

Ezekiel - Introduction & Background

Authorship

Ezekiel is identified as the author two times in the book (1:3; 24:24). The unity of the book seems defensible from various internal indicators. For example, the first person singular is used throughout the book. Also, the style, language, and thematic development are consistent throughout the book. Moreover, the book repeats distinctive phrases. Examples include "they shall know the lord," "son of man," "glory of the Lord." The presupposition of Ezekiel as the author was not challenged until around the 1930's.

Despite this evidence, many today deny the authenticity of the book, instead arguing that someone in Palestine composed it sometime after the return from the exile. However, the arguments used to buttress this position are answerable. First, it is argued that the book's focus on imminent judgment and restoration indicates that two different authors composed it. However, the pattern of judgment followed by restoration is the consistent pattern of virtually every other writing prophet. Even those prophetic books whose unity is not suspect follow this identical pattern. Second, it is argued that the book betrays an intimate knowledge of Jerusalem (8; 11:13; 12:3-12; 21:8; 24:2). Thus, it is contended that the writer lived in Jerusalem during its final years before the destruction in 586 BC. His work produced oral tradition that was later pieced together by an anonymous writer after the exile. However, the text indicates that the writer had knowledge of Jerusalem based upon supernatural visions given to him by God. Thus, only an anti-supernatural bias can allow one to hold that the author's knowledge of Jerusalem was derived as a result of being physically present in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens." His name is consistent with how the Lord repeatedly strengthened him so that he could fulfill his prophetic ministry (3:8,14; 30:25; 34:16). Like Jeremiah (Jer 1:1) and Zechariah (Zech 1:1, Neh 12:16), Ezekiel was a Judean priest (1:3). Ezekiel's priestly status would explain his understanding of the cherubim. It would also explain his natural interest in the temple, God's glory, the activities of Jerusalem's priests, the future temple, and the sacrifices. Ezekiel's father's name was Buzi (1:3). Ezekiel was married (25:15-24) and lived in a house (3:22-25). There is no record that he had any children. Aside from this scant biographical information, nothing else is known of Ezekiel. His hometown is unknown. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the OT.

Date

The three sieges of the southern kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled from 605 to 562 BC, are summarized in the following chart:

Nebuchadnezzar's 3 sieges of Judah

	1	2	3
Year	605	597	586
Scripture	2 Kings 24:1; Dan.1:1	2 Kings 24:10-16; Ezek. 1:1-2	2 Kings 25:1-2 , Ezek 33:21
Judah's king	Jehoiakim	Jehoiachin	Zedekiah
Those taken	Daniel & some princes	Ezekiel & majority 10k	Remnant captured, Jerusalem & Temple destroyed

After the death of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin came to the throne in 598-597 BC. However, he only ruled for three and one half months before surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar. The second deportation occurred shortly thereafter. As indicated in this chart, Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in the second exile in 597 BC where he predicted the third and final siege that would come in 586 BC. According to 1:1-2, Ezekiel's ministry began on the 5th day of the 4th month of the 5th year of Jehoiachin's exile. The fifth year of his exile would be 593 BC. The fourth month would be Tammuz, which began on 7/27/593. The fifth day would be 7/31/593.

Although debated, 1:1 seems to indicate that the prophet was 30 years old when he began his ministry (Num 4:3). Thus, Ezekiel was 25 years old when he was taken into captivity. Moreover, Ezekiel was probably born in 622 BC and grew up in the era of Josiah's reforms (628–609 BC). Ezekiel's last recorded prophecy occurred in the 27th year of the first month of the first day of Jehoiachin's exile (29:17). This occurred on 3/26/571. Thus, Ezekiel's ministry spanned 22 years. He continued functioning in his ministry until the age of 52.

Because Ezekiel's ministry started in 593 and ran until 571, it overlapped the end of Jeremiah's ministry (627–580 BC), who was prophesying in Jerusalem while Ezekiel was

prophesying in Babylon. Ezekiel's ministry also ran concurrently with the ministry of Daniel (605–536 BC). Because Daniel was taken as a teenager in the first deportation in 605 BC, he was probably born in 620 BC and was therefore only a few years older than Ezekiel. Both Ezekiel and Daniel ministered in Babylon. While Daniel ministered to the princes of Judah who were taken in the first deportation, Ezekiel ministered to the exiles that were taken in the second deportation. Despite the fact that both were exilic prophets, it is doubtful that the two personally knew one another. However, Ezekiel did demonstrate an awareness of Daniel's reputation and ministry (14:14, 20; 28:3).

In his book, Ezekiel took great care to provide specific chronological information regarding when important visions and events took place. Such data allows scholars to determine when various strategic events took place within the scope of Ezekiel's ministry.

Date	Event	Scripture
7/31/593	Call to ministry	1:1-2
8/7/593	Appointment as a watchman	3:16
9/17/592	Temple vision	8:1
8/14/591	Review of Israel's history	20:1-2
1/15/588	Siege of Jerusalem begins	24:1
4/23/587–4/13/586	Message Against Tyre	26:1
1/7/587	Message Against Egypt	29:1
4/26/571	Egypt given as payment for Babylon's siege	29:17
4/29/587	Message Against Pharaoh	30:20
6/21/587	Message Against Pharaoh	31:1
3/3/585	Lament over Pharaoh	32:1
4/13/586–4/1/585	Announcement of Egypt's “death”	32:17
1/8/585	News of Jerusalem's destruction reaches Ezekiel	33:21
4/28/573	Vision of the future temple	40:1

Because Ezekiel probably wrote the book shortly after the final events of his ministry transpired, assigning a date of 565 BC for the composition of the book seems appropriate.

Place of Writing

Ezekiel's ministry occurred while he was in captivity in Babylon. He lived among the captives in Tel Abib along the Kebar River (1:1; 3:15,23). The Kebar River was known as the grand river of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar's "Grand Canal." The Kebar River began at the

Euphrates River just north of Babylon. It bypassed Babylon to the east and proceeded through Nipur. The Kebar rejoined the Euphrates south of Babylon near Uruk. Most of the exiles lived in Nipur and this is the most likely location of Tel Abib. Ezekiel's ministry consisted of ministering exclusively to these Babylonian exiles.

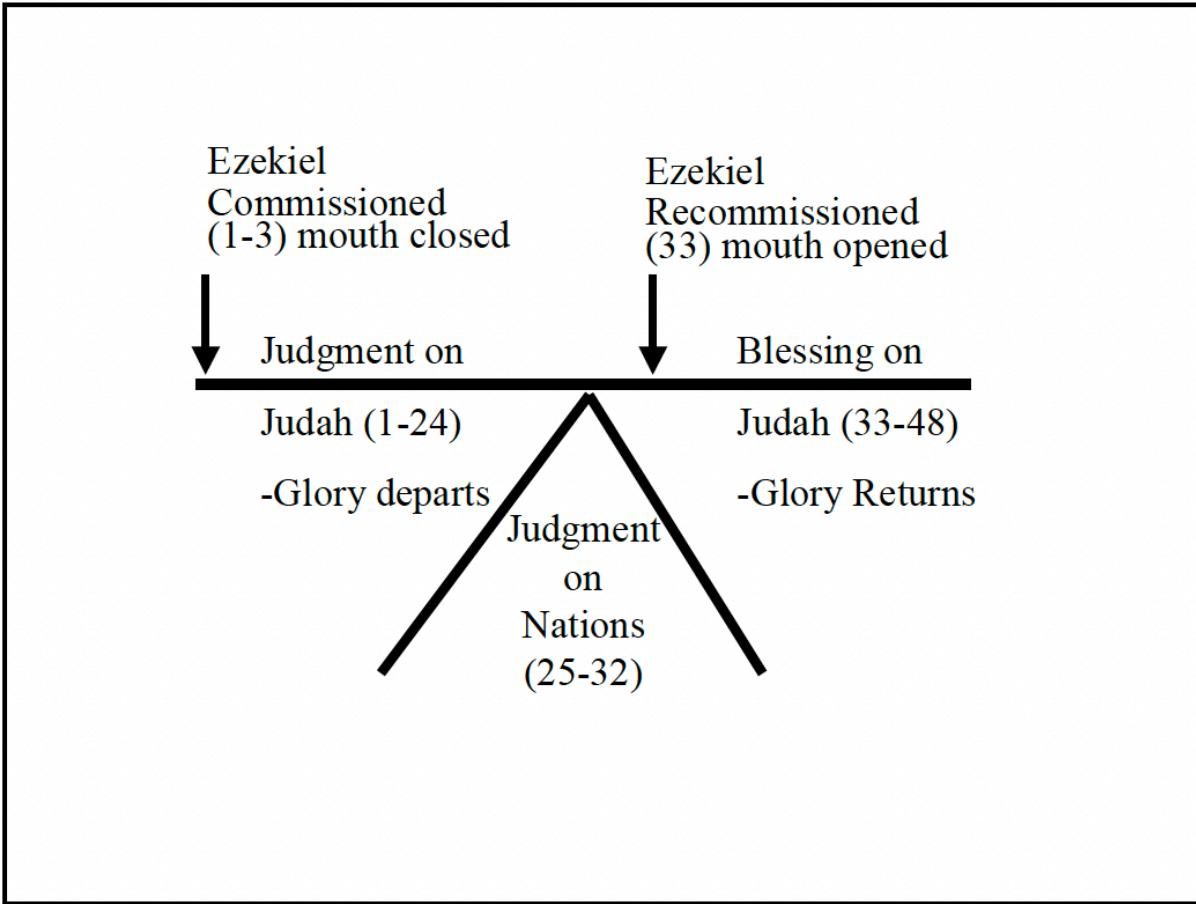
The life that these Jews experienced during the exile does not seem to have been unduly oppressive. Apparently, many of them had the opportunity of living in homes and running businesses while in Babylon (3:22-25; Jer 29). Messengers could reach them unencumbered (33:21). The relative ease of life during the captivity is evidenced by the fact that many Jews opted to remain in Babylon rather than returning to Canaan when later given the opportunity to return. There is no indication that Ezekiel ever returned to Jerusalem after his deportation to Babylon.

