

# Ezekiel

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## Overview

- In a word: Ichabod
- In a sentence: Looking toward a final sabbath rest for God's people when God's Spirit returns and fills them.

## Context and Setting

- "Ezekiel was taken captive by the Babylonians in 598 B.C. approximately seven years after Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were taken captive, and twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple."
- "It is likely that Ezekiel was 30 years old when the book of Ezekiel begins (See Ezekiel 1:1). If this is true, then Ezekiel was also likely born in the year of King Josiah's reforms and his Great Passover (see 2 Kings 23 and 2 Chronicles 34-35). The age of 30 is the age when priests were to be ordained (See Numbers 4) and in chapter 2, Ezekiel is set apart by God for his priestly and prophetic work."

## Thematic Comments

- "Throughout the book, Ezekiel is referred to as "Son of man" (over 90 times!). This is a clear reference to Ezekiel as a sort of new Adam, ushering in a "new creation" for Israel, and as a forerunner of Jesus, the ultimate new Adam, who brought about a new creation to the entire created order through His life, death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven."

## Structure

- 1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 – God Speaks the Universe into existence
- 2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
- 3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
- 4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 – Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
- 5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 – Swarms of Nations Fall
- 6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
- 7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 – A New Sabbath for God's People
  - All but one of these seven sections of Ezekiel are set apart by detailed references to time (years, months, days)
    - 1. Ezekiel 1:1-2 - Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month...On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity...
    - 2. Ezekiel 8:1 - And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month...
    - 3. Ezekiel 14:1 (no time marker) - Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. (why not break at 14:12 with "word of the lord came"?)
    - 4. Ezekiel 20:1 - It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month...
    - 5. Ezekiel 24:1 - Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month...
    - 6. Ezekiel 33:21 - And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month...
    - 7. Ezekiel 40:1 - In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day...
  - Expanded Commentary on Structure (taken from)
    - 1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 – God Takes the World in Hand Time: Fifth year of the exile On the first day of creation, the Lord sent the Spirit to dispel the darkness that was over the surface of the waters. In this first section of Ezekiel, we will see God the Father send the Spirit into Ezekiel to defeat the

darkness that has enveloped Judah. Ezekiel's call and commission are followed by a series of three experiences (chapters 1-3) in which Ezekiel sees visions of God's glory and receives instructions about his task as a prophet/priest to the exiles. Four messages about the coming destruction of Jerusalem follow these visions (chapters 4-7).

- 2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged Time: Sixth year of the exile On day two, the Lord created the firmament which served to divide the waters above it from the waters below. This dividing is often seen in Scripture as a separating of God and His faithful people from His enemies. Chapters 8-11 are a series of four visions once again depicting glory of God, who is departing from the temple (separating himself from His wicked people) and judging Jerusalem for her sins. This is followed in chapters 12 and 13 by five messages of judgment, the first two involving symbolic actions on Ezekiel's part of 1) packing and leaving and 2) eating food with fear.
- 3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment Time: Undated, but may be during the sixth or seventh year of exile? Day three of creation saw the Lord bringing forth the land from the midst of the waters and also filling it with the first plants and trees ("firstfruits"). Chapters 14-19 of Ezekiel are a series of seven messages of judgment against Judah that depict her as a fruitless vine (chapter 15) and as a tree and vine that have revolted against the Lord (chapter 17). Instead of being faithful to Yahweh and obeying Him ("bearing good fruit"), Judah, like Israel before her, has become fruitless and "ripe" for destruction.
- 4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 – Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed Time: Seventh to ninth year of exile The "lights" in the firmament (sun, moon and stars), created on Day 4, are seen as "ruling" over the day and the night. Thus we often associate the fourth day of creation with ruling. In this climactic section of Ezekiel, a series of four messages of judgment are given, beginning with an indictment of the wicked rulers of Judah, given just before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (chapter 20). In chapter 21, God says he is using the sword (rule) of Babylon to punish the rulers of Judah. Chapter 22 ends with Yahweh rebuking the priests, the religious rulers of Judah.
- 5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 – Swarms of Nations Fall Time: Ninth year of exile Day five sees God making the creatures of the sea and sky (birds and fishes), who travel together in large numbers. In the Scripture, these "swarming" creatures are often associated with the Gentile nations. Ezekiel 24-33 is a series of oracles of judgment against seven Gentile nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt) who have acted wickedly towards God's people.
- 6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden Time: Twelfth year of exile The land animals were created on the sixth day of creation. On that same day, the Lord created Adam and Eve to rule over the entire created order throughout the earth, beginning in the Garden of Eden. In this section of Ezekiel we see a movement from de-creation ("For I will make the land most desolate" 33:28) to a new creation (the dry bones live – Chapter 37). After this, God's enemies are defeated (chapter 38-39) and His people are reestablished as the New Adam, ruling for God in the New Eden, the land of Israel.
- 7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 – A New Sabbath for God's People Time: Twenty-fifth year of exile On day seven, "God rested in heaven". In these last chapters of Ezekiel we see his vision of the New Temple and the New Land, once again giving hope to Judah, that they will again be granted Sabbath-rest in the land as His beloved people."

