

Ezekiel Part 2

Syllabus

1. Course Requirements: The student will be required to read the Commentary which serves as the Course Textbook. At the conclusion of the course, the student will write a 5-10 page exegesis of a passage from the book of Ezekiel of his or her choosing.
2. Course Textbook: **The Book of Ezekiel**, 2 Volumes, Daniel Block.
3. Course Methodology: The student should read the lectures of the Professor which follow in conjunction with the course textbook. That is, as the student reads Ezekiel 1:1-10 in the lectures to follow then or she should read the textbook treatment of that passage and then move on to the next segment.
4. At the conclusion of the lectures for the whole of the course, there is a select bibliography which the student should consult for further study.

Introductory Remarks: Our purpose in this study of the great prophet Ezekiel is to understand what he says. Understanding requires work sometimes; and since Paul admonishes us to “study to show ourselves approved” that is exactly what I plan to do. We are going to study Ezekiel. In depth, thoroughly and at times precisely. Yet the understanding of Scripture is always worth the effort. My procedure will be simple: we will look at a verse or verses and I will, to the best of my ability, strive to tell you what Ezekiel is talking about.

In depth study is not everyone’s cup of tea, I grant you. Some wish merely to glance while others are of such a nature that they want to squeeze every drop of meaning that they can from every fruitful verse. I fall into this second camp, unapologetically. So, I warn you in advance, we will not be glancing here. If you wish to glance there are some fine, 5 page study booklets that summarize Ezekiel at your local Christian bookstore.

And now to a bit of **background**: Ezekiel worked as a prophet after the disastrous year 597 BC. In that year the Babylonians hauled off the leading people of Jerusalem and Judah and dispersed them to various encampments in the Babylonian empire. His sermons are, therefore, “crisis sermons” in the sense that they are addressed to people in the most extreme crises of uncertainty, fear, sorrow, and regret. We will not hear him rightly if we do not understand or appreciate this simple fact. Every good speaker knows the first rule of communicating: know your audience. Ezekiel did.

15:1 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, what is the vine-tree more than any tree, the vine-branch which is among the trees of the forest?

Bundles of vine were used for fuel.

3 Shall wood be taken thereof to make any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?

4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire hath devoured both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned: is it profitable for any work?

5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned, shall it yet be meet for any work!

The questions continue, intending to deny any constructive use for grapevine wood. It could not even provide a wall peg.

6 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

As the vine is good for nothing but fuel, so Jerusalem is fit only for the fire.

7 And I will set my face against them; they shall go forth from the fire, but the fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I set my face against them.

8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord Jehovah.

God's task had been done only in part, and he would return to complete his inevitable work of destruction and to consume the city, citizens and all.

16:1 Again the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations;

3 and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto Jerusalem: Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was a Hittite.

The priest turned prophet remained a priest in spite of being a prophet speaking God's word of judgement.

4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to cleanse thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

5 No eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, for that thy person was abhorred, in the day that thou wast born.

6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee weltering in thy blood, I said unto thee, [Though thou art] in thy blood, live; yea, I said unto thee, [Though thou art] in thy blood, live.

7 I caused thee to multiply as that which groweth in the field, and thou didst increase and wax great, and thou attainedst to excellent ornament; thy breasts were fashioned, and thy hair was grown; yet thou wast naked and bare.

8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord Jehovah, and thou becamest mine.

God has intervened in an act of kindness only to be rebuffed by her wickedness. A foundling is loved only to turn on the one who saved her.

9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

10 I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with sealskin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and covered thee with silk.

11 And I decked thee with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

12 And I put a ring upon thy nose, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head.

13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper unto royal estate.

14 And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect, through my majesty which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord Jehovah.

Dressed like a queen!

15 But thou didst trust in thy beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy whoredoms on every one that passed by; his it was.

16 And thou didst take of thy garments, and madest for thee high places decked with divers colors, and playedst the harlot upon them: [the like things] shall not come, neither shall it be [so].

17 Thou didst also take thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest for thee images of men, and didst play the harlot with them; 18 and thou tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them, and didst set mine oil and mine incense before them.

19 My bread also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou didst even set it before them for a sweet savor; and [thus] it was, saith the Lord Jehovah.

The frequent repetition of **הַזְנוּ** which denotes intercourse outside of marriage is used by Ezekiel as a descriptor of idolatry. The kind act of Yahweh has been clutched onto and totally perverted.

