



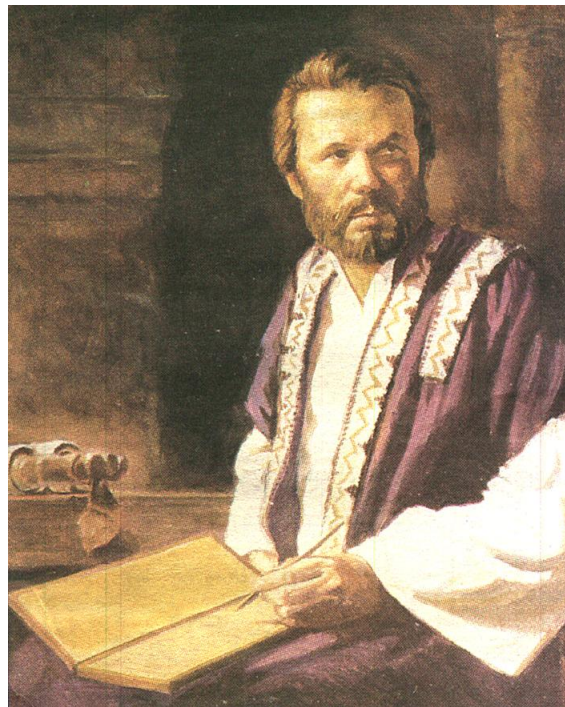
Forward



A Prophet Called Ezekiel



The name Ezekiel is pronounced “ee-ZEE-kee-uhl” or “ih-ZEEK-e-uhl”. The name itself is translated from the Hebrew word “יהקאל” or “Yechezchial” which means literally, “*May God (Jehovah or YHWH) make Strong*”. Such a name is fitting for a prophet of God who was called to witness to a group of extremely rebellious Israelites, while in exile in Babylon. His trials and calling in life were harsh and testing. Truly, the Lord made him strong; otherwise, he would not have been able to accomplish the miraculous things he did.

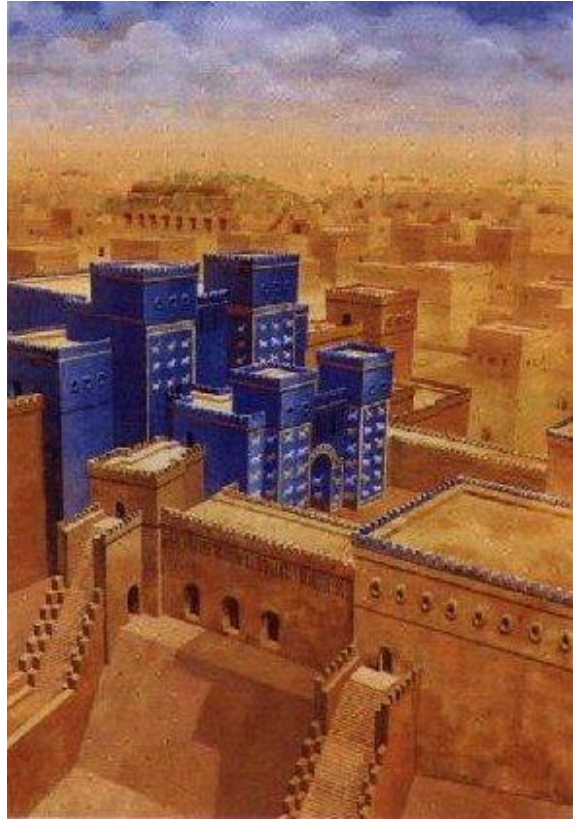


**Artistic Rendition of the Prophet
Ezekiel**

Ezekiel was a descendant of Father Noah through the lineage of his son Shem. Through Shem’s descendants came Father Abraham and the Israelite nation. Consequently, Ezekiel was of the House of Israel, specifically the tribe of Levi. Though many suspect that he was born and raised in Jerusalem, there is no imperial evidence to support this statement. His Father was named Buzi, pronounced BYOO-zie. Though just a point of trivia, the name Buzi means “contempt”. Buzi was part of a long line of priests. In fact, Ezekiel is said to have been a priest after the order of Zadok. Zadok was the High Priest during the time of King David.

