

The Book of ezeziel

“Know that
I am the Lord!”

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

The Vision of Ezekiel by Raphael, 1518

Ezekiel?!

Who or what is God? What is this God like? (And behind these, is there a God?) And then, how does my existence fit with this God? Knowing God is a fundamental concern of life.

Jim Packer, author of "Knowing God", cites the great late-1800s preacher Charles Spurgeon, "the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father." [p13].

He adds, anticipating an objector who would assert impracticality, "it is the most practical project anyone can engage in. Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives." [p15]

And,

"What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. ... What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. ... Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord." [p31]

This is the overriding concern of the Prophetic Book, Ezekiel. In it, over 70 times, the Lord says that people will "know that I am the Lord". Sometimes this refers to his enemies, sometimes even to trees but most of all it is to his own people.

This theme goes back to the Book of Exodus. God "came down" to rescue his chosen people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt and to give them the Land of Canaan in fulfilment of his promises and covenant (contract) to their forefather, Abraham [Exo.3:7-9 with Gen.12:1-3]. He revealed himself to Moses as "I am who I am", Yahweh (commonly translated "the LORD") [Exo.3:13-15]. Amongst other things this suggests he is the one who really is, the one true God, and "he will be who he will be" - that is, he will be known in his future works. He later explained to Moses that both Israel and the Egyptians "shall know that I am the LORD" when he rescues the Israelites and judges the Egyptians in fulfilment of his promises [Exo.6:5-8 & 7:4-5] - that is, God was known by his mighty works fulfilling his contracted promises. All this he would do by the glory of his Presence [Exo.11:11-12; 13:21-22; 14:19-20] and from then the LORD's Glory or Presence would be among them [16:6-7,10; 19:4,9-11,16-20; 24:9-11; 25:8; 40:34-38].

Again in Ezekiel's time he was to be so known. *Why is knowing God important to you?*

Ezekiel's Situation

Knowing the situation behind the writing of Ezekiel helps grasp the meaning and significance of its contents. Unlike the original readers who knew automatically (since it was written to their situation), modern readers benefit from background briefing.

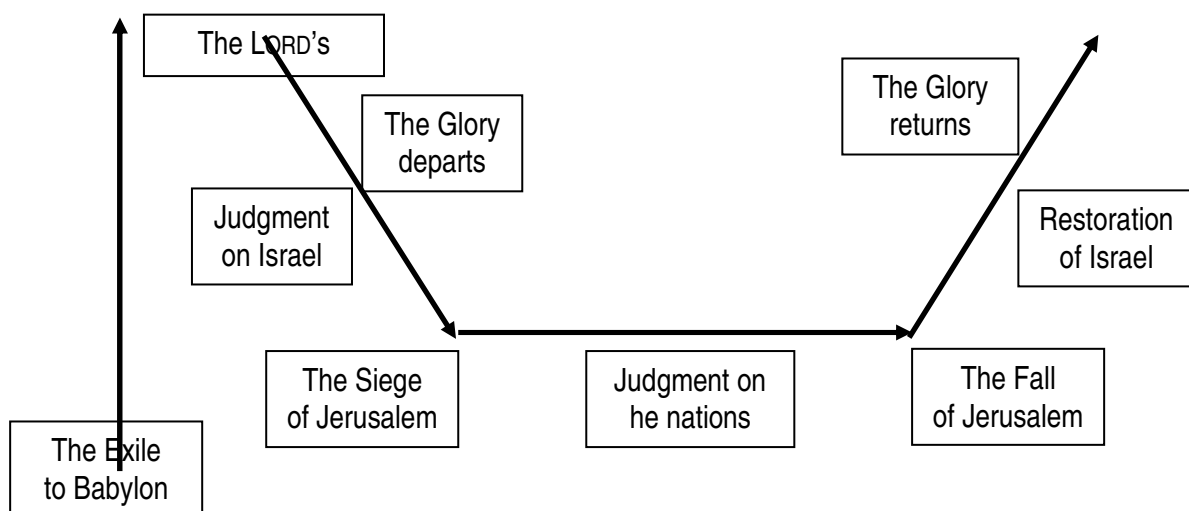
By the time of Ezekiel the Israelites had been reduced to just one tribe, that of Judah. They had lived in the Promised Land under the covenant's promises of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience [Deut.28]. The ultimate curse was that they would be exiled from the Land. The Northern Kingdom, Israel (the northern tribes that had split from King David's and King Solomon's successors) had had only unfaithful and wicked kings who led their nation into rebellion. In punishment the Lord gave them over to conquest by the Assyrians in 722BC who deported them, never to return. The Southern Kingdom, Judah, centered on Jerusalem, had had a few faithful and righteous kings but had also fallen into rebellion. The Lord gave them over to the Babylonians in 597BC who deported King Jehoiachin, the nobility and the temple priesthood to Babylon and replaced him with a puppet king. Ezekiel was among these deported priests. After uprisings Jerusalem fell and was destroyed in 587BC. Ezekiel ministered among the exiles up to and after Jerusalem's destruction.

