

The Book of Ezekiel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 1: The Glory of the Lord and the Call of Ezekiel

Ezekiel 1:1-3:27

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson opens the entire study by establishing who God is before Ezekiel ever delivers a single oracle. The doctrinal stakes are the glory, holiness, and sovereign presence of God. Help the class see that the throne-chariot vision deliberately demolishes the false idea that God was confined to Jerusalem or the temple; His glory moves on wheels within wheels, going wherever His Spirit goes, even into Babylon among defeated exiles. Guard against the modern error of a small, domesticated God who exists merely to make us comfortable. The proper response to this God is Ezekiel's response: face in the dust. Yet press also that the enthroned glory here, the likeness of a man upon the throne (1:26-28), points forward to the One who is the brightness of the Father's glory, Jesus Christ, now reigning at God's right hand over His church. This is not a future earthly throne but a present spiritual reign (Acts 2:32-36; Hebrews 1:1-3).

The lesson also aims at the student's calling and accountability. Ezekiel's commission as a watchman (3:16-21) is not unique to prophets; the principle of faithful, loving warning runs straight into the church's responsibility to proclaim the gospel whether or not the world listens. Help the class feel the weight of this: faithfulness, not visible results, is the measure of obedience. God told Ezekiel his accountability hinged on whether he warned, not on whether the people repented. Many in the room are discouraged because their witness seems to fall on deaf ears; this passage frees them to be faithful and to leave the results with God.

Finally, aim at the heart through the eaten scroll (2:8-3:3). God's word must go down into us before it can come out of us with any power. Press the class beyond mere study toward digestion: the truth must become part of who they are. Leave each student with one concrete way reverence, trust in God's presence, or faithful witness will mark their walk this week, and one renewed habit of taking God's word deep into the soul.

Question 1

Student Question:

The opening vision reveals a God of overwhelming holiness, power, and glory who is not confined to one place. What does this vision teach us about the true character and majesty of God, and how does it confront a small or sentimental view of Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The book opens with careful precision about time and place: the thirtieth year, the fifth day of the fourth month, by the river of Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans. This is not myth or vague

spirituality. God acts in real history, in a real place, among real people who had been carried into exile. Then the heavens are opened and Ezekiel sees visions of God.

What he sees defies tidy description. A whirlwind out of the north, a great cloud, fire enfolding itself, brightness all around, and out of the midst the likeness of four living creatures. The accumulation of detail, the wheels full of eyes, the wings, the gleaming like burnished brass, is meant to overwhelm. Ezekiel is straining language to its limit to describe what is finally indescribable: the glory of God Himself.

The point is not that we should decode every wheel and wing as a puzzle. The point is the sheer, staggering majesty of God. He is holy, transcendent, and beyond our control or comprehension. The vision is designed to crush every small and manageable idea we have of Him and to leave us, like Ezekiel, on our faces.

For our class this is a needed corrective. We are tempted to shrink God to a comfortable size, a kindly helper who exists to make our lives go smoothly. Ezekiel's vision will not allow it. The God of the Bible is the Lord of glory before whom heaven itself bows, and any worship that does not reckon with His holiness is worship of something smaller than the true God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God is holy, transcendent, and majestic beyond our full comprehension; He cannot be reduced to a manageable size.
- God acts in real history and real places, not in vague spirituality.
- True worship begins with a right and reverent vision of who God actually is (Isaiah 6:1–5).
- A small, domesticated view of God is one of the great dangers of comfortable religion.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think the book of Ezekiel opens with an overwhelming vision rather than a spoken message?
- In what ways are we tempted to shrink God down to a comfortable size?
- How does recovering a sense of God's majesty change the way we worship and pray?

Question 2

Student Question:

Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord and immediately fell on his face. What does genuine reverence look like in your own life, and where might familiarity have dulled your sense of awe before God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Watch Ezekiel's response when the vision reaches its climax. Above the living creatures is a throne like sapphire, and upon it the likeness as the appearance of a man, surrounded by fire

and brightness like the rainbow in the cloud. Ezekiel sums it up: “This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” And then, “when I saw it, I fell upon my face.”

