



GREAT THEMES OF EZEKIEL

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study by Jeff S. Smith

Introduction

It was in 597 B.C. that Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar deported Israel's King Jehoiachin along with 10,000 of his leading citizens. Among them was the prophet and priest, Ezekiel, who had grown up under the godly reforms of King Josiah and who continued to show an affinity for truth and the kind of honest visions that came from Jeremiah. Ezekiel settled into exile in Tel-Abib by the River Kebar, but five years later, he was summoned into his own prophetic ministry through a vision from God. Although adamant and dedicated, Ezekiel's warnings were rejected by most people who simply did not take him seriously. The book that bears his name records events in his captivity and his attempts to show the exiles why God had allowed them to be taken, that they might reform.

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- On the Cover: *Ezekiel*, a portrait by Guy Rowe

Lesson 1: Spokesman to the Exiles

Text: Ezekiel Chapters 1-3

Ezekiel, while in Babylonian exile, is summoned by God in a majestic vision to prophesy to the rebellious house of Israel as her watchman.

1. Under normal circumstances, Ezekiel would have entered fully into his priestly duties once he reached the age of 30. Why could he not (1:1-3)? How did God show him that he had another office in mind?

2. Ezekiel describes the cherubim in his vision (1:4-14, 10:20-22). To what animals did he compare them? How were they like fire?

3. What motivated, or moved, the wheeled “chariot” (1:15-21)? How did the Holy Spirit motivate the apostles (Acts 13:4, 16:6-7, 18:5, 20:22)?

4. Whom did Ezekiel see riding on the chariot’s throne (1:22-28)? What did he look like? Compare this vision to John’s in Revelation 1:10-17. How did both men respond?

5. Why didn’t God express much confidence in Ezekiel’s prospects for success in preaching to the Hebrews (2:1-5)? What does it mean to be impudent and stubborn (cf. Psalm 78:8, 81:12)?

6. What might God eventually do with a stubborn person, even one who is religious (Hosea 4:6, Romans 1:24-25, Second Thessalonians 2:9-12)?
7. How much latitude did God give the prophet to retreat or compromise if his audience rejected him? Compare this charge to Timothy's (Second Timothy 4:1-5).
8. How did God illustrate Ezekiel's mission for him (2:8-3:3; First Peter 1:19-21)? Ezekiel would learn what John quickly found about preaching God's word; what was it (Revelation 10:8-11)?
9. Who would be more likely to heed the prophet—God's exiled nation or the foreigners (3:4-11)? Why? Why won't people listen today (Matthew 13:18-23)?
10. How did God style Ezekiel's new office (3:16-27)? Who hold similar, but not prophetic, roles in today's church (Second Timothy 4:5, Acts 20:28)?

Lesson 2: Siege of Jerusalem

Text: Ezekiel Chapters 4-7

Ezekiel demonstrates the coming Babylonian siege against Jerusalem by modeling the city and the effects upon the people, save for a remnant that would endure.

1. What did God have Ezekiel make for a sign for the house of Israel (4:1-3)? How might this have looked to the exiles?

2. How long was Israel's punishment (4:4-8)? How long was Judah's? Each was completed at the same time—when?

3. What was Ezekiel demonstrating with this exercise (4:9-17)? What objection did he raise to God (cf. Deuteronomy 23:12-14)? How did God respond?

4. What was the fourth of Ezekiel's acted-out prophecies (5:1-4)?

5. How severe would the famine get (5:5-10; Jeremiah 19:9, Lamentations 4:10)?

5. What would happen to the citizens by thirds (5:11-12):
- the first third
 - the second third
 - the final third
6. How does God feel when his people sin or rebel against him (5:13-17)?
7. What had been going on in the mountains of Israel (6:1-7, 11-14)? How does God react to any form of idolatry (Matthew 6:19-24)?
8. For the first time, Ezekiel explicitly mentions a note of hope in the midst of a prophecy of overwhelming devastation (6:8-10). What is it? Explain.
9. What can the chastening of the Lord teach us (Hebrews 12:1-11, First Peter 1:6-9, Philippians 4:10-13)?
10. What is the theme of Ezekiel's poetic prophecy about Judah's demise (7:1-27)?
11. How do Christians sometimes betray the fact that they do not truly acknowledge God as Lord (Titus 1:16, First John 3:18)?

