

Dr. Leslie Allen, Daniel, Session 1, Ezekiel among the Prophets Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Allen, Ezekiel, Session 1, Ezekiel among the Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Allen's lecture introduces the Book of Ezekiel, emphasizing its complex nature and historical context. He stresses the importance of understanding the pre-Christian world to grasp the text's relevance, advocating for a historical and archaeological approach. The lecture highlights Ezekiel's role as a classical prophet during a time of crisis, specifically the fall of Jerusalem. Allen outlines the theological agenda of classical prophecy, focusing on themes of covenant, responsibility, and divine judgment, but also promises of renewal. He further discusses Ezekiel's unique priestly perspective, his sensational methods to engage his audience, and the structure of the Book of Ezekiel itself. The lecture sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of Ezekiel, its historical context, theological themes, and literary structure.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Ezekiel, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Ezekiel).



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3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 1, Ezekiel among the Prophets

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Allen's lecture on the Book of Ezekiel.

Briefing Document: Ezekiel, Lecture 1 - Ezekiel Among the Prophets

Overview:

This lecture serves as an introduction to the Book of Ezekiel, framing it within the broader context of Old Testament prophecy and emphasizing the importance of understanding its historical setting and original audience. Dr. Allen outlines the key themes that will be explored in subsequent lectures, including judgment, salvation, and the unique role of Ezekiel as a priest-prophet. He stresses the need for careful reading and awareness of the historical and theological context to properly interpret the text.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Importance of Context and Preparation:

- Dr. Allen emphasizes the necessity of reading the Book of Ezekiel *before* each lecture, having the Bible open during the lecture, and understanding the general content of the chapters being covered. He states, "the more you have read of the chapters we shall be covering for the next lecture, the more you will get from what I say, and you will not be stumbling along from verse to verse but you will know the general content and see what I have to say further."
- He clarifies the version of the Bible he will be using (NRSV primarily, with occasional quotes from the 2011 NIV revision) and highlights the importance of historical understanding: "As God's Word, the history of the Old Testament is his story at an earlier stage, his story of engagement with his people. So, our first question as we approach the book of Ezekiel must not be what's in it for me but what was in it for the first hearers and readers."

1. Ezekiel and Classical Prophecy:

- Ezekiel belongs to the "classical prophets," a group that began with Amos. These prophets delivered messages of warning and judgment in times of crisis, often tied to the rise and fall of empires. "Historically, Amos launched a new phase, a new development in prophetic preaching, and from then on, the prophets were prophets of crisis, and they were warning the people in the northern kingdom

and then in the southern kingdom with trouble to come; disaster was on the horizon, and they fully explained why that disaster was coming."

- They interpreted military invasion and foreign subservience as "the outworking of divine providence." This was often an unpopular message, contrasting with prophets who maintained a tradition of God automatically siding with and blessing his people.
- He is part of a tradition that anticipates judgement but also eventual salvation: "But in fact, most of these prophetic books also speak of salvation to come, but post-judgment salvation and this is the tradition of classical prophecy that the book of Ezekiel takes over and develops in its own particular way."

1. **Historical Setting: Exile and Deportation:**

- Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian exile, specifically after the first deportation in 597 BC, when the elite of Jerusalem were taken to Babylon, including Ezekiel's family. He continued to prophesy after the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 BC and the subsequent deportation.
- Ezekiel's message shifted after 587. Before, he warned of Jerusalem's impending destruction. After, he offered a message of hope and eventual return to the promised land. "From 593 to 587 obviously Ezekiel was talking to that first group of prisoners of war. And they all desperately wanted to go home and were praying and believed they would go home very soon. God was on their side. No, says Ezekiel, that's wrong. Jerusalem is going to finally fall...But then, in 587, the second group of prisoners of war arrived, and Ezekiel changed his tune. Now, he could indulge in a message concerning the return to the promised land."

1. **Theological Agenda of Classical Prophecy (Five Components):**

- Dr. Allen outlines five components to the theological agenda of classical prophecy.
1. **Israel's Receipt of Covenant Grace:** (often tied to the Exodus). Ezekiel mentions this, but downplays it, focusing on sin even during the Exodus. "Ezekiel has little to say about the exodus...not because it wasn't true...because the real reason was it wasn't relevant to his message of judgment. And in fact, he manages to weave judgment into his reference to the exodus. And say even back then the Israelites were sinners."

