


Reading Ezekiel

The Big Picture

- 1–3 Ezekiel’s call to be a prophet [**Yahweh’s glory in Babylon**]
 - 4–7 Announcement of judgment on Jerusalem
 - 8–11 Ezekiel’s Temple Vision [**Yahweh’s glory leaves the temple**]
 - 12–24 Oracles, signs, and allegories of judgment on Israel
 - 25–32 Judgment against the nations
 - 25 Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia
 - 26–28 Tyre and Sidon
 - 29–32 Egypt
 - 33 Jerusalem Destroyed
 - 34–39 Oracles of future hope
 - 34 Hope for a future, messianic king
 - 35–36 New covenant, new nation
 - 37 Valley of the dry bones
 - 38–39 Gog oracles
 - 40–48 Restoration of the Temple [**Yahweh’s glory returns to the temple**]
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Historical Context

- Ezekiel was a priest, taken captive in the first wave of the Babylonian attack and exile in the 590’s BC (see 2Kings 24). He lived in Babylon, and was a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Main Themes in Ezekiel

1. Israel has completely abandoned Yahweh
 - They have filled the Jerusalem temple with idols: Ezek 8-10
 - **Key Image:** Look for descriptions of Israel’s idolatry with metaphors about adultery, marital unfaithfulness and prostitution. These are vivid descriptions of how sin and selfishness ruin our relationship with God: Ezek 16, 23.
 - They have been deceived by false prophets: Ezek 13
 - They have been rebellious from the Exodus: Ezek 20
 - Israel’s Idolatry is connected with social injustice: Ezek 22
2. Therefore Yahweh has abandoned his temple...
 - Ezekiel’s vision of the divine chariot (= “God-mobile”): Ezek 1 describes God’s presence appearing to Ezekiel *in Babylon* (i.e. it assumes God’s presence has left Jerusalem)
 - Yahweh’s glory leaves the temple because of Israel’s idolatry: Ezek 10–11
3. Yahweh’s decision to bring judgment upon Judah is irreversible
 - Their idolatrous worship sites will be destroyed: Ezek 6
 - The righteous patriarchs could not save them: 14:12–21
 - They will go into exile: 12:1–15
4. Ezekiel emphasized that judgment is for *this generation’s* apostasy
 - Ezek 18: Each individual is responsible before God [no generational sin]

5. Yahweh's judgment will also affect the surrounding nations [Ezek 25–32]
 - For taking advantage of Israel's downfall: Ezek 25
 - For pride and arrogance: Ezek 28:1–10 (King of Tyre), 29:1–5 (King of Egypt)
 - Gog and Magog oracles: Ezek 38–39

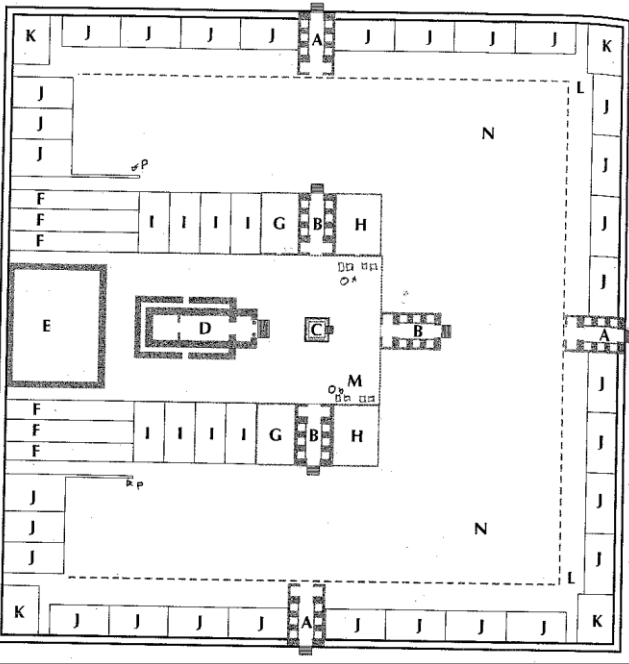
6. After the exile, Yahweh will restore Israel and enable them to keep the covenant
 - New Heart: Ezek 11:16–21
 - New Heart and New Covenant: Ezek 36:22–36
 - New Creation and a Messianic King: Ezek 37

7. At the center of Ezekiel's vision of a restored Israel is the New Temple: Ezek 40–48
 - Interpretive Views of Ezekiel's Temple:
 - (1) Describes an actual temple to be built when the Messiah returns to restore Jerusalem [Orthodox Judaism, Christians who believe in a millennial kingdom]
 - *Problem:* There is no basis in the New Testament for the hope of a restored temple in Jerusalem.
 - *Problem:* In the depiction of the New Creation in Revelation 21:22, it is very clear that there is no centralized temple, because the entire creation is filled with God's presence.
 - *Problem:* The New Testament authors are clear that Jesus and His body, *the community of Christ followers, are the new temple* (1Cor 3:16–17, 1Pet 2:4–10)
 - (2) Describes an idealized temple that uses "symbolic geography and architecture" that was not intended for precise historical reference.
 - The location of the temple ("a very high mountain", 40:2) is symbolic: "high mountain" = symbolic connection point between heaven and earth
 - The city-temple complex is over one mile wide and a perfect square, a magnified version of the Holy of Holies (48:17, 35).
 - There is a river coming from the temple mount (47:1–12). It is a symbolic stream linked to garden of Eden imagery.
 - The image of continuing sacrifices (ch. 45) is inconsistent with the New Testament theology of Christ's sacrificial death (Hebrews 9–10)

(continued...)