Lesson 3: Visions of the Temple

Text: Ezekiel Chapters 8-11

God grants Ezekiel a vision of idolatries in Jerusalem even while the prophet labored in faraway Babylon. God intended to judge the city and lay it waste when the time was ripe.

1. What did Ezekiel see in his vision (8:1-6)? Explain. How did God say he was responding to this (verse 6; Matthew 6:19-24, James 4:7-10)?

2. What attitude enabled the Israelites to worship these idols with such ease (8:7-12)? What causes people to think that way today? How do they show it, if not through the same idolatry (Ephesians 4:17-24)?

3. What two greater abominations did Ezekiel witness in his vision (8:13-18)?

- verse 14:

- verse 16:

4. Who received the mark on their foreheads (9:1-7)? What did it signify? When did two similar things occur in the Bible (Exodus 12:7,13; Revelation 9:4)?

5. Two behaviors resulted from the attitude that God had forsaken Israel (9:8-11). What were they? Show that the same behaviors result today from the same attitude (Romans 1:22-32, 3:10-18; First Timothy 4:1-2)?

6. What does the imagery of the chariot throne's movement indicate (10:1-22)?

7. How is this sad process described in terms of a church's fellowship with God in the New Testament (Revelation 2:5)?

8. What the theme of the false prophecy that God hated (11:1-4)?

9. How could Jerusalem have saved itself from that which it feared (11:5-12)? How can it be said that they brought violence upon themselves?

10. What was Pelatiah's sin that he deserved to die (11:13, 1-2)? What does God say of modern men who follow his example (Matthew 15:13-14, 18:5-7; Second Peter 2:1, Second John 7-11)?

11. What is the lone hopeful note in this disturbing chain of prophetic events (Ezekiel 11:14-25)?

Lesson 4: Jerusalem's Judgment

Text: Ezekiel Chapters 12-14

Ezekiel goes to dramatic lengths to illustrate the impending crisis in Jerusalem, doing battle with false prophets who preached a popular, but wholly deceptive message of peace.

1. What did God attach to the fact that Judah was a rebellious house—either as a cause or an effect, perhaps both (Ezekiel 12:1-6)? About whom did Jesus say the same thing (Matthew 13:1-17; cf. Hebrews 5:9-14)?

2. How do people act when they get tired of the Bible, or at least, its many New Testament warnings (Amos 5:10, Second Timothy 4:1-5)? How might preachers be responsible at times?

3. What reason did God give for allowing a remnant to escape his devastation (Ezekiel 12:7-16)?

4. How did Ezekiel illustrate the coming crisis in Jerusalem (12:17-20)? What sinful behavior would bring it on?

5. How did Judah interpret God's patience (12:21-28)? Why is God so patient (Romans 2:4-13, Second Peter 3:1-9)?

6. What was the central message of the lying prophets (Ezekiel 13:1-16)? What is the danger in unrealistic optimism (Jeremiah 5:30-31, Second Corinthians 13:5 and James 1:21-25)?

7. List the three punishments God planned for the false prophets:

- a.
- b.
- c.

8. When would the whitewash (plaster, NKJV) fail? When will modern false teaching fail?

9. Why do people listen to lies (Ezekiel 13:17-23; Second Thessalonians 2:9-12)?

10. Why did God refuse to be consulted by these elders (Ezekiel 14:1-11)? How can we be sure that our loyalty is not just as divided (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Luke 9:57-62)?

11. Why wouldn't the theoretical appearance of Noah, Daniel and Job serve to redeem Judah a while longer (Ezekiel 14:12-23)?

12. What was to be Judah's consolation?

Lesson 5: Metaphor, Allegory, Parable

Text: Ezekiel Chapters 15-17

Judah is compared to a wild, uncultivated vine and an adulterous, ungrateful bride before being confronted with a parable of two eagles.

