

Ezekiel

The Authorship and Dating

The book's claim that Ezekiel the Son of Buzi is its author (1:3, 24:24) is further supported by broad scholarship.¹ Although some scholars have forwarded two main arguments against Ezekiel's authorship, their basis is more antisupernaturalistic rather than evidential.²

According to Ezekiel 1:1-3, the author began his ministry at the age of 30 in the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (593 B.C.). And according to 29:17 he continued until the 27th year of the captivity (circa 570 B.C.) or around his 53rd birthday. The book's lack of comment concerning Cyrus or even the Hebrew return in 538 B.C. also supports an early dating. Given the detailed record of the book and lack of evidence otherwise there is little reason to date Ezekiel much later than his last prophecy in 570 B.C.

The Recipients

Ezekiel presented his messages to the exiles located in Babylon by the river of Chebar (1:1) between Israel's dispersion and subsequent return.

The Purpose

Since Ezekiel wrote portions of his book before Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. it can be safely assumed that his stern warnings of coming judgment served to solicit repentance within the Promised Land. However, Ezekiel, for the most part, wrote to the captives in Babylon explaining the reason for the nation's exile. "It was also a loving God's means of disciplining His people to correct their beliefs, redirect their behavior, and restore intimate fellowship between himself and them. Thus Ezekiel preached to the exiles the imminence of God's judgment and the need for individual and national repentance."³

The Message

The book may be divided into three sections. The first section serves as a presentation of the prophet's calling (1-3). The second section serves as announcement of Judgment (4-24) while the last section involves promises of restoration (33-48).

The book opens with the call of Ezekiel (1-3). Ezekiel notes that he began his ministry in the thirtieth year of his life. Ezekiel recorded his call as a prophet as well as Israel's idolatrous sin and sure judgment. After a vision of God and his majesty (1-2) the prophet was commanded to eat a scroll and preach to the people of Jerusalem (3). Although Ezekiel was raised for the

¹ Bill T. & Bryan T. Beyer Arnold, *Encountering the Old Testament*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). 409.

² The two arguments that are forward are: "1. The prophet who pronounced doom upon Israel could not possibly be the same as the one who held for heartening promises of future blessing. 2. It is alleged that the author of Ezekiel betrays a Palestinian viewpoint rather than that of an author writing in Babylonia." After his discussion Archer concludes: "Only on the basis of antisupernaturalistic presuppositions can the factor of divine revelation be ruled out as an explanation of how Ezekiel could have had such an exact knowledge of what was going on in the Lord's house back in his native land. Nor can it be successfully maintained that even the assumption of an author living in Jerusalem can satisfactorily explain all the material contained in the text, for some of these visions are obviously of supernatural origin." Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 412-13.

³ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Ronald B. Allen Earl D. Radmacher, H. Wayne House(Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999). 956.

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priesthood, God called Ezekiel as a prophet and used his priestly background to explain the reason for Judah's exile.

The book's second section (4-32) pronounces judgment on Judah, Jerusalem and the surrounding nations. Through drama, Ezekiel warned the Hebrew nation of certain destruction (4-7). Ezekiel detailed the sins of Jerusalem (8-11) demonstrating the necessity of their captivity (12-19) as well as their sure fall (20-24). Through chapters 25-32 Ezekiel pronounced Judgment upon seven surrounding nations. His judgments included Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt. Since these nations had abused Israel, these nations would also experience God's judgment.

In the third and final section (33-48) Ezekiel brought encouraging words to the exiled. He indicated that God would raise up a new prophet (33), a good shepherd (34) as God provided blessing (35-36), complete restoration (37) and peace (38-39) within the land of Israel. He further indicated that after this restoration to the land that God will restore the lost glory of His temple (40-43) providing opportunity for renewed service (44-46) within their promised land (47-48).

The Theme

God's Just discipline of His corrupted people and preservation unto eternal blessings.

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Outline

I. God Called Priestly Ezekiel to serve as a Prophet to the Exiles in Babylon 1:1-3:27

II. God Warned both Judah and Jerusalem as well as the Surrounding Nations of God's Coming Judgment.

- A. Ezekiel Pronounced Sure Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem for their Blaphemous Sins 4:1-24:27
 - 1. Destruction Predicted 4:1-7:27
 - 2. Jerusalem's Sin 8:1-11:25
 - 3. Captivity Necessary 12:1-19:14
 - 4. Israel's Sure Fall 20:1-24:27
- B. Ezekiel Pronounced Judgment on the surrounding enemies of the Hebrew Nation. 25:1-32:32
 - 1. Judgment Against Ammon 25:1-7
 - 2. Judgment Against Moab 25:8-11
 - 3. Judgment Against Edom 25:12-14
 - 4. Judgment Against Philistia 25:15-17
 - 5. Judgment Against Tyre 26:1-28:19
 - 6. Judgment Against Sidon 28:20-26
 - 7. Judgment Against Egypt 29:1-32:32

III. God Promised Complete Restoration of the Hebrew Nation to both Land and Glory. 33:1-48:35

- A. Ezekiel Promised Restoration leadership for the Hebrew nation resulting in a Peaceful and Unified Nation. 33:1-39:29
 - 1. New Age Prophet 33:1-33
 - 2. Good Shepherd 34:1-31
 - 3. Blessed Israel 35:1-36:38
 - 4. Vision of Dry Bones 37:1-28
 - 5. Peace After Gog 38:1-39:29
- B. Ezekiel Promised Restoration for the Hebrew Nation to a Supernatural Existence within the Land of Israel. 40:1-48:35
 - 1. New Temple 40:1-43:27
 - 2. New Service 44:1-46:24
 - 3. New Divisions 47:1-48:35

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Questions Concerning Ezekiel

1. Address the authorship and dating of Ezekiel.
2. Describe the setting of Ezekiel.
3. For what purpose did Ezekiel write concerning the departure of the Glory of God from the Temple?
4. Describe some of the Judah's sins throughout Ezekiel.
5. What are some of the textual difficulties concerning Ezekiel?
6. Discuss Ezekiel's vision of the wheel in a wheel.
7. Describe the significance of the vision concerning the Vision of Dry Bones 37: 1-28
8. Describe the various views concerning the New Temple in 40-43
9. To whom does Gog and Magog refer?
10. Describe the prophecy of Tyre (26-28) as related to history.

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Bibliography

Archer, Gleason L. Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

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