



## THE PROPHETS

**Date: 9.8.24 | Title: God Sees the Heart | Scripture: Ezekiel 8-10**

### LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

#### Middle School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

#### High School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God is a righteous judge.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and He is the only way for salvation.



#### MEMORY VERSE

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” 1 Peter 3:9



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### BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Other nations had temples, priests, religious laws, and sacrifices, but only the nation of Israel had the glory of the true and living God dwelling in their midst (Roman 9:4-5). In Ezekiel 8-11 God gave a remarkable vision, Ezekiel's second of four, for the future of Judah. Seeing dramatic visions and hearing God's voice were not everyday experiences for God's servants, the prophets. Fourteen months had passed since Ezekiel was called and given his first vision. During that time, he and his wife lived normal lives as Jeremiah had instructed. Since the exiles in Babylon didn't have Jewish kings or princes to direct the affairs of the people, they chose elders to be their leaders and some of these elders occasionally visited Ezekiel. In these chapters, Ezekiel shares with them that God will unleash His fury and judge His people without pity.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar with the second wave of Jewish captives in 597 BC, so his writing followed closely after Daniel's- who was taken with the first wave of captives in 605 BC and just prior to Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC. Jeremiah, who had been prophesying for more than thirty years by the time Ezekiel began his ministry, was left in Jerusalem at that time. All three prophets foretold the impending doom for Judah, the need for the Jews to return to God, and God's plan to make that possible.

The false prophets of the day kept saying God was going to bless His people. Good times were coming. Ezekiel preached from Babylon and his message was just the opposite. Instead of good times, Ezekiel preached the judgement of God followed by forgiveness when the people repented. Ezekiel seems the most eccentric of the prophets because he acted out many of his messages. He did things like scratch the outline of Jerusalem on an adobe brick and lay siege to it or dig through the wall of his house to show people trying to escape.

Ezekiel had been deported in the second group of captives, so news of what was happening back home in Judah would have caught most Jewish ears. The news wasn't good- trouble was coming to Jerusalem. God was telling His people the details in advance not because they could do anything about it- they were already captive in Babylon; it was too late for them to help Jerusalem. Rather, He told them so that, as it all unfolded, they would understand one thing: God was saying, "Know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 6:7). That phrase is used sixty times throughout the book.

## BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Ezekiel 8-11 is the second of Ezekiel's four dramatic visions. At the beginning of Chapter 8, Ezekiel was sitting in his house with the elders of Judah. Ezekiel's ministry beyond his house may have been limited (3:24), but the elders of the community could come to his house, where they received Ezekiel's message. Ezekiel is transported in his vision to the temple complex at the heart of Jerusalem (8:1-4), though his body remained in Babylon. The elders seated before him did not see the vision of God, which Ezekiel would later describe to them (11:24-25).

In a series of stops at different temple locations, various abominations against the Lord are revealed. Ezekiel is shown a series of scenes of idolatrous worship in the temple (Chapter 8), the citywide slaughter of idolaters (Chapter 9), the destruction of Jerusalem by fire, and the gradual withdrawal the presence of the Lord from the temple (Chapter 10). The vision culminates in the contrast of judgement on wicked officials (11:1-13) with an oracle of hope (11:14-21) before God's glory departs completely (11:22-25). The vision emphasizes God's rejection of this generation of Judeans and demonstrates His justice over sin.

In the first scene in 8:3, Ezekiel was brought to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court where he faced the seat of the image of jealousy with his back to the altar. God was righteously provoked to jealousy because of this pagan god receiving worship that was due to Him alone (Exodus 20:4 and Deut. 4:23-24). God was being "driven from His sanctuary" (8:6). God told Ezekiel the vision would get worse with great abominations to come. The following sins are "greater" in the sense of being more hateful to God, this can be because of bringing Him more dishonor, bringing greater harm to others, expressing more and more defiance to God's warnings or indifference to His love, being more boldly done in public, or being committed by those with greater responsibility. As the nation decayed spiritually, the religious leaders incorporated into the temple rituals the worship of other gods along with the worship of Jehovah. King Hezekiah had removed idolatry from the land but King Manasseh not only restored it but made it worse. It was he who put an idol into the Lord's temple and Mon, his son and successor, continued his father's evil practices. Godly Josiah purged the idol and crushed it to powder, but the idol had been replaced! The glory of God was present in the same temple, but God was about to remove His glory and Ezekiel would watch it occur. Without the presence of God, the temple was just another building. It was the blasphemous sins of the religious leaders that drove God away from His holy house, and Ezekiel was about to see how wicked these leaders really were.

