

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php



"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

CONTENTS

	PAGE
"PREACH THE WORD"	97
EZEKIEL AND HIS BOOK	102
BIBLE MIRACLES	113
NOTES ON HEBREWS	119
GREAT WORDS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH	125
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS	128
"THE VESSELS"	133
THE ETERNAL SON	134

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

EZEKIEL AND HIS BOOK

BY DR. W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE

Of the 15 Prophets, Ezekiel is No. 12 Southern Kingdom Prophet
EXILIC. BABYLONIAN. Date 592-572

OUTLINE

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| I. The Prophet Himself | III. His Prophetic Message |
| II. His Prophetic Mission | IV. His Prophetic Method |

I. THE PROPHET HIMSELF

1. Earliest Influences.

Descent—(i) *Ezekiel*, the son of Buzi, was of priestly descent.

Time of Birth.—(ii) If the 30th year of ch. 1: 1 refers to his age, he was born about the time that the *Book of the Law* was found in the Temple by Hilkiyah—622-1 B.C.

The influence upon Ezekiel of such a setting in the history of his nation cannot be overestimated. His childhood was spent in days of revival and his training was in accord with them.

2.—Personal Details.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—Jeremiah's Prophecy is conspicuous for the many personal details which enter into it, but Ezekiel's, for the omission of such: what we know of the man himself can be put into brief compass.

His Name.—His name, Ezekiel, means, *God is strong*, and is fully indicative of his mission, and also, to a large extent, of his own character as a prophet, stern and strong; although he was not lacking in tenderness.

In Exile.—He is introduced to us in exile.

Married.—Unlike Jer. 16:2, Ezekiel had a wife, who died in the 9th year of his exile and whose dying was turned to prophetic account by the prophet (24).

His House.—He lived in a house of his own, to which the captives came, from time to time, to seek counsel from him (8:1, 14:1, 20:1), and this practice was, no doubt, the beginning of the *Synagogue System*.

His Ministry.—Ezekiel prophesied for over 20 years (B. C. 592-572) and died in exile, it is said, by violence.

"Son of Man".—He alone with Daniel is called "Son of Man," which title is applied to him in this prophecy not less than 90 times.

He is not mentioned outside his own Book.

Spirit-Filled.—Among the prophets he stands out conspicuously as a *Spirit-filled man*. The Spirit entered into him, took him up, lifted him up; woe is pronounced against the prophets who do not prophesy by the Spirit, and an outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days is promised. Altogether there are about 20 references to the Spirit in his Book.

The Major Prophets.—A comparison of Ezekiel with the other Major Prophets is full of instruction. Of the three, it may be said:—Isaiah was the great *Poet*. Jeremiah was the great *Preacher*. Ezekiel was the great *Artist*.

The justification of this characterising will be given in what follows. The prophetic framework of all three is the same, but the manner in which each approaches the subject is different.

His Call and Commission.—All three are divinely called and commissioned. Ezekiel, like our Lord, began his ministry by a river, when he was 30 years of age, and there he saw a complex and mysterious vision symbolising the Divine Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence.

(a) **Divine Omnipotence.**

Four Living Creatures, each with four faces—

A Lion's—king of beasts; *An Ox's*—king of cattle; *An Eagle's*—king of birds; *A Man's*—crown of creation.

(b) **Divine Omniscience.**

In his vision there were *Wheels* as it were within wheels, and these were full of *Eyes* around their rings.

(c) **Divine Omnipresence.**

And these *Wheels* together with the *Living Creatures* moved rapidly between earth and heaven, indicating the universal presence of Deity: Strength; Intelligence; Activity.

These are presented in the Cherubim who act on behalf of the Son of God, who sits on His Throne above the firmament.

Before this sight, Ezekiel fell on his face, and after the Vision, came a Voice bidding him stand upon his feet and receive his commission.

II. HIS PROPHETIC MISSION

1.—Ezekiel in Judaea.

It will be well at the very outset to get the exact setting of the Prophet in the history of his time, for, without this, we shall not be able rightly to understand his Prophecy.

Josiah.—King Josiah went to battle against Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, and fell at Megiddo in the year 609 B. C., at the age of 39 (2 Kings 23:26-30).

Jehoiakim.—He was succeeded by Jehoahaz, and then by Jehoiakim, who reigned first as Necho's and then as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal, but who rebelled against the latter in 602 B. C. and, as a result, in that year the eastern king took many away captive to Babylon, Daniel being amongst them (2 Kings 23:31-24:4; Dan. 1:1).

