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Introduction to Ezekiel

by Ernest L. Martin Ph.D., 1999

Transcribed and edited by David Sielaff, November 2010

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The name Ezekiel means the “one whom God makes strong.” He was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. The two lived about 600 years before the birth of Jesus, when Jerusalem was on the verge of being conquered and destroyed. Jeremiah for some years before had prophesied the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The people of God were doing things which were not correct, and they were being chastised. Ezekiel also prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple; but he was more interested in Temple affairs than was Jeremiah.

Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah were priests (Ezekiel 1:3; Jeremiah 1:1), and both could go into the Temple and teach there. Ezekiel came specifically to give God’s instructions on what would happen to the people of God once Jerusalem and in particular the Temple, would be destroyed. Up to that time the people always looked upon the Temple as the “house” of God, where God lived symbolically, where He domiciled amongst men, where He looked out over His people to judge them, to bless them and to give them the things they needed.

This “Introduction to Ezekiel” concerns the central focus of Ezekiel’s prophecy: the Temple of God in Jerusalem. It is important for us Christians, to understand the premises behind what the Temple represents. Much New Testament teaching is based on the principle that God lives within a Temple. He either lives symbolically in a Tabernacle, a tent like in the time of Moses, or He lived in a house made of stone as in the time of Solomon, on down to the time of Ezekiel, and again later even to the time of Christ with Herod’s Temple. We find also that He lives in humans. He can live collectively in the *ecclesia*, all of us together, or He can be in each one of us, individually. Within that meaning, each of us happens to be a Temple of God.

Ezekiel's Message

To understand how we fit into the pattern of things it is good to realize what Ezekiel was talking about. The Jews along with the Israelites were on the verge of losing their Temple. They are about to lose God's presence. What would happen to them when this situation took place? That was what Ezekiel wrote about.

Ezekiel wrote 48 chapters in all. The first 39 chapters dealt with the Temple that existed in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, in the 6th century BC. The other Temple was his prophesized one, about which he described in chapters 40 to 48. It is a marvelous section of the Bible describing a new physical Temple in which God will live.

Ezekiel presented all these things in a way that makes our New Testament understanding of God's presence with us more comprehensible. The Temple was God's divine house on earth. In a symbolic way, it was a replica of God's literal house or palace in heaven. We must understand the anthropomorphic way of approaching God in His bodily substance.

In the first chapter of Genesis we read that mankind is made in the image of God, and in the likeness of God. God looks like man, or more precisely, man looks like God. There would be no need for a Temple or furniture in a Temple, or a throne to be in that Temple, unless God appeared as a man.¹

If we can approach the understanding of who God is, why He is our Father, who WE are to become, and that He does have a somatic existence like you and I have at the present time, then we can begin to appreciate (and perhaps appreciate for the first time) exactly what salvation is all about.

God's Design for Us

We are designed by God the Father and by Christ Jesus, His firstborn son, to be members of the very family of God. We are to look like They are, we are to appear as They are, and we are to have the character that They have. Eventually we will have the power that They have, which They will share with us.

The Temple is part of this cardinal teaching of the somatic existence of God, which even the Jews today do not accept. For the last one thousand years, since the time of Maimonides, one of their great scholars of the 13th century AD, the Jews have given up believing in the bodily existence of God. They consider God to be some kind of a spiritual essence itself with no somatic or substantial shape and form at all.²


However, that was not what the early Jews even of the Talmudic period believed. It certainly was not what they believed in the time of Jesus and you will not find a word in the Old Testament to suggest that God does not have a literal spiritual body. His body is made of spirit, and this spiritual substance is not flesh, yet it is still substance. This is important because in his 48 chapters Ezekiel talks about a house in which God lives.

¹ In Dr. Martin's article "[The Bodily Composition of God](#)" he explains from the Bible (of Adam) to be in the image and likeness of God. It is not merely some psychological like God, but it is first and foremost a somatic image and likeness. Yes, God has a body.

² Dr. Martin's article "[Maimonides – Saint and Heretic](#)" explains this Jewish scholar's role in changing the understanding of the Jewish people and scholars from a biblical understanding of the somatic composition of God to a spiritual non-bodily essence.

Ezekiel's Position in the Biblical Canon

Old Testament

1. The Law of Moses [the Torah]
2. The Prophets
(individual books listed)
 - (1) Joshua–Judges
 - (2) Kingdoms [1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings in one book]
 - (3) **ISAIAH**
 - (4) **JEREMIAH**
 - (5) **EZEKIEL** 
 - (6) the Book of the Twelve [the Minor Prophets in one "book"].
3. The Writings or "Royal" Section

New Testament

4. The Gospels with Acts
5. The General Epistles
6. The Epistles of Paul
7. The Book of Revelation

Inside the Temple

This house of God is called the Temple. We need to understand how God existed among the Israelites when they were in exile from the land of Israel, when there was no Jerusalem, no Temple; and when they were, shall we say, without God amongst them. Ezekiel told them what to prepare for, and you know, the teaching we have here is applicable to each one of us today. It helps us understand how God can dwell among us and more especially, how He can dwell within us if we read what Ezekiel has to say.

This Temple had a place where God could put particular furniture, where He could sit, where He could eat, where He could drink, where He could have council with His administrative servants (and He does have servants). We find that when David, under the orders of Samuel the Prophet, first designed the Temple and its administration, the priests and the Levites, as well as the singers and others, were organized into particular groups. This was designed to be exactly analogous to the groups of angels and other spiritual beings in the heavens that are God's administrative agents, including the Son of God.