Since the Lord's Temple was in Jerusalem, and the priests worked in the Temple, most people use this as evidence to support the fact that Ezekiel was indeed born and raised in Israel's Capital, Jerusalem.

We have no information regarding Ezekiel's childhood. Based on his record in the Bible, we can deduce that he was taken captive in the year 598 BC during a Babylonian siege on Jerusalem. He would have been twenty-five at the time he was taken captive into Babylonia. Based on this information, we can place his birth at approximately 623 BC. Despite the fact that we know very little about his childhood, we can assume that Ezekiel was raised under typical conditions for a young Levite boy in Israel. He was most likely schooled and taught very heavily in Jewish law and tradition. Given the wicked state of Israel between 623 BC and 598 BC, Ezekiel would have also been subjected to many kinds of false religions and wicked practices. He was most likely aware of the pagan rituals and practices that were going on in his country. He was also most probably aware of the many prophets of God that were sent to warn Israel of the consequences of their actions. It is conceivable that he had even heard the Prophet Lehi preach. Among the prophets who preached at the time, *“Jeremiah prophesied in the capital city. As a young resident of Jerusalem, Ezekiel probably heard and saw this great prophet at work”* (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, page 433).



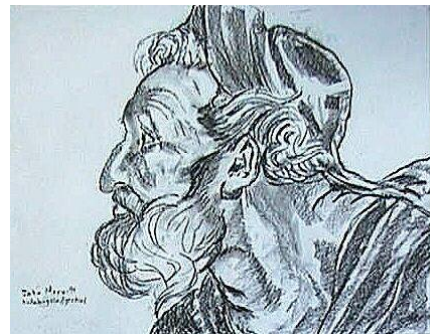
The Processional Way Babylon, Babylonia

Undoubtedly, these prophets set an example for Ezekiel to follow in future years. We don't know if Ezekiel had any manifestations or spiritual experiences in his youth that might have informed him of the future role he was to play as a prophet of God as an adult. We can assume that the Lord prepared him from his earliest childhood for the calling he would later undertake.

At the age of 18, the prophet Ezekiel experienced the first siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He was fortunate enough to survive the siege and retain his place of residence. This siege went, for the most part, uncontested by the Israelites. They were previously under the yoke of Assyrian rule and at the time they were ruled by the powerful nation of Egypt. Apparently, the Israelites had hoped for a strong show of defense on their behalf by the Egyptians. Unfortunately for them, the Egyptians sacrificed them like a pawn, hoping to defeat the Babylonians on another battlefield at another time. The famous king Nebuchadnezzar was the General of the Babylonian army at the time, while his father, Nabopolassar ruled as king. As the Babylonian army passed

through Jerusalem, they placed the Israelite king, Jehoiakim, under a strict oath of allegiance to the Babylonian Empire. They also instituted a very heavy tax program on the newly acquired Israelite nation. There is no proof as to the number of captives that were taken into Babylonia, but we do know that captives were taken. The prophet Daniel was taken in this group of captives. According to historical data this all took place in 605 BC.

