

# EZEKIEL

*Then they will know that I am the Lord.*

Ezekiel brought God's word to unfaithful people during a time of punishment and renewal.

In 598 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jerusalem. At this time, thousands of elite and skilled people, including Ezekiel, were taken captive to Babylon. After five years of exile, Ezekiel had a vision of cherubim. He saw four living beings with wings and wheels within wheels all covered with eyes. Above them was the glory of God; in fact, God himself. The book of Ezekiel begins with this vision.

Ezekiel writes in the first person. He reveals a few important things about himself: He is a priest. He is educated. His wife, the "delight of my eyes," dies just before Jerusalem is destroyed. He does bizarre, imaginative things as directed by God. Whether they listen or not, he is the watchman who warns.

Eleven years after King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, the Babylonian army returned to rebellious Jerusalem. It was a total siege. The city was burned. The temple was destroyed. Almost all the survivors were force-marched to Babylon. Ezekiel saw this coming. "In the Spirit," he was taken to Jerusalem to see the disgraceful worship of other gods in the Lord's temple, the desperate hunger during the siege, the total devastation of the city, and the glory of God leaving the temple. Until at least 571 B.C., Ezekiel spoke and acted God's message while the people experienced crisis, despair, repentance and recognition of God's sovereignty.

Ezekiel's prophecy is visually very powerful. Whether he is reporting visions or illustrating God's message with action, this book is full of symbols and colorful details. It may be confusing, but always it is impressive. All of it reveals these spiritual realities: the incredible glory of God, the sinfulness of God's people, God's power to restore.

On the other hand, Ezekiel's message is very simple: ***You have failed. You were unfaithful. Therefore, my***

***punishment is just...AND...I, the Lord, make you holy. I will restore you.***

- Your leaders failed. I will be your good shepherd.
- You cannot keep the covenant with me, your hearts are made of stone. I will give you living hearts and put my spirit in you.
- You are dead. I will bring life to dead bones.
- You are far from home and my temple is destroyed. I will build my temple and my city and its name will be "The Lord is There."

## Tips for Reading

1. Read out loud so you can feel the words and the images. It was written to be heard.
2. Read related chapters together. For example, read chapters 1-3 as one unit because they tell the story of Ezekiel's call. When you complete a chapter, look ahead. If the topic continues, read ahead.
3. For an overview of Ezekiel, read chapters 1-3, 8-11, 16, 33:1-9, 34, 37, and these portions from the last 8 chapters: 40:1-5, 43:1-5, 47:1-12 and 48:30-35.
4. Think of Ezekiel as a set of related short stories. If you are confused or bored, move on to the next section. If your edition of the Bible has headings, that will help you find the next topic. If your Bible does not have headings, go ahead to the next chapter until you find the next topic.
5. Read for the overall impression, instead of trying to comprehend each detail, especially chapters 1-3 and the last 8 chapters (which describe the new temple and new city, including rivers and measurements).

## Outline of Ezekiel

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| 1-3   | Ezekiel's Call Vision                      |
| 4-24  | Warnings against Jerusalem/Judah           |
| 25-32 | Warnings against other nations             |
| 33-39 | Promises of renewal and return to the land |
| 40-48 | The new city and the new temple            |

## DRY BONES – from Ezekiel 37

***The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones...and they were very dry. Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore, prophesy and say to them: "Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to land of Israel. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."***