

EZEKIEL

*The Lord is with the people in exile*

SETTING

592 - 571 BC

KEY VERSE

*"Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord."*

39:28-29

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# Introduction

When the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC, it was the third attack. They also attacked in 605 BC and 597 BC, when Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin were taken into exile (2 Kings 24:12-14). Consequently, Ezekiel is in Babylon in the year 597 BC, which is the starting point for the dates in the book (1:2). The book is quite thoroughly dated, from 592 to 571 BC, i.e., the years before and after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The book is mainly chronological and divided into three parts. Part 1 is chapters 1-24, which are mainly warnings about Jerusalem's destruction. It is not over yet; although someone has been sent into exile, the Babylonians will attack once more. In the first vision, Ezekiel sees that God's throne has "wheels within wheels" and can move in all directions, which thus appears to be an image of a mobile throne. In the next vision, he sees the Lord's glory leaving the temple because of the people's sin, several years before the temple was destroyed (10:4-11:23). God's throne was not tied to the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, he had left the temple without them noticing or caring. The last thing he sees of God's glory is that it stops on the mountain east of Jerusalem - probably the Mount of Olives. East was also in the direction of Babylon, so this vision shows why God left Jerusalem and came to Babylon (Ch. 1) to be with his people there.

Part 2 is chapters 25-32 and consists of words of judgment against the other nations, and these come at about the same time as Jerusalem is destroyed. They are judged especially for how they looked with glee at Jerusalem's destruction and exploited it to their advantage.

Part 3 begins in the middle of chapter 33 when the temple has been destroyed. From now on, Ezekiel's message is about hope after the destruction. First, hope for Israel in chapters 34-37 that they will be allowed to return to the land and be united as one kingdom, with some hints that the Messiah will be their king. Then come the somewhat apocalyptic chapters 38-39, which probably mean that all the world's evil is defeated so that God's people can live in peace forever.

It is in part 3 that we see the most of Jesus, as this is about restoration and hope. When Jesus says in John 10 that he is the Good Shepherd, it is Ezekiel 34 that lies behind, where God says that my servant David *"will tend them and be their shepherd."* (34:23). *"My servant David"* will also be king over the united kingdom and an eternal covenant of peace will be concluded (37:21-28), and God will give them his Spirit so that they live according to the law (36:26-37, 39:29). And when Jesus says in John 7 that he has the living water, it is the River of Life in Ezekiel 47 that is the context of the Feast of Tabernacles.

It is probably not just this river that Jesus is the fulfillment of, but probably the whole temple that is described in the 2nd temple vision in chapters 40-48. For it was not this temple that they built when they returned from exile. They did not interpret these as specific instructions for the constuction of a literal temple. And God's glory, which disappeared in chapter 11, now returns to the temple again in chapter 43. However, God's glory did not come noticeably when they rebuilt the temple after the exile. The next time we read that God's glory came was when Jesus came! (John 1:14) John's revelation ends quite similarly to Ezekiel, and when the last verse in Ezekiel says that Jerusalem will then be called *"The Lord is there"*, we can probably read it as meaning that God will once again live among men as He does at the end of Revelation.

## Historical situation

605 BC: Babylon makes Jehoiakim his servant for three years before he rebels. (2 Kings 24:1-2)

597 BC:

* Jehoiachin inherits the problem, and Babylon attacks after only 3 months (2 Kings 24:8-17)
* 10,000 people were deported to Babylon: the royal family, the chiefs, the courtiers, 7,000 rich men, 1,000 artisans, and blacksmiths, plus the treasures from the temple and the palace — and Ezekiel.

The lower social classes are left in Jerusalem and Judah under King Zedekiah.

## What could they have been thinking in Babylon?

*“Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off."* (37:11)

Why had this happened? Where was God in all this? Why hadn't He protected His people? Why had they lost the land He had given them? Were the Babylonian gods stronger than Yahweh? Even if God were to intervene now and save Jerusalem, what would happen to those who were already in Babylon? What had happened to the promise that there would always be a descendant of David on the throne now that the king was in exile?

## How is the people's relationship with God?

**The leaders** are corrupt; they despise their parents, oppress immigrants, are cruel to the fatherless and widows, despise the temple, desecrate the Sabbaths, slander, and sacrifice to idols. They engage in sexual immorality, incest, and adultery. They take bribes for murder, exploit people — and they have forgotten God.

