
EZEKIEL 1: 1 Now in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Ezekiel the prophet was the son of Buzi; and was of the sacerdotal race, as himself informs us, Eze 1:3, and was born at a place called Saresa, as the pseudo-Epiphanius tells us in his Lives of the Prophets. He was carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon, with Jeconiah king of Judah, and three thousand other captives of the principal inhabitants, and was sent into Mesopotamia, where he received the prophetic gift; which is supposed, from an obscure expression in his prophecies, Eze 1:1, to have taken place in the thirtieth year of his age. He had then been in captivity five years; and continued to prophesy about twenty-two years, from A.M. 3409 to A.M. 3430, which answers to the fourteenth year after the destruction of Jerusalem.

About three months and ten days after this conquest of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar made another descent, and again besieged the city; and Jehoiachin, who succeeded his father Jehoiakim, was obliged to surrender. The victorious Chaldeans carried off all the inhabitants of note into Babylon, leaving none behind but the very poorest of the people. See 2Kgs 24:8-16. These captives were fixed at Tel-abib, and other places on the river Chebar, which flows into the east side of the Euphrates at Carchemish, nearly two hundred miles northward of Babylon. There, as Archbishop Newcome observes, he was present in body, though, in visionary representation, he was sometimes taken to Jerusalem.

With this same learned writer I am of opinion that, the better to understand the propriety and force of these Divine revelations, the circumstances and dispositions of the Jews in their own country, and in their state of banishment, and the chief historical events of that period, should be stated and considered. Most writers on this Prophet have adopted this plan; and Archbishop Newcome's abstract of this history is sufficient for every purpose. "Zedekiah, uncle to the captive king Jehoiachin, was advanced by Nebuchadnezzar to the kingdom of Judah; and the tributary king bound himself to subjection by a solemn oath in the name of Jehovah, Eze 17:18. But notwithstanding the Divine judgments which had overwhelmed Judah during the reigns of his two immediate predecessors, he did evil in the sight of God, 2Chr 36:12. Jerusalem became so idolatrous, impure, oppressive, and blood-thirsty, that God is represented as smiting his hands together through astonishment at such a scene of iniquity, Eze 22:13. The Prophet Jeremiah was insulted, rejected, and persecuted; false prophets abounded, whose language was, 'Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon,' Jer 27:9. 'I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon,' Jer 28:2. They even limited the restoration of the sacred vessels, and the return of Jehoiachin and his fellow captives, to so short an interval as two years, Jer 28:3, Jer 28:4. Zedekiah, blinded by his vices and these delusions, flattered by the embassies which he had received from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, Jer 27:3, and probably submitting with his accustomed timidity to the advice of evil counsellors, rebelled against his powerful conquerors, and sent ambassadors into Egypt for assistance, Eze 17:15. Hence arose a third invasion of the Chaldeans. Pharaoh-hophra, king of Egypt, did not advance to the assistance of Zedekiah till Jerusalem was besieged, Jer 37:5. The Babylonians raised the siege with the design of distressing the Egyptians in their march, and of giving battle when advantage offered: but Pharaoh, with perfidy and pusillanimity, returned to his own country; and left the rebellious and perjured king of Judah to the rage of his enemies, Jer 37:7. Before the siege was thus interrupted, Zedekiah endeavored to conciliate the favor of God by complying so far with the Mosaic law as to proclaim the sabbatical year a year of liberty to Hebrew servants, Exo 21:2. But such was his impiety and so

