

WAY OF LIFE
COMMENTARY
SERIES



EZEKIEL
DAVID W. CLOUD

Ezekiel

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ISBN 978-1-58318-256-7



Published by Way of Life Literature
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SAMPLE

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The *Way of Life Commentary Series* is designed in a unique format to be used as commentaries, as teaching courses, and for expository preaching. The commentaries are thorough, serious, broad, insightful, and practical, with an emphasis on application to the Christian life and ministry. Context is honored; words are defined; metaphors are explained; difficulties are tackled. The commentaries are backed by 45 years of intense Bible study and are packed with historical backgrounds and archaeological studies based on the author's personal research, which is reflected in books such as *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* and *Jews in Fighter Jets*. The interpretation is from a literal, dispensational perspective, and the King James Bible is explained but not criticized. There is no hint of modernism or influence from compromised evangelicalism. The user will find no reference to or dependence upon men such as Origen, Jerome, Augustine, C.S. Lewis, Eberhard Nestle, or Bruce Metzger.

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Most of these courses include review questions. A lot of time and effort has gone into the creation of these, which are designed to draw the student's attention to the most important points of the lessons and to help him remember these points after the course is finished.

If you take the courses by self-study, don't skip over the review questions. Find someone who will test you by presenting a selection of the questions to you. This is a very important part of the learning process.

For the classroom setting, the teacher can use our review questions (plus his own, of course) to create appropriate sectional and final tests at the appropriate learning level.

Introduction

Ezekiel the Man

We don't know anything for sure about Ezekiel other than that which is mentioned in his prophecy. The Jewish traditions of his life and death are contradictory and lacking in authority. "There is no record of the time of the close of his prophetic activity or of his life, and the few traditions that remain about him are of little value" (F. Gardiner, *Biblical Illustrator*).

Ezekiel's name means "God will strengthen," and that is a fitting name for a prophet who was called to minister to impudent and stiffhearted people (Eze. 2:3-5).

Ezekiel was a priest (Eze. 1:3). It was to the priest prophet that God gave the vision of the Millennial Temple (Eze. 40-48).

Ezekiel was taken captive with Jehoiachin and began prophesying in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (Eze. 1:2). Compare 2 Ki. 24:12-16. The captivity was in 597 BC, so five years later was 592 BC, six years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. (See also Eze. 33:21, where the prophet says, "in the twelfth year of OUR captivity.")

He lived on the River Chebar, which was a great canal built by Nebuchadnezzar and connected to the River Euphrates near Babylon. Compare "the rivers of Babylon" (Ps. 137:1). Ezekiel lived here in his own house (Eze. 8:1). "This canal branched off from the Euphrates just above Babylon and flowed east of the city. It continued through the site of ancient Nippur and then reentered the Euphrates near Uruk (biblical Erech)" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

He was married and his wife's death was a sign to Israel (Eze. 24:15-18).

Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry at age 30 (Eze. 1:1).

Jews forbade the reading of Ezekiel before age 30 (John Gill).

Timeline of Events of Ezekiel's Life

597 - Second deportation to Babylon; Jehoiachin taken captive (2 Ki. 24:8-16); this was when Daniel was carried away (Da. 1:1-6); Zedekiah begins to reign over Judah (2 Ki. 24:17-18)

593 - The glory of God departs from Israel's temple (Eze. 10:18; 11:23)

586 - Israel's temple and Jerusalem are destroyed by Babylon and Zedekiah is taken captive (2 Ki. 25:1-10; 2 Ch. 36:11-21; Jer. 39:1-9)

573 - Tyre falls to Nebuchadnezzar after a 13 year siege beginning in 586

The Major Themes of Ezekiel's Prophecies

The following are some of the major themes of Ezekiel:

To reveal God to Israel and the nations

We see this theme in the repetition of "ye shall know that I am the LORD" 63 times (Eze. 6:7, 10, 13, 14, etc.).

By the fulfillment of these prophecies, Israel and the nations will know that Jehovah is the true and living God and there is no other God. Fulfilled prophecy is an irrefutable evidence that the God revealed in Scripture is the true God.

