

Dr. Leslie Allen, Daniel, Session 3, A Later Commission; Signs and their Meaning for Jerusalem (Ezek 3:16-5:17) 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. Leslie Allen's Lecture 3 on Ezekiel focuses on a later commission given to Ezekiel and the symbolic signs related to Jerusalem's fate found in Ezekiel 3:16-5:17. The lecture analyzes Ezekiel's role as a watchman, highlighting a shift from solely prophesying judgment to warning the exiles and offering a path to avert disaster. It further explores the structure of the Book of Ezekiel, examining both its chronological and thematic arrangements while suggesting the possibility of a second edition with later material moved to the front. **Allen explores** how Ezekiel's actions, such as drawing the siege of Jerusalem on a brick and performing symbolic acts, served as visual prophecies for the exiles, and emphasizes how these signs underscore God's alienation from the people, the coming siege, and its devastating consequences for Jerusalem, while still offering a chance at salvation for the exiles.

2. 19 - 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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on03.mp3**

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

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Leslie Allen's lecture on Ezekiel 3:16-5:17.

Briefing Document: Ezekiel 3:16-5:17 - Later Commission, Signs, and Their Meaning for Jerusalem

Overview: Dr. Allen's lecture focuses on Ezekiel's later commission (Ezekiel 3:16-5:17) and the symbolic acts he performs, interpreting their significance for Jerusalem and the exiles. The lecture highlights a shift from a message of absolute judgment to one with an element of choice and responsibility for the exiles. Allen argues that this section represents a second, thematic edition of the book of Ezekiel.

Main Themes and Ideas:

1. Ezekiel's Fresh Commission as a Watchman:

- Ezekiel receives a new commission as a watchman (sentinel/sentry) to warn the exiles of impending trouble and offer them a chance to avoid it. This contrasts with his earlier commission as a prophet of inevitable judgment. "In 3:16 through 21, Ezekiel is given the role of a sentry on guard, warning if something troubling comes near. He is to warn the exiles that this is so. Hopefully, they will listen and avoid the trouble."
- This commission emphasizes the exiles' responsibility to listen and act on the warning. Ezekiel also has responsibility to deliver it.
- This watchman theme is linked to Jeremiah 6:17.

1. Two Editions of Ezekiel:

- Dr. Allen suggests the book has a first edition that follows a chronological order.
- There is also a second edition which highlights a thematic approach, such as the commission of Ezekiel.
- Evidence of the second edition is found in Chapter 29, where there's a message against Egypt suddenly jumps forward to 571 BC, even later than the last date in chapter 40 of 573 BC.

1. Responsibility and Choice:

- This later commission introduces the idea of choice and responsibility for the exiles. "We should see an element of choice now that's given to the exiles."
- Ezekiel must warn the wicked, and they have a choice to repent and live or continue in wickedness and die. Ezekiel will be held accountable if he doesn't deliver the warning.
- God's desire is for the wicked to turn from their ways and live (Ezekiel 33:11). "'As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways. Why will you die?' And there it is."
- Even after 587, a message of "judgment with a small case J" is necessary to those that depart from God's ways.
- There's a heavy responsibility upon the hearers: if they don't listen, they'll suffer.
- This theme resonates with the New Testament, particularly Hebrews 13:17, where leaders are portrayed as watchmen over souls, accountable for their care.

1. Symbolic Acts and Their Interpretation:

- Ezekiel performs five symbolic acts, combining actions and words to convey powerful messages. "Actions speak louder than words, we say. But here in Ezekiel, we find a combination of actions and words. The combination speaks very loudly indeed."
- Dr. Allen connects this to the Christian sacraments of baptism and communion, which also involve symbolic actions and interpretations.
- **Act 1: Seclusion and Silence:** Ezekiel is told to stay home, bound and speechless, symbolizing God's alienation from his people.
- **Act 2: The Brick and Siege:** Ezekiel draws Jerusalem on a brick, creates models of siege works, and places an iron plate between himself (representing God) and the city, signifying the coming siege and God's lack of intervention.
- **Act 3: Lying on His Side:** Ezekiel lies on his left side for 390 days (representing the sin of the house of Israel going back to the time of Solomon's temple) and then on his right side for 40 days (representing the punishment of exile for 40 years). "And in the first half, you shall bear the sin of the house of Israel on the left side for 390 days... But then, but then that punishment, that sin or punishment, when

there's a turning down on the right side, lying on the right side, those 40 days, I think there, there it is punishment, there it is punishment. And it's the punishment of being sent into exile."

- **Act 4: Eating Defiled Bread:** Ezekiel is to eat a mixed grain loaf (representing scarcity) and bake it on human dung (representing defilement). He protests the latter, and God allows him to use cow dung instead.
- **Act 5: Cutting and Dividing Hair:** Ezekiel shaves his head and beard, dividing the hair into three parts: burning one in the city (representing death during the siege), scattering one with a sword (representing execution), and throwing one into the air (representing exile and death during exile).