Jehoiachin succeeded Jehoiakim, but after reigning for three months, he was, together with 10,000 of his people, taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon in the year 597 B. C. *In this contingent of captives was Ezekiel, a youth 25 years of age* (2 Kings 24:8-16; Ezek. 1:1, 2).

2.—Ezekiel in Chaldea.

Tel-Abib.—The Prophet was transported to Tel-Abib on the Chebar (3:15), a city of Chaldea, about 200 miles north of Babylon, and there, it would appear, he remained until the day of his death.

Silence and Speech.—During the first five years of his captivity, that is, during the first half of Zedekiah's reign at Jerusalem, Ezekiel uttered no prophecy, but after that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he exercised the prophetic ministry for over 20 years (1:1, 2; 29:17).

Contemporaries.—While Ezekiel was prophesying at *Tel-Abib*, Jeremiah was doing the same at *Jerusalem*, and Daniel likewise at Babylon.

The Three.—Nearly a century before, Isaiah had blown the silver trumpet of Evangelism, Jeremiah was now playing the mournful flute over Judah's sin, and Ezekiel strikes the iron harp of Divine justice consequent upon that sin.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—The contrast is greater than the comparison between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The former is distinguished for his tearful sympathy with God; whereas, the latter is more conspicuous for his fiery zeal for God. With Jeremiah we associate Feeling and Action, but to Ezekiel we attribute, more generally, Reason and Reflection. "Each of the two Prophets without communicating with each other, is the echo of the other's sorrow. Deep answers to deep across the Assyrian desert. The depth of woe in him who, from the walls of Zion, saw the

storm approaching, is equalled, if not surpassed, by the depth of woe in him who lived as it were in the skirts of the storm itself, 'the whirlwind, the great cloud, the fire unfolding itself from the North,' gathering round the whole horizon before it reached the frontiers of Palestine." (*Stanley*).

Such was Ezekiel's setting in the history of his time. Now look at—

III. HIS PROPHETIC MESSAGE

I.—Outline Survey of Ezekiel's Book.

The Periods.—The Book of Ezekiel is made up of the utterances of this great man across a period of at least 20 years, and these utterances are arranged in chronological order.

The Book falls into *three distinct parts*—

- I. Predictions *before* the siege of Jerusalem (1 Chs. 1–24).
4½ years. 592–588 B. C.
- II. Predictions *during* the siege of Jerusalem (1 Chs. 25–32).
2 years. 588–586 B. C.
- III. Predictions *after* the siege of Jerusalem (Chs. 33–48).
14 years. 586–572 B. C.

The Subjects.—It is most important to understand who it is the prophet is addressing in these various prophecies, and what is the nature of the message to each. Thus in:—

- (i) It is—Denunciation of *Judah*.
- (ii) It is—Visitation of the *Nations*.
- (iii) It is—Restoration of *Israel*.

If the foregoing be carefully pondered, it will be seen that the thought of these prophecies is progressive.

(i).—Denunciation of *Judah* (1–24).

Here he declares (1) The moral necessity for Judgment. (2) The absolute certainty of Judgment.

After these prophecies were delivered, Jerusalem fell to the attack of Nebuchadnezzar, and Judah was taken into captivity. There being no further need to "drop his word" against them, he then surveys the peoples in, or fringing on, the Holy Land, and utters a number of prophecies concerning the future.

(ii).—Visitation of the *Nations* (25–32).

Seven such come within the scope of his word:

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------|----------|----------|
| 1. Ammon | 2. Moab | 3. Edom | 7. Egypt |
| 4. Philistia | 5. Tyre | 6. Sidon | |

The judgments upon these Nations is chiefly on account of their attitude towards and actions against the chosen people of God; so that though the latter are in captivity, their God has not forgotten them.

(iii).—Restoration of *Israel* (33–48).

Working from the basis of the fall of Jerusalem, the soul of the prophet goes out in vision to a far future time when, not Judah alone, but “all Israel shall be saved”.

Here there are (a) Predictions of the new life to be bestowed. (b) Descriptions of the new order to be established.

This is a broad outline of Ezekiel’s message. We do not find here the sustained flight of Isaiah, or the mother tenderness of Jeremiah, both flight and tenderness being subject to directness or definiteness of address such as is common only to stern, strong natures.