What issues would have been raised by the Exile?

Ezekiel's Structure

Because Ezekiel is such a large, unusual and unfamiliar book, a grasp of the big picture helps not to get lost in the details.

Ezekiel is a compilation of oracles given at specified dates during the Exile (a bit like a collection of sermons through troubled times). These oracles divide into three broad sections: chapters 1-24a relating prophecies of judgment against Judah climaxing in Jerusalem's fall; 24b-33a, prophecies of judgment against Judah's enemies; and 33b-48, prophecies of restoration for Jerusalem. Three visions frame these oracles and reflect the movement from judgment to restoration: chapter 1 relates a vision of the LORD's glory; 10, the LORD's glory departing the temple and Jerusalem; and 40-48, the LORD's glory returning to a new temple.



1:1-2	5 th yr 4 th month of exile	Prophecies against Israel	Vision of LORD's Glory
8:1	6 th yr 6 th month	"	Vision of LORD's Glory departing
20:1	7 th yr 5 th month	"	
24:1	9 th yr 10 th month	Prophecy of Jerusalem's siege Prophecies against nations	
26:1	11 th yr 1 st day	"	
29:1	10 th yr 10 th month	"	
30:20	11 th yr 1 st month	"	
31:1	11 th yr, 3 rd month	"	
32:1	12 th yr 12 th month	"	
32:17	12 th yr 12 th month	"	
		Prophecy against Israel Report of Jerusalem's fall	
33:21	12 th yr 10 th month	Prophecies of restoration	
40:1	25 th yr 1 st month	"	Vision of LORD's Glory returning

Within these oracles are sections of narrative: the visions of the Lord's glory and briefer descriptions (such as "The Spirit lifted me up" [3:12 & 11:1]; and "Then certain elders of Israel came to me" [14:1]. These provide a context for the following messages and break up the longer clusters of messages.

The messages are typically introduced "The word of the LORD's came to me" and are to Ezekiel for himself (typically introduced "Son of Man") and to Ezekiel for Israel (typically introduced "thus says the Lord"). These provide sub-sections that are more easily absorbed.

Ezekiel today

Several concerns shape these studies:

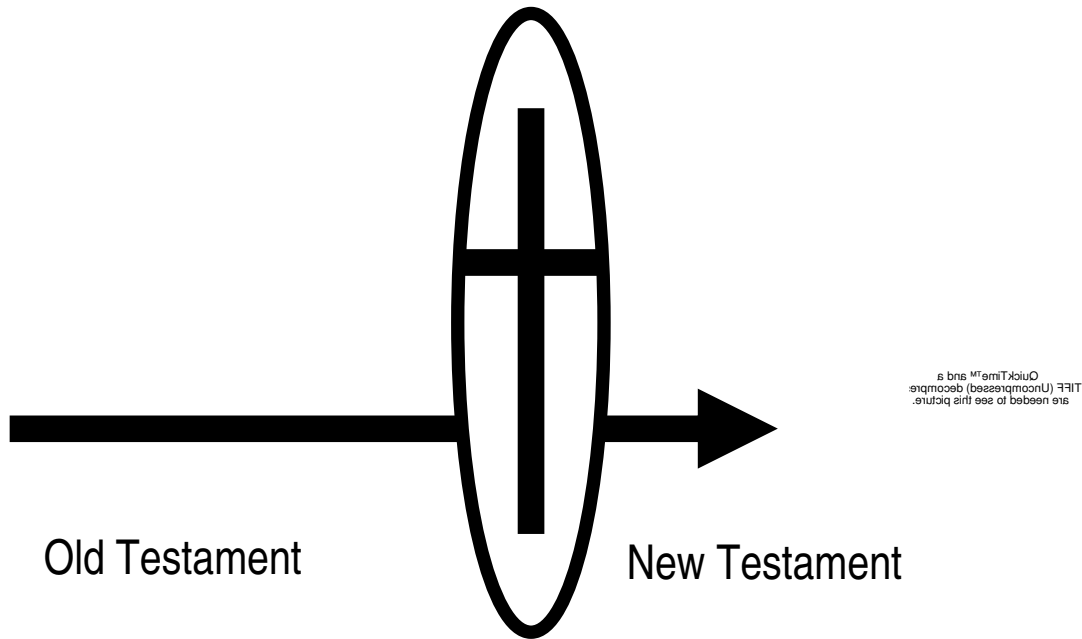
1. That they faithfully reflect Ezekiel – So these studies follow the sections and main sub-sections identified above. Yet because of limited time and space several sections and sub-sections are skipped over and most studies simply focus on a key passage within each section or sub-section while still providing summary explanations of the surrounding material.