They divided the priests into 24 divisions, and in the New Testament, you are well aware of the 24 elders mentioned in Revelation 4:4. They also had the 12 divisions of the tribes of Israel. Each was represented every month in the Temple. We find in the Book of Revelation the Israelite tribes are mentioned. When the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven with its foursquare shape, three of the tribes will be represented on one side, three on the other, three on another, and three on the fourth side (Revelation chapters 7 and 21). So even in the New Testament this symbolism of the Temple is very much in evidence. That is what Ezekiel is dealing with here.

The Temple is nothing more than a house like you and I live in, with a few pieces of furniture left out that are not needed. For example, God does not need a bed in which to sleep. He has a place to eat, because the altar on which the animal sacrifices were placed was called the **"table of YHWH."**³ He has a place to drink, and the wine offerings and other types of offerings placed on the altar were symbolic of God drinking, along with eating, at the very time of the meals.

This may sound strange to some people who believe in the spiritual existence of God but the Temple does have all of this furniture in it, to show that God has a home very much like we have with a few exceptions. He has a throne; that is most important. He lives in a place which is completely dark (and is known as the dark place).⁴ It is dark because God does not need light. He has the light in Himself. From Him emanates divine light to such an extent that He does not need the sun or any other type of light to help Him exist. He is the light for all practical purposes and He created the sun for each of us.

He lives in the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the Temple. The only furniture in the Holy of Holies were two cherubim, plated with gold, with their symbolic wings stretched out over a box. This box had a covering on it. It was typical of the throne on which God would sit. His feet would be in front of this throne, and it would be His footstool. Often in the Bible, the word "footstool" simply means the place from whence God rules. The mercy seat, as the throne is often called, means the seat of covering. It is symbolic of the covering of all sins of people.⁵

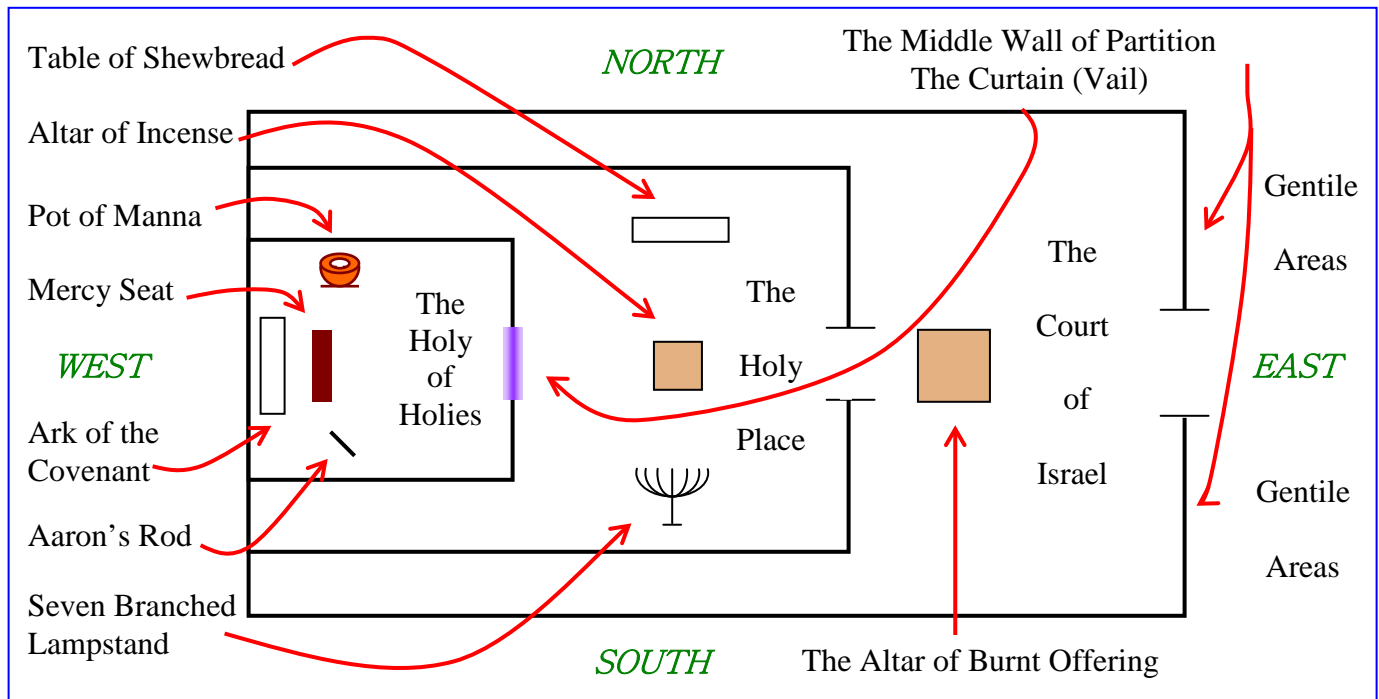
God faces eastward in the Temple, all the doors of the Temple (both the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place) face to the east side of the Temple so that when God sits down, He always orients Himself toward the east. In fact, the word "orient" means "to look eastward." When Solomon constructed the Temple in Jerusalem, he placed the entrance to the Holy of Holies on the east so that God symbolically would sit between the cherubim. From there He would rule, always facing eastward.⁶

³ It is specifically called by that term in Malachi 1:7, 12. DWS

⁴ See 2 Samuel 22:10–12; 1 Kings 8:12; 2 Chronicles 6:1; Psalm 18:11. DWS

⁵ In the Tabernacle the pot of manna and Aaron's rod is also kept in the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:3–5). This may not have been the case with the Temple (1 Kings 8:9). Manna was mentioned in John's vision in heaven (Revelation 2:17).