Occasion for Writing, Purpose, and Message

The *occasion* of Ezekiel's ministry involved Nebuchadnezzar's second deportation. In this deportation, Ezekiel was taken away to Babylon where he spent the rest of his career ministering among the Babylonian exiles. Nebuchadnezzar installed Zedekiah as a puppet king over Judah. As long as Zedekiah obeyed Nebuchadnezzar, Judah could be insulated from a third Babylonian invasion. This scenario engendered a false optimism among the exiles. They felt that the third invasion would never come. Consequently, they believed that they would be shortly returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. Thus, the *purpose* of Ezekiel's ministry involved showing the exiles that their optimism was a false hope (1-24). The third and final siege was inevitable. Judgment was sure to come upon Judah because of her repeated violations of the Mosaic Covenant. However, after the third siege became a reality, Ezekiel encouraged the beleaguered exiles by explaining to them that the Abrahmic covenant necessitated Judah's eventual restoration (33-48). The *message* of Ezekiel is that God destroys the false hope of a disobedient people. However, once this false hope is destroyed, He replaces it with a new hope.

Structure

Two features must be kept in mind regarding the overall structure of Ezekiel. First, the book is symmetrical:



In the first section of the book (1–24), information is given regarding Ezekiel's commissioning, dumbness, prophecies of coming judgment, and the departure of God's glory. In the book's final section (33–48), the nearly identical information is found. However, this time it is couched in terms of restoration rather than judgment. Ezekiel is recommissioned, his dumbness is removed, he prophesies restoration, and the glory of the Lord returns. Balancing these two sections are the prophecies of judgment against the surrounding nations found in chapters 25–32.

Second, Ezekiel seems to move into different phases of his ministry depending upon how his prophecies regarding imminent destruction of Judah are being realized. In the book's first section (1–24), Ezekiel prophesies imminent judgment upon Judah. This section of his ministry begins on 7/31/593 and lasts until 1/15/588. This section of the ministry takes place before Nebuchadnezzar's siege has begun. However, when Ezekiel receives word that Nebuchadnezzar has begun his final siege against Jerusalem (24:1–2), Ezekiel's focus shifts away from predictions about Judah and toward predictions of judgment concerning the surrounding nations (25–32). This section of his ministry begins on 1/15/588 and lasts until 1/8/585. It takes place during Nebuchadnezzar's final siege. When Ezekiel receives word that Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem has been completed (33:21), the tone of

his prophecies again shifts as he details Judah's eventual restoration. This section of his ministry begins on 1/8/585 and lasts until 4/28/573. This section of the ministry takes place after Nebuchadnezzar's final siege of Jerusalem.

In sum, Ezekiel's ministry has three distinct parts. First, there are the prophecies of judgment against Judah (1–24). This section also contains Ezekiel's commissioning from God (1–3). Second, there are the prophecies of judgment against the surrounding nations (25–32). Third, there are the prophecies of national restoration (33–48). This final section also contains Ezekiel's recommissioning (33).

Unique Characteristics

The Book of Ezekiel boasts several unique features. First, the book exhibits an unusual precision. The year, month, and day of several of the book's prophecies and events are recorded. Perhaps this precision is given in order to vindicate Ezekiel's ministry when his short-term prophecies are realized. Second, the book's structure seems to flow chronologically. When dates are given in the book, they are generally chronological. Thus, Ezekiel is the only major prophet who is chronologically structured. The only other prophets that seem to come close to Ezekiel's chronology are Zechariah and Haggai. However, this is not a "hard and fast" rule as some of Ezekiel's prophecies are out of order chronologically (29:1,17). The prophecies that are out of order generally revolve around his oracles against Egypt, which are grouped topically (29–32). Third, as previously explained, the book is symmetrically structured.

Fourth, the book is autobiographical. Nearly all of Ezekiel's oracles appear in the first person. However, Ezekiel does not disclose as much personal information as Jeremiah does. Fifth, Ezekiel places great stress upon the Spirit of God. God's spirit appears more prominently in Ezekiel than in any of the other prophets. Sixth, Ezekiel employs multiple literary devices in an attempt to communicate with his audience. They include proverbs (12:22-23; 16:44; 18:2-3), visions (1–3; 8–11; 37; 40–48) parables (17; 24:1–14), symbolic acts (4–5; 12; 24:15–27), allegories (16), prophecies, rhetorical questions, dreams, drama, funeral dirges, and history. Seventh, the book is characterized by repetitive phraseology. Such repetitive phrases include "the word of the Lord came to me saying," "thus has the Lord Yahweh said," "the declaration of the Lord Yahweh," "set your face toward," "the hand of the Lord came upon me," the Spirit of the Yahweh fell upon me," "I am Yahweh," "house of Israel," and "they will know I am Yahweh."

Eighth, the book emphasizes God's glory (1:28; 3:12; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4,18–19; 11:22–23; 39:11,21; 43:2–5; 44:4). Ezekiel's emphasis upon God's glory is seen through various repeated themes and phrases. 14x Ezekiel says God acted to prevent His name from being profaned. Sixty-three times Ezekiel says that God acted so people would know that he was the Lord. 271x Ezekiel calls God "Lord Yahweh" or "Sovereign God." God never uses Ezekiel's personal name but rather refers to him as "son of man" 93x throughout the book.

This title shows the humanity of Ezekiel and emphasizes the transcendence between holy God and sinful man. Perhaps Ezekiel emphasizes God's glory because there is no way his audience could understand the manner in which God was dealing with Judah without a fresh glimpse into God's glory. Ninth, the book emphasizes the temple. The temple is seen in its perversion, destruction, and eventual restoration. Tenth, Ezekiel's prophecies of restoration are more detailed than any other prophet. These prophecies are even more detailed than those of his contemporary Jeremiah. Eleventh, 60x the book emphasizes that God's purpose in blessing and judgment is so that people may come to know Him.

Messianic Prophecy in Ezekiel

Ezekiel contains several veiled messianic references. First, as mentioned previously, the title that God repeatedly uses to address Ezekiel is "son of man." This is the same title that Christ repeatedly applies to Himself in the gospels. However, this argument probably should not be pushed too far since the title may merely imply the transcendence between sinful man and a holy God rather than having anything to do with messianic prophecy. Second, there are two references to a resurrected David (34:23; 37:24). However, as will be explained later, there is a debate concerning whether these references pertain to David's greater son Jesus Christ or to literal David. Third, the messiah seems to be in view in 17:22-24. In this passage, His work of providing permanent security is contrasted with the false security offered by Zedekiah, Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar. Fourth, when Ezekiel proclaims that there is no one to "stand in the gap" for the Lord, he may be alluding to the work of a coming messiah who will be able to accomplish what no man can do (22:30).

