# Ezekiel 1

## *The Throne Above the Storm: Glory by the River Chebar*

**OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION**

*"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."*
**Acts 17:11**

CHAPTER THEME

God met a priest with no temple in the worst place of his life. Before Ezekiel ever said a word, God showed him that His throne is not stuck in Jerusalem — it moves, it sees everything, and it rules over Babylon too. Seeing the glory put Ezekiel on his face, and that is where his ministry began.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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# 00 The Text

EZEKIEL 1 (KJV), MARKED

**Gold** God — His character & actions
**Green** Command / instruction
**Sky** Key repeated word
**Rose** Sin / warning
**Violet** Promise / blessing
**Amber** Time / place / contrast

1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

4 And I 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.

5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 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.

11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

13 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.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour 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.

17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

19 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.

20 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.

21 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.

22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

23 And under the firmament 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.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

26 And above the firmament 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.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

28 As the appearance of the bow 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 the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

## Marked in the text

- **v1** the heavens were opened
- **v1** visions of God
- **v1** in the thirtieth year
- **v1** by the river of Chebar
- **v2** the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity
- **v3** The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel
- **v3** the hand of the LORD was there upon him
- **v4** a whirlwind came out of the north
- **v5** living creatures (*every occurrence*)
- **v6** four faces
- **v9** they went every one straight forward
- **v12** whither the spirit was to go, they went
- **v15** wheel (*every occurrence*)
- **v16** a wheel in the middle of a wheel
- **v18** full of eyes round about
- **v20** the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels
- **v24** as the voice of the Almighty
- **v26** the likeness of a throne
- **v26** the likeness as the appearance of a man
- **v28** the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain
- **v28** the likeness of the glory of the LORD
- **v28** I fell upon my face
- **v28** I heard a voice of one that spake

*Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.*

# 01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 1:1 (KJV)

[1]Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that ▲ the heavens were opened, and I saw ▲ visions of God.

## Setting

"Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (v1). Verse 2 fixes the date: "the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile" — about 593 BC. Ezekiel is a priest (v3) who was carried off to Babylon with King Jehoiachin in 597 BC. Jerusalem is still standing, the temple is still open, and false prophets are promising a quick return. Ezekiel is hundreds of miles away, sitting by a canal in Babylon, with no temple to serve in.

## Structure

- vv1–3 — **the call in exile:** "the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (v1). "The word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest" (v3), "and there the hand of the LORD came upon him" (v3).
- v4 — **the storm:** "a storm wind was coming from the north" (v4), a great cloud and flashing fire, and in its midst "something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire" (v4).
- vv5–14 — **the four living beings:** "figures resembling four living beings" (v5); "they had human form" (v5). "Each of them had four faces and four wings" (v6) — "the face of a man," "the face of a lion," "the face of a bull," "the face of an eagle" (v10). "Each went straight forward" (vv9, 12); "wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go" (v12). They look "like burning coals of fire" (v13) and dart "like bolts of lightning" (v14).
- vv15–21 — **the wheels:** a wheel on the earth beside each being, "as if one wheel were within another" (v16), with rims "full of eyes round about" (v18). The wheels move and rise with the beings, "for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels" (vv20, 21).
- vv22–25 — **the expanse:** over their heads, "something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal" (v22). Their wings sound "like the sound of abundant waters," "like the voice of the Almighty" (v24). A voice comes from above the expanse (v25).
- vv26–28 — **the throne and the One on it:** "something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance" (v26), and on it "a figure with the appearance of a man" (v26), fire and "a radiance around Him" (v27). "As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day" (v28) — "Such

was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD" (v28). "I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking" (v28).

### Repeated words

living beings (vv5, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22); four (vv5, 6, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18); faces (vv6, 8, 9, 10, 11); wings (vv6, 8, 9, 11, 23, 24, 25); wheel / wheels (vv15, 16, 19, 20, 21); spirit (vv12, 20, 21); fire (vv4, 13, 27); appearance (vv5, 16, 26, 27, 28); went straight forward (vv9, 12).

