

<Among the Captives>

Ezekiel 1:1 – 4

^^VV^^VV^^VV^^

~ **Our Spiritual Safari** returns to the Old Testament in this report to begin another prophetic leg in our expedition through the entire Bible. There are several introductory matters we need to consider in Ezekiel that will properly orient us into this prophet's life, where he was during the time he wrote, and the manner of living into which he was forced in Babylon. This is the fourth book of those commonly referred to as the Major Prophets; and, of course, our safari has examined three thus far. You're going to discover that this is one highly unusual book of the Bible. Ezekiel spoke to his people - the nation Israel - during their darkest days in history. Ezekiel was in a disturbing valley as he languished in captivity; and it seemed impossible that Israel could ever be freed and return to the land. That desperate, hopeless moment is when the Heavens were opened, and the True and Living God appeared to this man....

1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

~ Ezekiel was a priest, but he never served in office; because he was still a very young man when he was taken captive during the reign of Jehoiachin. Read second Kings chapter twenty-four verses ten through sixteen in this connection. By contrast, Daniel was taken captive with the first delegation

of captives during Jehoiakim's reign; about eight years before Ezekiel was taken captive. Ezekiel was contemporary with both Jeremiah and Daniel. As we learned in our last safari foray through the Old Testament, Jeremiah was an old man by the end of his prophecy; as he spoke to the remnant that had remained in Israel. Daniel spoke in the court of the king of Babylon - and Ezekiel spoke to the captives who had been brought to the rivers of Babylon. The canals that ran off of the Euphrates River were actually several miles from Babylon proper; and that's where Ezekiel was. Just another face in a massive crowd of deported slaves.

If you will flip back and read Psalm one hundred thirty-seven, you'll notice that it is the Psalm of the company that had been taken away as captives at the time in which we are studying. While the captives hung their harps and hearts on the willow trees, weeping as they remembered Zion, Ezekiel exulted in the greatest visions ever given to a prophet. His message was, by far, the most spiritual of the prophets, as he dealt more with the person of God than any of the others. Someone has said, *"...Ezekiel is the prophet of the Spirit of God, as Isaiah is the prophet of the Son of God, and Jeremiah is the prophet of our Father in Heaven."* I like that, friends; I like that very, very much.

I can only infer from the record of Daniel that Daniel knew Ezekiel. I think Daniel came down from the palace occasionally and visited the captives in their suffering; because he certainly had a great concern for them. Further, we're told that Daniel had the written prophecies of Jeremiah; so, it would also be reasonable to conclude that both Daniel and Ezekiel had heard Jeremiah teach at some point before being taken away captives to Babylon as young men.

During the first years of the captivity, the false prophets were still saying that the people would be returned to Jerusalem and that the city would not be destroyed. Remember, the temple and Jerusalem was not destroyed until the final deportation, during Zedekiah's reign, in about 587-586 B.C. — some eleven years after Ezekiel was taken captive. Well, Jeremiah had sent a message to Babylon in Jeremiah chapter twenty-nine, saying the city would be destroyed. Ezekiel confirmed this message and warned the people they must turn to God before they could return to Jerusalem.

Seventy years later, when the foretold time came, a small — and very much discouraged — remnant did return to Jerusalem — as we learned about in Ezra and Nehemiah — to rebuild the city and the temple.

Alright, Ezekiel began his ministry five years after being taken into captivity, when he was about 30 years old. In many ways, he spoke in the darkest days of the nation. He stood at the bottom of the valley - and in the darkest corner. He had to meet and quell the false hope being given by the false prophets; and he had to encourage the people as they withered and faded from indifference and despondency. They were reaping what they had sown the years of sin, disobedience in not observing the Sabbatical Year, and resulting disaster. Of course, as with Jeremiah, the people would not listen to Ezekiel or his message — because they didn't listen to God. So, Ezekiel resorted to a new method. Instead of speaking in parables, he began acting them out; see Ezekiel chapter twenty-four verse twenty-four in this connection – and we'll see all of those as we go along in our safari. Today, we have “*flagpole-sitters*” and “*walkathons*,” protests and rally's that are very effective attracting attention from the public — but they don't mean anything. So, this was the method Ezekiel adopted — because it got their attention; but having to resort to this jejune activity is *ALWAYS* indicative of an age of decay. It's what we see in meme's today; but, let's not digress. Let us move on again.