Thus far in Ezekiel's life, he had only experienced life under foreign rule; however, he was accustomed to life with somewhat of a semblance of an Israelite nation surrounding him. In the year 598 BC this came to a bitter end. The Israelites appeared to be working closely with the Babylonians most hated adversary, the Egyptians. The Babylonians came quickly through Judah and affirmed their claim on Israel. Israel's king was killed and captives were taken from the land. Ezekiel "*became one of Nebuchadnezzar's many hostages, the Babylonians concentrating on children of the gentry, clergy, and aristocracy*" (*Voices of the Old Testament, 26th annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, page 100*). The number of Judean captives taken to Babylon in many opinions is but an estimate, the fact remains that thousands of skilled and talented individuals were uprooted from Jerusalem and taken to Babylon. It is estimated that after Jehoiakim was killed over 3,000 captives were taken back to Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiakim's eight-year-old son, Jehoiachin, on the Judean throne. Jehoiachin's reign was short lived. Only three and one-half months after he was placed on the tributary throne, Nebuchadnezzar rethought his decision. Fearing that Jehoiachin might someday revolt against him, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem and removed Jehoiachin from the throne. He then took Jehoiachin, his mother, his court and over 10,000 educated and skilled Hebrews captive into Babylon. It is estimated that 13,832 Hebrew captives in all were taken to Babylon. It is not clear if Ezekiel was part of the first group of captives or the second group. In either case, we know that Ezekiel was taken captive. The captives left Jerusalem without much of their strength. The Book of Kings records that the young Hebrew King's wicked uncle Mattaniah, who was renamed Zedekiah by the Babylonians, was placed on the tributary Judean throne as nothing more than a 'puppet' King. Ezekiel would have been 25 years old at this time.



Artistic Rendition of the Prophet Ezekiel

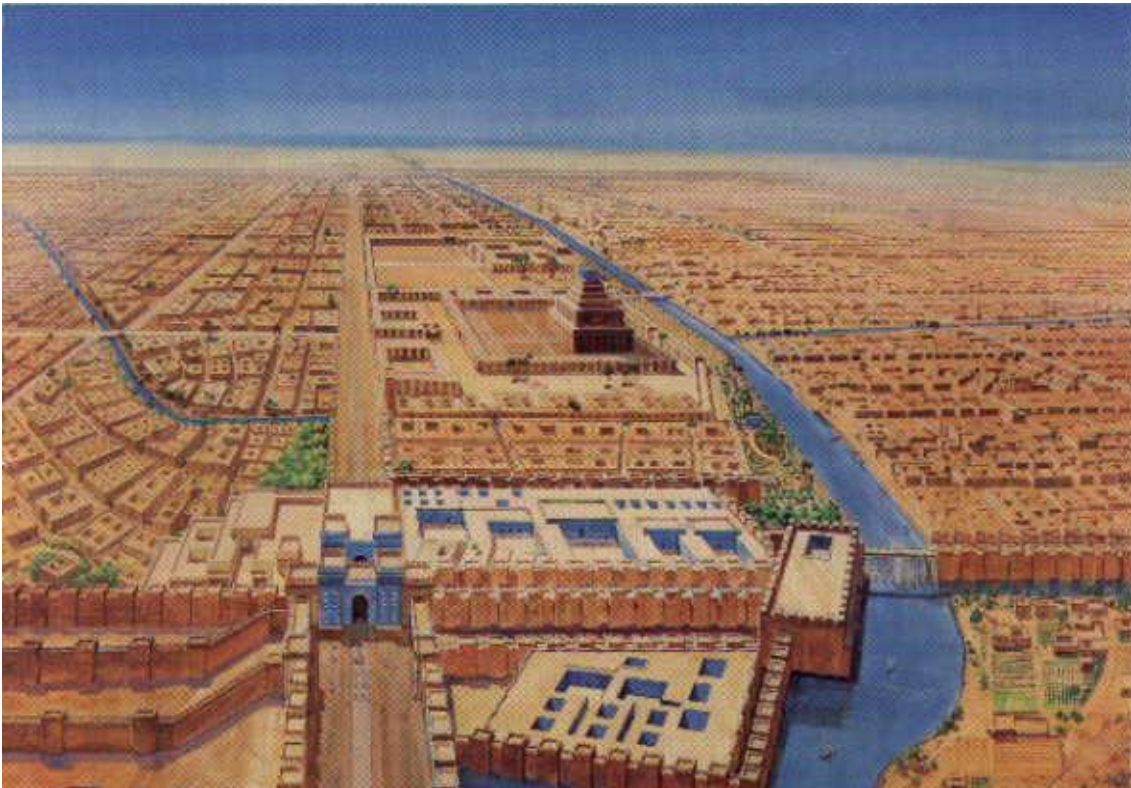
Zedekiah was a wicked man who had no allegiance to the God of Israel nor the Babylonians. His desires were selfish and base. Only a few years after Nebuchadnezzar left, we find that Zedekiah was seeking ways to break free from the Babylonian grip and establish himself as the clear and sole ruler of Judah.

