

Our God is an Awesome God

Ezekiel 1:1-28

Pastor Andrew Neville 15/11/20

Sermon Summary

God is worthy of all the praise we could ever give. That is the reason for the short, focused study of Ezekiel's incredible vision from today's sermon.

Two weeks ago, we studied Habakkuk. A man who battled doubt and fear, yet he was transformed into a man who could face the future, by trusting God. Zephaniah (last week's study), known as the Fierce Prophet, foretold a fearful judgment coming to Judah, but, that those who turn to God will be saved – and God will delight in them.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of both Habakkuk and Zephaniah. While Ezekiel has 48 chapters devoted to his utterances, only chapter 1 was discussed today.

Judah's woes, at the hands of Babylonia, occurred over a period of 20 years. The first invasion in 605 BC saw Daniel and friends carted off to Babylon. In 597 BC, the Babylonians took 10,000 including Ezekiel to Babylon, to a place west of Babylon by the Kebar River. [The Iraqi city of Kabala, contains the burial remains of Ezekiel. The Kebar River may be another name for the Euphrates River or a tributary of it. P.] The final invasion – and total destruction and diaspora – of Jerusalem occurred in 586 BC. Only a remnant of the poor was left behind to forage an existence from the surrounding countryside.

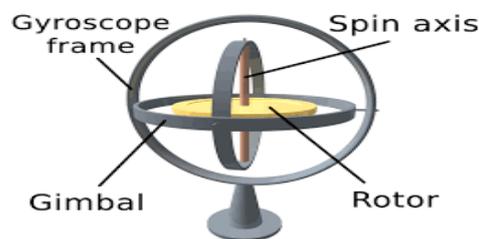
Ezekiel states he was 30 years of age (Ez. 1:1), which was the commencement age for a male going into the priesthood. In the 5th year of exile – 593 BC – while King Jehoiachin was still alive, God gives Ezekiel a tremendous visual experience of His glory. (At this time, Jerusalem and the temple have not been destroyed.) Approximately two-thirds of Ezekiel's prophecy describes the coming destruction upon Judah. The remaining third describes the glories awaiting those who are faithful.

Chapter 1:4-5 is an example of a *Storm Theophany*. God reveals Himself in a storm. This description is a figure of God moving in His chariot. And it is moved by 4 living creatures known as cherubim. But these are **NOT** the cute, cuddly, fat, small flying angels depicted in old paintings. Note verse 8: "They had the hands of a man." This is a reminder that angels have a "human form or likeness".

When we get to verse 10, though, we discover these creatures have 4-sided faces; the front resembles a human, the right side that of a lion, the back the face of an eagle, and the left side, that of an ox. Each of these represents 4 pinnacles of creation: mankind, the king of wild animals, the king of the air, and the strength of domestic animals. At this point, they are all UNDER the throne – holding it up. Later, in Revelation 4, we see these same creatures BEFORE the throne giving praise and glory to God.

These creatures move in an unusual manner and make a lot of noise in doing so. This is described as the sound rushing water makes. Those who have stood under, or near the Niagara or Victoria Falls will fully understand the roar that falling water makes. When they flew, they did so in a perfectly square formation with each of the top wings spread out touching another's top wing. The overall appearance of the living creatures (verse 13) was likened to burning coals or torches moving back and forth in rapid motion. Their speed of movement was like lightning. This is power beyond imagination.

One of the most unusual descriptions found in the Bible must surely be those of the 4 wheels on which this chariot both rests and moves. Verses 15-21 describe these wheels. [To me, it seems Ezekiel is trying to describe a gyroscope? P.]



Whatever the construction, it is a moving chariot, which means God can manifest His glorious presence everywhere and anywhere He needs to go. He is not a limited God bound to one (heavenly) place. He is omnipresent.

So, even though the glory of God is about to leave Jerusalem, this picture tells us that God will move wherever we **are!**

Adding to the description of the 4 living creatures or cherubim is that of Revelation 4:8 where they are stated to have eyes all over their bodies.

Up until now, Ezekiel has been looking at the chariot. But from verse 22, Ezekiel is now moving his eyes upward and sees an expanse sparkling like sun shining on hard ice. The throne itself has the colour of lapis lazuli (KJV) or sapphire (NIV) verse 26. [Lapis lazuli is only found as a distinct deep blue colour, whereas, sapphire can have several colours, one of which is blue. P.] The appearance is so dazzling and majestic that Ezekiel falls face-down on the ground (verse 28).

The full image of God is never shown to humans; these dazzling appearances are the closest we will ever "see" of God – perhaps because we are not permitted to create any idols/images lest we do harm to God's full glory.

We only see God in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Christ's heavenly (majestic) form will be quite different to His earthly form.

For 20 years people laughed at Ezekiel's sayings, but he had the vision of the glory that sustained him throughout his ministry.

The Lord is almighty (omnipotent); nothing can be hidden from Him (omniscient); God is here; He is also everywhere here and beyond the universe (omnipresent).

Would you like to have a glimpse of the majestic glory that Ezekiel was given? Then speak to Jesus!

We Christians are now in exile. This planet, this country, this city are not our home. This is not our destiny. Our destiny is in a new place; it is beyond this universe. Wait in faith for it.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: The first 6 questions call largely for a summary of Ezekiel's situation followed by a part by part summary of the details of his first vision.

1. **Read Ezekiel 1:1-3.** What do we learn about Ezekiel. What history do we know about his situation? What will he now tell us?
2. **Read Ez. 1:4-5.** Summarise what Ezekiel sees coming at him.
3. **Read Ez. 1:5-14.** What do these verses describe about the 4 living creatures? Summarise the details given about them. What are some of the similes (comparisons using "like" or "as") and why do you think Ezekiel uses so many?
4. **Read Ez. 1:15-21.** What are the wheels of their "chariots" like? How do the wheels and the creatures move?
5. **Read Ez. 1:22-24.** What is above the creatures and what are the sights and sounds under the vault?
6. **Read Ez. 1:25-28.** What does Ezekiel hear and see above the vault? How does he react?

Part 2:

7. What details in this initial vision (of the entire chapter 1) reveal God's omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence?
8. Do you find the chapter mind-boggling in a helpful or confusing way? Do you like unpacking this kind of symbolic prophetic passage?
9. **Read Revelation 4.** What similarities and differences do you see between John's vision and Ezekiel's?
10. Pastor Andrew did **not** suggest the vision of God in Ez. 1:26-28 was specifically of the pre-incarnate Jesus. **Read Hebrews 1:1-4**, especially 3, and consider the Revelation passage again. What would lead you to one view or the other?
11. What further thoughts do you have about the reading and study of such highly symbolic prophetic passages. Be brief so that a number of people can comment.