

Notes on Lamentations:

Ezekiel is many times called the priest to the exiles. His total ministry is spent in Babylon. Ezekiel was among the first group of Jews to be taken into exile in 597 B.C. His call to be a prophet came in 593 B.C.

The Babylonians allowed the captives great freedoms. They were allowed to worship as they pleased. Many were also able to work at trades that they were proficient at. The danger with the relaxed attitude of the Babylonians was that the Jews were quickly adapting themselves to their ways. Ezekiel acted as a siren to warn his people of the cost of being absorbed into this pagan society.

The book is divided into 3 parts.

Chapters 1-24 are warnings and judgements against Israel. Even though Israel was already a puppet to Babylon – Jerusalem, its crown jewel still stood. Many falsely thought that the Lord would never have Jerusalem and His temple destroyed. Ezekiel told them it would fall if they did not change their ways. No one listened. In 586 B.C. the temple and Jerusalem fell.

Chapters 25-32 are Ezekiel's judgement against other nations. We will look more closely at this type of writing as we look at the minor prophets.

Chapters 33-48 were written after the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel now is consoling the despondent exiles with the hope of restoration and spiritual renewal. Many of his thoughts in these chapters point to the eternal kingdom to be established on judgment day. The despair of Lamentations is answered with hope.

Ezekiel's ministry lasted until about 571 B.C. He would die in exile. His book is full of spectacular visions. The Lord has him act out many of the prophecies.

It is likely that during the Babylonian captivity the concept of the synagogues started. The believers could not go to the temple to worship so they started to get together in their homes to read Scripture and to pray.

Questions:

1. Chapters 1-3, the call of Ezekiel. In 3:1-4 the scroll is sweet like honey. What do you think that symbolized? (see also Revelation 10:9-10)
2. Chapter 3:16-17 – What assurance can we also have if we faithfully speak God's Word to others? Who is to blame if they do not listen? (See also Chapter 18:1-4)
3. Chapter 12 - What was Ezekiel to act out for the people?

4. Chapter 24 – The siege and fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.). How was Ezekiel's loss of his wife related to the fall of Jerusalem?

5. Chapter 34 – Relate Ezekiel's references to shepherds and sheep to the words in Psalm 23 and John 10.

6. Chapter 37 – What kind of hope would the story of the dry bones give to the exiles? What can it mean to us?

7. Chapters 40-44 – A very elaborate description of a temple and fittings that were never built – Really chapters 40-48 are a vision of a spiritual kingdom of God where men would truly worship and serve Him. This vision would give hope to those in exile. It also gives us hope as we labor on earth now.

Your questions on Lamentations & Ezekiel ...