20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Were thy whoredoms a small matter,
21 that thou hast slain my children, and delivered them up, in causing them to pass through [the fire] unto them?
22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast weltering in thy blood.

The cult of Molech is here described. It involved the sacrifice of children of both sexes.

23 And it is come to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord Jehovah,)
24 that thou hast built unto thee a vaulted place, and hast made thee a lofty place in every street.
25 Thou hast built thy lofty place at the head of every way, and hast made thy beauty an abomination, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredom.
26 Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians, thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast multiplied thy whoredom, to provoke me to anger.
27 Behold therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary [food], and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, that are ashamed of thy lewd way.
28 Thou hast played the harlot also with the Assyrians, because thou wast insatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet thou wast not satisfied.
29 Thou hast moreover multiplied thy whoredom unto the land of traffic, unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

Their multiple foreign alliances were evidence that they had abandoned Yahweh, their only true God. Alliances in the ANE were not just political events but religious intertwinings. Those making such alliances swore allegiance to one another's gods as well. That is why the word **הָנַח** again occurs repeatedly.

30 How weak is thy heart, saith the Lord Jehovah, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an impudent harlot;
31 in that thou buildest thy vaulted place at the head of every way, and makest thy lofty place in every street, and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire.
32 A wife that committeth adultery! that taketh strangers instead of her husband!
33 They give gifts to all harlots; but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and bribest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredoms.
34 And thou art different from [other] women in thy whoredoms, in that none followeth thee to play the harlot; and whereas thou givest hire, and no hire is given unto thee, therefore thou art different.
35 Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of Jehovah:
36 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness uncovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers; and because of all the

idols of thy abominations, and for the blood of thy children, that thou didst give unto them;

37 therefore behold, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them against thee on every side, and will uncover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will bring upon thee the blood of wrath and jealousy.

When adulterers were caught, they were taken to the square and exposed.

39 I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thy vaulted place, and break down thy lofty places; and they shall strip thee of thy clothes, and take thy fair jewels; and they shall leave thee naked and bare.

40 They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.

41 And they shall burn thy houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women; and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou shalt also give no hire any more.

Jerusalem will lose everything its favored position before God had gained her.

42 So will I cause my wrath toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

Radical measures were needed.

43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast raged against me in all these things; therefore, behold, I also will bring thy way upon thy head, saith the Lord Jehovah: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness with all thine abominations.

Cf. 2 Sam 1:16.

44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use [this] proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

45 Thou art the daughter of thy mother, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

The sinful disposition of Jerusalem is spread to all her children.

46 And thine elder sister is Samaria, that dwelleth at thy left hand, she and her daughters; and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

47 Yet hast thou not walked in their ways, nor done after their abominations; but, as [if that were] a very little [thing], thou wast more corrupt than they in all thy ways.

Jerusalem was no better than the other cities destroyed by God. Those cities were bywords for wickedness, and so was Jerusalem.

48 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw [good].

51 Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters by all thine abominations which thou hast done.

The urban wealthy have no concern for the poor and thus are judged accordingly. Cf. Lk 16:19-21 for a NT example of this.

52 Thou also, bear thou thine own shame, in that thou hast given judgment for thy sisters; through thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they, they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou also confounded, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.

53 And I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them;

54 that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be ashamed because of all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.

55 And thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate; and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate; and thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.

If Jerusalem was to be restored after plunging to such sinful depths, it was only fair that lesser offenders should participate in restoration and even be restored before Jerusalem was.

56 For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride, 57 before thy wickedness was uncovered, as at the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria, and of all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, that do despise unto thee round about.

58 Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith Jehovah.

59 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will also deal with thee as thou hast done, who hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

61 Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder [sisters] and thy younger; and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

62 And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah;

63 that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I have forgiven thee all that thou hast done, saith the Lord Jehovah.

This final segment of this very long chapter recapitulates what has already been said. Summarizing it quite nicely.

17:1 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

3 and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the top of the cedar:

4 he cropped off the topmost of the young twigs thereof, and carried it unto a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants.

5 He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful soil; he placed it beside many waters; he set it as a willow-tree.

6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

7 There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend its roots toward him, and shot forth its branches toward him, from the beds of its plantation, that he might water it.

