

Who Was Ezekiel? (Slightly Premillennial)

by

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There are many prophets in the Bible, aren't there? Remember, a prophet is someone to whom the Lord Himself speaks, telling him to tell others what the Lord has said.

Well, at other times we have talked about some of these prophets, haven't we? Yes, we've talked about Elijah and Elisha and Jonah and others. But, remember, I've told you that there were 4 prophets who wrote long books in the Bible, books that are named after themselves, Do you remember what we call these 4 prophets? Yes, we call them the major prophets, "major" meaning "bigger". And who are those 4 major prophets? That's right, the 4 major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. At other times we've talked about Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, so today, let's talk about the major prophet named Ezekiel. Okay?

Oh, first here is a little thing that you will find interesting! Names in the Bible often mean something. Now, "El" is a Hebrew word for God. So if you see someone's name in the Bible that has "el" in it, that means that if we were to translate that person's name into English, it would have the word "God" in it. For instance, "Dani-el" means "God is My Judge". Well, Ezeki-el's name ends in "...el", doesn't it? And it means "God Makes Strong". Isn't that interesting? When you are older, maybe you can find other names in the Bible that have "el" in them and look them up and find out what they mean. But back to Ezekiel!

Ezekiel's father's name was Buzi and he was a priest, but we don't know anything else about Ezekiel's parents. Ezekiel was a priest, too, and he lived about 600 years before Jesus came to earth. That would be about 100 years after the major prophet Isaiah. But Ezekiel lived at the same time as the other 2 major prophets, Jeremiah and Daniel.

Now, you remember, don't you, that many years before the time of the major prophets, the land of the Jews had divided into 2 separate kingdoms, hadn't it? Yes, the land had divided into the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Ezekiel lived in the kingdom of Judah. Now, the other Jewish kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, had worshipped idols and done many other evil things for years. And by the time of Ezekiel, the kingdom of Israel had already been captured by Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and the Jews there had been taken away to other lands,

Now, by Ezekiel's time, the kingdom of Judah had also been worshipping idols and doing many other wicked things. They hadn't learned from what had happened to Israel, had they? And the Lord had sent prophets to Judah to remind them of what had happened to Israel and to warn them to stop their idolatry, but the people of Judah had ignored these prophets.

Well, the Lord also gave many prophecies to Ezekiel to warn the people of Judah to stop being bad. In fact, He gave Ezekiel prophecies not only for the Jews but also for the nations around the whole land of Israel. To Egypt, Anmon, Moab, Edom, Tyre, and other lands, warning them, too, as they were also worshipping idols and being very wicked. But these countries didn't pay any attention to Ezekiel's warnings.

Ezekiel was a prophet for about 25 years, from about 575 to 600 years before Jesus came to earth. Ezekiel's book has 48 chapters in it. Many of the prophecies are about sad, unhappy things that would happen because of the people's wickedness. But also many of Ezekiel's prophecies are happy prophecies, about good things that would happen later. In fact, the last 8 chapters of the book of Ezekiel are full of tellings about a happy time that will someday come.

Well, Ezekiel prophesied about the city of Jerusalem which was there in the kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem was where the Lord's temple was, wasn't it? Ezekiel warned that very bad things would happen in Jerusalem because of their wickedness and that it would be destroyed. He told the Jews these prophecies during the time of the last 2 kings of Judah, King Jehoiachin and King Zedekiah.

What? The last 2 kings? Didn't the Jews have any more kings after that? No. Well, at least not Jewish kings from the tribe of Judah, which tribe the Lord had said the kings were to come from. Though later, about 100 years before Jesus came to earth, there were several Jewish rulers from the tribe of Levi. But other than that, after Zedekian only other countries would have kings over the land of Israel. Yes, the countries of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome ruled Israel at different times. But the Jews never had their own real king from the tribe of Judah again.

But someday they will have their own king again. And this King will be from the tribe of Judah. Who will that king be? Yes, that King will be Jesus! This will happen when the Lord Jesus comes back again and sets up His kingdom and is King over the whole world! And, remember, Jesus' mother Mary was from the tribe of Judah! But we're getting ahead of our story; we'll talk more about that later. Let's go back to what we were talking about earlier.

