

A Summary of Ezekiel Chapters 1-32

Historical Context and Archeological Evidence

Introduction

The book of Ezekiel records the visions, oracles, and prophetic theater of Ezekiel, who was among the exiles of Judah in Babylon in the sixth century BC and was probably a priest. Ezekiel's ministry spanned about 22 years, from 593 to 571 BC, and covered the period before and after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. His main themes are the judgment of God on Judah and the nations, the restoration of God's people and land, and the glory and sovereignty of God.

Ezekiel has some of the most bizarre imagery in the Bible and some of the strangest prophetic theater.

Ezekiel's book is divided into three main sections: chapters 1-24, which focus on the impending doom of Jerusalem and Judah; chapters 25-32, which pronounce oracles against the neighboring nations; and chapters 33-48, which envision the future hope of God's people and land.

Ezekiel Chapters 1-24 (Visions and oracles against/for Judah)

- Chapter 1: Ezekiel's inaugural vision of God's glory and the four living creatures.

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. ⁷ Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. ⁸ Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, ⁹ and the wings of one touched the wings of another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved.

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. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. ¹³ The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. ¹⁴ The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning.

15 As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. 16 This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. 17 As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. 18 Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around.

19 When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. 20 Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

22 Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome. 23 Under the vault their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. 24 When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty,^(b) like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

25 Then there came a voice from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. 26 Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. 27 I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

- Other places we've seen Cherubim?: The Garden, and The Holy of Holies
- Chapter 2: Ezekiel's commission as a prophet to the rebellious house of Israel.
- Chapter 3:
 - Ezekiel eats the scroll given by God. It is sweet as honey.
 - God tells Ezekiel that he is being sent to the Israelites even though they are obstinate.
 - Ezekiel is commissioned as a watchman – he must deliver the warning else the consequences will come onto him personally.

- The Spirit of God comes upon Ezekiel, the Israelites tie him up and God makes him mute until he gets another oracle for the Israelites.
- Chapter 4:
 - Ezekiel lays siege to a model Jerusalem.
 - He lies on his side for 430 days bearing the sin for Israel and Judah for the last 430 years. God ties him with ropes so he can't move.
 - He eats a loaf of wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt. First told to bake it over human excrement and then after protesting over cow dung. This is to symbolize the defiled food the Israelites would eat in the nations they are exiled to.
- Chapter 5: Ezekiel's symbolic judgment of Jerusalem by shaving his hair and burning, striking, and scattering it. Jerusalem citizens prophesied to turn to cannibalism and then ultimately destroyed through plague, famine, sword, and scattered to the wind.
- Chapter 6: Ezekiel's oracle against the idolatrous high places of Israel and the remnant that will survive.
- Chapter 7: Ezekiel's oracle of the end of Judah and the coming of God's wrath.
 - Chapter 7:2-4

² *"Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to the land of Israel:*

*"The end! The end has come
upon the four corners of the land!*

³ *The end is now upon you,
and I will unleash my anger against you.
I will judge you according to your conduct
and repay you for all your detestable practices.*

⁴ *I will not look on you with pity;
I will not spare you.
I will surely repay you for your conduct
and for the detestable practices among you.
'Then you will know that I am the LORD.'*

- Chapter 8 - 11: Ezekiel's vision of a glowing man showing him around Jerusalem and the Temple
 - Glowing man brings him to tour the abominations being done in the temple of Jerusalem by the Israelites.
 - Slaughter of the idolaters in Jerusalem
 - Man clothed in linen with a writing kit puts a mark of protection on the faithful.
 - 6 men with deadly weapons in their hands told to follow the man and kill everyone else.
 - Ezekiel pleads for mercy.
 - The glowing man responds (vv 9-10)

*"The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. **(What does this remind us of? Noah's***

time) *They say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.'* ¹⁰ *So I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own heads what they have done."*

- The departure of God's glory from the temple with the cherubim following underneath.
- The judgment of the leaders of Jerusalem and the promise of a new heart and spirit for the exiles. (vv 17-21)

¹⁷ *"Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.'*

¹⁸ *"They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. ¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."*

- Chapter 12: Ezekiel's prophetic theater of packing his bags and digging through the wall to portray the exile of the king and the people of Jerusalem.

²⁷ *"Son of man, the Israelites are saying, 'The vision he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies about the distant future.'*

²⁸ *"Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"*

- Chapter 13: Ezekiel's oracle against the false prophets and prophetesses who deceive the people with lies and magic.
- Chapter 14: Ezekiel's oracle against the idolaters who seek the word of the Lord and the certainty of God's judgment.
- Chapter 15: Ezekiel's parable of the useless vine that is fit only for burning. Parallel to Jesus' vine parable.