2. **Israel's Covenant Obligation:** The responsibility to live according to the covenant, including justice and righteousness. The classical prophets all say this didn't work out.
 3. **Israel's Lack of Responsibility:** This is a major theme in Ezekiel. "Israel went from bad to worse...Israel's lack of responsibility...looms largest in the book of Ezekiel and in the ministry of Ezekiel."
 4. **God's Rejection of His People:** Leading to judgment, exemplified by the fall of Jerusalem. "This component leads on in turn to the fourth component of classical prophecy: God's rejection of his people."
 5. **The Promise of Renewal:** A message of hope that emerges after the judgment, particularly after 587. "He can speak of the restoration of the old Davidic kingdom. He can speak of a renewed Israel in Judah. He can speak of a new temple to worship in." However, even with renewal, responsibility remains.
- A sixth component developed by post-exilic prophets: Israel's arrival at the door of hope.

1. **Ezekiel's Unique Role and Style:**

- Ezekiel is a "priest-prophet," incorporating his priestly training and concerns into his prophetic messages. He focuses on religious sins, temple irregularities, and the importance of God's presence. "He's not only a prophet, and he's a priest-prophet with a hyphen between the two words. He incorporates his priestly training as a teacher."
- Ezekiel's prophecy takes various forms: judgments, accusations, prophecies of salvation, messages against foreign nations, visions, and symbolic actions. "Earlier prophetic books incorporated visions as a form of revealing God's purposes...Ezekiel really goes to town on it and visions are a major component in Ezekiel's prophesying."
- Dr. Allen describes Ezekiel's "radical theocentricity," meaning that God is at the center of the book, with little focus on Ezekiel's personal reactions or experiences. Ezekiel is portrayed as subservient to God's will, contrasting with the rebellious exiles.
- Ezekiel is portrayed as a "sensational prophet" standing out through trances and visions, capturing the imagination of his audience.

1. **Structure of the Book of Ezekiel:**

- The book has two structures. The first is a chronological structure dating events from 593 to 573 BC. The second is a thematic structure that separates the book into messages of judgement and messages of salvation. There is also a section of oracles against foreign nations.
- The dating reveals two sections to the book: The first part consists of messages of judgement to the 597 prisoners of war. The second part consists of messages of salvation to all the exiles.
- The book has been edited to intersperse messages of judgment with messages of salvation.

Key Quote:

"So, our first question as we approach the book of Ezekiel must not be what's in it for me but what was in it for the first hearers and readers."

"But it's always a post-judgment salvation, and there's no easy way to find it. The first one must go downhill with God into the fall of Jerusalem before one can start going uphill again."

Implications:

- Understanding Ezekiel requires careful attention to the historical and theological context of the Babylonian exile.
- Ezekiel's role as a priest-prophet shapes his concerns and messages.
- The book's themes of judgment and salvation are intertwined.
- Ezekiel's emphasis on God's sovereignty and the people's responsibility remains relevant.

4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 1, Ezekiel among the Prophets

Ezekiel: A Study Guide

I. Key Concepts & Themes

- **Classical Prophecy:** Understand the historical development and theological agenda of classical prophecy, particularly its emphasis on judgment and subsequent salvation.
- **The Fall of Jerusalem (587/586 BC):** Recognize the significance of this event as a turning point in Israelite history and its impact on the message of the prophets.
- **Exile in Babylon:** Appreciate the social, political, and religious context of the exiles, including their initial hopes for a quick return and their later struggles with understanding God's purpose.
- **Ezekiel's Role:** Understand Ezekiel's unique position as a priest-prophet and how his background influenced his message and prophetic style.
- **Judgment and Salvation:** Grasp the interplay between these two themes in Ezekiel's prophecies, especially the shift in emphasis after the fall of Jerusalem.
- **Covenant Theology:** Recognize the importance of the covenant relationship between God and Israel, and the consequences of Israel's failure to uphold their covenant obligations.
- **Radical Theocentricity:** Understand how Ezekiel's book places God at the absolute center, emphasizing God's sovereignty, holiness, and initiative.

II. Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the significance of the fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 BC for understanding the book of Ezekiel?
2. How did Ezekiel's message change after the fall of Jerusalem?
3. What is "classical prophecy," and how does Ezekiel fit into this category?
4. What were the two deportations from Judah to Babylon, and how did they affect Ezekiel's ministry?

5. What is "Zion theology," and why did Ezekiel need to challenge it?
6. What is meant by the term "radical theocentricity" in relation to the book of Ezekiel?
7. How did Ezekiel's priestly background influence his prophetic message?
8. What are some of the ways Ezekiel made his message heard to an unappreciative audience?
9. What are the two different structures found in the book of Ezekiel?
10. What are the five components in the theological agenda of classical prophecy?

III. Quiz Answer Key

1. The fall of Jerusalem marked the culmination of God's judgment against Judah and the destruction of the landmarks of faith. It forced the exiles to confront the reality of their sin and paved the way for a new message of hope and restoration.
2. Before the fall, Ezekiel primarily preached messages of judgment, warning the exiles that Jerusalem would be destroyed. After the fall, his message shifted to one of hope, promising the eventual return to the land and the restoration of God's people.
3. Classical prophecy is a new phase in prophetic preaching, starting with Amos. From then on, the prophets were prophets of crisis, and they were warning the people in the northern kingdom and then in the southern kingdom with trouble to come.
4. The first deportation occurred in 597 BC, when the elite of Jerusalem, including Ezekiel's family, were taken to Babylon. The second deportation followed the fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 BC and involved a more general deportation of the population.
5. "Zion theology" is the belief, popularized by Isaiah and expressed in the Psalms, that God's presence in Jerusalem and its temple guaranteed the city's protection. Ezekiel challenged this belief because Jerusalem's destruction demonstrated that God's presence did not automatically ensure safety if the people were unfaithful.
6. "Radical theocentricity" refers to the book's intense focus on God's sovereignty, holiness, and initiative. Ezekiel portrays God as the primary actor, directing Ezekiel's words and actions and enforcing a sense of God's reality upon the exiles.

7. Ezekiel's priestly background gave him a special concern for religious sins, particularly those related to temple worship and idolatry. He often used priestly language and imagery, such as clean and unclean, to emphasize the importance of holiness and obedience to God's commands.
8. Ezekiel told fascinating stories and developed metaphors in detail. He fell into trances, had visions, and occasionally vanished.
9. One structure is dating that continues throughout the book. The second edition of the book wants to intersperse those messages of judgment with new messages to the 587 exiles.
10. The five components are Israel's receipt of covenant grace, Israel's covenant obligation, Israel's lack of responsibility, God's rejection of his people, and the promise of Ezekiel's renewal.

IV. Essay Questions

1. Analyze the ways in which Ezekiel's prophecies both affirm and challenge traditional Israelite understandings of God's covenant with his people.
2. Compare and contrast Ezekiel's role as a prophet before and after the fall of Jerusalem. How did his message and methods change in response to this pivotal event?
3. Explore the significance of Ezekiel's visions in conveying his prophetic message. What theological themes are emphasized through these visions?
4. Discuss the ways in which Ezekiel's priestly background shaped his understanding of sin and his vision for a restored Israel.
5. Examine the relationship between judgment and hope in the book of Ezekiel. How does Ezekiel balance these two themes, and what does this balance reveal about his understanding of God's character and purposes?

V. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Classical Prophecy:** A period of prophetic activity beginning with Amos in the 8th century BC, characterized by written prophecies, social critique, and warnings of impending judgment.
- **Exile:** The forced removal of the Israelite people from their land to Babylon, beginning with the first deportation in 597 BC and continuing after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/586 BC.
- **Judgment:** God's righteous response to sin and disobedience, often manifested in the form of punishment or suffering.
- **Salvation:** God's gracious act of deliverance and restoration, offering forgiveness, healing, and new life.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or relationship between God and his people, characterized by promises, obligations, and blessings or curses.
- **Theocentricity:** A worldview that places God at the center of all things, emphasizing his sovereignty, holiness, and ultimate authority.
- **Priest-Prophet:** An individual who combines the roles and responsibilities of both a priest (mediating between God and the people) and a prophet (speaking God's word to the people).
- **Zion Theology:** The belief that God's presence in Jerusalem and its temple guaranteed the city's protection and prosperity.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture.
- **Exposition:** A comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory.