This is the only fitting response to a true sight of God’s glory. Ezekiel does not analyze, debate, or take it in stride. He collapses. Throughout Scripture, those who genuinely glimpse the holiness of God are undone by it. Isaiah cried, “Woe is me, for I am undone.” John, seeing the glorified Christ, fell at His feet as dead (Revelation 1:17). Reverence is not optional decoration; it is the natural reflex of a creature before its Creator.

We live in an age that has largely lost this reflex. We speak of God casually, sing about Him with little thought, and treat worship as something we attend rather than something that should regularly bring us to our knees. Ezekiel reminds us that awe is not the enemy of intimacy with God; it is the doorway to it.

Ask the class honestly whether familiarity has dulled their sense of awe. The same God who flattened Ezekiel is the God we approach in worship each Lord’s Day. Coming to know Him well should deepen our reverence, not erode it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Falling on the face in awe is the fitting human response to the glory of God.
- Reverence is not the opposite of intimacy with God but the doorway into it.
- Familiarity with religious things can dull a genuine sense of awe (Hebrews 12:28–29).
- Those who truly see God’s holiness are humbled and undone, never casual.

Discussion Prompts

- When was the last time the worship of God genuinely humbled you?
- How can we guard against letting familiarity turn into irreverence?
- What practices help recover a healthy sense of awe before God?

Question 3

Student Question:

The exiles believed God had stayed behind in Jerusalem, yet His glory came to them in Babylon. What does this reveal about God’s presence with His people even in the hardest and most God-forsaken-feeling circumstances?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The setting of the vision carries enormous weight. Ezekiel is in Babylon, by the river Chebar, among exiles. The temple in Jerusalem still stood at this point, and the common assumption was that God’s presence was bound to that place. To be carried away from Zion was to be carried away from God Himself. The exiles felt abandoned, cut off, out of reach.

Then the glory of the Lord comes to Babylon. The throne-chariot moves on wheels, going wherever the Spirit goes, riding into the land of Israel's captivity. The message is unmistakable: God is not confined to one hill in Judah. He is the Lord of all the earth, present with His people even in the place of their defeat and shame.

This is a profound comfort for anyone who has felt that distance from familiar blessings means distance from God. The exile could not put the people beyond His reach. Whatever Babylon they find themselves in, a place of loss, failure, sickness, or grief, God is not locked out of it.

For the believer, this anticipates the great promise of the gospel that God dwells with His people by His Spirit wherever they are. We are not dependent on a sacred building or a particular geography. The Lord who came to the exiles by the Chebar comes to His people now, and He has promised never to leave nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's presence is not confined to a particular place; He is Lord of all the earth.
- Distance from familiar blessings does not mean distance from God.
- God meets His people even in their exile, defeat, and shame.
- The gospel promise is that God dwells with His people by His Spirit wherever they are (Hebrews 13:5).

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you been tempted to believe that God had stayed behind or abandoned you?
- How does it change your perspective to know God's glory came to the exiles in Babylon?
- What 'Babylon' in your life most needs the reminder that God is present there?

Question 4

Student Question:

God lifted Ezekiel from the ground and set him on his feet to give him a task. How have you experienced God meeting you in a low moment not to leave you there, but to humble you and then send you forward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After the glory flattens Ezekiel, God speaks: "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." And as God speaks, the Spirit enters into Ezekiel and sets him on his feet. The humbling is not the end of the story. God brings Ezekiel low only to raise him up for a purpose.

This is the consistent pattern of God's dealings. He does not break us in order to leave us broken. He humbles the proud heart so that He can fill it, empties the hands so that He can fill them, lays us in the dust so that He can lift us with His own strength. Ezekiel could not stand on his own before such glory; it was the Spirit who raised him.