## Exegetical Notes

- Ch.1-7 Day 1
  - **note the progression of seven "days" and the vision of the de-creation of Jerusalem.**
  - Ch. 1

- "Verse 1 – It was "in the thirtieth year...". This "thirtieth year" may refer to Ezekiel's age. Thirty was the age at which the priests of Israel would assume their duties in the temple (see Numbers 4) and Ezekiel, as the priest to Israel in exile, is commissioned by God at the age of thirty as well. Recall too that Jesus, the Great High Priest, began his earthly ministry at the age of thirty (see Luke 3:23)
- Verse 2 – "...in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity" – It has been five years since the exile to Babylon began and the Lord has sent no prophet to the captives before now. God will be silent no longer and, through Ezekiel, will bring His people a message of judgment and hope.
- Verse 3 identifies Ezekiel as a priest to the captives in the land of the Chaldeans (Babylon) and the ordaining hand of the Lord comes upon him here. He will also be commissioned by God as a prophet, a spokesman for God, in chapter 2.
- Ezekiel's Vision
  - Verses 4-28 depict Ezekiel's amazing vision of God's mobile chariot-throne and the four powerful angels who uphold and propel it wherever the Spirit of God directs them. **The coming of God in His fiery chariot to Babylon demonstrates that, though God has abandoned the Temple in Jerusalem, He is present with His people while in exile. He will act on their behalf, both to judge them and to restore them."**
  - **Important note:** we often mistakenly think of the world as God->Angels->Humans when in reality the bible presents a much richer picture that looks more like **God->elohim, seraphim, churbim, archangel, messengers (angels), watchers, Rephaim, Nephilim-> elohim/human mixture-> humans**
  - **Note also:** verse 5 they had a human likeness- it is probably wrong to imagine angels as merely "spiritual"
- Ch. 6
  - "All of these judgments are coming with one purpose in mind (see verse 7): "...and you shall know that I am the Lord". Yahweh is asserting His supremacy over all other (so called) gods. This is the first of over 60 times in Ezekiel (and four times in this chapter alone!) that the phrase "...you (or "they") shall know that I am the Lord" is used! All of these judgments are coming with one purpose in mind (see verse 7): "...and you shall know that I am the Lord". Yahweh is asserting His supremacy over all other (so called) gods. This is the first of over 60 times in Ezekiel (and four times in this chapter alone!) that the phrase "...you (or "they") shall know that I am the Lord" is used!"
- Ch. 7
  - Note repetition of "the end"
  - Verse 12 says, "The time has come, the day draws near" – This "time" and "day" has been warned of by God from the times of Moses (see Leviticus 26:14ff), through the days of Joshua, the judges, and all of the kings of Israel by means of His prophets. None of what 31 God is going to bring upon Israel should be a surprise to them, nor to us when we fail to repent of our sin!
- Ch. 8-13 (Day 2- The Expanse and Division)
  - This section reveals what is called "the abomination of desolation." Essentially there are many acts that are called an abomination to Yahweh throughout the OT (see the Mosaic laws). However when idol worship and abominable acts are practiced within the temple itself it is considered an abomination that causes God's presence to depart from his people (leave them desolate). This then is the idea behind the "abomination of desolation" referenced by Daniel and then Jesus.
  - "Ezekiel is in his house with the elders of Judah who are with him in exile. While he is there, the hand of the Lord comes upon him (remember 1:3) and he again sees a vision of the Lord similar to 1:26-28. The Spirit of the Lord takes Ezekiel by the hair and lifts him up into the firmament, where He shows Ezekiel four visions of the abominations that are taking place in Jerusalem and in the Temple there. It is these and other abominations that will cause God to desolate Jerusalem and the Temple (see verse 6)."
  - The Four-fold visions of abomination
  - Notice the deepening nearness to the holy of holies-
    - 8:3-6 Image of Jealousy at the North gate of city engaged in by All
    - 8:7-13 Shrine of Idols at the Outer wall of Temple engaged in by the Elders

