



New David

EZEKIEL'S VISION

Ezekiel 1-2

The Daily Word from Laura Martin

The Lord revealed His glory to Ezekiel in a vision. In the presence of the Lord, Ezekiel fell facedown as he listened to the Lord's voice. In that moment Ezekiel received his divine assignment: *to speak to the Israelites who had rebelled against God*. They may listen or refuse to listen, but they would know the Lord sent a prophet to be among them. The Lord promised the prophet Ezekiel if he would just open his mouth, He would provide the words.

Ezekiel's unique calling as a prophet parallels your role as a follower of Christ in one important way. Jesus calls you to a similar assignment: *to proclaim the glory and good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth*. Yes, even to those who may not listen or obey. As you go into all the nations, remember the first moment the Lord called you to follow Him. May the fire within you be rekindled to go forth in boldness, not with a spirit of timidity but of power, love, and sound mind. The Lord created you for this. Walk in confidence because the Lord's hand rests upon you. He promises to provide every word, every answer, every- thing you need to proclaim His name. Wait, listen, and trust His voice. He will show up and reveal Himself to you. Rely on His power.

"He said to me: 'Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to the rebellious pagans who have rebelled against Me. The Israelites and their ancestors have transgressed against Me to this day. The children are obstinate and hardhearted. I am sending you to them, and you must say to them, "This is what the Lord GOD says." Whether they listen or refuse to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.'"

— Ezekiel 2:3–5

FURTHER SCRIPTURE

- *Ezekiel 1:28* — "The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the form of the LORD's glory. When I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking."
- *Ezekiel 2:7* — "But speak My words to them whether they listen or refuse to listen, for they are rebellious."
- *2 Timothy 1:6–8* — "Therefore, I remind you to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God."



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Teaching Notes

INTRO

This is the start of our new study on the major prophet, Ezekiel. I described Ezekiel yesterday as a “hum-dinger.” The book was originally titled for Ezekiel. Constable explains that Ezekiel’s name means “‘God strengthens (or hardens)’ or ‘God will strengthen (harden)’”¹ (Ezekiel 3:8–9). In his ministry “Ezekiel uses visions, prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to proclaim and dramatize the message of God to His exiled people.”²

McGee states the vision that comes to Ezekiel in chapter 1 “is not a vision of the person of God—He is not seen here. It is a vision of the presence of God; it is a theophany. The God of glory is riding triumphantly in His own chariot, unseen by mortal man.”³

Verse 1 sets the dating of the book. “The 30th year” most probably refers to Ezekiel’s age when God’s vision first came to him. MacArthur explains Ezekiel “received his call to prophesy in 593 BC (Ezekiel 1:2), in Babylon (“the land of the Chaldeans”), during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, which began in 597 BC.”⁴ He was taken into captivity to Babylon five years earlier at the age of 25. Ezekiel’s ministry lasted 22 to 23 years (Ezekiel 29:17). He was a contemporary of Jeremiah’s and would have been the same age as Daniel. Before God’s call, Ezekiel was a priest (Ezekiel 1:3). Jeremiah, Zechariah, and John the Baptist were also both priest and prophet.⁵

Ezekiel was married, and they had been part of the 10,000 Jews who were taken to Babylon in 597 BC (2 Kings 24:11–18). According to Ezekiel 3:15 they lived at Tel-Abib on the bank of the Chebar river, which was probably located southeast of Babylon. His wife died there during the exile (Ezekiel 24:18). According to rabbinical tradition, Ezekiel died “at the hands of an Israelite prince whose idolatry he rebuked around 560 BC.”⁶

Ezekiel dated his prophecies internally in the book, such as 597 BC (Ezekiel 8:1), 573/572 BC (Ezekiel 40:1), and 571–570 BC (Ezekiel 29:1).⁷ Chapters 1–28 were written in chronological order, but in chapter 29 Ezekiel went back to the year before Ezekiel 26:1. However, in chapter 30 he remained close to chronological entries.⁸

Historically, after 110 years as one united nation, Israel separated into the northern and southern kingdoms in 931 BC. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC. One 135 years later, the southern kingdom of Judah also fell to Babylon in 605–586 BC. The Assyrian army collapsed, and the capital Nineveh was destroyed by the Babylonians and the Medes (612 BC). Babylon continued its takeover of the area, defeating Assyria completely and Egypt at Carchemish by 605 BC. Babylon then moved against Judah and Jerusalem. In 597 BC Jerusalem fell to Babylon and the captivity for the people of Jerusalem began. In 586 BC Babylon destroyed the city of Jerusalem.⁹

This is the background for the book of Ezekiel. There were three times when the captives were deported to Babylon. Isaiah prophesied about the Babylonian captivity, but he never experienced it himself. Jeremiah both prophesied about the captivity and witnessed it as well. The prophet Daniel was a part of the first group of exiles who were deported from Jerusalem in 605 BC. Ezekiel was taken with the second group of captives, which included King Jehoiachin, on March 16, 597 BC. The third group of captives was taken to Babylon in 586 BC. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel all ministered during the same period of time. MacArthur explains those who were exiled to Babylon “lived more as colonists than captives, being permitted to farm tracts of land under somewhat favorable conditions (Jeremiah 29).”¹⁰ According to Ezekiel 3:24, Ezekiel had his own house.

