

Major Prophets: Ezekiel

BIBLE BASICS

Introduction

Ezekiel means “**the strength of God.**” He is counted among the **four Major Prophets**, “major” not because their message is more important, but because **their writings are longer** and more expansive.

Ezekiel was **the son of a priest named Buzi**, and he himself belonged to the priestly line. He was taken captive **in the captivity of Jehoiachin, eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem**. He lived among the Jewish exiles who settled along the **Chebar**, described as a “river” or stream in Babylonia. His prophetic ministry began in **595 B.C.** and continued until **573 B.C.**, spanning about **twenty-two years**.

Ezekiel was married and had established a home in exile—Scripture notes both his **wife** and his **house** (*Ezekiel 24:18; Ezekiel 8:1*)—yet he endured a sudden, painful loss when **his wife died unexpectedly**. In a striking and difficult command, God required Ezekiel to bear this sorrow as a prophetic sign to the exiles, teaching them that the coming grief over Jerusalem would be so overwhelming that it would silence ordinary expressions of mourning.

Like other Old Testament saints who lived under foreign rule—such as **Daniel** and the **Three Holy Youth**—Ezekiel lived in high esteem among the exiles. Their elders sought him out and consulted him, not because he promised easy answers, but because they recognized that **the word of God was with him**.

Ezekiel’s place in salvation history is unique: he is a priest-prophet called to speak in a land of captivity, where the people were tempted to believe that God had abandoned them. His book proclaims the opposite: that even in exile, **God remains present, holy, and active**, purifying His people, judging sin, and preparing the way for restoration.

Prophetic Profile and Structure of the Book

Ezekiel’s prophetic character is marked by **firm resolve, spiritual severity, and unwavering obedience**. As both priest and prophet, he possessed a deep devotion to the **holiness of God**, the **order of worship**, and the **moral responsibility of the covenant people**. His temperament is often described as stern, not because he lacked compassion, but because he clearly perceived the gravity of sin and the seriousness of God’s holiness.

Unlike prophets whose ministries unfolded amid national stability, Ezekiel prophesied during **collapse, displacement, and theological confusion**. The exile raised painful questions among the people: *Has God abandoned us? Is the covenant broken? Can we still worship the Lord outside the land?*

Ezekiel's ministry confronts these questions directly. His answer is consistent and uncompromising: **God has not changed; His people must.**

Structure of the Book

The **destruction of Jerusalem** forms the major turning point of the book. For this reason, Ezekiel is often divided into two broad sections:

- **Chapters 1–24:** Prophecies delivered **before the fall of Jerusalem**, focusing on warning, rebuke, and the certainty of judgment.
- **Chapters 25–48:** Prophecies delivered **after the fall**, emphasizing consolation, restoration, and future hope.

Within this framework, another structural pattern is visible:

- **Chapters 1–32** primarily deal with correction, denunciation, and reproof, addressing both Israel's sins and the arrogance of surrounding nations.
- **Chapters 33–48** shift decisively toward hope, renewal, and divine restoration, culminating in the vision of a renewed temple and restored worship.

Oracles Against the Nations

A significant middle section of the book, **chapters 25–32**, contains prophecies against **seven foreign nations**. These nations are judged not merely for political hostility, but for **rejoicing over Jerusalem's fall**, trusting in false security, and exalting themselves against the Lord.

“Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’”
(*Ezekiel 26:2, NKJV*)

These judgments affirm: **God is not only the God of Israel, but the Lord of all nations**. No power escapes His authority, and no empire is permanent apart from His will.

Ezekiel and the New Testament

The New Testament contains no direct quotations from Ezekiel by name. However, the **Book of Revelation** is saturated with imagery drawn from Ezekiel—especially chapters 40–48, which describe the visionary temple, divine glory, and restored worship. **The Apocalypse echoes Ezekiel's themes** of divine presence, judgment, renewal, and eschatological hope.

