

# Ezekiel

*“As Good As It Gets”*



*- Six Studies in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel -*

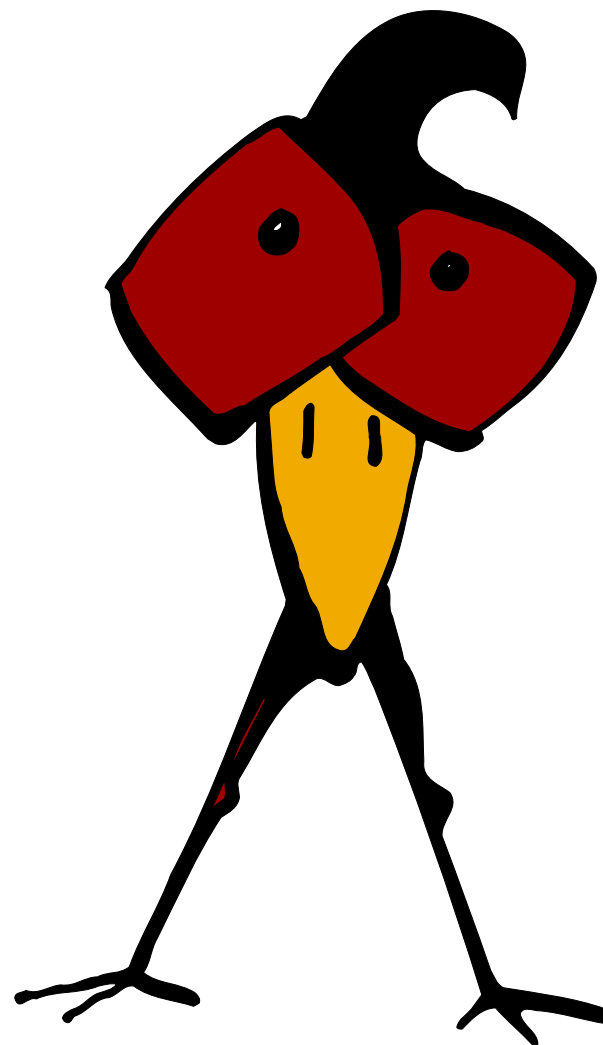
Dear Bible Study Peruser,

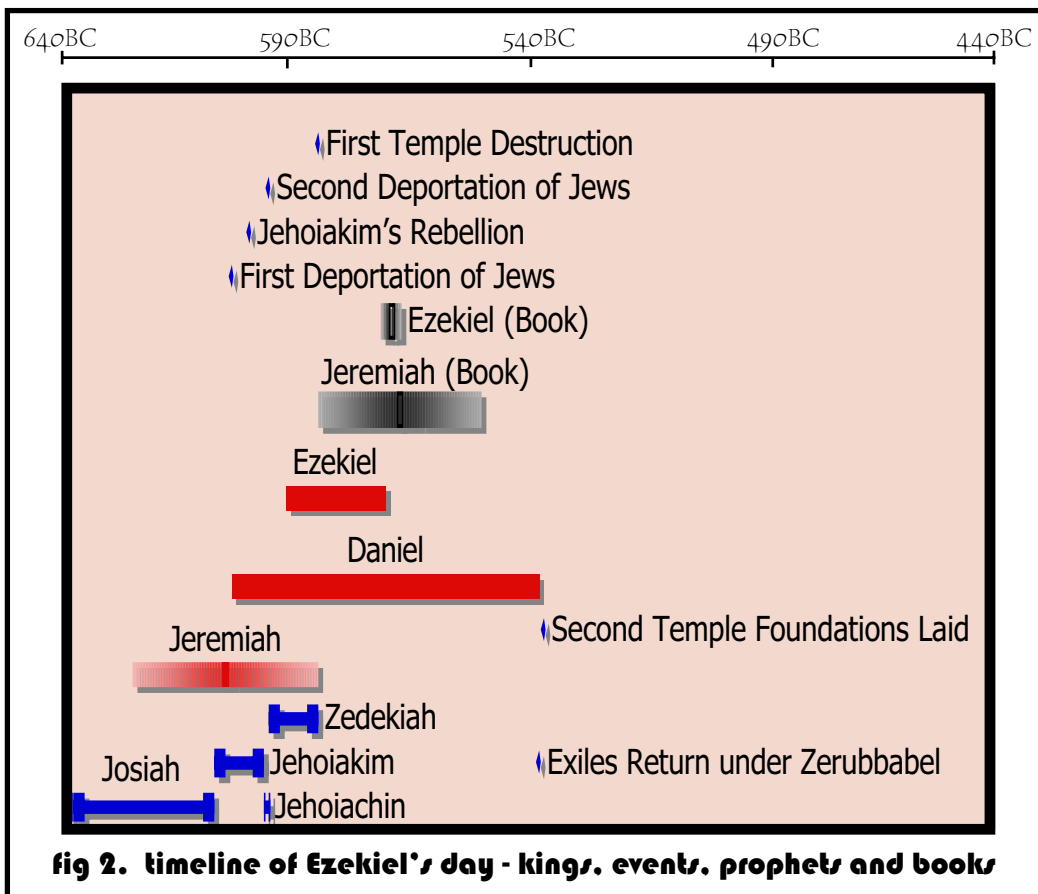
Welcome to a series on Ezekiel. This is a six part series, and as there are 48 chapters in the book of Ezekiel, it will be apparent that we are jumping over large chunks. While there is value in going over all the text closely, this is not the purpose of these studies. It aims to give you the big picture of Ezekiel, which should allow you to come back and look at individual texts and understand them more fully.

