

Lesson 111

Experiencing God's Glory

God reveals himself in visions of glory to Ezekiel, Isaiah, and John.

Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Introduction

How many of you have ever read a book or seen a movie that described heaven? Show of hands.

How was it described or shown? Was it fiction or nonfiction? Did you think it was accurate according to the Bible? Allow discussion.

Some popular books have been written by people who claim to have been to heaven. We all want to know about this special place being prepared for God's children, those who trust in Jesus. But we should be careful about the stories that focus on seeing friends or relatives who have passed away. We should trust what the Bible tells us about heaven, not what people tell us.

Who is the most important person in heaven? God.

God has revealed his glory in visions of heaven to just a few people in the Bible. When these men saw heaven, they were overwhelmed by the glory of God. They didn't write about friends they saw or conversations with relatives. Although it will be exciting to be with other children of God, we must remember that the real joy will be seeing our Creator and Savior face to face. Before we look at some of the visions God gave of his glory in the Bible, let's review where we are in our Exodus to Malachi Timeline.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. The people of Judah ignored the prophets God sent to warn them to stop worshipping false gods. God waited years and years for them to repent and return to him, but they would not. As punishment, God sent the Babylonians to capture Judah. Point to #28 in the timeline. The people were exiled, or moved away, from their homes to Babylon. However, God gave the people hope when the prophet Jeremiah said God would bring them back to their home after 70 years of captivity.

We are studying what happened to some of the exiles living in Babylon during that 70-year period. We learned about Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were chosen to serve the Babylonian king. Although they were in a foreign country with many false gods, Daniel and his friends stayed obedient to the Lord and his commands—even while facing dangers like the fiery furnace and a den of hungry lions! God was faithful to protect them.

Another man taken to Babylon was a priest named Ezekiel. Like Daniel, Ezekiel was also a prophet of God.

Ezekiel's Vision

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn in your Bibles to Ezekiel, one of the major prophets. Ezekiel's book comes before Daniel's in the Bible, but they were living in Babylon and writing what God told them to around the same time, during the 70 years in captivity.

Slide #3

Ezekiel 1:1

Who will read Ezekiel 1:1? Choose a reader.

Ezekiel is speaking in this verse. Where was Ezekiel when he said this?

Among the exiles by the Chebar canal.

Ezekiel was living among the other Jewish people taken from Judah. They were by the Chebar canal off the Euphrates River, south of Babylon.

What opened before him? The heavens.

What did Ezekiel see? Visions of God.

God allowed Ezekiel to see something very special. The heavens opened, and Ezekiel saw visions of God!

Slide #4

Ezekiel 1:4

We can learn more about this vision in Ezekiel 1:4. Will someone read that for us? Assign a reader.

What things did Ezekiel see in his vision? A stormy wind, a great cloud with brightness around it, flashing fire, and gleaming metal in the midst of the fire.

Where did the stormy wind come from? The north.

The stormy wind could be a picture of God's judgment—the Babylonians who invaded Judah from the north. The rest of the vision describes the glory of God with images of brightness, fire, and gleaming (shiny) metal.

Ezekiel wrote about what he saw in this amazing vision! The Bible tells us he saw creatures that he really couldn't describe, though he tried. They looked like men, lions, oxen, and eagles—all at the same time! He mentioned bright torches, fire, and lightning. Ezekiel described what sounded like it might be a giant chariot of sorts. There were bright colors, loud noises, creatures with wings—and a loud voice from above!

Slide #5

Slide #6

Slide #7

Ezekiel 1:26–28

Then Ezekiel saw something else amazing. Let's read about it in Ezekiel 1:26–28. Choose readers.

What did Ezekiel see in the expanse (air) over their heads? A throne.

What did this throne look like? A sapphire.

A sapphire is a precious blue gemstone.

What did Ezekiel see above the throne according to the end of verse 26? A likeness with a human appearance.