2. That people read Ezekiel for themselves - So although not all sections or sub-sections will be covered in depth with questions, users are encouraged to read and reflect on these other passages for themselves.

3. That people chew over Ezekiel for themselves - So the questions and activities encourage analysis for oneself rather than simply posing questions directed towards some predetermined answer, e.g. "What does Ezekiel say in verse X about Y?"

4. That passages are firstly understood in their original context and then its ideas and challenges are rightly translated and applied to the contemporary situation. Proper translation from then to now is critical. The following model is used ...

Old contract ... New contract



Like looking through eye-glasses, the Old Testament is read and filtered through the cross of Christ.

i. The Plan of Salvation – Ezekiel and the Exile (like the rest of the Old Testament) are part of God's big story of salvation. It is another stage leading up to the climax in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important to ask, "How does this lead towards the coming of Christ?"

ii. Patterns of Salvation – Ezekiel and the Exile (also like the rest of the Old Testament) establish patterns that anticipate and are reflected in the climactic salvation in the coming of Christ. It is important to rightly answer, "What are the New Testament equivalents for key elements in the story?"

On the above diagram, list the following elements on the Old Testament side and their equivalents on the New Testament side: Glory-Presence in the temple; the temple sacrifices; the (Promised) Land; God's people Israel-Judah; and the Prophet.

#1 The Overwhelming God

A Vision of the Glory of the LORD

Ezekiel 1

Opener - “Awesome” is nowadays an overused word. *What strikes you as truly awesome? How do you respond?*

Intro – The opening oracle-section of the Ezekiel extends from chapters 1-7. (See Ezekiel’s Structure in the introduction above.) Because of its size and importance in setting up the book it is explored over three studies.

Ezekiel opens with dates and places [1:1-3]. It is 592BC and Ezekiel, a priest, is in Babylon amongst the exiles taken there in 597BC. (See Ezekiel’s Situation in the introduction or a Bible dictionary.) *What issues would the exile have raised for Israel-Judah?*

There in exile “the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel”. The priest began to prophesy. He sees a vision of the glory of the Lord. The Lord’s glory is the radiance of his Presence. It protected and provided for the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt and journeying through the wilderness [Exo.13:20-22 & 14:19-20]. It was closely associated with the goodness of his character [Exo.33:17-34:7]. It settled permanently on the tabernacle (tent) and later the temple as the Lord dwelt there amongst his people. So overwhelming was his Presence that Moses and the Priests could not enter [Exo.25:8 & 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:1-11].

Breaking it down – Ezekiel relates four snap-shots of the vision:

- 4-14 He firstly looks into the storm and sees four living creatures.
- 15-21 Then, while looking at them, he sees a wheel next to each.
- 22-25 Then he looks up and sees an expanse above them.
- 26-28 And lastly above the expanse, he sees a throne with a human-like figure seated upon it.

Read chapter 1, noting these snap-shots.

Listing the details - *List what Ezekiel sees in each snap-shot.*

- 1.

2.

3.

4.

What was Ezekiel's response?

Summing it up - *Sum up this opening vision sub-section (c1).*

Putting it together - *What would've been the significance and impact of this vision for Ezekiel and the exiles?*

Looking through the cross

Pattern - *How is the Lord's glory revealed and experienced in the New Testament?*

John 1:14-18 & Hebrews 1:1-3

Acts 7:54-60

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

2 Corinthians 3:7-4:18

Revelation 21:9-27

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

4.

5.

6.

