

The Story of God: The Bible as Narrative

Act 4 – Repairing a Kingdom

Judah's Exile

Ezekiel

- * Act 1 – Scenes 1-5 = Genesis 1-11
- * Acts 2 – Scenes 1-11 = Genesis 12-I Kings 10
- * Act 3 – Divided Kingdom
- * Act 4 – Repairing a Kingdom

Ezekiel's prophecy falls at the early end of the exile

Ezekiel may actually have known Jeremiah before being deported in the first wave – 597BC

The first we hear of Ezekiel is in 593BC (1:2)

The disaster that fell upon Jerusalem and Judah is still VERY fresh

These people are extremely disoriented

How could God allow this, where do they stand, will anything ever make sense again?

As you recall, Isaiah & Jeremiah tried to wake people up to their impending fall

Jeremiah's warning hasn't yet fully come about and wouldn't for some 7 years or so

Ezekiel had to make people understand that the Temple would fall

So when it did they would know that it was indeed God as they sat decimated by the river

And they would also know there was more

Many still believed at the time Egypt had a chance to claim Palestine and keep Babylon at bay

This was of course a huge illusion

Jeremiah had predicted the exile would last 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12)

Ezekiel finds himself having to ram home this same message

Ezekiel is a Priest

- Ez. 1:3

What kind of perspective would this give him?

Has a super close view of the Jerusalem & the Temple

So the visions he gets that we will look at hit close to home, and they are very familiar to him

Even the Leaders named are probably people he knows

And keep in mind...though it sounds like his main audience at times is Jerusalem, it is really the EXILES

- Ez. 11:14-15

Many of the people back in Judah that hadn't been deported yet were growing more prideful

They actually thought the people in Exile were clearly in sin, but they were spared because they were walking well

This despite that fact that Jeremiah had made it clear that the exiles would inherit the land (Jer. 24)

Ezekiel preached for 22 years to the people in Babylon

His last dated words are in 571BC

Why is that date significant?

We have words spoken AFTER the sack of Jerusalem

Ezekiel is generally broken into 3 main sections:

1. Chapters 1-24 – Condemnation of Jerusalem for its unfaithfulness
2. Chapters 25-32 – Oracle Against Nations
3. Chapters 33-48 – Visions of Restoration and Salvation

Unique thing also happens in Ezekiel – His personal life deeply intersects with God's message

His wife dies in the 9th year of exile and he is struck dumb until the city falls – these parallel the events in the narrative

By modern standards, he is CRAZY:

- a) Lies motionless for hours at a time
- b) Goes mute
- c) Doesn't mourn the death of his wife

- d) Has these bizarre visionary transports
- e) Tells crazy stories

But rather than see him as crazy, we should stand in awe how he personally took on the life and pain of God's people

EZEKIEL:

Chapters 1-7 = Prophets call and Jerusalem's Destruction

- Ezekiel 1:1-3 – Call by the river
- 30th year = most likely his age, coincides with entering into the Priestly Service (read Jesus) (Num 4:3)
 As a result he wasn't able to fulfill his priestly calling, but instead was called as a Prophet
 Probably puts his birth around 623-622C...about 1 year before Josiah found the Law
 Jehoiachin's exile
 Priest AND Prophet
 He would have seen Assyria's decline
 He would have seen Babylon's rise
 As barely a teenager he would have heard about Josiah's death at Megiddo to Egypt
 Chebar = no one knows where it is, perhaps even a drainage ditch, where exiles are living

The action starts with AN INCREDIBLE VISION

Strange creatures and their wheeled chariot (perhaps like the one that carried the ark)

Leads up to a vision of God in Heaven

They have touching wings – should immediately make you think of the cherubim over the ark

They have human features but mixed with beasts = maybe symbolizing all creation

God's Presence is their = represented in fire, and He can move anywhere

The stand on one wheel each that can move in any direction, even up as it floats on the spirit

There is also a vast EXPANSE over the creatures = same word as used in Genesis 1:7

And in this limitless expanse, a throne

Above the throne is a FIGURE WITH THE APPEARANCE OF A MAN

You have this amazing picture of God with an echo of humanity in His image

- Ezekiel 1:28 = Glory of the Lord

Call...