Ezekiel was the prophet of the glory of the True and Living God of Israel. Three prophets of Israel spoke when they were out of the land: Ezekiel, Daniel, and John, from the Isle of Patmos — and each wrote an apocalypse. Although they used highly symbolic language, they saw the brightest light and held the highest hope. Ezekiel saw the Shekinah Glory of the Lord leave Solomon's temple, and he saw the return of the glory of the Lord which was projected into the future temple during the kingdom. The primary meaning of Ezekiel's prophecy is seen in the future coming of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as He establishes His earthly kingdom. Ezekiel looked beyond the sufferings of Christ to “*...the glory that should follow*” – as Simon Peter did in first Peter chapter one verse eleven.

Our Spiritual Safari is going to handle this very interesting prophecy of Ezekiel differently than we have handled other previous books of the Bible;

mainly because of the nature and characteristics of the content. Some of you will be shocked by what I say; others just aren't going to understand me. We are going to have to deal with subject matter that is extremely difficult to digest. Now, I know most people today like to grab a few little verses from Ezekiel and think they have really discovered something profound; but, my friends, they have *NO EARTHLY IDEA* what they are talking about. I have seen *MANY* – at least thirty-five – legitimate commentaries on Ezekiel, and I would say there are only four I could recommend. Ezekiel has, literally, the most profound vision of the glory of God in the entire Bible. Chapter one is all about the display of God's glory. Frankly, the vision in chapter one verses three through twenty-eight is almost not lucid; and I confess that I can barely understand its obscurity – which I am sure comes as no surprise to most of you dear readers. Let's move on.

I suggest you pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment at this time and read the entire first chapter. One thing I am sure of is that the vision of the wheels is *NOT* a vision of this mechanical age that you and I live in today. This does *NOT* refer to the automobile wheel, the propeller airplane, or to missiles, either. Those interpretations are the puerile, unlearned religious ramblings that bring prophecy into disrepute. Further, it is *NOT* a vision of the Person of God, either. God is not exposed in chapter one – although His glory and presence are – this is a Theophany. That may sound like a contradiction in terms, or a distinction without a difference, but this first vision is of God's glory, riding triumphantly in His Own chariot – yet unseen by mortal men.

In Isaiah, we considered the principles of the throne of God. In Jeremiah, we saw proper, correct and complete practice at the throne. Ezekiel ultimately presents the Person on the throne; but not in chapter one. I don't want to be tedious, but it is critical to make that distinction and hold it in our thinking. In this first vision, in chapter one, we see the glory of the Lord God Almighty riding irresistibly through all time and space and in all matter. One thing I am going to point out as we move along that might shock you is that the chariot is actually vacant. God Himself isn't in it. I told you some of you will not understand. The four living creatures are connected with the chariot; yet they are distinctly a separate entity. One

thing I can promise you – again – is that this high-vision of God wherein we do not see God will be nearly impossible for most people to fully grasp and comprehend.

So, as we end this first report in our Spiritual Safari through Ezekiel, I would have you notice verse three. The visions Ezekiel sees came from the *WORD OF THE LORD* that came to him. I have talked a whole lot about dreams and visions in past reports and I stand by one unwavering fact: God *ONLY* speaks to us in His Word! If you had a vision outside of the Word of God, my friends, it was of the devil. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, you will recall. And you can just write that down. If you had a dream, and it was outside of the Word of God, then it is perfectly meaningless. If God parted the sky and spoke audibly out of Heaven, He would quote Scripture. I know some of you will disagree – and you have an absolute right to be wrong – but this is what God says. We are studying the Bible in this safari – not Andrew C. Hunt’s personal philosophy of whatever from wherever. I hope you can join us ~

^^VV^^VV^^VV^^