

# **The Grievances God Had Against Israel in Ezekiel**

The book of Ezekiel records God's case against Israel and Judah for their persistent rebellion, idolatry, injustice, and refusal to repent. Through Ezekiel, God explains why Jerusalem would be destroyed, why the temple would be defiled, and why the people would be taken into Babylonian captivity.

A central theme throughout the book is that Israel had broken her covenant with God. Her sins were not merely mistakes; they reflected a persistent rejection of God's authority, commandments, and holiness.

The following is a comprehensive, topical list of the grievances God expressed against Israel in Ezekiel.

## **Idolatry and false worship**

1. Worshiping idols and images — Ezekiel 6:4–6; 14:3–5.
2. Building and maintaining high places for idolatrous worship — Ezekiel 6:3–6.
3. Making and worshiping idols despite God's commandments — Ezekiel 20:7–8.
4. Setting up idols in their hearts — Ezekiel 14:3–4, 7.
5. Practicing abominations in God's temple — Ezekiel 5:11; 8:6–16.
6. Worshiping images of creeping things and beasts — Ezekiel 8:10–12.
7. Elders secretly practicing idolatry — Ezekiel 8:7–12.
8. Women weeping for Tammuz — Ezekiel 8:14.
9. Men worshiping the sun toward the east — Ezekiel 8:16.
10. Polluting God's sanctuary with idolatrous practices — Ezekiel 8:5–18; 23:38–39.
11. Mixing the worship of God with pagan practices — Ezekiel 20:27–32.
12. Making offerings and burning incense to idols — Ezekiel 16:17–21; 20:28.
13. Defiling the land with idolatry — Ezekiel 36:18.

## **Rebellion against God and His commandments**

1. Rebelling against God from the beginning of their history — Ezekiel 2:3–5; 20:8.
2. Refusing to listen to God's word — Ezekiel 3:7; 20:8.
3. Walking contrary to God's judgments — Ezekiel 5:6–7.
4. Rejecting God's statutes and ordinances — Ezekiel 5:6; 20:13, 16.
5. Defiling God's Sabbaths — Ezekiel 20:12–13, 16, 21, 24; 22:8.
6. Refusing to abandon the practices of Egypt and other nations — Ezekiel 20:7–8, 18–24.
7. Hardening their hearts against correction — Ezekiel 3:7–9.
8. Refusing to repent despite repeated warnings — Ezekiel 18:30–32; 24:13.

9. Despising God's word and breaking His covenant — Ezekiel 16:59; 20:37–38.
10. Forgetting God and casting Him behind their backs — Ezekiel 23:35.
11. Profaning God's holy name among the nations — Ezekiel 36:20–23.
12. Refusing to be governed by God — Ezekiel 20:32.

## **Spiritual unfaithfulness and covenant betrayal**

God repeatedly portrays Israel as an unfaithful wife who has abandoned her husband.

1. Forgetting the covenant God made with her — Ezekiel 16:8, 59.
2. Trusting in her beauty, wealth, and position rather than God — Ezekiel 16:14–15.
3. Committing spiritual adultery through idolatry — Ezekiel 16:15–22.
4. Seeking relationships with foreign nations and their gods — Ezekiel 16:26–29.
5. Giving gifts and offerings to idols — Ezekiel 16:16–19.
6. Practicing greater unfaithfulness than Samaria and Sodom in the comparison God makes — Ezekiel 16:46–52.
7. Repeating the unfaithfulness of earlier generations — Ezekiel 20:4–32.
8. Abandoning God despite His loving care and deliverance — Ezekiel 16:4–14, 59.
9. Turning to Assyria, Egypt, and other nations for help and security — Ezekiel 16:26–29; 23:5–21.
10. Failing to remember God's goodness and deliverance — Ezekiel 16:22, 43.

These accusations are developed especially in Ezekiel 16 and 23, where Jerusalem and Samaria are depicted as unfaithful women.

## **Bloodshed, violence, and murder**

1. Shedding innocent blood — Ezekiel 22:3–4, 6, 9.
2. Committing murder within Jerusalem — Ezekiel 7:23; 9:9.
3. Using violence to oppress others — Ezekiel 7:23; 22:29.
4. Practicing bloodshed in the midst of the land — Ezekiel 22:3–4.
5. Shedding blood for dishonest gain — Ezekiel 22:12.
6. Committing violence against the poor and needy — Ezekiel 18:12; 22:29.
7. Making the land unclean through bloodshed and idolatry — Ezekiel 36:18.
8. Practicing violence and injustice despite God's warnings — Ezekiel 8:17; 9:9.
9. Filling the land with violence and turning justice into corruption — Ezekiel 28:16; 45:9.