What did this man above the throne look like? Allow discussion. Gleaming metal, fire all around, very bright.

Ezekiel described the appearance of the likeness another way in Ezekiel 1:28. What did it look like? A bow in the cloud on a rainy day.

What's another name for a bow in a cloud? A rainbow.

Whose appearance was Ezekiel trying to describe here? Look in Ezekiel 1:28. The appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

Yes! Ezekiel saw the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

What did Ezekiel do when he saw this and realized what he was looking at? He fell on his face.

Ezekiel fell down. And then, what did he hear? The voice of one speaking. Who do you think was speaking? The Lord.

Slide #8

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. What an amazing vision! Ezekiel saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and he fell on his face, completely overwhelmed by the glory and majesty. Ezekiel's vision is one that only a few people have ever seen. It is not something God has shown to many. God is holy, awesome, and powerful! Ezekiel could do nothing but fall on his face in adoration, praise, and fear.

Pass out the Class Notes.

God wants us to come to him in the same way! This is something we don't always think about. But God deserves all of our praise and honor, and we should treat him with humility and respect.

Slide #9

Slide #10

Let's start the Class Notes and fill in the blanks about Ezekiel's vision. Who will read #1 about where Ezekiel was living? Choose a reader. Babylon. Have students complete #1.

Who will read #2 about Ezekiel's vision? Choose a reader. Glory. Complete #2.

Look in Ezekiel 1:4 for the answers to #3. What words are missing ?

Choose a reader. Wind, cloud, fire. Complete #3.

Who will read #4 about how Ezekiel responded to seeing the Lord's glory? Choose a reader. Fell. Complete #4.

Isaiah's Vision

God has not shown a glimpse of his glory to many people. But there are two other places in the Bible God allows us to see what his glory in heaven is like and how people reacted to it.

Slide #11

Slide #12

Slide #13

Isaiah 6:1-5

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn back two books to Isaiah 6. Isaiah was a prophet who spoke for God. He saw a similar vision about 150 years before Ezekiel's vision. Let's take a look at what Isaiah saw and how he reacted. Who will help us read Isaiah 6:1–5? Choose readers. This starts right off with Isaiah's vision. Who was sitting on the throne? The Lord.

What was filling the temple? The train of his robe.

The train is the long part of the robe that trails behind the person.

Look in Isaiah 6:2. What did Isaiah see above the throne? Seraphim. Who knows what seraphim are? Allow discussion.

Some think that seraphim are angels. But the Bible doesn't say that specifically. The seraphim are only mentioned here in Isaiah's vision. And from what we read here, we know that they are heavenly beings that worship God.

How were these seraphim worshipping God? What were they saying in Isaiah's vision? Someone read Isaiah 6:3 again. Assign a reader. What attribute of God were the seraphim praising? His holiness.

They were calling God holy! That means God is completely without sin—perfect in every way.

Where is God's glory seen? The whole earth.

The earth, and all of creation, shows us the Lord's amazing attributes. Which attributes from the poster do we see in God's creation? Allow discussion. Answers may include his omniscience (knowing everything), omnipotence (creating by the power of his word), and love (giving us good gifts on the earth like food, water, and resources for shelter).

God revealed part of his glory to another prophet—Isaiah. What an amazing vision this must have been! Remember, very few people had seen anything like this. Ezekiel had a vision—we just read about it. And so did God's prophet Isaiah.

What did Isaiah say in response to all he saw? Who will read verse 5 again? Assign a reader.

What does this mean? What was Isaiah saying about his vision, God, and himself? Allow discussion. Isaiah was overwhelmed by his sin (unclean lips) and by being in the presence of the Lord, the King over all.

Slide #14

Slide #15

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Isaiah was at a loss! He didn't know what to do because of his unclean lips. The expression "woe is me" is a way of saying you're grieved or sorry for something. Isaiah knew he was a sinner, and the people he lived with were sinners. He was overwhelmed by the throne, the seraphim, and the Lord's voice.

