

## BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS

There are Scriptural books, that when you turn to them in most Bibles, you find that the pages still stick together. These are neglected books – *slighted slices of Scripture*. And of all such books, Ezekiel is probably at the top of the list.

One commentator writes, “Of all the prophetic books, Ezekiel is the one that has been the most neglected.” Let me save you from an embarrassing moment when you get to heaven. You don’t want to bump into Ezekiel, and have him ask, “Yo bro, how’d you like my book?”, and then have to admit you never even read it.

Why Ezekiel is on the slighted list I’ll never know. It’s an exciting book.

It reminds me of a sportscaster interviewing a victorious coach who had just led his team in a dramatic come-from-behind win. The announcer sticks the mic in the coach’s face and shouts,

“Coach, was this win beyond all your wildest dreams?”

The coach turns toward the camera with a deadpan look on his face, and answers, “Basketball has nothing to do with my wildest dreams.” Well, if you’re looking for material for your wildest dreams trust me, Ezekiel is loaded!

Jeremiah looked through *sobbing eyes* - Ezekiel saw through *surreal eyes*.

He was a visionary – a biblical mystic. He possessed a spiritually-sensitive, other-world focus. His head was always in the heavens. To appreciate Ezekiel’s visions we’d have to employ Hollywood’s best special effects artists. The book of Ezekiel makes today’s sci-fi thrillers look like old Laurel and Hardy films.

## EZEKIEL AND HIS FAMOUS FRIENDS

Ezekiel was a contemporary of two more famous friends, Jeremiah and Daniel. Ezekiel was in Babylon with Daniel. He mentions him three times in his book. Tradition says while Ezekiel was in Jerusalem he was a student of Jeremiah. Obviously, he had personal ties with both men.

Remember, 3 times Babylon invaded Judah and took the Jews captive – in 605 BC, 597 BC, and in 586 BC when they finally destroyed Jerusalem. In the second deportation the Babylonians took some of Judah’s brightest and most talented Jews – *the good figs* as Jeremiah called them. Ezekiel was one of them.

So here’s how God positions His prophets at

this strategic time in history...Jeremiah remains in Jerusalem to oversee the nation’s *collapse* - Daniel serves in Babylon’s *court* - Ezekiel lives with the exiles in *captivity*.

*Jeremiah oversees the collapse.*

*Daniel serves in the court.*

*Ezekiel lives with the captives.*

Here’s another way to position the book. The theme of Isaiah is *God’s salvation* - of Jeremiah, *God’s judgment*. Of Daniel, *God’s Kingdom*. Of Hosea, *God’s Faithfulness*. And the theme of Ezekiel is *God’s glory*.

Ezekiel starts with an amazing vision of the God’s indescribable glory!

### Devotion Box - Serving and Seeing

Ezekiel 1:1 tells us, “Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.” Ezekiel saw his vision of God in the 30<sup>th</sup> year – but the question becomes the 30<sup>th</sup> year of what? And we don’t know. But it could be his own 30<sup>th</sup> year– which gives us a glimpse at what Ezekiel may’ve been dealing with personally at the time.

Ezekiel was a priest, and priests couldn’t begin their ministry until age 30. He’d trained his whole life to minister in the temple. Now he’s finally old enough - and he’s an exile in Babylon – 600 miles away from the beloved temple. It’s like wanting to drive a car. You’re excited! You’re about to turn 16 years old. Then on the eve of your birthday Governor Barnes signs a bill into law that pushes the driving age back to 18. You’re bummed. It is a huge disappointment.

It all could’ve depressed Ezekiel if he’d not had his eyes on God. But in Ezekiel’s 30<sup>th</sup> year God shifts his direction. Rather than priest, God turns him into a prophet – a divine spokesman. His ministry begins not with *serving*, but with *seeing* God’s glory, “the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.”

This is always God’s pattern. When we come to Jesus we immediately get excited about serving Him. *After all, look at all He’s done for me, what can I do for Him?* And that’s good. But we need to realize in God’s plan, *knowing always precedes doing* – seeing comes before serving – worship comes before work.

How can we represent someone we really don’t know? How can we serve another person until we learn of their passion and priorities? Before Ezekiel is given a *ministry for God*, He’s given a *vision of God*. This is the pattern God replicates in every believer – *knowing always precedes doing*. God has a ministry for you, but be patient. First we need to catch a vision of God and His glory!

# HOT WHEELS

## GOD'S THRONE-CHARIOT

In chapter 1, Ezekiel recounts the spectacular sight he saw – *a vision truly beyond his wildest dreams*.

