophecies end with a last glimpse of restored Jerusalem, a four-square city, 1.5 miles long on each side, with 12 gates, each

named for one of Israel's 12 tribes (compare [Rev. 21:12-14](#)). Because of God's permanent presence within its walls, the city will be named, "The LORD Is There."

EZEKIEL

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM EZEKIEL)

Key Fact: Prophesied from exile in Babylon concerning the reason for Israel's fall and its hope for the future

Father: Buzi ([Ezekiel 1:3](#))

Wife: Unnamed ([Ezekiel 24:18](#))

Occupation: Priest and prophet ([Ezekiel 1:3](#); [Ezekiel 2:3-4](#))

Total Bible References: 93

Key References: [Ezekiel 1-48](#)

Ezekiel Speaks

My wife and I were newlyweds when Nebuchadnezzar took us away from our homeland as captives. How good it was to see Daniel, who had suffered the same fate some eight years earlier. God has certainly elevated him; as I write this he holds a position second only to the king himself. ([Ezekiel 1:1](#); [Daniel 1:1-6](#); [Daniel 6:1-3](#))

I was only 25 upon arriving in Babylon. Then, five years later, beside the Kebar River, the Lord called me into full-time service. A watchman on the wall! That was to be my assignment. What an ordination ceremony it turned out to be, with angelic cherubim in attendance! ([Ezekiel 1:3-28](#); [Ezekiel 3:17](#); [Ezekiel 10:1](#); [Ezekiel 40:1](#))

My wife was so proud of me. How we loved each other! She was the dearest thing on earth to me. Then, seven years later, with no warning, God suddenly removed her! I still remember those dreadful words: "Son of man, I am going to take away your dearest treasure. Suddenly she will die." And as if that were not hard enough, he forbade me to give even a hint of my unbearable sorrow! With a heavy heart, the next morning I told the people what was going to happen. Then, after what was certainly the longest and most anxious day of my life, my precious wife died. Yet with God's help the next day at her funeral, I restrained my emotions just as he had commanded. ([Ezekiel 24:15-18](#))

God then consoled my broken heart, explaining that all this was to be a sign to my people in Babylon, for on the very day of her funeral, Nebuchadnezzar's armies were laying siege to Jerusalem! In other words, the joy of my people's lives—their Holy City—would be removed just as my joy had been removed. ([Ezekiel 24:1, 15-27](#); [Ezekiel 33:21-22](#))

In reality, of course, my supernatural visit to the Temple had already shown me the need for divine judgment. The blasphemy and filth occurring right in the house of God had sunk to a new low! And then, to my horror, I witnessed the departure of God's glory cloud. ([Ezekiel 8:1-16](#); [Ezekiel 10:1-19](#); [Ezekiel 11:23](#))

I know I shall die here in Babylon, a lonely widower. But God has not left me without hope. Through the visions he gives me, the grievous past gives way to the glorious future. Think of it: All of our foes will be defeated, and we shall be resurrected, redeemed, and returned to the Promised Land! ([Ezekiel 34:28-29](#); [Ezekiel 36:24-25](#))

Then a beautiful new Temple will be built, with a life-giving river flowing from it, purifying the Dead Sea and causing the Jordan valley to blossom as a rose! Then, Jerusalem will be elevated and

will become the worship center of the world! ([Ezekiel 40-42](#); [Ezekiel 47:1-12](#); [Ezekiel 48:30-35](#); [Isaiah 35:1-2](#))

But to me, the most exciting vision was the one showing the return of God's glory cloud through the eastern gate, never again to depart! ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Ezekiel

- Ezekiel was commissioned to be a watchman, warning his people of impending danger; as Christians, we have the same commission ([Ezekiel 3:16-21](#); [1 Tim. 4:1-3, 6](#); [Hebrews 13:17](#)).
- He faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed God's word to a hard-hearted and rebellious people ([Ezekiel 2:3-4](#)) in spite of great personal difficulties and heartache:
 - He had been taken from his homeland as a captive ([Ezekiel 1:1](#); see [Psalm 137:1-6](#)).
 - His beloved wife suddenly died ([Ezekiel 24:15-18](#)).
 - For a long time, he was unable to exercise his faculty of speech in a normal way ([Ezekiel 3:26](#); [Ezekiel 24:27](#); [Ezekiel 33:21-22](#)).
- But Ezekiel had learned what Paul would learn—what we should learn today: "[God's] gracious favor is all you need. [God's] power works best in your weakness" ([2 Cor. 12:9](#)).
- Ezekiel learned from the very beginning how to feed on God's Word ([Ezekiel 3:1-3](#)). We should seek spiritual nourishment from the same source ([2 Tim. 2:15](#); [2 Tim. 3:14-17](#)).

Key Verses

"Then he added, 'Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself. Then go to your people in exile and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says!' Do this whether they listen to you or not' " ([Ezekiel 3:10-11](#)).