⁶ See Dr. Martin's important article "[Temple Symbolism in Genesis](#)." The following diagram is from that article. DWS



Looking east, He would see His people first of all in the court of the priests just outside and beyond to the altar of burnt offering. Outside and east of the Holy Place was another court called the court of the Israelites. In the forefront of that court facing east and closer to God was the court of the men. A bit farther to the east was a much bigger section called the court of the women. East of the court of the women you went outside of the sanctuary itself.

They had what was called three camps. The camp of God was the Holy of Holies, next was the camp of the priests or the Levites (the Holy Place), and then came the camp of the Israelites (the court of Israel), who camped around the Temple (or at least they did so in Moses' day around the Tabernacle in the wilderness).

The Red Heifer Altar

Outside that camp directly to the east of the sanctuary, was another altar called the altar of the Red Heifer or the Miphkad altar. This was a major altar outside the camp, outside of even Jerusalem, directly east in Herod's time. All the ritualistically unclean people could go there, obtain a view of God's home, His palace, stand in front of God and pray to Him as He symbolically looked eastward toward all of them. This Red Heifer altar in the time of Jesus was on the summit of the Mount of Olives. You might say that was the fourth compartment to the Temple, though in actual fact it was outside the Temple and was even outside the camp of Jerusalem.⁷

Jesus was crucified outside the camp on the Mount of Olives, very near where the Red Heifer altar was. The greatest sin offering of all was that of Jesus. The greatest sin offering that Ezekiel knew about and Jeremiah knew about (and all the people of the 1st century knew about), was the offering that took place on the Mount of Olives. The reality of Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled the symbolism of the Red Heifer sacrifice.

Moses had the Tabernacle (a portable Temple) built with the three compartments to it and Israel moved the Tabernacle from place to place. For forty years God did not have a permanent home, but He went from

⁷ See Dr. Martin's chapter 3, "The Importance of the Red Heifer Sacrifice" in his book *The Secrets of Golgotha*, 2nd ed. (Portland, OR: ASK Publications, 1996) where he explains the importance of this sacrifice, its location, and how it relates directly to Christ's crucifixion. DWS

place to place carried by the Israelites. He was always looked on as being in the Holy of Holies, always sitting on that throne over which the cherubim had their wings stretched. Only the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur in the autumn of the year, would go inside one time to symbolically cleanse the people of Israel of their sins. He could not enter until smoke from incense clouded and obscured the interior. This was done so that the High Priest would not inadvertently see the throne or the mercy seat on which God symbolically resided to govern Israel.

All of this was typical of what God's palace in heaven was like. Since the time of Moses, the Israelites had God dwelling in that Tabernacle until the time of Solomon. Solomon then built a permanent Temple made out of stone, gold, cedar and other things, and he put in it these three compartments. Then he put the Red Heifer altar on the Mount of Olives.

Ezekiel's Purpose

Solomon's Temple existed until the time of Ezekiel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel knew and prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed. Ezekiel wrote his 48 chapters primarily to teach the Israelites (the Jews of the time) what they were to be doing and how they would approach God once the Temple would be gone. There is no Temple in Jerusalem today, so many of the applications in Ezekiel apply not only to Jews today and to Israelites, but in a symbolic sense even to us Christians who are the Temple of God. You will know how He dwells in us when you realize how He dwelt in that Temple, symbolically, back in the time of Ezekiel.

The first chapter of Ezekiel gives the general authority of Ezekiel to prophesy. He was a very high-positioned priest though he was not high priest. He was very high in God's estimation, and had a good deal of authority amongst the Jews as well as the Israelites. God gave it to him by a series of visions that were vouched for by the elders of Israel. Most striking of all, Ezekiel was given an experience that was most important. That experience was to see God Himself.

He saw not just the symbolic God in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, underneath the wings of the cherubim. But he experienced with his own eyes and body the power or the glory of God as it existed. Ezekiel was given this very unusual circumstance, because he had power and authority to tell the Israelites and the Jews what would happen once God left this earth (He was going back to heaven). They were going into exile, and Ezekiel told them how God would treat them.

Ezekiel's Vision

Ezekiel 1:1, **"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month."** The thirtieth year meant when he became thirty years of age. In the scripture, people were commissioned to the priesthood when they reached full manhood at thirty years of age. He was now capable of receiving divine instruction from God, and Ezekiel wanted that to be known. Jesus Himself, though He was not a priest, commenced His ministry when He was thirty years old.

"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, I was amongst the captives⁸ by the river of Chebar [near Babylon, in Mesopotamia], that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God."

• *Ezekiel 1:1*

So here comes the commission of Ezekiel and it is impressive:

"The word of YHWH came expressly unto Ezekiel [only to him] the priest [God did it when Ezekiel was] in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar, and the hand of YHWH was there upon him [upon Ezekiel], and I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud,

⁸ Ezekiel's mention of **"the captives"** refers to both the Jews taken by the Babylonian empire, but also those Israelite captives taken by the Assyrians over 100 years before. *DWS*

and a fire enfolding itself, and a brightness was about it and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures.”

