

EZEKIEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ezekiel chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we begin this new book this evening. Before we get to our text this evening, let me give you some background information that will help you understand this book.

As we saw in our study of the book of Jeremiah and also Kings and Chronicles, the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell into idolatry and they refused to listen to the prophets of God. They refused to repent and return to the Lord and thus, the judgment of God came upon them by the hands of the Babylonians!

The Babylonians made their first invasion of Jerusalem in 606 B. C. when they took the cream of the crop or the best of the best with them. It is in that first invasion, during the reign of Jehoiakim, that they took away Daniel and his three friends; Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah along with many other important people. Jehoiakim reigned in Judah, from around 609 B. C. to 598 B. C., and he was the third to the last King to reign in Judah before the Babylonian captivity.

Then Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin became King after his father rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and he only lasted three months and ten days before the Babylonians came upon the nation a second time, in 597 B. C., carrying back to Babylon some ten thousand prisoners, including Jehoiachin and Ezekiel.

And then, eleven years later, in 586 B. C., the Babylonians made their third and final assault upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah, destroying the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of God, and taking the remaining people back to Babylon as captives except for the sick, the elderly who remained behind.

So Ezekiel is in exile in Babylon and it is there in Babylon that God is going to call him into the ministry as we will see. Interestingly enough his name, "***Ezekiel***" means "God strengthens" or "Strengthened by God." And as we shall see God did strengthen this man for this very difficult and prophetic ministry he was in.

Ezekiel was both priest and prophet, although he never functioned as a priest in the Temple of God because he was taken captive to Babylon before he reached the age of service for a priest. And Ezekiel's ministry lasted some 22 years, from the age of 30 to the age of 52. His first prophecy came in 593 B. C. (Ezekiel 1:2) and his last is dated in 571 B. C. (Ezekiel 29:17).

So we are into the second deportation and things did not look good for the Southern Kingdom of Judah even though the false prophets were speaking of peace and prosperity, of the Jews returning home soon. That is not what the prophets of God were saying and that is not what happened! They were going to be in captivity for seventy years for their sins and their refusal to repent and get right with God!

Now as bad as things looked for them, as hopeless a situation this was, the people of God were still not ready to get right with God! Our sin can blind us so much that we refuse to see and that is what we see here with the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

For a general outline this book can be broken down as follows, and keep in mind that this is just a simple outline but it makes it easy to see how this book is laid out for us. First of all we see in Ezekiel chapter 1 through chapter 24 ***the sin of Judah and the judgment of God***. Then in Ezekiel 25 through 32 we see ***the judgment of the nations that surround Jerusalem***. In Ezekiel chapter 33 we see this ***last call for repentance to Israel***. And then, in Ezekiel chapters 34-48 we see ***the future restoration of Israel***.

One more thing before we dig into this fascinating book and that is what Charles Lee Feinberg wrote. I think he sums it up nicely for us. He wrote,

From the first to the last chapter Ezekiel one supreme thought runs throughout, that of the sovereignty and glory of the Lord God. He is sovereign in Israel and in the affairs of the nations of the world, though the loud and boisterous claims of men seem to have drowned out this truth. In His sovereign will God has purposed that we should glorify Him in life and witness to the ends of the earth.

- Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*

How true that is and we will see that as we go through our study of Ezekiel. With that said, let's begin reading in Ezekiel chapter 1 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

EZEKIEL 1

VERSES 1-3

1. Ezekiel opens up by telling us his age, that he was thirty years old at this time. That means that he went into captivity when he was just 25 years old. Now we are into the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, placing Ezekiel at 30 years of age.

Why is that important, to know his age? In verse 3 we see that Ezekiel came from the priestly line and thus, you could not serve as a priest until you were 30 years of age. That means prior to his captivity he was probably training for the priesthood and only five years from being able to serve he is taken captive. His hopes and dreams are shot.

But what may seem frustrating and unfair, God has a plan and purpose for his life. Ezekiel is going to serve the Lord in Babylon and it is interesting that he begins this ministry at the age of 30! It is in the year 593 B. C. that the Lord begins to speak to Ezekiel.

