

good
NEWS BIBLE

The book of

Ezekiel

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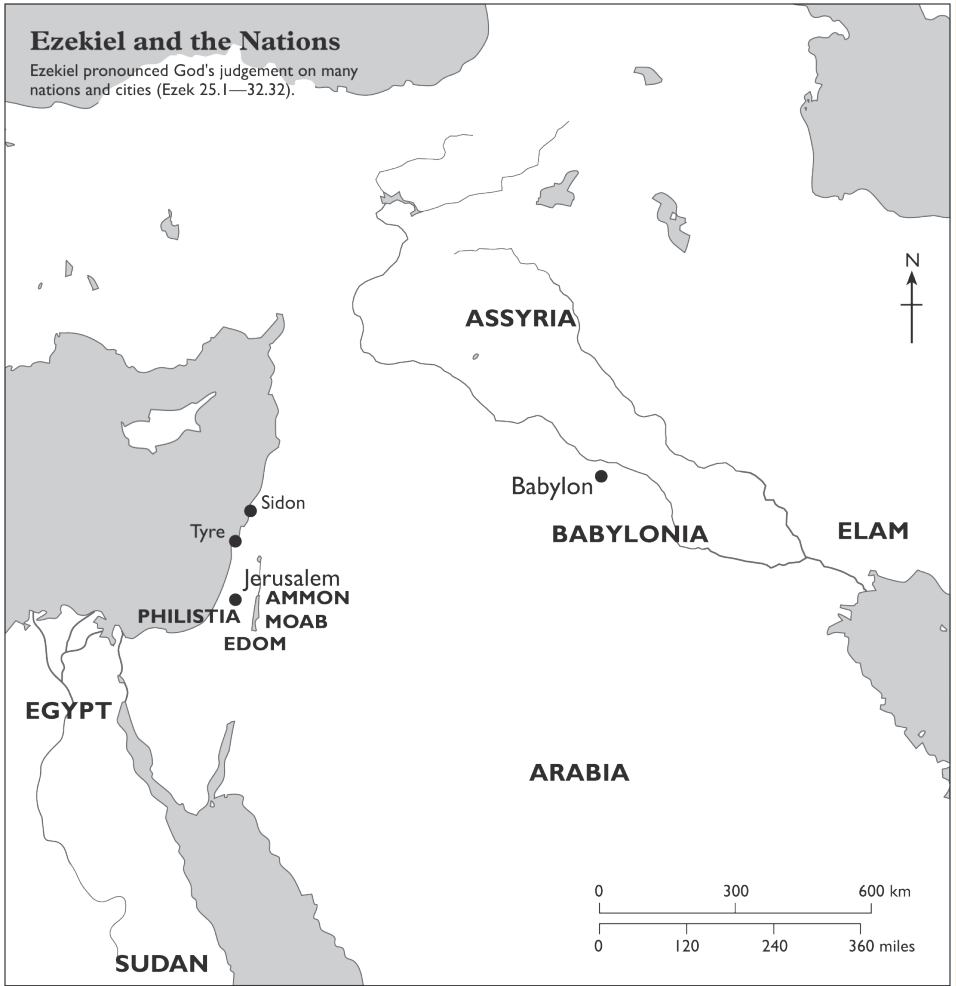
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Ezekiel and the Nations

Ezekiel pronounced God's judgement on many nations and cities (Ezek 25.1—32.32).



EZEKIEL

The prophet in exile

What's it about? Ezekiel was a prophet who lived in exile just before the Babylonians conquered the city of Jerusalem, in the first half of the sixth century BC. As a collection of messages, there is no storyline to Ezekiel, but it talks about God's holiness, judgement and all-powerful nature.

Who wrote it? Ezekiel probably wrote down most of the book, perhaps with help from his companions.

Why read it? Just as a shepherd guides his sheep, God will guide his people back home. Ezekiel's symbolic visions speak of God restoring his people – a valley of dry bones that come to life; a temple from which life-giving waters flow.

What's it to me? Where can we find hope when all seems lost? What would the experience of being conquered and exiled have done to the people's hearts and minds, their hopes and dreams, their faith in the God of Israel? Along comes Ezekiel, who has a glorious vision: God is still with his people, even in Babylon.

EZEKIEL'S FIRST VISION OF GOD

1.1—7.27

Chapter 1

God's Throne

¹ On the fifth day of the fourth month of the thirtieth year,^a I, Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, was living with the Jewish exiles by the River Chebar in Babylonia. The sky opened, and I saw a vision of God.

(² It was the fifth year since King Jehoiachin had been taken into exile.)

³ There in Babylonia beside the River Chebar, I heard the LORD speak to me and I felt his power.