1. God, perhaps shockingly, compares Judah, not to the cultivated vine of the vineyard as elsewhere in the Old Testament, but to the wild vine of the forest (Ezekiel 15:1-8). What is the implication? Why was God judging and burning this devolved vine?

2. To what does James compare unfaithfulness to God (James 4:1-5)?

3. What point did Paul make when returning to this theme of wild and cultivated vines (Romans 11:11-25)?

4. What was Judah's moral genealogy (Ezekiel 16:1-5)? What transition does he describe in Judah (6-14)?

5. What made Judah beautiful? Where is the glory of the church—in ornate architecture, pious rituals, societal approval or elsewhere? Where (Ephesians 3:21, 5:27)?

6. How did Judah play the harlot (Ezekiel 16:15-34)?
7. How do people today sacrifice their children to idols (Second Timothy 2:1-5)? Think!
8. What days of their youth did God want them to recall (Ezekiel 16:35-43)? What youth did the Hebrew writer want his readers to recall (10:32-39)? How is the intent similar in both cases?
9. To what does God compare Judah (Ezekiel 16:44-52)? Why did Jesus return to this theme in his ministry (Matthew 10:14-15, 11:20-24)?
10. What is the benefit of shame (Ezekiel 16:53-63, Second Corinthians 7:8-12)?
11. This parable rehearses political events inside Judah (Ezekiel 17:1-21). The king of Babylon captured Judah's Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. (3-4, 12; Second Kings 24:8-16, 25:27-30). Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah his puppet king in Judah (5-6, 13; Second Kings 24:17). Egypt appealed to Zedekiah as an ally (7), so he broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar (15-19) and would die in Babylon as his troops face defeat (20-21). What hope remains for Judah (Ezekiel 17:22-24)?

6. What should have happened to the righteous man's sinful son (Ezekiel 18:10-13)? Why didn't he inherit his father's righteousness?

7. What do we inherit from Adam (Romans 5:12-14, 8:1-4; First Corinthians 15:20-22)?

8. Whose sins do we seek to have forgiven (Acts 2:38, 3:19)? How?

9. What becomes of the sinful father's righteous son (Ezekiel 18:14-20)? Why shouldn't he be condemned simply for inheriting his father's guilt (Second Corinthians 5:9-10)?

10. What "complicates" the whole matter (Ezekiel 18:21-29)?

11. How does the Hebrew writer describe the possibility of apostasy (6:4-6)? How does Peter describe it (Second Peter 2:20-22)?

12. Who among men are eligible for conversion (First Timothy 1:15-16, 2:3-6)?

13. How does one obtain this new heart and spirit (Ezekiel 18:30-32, Psalm 51:17, Romans 1:17, First Timothy 6:11)?

Lesson 7: Degradation and Doom

Text: Ezekiel Chapter 19-24

The unavoidable judgment of Judah is emphasized in no uncertain terms, culminating with the sign of the death of the prophet's own wife.

1. What is a lamentation (Ezekiel 19:1)? Who was the first lion cub (2-4, Second Kings 23:33-34)? Who was the second lion cub (5-9, Second Kings 24:15)?

2. Whose rebellion occasioned the uprooting of Judah's vine (Ezekiel 19:10-14, Second Kings 24:20 and Jeremiah 52:3)?

3. What command had God given the fathers of the elders (Ezekiel 20:1-7)? Why hadn't they obeyed it (First Corinthians 15:33, Second Corinthians 6:14-20)?

4. Is it still true that a man will live if he observes God's ordinances (Ezekiel 20:8-17, Hebrews 5:8-9)? Explain.

5. Why did God spare the transgressors in the wilderness (Ezekiel 20:18-49, Exodus 32:11-14)? What obligation do Christians have regarding God's name (First Peter 4:12-19)?

6. How was God to swing his slaying sword against Judah (Ezekiel 21:1-32)? What benefit is there when God uses this sword upon his saints today (Hebrews 4:11-13, Ephesians 6:17)?

