



Part 1 of 3

Ezekiel's ministry overlaps with the latter years of Jeremiah's ministry, but Jeremiah prophesies in Jerusalem while Ezekiel prophesies in exile from Babylon. Ezekiel comes from a priestly family and God calls him to be a prophet while he is living in Babylon. Much of what God has to say in this book relates to the Temple and to God's Presence; thus a "priestly prophet" is appropriate to deliver these messages.

The book of Ezekiel contains some fascinating yet sometimes very strange events. The prophet sees the throne of God surrounded by four living creatures that have four different faces, four wings, and are covered with eyes. Ezekiel also stands in a valley full of old bones, the remnants of an old battle, and God brings them back to life! There are also more strange events, but all of which serve to proclaim the common theme that unrepentant sin will ultimately bring separation from God's Presence and judgment (*side note... due to some of the scary symbolic images, some early rabbis banned this book for anyone under the age of 30*).

Ezekiel's message is hard to hear that God will punish them harshly for their centuries of sin of ignoring and breaking their commitment to serve God, **"You have not even lived up to the standards of the nations around you... Because of your detestable idols, I will punish you like I have never punished anyone before or will again"** (5:7, 9). But their punishment is not God's final word. They are still God's people and God in His grace will bring restoration in the future, a common message proclaimed also by the other prophets.

Two major themes emerge from the book of Ezekiel. One is that **God is Sovereign** overall nations, all history, and therefore He will ultimately be glorified. The second pertains to the **Presence of God**, and due to their idolatry, His Presence is finally driven away from the Temple. However, future restoration will come! More next week...