irresolute and fluctuating were his counsels, that, on the departure of the Chaldeans, he revoked his edict, Jer 34:11; upon which God, by the Prophet Jeremiah, proclaimed liberty to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and commissioned these messengers of his wrath to avenge himself on his people, Jer 34:17. When the siege was resumed, we have a farther instance of Zedekiah's extreme infatuation; his rejection of Jeremiah's counsel, given him by the authority of God, to preserve himself, his family, and his city, by a surrender to the Chaldeans. Thus, after a siege of eighteen months, Jerusalem was stormed and burnt, Jer 39:1, Jer 39:2; Zedekiah was taken in his flight; his sons were slain before his eyes; his eyes were afterwards put out, agreeably to the savage custom of eastern conquerors; and he was carried in chains to Babylon, Jer 39:5-7. "The exiles on the river Chebar were far from being awakened to a devout acknowledgment of God's justice by the punishment inflicted on them: they continued rebellious and idolatrous, Eze 2:3; Eze 20:39, they hearkened to false prophets and prophetesses, Eze 13:2, Eze 13:17; and they were so alienated that he refused to be inquired of by them. In vain did Ezekiel endeavor to attract and win them by the charms of his flowing and insinuating eloquence; in vain did he assume a more vehement tone to awe and alarm them by heightened scenes of calamity and terror. "We know few particulars concerning the Jews at Babylon. They enjoyed the instruction and example of the Prophet Daniel, who was carried away captive to that city in the third year of Jehoiakim, eight years before the captivity of Ezekiel, Dan 1:1. Jeremiah cautioned them not to be deceived by their false prophets and diviners, Jer 29:8, Jer 29:9, Jer 29:15, Jer 29:21; against some of whom he denounced fearful judgments. He exhorted them to seek the peace of the city where they dwelt; to take wives, build houses, and plant gardens, till their restoration after seventy years, Jer 29:5-7, Jer 29:10. He also comforted them by a prediction of all the evil which God designed to inflict on Babylon: he assured them that none should remain in that proud city, but that it should be desolate for ever. The messenger, when he had read the book containing these denunciations, was commanded 'to bind a stone to it, and cast it into the Euphrates, and say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil which I will bring on her,' Jer 51:59-64. It farther appears, by Divine hymns now extant, see Psa 79:1-13, 102, 106, and Psa 137:1-9, that God vouchsafed to inspire some of these Babylonian captives with his Holy Spirit. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah ruler of the people that remained in Judea, 2Kgs 25:23; Jer 40:5; and the scattered military commanders and their men, together with other Jews who had taken refuge in the neighboring countries, Jer 40:7, Jer 40:11, submitted to his government on the departure of the Chaldeans. The Jews employed themselves in gathering the fruits of the earth, Jer 40:12, and a calm succeeded the tempest of war: but it was soon interrupted by the turbulence of this devoted people. Ishmael slew Gedaliah; and compelled the wretched remains of the Jews in Mizpah, the seat of Gedaliah's government, to retire with him towards the country of the Ammonites, Jer 41:10; a people hostile to the Chaldeans, Jer 27:3. Johanan raised a force to revenge this mad and cruel act, Jer 41:11-15; pursued Ishmael, overtook him, and recovered from him the people whom he had forced to follow him: but the assassin himself escaped with eight men to his place of refuge. The succeeding event furnishes another signal instance of human infatuation. Johanan, through fear of the Chaldeans, many of whom Ishmael had massacred, together with Gedaliah, Jer 41:3, conceived a design of retreating to Egypt, Jer 41:17; but before he executed this resolution, he formally consulted the Prophet Jeremiah. The prophet answered him in the name of Jehovah, Jeremiah 42, that if Johanan and the people abode in Judea, God would 'build them, and not pull them down: would plant them, and not pluck them up;' but if they went to sojourn in Egypt, they should 'die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence;' and should become an 'execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.' Notwithstanding this awful assurance, and the many prophecies of Jeremiah, which the most calamitous events had lately verified, Johanan defied the living God and his prophet, and madly adhered to his determination. Not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, the siege of Tyre was undertaken by Nebuchadnezzar. It

continued for the space of thirteen years; and many think that the conquest of the Sidonians, Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, and Idumeans, coincided with this period, the Chaldean being able to make powerful detachments from his vast forces. See the prophecies, Jer 27:2, Jer 27:3; 48, 49, and Ezekiel 25. After the reduction of that famous city, Nebuchadnezzar made his descent on Egypt, which he subdued and ravaged throughout; and at this time Johanan and his Jewish colonists experienced the vengeance of the conqueror, together with the Egyptians. So widely did Nebuchadnezzar spread his victories and devastations, that, according to the learned chronologer Marsham, Lond. edit. 1672, fol. p. 556, s. 18, this might justly be called the era of the subversion of cities. - Omnis eo terrore Aegyptus, et Indi,

Omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabaei.

Virg. Aen. 8:705. 'The trembling Indians and Egyptians yield:

Arabs and soft Sabaeans quit the field.'"

I may add that the stroke fell upon no people so heavily as upon the Jews, for no other station possessed privileges like them, and no other nation had sinned so deeply against God. Their crimes were seen in their punishment.

The principal design of this prophet was to comfort his companions in tribulation during their captivity, and to render it light by the most positive promises of their restoration to their own land, the re-building of the temple, and the re-establishment of the Divine worship, all their enemies being finally destroyed.

That Ezekiel is a very obscure writer, all have allowed who have attempted to explain his prophecies. The Jews considered him inexplicable. There is a tradition that the rabbins held a consultation whether they should admit Ezekiel into the sacred canon. And it was likely to be carried in the negative, when Rabbi Ananias rose up and said he would undertake to remove every difficulty from the account of Jehovah's chariot, chap. i., which is confessedly the most difficult part in the whole book. His proposal was received; and to assist him in his work, and that he might complete it to his credit, they furnished him with three hundred barrels of oil to light his lamp during the time he might be employed in the study of this part of his subject! This extravagant grant proved at once the conviction the rabbins had of the difficulty of the work; and it is not even intimated that Rabbi Ananias succeeded in any tolerable degree, if indeed he undertook the task; and they believe that to this hour the chariot mentioned in chap. 1, and the account of the temple described at the conclusion of the book, have not been explained.

I believe it may be affirmed with truth that these parts of the prophecy have had as many different explanations as there have been expositors! Yet each has been sanguine in the hope that he had removed all difficulties; while every successor felt that the whole work was yet to be done, and that the Gordian knot was not likely to be untied unless by himself. And it is to be lamented that in these circumstances the work still remains as to its principal difficulties; and I certainly do not attempt to add another to Ezekiel's commentators with the most distant hope of being able to solve those particular difficulties.

