

# Ezekiel: His Call and Commission

by Stephen Kaung

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*Stephen Kaung's sermon on Ezekiel explores the prophet's calling amidst captivity and the significance of spiritual vision in unusual times.*

**Duration:** 1:15:29

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 1:1, Ezekiel 3:17, Ezekiel 33:8, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 14:3, Revelation 4:6, Revelation 21:23

**Topics:** "Ezekiel"

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## Description

In this sermon, Brother Stephen Kahn begins by setting the context of the book of Ezekiel, stating that it was written during the fifth year of King Jehoi-Ching's captivity. He describes how Ezekiel, a priest, received a vision from Jehovah by the river Chiba. The vision includes a stormy wind, fire, and four living creatures with the likeness of a man, each having four faces and four wings. These creatures also had straight feet like a cow's foot and sparkled like burnished brass. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the symbolism in Ezekiel's vision and encourages further study of the book.

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## Transcript

This is Sunday evening, June 2nd, 1974 in Richmond, Virginia. The ministry is being given through Brother Stephen Kahn. We do thank the Lord that we may be together again.

Will you please turn to the book of the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 1. Ezekiel, the first chapter. I do not know how familiar you are with Ezekiel. For the sake of some who may not be too familiar, we'll read the first chapter.

Ezekiel, chapter 1, verse 1. Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Cheba, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth of the month it was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. The word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldees, by the river Cheba.

And the hand of Jehovah was there upon him. And I looked, and behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself, and a brightness was about it. And out of the midst thereof as the look of a glowing breast, out of the midst of the fire, also out of the midst thereof the likeness of four living creatures, and this was their appearance, they had the likeness of a man.

And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings, and their feet were straight feet, and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a cow's foot. And they sparkled as the look of burnished breasts. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides.

And they four had their faces in their wings. Their wings would join one to another. They turned up when they went.

They went every one straight forward, and the likeness of their faces was the face of a man. And they four had the face of a lion on the right side, and they four had the face of an ox on the left side. They four had also the face of an eagle.

And their faces and their wings were parted above. Two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward, whither the spirit was the goal they went.

They turned up when they went. And as for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire. As the appearance of torches, 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. And I look at the living creatures, and behold, one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, toward their four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was as the work of a crystallite.

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. They turned up when they went.

As for their rims, they were high and dreadful. And they four had their rims full of eyes round about. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside 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 will their spirit go, and the wheels were lifted up along with them.

For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, they went. And when those stood, they stood.

And when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up along with them. For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. And there was the likeness of an expanse over the heads of the living creature, as the look of the terrible crystal stretched forth over their heads above.

And under the expanse were their wings straight. The one toward the other. Every one had two which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side their bodies.

And when they went, I heard a noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, a tumultuous noise, as the noise of a host. When they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads.

When they stood, they let down their wings. And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone. And upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

And I saw as the look of glowing brass, as the appearance of fire, within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward, and from the appearance of his loins and downward. I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bull that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke. The prophet Ezekiel was one of the so-called four major prophets in the Old Testament.

Now, of course, the term major prophet is very arbitrary. This division is man-made according to the length of the book of each prophet. But anyway, Ezekiel was listed among the three great prophets at the time of the exile of the children of Israel.

There was Jeremiah, who started to prophesy before Ezekiel. He prophesied during that period when the nation of Judah was going to enter into captivity. And even after they were taken into captivity, Jeremiah continued his prophesying in the land of Egypt.

Jeremiah was prophesying in the land of Judah. Ezekiel was raised up by God among the Agars in Babylon to prophesy. And at the same time, we find there was Daniel.

Daniel was there in the court, and he was one raised up by God as a great prophet. So during that period, before, at the time, and after the captivity, we find God raised up three great prophets. Most probably they know one another.

Why? Because even though Ezekiel never mentioned Jeremiah in his book, and yet they were both of the priestly family. And Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem, where Ezekiel probably grew up. When he was young, Jeremiah was already used by God as a great prophet.

So most likely Ezekiel must have heard Jeremiah prophesying, and he must be greatly moved, impressed by Jeremiah. Now, of course, Ezekiel mentioned Daniel in his book. In chapter 14, in chapter 28, you'll find Ezekiel mentioned Daniel.