Carrying Ezekiel to the exiles in Babylon (12-15) marks them out as the primary audience for his ministry. In the third movement (16-21), the Lord again addresses Ezekiel "Son of Man". Falling on the face and being stood back on the feet (22-27), closes the call-commission as it opened. *List the key points that the Lord tells him in 16-21.*

Summing it up – *Sum up this call-commission sub-section (c2-3).*

Putting it together – *How does this fit with the opening vision of the Lord's glory?*

Looking through the cross

Pattern – *What role or ministry does Ezekiel's equate to in the New Testament?*

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#3 Shave Your Head
Acted Illustrations of the Siege of Jerusalem
Ezekiel 4-7

Opener – ‘A picture tells a thousand words’. *When have symbolic actions made a lasting impact upon you?*

Intro – Having been called and commissioned, Ezekiel is set to task amongst the exiles. The remainder of the Book’s opening oracle-section relates Ezekiel’s opening ministry and message to the exiles – prophecies of judgment in an impending siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Breaking it down –

Chapters 4 & 5 Both open, “And you, Son of Man, take ...” and relate symbolic actions Ezekiel is to undertake. Chapter 5’s action leads into prophetic speech (v5-17) with the classic introduction, “Thus says the Lord ...”

Chapters 6 & 7 Both open, “The Word of the Lord came to me: ...” and relate two “thus says the Lord” speeches each (6:3-10; 6:11-14; 7:1-4; 7:5-27).

Read chapters 4-7 noting these sub-sections.

Listing the details – *What symbolic actions is Ezekiel told to undertake in chapters 4 & 5?*

List the key points of the prophetic speech in 5:5-17.

How is this speech emphasised?

List the key points of the prophetic speech in 6:3-10.

Chapter 7's prophetic speeches reiterate these main points. *What will be the outcome of this judgment (5:13; 6:7,10,13,14; 7:9,27)?*

Summing it up – *Sum up the overall thrust of this opening prophetic action-speech sub-section.*

Putting it together – *How does this fit with the preceding vision of the Lord's glory and Ezekiel's call-commission?*

What impact would it have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *What is the history from the Exile to the coming of Christ?*

What does the New Testament view as the ultimate restoration of God's people?

Luke 1:76-80; 3:1-6 (Isa.40:3-5); 4:16-19 (Isa.60:1-2)

Pattern – *How is God known through his righteous judgment in the New Testament?*

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#4 The Day God Moves Out
A Vision of the Glory of the LORD Departing Jerusalem
Ezekiel 8-10

Opener – Sometimes, despite all good intentions, situations and behaviour goes beyond tolerable limits.
Have you ever walked out in disgust?

Intro – Ezekiel's second oracle-section extends from chapters 8-19. Because of its size it is explored over four studies – two for each of its two halves.

It opens with a date, about a year later; a place, Ezekiel's house in Babylon; and people, the elders of Judah in exile – the primary audience. Then and there and in front of them, Ezekiel sees another vision of the Lord's glory. This time it is departing the temple (and next the city of Jerusalem).

Breaking it down – The vision is related over several scenes from chapters 8-11. It is split into two:

8-10 Firstly, after a scathing examination of temple practices the Lord's glory departs the temple.
11 Then after a similar critique of Jerusalem's leadership the glory departs the city.

In 8 Ezekiel is lifted up again by the Spirit (wind) and carried to the Jerusalem temple where he is led on a temple tour and shown the idolatrous practices there.

In 9 With the glory of the threshold of the temple, Ezekiel is shown executioners sent out in judgment but only after the faithful are marked for protection.

In 10 Ezekiel sees the glory depart the temple.

Read chapters 8-10 noting these movements.

Listing the details – *List the idolatrous practices Ezekiel is shown in the temple (8:5-18)?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

What explanation does the Lord give for issuing such severe justice (9:9-10)?

Note how Idolatry and injustice are linked. How and why do they occur together?

Summing it up – *Sum up this part of the vision of the Lord's glory departing.*

Putting it together – *How does this fit with the preceding opening oracle-section?*

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Pattern – *What does the Apostle Paul write about idolatry and wider immorality in ...*

1 Corinthians 10:1-22

Ephesians 5:3-5 & Colossians 3:5-6

How do the human-like figures (8:2 & 9:2b-6) anticipate Christ (Revelation 1:12-16 & 7:1-8 with 20:12, 15 & 21:27)?

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#5 Pack Your Bags
An Acted Illustration of the Exile
Ezekiel 11-13

Opener – Journeys can be great adventures and experiences. They can also be painfully unwelcome. *Have you had to make an unwelcome journey?*

Intro – The vision of the departure of the Lord’s glory continues and is completed in chapter 11. Having left the temple, the glory now departs Jerusalem. As the glory’s departure was woven with judgment of the idolatry there, so now the glory’s departure from the city is woven with judgment of Israel’s leadership.