After all, with the exception of the chariot, Gog and Magog, the peculiarities in the description of the temple, and some matters of this kind, the major part of the prophecy is very intelligible, and highly edifying; and does not present more difficulties than have been found in the preceding prophets, and may be found in those which follow. I have in the following notes done what I could, as a help to a better understanding of this part of the sacred writings.

The ancient Versions give some help; but it is astonishing how difficult it is to settle the text by a collation of MSS. This has not yet been properly done; and we cannot know the true meaning till we call ascertain the true reading. But after having labored in this way, I must express myself as the learned professor of the oriental tongues at Parma, J. B. De Rossi:

Tanta hic in suffixis praesertim pronomibus codicum inconstantia ac varietas, ut taeduerit me laboris mei, ac verius ego quod olim de uno Zachariae versu (Zac 11:5) dolens inquiebat Norzius, de toto Ezechielis libro usurpare possim, angustiatam fuisse animam meam ob varietates multas, et avertisse faciem meam ab eis. "That there is so much inconstancy and variation among the MSS., especially in the subbed pronouns, that I was weary of my labor; and I could more truly say of the whole book of Ezekiel, than Norzius did relative to one passage in Zechariah, who, bitterly complaining of the many variations he met with, said, 'My soul was perplexed with them, and I turned away my face from them.'" As most of our printed editions have been taken from a very inadequate collation of MSS., especially of this prophet, much remains to be done to restore the text to a proper state of purity. When this is done it is presumed that several of the difficulties in this book will be removed. In many instances Abp. Newcome has been very successful.

On the famous controversy relative to Gog and Magog, I must refer the reader to the notes on chap. 38 and chap. 39, where the best accounts I have met with are detailed. There are only two schemes that appear at all probable; that which makes Gog Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Assyria, and that which makes him Cambyses, king of Persia. The former, as being the most probable, and the best supported in all its parts by the marks given in the prophecy, I have in a certain measure adopted, for want of one more satisfactory to my own mind.

The character of Ezekiel as a poet has been drawn at large by some of the most eminent critics of these and other countries. Lowth, Michaelis, and Eichhorn, are the chief. Abp. Newcome has quoted largely from the latter; and from his work, which is now very scarce and extremely dear, I shall present my readers with the following extracts: - "The two first visions are so accurately polished, chap. 1-7, 8-11, and demanded so much art to give them their last perfection and proportion, that they cannot possibly be an unpremeditated work. And if, according to the commonly received opinion, they were publicly read by Ezekiel as we read them now, he must have seriously designed them as a picture, and finished them in form. The intention of his visions might make this necessary. He designed no doubt to make deep impressions upon the people whom he was to guide; and by highly laboring the Divine appearances, to open their ears for his future oracles and representations. The more complete, divine, and majestic the Divine appearances were which he represented, the deeper veneration was impressed upon the mind towards the prophet to whom such high visions were communicated. Most of the parts which compose Ezekiel, as they are generally works of art, are full of artificial and elaborate plans. "The peculiarities of language in the first chapter are to be found in the middle and end of the book. The same enthusiasm which in the beginning of his prophecies produced the magnificent Divine appearances, must also have built the temple of God at the conclusion. As in the beginning every thing is first proposed in high allegorical images, and afterwards the same ideas are repeated in plain words, thus also in the middle and at the end in every piece, allegorical representation is succeeded by literal. Throughout the style is rather prose than verse; and rough, hard, and mixed with the Chaldee. "The division of Ezekiel into two parts has been adopted by several writers. They continue the former part to the thirty-ninth chapter, and consider the last nine chapters from the fortieth as a separate book. This division is possible. From the eleventh chapter a new elevated scene commences. Before there was nothing but oracles, full of misfortunes, punishments, death, and ruin; visions concerning the destruction of the government, and concerning the flight and state of the last king; and pictures of the universal corruption, idolatry,