Daniel, of course, lived in the royal court because he was of the royal seed, and he was taken to Babylon before Ezekiel. He was taken to Babylon in the third year of King Jehoiakim. At that time, you remember, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, and he took some of the sons of the nobles as hostages, and Daniel was among them.

He was trained to stand before the king. So during the period of the exile, of the captivity, Daniel served in the Gentile court, and he served well for God. But Ezekiel, he was taken into captivity during the reign of King Jehoiakim.

It was a few years later, and he lived among the exiles by the river Sheba. So he must have known Daniel. He mentioned him twice.

One, he mentioned Daniel as one, a man of great righteousness and of prayer. Because there he mentioned Daniel, together with Noah and Job. Even if there was Noah and Daniel and Job, they could only save themselves.

They could not save other people. And then again, in chapter 28 of Ezekiel, he mentioned Daniel, saying that the prince of Tyre was wiser than Daniel. In other words, Daniel was a wise man.

So these three prophets, they knew one another, and God used them to prophesy approximately at the same time, more or less, at different places, under different circumstances. And by the witnesses of two and three, everything shall be secured. We do not know too much about the past history of Ezekiel.

We only know that his name means the strength of God. That very name is a good testimony. Because he lived in a time of great weakness of the people of God.

Even though the people of God were in great weakness, and they manifested great weakness, even so they were taken into captivity. And yet, the strength of God remained unchanged. His father's name was Buzi.

We do not know much about him. We only know that he was of the priestly family. Now, as you know, if a boy was born to a priestly family, his future was actually decided.

He was to be a priest. And because of that, he will be trained from his childhood for that one service, for that one purpose of serving God in the temple as a priest. So most probably Ezekiel, when he was young, when he was a boy, he must be trained towards that one aim of his life, and that was to serve in the temple.

But he didn't have a chance. If, in the first chapter of Ezekiel, it says, now it came to pass in the thirtieth year. And this thirtieth year is the same as it was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.

Now, we do not know what that thirtieth year means. We only know that the thirtieth year there is the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. In other words, it was the fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity.

Some people think probably the thirtieth year, which is not described. Probably it is his age. At the fifth year of his captivity, he came to the age of thirty.

Now, if the rule governing the Levites is applicable to the priest, then a priest will be trained from childhood for that one service in the temple. And when he was twenty-five years of age, he would enter into the temple as an apprentice and assistant. He would assist the priest in the services of the temple.

And when he reached the age of thirty, then he would become a full-fledged priest. There he would serve the house with the rest of the priests. Now, brothers and sisters, just think for a moment.

This man Ezekiel, he was born in the priestly family. He was trained from his childhood just for one job and nothing else. He knew absolutely nothing but how to serve God in the temple.

And his whole life was trained towards that one aim. But when he was twenty-five, just at the time he could enter into the temple to serve as an apprentice, he was taken into captivity. And when he was thirty years old, instead of serving the temple in Jerusalem, here he was with the exiles by the river Chiba.

The river Chiba most probably was the Grand Canal of Babylon. The Babylonian king used slave labor to build a canal. And most likely that's why these captives were there.

They were taken to that place to dig the Grand Canal. Instead of serving in the house of God in Jerusalem, there you'll find Ezekiel was among the captives, the slave laborers by the Grand Canal doing

digging. No wonder, when he was at that time, the agony of his heart was beyond description.

Suppose you are trained, for one thing, through your life. And yet just before you were able to enter into that, you were taken away. And there was no chance, no possibility.

As Ezekiel looked back to Jerusalem, how his heart was wrong that he might be in Jerusalem serving God in the temple. Because that was his life. But there was no possibility.

He was among the captives by the river. At the death of his disappointment, the glory of the Lord appeared to him. And he was called to be a prophet.

Brothers and sisters, if you read the book of Ezekiel, you'll find he was a priest in heart. Though a prophet by calling. He was different from Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was a priest prophet. He was a priest. But his main occupation was a prophet.

But here you'll find Ezekiel was different. In his heart he was always a priest. Even after he was called by God to be a prophet, he was still a priest in heart.

And yet, at the time when he was at his end, as it were, there was absolutely no possibility of his being a priest, serving God in the temple. And as you read his prophecy, you know, he prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed, the temple would be destroyed. There was absolutely no chance.