**The priests** do not care about whether something is clean or unclean. They desecrate the temple, do not educate the people, do not care about the Sabbath - and dishonor God.

**The prophets** are superficial. They have empty visions and prophesy lies.

**The people** practice violence, sacrifice their children, rob, are harsh towards the helpless and poor, and oppress the immigrants.

# Opening 1:1-3

Ezekiel was a priest.

The visions came when he was 30 years old: “In my thirtieth year” (v. 1).

This year he would have begun to work as a priest — if he had still been in Jerusalem… *(“Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting.”* Numbers 4:3)

Instead, he becomes a prophet.

## Ezekiel's message

God judges them by sending them to Babylon, but He is not done with them. He is no longer in Jerusalem but is with his people in exile.

Salvation is not in Jerusalem nor the temple — but in their personal conversion. Jerusalem will fall, but God will stand. He's in control.

They must realize why they are in exile and return to God. Then he will lead them back to the land, give them his Spirit and live with them again.

The Babylonians came because the people did not listen to Jeremiah and others, who said they needed to repent. Now that the judgment has happened, the message to Ezekiel is that they must repent to share in the hope and return to the land so that the Messiah can come.

*"Then they/you will know that I am the Lord"* is repeated 72 times! They must both know and experience this.

If the people do not understand it when Ezekiel comes with his message, then they will understand it when what he prophesies comes true and the temple is destroyed in chapter 33:

*“And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.”* 2:5

*"When all this comes true—and it surely will—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."* 33:33

## Structure

### Part 1: Warnings to Judah before the fall of the temple

Ch. 1-3 Vision of God's mobile throne (592)

Ch. 4-7 Warnings about the fall of Jerusalem

Ch. 8-11 1st temple vision: God's glory leaves the temple (591)

Ch. 12-24 Words of judgment against God's people (591-588)

### Part 2: Warnings to the nations

Ch. 25 Judgment against the neighboring nations

Ch. 26-28 Judgment against Tyre (586)

Ch. 29-32 Judgment against Egypt (587-571)

### Part 3: Message of hope after the fall of the temple

Ch. 33 Jerusalem has fallen (585)

Ch. 34-37 Hope for Israel

Ch. 38-39 Evil is defeated

Ch. 40-48 2nd temple vision: God's glory returns (572)

# Ch. 1-3: Vision of God's mobile throne

## Ch. 1: God's glory comes to Babylon

Coming from the north — the same way the people themselves had come. He comes after them.

Storm and a swirling whirlwind (Jer 23:19, 30:23), a great cloud (Exodus 19, Psalm 18:7-14), fire, brightness (Exodus 19)

This is the cloud of God's glory (v. 28).

But what is God doing in Babylon? Is he not in the temple in Jerusalem?

In chapter 10, he realizes that the creatures (vv. 5-14) are cherubim — from the statues on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, where God's glory rested. Ezekiel gets to see them live. Otherwise, only in Genesis 3:24 that someone sees cherubim.

*“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”* Gen 3:24

The animals were known from religious art and communicated that a god was coming.

The wings touched each other (vv. 9-11) → are they standing in a square with their backs to each other? Yet they go straight ahead without turning (v. 12) — at the same time as they go back and forth? (v. 14)

Wheels within wheels (vv. 15-21): Can move in all directions. In the same way as the living creatures (v. 17), who could see in all directions.

v. 18: The wheels see everything (= omniscient)

The throne (vv. 22-27) is above a vault (Exodus 24:10), but it is not held up by the cherubim (v. 24).

v. 26: One who was like a man: In Genesis 1:26, man resembles God: *“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness”*. In Ezekiel 1:26, God resembles man.

**What is the point?**

1. God's throne can move anywhere and is coming to Babylon. He is not stuck in the temple.
2. God sees everything, and he sees them.
3. But he will bring judgment… (= much fire)

## Ch. 2-3: Ezekiel's call

2:1 — God always addresses Ezekiel as *"Son of man"*. Underlines God's greatness in relation to men, so that Ezekiel should pass on humility leading to repentance?

2:2-3: The role of the spirit is a distinctive feature of the book, and *spirit* is mentioned 25 times.

The Spirit enters him, lifts him, and enables him to hear from God. And the first thing he hears is that he is being sent. It happens again at 3:24.

