

Notes & Outlines

EZEKIEL

J. Vernon McGee

EZEKIEL

WRITER: Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a priest (Ezekiel 1:3) but never served in that office, as he was still a young man when he was taken captive during the reign of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:10-16). Daniel was taken captive in the first captivity during Jehoiakim's reign, about eight years before Ezekiel was taken captive.

Ezekiel was contemporary with Jeremiah and Daniel. Jeremiah was an old man who spoke to the remnant that remained in the land; Daniel spoke in the court of the king of Babylon; Ezekiel spoke to the captives who had been brought to the rivers of Babylon. While the other captives wept when they remembered Zion, Ezekiel exulted in the greatest visions ever given to any prophet.

HIS MESSAGE:

His message was the most spiritual of the prophets, as he dealt more with the person of God. Someone has said, "Ezekiel is the prophet of the Spirit, as Isaiah is the prophet of the Son, and Jeremiah the prophet of the Father."

During the first years of the captivity, the false prophets said that the people would be returned to Jerusalem and that the city would not be destroyed. It was not until the final deportation, during Zedekiah's reign, that the city was destroyed — some eleven years after Ezekiel was taken captive.

Jeremiah had sent a message to Babylon (Jeremiah 29) saying that the city would be destroyed. Ezekiel confirmed this message and warned the people that they must turn to God before they could return to Jerusalem.

Ezekiel began his ministry five years after his captivity, when he was about 30 years old.

HIS METHOD:

In many ways he spoke in the darkest days of the nation. He stood at the bottom of the valley in the darkest corner. He had to meet the false hope given by the false prophets and the indifference and the despondency begotten in the days of sin and disaster. The people would not listen to him or his message. Therefore, he resorted to a new method. Instead of *speaking* in parables, he acted them out (Ezekiel 24:24). We have had "flagpole sitters" and "walkathons" in our day, which attract the attention of the public. This sort of thing was the method of Ezekiel and is indicative of a day of decay.

HIS MEANING:

Ezekiel was the prophet of the glory of the Lord. Three prophets of Israel spoke when they were out of the land: Ezekiel, Daniel, and John. Each wrote an apocalypse. Although they used highly symbolic language, they saw the brightest light and held the highest hope. Ezekiel saw the Shekinah glory of the Lord leave Solomon's temple, and he saw the return of the glory of the Lord which was projected into the future during the kingdom.

The meaning of Ezekiel is seen in the coming glory during the kingdom. Ezekiel looked beyond the sufferings of Christ to "the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11).

OUTLINE

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III. **Glory of the Lord; judgment of nations**, Chapters 25 — 32

- A. Against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Chapter 25
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COMMENT:

I. **Glory of the Lord; commission of the prophet**, Chapters 1 — 7

A. **Display of the glory**, Chapter 1

v. 1 — “I saw visions of God” — compare Ezekiel to the other captives who said, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion” (Psalm 137:1). What a contrast — visions and weeping!

vv. 3-28 — Ezekiel has the most profound vision of the glory of God. “If anyone asks whether the vision is lucid, I confess its obscurity, and that I can scarcely understand it” (Calvin).

It is not a vision of this mechanical age — this is not the airplane or the missile. It is not a vision of the *person* of God — He is not seen here. It is a vision of the *presence* of God; it is a theophany. The God

of glory is riding triumphantly in His own chariot, unseen by mortal man. Several striking features are observable:

