

# The Visions of Ezekiel

## Lesson 3

### **HASTINGS PARAPHRASE - PART ONE: *And Ezekiel said ...***

It was the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the empire when the LORD spoke to me for the first time. It was the fourth month and the fifth day of that year. I was out by the Chebar River surrounded by many of the Israelites who had been relocated there from our Promised Land.

To my amazement, I looked to the north sky and saw what looked like a tornado coming, but it wasn't – it was God. He was coming to speak to me.

The platform of the LORD's throne had four sides and a creature on each side that looked like a man. Each creature had four faces, a man, a lion, a bull and an eagle. The creatures had feet that looked like polished brass calves' hooves and they had human hands under their wings. Two wings of each creature reached out to touch the wings of the creatures on each side of them. Their faces did not turn at all. Each face looked straight ahead. Each creature had two wings that they used to cover their bodies. And when they moved, they moved together in straight lines, never leaning or turning in a curved direction, and they moved as fast as a lightning bolt.

Among the four creatures I could see a fire of burning coals with flames dashing back and forth between them. The four creatures moved as fast as these lightning bolts.

Beside each creature I saw a wheel that looked like it was cut from a sparkling gold colored gem. But each wheel was actually two wheels – one inside the other. One faced north and south and the other faced east and west. When these wheels moved, they moved only in the four directions and they never turned. Their rims were full of eyes! These wheels moved with each creature.

Over the heads of the creatures I saw this beautiful floor that glowed like glass and above it was an incredible bluish-green throne. It looked like the form of a man was sitting on the throne and the sound was like the roar of a mighty waterfall! From the waist up, the Man looked like glowing metal and from His waist down, He looked like a roaring fire. He had a rainbow all around Him and it looked like the Glory of the LORD. When I heard His voice, I fell on my face.

The LORD told me to stand so He could talk to me. When He spoke, I felt the Spirit enter me! He gave me a task. He was sending me to the rebellious and obstinate Israelites to say to them, "Thus says the LORD." He told me not to be afraid of them no matter what they said or did, whether or not they listened to me. He warned me not to be rebellious like they were! Then He gave me a scroll to eat. It had words on it, all over, back and front. The words expressed tears and grief and distress.

I ate the scroll which tasted sweet like honey. Then the LORD told me to go to the Israelites where you live and speak to them. "They are intelligent, but they will not listen to you! Do not worry! Hide my words in your heart and tell them what I tell you to tell them. They will not listen."

The Spirit lifted me up and I heard the rumble from the creatures say, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD." So I went to the Israelites at the Chebar River in the village of Tel-abib and I sat quietly with them for seven days and I made them very uncomfortable (Ezekiel 1:1 – 3:15).

## STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURE

### III. The Rebellion of God's Chosen Family (Eze 1 – 24)

#### A. Vision One – (Eze 1:1 – 7:27) 30<sup>th</sup> Year, 5<sup>th</sup> Day, 4<sup>th</sup> Month

##### 1. Ezekiel's First Vision of the LORD (1:1-3:15)

###### a) According to Ezekiel

###### (1) The Date (1:1a)

**Eze 1:1a** Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month,

We first come to the date of the beginning of this series of prophecies. Unlike all the other prophetic books of the Bible, Ezekiel places time markers consisting of the year, month and day that the vision was delivered to him by the LORD. All thirteen visions are dated this way. We see that the first vision occurred in the 30<sup>th</sup> year. Here we must ask the question, the 30<sup>th</sup> year from what event or point in time in the past? Was Ezekiel thirty years, four months and five days old when this vision came to him? That could be a good answer. If it is correct, it would resolve the problem that no prophet or priest was recognized by the Israelite people until he reached the age of thirty. But then, how would we handle the second vision in which Ezekiel states that it occurred in the sixth year, sixth month and fifth day. Was Ezekiel revealing that he was really 36 years old or was he revealing that the second vision occurred six years after some event? The logical question might be to ask, "What transpired six years before?" Surely it is a reference to the occurrence of the first vision – that seems plausible. Why did Ezekiel not continue the thought through all thirteen visions and tell how old he was in each? Now we have discovered the problem.

