

While Jeremiah was ministering to the people in Judah, Ezekiel was ministering to the exiles in Babylon. He was taken to Babylon in 597 BC. with the second deportation; and five years later, he received his call to ministry (592 BC). Like Jeremiah, he was a priest who was called to be a prophet; and also like Jeremiah, he preached action sermons that caught the attention of the people.

Ezekiel's prophecy emphasizes the glory of God and the honor of God's name. Sixty-seven times the statement "I am the Lord" is found in this book, and several times God is said to act "for [His] name's sake" so that His holy name would "not be profaned." Had the people of Judah been concerned for the honor of the Lord, He would not have dishonored them before their enemies.

The Book of Ezekiel is one of the most overlooked, complex, and rewarding books of the Bible. While many readers focus solely on the prophecy of Gog and Magog in chapters 38 and 39, as we read through the book we will discover that the entire book is a masterpiece of divine revelation.

Our Guiding Principles

As we approach this book, we must keep two scriptural anchors in mind to guide our interpretation:

1. **Divine Origin:** We acknowledge that Scripture is not the product of human ingenuity. As 2 Peter 1:20–21 (NKJV) states:

"knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

2. **Personal Diligence:** While we will consider various scholarly perspectives, your ultimate responsibility is to the Word itself. One of guiding principles is found in verse is Acts 17:11, which describes the Bereans:

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

In other words, don't believe something because I have said it follow the example of the believers in Berea. Listen to what I have to say and then search the Scriptures to determine if I am correct. Secondly, don't quote me, quote the Bible.

To understand Ezekiel, we must understand where he fits in the timeline of Israel. After the reign of Solomon, the nation split into two houses (nations): the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

- The Northern Kingdom: Consisting of ten tribes, this kingdom fell into deep idolatry. In 721 BC, the Assyrians conquered them and scattered them throughout the empire, effectively ending their national existence at that time.
- The Southern Kingdom: Consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They remained under the Davidic dynasty for 370 years. Despite having several righteous kings (like Josiah), they eventually followed the North into rebellion against God.

In 612 BC, Nineveh fell, and by 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish. This established Babylon as the dominant world power. Jerusalem was subsequently besieged in three distinct stages:

1. 606 BC: The first deportation. High-profile hostages were taken, including the young prophet Daniel.
2. 597 BC: The second deportation. After Judah rebelled against Babylonian vassalage, 10,000 more captives were taken, including a 25-year-old priest named Ezekiel.
3. 586 BC: The final destruction. Because of continued rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar leveled Jerusalem and the Temple.

Ezekiel (meaning "God strengthens") was a priest by birth but was called to be a prophet while in exile. He lived among the captives by the River Chebar (a large canal near Babylon).

Ezekiel did not serve alone. He was part of a "triplet" of Major Prophets:

- Jeremiah: The older prophet remaining with the remnant in Jerusalem.
- Daniel: The statesman serving in the royal courts of Babylon.
- Ezekiel: The pastor and prophet to the common Jewish exiles in the Babylonian countryside.

God often commanded Ezekiel to act out his messages through bizarre, symbolic behavior to get the people's attention. He was a man of profound suffering and dedication:

- He lay on his side for 430 days to represent the years of the people's sin.
- He shaved his head and beard as a sign of judgment.
- Most poignantly, he was asked to endure the sudden death of his wife as a sign to the nation.

Organization of the Book

The Book of Ezekiel is structured logically around the fall of Jerusalem:

Section	Chapters	Theme	Timing
The Call	1–3	Ezekiel's commission and vision of God's glory.	Before the Fall
Judgments on Judah	4–24	Why Jerusalem must be destroyed for its sins.	Before the Fall
Judgments on Nations	25–32	God's justice regarding the surrounding peoples.	During the Siege
Future Restoration	33–48	The return to the land and the Millennial Temple.	After the Fall