2. Who else is there in Babylon with Ezekiel? Daniel is there as he was taken captive back in 606 B. C. by the Babylonians. Yes they were contemporaries in Babylon but Daniel conducted his ministry from the city of Babylon itself, he was a statesman.

On the other hand, Ezekiel was ministering from what you might call a prison camp north of Babylon, about 200 miles, by the River Chebar, in a place called Tel Abib. Both these men were about the same age and even though both were captives, chances are they never met each other, even though Ezekiel was well aware of the work that Daniel was doing.

3. Now put yourself in Ezekiel's shoes for a minute. How would you feel about the predicament you were in? Ezekiel feels isolate, alone, cut off from his homeland. He could have been angry at God, mad at God, he could have just turned his back on God but he didn't. He remained open to God and because of that he was able to hear the voice of God. That tells me that no matter where you are at, how isolated you may feel, God wants to speak to you, to comfort you, He wants to encourage you. The question is, "Are you listening?"

And as we are going to see, these are some powerful visions that God is going to give to him as he ministers to his people in captivity and those who were still in the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

VERSES 4-14

1. Now keep in mind that Ezekiel is trying to describe a heavenly vision using earthly terms.

These multicolored lights as we will see, describe stones that produced certain colors. These four living creatures are another story as some feel this is not real but they are symbolic. To me, that makes no sense, this is what Ezekiel saw and interestingly enough John sees these four living creatures in heaven in Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

So I do believe that these living creatures are real and we will see them in heaven, in fact, what we are going to see here is they are carrying the throne of God! So the focus of this vision is these four living creatures which we are told are Cherubim in Ezekiel chapter 10.

These angelic beings each had four wings, their legs were straight and they had cloven feet, not like the feet of man. And they sparkled brightly a bronze color. Under their wings they had hands that were similar to the hands of a man. And when they moved, they didn't have to turn around, because each one had four faces, and one of the faces was pointed in the direction they wanted to go.

Again, keep in mind that these creatures had four faces and each face of these creatures was different. Each one had the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle. As strange as this may sound, what happens if we try to picture Jesus Christ in these creatures? Remember, in Psalm 40:7 it says, “... **Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.**” That means from Genesis through Revelation the Scriptures are testifying of Jesus. Let me show you what I mean regarding the faces of these creatures and their relationship to Jesus.

In the faces of these Cherubim we see a picture of Christ, which is also seen in the four Gospels. First let's look at the face of a lion. Matthew portrays Jesus as the lion from the tribe of Judah. Matthew, in speaking to the Jewish people, shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of, He is the Messiah. In fact, Matthew quotes more of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies than any other Gospel because he was presenting to the Jewish people their Messiah. That is why the genealogy of Jesus that is found in this Gospel goes all the way back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

Now let's look at the face of the man. Luke presents the humanity of Jesus to us. Over and over, some 25 times in this Gospel, we see the phrase, "**Son of man**" used. And the genealogy of Jesus that Luke gives to us goes all the way back to the first man, Adam. Again this is showing us the humanity of Jesus.

The next face we will look at is the face of an eagle. And an eagle speaks of power, majesty. John presents to us in his Gospel Jesus as the "**Son of God**" with all power and majesty. Some 11 times John uses that phrase. And the genealogy that John gives us is found in John 1:1-2, which says, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.**" It points to the eternal existence of Jesus and His divinity, that He is God!

And lastly we see the face of an ox or a beast of burden. And Mark presents to us Jesus as the suffering servant. Mark 10:45 says, "**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**" And, interestingly enough, Mark does not give us any genealogy for Jesus. Why? Because you don't need to know the genealogy of a servant, that is not important.

We also see a picture of this in the book of Numbers chapter 2. As you look at the camp of Israel and how they set up, they went due north, due south, due east and due west, 3 tribes in each direction with one lead tribe. And when you look at the banners that were over these four lead tribes you will see that they match this picture that we see here in Ezekiel and in the Gospels.

Not only do we see that, but there in the center of the camp was the Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt. And thus, if you were to look down from above at the camp of Israel, the way that they set up camp, it would form a cross with God right in the middle! Chance happening? No way, but God has painted these pictures for us to see!

And so in this vision of these creatures we see a picture of Christ that is presented to us in the four Gospels as well as in the camp of Israel in the wilderness.