What is in this file? At it's completion there will be an introduction to the book as well as the six studies. There also should be some leaders notes to give an idea as to what I was thinking that you should be looking at in each passage as well as to fill you in on some of the background. Each study is designed to be a folded A4 sheet, photocopied front and back.

Recommending commentaries on a book like Ezekiel is difficult. Bill Dumbrell's book, "The Faith of Israel", is always worth a look. If you've got a lot of money Daniel Block's commentary in the NICOT series is good. If not, try Tyndale [but I haven't read it].

Regards





## the studies and the sermons...

1. Ezekiel 1-3 - Every Move You Make, Every Breath You Take
2. Ezekiel 3-23 - When God Says Goodbye
3. Ezekiel 24-33 - Justice For All
4. Ezekiel 34-36 - Shepherds Behaving Badly
5. Ezekiel 37-39 - A Reversal Of Fortune
6. Ezekiel 40-48 - Let The Good Times Roll

# intro to ezekiel

## ¿ who is ezekiel

Ezekiel was probably one of the first prisoners taken into Exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 598 B.C.. (2 Kgs 24:10-17). He active as a prophet from 593 B.C. to at least 571. He lived as an exile himself and, according to the label of the book that goes by his name (1:1-2), did all his preaching in Babylonia, probably in the Jewish settlement of Tel-abib on the Kebar canal near the ancient city of Nippur (3:15). According to the information at the start of his book, he was the son of the priest Buzi (1:3), and his name means “God strengthens”. Because he was of a priestly family, he probably had a good education, especially in the Law, and his father may even have had some influence in Jerusalem. Ezekiel was married (24:18), but little else is known about him personally. Legend says that he is buried in a tomb at al-Kifl, near the modern town of Hilla in Iraq, not far from the site of ancient Babylon.

## ¿ what is the situation of the book

The book of Ezekiel occurs at a time of unprecedented despair in the life of God's people, and this despair dominates the first half of the book. Ezekiel himself was an exile from the Promised Land, living with other Israelites in Babylon as a direct result of Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant with the Lord [have a look at Deut. 28.15f]. It is a time of unrest, with ongoing rebellion in Judah against the Babylonian overlord, Nebuchadnezzar. This is crushed in 586BC [see Jer. 52, Ezek. 33.21].

## ¿ what's ezekiel's book about

The book itself is one of the most highly structured among those of the prophets. It is clearly divided into three major sections that reflect different aspects of Ezekiel's ministry.

1. Chs. 1-24 contain words of judgment against Israel;
2. Chs. 25-32 contain words against foreign powers;
3. Chs. 33-48 contain promises of salvation for Israel.

The prophet preached warning and judgment to the Judeans up until the final catastrophe of 586 B.C. when Jerusalem fell completely to the Babylonians; and that he preached hope and promise of restoration after that date.

The oracles of judgment help Israel understand why God let the city of Jerusalem fall and the old kingdom end for good; the oracles directed to pagan nations serve as a prelude to the establishment of a new kingdom of Israel by announcing punishment on all who oppress God's people; and the oracles of consolation focus on the new order that God will establish for Israel. This last section has two major movements: (1) a promise of a new exodus and conquest of the land in chaps. 33-39; and (2) a new division of the land and rebuilding of the holy city in chaps. 40-48. In this program, Ezekiel reflects the original pattern found in the foundational book of the conquest story, Joshua.

## ¿ where's jesus

At its heart, Ezekiel's book shows us the justice and the mercy of God. Justice demands that sin be punished, impurity cleansed. God's mercy means that we see the hope promised of a rescue. Apart from some great specific promises of Jesus, it isn't too hard to see how Jesus ultimately ultimately satisfies God's justice and mercy.

