

Ezekiel
Ezekiel 1:1 – 21
God Comes Calling

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What does the name of the Prophet we are going to study, mean? Ezekiel = Strength of God; whom God will strengthen; God is strong; the man God strengthens. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 73)

Ezekiel is a Priest. He is the son of Buzi.

Buzi = Contempered of Jehovah; my contempt. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 43)

Why is Ezekiel in Nippur, living in a house on the Chebar, a canal just outside of Babylon?

2 Kings 24:10–16

“At that time the generals of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched to Jerusalem and besieged the city. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to the city while his generals were besieging it. King Jehoiachin of Judah, along with his mother, his servants, his officials, and his eunuchs surrendered to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took Jehoiachin prisoner. Nebuchadnezzar took from there all the riches in the treasuries of the LORD’s temple and of the royal palace. He removed all the gold items which King Solomon of Israel had made for the LORD’s temple, just as the LORD had warned. He deported all the residents of Jerusalem, including all the officials and all the soldiers (10,000 people in all). This included all the craftsmen and those who worked with metal. No one was left except for the poorest among the people of the land. He deported Jehoiachin from

Jerusalem to Babylon, along with the king's mother and wives, his eunuchs, and the high-ranking officials of the land. The king of Babylon deported to Babylon all the soldiers (there were 7,000), as well as 1,000 craftsmen and metal workers. This included all the best warriors." (NET 2nd ed.)

...in the eleventh year before the destruction of Jerusalem,—along with King Jehoiachin, the nobles of the kingdom, many priests, and the better class of the population of Jerusalem and of Judah. He lived there in the northern part of Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Chaboras, married, and in his own house, amidst a colony of banished Jews, in a place called Tel-abib. In the fifth year of his banishment, i.e., 595 B.C., he was called to be a prophet of the Lord, and laboured in this official position, as may be shown, twenty-two years; for the latest of his prophecies is dated in the twenty-seventh year of his exile, i.e., 572 B.C. (Ezek. 29:17). Regarding the other circumstances and events of his life, as also of his death, nothing is known. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 3)

Ezekiel is a prophet of the exile of the nation in Babylon. He was in the second deportation and a contemporary of Daniel. He will reference Daniel, who was in the first deportation, three times. There will be one more deportation to come.

At this point in time, the beginning of the book, the Temple is still standing, and the Jews are still in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel. Jeremiah was an old man at this time. He had begun his ministry as a young man during the reign of young King Josiah. He had remained with the remnant in the land and then was taken by them down into Egypt. Therefore his ministry at this time was confined to the remnant in Egypt. Daniel had been taken into the court of the king of Babylon and had become his prime minister. Ezekiel, then, was with the captives who had been brought down to the rivers of Babylon. The captives had been placed by the great canal that came off the River Euphrates, which was several miles from Babylon itself. Ezekiel's ministry was among those people. (McGee 1991, vii)

Ezekiel looked beyond the present condition of Israel to the time when she would experience restoration and prosperity in the Promised Land. God would bring His chosen people back in a new Exodus cleansed from their former sins and revitalized with a new heart and His Spirit under a new covenant. (Constable 2003, La 5:22)

As Ezekiel sat by the waters of Babylon, as he thought of the departing glory of Jehovah and of His house, he could not help drawing the lessons he did from the impending completion of the ruin of his country. It had come upon them not only in consequence of the errancy of the people as a whole. To him it was clear that each individual separately had his own responsibility in the matter. As the people, in their entirety, were to suffer for their corporate transgressions of Divine Law, so each individual, who did not turn from his own evil courses, would in due time meet with the due reward of his deeds. (Redpath 1907, xii)

We know that at the time we arrive with Ezekiel, he is 30 years of age. He is now living in a foreign country with no prospects of ever going home again. He has been in exile in Babylon now for four years entering into his fifth year. He is about to be asked by God to do something he did not want to do or ever desire to do. He is going to be called by God into a ministry that at first, he resists.

He will become one of the prophets who you could argue actually becomes a time traveler. As a time traveler, Ezekiel is allowed to see Israel's regathering, war for survival, and the subsequent reestablishment of the Third Temple. These things he sees with his own eyes, describing them in tones of awe and reverence. The features of Temple rebuilding as he relates them in chapters 40–48 are almost photographic in their detail. (Stearman 2011, Kindle Locations 1417 - 1419)

Numerous features of the present narrative, which will be noted in the commentary, suggest that Ezekiel was not a willing prophet, at least in the beginning. Contributing to this impression is the extraordinary length and detail of this account, which exceeds by word count the report of the call of Moses, the classic illustration of a resistant prophet, by almost fifty percent. Ezekiel is a product of his time and his environment. The intensity of the opening vision, the duplication of the commissioning speech, the prescribed physical ingestion of the scroll, the stern watchman charge, and the threefold binding combine to soften Ezekiel's resistance and prepare him for the role into which he is conscripted by the sovereign Lord. (Block 1997, 78)