1. Flashing light (vv. 4, 13, 14), brighter than the sun, similar to an atomic explosion: “Our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29); “God is light” (1 John 1:5); when Christ confronted Paul on the road to Damascus, he saw “a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun” (Acts 26:13).
2. The glory of God (v. 28). His presence is there. “No man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18). Ezekiel saw more than did Moses, David, Isaiah, or Daniel.
3. Vision of cherubim (vv. 5-12, 15-25). These living creatures resemble the description of cherubim.
4. Wheels (vv. 15, 16) — ceaseless activity and energy of divine power. It is God moving forward; His providence.
5. Intelligent purpose — “face of a man” (v. 10) and “eyes” (v. 18) are anthropomorphic terms, ascribing to God bodily attributes. “Appearance of a man” is prophetic of incarnation (v. 26).
6. Four faces (v. 10, cf. Revelation 4:6-8) remind us of the four Gospels in which Christ is revealed in four aspects: in His kingship — symbolized by the lion (Matthew); as a servant — symbolized by the ox (Mark); in His perfect humanity — symbolized by the face of a man (Luke); in His deity — symbolized by the flying eagle (John).

B. Prophet’s call and enduement with power for the office, Chapter 2

vv. 1, 2 — The Holy Spirit comes upon Ezekiel in preparation for his office.

vv. 3-5 — The prophet’s call — he is to speak for God, but will not be heard or obeyed.

C. Prophet’s preparation; office as watchman, Chapter 3

vv. 7, 8 — God warns of the reaction to and the reception of the message of Ezekiel.

vv. 9-14 — God prepares Ezekiel for the resistance of his people.

v. 15 — He is a prophet to the captives.

vv. 17-19 — As the watchman on the city walls, Ezekiel is responsible for giving God’s warning.

D. Judgment of Jerusalem, Chapter 4

(Jerusalem is not destroyed at this time.)

v. 1 — Sign of the tile.

vv. 4, 5 — In symbolic action, the prophet lies 390 days on his left side and eats defiled bread.

v. 6 — The prophet lies forty days on his right side (one day equals one year), depicting the coming siege.

E. Sign of prophet shaving hair, Chapter 5

vv. 1-5 — The shaved off hair, divided into three parts, depicts the three judgments of Jerusalem.

vv. 12, 17 — The judgments are spelled out.

F. Sword to fall upon Jerusalem; remnant to be saved, Chapter 6

v. 8 — The remnant.

G. Prophecy of final destruction of Jerusalem, Chapter 7

v. 12 — “The time is come.”

II. Glory of the Lord; complete captivity of Jerusalem and Israel; departure of the glory, Chapters 8 — 24

A. Vision of the glory; temple defilement by idolatry explains its destruction, Chapter 8

vv. 2-4 — The vision transports Ezekiel back to Jerusalem. God’s glory appears in the temple at Jerusalem.

vv. 16-18 — The exposure of the idolatry practiced in the temple explains why God will destroy it.

B. Shekinah glory prepares to leave temple, Chapter 9

v. 2 — Six men (angels) execute judgment.

v. 3 — The Shekinah glory leaves the cherubim and moves to the threshold of the temple.

v. 4 — A remnant is to be spared.

vv. 5-11 — Frightful judgment is to be executed.

C. Shekinah glory fills holy place; leaves the temple, Chapter 10

v. 4 — The glory fills the temple for the last time.

vv. 19-22 — The glory lifts up from the temple and stands at the east gate.

D. Prophecy against rulers of Jerusalem, Chapter 11

vv. 1-7 — Sins of the rulers are labeled.

vv. 8-13 — Judgment of the rulers.

vv. 16-20 — A remnant shall be preserved and returned to the land.

vv. 22, 23 — Shekinah glory departs from Jerusalem and stands over the Mount of Olives.

E. Ezekiel enacts destruction of Jerusalem, Chapter 12

vv. 1-6 — Because the people will not hear the prophet, he is to adopt a sensational and strange method.

vv. 7-16 — He locks himself in this house, digs through the wall, and takes his possessions out through the excavation.

vv. 17-28 — Then he is to announce the full captivity of Jerusalem.

F. Prophecy against pseudo-prophets and prophetesses, Chapter 13

v. 16 — These false prophets predict peace for Jerusalem. Since Nebuchadnezzar had besieged the city twice and had not destroyed it, they assume he will not.

vv. 17-23 — God condemns the lying prophetesses.