and superstition of Israel. From the fortieth chapter a new temple rises before the eyes of the holy seer; he walks round about it in Palestine; he measures the city and country for their new inhabitants; he orders sacrifices, feasts, and customs. In short, a Magna Charta is planned for priests, kings, and people, in future and better times. Lastly, from hence prosaic expressions predominate; at least the prophet elevates himself by poetical colouring much more rarely than before. "A generally acknowledged character of Ezekiel is, that he minutely distinguishes every thing in its smallest parts. What the more ancient prophets brought together in one single picture, and to which they only alluded, and what they explained with the utmost brevity, and showed only from one side, that he explains and unfolds formally, and represents from all possible sides. "Another character, and a principal one, which distinguishes his oracle is, that no other prophet has given so free a course to his imagination. Almost every thing is dressed in symbolical actions, in fables, narrations, allegories, or in the still higher poetry of visions. And as they are very complicate, there resound from all sides complaints of darkness. Whoever can look on these things with the eye of an eagle, and is not disturbed from the principal object by what is not essential; he alone is able to comprehend the sense of the whole composition, and he scarcely conceives how any one can complain of obscurity. Meanwhile, how different soever the species of composition are which he hazards, they are all worked out in the same general form. What he represents in one image, picture, or vision, in allegory, parable, or narration, is explained in a short speech, which God, who is at his right hand, enables him to pronounce. "It is evident that he has shown an inexhaustible imagination and power of invention throughout all the pages of his book. He uses all sorts of prophetic poetry to appear always great and magnificent; and it cannot be denied that he has given all kinds, excellent pieces, both in design and execution. Particularly, he is so used to ecstasies and visions that he adopts the language proper to these, where he has no visions to describe. "If the dress of vision fitted any prophet, it was certainly Ezekiel: he was even naturally led to it by his situation, and by the subjects which he was to represent. He was to describe and foretell to his fellow captives several facts which happened in Palestine, in Jerusalem, and in the king's palace. A narration and description in simple prose could not possibly suit a prophet; he must give his object the requisite prophetic dignity, by a particular dress. "He therefore brought the scene of events nearer. For this purpose he chose high ecstasies, such as the Greek and Roman poets pretended to in their flights of enthusiasm; the hand of Jehovah came upon him, and carried him to that place where what he intended to propose to his countrymen in their exile might be seen and considered. All ecstasies in my opinion are nothing but dresses, nothing but poetical fictions; and a poet of another age, and of another tone, of an inferior imagination and poetical endowments, would have given the same ideas quite another dress. "Accustomed to this kind of poetry, he represented the restitution of the Jewish state in a sublime vision. His imagination placed him upon graves, where he stood on the dried bones of the dead. He saw how the graves opened, the bones were clothed with flesh, and the dead came forth by a new creation. Could there be a more lively fiction for this case? Another poet would have represented the restoration of the Jews in simple words; and would only have compared it to a resurrection, or give it some other ornamental delineation. To view this intuitively in an example, compare Eze 37:1-14 and Isa 26:19. 'Thy dead shall live, their dead bodies shall rise: Awake and sing, ye that dived in dust: For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast forth the mighty dead.' "And, however numerous the fictions of Ezekiel are, they all appear in magnificent dress, and each in its peculiar splendid one. Lustre shines in him on every side; and if the poet has here and there overloaded his subject with ornaments, we shall be unable to refuse our admiration to his genius, notwithstanding these defects. "The first part of his book may be an instance. The barren genius of Moses was gone when God appeared only in a fiery bush in the wilderness; and as the world improved in cultivation, a more luxuriant one succeeded in his place, which in process of time demanded wonderful figures and giant forms, that the representation of the Divine appearance

might please. Isaiah had already appeared in a higher style than Moses. To him God manifested himself in the pomp of an oriental king; and this piece makes a strong impression by its unity and gains on us by its elevated simplicity, majesty, and dignity, Isa 6:1-13. But Ezekiel differs widely. Before him stands the chariot-throne of God, with wonderful forms; he summons all the pomp which nature and art can furnish; he abundantly employs fiction and composition to give his Divine appearance dignity, elevation, and majesty; and thus to make a suitable expression. The whole creation must lend him its most noble forms. Men, oxen, lions, and eagles support the throne: the Hebrew history must furnish all its most wonderful scenes, to surround the chariot-throne with the greatest pomp imaginable. I admire the master-hand of the artist, who knew how to compose in such a manner. I am astonished at the richness of his imagination, that could give dignity to all the exalted scenes of the Hebrew history, and could combine them in one body. But, notwithstanding this, the scene in Ezekiel is far from making the same deep and heart-striking impression with that of Isaiah. A short view of the whole in Isaiah does wonders; in Ezekiel the prospect is dispersed; and as it is not rounded, it astonishes rather than impresses. In Isaiah there is a majestic silence, which is only interrupted by the heavenly cry of the seraphs, Isa 6:3; in Ezekiel, the noise of the restless wheels and moving wings confounds us. In Isaiah, the eye is delighted with artless majesty; in Ezekiel, it is consumed by the brightness of the fire which shines round about the chariot-throne. "The author of the Revelation, whose poetry is in the same style with that of Ezekiel, and full of imagination, has for the most part avoided the rocks upon which his predecessor struck; and, happily for the most part, has cut off the wild shoots of a heated imagination. He also has fictions of wonders and giant forms; but he has produced them only so far as to give the reader a full image before his eyes. He does not pursue them minutely, and he does not distract or pain his reader. "On the contrary, it was a happy invention that his lofty poems are sometimes interrupted by short speeches; they are not only useful for the illustration of his symbols, but also for the repose of the mind. By this change, his readers are agreeably entertained; and their imagination finds resting places, so as to soar more easily after the imagination of the poet. "Ezekiel is a great poet, full of originality; and, in my opinion, whoever censures him as if he were only an imitator of the old prophets, can never have felt his power. He must not in general be compared with Isaiah and the rest of the old prophets. Those are great, Ezekiel is also great; those in their manner of poetry, Ezekiel in his; which he had invented for himself, if we may form our judgment from the Hebrew monuments still extant." Thus far a judicious critic, who but indirectly admits the prophet's inspiration.

