

**HEARTS OF STONE NEVERMORE**  
**PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: EZEKIEL**  
**Ezekiel 36:22-38**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

- Message to exiles during Babylonian Captivity
- Prophecies, parables, signs and symbols dramatize God’s message to them
- Though seemingly dead and hopeless—God will restore and breathe new life into the nation
- Present judgment will be to future glory—so—“*you shall know that I am the Lord*”

### **B. TITLE**

#### 1. HEBREW

- *Yehezke’l* = God strengthens
- Name occurs twice in book—and nowhere else in Scripture

#### 2. SEPTUAGINT = **Ἰεζεκίελ**

#### 3. LATIN = **Ezechiel**

### **C. PLACE IN HEBREW BIBLE**

- LAST OF THE 3 LATTER MAJOR PROPHETS—AFTER ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH

### **D. AUTHORSHIP**

#### 1. EZEKIEL

- Identified in text—**1:3** and **24:24**

#### 2. INTERNAL EVIDENCE

- a. First person singular is used throughout book
- b. Style, language, and themes are consistent throughout book
- c. Several distinct phrases are repeated
  - *They shall know that I am the Lord*
  - *Son of Man*
  - *The word of the Lord came to me*
  - *The glory of the Lord*

### **E. EZEKIEL**

#### 1. SON OF BUZI—**1:3**

2. WIFE—DIED DURING FINAL SIEGE OF JERUSALEM—AS SIGN TO JUDAH—**24:16-24**
3. A PRIEST—CALLED TO BE A PROPHET—**3:8-9**—[like Jeremiah]
  - Priestly emphasis—concern with temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and God’s shekinah glory

## F. DATE AND SETTING

### 1. DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM—IN THREE PHRASES

#### a. Background

1. 609 BC—when Josiah died, his younger son, Jehoahaz, became king
2. 609 BC—after 3 months, Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II deposed Jehoahaz, replaced him with his older brother, Eliakim, renamed Jehoiakim
3. Jehoiakim ruled 609-598

#### b. Phase One of Destruction—605 BC

1. Babylonians defeated Egyptians at Battle of Carchemish
2. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, forced Jehoiakim to pay tribute
3. First group of hostages deported

➤ First wave—including Daniel and friends

#### c. Phase Two of Destruction—597 BC

1. 598 BC—Jehoiakim rebelled—switched allegiance to Egypt
2. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem—Jehoiakim died before siege finished
3. Jehoiachin (Jeconiah)—son of Jehoiakim—became king
4. 597—Babylonians completed siege—replaced Jehoiachin with his uncle Zedekiah
5. 597—second wave of deportation to Babylon

➤ Second wave—Jehoiachin, royal household and many Judeans

#### d. Phase Three of Destruction—587 BC

1. Babylonians finally captured Jerusalem
2. Zedekiah’s sons executed—he was blinded—and deported to Babylon
3. Jerusalem was razed—the Temple destroyed—and last wave of Judeans deported

### 2. EZEKIEL’S SITUATION

**1:1-3—1** *Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw*

*visions of God. 2 (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, 3 the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the Lord came upon him.*

- a. 30 years old when called to prophecy—**1:1**—and living in exile—**1:3**
- b. 25 years old when deported—this was Jehoiachin's 5<sup>th</sup> year of exile—**1:2**
- c. Ezekiel's ministry over-lapped those of Jeremiah and Daniel
  1. He was about 20 years younger than Jeremiah
  2. He was about the same age as Daniel
    - a. Daniel—was deported as a youth in 605
    - b. Ezekiel—was 17 when Daniel was exiled
  3. Ezekiel's prophecy mentions Daniel 3 times—**14:14, 20**; and **28:3**
- d. Length of Ezekiel's ministry = at least **22 years**
  1. Last date given in book was—27<sup>th</sup> year—**29:17**
  2. Assumption: this was 27<sup>th</sup> year of exile—22 years after his call—**1:2**
- e. Ezekiel's Babylonian home
  1. Tel Abib—**3:15**
    - The main colony of Jewish exiles
    - Meaning—'hill of barley ears'
    - Probably near modern Nippur—in central Iraq
    - If Nippur—this was near ancient Calneh—**Gen 10:10**
  2. Near Chebar River—**1:1; 3:15, 23**
    - Probably Nebuchadnezzar's 'Great Canal'
    - Branched off the Euphrates north of Babylon
    - Ran through Nippur
    - Then rejoined Euphrates to the
- f. Ezekiel's chronology
  - Born 622 BC
  - Deported 597 BC
  - Prophesied 592 to about 570 BC
  - Died about 560 BC
- g. Date of book
  - Shortly after events he recorded—probably about 565 BC

## G. BIBLICAL CONTEXT—THE COMING MESSIAH

### 1. WILL BE LIKE A TENDER TWIG—17:22-24

○ Like the 'Branch' in other prophets

- **Isaiah 11:1**
- **Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15**
- **Zechariah 3:8; 6:12**