Throughout the Old Testament, ages are given quite often for the patriarchs. For instance, we know the age of Adam and all his descendants through his son Seth all the way down to Jacob in years but never months or days. The same is true for Joseph, Saul, David, Solomon and all the rest of the kings of Israel. Ezekiel is prophesying in the last days of the kings of Israel so we must ask the question, "Why would the Holy Spirit Who has inspired the men of God to write the story of God change the way He addressed the age of Ezekiel from the way He addressed the ages of all the rest of the patriarchs in the Old and New Testaments?" The answer is, He did not change the way He dealt with the ages of the patriarchs. This first verse in Ezekiel cannot be his age; it must be a reference to some event that occurred thirty years, four months and five days before this vision was given to Ezekiel. For proof of how the LORD used years, months and days to date events in the Scripture, we need look no further than the story of Noah and the flood. Noah's age was listed simply by the year but the starting of the rain to the flood to the receding of the water to the stepping out on the dry land were all described with years, months and days. This first verse is no different; it is a reference to some momentous event thirty years, four months and five days before.

We will discover as we study this book that the context plainly reveals that the bulk of the prophecies was given to Ezekiel before the fall of the Temple in 586 BC. The dating of the visions also reveals that many of them, especially the first five visions were given as many as eleven years before the fall of the Temple in 586 BC. Calculating that math would take Ezekiel's first vision to the year 597 BC. The thirteenth vision will justify this date back to 597 BC perfectly. If that is the case, what momentous event occurred thirty years, four months and five days before 597 BC? Every world history book in existence will give that answer in a heartbeat. In 627 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's father, with the help of the Medes and the Persians,

began breaking away from the Assyrian Empire and formed the Babylonian Kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar became his father's general before the fight began to conquer the Assyrian Empire. In 612 BC, Nebuchadnezzar was successful, the Assyrian Empire was taken, and the Babylonian Empire was fully in control of the world. Because Ezekiel was living under the Babylonian Empire's rule and because the LORD had established the Babylonian Empire to complete His will and usher in His punishment on His chosen people, and because all the visions were given to Ezekiel during the time of the Babylonian Empire, it seems most logical that this first vision was dated from the beginning of the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar's father.

### (2) The Place (1:1b)

**Eze 1:1b while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles,**

Second, we come to the place where this prophecy was delivered. Ezekiel was by the *Chebar River* with his cousins who were taken out of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of the Assyrian Empire and those taken with him from the Southern Kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar took the first swath of exiles from the Southern Kingdom to his home city of Babylon. They were the young, bright men of the Southern Kingdom who had great potential for servitude in his empire. But the second swath of exiles were older with families yet with enough vigor to be relegated to forced labor. At the *Chebar River*, Nebuchadnezzar had a task he wanted completed. It was not a small task at all. Nebuchadnezzar wanted the *Chebar River*, which flowed naturally into the Euphrates River, to be extended as a canal to the Tigris River, and it was all to be dug by hand. Hundreds of thousands of laborers were required and no doubt Ezekiel was part of that forced labor project. In this book, we are going to discover that Ezekiel will be addressing the *House of Israel and the House of Judah* among these exiles. That indicates that exiles from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah were living in and around Ezekiel near the *Chebar River*.

### (3) The Vision (1:1c)

**Eze 1:1c the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.**

On the thirtieth year, the fourth month and the fifth day, Ezekiel was astounded when he looked to the north and saw a whirlwind coming. We would call it a cyclone or a tornado. And then, Ezekiel saw his first vision. To the prophet, it looked like he could see into the heavens to see God. Actually, God was coming to see Ezekiel there on the river.

### b) According to Another Writer (1:2-3)

**Eze 1:2 (~~On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile,~~ <sup>Eze 1:3</sup> ~~the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.~~)**

