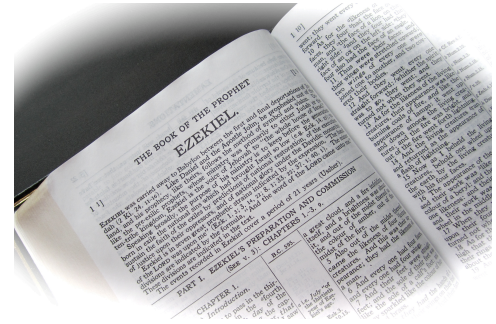


Books of The Bible

A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

The Author

Ezekiel is one of a number of men and places whose name has the letters “el” incorporated in it. “El” is one of the great trunk names of God and signifies His singularity and power. Some of those who had this title of God in their names were: Daniel (judge/d of God); Joel (Jehovah is his God), and Ezekiel (God is strong or strength of God). It is an interesting study to look at the names of such persons and to learn the truths from them. For instance, any activity we endeavor for God must be done in the strength of the Lord.



The first time God is designated “El” is when Melchizedek is said to be priest of the most high El (Gen. 14:18). It is a stupendously interesting passage of the scriptures for it is historical, prophetic, practical, Christological, and ecclesiastical truths. The historical background is that Lot and his family had been taken captive and Abram came with his 300 men and defeats the captors, freeing Lot. In this way it became a foreshadowing of a future day when Israel would be under the domination of the Gentiles, and when things look their darkest, the Lord would come and set them free. This title further indicates:

- a) Faith’s security is in El: “The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” (Psa. 18:2)
- b) Faith’s desire is El: “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psa. 63:1)
- c) Faith’s comfort in its relationship with EL: “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.” (Psa. 89:26)
- d) Faith’s confidence in El: “I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.” (Psa. 140:6)

Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, a man of priestly descent. Ezekiel was a priest, but now he was in a distant land where there was no temple for him to function in, no altar at which to sacrifice, and suddenly due to circumstances beyond his control he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. Life seemed to come to an abrupt end. It is a situation so many of those who are working for the Lord have known. John was on the isle of Patmos, Paul was in prison, suddenly all that they had been fitted for came to an abrupt stop. No longer able to preach and teach, no longer able to travel and minister to the saints and be ministered unto by them, and the normal question would be “Why?”. Then something beautiful is discerned. Their work is not being diminished but enlarged in its scope. When in prison Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. What a loss had God not caused him to be imprisoned. John had the revelation of the Lord and wrote the Revelation, Ezekiel wrote his prophecy. What rich treasures these are. None of us are Ezekiel’s, John’s or Paul’s, but God took a common man called John Bunyan and enabled him to write Pilgrim’s Progress while in prison. What encouragement these men are in our seeing the wonderful ways of God. However, we must go beyond curtailment of activity, for what could be said of Fanny Crosby who was blind but wrote: “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine”, or “Safe in the arms of Jesus”. This woman saw more with her spiritual eyes than she could ever have done with her physical.

It is a possibility that his home was at Tel-abib (ch. 3:15) which was toward the north of Babylon on the River Chebar. Ezekiel was married, whose wife died in the ninth year of his exile (ch. 24:16). That bereavement was darkened further by his being told she would die by evening and he was not to weep for her: “Behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke, yet neither shalt thou mourn or weep” (ch. 24:16). He had his own home in which captives came to him for counsel (ch. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1; 33:31). While the last three do not specifically say it was his home, there is no evidence of it being anywhere else.

His ministry lasted for twenty-two years, a fact that is gathered by comparing the first and last references to time. We read: “In the fifth day of the month (the fourth, ch. 1:1), which was the fifth year of king Jehoaichin’s captivity” (ch. 1:2), which was when he was given the first vision of the glory of God. The last mentioned date is: “in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month” (ch. 29:17). Thus, there was 22 years between them.