• **Ezekiel 1:3–5**

These were spiritual beings, cherubim, but they had form and shape. Notice that he saw this whirlwind, this great white cloud of fire coming out of the north. This whirlwind coming from the north gave Ezekiel a clue as to who was involved in all of this.

Next he describes the cherubim, **“They had four faces, one was like a man, one was like a lion, and one was like an ox, and the other was that of an eagle”** (Ezekiel 1:10). Notice that all of these individuals are the prime specimens of the living creatures we have on earth. Man is supreme among all, the lion is supreme among predators, the ox is supreme among the domestic animals, and the eagle is supreme amongst the flyers in the air. It shows that these creatures called cherubim were in charge of all of the physical things here on earth, and they demonstrate that by the symbolic features of their faces. They also did one other thing. They were carrying something. What they were carrying had wheels, and wheels within wheels.

Many people have thought this might describe a UFO or something similar. Ezekiel identified it as the conveyance by which the cherubim carried something most important to earth. Most people have passed right over it, but Ezekiel does not tell what they were carrying until verse 26.⁹ He says that they set this conveyance with its great brilliance down in front of him. He looked at what was being supported:

“Above the firmament [the expanse] that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne [he saw a throne], as the appearance of a sapphire stone and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.”

• **Ezekiel 1:26**

The appearance of a man. That is important to realize. It was not a spirit that had no body. He looked like a man sitting on a huge sapphire stone carved into the shape of a throne.

The Glory

He is there in all of His splendor, and with bright lights everywhere. Ezekiel was amazed, and said,

“And I saw the color of amber, the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward. I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the [rain]bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH. And when I saw it I fell on my face and heard a voice of one that spoke.”

• **Ezekiel 1:27–28**

Here we have the introduction to this vision on the Temple. The glory is coming from a person, who sits on a throne of sapphire and looks like a man, but has the resplendence of the sun.

Go to Ezekiel chapter 8 and you see a continuation of sorts to the commission given back in chapter 1. What Ezekiel saw come out of the north was most interesting. He saw a great brightness, and a conveyance brought about by cherubim, wheels within wheels, and all of that. They brought Ezekiel so close that he could look inside and see a sapphire throne. On that sapphire throne he saw the appearance of a man. It is most important again and I emphasize that he saw a man, not a spirit being of a nonsomatic type.

Chapter 8 carries on with the theme introduced in chapter 1, occurring a year or so later:

⁹ The term UFO is an abbreviation for “unidentified flying object.” Ezekiel does us a favor and “identifies” this flying object for us. It is a conveyance for God in the **“likeness of a throne”** (verse 1:26), but it is composed of living creatures. As Ezekiel describes what he saw in his vision, when the creatures come together, they themselves become the vehicle. *DWS*

“It came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, and the fifth day of the month, that I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me this time, and the hand of YHWH Elohim fell upon me.”

• **Ezekiel 8:1**

Notice how the context carries on here. He sees the same kind of scene introduced back in chapter 1.

“Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire [there it is again]: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber.”

• **Ezekiel 8:2**

This repeats much the same information from chapter 1. The individual reintroduced is the same one, with a somatic type of an appearance.

“And he put forth the form of a hand [so He has a hand], and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem [from Babylon to Jerusalem] ...”

• **Ezekiel 8:3**

Ezekiel went first class because He had the hand of the man taking him. I would like to experience that myself. We will experience that one of these days, but not by the hand of man.

Paul's Identifies the Man

That man, according to the apostle Paul, was none other than Jesus Christ Himself. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, Paul says that when the Israelites came out of Egypt into the wilderness they had the cherubim and the throne in the Holy of Holies. They had the great cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. And they had a rock with them, and from that rock came water. The rock was a sapphire stone (as in Exodus 24:10). It was no ordinary rock on the side of the road. It was a rock that they carried with them and it had someone sitting on it. Paul identifies this person who was said to look like a man. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 it says:

“And did all drink [the Israelites] the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”

• **1 Corinthians 10:4**

Who was sitting on that rock? Jesus Christ was, before He came in flesh to earth. He made several appearances in the Old Testament period. Here was Jesus Christ Himself in glorious form sitting on this throne and Ezekiel did not know His name. He knew it was God, but he called Him a man. (And what else would he say unless He was identified?) He saw the cherubim there and this individual was brought before Him. All of a sudden He takes Ezekiel by a lock of his hair and takes him through the air from Babylon almost 500 miles to Jerusalem.

The Image that Provokes

Why did Christ take him to Jerusalem? For a particular reason, He took him not just to Jerusalem but:

“... to the door of the inner gate that looks toward the north, where was the seat of an image of jealousy which provokes to jealousy.”

• **Ezekiel 8:3**

God was jealous of what He saw toward the north. They were not looking toward God but at this image placed inside the Temple, a pagan image. The glory of the God of Israel was there. This means that this personage got off that throne and walked in with him to this area. He showed Himself in glory to Ezekiel.

We will see that this glory the Jews later on called the Shekinah, which is Hebrew. That term is never used in the Old Testament. It is mentioned by illustration. It simply means the spirit or the glory of God, God shining forth as the sun in its full strength, a glorious resplendence which people could see, but had to turn their eyes from in most cases. This individual who took Ezekiel there manifests the glory inside the Temple. It says, **“according to the vision I saw in the plain”** (Ezekiel 8:4); it is just like I saw it up there in the plain of Mesopotamia. I see it here but now I am in Jerusalem and in the Temple.

