



A Course
In
**EZEKIEL, STUDIES
IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

Pineland, Florida 33945

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PREFACE

EZEKIEL, a priest whose name means *God will strengthen*, was among the Jewish exiles carried away to Babylon between the first and final deportation of Judah (II Ki. 24:11-16). His book shows him as a man of stern integrity and strong purpose, completely devoted to the practices of his priestly religion. Like Daniel and the Apostle John, he prophesied outside the land of Judah; and his prophecy, like theirs, follows the method of symbol and vision. Unlike the pre-exilic prophets, whose ministry was primarily either to Judah or to the ten-tribe kingdom, or to both, Ezekiel was the voice of the LORD to “the whole house of Israel.” In marked contrast with Jeremiah, all of the material in Ezekiel’s prophecy is arranged in chronological order as God revealed it to him.

Speaking broadly, the purpose of Ezekiel’s ministry was to keep before the generation born in exile the national sins which had brought Israel so low (e.g. Ezek. 14:23); to sustain the faith of the exiles by predictions of national restoration, of the execution of justice upon their oppressors, and of national glory under the Davidic monarchy.

Observe that the glory of the LORD departed from the city just before the destruction of Jerusalem (11:23); this glory will return to Jerusalem in the millennial period (43:2). No Temple in Jerusalem has known the presence of the glory of God in this manner since 586 B.C.¹

Although the American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, this method of study allows the writer to occasionally condense a passage in his own paraphrase. This should not be construed to imply that A. B. C. is correcting God’s Word.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Ezekiel ten times.

¹ THE NEW SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE, NEW TESTAMENT, (NEW YORK – OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1967), p. 838.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We have chosen to use Dr. B.H. Carroll's commentary on Ezekiel as a basis for this study. It is public domain material and can be viewed on the Internet. Benajah Harvey Carroll (B. H. Carroll), Dec. 27, 1843–Nov. 11, 1914, was a fundamental Baptist pastor, theologian, teacher and author, who lived before the re-birth of Israel as a United Nation's chartered nation.

Also, the American Bible College wishes to thank Dr. David H. Sorenson for his permission to use his material taken from his 2nd edition commentary, *UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE*, VOL. 26, EZEKIEL (published by Northstar Ministries, 1820 W. Morgan St., Duluth, MN). He is an outstanding independent Baptist pastor/scholar and a prolific writer holding to fundamental Bible doctrine. We whole-heartedly recommend our readers to purchase this commentary set. Also, we wish to thank the other commentators for the use of their quotes.

Likewise, the American Bible College wishes to thank Drs. Thomas Constable and Charles Dyer of Dallas Theological Seminary for their contribution. We would encourage the reader to purchase the two volume set of *THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY* from Chariot Victor Publishing.

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OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL

(This outline style is adapted from Dr. Charles H. Dyer's outline.)¹

OUTLINE

- I. Judgment on Judah (chaps. 1-24)
 - A. Ezekiel's preparation (chaps. 1-3)
 - 1. Introduction (1:1-3)
 - 2. The visions for the work (1:4-2:7)
 - 3. The message for the work (2:8-3:11)
 - 4. The motivation for the work (3:12-27)
 - B. Ezekiel's prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem (chaps. 4-24)
 - 1. The necessity of judgment because of disobedience (chaps.4-11)
 - 2. The futility of false optimism (chaps. 12-19)
 - 3. The history of Judah's corruption (chaps. 20-24)
- II. Judgment on Gentile Nations (chaps. 25-32)
 - A. Judgment on Ammon (25:1-7)
 - B. Judgment on Moab (25:8-11)
 - C. Judgment on Edom (25:12-14)
 - D. Judgment on Philistia (25:15-17)
 - E. Judgment on Tyre (26:1-28:19)
 - 1. Destruction of the city (chap. 26)
 - 2. Dirge over the city (chap. 27)
 - 3. Downfall of the prince of the city (28:1-19)
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 - G. Judgment on Egypt (chaps. 29-32)
 - 1. The sin of Egypt (29:1-16)
 - 2. The defeat of Egypt by Babylon (29:17-21)
 - 3. The destruction of Egypt and allies (30:1-19)
 - 4. The scattering of Egypt (30:20-26)
 - 5. The similarity of Egypt and Assyria (chap. 31)
 - 6. The lament for Pharaoh (32:1-16)
 - 7. The descent of Egypt into sheol (32:17-32)
- III. Blessings on Israel (chaps. 33-48)
 - A. New life for Israel (chaps.33-39)
 - 1. Watchman Ezekiel reappointed (chap. 33)
 - 2. The present false shepherds contrasted with the future true shepherd (chap. 34)
 - 3. The enemy (Edom) destroyed (chap. 35)
 - 4. The people blessed (chap. 36)
 - 5. The nation restored (chap. 37)
 - 6. The attack by Gog repulsed (chaps.38-39)
 - B. New [Temple] order for Israel (chaps. 40-48)
 - 1. A new temple (chaps. 40-43)
 - 2. A new service of worship (chaps. 44-46)
 - 3. A new land (chaps. 47-48)