Ezekiel and Daniel stand apart among the writing prophets: both lived and prophesied outside the land of Israel. Ezekiel ministered during the early period of exile, Daniel during the later years within the royal courts of Babylon. Jeremiah, by contrast, prophesied primarily before and during the fall of Jerusalem, and later among refugees.

Together, these prophets testify that God’s word is not bound to geography. Whether in Jerusalem, Babylon, or exile, the Lord speaks, judges, restores, and reigns.

Seven Lessons of Service

LESSON 1: Hard Call of Service

Ezekiel’s call to service reveals a sobering truth: **God often calls His servants into difficult, resistant, and painful situations.** The measure of a calling is not comfort or success, but faithfulness to the word of the Lord.

“And He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.’ Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. And He said to me: ‘Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.’”

(Ezekiel 2:1–3, NKJV)

Ezekiel is sent not to a receptive people, but to a rebellious house, a nation hardened by sin and resistant to correction. God makes it clear from the outset that **success is not measured by response**, but by obedience.

“As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

(Ezekiel 2:5, NKJV)

Fearlessness in the Face of Opposition

God prepares Ezekiel for hostility, rejection, and emotional isolation. The prophet is warned not to fear words, faces, or threats, even when surrounded by hostility.

“And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.”

(Ezekiel 2:6, NKJV)

This imagery conveys the painful reality of ministry among hardened hearts. **Service to God is often misunderstood, resisted, and even attacked.** Yet the servant of God is not called to retreat, but to speak faithfully.

Faithfulness Over Results

Ezekiel’s commission establishes a foundational principle of Christian service: **obedience matters more than outcomes.**

“You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse.”
(Ezekiel 2:7, NKJV)

The servant does not alter the message to gain acceptance. **God’s word must be proclaimed fully, truthfully, and courageously**, regardless of response. This is the mark of authentic ministry.

A Life Marked by the Word

Devotion to the word of God marks the servant’s life as distinct. Even when circumstances are harsh and opposition is strong, **faithfulness becomes a testimony**— not only to others, but before God Himself.

No servant can claim that God has left them unequipped. Every believer is given the capacity to serve in some way. The spirit of service is not limited to church roles but extends into **every area of life**—home, work, school, church, community.

The one who serves with love becomes a giver wherever they go. Everyone who encounters such a person receives something of God’s grace through them.

Ezekiel teaches us that the call to service may be heavy, but it is never meaningless. When God calls, He sustains and when His word is spoken faithfully, it never returns void.

LESSON 2: God Equips Us for the Call

God never calls His servants without also **strengthening them for the work**. When the mission is difficult and the people are resistant, God supplies what is needed—not by changing the circumstances, but by fortifying the servant.

“But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.”
(Ezekiel 3:7–9, NKJV)

Ezekiel is told plainly that his audience will refuse to listen, not because of his weakness, but because of their hardness of heart. Their rejection of the prophet is ultimately a rejection of God Himself. Yet instead of withdrawing the mission, God **strengthens the messenger**.

Strength for a Hopeless Assignment

Ezekiel’s mission, humanly speaking, appeared hopeless. He was sent to people who had already decided not to hear. But God’s response was not to lower expectations— it was to **increase Ezekiel’s endurance**.

The Lord gives him:

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- **Strength of face** — courage and resolve
 - **Strength of forehead** — firmness of mind and conviction
 - **Fearlessness** — freedom from intimidation

This does not mean Ezekiel becomes harsh or unfeeling. Rather, he becomes **unmovable**, anchored in obedience rather than reaction.

God Supplies What the Call Requires

When God calls, He provides what is necessary to fulfill that call. This principle applies both to **specific vocations** and to the **general call to serve**.

- **Consecration** requires a clear calling from God
- **Service**, in its broad sense, requires **love and willingness**

The desire to serve others is itself a form of calling—a movement of the heart shaped by God.

Love as God's Universal Gift

When God created humanity, He planted within every person a capacity for **love**. This love is like a seed: if cared for, it grows deep roots, strong branches, and bears fruit that blesses others.