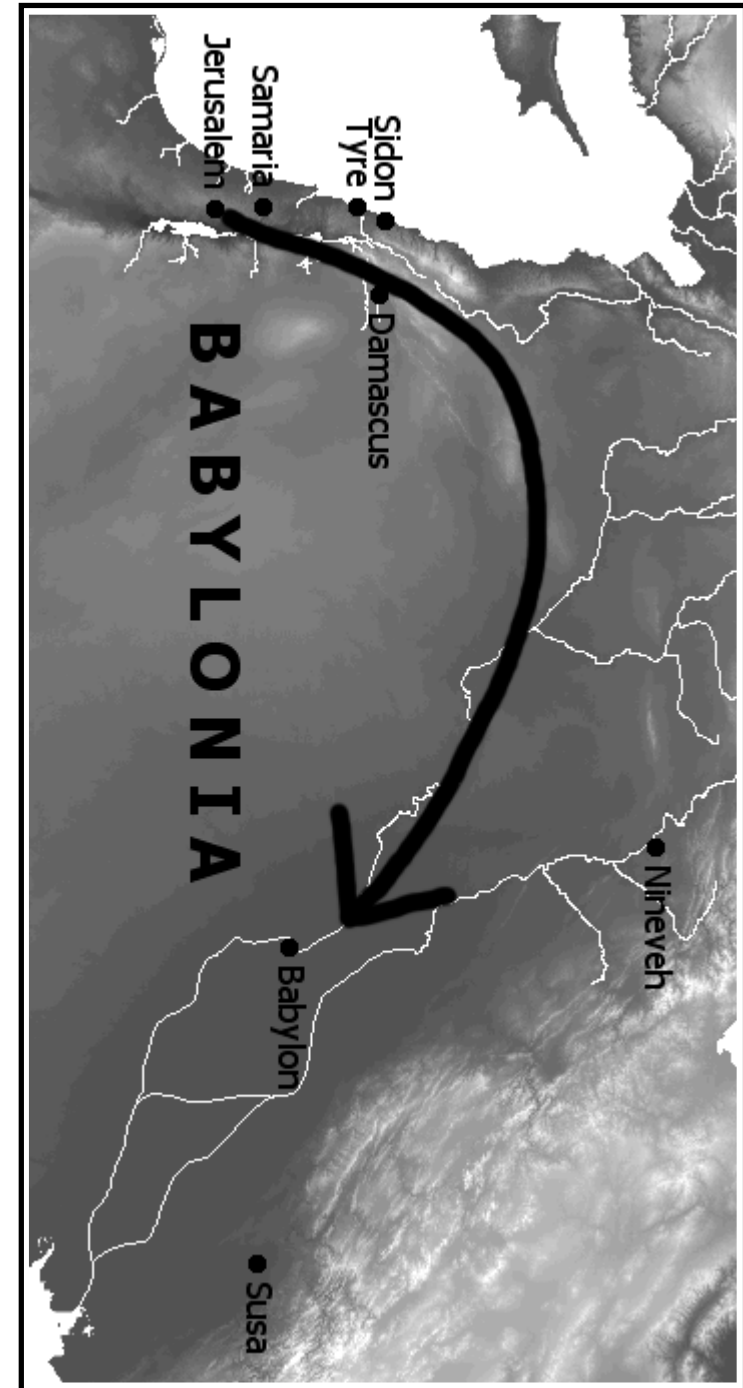


Fig. 1 - Jerusalem in the Babylonian Empire

## ¿ what are some of the main ideas in the book

### THE “SPIRIT”

Ezekiel has a great focus on the Spirit of God. He speaks of the new age which will be an age in which a new spirit will be placed within God's people, changing them inwardly so that they will be responsive to God's Word. Where Jeremiah speaks of the law (torah) being written on the heart, Ezekiel speaks of the spirit changing hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. For Ezekiel, the new age beyond judgment is essentially the age of the spirit. This theology is developed in the NT especially in Luke's Gospel and in Acts, but also in Paul's letters.

[NOTE - in Hebrew the word for Spirit is the same as the word for Breath and Wind]

### PURIFICATION

The crowning sin which brought about the fall of Jerusalem was the defilement of the Lord's sanctuary with worship of idols (see 5:11, and ch. 8). However, such defilement was not in the temple alone, but everywhere throughout the land –especially the mountains, where pagan rites had been practised at the high places or pagan shrines. The penalty for such defilement is expulsion from the land. Israel has chosen uncleanness, so she shall have it in full measure. They will be driven out of their land, which was Yahweh's sanctuary, to an unclean land. Uncleanness will be their total environment (4.13). However this is not the last word - the book of Ezekiel culminates in a scene of perfect purity, in which a pure people offer pure worship in a clean land.

### GOD AS KING

Ezekiel everywhere affirms the fundamental truth of the Sinai Covenant that Israel is a people ruled by the Lord as their King. The book begins with a vision of the Lord high and lifted up—enthroned above the living creatures, and yet with his people in their Exile [see also Isaiah 6]. The Temple is, of course, a powerful symbol of divine kingship in the OT, and that is possibly why it figures so prominently in Ezekiel's vision of the future with which the book ends. Throughout the book the LORD's kingly rule is exercised first in judgment (1-24; see especially 20:33) and then in salvation (33-48). Chapter 34 affirms that the Lord himself is the Shepherd (i.e. King) of his people.

### UNITY

A tragic feature of the monarchy period had been the fracturing of Israel into two kingdoms which were frequently at odds with one another, even to the point of armed conflict. The exile, of course, witnessed a further fracturing of Judah into Palestinian and Babylonian components. And we must not forget that from the time of Jeremiah there was also a sizable Jewish community in Egypt.

The book of Ezekiel reveals that this fracturing was not only physical but also spiritual and psychological. The Palestinian community regarded themselves as the true Israelites and virtually wrote off the exiles as spiritual rejects (Ezek 11:14-15). Ezekiel said that this was not so. Physical removal from the land did not mean that they were cut off from Israel. But still the fracturing was painful and raised serious questions about what it meant to be the people of God.

Ezekiel's understanding of the unity of the people of God is derived from his view of God's kingship. If there is ultimately only One Shepherd (ch. 34) then there can ultimately be only one flock - one people of God (ch. 37). The closing vision, with the twelve tribes arranged around the new Temple is a vision of such unity under God's rule.

In the NT Jesus seems to allude to the Shepherd passages of Ezekiel when he speaks of himself as the good Shepherd and alludes to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the phrase “one flock, one Shepherd” (Jn 10:16).

### GOD'S JEALOUSY

Essentially what is said is that Yahweh is jealous for what belongs to him. He will not allow what is his to be permanently misused. He will act in his jealous anger against those who touch and misuse what belongs to him (36:6). This thought of the Lord's jealousy has two aspects, the second more fundamental than the first: 1. The Lord is jealous for his people who have been misused by the nations (36:6-7). 2. He is jealous for his own name and reputation (39:25; 36:20-23, 32).

This understanding of Yahweh's motivation utterly undercuts human pride. It has its theological roots in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:5).

**¿ where does this leave us ?**  
[after all we are not Ezekiel in Exile in Babylon!]

¿ where do we see God at his most awesome ?

¿ what effect does this have on us ?

**...have a look at II Corinthians 5.11-6.2...**

¿ why does Paul speak ?

¿ what is the content of the message given to Paul ?

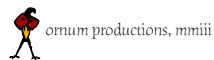
¿ what does the “vision of God” that is presented in the gospel do for those who are “recreated” by it ? what does it mean for us ?

