

EMBASSY

COLLEGE



TEXTBOOK (ACADEMIC VERSION)

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

COURSE: MAJOR PROPHETS II (OT411)

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*The Book of Ezekiel:
Ezekiel the Man and His Message*

by

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Dr. Ronald and Joanne Cottle. Together they have faithfully trained thousands of believers and ministers in the things of scripture, ministry and life.

Special Thanks

I would like to give special thanks to Margie Bibbs for designing the cover. Also, Karen Winchell for very helpful with the typesetting.

Table of Contents

Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	25
Chapter Three	42
Chapter Four	57
Chapter Five	70
Chapter Six	86
Chapter Seven	97
Chapter Eight	108
Chapter Nine	123
Chapter Ten	137
Chapter Eleven	147
Chapter Twelve	157
Chapter Thirteen	165

Chapter One: “The Call of Ezekiel”

Ezekiel 1:1-3:27

Ask the average Christian, “What do you know about the book of Ezekiel?” You will hear strange stories about a UFO or “wheels within wheels.” A high unlikelihood exists that you will meet someone who understands this important book of the Bible. Here are just a few of the reasons why I think this book is so important and worthy of our study:

Ezekiel pulls from the entire Old Testament as he gives his prophecy. As a result his book is an excellent overlap of much of the Old Testament.

He gives an insightful view of the Babylonian captivity that we would not have without his book.

Many of his prophecies have come to pass and add credence to the Word of God.

His prophecies set the stage for the coming of Christ.

Chapter One: The Call of Ezekiel

Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man. Ezekiel is the main prophet referred to by the Lord as the Son of Man.

Ezekiel prophecies of the return of Israel in the last days.

The book of Revelation quotes more from Ezekiel than any other Old Testament prophet.

His exceptional example of obedience is an inspiration to all who seeks to follow God and please Him.

The Context of the Prophets Call (Ezekiel 1:1-28)

The book of Ezekiel can be divided into two halves: chapters 1-24, a series of messages delivered before the fall of Jerusalem, the general burden of which is “judgment”; chapters 25-48, delivered after its fall, with the over-arching theme of “redemption.” The book is more appropriately studied under four divisions:

- chapters 1-24 - Prophecies of Judgment on Judah
- chapters 25-32 - Prophecies Against Judah- Enemies

Chapter One: The Call of Ezekiel

- chapters 33-39 - Prophecies of the Restoration of Israel

- chapters 40-48 - The New Temple and the Reoccupation of the Land

Historical Facts (Ezekiel 1:1-3)

“1Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. 2On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, 3the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.”

Ezekiel gives two major time-frames as a connection for the beginning of his ministry:

The First Time-Frame

Ezekiel’s call may be connected with the letter sent by Jeremiah to the captives (Jeremiah 29) written a few months previously. Some reckon this date, “the thirtieth year,” from the accession of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, 625 B. C., and surmise that Ezekiel here gives a Babylonian, as well as a Jewish, date. Since Nabopolassar reigned nineteen years, and his son,

Chapter One: The Call of Ezekiel

Nebuchadnezzar, eleven then the total of thirty makes a natural conclusion of a Babylonian dating method. The only problem with this view is no examples exist in the Old Testament of prophets using pagan kings to date prophecies.

Thirty years prior to this date, Josiah began his great reforms for the nation of Judah. Some have speculated that the prophet has this date in mind. Here again, we have no precedent for such a dating method.

The date may concern his own age of thirty years old. Since the time of Origen (185-254), this expression, "the thirtieth year," has been viewed to be the prophet's own age, the normal age when priests fully reached their ministry (Numbers 4:3-4). Both John the Baptist and our Lord began their ministry under these guidelines.

The New Testament guidelines for an elder, listed in 1 Timothy 3, state that an elder "must not be a novice." This admonition would be in keeping with the Old Testament requirements for the priest's age. The Greek word for novice, *neophuton*, was often applied to new plants when they were very vulnerable to the elements. The passage in 1 Timothy warns that a novice is prone to pride and may fall into the same condemnation as the Devil. One would think that the novice, knowing the least, would be more inclined to humility, but the exact opposite is the case. When we are prideful we only reveal how little we know. As we mature we begin to learn how much more there is to

Chapter One: The Call of Ezekiel

learn. Truly great scholars are usually humble people. I studied under one of the greatest Old Testament scholars imaginable, Dr. William Kuykendall. His knowledge of the Old Testament was amazing to me, yet humility was woven all through his character.

The Second Time-Frame

The next time frame is connected to the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin. Ezekiel dates his messages chronologically. His messages are linear in nature and much easier to follow the chronology than that of his counterpart, Jeremiah. Ezekiel gives fourteen date references in his book (cf. Ezek 1:2; 3:16; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 29:17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1; 32:17; 33:21; 40:1).

The Babylonian exile transpired in three major waves of deportation:

In the third or fourth year of Jehoiakim, the first carrying away of Jewish captives to Babylon took place, and among them Daniel was taken along with his companions.

The second was under Jehoiachin, when Ezekiel was carried away. This date (597 B.C.) serves as the cornerstone of all Ezekiel's dating process.

Chapter One: The Call of Ezekiel

The third and final one was at the taking of Jerusalem under Zedekiah. A minor deportation of a few hundred also occurs in 582 BC.

King Jehoiachin - the eighteenth king of Judah. He was the son of King Jehoiakim, and grandson of the godly Josiah. After the death of his father, he was enthroned by Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt. Because of the Babylonian takeover of the Levant region, he reigned only three months. He was deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in the year 597, along with the upper classes (2 Kin 24:8-16). Amel Marduk (also called Evil Merodach), son of Nebuchadnezzar in 560, released King Jehoiachin in the thirty-seventh year of his exile (2 Kin 25:27). Archaeology records from the mesopotamian region confirm this event.

Jeremiah (Jer 22:20-30) and Ezekiel (19:5-9) appear sympathetic toward him over against his successor, Zedekiah. Seal impressions stating, "Eliakim, Steward of Jehoiachin" have been found at two dig sites in Judah. Some have concluded that an official, Eliakim, continued to manage the royal estates of Jehoiachin. For many Jews he was the true, legitimate king. His grandson Zerubbabel was in the Messianic line (cf. Mt 1:11-12; Ezr 3:8; 1 Chr 3:17-19).

The fourth month is not expressed in the original, but only the number is given as was the common dating method. Before the captivity the months were described not by proper names but by their order, "the first, the second," etc. After the captivity, the Jews brought back with them