Consider the scattering and preservation of Israel. See Eze. 12:15-16; 20:42. The fact that Israel has been scattered among the nations for 2,000 years and yet has continued to exist as a nation and is in the process of returning to her homeland is a miracle. These events have happened exactly as the prophets stated in ancient times.

In the theme of Ezekiel that Israel "shall know that I am the LORD," we see the folly of Talmudic Judaism which forbids the speaking of God's name *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*, which is

composed of four Hebrew letters. In the three centuries before Christ, Jewish rabbinical tradition determined that the name of God is too holy to be spoken. It was alleged that God's name was pronounced in old times only by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, which is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. God's glorious name has been replaced in Jewish tradition by the bland *HaShem*, meaning "the name."

To reveal God's sovereignty

The theme of Ezekiel is God's sovereignty over human affairs. He has an eternal purpose, and He is working all things toward that purpose.

We see this theme in the vision of God's throne on the chariot of the cherubims (Eze. 1). This is the throne of the universe. It is a revelation of God in His glory and power and sovereignty over all nations and events.

We see this theme in the repetition of "I will" 191 times. God is in control of all events described in Ezekiel's prophecies. "I will draw out a sword" (Eze. 5:2), "I will execute judgments" (Eze. 5:10), "I will scatter" (Eze. 5:12), "I will make thee waste" (Eze. 5:14), "I will destroy" (Eze. 6:3), "I will cast down" (Eze. 6:4), "I will judge thee" (Eze. 7:8), "I will recompense thee" (Eze. 7:9), "I will gather you" (Eze. 11:17), "I will give them one heart" (Eze. 11:19), "I will deliver my people" (Eze. 13:23), "I will make the land desolate" (Eze. 15:8), "I will cause" (Eze. 16:41), "I will establish" (Eze. 16:60), "I will do it" (Eze. 24:14), "I will deliver my flock" (Eze. 34:10), "I will save my flock" (Eze. 34:22), "I will set up one shepherd over them" (Eze. 34:23), "I will make with them a covenant of peace" (Eze. 34:25), "I will send a fire on Magog" (Eze. 39:7).

To reveal God as Judge and Saviour

The main purpose of the Bible is to reveal God to mankind, and the two great aspects of God's character are His holiness and His love. He is Judge and He is Saviour. There is both severity and goodness with God (Ro. 11:22). It is impossible to understand God's love without understanding His holy justice. It is impossible to understand God as Saviour without

understanding God as Judge. It is impossible to understand His goodness without understanding His severity.

Ezekiel reveals God as Judge in a fierce and terrible fashion. He is the God who holds the sword of the Lord to judge sinning Israel and the rebellious nations (Eze. 21:1-17).

Ezekiel reveals God as Saviour with the great prophecy of the Shepherd (Eze. 34:11-24). God is the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, redeems them by His blood, saves them from eternal destruction, and adopts them as His own. The greatness of God's love is seen in that He did not suffer and die for friends; He suffered and died for enemies.

To reveal God's witness against "a rebellious house" (Eze. 12:2).

Jeremiah and Ezekiel were presenting God's indictment against Israel at the same time from two different locations: Jeremiah in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylon. Through these prophets, God showed Israel her sin in great and terrible detail and thus the reason for the coming judgments.

To reveal God's judgments of the nations

Ezekiel delivers prophecies against six ancient nations, and they have been fulfilled in detail (Eze. 25-32, 35).

The nations will be judged because of their hatred of Israel and participation in her destruction. See Eze. 25:3, 6, 8, 12, 15; 26:2.

Ezekiel says the Philistines will be cut off and destroyed (Eze. 25:16-17). The Philistines ceased to exist as a people.

Ezekiel describes Tyre's destruction at the hands of the Babylonians and the Greeks (Eze. 26:3-14) and her end as a place for the spreading of fishing nets (Eze. 26:14), which is exactly what Tyre is today.

