

Study 7 – Ezekiel

Before we begin: When we think about the instructions for churches in the New Testament, do you think the bible is specific in how we gather and worship, and in what we do together as we meet? Why or why not? Try to give theological reasons.

Historical context

Ezekiel, the son of *Buzi , was deported to Babylonia, almost certainly with Jehoiachin in 597 BC (2 Ki. 24:14–17). He was settled in the village of Tel-abib by the river *Chebar . Five years later he received his call as prophet (Ezk. 1:2), possibly at the age of 30 (1:1), though this interpretation is denied by many without offering a more satisfactory one. He lived for at least another 22 years (29:17).¹

Structure and message of Ezekiel

See the two-bible project videos

[Ezekiel 1-33](#)

&

[Ezekiel 34-48](#)

See the Bible [Project diagram on Ezekiel](#) for a structural outline

Exercise:

Read through the following passages –

- Ezekiel 5:13
- Ezekiel 6:6-7 & 9-10
- Ezekiel 25:5 & 14
- Ezekiel 29:8-9

1. What is the refrain that keeps emerging in these passages?
2. What does it say about God's reason or purpose for his actions?
3. How does the refrain in Ezekiel relate to Exodus 6:6-9 and 7:4-5?
4. Does this refrain transform Ezekiel's prophecies from being merely announcements of what God will do into announcements of Gods self-revelation?

¹Wood, D. R. W., D. R. W. Wood, and I. Howard Marshall. *New Bible Dictionary*. Includes Index. electronic ed. of 3rd ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996, c1982, c1962.

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Some Major Themes in Ezekiel

The name of God revealed in judgment and salvation

- The Lord reveals himself in both judgement and in salvation
 - See the above examples in the exercise
 - The name of the Lord has been profaned through Israel's rebellion against the covenant
 - **Ezekiel 20:5** 5 and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of the house of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, "I am the LORD your God."
 - **Ezekiel 20:8-9** "'But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. 9 But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt.
 - **Ezekiel 36:22-29** "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. 23 I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. 24 "'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you.

The covenant

- It's not surprising to see the covenant featured in Ezekiel's writings
 - God recalls his covenant with Israel when he brought them out of Israel
 - **Ezekiel 20:5-8** 5 and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of the house of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, "I am the LORD your God." 6 On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. 7 And I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

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- ⁸ ¶ "But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt.
- The restoration oracles also speak in terms of the covenant
 - **Ezekiel 11:19-20** 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.
 - **Ezekiel 34:20-22** "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, ²² I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another.
 - The covenant language is even modified to embrace the Davidic covenant
 - **Ezekiel 34:23-24** ²³ I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.
 - **Ezekiel 10:18-19** ¹⁸ ¶ Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. ¹⁹ While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

The temple.

- The temple forms the heart of Ezekiel's prophecy
 - The glory of the Lord departs the temple
 - **Ezekiel 10:18-19** ¹⁸ ¶ Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. ¹⁹ While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.
 - And returns later to the renewed temple
 - **Ezekiel 43:4-5** ⁴ The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. ⁵ Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

Ezekiel's Eschatology

Judgement

- Judgment is focused on God's absence and restoration on his presence.

Individual responsibility

- Israel had a collective responsibility to keep the covenant
 - But both Jeremiah and Ezekiel qualify this as they quote the following proverb
 - **Ezekiel 18:1-4** The word of the LORD came to me: ² "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "'The

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fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? ³
 "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. ⁴ For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son-- both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

Group focus

- Notwithstanding this – there is a group (exiles) and national focus (both in terms of Israel and the nations).
 - Seen expressed against the shepherd and the rulers
 - **Ezekiel 34:7-10** ⁷ ¶ "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, ⁹ therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

Spiritual renewal

- Just as exile was due to the sin and covenant breaking of Israel
 - Returning to the land has to be more than simply coming back
 - It has to involve renewal
 - **Ezekiel 36:25-28** ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

Spiritual warfare

- Political and spiritual powers will oppose the coming of God's reign on earth with all their might.
 - See Ch 38-39 and the battles described against Gog.
 - It may well be that Gog and his nations are symbolic of the people of the world who are arraigned against the people of God. (The book of Revelation refers to Gog and Magog in this sense in Rev. 20:8).²
 - Note also the tedious detail in the vision of the renewed temple ch 40-47 points back to the details of the Tabernacle in Exodus. This was necessary back then to maintain the relationship between God and his people.
 - The vision of the new temple points towards a new way to bring together a holy God and a sinful people.
 - **Ezekiel 43:10-12** ¹⁰ ¶ "Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan, ¹¹ and if they are ashamed of all they have done,

²Carson, D. A. *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*. Rev. Ed. of: The New Bible Commentary. 3rd Ed. / Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

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make known to them the design of the temple-- its arrangement, its exits and entrances-- its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. ¹² "This is the law of the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be most holy. Such is the law of the temple.

Exercise:

Read Ezekiel 47: 1-12.

Thinking back to our opening studies on Prophetic Eschatology, answer the following questions.

What is the shadow that informs (and has done so since Ch 40) the prophetic vision of Ezekiel?

Read John 4:1-15, Revelation 21:22 - 22:5, John 2:19-22, John 1:14.

How are the themes from Ezekiel taken up in these New Testament passages?

What Old Testament passages or images does Ezekiel's eschatology develop?

Discuss

How would you explain to someone (don't assume a person of high biblical literacy!) why we do not need a literal temple in Jerusalem to the specification that Ezekiel provides in chapters 40-47?

Also, revisit the opening discussion. Would you adjust or strengthen your position in any way?

Homework: Read the OT3 notes for study 7.

For next meeting: Read through Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah.