

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

Ezekiel 1:1–3:14

Introduction

1:1 In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was among the exiles at the Kebar River, the heavens opened and I saw a divine vision.

2 (On the fifth day of the month—it was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile—

3 the word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel the son of Buzi, at the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. The hand of the LORD came on him there).

The Windstorm

4 As I watched, I noticed a windstorm coming from the north—an enormous cloud, with lightning flashing, such that bright light rimmed it and came from it like glowing amber from the middle of a fire.

The Four Living Creatures

5 In the fire were what looked like four living beings. In their appearance they had human form,

6 but each had four faces and four wings.

7 Their legs were straight, but the soles of their feet were like calves' feet. They gleamed like polished bronze.

8 They had human hands under their wings on their four sides. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

9 their wings touched each other; they did not turn as they moved, but went straight ahead.

10 Their faces had this appearance: Each of the four had the face of a man, with the face of a lion on the right, the face of an ox on the left and also the face of an eagle.

11 Their wings were spread out above them; each had two wings touching the wings of one of the other beings on either side and two wings covering their bodies.

12 Each moved straight ahead—wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went.

13 In the middle of the living beings was something like burning coals of fire or like torches. It moved back and forth among the living beings. It was bright, and lightning was flashing out of the fire.

14 The living beings moved backward and forward as quickly as flashes of lightning.

The Wheels

15 Then I looked, and I saw one wheel on the ground beside each of the four beings.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their construction was like gleaming jasper, and all four wheels looked alike. Their structure was like a wheel within a wheel.

17 When they moved they would go in any of the four directions they faced without turning as they moved.

18 Their rims were high and awesome, and the rims of all four wheels were full of eyes all around.

19 When the living beings moved, the wheels beside them moved; when the living beings rose up from the ground, the wheels rose up too.

20 Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise up beside them because the spirit of the living being was in the wheel.

21 When the living beings moved, the wheels moved, and when they stopped moving, the wheels stopped. When they rose up from the ground, the wheels rose up from the ground; the wheels rose up beside them because the spirit of the living being was in the wheel.

The Platform

22 Over the heads of the living beings was something like a platform, glittering awesomely like ice, stretched out over their heads.

23 Under the platform their wings were stretched out, each toward the other. Each of the beings also had two wings covering its body.

24 When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings—it was like the sound of rushing waters, or the voice of the Almighty, or the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

25 Then there was a voice from above the platform over their heads when they stood still.

The Throne

26 Above the platform over their heads was something like a sapphire shaped like a throne. High above on the throne was a form that appeared to be a man.

27 I saw an amber glow like a fire enclosed all around from his waist up. From his waist down I saw something that looked like fire. There was a brilliant light around it,

28 like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds after the rain. This was the appearance of the surrounding brilliant light; it looked like the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I threw myself face down, and I heard a voice speaking.

God Sends Ezekiel to be His Prophet to the Exiles

2:1 He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet and I will speak with you.”

2 As he spoke to me, a wind came into me and stood me on my feet, and I heard the one speaking to me.

3 He said to me, “Son of man, I am sending you to the house of Israel, to rebellious nations who have rebelled against me; both they and their fathers have revolted against me to this very day.

4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and hard-hearted, and you must say to them, ‘This is what the sovereign LORD says.’

5 And 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 But you, son of man, do not fear them, and do not fear their words—even though briars and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions—do not fear their words and do not be terrified of the looks they give you, for they are a rebellious house!

7 You must speak my words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.

8 As for you, son of man, listen to what I am saying to you: Do not rebel like that rebellious house! Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.”

9 Then I looked and realized a hand was stretched out to me, and in it was a written scroll.

10 He unrolled it before me, and it had writing on the front and back; written on it were laments, mourning, and woe.

Ezekiel and the Scroll

3:1 He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you see in front of you—eat this scroll—and then go and speak to the house of Israel.”

2 So I opened my mouth and he fed me the scroll.

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

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

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

6 not to many peoples of unintelligible speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand—surely if I had sent you to them, they would listen to you!

7 But the house of Israel is unwilling to listen to you, because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hard-headed and hard-hearted.

8 “I have made your face adamant to match their faces, and your forehead hard to match their foreheads.

9 I have made your forehead harder than flint—like diamond! Do not fear them or be terrified of the looks they give you, for they are a rebellious house.”

10 And he said to me, “Son of man, take all my words that I speak to you to heart and listen carefully.

11 Go to the exiles, to your fellow countrymen, and speak to them—say to them, ‘This is what the sovereign LORD says,’ whether they pay attention or not.”

12 Then a wind lifted me up and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me as the glory of the LORD rose from its place,

13 and the sound of the living beings’ wings brushing against each other, and the sound of the wheels alongside them, a great rumbling sound.

14 A wind lifted me up and carried me away. I went bitterly, my spirit full of fury, and the hand of the LORD rested powerfully on me.

Ezekiel Appointed as Watchman for Israel (August 6, 593 BC)

Ezekiel 3:15–27

15 I came to the exiles at Tel Abib, who lived by the Kebar River. I sat dumbfounded among them there, where they were living, for seven days.

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

17 “Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you must give them a warning from me.

18 When I say to the wicked, “You will certainly die,” and you do not warn him—you do not speak out to warn the wicked to turn from his wicked deed and wicked lifestyle so that he may live—that wicked person will die for his iniquity, but I will hold you accountable for his death.

19 But as for you, if you warn the wicked and he does not turn from his wicked deed and from his wicked lifestyle, he will die for his iniquity but you will have saved your own life.

20 “When a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I set an obstacle before him, he will die. If you have not warned him, he will die for his sin. The righteous deeds he performed will not be considered, but I will hold you accountable for his death.

21 However, if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he will certainly live because he was warned, and you will have saved your own life.”

22 The hand of the LORD rested on me there, and he said to me, “Get up, go out to the valley, and I will speak with you there.”

23 So I got up and went out to the valley, and the glory of the LORD was standing there, just like the glory I had seen by the Kebar River, and I threw myself face down.

24 Then a wind came into me and stood me on my feet. The LORD spoke to me and said, “Go shut yourself in your house.

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

26 I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house.

27 But when I speak with you, I will loosen your tongue and you must say to them, ‘This is what the sovereign LORD says.’ Those who listen will listen, but the indifferent will 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).¹ The following dates are given:²

- 5th year, 4th month, 5th day (July 31, 593) – Ezek 1:2.
- 6th year, 6th month, 5th day (September 17, 592) – Ezek 8:1.
- 7th year, 5th month, 10th day (August 14, 591) – Ezek 20:1.
- 9th year, 10th month, 10th day (January 27, 589) – Ezek 24:1.
- 11th year, ? month, 1st day (September 18, 587) – Ezek 26:1.³
- 10th year, 10th month, 12th day (January 17, 588) – Ezek 29:1.⁴
- 27th year, 1st month, 1st day (April 26, 571) – Ezek 29:17.
- 11th year, 1st month, 7th day (April 29, 587) – Ezek 30:20.
- 11th year, 3rd month, 1st day (June 21, 587) – Ezek 31:1.
- 12th year, 12th month, 1st day (March 15, 586) – Ezek 32:1.
- 12th year, 12th month, 15th day (March 29, 586) – Ezek 32:17.
- 12th year, 10th month, 5th day (January 19, 586) – Ezek 33:21.⁵
- 25th year, 1st month, 10th day (November 2, 574) – Ezek 40:1.⁶

¹ 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).

² 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.

³ The month is assumed to be the first month of the 11th year.

⁴ This is the first deviation from strict chronological order in the book of Ezekiel.

⁵ 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]).

⁶ 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.