Let me sum it up for you, Ezekiel sees the throne of God – *but it's not what we think of as a throne*. It's not a ornate, plush velvet, padded chair. God's throne is more than a *chair* – it's a *chariot*. It's a throne on wheels – powered by angelic propulsion. Ezekiel sees God's *throne-chariot*.

Scripture tells us the Ark of the Covenant – was a small scale replica of God's throne in heaven. It's interesting that 1Chronicles 28:18 refers to the Ark as a chariot. In Israel you see ancient depictions of the Ark – often with wheels.

Remember, God took Elijah to heaven in a fiery chariot. We think of it as an angelic limo, but I don't think so. I believe God fired up his throne to fetch Elijah.

Deuteronomy 33:26, "There is no one like... God... Who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds." 2 Samuel 22:11 says of God, "He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He was seen upon the wings of the wind."

It's cool (and biblical) to imagine God ripping across the heavens in a souped-up chariot. Ezekiel sees God in a full-throttle, whirlwind-winging, fiery chariot.

## A FIREBALL FROM HEAVEN

Ezekiel says in 1:4, "Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire." Ezekiel saw a huge fireball spinning and descending. God appeared to him as a nuclear blast – a divine burst of holy fire. In Hebrews 12:29 we're told, "Our God is a consuming fire." Ezekiel would agree.

## LIVING CREATURES

I'm sure Ezekiel wondered how anything could exist within this fireball - until he spotted some movement. He says in verse 5, "from within it came the likeness of four living creatures." In Revelation 4, John gets a glimpse of God's throne, and he too sees four living creatures. We learn in Ezekiel 10:15 that these supernatural creatures are also called "*cherubim*" – which we know is a type of angel.

Verses 5-14 describe these four living creatures.

Each angel had 4 faces – one like a man, a lion, an ox, an eagle. They also had 4 wings – with legs, and feet, and hands. They sparkled like polished brass – and flash across the sky like lightning. They resemble a burning torch.

And since they have a face looking in all four directions whatever direction they move they're headed forward. They have an omni directional drive train. They dart here and there at incredible speeds, yet stop on a dime.

## UNDER THE HOOD

Verse 15 says, "Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces." Verse 16 describes the "works" or *motion* of the wheel as "a wheel in the middle of a wheel."

The wheels looked like gyroscopes – spinning vertically, then horizontally – alternating back and forth at tremendous velocity. The RPMs were cookin'.

We're told in verse 19 the wheels moved in harmony with the living creatures. And verse 20 says, "for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels". God's chariot is powered by angels. In heaven we'll gauge a vehicle's performance, and acceleration, and pick-up by noting its *angel-power* not its *horse-power*.

Notice too, in verse 18, the wheels have rims. God's chariot has mag wheels. The rims are full of eyes that spin around and see in all directions. 2 Chronicles 16:9 tells us "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth."

## GOD CRANKS IT UP

Up until now Ezekiel has been under the hood of God's throne-chariot. He's described the engine and chassis. In verse 22 he describes the chariot's body, "The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads." It was a huge crystal.

Hey, when I get to heaven I'm going to ask my heavenly Father if I can borrow the keys to the car, and take the family chariot for a spin around the universe.

In verse 24 God suddenly cranks-up His throne-chariot. Ezekiel describes the roar as the Lord revs it up, "I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army..."

That's when Ezekiel looks into the cab, and sees the throne of God. It's like a sapphire, or bluish color, stone – surrounded with a rainbow for a headliner. High behind the driver's seat, he sees a person with the appearance of a man with a fiery glow around him. I personally believe the driver of the chariot was the pre-incarnate Jesus. *(Proof that God does let His kids take His car for a spin.)*

**"As I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God..."**

Devotion  
Box  
-  
When  
You Need  
A Lift!

In response to the glorious vision, Ezekiel hits the deck. He falls on his face in humility. Now that Ezekiel has *seen the Lord*, he's ready to *serve the Lord*. And in 2:1 God comes to commission him, "And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me." It's ironic, when you compare Ezekiel's experience with what happens in a charismatic service today. In a Benny Hinn meeting supposedly it's the Holy Spirit who knocks you down - while it's man who helps you up. But that's not what happens to Ezekiel. The Spirit doesn't knock him down, but helps him up. Ezekiel humbles himself and falls on his face, then the Spirit *lifts* him up! Guys, don't be mistaken, *the Holy Spirit doesn't slay us - He stands us up again*, after we've humbled ourselves.

## WHEN THE GLORY DEPARTS

At the end of chapter 11 Ezekiel sees the glory cloud move from the gate of the temple to the top of the mountain east of Jerusalem, then it ascends into heaven. The mountain east of Jerusalem was the Mount of Olives.