Bp. Lowth, who has done so much to elucidate the Hebrew poetry, has also given fine critical judgments on the comparative merits of the prophets. Isaiah is his favorite and him he places always at the head, and with him all others are compared. Of Ezekiel, his character is very high and accurately drawn; and my readers will naturally expect that I should produce what he says on this subject, rather than attempt any thing of my own; for this would resemble the attempt to write an Iliad after Homer. "Ezekiel," says this learned prelate, "is inferior to Jeremiah in elegance, but is equal to Isaiah in Sublimity, though in a different species of the sublime. He is bold, vehement, tragical, and deals very much in amplification. His Sentiments are lofty, animated, poignant, and full of indignation. His Images are fertile, magnificent, and sometimes rather bordering on indelicacy. His Diction is grand, weighty, austere, rough, and sometimes uncultivated. He abounds in repetitions, not for the sake of beauty or grace, but from vehemence and indignation. Whatever his subject be, he keeps it always in his eye, without the least deviation, and is so much taken up with it that he has scarcely any regard to order or connection. In other things he may be perhaps exceeded by the other prophets, but in that species for which he was particularly turned, that is, force, impetuosity, weight, and grandeur, no writer ever equalled him. His diction is clear enough; almost all his obscurity arises

from his subjects. His Visions are particularly obscure; which, however, as in Hosea, Amos, and Zechariah, are delivered in a plain historical narration. "The greater part of the book, particularly the middle of it, is poetical; whether we regard the matter or the language. But some passages are so rough and unpolished, that we are frequently at a loss to what species of writing we ought to refer them. As to Style, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel may be placed with propriety enough in the same rank among the Hebrews, as Homer, Simonides, and Aeschylus among the Greeks."

Nothing need be added, and indeed nothing can be added, to this character; it is as fairly as it is fully drawn; and every paragraph in the book will show its propriety. But could we satisfactorily fathom the prophet's meaning in those places where he is peculiarly obscure, we should feel the force and propriety of the prophet's character still more, as in those very places the prophet is peculiarly sublime. The prophecy was delivered that it might be understood and be profitable; and no doubt it was fully apprehended by those to whom it was originally given, and for whose sake it was sent from heaven. As to the portions which respect a very remote futurity, they will be understood when the events take place; which will, in such times, be an additional argument in favor of Divine revelation, when it is seen with what precision and accuracy prophets have foreseen and described such very remote and apparently contingent events.

To the general reader the following table, taken from Calmet, may be useful: -

A.M. A Chronological Table of the Prophecies of Ezekiel 3405 Ezekiel is led captive to Babylon with King Jeconiah. From this year the epoch of these prophecies must be taken. 3409 The first vision by the river Chebar, chap. 1. The circumstances which followed Ezekiel's vocation to the prophetic office, chap. Eze 1:2.

He draws upon a tile or bed of clay the plan of Jerusalem, and the siege that it was about to endure; and he remains lying on this plan, on his left side, three hundred and ninety days, chap. 4. See under A.M. 3420. 3410 He turns on his right side, and lies forty days, which point out the forty years of the sins of Judah, To this time chap. 5, Eze 6:1-14, 7 refer.

About the month of September, this being the sixth year of the captivity of Jeconiah, he had the visions related, chap. 8, Eze 9:1-11, 10, 11. 3411 Prophecies and figurative actions by which he points out the flight, capture, and blinding of Zedekiah, 12: and the seven following.

Zedekiah rebels against Nebuchadnezzar, Eze 17:15, Eze 17:17.

The prophet charges the elders of Judah with hypocrisy, who came to consult him, chap. 20, 21, 22, 23. 3414 The siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This was a sabbatic year, Jer 24:8, etc. The siege did not begin till about the middle of the winter, 2Kgs 25:1. The prophet's wife dies on the same day of the siege, and he is forbidden to mourn for her, Eze 24:1, Eze 24:2. 3415 Predictions against EGYPT, Eze 29:16. Nebuchadnezzar puts to flight Pharaoh-hophra, and returns to the siege of Jerusalem three hundred and ninety days before it was taken. 3416 Predictions against Tyre, chap. 26-28, the first day of the first month.

In the seventh day of the same month, God shows the prophet the miseries to be brought on Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, chap. 30.

In the third month of the same year, the prophet had another vision against Egypt, chap. 31.

Jerusalem is taken the ninth of the fourth month. Zedekiah was taken prisoner near Jericho. He is brought to Riblah, where, after seeing his children slain, his eyes are put out, he is laden with chains and led to Babylon. Thus were fulfilled and reconciled the seemingly contradictory prophecies

concerning him. 3417 Ezekiel being informed of the taking of Jerusalem the fifth day of the tenth month, he predicts the ruin of the remnant that was left there under Gedaliah, Eze 34:21-29.

He afterwards foretells the ruin of Egypt, Eze 32:1, Eze 32:16, Eze 32:32; and that of the Idumeans, Eze 25:12. 3419 The commencement of the siege of Tyre, which lasted thirteen years.