But that is not all. We also read in Revelation 4:6-8 a similar vision that John has of heaven and the throne of God. He said, **“Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’”**

The big difference here is these angelic creatures only had one face each while in Ezekiel’s they each had four faces. Is John just describing the face that he saw facing him or did they just have one face? We don’t know but there are many angelic beings and they are different, they are not the same so it could be different creatures that John and Ezekiel saw.

We see that in Isaiah chapter 6 where we read, **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’”** Isaiah 6:1-3. Here is another group of angelic beings called Seraphim.

I believe when we get to heaven we will be surprised at the myriads of different angelic beings that God has created for His good pleasure. When you look at the variety of life He has created on this planet, our God is the God of variety. Just look at just the difference in man, the sizes, shapes, color and-so-on. So I have no problem with a variety of angelic beings that God has created.

2. In regards to their wings, we are told that two of their wings extended upward symbolizing exaltation towards God, and two of their wings covered their body which speaks of humility.
3. We also see their complete surrender and obedience to God. You see, wherever the Spirit wanted them to go, they went, and they wasted no time, no need for turning, because one of their faces was pointed in the direction they needed to go. And I believe Ezekiel is trying to tell us that these creatures moved very quickly, like flashes of lightening across the sky.

VERSES 15-21

1. Somehow, in some way, these creatures were connected to a wheel within a wheel, possibly like a gyroscope. And to picture exactly what these look like is hard to do but I also see in these creatures a picture of God. They can travel in any direction; it speaks of the *omnipresence* of God. We read that they are “awesome” or “dreadful” and I think that speaks of the *omnipotence* of God. And lastly we see that these rims were full of eyes and that could speak of the *omniscience* of God. I think when we see what these creatures are carrying in a minute you will understand why there is this picture of the attributes of God seen in these creatures.

2. As I have said, I can't fully understand what these creatures look like but I do believe they are angelic beings and not an airplane as some like to say. And I do realize that this is difficult to picture and I don't want to make it more confusing to you, but I think in light of what we see today, I need to bring this up.

In Ezekiel chapter 28 we are going to read of the fall of Lucifer, the anointed Cherub. That means when this Cherub fell, according to Revelation chapter 12, he took a third of the angelic beings with him. And the Scriptures tell us that they have the ability to transform themselves into angels of light, able to deceive people. Let me throw this idea out to you and you can either take it or leave it. Could all of these UFO sightings from around the world be nothing more than these demon's, these fallen angels deceiving people? I believe it is a strong possibility, and I am not alone.

Dr. Vallee, an expert in UFO sightings and he was used as the model for “Lacombe” in the Steven Spielberg movie, “Close Encounters of the Third Kind.” Dr. Vallee has spent over two decades in serious UFO research. And he has come to the conclusion that UFOs are purposely hoping to “change our belief systems” and that they are engaging in a worldwide enterprise of “subliminal seduction.”

In his book, *Messengers of Deception*, he states that an “Impressive parallel [can] be made between UFO occupants and the popular conception of demons” and the UFOs can “project images or fabricated scenes designed to change our belief system.” This is from an unbeliever!

Brad Steiger, who has investigated hundreds of cases, confesses that “Whether men and women claim to be in contact with Space Brothers, Ascended Masters, or spirits from the astral plane, they are all independently coming up with largely the same communications.”

And lastly, Dr. Vallee says “Increased attention given to UFO activity promises the concept of political unification of this planet. This is perhaps the most commonly recurring theme in my entire study of these groups. Through the belief in UFOs, a tremendous yearning for global peace is expressing itself. . . . Contactee philosophies often include belief in higher races and in totalitarian [dictator] systems that would eliminate democracy.”

Another writer wrote in regards to this deception regarding UFOs and aliens,

Military aviation historian Trevor James Constable once wrote that the battle with UFOs is not for the planet of man but for the soul of man. There are no more evolved super intelligent aliens out there. The Bible makes it clear that man is the highest form of creation, created in the image of God Himself (Genesis 1:26-27), that He created man for His own glory (Isaiah 43:7), that man was wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14), that the heavens are the heavens of the Lord but the earth He has given to the sons of man (Psalm 115:16). We are told that all things were created by Christ both in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, thrones and dominions all were created by Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16). We are told to praise the Lord as are the angels, the sun and the moon, the stars, because He established all (Psalm 148), And finally we are told that there is only one God and only one mediator between man and God and that is Jesus Christ (1Timothy 2:5).