Outline

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(1) Ezekiel's preparation for ministry (Ezek 1:1—3:27)

(A) The Lord appears to Ezekiel (1:1-3)

(a) Time (1:1-2)

(b) Recipient: Ezekiel (1:3a)

(c) Place: Kebar (1:3b)

(B) God's visions (1:4—2:7)

(a) Four living creatures (1:4-14)

(i) Their advent (1:4)

(ii) Their appearance (1:5-14)

(a) Generally (1:5-6)

(b) Specifically (1:7-14)

(1) Body parts (1:7-11)

a. Legs (1:7)

b. Hands (1:8a)

c. Wings (1:8b-9)

- d. Faces (1:10)
- e. Wings (1:11)
- (2) Movement (1:12-14)
- (b) Four wheels (1:15-21)
- (c) Firmament (1:22-25)
- (d) God's throne (1:26-28)
- (e) Ezekiel's assignment (2:1-7)
 - (i) Spirit stands Ezekiel up (2:1-2)
 - (ii) Ezekiel to be sent to rebellious Israel (2:3-5)
 - (iii) Ezekiel not to fear (2:6)
 - (iv) Ezekiel to speak God's Word (2:7)
- (C) God's Word (2:8—3:11)
 - (a) Ezekiel eats God's Word (2:8—3:3)
 - (b) Ezekiel to deliver God's Word (3:4-11)
- (D) God's hand (3:12-27)
 - (a) Spirit leads Ezekiel back to exiles (3:12-15)
 - (b) Ezekiel appointed as a watchman (3:16-21)
 - (i) Responsibility to declare God's Word (3:16-17)
 - (ii) Responsibility to warn the wicked (3:18-19)
 - (iii) Responsibility to warn the righteous (3:20-21)
 - (c) Ezekiel's limitations (3:22-27)
 - (i) Incarceration (3:22-25)
 - (ii) Limited dumbness (3:26-27)
- (2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)
 - (A) Imminent judgment (Ezek 4:1—11:25)
 - (a) Four signs showing the reality of the coming siege (Ezek 4:1—5:17)
 - (i) Brick indicating fact of the siege (4:1-3)
 - (ii) Lying on right and left side indicating length of the siege (4:4-8)
 - (a) Left side for Israel (4:4-5)
 - (b) Right side for Judah (4:6-8)
 - (iii) Unclean food indicating severity of the siege (4:9-17)
 - (a) Divine command to cook food over human excrement (4:9-13)
 - (b) Ezekiel's objection to human excrement (4:14)
 - (c) Divine command to cook food over animal excrement (4:15)
 - (d) Explanation: scarcity of food during siege (4:16-17)
 - (iv) Ezekiel's haircut indicating results of the siege (5:1-17)
 - (a) Sign (5:1-4)
 - (1) Hair shaved and divided (5:1)

- (2) One-third burned (5:2a)
- (3) One-third hit by sword (5:2b)
- (4) One-third scattered (5:2c)
- (5) Some saved (5:3-4)
- (b) Interpretation (5:5-17)
 - (1) Jerusalem sin (5:5-7)
 - (2) Jerusalem's judgment (5:8-12)
 - (3) Jerusalem's reproach (5:13-17)
- (b) Two sermons showing cause of the siege (6:1—7:27)
 - (i) Idolatry as the cause of judgment (6:1-14)
 - (a) Judgment against idolatry (6:1-7)
 - (b) Remnant spared (6:8-10)
 - (c) Judgment against idolatry (6:11-14)
 - (ii) The nature of the judgment (7:1-27)
 - (a) Sin as cause of judgment (7:1-4)
 - (b) Imminence of the judgment (7:5-13)
 - (c) Israel as the object of judgment (7:14-27)
- (c) One vision showing cause of the siege (8:1—11:25)
 - (i) What Ezekiel saw in the Temple (8:1-18)
 - (a) Introduction (8:1-3a)
 - (1) Date (8:1a)
 - (2) Place: Ezekiel's house (8:1b)
 - (3) Ezekiel transported to the Temple (8:2-3a)
 - (b) Sins in the Temple (8:3b-18)
 - (1) Idol of jealousy (8:3b-6)
 - (2) Idolatrous paintings on the walls (8:7-13)
 - (3) Tammuz worship (8:14-15)
 - (4) Sun worship (8:16-18)
 - (ii) Marking and slaying those in Jerusalem (9:1-11)
 - (a) Calling of the Six and the writer (9:1-2)
 - (b) Directive to mark and slay (9:3-7)
 - (c) Ezekiel's concern (9:8-10)
 - (1) Ezekiel's question (9:8)
 - (2) God's answer (9:9-10)
 - (d) Announcement of the accomplishment of the mission (9:11)
 - (iii) Cherubim and God's departing glory (10:1-22)
 - (a) Departure of God's glory to the Temple threshold (10:1-8)
 - (b) Wheels and cherubim (10:9-17)

- (1) Description (10:9-14)
- (2) Movement (10:15-17)
- (c) Departure of God's glory to the East gate (10:18-19)
- (d) Cherubim identified (10:20-22)
- (iv) The sin of the 25 rulers and God's glory departs (11:1-25)
 - (a) The 25 rulers (11:1-13)
 - (1) Sin: violence and teaching judgment would not come (11:1-6)
 - (2) Ezekiel's predictions of judgment (11:7-12)
 - (3) Slaying of Pelatiah (11:13a)
 - (b) Restoration of thenation (11:13b-21)
 - (1) Ezekiel's concern (11:13b)
 - (2) Restoration to the land (11:14-17)
 - (3) Fulfillment of the New Covenant (11:18-21)
 - (c) The departure of God's glory (11:22-23)
 - (d) Ezekiel is returned to the exiles (11:24-25)
- (B) Shattering false securities (Ezek 12:1—19:14)
 - (a) First false security: Jerusalem remnant (12:1-20)
 - (i) First sign (12:1-16)
 - (a) Baggage and hole in the wall (12:1-7)
 - (b) Interpretation (12:8-16)
 - (ii) Second sign (12:17-20)
 - (a) Trembling while eating and drinking (12:17-18)
 - (b) Interpretation (12:19-20)
 - (b) Second false security: parables (12:21-28)
 - (i) First parable (12:21-25)
 - (a) Prophecies come to nothing (12:21-22)
 - (b) Lord's response (12:23-25)
 - (ii) Second parable (12:26-28)
 - (a) Prophecies will not be immediately fulfilled (12:26-27)
 - (b) Lord's response (12:28)
 - (c) Third false security: false prophets and prophetesses (13:1-23)
 - (i) False Prophets (13:1-16)
 - (a) Sin (13:1-7)
 - (b) Judgment (13:8-16)
 - (ii) False prophetesses (13:17-23)
 - (a) Sin (13:17-19)
 - (b) Judgment (13:20-23)
 - (d) Fourth false security: idols (14:1-11)

- (i) Elders' idolatry (14:1-5)
- (ii) Elders must repent (14:6-11)
- (e) Fifth false security: presence of a righteous remnant (14:12-23)
 - (i) Ineffectiveness of a righteous remnant (14:12-20)
 - (a) Noah, Daniel, and Job cannot save land from famine (14:12-14)
 - (b) Noah, Daniel, and Job cannot save land from beasts (14:15-16)
 - (c) Noah, Daniel, and Job cannot save land from sword (14:17-18)
 - (d) Noah, Daniel, and Job cannot save land from plague (14:19-20)
 - (ii) God will bring famine, beasts, sword, and plague upon Israel (14:21-23)
- (f) Sixth false security: position as God's vine (15:1-8)
- (g) Seventh false security: Jerusalem (16:1-63)
 - (i) Jerusalem was an unwanted baby (16:1-5)
 - (ii) God rescued, reared and married the baby (16:6-14)
 - (iii) God's wife became an adulteress (16:15-34)
 - (iv) God will punish his adulterous wife (16:35-43)
 - (v) God's adulterous wife is worse than Samaria and Sodom (16:44-52)
 - (vi) God will restore his adulterous wife (16:53-63)
- (h) Eighth false security: Zedekiah (17:1-24)
 - (i) Parable of the two eagles (17:1-10)
 - (ii) Interpretation: Zedekiah's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar and its tragic (17:11-21)
 - (iii) God will provide true security (17:22-24)
- (i) Ninth false security: a proverb (18:1-32)
 - (i) The proverb stated (18:1-2)
 - (ii) Principle of individual responsibility defended (18:3-18)
 - (a) God rebukes the proverb (18:3-4)
 - (b) God refutes the proverb (18:5-18)
 - (1) Righteous man blessed (18:5-9)
 - (2) Sinning son cursed (18:10-13)
 - (3) Righteous grandson blessed (18:14-18)
 - (c) Conclusion (18:19-20)
 - (d) Application (18:21-32)
 - (1) To the wicked and righteous (18:21-29)
 - a. The wicked repenting brings life (18:21-23,27-29)
 - b. The righteous sinning brings death (18:24-26)
 - (2) To the present generation (18:30-32)
 - (j) Conclusion: funeral dirge for Jerusalem's princes (19:1-14)

(i) Jehoahaz (19:1-4)