5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 1, Ezekiel among the Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source:

FAQ on the Book of Ezekiel

1. What is the main focus of Ezekiel's prophecy before and after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC?

Before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, Ezekiel's primary message was one of judgment. He warned the exiles that Jerusalem would indeed fall, contradicting their hopes for a quick return. After 587 BC, his message shifted to one of hope and eventual restoration, including a return to the promised land, the rebuilding of the temple, and a renewed covenant with God. However, this salvation was always presented as post-judgment and carried a strong emphasis on responsibility.

2. How does Ezekiel's background as a priest influence his prophetic message?

Ezekiel's priestly background deeply influences his message. He emphasizes religious sins, such as worship at high places, image worship, and irregularities in the temple, viewing them as serious offenses against God. He uses priestly language like "clean" and "unclean," "holy" and "profane," and incorporates covenant curses from Leviticus 26 to underscore the consequences of unfaithfulness. His concern for the presence of God in the temple is also evident.

3. What is "classical prophecy" and how does Ezekiel fit into this prophetic tradition?

Classical prophecy, as represented by prophets like Amos, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, is characterized by prophecies of crisis. These prophets warned of impending disaster, explaining it as God's providential work through secular history. They also reflected on the necessity of judgment and helped the people recover from it. Ezekiel fits into this tradition by anticipating and explaining the fall of Jerusalem, but also by offering a message of hope and renewal after the judgment, echoing themes of post-judgment salvation.

4. What are the key components of the theological agenda of classical prophecy as exemplified in Ezekiel?

The theological agenda of classical prophecy includes: (1) acknowledging Israel's receipt of covenant grace, particularly in the Exodus; (2) emphasizing Israel's covenant obligation to live faithfully; (3) highlighting Israel's failure to fulfill this responsibility, especially regarding religious and moral faithfulness; (4) recognizing God's rejection of his people due to their unfaithfulness; and (5) promising eventual renewal and restoration through God's grace, even though it is undeserved.

5. How did Ezekiel uniquely deliver his message to an unappreciative audience?

Ezekiel used several methods to capture the attention of his audience, who were resistant to his message of impending doom. He was a compelling storyteller, developing metaphors into detailed narratives that gripped the imagination. His priestly background lent him authority and respect. He also engaged in symbolic actions to represent prophetic messages. Additionally, he experienced trances and visions, reporting remarkable experiences such as being physically transported by the spirit of God.

6. Why does Ezekiel largely ignore the Exodus narrative, a foundational event in Israel's history?

While the Exodus is typically central to Israel's identity, Ezekiel downplays it because his primary message was judgment. He manages to reference the Exodus but only to weave judgement into it, highlighting that sin has existed since the Exodus. By focusing on the present sins of the people, Ezekiel uses judgment instead of grace as the main part of his message.

7. What is "radical theocentricity" in the context of Ezekiel, and how does it manifest in the book?

"Radical theocentricity" refers to the emphasis on God's central role and reality in the book of Ezekiel. The book focuses primarily on what God said to Ezekiel and what he commanded him to do, with minimal attention given to Ezekiel's personal thoughts, feelings, or reactions. Ezekiel is portrayed as subservient to God's will, contrasting with the exiles who are portrayed as rebels. This theocentric approach reinforces the reality of God's presence and power to the exiles.

8. How is the Book of Ezekiel structured, and what transition occurs in the middle section?

The Book of Ezekiel has a general chronological structure, dating events from 593 BC to 573 BC (with one deviation). The first half focuses on messages of judgment to the 597 BC exiles, while the second half shifts to messages of hope and salvation for the broader group of exiles after 587 BC. The oracles against foreign nations in chapters 25-32 play a transitional role, but interspersed within the first half are prophecies of salvation that include an element of judgment and responsibility. This shows a second edition of the book which intersperses messages of judgment with the new messages to the 587 exiles.