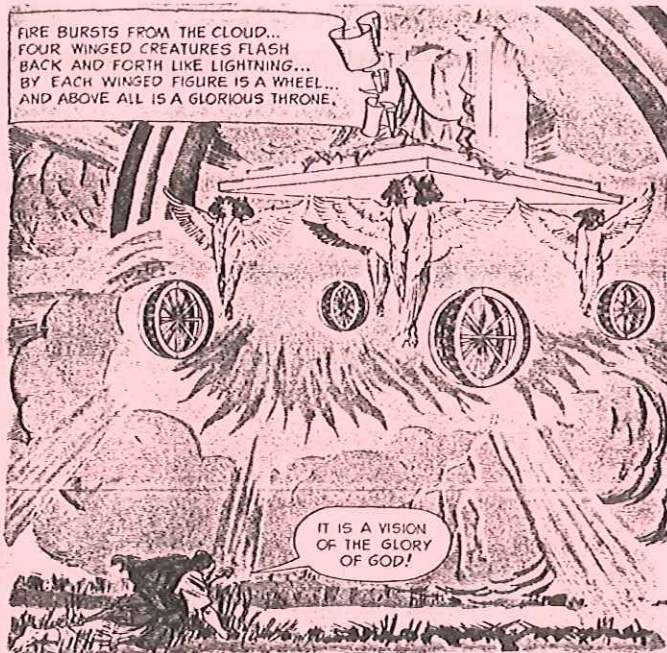


The Prophet Ezekiel



Ezekiel was a Jewish boy who probably grew up in the last years of King Josiah. He would have known the prophet Jeremiah and heard him warning the people that they were going to be taken captive.

Ezekiel was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar's army when they removed King Jehoiachin and set up Zedekiah as king. Daniel and his three friends had already been taken captive to Babylon about 7 years earlier. *Ezekiel and Daniel are good examples to us that*

even when we may feel alone and far away from God's people, we still must remain faithful to God and do good things!

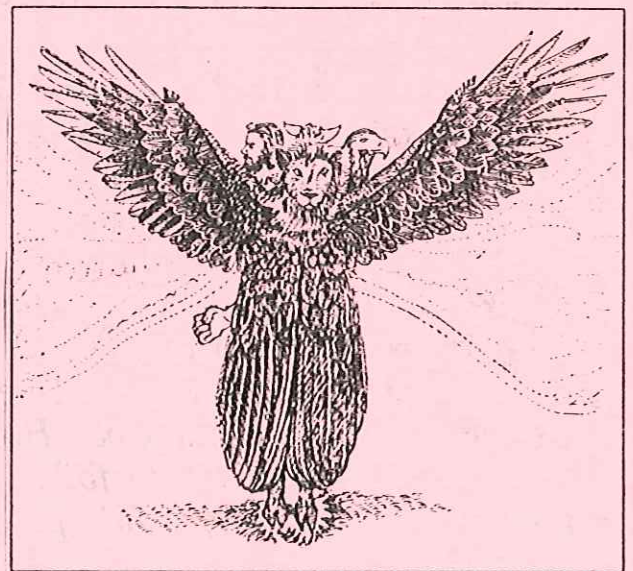
The Vision of the Glory of God

About 5 years after Ezekiel had been taken to Babylon, God chose him to be a prophet and showed him a vision. He saw a picture of the likeness of the Glory of God. There were four living creatures in the vision. They each had four faces: a man, lion, ox, and eagle.

The four creatures were surrounded by a bright cloud with fire flashing all around. When Ezekiel saw the powerful light, he fell on his face. God said to him, "Son of man, stand on your feet. I am going to send you to Israel, a nation that has rebelled against me to this very day."

God told Ezekiel he would be a prophet. It was his job to bring the words of the Lord to the people, even if they mocked him or refused to listen. Ezekiel spoke to the Jews who were living in Babylon, while Jeremiah continued to speak to the Jews still living in the land of Israel.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah can remind us that there are times when we must speak up for God and tell the truth, even if people will make fun of us or refuse to listen.