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Next, in 8:7-15, God brought Ezekiel to the entrance of the court of the temple where he saw a hole in the wall with wicked abominations being committed there. The things Ezekiel saw after digging in the wall were an unveiled presentation of God's view of idolatry (Romans 1:21-23). When Ezekiel entered the room, he saw seventy elders of the people burning incense before various idols whose images were painted on the wall, each man worshipping his own idol. These 70 elders or leaders of Israel who should have prevented sin, not perpetuated paganism offering incense in their censer to the idol of idolatry. God told Ezekiel these elders sought to justify their sin by thinking the sins they were committing in the dark were unseen by God. They imagined that God had abandoned them and rationalized worshipping other gods for their protection. The people's progression of idolatry went from open worship on the mountain's high places to idolatry in the temple. God again told Ezekiel the vision would get worse with greater abominations to come.

Then, in 8:14-15, God brought Ezekiel to the outer court of the temple where women were weeping for a fertility god or god of vegetation begging for rain through gross acts of immorality. They had replaced the worship of God with paganism. Again, God told Ezekiel the vision would get worse with greater abominations to come.

Finally in 8:16, the vision continues in the inner court of the Lord's house where the priests of Israel should have offered sacrifices and cried out to God for mercy, (Psalm 26:6-7 and Joel 2:17). Instead Ezekiel sees about 25 men, probably priests since they were in the temple, turning their backs on God and worshipping the sun. (Deut. 4:19; 2 Kings 23:11). These men were worshipping creation rather than the Creator. The house of Judah had committed the abominations which filled the land with violence, cruelty, corruption, mistreatment of widows and orphans, and immorality. These practices provoked God to anger and would bring His judgment (Ex. 22:21-22). God would deal with these abominations. Because of their abominable sin, He would not respond to their voice and spare them.

In 9:1-11, the second part of the vision is the carrying out of God's judgment on Jerusalem for the wickedness described in Chapter 8. The guilty nation could cry out for mercy but He would not listen to them and they couldn't appeal to a higher court. He had given them opportunity after opportunity to turn from their sins but they refused to listen and now, He wouldn't listen to them. Judgment was to be started with the elders in the temple (1 Peter 4:17) because they had turned their backs on God and led the people astray. A team of 7 angels carries out the execution of the unfaithful in Jerusalem at God's command. One of them is assigned the job of protecting the faithful.



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Distinct from the group was a seventh figure, a certain man who wore linen clothing suggesting dignity and purity (9:2). His work of marking the righteous (those who shared God's view of sin) for preservation suggests He was perhaps the "angel of the Lord", the pre-incarnate Messiah (Gen. 16:7-14; 22:11-15; 31:11-13). God knew those who had remained faithful to Him, and He would spare their lives when He judged the nation through the Babylonians (9:3-4). This is similar to applying blood to the doorposts at Passover to be spared from death (Ex. 12:23). The six men were commanded to go through the city and strike those without the mark, but they were not to touch any man who had the mark made by the man in linen. Everyone who did not have a mark from the scribe was to be destroyed without exception (9:5-7). Here, the mark is the Hebrew "taw" and in the script of Ezekiel's day would be an X. Ancient Christian interpretation saw in this symbol an anticipation of the cross. Grief stricken Ezekiel fell on his face because he loved the Jewish people, despite their sin (9:8). The prophet's anguished intervention does not dissuade God from judgment. God explained that their iniquity was VERY, VERY great (9:9-10). The man had marked the righteous for protection, (Exodus 12) just as God said because each person's destiny is determined by his relationship with the Lord (9:11).

