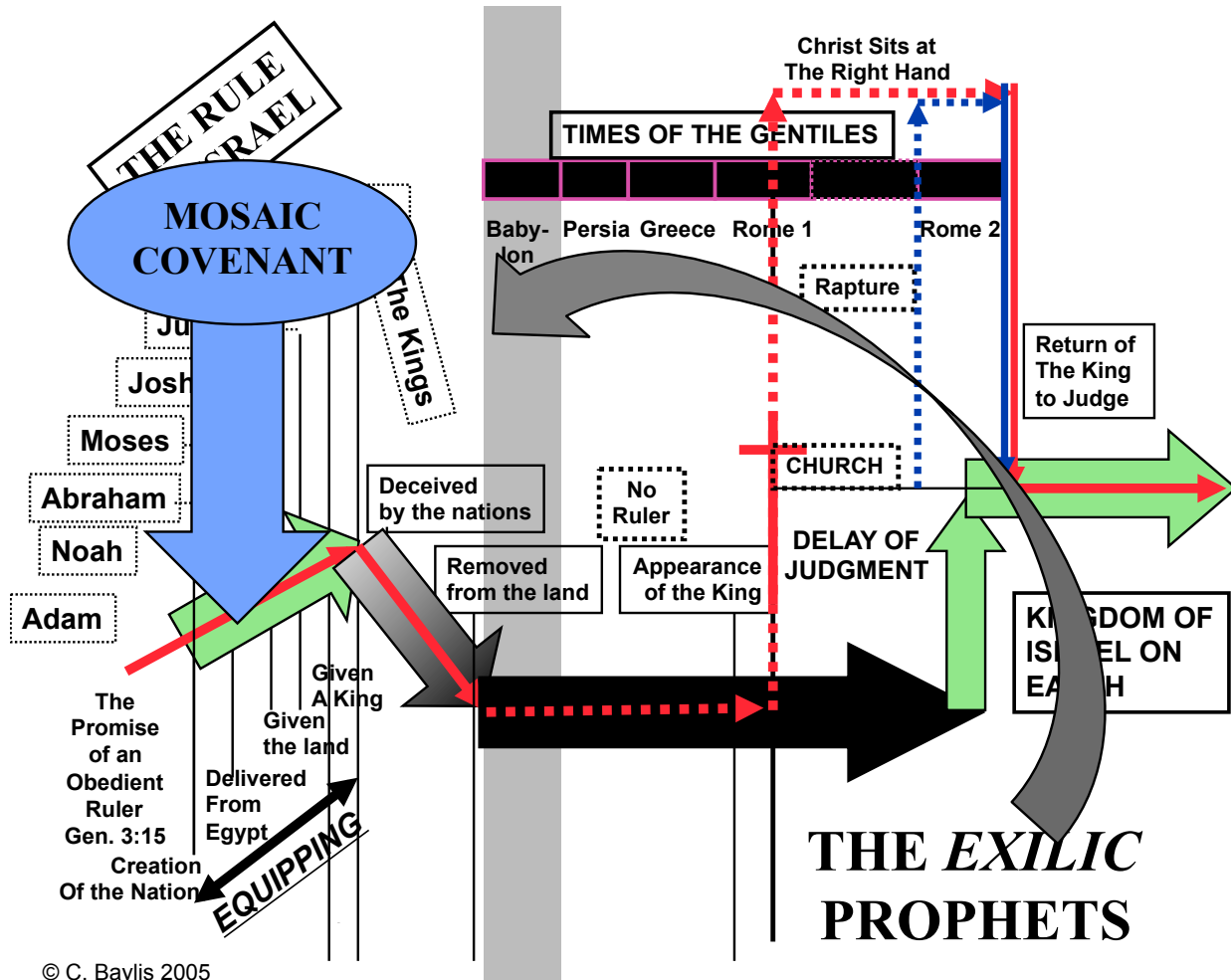


EZEKIEL

(See the Introduction to the Prophets for the place that Ezekiel plays in the Biblical Story)