### Contrasts

a captive by a Babylonian canal (v1) ⟷ "the heavens were opened" (v1). A storm out of the north, the direction judgment would come from (v4) ⟷ the throne of God riding inside it (v26). Creatures with wings and faces (vv5–14) ⟷ the One above them all on the throne (v26). Wheels on the earth (v15) ⟷ a throne above the expanse (v26). The blaze of fire around Him (v27) ⟷ the rainbow of promise (v28). Ezekiel on his face (v28) ⟷ God speaking to him (v28).

### Chapter theme (my words)

God met a priest with no temple in the worst place of his life. Before Ezekiel ever said a word, God showed him that His throne is not stuck in Jerusalem — it moves, it sees everything, and it rules over Babylon too. Seeing the glory put Ezekiel on his face, and that is where his ministry began.

## 02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 1:28 (KJV)

28 As the appearance of ★ the bow 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 the LORD. And when I saw it, ▮▮ I fell upon my face, and ★ I heard a voice of one that spake.

### Real history (vv1–3)

Ezekiel gives a year, a month, a day and a place. Guzik stresses that the date anchors the vision in real history. He takes "the thirtieth year" as Ezekiel's age — the year a priest began to serve (Num 4:3). Others count thirty years from the finding of the Law under Josiah (622 BC). If Guzik is right, the year Ezekiel should have entered the temple, God opened heaven instead. Taylor, in Guzik: "The priest was commissioned as a prophet." Babylon took the Jews in three waves (605, 597 and 587/586 BC); Ezekiel went in the second, with Jehoiachin. The Chebar was a navigable canal near Babylon. Ezekiel's name, Guzik notes from Poole, "signifies either, the strength of God, or, strengthened by God" — and "the hand of the LORD" was on him (v3).

### Out of the north (v4)

Babylon's armies would come down on Judah from the north (Jer 1:14). The storm, cloud and fire recall the pillar of cloud and fire and the burning bush (Exod 3:2; 13:21–22). Guzik's point: the vision told Ezekiel that Yahweh ruled over Babylon and its gods. Feinberg, in Guzik: "The vision Ezekiel had at the time of his call never left him but influenced his thought continually."

### The living beings (vv5–14)

In chapter 10 Ezekiel himself calls them cherubim (10:15, 20). Guzik traces cherubim through Scripture: guarding Eden (Gen 3:24), over the mercy seat on the ark, woven into the tabernacle and temple, and around the throne in Revelation 4. Alexander, in Guzik: "Certainly Ezekiel was acquainted with cherubim from his training in the temple." The four faces have been read many ways — as the four Gospels (common in medieval art), or as the tribal banners of Israel's camp. Guzik favors the view that they stand for the highest of creation: man, wild beast, domestic animal and bird. Smith, in Guzik: "The four represent all sentient creation." They never turn aside; they go "wherever the spirit was about to go" (v12). Guzik notes they are perfectly responsive — the very thing sinful people are not.

### The wheels (vv15–21)

The picture is a throne-chariot. Wright, in Guzik: "Each wheel is composed of two wheels apparently at right angles to each other" — able to go any direction without turning. Wiersbe, in Guzik: "The wheels symbolize the omnipresence of God, while the eyes on their rims suggest the omniscience of God." This same chariot will leave the temple in chapters 10–11 and return in chapter 43.

### The expanse and the voice (vv22–25)

Above the creatures is a crystal platform. The roar of their wings is "like the voice of the Almighty" (v24; compare Rev 1:15; 14:2). But the creatures are not the message; when the voice speaks from above, they stand still and drop their wings (v25).

### The throne and the glory (vv26–28)

The vision builds from the bottom up and peaks at the throne. The blue stone recalls the pavement under God's feet at Sinai (Exod 24:10). Block, in Guzik, calls it "the most majestic throne one could imagine." Notice how careful Ezekiel is: "resembling," "appearance," "likeness" — he describes what God looked like, not God Himself. Taylor, in Guzik: "no form but the human form could conceivably have been used to represent the Deity." Many Christians see here a preview of the Son, who would take on real human flesh (John 1:14; Rev 1:13–16); Guzik notes Wright's suggestion along these lines while insisting the Incarnation was still needed. The rainbow (v28) recalls God's promise to Noah (Gen 9:13–16); Guzik says it shows God binding His sovereignty to His promises. Glory (*kabod*) is, in Block's words quoted by Guzik, "that quality which evokes a response of awe in the observer." Ezekiel's response is the right one: on his face, listening.

