

Session 35

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel 1:1-14

Memory Verse

The word of the Lord came directly to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar Canal. The Lord's hand was on him there.

– EZEKIEL 1:3, CSB



Ezekiel

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The Lord is patient, loving, and merciful. He revealed Himself to Ezekiel through a glorious vision to encourage the people God loved them and still had good plans for them.

CALL TO ACTION: God's glory and majesty is indescribable. Consider taking this week to focus on a praise and worship service.

Nature is powerful and can be devastatingly destructive. Many have been exposed to the forces of nature beyond our control including hurricanes, tornados, or floods. The flood that took place in Nashville in 2010 lingers in many of our minds and when it rains heavily, some people get anxious due to their experiences over a decade ago.

When you go through a strong storm of some kind, one thing becomes perfectly clear. Humans have no control over what happens in nature. Although we watch the radar and try to predict what might happen, when high winds come, tornadic funnel cloud forms, or waters start to rise, we quickly realize our own lack of control and power. But God is the opposite. He used nature to reveal His presence and His glory throughout Scripture as a reminder that He is all powerful and glorious beyond our control.



How do you respond when storms develop in your area?
What is the strongest weather event you've experienced?



How does the power and beauty in nature reveal the glory of God?

Session Summary


Though God's people were in exile, He encouraged them and reminded them of who He is so they would know He had plans for them regardless of their past faithlessness. The Lord reached out to them through a vision given to Ezekiel. The various images Ezekiel received and shared pointed the people to the Lord.

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Even when His people sin and rebel and face the consequences of their choices, God still loves them. He used familiar images in Ezekiel's vision to communicate that He had not changed, and He still loved them enough to pursue them and offer a way out of their sin. The same is true for us. When we turn away from the Lord, He is waiting and willing to restore us, if we repent and turn back to Him.

1. Introduction (Ezekiel 1:1-3)

Ezekiel was one of the Jewish exiles in Babylon taken into captivity because of their rebellion against the Lord. Although they had received several warnings about the consequences of their disobedience, the Israelites persisted until God finally allowed them to suffer the punishment His prophets had foretold. Ezekiel was in the group taken captive by the Babylonians.

After about five years in exile, Ezekiel received a prophetic vision from the Lord. As a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel, Ezekiel spoke to the Israelite exiles in Babylon while Daniel addressed those in the court of the King of Babylon and Jeremiah was tasked with speaking to the remnant of the Jews who remained in their homeland.

 What can we learn about God that He continued to have prophets speak to His people from Him in many different areas?

Ezekiel was a priest who had never gotten to serve the Lord in the temple in his homeland as he was taken captive in his youth. Ezekiel's initial prophecy came in like a whirlwind and was fueled by the Holy Spirit of the Lord. Though he had acted as a mediator for the exiles to the Lord, now he was tasked with being the representative of God to His people.

? What do these verses indicate about the message of Ezekiel that would follow? Why is this important?

Ezekiel's vision was clearly a recorded event that had significance and wasn't to be disregarded as a folk tale of any kind. Ezekiel included details about his ministry in Babylon and referenced the common practice of the Israelites to congregate at the river for their worship gatherings. He used language to specify that this vision was a word directly from the Lord.

Ezekiel's name means "strengthened by the Lord," and he received this word from the Lord directly. He was a special representative of God as the hand of the Lord was on him. What Ezekiel said and did was not dependent on his own power or initiative but on the power of the Lord. Ezekiel was used by God to give the people a glimpse of what was to come and help them understand why they were in exile, while also giving hope for the future.

? Application: What are common ways we hear from God today? Why is it important that we do?

2. Vision (Ezekiel 1:4-9)

Ezekiel's vision began with him seeing "a whirlwind coming from the north" (v. 4). The Israelites often associated north with the judgment of God. Enemies had traveled from the north to overtake them and force them into exile. Hearing that the whirlwind was from the north would draw their attention to learn the rest of the vision.

Imagine being taken captive, knowing it was deserved judgment for your rebellion, and now came an additional word from God about what was coming. The people would be eager to gain a glimpse of what to expect. This was not a time for the people to ignore God's prophets but to raptly absorb everything God spoke through these men.

