

# Ezekiel

## The author

The author of the Book of Ezekiel was Ezekiel himself. The name “Ezekiel” means “God strengthens”. Ezekiel was a priest (see Ezekiel 1:3). His father was descended from the Zadokite clan of the Levite priests. At age twenty-five, Ezekiel was taken captive along with King Jehoiachin and other Judeans to Babylon in 597 B.C. Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry began in Babylon five years later (see Ezekiel 1:2) and continued for at least twenty-two years (see Ezekiel 29:17). Ezekiel was married. His wife died during the time of his ministry (see Ezekiel 24:15-27).

## Nature of the Book

The Book of Ezekiel is an autobiographical writing by Ezekiel. It contains a mixture of *history, visions, symbolism, parables* and *prophecies*. Ezekiel acted out many of his prophecies. For example, read Ezekiel 8:23 and 11:24.

## Date

The Book is easier to date than many other books because of Ezekiel’s usage of an orderly sequence of dates. The Book of Ezekiel was written between 593-571 B.C.

## Ezekiel emphasises God’s holiness and glory

Two of the main emphasises of the Book of Ezekiel are God’s holiness and His glory. There are 9 references to God’s holy name. Also there are 19 mentions of God’s glory.

In the early chapters of Ezekiel, there are mentions of God’s glory (see Ezekiel 1:28, 3:12 and 3:23). Then Ezekiel 8:4 and 9:3 refer to the glory of the Lord being in the Temple in Jerusalem.

## God’s supposed people followed unbiblical wicked customs

Ezekiel 11:12 records that in Ezekiel’s time, most of God’s supposed people were not obeying God’s relevant instructions and commandments but were following the unbiblical wicked customs of pagans: ***“And you shall know that I am the Lord; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you.”***

Ezekiel Chapter 8 reveals how the people of Judah were mixing the worship of God in the Temple in Jerusalem with the worship of pagan images, idols, the Sun and the pagan Babylonian nature god Tammuz. Ezekiel 8:17-18 records God’s response to this: ***“Then He said to me, ‘Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to***

*commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.”*

In Ezekiel 16:44-59, the Lord said that the ethical or moral standards of the Judeans had degenerated so much that they were worse than those previously in Sodom and in Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Ezekiel 16:20-21 records that many Judeans were even murdering their children in human sacrifice ritual.

## **God’s glory departed from the Temple**

Ezekiel Chapter 10 records that not long after this, God’s glory departed from His Temple in Jerusalem. Jeremiah 10:18 states: *“For thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will throw out at this time the inhabitants of the land, and will distress them, that they may find it so.’”*

Because of the continual compromising of the supposed people of God with the wicked standards of pagan unbelievers and their lack of sincere turning to God from their evil practices, God’s glory and Presence left His Temple in Jerusalem.

## **Religious hypocrites enjoying hearing the Word but not practicing it**

In Ezekiel 33:30-33, God said the following about His supposed people in Judea: *“As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. And when this comes to pass – surely it will come – then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”*

God said to Ezekiel that the Judeans:

- a. *“hear your words, but they do not do them”*. The Judeans enjoyed listening to God’s Word being spoken but they had no intention of obeying it.
- b. were pretending to show love with their mouths, but in their hearts they were devoted to selfishness.
- c. treated the sharing of God’s Word like it was musical entertainment.

Because of these same wicked attitudes, God would not give guidance to some of the elders of Judah when they inquired of Him through Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 20:1-3).

## **A popular false teaching in Ezekiel and Jeremiah's time**

Ezekiel 18:1-2 records that the people of Judah in Ezekiel's time were claiming that the sufferings of the present generation were solely the result of the sins of previous generations. The Judeans did not believe that they had committed any sins deserving of punishment by God and/or which would naturally cause problems in society.

These proud self-righteous but wicked Judeans in Ezekiel's time may have originated this false unbiblical teaching from unbalanced misinterpretations of Exodus 20:5, 34:7 and 2 Samuel 21:1-14.

In Ezekiel 18:3-10, God emphasises that all humans will be primarily punished by Him according to their own sins and not those of their parents or ancestors. Ezekiel 18:19-20 states: *"Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wicked shall be upon himself."*

Jeremiah 31:29-30 records that the same false teaching was prevalent in Judah during the earlier period in which Jeremiah was ministering to the Judeans: *"In those days they shall say no more: The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."*

## **Another prevalent wrong teaching in Judah**

Ezekiel 18:25, 18:29, 33:17 and 33:20 record that most of the Judeans taught the unbiblical doctrine that it was unfair:

1. if a person lived a wicked life and then turned from the person's sins to God and then He blesses and not punished the person with death.
2. if a person lived a righteous life but then turned to sin and God as a result punished the person with death.