2:3-7: He is sent to rebellious (18x) people. But God has not given up on them, and Ezekiel does not need to fear them (2:6, 3:9).

2:8—3:3: He will be different, listen to God, and eat a scroll (in the vision?).

The words are lament (Ch. 19, 26-28, 32), mourning, and woe cries (2:9, 6:11, Ch. 13, 16, 24).

He must identify with the message (3:10).

*"And he said to me, “Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you."* 3:10

Does it taste sweet (v. 3) because the message is good or because it is good to obey God?

*"Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth."* 3:3

3:12-15: Brought back, bitter and upset, because he had begun to feel what God felt?

3:16-27: He will be a watchman and warn against the enemy, which is God himself. He is rendered mute so that he would never doubt that what he said was right. Therefore, a great responsibility.

## Timeless truths and applications

1. When we experience God's glory and bow before Him, the Spirit can lift us, and God can speak. Then he can send us. How is this relevant to us?
2. We are also sent, but we must remember whose mission it is. Resistance is resistance to God, not to you (Acts 18:6). Rejection of a biblical expository speech is a rejection of God, not the speaker.
3. Chris Wright says: *“The task of rebuke and warning is difficult to do in a way that is sensitive and yet effective. But to avoid it for fear of hurting people's feelings is like a sentry failing to sound the alarm for fear of upsetting people by disturbing their sleep.”* What do you think about that?
4. We must let God impact us with the message he sends us to deliver, also in speeches and devotions.

# Ch. 4-5: Street theatre

## 1. Model of a besieged Jerusalem (4:1-3)

Ezekiel = God

Iron plate = God's firmness/determinacy?

Face to the city = God sees what they are doing

**Message:** Jerusalem will be besieged and attacked, and God is on the outside carrying out the attack!

## 2. Lying on the side for 390 days (4:4-8)

A task during the day, not constantly.

Not enough time between 1:2 and 8:1 for 430 days. The 40 days were probably included in the 390.

To bear the sin of the Israelites for as many days as the years of their sin.

From approx. 966 (Solomon's Temple) to 586? (380)

From approx. 931 (the division of the kingdom) to approx. 539 (the return)?

**Message:** Israel has a long, unsettled history of sin. The judgment comes just when the attack (1) comes.

## 3. Bake bread (4:9-17)

*"make bread for yourself. You are to eat it during the 390 days you lie on your side."* 4:9b

Must eat this on the days he lies on his side.

God allows him to use cow dung instead of human excrement for fuel to bake his bread (4:12-14).

He is told to eat 230 g and drink 1 liter of water per day (4:10-11).

**Message:** Those who remain in Jerusalem will starve during the coming siege, and they will eat unclean bread in exile.

## 4. Shaving the head and the beard (Ch. 5)

Shaving the head: Forbidden for the priests (Lev. 21:5), a sign of mourning (Deut. 21:12) and humiliating (2 Sam. 10:4-5)

Shall use a sword for the symbolism → probably a bloody affair

1/3 inside the model city = plague/famine in Jerusalem

1/3 struck with the sword all around the city = killed outside the city

1/3 scattered to the wind = spread over the earth

A few in the folds of your garment = some will survive

Some of them were left on the fire = to be judged/purified

**Message:** Jerusalem's inhabitants will die or be scattered. A small part will survive, but they must be cleansed.

# Chapter 6-7: Prophetic words against the mountains and land of Israel

### Chapter 6:

Words of judgment against the mountains of Israel → the restoration comes in chapter 36.

Still applies to the people (v. 6) but focuses on altars and high places.

**Same point as in chapter 5:** A remnant shall remain (v. 8). They will be carried captive to the nations and cleansed (vv. 9-10).

v. 14b: *“Then they will know that I am the Lord.”*

### Chapter 7:

Judgment on the land of Israel, especially Jerusalem (v. 22)

v. 16: Personal repentance

v. 27b: *“Then they will know that I am the Lord.”*

# Ch. 8-11: God's glory leaves the temple (1st temple vision)

## 4 scenes from the temple in Jerusalem (Ch. 8)

**Scene 1: The image that aroused God's jealousy (8:5-6)**

Great contrast between God's glory in v. 4 to the idol in God's temple.

Perhaps the Canaanite goddess Asherah /Astarte (2 Kgs 21:7). Perhaps the same as *"Queen of Heaven"* (Jer 7:18).

