

EZEKIEL CHAPTER ONE

Jon Macon

Ezekiel was a prophet of the Lord to the remnant of Israel in captivity in Babylon. The words of the book of Ezekiel were spoken from about 592 B.C. to around 570 B.C. We know this from what is revealed in the book of Ezekiel. God first spoke to Ezekiel during the 5th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah (Ezek 1:1-3). Jehoiachin was sent into captivity in 597 B.C., making the fifth year of his captivity 592 B.C. The last recorded date in the book is a prophecy against Egypt in the twenty-seventh year of king Jehoiachin, which was 570 B.C. (Ezek 29:17-21). Zedekiah was king of Judah during most of the first 31 chapters of Ezekiel, since Zedekiah was installed as king by Nebuchadnezzar after Jehoiachin was removed (2 Kgs 24:12-17; 2 Chr 36:9-10; Jer 37:1). No one was king of Judah for the remainder of the book of Ezekiel, because that was after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and removed Zedekiah, who was the last king of Judah.

The thirtieth year by the River Chebar in Babylon

The Book of Ezekiel begins in the “thirtieth year,” which was “in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month,” and was the time when Ezekiel first “saw visions of God” (Ezek 1:1). This “was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity (Ezek 1:2). Therefore, the “thirtieth year” did not refer to the length of time Ezekiel had been in captivity. It was the *fifth* year of his captivity. We are not told precisely what this “thirtieth year” refers to, but it likely refers to Ezekiel’s age. First of all, the context of these verses is about Ezekiel personally, and when he began to speak as God’s prophet. Secondly, Ezekiel is also identified as a priest (Ezek 1:3), and the Levites began their service at the age of thirty (Num 4:3,23,30,35,39,43,47; 1 Chr 23:3; Luke 1:5,26,36,56-57; 3:23). At this time, Ezekiel was “among the captives by the river of Chebar” (Ezek 1:1). This river of Chebar was “in the land of the Chaldeans” (Ezek 1:3).

Four living creatures

In Ezekiel 1:4-5, the prophet “looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures.”

1) The four living creatures “had the likeness of a man” (Ezek 1:5). “And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like

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(continued)

the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass" (Ezek 1:7).

2) "And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings" (Ezek 1:6). "And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward" (Ezek 1:8-9). "And their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies" (Ezek 1:11).

3) "And every one had four faces" (Ezek 1:6). "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces" (Ezek 1:10-11).

4) "And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (Ezek 1:12-14).

The wheels

Ezekiel 1:15-21 contains a description of wheels that were with the four creatures. "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."