(ii) Jehoiachin (19:5-9)

(iii) Zedekiah and the destruction of the vine (19:10-14)

(C) Historical causes and reality of coming judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem
(Ezek 20:1—24:27)

(a) History of Israel's rebellion (20:1-44)

(i) Introduction (20:1-3)

(a) Date(20:1a)

(b) Elders' inquiry (20:1-2)

(c) God's response (20:2-3)

(ii) Israel's past rebellion (20:4-32)

(a) Idolatry in Egypt (20:4-9)

(b) Idolatry in the wilderness (20:10-17)

(c) Idolatry in Canaan (20:18-32)

(iii) Future restoration (20:33-44)

(a) Purging out of the rebels (20:33-38)

(b) Fulfillment of the New Covenant (20:39-44)

(b) Reality of coming judgment (Ezek 20:45—24:27)

(i) Parable of the forest fire (20:45-49)

(ii) Four messages of the sword (21:1-32)

(a) Sword is drawn against sanctuary and Israel (21:1-7)

(b) Sword is sharpened against rebellious Israel (21:8-17)

(c) Sword is directed toward Jerusalem (21:18-27)

(d) Sword is directed toward Ammon (21:28-32)

(iii) Three messages against Jerusalem (22:1-31)

(a) Cause of judgment: Israel's covenant violations enumerated
(22:1-16)

(b) Means of judgment: the smelting furnace (22:17-22)

(c) Objects of the judgment (22:23-31)

(1) Princes (22:23-25)

(2) Priests (22:26)

(3) Officials (22:27)

(4) Prophets (22:28)

(5) People (22:29-31)

(iv) Parable of the two sisters (23:1-49)

(a) Their identification (23:1-4)

(b) Their sins (23:5:21)

(1) Oholah / Samaria (23:5-10)

- (2) Oholibah / Jerusalem (23:11-21)
- (c) Their Judgment (23:22-49)
 - (1) First judgment Oracle (23:22-27)
 - (2) Second judgment Oracle (23:28-31)
 - (3) Third judgment Oracle (23:32-34)
 - (4) Fourth judgment Oracle (23:35-49)
- (v) News of the initial siege reaches the Babylonian exiles (24:1-2)
- (vi) Parable of the boiling pot (24:3-14)
 - (a) Enacted (24:3-5)
 - (b) Explained (24:6-14)
- (vii) Death of Ezekiel's wife (24:15-26)
 - (a) Announced (24:15-17)
 - (b) Explained (24:18-26)
- (viii) Ezekiel's dumbness to end (24:27)

II. Imminent judgment upon surrounding nations (Ezek 25:1—32:32)

- (1) Nations to the east of Judah (25:1-14)
 - (A) Ammon (25:1-7)
 - (B) Moab (25:8-11)
 - (C) Edom (25:12-14)
- (2) Nation to the west of Judah: Philistia (25:15-17)
- (3) Nations to the north of Judah (26:1—28:26)
 - (A) Tyre (26:1—28:19)
 - (a) Tyre's downfall (26:1-21)
 - (b) Funeral dirge over Tyre (27:1-36)
 - (i) Tyre's former state (27:1-25)
 - (a) Glorious ship (27:1-9)
 - (b) Commerce (27:10-25)
 - (ii) Tyre's coming destruction: shipwreck (27:26-36)
 - (c) Tyre's leaders downfall (28:1-19)
 - (i) Prince of Tyre (28:1-10)
 - (ii) King of Tyre (28:11-19)
 - (B) Sidon (28:20-26)
 - (a) Sidon's downfall (28:20-23)
 - (b) Israel's restoration (28:24-26)
- (4) Nation to the south of Judah: Egypt (Ezek 29:1—32:32)
 - (A) Destruction of Egypt (29:1-16)
 - (B) Babylon to plunder Egypt (29:17-21)
 - (C) Egypt and her allies to be destroyed (30:1-19)

- (D) Egypt to be scattered by Babylon (30:20-26)
- (E) Egypt to experience the same fate as Assyria (31:1-18)
 - (a) Assyria's former glory (31:1-9)
 - (b) Egypt's imminent destruction (31:10-18)
- (F) Pharaoh lamented (32:1-16)
- (G) Egypt's appointment with the grave (32:17-32)

III. Restoration of Israel (Ezek 33:1—48:45)

- (1) Ezekiel's recommissioning (33:1-33)
 - (A) Ezekiel's reappointment as a watchman (33:1-9)
 - (a) General duty of a watchman (33:1-6)
 - (b) Ezekiel's duty as a watchman (33:7-9)
 - (B) Ezekiel's message (33:10-20)
 - (a) Turn from sin (33:10-11)
 - (b) Individual responsibility (33:12-20)
 - (C) News of Jerusalem's fall (33:21)
 - (D) Ezekiel's dumbness removed (33:22)
 - (E) Ezekiel rebukes two groups (33:23-33)
 - (a) Israelites whoremained in the land: false hope (33:23-29)
 - (b) Ezekiel's hearers in Babylon: false hearers (33:30-33)
- (2) Present false shepherds contrasted with the coming true shepherd (34:1-31)
 - (A) Present false shepherds (34:1-10)
 - (a) Sins (34:1-8)
 - (b) Condemnation (34:9-10)
 - (B) Coming true shepherd (34:11-31)
 - (a) His concern for the flock (34:11-16)
 - (b) His judgment among the flock (34:17-24)
 - (c) His establishment of the New Covenant (34:25-31)
- (3) Destruction of Edom (35:1-15)
 - (A) Destruction of Mount Seir (35:1-4)
 - (B) Sins of Edom (35:5-15)
 - (a) Everlasting hatred against Israel (35:5-9)
 - (b) Covetousness against Israel and Judah's land (35:10-15)
- (4) Restoration of Israel (36:1-38)
 - (A) Israel to prosper again (36:1-15)
 - (B) Israel's past sins (36:16-21)
 - (C) Israel to be restored physically and spiritually (36:22-38)
- (5) Israel's restoration illustrated (37:1-28)
 - (A) Vision of the dry bones (37:1-14)

- (a) Vision (37:1-10)
- (b) Interpretation (37:11-14)
- (B) Sign of the two sticks (37:15-28)
 - (a) Sign (37:15-17)
 - (b) Interpretation (37:18-28)
- (6) Protection from Gog and Magog (Ezek 38:1—39:29)
 - (A) The invasion planned (38:1-13)
 - (a) Intent of God (38:1-9)
 - (b) Intent of Gog (38:10-13)
 - (B) The invasion executed (38:14-16)
 - (C) Gog defeated (38:17—39:20)
 - (a) Armies destroyed (38:17—39:8)
 - (b) Weapons burned (39:9-10)
 - (c) Soldiers buried (39:11-16)
 - (d) Eaten by birds (39:17-20)
 - (D) Results of Gog's defeat (39:21-29)
 - (a) God's glory manifested (39:21-24)
 - (b) Israel restored (39:25-29)
- (7) Restored Temple (Ezek 40:1—48:35)
 - (A) Temple (Ezek 40:1—43:27)
 - (a) Introduction (40:1-4)
 - (i) Date (40:1)
 - (ii) Setting (40:2)
 - (iii) Angel (40:3)
 - (iv) Instructions (40:4)
 - (b) Outer court (40:5-27)
 - (i) Wall (40:5)
 - (ii) East outer gate (40:6-16)
 - (iii) Chambers of the outer court (40:17-19)
 - (iv) North outer gate (40:20-23)
 - (v) South outer gate (40:24-27)
 - (c) Inner Court (40:28-47)
 - (i) South inner gate (40:28-31)
 - (ii) East inner gate (40:32-34)
 - (iii) North inner gate (40:35-37)
 - (iv) Tables for slaughter animals (40:38-43)
 - (v) Chambers for singers (40:44-46)
 - (vi) Inner Court (40:47)

- (d) The temple structure itself (40:48—42:20)
 - (i) Porch (40:48-49)
 - (ii) Holy place (41:1-2)
 - (iii) Most holy place (41:3-4)
 - (iv) Side chambers (41:5-11)
 - (v) Separate building (41:12-14)
 - (vi) Temple interior (41:15-26)
 - (vii) Inner court chambers (42:1-14)
 - (a) Description (42:1-12)
 - (b) Their use by the priests (42:13-14)
 - (viii) Outer walls of the Temple (42:15-20)
- (e) Return of the Lord's glory (43:1-12)
 - (i) Return of the Lord's glory (43:1-5)
 - (ii) Israel's perpetual holiness (43:6-9)
 - (iii) Ezekiel to explain the Temple to the exiles (43:10-12)
- (f) Altar of burnt offering (43:13-27)
 - (i) Altar (43:13-17)
 - (ii) Offerings by priests (43:18-27)