The book of Ezekiel can be divided into three sections

- The destruction of Jerusalem 1-24
 - Before the final siege
- God's judgment on surrounding nations 25 – 32
 - During the final siege
- God's restoration of the Jews in the Kingdom 33 – 48
 - After the final siege

Ezekiel 1:1–3

“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. (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.)” (NASB 2020)

The exiles' fate was looked upon as incontrovertible proof of divine rejection. But Yahweh's sudden appearance to Ezekiel among the deportees shatters the widespread myth that the influence of patron deities was localized in the territory over which they were understood to have jurisdiction, and that a person's access to the divinity depended on one's physical presence in the god's land. Yahweh could appear whenever and wherever he chose, even in a foreign land, which was generally considered to be unclean. (Block 1997, 83-84)

The people of Judah who were in exile were convinced that God was through with them. They were convinced there is no way God would communicate to them outside of the land which they, through their own sin, resulted in them being kicked out.

They still held onto the same idea that Jonah had held, something the nations believed in, YAHWEH was localized and present only in Judah. They were wrong.

Jonah 1:3

“But Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship that was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and boarded it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

In reality, we are never out of God's sight.

Romans 8:38–39

“For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (GNB)

The reality is that He loves us so much He can't take His eyes off of us.

John 3:16–18

“For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.” (NET 2nd ed.)

God loves His own. His own includes those who are in exile.

Ezekiel begins by telling us how his life changed forever.

However, Ezekiel carefully notes that “the heavens were opened.” The word “heavens” is the Hebrew *shamayim* (*ohna*), which is the ordinary word for the sky. In other words, Ezekiel says that “the sky was opened.” As we shall see, this suggests that he experienced a visitation from another dimension. (Stearman 2011, Kindle Locations 5059-5063)

Ezekiel sees a rift in the sky and then describes for us what comes out of that rift. His is an eyewitness account. This is not an account of an early UFO.

Ezekiel 1:4–10

“As I looked, behold, a high wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing intermittently and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like gleaming metal in the midst of the fire. And within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. Each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf’s hoof, and they sparkled like polished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, their wings touched one another; their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. As for the form of their faces, each had a human face; 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.” (NASB 2020)

What are these creatures Ezekiel is seeing? Reading this, it sounds like something out of a Hollywood SciFi script. It is actually much worse. What is being described here are Uber Super Angels. We discover who they are elsewhere in the text.

Ezekiel 10:15

“Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the ground beside the living beings, for each of the four of them.” (NASB 2020)

Ezekiel 10:20

“These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim.” (NASB 2020)

These creatures Ezekiel is seeing are multiple cherubs, the plural is cherubim, they are not flying naked babies. Where did we first see these creatures?

Genesis 3:24

“He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.” (NRSV)

Exodus 25:18–22

“You shall make two cherubim of gold; you shall make them of hammered work, at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other; of one piece with the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They shall face one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be turned toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark

you shall put the covenant that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant, I will deliver to you all my commands for the Israelites.” (NRSV)

Characteristics of Cherubim (Super Throne Guardian Angels)

We need to know as they are the ones who are about the throne of God. We see this in the picture of the throne of God from the construction of the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

- Four faces
- Four wings
- Straight legs
- Calf's feet
- Gleaming like bronze
- Human hands under each of the four wings

These are the creatures who are coming to see Ezekiel.

By the way, John was taken to go meet a different type of creature in Revelation 4:5-8, the same type described by Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-7. That creature, we learn has six wings, is snake like and is called a seraph.

What Ezekiel sees is a cherub, he will also describe one other cherub for us later in the book.

Ezekiel 28:14–15

“You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you.” (NASB 2020)

Satan was a cherub.

The Four Faces

Ezekiel 1:10

“As for the form of their faces, each had a human face; 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.” (NASB 2020)

What does that mean?

What we have presented to us in the faces, is a picture of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. We see this first of all in the standards for the camp when the nation is in the wilderness.

Numbers 2:1–2

Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, “The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers’ households; they shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance.” (NASB95)

The standards of the camp are reflected in The Gospel in the Stars written by Joseph A. Seiss in 1882.

According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man's head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards. (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament 1996, 660)

Each tribe relates to an emblem they followed:

- Judah – Lion
- Dan – Serpent, then switched to Eagle
- Ruben – Man
- Ephraim – Ox/Bull

Per Rabbinical tradition.

The tribes camped around the ark in a specific format.

East – Descendants of Leah - Lion

Judah	74600
Issachar	54400
Zebulun	57400
	186400

South – Descendants of Leah/Zilpah - Man

Reuben	46500
Simeon	59300
Gad	45650
	151450

West – Descendants of Rachel - Ox / Bull

Ephraim	40500
Manasseh	32200
Benjamin	35400
	108100

North – Descendants of Bilhah/Zilpah- Eagle

Dan	62700
Asher	41500
Naphtali	53400
	157600

The manner in which the tribes are aligned in the camp and the size of the camps along each compass point, since thinking like a Rabbi prevents us from camping northeast or southwest but solely along the primary compass points, the camp would appear like a cross when looked at from above.