After being brought to Babylon, Ezekiel found himself living in a community of Jewish exiles. This was very typical of Babylonian procedure for captives. The Babylonians would generally relocate the skilled and talented people of a conquered country to a new location within their empire. The Babylonians usually allowed an exiled group to maintain their own identity, so long as they were obedient to the empire. They were allowed to pretty much function as normal citizens. Exiles typically had employment, owned homes, and traded goods like typical Babylonians. The Babylonian

philosophy was to assimilate the strength of a conquered nation into their own, thus strengthening and broadening their own capabilities. Ezekiel records that he was relocated to the community of Tel-Abib next to the River Chebar. This community appears to be an Israelite exile community. Over the course of time, the exact location of Ezekiel's community has been lost. We know through his record that it was in near proximity to (if not a part of) Babylonia's Capital City, Babylon. Even so, some scholars dispute the clues in the record itself. Moeshe Greenberg stated, *“The Prophet is located in the Babylonian exile, specifically at the Chebar Canal (near Nippur) in the town called Tel Abib” (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 15).*

At this point one might ask, **“Was Ezekiel married?”** and **“Did he have children?”** As will be discussed a little later, we know that Ezekiel was married. We don't know, however, if he was married in Jerusalem prior to the exile or if that event occurred in Babylonia. We can ascertain from passages in the Book of Ezekiel that he loved his wife dearly. We might conject that he and his wife had children; however, this would only be theory since there is no evidence to support that claim.

We know that shortly after Ezekiel's arrival in Babylonia, he acquired a house. It was here that Ezekiel settled down with his family and attempted to make a home. It would appear that though many Israelites hoped for a day in which they might return to their beloved city of Jerusalem, many didn't see that happening in the near future. This is implied in the fact that they built or purchased homes and started occupations.



An Artistic Rendering of the City of Babylon

Back in Israel, the remaining Hebrews had not lost hope of freedom. In the year 594 BC Jerusalem hosted a conference, which was a bold and defiant move toward their eventual destruction. The conference has come to be known as the Anti-Babylonian conference. United in their desire to break free from the Babylonians, the countries of Egypt, Syria, Tyre, Judah, and others met to strategize their move toward independence. They felt that with their combined strength, they could break the bands of the Babylonian rule and influence. These events lead up to the start of Ezekiel's service as a Prophet.

Ezekiel was called as a Prophet of the Lord at the age of thirty. This would have been an important age for a young Levite. Thirty would have been the youngest age at which a Levite could be made a priest. At thirty years of age, Ezekiel received what is thought to be his first vision, and his call to prophesy. It took place on the banks of the Chebar canal and is generally assumed to have taken place in an isolated location just outside the community of Tel-Abib. It was there that Ezekiel saw a vision that conveyed the beauty and power of the heavens. In a very symbolic description, Ezekiel recorded the experience. He records seeing the creations of God along with His very throne. According to Ezekiel, this vision took place on Saturday, June 25, 593 BC.

In Ezekiel's first vision, the Savior issued his call to serve. As the Savior appeared before Ezekiel, the spirit entered his body that he might withstand His heavenly



Ezekiel preaching to the Exiles in Babylon

glory. This same spirit gave him understanding and a soft heart, which was an important blessing since the Savior called him to preach to rebellious and wicked people. A people that the Lord told him would not accept his warning. The mission was obviously one that would bring great sorrow and distress to the young Prophet, however, the Lord promised him protection and safety. The Prophet accepted the mission by eating a symbolic scroll.