(B) Worship (Ezek 44:1—46:24)

- (a) East gate closed (44:1-3)
- (b) Foreigners not admitted (44:4-9)
- (c) Temple priests (44:10—45:8)
 - (i) Duties (44:10-27)
 - (a) Levites (44:10-14)
 - (b) Priest of Zadok (44:15-27)
 - (ii) Privileges (44:28—45:8)
 - (a) Inheritance (44:28-31)
 - (b) Land (45:1-8)
- (d) Offerings (45:9—46:24)
 - (i) Priests to be honest (45:9-12)
 - (ii) Offerings for and by priests (45:13-17)
 - (iii) Offerings on certain days (45:18-25)
 - (a) New Year's (45:18-20)
 - (b) Passover (45:21-24)
 - (c) Tabernacles (45:25)
 - (d) Sabbaths, new moons (46:1-12)
 - (e) Daily sacrifices (46:13-15)
 - (iv) Rules for the Prince (46:16-18)

- (v) Places for preparing the offerings (46:19-24)
- (C) Land (Ezek 47:1—48:35)
 - (a) Millennial river (47:1-12)
 - (b) Boundaries (47:13-20)
 - (i) Introduction (47:13-14)
 - (ii) Northern border (47:15-17)
 - (iii) Eastern border (47:18)
 - (iv) Southern border (47:19)
 - (v) Western border (47:20)
 - (c) Division of the land (47:21—48:29)
 - (i) Inheritance of the alien (47:21-23)
 - (ii) Among the tribes (48:1-29)
 - (a) Seven northern tribes (48:1-7)
 - (b) Prince's portion (48:8-22)
 - (c) Five southern tribes (48:23-29)
 - (d) City (48:30-35)
 - (i) Gates (48:30-34)
 - (ii) Size (48:35a)
 - (iii) Name (48:35b)

Important Prerequisite Understanding

2 Peter 1:20: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

- Scripture does not have one meaning for you and another for me
- In all these prophecies God had an intended communication
- They were given to us in the Bible for our learning and enlightenment
- Now, there may be areas in the Scripture where you and I may have different views. However, it is not a selective nor secret knowledge type of thing. Your only guide is the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21: For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

- This is very evident in Ezekiel. It is probably the most ignored book in the OT.

Historical Background: The Two Kingdoms

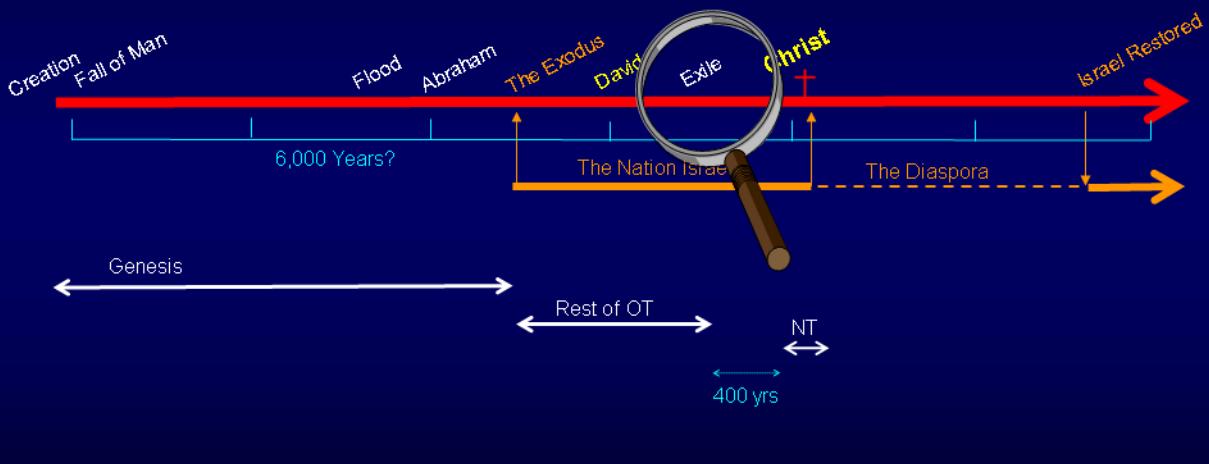
- The Northern Kingdom – Israel

- 19 kings reigned 250 years
- 7 different dynasties
- Assyrian Captivity, 721 BC (no return)

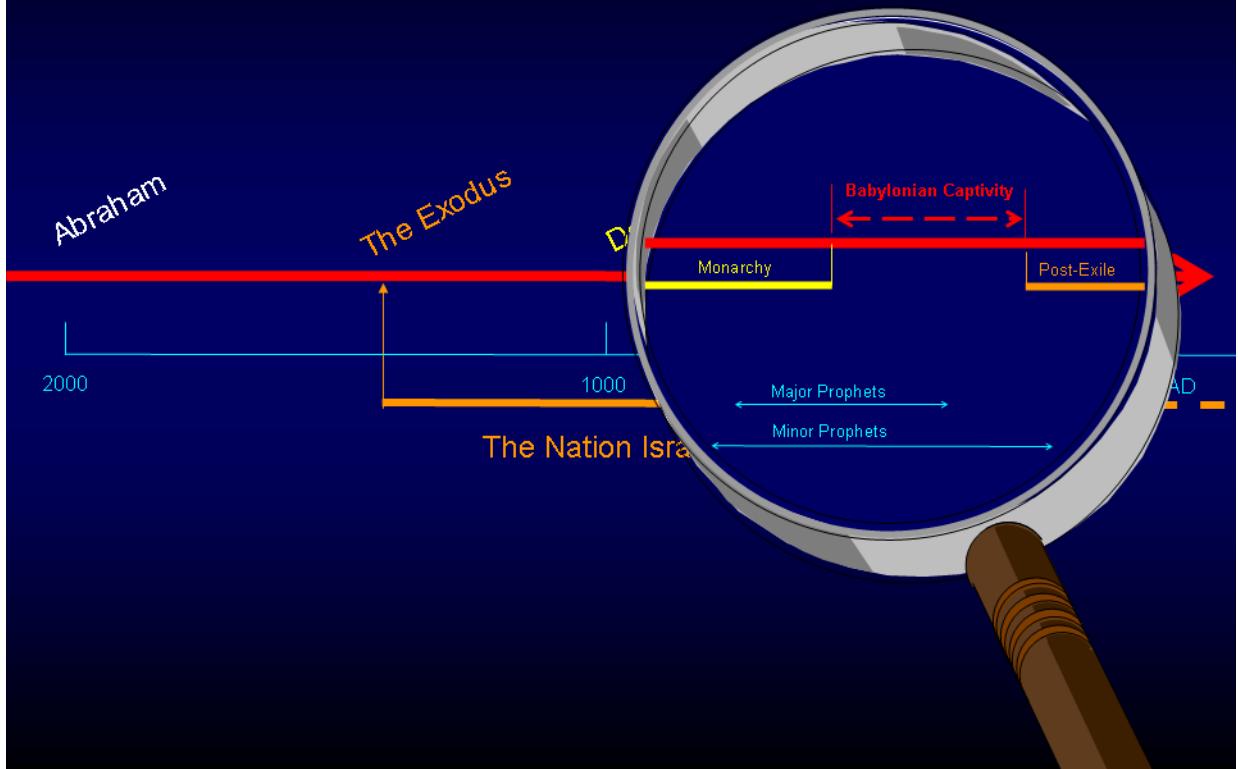
- The Southern Kingdom – Judah
- 20 kings reigned 370 years
- 1 dynasty: The Davidic
- Babylonian Captivity, 606 BC (70 years)