G. Prophecy against idolatry of elders; certain destruction of Jerusalem, Chapter 14

vv. 1-3 — The elders are idolatrous.

vv. 12-20 — Even Noah, Daniel, and Job could not deliver Jerusalem. (Daniel was prime minister at this time in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.)

H. Vision of the vine, Chapter 15

The vine is the symbol of the nation Israel (Isaiah 5:7).

vv. 2-5 — A vine is not good for lumber or for fuel.

vv. 6-8 — Neither is Israel in her sin of any value, but is fit only for destruction.

I. Jerusalem likened to abandoned baby adopted by God, Chapter 16

*(This is God's estimate of every sinner that He saves.
Read this chapter carefully.)*

The origin of Jerusalem is likened to an abandoned baby, deserted, dirty, repulsive, and obviously illegitimate. Jehovah adopted this baby,

cleaned her up, raised and trained her with loving care and concern. Then this baby girl grew up to play the harlot and deny the only One who befriended, loved, and nurtured her. Jehovah must judge, discipline, and purify her — but He has not forsaken her. He made a covenant with her and He will yet fulfill it (v. 53).

J. Riddle of two eagles, Chapter 17

vv. 12-24 — The answer to the riddle: The king of Babylon will besiege Jerusalem again. He will destroy the city and the temple and will take Zedekiah and all but a small remnant of the people into captivity.

K. Wages of sin is death; Jerusalem is the awful example, Chapter 18

(Read this chapter carefully.)

Life and death are set before Israel. (This is true of every person.) *Live* or *alive* occur thirteen times in this chapter. *Die*, *dieth*, or *death* occur fourteen times.

v. 4 — “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” omits no one.

v. 9 — God offers life.

vv. 31, 32 — God is righteous in all that He does.

L. Elegy of Jehovah over princes of Israel, Chapter 19

This is a sad song depicting the sordid history of the nation.

M. Review of Israel’s long history of sins; future judgment and restoration, Chapter 20

Over the black background of their failure (from Egypt to the Babylonian captivity), God writes in letters of light His redeeming promise and prophecy to judge and restore them to the land in full blessing.

vv. 33-38 — Israel, regathered from all nations, will enter into the Great Tribulation. The judgment will determine who of Israel will enter the Millennium.

vv. 42-44 — A glorious millennial prophecy.

N. King of Babylon to remove last king of Davidic line until Messiah comes, Chapter 21

v. 2 — Ezekiel is still prophesying against Jerusalem and Israel.

v. 9 — A sword is sharpened to judge the people and the land.

v. 25 — This is a judgment against Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and

Zedekiah. It also looks forward to the coming of the willful king.

v. 26 — Crown and scepter are removed from the house of David.

v. 27 — Crown and scepter will be returned to the Messiah (see Matthew 1:1; 2:2-6). This is a remarkable prophecy.

O. Review of abominations of Jerusalem, Chapter 22

The leaders were involved in apostasy and gross sins — princes (vv. 6, 27), prophets (v. 25), and priests (v. 26). There was not a man to be found who would stand in the gap (v. 30).

P. Parable of two sisters — Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem), Chapter 23

Both the northern and southern kingdoms were playing the harlot (spiritual adultery is idolatry).

Q. Parable of the boiling pot, Chapter 24

Jerusalem is to be burned. Ezekiel's wife dies and he is forbidden to mourn. Ezekiel is a sign to the captives in this, as Jerusalem is to be destroyed and there is to be no mourning.

III. Glory of the Lord; judgment of nations, Chapters 25 — 32

A. Against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Chapter 25

v. 3 — Ammonites applauded the enemy that destroyed Israel. They were allies.

v. 4 — The same enemy destroyed Ammon (see Jeremiah 49:6).

vv. 8-11 — The prophecy against Moab (see Jeremiah 48:47).

vv. 12-14 — The prophecy against Edom (see Ezekiel 35:9).

vv. 15-17 — The prophecy against the Philistines.