Notice that the title God uses, repeated again and again through the book, is “son of man.” It keeps Ezekiel mindful of his frailty and mortality even as God commissions him. He is a mere man, dust and breath, and yet God will use him. The strength for the task will come from God, not from Ezekiel’s own resources.

Many in our class know the experience of being brought low, by failure, by loss, by conviction of sin. The good news of this passage is that God’s purpose in humbling us is restoration and usefulness. He sets us back on our feet by His Spirit, not to abandon us, but to send us out in His service.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God humbles His people not to crush them but to restore and commission them.
- It is the Spirit of God, not our own strength, that raises us up for His work.
- The repeated title ‘son of man’ keeps us mindful of our frailty before God.
- God delights to use weak and mortal people for His purposes (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Discussion Prompts

- How have you experienced God lifting you up after He brought you low?
- Why is it important to remember our frailty even while God is using us?
- Where do you need the Spirit to set you on your feet for a task ahead?

Question 5

Student Question:

God called Ezekiel to be a watchman, responsible to warn the people whether they listened or not. What does the watchman’s charge teach us about our own responsibility to faithfully warn and proclaim God’s word, regardless of the response?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God’s commission to Ezekiel comes with sober honesty. He is sent to a rebellious nation, to impudent children with stiff hearts, and God tells him plainly, “they will not hearken unto thee: for they will not hearken unto me.” Ezekiel is not promised success. He is charged with faithfulness.

The heart of the charge comes in chapter three, where God appoints Ezekiel a watchman over the house of Israel. A watchman stood on the city wall and sounded the trumpet when danger approached. His job was not to make people respond; his job was to warn. If he warned and they ignored it, their blood was on their own heads. If he failed to warn, their blood was required at his hand.

This is a weighty principle that reaches far beyond Ezekiel. God’s people are entrusted with His word and made responsible to proclaim it faithfully, whether or not the world listens. We are

not free to stay silent because the message is unpopular or because we doubt anyone will respond. The watchman blows the trumpet because lives hang in the balance.

The church carries this charge today in proclaiming the gospel. We are not the judge of who will believe, and we are not excused by the hardness of hearts around us. Like Ezekiel, we are called to warn the lost lovingly and faithfully, sounding the alarm of sin and the hope of salvation in Christ, and to leave the response in God's hands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's people are responsible to faithfully proclaim His word whether or not it is received.
- The watchman's duty is to warn; the response belongs to the hearer and to God.
- Faithfulness, not visible success, is the standard God sets for His servants.
- The church carries a watchman's charge in proclaiming the gospel to a lost world (Acts 20:26–27).

Discussion Prompts

- What does the image of a watchman teach us about our duty to warn others?
- Why are we tempted to stay silent, and how does this passage confront that?
- How can we warn others lovingly and faithfully rather than harshly or fearfully?

Question 6

Student Question:

Ezekiel was sent to people God described as a rebellious house with hard hearts who likely would not listen. How do you keep speaking truth and living faithfully when those around you resist or reject the message?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God does not hide the difficulty of the assignment. He describes the people as briers and thorns and scorpions among whom Ezekiel must dwell, and He repeatedly warns him not to be afraid of their words or dismayed at their looks, even though they are a rebellious house. The opposition will be real, personal, and discouraging.

Yet God's command is not to retreat but to persevere. "Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words." Ezekiel is to speak God's words to them whether they hear or whether they refuse. His faithfulness is to be governed by God's command, not by the people's reaction. This is steadfastness in the face of rejection.

Every believer who has tried to live faithfully or speak truth in a resistant world knows this struggle. We grow weary when our words are dismissed, mocked, or ignored. We are tempted to soften the truth, to go silent, or to give up entirely. The flesh wants approval more than faithfulness.

