

October 3

Scriptures: Read Ezekiel 1, 2 & 3

Key Verse: "... I have made you a watchman...; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me." (Ezekiel 3:17)

Overview

Chapters 1 to 3 comprise an introductory section detailing the call of Ezekiel the prophet which he received through a magnificent vision of the manifestation of God and His glory (a theophany). Ezekiel was living among the other exiles in Babylon, the place that was to be his mission field. We can see in this account that God is active in communicating His message and in calling His servants in unique, effective, and unusual ways. Ezekiel's reaction, like that of others who have seen God's glory and heard His voice, was to fall prostrate in submission and unworthiness before the Most Holy God (1:28; 3:23; Dan. 8:17; Acts 9:4; Rev. 1:17).

Whatever Ezekiel saw, it was clearly something beyond the comprehension of the limited and finite human mind, for it was in the realm of the heavenlies, and such things cannot be understood without the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. God was gracious to allow Ezekiel to see this vision (here as well as at other times), and He mercifully put His Holy Spirit upon Ezekiel so that after such a sight he might be able to stand, hear, and understand the word of the Lord and be equipped to perform his new commission (2:1; 3:24).

In its symbolic interpretation, the vision not only revealed God's glory and holiness, but also His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, which were necessary for Ezekiel to understand before he began his prophetic ministry. As well as allowing Ezekiel to see this grand manifestation of His glory, God also allowed him to write about it. Notice how often Ezekiel uses the terms "likeness" and "appearance"; this illustrates the inadequacy of describing that which is indescribable and unexpressible in human terms. In his attempt, however, he provides us with one of the most detailed biblical descriptions of a heavenly vision (cf. Isa. 6:1-5).

The four, four-faced, four-winged living creatures are later described as cherubim (10:7-8,15). They are heavenly beings that are often pictured as throne attendants accompanying and declaring the holiness of God (cf. Rev. 4:6-8). Above them is the glorious and radiant throne of God, which pictures God's sovereignty over all His creation, even over those things that have received authority: man over the earth, the eagle over the sky, the ox over the domesticated animals, and the lion over the wild animal kingdom. The faces may also be a reflection of God's majesty, symbolizing His authority and intelligence (man), swiftness to act and bring judgment (the eagle), strength and patience (the ox), power and majesty (the lion).

"A wheel in the middle of a wheel" (1:16) that was full of eyes (1:18) was beside each of the four cherubim, allowing the platform of God's throne to easily move in any direction without having to turn. This, no doubt, symbolizes the power of the all-seeing, all-knowing God who can work and go anywhere He wills, whether in heaven or on earth. Ezekiel must have learned that the God of Israel was not only sovereign over Israel, but also over the whole world, including the most powerful nation of Babylon.

Above the four living creatures was the throne, and above the throne was the fiery brightness of “the appearance of a man” (1:26). Radiant rainbow colours surrounded Him, possibly symbolizing the mercy of God for mankind (cf. Gen. 9:12-17; Rev. 4:3:10:1). After being strengthened by God’s Spirit, Ezekiel heard His voice. The Lord made it clear to Ezekiel that they would reject his message, since they had rejected the Source of the message, the Lord Himself (3:7). Although the message was one of doom (2:10; chs. 1-24), when Ezekiel ate the scroll, it became sweet to him (3:3). The reason? When God’s Word is internalized and assimilated by His servants, it is always sweet and life-giving, and it is a privilege and a joy to be God’s messengers. In order to be a useful servant of the Lord, one must feed upon His Word (cf. Jer. 15:16; Deut. 8:3; Ps. 19:10-11; 119:103; Rom. 10:8-10; Rev. 10:9-10).

Later, when Ezekiel was carried away by the Spirit, we read that he went “in bitterness” (3:14). His task was not going to be an easy one, for the message of God he was to deliver was one of condemnation and doom — a hard message to give to those he loved; but since Ezekiel had internalized God’s Word, he now felt the indignation of God against the rebellious people of Israel. The gravity of his message was illustrated by the seven days of silence (a period of mourning, 3:15; cf. Job 2:13), and when he would break that period of silence, upon the Lord’s instructions, it would give greater force to his message. Before his first public proclamation, however, the Lord impressed upon him his great responsibility as a divinely appointed “watchman” (3:17-21). The duty of a watchman involved continuous watchfulness and faithfulness in giving God’s warnings to not only the people as a whole, but to every individual, who then had to choose to believe or not to believe; and if a watchman did not fulfill his duty to warn the people, then he would be held accountable. Every believer is to be God’s watchman. In light of this passage, we can see the seriousness of fulfilling our divinely appointed task to share Christ with the lost.

Prayer

Lord, help us to be better “watchmen”, to share with others Your message of salvation that You have provided for everyone who calls upon You.