⁴ I looked up and saw a storm coming from the north. Lightning was flashing from a huge cloud, and the sky round it was glowing. Where the lightning was flashing, something shone like bronze.

⁵ At the centre of the storm, I saw what looked like four living creatures in human form, ⁶ but each of them had four faces and four wings.

⁷ Their legs were straight, and they had hoofs like those of a bull. They shone like polished bronze.

⁸ In addition to their four faces and four wings, they each had four human hands, one under each wing.

^a *thirtieth year*: It is not known to what year this refers.

⁹Two wings of each creature were spread out so that the creatures formed a square with their wing tips touching. When they moved, they moved as a group without turning their bodies.

¹⁰Each living creature had four different faces: a human face in front, a lion's face at the right, a bull's face at the left, and an eagle's face at the back.

¹¹Two wings^b of each creature were raised so that they touched the tips of the wings of the creatures next to it, and their other two wings were folded against their bodies.

¹²Each creature faced all four directions, and so the group could go wherever they wished, without having to turn.

¹³Among^c the creatures there was something that looked like a blazing torch, constantly moving. The fire would blaze up and shoot out flashes of lightning.

¹⁴The creatures themselves darted to and fro with the speed of lightning.

¹⁵As I was looking at the four creatures, I saw four wheels touching the ground, one beside each of them.^d

¹⁶All four wheels were alike; each one shone like a precious stone, and each had another wheel intersecting it at right angles, ¹⁷so that the wheels could move in any of the four directions.

b Some ancient translations *Two wings*; Hebrew *Their faces, their wings*.

c Some ancient translations *Among*; Hebrew *And the likeness of*.

d Some ancient translations *them*; Hebrew *their faces*.

¹⁸The rims of the wheels were covered with eyes.^e

¹⁹Whenever the creatures moved, the wheels moved with them, and if the creatures rose up from the earth, so did the wheels.

²⁰The creatures went wherever they wished, and the wheels did exactly what the creatures did, because the creatures controlled them.

²¹So every time the creatures moved or stopped or rose in the air, the wheels did exactly the same.

²²Above the heads of the creatures there was something that looked like a dome made of dazzling crystal.

²³There under the dome stood the creatures, each stretching out two wings towards the ones next to it and covering its body with the other two wings.

²⁴I heard the noise their wings made in flight; it sounded like the roar of the sea, like the noise of a huge army, like the voice of Almighty God. When they stopped flying, they folded their wings, ²⁵but there was still a sound coming from above the dome over their heads.

²⁶Above the dome there was something that looked like a throne made of sapphire, and sitting on the throne was a figure that looked like a human being.

²⁷The figure seemed to be shining like bronze in the middle of a fire. It shone all over with a bright light ²⁸that had in it all the colours of the rainbow. This was the dazzling light that shows the presence of the LORD.

^e Verse 18 in Hebrew is unclear.

God Calls Ezekiel to be a Prophet

When I saw this, I fell face downwards on the ground.
Then I heard a voice

Chapter 2

¹saying, "Mortal man, stand up. I want to talk to you."
²While the voice was speaking, God's Spirit entered me
and raised me to my feet, and I heard the voice continue,
³"Mortal man, I am sending you to the people of Israel.
They have rebelled and turned against me and are still
rebels, just as their ancestors were.

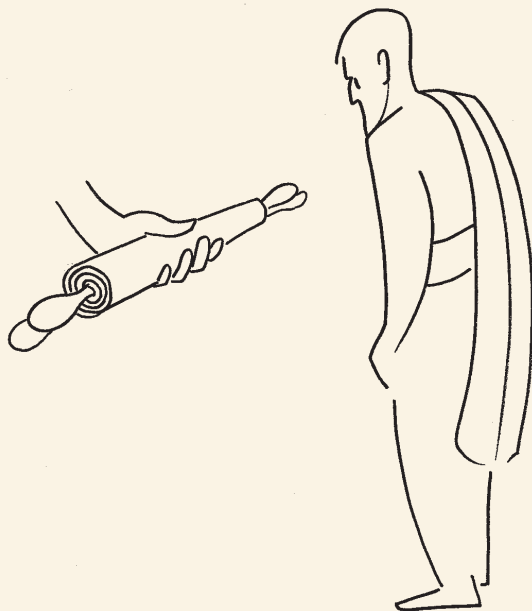
⁴They are stubborn and do not respect me, so I am
sending you to tell them what I, the Sovereign LORD, am
saying to them.

⁵Whether those rebels listen to you or not, they will know
that a prophet has been among them.

⁶"But you, mortal man, must not be afraid of them or of
anything they say. They will defy and despise you; it will be
like living among scorpions. Still, don't be afraid of those
rebels or of anything they say.

⁷You will tell them whatever I tell you to say, whether they
listen or not. Remember what rebels they are.