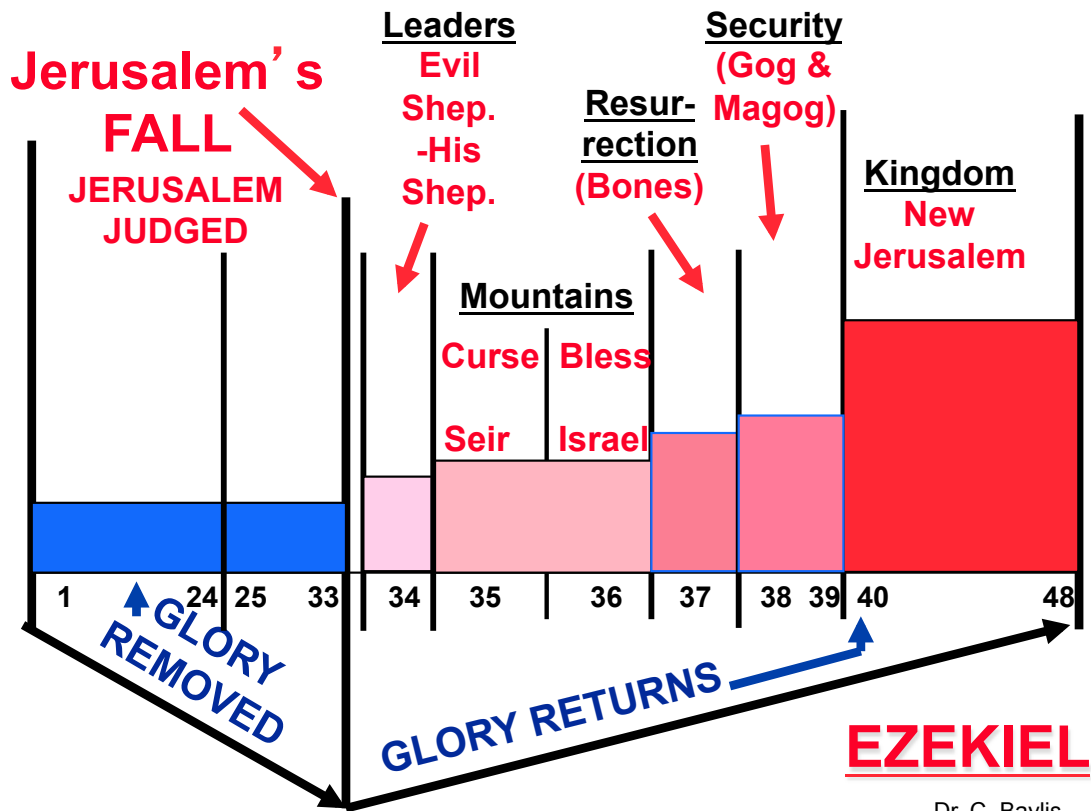


© C. Baylis 2005

Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian exile to give hope for a return to the City of Jerusalem under a new Shepherd (34) where the land will be restored to their dominion and the exile will be no more. Beside the return to Jerusalem, there is great emphasis on the Glory of YHWH returning to the temple. He departs in one of the saddest moments in Israel's history in chapters 8—10 and returns beginning in chapter 43. The ending verse of the book is "YHWH is there!"

Ezekiel: Death in Jerusalem as the Glory Departs; Hope of Life as Glory Returns

The book contains God’s case against Israel as they are in exile. God describes the judgments that He will take against the Gentiles who oppressed Israel and the judgments on Jerusalem. The book pivots at its worst point in chapter 33 when Ezekiel hears that the City of Jerusalem is taken. From then on the prophecies contain the hope of Israel as they receive:



EZEKIEL

Dr. C. Baylis
03/01

- **A new Shepherd** unlike the old shepherds who took advantage of them
- **Restored mountains** to fruitfulness
- **A New Spirit** within them (a change of character to the direction of God’s character as the Word is placed within them).
- **A New resurrected nation**
- **A new literal physical earthly kingdom** where the Glory once again dwells.

Ezekiel details the future enablement of the people of Israel through the indwelling Spirit (36) and the national resurrection (37). The details of the Kingdom reestablishment are in 40—48. All of this is the hope of the return of the Glory to Israel that new life might come.