To the same time we must refer the miseries of the Sidonians, the Amalekites, the Moabites, and the Idumeans, pointed out by Jeremiah, chap. 27, 48, 49.; Ezekiel 25. 3420 End of the forty years mentioned Eze 4:5, Eze 4:6, and of the three hundred and ninety years from the separation of Israel and Judah.

The forty years commence with the renewal of the covenant under Josiah. 3430 The vision in which God showed the prophet the rebuilding of the city and the temple, and the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, Eze 40:1 to the end of the book.

This vision took place on the tenth of the first month, fourteen years after the taking of Jerusalem. 3432 Taking of the city of Tyre, by Nebuchadnezzar, to whom God promises the spoils of Egypt, as a compensation for the trouble and loss he sustained before Tyre, Eze 29:17-20.

Nebuchadnezzar enters Egypt. Amasis had been made king by the Cyrenians, who had rebelled against Pharaoh-hophra. Herodotus, lib. 4 c. 159, and lib. 2 cc. 161, 162. 3433 The king of Babylon overruns and subdues the whole of Egypt; commits the greatest outrages; and carries off captives the inhabitants, the Jews, and others whom he found there. See Jer 43:1-13, 44, 46.; Ezekiel 29, 30, 31.

Nebuchadnezzar leaves Amasis king of Lower Egypt; Hophra, or Apries, having escaped to the Thebais. 3442 Death of Nebuchadnezzar.

Evil-merodach succeeds him; and sets Jeconiah at liberty, and makes him his companion, 2Kgs 15:27 and Jer 52:31.

This chapter contains that extraordinary vision of the Divine glory with which the prophet was favored when he received the commission and instructions respecting the discharge of his office, which are contained in the two following chapters. The time of this Divine manifestation to the prophet, Eze 1:1-3. The vision of the four living creatures, and of the four wheels, vv. 4-25. Description of the firmament that was spread over them, and of the throne upon which one sat in appearance as a man, Eze 1:26-28. This vision, proceeding in a whirlwind from the North, seems to indicate the dreadful judgments that were coming upon the whole land of Judah through the instrumentality of the cruel Chaldeans, who lay to the north of it. See Jer 1:14; Jer 4:6; Jer 6:1.

Verse 1

In the thirtieth year - We know not what this date refers to. Some think it was the age of the prophet; others think the date is taken from the time that Josiah renewed the covenant with the people, 2Kgs 22:3, from which Usher, Prideaux, and Calmet compute the forty years of Judah's transgression, mentioned 2Kgs 4:6.

Abp. Newcome thinks there is an error in the text, and that instead of בשלשים bisheloshim, in the thirtieth, we should read בחמישית bachamishith, in the fifth, as in the second verse. "Now it came to pass in the fifth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month," etc. But this is supported by none of the ancient Versions, nor by any MS. The Chaldee paraphrases the verse, "And it came to pass thirty years after the high priest Hilkiah had found the book of the law, in the house of the sanctuary," etc. This was in the twelfth year of Josiah's reign. The thirtieth year, computed as above,

comes to A.M. 3409, the fourth year from the captivity of Jeconiah, and the fifth of the reign of Zedekiah. Ezekiel was then among the captives who had been carried away with Jeconiah, and had his dwelling near the river Chebar, Chaborus, or Aboras, a river of Mesopotamia, which falls into the Euphrates a little above Thapsacus, after having run through Mesopotamia from east to west. - Calmet.

Fourth month - Thammuz, answering nearly to our July.

I saw visions of God - Emblems and symbols of the Divine Majesty. He particularly refers to those in this chapter.

EZEKIEL 1: 2 In the fifth of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

Verse 2

Jehoiachin's captivity - Called also Jeconiah and Coniah; see 2Kgs 24:12. He was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar; see 2Kgs 24:14.

EZEKIEL 1: 3 the LORD's word came expressly to 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 on him.

Verse 3

The hand of the Lord - I was filled with his power, and with the influence of the prophetic spirit.

EZEKIEL 1: 4 I looked, and behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with flashing lightning, and a brightness around it, and out of its midst as it were glowing metal, out of the midst of the fire.

Verse 4

A whirlwind came out of the north - Nebuchadnezzar, whose land, Babylonia, lay north of Judea. Chaldea is thus frequently denominated by Jeremiah.

A great cloud, and a fire infolding itself - A mass of fire concentrated in a vast cloud, that the flames might be more distinctly observable, the fire never escaping from the cloud, but issuing, and then returning in upon itself. It was in a state of powerful agitation; but always involving itself, or returning back to the center whence it appeared to issue.

A brightness was about it - A fine tinge of light surrounded the cloud, in order to make its limits the more discernible; beyond which verge the turmoiling fire did not proceed.

The color of amber - This was in the center of the cloud; and this amber-coloured substance was the center of the laboring flame. The word *ηλεκτρον*, which we translate amber, was used to signify a compound metal, very bright, made of gold and brass.

EZEKIEL 1: 5 Out of its midst came the likeness of four living creatures. This was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man.

Verse 5

Also out on the midst thereof came - four living creatures - As the amber-coloured body was the center of the fire, and this fire was in the center of the cloud; so out of this amber-coloured igneous center came the living creatures just mentioned.