So, the land of Judah was being so wicked that finally the Lord let Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, come and capture it. And many of the Jews were taken away as captives to the country of Babylon. Ezekiel was one of the men who was taken to Babylon at that time. Then several years later Nebuchadnezzar took more of the Jews away to Babylon, and that second time Daniel was taken to Babylon where he became a great prophet. Also, the prophet Jeremiah was there in Jerusalem at that time, too, but he was not taken away to Babylon; he was allowed to stay there. Yes, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel all lived at the same time, didn't they? Though Daniel was the youngest of them. (I wonder if they knew each other? But the Bible doesn't tell us.)

It seems that all of Ezekiel's prophecies in the book of Ezekiel were given after he was taken away to Babylon. I don't know if Ezekiel had been a prophet before then, back in Jerusalem, but he was certainly a great prophet when he was in Babylon.

Now, when Ezekiel was taken as a captive to Babylon, Jerusalem was still a city, and the temple was still in Jerusalem. But there in Jerusalem the people were worshipping idols instead of worshipping the Lord. In fact, they even had idols in the Lord's temple and were doing many other wicked things there! Can you imagine that?! So the Lord gave Ezekiel 2 amazing visions about this.

And in these 2 visions, Ezekiel actually saw the Lord! Wow! Visions of the Lord! These visions were both after Ezekiel had been taken away to Babylon but before Jerusalem was destroyed. Now, in his book, Ezekiel describes what he saw in these visions. I think that must have been hard for him to do, as what he saw was very different from anything he'd ever seen before. But let's see what he said.

In this first vision, Ezekiel was by the river Chebar in the land of Babylon. (This was actually a canal there in Babylon, but it's called a river.) Ezekiel looked, and he saw a whirlwind coming, a great cloud, and there was fire in it and shininess around it. And in the middle of all of this he saw 4 strange living creatures. They were cherubim. (I've told you about cherubim before, haven't I?)

Then Ezekiel described the cherubim. He said that they looked like men, but they each had 4 faces and 4 wings! Wow! And they had feet like a calf's foot, I guess like hooves. And they sparkled like shiny brass. Under their wings were hands like men's hands, and 2 of their wings were stretched out so that they were joined to each other. With the other 2 wings, they covered their bodies. And they would go straight ahead without turning.

And then Ezekiel talked about the faces of the cherubim. As I just told you, he said that each living creature had 4 faces. From what he wrote, it sounds to me as if they each had the face of a man on the front of their heads, the face of an eagle on the back of their heads, the face of a lion on the right side, and the face of an ox on the left side. And they looked bright and shiny, like burning coals of fire and like lamps. And lightning went out of the fire. When they moved, it looked like flashes of lightning!

Then as Ezekiel was looking at these amazing, living creatures, he saw that they each had a wheel with them. It looked as if these 4 wheels touched the earth. And it looked as if there was another wheel inside of each wheel. Wheels within wheels! And the rims of the wheels were very tall and were full of eyes!! And Ezekiel said that the spirit of the cherubim was in the wheels! You can see why it might have been hard for Ezekiel to describe these living creatures, can't you?! And he said that when they flew, it made a very loud noise, like a big waterfall or an army.

Up above these 4 living creatures was like a sky, and there was like a throne in this sky above them, and there was like a man on the throne. And this Person on the throne shown like fire, and there was like a bright rainbow around Him. This was like the glory of the Lord. Yes, the Lord was on that throne above the cherubim!! And it scared Ezekiel so much that he fell down on his face. I don't blame him for being scared, do you?!

Then the Lord spoke to Ezekiel and said to him, "Stand up on your feet, and I will speak to you."

Then the spirit entered Ezekiel, and he stood up and listened to the Lord. And the Lord told him that He was sending him to the Jewish people. Ezekiel was to tell them that they had disobeyed the Lord, rebelled against Him. And the Lord said that whether the people listened to him or not, that Ezekiel wasn't to be afraid but was to tell the people what the Lord said.

