

God Still Speaks

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Ezekiel 1:1-2:2

Z. N. Morrell wrote his autobiography of his experiences coming into Texas right after Texas Independence. He was a preacher, hunter, fighter, and sometimes served as a U.S. Marshal. The title of his book is Fruits and Flowers in the Wilderness. Texas was a wilderness. It was undeveloped land and often a wilderness for those who sought to live here in the early days. Yet, it is the title I find interesting. His title means that God moved in the wilderness and produced fruit. Even the desert can be a harsh place. The sand hosts little life. That is until a rain finally falls. Then what follows are weeks of flowers blooming on the dunes.

Ezekiel gives answer to the great need of the people of his day. Those exiled in Babylon, absent of the temple, felt absent from the presence of God. "How can they know God in exile?" It is essentially the age-old question: "Where is God when life is falling apart?"

God sent a message to the people through Ezekiel. He is present, even in the wilderness; and God still speaks. This message came through a dream like vision, which will need a little explanation for Western hearers.

Read Ezekiel 1:1-2:2.

God is everywhere.

In this vision, the glory of God is revealed riding a MDV (Multi-Directional Vehicle). The key to understanding is in the wheels.

Ezekiel. 1:15-17 NIVO

¹⁵ As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. ¹⁶ This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like chrysolite, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. ¹⁷ As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not turn about as the creatures went.

In Isaiah chapter 6, God reveals himself to the prophet Isaiah in the temple at a low point in Isaiah's life. King Uzziah had died. He was one of a very few good kings that lived for God. In the uncertainty of what would follow, Isaiah stood in the temple praying, when God came and revealed himself to him. In that vision, God's glory was seen as hovering above 4 cherubim, who called out "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty. The world is full of his glory." These cherubim have six wings each. With two they fly, with two they cover their faces, with two they cover their feet. The glory of the Lord flew above these cherubim.

Ezekiel now sees a similar vision, only it has some differences. Again we have four cherubim which have wings. This time they are described as having four wings. With two they fly, with two they cover their bodies. Again, God's glory resides above them. When they fly their wings are like the sound of a storm. Yet, these cherubim are not speaking. In this description another difference is the faces. Each cherub has four faces: a human face, a face of a lion to the right, a face of an ox to the left, and a face of an eagle behind. These cherubs face four different directions. It is uncertain if they are all with the human face facing outward, or if to one direction, the viewer sees all four faces, so each direction has one of the faces facing outward. They have feet like a calf which glow like bronze in a fire.

The glory of the Lord is seen above these cherubim as they fly. He is seen as sitting upon a throne made of sapphire (deep blue). His body is red like fire, as are the cherubim. They glow in bright red color. Bright light surrounds God's throne. All of this is seen in a cloud coming upon the plain like a windstorm.

What is unique and different in his vision of the angelic hosts is that they are riding a chariot of a sort. It has four wheels. Each cherub is at a different

point, and each has a wheel beside him. Like a hover craft, this platform moves in all directions, and it has no horses to draw it. It moves at the direction of the Spirit of God. It moves suddenly, quickly, in all directions – left, right, forward, backward. When it moves, the cherub's wings touch. When it rests, their wings go down.

What enables this flying platform to move in all directions is the wheels. The wheels make the holy platform an MDV. They are very unique. Each wheel is actually two wheels in one, set perpendicular. This way they can move forward, backward, left or right. Each cherub stands at the point in the direction it moves. I tend to think that each cherub's face faces in each of the four directions, depending on how God needs to reveal himself to the people. The ox as strength, the eagle as swift, the lion as power, and the human as personal. Yet, these wheels are an important part to understand the meaning of the vision. These multi-directional wheels enable the glorious presence of God to move at any moment in any direction. In so doing, they bring the presence of the Lord to any place God desires to go.

This is a revelation to the people of Israel in exile that God's presence is not restricted to the temple in Jerusalem. The exiles are not absent of God just because they have been taken to a foreign land. God is there as well. His presence can reach them quickly, powerfully, effectively and personally - if they will repent and seek him.

