The Book of Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel is a prophetic look at the fall and eventual restoration of Israel. In examining the book of Ezekiel, four areas stand out as important. This paper will cover those four areas. First of all, the authorship of Ezekiel will be examined. Next, a close look will be taken at when the book was written. This is followed by an analysis of the geographical setting and historical context of the book. Finally, this paper will note the purpose, message and character of the book.

Authorship of the Book of Ezekiel

Though there are a few scholars who believe that someone other than Ezekiel wrote the book, the general concession is that Ezekiel is the most likely candidate for authorship. Some credit is given to the idea of an outside editor adding clarification to the text a few hundred years after the death of Ezekiel. For example, Ezekiel 1:2-3 is an explanatory section that could easily have been written by someone other than Ezekiel, added at a later date.

There are several reasons why Ezekiel is the author of the book of Ezekiel. The book maintains a balanced structure throughout, with strong inner consistency. The style and language of the book are uniform. Unlike most other Biblical prophets, there is clear chronological sequencing in the book of Ezekiel, making it seem that the author must
The entire book is written in an autobiographical format, with the exception of the previously mentioned explanatory section. Finally, the picture and character of the prophet Ezekiel is consistently maintained throughout the book (Taylor 15).

The name Ezekiel means God strengthens. No doubt God did give him strength to accomplish the enormous prophetic task to which he was called. Born during the reign of King Josiah, Ezekiel was exposed to some of the most turbulent times in Israel's history. He was raised in the priesthood, growing a deep respect for symbolism and the holiness of God. At roughly twenty-five years of age, he was taken as a captive to Babylonia, where he prophesied the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel shows a deep sympathy and even obsession for the fate of his homeland (Greenburg 14). Through highly eccentric behaviors and a poetic writing style, Ezekiel was given the horrendous task of preaching pending doom to his own countrymen. However, he later was allowed to be a prophet of hope, telling of the future glory of Jerusalem (Tenney 456).

**Dating of the Book of Ezekiel**

Ezekiel dated his prophecies by citing the years of his captivity (Tenney 455). From these clues, it can be surmised that he was taken captive in 597 BC. In roughly 592, he received his prophetic calling through a theophany, or divine manifestation. The book of Ezekiel begins with a description of this prophetic calling. Ensuing prophetic happenings are recorded until roughly 570 BC (Elwell 747). As such, it is assumed that the book of Ezekiel was written between 592 and 570 BC. The only exception to this would be Ezekiel 1:2-3, which was likely added by an editor at an unknown later date for the purpose of clarification (Taylor 15). The autobiographical nature of the text seems to
indicate that Ezekiel wrote while he was experiencing his prophetic ministry, rather than writing years after the fact.

Ezekiel references many historical happenings in this book. Much is noted about the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple, which is an established historical date. These references allow scholars to place the book in a certain timeframe.

**Geographical Setting and Historical Context of the Book of Ezekiel**

The book of Ezekiel was written during the time of exile to Babylon. The captives lived a tolerably settled way of life. In this setting, Ezekiel prophesied and penned at a place called Tel Abib near the river Chebar, which was really an irrigation canal. Ezekiel lived in a house made of mud bricks typical of that locality. He most likely wrote from the relative comfort of his own home (Taylor 22).

The political situation at the time was complex. Ezekiel was born while the Assyrians, who had already caused the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, were still in power but beginning to weaken their hold. This is what allowed King Josiah to carry through necessary reforms after he discovered the book of the law. These reforms dramatically affected Ezekiel's life, as he was being trained in the priesthood while he was in Judah. For a time, Egypt played a part in the affairs of Judah. This eventually gave way to the growing control of the Babylonian kings over Near Eastern politics. It was in this unstable Babylonian era that Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry (Taylor 29).

Ezekiel was exiled the second time the Babylonians, under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, carried away captives (Tenney 455). From this exiled state, he began prophesying prior to the final siege and eventual demise of Jerusalem. After the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple, he continued to prophesy in Babylon. His entire prophetic
career happened from Babylon and was geared toward both the captives, who dreamed of their homeland, and those who were still in Judah.

It seems to be the case that some communication was made between the exiles and the remnant in Jerusalem. The situation of Judah was bleak. Jerusalem and the Temple did fall just as Ezekiel prophesied. After this complete devastation and several years of no recorded prophecies from Ezekiel, the prophecies took on hope. All shared this desire for restoration.

**Purpose, Message, and Character of the Book of Ezekiel**

The book of Ezekiel begins with the dramatic calling of the prophet. The subsequent prophecies are of judgment and the pending doom of Jerusalem. After the fall of Jerusalem, the book has oracles of judgment against other nations. Finally, Ezekiel gives proclamations of hope for the exiles and the remnant in Israel (Elwell 749).

Within this book, there is a definite theme of God's judgment as well as his promise to restore and rebuild. The concept of Yahweh revealing himself to other nations through his dealings with Israel is present as well. Specifically, God continued to reveal himself to and through those in Babylonian exile even without a Temple. Ezekiel emphasizes the idea of personal responsibility for sins. Though events happen to the nation, it is ultimately the choice of the individual to turn from wickedness and seek forgiveness for sin. This represents a pivotal point in the prophetic message and revelation of God (Tenney 467).

Possibly because of his priestly tradition, Ezekiel portrays God as holy. He does this through prose, poetry and great symbolic acts. Symbolism played an enormous role in the worship practices of the Israelites. Through these acts and verbal warnings or
promises, there is great focus on the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and
transcendence of the Lord. Revelation of God is also an important thematic element. The
phrase "Then they will know that I am the Lord" is used fifty times throughout the text,
bringing the importance of knowing the Lord into stark relief. Though Ezekiel is quick to
highlight the majesty of God, he refers to himself as son of man, a position of humility.

The book of Ezekiel has had tremendous effects on Apocryphal literature. The
final prophecies showcase the future kingdom of God in its final glory. The tone and
descriptions used set the standard for future prophetic writings. Phrasing from Ezekiel

In short, Ezekiel was a prophet at an extremely pivotal point in the history of
Israel. Through prose, poetry, and symbolic acts, he impacted a nation reeling from sin
and complete destruction. His prophecies contained both doom and hope. The outcome is
a Biblical book filled with powerful images of the holiness and magnificence of God.
Works Cited


Author: The Prophet Ezekiel is the author of the book (Ezekiel 1:3). He was a contemporary of both Jeremiah and Daniel. Date of Writing: The Book of Ezekiel was likely written between 593 and 565 B.C. during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. Purpose of Writing: Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both exceedingly sinful and thoroughly hopeless. By means of his prophetic ministry he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance and to confidence in the distant future. He taught that: (1) God works through human messengers; (2) Even in defeat and despair God's people need to affi
The Book of Ezekiel is a book of the Hebrew Bible named after the prophet Ezekiel, a prophet from the sixth-century BC. This book records Ezekiel's preaching. His name (Hb. יְהֹבֵחַנְיֶצֶקֶל‎ Yekhzeqēlē) means "God strengthens" or "May God strengthen". Ezekiel lived out his prophetic career among the community of exiled Judeans in Babylon. He belonged to the priestly class and was married (see Ezk. 24:15-24), but it is doubtful that he had any children.