But God called him to be a prophet. To a higher service. He was not allowed to serve in the temple in Jerusalem because that temple was to be destroyed.

But he was called to serve the people of God in captivity. Which is a higher service? To serve the temple or serve the people of God? That they may be the living temple of God. God took him and translated his ministry.

From the outward appearance into the inward reality. From serving in the material temple in Jerusalem to serve the living people of God. From the temporal to the eternal.

From the physical to the spiritual. At the extremity, the end of man, God began with a glorious beginning. Now that was Ezekiel.

Brothers and sisters, do you know that we too live in a very unusual time? If you live in an unusual time, the traditional, the conventional will not operate. If the nation of Judah was in its peaceful days, then surely you'll find Ezekiel could serve God in the traditional way. He was born in a priestly family.

Therefore his future was determined. He was trained to be a priest. And after he was trained, he knew all the precepts and all the details, all that he should do in the temple.

Then when he reached that age, automatically, mechanically, technically, he will be in the temple serving God. But he lived in an unusual time. The traditional and the conventional did not work.

And not because it did not work, that was the end of his service to God. As a matter of fact, it was a glorious beginning. Dear brothers and sisters, we are not living in the usual time.

We are living in an unusual time. And because our time is unusual, the way to serve God has to be unusual. The traditional and the conventional will not be able to operate.

Do not be at a loss, because that's what you are trained for. You may think because you are trained in that way, if you cannot operate in that way, then you are finished. Humanly speaking, that may be true.

But dear brothers and sisters, God has something far better. God desires that in an unusual time that we shall touch the reality and not just the appearance. A priest may serve in the temple, but you will discover in the book of Ezekiel that the glory of the Lord has left the temple.

It was just an empty house. And if it was an empty house, then the service will be serving an empty house. There was no eternal value in it.

It was just maintaining an appearance. There was no reality within it. But instead, Ezekiel did not have a temple by the river Jeba.

And yet Ezekiel preserved the exile, the people of God, with a service to the end. Later on we'll mention that. That God did use him.

In spite of all the difficulties, almost a hopeless situation, and yet you'll find God did use him in a very unusual way. Dear brothers and sisters, I believe the Lord is doing the same thing today. Do not be discouraged.

Do not think that the door is closed. Do not give up because the conventional and the traditional does not work. The Lord is calling us into something much higher, much deeper.

It is the spiritual, the real, that really matters. Here in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, when Ezekiel was 30 years old, he was by the river Jeba. I wonder if he was meditating, thinking.

Very often, you know, when a person was meditating, the Lord may appear to him. Just like John, there he was on the Lord's Day, on the island Patmos, and longingly he looked across the sea to the seven churches in Asia, which he served very faithfully before he was exiled. And there you'll find God giving a vision.

And probably the same thing happened to Ezekiel. Here he was by the river Jeba. And then you'll find he was in the spirit.

The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. The earth was closed, but the heavens were opened. And he saw the visions of God.

And the word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest. And the hand of Jehovah was there upon him. He saw the visions of God.

He heard the voice of the Lord expressly to him. And the hand of the Lord was upon him. He saw, he heard, and he felt it.

In other words, his whole being was taken up in the spirit. And there he saw the visions of God. Now what were the visions of God? Even though we may not see vision in the same way as Ezekiel saw.

And yet in spiritual principle, this is a must to our life. If we want to live a life pleasing and useful to Him, we must have vision. Not in the sense that we need to see something, hear something, or feel the touch of something physically like Ezekiel.

But even with Ezekiel you know it is in the spirit. But in our spirit we need to see, we need to hear, and we need to be touched. We need that.

That will bring us into usefulness in the hand of the Lord. I looked, and behold a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire enfolding itself. And a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the look of glowing brass, out of the midst of the fire.

He looked and he saw a stormy wind came out of the north, a great from the north. Now why is it it came from the north? You know Jerusalem was in the east, in the west, of where Ezekiel was. But he saw a cloud coming from the north.

I wonder if this is because God's throne is set in the north. You remember in Isaiah chapter 14 it is said, Upon the mount of assembly the recesses of the north. He must think the north speaks of where God is, where his throne is.

