

## **Ezekiel: Jesus our Glorious Shepherd**

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Ezekiel like Jeremiah was a priest and a prophet during Judah's darkest days, (the 70 year Babylonian captivity). His name means "*Strengthened by God*" and fits him as he wrote these words while in captivity to his fellow countrymen as God shared through him three specific things:

- That what they needed now was a fresh glimpse of God's glory and goodness.
- That the reason for their captivity was rebellion and a move away from their relationship with their God
- That God will judge the nations that have destroyed them and will restore their relationship with Him.

A French philosopher once wrote that, "*Every man carries within himself the history of the world*". In other words that which is recorded in mankind's history in the world is also written in our own personal life. Paul said in 1 Cor. 10:11 that, "*all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*" Then he further said in 1 Cor. 10:13 that "*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*" Ezekiel was the first of two prophets

that God used during the captivity as he wrote during the first 25 years and the 2<sup>nd</sup> was Daniel who wrote primarily over the final 50 years. The time frame of Ezekiel's prophecy was after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dispersion but prior to the third. In 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar destroyed part of Jerusalem and took off the first captives among this group would have been Daniel and his friends. Eight years later in 597 BC because of the rebellion of the two kings Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin Nebuchadnezzar further ransacked Jerusalem and took 10,000 more captives including the king along with Ezekiel. Eleven years after this (during this time Ezekiel writes a good portion of his prophecies) in 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed the city. Ezekiel was around the same age as Daniel but wrote to the captives that they weren't going to be going back home any time soon and most likely finished the book when he was around 57 and died at the age of 62.

So to this priest without a temple to serve in God speaks to him about what the people need is not to be brought back to where they once were but a fresh glimpse of God's glory as it is Him that we worship not where we worship that matters. Oh how much this is like us? Far too often we cry out to God to change our surroundings, to bring us back those things that we lost and instead we should be crying out not for God to restore what we lost but rather to deliver us from us and to bring us a fresh encounter with His character and nature. Such is what God spoke through Ezekiel to those who were captive.

### **I. Chapters 1-3 Ezekiel's call and close encounter**

Here in these first 3 chapters God reveals Himself to Ezekiel in a vision of His glory and power and then calls him to be His prophet. In Ezekiel 1:4-14 Ezekiel tries to use human terms to describe the mystery and majesty of the nature of God. He says, "*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. Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.”*

So too a priest without a temple, a people because of their sin God reveals to them the way back is a fresh glimpse of His presence. Ezekiel describes as best he could with human words the immensity, authority, power and illumination of the nature of God as He reveals Himself to Ezekiel. One must not think that we could possibly unlock the mystery of Ezekiel's revelation as to do so would only reveal a greater wonder. The more

we see of the glimpse of God's nature the more we come to realize that as Habakkuk would say in 3:6 that "*His ways are everlasting*". It has well been noted that the likeness of four living creatures bare a resemblance to John's vision in Revelation chapter 4 which many commentators remark speak to us of the four gospels. And to my way of thinking this makes sense as one considers the words of Jesus as the Gospels unveil Jesus and Jesus said in John 14:9 "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*". The best way to see God is to read the gospels and discover by way of the Holy Spirit Who Jesus said in John 14:26 "*will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*" In case there is any doubt with regards to Ezekiel's vision he writes in Ezekiel 1:26-28 that "*above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.*" And Ezekiel's response was "*So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.*" Dear ones, what we need today is not to reclaim what we have lost, to rebuild what we have destroyed, NO, we need to seek Him afresh, we need a NEW encounter with our God Who will if we so seek Him oblige us with His presence. Oh it won't be what it once was it will be more glorious than we could describe. Never forget my friends, **before there is a call there must always first be an encounter with the living God.**

And in the second chapter we are told in Ezekiel 2:1-3 that the Lord said to Ezekiel, *“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. And He said to me: “Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.”* I see two things that are a necessity for us before we are sent:

1. **An encounter that cause us to fall on our face to the One who has been speaking.** How long has He been speaking and revealing Himself to us and we have not been listening? Am I to assume that He was not willing to reveal Himself to me? No, it has been me who was not willing to seek for more of Him!