- 8:14-15 Weeping for Tammuz at the Inner wall of Temple engaged in by the Women of Temple
- 8:16-17 Worshipping the Sun at the Temple court engaged in by the Priests
- Note: perhaps a link between day 2 (expanse) and the climactic worship of the sun which rules over the expanse and which they were specifically not to worship
- In chapters 9-11, Ezekiel will now be shown a series of three aspects of the same judgment that God will bring as a result of these abominations:
  - **Chapter 9 – Judgment by God’s angels**
    - vv4-7 - note the marking of the faithful (yes, this and much else ties in to Revelation)- this also goes back to the marking of the doorpost in the passover.
  - **Chapter 10 – Judgment by God’s fiery presence**
    - "In verses 18, Yahweh leaves His place at the threshold of the Temple, and mounts his chariot throne. We see the cherubim lift their wings and carry the chariot throne to the door of the east gate of the Temple. From here Yahweh will leave the Temple and the city of Jerusalem and desolate the land of His presence. However, God will not leave His people forever! Later, in Ezekiel chapter 43, Yahweh, in His mercy, will reenter Jerusalem from the east gate, the direction of the sunrise...a new creation!"
  - **Chapter 11- Judgment by God’s Word**
    - "In verses 6-7, the Lord places the responsibility for the judgment and death to come upon Jerusalem squarely at the feet of her leaders."
    - "Here in chapter 11, Yahweh includes words of hope!
      1. Verses 14-15 – Even though the wicked leaders in Jerusalem think of the exiles as those who are forsaken by the Lord, Ezekiel’s “brothers”, his fellow exiles, are the true house of Israel whom the Lord is preserving in Babylon.
      2. Verse 16 – Yahweh is a true sanctuary (the true cauldron) for His people who are in exile in Babylon.
      3. Verse 17-18 – The Lord will bring the exiles back from Babylon and settle them once again in the Promised Land. When they arrive, they will remove all of the idolatry and all of the other abominations that now permeate the land.
      4. Verses 19-20 – Yahweh will not only bring them back to the Promised Land, He will also change the hearts of the people so that they will once again have the desire and the power to obey the commands of God, and to worship Him alone."
  - **Ch. 12-13 Five messages of coming judgement**
    - 1. 12:1-16 - The Prince Will Flee – “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”
    - 2. 12:17-20 - The People Will Eat Bread in Horror – “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ...”
    - 3. 12:21-25 - No More False Visions – “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”
    - 4. 12:26-28 - No More Delay of Visions – “Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”
    - 5. 13:1-16 - False Prophets and Prophetesses Will Be Judged – “And the word of the Lord came to me saying...”
- Ch. 14-19 (Day 3- Plants & Trees) - Seven Messages to the Elders of Israel
  - Ezekiel 14-19 is also a series of seven messages to the elders of Israel which followed the five messages of judgment in chapters 12 and 13:
    - Message 1 - Chapter 14:1-11 – Day 1 – Elders’ Idolatry Message 2 - Chapter 14:12-23 – Day 2 - Jerusalem is Worse Than Sodom Message 3 - Chapter 15 – Day 3 - Parable of the Vine Message 4 - Chapter 16 – Day 4 - Parable of the Adulterous Wife Message 5 - Chapter 17 – Day 5 - Parable of the Great Eagles Message 6 - Chapter 18 – Day 6 - Judgment for Present Generation’s Sins Message 7 - Chapter 19 – Day 7 - Lamentation for the Line of David
- Ch. 20-23 (Day 4- Rulers & Host of heaven) - Seven Messages of Doom for the Elders
  - 20:1-44 – Abominations of the Fathers 20:45-49 – Prophecy of Fire 21:1-32 – The Prophecy of the Sword and its Fulfillment 22:1-16 – Abominations of the Bloody City 22:17-22 – Dross 22:23-31 – Wild Animals 23 – Abominations of the Daughters