“God is dead”

In the mid-70's Time magazine entertained the question: Is God Dead? Modern theologians had dispensed with faith in God. They had come to believe the Bible to be not real history, and therefore, the idea of God was now mythical. For them, God was not real. Philosophers had already dispensed with the idea of a living, sovereign God. Science now upheld evolution as the explanation for reality, so we don't need God anymore. Atheism was now prominent among modern thinkers. So, in the minds of many, it seemed to many that the idea of God was now dead – at least to them. Yet, God was still showing up, calling many young people into faith, and calling many of them into the ministry to proclaim His name. Myself among them. For much of society, God was the decline. Yet, for some of us, we were getting new revelations from God.

God still speaks, and He will speak to this generation.

Ezekiel 2:1 NIVO

He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." ² As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

The first part of the vision is to reveal to Ezekiel and his people in exile that God is still present with them. He rides the glory wagon of the cherubim, going to and fro, wherever he wills. He is powerful, fast, effective and personal to meet every need. Then, he speaks to Ezekiel and calls him to speak for God. Similarly, God revealed himself to Isaiah in the temple high and lifted up. Yet, after the glorious revelation came God's word, calling Isaiah to speak for him. The glory of worship comes with an expectation of obedience to the Word for the one who hears it. For Ezekiel, he is to be a watchman on the wall. If you read on in chapter 2, Ezekiel will be held accountable if he does not warn people to repent of sin. When everything seemed lost for the people of Judah in a hostile country, God still spoke His Word. And, God will still speak His word to us today.

In the early years of my youth God began to move in my heart that I was to be a minister. He continued to do so through the years. Yet, never did He ever speak to me directly. One day while I was in seminary, I did hear directly from the Lord. He spoke to me as one speaks to another. It was not my ears that heard God, but in my mind, I heard words. There were others, like Francis Frangipane, who were having visions and revelations from God. We were the generation of the “Jesus Freaks,” that generation who turned to love Christ when the world was doing the hippie free love.

One of the things I rejoice in – in my years of ministry here at First Baptist, over these many years – is the number of young people God has spoken to and called into ministry. We have had several called into ministry. Some into missions, some into music ministry, and some into the proclamation ministry. God is still speaking. He is still calling for people to speak to this generation. The Bible is closed as being the official Word of God; yet, God is still speaking from generation to generation. He is calling people to be saved. He is calling people to repent. He is calling people to know His glory.

God will speak no matter what 2021 brings.

There is a great sense of foreboding and uncertainty as we approach 2021. In most years, we face a new year with hope of new and better things to come. Yet, with all of the political uncertainty we are facing, and with the still uncertain Corona virus, there is much we do not know that is coming good or bad. There are predictions of economic gloom, of a soviet style take over of the world, on and on. The left are calling for Christians and Trump supporters to be sent to camps and punished. There seems to be a lot of darkness on the horizon.

Yet, the same darkness hung over for those who came into exile to Babylon.

Psalm 137:1-4 NIVO

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

² There on the poplars we hung our harps, ³ for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" ⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

God gave this word for to His people in Babylon, in the darkness of their exile. He was still with them. He gave this word to us today as well, to remind us, that no matter how dark our world may get, God is still on His throne. He is present always.

Approaching the light.

I remember a dream Francis shared one time. He said he and his wife were in a very dark place. All around them were multitudes of people. They were weighed down by the darkness. The people in darkness had no hope. Then, all of a sudden a door opened. A bright light emanated from the door. In his heart, he knew the door was the glory of the Lord. He wanted to go into the light and enter the door. He began to approach the door of light. As he did so, he was surprised to see his wife enter the door before him! He was ashamed that she could enter the presence of God before him, because his heart was more pure. But he too entered the door and went into the light. Others also followed and entered the door into the house of light.

He said the vision was a message for the church in a time when everything around us is in total darkness. In the darkness, we are not to despair. We are to continue to pursue the glory of the Lord and live in holy obedience. If we do so, the people living in darkness around us will want to come to the light. The greater the light, the brighter and stronger it appears to those in darkness around. Our eyes do not need to be on the darkness. Our eyes need to be on the glory of the Lord who is always present in glory around us.

And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matt. 28:20

God still speaks!