

## 6. Ezekiel

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Last week we explored the trauma of Jeremiah — before, during, and after the crushing conquest and vanquishing of the Kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. This week we turn to the last of the three major prophets, Ezekiel - a priest-prophet who writes from within the experience of Exile. Obsessed with holiness; intemperate in his indictment of the Israelites' sins; and full of challenging symbolic and theological metaphors couched within the mythic and mysterious language of his powerful visions — nevertheless even Ezekiel looks forward to the recovery of hope for God's people, and a future of regeneration and blessing. Ezekiel is also famous for the bizarre acts and behavior he indulges in so as to dramatize the plight and circumstances of Israel's fragile covenantal relationship with God.

### **Assignment #6 for Class on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

#### ***Reading***

Please read through the book of Ezekiel in the Hebrew Bible. It's a lot of text, and should be broken up into digestible portions (I suggest five "chunks" that correlate to the three major cycles of oracles: (1) the oracles foreseeing Jerusalem's Doom: 1-24 [maybe 1-12 and 13-24]; (2) the oracles against the nations (25-32); and (3) the oracles of restoration (33-48) [maybe 33-39; and 40-48). In terms of the "Greatest Hits" of Ezekiel, I would recommend focusing on: 1-5; 8-10; 12; 16; 18; 25-27; 33; 37-39; 40; 47-48 (approximately two-fifths of the book). *However, for the purposes of this week's assignment, I would like you to concentrate particularly on the account of Ezekiel's bizarre prophetic actions (chapters 1-5).* Please read through the introduction to Ezekiel in your NRSV Bible, and use the annotations and notes as an aid to understanding and interpretation when you feel in need. [You may also want to consult 2 Kings 23-25 to frame the historical context of the period of the fall of Judah to Babylon, immediately before Ezekiel was active as a prophet in Exile.]

#### ***Thinking & Responding***

For this week's Response Paper, I would like you to focus specifically on the account of Ezekiel's bizarre prophetic actions (chapters 1-5). You will read about Ezekiel being commanded by God to perform a series of behaviors and actions that appear to be pieces of Prophetic "Performance Art": eating a scroll; forced muteness; besieging a model city; lying on his side for specific extended periods; cooking and eating unclean food prepared over human dung; and cutting his hair and beard in specific weighted portions. *Have we lost the ability to think in terms of "Prophetic Performance Art" in today's Church? Imagine a specific Prophetic Action or Behavior that could be filmed and go viral on Social Media to express and communicate God's Prophetic Voice to our world today. What sorts of considerations have to be taken into account in planning and executing such a media event?* Please write a Description of such a Prophetic Act / Behavior in approximately 350-400 words (12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margin, with your name at the top of the paper), and try to anticipate what sort of Reaction / Response it may engender. Type up and print your Reflections, and be ready to share and discuss your Insights in class. I will collect them in to review and grade at the end of the class.