2.—Dominant Notes of Ezekiel’s Ministry.

Of these there are four:—

Sin.—Judah had been led and cared for by God, but had fallen into the basest idolatry, and seemed happy and comfortable in it; they had sadly and for long backslidden from Him in Whom was their only hope, and consequently there was nothing for it but

Punishment.—God could not be loved if He were not just, and He must take means by which His banished be not expelled from Him, and the means lay along the way of removal from their land.

Judah’s sin led them to Babylon, and towards the heathen city the incline became more and more precipitous and the Chosen People went rushing downward. But the Prophet had a message also on

Repentance for them. “The wicked shall not fall in the day when he turneth from his wickedness.” “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die O house of Israel?” (33:11, 12). All the Prophets had called the people to repentance, but it seemed only to harden them in their sins, and yet if only they would turn, what prospects of

Blessing were held out before them. The Land of Canaan

was stretched before those wanderers in the wilderness and they were bidden enter in, but, with two exceptions, they all died in the desert.

Sin, Punishment, Repentance, Blessing—these are the notes of this strong man's ministry, and on what ears they fell, a reading of the Book fully discloses to us. To destroy false hopes and to awaken true ones was the burden of his soul, and as those who had gone before them, in the strength of God he discharged his ministry right faithfully.

IV. HIS PROPHETIC METHOD

I have referred to Ezekiel as the Great Artist of the Major Prophets. Only a slight acquaintance with his prophetic method will serve to prove this. Among the more prominent of the many ways in which Ezekiel receives and delivers his messages may be named six, two of which are simple, and four more complex.

I.—The simple Method.

The Prophet teaches:—

(i) By means of *proverbs*.

(a) *The Failing Vision* (12:21–25).

They of Israel were saying “The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.”

But the Lord would make that proverb to cease, and this should take its place, “The days are at hand and the effect of every vision.”

(b) *The Sour Grapes* (18).

There was a proverb in Israel to this effect: “The Fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.” The teaching of such a proverb was, that the children suffered for the sins of the parents, and therefore “the way of the Lord was unequal.” But, in place of that proverb, the Lord gives this: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

(ii) By means of *parables*.

This was a common method with the Hebrews, and we remember what part it played in our Lord's teaching. In Ezekiel there are five or six parables, two of which are elaborately finished. The prophet is in the habit of following up his parables with their interpretation.

(a) *The Vine* (15).

The Vine—the national emblem of Israel—is mentioned for the unexpected purpose of suggesting that this stands among the other trees of the forest as the one wood which is no use, not even to hang a vessel upon. This Vine is Jerusalem, and the Prophet asks of what use it can be after it is cast into the fire, seeing it was of no use before. Israel having failed to fulfil the purpose for which they had been chosen could have no other end than destruction. What substitute ends are we trying to serve for what God sent us into the world to do?

(b) *The Eagles and the Cedar* (17).

A Great Eagle (Babylon) is represented as perching on the topmost branch of a Cedar (the Royal house of Judah) and breaking off one of the topmost young twigs, and carrying it away (Jehoiachim taken to Babylon). It also planted a vine-seed in the land (Nebuchadnezzar putting Zedekiah on the throne), but another Eagle came (Egypt) and the roots of the Vine turned to it (Zedekiah turning to Egypt for help). The prophet declares that for this the Vine shall be rooted up, and its fruit cut off.

(c) *The Rusty Caldron* (24:1-14).

Some of the most abandoned in Jerusalem, believing that its walls were impregnable, used to speak of the city as a Caldron interposing between the meat (themselves) and the fire (their enemies). Ezekiel takes and reverses the application of this image. In elaboration of his idea the "Prophet chants—possibly with suggestive action—the song of the cook at his work:—

Set on the Caldron,
Set it on and also pour water into it;
Gather the pieces thereof into it,
Even every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder;
Fill it with the choice bones;
Take the choice of the flock
And pile also the bones under it;
Make it boil well,
Yea, let the bones thereof be seathed in the
midst of it.

"But suddenly a burst of divine denunciation is interposed, and a suggestion of a very different kind is fastened upon the emblem of the Caldron; the blood-stained city is a *rusty* Caldron, which must cast out its meat, and be plunged itself into the very hottest of the fire till it is purged."