The people drove God away from his temple.

**Scene 2: Prayers to animal gods (8:7-13)**

Especially common in Egyptian religion. The people's leaders make sacrifices to these, perhaps to ask the Egyptian gods for help from Egypt against Babylon — in God's temple, in the hidden and in the dark. Did they think that God was gone, or that he was too weak compared to the Babylonian gods, so they had to turn to the Egyptian gods? Either way, the wrong reaction. They should have understood that it was God's judgment and that they needed to repent, not turn to other gods.

**Scene 3: Mourning Cults (8:14-15)**

Tammuz = Fertility cult.

People mourned when the vegetation died, and they believed that Tammuz died and rose again with the seasons. They cried on command to get a better harvest.

**Scene 4: Sun Worship (8:16)**

They worshipped the Babylonian or the Egyptian sun god between the altar of the burnt offering and the entrance to the temple, maybe to be saved from the Babylonians. They turned their backs on God, both literally and spiritually.

## Chapter 9: The six men and the mark on the forehead

One of them has stationery and is dressed as a priest.

➡ Background for God's seal in Revelations (the contrast to the mark of the beast).

➡ Mark = *tav* = the letter T; at that time T was handwritten as X. The church fathers saw a foreshadowing that the cross saves from judgment.

Judgment will come upon all who do not respond to the abominable idolatry being done in Jerusalem. Those with the mark on the forehead will be spared.

God's glory rises from the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies and moves to the threshold.

## Chapter 10

v. 1: The figure on the throne in Ch. 1

v. 2: The angel dressed as a priest is told to scatter burning coals over the city. Probably to set it on fire (= judgement). (→ Rev. 8:5)

v. 4: The same thing that happened in chapter 9 is told once more.

Repetitions from chapter 1, probably to bring out the seriousness of the fact that the majestic God leaves His dwelling.

v. 18: God's glory moves from the threshold of the eastern gate into the temple court.

## Chapter 11

vv. 1-12: They think they are protected and that they are important. And perhaps better than the deported leaders (v. 15). God contradicts this (vv. 7, 11). They will be judged because they have behaved like the surrounding nations (v. 12).

v. 16: God says that He became a sanctuary for the raptured. He is with them in exile (Ch. 1); they are not sent away from Him even though they are sent away from Jerusalem. And the temple in Jerusalem is empty. God is nearer to those who are sent away.

vv. 17-20: Hope, pointing forward to Ch. 34-37

* *"They will be my people, and I will be their God."* Repeated in 14:11, 36:28, 37:23, 37:27. (First in Exodus 6:7)
* An expression of the covenant relationship between God and Israel, which in the NT is used for God and the church (2 Cor 6:16, Heb 8:10, Rev 21:3).

v. 23: God's glory moves further east, up on the Mount of Olives. Heading to Babylon?

## What would Ezekiel see if he were given a tour of God's temple today: Our churches and our hearts?

*“If the Holy Spirit exposes any part of our lives, past or present, as sin, then deal with it as such. Do not, like the exiles, blame others or accuse God. Do not, like so many today, explain it, excuse it or put it in perspective. Sin is sin and when it is exposed we are left with only two mutually exclusive alternatives—repentance or hardening. ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’ Such was the choice that now confronted the silent, stony faces in front of Ezekiel himself in that hot little room on 17 September 592 BC.”* Chris Wright

God always knows what is going on in our hearts. Our choice is between

1. Let Him enlighten us, repent of our sins, and thank Him that He sees it all and that He will cleanse us.
2. Refuse to bow down and not admit our sin and let Him take it away, and continue as before, further hardening our hearts.

The sin of the world brings God's wrath, but the sin of His people brings His jealousy.

# Ch. 12-24: Words of judgment against God's people

## Chapters 12-14

**Chapter 12: Street theater.** Dramatizes the deportation, saying that Zedkia will be blinded and that the country will be destroyed.

**Ch. 13: Judgment on the false prophets.** They take advantage of the destruction and will not be allowed to return to the country.

**14:1-11: Idols in the heart.** The elders come to Ezekiel for advice, but they have given room to idols in their hearts. God will therefore not answer their requests - He wants their hearts back!