7. Before, especially in the wilderness, God would not cut off his people because it would cause his name to be mocked among the heathen. Why is he no longer as concerned about that (Ezekiel 22:1-12)? What enables Christians to forget God, if only temporarily (Titus 1:15-16)?

8. What is dross (Ezekiel 22:13-22)? What becomes of it (Psalm 119:119)? How do we keep from becoming human dross (Second Timothy 2:20-21)?

9. Four groups, each starting with the letter “P” are indicted (Ezekiel 22:23-31). List them and their crimes.

a.

b.

c.

d.

10. What did God do with adulterous Samaria (Ezekiel 23:1-10)? How did Jerusalem respond (23:11-49)? What will God do with such people today (Romans 1:24-32)?

11. Ezekiel’s boiling pot parable was acted out on the very day that the siege of Jerusalem began (Ezekiel 24:1-14, Second Kings 25:1). What was its point?

12. What did the death of Ezekiel’s wife illustrate (Ezekiel 24:15-27)?

Lesson 8: Oracles Against Nations

Text: Ezekiel Chapter 25-28

God pronounces judgments on nations beyond Judah, including Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon. Each of these nations bore hostile animosity toward Judah to the point that they sinned against God's people.

1. How were the Ammonites related to the Hebrew people (Ezekiel 25:1-7, Genesis 19:36-38)? In what modern nation was the location of Ammon?

2. Why was God faulting them (cf. Proverbs 17:5)? What would be their punishment?

3. How should we act when one of our enemies is humbled (Romans 12:17-21)?

4. How were the Moabites related to the Hebrews (Ezekiel 25:8-11, Genesis 19:36-38)? What was their fault?

5. How are some Christians guilty of leaving the impression that Christ's kingdom and its people are just like any worldly group (First Peter 2:9-12)?

6. How were the Edomites related to the Hebrews (Ezekiel 25:12-14; Genesis 36:1,8)? What did Edom do (cf. Obadiah 10-14)?

7. For what reason did the Philistines attack Judah (Ezekiel 25:15-17)? Explain.

8. What was Tyre's strength (Ezekiel 26:1-21)?

9. What was her downfall?

10. Describe the similarities between the prophesied falls of Tyre and of "Babylon the Great" in Revelation 18.

11. What comprised the perfect beauty of Tyre (Ezekiel 27:1-11)?

12. To what does the prophet liken Tyre's demise (Ezekiel 27:12-36; see especially verses 25-27)? Which of the seven churches of Asia Minor held similar views about itself (Revelation 2-3)?

13. What was the sin of the prince of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1-10)? How do great riches inflate a man's pride and self-estimation today?

14. What is described in this lamentation (Ezekiel 28:11-19)?

15. What is the last of six nations to be punished according to this section of Scripture (Ezekiel 28:20-26)? What would become of the Jews afterward?

6. How is arrogance different from pride? What does God always look to do for the arrogant (First Corinthians 4:17-21, 13:4)?
7. Why should arrogance make a man unfit to serve as a church pastor (Titus 1:7 and First Peter 5:2-3, 3 John 9-11, Matthew 27:18)?
8. Interestingly, God returns to this arboreal theme at least once more. About whom does Daniel make a similar prediction (4:1-37)? When did he regain his life?
9. The key seems to be human willingness to acknowledge God. What is included in acknowledging God (First John 2:20-27, Hebrews 11:6)?
10. Why would other nations tremble at Egypt's sudden decline (Ezekiel 32:1-16)?
11. How does God prove that misery loves company (Ezekiel 32:17-32)?

Lesson 10: Grace and a New Heart

Text: Ezekiel Chapter 33-39

The third major section of the book begins with a message of hope that new leadership in Judah would bring about a new spirit and victory in spite of the ruined temple and capital.

1. Whose fault is it if one does not heed a legitimate warning and he falls as a result (Ezekiel 33:1-5)? Who bears responsibility if his job is issuing warnings and he does not do so (Ezekiel 33:6-9)?

