

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 67
Ezekiel 1-24

Key Concepts: The key concept in this portion of Ezekiel is that even though the people were in exile, God had not left them.

Stories: The stories in this section include the prophet's call and early visions, prophetic acts, declarations concerning the coming judgment of Jerusalem, a series of Temple visions, a variety of images of Israel, images of the final phase of Israel's history and the siege of Jerusalem.

Brief Summary: We begin a new section of the Biblical story with the writings of the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel is a priest who is taken into captivity with the first group of Israelites to go into exile in Babylon. His prophetic mission only begins once he is there and includes words to those back home and words to those in exile. What this means is that he is a contemporary of Jeremiah, though we are not certain if they knew one another. Ezekiel is known for a number of things, but especially for his fantastic visions, such as the wheel in the sky surrounded by living creatures. I encourage you to pay attention to these visions because we will encounter many similar ones when we reach the Book of Revelation.

We begin with Ezekiel's call to be a prophet. This begins with the aforementioned vision of the living creatures and the wheel. In the midst of the wheel he sees a throne and on it is the living God. God then gives the prophet five commissions. These are that Ezekiel, addressed as the Son of Man, is to first speak only what God tells him to speak (this is shown by Ezekiel eating a scroll); second to be more determined to speak the truth to Israel than they are to listen; third to speak to the exiles; fourth to become a watchman over Israel in order to warn them of what is to come; and fifth to speak only when God directly commands him to speak.

Ezekiel makes great use of prophetic actions. These actions are in a way, mini-plays which depict what is going to happen to Israel. Using a sun-dried brick he builds siege-works against it to portray Jerusalem's fate. He lies on one side for days at a time in order to show how many years the people of Israel will be in captivity. He mixes grains in order to show that scarcity is coming upon the people. He also shaves off his hair and beard to show how shamed the people of Jerusalem will become. Following these actions we come upon a series of prophecies which are all followed by the words, "Then they will know that I am the Lord." You will find these words used throughout the book.

The next large section concerns the Temple Visions. Ezekiel is mysteriously transported (we are not sure if this is a vision or an actual trip he makes back to Jerusalem) to the Temple. Once there he watches as the Glory of the Lord (in a sense God's presence) leaves the altar in the Temple, moves to the threshold of the Temple, moves to the East door, and then into the heart of the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel then uses a series of allegories to describe Jerusalem, including that of the unfaithful wife, the eagles, and the cedars. In this section he also offers up a significant piece of hope; the children of the exiles will not be punished for what their parents have done. This offers the exiles the possibility of eventual return to the land.

The prophet concludes this section with words about the fate and fall of Jerusalem. God tells Ezekiel that he should not mourn nor weep for the dead, for they had brought this upon themselves.

1. What do you make of Ezekiel's fantastic visions?
2. What do you make of the symbolism of the Glory of God moving away from the altar and Temple?
3. Why is it important that the children not be punished for the sins of the parents?