To give room for idols in the heart is to separate oneself from God! It is spiritual adultery (→ Ch. 16 and 23).

v. 9: If the prophet comes with a message, it is God who entices him because he is a false prophet, and they will both be judged. 1 Kings 22: Ahab worships Baal but asks God for advice. Therefore, God sends a lying spirit in all the prophets to deceive Ahab.

Jak 1:6-8 also says that one cannot expect God to answer if one has a divided heart. Idols separate us from God. God cannot be combined with anything.

**14:12-23: Noah, Daniel and Job.** Three biblical figures who were known for their righteousness, or three righteous Gentiles who far surpassed Israel? Not even the most righteous would be able to save Judah.

## Chapters 15-16

**Chapter 15:** Israel is compared to a vine, which in itself has no particular value and even less after the judgment. They must realize that it is not enough to be "Israel".

**Chapter 16:** A New Presentation of Israel's history. Israel has only been unfaithful to God, and God has only been gracious to them.

vv. 3-7: Their origin was like that of all other peoples. They weren't special. They came into existence only because it was God’s will.

vv. 8-14: From the Sinai covenant to Solomon.

vv. 15-19: Idolatry in the divided kingdom. The beauty God had given them turned into pride. *“The jeweled wife became a painted prostitute.”*

vv. 20-29: Indulged in the fertility cults of the Canaanites, sacrificed their children, built altars to the idols, shocked their neighbors, and flirted with both idols and other nations.

vv. 30-34: Acted like a prostitute who paid her clients to be allowed to be with them. Completely unfaithful to God.

vv. 35-59: They were even worse than Sodom! Only after the judgment will God be able to look at them without anger. But there is still hope.

vv. 60-63: God will forgive anyway! They will repent and be ashamed. God's grace shines extra brightly in contrast to the rest of the chapter.

## Chapters 17-19

**Ch. 17: The vine and the eagles.** The branch Jehoiachin is taken by the eagle Nebuchadnezzar, who plants Zedekiah as the new king. Zedekiah rebels (2 Kings 24:20) and turns against Egypt. He will be killed, but God will plant a new king on a high mountain.

### Chapter 18: Personal responsibility for sin

They believe they are suffering for the sins of their fathers and that God is therefore not just. (Based on Exodus 20:5 *“…I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me”*)

God says he is just and adheres to Deuteronomy 24:16 (*“Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.”*)

The point (vv. 30-31): God will judge them according to what each one has done, and they must therefore repent. If they continue as before, they will die.

### Chapter 19: Lament over the last kings of Judah

The lions: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin?

The vine (from Ch. 15 and 17) was strong but was torn up and withered by the east wind (Babylon). There is no longer a king (v. 14).

## Chapter 20: New presentation (No. 2) of Israel's history

vv. 5-9: Already in the exodus from Egypt, Israel deserved to be judged for their idols. God would have put an end to them for His name's sake but did not.

vv. 10-17: The first generation despised the law and the Sabbath, and God wanted to put an end to them for His name's sake. But let it be when Moses interceded for them again and again.

vv. 18-26: The second generation behaved like the previous one, and God would have put an end to them too. They deserved to be dispersed even before they took the land. The exile was by no means a surprise. The law became "not good" because they rejected it.

vv. 27-31: The generations in the land did the same, and they are still doing it. They cannot blame their ancestors (Ch. 18) when they are just as bad themselves.

vv. 32-44: The hope: They will be purified in exile, and the defiant and rebellious will not be allowed to return. It is for His name's sake that God will do this.

## Chapters 21-24

**Ch. 21:** God's sword comes, both against Judah, Ammon, and Babylon itself.

**Ch. 22:** Judgment on Jerusalem, the city of blood.

**Ch. 23:** New presentation (No. 3) of Israel's history. Jerusalem and Samaria have been grossly unfaithful ever since Egypt (as in Ch. 20).

**Ch. 24:** The siege begins (2 Kings 25:1). Jerusalem is the pot to be boiled. Ezekiel's wife dies as a symbol of the temple's destruction. He shall not mourn publicly because the sentence is deserved. Powerful illustrations, but the people had to repent for His plan of salvation for the whole world to happen.

## Application

1. How can we avoid dishonoring God's name?
2. Do we think that we are more important than we are when God does everything for His name's sake?
3. Are we trusting in what God has given us instead of God? (Leadership skills, evangelism techniques, teaching skills, pastoral gifts, etc.)
4. Chapters 16 and 23 are meant to shock. What does this do to us?