¹ Charles H. Dyer, *THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY*, Old Testament Vol., Ezekiel, (Chariot Victor Pub., Colorado Springs, CO., 1984), pp. 1226-1227.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE BOOK OF

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel belonged to one of the best and noblest families in Jerusalem, and was apparently a descendant of the family of Zadok, which could trace its descent directly to Aaron through Buzi (**1:3**) his father. Born in a priestly family he was a priest in his early years. With that privilege, there was familiarity with the law, and with the ritual. He was well educated, a man of the highest culture which Jerusalem afforded at that age.

It was in the year 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin surrendered the city to him, that 7,000 of the very best people of Jerusalem, including members of the priestly families, the nobility, the artisans, the smiths, and others of the leading citizens of Jerusalem, were taken away captive to Babylon. Ezekiel was taken with them, and during all the period of his prophecy he is among the exiles in that foreign land.

He was evidently a man of some wealth, as well as culture, and doubtless took a considerable portion of his wealth with him. He had a home, a wife, and possibly a family. He lived in comparative ease and comfort on the banks of the river Chebar, near a place called Tel-abib [different than the Tel-Aviv in Israel], not many miles from the city of Babylon.

There was a community of Jewish exiles in that place, and they seemed to be let alone, and were allowed to carry on a little government of their own, for we find that repeatedly the elders of this Jewish community came to Ezekiel to consult him regarding the fate of Jerusalem. It is difficult for us to understand their exact condition. They were apparently in comfortable circumstances.

They heard from home frequently no doubt, for there was a great deal of traffic, traveling, and letter writing in those days. They were, doubtless, envious of the people who had been left in Jerusalem, and were exceedingly anxious as to the fate of Jerusalem itself, as their property to a large extent was still there. They naturally supposed that their property would be confiscated by those who remained in Jerusalem and Judah, and it comes out incidentally in the prophecy of Ezekiel that there was a deep and bitter grudge in their minds because the people who remained in Jerusalem had taken over the property of those who had been carried into exile. There was this reason also, as we find in Jeremiah 24, that the people who remained in Jerusalem considered themselves to be very good; they thought that they were the favorites of Jehovah since they had been left at home. Those that were taken away captive were therefore the greater sinners. Jeremiah tried to meet that in his parable of the two baskets of figs. The basket of good figs were those Jews in Babylon; and the basket of bad figs, those left in Jerusalem.

It has been said that Jeremiah was the spiritual father of Ezekiel. No doubt there is a large element of truth in that statement. A great man like Jeremiah doubtless had sons in the ranks of prophecy, as Paul had sons in the Christian ministry. Jeremiah must have had a vast influence over Ezekiel, for he had been a prophet thirty years in Jerusalem when Ezekiel was carried away into captivity. That thirty years of ministry stamped upon Ezekiel's mind and heart, his theology, his religious life, and his view of the great religious questions of his age. He had, no doubt, read Jeremiah's writings, for they were published in 603 B.C., six or seven years before Ezekiel was taken away. He must have been familiar with a great part of the writings of Jeremiah, for his own book gives in many places almost the exact thoughts and words of his great predecessor and contemporary. They were contemporaries for about fifteen years.

There are many similarities between Ezekiel's writings and those of Jeremiah. Their themes are nearly the same. Their ideas are often identical. Their problems are very similar. The strange thing is that, although they lived as contemporaries for fifteen years, neither one makes the slightest reference to or mention of the other. Jeremiah knows Ezekiel is prophesying in

Babylon, yet he sends a letter all the way from Jerusalem to Babylon with admonition to the exiles, and though Ezekiel must be aware of Jeremiah's prophesying in Jerusalem, he makes no reference whatever to the fact.

