



Overview for Ezekiel

Purpose: The Book of Ezekiel was written to pronounce judgment on both Judah and surrounding nations, and to provide hope for the future Messianic Kingdom and Israel.

Author: Ezekiel, whose name means “God strengthens,” was a priest of Judah living in exile in Babylonia. Some Bible scholars suggest that the reference in the book’s first verse to “the thirtieth year” alluded to the thirty years that had passed since Josiah’s restoration of the Temple in 623 B.C. Other scholars believe this was Ezekiel’s age when God called him into service. Nothing is known of Ezekiel’s family except that he had a wife and his father was named Buzi.

In 597 B.C., Ezekiel was among the second group of Judeans taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and deported to Babylon. (The first group of captives was carried away in 605 B.C. and included Daniel.) A third and final group would be taken in 586 B.C. In the fifth year of Ezekiel’s exile, he was called by God to be a prophet, and he served in that role for more than twenty years. There is no record that he ever returned to Jerusalem. Jewish tradition holds that Ezekiel was put to death by his own people because of his preaching.

Time Period Covered: Ezekiel’s prophecies are dated between 593 and 571 B.C.

Date Written: Approximately 571 B.C.

History: Ezekiel lived in a time when crisis and upheaval characterized the Mediterranean region. Although Assyria had dominated the area for over 125 years, its power was in decline, and in 612 B.C., Babylon conquered Assyria and became the major superpower.

The Babylonians invaded Judah in 605 B.C. Judah initially was a vassal state, and maintained a semblance of independence by paying a substantial tribute to Babylon. However, King Jehoiakim discontinued payments, and in retaliation, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar sent an army against Jerusalem in 597 B.C. Ezekiel, along with some ten thousand of the most prominent men of the country, were among those carried into exile at that time. The conquest that led to Ezekiel’s captivity is described in 2 Kings 24:12-16.

In 586 B.C., following the final revolt, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, and Judah ceased to exist as an independent nation. Many of the remaining

people were taken captive to Babylon, some fled to Egypt, and others stayed behind in the decimated land. The Israelites who stayed in their homeland struggled to survive, but most of those in Babylon had a degree of freedom. While some were enslaved or imprisoned, many were allowed to settle and live as they pleased in their new country. Ezekiel was among that number.

Setting: The Chebar River, where Ezekiel received his prophetic commission, is thought by most Bible scholars to be a canal of the Euphrates River located southeast of Babylon near the city of Nippur in present day Iraq. It possibly was a place of prayer for the exiles. The Book of Ezekiel references this river eight times.

According to Ezekiel 3:15, the prophet’s home was located in Tel-Abib, where a great number of the exiles lived; some of his prophecies were given from that location (for example, Ezekiel 8:1). He was married until the death of his wife, recorded in Ezekiel 24:18. The fact that elders of the people came to consult with him indicates that he was respected within the community of exiles (see Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1; 20:1).

