

# The Prophets

## Study 2: Ezekiel – God’s Actor and Storyteller

© BETHANY HOPE BIBLE STUDIES

2008

Authored by: Mark Watson

# The Prophets

---

## Study 2: Ezekiel – God’s Actor and Storyteller

### Background

Ezekiel comes from the Hebrew ‘*el-yhezqee’l*’ meaning ‘God strengthens.’ He was among the Jews exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC, and there among the exiles he received his call to become a prophet<sup>1</sup>. He was married<sup>2</sup>, lived in a house of his own<sup>3</sup>, and, along with his fellow-exiles, had a relatively free existence.

Ezekiel was of a priestly family (the son of Buzi, a Zadokite priest) and therefore was himself eligible to serve as a priest. As a priest-prophet called to minister to the exiles (cut off from the temple of the Lord with its symbolism, sacrifices, priestly ministrations and worship rituals), his message had much to do with the temple and its ceremonies.

Ezekiel’s vision of God on the banks of the Chebar (Kebar) canal south of Babylon defies description. The rabbis rightly said “*the person who understands Ezekiel’s vision of God understands all the secrets of the universe.*” But the symbolism of the chariot throne coming out of the great storm cloud makes it clear that Yahweh is in full control of the nations and of history. However, Ezekiel’s task is clear – he is the ‘watchman for Israel’ over the souls of the exiles, a pastoral prophet. In his obedience to the Lord, he was asked to undertake dramatic and extremely difficult tasks born out of his heart for God. In our walk with the Lord, we all face choices. God gives us the free will to choose. Let us pray that we might be encouraged by Ezekiel and know something of God’s heart that we too might choose to serve Him...whatever the cost.

There are some features specific to Ezekiel including:

- Strange vision (Ezekiel 1:15-21)
- Parables and stories (e.g. Oholah and Oholibah – Chapter 23)
- Enacted prophecies (e.g. Ezekiel 4:1-3)
- Supernatural translocation (e.g. Ezekiel 8:2-3)
- New covenant (e.g. Ezekiel 16:59-62)
- A new heart and spirit (Ezekiel 18:31, 11:19-20 etc.)
- Individual responsibility (Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19-20)

### The Message

In this study on Ezekiel we will focus on aspects from the first 24 chapters only (chapters 12, 16 and 24), covering the period 593 – 589 B.C., and predominantly visions and sermons against Judah.

### Read Ezekiel 12

As a prophet who was God’s actor and storyteller, and as we have seen from the earlier summary of features, Ezekiel certainly did bring the prophetic message that God had laid on his heart in creative and often unusual ways – and often through very graphic parables. In Ezekiel 12:5-6, Ezekiel was instructed to “*Dig through the wall in their sight,*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 1:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 24:15-18

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 3:24; 8:1

*and carry the baggage through it. In their sight you shall lift the baggage on your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, so that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.”<sup>4</sup>*

1. What do you think Ezekiel is depicting through his actions in verses 1-7<sup>5</sup>?
2. How do the people respond?
3. How does God tell Ezekiel to interpret his actions to the people?
4. What is God’s purpose in Ezekiel's one man drama before the people?
5. What are the consequences of the people’s disobedience (see Ezekiel 12:15<sup>6</sup>)?
6. Summarize Ezekiel's instructions in verses 17-20, and the reason for them.
7. Describe the attitude God seeks to dispel in verses 21-28.

### **Read Ezekiel 16:1-22, 16:43-48, 16:59-63**

Perhaps if we thought that the language Ezekiel used in chapter 12 was quite stark and graphic, it becomes even more so in Ezekiel 16. A perhaps arrogant perception we often have is that there was something ‘special’ about the people of Israel that caused God to choose them. Yet in this chapter we are told something very different – and this is further substantiated by other passages in scripture such as Deuteronomy 7:7 and takes us back into salvation history itself as we also look at Genesis 12. We should never take our spiritual inheritance and ‘adoption’ for granted.

1. In what ways is this story shocking?
2. Why do you think God chose such a graphic allegory of his people?
3. How do you think the people responded to Ezekiel when he told this story?
4. What have the people done that grieves and angers God?

### **Read Ezekiel 24:15-27**

Once again, the ‘ante is upped’ in the extremes to which God will seek to speak to his people. CS Lewis wrote:

*“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”<sup>7</sup>*

When we are asked to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow Jesus<sup>8</sup>, I wonder if we are prepared to be the megaphone if required.

1. To what extreme does God take Ezekiel's life in order to get the people’s attention?
2. What do you think about this?
3. What does this incident indicate about God's desire to break through to his people?
4. What kind of person do you imagine Ezekiel to be?
5. What characteristics in Ezekiel’s life would you like to develop in your own?

## **Meditation**

Spend some time in prayer.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 12:5-6

<sup>5</sup> See also 2 Kings 25:4, 10 and compare with Nehemiah 1:3 and Jeremiah 39:4

<sup>6</sup> And also refer to Jeremiah 9:16 and Jeremiah 52:28-30

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, C.S., (2001), p.91, *The Problem of Pain*, Glasgow, HarperCollins

<sup>8</sup> Luke 9:22-26