

# Ezekiel's Vision — The Glory of the Lord

The book of Ezekiel is one of the major prophets in the Old Testament. When I say major prophets, that does not mean the book of Ezekiel is more important than the ones written by the other prophets. The word “major” just refers to the fact that it is longer than some books written by other prophets. The word “minor” just means the books called the minor prophets were shorter. Ezekiel has forty-eight chapters.

The author of the book was the prophet Ezekiel. J. Vernon McGee has said,

Ezekiel is the prophet of the [Holy] Spirit, as Isaiah is the prophet of the Son, and Jeremiah is the prophet of the Father.<sup>1</sup>

The book of Ezekiel is very unusual. The Spirit is mentioned twenty-two times in the book. The word visions is mentioned twenty-one times. The word parables occurs three times. Signs are mentioned nine

times. Multiple times we are told that the “hand of the Lord” was on the prophet and the Spirit had lifted him up. The glory of the Lord is mentioned ten times. It is the theme of the book. Symbolism occurs throughout the book, just as it does in Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Charles Feinberg, one of our nation's leading Bible scholars, now with the Lord, wrote this about the book,

From the first to the last chapter of 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. Was there ever an hour more weighed with terror and yet more opportunity than is ours? Hours of opportunity do not tarry for the convenience of man. What we do must be done quickly.<sup>2</sup>

Ezekiel can be outlined in a number of ways. These various outlines help us start to understand the book. The first way we could outline the book is by its six prophetic sections. The



first prophecy is about the glory of God or the introduction. The next four prophetic sections are about Israel's destruction. The fifth one is about Judah's enemies. The last prophetic section is about the mil-

lennial kingdom. We could also outline it by three visions and the phrase “word of the Lord.” That phrase occurs fifty-five times in chapters 12 through 32. It occurs almost four times in each chapter. We could outline it in three sections: before, during, and after the siege on Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Finally, we could also outline the book by a series of judgments on Israel, judgments on its enemies, and the restoration of Israel. That is the most meaningful outline, and the one we will use.

The book also has some very special features. We see angels,

<sup>1</sup> J. Vernon McGee. Book of Ezekiel. Thru the Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1982. p. 436.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lee Feinberg. The Prophecy of Ezekiel. Moody Press. 1969. p. 15.

# OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL

Author: Ezekiel, son of Buzi  
Date Written: 590 -- 570 B.C.

Glory of God		Destruction of Jerusalem Prophesied				Judgment of Gentile Nations		Restoration of Jerusalem							
1:1	3:27	4:1	7:27	8:1	11:25	12:1	19:14	20:1	24:27	25:1	32:33	33:1	48:35		
* Introduction		1st Cycle Prophecies		2nd Cycle Prophecies *		3rd Cycle Prophecies **		4th Cycle Prophecies		Prophecies Against Judah's Enemies ***		Promised Land, Millennial Kingdom & Glory of God ****			
First Vision			2nd Vision		12:1 "Word of the Lord" Occurs Predominately In This Section (55 of the 60 times in the book)						38:1 Third Vision				
Ezekiel Called		Certainty of Judgment		Necessity of Judgment		Justification of Judgment		God Cannot Ignore the Sin of Others		God Will Restore Israel, for He Keeps His Promises					
Before the Siege on Jerusalem (593 – 588 B.C.)								During the Siege (588-586 B.C.)		After the Siege (Future)					
Dates of Prophecies While In Chebar, Babylonian Empire (July 593 – March/April 571 B.C.)†															
593 B.C.			593 B.C.		592 B.C.		592 B.C.		591 B.C.		589 B.C.		588 B.C.		
						586 B.C.		585 B.C.							

\*Visions of God with Cherubim.  
\*\*Prophecy about the Messiah.  
\*\*\*Prophecy about the fall of Satan.  
\*\*\*\*Prophecies about Israel's restoration, Valley of Dry Bones, and Battle of Gog and Magog.  
†Ezekiel 19:1-16 was given in 571 B.C.

wheels, and God in chapters one, eight, and ten. The Messiah is mentioned in chapter 17. The fall of Satan is recorded in chapter 28. In chapter 36 we will read about the promise of the new covenant, of a new heart, and the gift of an indwelling Holy Spirit. The valley of dry bones occurs in chapter 37. The battle of Gog and Magog is described in chapters 38-39. From chapters 40-48, the future millennial kingdom with the temple, sacrifices, feasts, and the glory of God is described. We will read about false prophets and rebellious, religious people. Along the way there are very powerful applications for us and our culture. We will discover why God punished Israel. We will discover if the presence of righteous people changes how God responds to a rebellious people. The book is going to be a challenge to all of us.