Ezekiel, who we find is a very faithful and valiant servant of the Lord, leaves his first vision with the Lord and returns to the town of Tel-Abib. During the vision, he was commanded to cry repentance to his Jewish brothers and sisters; however, he found himself sitting bewildered amongst the people for seven days not being able to utter the words that the Lord commanded him.

After seven days of sitting amongst the captives and not fulfilling the Lord's wishes, the Lord's voice came to him. The Lord explained to Ezekiel that he was called as a watchman for the people. As such,

it was his responsibility to warn them. Failure to do so would bring the sins of the people upon Ezekiel's head rather than theirs. Subsequent to this, the Lord led Ezekiel into the plains outside of the city for further instruction as to how he might carry out his mission. The Lord, being sensitive to the Prophets feelings, directed Ezekiel to cry repentance through symbolism rather than words.

The Lord told the Prophet that his mouth would be sealed up for the first part of his ministry (which lasted over nine years). He would be functionally dumb, save when the spirit moved upon him to speak for the Almighty. His message, for the most part, would be delivered through scenes that the Prophet would act out among his countrymen.

The first act that Ezekiel would carry out involved a brick tile upon which the prophet drew a representation of Jerusalem, after which he proceeded to lay siege against the tile. To show the conditions that the people of Jerusalem would live under, the Prophet bound himself and laid on his side some 430 days. During that time Ezekiel ate rations made from base material in very small portions. Furthermore, the Prophet shaved his hair and beard, a sign of mourning and sorrow. He then took the shaved hair and divided it into three parts. One part he burned, another he chopped with a sword, and the last third he scattered in the wind. This entire play was done to convey the conditions and sadness that would accompany the future siege of Jerusalem.



Ezekiel depicted with a brick tile after going many days with only meager food allotments

Ezekiel's record gives us the pleasure of reading the Prophet's symbolic acts as well as the interpretations given to him from the Lord Himself. The Lord explained to the Prophet all of the conditions and events surrounding the eventual destruction of Jerusalem. As the Prophet sat among the exiled Jewish captives over one year after his initial vision, the Lord again came to him to give instruction and understanding. As he sat in his own home, the spirit led him away to the city of Jerusalem. There the Lord showed the Prophet all of the sins that existed among the Hebrews. He saw the secret acts of the priests worshipping idols and leading the people astray. He also witnessed idol worship within the Lord's very house, the Temple of Solomon. Ezekiel was able to see and understand all that displeased the Lord among His children. This experience was obviously quite traumatic for the young Hebrew Priest who could plainly see the downfall of his own people. At the close of this experience, the Lord showed Ezekiel the glory and splendor of Heaven again. This part of the vision was similar to the vision he had with the Lord next to the river Chebar. The vision is extremely rich in symbolism. The Prophet records the visions using descriptions like wheels, six winged creatures, and multi-faced beings. Understanding the vision requires the understanding of the symbols Ezekiel used. There is also some difficulty caused by poor translations from the original script. One example of this is the word 'wheel'. The word 'cherubim' is literally translated from the Hebrew as 'wheels'. For some reason, the translators used the literal translation instead of its probable translation. This causes some difficulty for the reader.

For years after Ezekiel's first vision he received revelations from the Lord calling the Jews unto repentance and unfolding the wrath that would come upon Jerusalem if they failed to listen to the Lord. The Prophet spent those years relating this message to his people. It is clear that the captive Jews received the Lord's word right from Ezekiel's mouth. It is also clear that they were reluctant to repent, even though they were smart enough to recognize that Ezekiel was a Prophet. They apparently visited him often to hear his message, but hearing was about all that they did. The Jews in Jerusalem also received his word. How this was done is unclear. Some speculate that the Prophet sent his messages via carrier. The actual method of delivery is unknown. We do know that the Lord commanded him to deliver his message to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we know from historical records that they received his words. Like the Jews in Babylon, the Jews of Jerusalem failed to truly listen to Ezekiel's words. They refused to repent and subsequently they were destroyed.