- Ch. 24-33 (Day 5- Swarms & Gentiles) – Climax of Messages Section- The Destruction of Jerusalem

- Note that judgement begins with the house of God in ch. 24.
- In chapters 24-33a, we will see God's judgments on the "swarm" of Gentile nations around Israel.
- Seven nations will be judged:
  - 1. Ammon – 25:1-7

- 2. Moab – 25:8-11
- 3. Edom – 25:12-14
- 4. Philistia – 25:15-17
- 5. Tyre – 26:1-28:19
- 6. Sidon – 28:19-24

– "Even in the midst of all of this judgment and wrath on Israel and the nations around her, there is yet hope"

– 7) Egypt – 29:1-32:32

- Ch. 33b-39 – (Day 6- Land animals & The Image of God) The False Shepherds / Yahweh the True Shepherd
  - A. 33:21-33 – Who Will Possess the Land?
    - Verses 25 and 26 give us a list of the specific "abominations" (sins) of Israel that brought about this desolation:

- 7. Eating meat with blood – Not following the dietary laws
- 8. Worshipping idols
- 9. Murder
- 10. Relying on the sword (military strength)
- 11. Abominations – These are often sins that took place in the context of the Temple
- 12. Adultery

– God repeats a question to those in the Promised Land twice: "Should you then possess the

land?" The obvious answer is, "No, not until we repent of these sins and return to a full devotion to Yahweh and His Law!" In fact, Yahweh says that those who remain in the ruined Promised Land will suffer three additional judgments. What are they? (sword, beasts, pestilence). This reminds us of other parts of Ezekiel (Chapters 5,6,7,12, etc.) where similar judgments are detailed. It will be a total of 70 years until the Israelites in exile return to the land. **(this will be important for Daniel)**

– B. 34 – False and True Shepherds

– C. 35:1-36:15 – Mount Seir (Edom) Verses Israel's Mountains

– D. 36:16-38 – Regathering and New Heart

– Verse 24 – He will take them out of exile and bring them back to the Promised Land. This will happen 70 years after their captivity, after the defeat of Babylon by the Medes and Persians.

Cyrus the Persian ruler will issue a decree ordering the exiles to return to the Promised Land and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (see Ezra 1:1-4).

– Verse 25 – He will cleanse (forgive) them from their uncleanness and idolatry

– Verse 26-27 – He will give them a heart of flesh in place of their stony heart and put a new spirit in them. His Spirit will cause them to be willing and able to hear and obey the word of the Lord, to worship Him according to His law and to live lives of righteousness and mercy towards one another. 122

– Verse 28 – God will dwell among them in the Promised Land and they will be His people once again.

– Verse 29-30 – He will prosper them in the Promised Land with abundant grain and fruit so that they never need to go hungry again.