Notice that we have marked through the second and third verses. Why? Because they are according to another writer, not Ezekiel. Three reasons should suffice. First, the oldest and most reliable copies of the Holy Word of God do not include these two verses. That is not to say that they are omitted from the majority of the copies we have of the Scriptures. We have more copies with these two verses included than we have without them; however, the oldest copies of the Scriptures that we have do not have these verses. That leads us to our second reason. It is not

until the completed book of Ezekiel is read that we discover that these two verses are the only two verses not written in first person by Ezekiel. The entire book is about what Ezekiel saw, heard, and experienced personally. These two verses do not fit the entire context of this book and the important details within them cannot be confirmed anywhere in the Holy Scripture. We do not know if it is the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile, if Ezekiel was a priest, or if Ezekiel was the son of Buzi. Certainly, he was in the land of the Chaldeans because he was by the *Chebar River*, but that seems to be an afterthought included at the end of the third verse. What does this mean? It just so happens that some Jewish historian did some of his homework correctly. If the LORD approached Ezekiel in 597 BC, it was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile. But as for Ezekiel's being a priest or the son of Buzi, we have no proof. Somewhere in time, before the days of the LORD's life on earth, a well meaning Jewish scribe wrote these two verses into the margins of a page of the Scripture and when it was old and needed to be replaced with a copy, the new copier included the two verses in the text and from then on, copies by the thousands were hand produced over time. We have many copies that include these two verses, but the oldest, that we really must rely on, do not include them in their texts.

Third, the two included verses interrupt the flow of the text. At the end of verse 1, Ezekiel is looking at the visions of God and in verse 4 he begins to describe them, as he should. The two verses between 1 and 4 destroy the continuity of the context. For those three reasons they cannot be part of the original text; therefore, we will not address these two verses any further in this commentary.

## 2. Ezekiel's Description of the LORD (1:4 – 28)

### a) The Whirlwind (1:4a)

**Eze 1:4a As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north,**

Ezekiel was not the only one to see the LORD coming in a "storm wind." More than a thousand years before Ezekiel, the LORD approached Job in the same kind of "storm wind" (Job 38:1). About two hundred years before that the LORD came in a storm wind to take Elijah to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-11). Isaiah proclaimed that the LORD would come one day in a "storm wind" (Isaiah 5:28, 66:15). Nahum chimed in with the same thought (Nahum 1:3). In the Revelation, John may not have seen the "storm wind," but he definitely saw the same LORD God and His cherubim that Ezekiel saw as the "storm wind" drew closer to him there on the *Chebar River*. (Revelation 4). In the next few verses we will discover that Ezekiel and John were blessed by the LORD to see His throne, its construction, its activity and the creatures that surrounded Him at all times.

### b) The Lights (1:4b)

**Eze 1:4b a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it,**

In the first part of verse 4, Ezekiel stated that he saw a "storm wind coming from the north." "Storm wind" can also be translated *whirlwind, cyclone or tornado*. It is impossible to see the wind except when some substance is used to cause it to be visible. As a child visiting my grandparents in West Texas, I can still remember seeing the small little dust tornados that would move across the grassless fields and cause the tumbleweeds to roll across the terrain. The tornados were visible only because they contained a cloud of dust being twisted around by the wind. Major tornados are attached to moisture in the air that is twisted around the cone shaped funnel that is always attached to a thunderstorm. Thunderstorms always contain energy and that

energy always exposes itself in the form of flashes of lightning. Sometimes the lightning seems to stay within the clouds; sometimes the lightning streaks across the skies in terrifying bolts. Of course, Ezekiel saw a great cloud with fiery bolts of lightning illuminating the skies attached to the whirlwind that he saw coming from the north because all those properties are part of the natural way the LORD designed whirlwinds. Altogether, Ezekiel was seeing the all-powerful LORD of creation coming toward him and there was nowhere to hide from this great power of energy heading his way.

#### c) The Glow (1:4c)

**Eze 1:4c and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire.**

As the whirlwind drew closer, Ezekiel could see an intense glow coming from the midst of the cyclone that looked like “glowing metal” being heated in a raging fire.

#### d) The Four Living Creatures (1:5a)

**Eze 1:5a Within it there were figures resembling four living beings.**

Within the glowing metal in the midst of the fire, Ezekiel could initially see four living creatures. For those who have studied the Book of Revelation, these creatures are not new, they are the same creatures John saw surrounding the fiery throne of the LORD.

#### (1) Their Appearance (1:5b-8a))

**Eze 1:5b And this was their appearance: they had human form. Eze 1:6 Each of them had four faces and four wings. Eze 1:7 Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. Eze 1:8a Under their wings on their four sides were human hands.**

Here we have Ezekiel’s description of the appearance of the four living creatures. They are not dead; they are not made of metals and other materials. They are made of what looks to be living flesh in their faces, wings, and appendages. He saw human hands, four faces, straight legs and hooves. Clearly these creatures are not human by any standard. They are spiritual creatures created by the LORD to attend to His throne for all eternity. These creatures had wings on their four sides. Notice the four wings on their bodies that covered their human looking hands. Notice also that their hooves were polished to a mirror finish and their color was tinted bronze.