## **Social injustice and oppression**

1. Oppressing the poor and needy — Ezekiel 18:7, 12, 16; 22:29.

2. Robbing and defrauding others — Ezekiel 18:7, 12; 22:12, 29.
3. Practicing extortion — Ezekiel 22:12.
4. Taking excessive interest or unlawful increase from others — Ezekiel 18:8, 13, 17; 22:12.
5. Failing to return a pledge to a debtor — Ezekiel 18:7, 12, 16.
6. Mistreating strangers and foreigners — Ezekiel 22:7, 29.
7. Oppressing widows and fatherless children — Ezekiel 22:7.
8. Despising parents — Ezekiel 22:7.
9. Practicing dishonest business and economic dealings — Ezekiel 22:12.
10. Using power to exploit others — Ezekiel 22:6, 12, 29.
11. Failing to practice justice and righteousness — Ezekiel 18:5–9; 33:15.
12. Taking advantage of the vulnerable rather than protecting them — Ezekiel 22:29.

## **Sexual immorality and abominable practices**

1. Committing adultery — Ezekiel 16:32, 38; 22:11.
2. Engaging in sexual immorality with close relatives — Ezekiel 22:10–11.
3. Violating women during their uncleanness — Ezekiel 18:6; 22:10.
4. Committing sexual sins with a neighbor's wife — Ezekiel 18:6; 22:11.
5. Engaging in immoral practices associated with idolatrous worship — Ezekiel 16:15–22.
6. Practicing abominations that defiled the land — Ezekiel 18:12–13; 22:9–11.
7. Following the corrupt practices of other nations — Ezekiel 23:11–21.
8. Treating God's covenant as though it imposed no moral obligations — Ezekiel 16:59; 22:11–12.

## **Corruption among the priests**

God held Israel's religious leaders accountable because they were supposed to preserve His law and teach the people.

1. Violating God's law — Ezekiel 22:26.
2. Failing to distinguish between holy and common things — Ezekiel 22:26.
3. Failing to distinguish between clean and unclean things — Ezekiel 22:26.
4. Hiding their eyes from God's Sabbaths — Ezekiel 22:26.
5. Profaning God's holy things — Ezekiel 22:26.
6. Failing to teach the people God's commandments properly — Ezekiel 22:26.
7. Participating in or tolerating the nation's corruption — Ezekiel 22:26.
8. Contributing to the profaning of God's name — Ezekiel 22:26.

The priests were guilty not merely of personal wrongdoing but also of failing in their responsibility to instruct and sanctify the people.

## **Corruption among the princes and civil rulers**

1. Using political authority for oppression and violence — Ezekiel 22:6.
2. Shedding blood for personal advantage — Ezekiel 22:6, 12.
3. Practicing extortion and dishonest gain — Ezekiel 22:12.
4. Failing to uphold justice — Ezekiel 22:27, 29.
5. Abusing power for selfish purposes — Ezekiel 22:27.
6. Destroying lives and property for dishonest gain — Ezekiel 22:27.
7. Following corrupt practices rather than God's standards — Ezekiel 11:1–12.
8. Relying on political power and alliances instead of trusting God — Ezekiel 17:11–21.

## **Corruption among the prophets**

1. Speaking false visions and claiming messages from God that He had not given — Ezekiel 13:2–7.
2. Prophesying out of their own hearts — Ezekiel 13:2–3, 17.
3. Failing to repair the nation's spiritual defenses — Ezekiel 13:4–5.
4. Declaring peace when God had announced judgment — Ezekiel 13:10, 16.
5. Giving false assurances to people who refused to repent — Ezekiel 13:22.
6. Misleading the people through false prophecy — Ezekiel 22:28.
7. Profaning God's name through false messages — Ezekiel 13:19.
8. Using religious influence for personal advantage — Ezekiel 13:19; 22:25.
9. Failing to warn the wicked of their danger — Ezekiel 3:17–21; 13:5.

## **Corruption among the elders and other leaders**

1. Coming to inquire of God while continuing to serve idols — Ezekiel 14:1–5.
2. Refusing to remove idols from their hearts — Ezekiel 14:3–4.
3. Leading the people into spiritual error — Ezekiel 14:9–11.
4. Participating in secret idolatry — Ezekiel 8:7–12.
5. Giving the people corrupt examples to follow — Ezekiel 20:18–21.
6. Failing to lead the people toward obedience and repentance — Ezekiel 22:25–29.