Argument

Background¹

Historical

Following the conquering of the 10 northern tribes by Assyria in 722-721 B.C., the Babylonians led three deportations. The first included Daniel (606 B.C.), the second; Ezekiel (597 B.C.) and the final invasion destroyed the city and the temple (586 B.C.). In the second deportation, Nebuchadnezzar led the invasion and took Jehoiachin and Jews, including Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah, on the throne in Jerusalem, but within five or six years he rebelled. Finally the city and the temple was destroyed on August 14, 586.

Authorship

Ezekiel is attested to be the author in the first three verses. He became an exile (see above). He was a priest, the son of Buzi (1:2-3). He was married (24:15-18). Being a priest he was concerned about the temple.

Date

Ezekiel received his call in July 593 B.C. He ministered for 22 years. The messenger from Jerusalem (33:21) reported to Ezekiel on January 8, 585. All Ezekiel's prophecies are arranged chronologically (starting with the "5th year of the exile," 1:2; and ending with the "25th year of our exile," 40:1; except the prophecies introduced in 29:1,17). Jehoiachin had been exiled for five years (1:1-2). There is considerable question over the meaning of "in the 30th year" (1:1). It could be that Ezekiel himself was 30 years old, the age he was eligible to enter the priesthood (cf. Num. 4:3).

¹ For reference for dates, etc., used in the "Background" here, and for additional background information see Dr. Thomas Constable's Introductory Notes on Ezekiel at www.soniclight.com.

Commentary

Structure

The book is divided into two sections, although some see three. Basically the book is a book of judgments and restorations. It begins in an introduction, essentially setting the scene for the judgment in 1-3, the judgment against Judah and Jerusalem in 4-24, and the nations in 25-32. There is a pivot in chapter 33, which reaches its pinnacle, or perhaps its bottom, in 33:21, when the messenger comes from Jerusalem to tell Ezekiel that the city has fallen. From then on the judgment prophecies end and Ezekiel moves on to restoration prophecies. From 33-39 Ezekiel describes the restoration of Israel, ending finally in the ultimate kingdom city and nation in 40-48.

I. Visions against the City of Jerusalem (1-24)

A. The Call of Ezekiel (1:1-3:27).

Following an introduction to Ezekiel, and to his position in life, he is greeted by a vision of God. This is the essence of Chapter 1. The point is to establish Ezekiel as a priest, who was being judged as part of Judah. He, however, is responsive to the vision of the glory of YHWH. YHWH has chosen Ezekiel to be his prophet, the spokesman of the word of YHWH to Judah.

In chapter 2, Ezekiel receives his call. He is told in vv. 1-7 that he is to send a message to Israel, but they will not listen. However, he must continue to speak the words of YHWH regardless of their reaction. In 2:8-10 he is told to eat the scroll that God gives him. It is a scroll of lamentations, mourning and woe for Israel, for the judgment about to come upon her.

Now Ezekiel receives instruction at the river Chebar among the exiles. (3:12-21). Then he is taken to the plain to speak only what God has told him and to be silent otherwise (3:22-27).

B. The Withdrawal of the Glory of God (4-11).

1. Ezekiel warns the nation (4:1-7:27).

The religious situation in Jerusalem and Israel is now described. Ezekiel's prophecy hones in on Jerusalem, the center of worship for the nation Israel. He will now enter into symbolism of the troubles of judgment that are coming to them. Chapter 4 begins by pointing out the oppression that the city will receive, first by siege (1-3), the years of Israel and Judah's iniquity (4-8), and the banishment among the unclean nations following their siege (9-17).

In chapter 5 Ezekiel's next prophecy is how one-third of the nation will die by plague or be consumed by famine within the city and its siege, one

third will go into exile among the Gentiles, and one-third will die within the city.

In chapter 6 God now moves against the nation Israel, the 10 tribes which separated themselves from Judah. He uses the figure of the mountains of Israel. The judgment will be on the false worship, and the remnant will recognize through judgment that He is YHWH.

Chapter 7 proclaims their doom is imminent since Israel's sin has brought it about. They will be helpless in the face of judgment and there will be no hope.

2. Ezekiel witnesses the evidence (8:1-18).

The Glory of God took Ezekiel to the temple and Ezekiel witnessed the abominations of the elders in the Sanctuary carving images of their pagan gods in the holy of holies. Then Ezekiel witnessed the women weeping for Tammuz. This was a pagan god which imitated a birth miracle as well as resurrection. Then Ezekiel saw the worship of the sun by men with their backs toward God. Thus God announced necessary judgment.