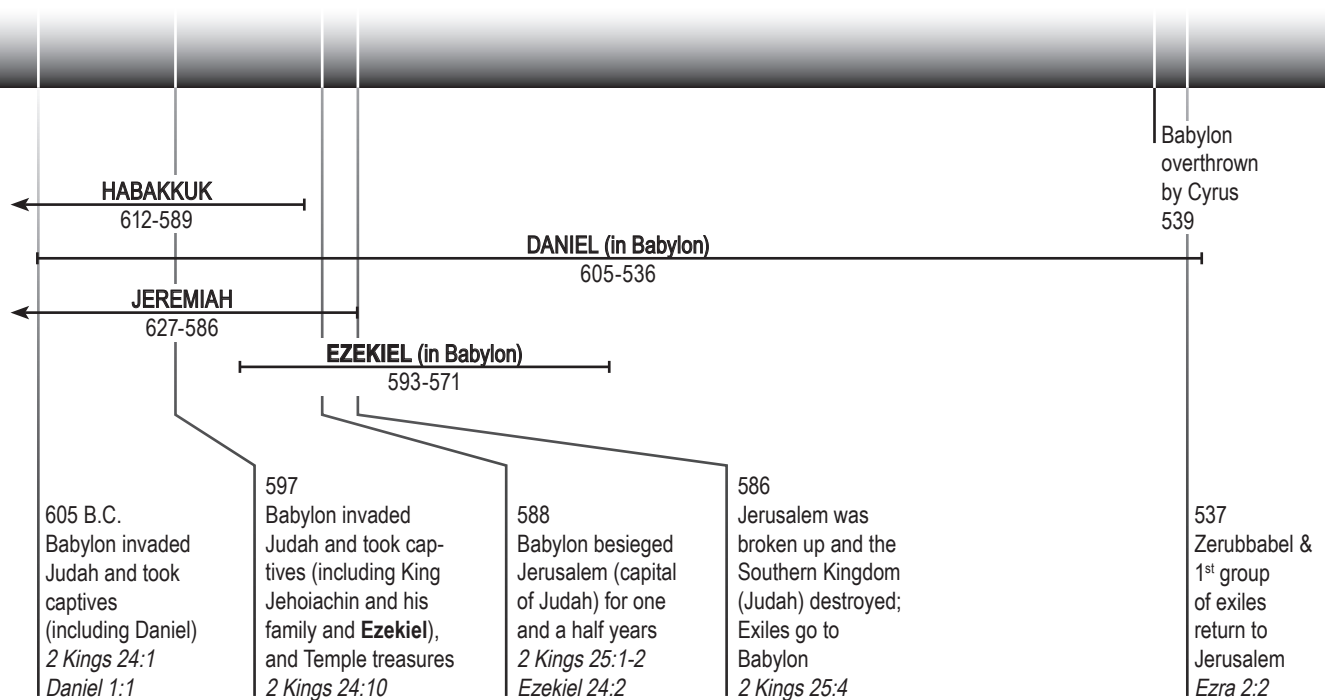
Unique Characteristics: Unlike other prophetic books, the Book of Ezekiel unfolds in chronological order, beginning with the prophet’s call to prophetic ministry. Many of the subsequent visions and events he related are precisely dated. The prophet’s messages are characterized by allegories, symbolic actions, and apocalyptic imagery (vivid symbolic pictures or revelations concerning the end times).

Though the subject matter varies throughout the book, its content is stylistically consistent. Ezekiel often made his points by using contrasts and the hammering effect of frequent repetition. He also employed parables as illustrations; five are included in this book.

Summary: The Book of Ezekiel contains forty-eight chapters, and has four main sections. The first section, chapters 1-3, focuses on the call of the prophet. The second section, chapters 4-24, pronounces judgment on Judah and Jerusalem, and was written prior to the fall of Jerusalem. Section three, including chapters 25-32, is a series of messages of judgment against seven foreign nations. In the final section, chapters 33-39 begin after the fall of Jerusalem and focus on Israel’s restoration, and chapters 40-48 deal primarily with a new Temple and a restored Israel in the end times.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. The call of the prophet (1:1 — 3:27)
 - A. The identification of the prophet (1:1-3)
 - B. The vision of the prophet (1:4-28)
 - C. The commission of the prophet (2:1 — 3:3)
 - D. The instruction of the prophet (3:4-27)
- II. The condemnation of Judah and Jerusalem (4:1 — 24:27)
 - A. The prediction of Jerusalem's overthrow (4:1-7:27)
 - B. The transgression and fall of Jerusalem (8:1 — 11:25)
 - C. The cause of Judah's destruction (12:1 — 19:14)
 - D. The revelation of God's dealings with Israel (20:1 — 24:14)
 - E. The signs of Israel's judgment (24:15-27)
- III. The condemnation of the nations (25:1 — 32:32)
 - A. The condemnation of Ammon (25:1-7)
 - B. The condemnation of Moab (25:8-11)
 - C. The condemnation of Edom (25:12-14)
 - D. The condemnation of Philistia (25:15-17)
 - E. The condemnation of Tyre (26:1 — 28:19)
 - F. The condemnation of Sidon (28:20-26)
 - G. The condemnation of Egypt (29:1 — 32:32)
- IV. The consolation of Israel (33:1 — 48:35)
 - A. Prophecies of Israel's restoration (33:1 — 39:29)
 - B. Prophecies of the millennial kingdom (40:1 — 48:35)