8 It was planted in a good soil by many waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

9 Say thou, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it may wither; that all its fresh springing leaves may wither? and not by a strong arm or much people can it be raised from the roots thereof.

10 Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the beds where it grew.

11 Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

12 Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and brought them to him to Babylon:

13 and he took of the seed royal, and made a covenant with him; he also brought him under an oath, and took away the mighty of the land;

14 that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping his covenant it might stand.

15 But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? shall he break the covenant, and yet escape?

16 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

17 Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company help him in the war, when they cast up mounds and build forts, to cut off many persons.

18 For he hath despised the oath by breaking the covenant; and behold, he had given his hand, and yet hath done all these things; he shall not escape.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will even bring it upon his own head.

20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will enter into judgment with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

21 And all his fugitives in all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward every wind: and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it.

22 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will also take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain:

23 in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shade of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish; I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it.

The dust has settled and the city is in ruins. The foolish Zedekiah has ruled over the demise of the country. But things will be better. What is of note here is that God, always merciful, always wants us to look up.

18:1 The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying,

2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

The slogan sums up their attitude. It's like suggesting that "my parents took drugs and I have an addiction". It implies that they are not responsible for their actions. But of course they are wrong.

3 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have [occasion] any more to use this proverb in Israel.

4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Each generation stands or falls before God on its own. No one can hide from this truth.

5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

Walter Eichrodt has the finest definition of what it means to be righteous: “[To call a person righteous] does not mean that he is sinless, or that he has shown his virtue by conforming perfectly to a comprehensive legal system, but that he is a willing member of the cultic community, who conforms with the ordinances of the community life and thus shows a right attitude towards the covenant relationship”. Indeed! Hence righteousness is a term of allegiance and not of achievement.

6 and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a woman in her impurity,

The sins described here are cultic transgressions. They are laid at the door of those who were left in Judah.

7 and hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath taken nought by robbery, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

גזלה means “to seize property” and is prohibited in Lev 5:21. It does not mean “robbery” in our sense of the word.

8 he that hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true justice between man and man,

Cf. Dt 24:19-21.

9 hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept mine ordinances, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah.

The liturgy reflected here is the so called “entrance liturgy”. See Psalm 15.

10 If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth any one of these things,

11 and that doeth not any of those [duties], but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife,

12 hath wronged the poor and needy, hath taken by robbery, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,

13 hath given forth upon interest, and hath taken increase; shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

14 Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth not such like;

15 that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife,

16 neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

17 that hath withdrawn his hand from the poor, that hath not received interest nor increase, hath executed mine ordinances, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

One should not generalize about bad parents and their innocent children.

18 As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother, and did that which is not good among his people, behold, he shall die in his iniquity.

19 Yet say ye, Wherefore doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? when the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

The bad son of a good father would die while the good son of a bad father would live.

20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Moral responsibility is not inherited. Each person must be moral and cannot rely on the morality of others.

21 But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

22 None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live?

24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

In the present generation of exiles is no longer locked into the consequences of bad choices made by its forebears, neither are members of this generation locked into the choices they have already made.

25 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

26 When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein; in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

27 Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

Their perverse theology is here denounced.

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live.

19:1 Moreover, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

2 and say, What was thy mother? A lioness: she couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she nourished her whelps.

3 And she brought up one of her whelps: he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.

Cf. Jer 22:13-17. Perhaps Ezekiel heard Jeremiah preach?

4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit; and they brought him with hooks unto the land of Egypt.

5 Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.

6 And he went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.

7 And he knew their palaces, and laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, because of the noise of his roaring.

The "lion" is Zedekiah. It is not surprising that he is described as wicked.

8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces; and they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit.

9 And they put him in a cage with hooks, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into strongholds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

Yahweh spreads a net to catch Zedekiah. And so eh will be caught!

10 Thy mother was like a vine, in thy blood, planted by the waters: it was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

11 And it had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and their stature was exalted among the thick boughs, and they were seen in their height with the multitude of their branches.

12 But it was plucked up in fury, it was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up its fruit: its strong rods were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them.

The death of the dynasty is assured.

13 And now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land.

14 And fire is gone out of the rods of its branches, it hath devoured its fruit, so that there is in it no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Again, the announcement of judgment. Zedekiah is ordered by God, through Ezekiel, to give up the crown.