Woe to the bloody city,
 I also will make the pile great,
 Heap on the wood, make the fire hot,
 Boil well the flesh and make thick the broth
 And let the bones be burned.
 Then set it—empty—upon the coals thereof
 That it may be hot and the brass thereof may burn,
 And that the filthiness of it may be molten in it
 That the rust of it may be consumed.

It will readily be understood what a power this method of address must have exercised over the prophet's hearers, at the moment at least.

(iii) By means of *allegories*.

These, drawn out at length, are—

(a) The Foundling (16:1-43).

(b) The Mother and Daughter (16:44-63).

(c) Oholah and Oholibah (23).

Let us turn now to

2.—The more complex Method.

The Prophet teaches, e.g.:—

(iv) By means of *sustained imagery*.

In this form of discourse, Ezekiel applies some image to persons, peoples, or places, and carefully works out to a climax, under that image, the truth he would convey.

In illustration of this method, consider:—

(a) The Sevenfold Doom of Egypt (29-33).

Two illustrations: Pharaoh is a Great Crocodile, lying in the midst of the Nile, and boasting that he made the River for himself. But the Lord puts hooks in his jaws, causes all the fish of the river to stick to his scales, and then drags him out, and lays him in the open field to be meat for birds and beasts (29:3-5). Secondly, the Lord breaks Pharaoh's arm, so that he cannot hold a sword and so is not able to resist the King of Babylon (30:21, 22).

(b) The Shepherds and the Shepherd (34).

The leaders of Israel are likened to *false shepherds*, who serve not the flock, but themselves. They kill the fatlings, and eat the fat, and clothe themselves with wool. They do not strengthen the diseased, nor heal the sick, nor seek after that which is lost. Therefore the Lord is against them, and will deliver the sheep

out of their hands and be Himself a *Shepherd* to Israel. They shall be gathered from all quarters whence they have been scattered, and shall be made to dwell securely in the wilderness, and upon them "there shall be showers of blessing."

(c) The wreck of the Goodly Ship (27).

The City of Tyre is likened unto a goodly ship. Her planks are of fir trees, her mast is of cedar wood from Lebanon, her oars are of the oaks of Bashan, her benches are of ivory inlaid in boxwood. Her sails are of fine linen with broided work from Egypt, her awning is blue and purple from the isles of Elishah. Her rowers and pilots are the great and wise men. By reason of her wealth, she was the centre of merchandise for nations near and far. But suddenly the Great Ship foundered and was broken in the heart of the seas. All oarsmen, mariners and pilots gather around her, and cry bitterly, and lament over her saying—"Who is there like Tyre, like her that is brought to silence in the midst of the sea?"

The Prophet teaches also—

(v) By means of *symbolism*.

When the fall of Jerusalem was near, Ezekiel, on one occasion, *drew a sword and traced a rough map* on the floor, a meeting point of two roads.

At this point he represents the King of Babylon as calling a halt, that he might cast lots to know which way to go. "Dumb show just suggests the shaking of the arrows, the looking into the liver, and then the advance is decided for the way to Jerusalem" (21:19-23).

(vi) By means of *gesture language*.

This perhaps is the method most characteristic of Ezekiel. The text of numbers of his discourses is a *gesture*, "a vivid action that half tells the tale before words come to complete it."

To express his horror of Judah's idolatry, he would repeatedly smite with his hands, and stamp with his feet. But there are more elaborate illustrations of this method:—

(a) The mimic siege of Jerusalem (4-5).

Taking a *tile*, he draws a picture of Jerusalem upon it, and surrounds the tile with mounds, setting camps against it, and placing battering-rams around it. In this way he mimics before the people the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar.

In addition to this, he eats *filthy food* to indicate to what straits the inhabitants would be reduced during the siege.

And, finally, he cuts off *the locks of his hair*, weighs and divides them. One-third he burns to indicate the destruction of the city. Another third he smites about with a knife, to indicate that large numbers of the people would be slain by the sword. And the other third he throws to the wind, to indicate that many would be scattered abroad before the enemy.

(b) Stuff for removing (12:1-15).

The Prophet, in obedience to the Lord, brings out his household goods by day, in the sight of the people, in preparation for removing. At night he digs a hole in the wall and shouldering his goods he carries them forth in the dark.

Then follows the discourse which tells of how the inhabitants of Jerusalem would do that very thing, when Nebuchadnezzar came against the city.

(c) The joining of the sticks (37:15-28).