2. How does this kind of caution apply today when all the prophets are dead, but the church still requires warnings (Second Timothy 4:5, Hebrews 13:17)?

3. If annihilating Judah was not God's wish, then what was it (Ezekiel 33:10-11)? What happened on or about January 8, 585 B.C. (33:21-29)?

4. What could cause the fortunes of the wicked and the righteous to reverse (33:12-20)? Is it fair that a righteous man could lose his redemption on the last day of his life and a wicked man could gain his the same way?

5. What was lacking in Ezekiel's prophetic popularity (33:30-33)? What is the modern equivalent (James 1:22-25, Matthew 23:1-4)?

6. The kings were the shepherds of Israel. How had they failed the Chief Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:1-31)? How can the shepherds of spiritual Israel fail the flock (Acts 20:28-31)?

7. Mount Seir represents Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea. What did God accuse her of doing (Ezekiel 35:1-15, Obadiah 10-15)?

8. From what did God intend to cleanse the remnant (Ezekiel 36:1-38)? How would their spirit change?

9. Why is the acquisition of this new spirit so vital today (Romans 8:1-11)? How is it obtained (Ephesians 4:17-24)?

10. How does Ezekiel illustrate the resurrection of Israel (37:1-14)? Would the kingdoms be divided again or united into one (37:15-28)? Explain (Ephesians 2:14-22).

11. The identity of Gog, an aggressive foreign ruler of Magog, have not been satisfactorily established by Bible students or commentators, but much of the Premillennial hype that surrounds them is surely speculative. What is the point of this prophecy (Ezekiel 38:1-39:29)?

Lesson 11: Restoration of the Temple

Text: Ezekiel Chapter 40-44

Ezekiel relates a vision of the restored temple, not its physical blueprints, but its spiritual nature, by stressing the virtues of purity and vitality in those who worship there.

1. Where was Ezekiel transported in this vision (Ezekiel 40:1-5)? Who was his guide?

2. Satan's temptations of Christ bear a resemblance to this vision in some ways. How do Ezekiel's visions foreshadow Christ's?

- Matthew 4:3-4:
- Matthew 4:5-7:
- Matthew 4:8-10:

3. How many Jerusalem temples does the Bible describe (Ezekiel 40:6-37)? Name the builders. What feature do they all share?

4. What was the area described in Ezekiel 40:38-43 for? Who occupied the chambers described in Ezekiel 40:44-49?

5. What is the "Most Holy Place" (Ezekiel 41:1-4; Leviticus 16:1-4, 34)? How did Christ enter it as well (Hebrews 9:1-14)?

6. What was carved on the paneling of the walls (Ezekiel 41:5-26)? What are cherubim (Genesis 3:24, Exodus 25:18, First Kings 6:27)?
7. What did the plan include to isolate the holy from the common (Ezekiel 42:1-20)? What does the New Testament include to distinguish holy people from worldly ones (Second Corinthians 6:14-18, First Peter 1:13-16, 2:9-12; Romans 12:1-2)?
8. What does this vision signify (Ezekiel 43:1-5, 10:18-19)? What is it like when apostate people are restored (Luke 15:7-10, James 4:7-10)?
9. What was the purpose of this temple vision (Ezekiel 43:6-17)? What pattern are we to measure today (John 8:28-32, Second Timothy 1:13, Titus 2:7)? How?
10. Where was the sacrificial bull to be burned (Ezekiel 43:18-27)? What obligation does Christ's similar sacrifice place upon us (Hebrews 13:10-14)?
11. Which priests are rewarded for their faithfulness (Ezekiel 44:1-22)? What were they to teach (44:23-31)?

Lesson 12: Restoration of the Land

Text: Ezekiel Chapter 45-48

Ezekiel receives a vision of the restored land as a center for faith and governance in restored Israel, awaiting the coming of the Messiah.