In contrast to Jeremiah, Ezekiel presents some striking peculiarities. His private life was very different, for he had his home and his wife, but Jeremiah was forbidden these. Like Jeremiah he absents himself from all the social enjoyments and pleasures of the people among whom he dwells, refraining from entering into their mournings or their feasting. In contrast with Jeremiah he records no inner struggle such as that prophet passed through, no such complaints, no such murmurings, no such agony, no such mournings and tears, no such doubts of God, no such attempts to give up the work of prophesying. Ezekiel gives no hint that he passed through those temptations which tortured the soul of Jeremiah in the early half of the latter's ministry. Ezekiel is more calm and judicial; he lays emphasis upon the divine sovereignty more than upon human freedom. He emphasizes the necessity and value of the human institutions, such as the Temple, the ceremonial, the ritual, the priesthood, and sacrifices, which Jeremiah does not. Jeremiah was willing to do without all these, if he could only have the heart religion which kept the people in fellowship with God and in obedience to him.

Ezekiel combines both the institutional and the spiritual. He combines the ritual and ceremonial with the new heart, the heart of flesh, the cleansed and pure spirit. He is in substantial agreement with Jeremiah on several points. His conception of the prophetic office is almost identical with that of his spiritual father. He conceives of himself as the one who is to warn, who is to pronounce judgment and threaten doom. His conception of the character of the people is exactly like Jeremiah's. His pictures are even more lurid and terrible. His conception of the history of Israel is almost the same as Jeremiah's. Jeremiah pictures her, from the time of her entrance into Canaan, as going astray after false gods, and her history as one long story of defection and idolatry. Ezekiel pictures her, as from the very beginning prone to idolatry and her history, as a long story of spiritual harlotry.

Ezekiel's conception of the sin of idolatry is exactly the same as that of Jeremiah's. He characterizes it in scores of passages by that one striking name which stigmatizes all defection from the worship of Jehovah. His picture of society is much the same as that of Jeremiah's. He pictures it as having gone to the lowest depths, and as we go on in the study of his prophecy, we shall get some glimpses into those awful scenes which Ezekiel portrays. Like Jeremiah he prophesies the downfall of the (Jewish) state, the devastation of

the country, the desolation of the city, the destruction of the Temple and the obliteration of the ritual.

Unlike that of Jeremiah, this book doubtless came from Ezekiel's own hand, written and completed by himself. It is in many respects the most orderly, the most logical, the most chronological, of all the books of the Bible. Almost every distinct prophecy is dated, so that we can give the exact date, the month and the year, in which these prophecies were given to Ezekiel, or were uttered by him.

The following is an analysis of Ezekiel:

I. The [first] vision of the glory of God and the call to the prophetic office (**1-3**).

II. Symbolic prophecies of the overthrow of the city and the state (**4 to 24**). By means of symbols, symbolic actions, allegories, and metaphors,

Ezekiel brings before the minds of the exiles the inevitable fate of their beloved city and state in Palestine.

III. Prophecies concerning foreign nations (**25-32**).

IV. Prophecies of the restoration of the people of Israel and the reconstruction of God's people (**33-39**), which are in perfect order. Having done with the prophecies concerning the foreign nations, he calls the attention of the people to their own glorious future.

V. A vision of the restored Temple and theocracy with the final glory and peace of the redeemed people of God (**40-48**). Under this we have three sections:

1. An account of the restored Temple (**40-43**).

2. An account of the ordinances of the Temple as restored (**44-48**).

3. The boundaries of the Holy Land and the new distribution of the tribes within it (**47-48**), closing with the significant statement that in all this land, this territory, this Temple, the one great fact is that Jehovah is there.

The date of the prophet's [first] vision and call is the year 592 B.C., the fourth month and the fifth day of the month (about August 5). It was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. That captivity occurred in 597 B.C.

The place was by the river Chebar. The river Chebar was not a river proper, but one of the large irrigating canals which coursed through the plains of Babylon from the Tigris to the Euphrates, irrigating that rich and fertile country in which, some say, the garden of Eden itself originally was located. The irrigated plain of Babylon was probably the richest portion of land in all the world. It produced from two to three hundredfold.

[There is a legend that Ezekiel was put to death by a Jewish prince in Babylon. Arab historians have reported that he is buried in the tomb of Shem and Arphaxad. ...