Ezekiel says the Pharaohs will cease (Eze. 30:13) and Egypt will become a base kingdom (Eze. 29:15). This is *exactly* what happened. Egypt was defeated at the hands of the Babylonians and the Persians. The final Pharaoh was Nectanebo II, who was defeated by the Persians in 343 BC. After that Egypt was a tributary to the Greeks, the Romans, the Muslim Caliphs, the

Mamluks, the Ottomans, and the British. Egypt finally regained her independence in 1922, but she is still a base kingdom.

Ezekiel says Edom will be perpetual desolations (Eze. 35). Today the territory of Edom is barren desert and the glory of her ancient cities lies in ruins beneath the sands. Even the location of most of them is unknown. Sela or Petra was lost for nearly two millennia. Today it is a major tourist destination, and its desolate ruins stand as mute witness to the truth of God's Word.

The prophecies of the nations look beyond the historical fulfillment of Ezekiel's day to the end times. See Eze. 30:1-3 which says the prophecy is about the day of the Lord. Compare Isa. 13:6-14; 24:1-23; Joe. 1:15; 2:1-2; Ob. 1:15-16; Zep. 1:14-18.

To reveal the restoration and conversion of Israel

Ezekiel contains unique prophecies about the restoration of Israel that are not found in any other prophet. These are the purging of the rebels (Eze. 20:33-43), the valley of dry bones (Eze. 37: 1-14), the two sticks (Eze. 37:15-28), and Gog and Magog (Eze. 38-39).

Ezekiel describes Israel's glorious spiritual conversion when she receives a new heart to love God and His holy laws (Eze. 36:25-27). He describes Israel's thorough repentance when they will loath themselves for their iniquities (Eze. 36:31).

Ezekiel describes the restoration of Israel as one nation (Eze. 37:15-28).

To reveal Christ's kingdom

Ezekiel describes the Millennial Temple at the center of earth's government and the focus of earth's worship (Eze. 40-46). He shows Christ enthroned there in glory. He describes Jerusalem, the capital of Christ's global kingdom, and the allotment of the twelve tribes of Israel (Eze. 47-48).

Ezekiel describes the prosperity and fruitfulness that will characterize Christ's kingdom (Eze. 34:8-15). God will turn to the land (Eze. 36:9). As He turned *from* the land to remove His

blessing (Le. 26:18-22; De. 28:23-24), God will turn *to* the land to bless it. The God who “planted a garden eastward in Eden” (Ge. 2:8) will make restored Israel like Eden (Eze. 36:35). God will call for the corn, and increase it (Eze. 36:29-30). He will, as it were, speak to the produce of the land and say, “Come forth!” God will settle the land “after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings” (Eze. 36:11). In Israel’s beginning, the land that God gave them was “flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands” (Eze. 20:15). The grapes were so large and the vines so full of fruit that it took two men to carry one cluster (Nu. 13:23).

Outline

Ezekiel 1 Ezekiel’s Vision of God’s Glory

Ezekiel 2-3 Ezekiel’s call

- Ezekiel is commanded to stand upon his feet (Eze. 2:1-2).
- Ezekiel is commissioned to speak to Israel (Eze. 2:3-8).
- Ezekiel is commanded to eat the scroll (Eze. 2:8 - 3:4).
- Ezekiel is given a hard forehead (Eze. 3:4-11).
- Ezekiel is taken to Telabib by Chebar (Eze. 3:12-15).
- Ezekiel is appointed a watchman (Eze. 3:16-23).
- Ezekiel is instructed to speak only when directed by God (Eze. 3:24-27).

Ezekiel 4-25 God’s Indictment of Israel

- Ezekiel is a sign of the siege of Jerusalem (Eze. 4)
- Ezekiel’s hair is a sign of the destruction of Jerusalem (Eze. 5)
- God pronounces judgment against Israel’s idolatry (Eze. 6)
- God pronounces the day of wrath (Eze. 7)
- The departure of the glory of God from Jerusalem (Eze. 8-11)
- Ezekiel is a sign of the destruction of Jerusalem (Eze. 12)
- God’s Word against the false prophets (Eze. 13:1-16)
- God’s Word against the false prophetesses (Eze. 13:17-23)
- The idolatrous elders condemned (Eze. 14:1-11)