Therefore you find a great cloud coming from the north. It is a cloud. And yet it is a brilliant cloud.

It is a cloud. And yet you find it is like fire enfolding there. There is a brightness there.

I wonder if this is what we call the Shekinah, glory of the Lord. This is the cloud that once filled the house built by Solomon. When the glory of the Lord entered into the house built by Solomon, the whole place was filled with smoke, and the priest could not serve there.

The glory of the Lord filled that place. I wonder if it is the same cloud that the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration entered into. You remember they woke up and they saw that Moses and Elijah were going to leave, and Peter putting a word, trying to retain them, and said, Now it is good, Lord, to be here.

Let us make three taverns. One for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. And in a minute you will find a cloud cover there.

And in the original it was not a dark cloud. It was a shiny cloud. The glory of the Lord.

The Lord used darkness as His pavilion when He traveled. But inside is full of glory. You can read that in Psalm 18.

So here you will find God, the God who is on the throne, He is coming from the north, traveling towards the prophet. So there He saw a great cloud, shiny, brilliant cloud, all the glory of the Lord traveling. And as He comes closer, He saw also out of the midst thereof the likeness of four living creatures.

At a distance He only saw a cloud, a brilliant cloud. But when the cloud came closer to Him, He could see that in the midst of the cloud there was the appearance of four living creatures. Now who were they? Here you will find mentioned four living creatures.

And when you come to chapter 10 of Ezekiel, you will find these four living creatures actually were cherubim. Because in chapter 10 it explains it. It is the same vision, and yet you will find it used the word cherubim instead of living creatures.

You can look up later on. But anyway you will find in the midst of the cloud there were four living creatures. And they were cherubim.

Cherubim is a mystery to us. The first mentioning of the cherubim were in Genesis chapter 3. You remember after man sinned, they were driven out of the garden of Eden. And there God set cherubim with a flame of flashing sword guarding the way to the tree of life on the east of the garden.

That was the first mentioning of the cherubim. But there was no description of these cherubim. Then later on you will find Moses while he was in the wilderness.

God commanded him to build a tabernacle and the different pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. And you remember God commanded Moses to build an ark. And upon the ark was the lid which was to be the mercy seat.

And on the mercy seat there were to be two cherubim facing each other looking towards the ark and with their wings covered. Not only on the mercy seat you'll find cherubim but you'll find on the veil that separates the holy place and the holiest of all that veil was made of blue, purple, gold and also embroidered with cherubim of artistic. Not only that but you'll find the tabernacle, the curtain were embroidered with cherubim.

And yet God did not tell Moses what were the cherubim like. And yet Moses seemed to have no problem. God did not tell him the shape, the form and so forth and yet Moses had no problem.

He just built a cherubim over the ark. He just embroidered the cherubim on the veil and the curtain. There was no problem.

When Solomon built the temple you'll find he used olive wood to carve two giant cherubim ten cubits high. And with their wings of five cubits each they stretched across the holiest of all serving as the back of the ark. So instead of two cherubim on the mercy seat you'll find two more in the holiest place four living creatures, four cherubim in the holiest of all.

And cherubim was carved on the walls of the house. Carved on the door of the house. And even you'll find on the panels of the base of the labyrinth cherubim everywhere.

No description. David mentioned cherubim in his psalms. He said God is the God of Israel who is seated between the cherubim.

Asaph mentioned cherubim in the book of Psalm 2. Hezekiah in his prayer he said O Lord of hosts the God of Israel who is seated between the cherubim. They all mentioned cherubim. But no description.

No description. It wasn't until Ezekiel you'll find that cherubim were described in detail. And there is another place in the Bible where cherubim are described in the book of Revelation.

The four living creatures. Now dear brothers and sisters who are these cherubim? Here you're finding Ezekiel. They were living creatures.

This was their appearance. They had the likeness of a man. They looked like men.

And yet you know when Moses built the tabernacle it was according to the pattern God gave him on the mountain. Everything was patterned after that which is in heaven. And you remember in Ezekiel chapter 28 it said the anointed cherub that covered the throne of God.

Well these anointed cherub that covered the throne of God in heaven seemed to be angelic beings. And yet here you'll find the appearance of a man. Everyone had four faces.

At the front the face of a man. On the right side the face of a lion. On the left side the face of an ox.

