

## Ezekiel Chapters 1 and 2 - John Karmelich

Title "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro!"

Let me open with the question of why Ezekiel? Whenever I get close to finishing a book, I pray about what God desires me to do next. Somehow, He made it clear to take on Ezekiel. I don't know why yet. I learned not to argue! I also figure by the time one's teaching Ezekiel verse by verse, it is a point of no return when committed to teaching the Bible! With all that out of my system, let me talk about Ezekiel.

First that title comes from a gifted secular writer, who unfortunately was famous for writing when high on drugs. (Hunter Thompson.) I prefer to use my writing skills for a greater purpose! I thought of that title as truthfully these first two chapters get weird! They describe a strange scene in heaven that reads like something out of science fiction book! That's why I picked that title! Ezekiel as a prophet in effect "turned pro" to describe something strange! Ok then, time for a little background on the book itself:

He's never quoted once in the New Testament, although some of the imagery in Revelation ties well to what he wrote! Ezekiel is big on imagery and uses it to describe what God is doing and plans to do in the world. The book in effect has three parts: God's condemnation of Israel for how they acted, then it focuses on statements to nations around them to say in effect, "I got my eyes on the world too!" Then it predicts future events with some amazing predictions about not only Jesus first coming, but what life is going to be like when He returns to rule the world! Let's be honest the name Ezekiel isn't as popular as other biblical names in today's culture, so even in that sense, he's considered a little weird!

Ok time for the who, what when and how's. A little after 600BC, an empire based out of Iraq (today) is dominated the Middle East for roughly 100 years. They conquered Egypt, the other major power when that time era occurred and to put it simply, conquered Israel as a "bonus". They actual conquered Israel in three phases. The third time, they totally destroyed Jerusalem. The 2nd time (about 10 years earlier) was when Ezekiel along with about 10,000 Israelites were taken captive to that empire. They settled in that area and many Jewish people stayed there for generations, even though the official captivity would end about 70 years later! He was about the same age as Daniel and most likely they never met. Daniel's a top ruler in the empire, while God called Ezekiel to preach to the Israel captives near him! Realize it teaches that God cares about us even when we turn from Him and are living "away from His presence".

Ezekiel was 30 years old when he began his ministry. His writing is pretty much in chronological order and covers about 20 years. Tradition is he died being killed by a Jewish leader who didn't like what he preached. Again, he preached not from the empire "headquarters", but from where the Israelites settled in that empire! As to what he preached, it was mostly repentance and promises of restoration despite a lot of rebellion by the Israelites, because God is incapable of going back on His promise to that nation!

OK enough of all that. Let's talk about these two chapters! In short, these chapters are about Ezekiel as he's called by God to be a witness for Him. Grant it, the visions we see here seem like something from a science fiction movie with good special effects! Keep in mind Ezekiel was trained to be a priest so he describes things that a Jewish priest would grasp. Again, things will get weird for the rest of the lesson, so accept it for what it is and how Ezekiel described it. The rest of the book isn't nearly as strange so if you can get past the first lesson, it's downhill from here!

The book starts by Ezekiel dating this vision. Most likely was 25 when he was taken into captivity and now, he's 30. Jewish priests begin at that age (Numbers 4:3). Don't know if that's why God picked this

time, but it's a good moment. It's before Jerusalem got destroyed (less than 10 years later)! Later in the book he is going to preach about it and report it. The essence of the first few verses is just to say here's where he was in the Babylonian Empire (the one who conquered Israel). He lives in an encampment of about 10,000 Jews who also got taken into captivity! OK I promised weird stuff, let's get at it!

He saw out of the north a whirlwind with lightening, and flashing light. In short, it is about judgement! In the fire he saw four creatures. They each had four wings, four faces, straight human-like legs and on their feet were calves-like feet! Their wings touched each other! The idea is that even though there are four of them, they move as a single unit!

Believe it or not, let me show how this ties to God and Jesus: Their four faces are that of a human, of a lion, an eagle and an ox. What is the most mighty creature? A lion. Jesus is called the lion of the tribe of Judah. Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the Messiah which ties to the lion. Next, we have the ox that is the greatest animal that can be domesticated. Mark's Gospel presents Jesus as a servant and there is no genealogy! That ties to the ox! The Gospel of Luke focuses on Jesus' humanity. Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam, so it ties to His humanity. Finally, we have the eagle. That's the greatest of all the animals in the sky. In effect John's Gospel looks up to the sky (to God)! John's gospel focuses on Jesus as God. My simple point is the four faces on these creatures (human, lion, eagle and ox) tie to Jesus. It is a way for us to think about Him when we see this vision!

The vision continues to get stranger. It describes the way it moves like "a wheel within a wheel" to say it moves however it wants and appears not to move! Ezekiel then describes a large "vault" (In effect, it is a ceiling separating God's presence from man)! The sound of the moving creatures is like a powerful waterfall! All of this conveys something more powerful than we can imagine. To share a classic joke, if we could fully understand God, we'd be Him! Ezekiel then describes above the four strange "angels" a throne and a man on the throne! (Yes, more ties to Jesus!) He also sees a rainbow to symbolize God's promise not to destroy our world until "the end"! When Ezekiel considered all this, he went face down as it was overwhelming to take in, once he realized it wasn't just a weird dream!

That leads to Chapter 2. God calls Ezekiel "son of man" referring to the fact he was a man called to be a witness for God! The Spirit stood him up and gave him the following instructions! In short, he was to be a witness to the Israelites who let's be honest had turned from God, or else they would not be kicked out of Israel in the first place. God is saying to Ezekiel: I'm calling you to preach to them! They won't like the message, but it's "his job" and who are we to argue with what God's called us to do? Chapter 2 ends with him eating a scroll. I'm fascinated he saw a hand give him the scroll. (I think of "thing" from the Adams family here!) Eating the scroll represents God giving Ezekiel His laws that they're required to obey!) Like I said, "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro!" Ezekiel had to "turn pro" since he is being called by God to be a witness for Him! He figured it out through these strange visions and knowledge of what He desires His people (yes that's us) from studying our Bible!

OK John, good for Ezekiel. We accept he's an Old Testament prophet! Why should I care about all of this "weird stuff"? For starters, we may see this in heaven! I think the greatest shock of us getting into heaven isn't who made it and didn't make it, it'll be the fact that despite our sins, God will let us be with Him for eternity! Will there be stuff we can barely comprehend? Here's Ezekiel who lived 6 centuries before Christ let alone modern technology seeing all of this! It had to be overwhelming. Instead of just saying it was a weird dream, he knew it was God calling Him and He "turned pro!" So, does that mean God will call us the same way? Of course not! The way to tell if we are called is, if we can't stand not doing something for God and it leads to His glory! As we go through this book, we'll see lots of things

that will not only benefit our Christian walk, but hopefully make us a better witness for Him! That's the reason God calls us in the first place to be a witness for Him!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!