



LESSON 191

EZEKIEL'S CALL TO MINISTRY

Story Elements

- **Text:** Ezekiel 1:1-3:27
- **Setting:** ca. 592 B.C. in Babylon
- **Main Characters:** God and Ezekiel
- **Plot:** While Ezekiel prays at the Chebar River, he receives a divine vision which inaugurates his prophetic ministry.
- **Key word(s):** " " is a phrase that appears 1:5, 13, 14, 15, 19; 3:13. Later, in Ezekiel 10:20, the prophet realizes that these creatures are the cherubim associated with the ark of the covenant and God's glorious presence with his people.
- **Climax:** Ezekiel 3:12 *Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place.* This verse marks the

transition between Ezekiel's receiving the inaugural vision to his entrance into prophetic ministry to the captives of Israel living in Babylon.

Introduction

1. (1:1-3) Ezekiel was one of the 10,000 captives taken from Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 597 BC. (2 Ki. 24:11-18) He was 25 years old at the time; at age 30, he became a _____.
- a. As a priest, Ezekiel's 30th year would have been the year he began his priestly service, but instead of serving in the temple, he prophesied to Jewish captives in a land far away from Jerusalem.
- b. Ezekiel lived with other captives in Tel-Abib, near the Chebar River (a major canal off the Euphrates) 50 miles southeast of _____.

Seeing God's Glory

2. (1:4-11) While meditating by the river Chebar, Ezekiel sees a vision of a fiery storm coming out of the north, and out of the storm he sees four "living creatures." The creatures had "the likeness of a man" but were very different from the normal human form:
 - a. They had the feet of calves.
 - b. They sparkled as burnished brass.
 - c. Each creature had four different faces on their head, each pointing in their respective directions: the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an _____.
 - d. Though they had man-like hands, they had _____ wings.
 - i. Two of their wings were joined to two other creatures.
 - ii. Their other two wings covered their bodies.
 - e. The creatures always appeared to move forward, never turning in one direction or another.
 - f. Their creatures glowed and flashed with fire and lightning.
 - g. When the creatures flapped their wings, it sounded to Ezekiel like a torrent of rushing water and the voice of the Almighty. (v 24)
3. (1:12-21) Joined to the creatures were four wheels that each had a wheel within itself, and each was covered with _____, inside and out.
 - a. The wheels could move in any direction without turning.
 - b. The wheels moved according to the spirit of the creatures to which they were joined.
4. (1:22-25) Above the creatures, on top of their heads, was a _____ (KJV: firmament) that glowed with gloriously.

5. (1:26-28) atop the platform was a sapphire throne, and atop the throne was a _____, fiery and bright. When Ezekiel saw the man, he fell upon his face.

➔ “Here is no Angel conveying God’s message to man, but the glory of the Lord Himself. We recognise in this vision the prophetic annunciation of the Holy Incarnation.”¹

Eating God’s Book

6. (2:1-8) The man on top of the throne spoke to Ezekiel, commissioning him as a prophet.
- The LORD warned Ezekiel that his target audience will not listen to his preaching, for they are *impudent children and* _____ . (v 4)
 - Yet, in spite of Israel’s unwillingness to listen, Ezekiel’s mission is necessary so that the people will *know that their hath been a prophet among them* – that is, through Ezekiel’s preaching, the people could not plead _____ .
 - The LORD encouraged Ezekiel to *be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks*.
7. (2:9-3:3) Then the LORD commanded Ezekiel to eat a *roll of a book* (a scroll).
- The book was written within and without (denoting its _____).
 - The contents were *lamentations, and mourning, and woe*.
 - Yet, in spite of the bitter contents, to Ezekiel the book tasted sweet like _____.

APPLICATION ➔ The sweetness of the book reminds us that, though God’s word has bitter warnings, yet because it reflects the character of God, there is sweetness to it. John the Revelator shows us this also when he was told to eat a book (Rev. 10:9) which was sweet to his mouth but _____ to his stomach. (Rev. 10:10)

Meeting God’s People

8. (3:4-11) After further warnings of the people’s hardheartedness, God tells Ezekiel to go to the people and begin preaching to them.
9. (3:12-15) When Ezekiel heard the chariot of God’s glory moving, he was transported away by the Spirit and placed in Tel-Abib, a major city for Hebrew _____.
- Telabib was a city on the banks of the Chebar. It was where many Hebrew captives were relocated, possibly including even those deported out of the north by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 17:6).
 - At Tel-Abib, Ezekiel sat with the captives and sat *astonished among them* _____ days.

APPLICATION ➔ Knowing that his message would not be received, Ezekiel went to his mission field *in bitterness, in the heat* of his spirit (v 14). As he sat with the captives, he learned to mourn their sins and the coming judgment. Likewise, we are trained to persevere in the work of proclaiming God’s word to those who won’t hear when we contemplate the wickedness of sin and the seriousness of the judgment of God.

Answer Key: Key word(s): “living creatures” • 1. prophet; b. Babylon • 2. c. eagle; d. four • 3. eyes • 4. platform • 5. man • 6. a. stiffhearted; b. ignorance • 7. a. fullness; c. honey ➔ bitter • 9. refugees; b. seven

¹ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Jeremiah, Lamentations & Ezekiel*, ed. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller (London: John Murray, 1879), 311.