At the back the face of an eagle. They were all kings. Man is the king of the created beings.

Lion is the king of the beasts. Ox is the king of the domesticated animals. And eagle is the king of the birds.

All kings in their different realms. Here you'll find each cherub has four faces. But when you come to the book of Revelation you'll find four living creatures and each with one face.

They change. They change. And every one of them has four wings.

Only four. Two to stretch out and join together serving as the chariot of the throne of God. And two to cover their bodies because before God everything must be covered.

And yet in Isaiah chapter 6 the seraphim have six wings, not four. We wonder if the seraphim and the cherubim are the same or different. And their feet were straight feet.

They cannot bend. They were straight. Why? Because they walked straight.

They can go to four directions but they never need to make a right turn or a left turn or a roundabout turn. They just go straight forward, straight backward, straight right and straight left. And their feet were straight.

Never bend. And the soul is like an ox soul. Why? Cow soul.

It's very steady. Very steady. They won't stumble.

And they went, everyone, straight forward. Whither the spirit was to go, they went. They turned up when they went.

In other words, their action was controlled completely by the spirit. I believe the spirit here is the spirit of God. These living creatures were under the complete control of the spirit of God.

Wherever the spirit of God goes, they go. And they turned not aside. The appearance of these living creatures were like the appearance of fire.

Lightning. Full of brightness. And when they traveled, they traveled as the flesh of lightning.

Swift. Very fast. And Ezekiel looked again and he saw by the side of the living creatures were wheels.

Wheels within wheels. And the rim of the wheels were very high and dreadful, full of eyes. And wherever the spirit went, the living creatures went, the wheels went.

Because the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. Now, brothers and sisters, these were the descriptions you'll find in the book of Ezekiel of these charities. We do not know who they are.

Whether they are angelic beings or what. We believe that they are real. They are not just some ideas.

Abstract ideas. They are real. And yet, it seems that you cannot pin them down to a fixed form.

They seem to be so adjustable. They seem to change their form from time to time. They are not as rigid and fixed.

They are more fluid. In other words, can it be that these cherubim, without defining what they are or who they are, we believe they are real. And yet, in these cherubim, probably God wants us to see certain spiritual principles embodied by them.

These cherubim, they were creatures, living creatures. They were four in number. We wonder if they represent God's creation as God designed.

You know, in the first world, the highest of God's created beings are the angels. And for that reason, probably, the cherubim were angelic in appearance. But when God remade this world, in Genesis chapter 1, you'll find the highest of God's created beings was man.

And I wonder if because of that, the cherubim took up the form of Purim. Let me put it this way. I'm not trying to define what and who these cherubim are.

I don't know. But I think probably from these cherubim, we can learn some spiritual principles. No doubt God must have put some spiritual principles in these cherubim.

They represent something. They represent something. Why is it that after man fell, God sent cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life? Can it be that when man fell, God set before man what he had first designed man to be? In other words, man can fail, but God's design can never fail.

It's still there. God will not lower his standard. God's standard is still there.

And because God's standard is still there, man has no way to get to the tree of life. There's no way. In other words, these cherubim that stood guarding the tree of life reminded man what they ought to be and what they were not.

That's why you'll find the cherubim appeared for the first time in the book of Genesis, chapter 3. And again and again you'll find in the temple, in the tabernacle in the temple, you'll find these cherubim. Why? Because the tabernacle and the temple stood for what God desired. He wanted to dwell among man.

But he had to dwell among man in that expression. Nothing less than what these cherubim represent. One day, when our Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, when he said, It is finished.

Father, I surrender. I give my spirit to you. When Christ died on the cross outside the gate of Jerusalem, there within Jerusalem, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom into two.

And Hebrews said, This veil represents the flesh of our Lord Jesus, the body of our Lord Jesus. And because he was broken, a new and living way is given to us that we may enter into the holy of holies, the very presence of God. If the veil represents the flesh of our Lord Jesus, then you know on the veil were embroidered the cherubim all over.

All over. When the veil was rent, the cherubim embroidered on the veil. And brothers and sisters, when the Lord was in the flesh, in one sense, his very presence on earth condemned everyone.