2. **Next I must have the Holy Spirit to fall afresh upon me and set me on my feet.** The Holy Spirit is not an option He is a necessity if I am to be of use and set on my feet again. Have God’s people become to clever, to sophisticated, to technological to depend upon the Holy Spirit alone for the work that He has called us too?

Oh and look at what the Lord says to Ezekiel in 2:5,-7 *“As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse--for they are a rebellious house--yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.”* Saint’s, do you understand what the Lord is saying? The only way that we will be able to affect those around us is if we first are affected, and if we have not had what I spoke of above then nothing that we do will have any transformation upon others.

*“You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious.”* As I see this are responsibility it first be impacted by His words, then to speak His words that have impacted us to others. No where in that equation is it our responsibility to be towards others response. Oh how the church of God has missed this and instead gauged God’s Word upon mans response to it.

Notice what God has Ezekiel to do in 3:1-3 *“Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.”* So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, *“Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.”* So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.” Friends, **I have never left feeding on God’s Word with any thing but a full heart and a sweeter disposition.** And to me that is why I’m personally committed to teaching the Word because as the Lord tells Ezekiel in 3:7 *“the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted.”* Then in 3:17-20 God tells Ezekiel *“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at*

*your hand.*” It is no wonder that James warned in chapter 3:1 *“let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”*

## **II. Chapters 4-24 Judah’s judgment**

Now God speaks through Ezekiel about what has caused the nation to be away from the land and the city He gave them to fellowship with Him amongst them. Ezekiel’s prophecies were more than just words they were physical demonstrations. In chapter 4 God asks Ezekiel to lay on his left side 390 days and then on his right side 40 days which was to symbolize the 390 years that God tried to get the nation to come to its senses and 40 years that God spoke through Jeremiah that judgment was imminent. Dear ones, think of how many times and ways the Lord has tried to get our attention withholding His hand of discipline only to find that we still rebel. Paul wrote in Romans 2:4 *“do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”* Through out this chapter God reveals through Ezekiel the countless times He was speaking to them about turning to Him only to be rejected. God says of them in 7:26 that *“Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumor will be upon rumor. Then they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders.”* There problem is described for us in 8:12 *“Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.”* The 10<sup>th</sup> chapter describes that the Glory of the Lord had depart form the temple and the people didn’t miss Him all they missed was the building. We are told in 10:18 that Ezekiel saw that *“The glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.”* In 11:12 Ezekiel writes, *“you shall*

*know that I am the Lord; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you.”*

Yet in the midst of the nations failure is the promise of God’s future restoration as we read in 11:16-20 *“Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.”* Therefore say, *“Thus says the Lord God: “I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”* And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. Then I will give them one heart, and 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 and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”

God in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter had Ezekiel his bread with trembling because sense they had left their God they lost their security and now were left with anxiety (12:19). The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter God speaks of the judgment that came upon the false prophets who according to 13:2 *“who prophesy out of their own hearts.”* The in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter God speaks to the idolatry of the leadership of the nation saying in 14:3 *“these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?”* The Ezekiel writes in 14:13-14 *“when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,”* says the

*Lord God.*” In 16:15 God says, “*But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it.*” Oh how many times we have tried to bask in our beauty instead of resting in God’s. In 16:49-50 we are told a most remarkable truth as it relates to our beauty and the sin of Sodom whom the Lord calls Judah’s sister saying, “*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.*”

In the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter the Lord says in verse 4, 20 “the soul that sins shall die”. But then promises in 18:21 that “*if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.*” And in 18:23 God asks “*Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?*” says the Lord God, “*and not that he should turn from his ways and live?*” The nation’s response was in 18:29 to say, “*The way of the Lord is not fair.*” To which the Lord said, “*O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?*”

Saying in 18:30-32 “*Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,*” says the Lord God.

“*Therefore turn and live!*” In chapters 19-24 God continues to speak to the nation through sermons and illustrations of their need to get their heart right. The final sign was through the death of Ezekiel’s wife in chapter 24:16 saying to him, “*Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor*

*weep, nor shall your tears run down.*” Oh how Ezekiel would know of a little of what the Lord felt.