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL. Who wrote this book?

First, the book of Ezekiel has two authors. The first and most important author is the Holy Spirit. The second author was Ezekiel. He wrote his book about 590 – 570 B.C. The first verse tells us at what age he began to write it. Ezekiel 1:1 says,

Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. Ezekiel 1:1 (NASB)

The “thirtieth year” refers to his age. He wrote the book when he was thirty years, four months, and five days of age. He was living by the river Chebar or Kabar in the ancient Babylonian empire. Today, the Arabic name for the river is called Shatt en-Nil. Its location was identified on two clay tablets that were

unearthed at Nippur. It was called the Great Canal.<sup>3</sup> It was located near the city of Babylon. Ezekiel 3:15 says this was the place where the exiles from Judah were located. Psalm 137:1-4 records a sorrowful psalm of the exiles who lived on this canal. It says,

By the rivers of Babylon,  
 There we sat down and wept,  
 When we remembered Zion.  
 Upon the willows in the midst of it  
 We hung our harps.  
 For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
 And our tormentors mirth, saying,  
 “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”  
 How can we sing the LORD’S song  
 In a foreign land?  
 Psalm 137:1-4 (NASB)

Ezekiel lived with the Jewish exiles from Judah on the Great Canal of Chebar. At the same time, Daniel was the prime minister under King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel is mentioned three times in this book. Noah and Job are each mentioned once. Even though Daniel and Ezekiel lived within about

60 miles (96.6km) of one another, we do not know if they ever spoke with each other. Ezekiel and Daniel were almost the same age. Jeremiah the prophet was about twenty years older and was considered the sage prophet. There is an important

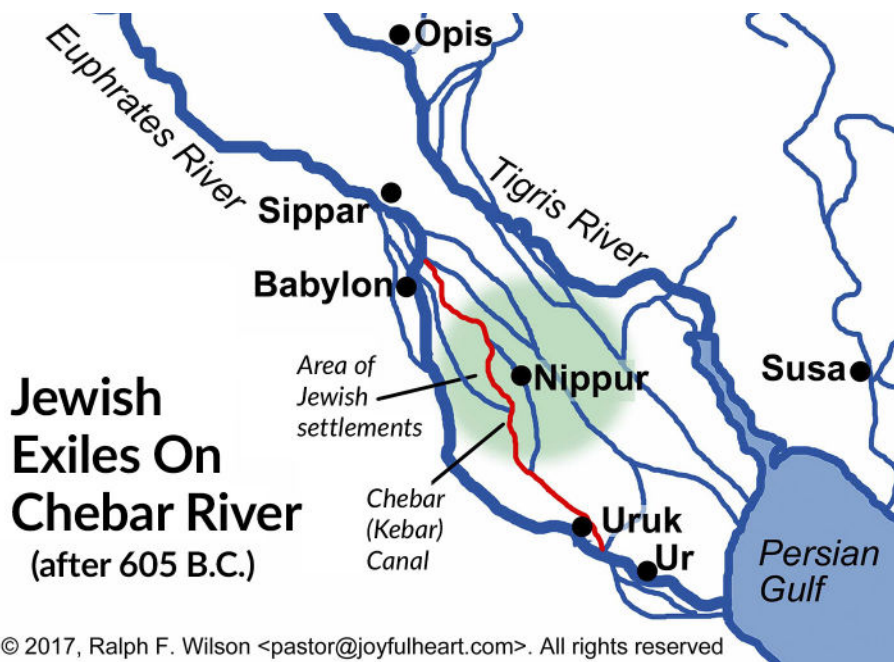
lesson here for us. Daniel was in the king’s palace and Ezekiel was with the exiles. Yet, they were both prophets of God. Both men were used of God. From the world’s perspective, Ezekiel did not accomplish much because the people did not respond to his messages and change. But both men were equally outstanding prophets of God. We should never look down upon a man because his ministry is not in the palace. What matters is does he faithfully speak for God.

Verses 2-3 also give us the date of the first vision that was given to Ezekiel.