“Then he said unto me ‘Son of man, lift up your eyes now the way toward the north [of the Temple].’ So I lifted my eyes the way toward the north and behold northward of the gate of the altar this image of jealousy [not God’s image, the Jews placed the image there] in the entry.”

• **Ezekiel 8:5**

This was after Jeremiah had been prophesying for almost thirty years — after Judah went into captivity because of their idolatry. So He showed Ezekiel what he saw with his own eyes:

“He furthermore said unto me, ‘Son of man, see you what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary?’”

• **Ezekiel 8:6**

This is the key to the intermediate chapters that I skipped. God is saying, now I shall leave the sanctuary. I am letting you know that I am leaving it; I will not stay any longer.

More Abominations

Look at what I have in my own home, my own house, and what they put in there. I did not tell them to, and they put it there. I will leave this sanctuary, so get ready. I will show you how I shall do it. So He said:

“... but turn you yet again and you shall see greater abominations [than this]. And he brought me to the door of the court [a bit farther into the Temple], and when I looked, behold [there was] a hole in the wall. Then he said unto me, ‘Son of man, dig now in the wall’ [a little bit more] and when I had dug into the wall, behold [there was] a door ...”

• **Ezekiel 8:6–8**

Ezekiel looked in through the door and what did he see?

“... creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall roundabout [inside the Temple].”

• **Ezekiel 8:10**

It is amazing how far they had gone downhill, and this is God’s house. Surely, they should have enough wisdom, if they want to have their idolatry, to put it in their own house, not in God’s House. That is why God said, I am leaving this sanctuary.

“And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients [elders] of the house of Israel.”

• **Ezekiel 8:11**

When it says seventy, that is a clear sign it meant seventy members of the Sanhedrin (the congress, the parliament, the judiciary) were there, the top men of the kingdom. **“And in the midst of them”** (verse 11), He mentioned one or two important individuals standing with censers of incense, honoring these terrible beasts on the walls of My house. God says I will show you **“greater abominations”** (Ezekiel 8:13).

“Then he brought me [to the third place] to the door of the gate of YHWH’s house which was toward the north [again]; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz [a pagan god].”

• **Ezekiel 8:14**

Tammuz was the god of the springtime, which was when they fasted for him. Our modern Lent, which is forty days, is really the same thing. Lent is never found in the scripture; we have taken that over from the pagans. These women are lamenting and weeping for Tammuz.

“Then said he unto me [the third thing], ‘Have you seen this, O son of man? turn you yet again, and you shall see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of YHWH’s house [where He lives all the time. Close to the Holy of Holies], and, behold, at the door of the temple of YHWH [the entrance to His throne], between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men [Israelites], with their backs toward the temple of YHWH [their backs toward me, God says], and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.”

• *Ezekiel 8:15–16*

The sun that comes up every morning and sets in the evening was not to be worshipped. Here were these men, 25 of them in the inner Temple, which means that they were priests of the highest order, going contrary to God. He said, I am just showing you, Ezekiel, why I am leaving this sanctuary,

“Then he said unto me, ‘Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here [continuing to do so]? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to the nose [tickling my nose].”

• *Ezekiel 8:17*

That is a figure of speech. This Man takes Ezekiel by the lock of hair. He has a nose, He looks like a man. I am fool enough to believe that God in all of His power can manifest Himself in a body in vision if He wishes to. If He has such great power as a spiritual being that He can be in the whole universe at the same time in some mysterious way, that is fine. If that is the case that is okay, but I still feel He has the ability to transform Himself into a being that is a model for humans.

If He does not do that, then all of the scriptures that we have been reading here are completely anomalous. They mean nothing and the Temple itself means nothing, because it all describes someone who looks like a human being, who sits on a throne, and has a branch tickling His nose.

“Therefore will I also deal in fury: my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them. He cried also in my ears with a loud voice, saying, ‘Cause them that have charge over the city [of Jerusalem] to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.”

• *Ezekiel 8:18–9:1*

God wants everyone in the army present. Ezekiel gets them.

“And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand [these are the military officials]; And one man amongst them was clothed with linen.”

• *Ezekiel 9:2*

This means this “one man” was a priest. He had a writer’s inkhorn on his side and God will use this for a purpose. He is saying, I want you to go throughout the land:

“And the glory of God of Israel was gone up from the Cherub [right here], whereupon he was [on], to the threshold of the house.”

• *Ezekiel 9:3*

The Mark

He goes on to say, go through this city of Jerusalem (I am paraphrasing here) and select the righteous people (if there are any) and mark them on their forehead and hand. This writer was sent with an inkhorn

throughout the city and he marked few people. He said when I come to destroy this city I will look for that mark. If I find it I will not destroy them. If I do not find that mark I will not pity anyone — man, woman, or child. You better have that mark on you. God says He will:

“Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women. But come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary. [If someone has a mark, he or she will be spared. For the rest the slayers shall ...]

... Defile this house, and fill the courts with the slain; go you forth ...”

• *Ezekiel 9:6–7*

God again chastises them in chapter 10:

“Then I looked, and, behold in the firmament [the expanse] that was above the head of the cherubims, there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.”

• *Ezekiel 10:1*

The man saying all of this, the Son of God, steps back up on that throne. He had been off of it for a little while (verse 9:3). Ezekiel got in the conveyance:

“Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house [of the Temple and], ... then the glory of YHWH went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house ...”