### 2. WILL BE A KING—21:26-27—like numerous OT and NT references

### 3. WILL BE A TRUE SHEPHERD—34:11-31—like numerous OT and NT references

## H. STYLE

### 1. HIGHLY FIGURATIVE IMAGERY

#### a. **Ten signs**—or symbolic acts

- **12:6**—*I have made you a sign to the house of Israel*
- Nine—in the section of judgment against Judah—**chapters 4-24**
- One—in **chapter 37**—the rebirth of Israel

#### b. **Six visions**

#### c. **Six parables**

#### d. **Apocalyptic passages**—scattered throughout

### 2. PROBLEM—CHAPTERS 40-48

#### a. These chapters describe the restored kingdom

- The New Temple
- The New Worship
- The New Land

#### b. How are they meant to be interpreted?

##### 1. Literally

- Measurements and descriptions are too detailed to be figurative
- When Christ returns—sacrifice/worship/temple will be renewed—in the Millennial Kingdom
- Israel's covenant promises are not fulfilled in the church

##### 2. Figuratively

- Christ fulfilled sacrificial requirements—abolished future need for them

➤ There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem—**Rev 21:22**

## **I. THEMES**

### 1. CONDEMNATION—CHAPTERS 1-32

○ Like Jeremiah—reviews Judah's sins—which resulted in God's judgment

### 2. CONSOLATION—CHAPTERS 33-48

○ Comforts Judah—promises future blessing and complete restoration—more extensive section than that of Jeremiah

### 3. THE TEMPLE

○ Its perversion—destruction—and restoration

### 4. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND FAITHFULNESS

### 5. GOD'S GLORY

○ His heavenly glory—**chapters 1 and 3**

○ His departing glory—**chapters 9, 10 and 11**

○ His earthly glory—**chapters 43 and 44**

### 6. GOD'S PURPOSE IN JUDGMENT AND BLESSING

○ That all nations come to know that He is Lord

### 7. GOD'S RELATIONAL INTENTION

○ To be their God—and for them to be His people

## **J. STRUCTURE**

### ❖ FOUR MAIN PARTS

#### 1. EZEKIEL'S COMMISSION—CHAPTERS 1-3

#### 2. JUDGMENT ON JUDAH—CHAPTERS 4-24

#### 3. JUDGMENT ON GENTILES—CHAPTERS 25-32

#### 4. RESTORATION OF ISRAEL—CHAPTERS 33-48

## **K. OUTLINE**

### 1. PART ONE—EZEKIEL'S COMMISSION

a. Ezekiel sees God's glory—**chapter 1**

b. Ezekiel is commissioned to tell God's word—**chapters 2-3**

### 2. PART TWO—JUDGMENT ON JUDAH

- a. 4 signs of coming judgment—**chapters 4-5**
  - b. 2 messages of coming judgment—**chapters 6-7**
    - Destruction is because of idolatry
    - Description of Babylonian conquest
  - c. 5 visions of coming judgment—**chapters 8-11**
    - Includes—departure of God’s glory from the Temple and the Mount of Olives
  - d. 2 signs, 4 parables, 4 messages, and 1 lament about coming judgment—**chapters 12-24**
    - Includes—lengthy message of judgment against Jerusalem—**chapters 20-24**
3. PART THREE—JUDGMENT ON GENTILES
- a. **Chapter 25**
    - Ammon
    - Moab
    - Edom
    - Philstia
  - b. **Chapters 26-28**
    - Tyre
    - Sidon
  - c. **Chapters 29-32**—Egypt
4. PART FOUR—RESTORATION OF ISRAEL
- a. Return of Israel to the Land—**chapters 33-39**
  - b. Restoration of the Kingdom—**chapters 40-48**
    - The New Temple—**chapters 40-43**
    - The New Worship—**chapters 43-46**
    - The New Land—**chapters 47-48**

## II. BIBLICAL TEXT

**Ezek 36:22-38**—22 *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 23 I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among*

*you in their sight. 24 For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. 29 Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. 30 I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. 32 I am not doing this for your sake,” declares the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!” 33 ‘Thus says the Lord God, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. 34 The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. 35 They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’ 36 Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the Lord, have spoken and will do it.” 37 ‘Thus says the Lord God, “This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. 38 Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”’”*

### III. EXPOSITION

#### A. SUMMARY

##### 1. GOD’S PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR RESTORING ISRAEL—vv 22-23

- a. God’s main concern is not—Israel’s situation
  - It is not for your sake—v22—repeated in v32
- b. **Instead**—it is for the reputation of His holy name—v22
  - Name is **Jehovah** = I AM that I AM—the One and only truly existent One
  - Who is **holy**—pure in character and separate—Who calls His people to be holy
  - Who is the **Lord**—supreme master—over all—Who holds people accountable
- c. Ultimate purpose
  - So—the nations will know **He is the Lord**—v23—repeated in v38
- d. **Meaning**
  1. He is concerned about His reputation among the nations