B. Against Tyre, Chapters 26 — 28

(Marvelous example of the exactness of the literal fulfillment of prophecy.)

Chapter 26

v. 3 — Because God is against Tyre, there will be many nations that will come against her.

vv. 4, 5 — This prophecy waited centuries for fulfillment. Nebuchadnezzar first came against Tyre and destroyed it according to vv. 7-11 (read these verses).

Tyre was the great city of Phoenicians (called a "strong city" in Joshua 19:29). Hiram, king of Tyre, was a friend of David and gave

him and Solomon valuable assistance in getting materials for the temple and other buildings in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Kings 5). See other references to Tyre: 1 Kings 7:13, 14; 9:27, 28; 2 Chronicles 2:3, 11; Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 27:2-6; 47:4; Joel 3:4-6; Amos 1:9, 10.

Nebuchadnezzar's invasion did not go so far as to "scrape her dust from her" (v. 4) nor perform the prophecy of vv. 12-14. It was about 300 years later that Alexander the Great came and fulfilled this portion. After the return of Tyrians from Babylonian captivity, they decided to rebuild their city on an island and forget all about the mainland. Since they were a seafaring power, they could better protect themselves on an island. To conquer this island city, Alexander made a causeway to the island by using the debris of the old city — thus fulfilling literally the prophecy (v. 12).

v. 14 — The author saw nets spread along the ruins of ancient Tyre.

vv. 15-21 — Lamentation over Tyre — the nations all did business with Tyre and mourned its passing (cf. Revelation 18).

Chapter 27 — Lamentation for Tyre. Tyre is compared to a great ship that is wrecked.

Chapter 28 — Judgment of the prince and king of Tyre and Sidon. The prophecy looks beyond the local ruler to the one who is behind the kingdoms of the world — Satan.

vv. 1-10 — Prince of Tyrus is a type of the "man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). Is he an Israelite? Notice "uncircumcised" in v. 10.

vv. 11-19 — This section gives the best description in all Scripture on the origin of Satan (see Isaiah 14:12-17). Both passages look beyond the local ruler.

v. 12 — Satan was Lucifer, son of the morning, the highest creature God ever created. He was wiser than all other creatures, and the most beautiful.

v. 13 — He was a musical instrument.

v. 14 — He was "the anointed cherub" next to the throne of God.

v. 15 — "Iniquity was found in thee" (see Isaiah 14:12-17). He set his will over the will of God.

v. 16 — He will be judged. He is only a creature.

vv. 20-24 — Judgment is pronounced on Sidon, but not complete destruction. Today Tyre is gone; Sidon lives on.

vv. 25, 26 — Israel will be restored to the land in peace.

C. **Against Egypt**, Chapters 29 — 32

Chapter 29 — This proudest of all nations, that had never been destroyed, is to be reduced to the lowest level.

vv. 14, 15 — These are conditions of Egypt today.

Chapter 30

vv. 4, 5 — Egypt is to be destroyed.

vv. 13-19 — Great cities are to become ruins and rubble. Noph (KJV) is Memphis; No is Thebes; Sin is Pelusium; Aven is Heliopolis.

Chapter 31 — Against Pharaoh personally.

Chapter 32 — Lamentation for Pharaoh and Egypt.

IV. **Glory of the Lord and coming kingdom**, Chapters 33 — 48

A. **Recommission of the prophet**, Chapters 33, 34

Chapter 33

vv. 2-20 — Now, since the temple is destroyed, Ezekiel is to tell the captives how to live in captivity.

v. 21 — The shocking announcement comes that Jerusalem is destroyed — after the false hope given by the pseudo-prophets. (In 587 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed.)

v. 33 — They know now that Ezekiel is a prophet of God.

Chapter 34 — The false shepherds have failed, but God will send the true Shepherd.

vv. 1-10 — Description of false shepherds.

vv. 11-31 — The true Shepherd will gather the scattered flock, restore them to the land, and feed them.

vv. 23, 24 — The true Shepherd, who is Christ, will feed them. During His earthly ministry, Jesus was the greatest teacher. He will be the greatest teacher in the future kingdom.

