

**Ezekiel's Vision of God (July 31, 593 BC)**

Ezekiel 1:1–3:14

**Introduction**

1:1 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.

2 (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile,

3 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.)

**The Windstorm**

4 As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire.

**The Four Living Creatures**

5 Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form.

6 Each of them had four faces and four wings.

7 Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze.

8 Under their wings on their four sides *were* human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

9 their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward.

10 As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; 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.

11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another *being*, and two covering their bodies.

12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.

13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.

14 And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.

**The Wheels**

15 Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for *each of* the four of them.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship *was* like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship *being* as if one wheel were within another.

17 Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved.

18 As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about.

19 Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*.

20 Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels.

21 Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels.

**The Platform**

22 Now over the heads of the living beings *there was* something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads.

23 Under the expanse their wings *were stretched out* straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other.

24 I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

25 And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

**The Throne**

26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was* a figure with the appearance of a man.

27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him.

28 As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

**God Sends Ezekiel to be His Prophet to the Exiles**

2:1 Then He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!”

2 As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard *Him* speaking to me.

3 Then He said to me, “Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

4 I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’

5 As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.

6 And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house.

7 But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.

8 “Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.”

9 Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll *was* in it.

10 When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.

**Ezekiel and the Scroll**

3:1 Then He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.”

2 So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.

3 He said to me, “Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.” Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

4 Then He said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.

5 For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, *but* to the house of Israel,

6 nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you;

7 yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.

8 Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads.

9 Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house.”

10 Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely.

11 Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’”

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me, “Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place.”

13 And I *heard* the sound of the wings of the living beings touching one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, even a great rumbling sound.

14 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me.

**Ezekiel Appointed as Watchman for Israel (August 6, 593 BC)****Ezekiel 3:15–27**

15 Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar at Tel-abib, and I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them.

16 At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

17 “Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.

18 When I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

19 Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself.

20 Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

21 However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself.”

22 The hand of the LORD was on me there, and He said to me, “Get up, go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you.”

23 So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face.

24 The Spirit then entered me and made me stand on my feet, and He spoke with me and said to me, “Go, shut yourself up in your house.

25 As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them.

26 Moreover, I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute and cannot be a man who rebukes them, for they are a rebellious house.

27 But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

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### **Chronological Notes**

1) Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon with king Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:10–17; 2 Chr 36:10; Ezek 1:1–3), and his prophecies show a genuine concern to date the significant events he lived through. He measured these dates in terms of the captivity of Jehoiachin (Ezek 1:2).<sup>1</sup> The following dates are given:<sup>2</sup>

- 5<sup>th</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> month, 5<sup>th</sup> day (July 31, 593) – Ezek 1:2.
- 6<sup>th</sup> year, 6<sup>th</sup> month, 5<sup>th</sup> day (September 17, 592) – Ezek 8:1.
- 7<sup>th</sup> year, 5<sup>th</sup> month, 10<sup>th</sup> day (August 14, 591) – Ezek 20:1.
- 9<sup>th</sup> year, 10<sup>th</sup> month, 10<sup>th</sup> day (January 27, 589) – Ezek 24:1.
- 11<sup>th</sup> year, ? month, 1<sup>st</sup> day (September 18, 587) – Ezek 26:1.<sup>3</sup>
- 10<sup>th</sup> year, 10<sup>th</sup> month, 12<sup>th</sup> day (January 17, 588) – Ezek 29:1.<sup>4</sup>
- 27<sup>th</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day (April 26, 571) – Ezek 29:17.
- 11<sup>th</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> month, 7<sup>th</sup> day (April 29, 587) – Ezek 30:20.
- 11<sup>th</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day (June 21, 587) – Ezek 31:1.
- 12<sup>th</sup> year, 12<sup>th</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day (March 15, 586) – Ezek 32:1.
- 12<sup>th</sup> year, 12<sup>th</sup> month, 15<sup>th</sup> day (March 29, 586) – Ezek 32:17.
- 12<sup>th</sup> year, 10<sup>th</sup> month, 5<sup>th</sup> day (January 19, 586) – Ezek 33:21.<sup>5</sup>
- 25<sup>th</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> month, 10<sup>th</sup> day (November 2, 574) – Ezek 40:1.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The single exception to this rule is found in Ezekiel 1:1 in which Ezekiel makes reference to “the thirtieth year.” Block comments: “the explanation Origen proposed long ago remains the most likely: the *terminus a quo* is the year of the prophet’s own birth” (Daniel I. Block, “The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24,” *NICOT*, 82). However, I believe Hoeh makes an insightful suggestion when he says: “The original Hebrew expression is not a reference to the age of the prophet Ezekiel, but to the fifth year of the captivity of the king (593–592) would clearly be the thirtieth year of the renewal of the covenant which occurred, in the eighteenth year (622–621) of Josiah (2 Chr 34:8–33)” (Herman L. Hoeh, “When Did Nebuchadnezzar Conquer Jerusalem?” This paper was delivered at the Symposium of “Frontiers of Knowledge” at Ambassador College, Pasadena, California, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> All Julian dates are based on the computation of R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*, BUS 19 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), p. 28. See also the online Babylonian Calendar Converter available at [http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal\\_converter.htm#converter](http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal_converter.htm#converter).

<sup>3</sup> The month is assumed to be the first month of the 11<sup>th</sup> year.

<sup>4</sup> This is the first deviation from strict chronological order in the book of Ezekiel.

<sup>5</sup> See the details of Rules 1, 3 and 7 in Rodger C. Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” *JETS* 47.1 (Mar 2004): 26–27 where the length of time between Jerusalem’s fall and Ezekiel hearing from the fugitive is solved by the July 29, 587 date (it would be 18 months with the 586 date which commentators agree is too long [cf. Block]).

<sup>6</sup> For confirmation that Ezekiel used the Tishri calendar and that the fall of Jerusalem is correctly dated to July 29, 587, see the following articles: Rodger C. Young, “Ezekiel 40:1 As a Corrective for Seven Wrong Ideas in Biblical Interpretation,” *AUSS*, Vol. 44, 265–283; Rodger C. Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” *JETS* 47.1 (Mar 2004): 21–38.