Press the class to consider where they have grown discouraged. Ezekiel's example, and ultimately the example of Christ Himself who steadfastly set His face though men rejected Him, calls us to keep speaking and keep living for God when it would be easier to quit. Our courage rests not in the receptiveness of others but in the One who sends us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithfulness to God often means persevering through real opposition and rejection.
- Our obedience is to be governed by God's command, not by others' reactions.
- The temptation to soften or silence the truth must be resisted.
- Courage to keep speaking rests in the God who sends us, not in receptive hearers (Galatians 1:10).

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you grown discouraged because your witness seemed to fall on deaf ears?
- What is the difference between faithfully softening our tone and unfaithfully softening the truth?
- How does fixing our eyes on God rather than people's reactions give us courage?

Question 7

Student Question:

God told Ezekiel that his accountability depended on his faithfulness to warn, not on whether the people repented. How does this reshape the way we measure success in serving God and sharing His truth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The watchman passage in chapter three lays out Ezekiel's accountability with striking clarity. If God warns the wicked and Ezekiel fails to speak, the wicked die in their sin but their blood is required at Ezekiel's hand. If Ezekiel warns and they do not turn, they die in their iniquity but Ezekiel has delivered his own soul. His responsibility is bounded by his faithfulness, not by their repentance.

This reframes how we measure success in serving God. We are tempted to judge our usefulness by visible results, by how many respond, by whether people change. But God measures the servant by faithfulness to the charge given. The sower scatters seed; whether it grows is in God's hands and the hearer's heart.

This is enormously freeing. It lifts from our shoulders a burden we were never meant to carry, the burden of producing results that belong to God alone. At the same time it lays on us a burden we must carry, the duty to actually speak, to not stay silent out of cowardice or convenience.

Help the class hold both truths together. We are not responsible for outcomes, but we are responsible for obedience. The gospel preacher and the faithful Christian alike will give account not for how many believed, but for whether they were faithful to declare the whole counsel of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Our accountability before God is measured by faithfulness, not by visible results.
- Results belong to God and to the hearts of the hearers, not to us.
- We are freed from the burden of outcomes but bound to the duty of obedience.
- Silence out of cowardice or convenience makes us guilty before God (Ezekiel 3:18).

Discussion Prompts

- How does measuring success by faithfulness rather than results change your service?
- What burden might you need to lay down because the outcome belongs to God?
- What duty might you need to take up because faithfulness requires you to speak?

Question 8

Student Question:

Before Ezekiel ever spoke, God told him to eat the scroll so the word would be inside him. What would it look like this week for God's word to move from your head into the depths of who you are?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Before Ezekiel speaks a single word to the people, God gives him a strange command. A hand stretches out holding a scroll written on both sides with lamentations, mourning, and woe, and God says, "Eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." Ezekiel eats it, and remarkably, it is in his mouth as sweet as honey.

The picture is unforgettable. God's word must go into Ezekiel before it can come out of him. He is not to be a hollow loudspeaker, merely relaying sounds. The message must be taken in, digested, made part of his very being. Only then is he ready to deliver it to others. The word must dwell in him richly before it can flow out of him faithfully.

There is a lesson here for every Christian. It is possible to handle God's word at arm's length, to study it for information, to argue about it, even to teach it, without ever letting it sink down into the soul. But God's word is meant to be eaten, taken deep within, allowed to shape the heart and not merely fill the head.

And note the surprising sweetness. Though the scroll was full of mourning and woe, it tasted sweet, because the word of God, even when it warns and convicts, is good and life-giving to the

one who receives it. Encourage the class to move beyond skimming Scripture toward truly feeding on it, letting it become part of who they are.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's word must be taken deep within us before it can flow out of us faithfully.
- It is possible to handle Scripture for information without letting it shape the heart.
- The word of God, even when it warns, is sweet and life-giving to those who receive it (Psalm 119:103).
- We are called to feed on God's word, not merely study it at arm's length (Jeremiah 15:16).