– C' 37:1-14 – Resurrection

– Note the language that sounds like when God breathed life into Adam

– B' 37:15-28 – Reunion Under a True Shepherd

– A' 38-39 – Gog and Magog

- Ch. 40-48 (Day 7 Final Jubilee Rest)

- "The book of Ezekiel began with the captives by the River Chebar in Babylon wondering if God had abandoned them. But God was with them as seen both in the presence of the chariot throne, and in the presence of Ezekiel, God's priest and prophet. Though the Lord desolated (left) the Temple and Jerusalem, He joined the captives in exile. Though He used Nebuchadnezzar and his armies to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, Yahweh did not abandon His people, but led them every step of the way to this Restoration Period. As the book ends, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple have been rebuilt, the worship of Yahweh has been renewed, and the people of God have been restored to their land. Yahweh has once again taken up residence in the Temple and His glory fills the place. Even the name of the city of Jerusalem has been changed to Yahweh Shammah, "The Lord is There"! (verse 35). And the rivers of the gospel now flow out to all the nations!"

#### Structure

- Subsequent revelations to Ezekiel confirm that Jerusalem and its temple will soon be demolished. Transported in a vision to the Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel witnesses a variety of idolatrous activities that desecrate the temple (Ezek.8:3–16). In light of these, God warns Ezekiel that these "great abominations" committed by the house of Israel are driving him from his sanctuary (Ezek. 8:6). Ezekiel then witnesses "the glory of the God of Israel" depart from the temple (Ezek. 9:3). Due to the people's sins, God leaves the city. As God reveals to Ezekiel, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice. For they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see'" (Ezek.9:9). Tellingly, chapters 8–11 of Ezekiel reveal that God is reticent to abandon the temple and Jerusalem. Commenting on Ezekiel 10, Taylor observes that God's departure "was only a partial departure: from inner sanctum to threshold, as if the LORD is reluctant to leave and is almost pressurized into moving further away from the idolatrous epicentre that was once his dwelling place."<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 11:23 describes how God moves "from the midst of the city" to a "mountain that is on the east side of the city." The Lord then looks over the city with regret. Ezekiel's vision of the divine abandonment of Jerusalem makes clear that the Babylonian destruction of the temple in 586 BC is not a consequence of God's failure to defend his temple-city. God himself determines what occurs; he forsakes the temple due to the people's idolatry and injustice, as Jerusalem comes under severe judgment. In subsequent visions, Ezekiel discovers that in spite of the severity of God's anger against the people of Jerusalem, God has not abandoned his plans to create on the earth a temple-city. While a variety of passages in Ezekiel look with confidence to the future, the hope of a new beginning is most graphically conveyed through Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1–14). The restoration of life to these long-dead corpses points emphatically toward a new beginning. And as Ezekiel 37 goes on to reveal, this new start will entail a restoration of city, temple, and monarchy: My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 142 hl-color:: yellow
- Whereas Ezekiel 8–11 describes God's reluctant departure from the sanctuary in Jerusalem, chapters 40–48, especially chapters 43–46, focus on God's return to a new temple. Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 144 hl-color:: yellow

#### Thematic Comments

- Ezekiel, from his home with the exiles in Babylon, similarly (to Jeremiah) envisions a time when God will send to the exiled "sheep" of Israel a new and different shepherd, unlike the shepherd-kings who have exploited God's sheep and failed to take care of them, resulting in their dispersion "over all the mountains and on every high hill" (Ezek. 34:6; cf. 34:1–22): I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the L, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. (34:23–24) Ezekiel says that during this time God will "make . . . a covenant of peace" with Israel (34:25), and his description of life under this covenant recalls the security and abundance of the garden of Eden. The Lord will "banish wild beasts from the land" (34:25). The woods, formerly feared, will now become a place of "blessing" where people go to sleep (34:26). Trees will yield fruit, the earth will produce crops, God's people will no longer be prey for the nations around them or the wild animals in their midst (34:27–

