



# Ezekiel 34-48

## Transcript

### Introduction

00:00-01:12

The book of the prophet Ezekiel. In the first video, we were introduced to Ezekiel the priest. And he's sitting among the exiles in Babylon, and he's confronted by the awesome glory of God's temple presence, but it's appearing to him in Babylon. And then Ezekiel discovers why. It's because of Israel's idolatry and injustice that has compelled God to abandon his own temple. And while there is still hope for the future, the book went on to develop Ezekiel's message of divine judgment, first for Israel, and then for the nations around Israel. And then a key moment happened in chapter 33. Ezekiel receives a report that the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem is over because the city has fallen. The temple is destroyed. Ezekiel's grim words of warning came true.

The exile was the most horrendous catastrophe that ever happened to Israel, and it raised the big question of whether God was done with Israel for good. But remember, at the end of chapter 11, God promised that there was still a future beyond exile for Israel. And so the rest of the book is designed to explore Ezekiel's vision of hope, first for Israel, then for the nations, and then for all of creation.

### Chapters 34-37

01:12-03:08

The hope for Israel begins with God promising to raise up a new David, a future messianic king who's going to be the kind of leader that Israel needed but never got. And this new Israel, who's going to come under the messianic king's rule, is going to be a transformed people. God's going to deal with the heart of their problem of rebellion by giving them new hearts. It's just like Moses promised at the end of the book of Deuteronomy. God says he's going to remove their hard hearts

and send his Spirit into his people to give them new soft hearts that can love and obey their God. And this idea gets developed in the next strange vision.

Ezekiel sees a huge valley filled up with dry human bones and skeletons, and God tells him that it's an image—a metaphor—for Israel's spiritual state. So their rebellion against God, it resulted in exile and the literal death of many people, but it was also a metaphorical death of their covenant relationship. And God tells Ezekiel that his Spirit is coming to bring his people back to life. And so this wind comes and it causes all of the bones to stand up, and it fills them with breath and life. And then skin grows over the bones, and then all of a sudden, Ezekiel sees all of these new humans standing in front of him. Now this vision, it's recalling the story about the creation of humans in Genesis chapter 2, where God made humans out of dirt and divine breath. And so Israel and all humanity have rebelled, resulting in death, and so the only hope is that God would perform a new act of creation and remake humans in such a way that they can truly live in a relationship of love with God and with each other.

And so after God is going to deal with the evil that's in the hearts of his own people, some questions still remain unresolved, like: What about the evil that is still rampant out there among the nations? And what about the future of God's dwelling place in the temple? And this is what the final two sections of the book are about.

## Chapters 38-39

03:09-05:03

So first come chapters 38 and 39, and they promise God's final defeat of evil among the nations, which gets personified by a ruler who's named Gog, from the land of Magog. Now this name is derived from a genealogy of ancient kingdoms and lands from Genesis chapter 10, and it referred to powerful nations from the distant past. And so Ezekiel picks up this ancient biblical name as an image of any and all violent kingdoms. And so we find that Gog gets allied with seven nations that come from all four directions of the compass. It's clearly an image that represents all of the nations. This also helps us understand why Ezekiel describes Gog with images that he used earlier in the book to describe the king of Tyre and the king of Egypt, Pharaoh. For Ezekiel, Gog is an amalgam of all of the worst, most violent people in the Bible. Gog is the archetype of human rebellion against God.

The basic story in these chapters is that Gog resists God's plan to restore his people. And so just like Pharaoh in the exodus story, Gog comes to destroy the people, but God unleashes his justice on Gog. And it's in a flurry of scenes that don't actually make very good literal sense if you read them in sequence. Because first, Gog and his armies are consumed by an earthquake, but then they're consumed by fire two different times. And then after that, God comes and strikes Gog and his army down

in the fields where they lay unburied for months. It's clear that these scenes are full of symbol and imagery. Ezekiel has pulled out his entire poetic tool set here to describe how God is determined to finally defeat human evil that has ruined his world, and it's so that he can pave the way for a new creation.

And so once evil is finally dealt with among the nations, the last section of the book describes how God's presence is going to one day return to his people and his temple to bring cosmic restoration.

## Chapters 40-48

05:04-06:54

So Ezekiel first gets this long, elaborate vision of a new temple and a new city. He's given this heavenly tour guide who shows him around the new temple complex, and it's much larger and more majestic than even Solomon's temple. There's a new altar, new priests, a whole new system of worship. And then after this elaborate tour, God's glorious throne chariot that he saw back in his first vision comes back, and it enters the new temple. Now, the meaning of these temple visions has been the source of debate for a long, long time.

So some Christian and Jewish readers believe that this vision will be fulfilled literally one day, and that these chapters offer the actual blueprints of the new temple that will be built when the Messiah returns and brings God's Kingdom. But many other Jewish and Christian readers think that this vision—like all of Ezekiel's other visions—is full of symbols. And they depict the reality of God's presence returning to his people in the messianic kingdom, but not necessarily in the form of an actual building. Whichever view you take, it's important that Ezekiel never calls the city Jerusalem, and chapters 47 and 48 show why.

Ezekiel sees this tiny stream pouring out of the temple threshold and steps, and then it quickly becomes this raging river. And then it flows out of the temple and the city into the desert, into one of the most desolate places on planet Earth, the Dead Sea Valley. And then that river, it leaves behind a trail of trees and life, and then the Dead Sea gets transformed into a living sea that's teeming with plants and animals. All of this imagery comes from the garden of Eden in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, and we see just how cosmic Ezekiel's vision really is. God's plan has always been to restore all humanity and all creation back to his life-giving presence. And so the book ends with the name of this garden city, "the Lord is there."

## Conclusion

06:55-07:12

And so Ezekiel's visions come to a close, full of hope for a new future, new humans living in a new world that's animated by God's life-giving Spirit. It's a world permeated with God's love and justice. And that's what the book of Ezekiel is all about.