Books of The Bible A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

As a prophet his pronouncements were solemn declarations from God which he spoke with divine authority and personal conviction. Many a preacher and teacher has stood, and with divine authority presented the truth of the scriptures but void of any passion and conviction. For Ezekiel this was not just “taking a meeting”, “giving a wee word”, or “preaching a sermon”, it was the message of God filled with the truth of God. He will use such expressions as:

- a) Thus saith the Lord GOD - 122 times
- b) Lord GOD \ LORD God - 210 times
- c) They shall know that I am the LORD - 25 times
- d) I the Lord have spoken it - 13 times
- e) The word of the Lord came - 60 times
- f) Ye shall know that I am the Lord - 51 times

The Historical Background of The Prophecy

King Josiah went into battle against Pharaoh-nechoh, the king of Egypt, during which he was killed at Megiddo when he was thirty-nine years of age (2 Kgs. 23:28-30). He was succeeded by Jehoahaz, who was succeeded by Jehoiakim who reigned as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal for three years of his total eleven years (2 Chron. 36:11). Foolishly he rebelled and after the battle of Carchemish, from it came the first stage of the captivity. Jehoiachin succeeded Jehoiakim, but after only three months he, Ezekiel, and 10,000 others were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, which was the second deportation (2 Kgs. 24:11-18). At this time Daniel, the three Hebrews, and other Jews were deported to Babylon (2 Kgs. 24:12; Dan. 1:7). This would have been at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign of 11 years. The problem was, despite the deportments and the land of Israel bereft, the people did not see this as a judgment from God! They failed to see the inevitable approaching, choosing rather to not only continue in their sins, but grew gradually worse. It is on this point Jeremiah and Ezekiel minister to the same attitude of the people. Instead of seeing the imminent danger, they accepted lies that the Babylonians would never return, and the Holy City was untouchable. This was due to the false teaching of false prophets who thus blasphemed in the Name of Jehovah (ch. 13:16, 19; Jer. 27:9, 28:1-11). In vain Jeremiah told them of the danger and that the fate of the city was sealed (Jer. 21:7, 24:8; 32:3-5; 34:2-3). It was to counteract the false prophets that Jeremiah wrote his letter (Jer. 29:1). Sadly the message was not fully received, and Shemaiah the Nehelamite wrote in reply to Jeremiah's letter suggesting that Zephaniah the priest ought to imprison Jeremiah as a madman (Jer. 29:24-28).

Who The Prophecy Was Concerned With

This prophecy is intriguing because while Ezekiel is speaking about those in Israel and Jerusalem, he is not speaking to them! Among the captives in Babylon there were false prophets who told the people the discipline of God will not be long and they would soon be returning to Israel (ch. 11:1-3, 15). Ezekiel was warning them that they would not be returning any time soon, that Jerusalem would fall (ch. 4:1-2); the people of Israel would be scattered (ch. 6:8), and the land would lie waste (ch. 6:14; 7:2). It was a hard message for it was for many a death knell sounding, informing them that they would never see Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple ever again.

After the deportation of the 10,000, God gave to Jeremiah the vision of the good and evil figs (Jer. 24:1-8). The good figs represented those who were carried away into Babylon, and the evil figs represented those who remained. Yet so twisted is the mind of man that those who were left thought they were the good, and the ones carried away were the evil. Those in captivity accepted the lies of the false prophets, but not all for there were some who sided with the message of Ezekiel and mourned (Psa. 137:2), but the majority hung onto their evil ways (ch. 2:4; 3:7-9; 14:4; 33:32). Thus, the task of Ezekiel was an exceedingly difficult one.

Theological Perspective

God

There are times when reading Ezekiel it is hard to determine between whether the reference is to God or Christ, however, it is evident that Ezekiel had very high thoughts of God, for he speaks constantly of Him and His abilities. He will:

- a) Speak of His supremacy and sovereignty, an aspect of God spoken of 256 times
 - i) In 195 verses there is recorded the expression: "I will"
 - ii) In 61 verses is recorded the expression: "Will I"

- b) He will also speak of the bodily parts of God:
 - i) Arm(s) (ch. 20:33, 34)
 - ii) Mind (ch. 23:18)
 - iii) Heart (ch. 28:6)
 - iv) Ear (ch. 8:18)
 - v) Eye (ch. 8:18)
 - vi) Face (ch. 7:22)
 - vii) Hand (ch. 1:3)
 - viii) Loins (ch. 8:2)
 - ix) Mouth (ch. 3:17)
 - x) Voice (ch. 1:24, 25; 9:1; 10:5)

- c) He will speak of God's name in at least three ways:
 - i) Name (ch. 20:9)
 - ii) Great (ch. 36:23)
 - iii) Holy (ch. 20:39)

- d) He will speak of God as:
 - i) The Holy One (ch. 39:7)
 - ii) The Almighty (Shaddai) (ch. 1:24)
 - iii) The Almighty God (Shaddai El) (ch. 10:5)
 - iv) Lord GOD (Adonay Jehovah) (ch. 2:4)

- e) He will speak of God's:
 - i) Presence (ch. 38:20)

Holy Spirit

In Isaiah there is major emphasis on Christ, but in Ezekiel it is on the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we read of:

