

Lesson 03: Ezekiel

GROW University - Old Testament 103

Context

Historical:¹

	Jeremiah	Ezekiel
Time	Early <u>6th</u> century (beginning of Judah's exile)	
Location	Jerusalem, then Egypt	<u>Babylon</u>

Read **Ezekiel 1:1-3**.

Much of Ezekiel's message is the result not of experiencing things in the land, but through visions of the land Yahweh has given to him.

Redemptive-Historical:

Similar to Exodus— Now, Yahweh's people go not out of captivity, but into captivity for the glory of Yahweh's name.

By the end, Ezekiel preaches that the salvation of the people, and their second exodus back out of captivity again, is also motivated by Yahweh's passion for His glory.

Theme

The glory of Yahweh has departed from His land, because He is jealous for His name. But His glory will return, because He is jealous for His name. Ultimately, His glory will be restored to the entire earth in the last days.

Exodus: the announcement and introduction for Yahweh in all His glory onto the world stage.

Ezekiel: the vindication of His name, fame, and glory after years of practice on His part in the face of neglect on His people's part.

These point forward to a day when the knowledge of the Yahweh's glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).

¹ His writings span from (ca.) 593 to 571BC.

Outline W/ Pivotal Texts

I. Ezekiel 1-32 —Judgment/Removal: Against Judah and the rest of the nations

- A. 1:1-3:15— The call and sending of Ezekiel
- B. 3:16-7:27 — Announcement against Jerusalem (imminent judgment)
- C. 8-11 — Visions of idolatry and the flight of the glory of Yahweh
- D. 12-19 — Idolatry and the Lord Yahweh
- E. 20-23 — Judgment coming closer and closer (warnings intensify)
- F. 24 — The beginning of the siege of Jerusalem
- G. 25-32 — Seven oracles against seven cities/nations

II. Ezekiel 33-48—Grace/Restoration: A vision of the future

- A. 33-37 — Three symbols of restoration announced immediately after the fall
 - 1. The Good Shepherd
 - 2. Dry Bones Resurrected
 - 3. Two Rods
- B. 38-39 — The final battle (God and Magog typological; used in Revelation too)
- C. 40-48 — Vision of the coming kingdom of God: the glory of Yahweh returns New Temple, New Jerusalem, New Heavens, New Earth

Theme Texts

Ezekiel 1

Read **1:26-2:1** (cf. Exodus 24, Isaiah 6, and Revelation 1 & 4).

Notice:

- 1.) Yahweh Himself is not described, only His surroundings and "garments" are.
- 2.) The person having the vision of Yahweh's glory falls on his face in fear and worship.
- 3.) Yahweh consoles these people, and tells them not to fear.

Revelation 1: *"the Revelation of Jesus Christ"*

John 1:14

Hebrews 1: *Jesus Christ is the fullest expression and manifestation of the glory of God.*

Jesus (in John) says that His greatest work of demonstrating the Father's glory was *on the cross.*

John 13:31-32

John 17:1-3 (*The effect of Jesus glorifying God and God glorifying Jesus*)

The point: *The only way to know God and have eternal life is in the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ.*

To claim that there are other ways to knowing God and inheriting eternal life, is to belittle the glory of God as He's expressed Himself in Christ, and defame the greatness of who He is.

Ezekiel 5-7

Chapters 2-3: The rest of Ezekiel's call to ministry

Chapters 4-7: The beginning of announcements against Jerusalem for their idolatry.

Read **5:13; 6:9-10; 7:27**. The exile, like the exodus before it, is Yahweh's proclamation of His holy character.

Ezekiel 20

Ezekiel reminds us that Yahweh's motivation behind all of His actions has been for the sake of His own name.

Read...

- **20:8-9.** *Why hadn't Yahweh destroyed His people while they were still in Egypt, already rebelling against Him and His servant Moses?*
- **20:8-9.** *Why didn't Yahweh wipe them away when, even after His great deliverance, they rebelled against Him in the wilderness?*
- **20:13-14.** Now it's that same motivation that has brought Judah to an end. *But* Yahweh will also bring His people back from exile, because of Yahweh's zeal for His own name's sake.
- **20:41-44.** His dealings with us are premised upon His own desire to bring Himself glory and lift up the worth of His name! —> the gospel. In Christ, God gets the glory, and we get the salvation!

Note **verse 43**. This should result in great contrition and humility in the hearts of the saved (**Romans 3:25-27**).

*Further Reading: Galatians 6:14-15; Ezekiel 16:60-63

Ezekiel 8-11

Yahweh gives Ezekiel a vision of what's happening back in Jerusalem: idolatry

8:5— at the "altar gate"

8:7— at "the door of the court,"

8:14— at "the north gate of the temple,"

8:16— in "the inner court of the temple."

The point: the closer one got to the most inner court of the temple, the place called "the holy of holies," the more holy the land was supposed to be for the worship of Yahweh (cf Leviticus).

But here, Ezekiel sees more and more idolatry as the visions get closer to the "holy of holies" in the temple! The result...

Read **10:4**.

The fire/smoke cloud that dwelt in the holy of holies = a particular physical manifestation of Yahweh on earth, what made the holy of holies the most holy place on earth.²

Remember the cherubim from Exodus and 1 Kings.³

So Ezekiel sees that Yahweh is leaving His dwelling place and moving to the threshold of the temple.

