

# ezekiel

---

FROM A REBEL'S HOUSE  
TO AN EXILE'S HOME



This short introduction to the book of Ezekiel is meant to help us as a congregation as we journey through this book of the Bible. For many of us, the book of Ezekiel is an intimidating and perhaps even confusing book. It is filled with strange visions and very peculiar prophetic actions. Yet, within this incredible book of the Bible we see God speaking to His People who have wandered far from him in rebellion. He speaks a message of loving judgment and points to how he restores the broken.

In order to understand this book of the Bible, we need to see the larger story and how God was at work among his people. In the very beginning, God created a “very good” world. This world was filled with his loving presence and everything was functioning the way it was supposed to function. The word used in the Bible to describe this harmony is the word “shalom.” We learn that early on in the story, our rebellion against God caused the world to be turned upside down. Sin and death—a corruption—were ushered into God’s “very good” creation because of our decision to pursue true life outside of God’s loving rule.

Well, God did not abandon his creation and he did not utterly destroy his creation either. Instead, God promised to restore his creation and undo the destruction that our sin had caused. He formed and shaped a people, Israel, who would be a display people for God of blessing on the earth. He led them. He rescued them. He provided for them. He lavished gifts on them. He loved them. Yet, their hearts were still very broken and they continually rebelled against him. Their rebellion became so bad that God used other nations—Assyria and Babylon—to remove Israel from the land that God

provided. Israel was taken in exile, which means that they were removed from their land and brought into a foreign place.

This is the context that Ezekiel is found. In the midst of some of the first waves of Babylonian exile, Ezekiel begins to prophesy. God gives him words to say to the people of Israel and even actions to perform to signal God’s displeasure with their rebellion, his coming judgment, and his work of restoration that will come.

## WHAT IS OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY?

The book of Ezekiel is one of several books of the Bible in the literary genre of prophetic writing. These books were put together by collecting and organizing the actions of prophets in Israel’s history. A prophet was someone God would raise up to speak to the people on his behalf. This was not a vocation Israelite boys dreamed of becoming one day. Prophets were often and unfortunately despised by the people. This is because prophets usually spoke very harsh words that directly addressed the sin and idolatry of God’s People. These men were called by God into this role sovereignly. They didn’t train for this position, but were appointed by God to carry his message faithfully.

## WHO WAS EZEKIEL?

Ezekiel was a relatively young man, who was part of the second wave of Israelites that were removed from their land by the Babylonians. He comes from a line of priests. This meant that he would serve as

a priest for Israel from the ages of 30 to 50. He was a contemporary of Daniel, Jeremiah and Obadiah. He served as a prophet just prior to, during, and immediately following the fall of Jerusalem, which took place in 586 BC.

## WHAT IS THE BASIC MESSAGE OF EZEKIEL?

We need to understand that Israel during this time was in tremendous confusion. Many had been captured and taken off into exile. Their nation was crumbling around them. The promises of God seemed like a distant memory and their dreams were dissolving right in front of them. In order to understand this period, we need to try to immerse ourselves in the realities of exile.

Tamara Eskenazi expresses the realities of exile this way:

*Exile. It is not simply being homeless. Rather, it is knowing that you do have a home, but that your home has been taken over by enemies.*

*Exile. It is not being without roots. On the contrary, it is having deep roots which have now been plucked up, and there you are, with roots dangling, writhing in pain, exposed to a cold and jeering world, longing to be restored to native and nurturing soil. Exile is knowing*



*precisely where you belong, but knowing you  
can't go back, not yet.*

(Eskenazi, Tamara. "Exile and Dreams of Return". 1990.)

The message of God comes to Ezekiel that he is to speak on God's behalf to the rebellious house of Israel, telling them their rebellion has led to exile and hardship. They have sinned against their holy and righteous God and are now receiving the due punishment for their pursuit of true life apart from God. Ezekiel's message is that God rules over not only Israel, but all nations. And not only does God rule over all nations, but over the entire creation. This work that God is doing is to judge the wickedness and evil in the world, and to restore the entire creation from its brokenness to experience the flourishing life of shalom that existed in the beginning.

## WHY PREACH THROUGH EZEKIEL?

Our main diet of preaching is called expository. This simply means that we progress through books of the Bible, allowing the content and literary organization of the book to shape our preaching. Sometimes we do this in a verse-by-verse way and sometimes we progress through a book in a thematic way, going straight through the book theme by theme. We are progressing through Ezekiel using the latter method, which will help us to get a glimpse of the immense scope and beautiful message of Ezekiel over the course of several months.