Breaking it down –

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Chapter 11 | The second stage of the glory’s departure: |
| 11:1-13 | This is marked and begun by the Spirit (wind) again lifting up and carrying Ezekiel, this time to east gate of the temple and 25 men there. There the Spirit (wind) falls upon him and he is given a message of judgment for such men. |
| 11:14-24 | The vision then closes with a surprising message of future restoration for the exiles, before the glory leaves the city and the Spirit (wind) again lifts Ezekiel up and carries him back to Babylon. |
| Chapters 12-13 | The vision is followed by another series of prophetic actions and messages of judgment, each marked by the introduction, “The word of the Lord came to: “Son of Man ...” |
| 12:1-20 | Ezekiel is then instructed to perform two prophetic actions of judgment: bringing out baggage as symbol of being taken into exile and eating and drinking with trembling as a symbol of the coming violent destruction. |
| 12:21-25 | The Lord then tells Ezekiel that although the people doubt the messages or consider them far off they are true and will come true soon (12:21-25). |
| 13:1-23 | The closing message is a long one made up of five pieces introduced, “Thus says the Lord ...” (13:3-7, 8-12, 13-16, 17-19 & 20-23) The first two condemn false prophets and the last two wider injustices. |

Read chapters 11-13, identifying the verses for these actions and messages.

Listing the details – *What explanation does the Lord give for his judgment of the 25 men (11:1-13)?*

(We will return to the message of future restoration for the exiles [11:14-21] later.)
What wrongs of the false prophets are condemned (13:3-12)?

What false hope do they hold out? How do they match the wrongs of the 25 men?

What wider injustices are condemned (13:17-23)?

In the middle of the messages of judgment against the Israelites, comes the message of future restoration for the exiles (11:14-21). *What does the Lord promise for the exiles? What is Israel's real hope?*

Summing it up – *Sum up the overall point of this sub-section of vision and messages?*

Putting it together – *How does this fit with the preceding opening oracle-section?*

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *How are the Lord's promises of restoration to the exiles ultimately fulfilled through Christ (Galatians 5:16-26)?*

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#6 The Bad Bad Bride
An Allegory of Israel's Unfaithfulness
Ezekiel 14-17

Opener – *Have you ever known unwarranted betrayal to be met by unwarranted mercy?*

Intro – After the vision of the glory's departure and following prophetic messages "certain of the elders of Israel" interrupt (14:1). This breaks this second and long oracle-section (8-13 & 14-19). Its second half will also be explored over two studies. Again the theme continues to be judgment on Jerusalem's unfaithfulness and her wicked leaders.

Breaking it down – This second half of the second oracle-section is made up of seven prophetic messages (again introduced, "The word of the Lord came to me ...") and a closing song.

- 14:1-10 Message of judgment on idolatrous elders and false prophets.
- 14:11-23 Message of judgment on Jerusalem with individual responsibility.
- 15:1-8 Riddle of a useless vine.
- 16:1-63 Allegory of a faithless bride.
- 17:1--24 Riddle of two eagles and a vine
- 18:1-32 Message of individual responsibility.
- 19:1-14 Lament for the princes of Israel.

Listing the details – The opening message and closing lament continue the theme of coming judgment on Jerusalem's wicked leaders. *Read 14:1-10 & 19:1-14, noting these recurrent themes.*

The message of 14:11-23 & 18:1-32 introduce and deal with new theme of individual responsibility. (These are explored in the next study.)

Read the two riddle chapters; 15 & 17. What question does the Lord pose to Ezekiel (15)? What point is he making?

What riddle does the Lord tell Ezekiel to pose to Israel's royal house (17)? What point is he making?

Read the long central allegory of the unfaithful bride (16). Outline the stages of the history of the relationship (1-34) ...

1-4

5-7

8-14

15-22

23-29

30-34

Outline the future stages of this relationship (35-63) ...

35-43

44-52

53-58

59-63

Summing it up – *Sum up the thrust of this sub-section, in particular, the central allegory.*

Putting it together - *How does this pull together the themes so far?*

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *How did Christ ultimately bring the atonement and new covenant promised in Ezekiel (Hebrews 8-9)?*

How does the exile-restoration in Christ reassert the basis on which people may stand before God (Ezekiel 16:63 with Romans 3:19-26)?