Thus we do not need some ET to come and save us from the wrath to come. We do not need some extraterrestrial savior to redeem a fallen mankind when we have God's first begotten Son who came to earth and died for our sins (John 3:16). If any more evolved aliens are ever discovered, than throw away your Bible because it is false, but don't count on that ever happening. If these beings ever appear, we will be deceived as to who they really are.

- <http://www.rapturenotesmirror.com/myfavouritemartian.html>

When you look at how these alien abductions are very similar all over the world, that what people see resembles what Ezekiel saw, I think it is very possible that these are real and they are fallen angels, demons! Now whatever your view on this is, you have to see that UFOs are nothing more than illusions, it is a deception, and like I have said, I believe that these fallen angelic beings are behind it and they are doing this for their own purpose, their own plan. They are preparing the world for the ultimate deception!

VERSES 22-25

1. The firmament means expanse or sky, and Ezekiel is just describing the beauty of it. As you look at this think about the throne room in heaven that John saw in Revelation chapter 4. It was beautiful and as we are going to see, these creatures are carrying a throne and on that throne was the Lord.

We are also told that when these creatures moved, they made this thunderous sound. I bet it was nothing like Ezekiel ever heard before.

2. And notice again verse 25, “**A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.**” This voice, as we will see, is the voice of God seated upon the throne that these cherubim are carrying.

VERSES 26-28

1. Here is a picture of Jesus, post incarnation, post resurrection, sitting upon the throne. You see, the Scriptures say that God is Spirit, but when Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us He took on the body of flesh, He became man. Ezekiel now sees into the future in this vision that God has given him seated upon this throne, “**... the appearance of a man high above it.**”

2. Also, look at the picture that is painted here of God and you will see that it compares to what John saw in Revelation chapter 4 as I have said. We see a rainbow around the throne of God and we see a rainbow here.

The rainbow was a symbol of God’s grace, His promise that He would never destroy the earth again by a flood. Fire speaks of judgment. And that reminds me of the burning thorn bush that Moses saw in the desert. It was common for these bushes to burn, but what drew Moses to this one bush was it was on fire but it was not consumed.

The thorn bush was a symbol of sin; the fire was a symbol of judgment. And the thorn bush not being consumed is a symbol of God’s grace. It was not the righteousness of God, or the holiness of God that drew Moses, but the grace of God. It is as Paul said in Romans 2:4, “**Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**”

Not only does Ezekiel speak of these things but he also tells us, “**... This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.**” In other words, this One who appeared like a man is Almighty God. I think it is possible, even though Ezekiel did not understand this, that we see the Incarnation here. That the God-Man was seated upon this throne!

3. Also, as Ezekiel is given this vision notice how he responds to it, “**. . . So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.**” Did you notice how he responded as he saw the LORD and heard the LORD speak, he fell on his face, he bowed his head before the Lord.

People today are so flippant about all these visions of God they say they are having. There is no reverence; there is no bowing of the head before Him. Why? Maybe they aren't receiving a vision of Jesus! You see, God is holy, He is pure, and for sinful man to approach Him any other way than on his knee's with his head bowed is wrong! We are not God, He is, and we need to remember to approach Him that way, giving Him all the glory that his due His name, give Him the honor He deserves!

4. As we move into chapter 2 it does flow from what is taking place here in chapter 1 of Ezekiel. He is now on his knees before the LORD and listen to what takes place next.

EZEKIEL 2

VERSES 1-5

1. So as Ezekiel is on his face before the Lord the Lord now tells him to stand on his feet. What I like here is that the Lord tells Ezekiel to do this and then, by His Spirit, the Lord lifts Ezekiel up! That is our Lord and that is a principle that we need to not only learn but apply to our lives.

When God calls you to a work He does not say, “Joe I want you to do this, good luck!” No, He not only calls us to a work but then He enables us to complete the work He has called us to do. The problem for us many times is that we get in His way; we think we can do it on our own.