He was the only one who could see the Father. But at the same time, he was the one that should bar everyone from the present book. You remember the Lord in John said, When the Holy Spirit shall come,

he shall convict people of sin, of righteousness, of judgment.

Of righteousness, because I go to the Father. In other words, he was the only one who was fit to see the Father's face. And that condemned us.

We are not fit. Because we are not what we should be. What God designed us to be.

We had fallen. But dear brothers and sisters, when Christ died on the cross and he was rent, we were rent in him. By his death we died.

And a new and living way appears to us. We now can go to the Father. So if we look at it in this way, we can see that the Cherubim, at least, impressed upon us that they stand for God and for what God's purpose is in creation.

He created angels, but the angels fell. He created man, but man fell. He called Israel to be his temple, and Israel fell.

And brothers and sisters, who are represented by these Cherubim today? The church. The Cherubim are the living creatures. They were closest to the throne.

They guard the throne. They support the throne. And they carry the throne wherever God wants to go.

They were the carriers of the throne. They are in such oneness with the throne. They are under the throne.

They are under the complete control of the Spirit. They are in one spirit with God. They are full of intelligence, full of eyes.

They never turn hither and thither, but they always go straight and sweet and full of fire that is holy. Brothers and sisters, is that not a description of what the church is in the mind of God today? Who can be closer to the throne today than the church of God? To whom does God commit Himself on this earth? To the church. What is the church? The church is to be under the throne of God, to carry out His will.

The church is to be filled by the Spirit of God and to go straight. The church is to be intelligent enough to know the Lord. And the church is to lead the universe in worshipping God, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.

That is what the church is. When Israel failed, God had His charity. When the church failed, God still has His charity.

That's what you'll find in Revelation. He still has His charity. Men may fail, but God cannot.

Thank God for that. But brothers and sisters, do not stop at the charity. Here you'll find Ezekiel saw a cloud coming.

And as the cloud comes, he looked up and he saw in the cloud the four living creatures. And they spread their wings as the chariot of God. Then he looked further up and he saw the next space.

Clear as crystal. Transparent. And you know John the Apostle saw the same thing.

A glassy sea. Under the throne. Before God, everything is transparent.

God is light. There is no darkness in there. There is no shadow nor turning with God.

So here you'll find even at the feet of the throne, it is all transparent. Everything is transparent. And there he saw, on the expanse, the lightness of the throne.

Now do not try to imagine a throne in a physical way. You know, that's the problem. When we read the Bible, you know, well, just this afternoon, before I came, somebody asked me this question.

The Lord is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Now, we imagine there is a throne there, you know. And God sits in the throne and the Lord sits at his right hand.

God has to use these figurative ways to explain to us finite minds. But do not try to visualize it. To limit it to a material concept, you know.

God is trying to show us that he is on the throne. And the throne, the appearance of the throne. Appearance.

And it is full of fire. Pure glory. And one sits upon the throne like the appearance of a man.

And you see the upper part, the lower part, and it's all like fire burning. Holy, holy, holy. In other words, God is on the throne.

And the cherry beans are underneath and carry the throne wherever God wanted to go. Brothers and sisters, it is good to catch a vision of what the church is in God's eyes. We see too much on earth.

And sometimes because we see too much, we cannot see what we ought to see. We look downward instead of upward. We look around instead of up.

Oh, if only God allows us to see what the church is as he sees it. They are represented by the cherry beans, the living creatures, doing the will of God, in perfect harmony with God. No matter what happens, the throne of God is there.

God is in full control. And he is working out his purpose. Brothers and sisters, when Ezekiel saw that vision, you know, what a comfort it must be to Ezekiel.

He saw that so far as his life was concerned, he was finished. Finished at 30. So far as the children of Israel were concerned, it was finished.

Everything was finished. But God showed him that. In spite of what happened on earth, God is still on the throne.

He still has his cherry beans to carry out his will. And his will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now this is the vision that Ezekiel saw.

I wonder if we should go on. That's the introduction. Maybe go on a little bit.

All right. And after Ezekiel saw this vision, then he heard the voice of God calling him. You know, brothers and sisters, if God should appear to us, invariably there is a message to us.

There is a calling. God will not appear to us just to satisfy our curiosity with no meaning, with no purpose. If God should appear to us, he will call us to a definite calling.

