

Ezekiel

What's in the Name?	The name Ezekiel is a beautiful one. It means “the Lord strengthens.” It’s also fitting, as Ezekiel is the prophet who was called by God to journey with the Israelites to their captivity to Babylon.
A Contemporary of Jeremiah	Ezekiel prophesied <u>before</u> the Babylonian Captivity of Judah and <u>during</u> the captivity. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, then, were contemporaries. The major difference is Ezekiel tells us a little more about that journey to captivity than Jeremiah, who concentrates largely on the events preceding captivity.
A Unique Prophet	Most of the prophets are ordinary people, much like the disciples. Ezekiel was slightly different in that he was a priest, of the tribe of Levi and in the line of Aaron. That’s fitting because he’s going to be the “go between” and the representation of the “presence” of God as they journeyed to Babylon.
A One-of-a-Kind Prophet	Ezekiel is unique in the Bible because of his strong and colorful personality. Nowhere else in the Bible are the experiences of the prophets described in such vivid detail as Ezekiel. So unique is Ezekiel in terms of his actions (laying on his sides; eating scrolls; extreme visions, etc.) that some psychologists have even dared to suggest that he was a paranoid schizophrenic. That’s going too far. But even the suggestion is enough to suggest how unique Ezekiel was.
A Definitive Central Theme	Ezekiel’s message is clear: The Glory of God is going to leave the temple/land and come back again one day. Think of it as God removing his presence from the temple/land and then, through his goodness and mercy, returning his presence to the temple/land. It has apocalyptic connotations for Israel: a vision of a third temple (one that hasn’t been built yet). And N.T. connotations for believers, whether Jew or Gentile: the glory of God returned to the land through the person of Christ. For he “tabernacled” among us. He was the temple “rebuilt” in three days.
Not Just Glory, But Shekinah Glory	We use “glory” interchangeably with “praise.” Ezekiel doesn’t. He uses the Hebrew word “shekinah.” It denotes <u>divine presence</u> . If the divine presence (shekinah) of God was with Israel at the tabernacle, the temple, and in the land, and that “shekinah” departs, it gives you an idea of how serious Ezekiel’s message was.
Key Verse(s)	<i>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. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36:26-28)</i>
The Best Way to Read Ezekiel	The best way to read Ezekiel is to pay attention to the extremes of his actions, visions, and behavior. For when viewed together, they paint a picture of the central theme: the Glory of God departing/returning.

The First Vision Tells Us Everything (ch1)

It Will Help If You Think of This as “The Best Vision,” Not the Chronological First

God Was with Israel on the Way to Exile	<i>In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, <u>while I was among the exiles</u> by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. ² On the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin—³ the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River <u>in the land of the Babylonians</u>. There the hand of the Lord was on him. (1:1-3)</i>
The Chariot of Fire with Four Living Creatures	<i>⁴ I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, ⁵ and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, ⁶ but each of them had four faces and four wings. . .¹⁰ Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. ¹¹ Such were their faces. They each had two wings spreading out upward, each wing touching that of the creature on either side; and each had two other wings covering its body. ¹² Each one went straight ahead. <u>Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went.</u> (1:4-6, 10-12)</i>

The vision of the Chariot of Fire has language reminiscent of the Ark of the Covenant. Whereas the ark was going to the Promised Land, this vision is moving away from it. Furthermore, in the NT (Revelation 4) the ark images of the Lion, Ox, Man, Eagle circle around the throne of God day and night saying “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.” The four living creatures echo the message of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It’s John’s way of saying the ark of the covenant has been replaced with a new one: Jesus.

Eating the Scroll Is Very Significant: Occurred Before the Captivity (Ch 2/3)

Eating the Scroll Was Part of Ezekiel’s Calling	<i>⁷ You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. ⁸ But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious people; open your mouth and eat what I give you. ” ⁹ Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll,¹⁰ which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. (2:7-9)</i>
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Ezekiel Hid the Word Inside	<i>And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.”² So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.³ 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. (3:1-3)</i>
Ezekiel eating of the scroll symbolizes several things: (1) Israel couldn't go to the temple and hear it proclaimed; (2) But Ezekiel was the embodiment of the Word/Presence of God to his people in captivity.	

Acting Out a Siege is Important: Occurred Before the Captivity (Ch 4)	
Build a Ramp on a Model City	<i>“Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it.² Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it.³ Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the people of Israel. (4:1-3)</i>
Lie on Your Left Side	<i>⁴ “Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself.^[a] You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side.⁵ I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel. (4:4-5)</i>
Lie on Your Right Side	<i>⁶ “After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.⁷ Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her.⁸ I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege. (4:6-8)</i>
**Ezekiel here acts out what the Babylonians are going to do to Israel and Judah. He's predicting a trouble in the land/an attack of it/banishment from the land.	

The Vision of the Glory of God Departing Is Also Important (Ez 10)	
A revisiting of the 1 st vision in Ch 1	
<i>⁴ Then the glory of the Lord rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the Lord.⁵ The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.¹⁸ Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim.¹⁹ While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. (Ez 10:4-5, 18-19)</i>	
**Ezekiel tells us here at the end of the chapter that he saw this vision at the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. Think of it as a reflection. He's there in Ch 1 seeing the divine presence leading them to Babylon. And in Ch 10, he's answering why. The answer is: Because the glory of God no longer is in Israel.	

The Valley of the Dry Bones is Important (Ez 37)	
<i>The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.³ He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I said, “Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!’⁵ This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath^[a] enter you, and you will come to life.⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.” (37:1-6)</i>	
**Remember the theme? Ezekiel has spent the majority of his prophesy detailing how the glory of God departs. Now the emphasis is on the glory of God returning, through the image of bones coming to life: resurrection. (1) God has not finished with the land; (2) a resurrection in the future is what he has in mind: (a) for Jesus; (b) and us.	

The Vision of the Third Temple is Also Important (Ez 40)	
<i>In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the Lord was on me and he took me there.² In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.³ He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand.⁴ The man said to me, “Son of man, look carefully and listen closely and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the people of Israel everything you see.” (40:1-4)</i>	
**Ezekiel sees a vision of a third temple at a time where the 2 nd temple hadn't even been built yet! Herod built the 2 nd temple in the Intertestamental Period. This vision is of one in the way distant future. That can't happen unless the glory returns to the land. It did!	