Jerusalem will not be spared (Eze. 14:12-23)
Jerusalem likened to a vine (Eze. 15)
Israel is likened to a whorish wife (Eze. 16)
Parable of the eagles and the vine (Eze. 17)
The soul that sinneth, it shall die (Eze. 18)
Lamentation for the princes of Israel (Eze. 19)
God indicts Israel for perpetual idolatry (Eze. 20:1- 32)
God will bring Israel under the rod (Eze. 20:33-49)
The Messianic kingdom (Eze. 20:40-44)
Prophecy against the forest of the south (Eze. 20:45-49)
The sword of the Lord (Eze. 21:1-17)
The king of Babylon at the head of two ways (Eze. 21:18-27)
God's judgment on the Ammonites (Eze. 21:28-32)
Jerusalem the bloody city (Eze. 22)
Israel and Judah as whoring sisters (Eze. 23)
Jerusalem likened to a seething pot (Eze. 24:1-14)
Ezekiel's wife's death a sign (Eze. 24:15-27)

Ezekiel 25-32 God's Witness against the Nations

Against Ammon (Eze. 25:1-7)
Against Moab and Seir (Eze. 25:8-11)
Against Edom (Eze. 25:12-14)
Against Philistia (Eze. 25:15-17)
Against Tyre (Eze. 26-28)
Against Egypt (Eze. 29-32)

Ezekiel 33:1 - 34:10 Final Warning to Israel

The watchman prophecy repeated (Eze. 33:1-9)
God's final plea to Israel (Eze. 33:10-20)
The announcement of Jerusalem's destruction (Eze. 33:21-33)
Prophecy against the shepherds of Israel (Eze. 34:1-10)

Ezekiel 34-48 The Restoration of Israel

Jehovah the Good Shepherd (Eze. 34:11-24)

Judgment upon Seir (Eze. 35)

Prophecy to the mountains of Israel (Eze. 36:1-15)

Israel scattered among the nations (Eze. 36:16-21)

Israel's Conversion (Eze. 36:22-36)

Ezekiel 37:1-14 The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37:15-28 The Two Sticks

Ezekiel 38-39 Gog and Magog

Ezekiel 40-48 The Millennial Temple

SAMPLE

Ezekiel 1 Ezekiel's Vision of God's Glory

Ezekiel was shown one of the most amazing and wonderful sights that a man has ever seen. He saw God's glorious, lightning-fast chariot throne, and he was given words to describe it for us in detail.

The vision had a two-fold purpose.

The vision was part of Ezekiel's call (Eze. 1-3). God wanted Ezekiel to see Him high and lifted up on the throne of the universe. Isaiah had the same type of vision (Isa. 6). God wanted Ezekiel to see His glory and power and sovereignty over all nations and events. This is the right perspective for every preacher. It is the thing that will cause the preacher to do right and preach right. He must fear God more than man. He must keep the revelation of God before him at all times. This is why Paul prefaced the charge to preach the Word with a warning of God's judgment (2 Ti. 2:1-2).

The vision was the introduction to all of Ezekiel's prophecies. God wants Israel and all the nations to see Him high and lifted up. The God of Israel is the living God, the eternal God, the Creator God, the almighty God, the God who is working out His eternal purposes.

The vision is not poetic.

The cherubims are real creatures. They are mentioned many times in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. They will be seen by all of the occupants of Christ's millennial kingdom. See Eze. 43:1-4.

Simile and metaphor are used in the vision to describe some elements. For example, the cherubims are in appearance "LIKE burning coals of fire, and LIKE the appearance of lamps" (Eze. 1:13). And they ran and returned "AS the appearance of a flash of lightning" (Eze. 1:14). But the cherubims themselves and

their throne chariot is a real entity, as real as anything on this earth today.

The Cherubims

Cherubims is the plural of *cherub*.

The cherubims are highly intelligent, powerful creatures, created to do God's will. They are intimately associated with God's throne.

They are wholly devoted to God's will, being in that regard a good example to all of God's creatures.

Satan was apparently the highest cherub before his fall (Eze. 28:14). His name was "Lucifer, son of the morning" (Isa. 14:12).