- He is the one and only true God—pure and separate—above all other ‘gods’
- 2. He chose Israel to witness for Him them—not just to gratify Israel
- 3. But Israel has profaned His name
  - a. Ruining their witness
    - ▲ They worship other ‘gods’—reject Him as the one and only God
  - b. Disrespecting God
    - ▲ They do not fear Him—so there is no accountability or truth in Him
- 4. The pagan nations are watching Israel
  - a. Even pagan nations expect their ‘gods’
    - ▲ To live up to their name
    - ▲ To hold their people accountable
  - b. So they do not take the ‘Lord God’ seriously
    - ▲ Because Israel has been unfaithful
- 5. So God will judge Israel—to show Israel and all nations 4 things
  - He *does* exist—as the one and only God
  - He *is* holy—pure and separate
  - His *is* supreme Lord—who holds *everyone* accountable
  - He holds all nations accountable—and will punish them too—not just Israel

## 2. THE RESTORATION—vv 24-30

- a. Implied
  - 1. Unlike pagans ‘gods’—who are capricious, self-centered, and merciless
  - 2. Jehovah—is the covenant God of mercy and love—who gives a second chance
- b. Five Promises
  - 1. **Gather** you [the Diaspora]—and **return** you to your own land—v24
  - 2. **Cleanse** you—from idolatry—[the cause of your misfortune]—v25
  - 3. **Transform** you spiritually—vv26-28
  - 4. **Save** you—guard you from uncleanness [idolatry]—v29
  - 5. **Prosper** you—multiply your grain and fruit—as a witness to the nations—vv29-30

## 3. THE RESULTS—vv 31-38



- a. Israel will **remember** its evil ways—**v31**
  - Implied—Israel will repent—and continue to do avoid idolatry
  - God expects them—to remember the shame idolatry brings—see **v32b**
- b. **Reminder** of purpose—not for *their* sake—**v32**
- c. Summary of **restoration**—**vv33-34**
  - Cleansing from iniquity
  - Restoration of cities and destroyed places
  - Cultivation of desolate land
- d. Surrounding **nations will witness** and recognize that the Lord has done this—**vv35-36**
- e. The Lord will **increase Israel itself**—cause the people to grow—**vv37-38**
- f. Ultimate purpose—*Then they will know that I am the Lord*—**v38**

## B. TWO APPLICATIONS

### 1. GOD SAVES US FOR A PURPOSE

- a. The matter of **witness**
  - He saves us—because He cares for us—like Israel
  - But he also calls us—to be His witnesses
  - He is concerned for all people—the ‘nations’—who are not saved
  - Our purpose as witnesses—to proclaim Him as Lord
- b. The matter of **God’s holy name**—His glory and reputation
  1. This should be our **primary concern**
    - Our own situation and prosperity do not come first
  2. This **does not mean**—**God is unconcerned** about our situation
    - a. Some people say it is **all and only** about **God’s glory**
    - b. But God does not *use* us like puppets—only as a means to His ends
    - c. God still loves and cares for us—and does what He knows is best for us
    - d. Here is the point to remember—God will not share His glory with anyone else!

**Is 42:8**—*I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give my glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.*

- c. The matter of **accountability**

- God holds us accountable—just as He did Israel!
- We are to bear fruit—this is what brings the Father glory—**Jn 15:8**
- When we do not bear fruit—we can be pruned—**Jn 15:2**
- Every tree that does not bear fruit—can be cut down and burned—**Mt 3:10; 7:19**

## 2. THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION—**vv 26-28**

**26** *Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.*

### a. Israel developed hearts of stone

#### 1. In Ezekiel's day

- a. They followed **idols** made of stone—no intimacy with the living God
- b. Leaders showed no compassion for the poor

#### 2. In Jesus' day

- a. They legalistically followed traditional **rules**

**Mk 7:6-8**—*Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men; you have let go of the commandments of God and are holding on to the traditions of me.'*

- b. Again—leaders showed no compassion for the poor

### b. The Great Transformation

#### 1. The OT restoration

- This was the return of God's presence—in their midst
- Visibly restoring His relationship with Israel
- Giving evidence of His presence—through the prosperity of Israel

#### 2. The NT transformation—the *sensus plenior*

- a. **Spiritual transfusion**—combines with the prophecy of—**Joel 2:28-29**

- To **pour out His spirit** on all kinds of humans
- To inhabit believers **personally**
- Fulfilled at **Pentecost**

- b. **Heart-change**—combines with the prophecy of—**Jer 31:31-33**

- To establish a **New Covenant** with His people
- To put His **law in their heart**
- So they will **be His people**—and He will **be their God**
- This **new covenant**—and better ministry—was fulfilled in Christ—**Heb 8:7-13**
- His law has been **written in our hearts**—personally in every believer

**I Cor 3:2-3**—*You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the spirit of the living god, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

c. Our **primary identity**—the Lord’s people

1. From the Torah—through the prophets—a recurring theme
  - **You will be my people, and I will be your God**
2. Recurring theme in Ezekiel—mentioned at least 11 times
  - 11:20
  - 14:11
  - 20:5, 7, 19, 20
  - 34:24, 31
  - **36:28**
  - 37: 23, 37

3. Our NT identity—as the Lord’s people—calls us to witness

**I Pe 2:9-10**—*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of god; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

4. Our final identity—[God’s people]—and destiny—[in His presence]

**Rev 21:3**—*And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.*

## IV. INVITATION

**HERE I AM, SEND ME**