INTERESTING POINTS

A. There is more symbol and allegory than in any other Old Testament book. "Ezekiel's *style of prophetic representation* has many peculiarities. In the first place, the clothing of symbol and allegory prevails in him to a greater degree than in all the other prophets: and his symbolism and allegory are not confined to general outlines and pictures, but elaborated in the minutest details, so as to present figures of a boldness surpassing reality, and ideal representations, which produce an impression of imposing grandeur and exuberant fullness. Even the simplest prophetic discourse is rich in imagery, and in bold, partly even strange, comparisons, and branches out into a copiousness which strives to exhaust the subject on all sides."—Keil and Delitzsch, vol. 9, p. 7.

B. The term "Son of Man" is used 91 times. [In verse 2:1 Jehovah calls him: "And he said unto me, son of man." That does not have the messianic meaning which "Son of man" has in the Gospels. It means child of man, mortal man, you mortal being, in contrast with God—B. H. Carroll, AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE, Vol. 3, on Ezekiel 2:1.]

C. Ezekiel was instructed to deliver his message by personal acts: **4:1-3, 9-15; 5:1-4; 3:25-26; 4:4-13; 12:3-7, 17-20; 21:11-12; 24:3-5, 15-24; 37:15-17**.

D. In Chapter 1, Did Ezekiel See a flying saucer?

"Of all the UFO accounts in the Bible, the one that I hear mentioned most often is Ezekiel's, Wheel. Many people claim that Ezekiel clearly describes a UFO in the following passage."

Jim Aho

One can read dozens of books and magazine articles today written by U.F.O. enthusiasts, which make reference to Bible characters sighting flying saucers! The vision described in Ezekiel chapter one is referred to more than any other. Many people today take it for granted that Ezekiel must have seen a flying saucer and failed (naturally enough) to comprehend what he really saw. One, Joseph Blumrich, formerly chief of the Systems Layout branch of NASA, has even written a book entitled *THE SPACESHIPS OF EZEKIEL*. He claims that Ezekiel's description is exactly that of a spaceship. He even includes diagrams and drawings of the spaceship he thinks Ezekiel saw. But did Ezekiel really see a flying saucer?

It is clear that Ezekiel has paid close attention to this vision because he has described it in such close detail. Many people wonder what Ezekiel really saw because they cannot match this detailed description with anything from their own experience or information. Sometimes people try to stretch this description to make it match something they are familiar with or believe in (like flying saucers).

God. (Ezekiel 3:18). The same God today welcomes the wicked if they will repent and turn in faith to Him.

Phil Stringer

However, a study of the whole book of Ezekiel will make it clear what he saw. He refers to these living creatures again in chapter three, verse thirteen. They are seen again in chapter ten, where they are clearly labeled as cherubim. "And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river Chebar." (**Ezekiel 10:15**). "This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims." (**Ezekiel 10:20**). The cherubim are seen again in **Ezekiel 41**.

The cherubim are referred to 65 times in the Old Testament by name and at least once in the New Testament. Arno Gabelein describes them this way: "The cherubim are another class of mighty beings close to the throne of God in worship and in government."² Charles Feinberg gave the comment, "Cherubim, wherever found in the Scriptures, are related to the holiness of God. They do not represent a likeness of God which is forbidden by commandment. They are instruments of His government."

Many people are surprised to learn that the living creatures in this vision are a type of angel. The creatures described are so different from the angels pictured on their Christmas cards or in manger scenes. Yet Ezekiel's description and identification are clear and it takes a vivid imagination to twist this description into a description of a spaceship. The cherubim are seen again in Revelation 4 where they are referred to as "beasts."

It is important to identify that bright and fiery being with the appearance of a man who appeared above the cherubim. **Ezekiel 1:1** declares that Ezekiel saw visions of God! In chapter one, verse twenty-eight, Ezekiel says, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God." In **Ezekiel 10:20** it declares that the cherubim appeared under "the God of Israel."

Hebrews 1:3 describes Jesus the Son of God this way: "Being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." God the Father is spirit, but often in the Old Testament, God the Son appeared in the form of a man. These appearances are called Christophanies. He is often referred to as The Angel of the Lord. **Daniel 3:25** is one example of Christ appearing in human form before His incarnation.

Ezekiel did not see a flying saucer, regardless of how badly flying saucer fans wish he had. He did see four cherubim and was granted a vision of God the Son. Ezekiel was granted such a vision in order that he might be impressed to warn the wicked to come to

END OF SAMPLE

² Arno Gabelein, *THE ANGELS OF GOD*, p.47

³ Charles Feinberg, *THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL*, p. 11.