“Hey, I can stand on my own!” No you can’t, you can’t do anything apart from God and when we truly realize that and walk in His power instead of our own, we will see what God can do, the amazing things He can do through us! God has given us His Word, He has given to us His Spirit, and now He tells us to go and do the work! May we listen and obey!

2. So the Holy Spirit empowers Ezekiel for this work and he is going to be speaking to the children of Israel. Now that sounds great until you read that this is “**. . . a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’**” Ezekiel 2:3-4.

The Lord is saying to Ezekiel, literally, that they are “*stiff-of-face and hard-of-heart children.*” And Ezekiel said, “Lord, do you have any other ministry for me!” No, he did not say that. But what a tough ministry this was going to be for Ezekiel. He was to go and speak to the children of Israel, to share with them the things of God and they were not going to listen to him.

The ministry that God places us in is not always easy and God is not saying that you have to be successful according to what man thinks success is, but He does require you to be faithful! May we not lose sight of that fact!

3. One more point here and that is this title that Ezekiel is given, “**Son of man.**” It is used some 93 times in this book! And I believe this is referring to his humanity as this phrase means, “human one.” Thus, this human one, empowered by the Spirit of God will do great things for the Lord, not through his human strength but by the power of God working in him and through him!

What is interesting is that this is a title we see spoken of Jesus and I think the idea here is that Jesus was going to be “the Human One.” The Incarnation, God almighty entering a body of flesh, being fully God and fully man but in the Incarnation depending upon the Spirit of God!

VERSES 6-10

1. When the Lord tells you not to be afraid that means Ezekiel must have been afraid, had some doubts. And the Lord encourages him by telling Ezekiel that “They are going to come against you, they are going to speak against you, they will be like thorns that poke you, scorpions that sting you, just don’t let that bother you!”

“Thanks Lord, I rather not hear what it was going to be like and be surprised!” And we do see that today. Yes the unsaved do that, they don’t want to hear what we have to say, but what is even more troubling is God’s people don’t want to hear what God has to say. When you share the Word of God they are not interested. When you share about what the Bible says about the days we are living in they don’t want to know about it!

For us, as with Ezekiel, may we not be afraid, may we not be discouraged, but keep speaking forth the Word of God and then it is up to the individual if they will listen or not. We are not to let men move us but we are to let God lead us. We are not to let the fear of man stop us but the fear of God to move us forward.

It is as Paul said in Galatians 1:10, “**For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**” You see, our service is unto God, we need to do as He commands us, not to be men pleasers but God pleasers! And if that is done, people will be blessed.

The interesting thing here is that God gives Ezekiel a warning in verse 8 not to be rebellious like the children of Israel but he was to obey the Lord! He was to speak for the Lord or speak forth the Words of God. We are to do the same. And to ignore what God is saying, to not share the Scriptures is to be rebellious!

2. In the last two verses of this chapter we see the Lord hand Ezekiel a scroll that was written on both sides. This scroll is a scroll of judgment against a rebellious people, many who were now in captivity in Babylon, the children of Israel! Yes, there are many blessings found in God's Word, but there are also woes, judgments, that also need to be shared. People need to understand the consequences of sin!

Now as we move into Ezekiel chapter 3 we are still dealing with this scroll and what the Lord tells Ezekiel to do is interesting. Let's read on and see what takes place.

EZEKIEL 3

VERSES 1-3

1. I realize that this sounds strange but there is a principle here that the Lord is showing us. In having Ezekiel take the scroll and eat it the Lord is saying that before a person can give the Word of God to others he must take it in himself, it must become part of his life. You can't give to others what you yourself don't have!

That is what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2:6, "**The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.**" In other words, we first must feed on the Word of God before we can give it to others like I have said.

God's Word to us must be valuable, it must be important. Just like food is to our body, God's Word is so important for our spiritual lives. It is as we are told in Psalm 19:10 that God's Word is "**More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.**" And Job said of God's Word, "**I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.**" Job 23:12. We are to be partakers of the Word of God and then dispensers of the Word of God to others!

2. Now the Lord is going to send Ezekiel out. He fed upon the Word of God and what he has taken in he is going to give to others, God's Word. And for the children of Israel, it is going to be speaking of the judgment that is coming upon them.