1. **Jerusalem's Rebellion and God's Anger:**

- The symbolic acts are a consequence of Jerusalem's rebellion against God's ordinances (echoing the "rebellious house" theme from earlier chapters).
- God's anger and fury are emphasized as reasons for Jerusalem's fall. "My anger shall spend itself. I will vent my fury on them and satisfy myself."
- Dr. Allen draws a parallel to the New Testament's emphasis on the wrath of God as a necessary precursor to the good news of the Gospel. There has to be awareness of bad news and the anger of God before there can be good news.

1. **Judgment Oracle Structure**

- A typical judgment oracle starts with accusation, followed by the punishment. The punishment consist of two parts, God intervening personally, and then human consequences following from that.

Significance for the Exiles:

- The messages are aimed at both the 597 and 587 exiles, with specific appeals to the latter group scattered throughout the first half of the book.
- The 597 exiles need to understand that things will get worse, and there will be a full and final siege of Jerusalem.
- The messages are to remind the 587 exiles of the history of rebellion that caused the destruction of Jerusalem.
- The messages convey both judgment and the possibility of salvation contingent upon repentance and obedience.
- The symbolic acts illustrate the severity of the situation and the consequences of disobedience.

Next Steps: The next lecture will cover Ezekiel chapters 6 and 7.

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

Ezekiel: A Later Commission, Signs, and Their Meaning

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary difference between Ezekiel's earlier commission and his later "watchman" commission?
2. What are the two editions of the Book of Ezekiel that Allen references?
3. According to Allen, what is the significance of Ezekiel being struck dumb and secluded?
4. What groups does Allen claim Ezekiel was speaking to throughout the book?
5. What is the significance of the exile being given a choice?
6. Explain Allen's understanding of the meaning of the term "life" in Ezekiel's salvation oracles.
7. What is the New Testament parallel to Ezekiel's watchman commission that Allen identifies?
8. Describe the symbolic action involving the brick and the iron plate. What does it represent?
9. How does Allen interpret the 390 days and 40 days Ezekiel spent lying on his sides?
10. Describe the symbolic action involving Ezekiel cutting off his hair and beard. What does it represent?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Ezekiel's earlier commission was primarily focused on delivering messages of judgment, regardless of whether the people listened. The later "watchman" commission emphasizes warning the exiles of impending trouble, giving them an opportunity to avoid negative consequences if they heed the warning.
2. The first edition of Ezekiel, Allen says, was structured chronologically, emphasizing the progression of time and events. The second edition takes a more thematic

approach, arranging material based on shared themes rather than strict chronological order.

3. Ezekiel's being struck dumb and secluded symbolizes God's alienation from the people of Israel. Their disobedience and rebellion created a significant gap between them and God, rendering communication limited.
4. Allen claims that Ezekiel was speaking to both the exiles of 597 (the VIPs) and the exiles of 587 (the general populace) throughout the book. He argues that messages specifically intended for the 587 group are interspersed within the larger narrative, ensuring their engagement with the text.
5. The exiles being given a choice represents a shift from absolute, inevitable judgment to a message of salvation with responsibility. If the people heed the warning and repent, then there is an opportunity for them to be saved.
6. In Ezekiel's salvation oracles, "life" refers to the anticipation of a return to the land, which Allen says takes on a whole fullness of meaning in Jeremiah's oracles of salvation. It represents more than physical existence; it embodies the hope for a restored relationship with God and a renewed future.
7. Allen identifies Hebrews 13:17 as a New Testament parallel to Ezekiel's watchman commission. It speaks of leaders keeping watch over the souls of their congregations and being accountable for their spiritual well-being, mirroring Ezekiel's responsibility to warn the exiles.
8. The symbolic action involving the brick with a drawing of Jerusalem, the models of siege works, and the iron plate represents the coming siege of Jerusalem and God's abandonment of the city. The iron plate symbolizes an "iron curtain" falling between God and Jerusalem.
9. Allen interprets the 390 days Ezekiel spent lying on his left side as representing the long history of Israel's sin from the time of Solomon's temple. The 40 days spent lying on his right side symbolize the punishment of exile for 40 years.
10. The symbolic action of Ezekiel cutting off his hair and beard represents the destruction of Jerusalem and the fate of its inhabitants during the siege. The different ways the hair is disposed of (burning, scattering, slashing) symbolize death, exile, and further violence.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the "watchman" motif in Ezekiel, comparing and contrasting it with its presence in the book of Jeremiah. How does Ezekiel's commission reflect a development or transformation of this theme?
2. Analyze Allen's argument for the presence of multiple editions or layers within the book of Ezekiel. What evidence does he present to support this claim, and how does this perspective affect our understanding of the book's overall message?
3. Examine the symbolic actions that Ezekiel is commanded to perform in chapters 3-5. How do these actions contribute to the prophet's message, and what do they reveal about the relationship between God and the people of Israel?
4. Explore the tension between judgment and salvation in the book of Ezekiel, as highlighted by Allen. How do these themes interact with each other, and what does this tension reveal about God's character and intentions?
5. Considering Allen's lecture, discuss the challenges of interpreting the book of Ezekiel. What are some of the key interpretive decisions that readers must make, and how might different approaches affect our understanding of the text?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Commission:** A formal authorization or instruction to perform a specific task or role. In Ezekiel, it refers to God's calling and appointment of the prophet.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humankind.
- **Chronological:** Arranged in order of time.
- **Thematic:** Organized around specific subjects or ideas.
- **Watchman (Sentinel/Sentry):** A person assigned to keep watch and warn of danger. In Ezekiel, it symbolizes the prophet's responsibility to alert the exiles to impending judgment or opportunities for repentance.
- **Exiles:** People forced to leave their native country, especially for political reasons. In the context of Ezekiel, it refers to the Israelites who were deported to Babylon.
- **597 Exiles:** The upper-class citizens and leaders of Jerusalem, the VIPs, who were exiled to Babylon in 597 BCE.
- **587 Exiles:** The general populace of Jerusalem who were exiled to Babylon after the city's destruction in 587 BCE.
- **Judgment (Capital J):** In Allen's terminology, absolute, inevitable punishment for sin, often referring to the destruction of Jerusalem.
- **Judgment (Small j):** In Allen's terminology, consequences or trouble that individuals or groups may face for departing from God's ways, but with the possibility of repentance and restoration.
- **Salvation Oracles:** Prophetic messages that offer hope, restoration, and deliverance.
- **Staff of Bread:** A metaphor for the essential food supply that sustains life.
- **Symbolic Action:** An action or gesture that represents something else, often used by prophets to communicate a message from God.
- **Rebellious House:** A term used in Ezekiel to describe the people of Israel, who have consistently defied God's commands and covenants.
- **Iron Plate (Iron Curtain):** A symbol of separation or barrier, representing the division between God and Jerusalem due to the city's sin.