#### (2) Their Wings (1:8b-9a)

**Eze 1:8b As for the faces and wings of the four of them, Eze 1:9a their wings touched one another;**

As the whirlwind approached Ezekiel, he could describe the detail with more clarity. He saw the faces and wings. The wings were so large that they touched the wings of the other creatures. We have not discussed the placement of these creatures around the throne of the LORD yet, but that will come soon. For now, we will introduce the placement of where each creature stands on each of the four sides of the LORD’s throne. The wings of each creature could reach from front to back and side to side of the throne to touch the wings of the others.

#### (3) Their Faces (1:9b)

**Eze 1:9b their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward.**

Here we discover a detail that John does not give in the Revelation. Each face was stagnant; it did not turn; it always faced in the same direction in relation to the throne. In other words, the face that looked away from the throne never looked at the throne. Conversely, the face that looked at the throne always looked at the throne. Next, Ezekiel will tell about the four faces of these four creatures.

#### (4) Their Gaze (1:10-11a)

**Eze 1:10 As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. Eze 1:11a Such were their faces.**

Each living creature had the face of a man with a lion's face to the right, a bull's face to the left and an eagle's face to the rear.

#### (5) Their Span (1:11b)

**Eze 1:11b Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another being, and two covering their bodies.**

Two of the four wings stretched out to touch the wings of the creatures on each side and two were used to cover each body.

#### (6) Their Course (1:12)

**Eze 1:12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.**

Who was "the spirit" in this verse? It was not the four living creatures because they would follow this "spirit." We must remember, this encounter with the LORD was Ezekiel's first. He did not know Who he was seeing sitting on the throne among the four living creatures. Ezekiel seemed to be calling the LORD a "spirit" at this point in the visions. Who were the "they" in this verse? The "they" were the four living creatures that go wherever the "spirit" goes.

#### (7) Their Fire (1:13)

**Eze 1:13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.**

Ezekiel speaks of the great energy that is involved with the whole scene. Burning fire and darts of fire flashing all about the throne. John, in the Revelation saw the same thing.

#### (8) Their Speed (1:14)

**Eze 1:14 And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.**

Notice that the four living creatures were not attached to the throne. Ezekiel saw their movement and they were as fast as the lightning bolts flashing from the throne.

#### (9) Their Wheels (1:15)

**Eze 1:15 Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for each of the four of them.**



As Ezekiel began to focus on the four living creatures, he noticed the wheels on the throne. He saw a wheel by each creature.

(a) The Construction (1:16)

**Eze 1:16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another.**

The wheels were beautiful and exactly alike. But the wheels were strange in appearance. Each wheel looked like it was two wheels, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. These wheels were not earthly; these wheels were heavenly. Therefore, these wheels did not need to conform to our human limitations. Each wheel looked essentially like a wheel which we would recognize on a cart, wagon or car. Yet, each wheel had another wheel attached that pointed at a 90-degree angle to the original wheel. The wheels intersected at the rims and the rims turned forward and backward and side-to-side right through each other – miraculously. Each wheel could roll forward-to-back and side-to-side at anytime. The wheels looked to be made out of a mineral that Ezekiel was familiar with, beryl. It was an aquamarine color.

(b) The Movement (1:17-18)

**Eze 1:17 Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved. Eze 1:18 As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about.**

Ezekiel then confirms that the wheels moved only in four directions, from front-to-back and side-to-side, but they did not turn like wheels we are used to seeing on the front of cars and carts. The Ezekiel tells us that these wheels were “lofty,” meaning *tall and large, maybe even giant!* They were “awesome,” meaning *extremely impressive or daunting and inspiring great admiration.* But more than all that, the wheels had “eyes.” They were “full of eyes round about.” We must ask some questions. *Were these wheels alive? Could these wheels see? Did these eyes direct the movement of the throne?* These questions we cannot answer. One day we will know when we reach our heavenly home with this same LORD on His throne, but for now we must be satisfied with the knowledge that these wheels were not earthy in any way!