(On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s exile, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.) Ezekiel 1:2-3 (NASB)

The date is the fifth day of the fifth month of the fifth year

of King Jehoiachin’s exile. In our calendar that corresponds to 593 B.C. Jehoiachin was king of Judah in Jerusalem. He became king at 18 years of age. He reigned three months before King Nebuchadnezzar deported him to Babylon. You can read about this event in 2 Kings 24:6-14.



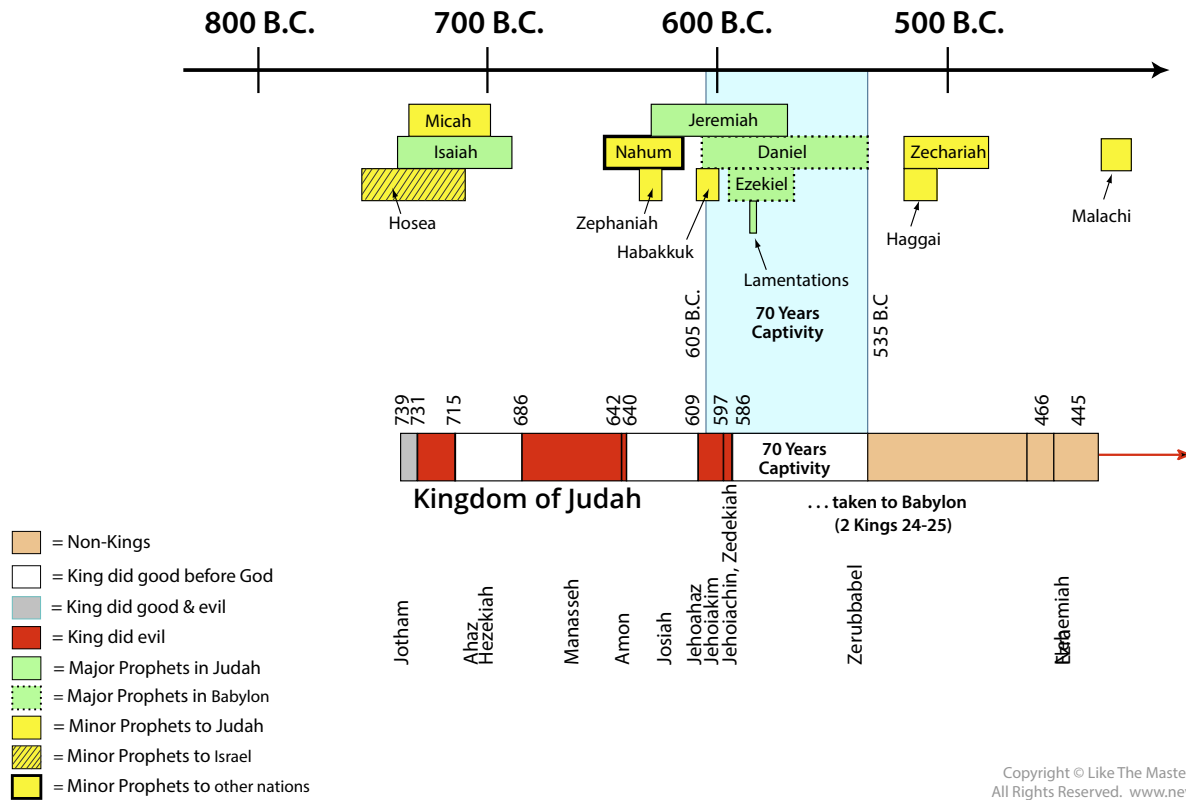
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Ezekiel had been taken captive at the same time. That occurred in 597 B.C. It is now five years later, when this young man received a series of visions from God.

The first vision or prophecy was given in the year 593 B.C. and the last prophecy was given in 571 B.C. That means Ezekiel was a prophet for about twenty-one or twenty-two years.

<sup>3</sup> R.C. Ridall. Chebar. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing. 1977. Vol. 1., p. 784.

# Timeline of the Fall of Jerusalem



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We are also told that Ezekiel was a priest. So, at this point he was both a priest and a prophet. However, he never served as priest since he did not live in Jerusalem. We are told that his father was Buzi, but Scripture does not give us any more information about his father. We are also told that Ezekiel had a wife in Ezekiel 24:15-18. In that passage, we are told God took the life of his wife. She died during his ministry as a sign to the people. We will learn more about that later. Ezekiel had a very difficult ministry. The people did not like him, and we will see that in the study. Ezekiel 2:6-7 tells us that God told him,

*And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions;*

*neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house. But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious. Ezekiel 2:6-7 (NASB)*

So, we will be studying an amazing series of prophecies. Even though I say that, the most important reason to study the book is that God wrote it for us. As believers we should long to know everything God wrote. The writings of God are more important than anything else we can read, because they contain all that He wants us to know. So, would you like to see what God wrote?