Let's fill in some more Class Notes. Who will read #5 about Isaiah's vision? Choose a reader. Throne. Have students complete #5.

What attribute were the seraphim praising the Lord for? That's #6. Choose a reader. Holiness. Complete #6.

Who will read Isaiah's response in #7? Choose a reader. Sin. Complete #7.

Isaiah was burdened by his sin, his unclean lips being one example, when he saw the glory of God. Ezekiel fell on his face at the glory of God. These great prophets were both humbled before our great, powerful, and holy God.

John's Vision

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. We are going to look at one more biblical account of a spectacular vision. It occurred many years after Isaiah and Ezekiel. Turn to the book of Revelation—the very last book of the Bible. It was written by Jesus' disciple and very close friend, John.

Slide #16

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

Revelation 1:12–18

Find Revelation 1:12–18. Let's read about John's vision. Choose readers.

What John saw was a little different from the others. Let's start with Revelation 1:12. What does this say he saw? Seven golden lampstands. And who stood with these lampstands? One like the son of man. Who is the Son of Man? Allow discussion.

The Son of Man is Jesus! This title was first given by Daniel as a prophecy (Daniel 7:13), and Jesus often called himself the Son of Man while he preached and taught during his time on earth.

But John's vision was of Jesus in heaven, so his appearance was very different from how he looked on earth. What was he wearing? A long robe with a golden sash around his chest.

What did John say his hair was like? White like wool or snow.

How were his eyes? Like a flame of fire.

What about his feet? Like burnished bronze.

What did his voice sound like? Like the roar of many waters.

The Bible goes on to say that Jesus held seven stars in his hand and a two-edged sword came out of his mouth. His face was bright and shining like the sun.

This was another incredible vision! What did John do when he saw and heard this amazing sight? He fell at Jesus' feet as though he were dead.

Slide #20

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. John was so afraid and in awe of what he was seeing and hearing that he fell at Jesus' feet. But Jesus told him not to fear.

What did the Son of Man say to John that tells us he is Jesus? Look in verses 17–18. He is the first and the last. He is the living one. He died and is alive forevermore. He holds the keys of “Death and Hades.”

The Son of Man said he is the first and the last, which means he is eternal. This tells us the Son of Man is one of the persons in the Trinity because he was there at the beginning—at creation.

Then he said he died and is alive forevermore. What is that referring to? Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead.

Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, he holds the keys of “Death and Hades,” or hell. That means Jesus is the only way we can be free from the sting of death and the punishment of hell. By trusting in Jesus and turning away from our sin, we can have eternal life in heaven with God.

Slide #21

Let’s finish the Class Notes. Who will read #8 about who John saw in his vision? Choose a reader. Son of Man. Have students complete #8.

And #9, who will read that? Choose a reader. Jesus. Complete #9.

Who will read John’s response in #10? Choose a reader. Feet. Complete #10.

Application

Slide #22

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Ezekiel, Isaiah, and John were each given a glimpse of God’s glory. Not many people have ever had that privilege. It was a truly awesome experience for all three of them. They were in the presence of God’s glory and holiness. They fell down. They were amazed. They were completely overwhelmed. They were filled with awe!

Awesome is a word used in the Bible to describe God. No words can possibly explain who God is, but awesome is what God used in his Word—and it is a good word to use. But, we have overused the word awesome, haven’t we?

What are some things we might describe as “awesome” today? How have you used the word or heard others use it? Allow discussion.

Awesome has lost its special meaning because it’s become a substitute for words like “great,” “terrific,” and “amazing.” But Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John saw something truly awesome. They saw the power, holiness, and glory of God!

I wonder if we could save the word awesome just to describe our holy, omnipotent, sovereign God. Remember that nothing we buy, own, eat, wear, play, or watch can ever be great enough to be described in the same way as our AWESOME God, our AWESOME Creator, and our AWESOME Savior.

Lesson Review

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

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