¹ Thomas Constable, Dr. Constable’s Bible Expository Study Notes, p. 1; available online at <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/ezekiel.pdf>.

² MacArthur, p. 891.

³ J. Vernon McGee, *Ezekiel: Notes & Outlines*, n.p.; available at https://ttb.org/docs/default-source/notes-outlines/no18_ezekiel.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 891.

⁵ Constable, p. 1.

⁶ MacArthur, p. 891.

⁷ MacArthur, p. 891.

⁸ MacArthur, p. 891.

⁹ MacArthur, p. 891-892.

¹⁰ MacArthur, p. 892.



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Teaching Notes

Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel also dealt with false prophets who stated the people wouldn't remain long in Babylon. Ezekiel warned from 593 to 583 BC that the exile would last much longer, and they needed to make Babylon their home. In 585 BC the destruction of Jerusalem was complete and a fugitive from Jerusalem reported the destruction to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 33:21). Ezekiel's reminder was that God was still in control. Ezekiel 1—24 includes "prophecies of Jerusalem's ruin"; chapters 25—32 cover "prophecies of retribution to the nations"; chapter 33 records the "provision for Israel's repentance"; and chapters 34—48 prophecies of Israel's restoration."¹¹

TEACHING

Ezekiel 1:1-14: Psalm 137:1 speaks of sitting at the Chebar Canal (or river). Ezekiel received visions of God from there (v. 1). The historical data is included and the statement that God's hand came down on him (vv. 2–3). Ezekiel described a whirlwind cloud with fire flashing and brilliant light (v. 4). J. Vernon McGee described this flashing light (vv. 4, 13, 14) as "brighter than the sun, similar to an atomic explosion."¹² In verses 5–26, Ezekiel describes a vision of cherubim, each with four faces and four wings. MacArthur states, "They were able to move in any direction without needing to first turn, giving swift access to do God's will."¹³ McGee points out the evidence of "intelligent purpose" in verses 10 and 18. He further suggests the "four faces remind us of the four Gospels in which Christ is revealed in four aspects: in His kingship—symbolized by the lion (Matthew); as a servant—symbolized by the ox (Mark); in His perfect humanity—symbolized by the face of a man (Luke); in His deity—symbolized by the flying eagle (John)."¹⁴

Ezekiel 1:15–28: In verses 15–16, each creature is described as having a wheel within a wheel beside them. McGee explains this shows "ceaseless activity and energy of divine power. It is God moving forward; His providence."¹⁵ MacArthur describes the wheel within a wheel as "the gigantic energy of the complicated revolutions of God's massive judgment machinery bringing about His purposes with unerring certainty"¹⁶ (vv. 17–21). Their heads were covered with a platform, their wings extended toward each other, and two wings on each covered their bodies (vv. 22–23). Their wings made a mighty roar like the voice of God (v. 24). The voice of the Lord came from over their heads, and the presence of a human (possibly Christ) on a throne appeared above them (vv. 25–26). This human is pictured in Psalm 103:19 and Revelation 4:2–8. In God's presence, he fell down and heard God's voice speaking (v. 28). The glory of God was seen.

CLOSING

We have the picture of the presence of the human in the glory of God releasing the cherubim to do something that had yet to be explained. MacArthur describes chapter 1 as the "divine appearance to Ezekiel," and chapter 2 as the "divine assignment to Ezekiel."¹⁷

¹¹ MacArthur, p. 894.

¹² McGee, n.p.

¹³ MacArthur, p. 896.

¹⁴ McGee, n.p.

¹⁵ McGee, n.p.

¹⁶ MacArthur, p. 896.

¹⁷ MacArthur, p. 896.



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Reading Guide Questions

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1. What were the two job descriptions for Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–3)? What other prophets were both as well? (Nehemiah 12:16; Jeremiah 1:1; Zechariah 1:1)
 2. Where was Ezekiel called into the prophetic ministry by God?
 3. In Ezekiel 1 what are some characteristics of God that may be different from what you grew up learning about Him or know about God? (Ezekiel 1:25–28)
 4. What was Ezekiel's reaction when he saw the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:25–28)? How does this help you understand how you should approach Him because of what He has done for you? (Romans 6:6–11)
 5. How did God give Ezekiel the strength to stand back up on his feet in Ezekiel 2? What was the command that He gave Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:3–7)? Does this encourage you about sharing the gospel with those who won't listen?
 6. What did the Holy Spirit highlight to you in Ezekiel 1–2 through the reading or the teaching?



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