The Prophet takes *Two Sticks*, and on the one he writes "for Judah," and on the other, "for Joseph;" and he joins them to one another at the ends, making of them one stick. Then follows a discourse telling of the future restoration and union of Judah and Israel, in the Land of Promise.

Finally, the Prophet teaches also,

(vii) By means of *Vision*.

"The mass of discourses which makes up the whole ministry of Ezekiel comes to us enveloped in a glory of supernatural vision. To Isaiah and Jeremias was granted a theophany, but this was in their case only the occasion of their call to the prophetic office, and appeared no more. But the Divine Glory amid which Ezekiel received his call reappeared to him at critical points of his ministry, and mingled with his final vision of the ideal Land of Promise."

There are four great Visions in this book:—

(a) *Vision of the Cherubim* (1).

This is the Vision which he saw at the time that he was called to the prophetic office.

(b) *Vision of Jerusalem* in her pollutions (8-11).

In spirit the Prophet was transported to Jerusalem, and was

led from place to place to behold the great abominations of the children of Judah.

The portrayal of vile things on the walls of the secret chamber of the elders.

Jewish women weeping for Tammuz.

Twenty-five men standing between the porch and the altar of the Temple with their faces towards the east, worshipping the sun.

Concerning these things, the Lord told Ezekiel what His purposes were. In vision, a man clothed in linen with a writer's ink horn by his side, went through the city and marked the foreheads of all who sighed and cried for the abominations that were wrought. And behind him were six men with drawn swords who utterly smote the guilty in the city.

(c) *Vision of the dry bones* (37:1-14).

It is the graveyard of the Jewish nation which the prophet sees, the helpless, dismembered, denationalised people whose return and restoration to the favour of God and to national unity are as resurrection from the dead.

(d) *Vision of Jerusalem in her glory* (40-48).

This is by far the longest and most elaborate section of the Book, and reveals, with an enormous wealth of detail, the future felicity of Israel. The outstanding promises of this vision are:—

- (1) The Repossession of the *Inheritance*.
- (2) The Redistribution of the *Land*.
- (3) The Rehabilitation of *Zion*.
- (4) The Reconsecration of the *People to God*.

This, then, is the method of Ezekiel. No artist has given us pictures so inspiring, so mysterious, so charming, and so terrifying as these. Some are given in a stroke or two, but others are given in minutest detail, and stand forth from the canvas of history with convincing reality. Ezekiel truly was a Seer. His ministry began beneath the opened heavens upon a high mountain (40:2). It was because of such *visions* that he was possessed of such *passions* and engaged in such *missions*. Alas, that so many to-day are labouring in service who are thrust forth by no irresistible passion, because they have never had any "open vision."

Our first business is on our faces before the Throne; then we are made fit, and then only, for the tasks to which God calls us.

Ezekiel's vision was of great range. No doubt in part some of it was fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon in the reign of Cyrus, but it stretched far beyond that, to the time yet future when the scattered flock shall be gathered again, and the Shepherd-King shall lead them (34).

The Seer of Patmos and the Prophet by the Chebar both worked towards the same centre, for in the book of Revelation, as here, we see the City, the Temple, the Throne, and the Glorified Man upon it, and the Rainbow round about it. Gog and Magog are overthrown, and the Glory of God enfolds all things.

Surely this is witness sufficient to the inspired character and Divine authority of the Scriptures, that men separated by 600 years should see visions so closely corresponding.

"Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89).

BIBLE MIRACLES

BY ROWLAND H. C. HILL

(Concluding article)

The miracles performed by the Lord Jesus Christ were unique in more than one respect. In the first place, according to His own word they were "works which none other man did" (John 15:24). "None other man" means He was man and as such performed a great number of miracles; and if we consider the great numbers healed on various occasions, each individual a separate miracle, the number is further increased. The Gospels record about forty but refer to other unrecorded ones. John, who recounts but seven, refers to the many others in chs. 2:23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:37; 20:30.

In the second place, not all His miracles were performed publicly and He sometimes forbade the publication of them. There is an explanation of this that may be alluded to as it bears upon our subject. Of one great matter of revelation there will be no attempt at explanation. The Scriptures emphatically state, and we irrevocably believe and proclaim, that the Christ was God from eternity and ever shall be God. As emphatically it is stated that Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, condescended to be a babe needing the nourishment and care of His mother. He became and was man and so continues. As a man, and without stepping out of that condition He performed His miracles.