? How would being in exile give the people an added level of desperation to hear from the Lord? How have difficult times tuned your ear to seek God more?

The whirlwind imagery described by Ezekiel would remind the people of God's presence from the Exodus period. These Israelites were raised hearing the stories from generations before when God led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness wandering. When they felt alone or isolated due to their circumstances, they likely reminded each other of the stories they grew up on and the promises of God that He would be with them.

Cloud by day and fire by night were the two main visuals the Lord used to guide the children of Israel and demonstrate His presence with them. Both these were included in Ezekiel's vision. The continual fire might be compared to Moses and the bush that burned yet wasn't consumed. The brightness in the vision emphasized the glory of the Lord—the main message of the book of Ezekiel.

? Why might it be important for the people to be reminded of God's past faithfulness to them and their ancestors? Why is it important for us to remember God's past faithfulness?


Along with the cloud and fire were four creatures. These are described in detail and later Ezekiel identified them as cherubim, but here only gave details of their appearances. The various characteristics Ezekiel saw in these incredible creatures point to the unique power and glory of God and all that surrounds Him. These beings had a sparkly, shiny appearance in the likeness of a human. When angels appear in Scripture, they are often described as having the appearance or likeness of a man.

? Application: How does this description serve to move you toward awe of God?


3. Glory (Ezekiel 1:10-14)

Ezekiel was specific in his descriptions and when words failed him, he would use phrases to make comparisons with more common images like “had the likeness of” or “was in appearance like” to enable the reader to form images in his or her mind.


Every detail of this vision is awe inspiring and was intended to remind that God is glorious and worthy of our praise despite any circumstances we may be facing. The specifics about the cherubim and how they moved with intention speak to the glory of God. Cherubim were typically associated with the presence of God and the sacred; the details of these creatures and this setting served to emphasize the greatness of God.

 **How do you see God’s glory in these further details of Ezekiel’s vision?**

The people who were told this vision likely recognizing how badly they had rebelled against the Lord and failed Him by their unfaithfulness. Yet, even as they faced the consequences of their rebellion, God reminded them through Ezekiel that He still loved them and wanted them to know Him for who He is. The Lord pursues the rebellious with His patient love.

 **How does this reality apply to those who are seeking to follow the Lord today?**

How often do we find ourselves in a similar situation? Maybe you have chosen to ignore the Lord and sinned against Him. Although Scripture instructs you how to live, you have chosen to go your own way and are now facing the consequences for that decision. It is easy when you are in exile like the Israelites or just feeling separated from God to believe the lie that you are too far gone for Him to care for you anymore. The enemy loves to tell God’s people they are irredeemable because of their failure. Ezekiel reminds us that no matter what, the Lord loves you and wants you to know and trust Him. Just as God spoke words of redemption to the Israelites, He offers that same forgiveness to all who turn toward Him in repentance and faith.

 **Application: Where do you feel like you’ve gone too far to be redeemed by God? How are you encouraged by today’s study?**

Conclusion

Due to their sinful choices and rebellious acts, the Israelites were taken into captivity to Babylon. Although the Lord brought this devastating judgment on the people, after about five years, he sent a prophetic vision to a priest named Ezekiel who was from the line of priests but was without a temple to serve in. The children of Israel would gather for worship on the riverbanks, and Ezekiel was serving and ministering to the people in this way.

God gave Ezekiel a glorious vision that Ezekiel meticulously shared through spoken and written word the give God's people past and present a glimpse of the glory of our Lord. God used Ezekiel to remind His people that He loved them and wanted them to know Him. Ezekiel referenced several images from Israel's past to describe the Lord and remind the people of His ongoing faithfulness to them. The Israelites were assured that the Lord was still exactly who He said and who they had always known Him to be.



Where do you need to be reminded of God's glory and ongoing faithfulness?



How can we encourage one another to remember these truths about God as a group?



How can you seek a gospel conversation with another by sharing about God's glory?

Memorize

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