Ezekiel

Historical Context of Ezekiel

- About 592-572
  - After initial exile of Jerusalem elite (597)
  - Jeremiah with initial exiles to Babylon
  - Over the destruction of the city in 587
- Jeremiah the faithful “sentinel”
  - 33

Form and Composition in Ezekiel

- Familiar forms
  - Messenger formula (+ and -)
  - Laments (19)
  - No trial speeches
- Highly structured
  - Call, judgement, foreign nations, restoration
- Distanced from oral pronouncement
  - Importance of writing
  - Only record of what God tells Ezekiel to say
- Moving toward apocalyptic
  - Long descriptions of visions
  - More complex symbolism (esp. actions)
- Literary composition?
  - Long description of ideal restored temple
  - Mostly prose

Ezekiel’s Call

- The vision of God
  - From the north
  - Bright, fiery cloud
- 4 creatures
  - Human bodies
  - 4 faces
  - 4 wings
  - Hooves
  - Shining like bronze
  - Wings touching one another
- 4 “wheels within wheels”
  - Made of jewel
  - Eyes all around rims
  - Connected to “spirit” of creatures
- Shining dome above
  - Throne
- Seated human form
  - Waist up: shining amber
  - Waist down: fire
- Rainbow overtop

Ezekiel’s Call

- The commission
  - Sending him to rebellious people
  - Don’t fear them
  - Don’t be like them
  - Scroll
    - “words of lamentation and woe”
    - Prophet eats it
  - Carried by the spirit to exiles
    - Sits stunned for 7 days
  - Final commission
    - Responsibility for conveying chance to repent (cf. 33:6)
    - In valley meets “chariot” again
    - Shut in house, speechless
    - Only able to speak God’s words
Relationship with God

- A distant, holy, awesome God
  - Ezekiel as “son of man”
    - Mortal vs. the cosmic creator
  - Though still metaphor of adulterous wife (23)
- Individual reward and punishment
  - Vision of temple’s destruction (9)
  - Saying re. sour grapes (18:1-4)
  - Re-emphasized before restoration announced (33)
- Doesn’t act out of compassion
  - For his name’s sake (20; 36:22)
  - They will “know that I am YHWH”
- Mediation of the prophet
  - Responsible for giving the chance to repent (33:3)
- Centrality of temple cult (8-11; 40-48)

Ezekiel’s Message: Accusation

- Almost entirely in chapters 4-24

- Idolatry
  - Visionary tour of desecration in temple (8-11)
- Violence (33:25)
- Violation of law/commands
  - Theft (33:15)
  - Eating blood (33:25)
  - Adultery (33:26)

Ezekiel’s Message: Coming Destruction

- Before 587: don’t expect quick restoration
  - Symbolic actions
    - Brick (4)
    - Lying on side – 390 days and 40 days (4)
    - Baking bread over human excrement (4)
    - Shaving hair (5)
  - Visions
    - Heavenly chariot arrives at temple (8-11)

Ezekiel’s Message: Predictions?
Ezekiel’s Message: Restoration

• After vision of destroyed temple (11:17-21)
  - Gather exiles
  - Purify temple
  - New heart, new spirit
• Exile again a time of purification
  - Comparison with desert wandering (20)
• Hinge: a second commission (33)
  - Now focus on possibility of restoration (individual)
  - Coincides with news of Jerusalem’s fall in 587

Ezekiel’s Message: Restoration

• Tension
  - People changed
    • New heart and spirit (36:25-27)
    • Purified with water (36:25)
  - Repentance necessary
    (33:10ff.)
    • Individual restoration
    • Even individual’s past conduct doesn’t matter

Ezekiel’s Message: Restoration

• People saved from bad “shepherds”
  - God as “good shepherd” (34:15-16)
  - Messiah as “good shepherd” (34:23)
• Political safety (34:28)
  - Judgement on hostile neighbours (25-32, 35)
  - War of Gog and Magog (38-39)
• Re-united tribes
  - Vision of two sticks (37)
• Cosmic harmony (34:25)
  - Abundance in Israel (36)
  - Restored Eden (36:34)
• Vision of dry bones (37)
  - Resurrection?
• Ideal temple (40-48)