Then another strange thing happened in this vision. Ezekiel saw a hand come to him with a scroll in it. This scroll was spread out before Ezekiel, and it was full of writing, writings about bad things that would happen. Then the Lord told Ezekiel to eat the scroll! So in his vision, Ezekiel opened his mouth and ate it. And the Lord said, "Now go to the house of Israel (the Jews) and speak my words to them."

But what did that mean, eating the scroll? Why when Ezekiel ate the scroll in the vision, it was like a picture that now Ezekiel was full of the Lord's words, wasn't it? And he was to tell these words to the Jews.

Then the spirit took Ezekiel up, and he heard behind him a great voice saying, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord in this place." And he heard the noise of the wings of the 4 living creatures, the noise of their wheels, and a great rushing sound. And the spirit lifted Ezekiel up and took him away, and that was the end of that vision.

That was an exciting vision, wasn't it?! But Ezekiel was very unhappy. Now why would he be unhappy? Yes, he was unhappy because of all the bad things that were going to happen to the Jews -- and he had to tell them about it.

Then the Lord made Ezekiel strong, so he went to where the Jews were there by the river Chebar. Ezekiel sat down and was astonished for 7 days. Then the Lord spoke to him again. The Lord told Ezekiel that he must warn the people, telling them what the Lord had said. In fact, the Lord told Ezekiel that if he did not warn the people, then when they were destroyed, it would be Ezekiel's fault for not having warned them. But if he did warn them, then it would be the people's own fault, because they wouldn't have paid attention to the warning.

And the Lord told Ezekiel to take a tile. On this tile he was to show the Jews how

Nebuchadnezzar was going to capture Jerusalem, and that this time Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Jerusalem. So day by day Ezekiel who was there in Babylon, showed the Jews there in Babylon what was happening back in Jerusalem. Now, they didn't have newspapers or radios or television or internet to tell them the things that were happening way over in Jerusalem, did they? So the Lord let Ezekiel know what was happening, and then Ezekiel would show the people on that tile. Now, I don't know just how he told them, whether he sort of built with little blocks and moved the blocks around on the tile or drew pictures on the tile or what. But some way Ezekiel was able to show them what was going on over in Jerusalem.

But Jerusalem was a special city to the Lord, wasn't it? And the Lord's temple was there. Why, hundreds of years before this, the Lord had said that Jerusalem was His own city and that He'd put his name on Jerusalem. So why was the Lord allowing these bad things to happen to Jerusalem? Was that unfair of the Lord? No. The Lord is never unfair, and He was going to prove this to Ezekiel.

How did He prove it? Well, a while later the Lord gave Ezekiel another vision. Yes, Ezekiel was sitting in his house in Babylon with some of the leaders of the Jews, and he had another vision. And in this vision he saw someone who looked like fire. And then he saw a hand. And in this vision, the hand took hold of Ezekiel and lifted him up and took him back from Babylon over to Jerusalem and to the temple there. Now, this was a vision, wasn't it? Ezekiel himself was still in Babylon, but the Lord was letting him see Jerusalem and the temple as if he were actually there. And there Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord, the same as he had seen it before. And the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Look around you."

So Ezekiel looked around him

And the Lord said, "Do you see what they are doing here?"

And the Lord showed Ezekiel that there were idols there, idols actually inside of the Lord's temple! And there were paintings of idols on the walls of the temple! And lots of the elders of the Jews were there. And what do you think these leaders were doing? Why, they had censers with incense and were burning incense to these idols, these false gods! They were not only doing this evil thing, they were actually doing it there in the Lord's temple! How wicked of them!! And also how very foolish of them to be worshipping idols. Why, idols are just something that people make and say it is a god! But the Lord God is the only God, isn't He? And only the Lord God is to be worshipped!

And they should have known better than to do these wicked things. Why? Because not only had the Lord's prophets told them, but they had the Law that many years before the Lord had given to Moses for the Jews. We call this the Law of Moses. And this Law told them what was right and what was wrong. So those men didn't really have any excuse for the evil things they were doing, did they? No. They had both prophets and the Law.