28). They will know neither hunger nor shame, and just as in the garden of Eden, God will dwell "with them" (34:29–31). God will breathe new life into their dead bones (37:1–10), just as he had given the first man the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). He will, he says to his people, "put my Spirit within you, and you shall live" (Ezek. 37:14). In Ezekiel, God at first says that he will personally search for his scattered sheep, reunite them, and feed them (Ezek. 34:11–16), and then that he will set up David his servant over them as their shepherd—"he shall feed them and be their shepherd" (34:23). Will God tend his sheep, or will a human king from David's descendants?<sup>23</sup> Matthew's Gospel answers this question. (Thielman New Creation)

- Ezekiel would have associated the glory of God with the Most Holy Place inside the Jerusalem temple. To Ezekiel's surprise, the Lord appears to him in Babylonia. This extraordinary vision signaled loudly that the sovereign Lord had not forsaken his people in Babylonia. Exile from Jerusalem did not mean abandonment by God. Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 142 hl-color:: yellow
- he major prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all concentrate on how God abandons Jerusalem, permitting the Babylonians to raze its walls and demolish the temple. With the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC the Davidic dynasty loses control of the city and the surrounding region. Everything that the Lord enabled David and Solomon to achieve in establishing Jerusalem as the holy city of God is dramatically undone. Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 91 hl-color:: yellow
- The prophet Ezekiel is also conscious of the concept of a mountain city where God dwells (e.g., Ezek. 20:40). While in the early part of his prophetic ministry he witnesses God's departure from Jerusalem, his final vision in chapters 40–48 is of a restored temple-city. Interestingly, he introduces this material with these words: In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. (Ezek. 40:2) Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 50 hl-color:: yellow
- the emphasis in chapters 40–48 is upon the return of God's glory to a renewed temple-city. This return is described most fully in chapter 43:1–9, where Ezekiel speaks of "the glory of the God of Israel . . . coming from the east" and entering the temple with the intention of living there forever. Ezekiel's vision undoubtedly anticipates God returning to dwell within the temple-city. What is less clear is the timeline for this development, especially given that the postexilic temple and city do not correspond to the description set out by Ezekiel. Scholars debate the nature of Ezekiel's visions in chapters 40–48. The weight of evidence favors seeing Ezekiel's final vision as portraying an idealized replacement temple-city. The artificiality of the vision suggests that its contents are to be understood as emblematic. Taylor sees chapters 40–48 as "idealized and essentially symbolic in character and intention."<sup>11</sup> A similar view is expressed by Block: While some elements of Ezekiel's vision of the future derive from well-known physical realities, others are quite idealistic and even unimaginable. . . . The river, whose source lies within the temple complex itself, flows through the Judean desert increasing dramatically in size, and turning the wasteland into an Edenic paradise, even healing (rāpā') the Dead Sea (47:1–12). The plan of the city is idealized as a perfect square with three gates punctuating each side to provide admittance for the twelve tribes. The emphasis on the twelve tribes itself reverses five centuries of history. The apportionment of the land of Israel among the tribes to a large extent disregards topographic and historical realities. The dimensions of the temple and the city are dominated by multiples of five, with twentyfive being a particularly common number. All in all Ezekiel's scheme appears highly contrived, casting doubt on any interpretation that expects a literal fulfillment of his plan.<sup>12</sup> Although Ezekiel's vision in chapters 40–48 is a highly idealized picture of the future, it communicates powerfully, like the concluding chapters of Isaiah, that God is still committed to the process of constructing a temple-city on the earth where he will dwell. As McConville notes, "Though the name Zion does not occur in the Book of Ezekiel, the Zion-tradition is central to its message. . . . The whole structure of the prophecy is built on the idea of a temporary withdrawal of Yahweh from Jerusalem, in expression of his wrath over a corrupt people, to be followed in due course by his triumphant return."<sup>13</sup> Anticipating a future temple-city, Ezekiel's final vision concludes with Yerushalayim, "Jerusalem," being renamed Yahweh-shammah, "The LORD Is There" (Ezek. 48:35). No indication is given, however, as to when and how this ideal city will be established. Ezekiel's vision of the restored Jerusalem is not a blueprint for the postexilic reconstruction of Jerusalem. It envisions so much more, for the fulfillment goes beyond what might be achieved by human efforts alone. Only a divine intervention of great magnitude could result in the kind of temple-city described by Ezekiel. While the imagery is temple

orientated, Ezekiel's city resembles Isaiah's vision of a God-created new Jerusalem that is to be equated with a re-created earth. Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 145 hl-color:: yellow