# Ch. 25-32: Words of judgment against the nations

## Chapters 25-32

They are judged for how they have treated Jerusalem and Israel. 7 nations are addressed, and the 7th nation (Egypt) receives 7 messages. Perhaps it is meant symbolically for God's judgment on all the nations of the world. Does Egypt receive the most judgment because Zedekiah thought of making an alliance with them? It won't work.

## Ch. 25: The neighboring nations

Zedekiah had made an alliance with Ammon, Moab, Edom, Tyre, and Sidon (595 BC?, Jer 27). But when Jerusalem was attacked, they were not helped. The other nations rejoiced that they escaped, and some also exploited it to their advantage.

**Ammon (vv. 2-7)**

Sin: Rejoicing when the temple was destroyed and when Judah went into exile.

Judgment: The people of the east will take them, and Rabbah will be destroyed.

Fulfilled: Taken by Babylon in 582 BC.

**Moab (vv. 8-11)**

Sin: Not realizing that Judah was anything special.

Judgment: The people of the east will take them.

Fulfilled: Taken together with Ammon in 582.

**Edom (vv. 12-14)**

Sin: Retaliated against Judah.

Judgment: Shall be laid waste and fall by the sword.

Fulfilled: Taken by Babylon, probably in 552 BC.

**Philistia (vv. 15-17)**

Sin: Retaliated with contempt.

Judgment: They shall be annihilated.

Fulfilled: Also taken by Babylon by 562 BC.

## Ch. 26-28: Tyre

**Ch. 26:** Tyre is judged for spoiling Judah (vv. 1-2). Fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland part of the city in 573 (vv. 7-9).

**Ch. 27:** Mourning for Tyre. The great trading city will be gone forever.

**Ch.28:** Judgment on the Prince of Tyre (Ithobaal III)

Sin: Haughty, says he is a god (vv. 1-2). Proud of his wisdom which gave him power and wealth (vv. 4-5).

Judgment: Gentiles will come, and he will be killed (vv. 6-8).

Fulfilled: Deported to Babylon in 570.

### Is 28:11-19 about Satan?

*"11 The word of the Lord came to me: 12 “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. 14 You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. 15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. 16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. 17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. 18 By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. 19 All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”"* 28:11-19

v. 12: *"You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."* In 27:3 Tyre says: *"I am perfect in beauty."*, which indicates that this might be about Tyre.

Eden (v. 13) is used as an image 4 times in Ch. 31

v. 16: "Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned." Tyre was a trading city.

Here there is much that can be linked to Tyrus. The context also says quite clearly that it is the king of Tyre. It is an old Christian interpretation that it is about Satan, but no one saw this until approx. 200 AD and the context shows that it is first and foremost about the great, contrasting fall of the king.

## Ch. 29-32: Egypt

God controls Egypt too, and they are to be captured. Egypt failed when it was trusted (2 Kings 18:21). They failed Zedekiah in Jer 37:7. They are to lie deserted for 40 years. Fulfilled in 568 (→ ca. 530?). Nebuchadnezzar receives Egypt as a reward for his struggle against Tyre. Egypt will fall as Assyria fell.

*"Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him."* 2 Kings 18:21

*"This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, ‘Pharaoh’s army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt."* Jer 37:7

Why these judgments? The messages are for God's people. Judgment of their enemies is an encouragement to them. God acts on behalf of His people and His plan.

# Ch. 33-37: Hope for Israel

## 10 signs of a bad leader ( Ezekiel 34:1-6)

*Retrieved from Ed Taylor*

1. SELF-CENTERED - shepherds himself. Does not care about the needs of others.
2. USES HUMANS - eats the fat and dresses himself. Exploits others.
3. TAKES THE BEST - Slaughter the best animals; don't herd the sheep.
4. IGNORES NEED - Does not empower the weak
5. IGNORES SUFFERING - Does not heal the sick
6. LOOKS AWAY FROM PAIN - Does not help the wounded
7. DON'T CARE - Does not bring back the displaced
8. REFUSES TO HELP - Does not search for the lost
9. HARD/ANGRY - Rule by force and coercion
10. CARELESS - Allows the sheep to be scattered

## Prophecy against Israel's leaders (34:1-16)

*"You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them."* 34:3-6

Sin: Instead of taking care of the flock, these leaders took care of themselves and let the flock suffer. It is, among other things, their fault that the people are now scattered.