⁶ *"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As I have given the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest as fuel for the fire, so will I treat the people living in Jerusalem. ⁷ I will set my face against them. Although they have come out of the fire, the fire will yet consume them. And when I set my face against them, you will*

know that I am the LORD. ⁸ I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful, declares the Sovereign LORD."

(John 15:6) If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

- Chapter 16: Ezekiel's allegory of Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife who commits adultery with many nations and is punished by them.
- Chapter 17: Ezekiel's riddle of the two eagles and the vine that represents the treachery of King Zedekiah and the futility of his alliance with Egypt.
- Chapter 18: Ezekiel's teaching on the individual responsibility for sin and the possibility of repentance and life.

¹⁹ "Yet you ask, 'Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?' Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. ²⁰ The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.

- Chapter 19: Ezekiel's lament for the princes of Israel who are like lions captured and caged by the nations.
- Chapter 20: Elders of Israel come to inquire of the Lord. The Lord refuses, instead has Ezekiel review the history of Israel's of rebellion and idolatry and His promise to purge and restore his people.
- Chapter 21: Ezekiel's oracle of the sword of the Lord that will strike Jerusalem and the king of Babylon.
- Chapter 22: Ezekiel's indictment of Jerusalem for its bloodshed, corruption, and immorality.
- Chapter 23: Ezekiel's allegory of the two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who represent Samaria and Jerusalem and their whoredom with the Egyptians at first and then later the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Their lovers will turn against them and destroy them.
- Chapter 24: Ezekiel's parable of the boiling pot that symbolizes the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. God tells Ezekiel not to mourn his wife's death as a sign that the Israelites won't mourn the loss of the temple as they go into exile.

Ezekiel's oracles against the surrounding nations

- Much like Jeremiah's oracles
- Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia
 - Chapter 25: Ezekiel's oracles against the nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, who rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem and oppressed God's people.
- Tyre and Sidon
 - Chapter 26: Ezekiel's oracle against the city of Tyre, which boasted of its wealth and power and exploited the misfortune of Jerusalem.
 - Chapter 27: Ezekiel's lament for the city of Tyre, which is compared to a splendid ship that sinks in the sea.

- Chapter 28: Ezekiel's oracle against the king of Tyre, who claimed to be a god, and the promise of restoration for Israel.
- Chapter 26:3-4

³ therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. ⁴ They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.

- Chapter 26:12-14

¹² They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. ¹³ I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. ¹⁴ I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

- The destruction of Tyre was fulfilled in stages, first by Nebuchadnezzar, who besieged the mainland city for 13 years, and then by Alexander the Great, who built a causeway to the island city and conquered it in 332 BC. The remains of Tyre today are mostly under water or covered by sand.

- Chapter 28:25-26

²⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land, which I gave to my servant Jacob. ²⁶ They will live there in safety and will build houses and plant vineyards; they will live in safety when I inflict punishment on all their neighbors who maligned them. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God."

- Egypt

- Chapter 29: Ezekiel's oracle against the nation of Egypt, which is compared to a crocodile that God will hook and destroy.
- Chapter 30: Ezekiel's oracle of the day of the Lord, when Egypt and its allies will be shattered by the Babylonian invasion.

- Ezekiel 29:10

I will make the land of Egypt a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush.

- Ezekiel 30:5

Cush and Libya, Lydia and all Arabia, Kub and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt.

- Ezekiel 29:13-16

¹³ "Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered. ¹⁴ I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt, the land of their ancestry. There

they will be a lowly kingdom. ¹⁵ It will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the other nations. I will make it so weak that it will never again rule over the nations. ¹⁶ Egypt will no longer be a source of confidence for the people of Israel but will be a reminder of their sin in turning to her for help. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.”

- Archeological evidence shows that these places were indeed attacked and devastated by Nebuchadnezzar in the years 568-567 BC. Thebes, the ancient capital of Upper Egypt, was sacked and burned, and its temples and statues were smashed. Memphis, the capital of Lower Egypt, was also captured and plundered. Pathros, Cush, Put, and Lud were neighboring territories that supported Egypt and were also subdued by Babylon. The Babylonian Chronicles, which are clay tablets that record the events of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, corroborate Ezekiel's account of the campaign against Egypt and its allies.
- Chapter 31: Ezekiel's parable of the cedar of Lebanon, which represents the pride and fall of Pharaoh and Egypt.
- Chapter 32: Ezekiel's lamentation over Pharaoh going to the realm of the dead