PRAY!!!

**...other passages to have a look at...**

I Peter 3.13-17...

Mark 4.1-20...



# ezeiel 1-3

**¿ what would convince you to give your allegiance completely to another person ?**

**E  
Z  
E  
K  
I  
E  
L**



Ezekiel’s book opens with an account of his comissioning by the Lord to be his prophet, to speak his words, to his rebellious people. While in Babylon he sees a awesome vision of God on his throne...

**¿ what different elements make up the vision that Ezekiel sees in chapter 1 ?**  
**Describe them**

v4...

v5-14...



v19-21...

**¿ what is the overall effect of the vision ?**



v22-28..

Ezekiel having seen the vision of the “Heavenly Chariot”, the Lord Almighty commissions him as his prophet in chapters 2 & 3...

**unpack the elements of the commission...**

**¿ what do you think the four creatures stand for ?  
¿ why a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle ?**

¿ who is the sender ?

¿ who is sent ?

¿ to whom is he sent ¿

**¿ what do you think the wheels represent ?  
¿ what are they doing?**

¿ what must he do ?

¿ what will be their response ?

**¿ why does the throne sit on the creatures and the wheels ?**

¿ what help is Ezekiel given ?

¿ what effect does the commissioning have on him ?



## ...read Hebrews 4.1-11

The writer to the Hebrews speaks to the church about the “Sabbath-rest for the people of God”, which is Heaven. He uses the example of Israel wandering through the desert for 40 years, and the example of their disobedience as a warning.

¿ what is the warning that the writer gives for Christians ?

¿ how could we fall short ?

¿ how can we make sure that we don't ?

¿ in Ezekiel's terms, what are our idols ?

¿ Have we ever been guilty, like Ezekiel's audience, of not hearing the force of God's words ?

*“Ah, Sovereign LORD! They are saying of me, ‘Isn't he just telling parables?’”*

[Ezekiel 20:49 ]

PRAY!!!

# ezeziel 3-23

## ¿ what's happening here

Ezekiel 3.16-23.49 is a very sombre section of the Old Testament. Following the opening vision of the Lord at the river Kebar and Ezekiel's commissioning [1.1-3.15], the word of the Lord returns to Ezekiel. Ezekiel is made a watchman for Israel and is accountable for warning them of the coming judgment - and so he does for the next twenty chapters! They are a mix of visions, prophetic condemnation, and allegories but they all focus on the fact that Israel, and particularly Jerusalem, will be judge for their moral and religious corruption. It is a black picture, with very few signs of hope. We will focus in on one passage, so come to grips with what Ezekiel is saying to us!



**¿ what would your “loved one” need to do for you to turn away from them ?**

**...read Ezekiel 20.27-43**

**¿ what is Israel's crime ?**

¿ what did their ancestors do ?

¿ how do Ezekiel's hearers continue in the way of their ancestors ?

¿ why do they do it ?

**¿ what is the Lord's response to it ?**

¿ what will he do ?

¿ why will he do it ?

¿ what will be the result of his action ?

¿ for Israel ?

¿ for the nations ?

¿ for the Lord?

¿ by what right does he act ?

**...see if you can sum up the message for Israel**



The question arises for us now - how do we apply this to us? The most obvious application is 'Don't commit idolatry', but is this all we can take from Ezekiel 20?

Ezekiel spoke to the national Israel, the people of God, in Exile. They were in Exile because of their unfaithfulness to the covenant, in their relationship with him. Jesus was a future promise, the church unimagined - what does this mean for us?

Paul spoke of the Old Testament - "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" [1 Cor 10.11]. Israel's experience foreshadows ours and so we can gain valuable insight for our Christian lives...

## ...read Revelation 18

in the book of Revelation John sees history unfold from God's perspective. Through the use of images and recurring patterns a tapestry of history is unfolded. One of the main images in the book is that of the city of Babylon, which represents all human power set up in opposition to God and to his people. In Revelation 18 we see "Babylon" fall.

¿ how and why does Babylon fall ?

¿ what is the world's reaction to her fall ? why ?

¿ what is the reaction of God and his people ? why ?

¿ will God's enemies 'get away with it' ?

¿ what waits for God's people ? [have a look at Revelation 21.1-5]

PRAY!!!

# ezeziel 24-33

¿ what's happening here

Ezekiel 24.1 opens with the Lord making Ezekiel note the date - it is the day the seige of the city of Jerusalem begins. Through the opening chapters of the book, Ezekiel has carried a word of judgment against God's people and against the city of Jerusalem - now the time has come to see those prophecies fulfilled. And now their is a change of focus - it is the nations, Israel's neighbours, who are under the spotlight of God's just judgment. This section ends with Ezekiel's recomissioning as Israel's watchman and the confirmation that true to the word of the Lord and his prophet, Jerusalem has fallen.



**¿ have you ever felt that it would be easier to not be one of God's people ? Why/why not?**

as we know, Israel is in trouble - most of her people are in exile, and those who remain are under seige in Jerusalem, and the Lord has made it clear that they will not win.

Let's have a look at what Ezekiel says about the other nations.



**briefly skim the contents of chapters 25-32.  
Summarise them in the table...**

ch. 25	judgment on Ammon
ch. 25	
ch. 25	
ch. 25	
ch. 26-28	
ch. 28	
ch. 29-32	

**¿ how rosy is the future for Israel's neighbours ?**



Let's focus in on the great trading city of Tyre. Tyre was to the north of Israel, and in the past had quite good relations with her. She was a city built partly on an island, and partly on the main-land, thus she had very great defensive capacity

**...read Ezekiel 28.1-10**

the ruler of the city is representative of the people, and so as the prophet directs his words to the king, he speaks of the fate of the nation.