EZEKIEL 1: 6 Everyone had four faces, and each one of them had four wings.

Verse 6

Every one had four faces - There were four several figures of these living creatures, and each of these figures had four distinct faces: but as the face of the man was that which was presented to the prophet's view, so that he saw it more plainly than any of the others; hence it is said, Eze 1:5, that each of these figures had the likeness of a man; and the whole of this compound image bore a general resemblance to the human figure.

EZEKIEL 1: 7 Their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished brass.

Verse 7

Their feet were straight feet - There did not seem to be any flexure at the knee, nor were the legs separated in that way as to indicate progression by walking. I have before me several ancient Egyptian images of Isis, Osiris, Anubis, etc., where the legs are not separated, nor is there any bend at the knees; so that if there was any motion at all, it must have been by gliding, not progressive walking. It is a remark of Adrian, that the gods are never represented as walking, but always gliding; and he gives this as a criterion to discern common angelic appearances from those of the gods: all other spiritual beings walked progressively, rising on one foot, while they stretched out the other; but the deities always glided without gradual progressive motions. And Heliodorus in his Romance of Theogines and Charicha, gives the same reason for the united feet of the gods, etc., and describes the same appearances.

Like the sole of a calf's foot - Before it is stated to be a straight foot; one that did not lay down a flat horizontal sole, like that of the human foot.

And they sparkled like the color of burnished brass - I suppose this refers rather to the hoof of the calf's foot, than to the whole appearance of the leg. There is scarcely any thing that gives a higher lustre than highly polished or burnished brass. Our blessed Lord is represented with legs like burnished brass, Rev 1:15.

EZEKIEL 1: 8 They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and the four of them had their faces and their wings thus:

Verse 8

They had the hands of a man under their wings - I doubt much whether the arms be not here represented as all covered with feathers, so that they had the appearance of wings, only the hand was bare; and I rather think that this is the meaning of their having "the hands of a man under their wings."

EZEKIEL 1: 9 their wings were joined one to another; they didn't turn when they went; each one went straight forward.

Verse 9

Their wings were joined one to another - When their wings were extended, they formed a sort of canopy level with their own heads or shoulders; and on this canopy was the throne, and the "likeness of the man" upon it, Eze 1:26.

They turned not when they went - The wings did not flap in flying, or move in the manner of oars, or of the hands of a man in swimming, in order to their passing through the air; as they glided in reference to their feet, so they soared in reference to their wings.

EZEKIEL 1: 10 As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and the four of them had the face of a lion on the right side; and the four of them had the face of an ox on the left side; the four of them also had the face of an eagle.

Verse 10

As for the likeness of their faces - There was but one body to each of those compound animals: but each body had four faces; the face of a man and of a lion on the right side; the face of an ox and an eagle on the left side. Many of these compound images appear in the Asiatic idols. Many are now before me: some with the head and feet of a monkey, with the body, arms, and legs of a man. Others with the head of the dog; body, arms, and legs human. Some with the head of an ape; all the rest human. Some with one head and eight arms; others with six heads or faces, with twelve arms. The head of a lion and the head of a cock often appear; and some with the head of a cock, the whole body human, and the legs terminating in snakes. All these were symbolical, and each had its own appropriate meaning. Those in the text had theirs also, could we but find it out.

EZEKIEL 1: 11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above. Two wings of each one touched another, and two covered their bodies.

EZEKIEL 1: 12 Each one went straight forward: where the spirit was to go, they went; they didn't turn when they went.

Verse 12

They went every one straight forward - Not by progressive stepping, but by gliding.

Whither the spirit was to go - Whither that whirlwind blew, they went, being borne on by the wind, see Eze 1:4.

EZEKIEL 1: 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches: the fire went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and lightning went out of the fire.

Verse 13

Like burning coals of fire - The whole substance appeared to be of flame; and among them frequent coruscations of fire, like vibrating lamps, often emitting lightning, or rather sparks of fire, as we have seen struck out of strongly ignited iron in a forge. The flames might be something like what is called warring wheels in pyrotechny. They seemed to conflict together.

EZEKIEL 1: 14 The living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

Verse 14

The living creatures ran and returned - They had a circular movement; they were in rapid motion, but did not increase their distance from the spectator. So I think this should be understood.

EZEKIEL 1: 15 Now as I saw the living creatures, behold, one wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces of it.

Verse 15

One wheel upon the earth - It seems at first view there were four wheels, one for each of the living creatures; that is, the creatures were compound, so were the wheels, for there was "a wheel in the middle of a wheel." And it is generally supposed that these wheels cut each other at right angles up and down: and this is the manner in which they are generally represented; but most probably the wheel within means merely the nave in which the spokes are inserted, in reference to the ring, rim, or periphery, where these spokes terminate from the center or nave. I do think this is what is meant by the wheel within a wheel; and I am the more inclined to this opinion, by some fine Chinese drawings now before me, where their deities are represented as walking upon wheels, the wheels themselves encompassed with fire. The wheel is simply by itself having a projecting axis; so of these

it is said, "their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel within a wheel." There were either two peripheries or rims with their spokes, or the nave answered for the wheel within. I have examined models of what are called Ezekiel's wheels, which are designed to move equally in all directions: but I plainly saw that this was impossible; nor can any kind of complex wheel move in this way.

