

Ezekiel 1:1-3 • “In the Thirtieth Year”

Overview

God calls Ezekiel to prophetic ministry in the midst of his captivity.

Background

- c. 1000^{BC} David becomes king of Israel
- 970^{BC} David dies; Solomon becomes king
- 930^{BC} Solomon dies; kingdom divides (Israel / north; Judah / south)
- 874^{BC} Reign of Ahab & Jezebel; essentially seals fate of the north
- 722^{BC} Israel falls to Assyrians (should have been warning to Judah)
- 640^{BC} Josiah becomes king of Judah (last good king)
- 622^{BC} Book of the Law rediscovered (see 2 Kings 22 & 23)
- 612^{BC} Nineveh collapses; Judah loses passion for reform.
- 609^{BC} Egypt tries siding w/ Babylon against Assyria;
Josiah dies; Jehoahaz takes over (only lasts 3 months)
After Jehoahaz taken to Egypt replace by Jehoiakim.
Jehoiakim aligns with Egypt; undoes all Josiah's reforms.
- 605^{BC} Egypt defeated by Babylonians at Carchemish.
Jehoiakim still king but plots how to escape Babylonian rule
Eventually Nebuchadnezzar fed up; marches vs. Jerusalem.
First wave of Jews taken into captivity (including Daniel)
- c.597^{BC} Jehoiakim killed; son Jehoiachin (age 18) takes his place.
Nebuchadnezzar distrusts him; marches v Jerusalem again.
Jehoiachin taken into captivity along with Ezekiel & others.
(Second wave of captivity)
- 597^{BC} Zedekiah (Jehoiachin's uncle) on throne by Babylon.
People optimistic; right king + right alliances = prosperity!
- 586^{BC} Except no; another revolt v Babylon → another siege (588^{BC})
Jerusalem falls; Zedekiah and others brought to Babylon.
(Third wave of captivity)

Outline

- Ch 1-3 Ezekiel's Call
- Ch 4-24 Prophecies of Judah & Jerusalem
- Ch 25-32 Prophecies of Other Nations
- Ch 33-48 Prophecies of Restoration

Notes on v1-3

- WHEN** "30th year" – birthday? Priests start ministry age 30 (see Numbers Ch 4)
But more like reference to historical event. What event?
We get a clue from v2 – 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity ie 593/2BC.
What happened 30 years before 593/2BC?
Rediscovery of the book of the law under Josiah – 622BC!
So Ezekiel is called on July 31, 593BC!
- WHERE** River Chebar (aka "Grand Canal") – manmade irrigation channel
Archeological evidence of Jewish settlements
Possible site of ritual cleansing (foreign lands = unclean)?
- HOW** Heavens were opened (v1)
Visions of God (v1)
Word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel (v3)
Hand of the Lord was upon him (v3)
- WHY** Consider the timing – Zedekiah on the throne; Judah is a mess.
People choosing to believe that peace & prosperity is coming.
Right king + right alliances = everything will be good.
Ezekiel called to tell the people in exile: "NO!"
- APPLICATION** American church can fall into same trap: right king / allies = all good.
Except no. Not about kings & allies. With God it's always about heart.
Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions (not political solutions).
God not interested in behavior modification in and of itself.
God always looking for heart transformation.
Only true heart transformation can revive a nation.
Only true heart transformation can revive an individual.