The cherubims are associated with the glory of God (Eze. 10:14-15) and are called "the cherubims of glory" (Heb. 9:5).

The appearance of the cherubims

The overall appearance of the cherubims transporting God's throne is like a tornado and a great thundercloud, but it is a tornado of fire infolding itself (Eze. 1:4).

The cherubims appear as burning coals of bright fire and as torches and lamps, with the bright flaming light going up and down among the creatures, and with lightning emitting from the fire (Eze. 1:13).

The cherubims have the general likeness of a man, but they have four faces: one like a man's, one like an ox's, one like a lion's, and one like an eagle's (Eze. 1:5-6, 10) It appears that the man's face looks forward, the lion's face looks right, the ox's face looks left, and the eagle's face looks rearward. (Ezekiel 10:14 describes the faces as a man's, a lion's, a cherub's, and an eagle's, so that the ox face is here described as a cherub face.) "The chariot would present to the beholder two faces of a man, of a lion, of an eagle, and of an ox, according to the quarter from which he looked upon it" (Barnes). As creatures made to be associated with God's throne, the cherubims bear the

characteristics of God. The face of a man is the face of intelligence; that of the lion is the face of power; that of the ox is the face of servanthood; that of the eagle is the face of majesty.

Their hands are like a man's (Eze. 1:8). The human hand is an amazing product of God's creative wisdom and power.

Their feet are straight with soles like that of a calf (Eze. 1:7). Instead of a man's foot, they have a different type of foot that is fitting for their purpose. Their feet shine like burnished brass.

They have four wings, two of which cover their bodies and two of which stretch out and touch the wings of the cherub next to them (Eze. 1:11).

The four cherubims form a square under the platform of God's throne (Eze. 1:9-11). "The four together formed a square, and never altered their relative position. From each side two faces looked straight out, one at each corner--and so all moved together toward any of the four quarters, toward which each one had one of its four faces directed; in whatsoever direction the whole moved the four might be said all to go 'straight forward'" (Barnes).

They fly in a straight line (Eze. 1:6, 9, 12; 10:11). They move straight and sure in God's will, turning neither to the right nor the left.

They move quickly like a flash of lightning (Eze. 1:14). This speaks of the speed with which the angels accomplish God's will. Wherever God wills the cherubims chariot to go, it goes instantly. His omnipotence guarantees that nothing can hinder His will or cause Him to take a detour.

Their wings make a great noise, like the noise of great waters or a great host of an army (Eze. 1:24; 10:5, 21). Niagara Falls is an example of great waters. When you are near the falls, such as when riding the Maid of Mist boats, the noise is so loud that you have to shout to be heard by someone standing right beside you.

They have many eyes showing their great awareness and intelligence (Eze. 1:18; 10:12). They are not omniscient, but

God has given them great wisdom. Natural man thinks that he can do things in secret, when no other man sees him, but there are no secrets before God. "What can shut out the beings who do the will of heaven, and who are full of eyes, their very chariot wheels being luminous with eyes, everything round about them looking at us critically, penetratingly, judicially? We live unwisely when we suppose that we are not being superintended, observed, criticised, and judged. 'Thou God seest me'; 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth'" (Joseph Parker).

The wheels of the cherubims (Eze. 1:15-18; 10:9)

The wheels are the color of beryl, which is bright sea-green (Eze. 1:16).

The wheel looks like a wheel within a wheel (Eze. 10:10). "One wheel intersects another wheel at right angles; thus they can roll in four directions without being turned and could move with the cherub" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*). The chariot can move instantly in any direction.

The rings or rims of the wheels are extremely high (Eze. 1:18).

Like the cherubims themselves, the wheels are full of eyes (Eze. 1:18).

They are called whirling wheels (Eze. 10:13). They are loud and active.

The wheel moves with the cherub, and the spirit of the cherub is in the wheel (Eze. 1:19-21; 10:16-17). The cherubims are controlled by the spirit (Eze. 1:20). Whatever the spirit wills, they can do immediately. The resurrection body of the redeemed, too, is a spiritual body, meaning it will be under complete control of the spirit (1 Co. 15:44). "The body will then be subject to the spirit and soul of man; it will be employed in spiritual service, for which it will be abundantly fitted and assisted by the Spirit of God" (John Gill).