Then the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Do you see what the elders of Israel are doing? They say that I, the Lord, don't see them. They say that the Lord has left the earth." (Of course, the Lord sees everything, doesn't He? Yes. He sees both the good things that people do and the bad things that people do.)

Then the Lord showed Ezekiel a bunch of women outside of the temple who were crying for a false god!

Then the Lord showed Ezekiel the door of the temple, and there were 25 men there. And what were these 25 men doing? Why, they had their backs to the temple and were worshipping the sun! Imagine that?! Again, how very foolish, as well as how very wicked of them! Why, the Lord had made the sun, hadn't He? Those men should have been worshipping the Lord, the Creator, not worshipping something the Lord had made, shouldn't they?!

Then Ezekiel saw the cherubim again like he'd seen them before. And he saw the Lord on the throne above them and the glory of the Lord there above the cherubim. And the Lord told Ezekiel that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed and that many people there would be killed. Why? Because of their evil ways.

And did this happen? Did the Lord allow Jerusalem, His city, to be destroyed? Yes. A few years after that, Nebuchadnezzar went back to Jerusalem and captured the rest of the Jews who were there. And many of the Jews were killed, and the rest were taken away as prisoners to Babylon. Daniel was one of the Jews who was captured at this time, though Daniel himself hadn't been worshipping idols.

And this time Nebuchadnezzar had Jerusalem destroyed. Yes, the walls around the city were knocked down, and the houses were knocked down, and the golden furniture of the temple was taken away, and the temple itself was knocked down. Nothing was left of the temple.

Now why did Nebuchadnezzar come back and do that? Well, you see, the first time that he had come, the time when Ezekiel was one of the captives, Nebuchadnezzar had told Jerusalem that they were to pay taxes to him every year. They did that for a few years, then they rebelled and stopped paying him taxes. So this time Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed the city and the temple and took many more of them as captives.

Of course, it is sad that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. But what had the Lord shown Ezekiel? Yes, after all of the warnings that the people had been given, they were still worshipping false gods and idols, and even putting idols in the Lord's temple, and doing many other very wicked things. They were disobeying the Lord in all sorts of ways, and they didn't care that they were disobeying Him. And they were ignoring the Law of God that had been given to Moses. So, though it is sad, it was their

own fault that the temple was destroyed and that they were taken as prisoners, wasn't it? And the Lord was right in punishing them, wasn't He? Yes. He had warned them and warned them that they must stop being bad or else He would punish them. But they hadn't paid any attention to these warnings, had they? And the Lord had been very patient with them, but they had just kept on being wicked. So the Lord had let Nebuchadnezzar come and destroy them as a punishment, though Nebuchadnezzar didn't know that he was doing it because the Lord was letting him. And it was fair for them to be punished then, wasn't it? Yes, the Lord God is always fair and always right in what He does, isn't He?

And the Lord wasn't being mean to the Jewish nation. Actually, He was teaching the Jewish nation that they must obey Him, that He was the only God. The Lord loved the Jewish nation, His special people, and he wanted them to be good so that He could bless them. So He was disciplining the Jewish nation to teach them to obey Him, wasn't He?

Now, when my children were small, sometime I had to discipline them. I didn't like to do that, but I wanted to teach them to obey me, and this was for their own good. For instance, I had to teach them not to go into the street. Why? Yes, because I loved them and didn't want them to be hit by a car. Well, God is our heavenly Father, isn't He? And He loves the Jewish nation (and us!) very much, so He wanted good things for the Jewish nation, and sometimes He had to discipline them to teach the nation not to do bad things.

Well, by the time that Jerusalem was destroyed, Ezekiel had already been in Babylon for 11 years, And Ezekiel had settled down by what is called the River Chebar. And Ezekiel was married and he had a house there. The other Jewish elders would come to his house and talk with him, asking his advice and asking him what the Lord had told him. Yes, even though the people had ignored the Lord's prophecies when they were back in the land of Judah, now in Babylon Ezekiel was respected very much and the Jewish people there in Babylon knew he was a prophet and paid attention to him.

