

Introduction to Ezekiel

Ezekiel delivers God's words during one of the most calamitous periods in Israel's history: surrounding the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the exile to Babylon. The oracles in the book span a period of twenty-two years from 593 to 571 BC. The hinge-point of the book is **the fall of Jerusalem**, and the subsequent reporting of that terrible message (24:26; 33:21) – to those already exiled to Babylon, including Ezekiel himself, deported among Judah's leading citizens when Nebuchadnezzar annexed Judah in 597 BC. This event divides the book into 3 main sections of oracles:

1. Prior to Jerusalem's fall (c593-587 BC): Ezekiel 1-24
– *oracles of judgment against Judah, God's people*
2. During the siege of Jerusalem: Ezekiel 25-32
– *oracles of judgment against the nations, his people's enemies*
3. After the fall of Jerusalem (c587-571 BC): Ezekiel 33-48
– *oracles of hope for God's people's future, from all nations*

Ezekiel's message is that God's holy glory must, and will, be vindicated in the sight of the world: through his judgment on all sin and evil – beginning with his own household, Israel – but also in the great restoration he promises for all who will turn, and live.

A broad outline for the book, and its key message can be summarised thus:

The Nations will Know that I am the LORD – **God's Glory Revealed in Judgment, and Hope**

1. The Revelation of God's Glory (1-3)

- Proclaimed to Ezekiel, God's witness and watchman

2. The Removal of God's Glory (4-24)

- Be warned! God's glory will *depart* from sin and rebellion and evil

3. The Return of God's Glory (25-48)

- **God will restore the honour of his holy and glorious Name in the sight of the world:** 'I will set my glory among the nations' (39:21)...
 - Through **judgment on evil in all nations (25-32)**
God's Glory will ultimately **destroy** all evil. *No hope or help lies there.*
 - Through **restoration and renewal of his kingdom & people (33-48)**
God's Glory will ultimately **display** all righteousness. *There is hope here!*

Message:

*I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so **turn**, and **live**... turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die?' (18:32; 33:11)*

The Careful Crafting of Ezekiel's Message

Though the oracles are carefully dated chronologically, the coherence and logic of the book's message is reflected in the careful crafting and shape of its final composition.

A. Ch1-11 God's Glory departs from Jerusalem

B. Ch12-17 Judgment is near, and certain

It must be so: Israel is a rebellious house; exile looms (12)
The land is become a place of death (13-15)
Jerusalem is a filthy harlot (16)
Her Kings shepherd in rebellion (17)

C. Ch18 But each is accountable for their own sin

Gospel WARNING & hope

*'the soul that sins shall die' (18:4);
'you must repent and turn from your transgressions (18:30)*

D. Ch19-23 Imminent judgment is certain for Judah

Lament for Israel (19)
Idolatrous leaders of Judah condemned (20)
Sword of judgment on Judah & others (21)
Judgment on Jerusalem (22-23)

E. Ch24 The siege of Jerusalem

D'. Ch25-32 Ultimate judgment is certain for all nations

Judgment on all nations (25-29)
Sword of judgment on nations (30)
proud leaders of Egypt condemned (31)
Lament for Egypt (32)

C' Ch33 But each is accountable for their own sin

Gospel warning & HOPE

'turn and live! Why will you die' (33:8);

B. Ch34-39 Hope is ahead, and certain

It shall be so: God, as King, will shepherd his people in righteousness (34)
Israel is cleansed and purified (35-36)
The land brings forth life from the dead (37)
Rebellion is overcome, exile is ended (38-39)

A. Ch40-48 God's Glory dwells in the New Jerusalem