3. Judgment on the religious center (9:1-10:22)

Chapter 9 describes the six executioners who execute judgment on the abominable worshipers at Jerusalem. Chapter 10 describes the departure of the Glory from the Temple.

C. Judgment on Israel (11-24)

1. Judgment on the city (11:1-25).

Chapter 11 finishes the departure of the glory of God. While the men feel that they are secure in their city, God shows them that they will be brought down. But in response to Ezekiel's worry that the remnant would die, God promises him a New Covenant return.

2. The prophecy of Exile as judgment (12:1-28).

Chapter 12 begins speaking about the exile to come. Ezekiel was to symbolize exile. The final portion describes with intensity the sureness of the fulfillment.

3. The prophecy against prophets (13:1-23).

In chapter 13 the prophecy focuses on the false prophets and prophetesses. Essentially they have deluded the people into believing that judgment was

far off, and now God has stated that He is going to deliver the people out of their control.

4. Judgment on the elders of Israel (14:1-23).

Now God turns to the elders and points out that they will be judged and the nation they represent. He further intensifies the issue when he states that the nation will be judged regardless of a few righteous.

5. As wood for the fire, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are judged (15:1-8).

Chapter 15 details the fact that Israel is like a branch on a vine, and when it is apart from the vine, it is useless for anything.

6. Israel likened to a harlot (16:1-63).

The prophecy turns now to parallel Israel to that of a harlot. She was born of an abhorrent birth, yet God made her alive, protected her and clothed her. Israel used all the beautiful things God had given her for abominations. She turned to other nations for her allies, Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, and asked them for protection instead of turning to God, . But now God has turned her over to them for chastisement. They will ruin her.

However, before the chapter is over, God gives the hope of a remnant. Further he promises to bring Samaria and Sodom back to their former state since Israel has made them look good by comparison.

7. The two eagles and Babylon and Egypt (17:1-24).

The prophet now tells the story of the two eagles, and the two trees. One dies when the east wind comes, and the other prospers. Thus the king Jehoiachin will die in Babylon since he made a covenant with the king and did not honor it. Egypt will not be able to help him. Then God tells how He will replant a remnant on the mountains of Israel and this remnant will prosper.

8. Individual judgments on the wicked and the righteous (18:1-32).

The specifics of the judgment are now becoming clear. While the individual may think that he has much company in his iniquity, the prophet makes it clear that any individuals who are righteous will not become part of the national judgment. And any individuals who turn from righteousness will become part of the national judgment.

9. Lamentation for the princes of Israel (19:1-14).

Chapter 19 is a poetic lamentation speaking of Israel as a young lion which roared, but then was captured first by Egypt, and then by Babylon, now she has been brought low.

10. God's faithfulness to judge Israel (20:1-44).

God now turns to the necessity of the judgment on Israel. It is so that she might return in obedience to the LORD. God reviews first her history, and then her present predicament. However, Ezekiel turns to the restoration, a restoration which has clearly not been accomplished in Israel's history to the present date. However, she is assured of such judgment and restoration.

11. Judgment by the sword (20:45-21:32).

The specifics now are given that Israel will be taken by the sword of Babylon, following a parable to illustrate God's judgment on them.

12. Judgment on defilement of Jerusalem (22:1-31).
13. Judgment on Samaria and Jerusalem as harlots (23:1-49).

Chapters 22 and 23 refer to the defilement of the city, and the necessity of God's judgment. Israel is again referred to as a harlot who desires to waste herself with other nations, and misuse her God given potential.

14. Judgment proclaimed by the boiling pot (24:1-14).
15. Judgment by removal of the sanctuary (24:15-27).

Now Ezekiel's wife is taken from him as Jerusalem being taken away was to the exiles. Ezekiel was not to mourn or show any sign of grieving, as a sign to Israel that any public display of grief for Jerusalem would be useless.

- D. Judgment on the nations (25-32).

Now a separate section is entered into by Ezekiel. This is the section which pronounces judgment on the surrounding nations, as they took advantage of polluted Israel. Since the siege of Jerusalem had now begun (24:1 on Jan. 15, 588), God is taking judgment on those surrounding her. This is based on the Abrahamic Covenant, that He will curse those who curse Israel.