## Exegetical Notes

- Introductory Stuff
  - Among the citizens of Judah for whom Isaiah's vision of a new Jerusalem might have offered comfort was the prophet Ezekiel, a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. Born into a priestly family toward the end of the seventh century BC, Ezekiel expected at the age of thirty to be consecrated for ministry within the Jerusalem temple. However, in 597 BC, when he was twenty-five years old, Ezekiel was deported, along with others, from Judah to Babylonia. At thirty years of age, the age for temple service, Ezekiel had the first of various visions through which God spoke to him. Further visions came to him over the next twenty years. Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 141 hl-color:: yellow
- Chapters 40–48
  - the emphasis in chapters 40–48 is upon the return of God's glory to a renewed temple-city. This return is described most fully in chapter 43:1–9, where Ezekiel speaks of "the glory of the God of Israel . . . coming from the east" and entering the temple with the intention of living there forever. Ezekiel's vision undoubtedly anticipates God returning to dwell within the temple-city. What is less clear is the timeline for this development, especially given that the postexilic temple and city do not correspond to the description set out by Ezekiel. Scholars debate the nature of Ezekiel's visions in chapters 40–48. The weight of evidence favors seeing Ezekiel's final vision as portraying an idealized replacement temple-city. The artificiality of the vision suggests that its contents are to be understood as emblematic. Taylor sees chapters 40–48 as "idealized and essentially symbolic in character and intention."<sup>11</sup> A similar view is expressed by Block: While some elements of Ezekiel's vision of the future derive from well-known physical realities, others are quite idealistic and even unimaginable. . . . The river, whose source lies within the temple complex itself, flows through the Judean desert increasing dramatically in size, and turning the wasteland into an Edenic paradise, even healing ( rāpā' ) the Dead Sea(47:1–12). The plan of the city is idealized as a perfect square with three gates punctuating each side to provide admittance for the twelve tribes. The emphasis on the twelve tribes itself reverses five centuries of history. The apportionment of the land of Israel among the tribes to a large extent disregards topographic and historical realities. The dimensions of the temple and the city are dominated by multiples of five, with twentyfive being a particularly common number. All in all Ezekiel's scheme appears highly contrived, casting doubt on any interpretation that expects a literal fulfillment of his plan.<sup>12</sup> Although Ezekiel's vision in chapters 40–48 is a highly idealized picture of the future, it communicates powerfully, like the concluding chapters of Isaiah, that God is still committed to the process of constructing a temple-city on the earth where he will dwell. As McConville notes,"Though the name Zion does not occur in the Book of Ezekiel, the Zion-tradition is central to its message. . . . The whole structure of the prophecy is built on the idea of a temporary withdrawal of Yahweh from Jerusalem, in expression of his wrath over a corrupt people, to be followed in due course by his triumphant return."<sup>13</sup> Anticipating a future temple-city, Ezekiel's final vision concludes with Yerushalayim, "Jerusalem," being renamedYahweh-shammah, "The LORD Is There" (Ezek. 48:35). No indication is given, however, as to when and how this ideal city will be established. Ezekiel's vision of the restored Jerusalem is not a blueprint for the postexilic reconstruction of Jerusalem. It envisions so much more, for the fulfillment goes beyond what might be achieved by human efforts alone. Only a divine intervention of great magnitude could result in the kind of temple-city described by Ezekiel. While the imagery is temple orientated, Ezekiel's city resembles Isaiah's vision of a God-created new Jerusalem that is to be equated with a re-created earth. Is-type:: annotation hl-page:: 145 hl-color:: yellow