3. Now why was the book sweet? If this is speaking of the judgment of God that would seem strange that Ezekiel would see it as sweet! If you think about it, God's Word is sweet to us, we love God's Word and even in the judgments of God we see the grace and mercy of God.

Also keep in mind that the sweetness came from the source of the Words, God, rather than the content of the Words, which was judgment. It is as Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 15:16, "**Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.**"

VERSES 4-9

1. God is sending Ezekiel to his own people, the Jews. There was no language barrier, no walls to breakdown, they were family and yet their heart was hard and they refused to listen to what the Lord was saying through Ezekiel.

And yet the indictment is even worse. The Lord tells Ezekiel that if he was going to foreigners they would listen but his own people closed their ears to what he was saying! And the idea is that different languages are more easily mastered than the technique of communicating with those with unbelieving hearts. Ezekiel's chances of "getting through" to his audience will have been greater if he were speaking to people with a hard language rather than a hard heart. And how true that is even today! Try talking about the Lord to your own family!

2. Make no mistake about it; this was going to be a difficult ministry that the Lord was placing Ezekiel in. There would be some evil looks towards Ezekiel. He would butt heads with these people. And as hard, as tough as things might get, the Lord is telling Ezekiel that he is not to back down, he is not to give up, to stand strong in the faith! The words that God gave to Ezekiel are very similar to the words He gave to Isaiah and Jeremiah as they were commissioned by God. (Isaiah 6:8-13, Jeremiah 1:11-19)

And I believe the Lord is admonishing us to do the same. Have a soft heart towards people but don't back down in regards to the faith, don't compromise your faith! Listen to these encouraging words of Paul as he is admonishing believers to forge ahead, don't give up.

In Galatians 6:9-10 Paul wrote, "**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**"

And Paul said this in I Corinthians 15:58, “**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**” I do think we need to be reminded of that from time to time and it does encourage us to go forward no matter how difficult it may be, how hard it may be!

VERSES 10-15

1. This is so important for us today. God is telling Ezekiel to pay attention, to listen to the voice of God, to take in the Word of God and then speak to the children of Israel the things of God. We see here that God tells Ezekiel to take in all of God’s Words, that means the blessings and the judgments, don’t edit anything out! May we also heed these Words of God and speak the whole counsel of God, not just the things we like! Too often today pastors, teachers, Christians edit the Word of God and keep what they like and toss away what they don’t. We don’t have that option, it is all God’s Word from Genesis to Revelation!

And think about what happens when people don’t want to hear the Word of God any longer, what do we do? Today we water things down, tell stories and we give the people what they want instead of what they need. I think we worry far too often about how people are going to respond to what we say regarding the Lord and His Word instead of what the Lord thinks.

Let me try to take that burden away from you. God is telling Ezekiel, and us, to speak forth His Word, whether people hear it, whether they accept it or not. You see, it is not our responsibility that people get saved. Our responsibility is to be a farmer and sow the seed of God’s Word in love. The Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing forth life in the hearts of the people.

And if you are still not satisfied, then listen to what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 4:1-5, **“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

Again, you don't let the fear of man drive you but you let the fear of the Lord lead you. Your reasonability is to share God's Word and it is up to the individual if they will receive it or not.

2. Now the Lord picks Ezekiel up and transports him to the captives in Tel Abib and as this is happening he also hears the noise of the four Cherubim moving.
3. Ezekiel was going to bring the children of Israel the warning of the judgment of God that was coming upon them for their sin, their rebellion and refusal to repent and get right with God. And in verse 14 it speaks of Ezekiel being **“in bitterness”** and **“anger of spirit”** and it is almost like the Lord forced him to go, that he did not want to go.

I don't see that Ezekiel was upset with the Lord and he did not want to go. I think he recognized that his people had to go through this judgment because they refused to listen and obey the voice of the Lord. And he may have been upset with them because of their rebellion, maybe feeling the same emotions that God felt towards the sinful nature and hard heartedness of these people. And as I have said, this was going to be a tough ministry but Ezekiel was not going to accomplish this in his own strength, but the Spirit of God would equip and enable him to accomplish all these things.

Now as Ezekiel arrived at Tel Abib he sat there for seven days and he was astonished by what he was seeing, what he was hearing from the people, knowing what he was going to have to say to them regarding the judgment of God. Here were a people where judgment was coming and they were blind to what was happening, they refused to listen to what the prophets of God were saying!