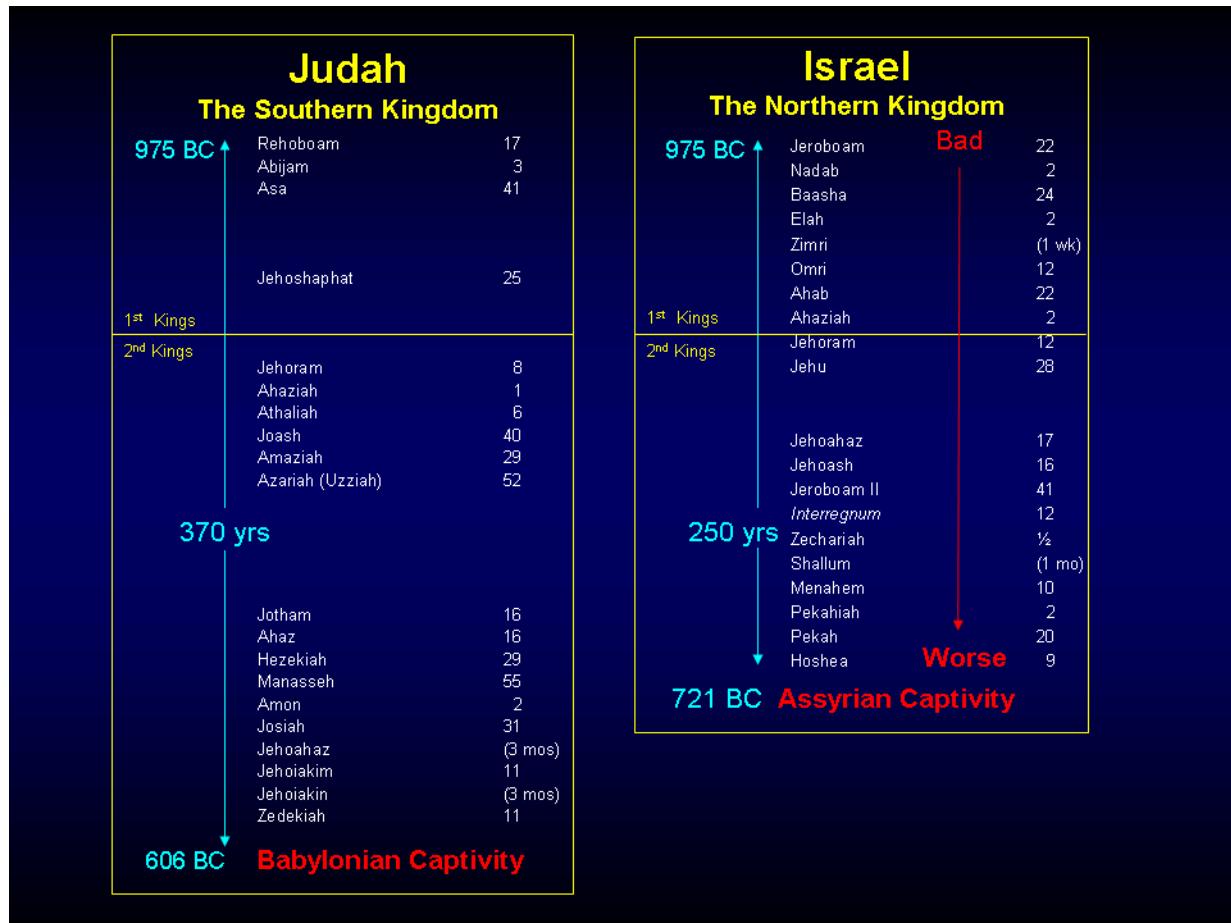
*Note: "Israel" in the OT can mean either the entire nation (both kingdoms) or refer specifically to the Northern Kingdom. Most of the usage refers to the entire nation, but phrases such as "King of Israel" refers to the king of the Northern Kingdom during this time period.

The Panorama of History

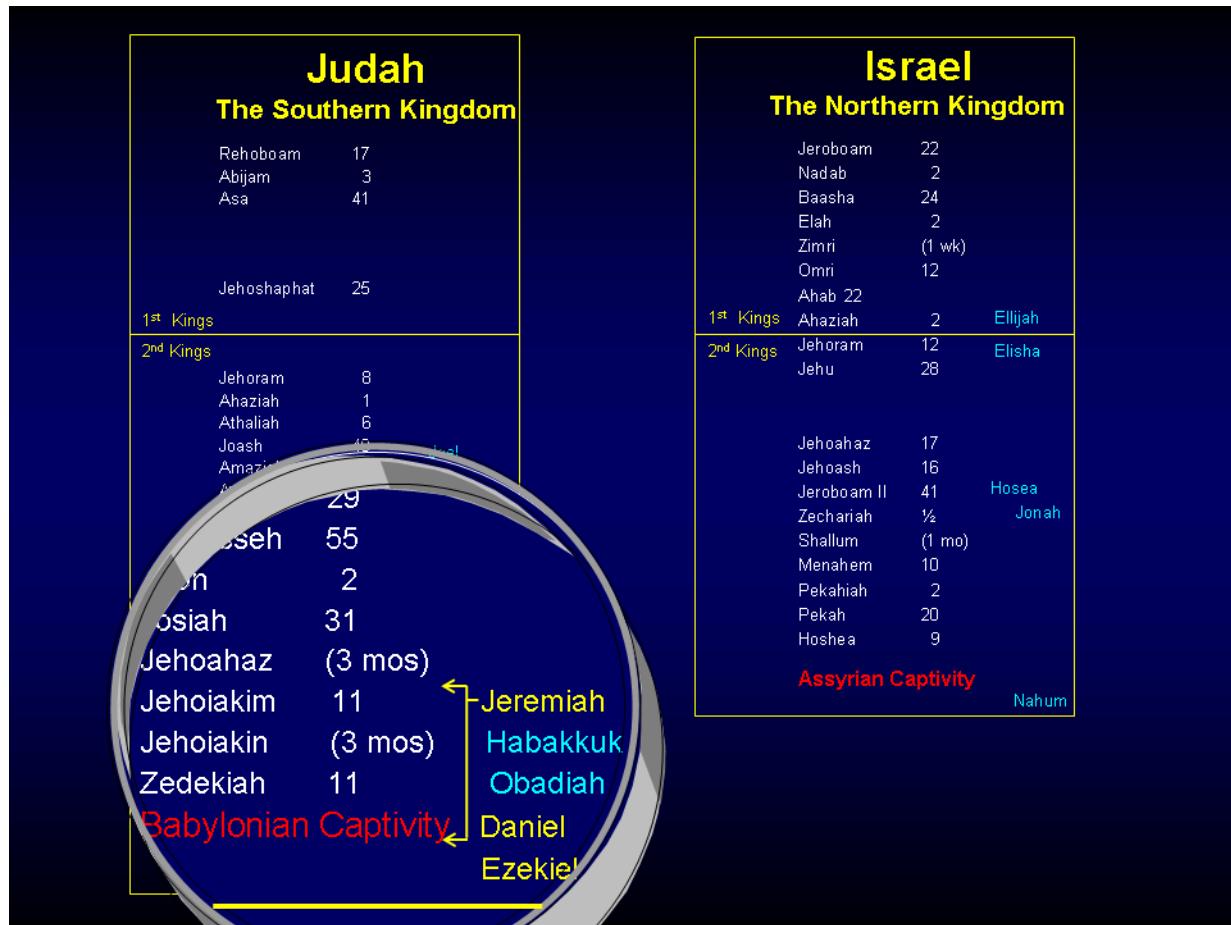


The Panorama of History





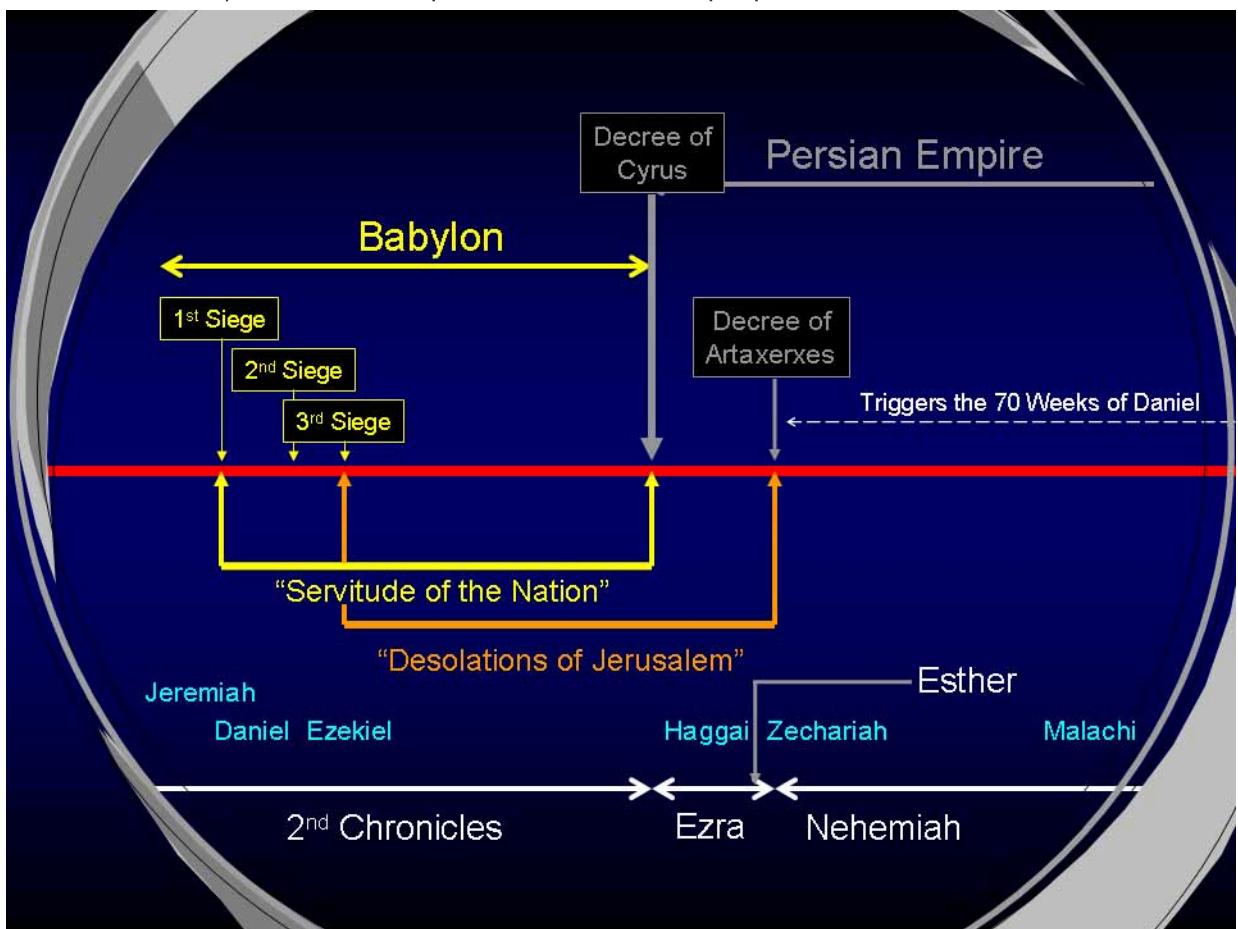
Prophets related to the last days of the Southern Kingdom and the Babylonian Exile