When nurtured:

- Love becomes **strength**
- Love becomes **beauty**
- Love becomes **fruitfulness**

The servant of God draws strength not only from resilience, but from love rightly ordered toward God and neighbor.

Endurance Through Grace

Ezekiel teaches us that **obedience does not depend on success** and **faithfulness does not require applause**. God equips His servants to stand firm, even when nothing seems to change around them.

The strength God gives is not for domination, but for **perseverance**—to remain faithful until the work is complete.

LESSON 3: God's Word is Consistent

God entrusted the same message to both Ezekiel and Jeremiah—not to create comparison, rivalry, or hierarchy, but to ensure that His truth reached His people wherever they were.

Jeremiah proclaimed God's word to those who remained in Jerusalem. Ezekiel proclaimed that same word to the exiles in Babylon. Different locations, different audiences—but one divine message.

This was not a competition between prophets, nor a test of who was more faithful, eloquent, or effective. It was a unified work of obedience. God does not pit His servants against one another; He distributes His word according to need, not merit.

Unity of Message, Diversity of Service

God's servants differ in temperament, setting, and role, but never in truth. Each prophet was responsible only for the task entrusted to him.

- Jeremiah spoke amid collapsing Jerusalem
- Ezekiel spoke amid displaced exiles

Both were equally faithful. Both were equally necessary. Neither replaced the other.

This teaches a vital lesson in service:
Faithfulness is measured by obedience, not comparison.

God Is a God of Order, Not Rivalry

God's consistency reveals His order. He does not contradict Himself, and He does not foster rivalry among His servants. The same God spoke through multiple voices so that no one could claim ignorance.

Every true message from God:

- Agrees with Scripture
- Aligns with His revealed character
- Complements—not competes with—other faithful ministries

Discernment Without Division

Because God is consistent, we are able to discern truth from deception. Messages that contradict Scripture or sow division among believers do not come from God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ warned clearly about the source of deception:

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

(John 8:44, NKJV)

The enemy divides; God unites. The enemy isolates; God coordinates.

Because God is consistent, Scripture becomes our safeguard. The written Word allows us to:

- Test every teaching
- Measure every prophecy

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- Evaluate every spiritual claim

The Church has always understood that **no new message can overturn what God has already revealed.**

Service Without Comparison

Ezekiel's ministry reminds us that:

- One servant may labor publicly, another quietly
- One may see fruit, another rejection
- One may speak to kings, another to captives

Yet all are equal before God if they are obedient.

The servant's task is **not to outperform others**, but to **faithfully deliver what God has entrusted to him.**

A Servant's Responsibility

Those who serve God must commit themselves not to novelty, popularity, or personal opinion but to **faithful transmission of God's Word.** Like Ezekiel, servants are called to speak truth whether it is welcomed or rejected.

The consistency of God's Word is both a comfort and a responsibility:

- A comfort, because truth does not shift
- A responsibility, because we must guard it.

The consistency of God's word protects the Church from confusion, pride, and rivalry. Scripture allows us to test every message, not against personalities, but against **truth.**

God's word is consistent because God Himself is faithful.

LESSON 4: God's Perspective on the Punishment of the Wicked

The book of Ezekiel shows God's heart toward sinners. **His judgment** is never arbitrary, cruel, or vindictive. It is always relational, moral, and **redemptive** in intent.

"But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"

“But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.”

(Ezekiel 18:21–24, NKJV)

God Takes No Pleasure in Destruction

God states explicitly that He does **not delight in the death of the wicked**. Judgment is not His desire; repentance is. His justice is real, but it is never detached from mercy.

The purpose of warning is not condemnation but invitation:

- Invitation to turn
- Invitation to live
- Invitation to be restored

Every call to repentance is an act of love.

Responsibility Is Personal

Ezekiel emphasizes personal accountability. No one is condemned for another’s sins, nor saved by another’s righteousness. Each person stands before God by the orientation of his heart **now**, not by past status or former deeds.

- Past wickedness does not block repentance
- Past righteousness does not excuse present rebellion

This destroys the illusion of spiritual entitlement and affirms the possibility of real change.