4. I also like the fact that Ezekiel is with the people, he is not looking down from his ivory tower bringing judgment upon them. And the same is true for us, we need to get involved in the lives of people, we need to come in contact with them.

It is so helpful that when we minister to people that we sit down with them, we put ourselves in their shoes you might say. We need to feel what they feel. That doesn't mean we need to sin with them, but we need to have compassion upon them and that won't come when we are sitting in our ivory tower!

VERSES 16-21

1. After seven days pass the Lord speaks with Ezekiel once again. And he tells Ezekiel that he is a watchman for the house of Israel. A watchman was a person who sat on the wall of the city and when he saw danger coming he would sound the alarm to warn the people. Obviously it was a very important position. To fail in your duty could mean the death of many people and you would be responsible for their shed blood!

2. Now the watchman that the Lord is speaking of is also going to sound the alarm, warn of coming danger and he will do this by speaking forth the Words of God. It didn't matter if the message was good or bad, blessings or curses.

If you warn the wicked person of his wickedness and that he needs to come to the Lord and he does, he will be saved. If he refuses then he will die in his iniquity! But if you don't warn the wicked person and he dies in his sins, then God will hold you responsible in the sense that his blood will be required at your hand!

Now let me explain what is going on here because people freak out on this one. I don't believe you can lose your salvation once you are saved. But God can chasten you for your failure to listen to Him. You see, I don't believe these verses are speaking of our position, but in a practical sense. Paul, in speaking to the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20 said, "**Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**" Acts 20:26-27. Paul gave the people the whole council of God and he was not guilty before God in fulfilling his responsibility towards man. He spoke forth the Word of God to the people and that is what God is admonishing us to do!

On the other end of the spectrum is the righteous man and if he turns from the Lord, gets into sin and you don't warn him, once again his blood the Lord will require at your hand. But if you do warn him and he turns from his wicked ways, he will be saved. If he doesn't then he shall not live. This is the same idea as before.

How does that relate to us today? I believe what the Lord is saying to us is that we are our brothers keepers. We are to be watching out for each other, encouraging each other, rebuking in love when needed, correcting, and-so-on.

Don't let a family member head down a path of death and destruction. Paul, in Hebrews 10:24-25 exhorts us by saying, **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

Make no mistake about it; this is an enormous responsibility that we as Christians have to warn people of the coming judgment. Noah warned the people for 120 years before the flood came. There is another judgment of God that is coming and people need to be warned of what is happening. Not only the coming judgment upon this earth, but man will be judged for his sin apart from Christ and they need to be warned. It is as John said in I John 5:16, **“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.”**

May we be watchmen for our brethren and for the lost!

VERSES 22-27

1. Once again the hand of the Lord was upon Ezekiel and He tells Ezekiel to go to the plain. And as he gets there he sees the glory of the Lord and he fell on his face! Once again notice the reverential respect that Ezekiel has towards the Lord. He falls down before Him to worship Him.

2. Now Ezekiel is told to shut himself in his house and it almost seems like he is under house arrest, probably for what he was saying. And during this time he is going to be silent as the Lord closes his mouth.

Then God opens his mouth and he is to speak to this rebellious house, the children of Israel, “**Thus says the Lord GOD.**” I think that is important. It was not the words of Ezekiel or this person or that person but the Words of God!

