

Analysis of Ezekiel

General

Unlike other books of the Old Testament Ezekiel was unscathed by critical scholarship into the early years of the twentieth century. Its single authorship was affirmed and its well-developed composition recognized by biblical scholars.

Authorship

If one recognized the scholarly consensus of the previous twenty plus centuries, then the authorship of Ezekiel would be affirmed without reservation. Although having recognized Ezekiel's authorship, that does not rule out that Ezekiel arranged his material (after he delivered them orally) nor does his authorship "rule out editorial clarification by later hands" (Block, p. 22-23).

Date

Since Ezekiel's ministry to the exilic community spanned at least twenty-three years from 593-571 BC (Lasor, et. al. p. 357), then a date consistent with Ezekiel's life would be assumed.

Key Issues

Key issues in Ezekiel are: 1) to determine the mental state of Ezekiel, 2) to explain Ezekiel's audience: exiles in Babylon or his countrymen in Jerusalem, 3) to recognize the significance of the "recognition" formula: "... I am Yahweh," 4) to appreciate the rhetorical devices of Ezekiel (e.g. sign acts) and his divinely directed behavior to illustrate his message, 5) to grasp the significance of the loss of the temple, land, king, and the presence of the Lord Himself, 6) to understand apocalyptic genre, 7) to understand that there is a literal future for Israel in the land with a Davidic King and temple. God will be faithful to His covenants.

Subject/Purpose Statement

The book of Ezekiel explains his call to the prophetic ministry to the exiles in Babylon, the reasons for their exile, judgment on surrounding nations, and a vision of a new temple in the land where God will dwell. These explanations were to motivate the people to know that Yahweh was their God and He was dealing decisively with His people because of their sin. Although the people had trusted in the outward (the land, and the temple and suffered exile), God would one day restore His people to the land with a

new temple with a Davidic King where all could enjoy His presence.

Outline of Ezekiel

- God pronounces His judgment on Israel because of their sin (1:1-24:27).
 - Ezekiel is called and commissioned as God's spokesman to an obstinate people (1:1-4:17).
 - Ezekiel "acts out" God's impending judgment on Jerusalem (4:1-5:17).
 - God proclaims His coming judgment against the high places of Israel and the rest of the land (6:1-7:27).
 - Ezekiel's vision of God's jealousy and coming judgment (8:1-11:25).
 - God's promise of exile against Israel (12:1-24:27).
- God pronounces judgment against foreign nations (25:1-32:32).
 - Divine judgment promised against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, (25:1-17).
 - Divine judgment promised against Tyre (26:1-28:26).
 - Divine judgment promised against Egypt (29:1-32:32).
- God promises restoration to Israel so that they might know that "I am Yahweh" (33:1-39:29).
 - Israel's present deplorable condition is rehearsed (33:1-35:15).
 - Israel's restoration begins as God deals with the nations that insulted Israel (36:1-38).
 - God re-gathers Israel to the land (37:1-39:29).
- God's vision to Ezekiel of a restored and divinely inhabited glorious temple and city (40:1-48:35).
 - A vision of a new temple and its environs (40:1-46:27).
 - A vision of a renewed land with material blessings and the presence of God (47:1-48:35).

Theological Application

The awful truth of Ezekiel is that although God is and will be faithful to keep His covenants with His people, He will discipline His people severely if they do not maintain their end of the covenant. Although it is an age-old truth for Israel, obedience brings

blessing and disobedience will result in divine discipline no matter what. God disciplined His people so that they would know that He was their God and that they would repent so they could enjoy His presence in the land.

By application, Block notes well “The Christian has no right to claim the promises of God if that claim is not matched by exclusive devotion to him and faithful obedience to His will” (p. 54).