(c) The Path (1:19-21)

**Eze 1:19 Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose also. Eze 1:20 Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. Eze 1:21 Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.**

The throne of the LORD, the living creatures and the wheels all moved in unison, in perfect harmony, in perfect timing. Once again, we encounter the “spirit” controlling the movement of the throne; however, in verse 20 we discover the following gem of information. “... for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.” The same words are repeated at the end of verse 21. Were the living beings *spiritless*? If they were, what gave them life? Were the wheels controlling the living beings or were the living beings controlling the wheels? “... and the spirit

of the living beings was in the wheels” means *the spirit of the living beings were in complete control of the wheels*. The wheels had no spirit of their own; the wheels were controlled by the living beings.

e) The Awesome Expanse (1:22 – 25)

(1) The Look (1:22-23)

**Eze 1:22 Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads. <sup>Eze</sup> 1:23 Under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other.**

Ezekiel’s attention moved from the creatures and the wheels and he saw above their heads a crystal floor. Under the floor, two wings of each creature were stretched out toward the others as if to support the floor. Two wings of each creature were used to cover their bodies “on one side and on the other.” John, in his Revelation, told us that these creatures had six wings. They had two that were stretched out and four that covered the body. In this passage Ezekiel mentions four wings only, but is that really what he means? Remember, Ezekiel also tells us that each creature had four heads, one on each side. In this verse Ezekiel says that each creature “had two wings covering its body on one side and on the other.” Does Ezekiel mean that he saw two wings on one side of a creature’s body and two wings on the other side of the creature’s body – which means each creature actually had a wing covering each side of the body, which had a head to match? I think so! With that understanding of the wording in this passage, the wings of Ezekiel’s creatures match those of John’s.

(2) The Sound (1:24)

**Eze 1:24 I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.**

Ezekiel was privileged to see the creatures in movement and at rest. The sound of the fluttering of the wings was astounding – as loud as Ezekiel imagined the “voice of the Almighty” God. But the sound was a “tumult” to Ezekiel, meaning *it was a confused noise in his ears, a racket!* Then, when the wings were not moving, the creatures would drop them to their sides and the sound would be gone – quiet!

(3) The Voice (1:25)

**Eze 1:25 And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.**

These creatures knew when to be quiet! When the Voice above them spoke, they became silent.

f) The Throne (1:26 – 28a)

(1) The Resemblance (1:26a)

**Eze 1:26a Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance;**



Ezekiel has hinted about the throne floor located above the creatures, but in this verse he begins to explain what he saw. On top of the floor he saw what looked like a throne and its color was bright blue like a “lapis lazuli” stone.

**(2) The Man (1:26b)**

**Eze 1:26b and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man.**

Ezekiel saw that the bodily shape of a man was sitting way up high on the throne. But He was no man. He may have looked like a man but when Ezekiel finishes describing Him, it is evident that He was not human in any way.

**(a) His Upper Body (1:27a)**

**Eze 1:27a Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it,**

This Man that Ezekiel saw, from the waist up, looked like the body shape with flowing hot metal with flames of fire all around.

**(b) His Lower Body (1:27b)**

**Eze 1:27b and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.**

Ezekiel states that this Man looked like a flaming fire from His waist down. To add to that, this man had a glow all around Him.

**(3) The Radiance (1:28a)**

**Eze 1:28a As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance.**

The glow that surrounded the Man reminded Ezekiel of a rainbow. We see only part of a rainbow from our perspective here on earth, but Ezekiel saw the complete circle of the rainbow around the throne of this Man.

**g) The Glory of the LORD (1:28b)**

**Eze 1:28b Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.**

Finally, Ezekiel admits that this Man looked to him like “the glory of the LORD.” How did Ezekiel know this? It was the LORD God, but how could Ezekiel make that claim? Had he ever seen the LORD before? Had he heard the stories about the LORD before? Surely he had! Job’s story of meeting the LORD was already well known to all the Jews. The Jews also knew Moses’ story. And for that matter, so were the stories of the Shekinah glory of the LORD that radiated from the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. If this was an educated guess by Ezekiel, it was a perfect guess in every way!