There is a commission coming to us. It is not in vain. There is something that God wants in us.

So when Ezekiel saw this vision, the voice of God came to him, and God told him that he was to be approached. God was to send him to the children of Israel, especially among the exiles. And in one sense it was a hopeless job.

Why? Because he was sent to the exiles. And these exiles were a rebellious people. They would not listen.

But God said whether they hear or whether they forbear, let them know that there is a prophet among them. Think of it. It was to be a very difficult job.

The people, even the exiles, their hearts were so hardened. They would not listen to Ezekiel. They would rather listen to these false prophets.

Because these exiles, when they were in captivity, of course they longed to go back to Jerusalem. And sure enough, there were false prophets in Jerusalem and false prophets among the exiles prophesying that very soon God will let them go back to Jerusalem. God will once again bless the nation of Israel.

And their ears were so itching. They liked to hear these voices. And to be a prophet under such circumstance was really an ungrateful, unthankful job.

He was to announce judgment. He was to announce. There was no hope.

They wouldn't hear him. And God told him beforehand. God said, I raise you up as a prophet among the exiles, but it is an unthankful job.

Whether they hear or they forbear, let them know there is a true prophet. That's all. And God gave him a roll of books, a book, asked him to eat it.

And in his mouth it was sweet as honey. But of course we know afterwards he was filled with bitterness of spirit. With the vision came the calling.

He was called to be a prophet. He was to be a prophet's priest. Not just to prophesy, but to serve as a priest.

In other words, not only to prophesy, to tell them the word of God, but try to shepherd them, try to help them, to restore them. And it was something to be done. Not in an objective way.

The word came and he just passed it on. No. He had to eat the word.

Assimilate it. Become one with the word. He must feel as the word of God feels.

It is a very subjective experience. And that's why you'll find Ezekiel, he had to act sometimes. Because he was entirely one with the word of God.

And God set him up as a watchman. In chapter 3. God said, I set you up as a watchman. When you see danger coming, and if you don't warn them, they will die in their sin.

But I will. I will find you. Yes.

But if you warn them, and they do not listen, they die in their sin, but you are innocent. In other words, Ezekiel was set up as a watchman. Brothers and sisters, we need to have a vision of God.

We need to know God, and know His purpose, His will. And knowing that, we will be sent among God's people with His word. And His word shall burn within us.

Not just an objective delivery, but shall burn within us. And we should serve as watchmen among God's people to war. If we do not do that, the blood is upon us.

Very seriously. It is a great privilege to be God's spokesman. It is a great privilege to be a watchman.

To know God's will. To know what is coming. And to warn the people.

But it is a tremendous responsibility. Oh, how the church today needs prophetic ministry. Prophetic ministry today may not be welcome.

Because it is not all peace, peace. Today, how we need watchmen to warn the people of God. But again, it is a very unthankful job.

Ezekiel, when he prophesied, people would not listen to him. But if you read the Bible, you will find, even though his prophesying was rejected in the beginning, but afterwards, it did produce some fruit among God's people. How do we know? Because 70 years of captivity ended.

And you know, when the call came for God's people to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, there was at least a remnant that was ready to go. Now, who prepared this remnant? Ezekiel. Even though he was not able to restore all the children of Israel, turn them back to God, and yet, through his faithfulness, there was a remnant that was ready when the 70 years were ended.

How often a prophet does not see his fruit while he is living. A prophet is not honored while he is living. But afterwards, you will find his labor is not in vain.

So dear brothers and sisters, just as an introduction to Ezekiel, let us encourage ourselves with this, you know. Whatever may be our situation, whatever we may see around us and in us, thank God, his throne is always there. He always has his cherubim, and his purpose shall be fulfilled.

For those who have caught that vision are called to speak for God and to be as watchmen to warn God's people. And your labor shall not be in vain. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we do praise and thank thee when man comes to its end, thou art able to begin with the appearing of thy glory.

O Lord, how we need to see thy glory that we may not only be able to press on, but we may be useful in your hand to serve as watchmen among thy people. O Lord, raise up people with vision, with word, and with carefulness, watchfulness. Have mercy upon us, upon thy people.

We praise and we thank thee. It is not all lost. Thou shalt gain what thou dost desire to have.

Thou shalt have it. And we want thee to have it. We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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