¿ What is the sin of the King of Tyre ?

¿ what was the Lord's answer to the King's claim ?

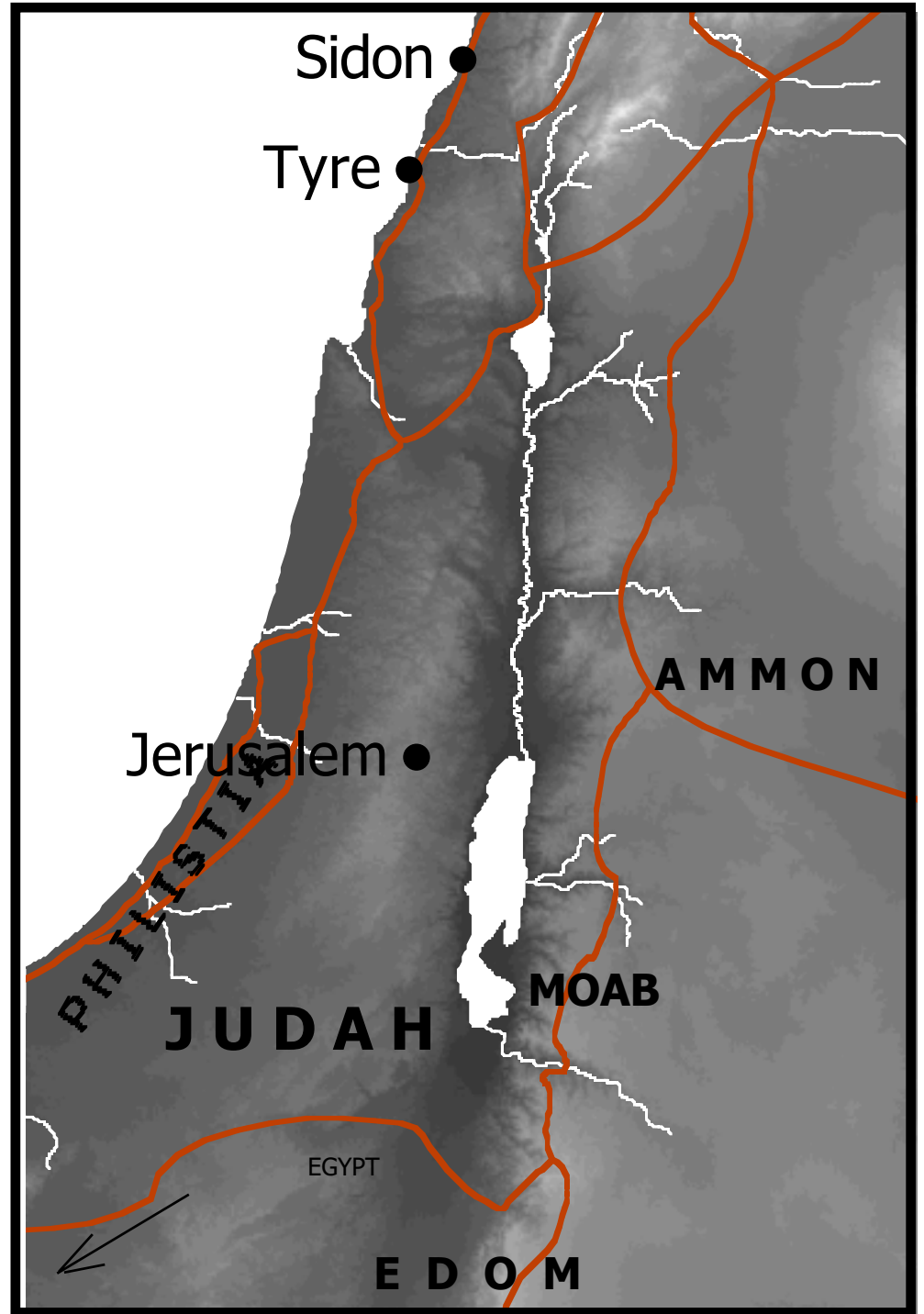
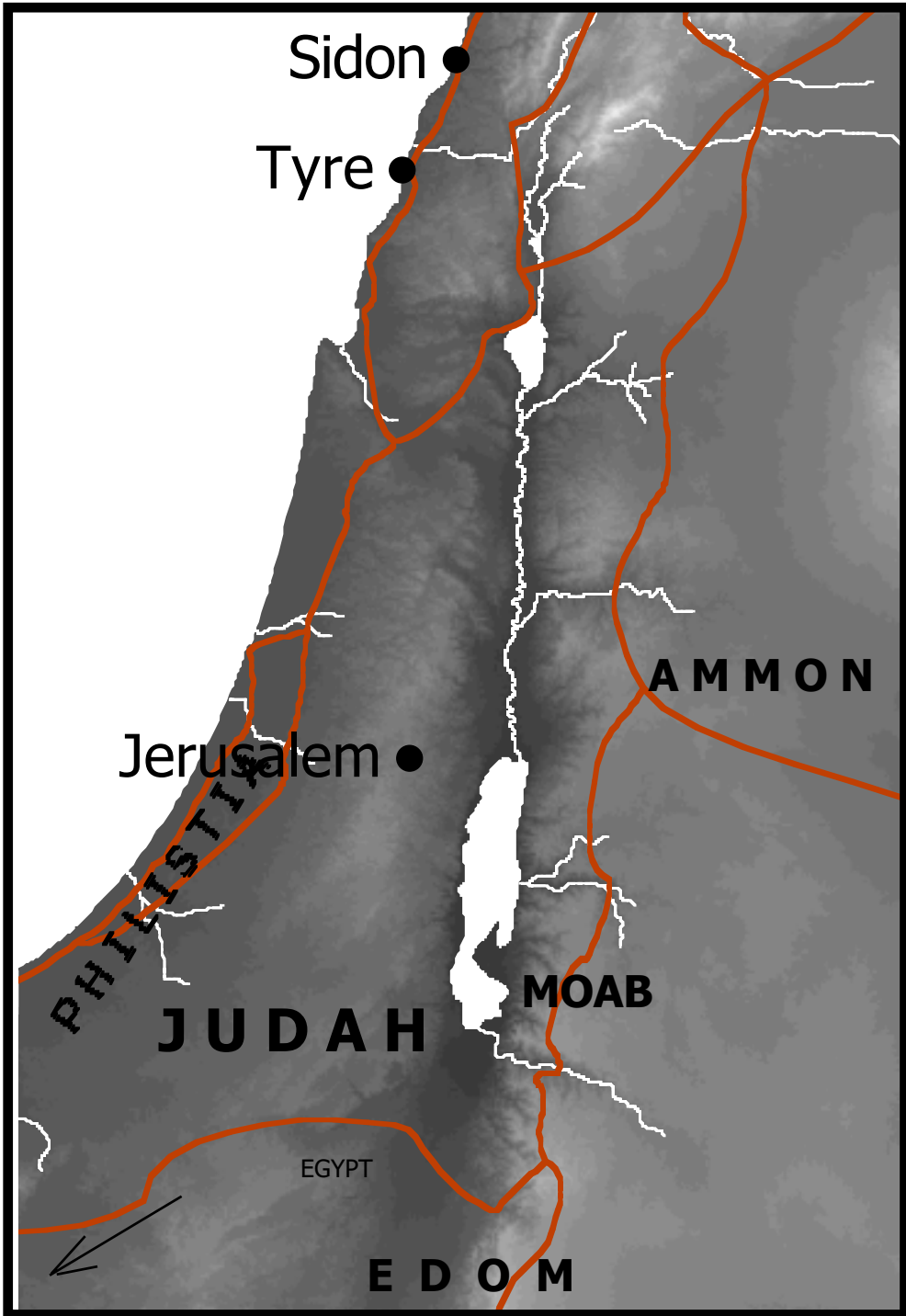
**...A Bit Of History**