Next, he sees a vision of real live cherubim, driving a sort of wheeled throne. And the seat is empty.⁴

Read **10:16-17**. What's going on here? What's the purpose of this chariot?

Read **10:18-19**. This divine chariot, taxied by awful creatures, is coming to the temple to pick up the glory of Yahweh, and escort Him away.

² Of course this is some how metaphorical. Even Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, recognizes this in 1 Kings 8:27 when he says, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!"

³ Statues of angels, carved in gold, that covered the ark of the covenant which was also in the holy of holies. The glory of the God of Israel rested above these cherubim.

⁴ This isn't the first time he's seen this. You can read more about this chariot in chapter 1 as well.

This vision is sad, consoling, and frightening all at the same time.

Sad: it represents Yahweh's displeasure with the people's covenant unfaithfulness and that He will no longer dwell in the temple. That means that the temple is no longer holy, and sacrifices are of no use to be made there anymore.

Consoling: Read **11:6**. The glory of Yahweh is portable! Means that ultimately one needs neither land, nor temple, nor sacrifices in order to know God and worship Him as such.

Connection to chapter 1: Ezekiel is in *Babylon* when he sees his vision of the glory of the God of Israel, and has continued to remain there this whole time. Yahweh Himself is the people's dwelling place, not a land or temple.

Frightening: But first, because of the people's sins, they will be scattered, and the destruction of the temple is a hair-raising verdict from heaven against them.

Read **11:22-23**. Yahweh's glory leaves the city, and rests on the mountain opposite the city. The mountain is a place of attack. Like a lioness that perches herself on a rock to pounce on her prey, Yahweh will next turn on Jerusalem and destroy the city where He once dwelt.

Ezekiel 14

Read **14:3**. Yahweh sees not only the idols we contract, but the idols in our hearts too.

Idolatry: taking anything other than the true God and turning it into a **commodity**, meant to bring the person security in this world (Romans 1:25).

Q: What sort of things do we turn into idols, in our hearts, even if we don't call them idols with our lips, or bow down to them on our knees, or lift our hands up to them in prayers?

J. I. Packer⁵ makes the case that idols are not only images of false gods, but also images of the true God. These images do not only exist in physical form, but also in our **minds**.

"All speculative theology, which rests on philosophical reasoning rather than biblical revelation, is at fault here...To follow the imagination of one's heart in the realm of theology is the way to remain ignorant of God, and to become an idol-worshipper."⁶

⁵ Chapter 4, *Knowing God*

⁶ Ibid.

Packer tells us that we are therefore summoned to *“recognize that God the Creator is transcendent, mysterious and inscrutable, beyond the range of any imagining or philosophical guesswork of which we are capable and hence a summons to us to humble ourselves, to listen and learn of him, and to let him teach us what he is like and how we should think of him.”*⁷

We are compelled to *“to take our thoughts of God [from God], from His own holy Word, and from no other source whatsoever.”*⁸

Idolatry also comes simply by osmosis from the **social context** we live in.

*“We were made in His image, but we must not think of Him as existing in ours.”*⁹

What can we do? Return to the word of God.

Your mind = a cup full of dirty water. Pour more and more fresh water in, to dilute the dirty and cause it to overflow out of the cup.

*“The mind that takes up with images is a mind that has not yet learned to love and attend to God’s Word.”*¹⁰

Ezekiel 34-37

Read **34:23-24**. Yahweh says that He will give His servant David to shepherd His people (Not literally him, but one like him, in his kingly line) —> Jesus Himself, the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10).

Read **36:25-27**. Yahweh’s solution for the salvation of His people is to give them a savior (Jesus Christ) and new hearts (the work of the Holy Spirit living inside believers).

Read **37:12-14**— A “resurrection” of Yahweh’s people — The vision of the valley of dry bones.

Read **37:24-28**. Can you hear the covenant with David, the covenant with Moses, and the covenant with Abraham all converging and being fulfilled in Christ?

Ezekiel 38-39

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Page 43.

⁹ Page 42.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The book closes out with a couple eschatological visions.

Chapters 38-39— the end-times defeat of all of Yahweh's enemies.

Ezekiel 40-48

A mammoth-sized temple that will be rebuilt

Not literal, but meant to hope and to prophesy a greater future reality

It's meant to emphasize the return of Yahweh's glory (cf. ch8-11)

Read **43:1-5**— *The point*: Yahweh has returned to dwell with His people forever, meant to encourage the captives in exile and give them hope.

Read **43:7, 9**—The same is true with the description of the city.

Read **48:35**— the awesomeness of what it means that Yahweh dwells with His people!

Read **Revelation 21:2-3**. The glory of the city is that Yahweh is dwelling there with His people!

Biblical truth: God will dwell with His people.

Ezekiel's vision of *this truth*: a huge temple!!!

John's exact opposite vision of *the same truth* (**Revelation 21:22-24**): no temple?!?

Why? Because, in Ezekiel, though Yahweh dwelt among His people, He couldn't dwell with them immediately and had to be separated from them, because of His holiness and their sins.

In Revelation 21, Yahweh can dwell with His people without need for a temple any longer in Christ!

Conclusion

Homework:

Read **Ezekiel 1** this week.