1. Where was the temple to be located (Ezekiel 45:1-6)? What else was to be constructed there?

2. When had the curse of oppressive Hebrew princes begun (Ezekiel 45:7-9, First Kings 8:14, 21:1-16)?

3. What was Ezekiel trying to do with these measurements (Ezekiel 45:10-25, Proverbs 16:10-15)?

4. Why is it wrong to lie and take advantage of others (Ephesians 4:25-28)?

5. How might the Hebrews have spent their Sundays (Ezekiel 46:1-8)? What guidance for us might there be in the commands here about their Sabbaths (Colossians 2:13-19, Acts 20:7)?

6. The prince was to set an example before others of holy worship. Of what did Paul tell Timothy to be an example (First Timothy 4:12)?

7. Ezekiel speaks of the prince's voluntary offering (Ezekiel 46:9-24). In what way is the Christian's financial contribution voluntary (Second Corinthians 8:8-12, 9:5-8)? In what way is it not (First Corinthians 16:1-4)?

8. What did Ezekiel see from the threshold of the temple (Ezekiel 47:1-6)? What might that symbolize in New Testament lingo (Genesis 2:10, John 7:37-39, Revelation 22:1)?

9. Healing is a function of this water and the nearby trees (Ezekiel 47:7-12). For what purpose are the trees in heaven (Revelation 22:1-2)?

10. What might all this represent for the stranger—the Gentile—in God's ultimate plan for him (Ezekiel 47:13-23, John 10:15-18, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:12-14, Colossians 3:11)?

11. What is the purpose of Ezekiel 48:1-29?

12. What was to become the name of the city (Ezekiel 48:30-35)? Why was this significant to the exiles?

13. How does the church compare to this description (First Timothy 3:15)? How does heaven compare (Revelation 21:1-5)?

Lesson 13: Review

1. Why couldn't Ezekiel enter fully into his priestly duties once he reached the age of 30 (1:1-3)? How did God show him that he had another office in mind? Why didn't God express much confidence in his prospects (2:1-5)?
2. What did God have Ezekiel make for a sign for the house of Israel (4:1-3)? How might this have looked to the exiles? How severe would the famine get (5:5-10; Jeremiah 19:9, Lamentations 4:10)?
3. What did Ezekiel see in his vision (8:1-6)? Explain. How did God say he was responding to this (verse 6; Matthew 6:19-24, James 4:7-10)?
4. What reason did God give for allowing a remnant to escape his devastation (12:7-16)? How did Judah interpret God's patience (12:21-28)? Why is God so patient (Romans 2:4-13, Second Peter 3:1-9)?
5. To what does God compare Judah (16:44-52)? Why did Jesus return to this theme in his ministry (Matthew 10:14-15, 11:20-24)? What is the benefit of shame (16:53-63, Second Corinthians 7:8-12)?
6. How would you characterize their proverb (18:1-2)? What do we inherit from Adam (Romans 5:12-14, 8:1-4; First Corinthians 15:20-22)?

7. Before, especially in the wilderness, God would not cut off his people because it would cause his name to be mocked among the heathen. Why is he no longer as concerned about that (22:1-12)? What enables Christians to forget God, if only temporarily (Titus 1:15-16)? How do we keep from becoming human dross (Second Timothy 2:20-21)?

8. God discusses his judgment upon Israel's enemies. How should we act when one of our enemies is humbled (Romans 12:17-21)?

9. To what does the prophet liken Pharaoh (29:1-7)? The key seems to be human willingness to acknowledge God. What is included in acknowledging God (First John 2:20-27, Hebrews 11:6)?

10. Whose fault is it if one does not heed a legitimate warning and he falls as a result (33:1-5)? How does this caution apply when all the prophets are dead, but the church still needs warnings (Second Timothy 4:5, Hebrews 13:17)?

11. What is the "Most Holy Place" (41:1-4; Leviticus 16:1-4, 34)? How did Christ enter it as well (Hebrews 9:1-14)?

12. What was to become the name of the city (48:30-35)? Why was this significant to the exiles? How does the church compare to this description (First Timothy 3:15)? How does heaven compare (Revelation 21:1-5)?

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