

EZEKIEL

THE PEOPLE'S PROPHET IN EXILE

His call:

Ezekiel says his call came in "the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity" (1:2), which would have been 592 B.C. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the new king Jehoiachin captive, along with 10,000 of Jerusalem's leading citizens, artisans, and craftsmen. Ezekiel would have been among those taken away, and was likely about 25 years old at that time. (By comparison, Daniel would have been about two years younger than Ezekiel.)

His ministry:

While Daniel served the kings in the palace, Ezekiel served the captives in the capital city, Babylon, as well as the neighboring city of Tel-abib. It is believed that Ezekiel, born as a priest, but called to be a prophet, served in many pastoral duties including activities like preaching, counseling, comforting, and admonishing.

His prophecy may be outlined by three divisions: 1) those against Judah prior to Jerusalem's fall (chapters 1-24), 2) those against foreign nations (chapters 25-32), and 3) those of Israel's future restoration (chapters 33-48).

His character:

Unlike many prophets, Ezekiel was controlled by, and conscious of the Holy Spirit in his life. Seven times in his book he refers to the Spirit transporting him (3:12,14; 8:3; 11:1,24; 37:1; 43:5). Some take this as a mark of Ezekiel's intimate relationship with God.

Ezekiel also reflects a natural interest and heart for the priesthood. Though he is far from Jerusalem's temple he seems to demonstrate a familiarity with temple operations during the millennium, as seen in chapters 40-48. While prophets were responsible for representing God before men, priests were responsible for representing men before God. Ezekiel seems to have a heart for both, but a calling to prophecy.

His personality was used of God in extraordinary ways. We might assume that Ezekiel may have dealt with some jealousy toward Daniel since Daniel served in the palaces, but actually Ezekiel refers to him as a righteous man, and ranks him beside the likes of Job and Noah (14:14). He also uses odd means to communicate in chapters 3 and 4, such as drawing out a blueprint of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and setting an iron plate up to illustrate a siege on the city. He was to lay on his sides according to the days of trial and bake lentil bread over a dung fire to picture the famine. He also shaved his head and used the hair as a picture of God's judgement that would befall His people.

A strange eschatological prophecy:

Ezekiel prophesies a temple in the Millennium where sacrifices are made. But atonement is final with Christ, so why the sacrifices?