

# EZEKIEL'S VISIONS

Ezekiel 1:1-28; 2:1-10; 3:1-27

## LESSON 407

### Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

## The Captivity

God had meant just exactly what He said when He told the Israelites that if they would not obey His commandments, He would punish them. "Because ye have not heard my words, this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jeremiah 25:8-11: See Lesson No. 375). The time had come when God let wicked kings take 'the people hundreds of miles from their homes in Jerusalem. The mighty men, the craftsmen, and the royal families were driven from their homes into Babylon. In a future lesson we shall study about Daniel and the three Hebrew children who were among those sent away from home.

Ezekiel, the priest, was one of the good men who was a captive in Babylon. While there God used him to preach to the people. The name "Ezekiel" means "God strengthens" or "God will prevail."

## The Visions

On the fifth day of the fourth month, as Ezekiel was by the river of Chebar with his fellow countrymen, he had a marvellous experience: "The heavens were opened" and he saw "visions of God."

We read in the Bible of others who had visions and dreams from the Lord. Today, the Lord does not very often give visions to His people; and dreams which are really from the Lord are not common. He expects us to read His Word and to be led by His Spirit, and we have ministers and Sunday School teachers to show us the way.

The vision which Ezekiel saw was by no means mere imagination for he was wide awake and alert at the time; "The hand of the LORD was there upon him." All of a sudden as he looked, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire, and brightness the colour of amber came out of the fire. Then he saw four living creatures something like a man, with the hands of a man, but every one had four faces. One face was as a man, one as a lion, one as the face of an ox, and one as the face of an eagle. Each creature had four wings; the tips of two touched together, and the other two covered their body. Ezekiel noticed that the creatures, or angels, went straight forward - "they turned not when they went," for they had a face looking each direction.

They sparkled like polished brass and their appearance was as burning coals of fire and bright lamps, Swiftly, as the flash of lightning, they moved back and forth. Then Ezekiel saw a wheel, and another wheel in the middle of the first wheel. When the wheels were lifted up from the earth, the creatures were lifted up; whenever the creatures stood still, the wheels stood still. When the creatures stood, they let down their wings and covered their bodies.

## The Glory of the Lord

When they flew, it sounded as the noise of great waters or as the voice of the Almighty. Then as Ezekiel watched he saw them reverently let their wings fall as there appeared in the heavens a throne with fire around it, very bright as a beautiful rainbow. Above it appeared a man surrounded by the glory of the Lord. Ezekiel fell upon his face as he heard a voice that spoke to him.

Just as John, of whom we read in Revelation, fell upon his face when he saw a vision of the glorified Christ, so Ezekiel fell upon his face. That is the right attitude to take toward the Holy Lord. Before we enter into any service for God, we feel our unworthiness and we kneel in prayer to God, the Almighty One, asking His help.

Isaiah, too, had a vision from the Lord and Saw the seraphims and cherubims, or angels, and the Lord high and lifted up sitting upon a throne. The Lord gave him a message for the people. No doubt both Isaiah and Ezekiel recognized the living creatures as cherubims or angels (Ezekiel 10:20). Solomon's Temple contained beautiful carvings of angels (II Chronicles 3).

## The Message

The Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." Part of the message the Lord gave him was: "I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day, For they are impudent children and stiff hearted." God's message to the wicked was, "Thou shalt surely die." By that, God meant that such a person's soul would be forever lost.

Ezekiel was told to preach to the captive people; they should know that there had been a prophet among them. The Lord said for him not to be afraid of their looks or their words, even though briars, thorns and scorpions were with him. Perhaps the words from the wicked people would cut Ezekiel and hurt him as sharp thorns, or even as a serpent's sting. Sometimes words can "hurt" one as much or even more than actual wounds. Three times in these chapters the Lord told Ezekiel to speak His words "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

Today the Lord wants us to tell the Story of Jesus and warn sinners of the Judgment. That is why our church holds street meetings and prison meetings, publishes; Gospel literature and holds church services. It is our duty to publish the message of salvation even though people often refuse to listen.

"Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house," the Lord said. Then Ezekiel was given a roll of a book to eat, which was symbolic of having his heart completely filled with the urgency of his message. They "will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me," the Lord said, for they were "impudent and hardhearted."

## **A Watchman**

Then the Spirit lifted Ezekiel up and took him away. Later he came again to the captives by the river of Chebar and remained there seven days. After that the Lord said, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." If Ezekiel would not be faithful to warn the people, and sinners would die in their sins, God said that He would hold Ezekiel responsible. On the other hand, if Ezekiel warned a person and he did not heed the warning and turn from his sins, should that person die, Ezekiel would not be held accountable.

God said also that if a righteous person should turn from his righteousness and commit sin, or backslide, and should die in his sin, all the righteousness that he had done would not be remembered. His former goodness would not help him then.

## **Losing God's Love**

This teaches us that when we are saved we must not let the love of, God slip out of our heart. Some false teachers say that when once we are saved, it is impossible to be lost. But we see very clearly from the 20th verse of the third chapter that it is possible to fall back into sin and to be lost, even after having been saved. However, God is able to keep us from falling. How diligently we should read the Word and pray before we begin each day's activities.

## **Fulfilling the Call**

Ezekiel was a faithful prophet of God and for more than twenty years he preached to the people and taught them that even though they were eager to return to their homes in Jerusalem they must first return to their God.

We, too, are called to be spiritual watchmen to warn sinners of the coming judgment. Let us not be disobedient to the voice of God.

"Would you care if some friend  
You have met day by day  
Should never be told about Jesus?  
Are you willing that he in the judgment shall say:  
'No one ever told me of Jesus'?"

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Give a brief description of the cherubims.
2. Describe the throne which Ezekiel saw.
3. What did he do when he saw the glory of the Lord?
4. Name two others of whom we read in the Bible who had visions from God.
5. Why did the Lord send Ezekiel to the Children of Israel?
6. Would Ezekiel's message be received by the people? How had they accepted previous messages?
7. What title did the Lord give Ezekiel?
8. What would happen to him if he did not sound the warning?
9. What if he sounded the warning but it was not heeded?
10. Give four words the Lord used in describing the Children of Israel. Do you think some people are that way today?