Nebuchadnezzar's victory over the Egyptians in 605 BC changed the political map of the region (cf. 2 Kgs 24:7). Tyre was jubilant when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. (Ezek 26:2), but the Tyrian king did not, however, recognize the immediate danger; only too late did Tyre recognize the political and strategic line of Nebuchadnezzar, who, after the fall of Jerusalem, turned to Tyre and besieged it to safeguard his lines for his ultimate goal, the conquest of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre 13 years (ca. 585-573/2 - see Ezekiel 29:17-18), who conquered the old city and forced a treaty upon Tyre: the royal house had to reside in Babylon. Tyre's power had been totally exhausted; its overseas territories were mostly taken over by Carthage. In 332BC, Alexander the Great conquered the whole of Tyre after a seven-month siege, selling or slaughtering most of the population. "She recovered in a measure after this blow, but never regained the place she had previously held in the world. the larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare as the top of a rock - a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry" [Philip Myers].

**...read Ezekiel 28.24-26**

¿ what future for God's people ? why does God act ¿







Have a Think!!!

¿ how has looking at Ezekiel 34 changed or expanded our understanding of Jesus ?

¿ what are some of the implications for we who follow ?

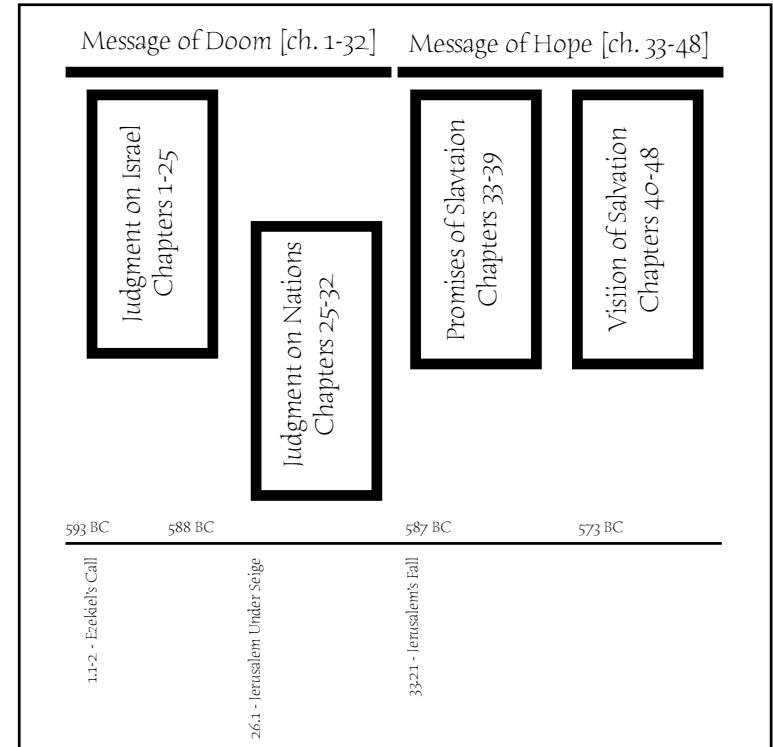
¿ what are some of the implications for we who lead [or want to lead] ?