**STORM CLOUD FROM THE NORTH.** The first vision or prophecy in the book of Ezekiel begins in verse 4 and con-

tinues through chapter three. But our study today is Ezekiel 1:4-28. The passage has four sections. The first section is about a cloud (v. 4). The second section is about four living beings (v. 5-14). The third section is about some wheels and a chariot (v. 15-25). The fourth section is about God Himself (v. 26-28). Let us look at the first section about a storm cloud from the north. Verse four says,

**As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. Ezekiel 1:4 (NASB)**

In the vision, Ezekiel saw a storm cloud coming down from the north. Most visions in Scripture cannot be understood literally. They are symbolic. So, we should understand this symbolically, including the storm cloud. We will discover later in verses 26-28 that God is in this storm cloud. This helps us understand that this is not a real storm cloud. It symbolizes the approaching presence of God. Verses 26-28 help us understand that God is coming from the north.

Isaiah 14:13 records Satan as saying that heaven is located in the north. It says,

**“But you said in your heart,  
‘I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.’”  
Isaiah 14:13 (NASB)**

Since the verse refers to the throne above the stars and then adds the recesses of the north, it implies that the north was equated with the presence of God above the stars. But the north also had another meaning. It was the location of Babylon, the capital of the invading Babylonian army. The first twenty-four chapters of Ezekiel are warnings about the next and most devastating invasion of 586 B.C. The storm cloud clearly symbolizes God coming from heaven. But it may also symbolize God bringing the Babylonian army from the north down to Judah in judgment for another invasion in 586 B.C.

The Hebrew words refer to a bright light surrounding the cloud. The statement in the “midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire” is the mystery of the cloud. The Hebrew indicates the glowing metal is a brilliant metallic substance that is a mixture of silver and gold. But what is it? We will soon discover. Next, the cloud, wind, and fire also refer to a purifying, refining, judgment. They are symbolic of God’s glory and holiness. This is a picture of coming trouble against a rebellious people.

**THE FOUR LIVING BEINGS.** Verses 5-14 introduce us to the next section. This section is about four living beings. Verse 5 says that within the storm cloud there were things that looked like four living beings. They seemed to look something like a human.

**Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. Ezekiel 1:5 (NASB)**

Verse 6 says they had four faces and four wings. So obviously, they were not human.

**Each of them had four faces and four wings. Ezekiel 1:6 (NASB)**

Verses 7-8 say they had legs and hands. Their legs were like the feet of calves, except they were gleaming. Their hands were like those of humans. Verses 9, 11, and 23 reveal that two of their wings were spread upwards and touched one another. The other two wings covered their bodies.

Verse 10 describes their four faces. It says,

**As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. Ezekiel 1:10 (NASB)**

Apparently, the face that was facing Ezekiel was like that of a man. The face on the right was like that of a lion. The one on the left was like a bull or ox. The face on the back side was like that of an eagle. We will see these same living beings later in Ezekiel 10. There we will be told these living beings are cherubim. These same angels are described in Revelation 4:5-11.



They stand before God in His presence.

Charles Dyer in his commentary on Ezekiel said he believes the face of a man was chosen because he represents the crowning glory of God's creative work. The lion was selected because it is the king of the beasts. The ox is the strongest of the domesticated animals, and the eagle is the lord of the birds.<sup>4</sup> These are all guesses. We do not know the mind of God, but they are interesting suggestions.

Verse 12 describes their movement. Most importantly, we are told the Holy Spirit is controlling these cherubim. The angels could move in any direction without turning. Verse 13 states there was something like hot coals, and bright flickers of lightning flashing from the fire. Verse 14 adds that the living beings could move like a lightning bolt. The idea is that the cherubim could instantly move in any direction they desired without having to turn. Their movement reflects the majesty and wonder of God.