• *Ezekiel 10:3–4*

This was to the eastern part of the Holy of Holies in which was the symbol of the throne. They were standing in front of the Holy of Holies and He was in His glory. **“And the sound of the cherubim’s wings was heard”**; they were moving (Ezekiel 10:5):

“Then the glory of YHWH departed from off that threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and everyone stood at the door on the east gate of YHWH’s house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.”

• *Ezekiel 10:18–19*

From that threshold in the west they went toward the east to the gate that enters the house. From here Ezekiel was taken from the place, which is the Holy of Holies, symbolically speaking, going eastward.

“Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the east gate of YHWH’s house, which looks eastward [toward the Mount of Olives]: and behold at the door of the gate, five and twenty men ...”

• *Ezekiel 11:1*

Twenty-five more men, and they are doing the same evil things, but they are saying that judgment is **“not near, let us build houses, this city is the caldron and we be the flesh”** (Ezekiel 11:3). We will be right here. And He says to Ezekiel, prophesy and tell them the truth, and so God’s glory continues going down and they are getting a little farther out of the house all the time (Ezekiel 11:4).

“Therefore say, ‘Thus says YHWH Elohim; although I have cast them far off among the heathen and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them [the righteous ones] as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.’”

• *Ezekiel 11:16*

He is saying, from now on I will not be a big sanctuary, but a little one. What does God mean?

Small Sanctuaries

This was the first indication of what the apostle Paul found out later was meant. Wherever a congregation of His people would be, He would dwell amongst them. If there would be only one individual that was His, He would dwell in him, a little sanctuary. I leave this Temple behind, made of stone and gold, and corruption. From now on, I will be with my people and they will be little sanctuaries. Verse 22:

“Then did the cherubims lift up their wings [Ezekiel was standing at the eastern gate ready to go out], and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of YHWH [His resplendence shining like the sun] went up from the midst of the city [He walked outside, out of the city], and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.”

• *Ezekiel 11:22–23*

What mountain did He stand on? All commentators know it was the Mount of Olives where the glory of YHWH stopped. Do you know what happened to Ezekiel next? It says:

“Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God [back] into Chaldea [with the exiles] to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me [into heaven].”

• *Ezekiel 11:24*

The Jews have recognized for a long time that there is something special about the Mount of Olives. The Glory of YHWH left the Temple behind step by step, out of His home, out of the priest court, out of the court of the men, court of the women, out the east gate, out of Jerusalem, but when He got to the Mount of Olives He stopped. That is where He left Ezekiel. He had nothing bad to say about the Mount of Olives because, that was where this very person would later be crucified and resurrected from the dead. The Mount of Olives was on the East Side of Jerusalem. It saw the Shekinah glory of God before it went back to heaven.

When Jesus came down and lived in the flesh, He went to that very area to be crucified, the area of the Red Heifer. The Red Heifer was the greatest of the sin altars for cleansing not only righteous Israelites but also those who were unrighteous or unclean. That altar was outside the camp, outside the physical Temple, and outside physical Jerusalem. From there He went back to heaven while Ezekiel went back to Chaldea.

That was important and significant because New Testament people knew that Ezekiel’s journey was taken by this very conveyance that led the Israelites in the time of Moses. Out of that rock, out of that sapphire stone a miracle took place to give water to the Israelites while they were in the wilderness for forty years. Finally in the fortieth year they moved farther north and found rivers. They no longer needed it.

This rock went with them, Paul said, from the time they had the Tabernacle and made it the throne with the cherubim over the mercy seat, and the throne and water came forth from that Tabernacle. It accompanied the Israelites to the land of promise. Finally when they went into the land they took it to Shiloh and set it up in the land of Ephraim.

Later the Tabernacle moved to various places. It was stolen by the Philistines, stayed with them for some time and Dagon the fish god fell in front of it, to worship in front of it. Finally it was taken to the Gihon spring below Jerusalem, the only spring in the city, and a Tabernacle was set up there for it. Then they started to build a Temple. When Israel finally built the Temple to dedicate it, they brought this Ark of the Covenant up and put it in the Temple at Jerusalem and Solomon dedicated it. Then God came down in a great brightness, a great fire, and showed He approved of the Temple that Solomon made (2 Chronicles 7:1).

Some 400 years later, the people had degenerated to such an extent that God took Ezekiel and said, you see what they have done? In my own home, they have done this. I am leaving it step by step. I am putting it behind. The last place I will look to on this earth is the very Holy Place in the Jerusalem area, the Mount of Olives and that is the last place Ezekiel ever saw the glory of YHWH. Most interesting is it not? Ezekiel is very pertinent and right up to date.

You are one of those small sanctuaries, believe it or not, walking around, if you have the spirit of God in you. You should thank God for it. You do not need the physical Temple because you are the little sanctuary.

Ernest L. Martin, 1999

Edited by David Sielaff, November 2010

Appendix: Skeletal Outline of the Book of Ezekiel

Below is the outline for the Book of Ezekiel from Ingram Cobbin's *The Bible Remembrancer: Containing an Analysis of the Whole Bible* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1848). The outline is presented according to chapter content, and not by topic or chronology.