## **Greed, pride, and self-exaltation**

1. Becoming proud because of wealth and beauty — Ezekiel 16:14–15.
2. Trusting in riches rather than God — Ezekiel 28:4–5.

3. Allowing prosperity to produce arrogance — Ezekiel 16:49–50; 28:5–6.
4. Seeking personal glory and honor — Ezekiel 28:2–5.
5. Believing themselves wiser than God — Ezekiel 28:2–6.
6. Using wealth and position for selfish purposes — Ezekiel 22:12, 27, 29.
7. Despising God's authority because of their perceived strength — Ezekiel 28:2–6.
8. Failing to acknowledge that their blessings came from God — Ezekiel 16:17–19.

Ezekiel 28 specifically addresses the prince of Tyre, so that chapter's direct accusations should not all be transferred to Israel. It nevertheless illustrates the pride and self-exaltation condemned in the surrounding prophecies against the nations.

## **False confidence, stubbornness, and refusal to repent**

1. Assuming that Jerusalem would remain secure despite its sins — Ezekiel 11:3; 12:21–28.
2. Rejecting warnings of coming judgment — Ezekiel 12:21–28.
3. Listening to false assurances of peace — Ezekiel 13:10–16.
4. Refusing to turn from wickedness — Ezekiel 18:30–32.
5. Maintaining sinful practices despite repeated warnings — Ezekiel 20:8, 13, 21.
6. Blaming circumstances and misunderstanding God's justice — Ezekiel 18:1–4, 25–29.
7. Claiming innocence or questioning God's fairness rather than repenting — Ezekiel 18:25–29.
8. Failing to recognize that judgment was the consequence of their own conduct — Ezekiel 18:30; 33:10–20.
9. Treating God's patience as though judgment would never come — Ezekiel 12:21–28.

## **National rebellion throughout Israel's history**

1. Refusing to humble themselves before God — Ezekiel 20:43–44.

In Ezekiel 20, God reviews Israel's history to show that the current generation's rebellion was part of a longstanding pattern.

1. Rebellion in Egypt — Ezekiel 20:5–9.
2. Refusal to abandon Egyptian idols — Ezekiel 20:7–8.
3. Rebellion in the wilderness — Ezekiel 20:13–17.
4. Desecration of God's Sabbaths — Ezekiel 20:13, 16.
5. Rejection of God's laws and judgments — Ezekiel 20:16, 21.
6. Rebellion by the next generation in the wilderness — Ezekiel 20:18–24.
7. Continuing to worship idols after entering the promised land — Ezekiel 20:27–29.

8. Adopting the detestable religious practices of surrounding nations — Ezekiel 20:30–32.
9. Repeating the sins of their fathers rather than learning from them — Ezekiel 20:30–31.

God's historical review makes clear that the exile was not an isolated punishment for one generation's mistakes. It followed a long history of covenant rebellion.

## **Defiling the land and polluting God's sanctuary**

1. Defiling the land through idolatry — Ezekiel 36:17–18.
2. Defiling the temple with abominations — Ezekiel 5:11; 8:6–18.
3. Committing abominations in the very place dedicated to God's presence — Ezekiel 8:5–16.
4. Profaning holy things — Ezekiel 22:26.
5. Desecrating God's Sabbaths — Ezekiel 22:8.
6. Making the land unclean through bloodshed and immoral practices — Ezekiel 22:3–11.
7. Treating God's sanctuary as though it were no longer holy — Ezekiel 23:38–39.
8. Bringing the consequences of their sins upon the land and its inhabitants — Ezekiel 36:18–19.

## **Failure to care for God's people**

In Ezekiel 34, God specifically condemns the shepherds of Israel—the leaders responsible for caring for the people.

1. Feeding themselves instead of the flock — Ezekiel 34:2–3.
2. Taking the people's resources for personal benefit — Ezekiel 34:3.
3. Failing to strengthen the weak — Ezekiel 34:4.
4. Failing to heal the sick — Ezekiel 34:4.
5. Failing to bind up the injured — Ezekiel 34:4.
6. Failing to seek the lost and scattered — Ezekiel 34:4, 6.
7. Ruling harshly and cruelly — Ezekiel 34:4.
8. Allowing the people to become scattered and vulnerable — Ezekiel 34:5–6.
9. Failing to protect the flock from danger — Ezekiel 34:8.
10. Allowing the strong to oppress the weak — Ezekiel 34:17–22.