1. On the surrounding nations (25-28).
 - a. Judgment against Ammon (25:1-7).
 - b. Judgment against Moab and Seir (25:8-12).
 - c. Judgment against Edom (25:12-14).

d. Judgment against the Philistines (25:15-17).

Ammon (25:1-7) had left its alliance with Judah when Babylon attacked Judah, and hoped to profit in their misfortune. Ammon thus would be captured by nations to their east and plundered.

Moab (25:8-11) had contempt for Israel as God's special nation, and it too would be overrun as Ammon.

Edom also joined with Babylon in surrounding the city and ended in losing its national identity.

Philistia also was under Babylonian control, but still waited for an opportunity to kill Israel. God warned that He would destroy them.

e. Judgment against Tyre (26:1-28:26).

There are two sections to the description of Tyre's judgment. First, Tyre was a rich merchant area, which gleefully looked on Israel as a competitor. However, Nebuchadnezzar devastated Tyre, so that it has never been rebuilt. In chapter 27, the neighboring areas of Tyre take a lament over her since they have related to her in the merchant riches.

The next section is a lament over the prince and the king of Tyre. While the prince of Tyre appears to be a literal man who felt he was a god. He would be brought to a low death.

The second part is the lament over the 'king' of Tyre. This is a shift from the 'ruler' of chapter 27. Further, the adjectives could not here be applied to a man. Thus Satan, the head of all evil, is in view here. He had been an angel of beauty, but had ascended to proclaim himself as God, but he would be brought low also.

Finally, God moves to extend the judgment on Tyre to the area of Sidon, and then gives hope to the exiles, that the day will come when they are regathered back to their land.

2. On Egypt and Pharoah (29-32).

Chapter 29 discusses that the land of Egypt is to be desolate and will be given to Babylon. In chapter 30 there is made a lament over Egypt. Egypt will be scattered among the nations. God will judge Pharoah. In chapter 31 there is a lamentation over Pharoah and in chapter 32 there is a judgment on the multitude of Egypt.

E. Responsibility of the peoples (33:1-20).

Now the book moves to its pivot verses. Here is where the prophecy of judgment is ended. Ezekiel, as watchman of Israel is told to be sure that he warns the Israelites of impending doom, so that they might repent. Then God tells Ezekiel of the individual's responsibility to repent.

F. Israel falls (33:21-22).

Building up to this point has been the movement of Ezekiel, and now he is there, the downfall of Jerusalem on August 14, 586. The messenger arrives on January 8, 585, and from then on Ezekiel forecasts, not judgment, but restoration.

G. The verification of these prophecies (33:23-33).

First God tells that they will know the truth of these things when they see the land desolated, and then they will know that these prophecies are true. Until then they will not hear.

II. Vision concerning the restoration of Jerusalem (34-48).

The second major portion of the book now comes into view with a focus on the restoration of the nation and primarily the center of worship, Jerusalem. Ezekiel will outline the various areas of restoration, the very areas which had failed, and had caused their exile.

It should be noticed that the emphasis of these final restoration chapters is the "I will" of YHWH. In contrast to the past, when Israel would try to keep the Law and fail, this time, YHWH will do it. It is guaranteed, and it implies a New Covenant, which God will insure that they keep.

A. Various areas of restoration (34-39).

Chapter 34 details the area of leadership. It is broken into two sections, first, the past bad leaders and their judgment, and second; the LORD Himself to be the leader of Israel.

In reference to the 'David' problem of 34:23,24, it appears certainly possible that David will be a 'sub-king' over Israel in the kingdom under Jesus. However, it would be more likely that what is being referred to is that the line of David (2 Samuel 7) is being restored to the throne, and this would be in Christ, through the Davidic Covenant.

However, on the other hand, the 'prince' referred to in chapter 45ff. seems to be a ruler under the LORD. It is perhaps possible that it could be the resurrected David. However, this presents a difficulty for David would not be offering for his

own sin (45:22, 46:4), since he would be in a resurrected body. The solution for that is that it would be in the memorial sense, i.e., his sin during his life which Christ removed.