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#7 Don't Blame Your Parents!
A Lesson in Individual Responsibility
Ezekiel 18

Opener – Some older folk observe an increasing tendency not to take responsibility for oneself but to look for someone else to blame; parents, teachers, society, anyone. *Have you observed this?*

Intro – This study explores the two messages reaffirming individual responsibility (14:12-23 & 18:1-32).

The covenant at Mount Sinai had emphasised a corporate responsibility amongst the nation and families. [See the national blessings and curses, Deuteronomy 28 and the revelation of God's glory and character to Moses, Exodus 34:6-7.] God's also always operated with consideration for individual responsibility. (God in his infinite wisdom can mix the two.) By the exile the debt of national wickedness left a great burden on that generation, which they then added to for themselves. The exile-restoration marked the wiping away of this burden and a fresh affirmation of individual responsibility before God.

Breaking it down –

14:12-23	Introduces the theme of individual responsibility.
18:1-34	Develops the theme more fully.
1-4	An old proverb of fathers and sons refuted.
5-18	Three cases of fathers and sons (5-9, 10-13, 14-18).
19-29	Twice, Israel's protests of injustice refuted (19-24 & 25-29).
30-32	The case of Israel.

Listing the details – *How do references to Noah, Daniel and Job illustrate individual responsibility?*

What is the inference of the old parable? What does its refutation indicate?

Outline the way of the Lord's justice ...

... in each of the three cases.

... in the two refutations of Israel's protests.

How does the case of Israel reflect this justice?

Summing it up – *Sum up the contribution of these twin prophetic messages.*

Putting it together – *How does this pull together the themes so far?*

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *How have the burdens of the generations been ultimately and finally dealt with in Christ (1 Peter 1:17-20)?*

How should this impact lives in each generation (1:14-2:3)?

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

Extra #1 - The Sword
The final prophecies of judgment on Israel
Ezekiel 20-23

Intro - This unit is not a full study but a support to reading of the dated oracle-section chapters 20-23.

After chapter 18 the church teaching series skips to Chapter 33v21 where the dated oracle sections turn to the theme of restoration.

This oracle section reiterates and recapitulates the preceding well-developed theme of judgment. Its climactic allegory of two sister prostitutes (c23) parallels the earlier allegory of the unfaithful bride (c16) but without any note of hope.

Breaking it down -

Read chapters 20-22 noting the following sub-sections of prophetic words.

<u>Passage</u>	<u>Literary Marker</u>	<u>Main idea</u>
20:1	7th year, 5 th month	
20:2-26	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ... 'Thus says the Lord' ...	History of the covenant.
20:27-38	'therefore Son of Man' ... 'thus says the Lord' ...	The Lord's kingship in judgment.
20:39-44	'thus says the Lord' ...	Future restoration in mercy.
20:45-49	'word came' ... 'Son of Man'... 'thus says the Lord' ...	Fire on the regions.
21:1-7	'word came' ... 'Son of Man'... 'thus says the Lord' ...	A sword on Jerusalem.
21:8-13	'word came' ... 'Son of Man'... 'thus says the Lord' ...	A sword.
21:14-17	'therefore Son of Man' ...	A sword.
21:18-23	'word came' ...	A signpost.
21:24-27	'therefore thus says the Lord' ...	The Prince slain.
21:28-32	'word came' ... 'Son of Man'... 'thus says the Lord' ...	A sword.
22:1-16	'word came' ... 'Son of Man'... 'thus says the Lord' ...	Abominations and blood-guilt.
22:17-22	'word came' ... 'Son of Man'... 'thus says the Lord' ...	Dross.
22:23-	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Conspiracy of prophets.
23:1-48	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Allegory of 2 prostitute sisters, Oholah and Oholibah.

Summarise the overall thrust and impact of this oracle-section.

How does this oracle-section reiterate and recapitulate the preceding themes?

How does it set up the news to come, Chapter 24 & 33v21ff?

Extra #2 - Let My Enemies Beware
The prophecies of judgment on the nations
Ezekiel 24-33:20

Intro - This unit also is not a full study but a support to reading Chapters 24-33a.

This, the Book's middle section (also skipped over in the church teaching series), relates a series of 7 dated oracle sections all received from 2 years prior to Jerusalem's fall to 2 months afterwards.

This middle section of judgment on the nations separates the Book's opening 3 oracle-sections of judgment on Israel (c1-23) and closing 2 of restoration (33:21-c48). After announcing the siege of Jerusalem (c24), they repeatedly declare judgment against Israel's surrounding nations and enemies (c25-32) before closing in a final prophecy of judgment against Israel (33:1-20).