### Word study (Hebrew)

- **Ezekiel — *Yechezqel* (H3168):** "God strengthens."
- **visions — *mar'ah* (H4759):** a vision, a sight given by God.
- **exiles — *golah* (H1473):** the captivity, the community of exiles.
- **hand — *yad* (H3027):** hand; power — "the hand of the LORD" (v3).

- **storm — *seʿarah* (H5591):** a tempest, whirlwind.
- **glowing metal — *chashmal* (H2830):** a gleaming substance, amber or electrum.
- **living beings — *chayyah* (H2416):** living things, creatures.
- **spirit — *ruach* (H7307):** wind, breath, spirit.
- **wheel — *ʾophan* (H212):** a wheel.
- **rims — *gab* (H1354):** a curved thing — the felloe, rim of a wheel.
- **expanse — *raqiaʿ* (H7549):** a beaten-out platform, the firmament.
- **throne — *kisseʾ* (H3678):** a seat of honor, throne.
- **lapis lazuli — *sappir* (H5601):** a deep-blue precious stone.
- **likeness — *demuth* (H1823):** likeness, resemblance.
- **Almighty — *Shadday* (H7706):** the Almighty.
- **rainbow — *qesheth* (H7198):** a bow; the rainbow (Gen 9:13).
- **glory — *kabod* (H3519):** weight, honor, glory.

### Cross-references

Gen 3:24; Gen 9:13–16; Exod 3:2; Exod 13:21–22; Exod 24:10; Exod 25:18–22; Num 4:3; 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Kgs 24:10–16; Ps 18:10; Ps 139:7–12; Isa 6:1–5; Jer 1:14; Ezek 10:1–22; Ezek 43:2–5; Dan 7:9–10; John 1:14; John 12:41; 2 Cor 4:6; Rev 1:12–17; Rev 4:2–8.

## 03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 1:9 (KJV)

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

### Command to obey — fall on my face and listen

Ezekiel's first act as a prophet was not to talk but to fall down and hear "a voice speaking" (v28). Before I write, teach or counsel anyone, I need to be on my face before God's glory and listening to His Word. Ministry that skips this step runs on my own steam.

### Sin to confess — a God too small

The exiles thought God was stuck in Jerusalem and had forgotten them in Babylon. I do the same when I act as if God is present at church but absent at the job site, the courtroom or the hospital. I confess the shrunken view of God that makes me anxious and prayerless.

### Warning to heed — the storm from the north

The vision came out of the north — the direction the judgment was coming from. Hard seasons are not outside God's rule; sometimes He rides in on the very storm I fear. I won't assume a hard providence means God has left. I'll ask what He is saying in it.

### Promise to trust — the heavens opened by a canal in Babylon

God opened heaven to a captive, not to a king. For the man in a cell block, a treatment center or a halfway house, this is the promise: God can meet you right where you are — no temple, no title, no freedom — and His eyes are on you (v18). You are not too far away for Him.

### Example to follow — the living beings

They went "straight forward," without turning, wherever the spirit went (v12). That's what I want for the men I disciple and for myself: no double life, no detours back to the old haunts, just steady going where God leads, one straight step at a time.

### Worship

Above the storm, above the creatures, above the expanse, there is a throne — and a rainbow around it. He sees everything and goes everywhere, and His glory puts the strongest man on his face. My God rules over Babylon.

### Prayer

Lord God, You opened heaven to a captive by a canal. Open my eyes to Your glory where I am today. Make my view of You big again. Put me on my face, speak to me, and send me straight forward wherever Your Spirit leads. Meet the men I serve in their exile, and let them see Your throne. Amen.