God's Throne

According to Ezekiel's vision, the throne of God is transported by the cherubims.

Over the cherubims is a firmament or expanse or platform, and on that expanse is God's throne. See Eze. 1:22, 25; 10:18-19; 11:22.

God is a spirit and He is omnipresent, but He also appears in glory on His throne. In Scripture, the throne is seen in heaven (Re. 4:2-11), and it is also seen traveling with the cherubims acting as a divine chariot.

This throne is the center of the universe. From it flows all power and authority throughout creation; from it all things are upheld, all things ordered and commanded. The throne and the cherubims "show forth and symbolize the purposes of God in the execution of His inerrant governmental dealings on earth. God controls it all, and His Spirit directs every movement" (*The Annotated Bible*).

David was instructed to make "the chariot of the cherubims" for Solomon's Temple (1 Ch. 28:18).

Psalm 18:10 says Jehovah rides upon a cherub.

The platform of the throne is "the colour of the terrible crystal" (Eze. 1:22).

Moses described this "as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness" (Ex. 24:10). Thus, the pavement beneath the throne looks like bright clear crystal with a deep bluish tint. It is like crystal glass (Re. 4:6), thus it is transparent but also reflects the light like crystal or the clearest quartz or diamond. The transparent pavement beneath the throne would gather and reflect the lightnings and rainbow and other aspects of the glory of God's throne.

The throne is "like the appearance of a sapphire stone ... as it were the body of heaven in clearness" (Eze. 1:26; 10:1).

The throne of God appears to be the same material as the pavement beneath. It is crystal clear with a deep bluish tint. The blue sapphire is the most beautiful sapphire. The word “sapphire” is from the Latin “saphirus” and the Greek “sapheiros,” both of which mean blue.

A bright rainbow surrounds the throne (Eze. 1:28).

The rainbow is part of the glory of God’s throne. It is “the brightness round about” (Eze. 1:28). It is colorful and splendid in appearance. Its predominant color is emerald green (Re. 4:3), the color most pleasant to the human eye, possibly signifying “the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant.”

The rainbow was the token of God’s covenant with mankind following the flood of Noah’s day (Ge. 9:13-16). It was a covenant of undeserved grace. The rainbow, therefore, reminds us that God is love; He is gracious and longsuffering and merciful; He keeps His promises. Though He is holy and just, He has given His own Son to make atonement for man’s vile sin and has offered eternal salvation to all who will receive Christ as Lord and Saviour. The very colors of the rainbow depict God’s mercy. The pure white light signifies God’s righteousness and holiness and justice, but in a rainbow the white is broken up into a variety of colors, signifying other attributes of God’s character, His mercy, patience, kindness, love, etc. Thus, when the believer beholds God’s throne he is comforted by the presence of the rainbow and reminded that for him, in Christ, the throne of God is a throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

Those who refuse God’s grace will drink of the full measure of His holy wrath. At the Great White Throne there is no rainbow, and the sinner will stand before God’s holiness without a Redeemer and without mercy (Re. 20:11-15).

The rainbow follows the storm, and even though God will pour out fearful judgments upon mankind during the Great Tribulation, He will not unsheathe His sword forever. His wrath is “little” (Isa. 54:8), and afterwards He will comfort and heal. “The appearance of the rainbow, therefore, around the

throne, was a beautiful emblem of the mercy of God, and of the peace that was to pervade the world as the result of the events that were to be disclosed to the vision of John. True, there were lightnings and thunderings and voices, but there the bow abode calmly above them all, assuring him that there was to be mercy and peace” (Matthew Henry).

The rainbow was “round about” (Eze. 1:28; Re. 4:3). Unlike the rainbows on earth, which are not more than a half circle, it appears that the rainbow pertaining to God’s throne might go all the way round or be reflected in such a way that it appears to go all the way around. This would signify the perfection and completion of God’s grace and mercy.

God’s appearance is “as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it” (Eze. 1:27).

Amber is deep yellow and orange.