In Chapter 10 we see that God is too holy to share his dwelling place with idolatry, so the Lord will depart from His temple. Two actions are interwoven here: the second phase of the city destruction (10:1-8), and the further withdrawal of the glory of God from the temple (10:9-22). The man clothed in linen is told to take coals of fire and scatter them over the city (10:1-2). God would use these to purify Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1; Isaiah 52:1). The man clothed in linen now received fire from a cherubim and went out to bring judgment on Israel (10:6-7). The departure of the glory of God is presented in stages. This perhaps symbolizes how he gives the people every opportunity to repent. The Lord was resolved to depart from the temple, for He would not share His dwelling place with idols that had polluted His sanctuary. Then the cherubim rose up (10:15). God moved from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the temple while the cherubim remained on the "right side of the temple". The lord went up and sat on the throne (10:4). Finally, the Lord with His throne chariot and the cherubim departed the temple. After they stood still at the entrance of the east gate (10:18-19) the Glory of the God of Israel hovered before leaving (10:19).



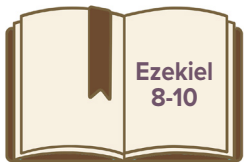
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### BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

God's glory departed from the threshold and stood over the throne-chariot, which was on the right side of the house, as though the Lord were calling His glory back to His throne. Ezekiel was learning that the most important part of the nation's life was to magnify the glory of God. The presence of God in the sanctuary was a great privilege for the people of Israel, but it was also a great responsibility. The glory of God cannot dwell with the sins of God's people, so it was necessary for the glory to leave, the sanctuary and the people to be judged.

Jeremiah and Isaiah covered a lot of the same material- the inevitability of judgment, the false hopes raised by the leaders, the horror of life under siege, the wrath of God through the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel emphasized God's promises to bring the people back and restore them but focused primarily and graphically on the harsh nature of the punishment to come. This worked, the 70-year captivity did its job of correcting Israel's behavior. When the people returned home after seventy years in Babylon, they never again fell into the kind of blanket idolatry they engaged in before the captivity.

## LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



**Tell the story:** Use the Background Info for Leaders, The Moody Bible Commentary, or the Bible from 30,000 ft to tell the story.

**Re-tell the Bible Story:** Have students re-tell the story as best they can.

TELL  
THE  
STORY

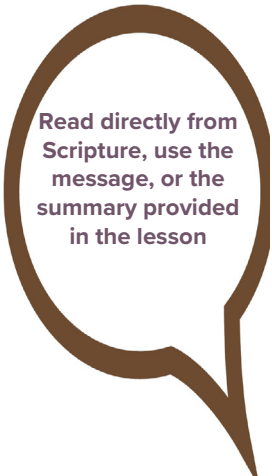


**Attributes of God:** Determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true, change the way we live in Christ?

**Share the GOSPEL:**

Ezekiel 39:25-29 adds a radical and new dimension to the promises of the coming messiah. In the future, God will place his Spirit within each person who trusts in him. As God's presence in the temple is lost, an even greater presence of God is gained, a presence provided by the pouring out of his Spirit on his people.

The bright scarlet thread of redemption is found in Ezekiel 36, where God made a three-tiered promise to Israel that they would be regathered to their land, that their hearts would be regenerated spiritually, and that His kingdom would be reestablished among them. The first part of that promise was fulfilled when Israel became a nation in 1948, and the third part will be fulfilled at Jesus' second coming when He establishes His kingdom on earth (Ezekiel 40-48). The second part- the promise of regeneration- points to the work Jesus did on the cross. Jesus is our "great High Priest", who gave Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Under this covenant, His blood regenerates us spiritually, cleansing us of sin and making us new creations.



Read directly from Scripture, use the message, or the summary provided in the lesson



Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...



