

## Ezekiel 1

### *A New Setting*

**Read Ezekiel 1:1-3:** We just finished reading the book of Jeremiah. It was God's message about a housecleaning in Jerusalem. Things had become corrupted and filthy. God was essentially telling his people that they just could not go any further downhill. This chapter of history reached its conclusion.

Now it was time to turn the page. God is creating a paradigm shift. The shiny things that captured the hearts of the Jews were now going to be revealed up close for inspection. The greener grass in Babylon was actually not green at all. You don't appreciate what you have until it is gone.

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. <sup>2</sup>We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. <sup>3</sup>For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” <sup>4</sup>How shall we sing the LORD’s song In a foreign land? <sup>5</sup>If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! <sup>6</sup>If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth— If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy. (Psalm 137)*

It was time to expose the truth behind the fantasy of being part of Babylon. It is a make-believe system. God was breaking them of idolatry. It worked. The Jews are no longer idolaters.

Some prophetic books are presented on a dual stage. There is the scene in heaven on one stage; and the dire situation on earth on another stage. They both play out at the same time.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah have some timeline overlap. Jeremiah preached from Jerusalem. Ezekiel was preached from Babylon. Ezekiel was a Babylonian captive experiencing a fresh message for God's people abroad, amidst his alien brothers and sisters. Ezekiel begins to hear from God after the first wave of Jews had been living in Babylon for a while.

Jeremiah focused on the need for repentance, in the face of the coming destruction. Ezekiel is about the glory of God amidst the messes of men. There was no glory of God seen in Jeremiah. Jeremiah was about man's story. Ezekiel is all about the

massive and unseen spiritual world amongst us. It is about redemption. Heavy spiritual imagery is most commonly seen during times of persecution (Revelation, John, Daniel, etc.).

Ezekiel was seen frequently praying by a river. That may not be a coincidence. The Jews were far away from their temple. This was about the next best thing. The word synagogue means (a house of prayer, or house of assembly). It was typically 10 or more men, gathering at a river. The Jews held that a minimum quorum for sacred gatherings required 10 men. The river was needed for clean running water for some of their cleansing rituals.

Ezekiel confuses some people. Some speculate about aliens and spaceships and crazy things. It is best to take on the book piece by piece and take it in literally.

**Read Ezekiel 1:1-3:** People knew about Daniel and Jeremiah. Not so much about Ezekiel. We should follow the breadcrumbs from Jeremiah to Ezekiel. Ezekiel paid attention to what Jeremiah said. In fact, Jeremiah sent a message from Jerusalem to the Jews living in Babylon. He was telling them to start over.

*Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon..... Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. 8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD..... For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the*

*LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. (Jeremiah 29)*

Jeremiah did not have much of an audience at home. He did have a following in Babylon. Jeremiah was a central text to the Jews in Babylon. God told his survivors to turn away from the past; and turn towards the glory of God.

True believers do not see themselves as champions. They see themselves as being rescued from death by God's miraculous power and glory. Christianity is a dichotomy of personal failure and unspeakable glory.

*"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side," Let Israel now say—<sup>2</sup> "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, When men rose up against us,<sup>3</sup> Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their wrath was kindled against us; <sup>4</sup> Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul; <sup>5</sup> Then the swollen waters Would have gone over our soul." <sup>6</sup> Blessed be the LORD, Who has not given us as prey to their teeth. <sup>7</sup> Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; The snare is broken, and we have escaped. <sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 124)*

We cannot ruin the earth so badly with our sin that God cannot re-purpose it. The Renaissance followed the Dark Ages. One application for us is to see the absolute glory of God over time as our own world unravels. The recent craziness of the Democrats, and the Chinese plots against us, and our border situation should remind us how absolute and exact that God's word is. Once again, God is letting evil cleanse evil.

There are two kingdoms present in our lives; and we have made the right choice. Hopefully our culture's bad choices only further confirm your hope in God. The cause and effect are evident. In every case, God is cleaning up the messes of men.

**Read Ezekiel 1:4-21:** After painfully staring at the death and destruction of men; we are now ready to take a look at heavenly things. We have gone downhill as far as you can go. Like Ezekiel, we need to see something new and exciting and powerful to put our hope in.

Ezekiel had a vision of the four cherubim angels that are around God's throne. Each one has four faces and four wings. Each one has a face of a man, a lion, an eagle and an ox. Their legs were straight like a calf. They had the hands of men. They were the color of polished bronze. They moved straight; and not at an angle (just left-right or forward-back). One set of wings pointed up and touched the wings of the one next to it. The other set of wings covered their bodies.

The cherubim have a look like highly-reflective and molten bronze, with something within them that looks like ultra-bright, burning embers flashing back and forth. They are so fast that they look like lightning when they move back and forth. Heaven is described as having lightning and thunder. I think that God made lightning and thunder in the sky as a representation of what is in heaven. The cherubim look like lightning when they are on the move. The seraphim angels sound like booming thunder. Each cherub has two large rims/plates that spin in perpendicular directions. One wheel is within a wheel. One wheel goes forward and back, and the other goes sideways, left, and right. These rims are huge. It does not look like a flying saucer.





**Read Ezekiel 1 :22-28:** When a prophet saw an angel they would either temporarily die, or soil themselves or pass out. The sight can be too overwhelming. They are creations, like us. Now we look towards God, on his throne. He looked like glowing metal above the waist; and fire downward. His brightness is blinding. There is also a rainbow around him. The bow may be the Holy Spirit.



*” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup> and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kings 19)*

There are many great and glorious things around God and in his presence.