**THE WHEELS.** Verses 15-25 is the next section. It is about four wheels.

*Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for each of the four of them.*

*The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another. Ezekiel 1:15-16 (NASB)*

We are told there was one wheel with each cherub. The wheel was down close to the earth. The wheels were sparkling like beryl. Beryl was a jewel with a gold or green appearance. So, the wheels were sparkling like jewels. The Hebrew suggests that the two wheels were perpendicular to each other so that they could roll in any direction.

Verse 17 says they moved just like the cherubim. Verse 18 says the rims of the wheels were full of eyes. That seems to be symbolic of the fact that God is omniscient. They may symbolize that God sees everything that happens upon the earth. Verses 19-21 tell us that when the Holy Spirit moved in any direction, the cherubim and the wheels moved immediately

and together.

Verses 22-23 says that above the cherubim and the wheels was some type of expanse.

*Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads. Under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other. Ezekiel 1:22-23 (NASB)*

The expanse was like a platform with an awesome appearance of gleaming crystal. At this point you may wonder what is being described. The reaction of the cherubim gives us an important clue. We are told that they covered their bodies. Verse 24 says their wings were beating so fast that the sound was loud. Verse 25 announces that a voice from above the platform was heard. It was the voice of God, as we will discover in verses 26-27.

**THE GLORY OF GOD.** The final section is verses 26-28. Verse 26 says,

*Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. Ezekiel 1:26 (NASB)*

Now we see the throne of God. The throne was like lapis lazuli, which is like sapphire. On the throne was something that appeared like a man.

So, what was being described? What was described is God's throne-chariot. God is sitting on His throne and His throne is moving through space. It is carried by the cherubim with the wheels moving on the earth. That is the picture being painted. To understand the description, remember that in Exodus 25:10-22, the Ark of the Covenant is described. There we are told two cherubim were on top of the ark and they faced one another. They were above the mercy seat. In Numbers 7:89 we are told that when Moses met with God, He spoke to Moses from above the mercy seat and between the two cherubim. In other passages we are told that God's presence apparently

<sup>4</sup> Charles H Dyer. Ezekiel. Old Testament. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. ChariotVictor.1984. p. 1228.

extended above the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). Maybe the most important passage is 1 Chronicles 28:18 which describes the Ark of the Covenant as a chariot. This is the picture Ezekiel sees. God is sitting on His throne and it is moving like a chariot.

This is God appearing in some form. It is important to notice that nine times the concept of resembling or looking like something is mentioned. No exact descriptions are being given about God. We must remember that God told Moses in Exodus 33:20 that no man can see Him and live. That message is repeated in the New Testament (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12, 20). This is a theophany or Christophany. Most Bible scholars believe this was an Old Testament appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. That is why the description has some resemblance to a man. The description is purposefully vague.

Verse 27 continues this theophany.

**Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. Ezekiel 1:27 (NASB)**

This theophany is very similar to the one Moses and his seventy elders saw (Exodus 24:9-10), and the one John saw in his vision (Revelation 4:3-11). Ezekiel will see this again in chapter eight and verse two. This is the best view of God we can see in this life. When we arrive in heaven, we will be able to see God as the cherubim and the other angels do.

Verse 28 tells us that this part of the vision was to reveal the glory of God to Ezekiel.

**As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking. Ezekiel 1:28 (NASB)**

God appeared multicolored, including the colors of the rainbow. In Revelation 4:3-4, He appeared with a rainbow surrounding Him. I believe that is why Noah was given the

promise of a rainbow in the sky (Genesis 9:13). It is a reminder of God. The rainbow was chosen to remind us of God and His promise. Then, we are told God spoke to Ezekiel. That is how chapter one ends. God speaks .

**CONCLUSION.** This was the introduction of God to Ezekiel. He was going to become a prophet for God. God gave this thirty-year-old man a vision. It began with God riding on His throne-chariot with four cherubim and four sparkling wheels covered with eyes. Finally, he saw God as multi-colored light. He did not see God. He saw the glory of God. His response was to fall down on his face. He did not stand and talk with God or have a wonderful conversation. Instead, he humbled himself and obeyed. Now that is what happens when a man or a woman of God really meets God in the pages of Scripture. He or she is humbled when they see the glory of God. Then God can use them for His own purpose, whatever that may be.

But every believer has a wonderful experience awaiting them when they arrive in heaven. We will not see some resemblance, or likeness of God. We will actually see God. 1 John 3:2 promises us,

**Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 1 John 3:2 (NASB)**