- a) The Spirit is in the living creatures (ch. 1:20)
- b) The Spirit enters into him (ch. 2:2)
- c) The spirit lifts him up (ch. 3:12, 14, 24)
- d) Woe is pronounced against the prophets who do not prophecy by the Spirit (ch. 13:3)
- e) An outpouring of the Spirit is promised in the later days (ch. 39:29)
- f) The spirit moved him (ch. 8:3; 11:1; 37:1)
- g) The Spirit fell on him (ch. 11:5)
- h) A new Spirit is promised the repentant (ch. 11:19; 36:26, 27)

Books of The Bible
A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

Christ

It is to be understood that at times bodily parts are indicative of authority, and it is in this way the expressions about “The soles of His Feet” (ch. 43:7); “Hand” (ch. 2:9); and His “Loins” are used (ch. 1:27). When it is speaking of His “Person” (ch. 1:28) and “Voice” (ch. 43:2), that is literal.

Titles of Divine Persons

There are a number of titles or manifestations of the Lord in Ezekiel which are also indicated in other Old Testament books as noted in the following table:

Title	Ezekiel	Other Book
I AM	ch. 5:8	“I AM THAT I AM” (Ex. 3:14)
King	ch. 37:22, 24	“The King of Heaven” (Dan. 4:37)
Lord sitting upon His Throne	ch. 1:26	“He shall build the temple of the Lord . . . and shall sit and rule upon His throne” (Zech. 6:13)
My Holy Name	ch. 43:7, 8	“My Holy Name” (Amos 2:7)
Plant of Renown	ch. 34:29	“Tender Plant” (Isa. 53:2)
Prince	ch. 34:24	“Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6)
Shepherd	ch. 34:12	“He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd” (Isa. 40:11)

Key Words and Phrases

- 1) “I will occurs in 195 verses (from ch. 2:1 - 44:14)
- 2) “Will I” occurs in verses (from ch. 3:18 - 39:29) (*While 2 and 3 is mentioned above, they are in different contexts*)
- 3) “The glory of the Lord” occurs in 9 verses (from ch. 1:28 - 44:4)
- 4) “I saw visions of God” occurs in 3 verses (ch. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2). In the first he learns that God is above all; in the second God is behind all; in the third God is beyond all.
- 5) “Son of man” occurs in 93 verses (from ch. 2:1 - 47:6)
- 6) “They shall know that I am the Lord” occurs in 24 verses (from ch. 6:10 - 39:6)
- 7) “The hand of the Lord was upon me” and “was there upon me” occurs in 7 verses (from ch. 1:3 - 40:1)
- 8) “The word of the Lord came unto me saying” occurs in 47 verses (from ch. 1:3 - 38:1)
- 9) “The word of the Lord GOD” occurs in 3 verses (ch. 6:3; 25:3; 36:4)

His Message

The people would not listen to Ezekiel so God, by him, uses symbolic acts to warn those of Jerusalem and demonstrated to those in Babylon that which would happen to Jerusalem and its peoples. When there was refusal to listen to the word of God then God was silent, and by using imagery aroused their interest.

Books of The Bible
A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

Peculiarities

- 1) It is only in Ezekiel:
 - a) We learn that the children of Israel were idolators in Egypt and throughout their whole wilderness journey (ch. 20:1-4)
 - b) In the Old Testament are the Heavens opened and he sees visions of God (ch. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2)
 - c) Of God's thoughts to destroy them and the only reason He did not was for His own names sake (ch. 20:1-4)
 - d) We get the full details of the temple yet to be built at Jerusalem (ch. 40-42)
 - e) The understanding of the river flowing out from the south side of the altar (ch. 47:1)
 - f) The book begins with a vision of the glory of God and ends with a vision of God amongst His people.
 - g) The reluctance of God to withdraw from His people as manifested by the hesitancy of the glory of the Lord departing. The glory was in the temple (ch. 10:1), then it moved to the threshold of the house (ch. 10:4), then to the east gate (ch. 10:18-19), then to Olivet (ch. 11:22-23).
 - h) He was one of three men called "Son of man"; Ezekiel, Daniel and Christ (Ezek. 2:1; Dan. 8:17; Matt. 8:20)
 - i) He was one of four men not permitted to show signs of mourning; Aaron, Eleazar, Ithamar and Ezekiel (Lev. 10:6; Ezek. 24:16)
- 2) Ezekiel:
 - a) Is one of only two prophets which tell by historical persons the position and end of Satan. (ch. 28:11-19; Isa. 14:12-15)
 - b) He will speak of Egypt more than any other prophet. (see notes below)