Well, Ezekiel had prophesied about the bad things, the punishment, that would happen to the Jews in Jerusalem, hadn't he? And now that these bad things had happened, now the Lord gave Ezekiel other prophecies that were to comfort the Jews in Babylon, to encourage them and give them hope.

One way the Lord did this was that He gave Ezekiel yet another vision, a very exciting vision. I'm not going to describe this exciting vision today, but sometime if you want to, you can read about it in the 37th chapter of the book of Ezekiel. And this vision was to give hope to the Jews. How? Well, now that the Jews were in foreign countries and not in their own land, they sort of felt as if their Jewish nation was dead. But in this vision the Lord tells them that some day the Jewish nation will be alive again, sort of as if the nation itself were resurrected. And that was a happy thought, wasn't it? Yes, it gave them hope.

How was it to give them hope? Well, you see, the Jewish nation had been punished for their great disobedience to the Lord, hadn't it? And they were learning the lesson that they were being taught by this. And now they were gone out of Israel and were scattered around in other countries. The kingdom of Israel was in Assyria. The kingdom of Judah was in Babylon and other countries. The Jews felt as if their nation, the nation of Jews, was gone, was dead. But the Lord was telling them in this vision that they would some day again be a nation and again be back in their own country, in the land of Israel, and they would be alive as a nation. And, most importantly, they would know that the Lord is God, the only God. This vision gave them hope, encouraged them, didn't it? By the way, the Jewish nation never again made idols; they never again worshipped false gods. They had learned that lesson.

Well, the Lord also gave other prophecies to Ezekiel for him to tell the Jews. These prophecies would also give them hope. In fact, as I said earlier, in the last several chapters of the book of Ezekiel, the Lord tells about very happy times. About the time when the Lord comes back to earth and sets up His kingdom.

Hey! Wait a minute! I said when the Lord comes back to earth. Has the Lord already been here on earth? Yes, of course! When? Why, when Jesus, God the Son, came to earth 2000 years ago! Yes, remember the Christmas story of when Jesus was born in Bethlehem? And remember all of the true stories in the New Testament part of the Bible of when Jesus had grown up and performed miracles? And remember the Easter story when Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and then 3 days later was alive again, was resurrected? And He is still alive in heaven, isn't He?

But why did Jesus come to earth that first time? Yes, God loves us so much that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth as a human (though He was still God, too, both human and God at the same time), and He came so that He could make a way for us to be able to go be with Him in heaven some day. And what did Jesus do to make this way for us? Yes, He died on the cross to pay for our sins, didn't He? And then Jesus rose from the dead, was resurrected, and He is still alive in heaven. And if we trust in Jesus to save us from our sins, He will. Then we can be with Him some day in heaven. But remember, the Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus is also coming back to earth someday, And everyone who has trusted in Him will be with Him. We will be with the Lord forever!

Yes, Ezekiel and many other prophets wrote down prophecies about when the Lord Jesus someday will come back again to earth. And then the Lord Jesus will set up His kingdom and be King not only of the Jewish nation, but of all nations, of everyone and everything all over the whole world!

And the prophet Ezekiel wrote about a very big, very beautiful temple that will be built in Jerusalem when the Lord Jesus comes back to earth. and everyone will go there to worship the Lord -- not just Jews, but everyone!! All nations!! And Ezekiel describes this great temple in the last several chapters of his book, and we can read about it there. Yes,

Ezekiel and other prophets describe many things that will happen after Jesus comes back.

Now, the Lord always keeps His promises, doesn't He? We can look back in history and see many prophecies that the Lord gave to prophets and how these prophecies really happened, can't we? So we know that this good time will really happen someday, too, don't we? Yes, we can trust the Lord God to do what He says through His prophets. And the Bible has many, many other prophecies about the good times that there will be when He comes back someday.

Well, the major prophet Ezekiel was really a great prophet, wasn't he? Did you enjoy hearing about him. I hope so; I certainly enjoyed telling you about him!