Nine years after Babylon's last invasion of Jerusalem came the great and final siege of the city by the Babylonians. It would seem that the Babylonian appointed 'puppet' King of Jerusalem, King Zedekiah, stopped paying tribute to the Babylonians and began to pull away from the Babylonian state. Zedekiah was part of the Anti-Babylonian congress held in Jerusalem just a few years prior and obviously felt that he could manage a breakaway from the Empire. Shortly thereafter, *"in the ninth year of"*

Zedekiah's *"reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month,"* approximately December 14, 587 BC, *"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about"* (2nd Kings 25:1). As a sign to the Jews, the Lord came to Ezekiel the night previous to the invasion and explained that Ezekiel's wife would die during the night. Showing the love that Ezekiel must have had for her, the Lord referred to her as the *"desire of thine eyes"*.



Jerusalem under Siege

She died during the night from a stroke as a sign from the Lord to the Jews. Ezekiel was commanded that he was not to mourn or grieve his wife's death so that the Jews might understand that the great city of Jerusalem, the desire of their eyes, would fall in such a fashion so as the inhabitants will not have time to mourn their losses. The way in which Ezekiel carried out the Lord's command in this instance says something about his character and his devotion to the Lord. Ezekiel was absolutely relentless in his pursuit of the Lord's commands. It is instances like this that causes one to wonder just how he did some of the things he was asked, but he did.

Between the invasion of Jerusalem and its subsequent fall some 18 months later, the Prophet Ezekiel continued his divine calling. The Lord directed his prophecy towards the wicked allies of Jerusalem. The Prophet proclaimed divine judgement against Phoenicia (more specifically the city of Tyre), the Egyptians, and other countries whose wickedness had displeased the Lord.

Finally, one summer night a man came among the captives in Tel-Abib. He said that he had managed to escape from Jerusalem (a task very few succeeded with) during its final destruction. He brought word to the captives that the city was utterly destroyed. This sad news not only brought the sorrow of knowing that loved ones were quite possibly dead, but it also brought the knowledge that they had no home to return to. The only highlight to this news was the fact that Ezekiel ended some nine to ten years of being dumb or unable to speak unless moved upon by the Lord. It seems almost unconceivable that one could go without speaking for such a long period of time. Here again, the Prophet was faithful in fulfilling a mission given him of the Lord.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel continued his role as Prophet; however, his message changed now to a message of hope. He spent the rest of his recorded book speaking of the day of resurrection and judgement. He gives the promise of preservation to the righteous and a message of destruction to the wicked. He speaks of the restoration of all things and the building of the Temple on Temple Mount in the last days. His words are as necessary today as they were some 2,400+ years ago.

From the first to last recorded vision, the time frame spanned an estimated 7,210 days or approximately 19 years and 9 months. During this time Ezekiel received a known 48 revelations, the last being after an approximate 13-year gap. Eliminating the final revelation, Ezekiel would have averaged over 1 revelation every 2 months for seven years straight. We should keep in mind that Ezekiel probably received other revelations, which have become lost to us over time. One example of this is the writings of Ezekiel found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls. Ezekiel's work, as we have it today, can be simply outlined as follows.

Chapters 1-32

“The Books of Judgement”

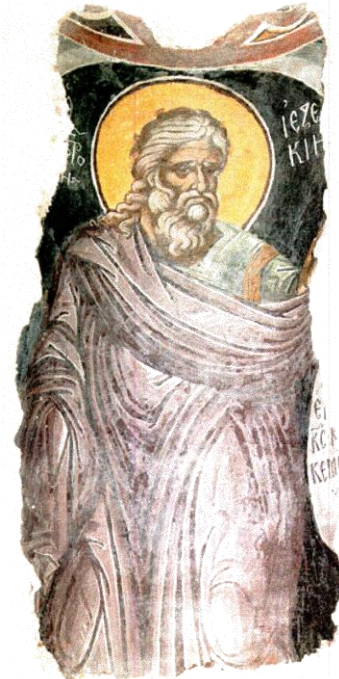
Chapter 1-3 Ezekiel's call

Chapter 4-24 Judgements on Judah

Chapter 25-32 Judgements on foreign nations

Chapters 33-48

“The Books of Hope”



Ezekiel as painted in a Cathedral in Italy

What do you suppose happened to this great man? His record ends with the vision of a celestial Jerusalem, further mention of his life is not given in the Holy script.

Tradition says that Ezekiel never left Babylonia. Supposedly, he died in Babylon and was given a burial of great honor. The facts are somewhat vague. Ezekiel *“is said to have been murdered in Babylon and to have been buried on the Banks of the Euphrates. The tomb, said to have been built by Jehoiachin, is shown, a few days journey from Baghdad”* (Smith’s Bible Dictionary, page 187). It is unfortunate that we do not have more information about this great man. From the examples we have of his character, he must have been one of the greatest men to have ever lived upon the face of the earth.

The Book of Ezekiel, as contained in the King James Version of the Bible, encompasses over 6% of the Old Testament. The writings of Ezekiel lie between the writings of Jeremiah and Daniel. Despite the greatness of his writings and the messages contained therein, many readers of the Bible are not as acquainted with them as the writings of other Old Testament authors. Even so, Ezekiel was and is considered one of the four greater prophets, being numbered with great men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.



Ezekiel is unique in that he dated his revelations. Based on these dates, Biblical scholars typically believe the Book of Ezekiel to be in actuality nine books, volumes or episodes. This is based on the fact that there are nine dates given, which are the beginnings of major themes or stories. This theory, though it does make sense, should be considered as just that, a theory. At any rate, the dates given by Ezekiel can be summarized as follows.

Location of Dating	Jewish Calendar Date	Modern Calendar Date	Julian Date	Days from Last Date	Ezekiel’s Age
Chapter 1:1-2	5 th of Tammuz, 3,168	Saturday, June 25, 593 BC	1,505,012	-----	30 yr.
Chapter 3:16	12 th of Tammuz, 3,168	Saturday, August 1, 593 BC	1,505,019	7 days	30 yr.
Chapter 8:1	5 th of Elul, 3,169	Sunday, August 13, 592 BC	1,505,426	414 days	31 yr.
Chapter 20:1	10 th of Ab, 3,170	Sunday, July 8, 591 BC	1,505,755	329 days	32 yr.
Chapter 24:1	10 th of Tebet, 3,172	Sunday, December 22, 590 BC	1,506,287	532 days	33 yr.
Chapter 29:1	12 th of Tebet, 3,173	Sunday, December 13, 589 BC	1,506,644	357 days	34 yr.
Chapter 26:1	1 st of Nisan, 3,174	Saturday, March 19, 587 BC	1,507,105	461 days	36 yr.
Chapter 31:1	1 st of Sivan, 3,174	Tuesday, May 17, 587 BC	1,507,164	059 days	36 yr.
Chapter 33:21	5 th of Tebet, 3,175	Tuesday, December 13, 587 BC	1,507,374	210 days	36 yr.
Chapter 32:1	1 st of Adar I, 3,175	Monday, February 6, 586 BC	1,507,429	055 days	37 yr.
Chapter 40:1	10 th of Nisan, 3,188	Saturday, March 22, 573 BC	1,512,222	4,793 days	50 yr.

Sandwiched between Jeremiah and Daniel, the Book of Ezekiel should not be forgotten by the Bible scholar. Ezekiel’s work conveys the fact that God is a loving Father who desires greatly to have us follow Him. He will plead with us and call us unto repentance. He has even offered the great sacrifice for our salvation. Even so, we learn that He respects our right to agency. Given this choice, we can choose His mercy or His Judgement. We learn clearly that those who reject His loving offers will feel His wrath. Ezekiel’s work is a work of mercy and judgement, happiness and sorrow, and righteousness and iniquity. Like the ancient Hebrews, we have the same choice before us. Who shall we follow, the world or God?

