

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious

Part I: Preparation To Minister By An Awareness Of An Overpowering God (Ezekiel 1:1-28b)

I. Introduction

- A. When God called Ezekiel who was among the initial captives of Judah with king Jehoiachin to minister to Judah's captives in Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1-2), he was being sent to a people who thought they were about to return to Judah, so his message would initially fall on deaf ears. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1230)
- B. Ezekiel thus needed a call to equip him to *withstand* strong, sinful resistance, so God gave him a vision of His overwhelming greatness to impress Ezekiel to serve a God Who would equip him to succeed, Ezekiel 1:1-28b:

II. Preparation To Minister By An Awareness Of An Overpowering God, Ezekiel 1:1-28b ESV.

- A. The Babylonian army that God had sent to capture Judah's first wave of captives under king Jehoiachin was equipped with chariots to wage formidable warfare against their enemies. This army had been sent by God to punish His people in Judah for their great involvement in pagan idolatry, cf. Jeremiah 1:16.
- B. To reveal His vastly superior power over not only Babylon that had taken Ezekiel's people captive, but over the false pagan gods Judah's Hebrew captives had worshiped, captives who would sinfully oppose Ezekiel's ministry, God presented Himself as an overwhelmingly powerful God to Ezekiel (as follows), Ezekiel 1:1-28a:
 - 1. God presented Himself as sovereign over the false gods the Hebrew captives had worshiped, Ez. 1:1-4:
 - a. While residing by the Chebar canal in Babylon, the hand of the Lord came upon Ezekiel, Ez. 1:1-3.
 - b. He saw a stormy wind and a great cloud coming out of the north, and lightning was flashing forth from the cloud with what appeared of gleaming metal in the fire, Ez. 1:4. Pagans held Baal to be god of storm and lightening, so this vision reveals God as sovereign over the false gods the captives had worshiped.
 - 2. God presented Himself as sovereign over the Babylonian army that had captured the Hebrews, Ez. 1:5-21:
 - a. In the midst of the cloud appeared four creatures, angelic beings reflecting God's glory, and they formed a great chariot with wheels and eyes and moved powerfully and swiftly in any direction, Ezekiel 1:5-21.
 - b. This chariot of God pictured God's supremacy over the Babylonians who had captured Judah's people and Ezekiel in the captivity of Judah's king Jehoiachin by use of its powerful chariot army.
 - 3. God presented himself as sovereignly gracious in dealing with rebellious people, Ezekiel 1:22-28a:
 - a. Above this chariot of angelic beings was an expanse, shining like crystal, and above the expanse over the heads of the angelic beings was the likeness of a throne, like sapphire in appearance, and seated upon the throne was a humanlike form, Ezekiel 1:22-26.
 - b. This humanlike form's waist and upwards appeared to be gleaming metal and from the waist down like fire, with a radiant brightness all around the form itself, Ezekiel 1:27.
 - c. This radiant brightness surrounding the form was that of a rainbow in a storm cloud, Ezekiel 1:28a. Since the rainbow of a storm cloud was instituted by the Lord as an act of grace in His Noachic Covenant of Genesis 8:20-9:17, God's promise not to destroy the world again by a worldwide Flood since man was already so sinful, the rainbow presented God as a very gracious God Who remembered mercy in judgment.
 - 4. Even more remarkably, the rainbow that typified the Noachic Covenant applied God's grace not only to the Hebrew people, but to all mankind, cf. Genesis 9:13-17. God was also thus revealing His infinite grace over not only the rebellious Hebrew people, but over also the rebellious pagan Babylonians and even all pagan mankind who worshiped false gods, what will be applied in the Messianic Kingdom of Christ!
 - 5. Ezekiel realized this whole presentation was a visionary presentation of the glory of the Lord, Ez. 1:28b.
- C. Ezekiel's response to this demonstration of God's great glory was to fall on his face before the Lord, Ez. 1:28c.

Lesson: *God began to prepare Ezekiel to minister in a difficult ministry by giving him a vision of God's sovereignty over the false gods Judah's people had worshiped, over the Babylonian army that had captured them and of God's great grace in dealing with sinful people. All Ezekiel needed for his difficult ministry would be met by God!*

Application: *(1) In serving Christ, may we recall God's revelation of Himself to us in our walk by the authority of His Word as the resource we need in times of difficulty in ministry, that we might succeed in God's assignments for us. (2) May we specifically recall that God is greater than the sinful world we face (God's great chariot versus the Babylonian chariots), He is greater than the false beliefs we face (God's great storm cloud versus Baal's cloud) and greater than the sinful people to whom He sends us to minister (rainbow around the Lord).*