B. **Restoration of Israel**, Chapters 35, 36

Chapter 35 — Mount Seir is Edom (the people of Esau). It must be judged and removed before Israel can be restored to the land in peace. The reason is given in v. 5.

vv. 3, 4 — Desolation of Edom.

v. 9 — It is to be perpetual desolation.

Chapter 36 — Past sins must be judged and forgiven.

vv. 22-38 — Promise of a glorious future for Israel: Israel shall be restored, redeemed, and the land shall become like the Garden of Eden. “A new heart” (v. 26) is equivalent to being “born again.”

C. Resurrection of Israel, Chapter 37

vv. 1-4 — In a vision, Ezekiel is taken to a valley of dry bones. The bones are identified — “the whole house of Israel” (v. 11).

vv. 5-10 — Note the three stages of development of the bones.

- (1) Scattered and very dry (v. 2).
- (2) Come together and covered with flesh (v. 8) — without life, only corpses.
- (3) Life comes into the dead bodies (vv. 9, 10).

In Ezekiel’s day, Israel was scattered and dry. In our day, Israel has become a nation (1948) — with no spiritual life, but a national entity. In the future, Israel will turn back to God. Also the Old Testament saints will be raised for the Millennium.

vv. 15-28 — The two sticks typify the northern and southern kingdoms which will again become one nation. David will be raised to rule over it (v. 24).

D. Repudiation of Gog and Magog, Chapters 38, 39

Chapter 38 — That Gog and Magog may be identified with Russia is supported by a threefold reason:

1. Linguistic phenomenon — (vv. 2, 3) “Gog” is a word for ruler, meaning “roof” (the man on the top). Dean Stanley, in his exhaustive *History of the Eastern Church*, published a half century ago, has a note, founded on Gesenius, to the effect that the name “Russ” (Hebrew “Rosh”) occurs in v. 3, mistranslated “chief” in the English version. Thus, says Stanley, it is the only name of a modern nation found in the Old Testament. Bishop Lowther says, “Rosh, taken as a proper name, in Ezekiel signifies the inhabitants of Scythia, from whom the modern Russians derived their name.”

Josephus said that Magog (Genesis 10:1, 2) “founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who by the Greeks were called Scythians.” Russia was called Muscovy, derived from Meshech, until Ivan the Terrible (1530-84) assumed title of “Czar of Russia.”

2. Geographic phenomenon — (v. 6) “North quarters” means north of Israel. Directions in Scripture are in relationship to the land of Israel. Russia is north of Israel and fills the entire area. Assyria

in ancient times is a type of Russia (as Babylon is a type of the restored Roman Empire) in the “latter days.”

3. Philosophical or ideological phenomenon — God’s mercy was extended to all nations of the past which were polytheistic: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, etc. But here it is stated from the beginning, “I am against thee, O Gog” (v. 3). Russia is the first nation of the world to adopt an atheistic philosophy of life and government. “It is possible,” said Plutarch, “to find cities without walls, without kings, without wealth, without letters, without theaters, but a city without a temple or that practiceth not worship no man ever saw.”

Stalin boasted, “We have deposed the czars of the earth, we shall now dethrone the Lord of Heaven.” Also from Moscow has come this: “Our rocket has bypassed the moon. It is nearing the sun, and we have not discovered God. We have turned out lights in heaven that no man will be able to put on again. We are breaking the yoke of the Gospel, the opium of the masses. Let us go forth and Christ shall be relegated to mythology.”

v. 4 — “Put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth” indicates that God will bring Russia down into Israel at the proper time. He is baiting hooks for them. Several are evident today:

1. Russia needs a warm water entrance into the waterways of the world. Israel offers that.
2. The oil deposits of the Near East are essential for the survival of modern nations.
3. The mineral deposits in the Dead Sea are so great that they cannot be evaluated on today’s market.

vv. 5, 6 — There are many allies with Russia — Ethiopia, Asian Cush, Gomer (in the Talmud, Gomer is stated to be the Germani, the Germans), Togarmah (Turkey). “And many peoples with thee” indicates that this is not an exhaustive list.