- Ezekiel 2:3-5
- Given a scroll TO EAT that is full of Lamentation of mourning and woe
 His call is to bring words of Judgment to a rebellious people
 The Spirit lifts him up and places him beside the river to frustrate the people
 The Spirit then carries him to his house and locks him in
 God tells him He will make him mute, only speaking when God allows

At that point God begins to lay words of Siege on Jerusalem itself

In chapters 4-5 performs 4 symbolic actions against Jerusalem

1. Lies on his side for 390 days to serve for Israel's sin and punishment, then 40 for Judah
 And God ties him down
 In this sense Ezekiel serves as a Priest for their sins as a "bears their punishment"
2. Shaves his head & beard with a sword – hair becomes symbolic of the city
 Burns 1/3, wind blows 1/3 away, 1/3 he stabs

And why, verse 6 says because they broke the covenant thru idolatry (5:11)

And Ezekiel promises a small remnant will survive

Again, God's goal?

- Ezekiel 7:20-27

Chapters 8-11 = Vision of Jerusalem's Sin's from Babylon's Perspective

Ezekiel takes a visionary Journey to Jerusalem and then back to Babylon

A figure that looks human takes him but is a Heavenly being (8:2)

The Spirit actually transport him

God matches his Journey with a journey of His own

He leads Ezekiel to the Temple and has him dig thru the wall in the courtyard where he sees their abominations
Hundred of leaders worshiping images and the sun, creating violence, worshiping a God of rising and dying
And then God's Glory enters the threshold, marks the foreheads of the few faithful, the remnant who mourn
And then lays siege on the rest of the city thru 6 executioners and an official – probably Babylonians

- Ezekiel 10:18-19
- Ezekiel 11:13-20

With the destruction of the Temple, God Himself becomes a sanctuary to the few faithful
And not in Jerusalem, but on foreign soil

Chapters 12-24 – Oracles about the sins of Israel and Jerusalem

Focus then switches back to the Exiles in Babylon as they are rebellious too

The Elders of Israel in Babylon wants this to end quickly

Ezekiel is there to make them know it will not end any time soon

The main aim of these chapters is to reinforce that Jerusalem will fall

- Ezekiel 12:1-6, 16

Goes on to predict that King Zedekiah will be brought with the future exiles

He is called a Prince because he is just a puppet King

- Ezekiel 12:27-28
- Ezekiel 14:12-20

Daniel is probably not the Daniel from the Bible but someone from antiquity (in Canaanite Ugaritic text)

Notice they are essentially all NON-Israelites

God essentially has TWO MAIN PURPOSES FOR THE EXILE:

1. To demonstrate His Justice & Authority– “They will know that I am the Lord”
2. To create a RENEWED People

Punishment, Judgment is not His end goal...it is a necessary means to an end

Chapters 16-24 – He shares numerous parables and allegories that illustrate where they are at

In Chapter 16, they are described as an UNFAITHFUL BRIDE (sounds like Hosea)

Point = Israel, once married to God in Covenant, has taken other lovers thru idolatry (“of the heart” it says)

The section ends in chapter 24 with Ezekiel's wife dying and him going mute

He is not to mourn her as they will not as they simply rot away in their own misery and sin

And he is done speaking – Jerusalem is GONE, the Temple is GONE

Chapters 25-32 – Oracles Against Nations

Common in most of the Prophets

[Do you remember the point of them?](#)

Remind them after feeling rejected that God will still be there for them

History has proven that these Oracles came thru

Tyre for example was besieged by Babylon for 13 straight years after Jerusalem fell

Assignment – READ CHAPTER 16