Judgment: They shall be deposed as shepherds, but the sheep shall be saved.

### Recovery:

God will save the sheep from all the places where they have been scattered, bring them out from the peoples, gather them from the lands, and bring them back to the land of Israel.

Then He himself will be their shepherd and let them rest.

He will do what the bad shepherds did not (vv. 2-4 are reversed)

*"I will rescue my flock from their [the bad shepherds’] mouths, and it will no longer be food for them. For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them."* 34:10b-11

*"I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered"* 34:12b

*"I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak"* 34:16a

Fulfilled: The deposition in 586, and the rescue in 539 — probably with reference to Jesus because of vv. 23-31 (and John 10).

*"I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken. “‘I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of savage beasts so that they may live in the wilderness and sleep in the forests in safety. I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid. I will provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations. Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord.’"* 34:23-31

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* John 10:11

## Prophecy against the flock (34:17-31)

Sin: The rich (fat) oppress the poor (skinny, weak).

Judgment: The weak shall no longer be prey → the weak shall be saved.

Restoration: The Messiah will become their new shepherd and make a peace pact with them so they can live safely in their land.

Fulfilled: The New Covenant

## Chapter 36: Land and people must be renewed

To the mountains (vv. 1-15): Reversal of chapter 6. The people will return.

A new heart and a new spirit (vv. 16-38): Chapter 34 promises a new shepherd, and 36:1-15 a renewed land. But the people must also be renewed.

It was not the best for God's reputation to send them to Babylon (v. 20), but he had to because of their sins. The cleansing of the people was important enough to endure this disgrace.

He brings them back to the land for His name's sake, not for their sake (vv. 22-23), nor because of the promise to give them the land.

The people must understand that the exile was a result of God's judgment and not a sign of His weakness. God always has all people in mind.

vv. 25-27: They will behave better after the exile, but this may be seen as the same event as the coming of the Messiah — which is also the fulfillment of the return (Isa 11:11)

*"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."* 36:25-27

*"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean."* Isa 11:10-11

## The dead bones become alive (37:1-16)

Bones were unclean and much more dead than Lazarus. They are also not buried, which means that they were cursed; they had become victims of God's judgment. But the Spirit makes the impossible possible.

The bones are the people of Israel who think that all hope is lost (v. 11). But they must be brought back to life and to the land.

The nation of Israel was "dead" in Babylon, but it will be resurrected by God. Fulfilled in 539 BC. Not the general resurrection from the dead, although it probably points to that (Luke 24:46).

*"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day"*. Luke 24:46

## Israel and Judah will be united (37:15-28)

The Israelites must be brought back from the nations and become one people again with the same king and shepherd. The kingdom will no longer be divided, and they will no longer defile themselves. (vv. 21-24)

God's people must be obedient. They will live safely forever in an eternal covenant of peace. God will live among them in a perfect relationship forever. (vv. 24-28)

The word *"ehad"* (one) is used 11 times. The future of God's people is a future for one people and one covenant.

Back from exile and fast forward to Messiah. Seen again as approximately the same event.

The congregation is also united into *"one new humanity"* (Eph 2:15) with the same relationship with God through one covenant. God only has one people (Romans 11).

# Ch. 38-39: Evil is defeated

Who is Gog? Suggestions through history:

1. Gyges of Lydia († 652 BC) (Josephus)
2. The Goths' attack on the Roman Empire in the fourth century
3. The Arabs in the 6th century
4. The Mongols in the 13th century
5. The Turks in the 16th century (Luther)
6. Russia in the 1850s
7. Russia in the 20th century

*"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of[Or Gog, prince of Rosh,] Meshek and Tubal."* 38:3

Some people think that *"Ros"* sounds like Russia, *"Meshek"* like Moscow, and *"Tubal"* like Tobolsk. They believe the Soviet Union will invade Israel and start Armageddon.

1. Russia in the 2020s (Ukraine)

**What points to the fact that this is not meant literally?**

They live without walls, bars, and gates (v. 11), even though 36:35 said that Israel and Jerusalem were to be rebuilt. Does not fit well with either post-exilic or modern Israel.

*"In the last days"* (38:16 KJV) means after Jesus has come.

38:17 and 39:8 say that the prophets have spoken about this many times. None of the prophets had talked about Gog before. This indicates that it refers to God's final judgment of the world.