EZEKIEL 1: 16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like a beryl: and the four of them had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel.

EZEKIEL 1: 17 When they went, they went in their four directions: they didn't turn when they went.

EZEKIEL 1: 18 As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and the four of them had their rims full of eyes all around.

Verse 18

As for their rings - The strakes which form the rim or periphery.

They were dreadful - They were exceedingly great in their diameter, so that it was tremendous to look from the part that touched the ground to that which was opposite above.

Were full of eyes - Does not this refer to the appearance of nails keeping on the spokes, or strakes or bands upon the rim?

EZEKIEL 1: 19 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.

Verse 19

When the living creatures went, the wheels went - The wheels were attached to the living creatures, so that, in progress, they had the same motion.

EZEKIEL 1: 20 Wherever the spirit was to go, they went; there was the spirit to go: and the wheels were lifted up beside them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

Verse 20

The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels - That is, the wheels were instinct with a vital spirit; the wheels were alive, they also were animals, or endued with animal life, as the creatures were that stood upon them. Here then is the chariot of Jehovah. There are four wheels, on each of which one of the compound animals stands; the four compound animals form the body of the chariot, their wings spread horizontally above, forming the canopy or covering of this chariot; on the top of which, or upon the extended wings of the four living creatures, was the throne, on which was the appearance of a man, Eze 1:26.

EZEKIEL 1: 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 beside them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

EZEKIEL 1: 22 Over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like the awesome crystal to look on, stretched out over their heads above.

Verse 22

The color of the terrible crystal - Like a crystal, well cut and well polished, with various faces, by which rays of light were refracted, assuming either a variety of prismatic colors, or an insufferably brilliant splendor. This seems to be the meaning of the terrible crystal. Newcome translates, fearful ice. The common translation is preferable.

EZEKIEL 1: 23 Under the expanse were their wings straight, the one toward the other: each one had two which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies.

Verse 23

Every one had two, which covered on this side - While they employed two of their wings to form a foundation for the firmament to rest on, two other wings were let down to cover the lower part of their bodies: but this they did only when they stood, Eze 1:24.

EZEKIEL 1: 24 When they went, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of an army: when they stood, they let down their wings.

Verse 24

The noise of their wings - When the whirlwind drove the wheels, the wind rustling among the wings was like the noise of many waters; like a waterfall, or waters dashing continually against the rocks, or rushing down precipices.

As the voice of the Almighty - Like distant thunder; for this is termed the voice of God Psa 18:13; Exo 9:23, Exo 9:28, Exo 9:29; Exo 20:18.

EZEKIEL 1: 25 There was a voice above the expanse that was over their heads: when they stood, they let down their wings.

EZEKIEL 1: 26 Above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and on the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man on it above.

Verse 26

A sapphire - The pure oriental sapphire, a large well cut specimen of which is now before me, is one of the most beautiful and resplendent blues that can be conceived. I have sometimes seen the heavens assume this illustrious hue. The human form above this canopy is supposed to represent Him who, in the fullness of time, was manifested in the flesh.

EZEKIEL 1: 27 I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it all around, from the appearance of his waist and upward; and from the appearance of his waist and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.

Verse 27

The color of amber - There are specimens of amber which are very pure and beautifully transparent. One which I now hold up to the light gives a most beautiful bright yellow color. Such a splendid appearance had the august Being who sat upon this throne from the reins upward; but from thence downward he had the appearance of fire, burning with a clear and brilliant flame. For farther particulars see the notes on Ezekiel 10 (note).

EZEKIEL 1: 28 As the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the LORD's glory. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

Verse 28

As the appearance of the bow - Over the canopy on which this glorious personage sat there was a fine rainbow, which, from the description here, had all its colors vivid, distinct, and in perfection - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. In all this description we must understand every metal, every color, and every natural appearance, to be in their utmost perfection of shape, color, and splendor. "And this," as above described, "was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Splendid and glorious as it was, it was only the "appearance of the likeness," a faint representation of the real thing.

I have endeavored to explain these appearances as correctly as possible; to show their forms, positions, colors, etc. But who can explain their meaning? We have conjectures in abundance; and can it be of any use to mankind to increase the number of those conjectures? I think not. I doubt whether the whole does not point out the state of the Jews, who were about to be subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and carried into captivity. And I am inclined to think that the "living creatures, wheels, fires, whirlwinds," etc., which are introduced here, point out, emblematically, the various means, sword, fire, pestilence, famine, etc., which were employed in their destruction; and that God appears in all this to show that Nebuchadnezzar is only his instrument to inflict all these calamities. What is in the following chapter appears to me to confirm this supposition. But we have the rainbow, the token of God's covenant, to show that though there should be a destruction of the city,

temple, etc., and sore tribulation among the people, yet there should not be a total ruin; after a long captivity they should be restored. The rainbow is an illustrious token of mercy and love.