Breaking it down - Within this middle section the opening and closing oracle-sections include judgment on Israel. This frames the judgment on the nations.

Read and summarise each of the following dated oracle-sections ...

<u>Passage</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Literary marker</u>	<u>Main idea</u>
24:1	11th year, 1st month	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Siege of Jerusalem.
24:15		'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	illustration of Ezekiel's wife's death.
25:1		'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Ammon, Moab & Seir, Edom and Philistia.
26:1		'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Tyre.
29:1	10th year 10th month	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Egypt & co.
30:20	11th year 1st month	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Egypt.
31:1	11th year 3rd month	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Egypt.
32:1	12th year 12 month	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Egypt.
32:17	12th year	'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Judgment on Egypt.
33:1		'word came' ... 'Son of Man' ...	Watchman of a sword on Israel.

Summarise the repeated thrust of these oracle-sections.

What's the impact of framing these judgments on the nations within judgment on Israel?

What's the impact of these judgments coming between the Book's opening and closing sections of judgment and restoration on Israel?

#8 Bad Shepherds ... Good Shepherd
A Critique of Israel's Leaders & Promise of the LORD's Leadership
Ezekiel 33b-36

Opener – *Where have you seen the impact of bad leadership? What makes for good leadership?*

Intro - The closing third of the Book returns the focus from the nations to Israel and turns the focus from judgment to restoration.

This is conveyed over 2 long dated oracle-sections:

33:21-c39 in 2 halves which focus respectively on promises
of the Lord's own shepherding (34)
and of national resurrection (37).

Chapters 40-48 which relates a closing vision of the Lord's Glory returning to the temple.

This study explores the 1st half of the penultimate oracle-section - the promise of the Lord's own shepherding.

Breaking it down - The formula 'the word of the Lord came to me' ... 'Son of Man' ... 'thus says the Lord' introduces and marks out 3 sub-sections of prophecies:

33:21-33 Relates news of the fall of Jerusalem and critique of both refugees and exiles.

34:1-31 Declares the promise of the Lord's own shepherding.

35:1-36:38 Declares judgment on Seir
and offers reassurance of restoration to the mountains of Israel.

Listing the details – *Read Ezekiel 33:21-33. List the points of the critiques against ...*

The Jerusalem refugees (33:23-29)

The exiles (33:30-33)

The promise of the Lord's own shepherding is declared over several smaller sub-sections:

Concerning the shepherds

34:1-6 "This says the Lord" ...

34:7-10 "Therefore hear the word of the Lord"

34:11-16 "For thus says the Lord"

Critique of the shepherds

End of the shepherds

Promise to shepherd

Concerning the sheep

34:17-19 "Thus says the Lord"

34:20-31 "Therefore thus says the Lord"

Critique of the sheep

Promise to shepherd

v20-22

judge between sheep

v23-24

Davidic 'prince'

v25-31

covenant of peace

Read Ezekiel 34. List the main points of each sub-section:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Read Ezekiel 35-36 noting the links between the 2 chapters.

Summing it up – *Sum up the overall point of this sub-section of vision and messages?*

Putting it together – *How does this fit with the previous two-thirds of the Book?*

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *How did Christ fulfil ...*

The promise of the Lord's own shepherding [John 10]? What's so good about this?

The promise of Davidic leadership? Identify 3 NT passages for this.

The promise of the covenant of peace [Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:19-23]?

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#9 Dry Bones
A Vision of Israel's Renewal
Ezekiel 37-39

Opener – *When have you seen the scattered corpses and dry bones of stock during a drought? How did it make you feel?*

Intro – The second half of this oracle-section is marked by the hand and Spirit (wind or breath) of the Lord again coming upon Ezekiel. He returns him to the valley where he was first sent to declare judgment [37:1-2 with 3:22]. Now that valley is full of dry bones.

Breaking it down – This half oracle-section is made up of three sub-sections of visions and prophecies:

37:1-14	'The hand and Spirit of the Lord'	Vision of the valley of dry bones.
37:15-28	'The word of the Lord came to me'	Illustration of 2 sticks.
c38-39	'The word of the Lord came to me'	Destruction of Gog and Magog.

Listing the details

The vision of the valley of dry-bones unfolds as follows:

v1-6	"Son of Man"	Command to prophesy 'breath' over the bones.
v7-10	'So'	Fulfilment of command & prophecy.
v11-14	'Son of Man'	Identification of bones with Israel.