*"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: You are the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel. At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them."* 38:17

*"It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of."* 39:8

Symbolic cosmic effects, which remind us of the flood, the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues in Egypt, etc. (38:19-22)

### 7 = completeness:

‣ 7 nations → all the peoples of the world (39:21)

‣ Burning of weapons for 7 years → put an end to all war (Is 2:4)

‣ Burial for 7 months → complete purification of the land

"Thus says the Lord God" 7 times

Rev 20: *“Gog and Magog”* = *“the nations in the four corners of the earth”*, surround *“the camp of God’s people, the city he loves”*, but God stops it. Then came universal judgment and the new creation. Fits with the structure in Ezekiel: Messiah (Ch. 34-37) → judgment (Ch. 38-39) → new creation (Ch. 40-48)

## What does this mean?

The same story happens twice (as it often does in apocalyptic texts)

A description of the world's opposition to God (Ps 2), represented by 7 distant, unknown enemies from the far north (Asia Minor/Armenia), the far south-west (Africa) and the far east (Mesopotamia).

The point: When God finally restores His people to the perfect relationship of 37:24-28, there will never again be any danger of this peace and blessing being threatened or destroyed. They must come home, and they must be protected when they come home. They will be safe forever. Chapters 34-37 cannot be reversed!

We do not need to fear a 3rd World War before Jesus' return. Jesus shall return when people are not expecting it (1. Thess 5:2-3), and he shall come like a thief in the night (Matt 24:42-44).

Regardless of what happens in the world, our future is secure in God.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-39).

# Ch. 40-48: God's glory returns (2nd temple vision)

## Chapters 40-48

When they return, a great new temple will be built that will be treated properly.

Long and important part of the book: The details convey that everything will become perfect.

But it was not this temple they built when they returned. They did not understand it as floor plans to follow. This is not a literal temple, but a new type of sanctuary sometime in the future. 40:2 reminds us of Isaiah 2.

Ezekiel is a new Moses, who also received instructions about God's dwelling while he was on a mountain.

Ezekiel receives this on the Day of Atonement — because it has to do with reconciliation and restoration.

## Ch. 43: God's glory returns

Ezekiel here promises a powerful arrival of God's glory, but this did not happen when they rebuilt the temple after the exile.

Because it was not this temple they built! Instead, it happens when Jesus comes! ( John 1:14)

vv. 10-11: He will tell Israel about this vision, so they will repent. This is what awaits them if they return to God.

## Chapter 47: The creation is restored

Water pours out from the temple and becomes a river that makes even the Dead Sea fresh! (v. 8) It makes everything fresh and alive (v. 9); the fruit becomes food, and the leaves bring health (v. 12).

Used with a twist in Revelation 21-22, when God makes everything new.

## John 7:37-39

The Feast of Tabernacles: People prayed for autumn rain, and the end-time rivers in Acts 14 were symbolized by a procession to the Pool of Siloam every day to collect water, which was then poured out as a thanksgiving offering.

Zech 14 was read and interpreted together with Ezek 47. These two texts together said that water would flow from the temple and give life to the whole earth. The water fetching ceremony pointed towards this.

Jesus announces that he is the source of the Holy Spirit and the end-time rivers in Ezek 47 and Zech 14.

## What does all this mean?

God's earthly city was destroyed, and his people were trapped in the most godless city in the world at that time. Ezekiel receives a vision that the true city of God will one day come.

Probably not a temple that will ever be built (because Jesus became the final sacrifice), but a wonderful picture of the perfect relationship God's people will have with God when His kingdom comes.

The goal is clear from the city's name: *"The Lord is there"* (48:35). God will again dwell with His people. This interpretation is confirmed by Revelation 21-22.

God loves us and only wants to be with us, so He endured the humiliation when Israel dishonored His name with their unfaithfulness. And because Ezekiel did all these strange things, we have come to know God and have shared in Israel's salvation. You are part of the story Ezekiel tells. We have seen much of this being fulfilled, so that *“you will know that I am the Lord your God.”* (Ez 20:20)

God talks a lot about spiritual adultery and jealousy in this book.

The majestic, great God that Ezekiel gets to see, and that causes him to fall to the ground in awe, becomes jealous when we are unfaithful to Him. Let this book motivate us to faithfulness and surrender to God and to have Him as the only God in our hearts.