**3. Ezekiel’s Reaction to the LORD (1:28c)**

**Eze 1:28c And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.**

Ezekiel did what every person should do when they meet the LORD. We should all fall before Him in contrite humility and submission. Every knee should bow before the LORD and that is exactly what Ezekiel did!

#### 4. Ezekiel's Conversation with the LORD (2:1-3:11)

##### a) The Instruction Announced (2:1)

**Eze 2:1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!"**

To hear the LORD's voice is a privilege. I can only hear the LORD speaking in my heart and soul, but the LORD spoke directly to the ears of Ezekiel. "*Get up Ezekiel; I want to talk to you today!*"

##### b) The Spirit Announced (2:2)

**Eze 2:2 As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard *Him* speaking to me.**

The "Spirit" magically entered Ezekiel and set him on his feet. We do not want to split hairs at this point in the story about the use of the word "Spirit" found here with a capital "S" and in the previous verses with a lower case "s." We are reading in English and making such a distinction is an English translator's choice and it may not be correct. To this point in the story line, Ezekiel has made a distinction concerning a spirit which he saw in the midst of the fire and the spirits of the four living creatures who were controlling the wheels on the throne. Here he introduces a "Spirit" Who entered his body and physically moved Ezekiel to a standing position. To add more confusion to the text Ezekiel says, "and I heard *Him* speaking to me." Who was speaking to Ezekiel? The "spirit" from the midst of the throne or the "Spirit" that had just entered him and stood him on his feet? The answer is found in the first part of the verse, "As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me. . . ." Therefore, Ezekiel called the LORD on his throne a "spirit" and he identified a "Spirit" who entered into his body in addition to the "spirits" of the four living creatures. They all were spiritual beings.

##### c) The Mission Announced (2:3)

**Eze 2:3 Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.**

The LORD has a mission for Ezekiel and the mission will not be an easy one. He must go to the wicked *sons of Israel*. This reference is directed at the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel who made up the population of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is not a reference to the population of the Southern Kingdom here.

##### d) The Reason Announced (2:4-5)

**Eze 2:4 "I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' Eze 2:5 "As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.**

The *sons of Israel*, living in the old Assyrian Empire, were prophetless! Their false prophets in the old kingdom of Israel were dead and gone. They needed a new prophet and Ezekiel was the man for the job. When Ezekiel stepped into their presence, even without saying a word, they would know that they once again had a prophet in their midst.

e) [The Power Announced \(2:6\)](#)

**Eze 2:6 "And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house."**

The LORD is warning Ezekiel of the difficult task he is about to undertake. The *sons of Israel* will not make his job easy.

f) [The Resolve Announced \(2:7\)](#)

**Eze 2:7 "But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious."**

Ezekiel is going to be the LORD's mouthpiece. He warns Ezekiel that the *sons of Israel* will rarely, if ever, listen to his message. "*Ezekiel, say what I tell you to say no matter what!*"

g) [The Warning Announced \(2:8a\)](#)

**Eze 2:8a "Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house."**

The LORD warns Ezekiel about rebellion. Surely the *sons of Israel* are rebellious, but Ezekiel had better refrain from rebelling against the LORD.

h) [The Meal Announced \(2:8b-3:3\)](#)

**Eze 2:8b "Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you." Eze 2:9 "Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it." Eze 2:10 "When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe." Eze 3:1 "Then He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." Eze 3:2 "So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll." Eze 3:3 "He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth."**

The eating of the meal is announced. It will be a scroll provided by the LORD and is an interesting turn in this opening vision. Ezekiel will not be the only prophet the LORD gives a scroll to eat. John, of the Revelation, was also given a scroll to eat. For John, the scroll was sweet in his mouth but sour in his stomach. Ezekiel tells us only that the scroll was sweet in his mouth; we do not know about how it made his stomach feel.

