

Reading Ezekiel as Christian Scripture

I. Ezekiel in Outline

597 BC Babylonians conquer Jerusalem, exiles 10k Israelite elites (including Ezekiel)
 593 BC In exile, Ezekiel called to prophesy (Ezek. 1:2)
 586 BC Babylonians destroy Jerusalem, deport much of the rest of the population
 538 BC The Persian Emperor Cyrus sends Israelites back to Jerusalem.

Chs. 1-3 Ezekiel's call by the river Chebar (God's "chariot-throne")

Chs. 4-24 Prophecies of doom against Judah and Jerusalem

"Sign-acts" of judgment (cf. 12:3-5).

The departure of the LORD's glory from the Jerusalem Temple (chs. 8-11)

Parables of Israel's unfaithfulness to God (chs. 16, 20, 23)

Chs. 25-32 Prophecies against the nations

Chs. 33-39 Prophecies of return and redemption

A new Davidic king (cf. 34:23-24).

The Valley of Dry Bones (37:1-14)

The war against "Gog, the land of Magog" (chs. 38-39, cf. Rev. 20)

Chs. 40-48 A vision of a new (and HUGE) Temple

II. A Nicene Reading of the Old Testament?

"[Our fathers] drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

"Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar" (Gal. 4:24).

III. Christ at the Chebar? (Ezek. 1)

A. "Thus, by the river Chebar, when he was thirty years old, Ezekiel saw the heavens opened [cf. Ezek. 1:2]. And the Lord Jesus Christ, 'when he began, was about thirty years old' [cf. Lk. 3:23], by the river Jordan, and 'the heavens were opened' [cf. Lk. 3:21] for him. And all through his prophecy, Ezekiel is addressed as 'son of man' (Origen, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1.1).

B. “In the thirtieth year of Ezekiel the prophet, the heavens were opened, and he saw visions of the LORD next to the river Chebar, because in about his thirtieth year the LORD came to the river Jordan. And indeed there the heavens were opened, because the Spirit descended in the dove...Ezekiel came to the river Chebar, then, because the fortitude of God deigned to draw near by the mystery of his incarnation, bearing the weights of humankind” (Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2.5-6).

C. “The charioteer of these four living creatures was not entirely fire, but only from the loins downward; and from the loins to the top he was electrum. For the Logos does not have only instruments of punishment, but also has that by which he grants rest” (Origen, *Fragments on Ezekiel*).

D. “Above the throne there was the likeness of a human being, because above those powers, which take precedence even over the angels, is the glory of our Redeemer” (Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 8.20).

IV. Paul and Matthew in the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezek. 37:1-14)

A. “Thus says the LORD to these bones, ‘Behold, I am bringing into you the Spirit of life (*pneuma zōēs*)’ (Ezek. 37:5, LXX).

B. “The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (*pnoēn zōēs*); and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7, LXX).

C. “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6).

D. “For the law of the Spirit of life set us free from the law of sin and death...If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also *through his Spirit* which dwells in you.” (Rom. 8:2, 11).

E. “It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’ [cf. Gen. 2:7]; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:44-45).

D. “And I prophesied as he commanded me, and it happened as I prophesied, and behold, an earthquake (*seismos*), and the bones gathered together, each with its mate...Thus says the LORD, I will bring you up from your tombs, and I will lead you into the land of Israel” (Ezek 37:7, 12 LXX).

E. “And behold, there arose a great earthquake [*seismos*] on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and raised him” (Matt. 8:24-25).

F. “The earth shook (*eseisthē*), and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised” (Matt. 27:51-52).

G. “Behold, there was a great earthquake (*seismos*)...‘He is not here; for he has risen’” (Matt. 28:2, 6).