Ezekiel Eats a Scroll

God handed Ezekiel a scroll on which words of sorrow and mourning about Israel were written. He told Ezekiel to eat the scroll and so Ezekiel did! God used this event to teach Ezekiel that God would give him the words to say to the people. Ezekiel had to take God's word into his own mind, and then he would know what to say to the Jews.

Ezekiel went down among the Jewish exiles who lived along the Chebar River in Babylonia. There he spoke to the people and asked them to turn from their wicked ways and their idol worship. Some of them listened to him, while many others stubbornly refused to hear.

Jerusalem will be Destroyed!

Then God instructed Ezekiel to take a big clay tile, and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. When the prophet had made his drawing, God told him to add enemy camps and battering rams around the city wall. These were a sign to the people that one day Israel would be completely destroyed.

God wanted Ezekiel to explain to the captives in Babylon that the Jews back in the land of Israel were still wicked and had not repented, so God must destroy Jerusalem and scatter the Jews out of the land of Israel.



The Sign of Ezekiel's Hair and Beard

As another sign of Israel's coming punishment, God told Ezekiel to shave his head and his beard. He then burned some of the hair, hit some with his sword, and threw the rest into the wind to scatter it.

In this way God showed Ezekiel the three ways God would destroy the Jews still in the land of Israel. Some would be burned, some would be killed by a sword, and others would be scattered out of the land. *We know that our God is a very merciful God. He likes to show kindness to people who admit their mistakes and try to follow His ways. But if people choose to do bad things day after day, God's patience does end and He will punish them for their sins.*

The People Continue to Worship Idols!

Some time after this, Ezekiel saw another vision of God. This time God lifted the prophet and carried him to the city of Jerusalem, where he was able to see all the sins of the people. God brought him into the Temple and showed him the idol that the people were worshipping right in God's house! God told Ezekiel that He felt like the evil Jews were forcing Him out of His own house!

Then God took Ezekiel down into a secret room where 70 leaders of Jerusalem were worshipping a wall that had beasts, reptiles and other idols drawn on it! The people refused to faithfully follow Yahweh and they chose to put their trust in idols instead! God's patience had run out.

Ezekiel Hires Six Executioners

After Ezekiel had seen the sins of the Jews, God ordered him to hire six men to kill every man, woman and child who did evil things or worshipped idols. Ezekiel sent a man to mark the forehead of every person who was sad and upset about the evil ways of the people. After the man had marked the good people, Ezekiel sent the six men into Jerusalem to carry out God's judgement. He ordered them to leave everyone alone who had the mark on their forehead, but to kill all the rest of the people without any mercy!

The men obeyed Ezekiel's command and killed a large number of people. They only found a few righteous people who had the mark on their foreheads. So, at the end of this vision, Ezekiel knew that only a few people who followed God's laws would be saved.

Judah was finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army. King Zedekiah's sons were killed and Zedekiah's eyes were removed. Many Jews in the land were killed. The survivors were captured and scattered out of the land just as God had warned through the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah.



Israel Will be Restored in the Last Days!

Later on, Ezekiel had another vision. This time it was an exciting vision about the rebuilding of Israel in the last days, just before the Kingdom of God is established! God showed Ezekiel a valley full of dry bones. He said to Ezekiel, "Prophesy to these bones and say that I will cause breath to enter them and they will live."

Ezekiel did as God asked him to, and when he was finished, there was a great noise and a tremendous shaking. Suddenly the bones came together with flesh and skin on them, but no breath in them. At God's command Ezekiel called to the four winds to breathe on the bodies so they could live. When he was done, breath came into the bodies and they stood on their feet alive!

God then explained to Ezekiel that these bones were a symbol of the nation of Israel. One day, just as He had done in the vision, God would gather the Jews who were scattered in other nations and bring them back to the land of Israel. In that day, the Jews will not turn to idols anymore, but they will finally worship Yahweh their God.

The New Temple In Jerusalem

In Ezekiel's last vision he saw a new temple being built in Jerusalem during the kingdom. When it was finished, God's Glory moved into His new house. Ezekiel saw the temple that will be used by everyone during the kingdom when Jesus Christ returns to earth. *We will be able to walk in that temple during the kingdom if we follow God's ways like Ezekiel, and faithfully accept the events that God brings into our lives.*