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14 noting these stages. List the key details of each.

1.

2.

3.

What hope is here promised to the exiles? How is the return from exile here described?

What will be the outcome [14b]? How is this emphatically assured [14b]?

The illustration of two sticks [v15-22] flows into promises of covenant relationship under a Davidic shepherd [v23-28]. *Read Ezekiel 37:15-22 and list the key points of ...*

the illustration

the promises

What again will be the outcome?

Interpretation of the destruction of Gog and Magog is much debated. Is it to be understood literally or symbolically? Is it now past or still future? It picks up on a existing more widespread idea of a great once-and-for-all end-time battle between good and evil. Its details are very vague. Why the mysterious Gog and Magog? How does the chronology fit together? It should not be over-interpreted. Assumptions must be tested. It must be read carefully through the lens of Christ. It is picked up in Revelation 20 – another vague passage which must be treated cautiously.

However it is to be taken, it functions here to reassure the future security of the restored Israel under the new covenant. It anticipates a future attack by the nations. Instead of being handed over to the nations in judgment the Lord will defend his restored people and destroy their attackers. Just as Israel's restoration came through the judgment on the nations so this restoration would be protected through judgment on the nations.

Read Ezekiel 38-39 noting the above comments and cautions.

Summing it up – *Sum up the overall point of this sub-section of vision and messages?*

Putting it together – *How does this pick up on themes, issues and promises from earlier in the Book?*

God's Presence?

The covenant relationship?

Abominations v obedience?

The people's leadership?

Other?

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *How did Christ fulfil ...*

The corporate resurrection-restoration [Ephesians 2:4-7; Colossians 3:1-4]? (In Matthew 2-4 Jesus is portrayed as fulfilling the identity and role of Israel.)

The ultimate hope of resurrection-restoration [1 Corinthians 15]? (National and individual resurrection are intertwined.)

The obedience of the promised New Covenant [Romans 7:4-7; 8:1-11; 13:8-10]?

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*

#10 Future Glory
A Vision of the Glory of the LORD Returning
Ezekiel 40-48

Opener -

Intro – The final oracle-section relates a vision of another temple tour in Jerusalem. In contrast to the earlier tour (Chapters 8-10), it portrays a temple in which priestly ministry is rightly conducted and to which the Lord's Glory returns.

At that point in time, there was not temple in Jerusalem. The old temple of Solomon had been destroyed by the Babylonians when Jerusalem fell. Like the prophecies to Gog and Magog, interpretation of this temple is much debated. What temple does it portray? Again is it literal or symbolic? There is more detail of this temple than available for any other. How do they compare? The contrast in righteousness and holiness and the Presence of the Lord's Glory is the clearest and most notable feature. Again it should not be over-interpreted. Assumptions must be tested. It must be read carefully through the lens of Christ.

Breaking it down - The temple tour is interrupted at several points for prophetic comment. Narrative of the tour increasingly gives way to increasing prophetic explanation or instruction.

40:1-42:12 Through the whole precinct stopping at the priests' chambers.

42:13-14 Instructions for the priests.

42:15-43:5 To the east gate as the Glory returns.

43:6-27 Promise of the Lord's Presence & instructions for temple's consecration.

44:1 To the east gate

44:2-3 Instructions for this the Prince's gate.

44:4 To the front of the temple.

44:5-46:18 Instructions for the priests and princes.

46:19 To a northern entrance

46:20 Instructions for the priests

46:21-47:7 To a river flowing from the temple with many trees on its banks.

47:8-12 Explanation of the river.

47:13-48:35 Instructions for the division of the land.

Read Ezekiel 40-48 noting these movements and sections of instructions.

Listing the details – *List the main points in ...*

The description of the river [46:21-47:7]

The explanation of the river [47:8-12]

What's the significance of the re-division of the land?

What's the significance of the closing verse [48:35]?

Summing it up – *Sum up the overall point of this vision and its messages?*

Putting it together – *How does this fit with all that's gone before in the Book?*

What impact would this have made on the exiles?

Looking through the cross

Plan – *How did Christ fulfil ...*

The promise of the Lord's Presence ...

John 1:14-18?

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 & 6:19?

Revelation 21?

The river of blessing [Revelation 22:1-5]?

Applying to life - *Reflect on how this should impact your life and church community. What will you do as a result of this? (It helps to make this a measurable action.)*

Praying to life - *Ask the Lord's help to do this. (Perhaps write a prayer and then pray it daily.)*