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between studying God's word and truly feeding on it?
- How can you take a passage deeper this week, letting it become part of you?
- Why might God's word taste sweet even when it warns and convicts?

Question 9

Student Question:

The glory of the Lord that filled this vision, the One enthroned above the living creatures, ultimately points us to the One who shares that glory, Jesus Christ, who now reigns at God's right hand. How does seeing God's enthroned glory in Ezekiel deepen your understanding of Christ's present reign over His church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Return now to the heart of the vision: above the throne was "the likeness as the appearance of a man" surrounded by fire and the brightness of the rainbow. This was "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." The enthroned glory of God is here pictured in the likeness of a man, a detail that quietly opens toward the New Testament.

Throughout Scripture the glory of God enthroned in heaven finds its fullest revelation in Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews says the Son is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," who after purging our sins "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). The throne Ezekiel glimpsed is now occupied, in the fullness of revelation, by the exalted Christ.

This is crucial for understanding God's kingdom rightly. The reign of Christ is not a future earthly political throne in Jerusalem awaiting a millennial age. It is a present spiritual reign that began when He ascended and sat down at God's right hand. Peter declared at Pentecost that God had made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ, raised up to sit on the throne (Acts 2:32-36). His kingdom is His church, over which He reigns now.

Let the class marvel that the glory which flattened Ezekiel is the glory of the One who came in the flesh, died for our sins, rose again, and now reigns. To see God's enthroned majesty in Ezekiel is to be pointed forward to Christ, who shares that glory and rules at the Father's right hand over all who belong to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The enthroned glory of God finds its fullest revelation in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1–3).
- Christ now reigns at God's right hand; His is a present spiritual reign, not a future earthly political kingdom.
- The kingdom of Christ is His church, established and reigning now (Acts 2:32–36; Colossians 1:13).
- Seeing God's majesty in the Old Testament rightly points us forward to the exalted Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Ezekiel's vision of enthroned glory deepen your view of the reigning Christ?
- What does it mean that Christ's kingdom is His church, reigning now rather than later?
- How should the truth of Christ's present reign shape the way you live today?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across this entire vision and call, name one specific way the Lord is using this passage to make you more like Jesus, whether in deeper reverence, in trusting His presence in hard places, or in faithful witness to a resistant world.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

As we close, gather up the whole sweep of this opening vision and call. Ezekiel saw the overwhelming glory of God who fills the whole earth, fell on his face in reverence, was raised by the Spirit and sent as a watchman to a rebellious people, charged to be faithful regardless of results, and given a word to eat before he could speak. Every part of this presses us toward the likeness of Christ.

Jesus is the One who perfectly revered the Father, who came into our exile to seek and save the lost, who faithfully spoke the truth though men rejected Him, who set His face like flint to do the Father's will, and who Himself is the eaten word, the bread of life of whom we must partake. To grow more like Him is to learn Ezekiel's reverence, trust, faithfulness, and hunger for God's word.

Invite each student to be specific. It is easy to be impressed by Ezekiel's vision and remain unchanged. Far better to name one concrete way the Lord is forming us through this passage:

perhaps a recovered awe in worship, a renewed trust that God is present in a hard place, a fresh resolve to speak truth faithfully, or a deeper feeding on Scripture.

End by lifting the class's eyes to the throne. The same God whose glory came to the exiles by the Chebar reigns now in the person of His Son, and He is shaping us, vision by vision and obedience by obedience, into the image of the One who sits enthroned in glory.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Spiritual growth moves from being impressed by truth to being transformed by it.
- Reverence, trust, faithful witness, and hunger for the word each point toward the character of Christ.
- The God who came to the exiles reigns now in Christ and is forming us into His image (Romans 8:29).
- Naming one concrete response helps the truth take root in daily life.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific way this passage is forming you to be more like Jesus?
- Which is most needed in you right now: reverence, trust, faithful witness, or hunger for the word?
- How will you put one of those into practice before our next lesson?