



Getting started with Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a priest who'd been captured from Jerusalem during Babylon's first wave of attacks. Now in Babylon, Ezekiel had a message for his fellow exiles.

It's a message of judgement and hope; and through it all God is making Himself known. "Then they shall know that I am the LORD." (A phrase which appears over 50 times!)

The book of Ezekiel begins with a striking image: God's glorious presence leaving the temple (ch1). It ends with a striking image: God's glorious presence returning to the temple (ch43).

This picture mirrors the two halves of the book. God will destroy; God will restore.

Structure

First half: God will destroy - Chapters 1-32

Ezekiel starts by accusing Israel of breaking the covenant. God is holy, and His people are sinful; their idolatry and injustice meant that judgement was on the way. Babylon would soon launch attack number 2 and bring destruction to Jerusalem.

But as well as judgement on God's rebellious people, this section also outlines His just anger against the sin of the nations. These chapters are full of lots of bad news – but with just a hint of a new hope and a new heart.

Hinge: Jerusalem has fallen- Chapter 33

A turning point – a messenger arrives with the news that Ezekiel's warnings had come true. Babylon had attacked; Jerusalem and the temple were ransacked.

Second half: God will restore – Chapters 34-48

The first half talks of judgement for Israel and the nations; but now there is hope for Israel, the nations and indeed all of Creation! God will deal with the problem of the heart, deal with the problem of evil and bring back His wonderful life giving presence.

Things to watch out for...

- Ezekiel is full of imagery and symbolism. Don't worry too much about the details – try and follow the big point!
- Ezekiel gets his message across with words but also actions – he uses acted out pictures, street theatre, to make his point.
- In chapters 38-39 we're introduced to a character called "Gog." Gog is an image of human rebellion against God.
- Some of the nations and situations seem pretty far removed – but put yourself in an Israelite's shoes; think about the significance for the first hearers.

Jesus in Ezekiel

There are various ways in which Jesus is talked about in Ezekiel.

Perhaps one of the clearest is in chapter 34, where Israel is promised a shepherd in the line of David, and chapter 37 where this shepherd-King will unite God's people and bring them peace.

God's holiness and the people's sinfulness is the backdrop for the judgement that dominates Ezekiel's message. The only way this problem can be sorted is at the cross of Jesus.

How is it relevant today?

This book teaches us a lot about our sinfulness, God's holiness, and His plan to restore His life-giving presence to us.

In chapter 36 we have a great image of what all of us need – as God's people are promised a heart transplant – a heart of flesh for a heart of stone.

Ultimately, Ezekiel gives us great hope for the future as we see what God is going to bring about DESPITE the sinfulness of human beings.



g r o w .
g r o u p

RBT Grow Group is on
Tuesday 5th June

Bring along some things from your reading of
Ezekiel to share with others.

Some RBT reading ideas:

- Meet up once a week to read it with a friend.
- Listen online at Biblegateway.com
- Write down a verse that struck you that day.
- Encourage someone by texting them a thought from what you've read.



Here are some questions the Bible wants you to ask of itself. Use these to help you as you read your way through this month's book: (please don't feel like you have to fill in every question in loads of detail. These are a guide to help you learn from what you are reading.)

- What did you learn about Jesus and what it means to trust him? (Luke 24:45-47)
- What did you learn about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)
- How were you corrected or rebuked or equipped for every good work? (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- What did you learn from the book that will help you keep going as a follower of Jesus? (Romans 15:4)
- What did you learn that will help you serve and build up the church? (Eph 4:11-16)
- What have you learnt that helps you love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind? (Matt 22:37-40)
- What has helped you love your neighbour as yourself? (Matt 22:37-40)