Ezekiel saw the writing on the scroll before he ate it. The front and the back were filled with "Lamentations, mourning and woe." A "lamentation" is a *passionate expression of grief or sorrow*. A "mourning" is a *deep sorrow or regret*. A "woe" expresses the *actual great sorrow or grief that a person is feeling*. The scroll was all about the LORD and His thoughts and feelings about the *sons of Israel*. Ezekiel needed to eat it in order to feed the message deep into his body but actually into his soul so he could express the LORD's intent to the *sons of Israel*. How could such "lamentations, mourning and woe" be sweet to eat? Truth is sweet to those who

are in a right relationship with the LORD. Make no mistake; it will not be a sweet message to the *sons of Israel*.

i) The Message Announced (3:4)

**Eze 3:4 Then He said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.**

Once Ezekiel had eaten the meal, it was time for the message on the scroll to be announced to the *sons of Israel*. The LORD sent Ezekiel to deliver the message.

j) The Recipient Announced (3:5-6a)

**Eze 3:5 "For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel, Eze 3:6a nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand.**

Once again, the LORD instructs Ezekiel about the intelligence of the *sons of Israel*. They will understand every word Ezekiel speaks to them, but that does not mean that they will accept the words as truth from the LORD.

k) The Rejection Announced (3:6b-7)

**Eze 3:6b But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; Eze 3:7 yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.**

In this verse we learn that more people than just the remnant of the house of Israel would hear the message Ezekiel had been given to deliver. Evidently, there were other Jewish descendants in the area who would hear Ezekiel's message and accept it. In the first two lessons we spoke about the *house of Judah* and the possibility that Ezekiel was from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. We discussed the project that Nebuchadnezzar was involved in at the *Chebar River*. We concluded that Nebuchadnezzar transplanted the Jewish remnant from the second extraction from the Southern Kingdom in the old Assyrian Empire area to help with the *Chebar River Canal* project. We concluded that Ezekiel was probably there because of the project. With this verse we can begin to see that not all of Ezekiel's ministry would be unfruitful; nevertheless, the LORD promises here that the *house of Israel*, meaning the *descendants of the remnant that was taken out of the Northern Kingdom more than 130 years before had grown rebellious, "stubborn and obstinate."* They would not listen to Ezekiel and he should not be disappointed when they did not listen to him.

l) The Strength Announced (3:8-9)

**Eze 3:8 "Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. Eze 3:9 "Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house."**

We often fail to consider the way the LORD operates. The LORD has already called Ezekiel the *son of man*, a term that describes the *frailness of human life across all of mankind*. But in this verse, we see that the LORD never sends a person to do a job unprepared. He announces the strength that He has given to Ezekiel for this task. This prophet may be facing a raging mob of

stubborn and obstinate Jews from the Northern Kingdom but Ezekiel, by himself, is as strong as all of them put together.

#### m) The Heart Announced (3:10)

**Eze 3:10 Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely.**

When the LORD told Ezekiel to “take into your heart all My words which I speak to you” He actually was telling Ezekiel to learn what the LORD was saying from His heart. The LORD was truly concerned with the people of His chosen nation, but here He was especially concerned about the remnant of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the *sons of Israel*, and yet He had also called them the whole *house of Israel*. Ezekiel’s job would be to convey the message of the LORD’s heart to the *house of Israel*. Therefore, the LORD told Ezekiel to “listen closely.” Ezekiel must not miss a word; he must be able to repeat what the LORD says word-for-word.

#### n) The Charge Announced (3:11)

**Eze 3:11 "Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the LORD God.'"**

And finally, we come to the all-important charge announcement! Only true prophets of the LORD should use it! “Thus says the LORD God.” Many a false prophet had used those words which resulted in disastrous peril from the LORD. The LORD does not think or respond kindly to someone who pronounces this charge without truly hearing from the LORD. We can say this same phrase many ways. You have heard them all from so-called ministers of God. *God told me ...*, *the LORD told me ...*, *I have heard from the LORD ...*, *The Spirit of God is all over me right now ...*, *God said to me in a dream ...*, *The LORD came to me in my spirit and said ...*, *I heard the voice of the LORD saying ...!* It is a dangerous thing to tell a congregation that the LORD told you something when, in fact, He did not. But Ezekiel had heard the word of the LORD and he could confidently go to his rebellious and obstinate cousins and say, “Thus says the LORD God.” Ezekiel had all the authority he needed to do the job the LORD sent him out to do.

### 5. Ezekiel’s Flight with the LORD (3:12-15)

#### a) The Spirit’s Power (3:12a)

**Eze 3:12a Then the Spirit lifted me up,**

It was time for the LORD to leave Ezekiel and send him to his first assignment, but Ezekiel was in extremely close proximity to the LORD. Once again, Ezekiel realized that he was being lifted away from this vision, away from the LORD; he attributed the power that was moving him away from the LORD to the “Spirit” that he had already mentioned before. It was the “Spirit” moving him away from the throne and the whirlwind that would be generated by the four living creatures as they took the throne back to its home in heaven.

