

Since the 1920's however, several issues have been raised concerning Ezekiel, including questions concerning his knowledge of events in Jerusalem, hundreds of miles away, and the reason for his preaching against Jerusalem when it was so distant. But there was open communication between the Jews in Judah and those in Babylonia (Jeremiah 29; Nehemiah 1:1-3). And this question often fails to deal with the prophet's claim to have divine inspiration. The second question can be answered by careful study of the text. Ezekiel was not preaching to the Jerusalemites but about them to the exiles around him. He was explaining to them through his preaching the reason (s) for the imminent fall of the city.

Other questions concern more traditional matters of introduction. The first deals with the date of Ezekiel. Some scholars say that Ezekiel was composed and written down as late as 230 BC or from the time of Alexander the Great (333-323 BC). They call Ezekiel a pious fraud without any historical basis. Another view is that Ezekiel lived in the eighth century BC (two centuries before the dating of the book). This view is based on an interpretation which understands the sins which Ezekiel condemns to be those of Manasseh's reign.

A second area of contention concerns the place of Ezekiel's ministry...it is sometimes thought that he ministered in Palestine for either all or part of his ministry period. The third of these areas deals with the unity of the book--did Ezekiel write all of it? Some scholars, claiming that Ezekiel was a poetic man, credit him with the poetic sections and a few lines of prose (he is usually credited with about 200 of the 1273 verses in the book). Each of these questions has answers. Ezekiel has a consistent internal system of chronology which should be taken seriously as evidence for its date. The general correspondence between Manasseh's reign and Ezekiel's prophecies is to be expected--people do not change that much. The correspondence is usually exaggerated, at any rate. Those who say that Ezekiel was written in Palestine rearrange the text in such a way as to destroy its literary unity and progression of thought. They also have difficulty explaining the motive for such a change of locale. The question regarding the unity of the book does not recognize its carefully constructed flow of thought not its uniform literary style and "feel" --it seems to be the product of one mind.

Although the general opinion of scholarship today is less favorable than sixty years ago, the evidence seems to indicate that Ezekiel was written by Ezekiel the son of Buzi between c. 592 and 570 BC. Ezekiel is most prose (1-17; 33-48). The middle section (18-32) is a mixture of prose and poetry.

In outline form we find many writers divide Ezekiel into three parts:

- I. Israel's sin and judgment 1-24
- II. Prophecies against the nations 25-32
- III. Promises of restoration 33-48

This is simplistic to a fault and following is an outline that sees the book in two sections with better parallel construction:

- I. Destruction of Judah 1-24
 - A. Introduction and call 1:1-3:21
 - B. Prophecies and Visions of Judgment 3:22-19:14
 - C. Final Warnings 20:1-24:27
- II. Judgment upon the nations 25-48 (and restoration)
 - A. Prophecies upon the nations 25-32
 - B. Prophecies of Hope 33-48