Chronology

- 612 BC: Nineveh falls to an alliance of Babylon and Media
- 609 BC: Pharaoh Necho leads army against Assyria. Josiah fights Necho and gets killed (2 Chr 35:20-24)
- 606 BC: Battle of Carchemesh - Nebuchadnezzar vs. Pharaoh Necho on the West bank of Euphrates (Jer 46:1-6)
 - The Babylonians began the first of three deportations of the Jews; Daniel was in this group [1st Siege of Jerusalem]
 - Nebuchadnezzar just took hostages at this point; sets up a vassal king in Jerusalem; heads back to Babylon because his father died
 - False prophets in Jerusalem urged the vassal king to rise up and throw off the yoke of Babylon
 - Jeremiah told him otherwise, saying that Nebuchadnezzar was an instrument of God to judge Israel for their disobedience
 - Vassal king didn't listen to Jeremiah, but listened to false prophets and rose up...which led to 2nd siege in 597 BC

- 597 BC: In the second group was young Ezekiel, then about twenty five years old [2nd Siege of Jerusalem]
 - He was taken to Tel Aviv [no relation to city in Israel today] near the ship canal Chebar (Ezek 3:15)
 - Although he was a captive in Babylon, he lived in his own house with his beloved wife (Ezek 8:1; 24:16ff)
 - In Jerusalem, same story as before...vassal king set up (Zedekiah); instead of listening to Jeremiah, he listens to the false prophets
 - The Jews rise up; Nebuchadnezzar's patience is at the brink, so he sends a 3rd Siege of Jerusalem to destroy it completely
- 592 BC: Five years after Ezekiel came to Tel Aviv, he was called to be a prophet of God, when he was 30 years old [min. age for a priest]
 - This was 6 years before the complete destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC [3rd Siege]
 - While Jeremiah was ministering to the people back home, Ezekiel was preaching to the Jews of the captivity in Babylon
 - Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest called to be a prophet



Servitude of the Nation

- From 1st Siege of Jerusalem in 606 BC — ends in 536 BC with Decree of Cyrus
- When captivities begin
- Lasted 70 years, exactly to the day!
- Even the Jews who still lived in Jerusalem were under Babylonian Captivity

Desolations of Jerusalem

- From 3rd Siege of Jerusalem (destruction of Jerusalem) in 586 BC to the Decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild the city, wall, etc. (Dan 9:24)
- From date that Jerusalem was leveled to the command to rebuild it (1 of 4 commands, specific to Artaxerxes Longimonus)
- Lasted 70 years, exactly to the day!

Ezekiel the Man

Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens" or "God will strengthen"
 Ezekiel is one of the three that were called the *Captivity Prophets* (the other two are Jeremiah and Daniel)

Daniel

- It was during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim that the first deportation took place when Daniel was taken captive
- Daniel was a young man, but also writing at that time
- Daniel had been taken into the court of the king of Babylon and had become his prime minister
- Ezekiel never mentions Jeremiah in his writings, but he does mention Daniel 3x

Ezekiel

- Ezekiel was a priest, but he never served in that office because he was taken captive to Babylon before the age of 30 (min. age for a priest)
- Taken during the second deportation in the reign of Jehoiachin, who was the king of Judah who *followed* Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:10-16)
- He was with the captives who had been brought down to the rivers of Babylon
- The captives had been placed by the great canal that came off the River Euphrates, which was several miles from Babylon itself
- Ezekiel's ministry was among those people
- Jehoiachin (aka Jeconiah) then came to the throne and reigned only three months before he's dealt with by Nebuchadnezzar
- Jehoiachin was the object of the blood curse that is circumvented by the virgin birth (Jer 22:30)

Jeremiah

- Jeremiah was an old man at this time
- He had begun his ministry as a young man during the reign of young King Josiah
- He had remained with the remnant in the land and then was taken by them down into Egypt

The Captivity Prophets

- Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel each had a particular and peculiar ministry to a certain group of people, and apparently they never came into contact with each other
- From the record in the Book of Daniel you would not gather that Daniel ever visited his people in Babylon where Ezekiel was; yet he had a great concern for them and he actually defended them
- Daniel was acquainted with the prophecies of Jeremiah
 - As a young man in his teens he may have listened to Jeremiah in Jerusalem
 - Ezekiel also was a young man when he was taken captive, and he too probably had heard Jeremiah
- Though the prophet was in distant Babylon, he was able to see events in Jerusalem through the power of the Spirit of God
- Ezekiel not only proclaimed God's message to the people, but he had to do the most bizarre things to live out the message before them
 - God commanded him to do a number of symbolic acts in order to get the attention of the people:
 - (1) Ezekiel was house-bound, tied up and must (Ezek 3:23-27)
 - (2) Used a clay tablet and iron plate as illustrations of Jerusalem's coming destruction (Ezek 4:1-3)
 - (3) Laid on his left side for 390 days and right side for 40 days (Ezek 4:4-8)
 - (4) Eat in an unclean manner (Ezek 4:9-17)
 - (5) Shaved his head and beard (Ezek 5:1-4)
 - (6) Packed his bags and dug through the wall of Jerusalem (Ezek 12:1-14)
 - (7) Ezekiel had to eat his bread with quaking and drink water with trembling (Ezek 12:17-20)
 - (8) Brandished a sharp sword and struck his hands together (Ezek 21:8-17)
 - (9) Portrayed Israel as a smelting furnace (Ezek 22:17-22)
 - (10) Cooked a pot of stew (Ezek 24:1-14)
 - (11) Could not mourn at the death of his wife (Ezek 24:15-24)
 - (12) Was struck mute for a season (Ezek 24:25-27)
 - (13) Put two sticks together and they became one (Ezek 37:15-28)

Ezekiel's Message

God's prophecies of impending judgment and ultimate restoration afflict the comfortable through the removal of false sources of security (Ezek 1-24) just as they also comfort the afflicted through reminders of the ultimate destruction of God's enemies (Ezek 25-32) as well as the glorious future of God's people (Ezek 33-48).