⁸"Mortal man, listen to what I tell you. Don't be rebellious
like them. Open your mouth and eat what I am going to
give you."



"I saw a hand stretched out towards me" (2.9)

⁹I saw a hand stretched out towards me, and it was holding a scroll.

¹⁰The hand unrolled the scroll, and I saw that there was writing on both sides — cries of grief were written there, and wails and groans.

Chapter 3

¹God said, "Mortal man, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel."

²So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

³He said, "Mortal man, eat this scroll that I give you; fill your stomach with it." I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey.

⁴Then God said, "Mortal man, go to the people of Israel and say to them whatever I tell you to say.

⁵I am not sending you to a nation that speaks a difficult foreign language, but to the Israelites.

⁶If I sent you to great nations that spoke difficult languages you didn't understand, they would listen to you.

⁷But none of the people of Israel will be willing to listen; they will not even listen to me. All of them are stubborn and defiant.

⁸Now I will make you as stubborn and as tough as they are.

⁹I will make you as firm as a rock, as hard as a diamond; don't be afraid of those rebels."

¹⁰God continued, "Mortal man, pay close attention and remember everything I tell you.

¹¹Then go to your countrymen who are in exile and tell them what I, the Sovereign LORD, am saying to them, whether they pay attention to you or not."

¹²Then God's Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the loud roar of a voice that said, "Praise the glory of the LORD in heaven above!"

¹³I heard the wings of the creatures beating together in the air, and the noise of the wheels, as loud as an earthquake.

¹⁴The power of the LORD came on me with great force, and as his Spirit carried me off, I felt bitter and angry.

¹⁵So I came to Tel Abib beside the River Chebar, where the exiles were living, and for seven days I stayed there, overcome by what I had seen and heard.

The LORD Appoints Ezekiel as a Watchman

¹⁶After the seven days had passed, the LORD spoke to me.

¹⁷"Mortal man," he said, "I am making you a watchman for the nation of Israel. You will pass on to them the warnings I give you.

¹⁸If I announce that an evil person is going to die but you do not warn him to change his ways so that he can save his life, he will die, still a sinner, and I will hold you responsible for his death.

¹⁹If you do warn an evil man and he doesn't stop sinning, he will die, still a sinner, but your life will be spared.

²⁰"If a truly good person starts doing evil and I put him in a dangerous situation, he will die if you do not warn him. He will die because of his sins — I will not remember the good he did — and I will hold you responsible for his death.

²¹If you do warn a good man not to sin and he listens to you and doesn't sin, he will stay alive, and your life will also be spared."

Ezekiel will be Unable to Talk

²²I felt the powerful presence of the LORD and heard him say to me, “Get up and go out into the valley. I will talk to you there.”

²³So I went out into the valley, and there I saw the glory of the LORD, just as I had seen it beside the River Chebar. I fell face downwards on the ground, ²⁴but God's Spirit entered me and raised me to my feet. The LORD said to me, “Go home and shut yourself up in the house.

²⁵You will be tied with ropes, mortal man, and you will not be able to go out in public.

²⁶I will paralyse your tongue so that you won't be able to warn these rebellious people.

²⁷Then, when I speak to you again and give you back the power of speech, you will tell them what I, the Sovereign LORD, am saying. Some of them will listen, but some will ignore you, for they are a nation of rebels.”

Chapter 4

Ezekiel Acts Out the Siege of Jerusalem

¹God said, “Mortal man, get a brick, put it in front of you, and scratch lines on it to represent the city of Jerusalem.

²Then, to represent a siege, put trenches, earthworks, camps, and battering rams all round it.

³Take an iron pan and set it up like a wall between you and the city. Face the city. It is under siege, and you are the one besieging it. This will be a sign to the nation of Israel.

⁴⁻⁵“Then lie down on your left side, and I^f will place on you the guilt of the nation of Israel. For 390 days you will stay there and suffer because of their guilt. I have sentenced you to one day for each year their punishment will last.

⁶When you finish that, turn over on your right side and suffer for the guilt of Judah for forty days — one day for each year of their punishment.

⁷“Fix your eyes on the siege of Jerusalem. Shake your fist at the city and prophesy against it.

⁸I will tie you up so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until the siege is over.

⁹“Now take some wheat, barley, beans, peas, millet, and spelt. Mix them all together and make bread. That is what you are to eat during the 390 days you are lying on your left side.

¹⁰You will be allowed 230 grammes of bread a day, and it will have to last until the next day.

¹¹You will also have a limited amount of water to drink, two cups a day.

¹²You are to build a fire out of dried human excrement, bake bread on the fire, and eat it where everyone can see you.”

^f Probable text *I*; Hebrew *you*.