What a tragic moment. After 8½ centuries of abiding in the midst of His people the glory, and power, and presence of God returns to heaven. Jerusalem's loss was the consequence of a perpetual stubbornness. She refused to repent.

In chapters 8-11 you can chart his slow, reluctant exit – from the Holy of Holies to the door of the Holy Place to the east gate to the mountain top. It was as if He didn't want to leave. The rabbis even claimed the Shekinnah stayed on top of the mountain for 3½ years. From the Hebrew text they discerned 10 stages in God's departure.

But here's a simplified way to look at it – the temple had two courts - the inner and outer court. God's glory left the inner court, before He left the outer court.

It's also possible for the glory of God to depart a person. Here's an important application. You too are a temple with an inner and outer court. You have an inner, spiritual life. You also have an outward ministry.

A person once filled with the Holy Spirit can lose that special empowerment – but it also happens in two stages. The inner life is effected first, then the outward ministry. Public ministry may still be going strong, after the private devotion has dried up. You lose *intimacy with God*, long before you lose *influence for God*.

Samson is the classic example. Privately, in his heart he harbored lust and sexual sin – while publicly, he continued to exude supernatural strength. But the day came when God's Spirit left him completely. The Philistines tied him up, and Samson thought it was business as usual. Judges 16:20

tells us what he said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free! But the Scripture adds... "he did not know that the LORD had departed from him." His compromise caused God to depart from him.

Let's beware that doesn't happen to us. Make sure Jesus remains on the throne in the inner court of your life. Make sure He's at home in your heart.

And if you wonder... can the glory return once it has departed? Look no further than Matthew 21, and Jesus' triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem. Remember, according to Hebrews 1:3 and Ezekiel 10:4 Jesus was the Shekinnah glory – the brightness of the Lord's glory.

And remember the path He took into the city that day... He rode the donkey down the Mount of Olives, through the east gate, right into the Temple. *The same path by which the glory left - the glory returned.*

And how long did Jesus linger on earth? 3½ years – the same amount of time the rabbis said the Shekinnah lingered on the mountain before it ascended. Remember too, at the end of His 3½ years of ministry - as well as His death and resurrection - Jesus ascended to heaven – and from where? The mountain top east of Jerusalem... the Mount of Olives was again His launching pad.

But the story still doesn't end there... One day Jesus will return to earth to establish His throne in Jerusalem – and guess where Zechariah 14:4 tells us He'll set His foot? You bet, the Mount of Olives. He'll return to the same mountain - and according to Ezekiel 44:1-3 – He'll enter through the very same eastern gate.

The same path the Shekinnah glory cut when it departed from the temple is the same path Jesus has used to come and go from Jerusalem ever since.

## EZEKIEL AND UFOs

There are people who read chapter 1 and suggest that what Ezekiel really saw was a UFO – some alien spacecraft. And there are some striking similarities between Ezekiel's vision and the descriptions of alleged UFO sightings. For example, UFOs appear like "a torch" or "flash of lightning" - words used by Ezekiel. The prophet sees spinning wheels compared to revolving saucers. The speed and darting movements Ezekiel describes parallel a UFO's flight pattern.

A 1990 Gallup poll reported that 14% of Americans claim to have seen a UFO. There are numerous military and NASA sightings that have bolstered the claim. Do UFOs exist, and did Ezekiel see an *unidentified flying object*?

First, understand Ezekiel had no problem identifying his flying object. To the contrary, he knew exactly what he saw – it was the glory of God. Ezekiel saw the manifestation of angels. Rather than assume Ezekiel mistook what he saw for the glory of God, is it possible people today are mistaking what they see as UFOs?

Remember, Lucifer was once a cherubim. These are the type of angels in Ezekiel's vision. Could it be that Satan and his angels – *fallen angels, or demons* - are again materializing in the physical realm in effort to deceive modern man.

Allen Hyneck was an Air Force investigator on Project Blue Book. In the early stages of his research Hyneck believed UFOs were alien spacecraft from other quarters of the universe. But after years of examining UFO behavior, he changed his mind. The characteristics he observed violated laws of aerodynamics and physics – and more often resembled phenomena associated with the occult. Hyneck came to believe that UFOs are part of a parallel reality, slipping in and out of sequence with our own. UFOs are *interdimensional*, not *interplanetary*. Author and cult researcher, Tal Brooke, agrees, "The old Angel of Light is back in the sky with new aerial phenomena (and projection equipment) geared to capture (and deceive) a culture jaded, yet credulously hunting for supernatural wonders in the heavens."