The following is not a comprehensive listing of His methods of presenting the message of God, but they are the main ones. God instructed him to prophecy to the people by or from:

- 1) Visions
 - a) The vision of God (ch. 1:3-28)
 - b) The journey to Jerusalem to see the sins being committed (ch. 8:5-17; 11:1-15)
 - c) The journey with the scribe marking the heads of the faithful (ch. 9:2-11)
 - d) The vision of the valley of dry bones (ch. 37:1-10)
- 2) Symbolic action
 - a) By use of a tile (ch. 4:1-2)
 - b) By use of the pan (ch. 4:3)
 - c) Lying on one side and then the other for a prescribed number of days (ch. 4:4-7)
 - d) Eating dirty food (ch. 4:9-17)
 - e) Cutting of his hair with a knife to show the many being slain with a sword (ch. 5:1-5)
 - f) The pot with the good pieces in it (ch. 24:3-5)
 - g) Prepare his belongings for moving (ch. 12:3)
 - h) Smite his hands together (ch. 21:14, 17)
 - i) Stomping with his feet (ch. 6:11)
 - j) Not to mourn when his wife died (ch. 24:16)
 - k) The two sticks (ch. 37:15-21)
- 3) Parables
 - a) The eagle representing Babylon, perching on top of the top cedar, representing the royal house of Judah (ch. 17:3-6)
 - b) The eagle planting a vine seed, that is Nebuchadnezzar putting Zedekiah on the throne (ch. 17:5)
 - c) Another eagle coming, that is Egypt (ch. 17:7)
 - d) The roots of the vine turning toward it, Zedekiah turning to Egypt for help (ch. 17:7)

Books of The Bible A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

- 4) Lamentation
 - a) The lamentation concerning the lion and the vine (ch. 19:1-14)
- 5) Proverbs
 - a) The proverb about the prolonging of days (ch. 12:22-23)
 - b) A man shall be a sign and proverb (ch. 14:8)
 - c) The proverb about mother and daughter (ch. 16:44-45)
 - d) The proverb about the eating of sour grapes (ch. 18:2-3)
- 6) Allegories
 - a) The allegory of Israel as a newborn and a woman of marriageable age, and finally worse than a whore (ch 16:1-58)
 - b) The allegory of Samaria and Jerusalem (ch. 23:2-49)
- 7) Prophecies
 - a) The prophecies are both foretelling and forth telling. Ezekiel was to reveal to the people their true condition and prophecy of judgments to come. At times:
 - i) It was against Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple (ch. 6:2; 7:2; 23-24)
 - ii) It was against the nations (ch. 25:1 - 32:32)
 - iii) It was against the shepherds of Israel and the flock (ch. 34:1-22)
 - iv) It was a message of hope (ch. 17:22-24; 37:21-28; 48:35)

Relationship With Other Old Testament Prophets

Ezekiel had three and possibly four fellow prophets, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, and possibly Obadiah. Putting them together they become a beautiful picture of the mystical body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:4-12)

- a) 5 men doing one work, serving God
- b) Each in his own place. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, Daniel was in the court of Babylon, and Ezekiel was by the river with the captives.
- c) Each in his own time. Jeremiah from 518-477 B C; Daniel from 495-424 B C; Joel from 488-477 B C.; Obadiah approximately 1 year 482 B C; Ezekiel from 484-462 B C.
- d) Each had their own burden
- e) Each had their own ability
- f) Note the high esteem Ezekiel had of Daniel when he coupled him with David and Noah
- g) Each accepted God's place for him

Outlines

- 1) No. 1 - "The glory"
 - a) The glory is revealed (ch. 1-9) and with its revelation there is exposure of the sin of Israel revealing why judgment must fall.
 - b) The glory is departing, (ch. 10-11) and with its departing there is judgment on the nations (ch. 15-32). God's judgment came on them not only because of their own sin but also because of their ill treatment of Israel.
 - c) The glory is returning (ch. 33-48), subdivided into two sections: The preparation for the return of the glory of the Lord (ch. 33-42); the return of the glory (ch. 43-48) and its attendant blessings.
- 2) No. 2 - "The glory"
 - a) The glory appears (chs. 1-3)
 - b) The glory departs (chs. 4-32)
 - c) The glory returns (chs. 33-48)

Books of The Bible
A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

3) No. - 3 Judah

- a) The fall of Judah (chs. 1-24); Prophecies before the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
- b) The foes of Judah (chs. 25-32): Prophecies during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
- c) The future of Judah (chs. 33-48); Prophecies after the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
 - i) J B Phillips “Exploring the Scriptures”