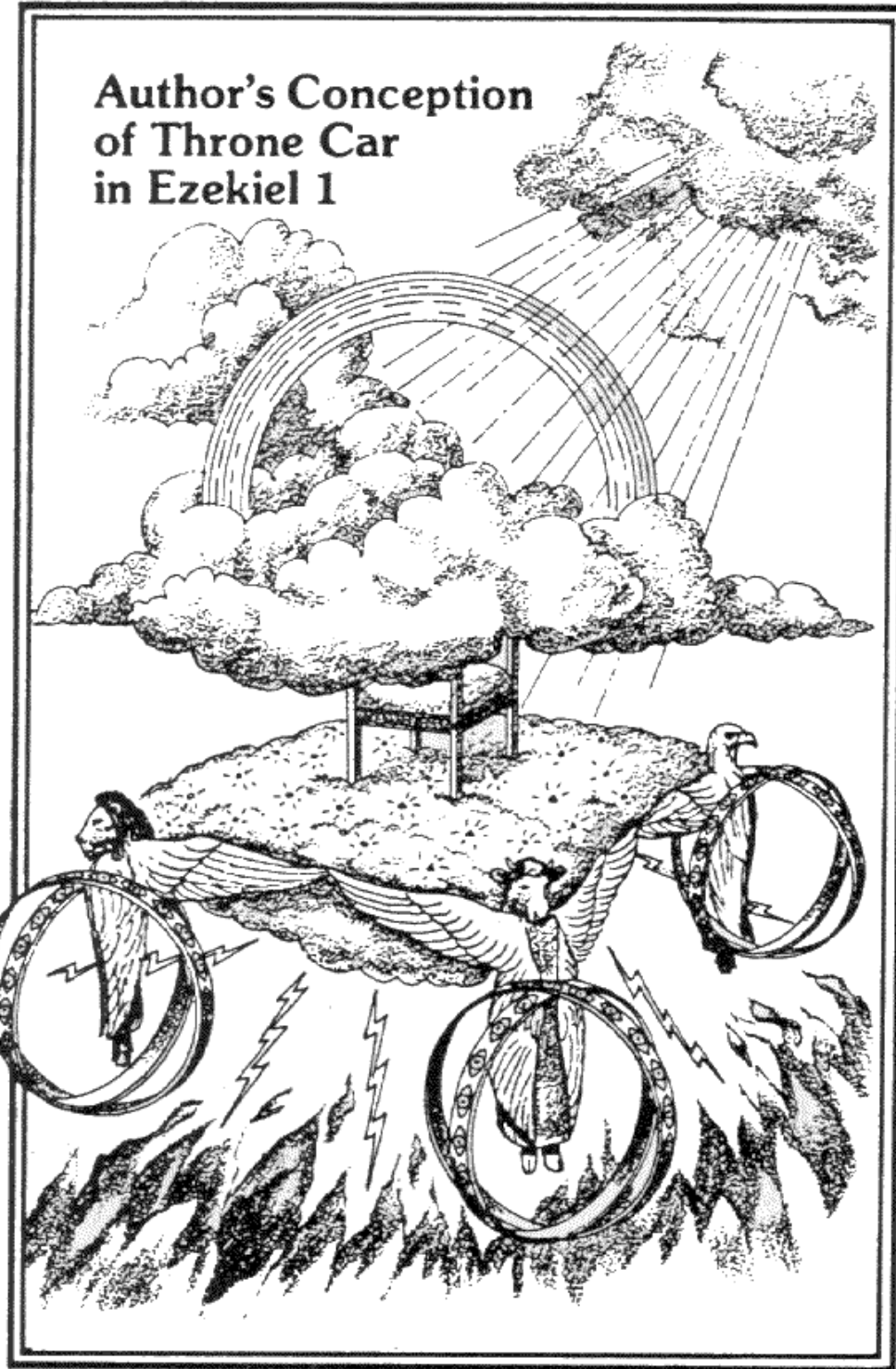
Peter wrote in I Peter 4:10-11, “**As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**”

I like what Wesley wrote on this passage,

If any man speak, let him - In his whole conversation, public and private. Speak as the oracles of God - Let all his words be according to this pattern, both as to matter and manner, more especially in public. By this mark we may always know who are, so far, the true or false prophets. The oracles of God teach that men should repent, believe, obey. He that treats of faith and leaves out repentance, or does not enjoin practical holiness to believers, does not speak as the oracles of God: he does not preach Christ, let him think as highly of himself as he will. If any man minister - Serve his brother in love, whether in spirituals or temporals. Let him minister as of the ability which God giveth - That is, humbly and diligently, ascribing all his power to God, and using it with his might. Whose is the glory - of his wisdom, which teaches us to speak. And the might - Which enables us to act.

- John Wesley

May we do that, may we be watchmen on the wall and warn people of the danger, of the judgment that is coming and then it is up to them to listen or not. It is not the wisdom of man but the wisdom of God spoken with the Words of God and empowered by the Spirit of God!



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