## **Important truths in Ezekiel Chapter 18**

In Ezekiel Chapter 18, God taught that:

1. Death is the deserved punishment for sin (see verses 20-32).
2. Those who have lived evil lives but then turn from their sins to God will be blessed by Him (see verses 21-23 and 27-28). Ezekiel 33:14-16 teaches similarly.
3. Those who live a righteous life but then turn to wickedness, will be punished by God (see verses 24 and 26). Ezekiel 33:12-13 teaches similar things.
4. God has no pleasure in punishing any human (see verses 32).

## **The selfish shepherds of Israel**

In Ezekiel 34:1-10, God reveals that the shepherds of Israel were selfishly using God's people. The shepherds were the kings, prophets and priests of Israel.

## **False prophets in Judah in Ezekiel's time**

In Ezekiel Chapter 13, God revealed His attitudes to the false prophets and prophetesses who had been deceiving most of God's supposed people in the kingdom of Judah. Ezekiel 13:1-3 records: ***“And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’” Thus says the Lord God: ‘Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!’”***

These false prophets were falsely predicting peace for the nation of Israel despite their lack of turning from their sins.

## **The prophet's ministry as a spiritual watchman**

In Ezekiel 3:16-21 and 33:1-11, God refers to Ezekiel's prophetic ministry as a spiritual watchman to the nation of Israel. In these two passages, God says the watchman's role involves:

- hearing the Word of the Lord,
- warning the wicked to turn from their sin and
- warning the righteous not to sin.

Also, God warned that if Ezekiel was not willing to warn the wicked and the righteous, God would hold him responsible.

## **God is extremely pleased with those who hate and turn from known evil**

God is exceptionally pleased with those people who hate everything He says is evil. In Ezekiel 9:4, God commanded an angel to put a special mark on the heads of all people in Jerusalem who ***“sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”***

Also Ezekiel 18:21-23, 18:30-32, 33:11 and 33:14-16 reveal God is very pleased with people who turn from their sins. Ezekiel 18:30-32 records: ***“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,’ says the Lord God. ‘Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord God. ‘Therefore turn and live!’”***

## God held the pagan nations accountable for their actions

In Ezekiel Chapters 25-32, God gave details of his judgments, anger and punishments of the pagan nations of Ammon, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Egypt, Ethiopia and Egypt's other allies. These chapters reveal that even in Old Testament times, God held the pagan nations accountable for their actions. This is even though these nations did not have the written Word of God.

To a limited extent, God revealed Himself to these pagan nations through the nation of Israel (see Ezekiel 20:9, 14 and 22). God also put His laws on their consciences (see Romans 2:14-15).

## God's four major punishments for nations

Ezekiel 14:12-20 record the different means by which God punishes nations which are persistently unfaithful to Him: *"The word of the Lord came again to me, saying: 'Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Through these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,' says the Lord God. 'If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, even though these three men were in it, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate. Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, "Sword, go through the land," and I cut off man and beast from it, even though these three men were in it, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered. Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.'"*

God said He uses famine, wild beasts, war and disease pestilences.

## The Holy Spirit entered into Ezekiel

I have heard some Christians suggest that in Old Testament times, the holy Spirit only came upon believers but not into them. But note in Ezekiel 2:2 and 3:24 Ezekiel says *"...the Holy Spirit entered me..."*

## Ezekiel's prophecies

God gave some wonderful predictions through the Prophet Ezekiel. These related to:

- God making a new covenant which would be everlasting (see Ezekiel 16:60-63).
- The nation of Israel returning from exile (see Ezekiel 36:1-38).
- The fulfilment of the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants (see Ezekiel 37:15-26).
- A great army from many nations would one day militarily attack the nation of Israel but God would destroy this army (see Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39).

- A new Temple, a new priesthood and new boundaries for the nation of Israel (see Ezekiel Chapters 40 to 48). In Ezekiel 43:2-5 and 44:4, Ezekiel prophesies that God's glory would return to His Temple some time in the future.

### **Extra interesting points in Ezekiel**

The below are other interesting points found in Ezekiel:

1. The Scriptures tells us to shout for joy (see Psalms 5:11, 32:11, 35:27, 47:1, 132:9, 132:16 and Zephaniah 3:14). Put Ezekiel 8:18 warns us that just because we shout out with a loud voice does not mean that God will hear our prayer: ***"...and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."***
2. Also note Ezekiel 12:2-28 reveals that because God's warnings about future judgment often take years to occur, many people then use this as an excuse to ridicule what God has said through His prophets.