Patience and Warning

Throughout history, God has demonstrated patience. He warns repeatedly before judgment comes. Every warning is a delay of judgment, offering time for repentance.

Yet love does not cancel truth. When people **persistently reject God**, they are warned of eternal consequences—not because God desires punishment, but because separation from Him is the natural result of refusing life.

A Call to the Servant

For those who serve God, this passage shapes how we speak about judgment:

- Without cruelty
- Without delight

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- Without compromise

The servant must reflect God's heart—**firm in truth, rich in mercy**.

God's justice is not opposed to His love. It is the boundary that protects life.

Hope Embedded in Judgment

Even within the language of judgment, Ezekiel reveals hope. As long as life remains, repentance is possible. God's ultimate desire is always restoration.

This truth prepares us for the Gospel, where justice and mercy meet fully in Christ.

LESSON 5: Power of Intercessions

In the midst of widespread corruption and injustice, God reveals one of the most sobering truths in the book of Ezekiel: **the fate of many can hinge on the prayer of one**.

“The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”

(Ezekiel 22:29–30, NKJV)

Standing in the Gap

To “stand in the gap” is to intercede, to place oneself between judgment and mercy, pleading for God's compassion on behalf of others. God Himself declares that intercession can restrain destruction.

The tragedy in this passage is not merely the sin of the people, but the **absence of an intercessor**.

The Heart of an Intercessor

An intercessor is not motivated by:

- Personal preference
- Tradition
- Control or power

An intercessor is driven solely by **love for God and compassion for people**.

True intercession says:

“Not my will, but Yours be done.”

It is a prayer shaped by humility, urgency, and surrender.

Intercession in the Life of the Church

The Church has always believed in the power of intercession, not only our prayers for one another, but also the prayers of the righteous who have gone before us.

Scripture affirms this clearly:

- “Pray for one another” (*James 5:16*)
- “Pray for us” (*2 Thessalonians 3:1*)
- “Praying always with all prayer and supplication..for all the saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me” (*Ephesians 6:18-19*)

Intercessory prayer reflects the unity of the Body of Christ. We do not pray instead of others, but **with and for** one another. The prayers of the saints magnify, not diminish, the prayers of the faithful on earth.

Intercession is an act of love that binds the Church together across time and space.

A Call to Become the One

God once sought **one person** willing to stand in the gap and found none. This passage challenges every generation:

Will we be the ones who pray when others remain silent?

Intercession may not be visible, praised, or noticed but it is powerful. It holds back judgment, invites mercy, and reflects the heart of God Himself.

LESSON 6: Responsibility to Declare

When Jesus commissioned us to make disciples, he gave us the responsibility to teach everything he had taught. In Ezekiel, we see a strong commission to declare the whole counsel of God, particularly warnings to repent or face harsh judgment and punishment.

“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.” - Ezekiel 33:7-8

The Watchman’s Role

A watchman does not create danger, he announces it. His responsibility is not to control outcomes, but to sound the warning.

Ezekiel is told that:

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- If he warns and they refuse, they bear responsibility
 - **If he remains silent, he shares accountability**

This reveals a sobering truth: **with calling comes responsibility**. This responsibility is echoed in Christ's Great Commission. Jesus commands His disciples not only to make disciples, but to teach **everything He commanded**.

To withhold truth, especially warnings about sin and repentance, is not compassion. True love warns before destruction comes.

Fair Accountability?

God does not hold the servant accountable for how people respond but He does hold the servant accountable for whether the message was spoken.

This preserves both:

- God's justice
- Human freedom

Truth must be spoken in love, clarity, and courage—without fear of rejection.

Declaring Through Life and Word

Declaration is not limited to preaching. We declare truth:

- By how we live
- By what we refuse to compromise
- By how we invite others to experience God

As David writes:

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”
(*Psalms 34:8, NKJV*)

Helping others *taste* God's goodness is part of our declaration.