The fiery scene of God’s throne reminds us of God’s awful holiness and justice which is the foundation and anchor of the moral law of the universe. He can abide no sin, no infraction of His holy laws. Every sin will be duly judged, either in Christ in the case of believers, or in the sinner himself in the case of those who reject Christ.

SAMPLE

Ezekiel 2-3 Ezekiel's Call

Ezekiel is commanded to stand upon his feet (Eze. 2:1-2).

Ezekiel had fallen upon his face at the vision of God's throne (Eze. 1:28). This is often the effect that the vision of God has upon men. Compare Eze. 3:23; 43:3; Ge. 17:3; Ju. 13:20; Da. 8:17; 10:7-9; Mt. 17:5-6; Re. 1:17.

The Spirit of God enabled Ezekiel to do what God commanded (Eze. 2:2). This is the first of 12 times that we are told that the Spirit dealt with Ezekiel. The Spirit entered into him, spoke to him, and set him upon his feet (Eze. 2:2; 3:24), took him up (Eze. 3:12), lifted him up and transported him (Eze. 3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5), and fell upon him (Eze. 11:5). The third member of the Trinity is the unseen enabler, comforter, and instructor of God's people. Micah said, "I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:8). The word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zec. 4:6). Even the Son of God ministered by God's Spirit (Isa. 11:2-4). In the book of Acts, we see the believers operating by God's Spirit (Ac. 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52). Paul understood the necessity of ministering by God's Spirit (1 Co. 2:4-5).

God addressed Ezekiel as "Son of man" (Eze. 2:1). This term appears 93 times in Ezekiel and 15 other times in the Old Testament. It is a general term for natural man, as we see in its first appearance in Scripture in Numbers 23:19, where God is contrasted with "the son of man" who lies and has to repent. It is used as a synonym for "man" (Ps. 8:4; Jer. 51:43). When God uses "son of man" to address Ezekiel, He is emphasizing that Ezekiel is only a man, only a servant. It is a reminder of man's lowly stature and unworthiness to speak for God. Job said that the son of man is but a worm (Job 25:6). "Son of man" is used 90 times for Christ, once in Daniel 7:13 and 89 times in the New Testament (Mt. 8:20, etc.). It describes Christ's identity

with mankind in His incarnation, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. “[T]he term ‘son of man’ in the Book of Ezekiel is no title of honour or of distinction. It is precisely the opposite of this. It denotes the absence of distinction in the person of the prophet. It signifies no more than ‘member of the human race’; its sense might almost be conveyed if we were to render it by the word ‘mortal.’ It expresses the infinite contrast between the heavenly and the earthly, between the glorious Being who speaks from the throne and the frail creature who needs to be supernaturally strengthened before he can stand upright in the attitude of service (Eze. 2:1). He felt that there was no reason in himself for the choice which God made of him to be a prophet. He is conscious only of the attributes which he has in common with the race—of human weakness and insignificance; all that distinguishes him from other men belongs to his office, and is conferred on him by God in the act of his consecration” (*Expositor’s Bible*).

Ezekiel is commissioned to speak to Israel (Eze. 2:3-8).

God refers to “the children of Israel” (Eze. 2:3). The northern tribes of Israel had gone into captivity 130 years previously at the hands of the Assyrians, and only Judah was left. But God doesn’t say that He had called Ezekiel to preach to Judah. Israel is one nation before God, and there are no “lost tribes.” Representatives of all of the tribes returned to Israel after the Babylonian Captivity. See Eze. 10:25. Four hundred years later, James addressed the “twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jas. 1:1).

God emphasizes Israel’s terrible rebellion--“a rebellious nation that hath rebelled ... impudent ... stiffhearted ... a rebellious house ... a rebellious house ... most rebellious ... a rebellious house.” The term “a rebellious house” appears 13 times in Ezekiel (Eze 3:5, 6, 8; 3:9, 26, 27; 12:2, 3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3). What a wretched thing Israel had become! God had brought up children, and they had wickedly rebelled. He had married a wife, and she had become a harlot. Note that God speaks plainly and directly. He does not try to soften the blow or avoid offense. This is an essential characteristic of preaching