Charts adapted from Daniel Block, *Ezekiel* (Eerdmans, 1998)

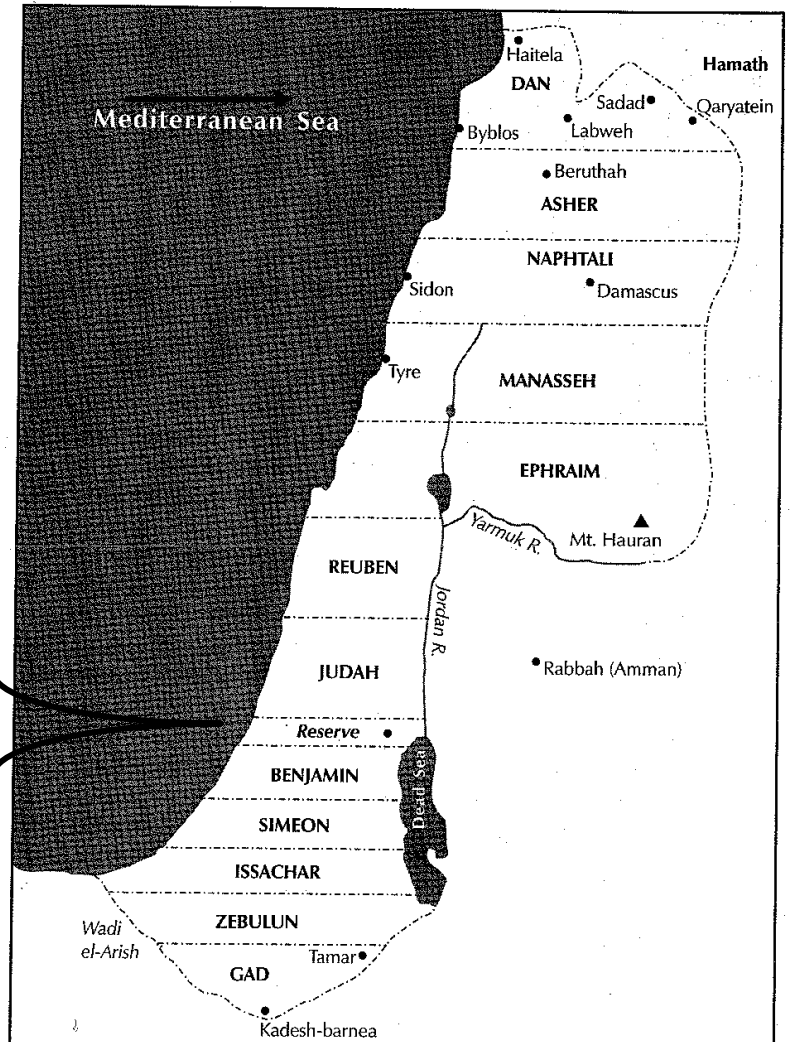
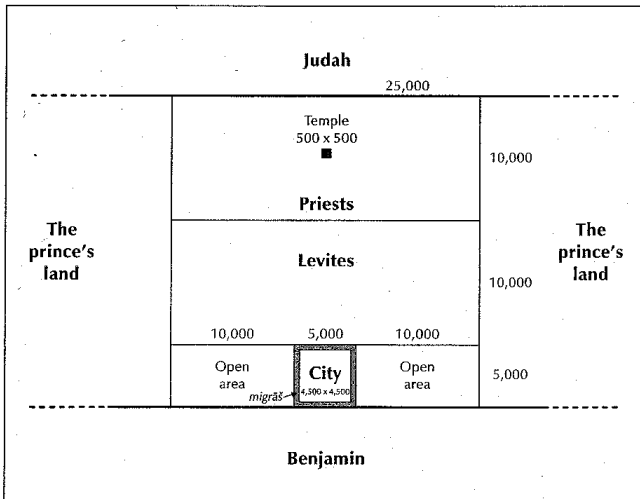


The Temple

Key

- A Outer gates (40:5-16, 20-27)
- B Inner gates (40:28-37)
- C Altar (43:13-17)
- D Temple (40:48-41:11, 15-26)
- E Binyān (41:12-14)
- F Priestly sacristies (42:1-14)
- G Priestly chambers (40:44-46)
- H Chamber of offerings (40:38)
- I Outer chambers (41:9b-10)
- J Worshiper's chambers (40:17)
- K Kitchens (46:19-24)
- L Lower pavement (40:18) רָצוּץ
- M Inner court (40:44)
- N Outer court (40:17-19)

The Divisions of the Land (ch.48)



Map 2. Ezekiel's Vision of the Land of Israel