When will Russia come down?

v. 8 — “In the latter years” and “in the latter days” (v. 16) places the time of this event in the Great Tribulation period. Probably in the midst of the 7-year period (Daniel’s 70th week, cf. Daniel 9:20-27), Russia will trigger the Great Tribulation by invading Israel and thereby breaking the false peace made by Antichrist.

What will be the results?

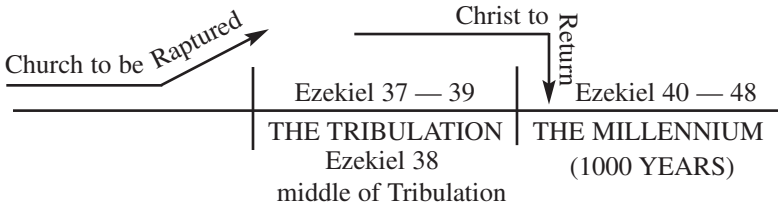
The defeat of Gog is described in great detail in Ezekiel 38 and 39. The slaughter is graphically given in Ezekiel 39:1-24.

Chapter 39

v. 2 — “Leave but the sixth part of thee” is literally “I will six thee” or, better still, “I will afflict thee with six plagues.” These plagues are listed in Ezekiel 38:22 as pestilence, blood, overflowing rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. This is the way God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. These are warnings (see Luke 17:29, 30; Jude 7).

What is the reason for the judgment on Gog?

He has denied and blasphemed God. God will get glory to His name (Ezekiel 38:16, 23; 39:22).



E. Rebuilt temple, Chapters 40 — 42

Ezekiel returns to the land in a vision and sees the millennial temple. The Mosaic system is restored (Ezekiel 40:39-42) in reinstating the Levitical liturgy, the burnt offering, sin offering, and trespass offering.

F. Return of the glory of the Lord, Chapters 43 — 48

Chapter 43

vv. 1-5 — The glory of God comes from the east and fills the temple. This is the return of Christ to the earth.

vv. 18-27 — The sacrifices offered will be memorial in character. They will look back to the work of Christ on the cross, as the offerings of the Old Testament anticipated His sacrifice.

Chapter 44

vv. 2, 3 — Some consider that the closing of the east gate in the wall surrounding present-day Jerusalem is a fulfillment of this prophecy.

v. 4 — Glory fills the house.

Chapter 45

vv. 18-22 — The Passover is kept.

Chapter 46 — Offerings and feasts are restored.

Chapter 47 — River of life that flows from the temple.

vv. 1, 2 — Notice the source of the river — water is a type of the

Holy Spirit.

vv. 3-12 — Notice the course of the river. Many spiritual lessons may be drawn from this passage. “The waters were to the ankles” (v. 3) — the walk of the believer in the Spirit. “To the knees” (v. 4) speaks of prayer. “To the loins” (v. 4) speaks of service (“gird up your loins”). “Waters to swim in” (v. 5) indicates fullness in the blessing in the Millennium.

vv. 13-23 — Borders of the promised land are redefined for the Millennium.

Chapter 48 — Division of the land among the twelve tribes.

vv. 1, 2 — The tribe of Dan is present in the Millennium, although it is absent from those sealed in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:4-8). Danites do not serve in the Great Tribulation, but the grace of God brings them into the Millennium.

We, too, are saved by grace but rewarded for service. The prophet closes on a high note, *The LORD is there*.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Alexander, Ralph. *Ezekiel*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1976.
(Fine, inexpensive survey.)
- Feinberg, Charles L. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1969. (Excellent.)
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(An excellent survey and outline of the Old Testament.)
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- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1982.
(Two volumes cover the Old Testament. Highly recommended.)

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