It's just my opinion, but I believe some UFOs sightings are real phenomena – but of a satanic origin. They're a satanic set-up - a deception designed to lure people into the occult and New Age – and away from the truth of Scripture. UFOs may also be the way Satan ends up trying to explain away the rapture.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)  
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: [www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm](http://www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm)

Calvary Chapel Announcements - February 18, 2001 - The latest issue of LikeMinds explains our building project and how you can get involved - Today is the last day for this year's Deacon Selections - Servants Retreat for those who want to be involved in ministry at CC, March 9-10, at FFA Camp in Covington. - Check out today's Announcement Sheet for our Calvary Connection Home Fellowships. - CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering kids from our church through the month of February. After March 1 registration is open to families outside CCSM.  
Next Bible Scan - February 25 - Ezekiel 12-32

"I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes." - Ezekiel 11:19-20

Bible Scan  
Memory  
Verse

## Devotion Box - Is the Watchman Awake ?

At the end of chapter 3 Ezekiel receives another nudge to get on with his ministry. In ancient times watchmen were stationed on top of the city's walls as look-outs. Their job was to spot approaching danger. God appoints Ezekiel to be a spiritual watchman over Israel.

The watchman's job is to sound the alarm. If his warning goes unheeded, he's done his job. He's not responsible for the disaster that results. But if he goes to sleep on the job, or gets distracted...if he neglects to sound the alarm - God will hold him responsible for the destruction.

God has also set you up as a watchman on the walls. Who's within your walls? Who are the folks within the sphere of your influence? People at work? Neighbors? Family? Friends at the health club, or ballpark? Perhaps God has laid a whole country on your heart? Hey, you're not responsible for how people react to God's message - just as long as you speak up, and sound the alarm. It's up to you to present the truth of the Gospel, and provide an opportunity to repent. *Are you a good watchman?* God holds you responsible for the people within your walls!

## Devotion Box - This Ain't No Sip'n Book

At the end of chapter 2 God hands Ezekiel a scroll, which he's told to eat. In 3:3 Ezekiel says, "So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness." Here's God's point - His Word needs to be digested and consumed. Don't just nibble - scarf it up, pig out, chow down! There used to be a Lipton ad that portrayed a bold and feisty image. The punch line was, "This ain't no sip'n tea." Well, *this ain't no sip'n book*. The Bible is not a *finger food*. You've got to chew on its message.

## Devotion Box - Command or Conscience ?

In chapter 4 God tells Ezekiel to cook his barley cakes over human waste. God was portraying what life would be like when Jerusalem was under siege. But Ezekiel comes unglued. He's a priest, and from his earliest days he's kept the Jewish dietary laws. He was a kosher kid, and he didn't want to defile himself.

Most of the time we should follow our conscience. But at times God's command will contradict. The conscience can be trained by unbiblical programming - by tradition rather than truth. A legalistic conscience can interfere with us following God.

In Acts 10, when God told Peter to eat unkosher food he balked. God was asking Peter to do something his upbringing and tradition told him was wrong.

God makes one concession for Ezekiel. Rather than human waste, God allows him to cook over cow chips. You might say, it was a *merciful moooove* on God's part. Ezekiel was rewarded for placing obedience to God over his own conscience. When you meet Ezekiel, tell him, "Well dung, good and faithful servant."

## STUNTMAN OF THE BIBLE

The book of Ezekiel is full of object lessons the prophet acts out. In the Gospels, Jesus *spoke in parables*. Ezekiel *lived in parables*. God sums up Ezekiel's ministry in 24:24, "Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done."

He was constantly acting out a skit that taught a spiritual lesson. I like to call Ezekiel, "*the stuntman of the Bible*." With God's prompting Ezekiel will do some wild, bizarre, outrageous stuff. Ezekiel should've won an Oscar for best actor.

## Devotion Box - Lying Down on the Job

In chapter 4 God tells Ezekiel to lay on his left side for 430 days. And He tells the prophet not to move. Imagine the bed sores Ezekiel developed. Sometimes obedience to God can hurt. It produces sore spots. When God restrains you, and tells you not to move from the place where He's positioned you it can hurt and be painful - maybe it's a tough marriage, or an unbearable job, or a friendship that's being tested, or a church where you've grown bored.

Hey, it's not always easy to *lie down* when you feel like *walking off*. Everybody else screams for you to *take a stand*, but God is saying *stay on your side*. There are times to *stand up*, and there are times to *stay down*.

Guys, if you're obedient to stay where God has placed you, He'll sustain you, and strengthen you. And He'll use you as a witness to others. He'll speak to others through your commitment. *Perhaps it's vital that you keep lying down on the job!*