#### b) The Creature’s Song (3:12b)

**Eze 3:12b and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place."**

Ezekiel was blessed to hear the “great rumbling sound behind” him and this time he understood the words. Before, the sound was a disturbing “tumult” which Ezekiel could not

understand at first. This time, he heard the benediction, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place."

c) **The Throne's Rumble (3:13)**

**Eze 3:13 And I heard the sound of the wings of the living beings touching one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, even a great rumbling sound.**

When Ezekiel was far enough away to be safe, the four living creatures began to stir their wings and the wheels began to spin with a "great rumbling sound." When the English version uses the word "rumbling" it means the sound of *blowing wind like the sound made by a tornado*.

d) **The LORD's Hand (3:14)**

**Eze 3:14 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me.**

Just as quickly as the "Spirit lifted" Ezekiel away from the presence of the LORD, the "Spirit" returned Ezekiel to the place where this vision began. Did the "Spirit" stay within Ezekiel or did He come out of Ezekiel? At this point in the story, we do not know.

Ezekiel had a place to be and it was time for him to go to the *sons of Israel*. Ezekiel says, "I went embittered in the rage of my spirit." When Ezekiel uses the word "embittered" it means that *he was outraged because of the rebellion his people had displayed in response to the LORD's instruction, their wickedness and obstinacy*. His outrage was deeply rooted in his own spirit. In other words, Ezekiel was figuratively on fire to accomplish the task the LORD had given him. Ezekiel has now indicated that he, too, possessed a "spirit." But this spirit is a little different from the *spirits* previously mentioned by the prophet. Although the Hebrew roots words are the same, the whole words used are not. For the LORD, the Spirit and the spirits of the living creatures were spiritual beings. When Ezekiel speaks of his "spirit" the word would be better translated today as "attitude." The soul of Ezekiel which lived within his body of clay, burst forth with an embittered, outraged, or angry attitude because of what he had just heard from the LORD. We must not confuse the soul of man with the spirit of man as the translation of this passage could imply. The soul of a man is the person who lives inside the body of clay and speaks his thoughts through the mask of the face and acts out his righteousness or wickedness by controlling the clay body. The clay body of a man is given life by the breath of God Who causes it to be alive with each cell containing that breath until it dies. That breath is called the *spirit*. The *spirit* keeps the heart ticking, the lungs breathing, the blood moving, the brain thinking and so on. All the involuntary actions of the body are controlled by the spirit of life, or rather, the breath of God, until the LORD says it is time for that body to die. At that moment, the spirit of life departs from the body and the living flesh dies and returns to being just the dust of the ground. The spirit of life leaves the body and returns to the LORD, the giver of life. At that time, the soul goes to heaven or torment depending on the choice it made concerning the LORD while dwelling in the living clay of the body (Ecclesiastes 12). There we have the differences in the body, soul and spirit of man. There we have one good example of one Hebrew word for *spirit*. But this Hebrew word is different. This Hebrew word has nothing to do with the spirit that gives life; it has to do with the psychological way we think, respond or react, negatively or positively. It is a characteristic of the nature of the soul of each human. We all have biases. The soul of a person cannot be changed but the attitude or spirit displayed by the soul can. Every soul who has



a life-changing encounter with the LORD out on the plain of life will result in a change of attitude or what Ezekiel calls in this passage, *spirit*.

Forever changed by his encounter with the LORD, Ezekiel then indicated why he was determined to do the task by saying, “the hand of the LORD was strong on me.” Ezekiel had no choice but to fulfill the LORD’s assignment. If he did not, then the doom that was set for the *sons of Israel* would be directed at him.

e) **The Exile’s Consternation (3:15)**

**Eze 3:15 Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar at Tel-abib, and I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them.**

True to the word of the LORD, Ezekiel arrived in the village of *Tel-abib* on the *Chebar River*, drew the attention of all the exiles in the area and sat in the middle of the town without saying a thing for seven days and his mere presence in the village caused great feelings of anxiety throughout the people. They did not know why he was there, but for whatever reason he was there, his mere presence indicated it would not be good for them!