This assumes a uniform width for each camp—which cannot be known with certainty. If the boundary between each camp was taken to be on a diagonal (e.g., northwest, northeast, etc.) then the formation of the camp would have not been that of a cross. (Garland 2006, Re 22:21)

- Lion – Messiah
- Ox – Servant
- Man – The Son of Man
- Eagle – The Son of God

You could take this even further looking at the four gospels.

Matthew

Theme - **Jesus is the Messiah**

All that He said

Lion

Mark

Theme - **Jesus is a servant**

All that He did

Ox

Luke

Theme - **Jesus is the Son of man**

All that He felt

Man

John

Theme - **Jesus is the Son of God**

Who He is

Eagle

But there is also a connection here with the covenant God made with Noah after the Flood (Gen. 9:8–17). God promised not to destroy the world again with a flood, and He gave this promise to Noah (a man) and his descendants, the birds (the eagle), the livestock (the ox), and the wild animals (the lion). The presence of the cherubim before the throne of God is assurance that God remembers His promise and cares for His creatures. But it also reminds us that all of creation is used by the Lord to bless or to chasten His people. In this vision, they are a part of God's judgment on His sinful people. (Wiersbe 2000, 14)

Ezekiel 1:11–12

“Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another being, and two covering their bodies. And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.” (NASB 2020)

The faces did not turn at all. They always had the same face facing center.

James 1:17

“Every generous act of giving and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father who made the heavenly lights, in whom there is no inconsistency or shifting shadow.” (ISV)

Ezekiel is describing what we call parallax. Parallax is “an apparent change in the position of an object caused by change of position in the observer.” (Parallax 1900, 360)

The correct line of sight needs to be used to avoid parallax error. Measurements made by viewing the position of some marker relative to something to be measured are subject to parallax error if the marker is some distance away from the object of measurement and not viewed from the correct position.

What would be the correct position to view something coming from a dimensional portal?

...we learn that of the two pairs possessed by each creature, one was extended upward so that its tips touched the tips of the creature opposite. This feature is reminiscent of the cherubim over the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies, but Ezekiel seems not to have made this connection. (Block 1997, 97)

The two wings touching the ones next to them also showed that they were a team. God had given them a job to do and they could not do it alone, but as a team they could.

They also covered themselves with the other two wings. This is a sign of humility.

Proverbs 3:34

“Although he is scornful to arrogant scoffers, yet he shows favor to the humble.” (NET)

1 Peter 5:5–8

“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (NKJV)

Notice also that the movement is forward. Wherever the Spirit was about to go they moved forward. God does not retreat, His purpose is always moving forward. The cross was a triumph, not a retreat.

Because the cherubim were constantly available to the Spirit of God, they would be sensitive enough to move with the Spirit at the same time the Spirit would move.

Genesis 17:1

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.” (NKJV)

1 Corinthians 6:17

“But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.” (ESV)

Ezekiel 1:13–14

“In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. And the living beings ran back and forth like bolts of lightning.” (NASB 2020)

The Scripture tells us “... God is light ...” (1 John 1:5). This is a tremendous vision of the glory of God, a vision out of the person of God. The Lord Jesus said, “... I am the light of the world ...” (John 8:12). What does this reveal to us? It reveals the righteousness and holiness of God. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). We would be scorched by the holiness of God if we had not been redeemed by the blood of Christ and covered with His righteousness. God is not exposed in this vision—He is portrayed. It is still true that no man has seen God at any time. (McGee 1991, 17-18)

Ezekiel 1:15–21

“Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the ground beside the living beings, for each of the four of them. The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling topaz, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another. Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved. As for their rims, they were high and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were covered with eyes all around. Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose also. Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose just as they did; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. Whenever those went, they went; and whenever those stopped, they stopped. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose just as they did; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.” (NASB 2020)

The prophet now proceeds to describe the wheels which conveyed the living creatures. They were four in number, and of the singular structure, that one wheel appeared transversely within another, so that the chariot might roll on without turning, to whichever quarter the four living creatures supporting it were to advance. (Henderson 1870, 18)

No matter which direction they Cherubim moved, the wheels were able to move as well. This may mean what Ezekiel is seeing is hyperdimensional.

The wheels were made of valuable material and had an interesting appearance.

The rims around these wheels had eyes all around them (cf. Rev. 4:6). This gave the wheels an even more awesome appearance. Many eyes elsewhere in figurative language represent great intelligence and perception. (Constable 2003, Eze 1:18)

The eyes in the wheels implies the omniscience of God. The ability to move in any direction at any and all times implies the omnipresence of God and the wheels rising up speaks to God's omnipotence.

"God had wheels! He was not limited. He could go anywhere anytime. . . ." (Constable 2003, Eze 1:20)

Ezekiel's first chapter is devoted to a detailed description of something that resembles a vehicle, except that it was light years beyond our twenty-first-century concept of high technology. (Stearman 2011, Kindle Locations 5127-5129)

God's throne coming to earth and specifically to Ezekiel, in Babylon no less.

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