LESSON 7: God's Great Grace

Even at the height of exile, judgment, and apparent abandonment, God reveals the deepest truth about Himself: **His grace precedes restoration**. Ezekiel does not end with destruction, but with renewal—inner, spiritual, and covenantal. God's grace does not excuse sin, but it **overcomes it**.

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone

out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

(Ezekiel 36:25–28, NKJV)

God does not say, “*Clean yourselves and then I will help you.*”

He says, “*I will cleanse you.*”

Grace is **initiated by God**, not earned by human effort. Obedience flows **from transformation**, not the other way around.

The Gift of a New Heart

The heart of stone represents spiritual insensitivity, stubbornness, rebellion, and resistance to God. God promises:

- A new heart
- A new spirit
- His own Spirit dwelling within His people

This prophecy reaches its fulfillment in Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God kept His promise:

- Cleansing through Christ
- Renewal by the Spirit
- Communion restored eternally

What Ezekiel foresaw, the Church now lives.

Conclusion: The Message of Ezekiel

The Book of Ezekiel reveals a God who is holy, faithful, and relentlessly committed to the restoration of His people. Written in the context of exile, displacement, and judgment, Ezekiel’s prophecy addresses a people who believed that God had abandoned them. Instead, the book demonstrates that exile was not the end of covenant but its purification.

Ezekiel shows us that judgment is never God’s final intention. Divine chastisement serves a corrective purpose: to expose sin, call for repentance, and prepare the way for renewal. God’s holiness demands justice, yet His mercy continually seeks restoration. These two truths are never in conflict.

At the heart of Ezekiel’s message is responsibility—the responsibility of the people to repent, and the responsibility of the servant to speak truth faithfully. The prophet is called to declare God’s word without alteration, fear, or compromise. Silence in the face of sin is itself a form of disobedience.

Equally central is the role of intercession. God actively seeks someone to “stand in the gap,” revealing that prayer has real spiritual consequences. The absence of an intercessor results in devastation, while faithful intercession reflects the very heart of God.

Yet Ezekiel does not leave us with warning alone. The true depth of the book is grace: a promise of cleansing, renewal, and indwelling by the Spirit. God promises not merely external restoration, but inner transformation: a new heart, a new spirit, and a restored covenant relationship. This promise anticipates the New Testament reality fulfilled in Christ and lived out in the Church.

Ezekiel ultimately teaches that:

- God remains present even in exile
- God equips those He calls
- God’s word is consistent and trustworthy
- Repentance always opens the door to life
- Intercession restrains judgment
- Grace renews what sin has broken

The prophet’s life and message affirm that faithfulness is not measured by visible success, but by obedience. Ezekiel stood firm when the people would not listen, trusting that God’s word would accomplish its purpose in His time.

Thus, Ezekiel speaks not only to ancient Israel, but to every generation of believers learning to serve God faithfully in difficult and uncertain times.



Review Questions

1. Who was Ezekiel? [He was one of the major prophets. Major refers to the length of their writings.]
2. How long was the Ezekiel prophecy period? [HebBegan prophesying B.C. 595, and continued until B.C. 573, ~ 22 years.]
3. How is the Book of Ezekiel divided? [The book is divided into two parts, the destruction of Jerusalem being the turning-point. Chapters 1-24 contain predictions delivered before that event, and chapters 25-48 after it.]
4. What are some of the qualities of a person who serves? [He is a giver and whoever meets him has to receive something from his giving]
5. How can a person determine if the message is the truth? [When the message contradicts the known word of God, we can be sure that it is not from God.]
6. What is God’s perspective on the punishment of the wicked? [He is a merciful and forgiving God. If they turn away from their wickedness, they will die eternal death.]
7. What is Intercession? [Intercession of the Saints is merely a prayer on our behalf.]
8. What is asked of us toward the ones that move away from God? [Help them taste and

experience the sweet life with God.]

9. How is God's mercy revealed in the Book of Ezekiel? [Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; ... you shall be My people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel 36:25-28]
10. How many lessons of service are listed in the Book of Ezekiel? [Seven]