PRAY !!!

e  
z  
e  
k  
i  
e  
l

# Ezekiel 34-46

...structure and other stuff



¿ when you look at leaders our world respects and follows, what do you see ?  
¿ Do you like it ?

Ezekiel 34 is a mixed chapter where God looses both barrels upon the leadership of Israel, but promises a solution.

¿ God's action is for what reason ?  
¿ Is this just for His "ego" ?

...Read Ezekiel 34

summarise the "two shepherds"



...read John 10.11-18

Here Jesus identifies himself as the "one shepherd, my servant David" of Ezekiel 34.

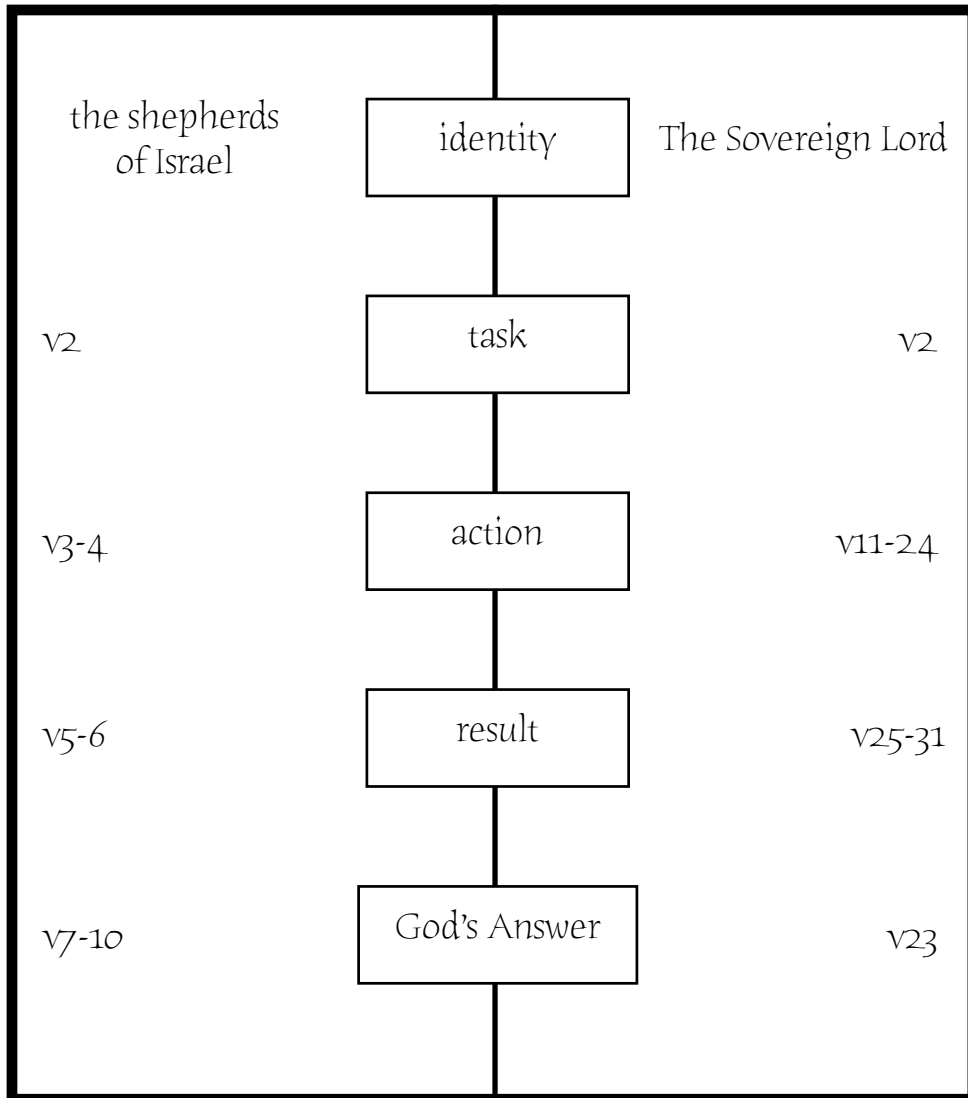
¿ What defines his "shepherding"?



...read I Peter 5.1-4 and Mark 10.35-45

¿ what does Jesus say characterises secular leadership ?

¿ what should characterise Christian leadership ?



## Have a think...

look at Luke 2.22-38 [esp. v22 & v38] - Simeon and Anna are waiting for what ?

look at Luke 1.67-79 - Zechariah [the father of John the Baptist] sees what promises fulfilled in the birth of Jesus?

v68 - .....

.....

v69 - .....

.....

v70-73 - .....

.....

v74-75 - .....

.....

v76-79 - .....

.....

[see also Acts 2, John 2.19-22]

PRAY !!!

# ezeziel 37-39

...filling in the gaps

**e** plot out the significant events that describe Israel's situation at this stage of Ezeziel's book...

**z**

ch 1.1-3 -

**e**

ch 24.13-14 -

**k**

ch 33.21 -

**i**

¿ how happy would have you been to be an Israelite at this stage of their history ?

**e**

not happy Jan	quite unhappy	quite happy	very happy	over- joyed
---------------------	------------------	----------------	---------------	----------------

**i**

¿ what would you do to start all over again ?

The Original State

v1-2

The Prophet's Action

v3-10

The Promises of God

v11-14

v15-16

v17

v18-28



¿ what would these promises meant to Israel ?

Malachi was written after Israel returned from Exile - have a look at Malachi 3.9-12 - ¿ do they seem to have received the promises of God ?

...Jesus

Jesus is Immanuel [God with us] - ¿ in what way do we see this in John 2.13-22 ?