Outlines of biblical books fill in details of the larger skeletal structure of the Bible shown above in the insert "Ezekiel's Position in the Biblical Canon." Outlines give modern readers of Scripture a great advantage. Ancient students had to keep details of Scripture in their memory. To refresh their memory they had to consult a scribe who could access the biblical scrolls, whether at the Temple or a synagogue. Today if we forget a detail, we can reference a written or a computer Bible. Outlines are a great aid to Bible study. Rev. Cobbin's introduction and outline of Ezekiel are quoted directly from his book:

"The name *Ezekiel* means *The Strength of God*. Nothing is known of this prophet's origin but that he was the son of Buzi; and that, like Jeremiah, he was of the priestly order. But, as with Jeremiah, the priestly became subordinate to the prophetic office. For a period of about nine years the prophesying of the two men ran parallel in point of time: Jeremiah was testifying in Judah and Jerusalem, and subsequently in Tahpanes, Egypt; whilst Ezekiel was proclaiming his message away in Mesopotamia, a thousand miles or more distant from his coreligionist. At the same time Daniel was faithfully witnessing for God in the city of Babylon, probably removed from Ezekiel by a distance of about 150 miles. It is remarkable that Daniel, though a contemporary of Ezekiel's is twice mentioned by name in the Book of Ezekiel, in connection with the two men of God who had died ages before (see Ezekiel 14:14, 20). The term "son of man" is applied to Ezekiel 89 times.

Ezekiel was probably made captive in the second attack on Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:10–16); whilst Daniel had been taken to Babylon about eight years previously (*compare* 2 Kings 24:1 and Daniel 1:1–4). The references and allusions of some of the prophets, as, for example Habakkuk and Amos, are mainly to pastoral and agricultural life; but it deserves note that Ezekiel's mind is distinctly *architectural* in its bent, although the pastoral references are not wanting — e.g., Ezekiel chapter 34. A perusal of chapters 40–48 will confirm the observation.

It is said that Isaiah is "unfulfilled"; and one volume at least has been written to demonstrate this. But it is no less true that the Books of Ezekiel and Zechariah (along with those of other prophets) also yet await their fulfillment. What, for instance, does the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones mean if it be not the resurrection of a nation "as good as dead," and their reestablishment as "one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel"? (See Ezekiel 38:12, 14, 21–22.) Chapter 37 contains two prophecies — distinct, and yet identical — the Valley of Dry Bones, and the Union of the Two Sticks: to those who would assert that these do not refer to the restoration and reunion of Israel and Judah the simple answer is — *read the portion again*.

As to who is meant by Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, opinion is less divided than it was a century or two ago. Men do not now look back into the past, but on towards the future, for the solution of the prophetic enigma; and probably most modern commentators would agree that by Gog is symbolized some power yet to be developed, although possibly now developing. A century ago men dealt with the prophecy as something past and done with; and were emphatic that either Cambyses, king of Persia, or Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, was prefigured.

The description of the reconstructed Temple (chapters 40–47) does not apply to the restored Temple of Zerubbabel, or to the beautiful structure of Herod the Great; and it points, therefore, to a new Temple yet to be built.

Jeremiah spoke of the promised Messiah as a "Righteous Branch" (23:5); and some seventy years later Zechariah had taken up the illustration, and testified of the coming of God's Servant, The

Branch (Zechariah 3:8, 6:12). And under a kindred figure Ezekiel declares that God shall raise up for His people a “Plant of Renown” (34:29). This clearly refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel there are two passages speaking of **The Prince**, where, without doubt, the true Son of David is intended (34:24; 37:25). But there are a number of passages in this Book where the same term is applied — in which no one can possibly tell to whom reference is made (Ezekiel 44:3, 45:17, 46:2, 4, 12, 16, 18, 48:21). The explanation lies veiled in the future.”

• Bible Remembrancer, pp. 66–67

Outline of Ezekiel, Chapter by Chapter

5 th year of Jehoiachin's captivity	Ch. 1	Ezekiel's visions of four cherubim; — four wheels; God's glory, which he saw when among the captives by the river Chebar.	Cherubim	10	Coals of fire scattered over the city. The cherubim and the Divine glory forsake the Temple.									
		2			Ezekiel's commission and instruction. Ezekiel's roll.	The glory departs	11	Presumption of the princes of Israel. God's glory leaves the city.						
					3			Ezekiel eats the roll. Ezekiel's charge as a watchman of Israel.	12	Ezekiel removes his dwelling, as a sign of Judah's removal into captivity. He gives a second sign by taking his food with fear and trembling.				
	4	Types of Jerusalem's ruin, in vision: To portray Jerusalem on a tile. To set up an iron pan, or plate, as a fortification. To lie on his side before it for 390 days, to shew the years of Israel's defection. To make bread of various farinaceous articles, and show, by signs, the scanty food from the siege.						13		The false prophets compared to builders with untempered mortar. False prophetesses seducing the people to ease compared to sewing pillows under the armpits.				
					5					The prophet's hair and beard shaved, then burnt, cut, and scattered; significant of the fate of Israel, by pestilence, famine, sword, and dispersion.	14	Ezekiel's reply to the inquiry of the elders. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job should be in Judah, God would spare only them.		
												6	Ezekiel prophesies to the mountains of Israel, threatening judgments for idolatry.	15
	7	Final desolation of Israel. The sanctuary defiled.			16					Judah and Samaria compared to harlots, on account of their vile idolatries.				
										8				
	9	Vision of the angels of judgment destroying Jerusalem. The man with the inkhorn marks the faithful few.										18	Judah reprov'd for applying the proverb of the sour grapes. God's ways equal.	
Image of jealousy				19									Parable of the lioness and her cubs applied to the princes of Israel. Similitude of the transplanted vine.	
	Angels of judgment					20	The inquiring elders reprov'd for their idolatrous inclinations.							
							Two great eagles			21			A prophecy against Jerusalem and Israel. The type of sighing enjoined on the prophet. The sharpened sword. Divination of the king of Babylon.	
Lioness and cubs		21												
			Two great eagles								21			