4) No. 4 - Concerning the dates

It is interesting that the dates are not chronological therefore, there must be a moral reason for them. In ch. 1:1 he begins with the very unusual expression: “in the thirtieth year”! Thirtieth year from what? It is evident it is not after the 27th year of ch. 29:17 since the visions of chs. 1-10 had already been given. I cannot see it being connected with Ezekiel and his entrance into the priesthood (Num. 4:3) for this law was changed (1 Chron. 23:24-27). A careful consideration of the chronology would show that it was thirty years from the great passover under Josiah and the finding of the book of the law (2 Chron. 35:1).

Date			Reference
Day	Month	Year	
5th	4th	30th	ch. 1:1
5th	6th	6th	ch. 8:1
10th	5th	7th	ch. 20:1
10th	10th	9th	ch. 24:1
1st	Not told	11th	Ch. 26:1
12th	10th	10th	ch. 29:1
1st	1st	27th	ch. 29:17
1st	7th	11th	ch. 30:20
1st	3rd	11th	ch. 31:1
1st	12th	12th	ch. 32:1
15th	12th	12th	ch. 32:17
5th	10th	12th	ch. 33:21
10th	1st	25th	ch. 40:1, the month is implied by the expression “in the beginning of the year”.

Books of The Bible
A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

Ezekiel							
Ch. 1-3	Ch. 4 –24		Ch. 25-39			Ch. 40-48	
Vision	God's impending, imminent judgments on Israel and Jerusalem?/		God's judgments and destiny of the nations			God's future for Israel	
Commission	Ch 4-11	Ch 12-24	Ch 25-32 The Nations	Ch 33-39 Israel	Ch 40-43:12 The Temple re-erected	Ch 43:13-47:12 Worship and the River of God	Ch 47:13-48:35 The redivided land and the city of God
	Ch 4-7 Message and visions	Ch 8-11 Single vision		Ch 33? The land restored Ch 34 ?The monarchy restored Ch 35? The people reunited			
	Ends with a climax	Ends with a climax	Ends with a climax	Ends with a climax	Ends with a climax	Ends with a climax	
	The judgment of God on His people	Jehovah leaves the Temple	The day Jerusalem is besieged	The overthrow Jehovah leaves the Temple of all opposing powers	All nations recognizing Jehovah as the true God through His dealings with the nations and Israel	The Lord is there.	

Lessons

Ezekiel has a number of lessons for us, some of which are:

- 1) God will not be inquired of by those who have historically and willfully rebelled against His will. (ch. 20:3)
- 2) Before there can be any commissioning by God there must be an experimental appreciation of God's glory. (ch. 1:1-28)
- 3) There is constant reference to the wheels going straight forward, confirming to us that the purposes of God will not be redirected by the disobedience of man, or presumptuousness of the nations.
- 4) The wheels are "a wheel within a wheel", that is a geometrical design with the wheels criss crossing so that they never have to turn. This is the background for the significance of the expressions: "round about the throne" (Rev. 4:4) and both carry the same truth, the ways of God are unchanging.
- 5) In knowing God was above all, behind all, and over all helped Paul. He saw that God was above all when he spoke of himself as a prisoner of Christ while imprisoned by Nero (Eph. 4:1); that God was behind all when he wrote: "The things which happened unto me . . . for the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12); that God is beyond all when he wrote: "Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident. . . are much more bold to speak" (Phil. 1:14).
- 6) The scriptures are for our comfort and what a comfort Ezekiel can be to so many saints. This was a man who was rejected and set aside by his own because he told the truth. There have been so many men I personally have known who, because they stood for that which is Biblical and did not bow to the "accepted teachings" which were biblically wrong, were treated as outsiders.

Books of The Bible
A Survey of The Prophecy of Ezekiel

- 7) God fitted this man for the work he was to do by making his forehead like brass. God will never give anyone a work to do for which he has not equipped them.
- 8) He was a man sent by God and Spirit led. Notice that there is not a word about “inward peace”, “support of other persons”, or “getting a verse”. His being led by the spirit was borne out of a deep fellowship with God, and obedience to Him.
- 9) The four major sins of the shepherds: indolence (ch. 34:3); neglect (ch. 34:4); cruelty (ch. 34:4), and misrule (ch. 34:5-6).
- 10) The sins of the flock: selfishness (ch. 34:18); inconsideration (ch. 34:19); and oppression (ch. 34:21).

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia