

BACKGROUND TO EZEKIEL

Setting: Ezekiel lived among the community of Judeans (i.e. the southern kingdom of Judah) who were exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 598BC.

Date: Ezekiel's first vision occurred in 593BC, when Ezekiel was almost 30 years old; Ezekiel's final vision happened in 571BC, when Ezekiel was just over 50 years old.

Contemporaries: Jeremiah, Daniel and Obadiah were also prophets of Judah during Ezekiel's lifetime.

Unique feature: Ezekiel received six visions from God, and the book as a whole is full of symbolic imagery, some of which Ezekiel is called to personally act out.

Key theme: the glory and holiness of the LORD; the supremacy of God over all the earth.

Key message: a call to repentance with the threat of judgement (chapters 1-25); a call to repentance with the promise of restoration (chapters 33-48).

Key moment: the fall of Jerusalem in 587BC (chapter 32).

Key phrases: introductory formula, "the word of the LORD came to me" (50 times); recognition formula, "they shall know that I am the LORD" (over 50 times).

Structure/Series Outline:

- Chapters 1-3: Ezekiel's first vision – God of Justice
- Chapters 4-11: Judgement & Hope for God's people
- Chapters 12-24: Judgement on God's People
- Chapters 25-32: Judgement on All Nations
- Chapters 33-39: Hope for God's People
- Chapters 40-48: Hope for All Creation

Relevance: What is justice? And do we really want it?