The Conflict of Messages

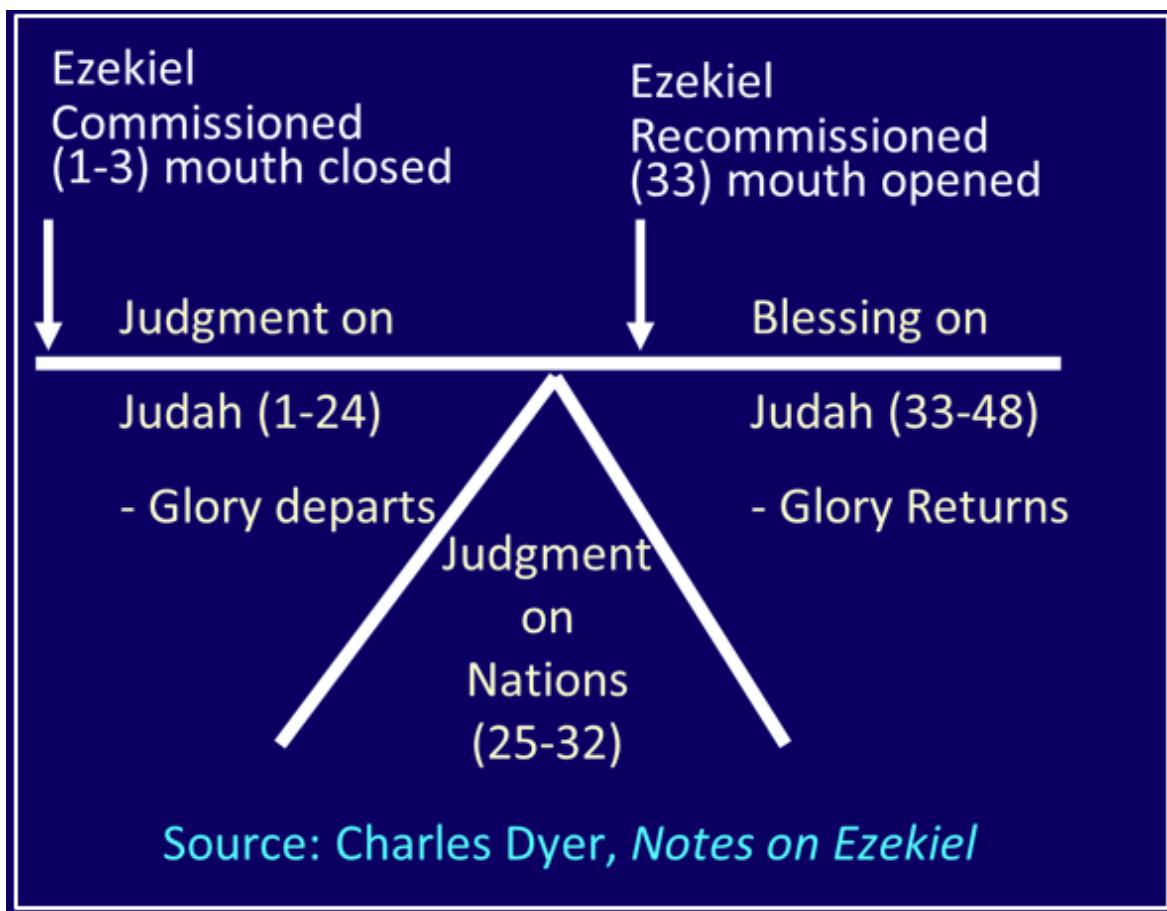
- Jeremiah had told them to settle down in Babylon for 70 years, but the false prophets told the people that God would destroy Babylon and set the captives free (Jer 28-29)
- It was Ezekiel's task to tell the people that God would destroy *Jerusalem*, not Babylon, *but that there would one day be a glorious restoration of the people and a rebuilding of the temple*
 - The temple that Ezekiel is referring to we'll study in detail in Ezek 40-48
 - It's not Zerubbabel's temple, which Nehemiah rebuilt; it's not Herod's Temple, which was a remodeled and expanded version of Zerubbabel's Temple during the NT times, it's not the Temple that will be rebuilt on our near horizon...it's the Temple that Jesus will build...the Millennial Temple

General Outline of Ezekiel

- I. Judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1-24)
 - Visions explaining the guilt of Judah, explaining why 586 BC (destruction of city & temple) is coming, and why they deserve it
 - The exiles thought the captivity would be short-lived and they'd be back in Jerusalem/Judah soon; Ezekiel told them it was only going to get worse
- II. Judgment upon the nations (Ezek 25-32)
 - In 588 BC, Ezekiel gets word that Nebuchadnezzar had begun the final siege of Jerusalem
 - This event completely shifts Ezekiel's ministry...he's no longer prophesying about deserved judgment on Jerusalem and the temple; his focus shifts to talking about judgment on the surrounding nations (for about 2 years).
- III. Israel's future restoration (Ezek 33-48)
 - Ezekiel receives word that Nebuchadnezzar had finished the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (586 BC)
 - He's now dealing with an exilic community who is no longer filled with false optimism. Now he's dealing with very dejected people, a people who have lost all hope.

- With this background, God shifts Ezekiel's ministry again and he begins to receive new content in visions from God, which he passes along to the dejected exiles, explaining how God's purpose, in God's timing, is to restore the nation of Israel.
- It's interesting that Ezekiel doesn't start talking about this until the people were ready to hear it, and the people weren't ready to hear it while there was a functioning temple.
- Jeremiah is writing Lamentations at this point; the exiles are so discouraged so Ezekiel tells them in Ezek 33-48 that it isn't over yet and God still has a future and a purpose for Israel.

The important thing to remember about Ezekiel is that he began prophesying between siege #2 and siege #3. When siege #3 begins, his ministry shifts to visions of judgment on the surrounding nations (Ezek 25-32). When siege #3 is complete, he shifts again to begin to describe that God still has a future and a purpose for Israel (Ezek 33-48).



The Book of Ezekiel is laid out symmetrically. Unless you understand the big picture, you'll get lost in all of the interesting details.

What happens in the beginning of Ezekiel (Ezek 1-24 prophesying judgment on Judah) is symmetrically parallel with the end of the book (Ezek 33-48, prophesying blessings and

restoration on Judah).

Ezekiel is commissioned by God (Ezek 1-3) to prophesy judgment on Judah. He is recommissioned by God (Ezek 33) to prophesy restoration on Judah.

In Ezek 1-33, Ezekiel's mouth is closed (he can't talk). The only time he talks is when God touches his mouth and gives him permission to talk. This let the exiles know that Ezekiel doesn't say much, but when he does say something, you better darn well listen. The only time he talked, it was a divine enablement.

The Shekinah Glory of God left the temple (Ezek 8-11). It originally entered the temple when Solomon dedicated it, and remained there ever since. However just prior to Nebuchadnezzar arriving to destroy the temple and city, the Shekinah Glory left. Ezekiel saw this in a vision, while he was in Babylon.

In his prophecies of restoration, he sees the Shekinah Glory of God returning to the millennial temple (Ezek 40-46).

Sequencing

- (1) 1:1—3:15 - Ezekiel's call to prophesy
- (2) 3:16—7:27 - Symbolical predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem
- (3) 8:1—11:25 - 14 months later:
 - A vision of the temple polluted by Tammuz or Adonis worship
 - God's consequent scattering of fire over the city and forsaking of the temple to reveal Himself to an inquiring people in exile
 - Happier and purer times to follow
- (4) 12:1—19:14 - Exposure to Ezekiel of the particular sins prevalent in the priests, prophets, and princes
- (5) 20:1—23:49 - A year later: the warning of judgment for national guilt repeated with greater distinctness as the time drew nearer
- (6) 24:1-27 - Two years and five months later
 - The very day on which Ezekiel speaks was the day of the beginning of the siege; Jerusalem shall be overthrown
- (7) 25:1—32:32 - Predictions against Muslim nations during the interval of silence towards his own people
 - If judgment begins at the house of God, much more will it visit the ungodly world
 - Some of these were uttered much later than others, but they all *began* to be given after the fall of Jerusalem

(8) 33:1—39:29 - In the 12th year of the captivity, when the fugitives from Jerusalem had appeared in Chaldea (33:21), Ezekiel foretells better times, the re-establishment of Israel, and the triumph of God's kingdom on earth over its enemies, Islam, and Gog

(9) 40:1—48:35 - After an interval of 13 years, the closing vision of the restored kingdom

[Source: Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* , Logos Research Systems, Inc., Oak Harbor, WA, 1997.]

Dates in Ezekiel

<u>Event/Verses</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Month/Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Year</u>
Call / 1:2	5	4/5	July 31	593
Temple tour / 8:1	6	6/5	Sept 17	592
Elders' visit / 20:1	7	5/10	Aug 17	591
3rd Siege begins - 24:1	9	10/10	Jan 15	588
Against Tyre - 26:1	11	?/1	?	587/586
Against Egypt - 29:1	10	10/12	Jan 7	587
Against Tyre, Egypt - 29:17	27	1/1	Apr 26	571
Against Pharaoh - 30:20	11	1/7	Apr 29	587
Against Pharaoh - 31:1	11	3/1	Jun 21	587
Lament for Pharaoh - 32:1	12	12/1	Mar 3	585
Pharaoh to Sheol - 32:17	12	?/15	?	586/585
Refugee report on fall of Jerusalem - 33:12	12	10/5	Jan 8	585
Vision of future Temple begins - 40:1	25	1/10	Apr 28	573