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

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

FAQ on Ezekiel 3:16-5:17

- **What is the significance of Ezekiel's commission as a watchman in Ezekiel 3:16-21?**
- Ezekiel's commission as a watchman represents a shift from his earlier role as a prophet of inevitable judgment. As a watchman, he is responsible for warning the exiles of impending trouble, offering them a chance to avoid it if they heed the warning. This introduces an element of choice and responsibility for the exiles, contrasting with the absolute judgment previously proclaimed. This commission is a reflection of God's grace and desire for the wicked to turn from their ways and live.
- **How does the "watchman" theme in Ezekiel relate to earlier prophetic traditions?**
- The watchman theme in Ezekiel builds upon earlier mentions in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 6:17 speaks of God raising up sentinels, but the people refusing to listen. Ezekiel's commission as a watchman in Ezekiel 3 and 33 is a more developed and personalized application of this theme, emphasizing the watchman's responsibility to warn and the people's responsibility to heed the warning.
- **What is unique about the structure of the book of Ezekiel in relation to the timeline of events?**
- While the book of Ezekiel appears to follow a chronological order, beginning in 593 BC and moving toward 587 BC (the fall of Jerusalem), there are indications of a second "edition" or thematic arrangement. Certain messages, particularly those related to salvation and the watchman commission, seem to be placed outside of the strict chronological timeline, potentially to address different groups of exiles or emphasize certain themes more strongly.

- **What is the purpose of Ezekiel's symbolic actions described in chapters 3-5?**
- Ezekiel is commanded to perform a series of five symbolic actions, including being bound and silenced, drawing the siege of Jerusalem on a brick, lying on his side for extended periods, preparing and eating a special bread mixture, and cutting his hair and beard. Each of these actions is intended to communicate a message about the coming siege of Jerusalem, the exile, and God's judgment.
- **Why was Ezekiel instructed to be silent and bound (Ezekiel 3:24-27)?**
- Ezekiel's seclusion and silence symbolize the alienation between God and the rebellious people of Israel. During this period, there was a great gap between them, there is nothing for Ezekiel to say to them. It was a physical manifestation of the fact there was a great divide between God and the people of Israel. The promise that he would eventually be allowed to speak again indicated the future renewal of communication and the restoration of God's message.
- **What do Ezekiel's actions of lying on his left and right sides for extended periods symbolize (Ezekiel 4:4-8)?**
- Ezekiel's lying on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days, are symbolic actions signifying the sin and punishment of the house of Israel and Judah. The 390 days are the time from Solomon's Temple representing Israel's sin while the 40 days represent the punishment of the people being sent into exile.
- **What does Ezekiel's eating of mixed-grain bread and limited water rations signify (Ezekiel 4:9-17)?**
- The mixed-grain bread, made from various odds and ends, represents the scarcity of food during the siege of Jerusalem, symbolizing how the people would be reduced to eating whatever they could find. The limited water ration represents a dire scarcity of this life-giving resource.
- **What does Ezekiel's shaving of his head and beard, and dividing the hair, symbolize (Ezekiel 5:1-4)?**
- Ezekiel's shaving of his head and beard and dividing the hair into thirds symbolizes the fate of the people of Jerusalem during and after the siege. One-third burned within the city represents those who die in the siege, another third slashed around the city symbolizes the execution of citizens, and the final third scattered into the wind and pursued by the sword symbolizes the exiles who are killed as they flee.