

Lessons from Ezekiel: Visions of a Glorious Future¹

Ezekiel 33–36

“Chapter 33 serves as a transition between the first half of Ezekiel’s prophetic record [Ezekiel 1–32] and the second [Ezekiel 34–48]. This transition represents the historical moment of Jerusalem’s fall [in 586 BC] ... Chapter 34 represents the start of another series of prophecies that continues through chapter 48. In these messages, Ezekiel’s primary theme is the future restoration of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. In other words, these prophecies from Ezekiel primarily offer hope to the people rather than judgment. They emphasize God’s grace and mercy and point forward to a future regathering of God’s people in their Promised Land. For that reason, many of the prophecies in this section have strong connections to the Millennium” (MacArthur, 90).

The Justice of the Lord (Ezekiel 33:1–33)

This chapter functions as a theodicy or vindication of the justice of the Lord.

- The Role of the Watchman (vv. 1–9)
- The Complaints of Israel (vv. 10–11, 17–20). The people reasoned that if judgment was inevitable, then they were in a hopeless situation and had no future.
A further complaint was that the Lord was unjust.
- The Fall of Jerusalem (v. 21): **Read v. 21.** Almost six months after the destruction of Jerusalem (July 18, 586 BC to January 8, 585 BC), a “fugitive” or survivor reports this tragic news to Ezekiel.
- The Justness of the Lord’s judgment of Israel (vv. 23–33)

The Shepherds of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1–30)

- The sin of the false shepherds of Israel (vv. 1–10): These verses refer to the kings, priests and prophets (cf. Ps. 78:70–72; Isa. 44:28; 63:11; Jer. 23:1–4; 25:34–38) who fleeced the flock for personal gain rather than feeding the sheep as servants of the Lord (vv. 2–4).
- The rescue by the true Shepherd of Israel (vv. 11–22).
- “David” as Israel’s future shepherd (vv. 23–24). Most understand this to be the Messiah, not David himself, though other prophets say the same thing (Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5; cf. Ezekiel 37:24–25).
- The Covenant of Peace (vv. 25–30). This covenant looks forward to the Millennium, wherein Israel will be established in her land permanently and the temple will be rebuilt.²

Prophecy against Mount Seir (Ezekiel 35:1–15)

“Edom was the prototype of all Israel’s later foes [cf. 36:5]. The destruction of Edom would signal the beginning of God’s judgment on the whole earth based on that nation’s treatment of Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3).³

¹ Adapted from *Ezekiel: Redemption for God’s People* (2024) by John MacArthur.

² Dyer, C. H. (1985). Ezekiel. In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 1:1295.

³ Dyer, C. H. (1985). Ezekiel. In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 1:1295.

Prophecies of Restoration and Renovation (Ezekiel 36:1–38)

“This chapter must be understood to speak of a literal Israel, a literal land, and a literal regeneration, leading to a literal Kingdom under the Messiah” (MacArthur, 95).

- Prophecy to the “Mountains of Israel” (vv. 1–15): The mountains symbolize the whole nation.
- Promises to vindicate the Lord’s holy name (vv. 16–23).
- Promises of restoration, cleansing, and a new heart (vv. 24–38)

Verses 25–27 area statement of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34), and it may be the passage the Lord had in mind when he told Nicodemus he must be born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:5; see also, Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22).

“The fact of Israel’s future restoration seemed so remote after her fall to Babylon that God put great emphasis on His personal character (rather than external circumstances) as the basis for the fulfillment.”⁴

Applications

1. God wants his people to _____.
2. God requires his people to _____.
3. God desires his people to _____ !

⁴ Dyer, C. H. (1985). Ezekiel. In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 1:1296).