¿ what does it mean for Jesus to be the Temple ?

¿ but, are we there yet ? [i.e. at the situation Ezekiel spoke of]

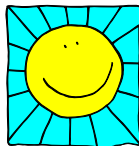
...heaven

read Revelation 21.1-22.5

SOAK IN IT!

¿ How does the vision of heaven in Ezekiel and Revelation speak to our lives today ?

PRAY!!!



# ezeziel 40-48

what does the word "home" mean to you ?  
...describe it.

e  
z  
e  
k  
i  
e  
l

Israel had very strong ties to home - to the Promised land, to the city of Jerusalem, to the Temple of the Lord. Being in the Land was a sign of the Lord blessing them - that they were his chosen people and that he was their faithful loving God and Father. That is why Exile was such a hideous judgment for God's people - blessing had turned sour: it had turned to curse. But the Lord promises through Ezekiel that home awaits his faithful people and it will be better than before.



...BEING REAL...



## ...visions of home

briefly summarise chapters 40-48 [just look for the general flow rather than the nitty gritty - the NIV headings can be useful]...

ch. 40-42...
ch. 43.1-12...
ch. 43.12-27...
ch. 44-45...
ch. 46...
ch. 47...
ch. 48...

¿ what is Ezekiel seeing ?

## ...focusing in on chapter 43.1-12

Ezekiel comes around to the East Gate -¿ what does he see ?

¿ Why is this significant ?

¿ what promise does the Lord make to Ezekiel ?

¿ what does this mean for Israel ?

¿ what impact do you think that the plans for the New Temple wuld have had on the people of God in Exile ?



**...where do we see this fulfilled ?**

have a look at Haggai 2.1-9

¿ is it fulfilled in the return from Exile ?

¿ what is the word of the Lord through Haggai pointing to ?

## STUDY ONE - EZEKIEL 1-3

The first study looks at the vision of the Lord that Ezekiel sees on the banks of the river Kebar in Babylon. Quite simply, it floors him. He sees the Lord enthroned in majesty, an awesome figure of power. This is no regional deity, confined to the borders of his land - rather he is the God of the earth, and Ezekiel is his chosen representative.

### ¿ what do you think the four creatures stand for ?

The four creatures represent the best of the best of creation - humanity [in the image of God]; the lion [the undisputed king of the wild animals and associated with royalty]; the ox [the king of the domestic animals and associated with fertility and deity]; and the eagle [the king of the birds].

### ¿ what do you think the wheels represent ?

the wheels give the whole throne-thing the appearance of a chariot. It is impressive and implies that the Lord is able to cruise where he will because they are able to move in all directions.

### ¿ why does the throne sit on the creatures and the wheels ?

The Lord is separated from creation and enthroned over it - the best that creation has to offer is used to hold up the platform under his throne.

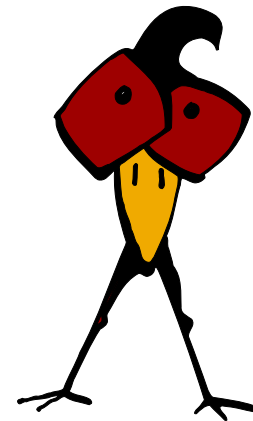
### unpack the elements of the commission...

Ezekiel is basically commissioned by God to go and speak to God's people who are in rebellion. He is equipped by God's spirit and the words he speaks are God's words. He is also possessed of a very hard forehead.

### NT application...

I have taken you to II Corinthians 5 and the passage that describes Paul pleading with the Corinthians to be reconciled to him as their apostle and so to God. You cannot reject God's messenger and be his friend at the same time. We are ambassadors, compelled by God's love in Christ to plead with the world, only in a secondary sense - it is true for us as we are faithful to the message delivered through the Apostles [i.e. the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ].

E  
Z  
E  
K  
I  
E  
L



## STUDY TWO - EZEKIEL 3-23

The second study looks at the long section of judgment being pronounced, seen, and demonstrated on the people of Israel, particularly those still in Israel, but it is a warning for those in Babylon to get their house in order. There is a very significant vision in which Ezekiel sees God pack his bags and leave the Temple and Jerusalem, thus making them vulnerable.

### ¿ what is Israel's crime ?

Israel, like their forefathers is guilty of breaking the covenant - their formal relationship with God [I will be your God and you will be my people, and all that entails]. This is basically by the worship of other gods and wanting to be like the nations. Moral corruption inevitably followed such falling away.

### ¿ what is the Lord's response to it ?

Quite simply, God judges sin - but he will not give up on his people. For the sake of his reputation he is faithful where they are faithless and he does not abandon them as they deserve, but rather refines them and makes them a testimony of his faithfulness to the nations. For Israel, it is to be another 'wilderness 40 years' where again only the faithful will enter the promise land [NB. last time only two adults of the original generation entered the land].

### NT application...

I have taken you to Hebrews 4 and the passage where the writer is warning the Christians from the wilderness experience of Israel. His point is that they heard the gospel [the promise of God's rest] and they did not meet it with faith and so live accordingly. So they fell in the desert and did not enter the rest of God [Canaan]. For the Christian Heaven is our Sabbath-rest, and so we must live according to the faith we profess in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have extra time, have a look at I Peter 5. There Peter speaks of judgment starting in the church. This is a refining like Israel endures, designed to separate the wheat from the chaff. Simply, the elect will be purified.

NOTE - only those who enter "rest" can truly be considered as one of the 'elect' of God. As Paul says in Romans 9, not all Israel are Israel [9.6] - external membership is not a guarantee of God's choice.

E  
Z  
E  
K  
I  
E  
L