Aholah and Aholibah	22	Catalogue of Jerusalem's sins. God's approaching judgments, compared to a smelter's furnace.	Against Edom	35	Prophecies renewed against Mount Seir, or Edom.	
	23	Aholah and Aholibah, types of idolatrous Israel and Judah. Their dreadful punishment.		36	Promises of restoration to Israel, with a new heart and new spirit.	
The boiling pot	24	Parable of a boiling pot. Type of Ezekiel's not mourning for his dead wife.	Vision of dry bones	37	Vision of the resurrection of the dry bones. Type of the two sticks, foretelling the reunion of Judah and Israel.	
		Against Ammon, etc.			25	Prophecies against the Ammonites; Moabites; Edomites; Philistines.
Against Tyre & her merchants	26 27		Prophecies against Tyre. Further prophecies against Tyre, enumerating the extent of her trade, and number of her merchants.	New Temple		40 41
		28 29 30 31	Prophetic announcement to the proud prince of Tyre. Zidon addressed. Prophecies against Egypt. Further prophecies against Egypt. Egypt warned of the downfall of proud Assyria, compared to the tall cedar.		The glory returns	
	Against Egypt		32 33 34	Egypt to fall among the mighty slain, Asshur, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, and Zidon. Ezekiel, Israel's watchman. Wicked shepherds warned. Promises of the good Shepherd.		The Prince

E.W. Bullinger's Outline

Dr. Bullinger's basic outline of Ezekiel (below) is found in a condensed version of [The Companion Bible online](#). This website contains Bullinger's basic outlines of all the books of the Bible.

A	The desolation	1:1–12:28
B	Prophets and prophetesses	13:1–23
C	D Elders	14:1–11
	E The Land and City (Judgments)	14:12–15:8
	F Jerusalem (Deserted Infant)	16:1–63
	G Babylon War (Parable)	17:1–24
	H The People. Proverb (Sour grapes)	18:1–32
	J The Princes of Israel	19:1–14
C'	D' Elders	20:1–44

E	The Land and City (Judgments)	20:45–22:31
F	Jerusalem (Two Sisters)	23:1–49
G	Babylon War (Parable)	24:1–32:32
H	The People. Sign (Watchman)	33:1–22
J	The Inhabitant of the Wastes	33:23–33
B'	Shepherds and flock	34:1–31
A'	The restoration	35:1–48:35

All of Ezekiel's visions occurred while he was in Chaldea, the land near Babylon where the Jews were held captive. The captives from the Israelite kingdom of Samaria transported by Assyria over 100 years earlier, were in the same area.

Ezekiel's prophecies and visions are arranged in roughly chronological order. Of Ezekiel's visions, it is important to note which take place before the destruction of Jerusalem, and which take place after the city and Temple were destroyed. Luckily, most of Ezekiel's visions are presented with precise chronological indicators (except 26:1 and 29:17, which are out of strict date order):

Visions before the destruction: 1:1–2, 3:16, 8:1, 20:1, 24:1, 29:1, 26:1, 30:20, 31:1

Visions at or after destruction: 32:1, 17, 33:21, 40:1, 29:17

With this in mind, the relationship of each vision to others can be fairly well determined. As we near the time of Christ's return, I expect we will come to understand that there is great significance to these time indicators given by Ezekiel. They are precise for a reason. The interplay of Jeremiah's prophecies, Ezekiel's prophecies, prophecies of the corresponding Minor Prophets, and the histories of the books of Kings and Chronicles will all combine to show us a mosaic of God's precision in His prophetic plan.

David Dorsey's Outline

Below is Professor David A. Dorsey's outline of Ezekiel (again as I presented in Dr. Martin's presentation "[Introduction to Isaiah](#)"). Note how the structure of Ezekiel, according to Dorsey, is straightforward.¹⁰ His analysis sets out the major divisions of Ezekiel as follows (pages 253–258, particularly p. 257):

- A** Ezekiel's call and first collection of messages about coming judgment (Ezekiel 1:1–7:27).
- B** Second collection of messages about coming judgment (Ezekiel 8:1–13:23).
- C** Third collection of messages about coming judgment (Ezekiel 14:1–19:14).
- D** Fourth collection of messages about coming judgment (Ezekiel 20:1–24:27).
- E** Oracles against the nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32).
- F** Messages about Israel's punishment and future restoration (Ezekiel 33:1–29).
- G** Vision of the new Temple and the new land (Ezekiel 40:1–48:35).

Unlike Bullinger (whose outlines he acknowledges), Dorsey does not think that Ezekiel has a recognized structure that is symmetrical, such as beginning themes reflected at the end, parallel themes, or a chiasmic arrangement, etc. (Dorsey, p. 253, 258):

¹⁰ *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999/2004) p. 244. DWS

“It appears that the Book of Ezekiel has been rigorously designed in a grand sevenfold structuring scheme. The book’s four introductory units plus the three concluding units, and each of these contains seven smaller units.”

• *Dorsey, Literary Structure, p. 258*

Ezekiel begins with God departing from Jerusalem. It ends with God returning to Jerusalem. God expands His presence from one location in one sanctuary to many little sanctuaries. There is more to present on Ezekiel.

David Sielaff, November 2010