The reason we've selected this book is because we want to be a congregation of missionary servants in our city. We desire to live as a contrast people, who love and serve our neighbor and put Jesus on display in all areas of life. Ezekiel is a wonderful picture of learning to trust an unchanging God in the midst of a changing world. It is a book that confronts our rebellion head on and doesn't pull any punches. It may cause us to see our sin even more deeply and lead us to praise God for his grace even more fully.

Ultimately, it is a book about God's action in the world and where history itself is leading. The last picture of the book of Ezekiel is of a restored creation, where everything is the way it is supposed to be. God is at work in the midst of our confusing world, bringing about his plans in just the way he had decided from before the foundations of the world existed. You can have confidence in God and trust that he will do what he says he will do.

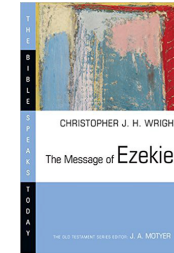
## LOOKING FOR MORE?

As we progress through, we encourage you to check out our website for more content related to this book of the Bible.

[viachurch.org/ezekiel](http://viachurch.org/ezekiel)

## WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING?

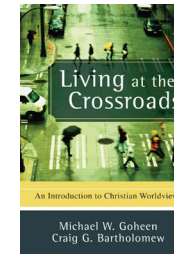
If you would like to intensify your study of Ezekiel, we would highly recommend two resources that will be available at the Bookshelf for purchase.



### *The Message of Ezekiel* by Christopher Wright

This is an excellent resource for understanding this book of the Bible as we progress through it. It is a commentary, so it will provide helpful insight on each section of the book.

**Current Price: \$17.10** (reg. \$19)



### *Living At the Crossroads* by Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew

This book is a tremendous gift to the church in the West. In this book, you will uncover the story of Western culture and see the idolatries that exist all around us. As we progress through Ezekiel, this resource may help you to notice ways in which you are living in a foreign land.

**Current Price: \$18** (reg. \$20)

## OUR RESOURCES

In addition to those mentioned above, we wanted to share the resources that our pastoral team will be using to preach through this book of the Bible. First and foremost, we read and seek to know what the Bible says on its own terms. We never want to impose our structures onto the Bible, but rather, have the Bible restructure our thinking. In order to best accomplish this, we have found it very helpful that while we stay tuned to what the Spirit is saying through the Scriptures, we also have conversations with various scholars and church thinkers through their written material. This is very helpful, because it keeps us from being carried along by our own thoughts and helps us to be grounded to what the church has taught throughout the centuries. We may add various resources as we go along, but these will be the main resources we draw from to discover more about this book of the Bible.

Beale, Gregory K. **The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the**

**Dwelling Place of God.** Leicester: Apollos, 2005. Print.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. **Ezekiel.** Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2016. Print.

Block, Daniel Isaac. **The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24.** Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997. Print.

Block, Daniel Isaac. **The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48.** Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. Print.

Boda, Mark J., and J.G McConville. **Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets.** Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. Print.

Craigie, Peter C. **Ezekiel.** Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983. Print.

Dowden, Landon. **Exalting Jesus in Ezekiel.** Nashville, TN: B&H Group, 2015. Print.

Duguid, Iain M. **Ezekiel.** Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006. Print.

Fairbairn, Patrick. **Commentary on Ezekiel.** Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989. Print.

Goheen, Michael W. **A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story.** Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. Print.

Goheen, Michael W., and Craig G. Bartholomew. **Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview.** Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. Print.

Scott, James M. **Exile: A Conversation with N.T. Wright.** Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an Imprint of InterVarsity, 2017. Print.

Stuart, Douglas K., and Lloyd John. Ogilvie. **Ezekiel.** Nashville, TN: Thomas

Nelson, 1989. Print.

Taylor, John B. **Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary.** Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969. Print.

Thomas, Derek. **God Strengthens: Ezekiel Simply Explained.** Darlington: Evangelical, 1993. Print.

Wolters, Albert M. **Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview.** Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005. Print.

Wright, Christopher J. H. **Salvation Belongs to Our God: Celebrating the Bible's Central Story.** Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007. Print.

Wright, Christopher J. H. **The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit.** Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 2001. Print.