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**This covenant is foreshadowed in Ezekiel 36: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” (v 25). In Jewish rights of purification, the priest would sprinkle lamb’s blood on the “dwelling places”, the vessels used for worship, and on the people themselves to cleanse them. Ezekiel’s use of “sprinkle” predicted the priestly work the Messiah would do in cleansing the nation of Israel through His own suffering on the cross. Israel lost its temple- its means to atone for sin- not long after Jesus walked on the earth, but here in Ezekiel, God promised to provide atonement for them. Isaiah used similar language when he prophesied that God’s servant (Jesus) would “sprinkle many nations” (Isaiah 52:15). This foretold the great truth that salvation isn’t just for the Jews, but for the whole world.**

**In his vision, Ezekiel was still in the temple in Jerusalem when he heard the Lord summon six “men” to prepare the way for the slaughter. These were probably angels who appeared as men, the angels assigned to destroy the city of Jerusalem. The scribe-angel was commanded to go through the city and mark people who lamented and grieved because of the sins of the city. No matter how dark the day, God has always has His faithful remnant who obeyed His will and trusted Him for deliverance, and Ezekiel was among them.**





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**“Storying” Questions:** As you ask these questions, have your students find the answers in the actual verses of scripture instead of recalling them from your re-telling of the story. We always want to encourage all of our students to go directly to God’s Word over a commentary on or summary of scripture. Use the Bible Study Bookmark Questions as well as these questions to help students understand the text:

1. Was Ezekiel a major prophet or minor prophet? Why?
2. During what time period did Ezekiel serve? What major event was going on during this time?
3. From where did Ezekiel serve?
4. Which other prophets served during this same time period or from the same geographical location?
5. What sets Israel apart from other surrounding nations?
6. What were false prophets preaching during this day? How is this different from what Ezekiel was preaching?
7. Where does Ezekiel’s vision take him?
8. What scenes did God reveal to Ezekiel in his second vision?
9. Why did God show Ezekiel these things?
10. What phrase is repeated 60 times in this book?
11. Describe how the judgement would take place as told in Chapter 9.
12. Why will God no longer listen to the cries of the people? What does this teach us about the character of God?
13. Who would be spared? Why would they be spared? How would this be marked?
14. What other similar examples of this you can think of in scripture? How is this a picture of the Gospel?
15. What is the ultimate consequence for the sin and idolatry of the people?
16. How is God’s presence returning even greater for NT believers?

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

**ATTENTIVE** - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

**COMPASSIONATE** - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

**CREATOR** - God made everything. He is uncreated.

**DELIVERER** - God rescues and saves his children.

**ETERNAL** - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

**FAITHFUL** - God always keeps his promises.

**GENEROUS** - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

**GLORIOUS** - God displays His greatness and worth.

**GOOD** - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

**HOLY** - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

**IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING** - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

**INCOMPREHENSIBLE** - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

**INFINITE** - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

**JEALOUS** - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

**JUST** - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

**LOVING** - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

**MERCIFUL** - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

**OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY** - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

**OMNIPRESENT** - God is fully present everywhere.

**OMNISCIENT** - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

**PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING** - God is untiring and bears with His children.

**PROVIDER** - God meets the needs of his children.

**REFUGE** - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

**RIGHTEOUS** - God is always good and right.

**SELF-EXISTENT** - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

**SELF-SUFFICIENT** - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

**SOVEREIGN** - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

**TRANSCENDENT** - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

**TRUTHFUL** - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

**WISE** - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

**WORTHY** - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

**WRATHFUL** - God hates all unrighteousness.



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### PRAYER PROMPTS

God thank You for Your patience in dealing with our sinfulness. Help us to recognize our sin for what it is and for how it separates us from Your holiness. Thank you for the hope that you gave the Israelites and thank you for the hope we have today thorough Your perfect

### IF TIME ALLOWS:

Help the students in your group practice memorizing the books of the Bible:

- Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy
- History: Joshua-Esther
- Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon
- Major Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- Gospels: Matthew-John
- Paul's Letters: Romans-Philemon
- General Letters: Hebrews-Revelation

### MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For the months of August, September and October we will be collecting money for the Connie Maxwell Children's Home. Please visit their website for pictures and descriptions of some of the services they offer that you can share with your group. A generous donor will match all of our donations. Encourage your class to collect money and donate it in the giving funnel in the upstairs lobby. Students can donate with their families as they arrive, or you can go together as a class on the way back to the Worship Center at the end of SS.

### REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this weeks verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:



## Application Questions

### LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

### LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

### LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



## Application Questions

### LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

### LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?