These grievances are especially directed against the leaders, but they reveal the broader injustice that characterized the nation.

## **Dishonesty, conspiracy, and corruption throughout the nation**

Ezekiel 22 gathers together many of the charges against Jerusalem.

1. Conspiring to shed blood — Ezekiel 22:25.
2. Devouring people and destroying lives for gain — Ezekiel 22:25, 27.
3. Practicing robbery and oppression — Ezekiel 22:29.
4. Accepting bribes and dishonest payments — Ezekiel 22:12.
5. Using dishonest gain to enrich themselves — Ezekiel 22:12, 27, 29.
6. Spreading falsehood and deceit through religious leadership — Ezekiel 22:28.
7. Failing to uphold the law and protect the vulnerable — Ezekiel 22:26, 29.
8. Participating in a culture in which corruption had spread through every level of society — Ezekiel 22:23–31.

God's indictment was comprehensive: rulers, priests, prophets, and ordinary people were all implicated.

## **Dishonoring God before the nations**

1. Profaning God's holy name among the nations — Ezekiel 36:20–23.
2. Giving the nations reason to associate God's name with a defeated or powerless people — Ezekiel 36:20–23.
3. Failing to live as God's holy people — Ezekiel 20:39; 36:17–23.
4. Turning God's blessings into occasions for idolatry — Ezekiel 16:17–19.
5. Rejecting the God who had delivered and sustained them — Ezekiel 16:4–14, 22.
6. Causing the land and sanctuary to be polluted through their sins — Ezekiel 36:17–18.

This explains an important theme in Ezekiel: God's judgment and eventual restoration would demonstrate His holiness and make His identity known among the nations.

## A summary of the principal grievances

The following table condenses the major charges into the principal categories found throughout the book.

| Category           | Principal grievance                              | Key passage         |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Worship            | Idolatry and pagan worship                       | Ezekiel 8           |
| Covenant           | Rebellion against God's commandments             | Ezekiel 20          |
| Spiritual fidelity | Unfaithfulness to God                            | Ezekiel 16; 23      |
| Morality           | Sexual immorality and abominations               | Ezekiel 18; 22      |
| Justice            | Bloodshed, violence, and oppression              | Ezekiel 22          |
| Economics          | Extortion, robbery, and dishonest gain           | Ezekiel 22:12, 29   |
| Priesthood         | Profaning holy things and neglecting instruction | Ezekiel 22:26       |
| Prophets           | False prophecy and deceptive assurances          | Ezekiel 13          |
| Rulers             | Abuse of power and corrupt leadership            | Ezekiel 22:6, 25–29 |
| Shepherds          | Neglecting and exploiting God's people           | Ezekiel 34          |
| Repentance         | Refusing to turn from wickedness                 | Ezekiel 18:30–32    |
| Holiness           | Defiling the land and sanctuary                  | Ezekiel 5; 36       |
| National history   | Repeating the sins of previous generations       | Ezekiel 20          |
| Pride              | Trusting in wealth, beauty, and power            | Ezekiel 16; 28      |
| God's name         | Profaning His name among the nations             | Ezekiel 36:20–23    |

## What was the underlying problem?

Three passages summarize God's case particularly well.

1. Ezekiel 5:6 — Rejection of God's judgments

Israel rebelled against God's judgments and statutes, even behaving more wickedly than the nations around her in the matters described in the passage.

2. Ezekiel 22:26 — Corruption of spiritual leadership

The priests failed to distinguish between holy and common things, failed to teach the difference between clean and unclean, and profaned God's Sabbaths.

3. Ezekiel 18:30–32 — Refusal to repent

God called Israel to repent and turn away from transgressions. He declared that He had no pleasure in the death of the one who died, but called the people to turn and live.

The final passage is especially important: God's purpose in warning Israel was not simply to condemn her but to call her to repentance.

The Babylonian captivity was God's judgment on persistent rebellion, but Ezekiel also promises restoration, a new heart, a new spirit, and renewed fellowship with God (Ezekiel 36:24–28).

For this study's perspective, Ezekiel's central lesson is that religious privilege does not excuse disobedience, corrupt leadership magnifies a nation's guilt, and God calls people to repentance before judgment comes.