In chapter 35 and 36 the land now is restored. As a contrast, the author shows that the mountains of Edom will become desolate (chapter 35) while Israel's mountains will be prolific, populated, fruitful (36:1-21). The land will have a new people in it, who will be brought back from the nations to populate the land of Israel (36:22-37:23). They will be given a New Covenant, making them a transformed people (36:22-28).

Up until this point the prophecies have essentially been topical (34-36). The old shepherds would be destroyed, the new One would be installed, the land of Edom would be judged, while Israel became prosperous, and the people were fruitful within it. The prophecy shifts now to the new people, the demonstration of that revival is given in the vision of the dry bones (37:1-28). Now with chapter 37 comes a prophecy which identifies a sequence. The sequence here is a 'dead' Israel in the bones. It is a redeemed Israel in the resurrected bodies without breath, and it is a Kingdom Israel with breath. The breath is the Spirit of the New Covenant (37:14), and this Spirit will come upon the nation which when they "call upon the Name of YHWH" (cf. Joel 2:28-32) just prior to the beginning of the Kingdom as a nation.

Now that Israel is secure with a new Leadership, a restored land, with revived New Covenant people, Ezekiel moves on to a new topic; what about our security. Israel had felt secure before their exile. How could they ever enjoy their land again knowing that another Babylon could exile them again.

This is what chapters 38-39 answer. There is a sequence in the chapters 34-37 (restoration) and 38-39 (security) and 40-48 (Kingdom). Chapters 38-39 assume that 34-37 has already occurred (38:8,11-12,14; 39:25-29).

The point is that God is going to protect them from any other exile once He restores them to the land. Thus this invasion is, of necessity, following the events of chapters 34-37, the establishment of the King at Jerusalem, the restoration of the land, and the New Covenant Spirit indwelling in Israel's people. It must follow any exile of the people (39:28). It must precede the actual Kingdom, since there will only be redeemed people beginning the Kingdom, and it precedes the actual kingdom in Ezekiel 40-48.

B. The Re-establishment of the Glory of God in the Temple forever (40-48).

The remaining portion of the book brings satisfaction to the righteous exile. For the glory of God will return to the temple, and the land will be restored and given to Israel under the Abrahamic Covenant, based on the New Covenant.

1. The Glory returns to the temple (40-43:9).

First, Ezekiel is taken to view and to be given details of the future temple (40-42). Finally in chapter 42 as he is being taken on a tour of the temple, the Glory returns. This forms an inclusio with chapter 9.

2. The Worship in the future temple (43:10-45:24).

These portions refer to worship in the temple; the altar (43:10-43:27), the priests (44), the land for the priest and the Prince (45:1-8), fair measure (45:9-12), and offerings (45:13-46:24).

3. The river of life (47:1-13).

Now Ezekiel brings forth an interesting experience. The water of life is flowing from the throne of God. The man with the measuring line measures it, and Ezekiel tries to wade into it. The river is too massive to accomplish this.² The river is fresh water which brings life, and miraculously removes the salt from the Dead sea into which it flows. Fish are abundant. Fisherman stand beside it to fish. This appears to indicate that fishing (and thus killing) is to some degree allowed in the millennium. Further this river brings life to certain trees along its banks. It also brings life to all who drink of it. The fruit of the trees is for eating and for healing.

This river flows out to the Dead Sea³ on the east and the Mediterranean on the west.

4. The apportionment of the land to the tribes (47:14-48:35).

Finally, to show the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, Ezekiel is shown the apportionment of the land, under YHWH's rule.

The river becomes the dividing line between the tribes of the south and the tribes of the north. Then Ezekiel allots the tribes equally, with Joseph getting the double portion. This is a fulfillment of Genesis 48 where Joseph's two sons get the blessing of the elder because of his sacrifice for the sake of his brothers. Ezekiel ends his prophecy with the words in 48:35b,

² Ezekiel waded 1750 feet (about 1/3 of a mile) and the water was ankle deep, another 1/3 of a mile it was knee deep, another 1/3 of a mile and it was waist deep, another 1/3 and it was too deep to ford.

³ The Dead Sea is presently six times saltier than the ocean and supports no life.

". . . and the name of the city from that day shall be 'YHWH is there.'"