

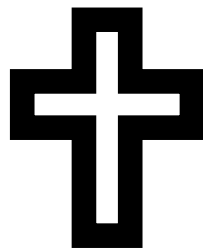
Twelve Lessons

on

The Book of Ezekiel

by

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THE BIG PICTURE – LESSON 1 – Ezekiel 1:1-12

Introduction: This vision of Ezekiel teaches the God rules and overrules in the affairs of men.

1. The Four Faces – Suggests that God interacts to all time, space, creatures, and spheres. We are finite and cannot see the big picture, cannot see everything at once like God. They faced four directions, we can't. In the providence of God our position never changes.
2. The Four Wheels – Suggests God can change Directions (what He does) without changing Deity (who He is). Notice verse 12 – *“And they went every straight forward:”* *whither the spirit was to go, they went(what He does); and they turned (who He is) not when they went.”* In the providence of God we always succeed.
3. The providence of God is the theme of Ezekiel.
4. Our problem is we have the promise and the provision but between them we have the process.
5. Jesus had three places: The wilderness was the hindering place. Calvary was the happy place (for the joy). But between them was Gethsemane the hard place. The truth is we cannot have a happy ending without going through a hard place.
6. God sees the big picture. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

Lesson Goals:

1. To discover our position in Christ.
2. To study the providence of God.
3. To understand our life is more than one day.

Definitions of Important Terms and/or Phrases:

1. Providence – The continuous activity of God in His creation by which He preserves and governs. The doctrine of providence affirms God's absolute lordship over His creation and confirms the dependence of all creation on the Creator. It is the denial of the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary).
2. Cross – Figurative. The cross is used in Scripture, in a general way, for what is painful and mortifying to the flesh (Matt 16:24). After the resurrection of our Lord the cross is spoken of as the representative of His whole sufferings from His birth to His death (Eph 2:16; Heb 12:2) and for the whole doctrines of the gospel (1 Cor 1:18; Gal 6:14); whereas the opposers of the gospel were spoken of as enemies of the cross (Phil 3:18). "The cross of Christ" (1 Cor 1:17) represents that Christ was crucified for man and thereby procured His salvation. (New Unger's Bible Dictionary).
3. Sovereignty of God – A theological term which refers to the unlimited power of God, who has sovereign control over the affairs of nature and history (Isa 45:9-19; Rom 8:18-39). The Bible declares that God is working out His sovereign plan of redemption for the world and that the conclusion is certain. Immediately after the Fall He talked about the curse of human sin and specified the cure for man's sin. To the serpent He said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen 3:15). The whole redemptive story of the Bible is the fulfillment of this prophecy by the sovereign God, as Paul clearly teaches in Rom 8-11. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

I. THE BIG PICTURE IN POSITION – The Four Faces. Vs. 5-12

A. Our position is based on a Man – Point: One day is not my life; one piece is not the whole picture; and one part is not the whole car.

1. Verse 5 – *“...they had the likeness of a man”*. **They had four faces** – Vs. 10 – They had the face of a man, lion, ox, and eagle on four different sides.
2. Commentators have always recognized that these four faces **relate to the four Gospels**:
 - a. Matthew presents Jesus as King, typified by a lion. Mark presents Him as a Servant, the ox. Luke presents Jesus in His humanity, a man. John presents Jesus as the Son of God, the eagle who not only flies higher than any other creature but is the only creature able to look directly into the sun, even as only the Son of God beholds the glory of the Father.
 - b. This is a reverse order from Ezekiel. Why? Because Jesus came the first time as a Man but He's coming the second time as King.
3. The Gospel – Rom 1:16 – *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*
4. I Cor. 15 – The Gospel is the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of the Man, Christ Jesus. **God sees the Big Picture** – Col 2:10 – *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”*
5. Our salvation is a Man – Noah's family entered into the ark because of him.

- a. 1 John 4:17 – “*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*”
- b. The Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. When He died – we died; when He was buried – we were buried; and when He arose – we arose.

B. Our position is based on a message

1. The Twelve tribes of Israel camped into 4 camps around the Tabernacle.
2. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon – 186,400 – Camped on the East Side – Called Camp of Judah – The Lion. (He’ll march into Jerusalem from the East). Judah means “thanksgiving and praise.” See Psa. 100:4.
3. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin – 108,100 – Camped on the West Side – Called the Camp of Ephraim – The Ox.
4. Reuben, Simeon, and Gad – 151,400 – Camped on the South Side – Called the Camp of Reuben – The Man.
5. Dan, Naphtali, and Asher – 157,600 – Camped on the North Side – Called the Camp of Dan – The Eagle.
6. Point: The largest number – East; the smallest number – West; Almost identical numbers – North and South made it look like a Cross.
7. Illustrate – Num. 23-24 – Balaam was asked to “Curse” Israel but all that would come out of his mouth was a “Blessing.” Why? Because when he stood on the mountain and looked over the Camp of Israel, all he could see was a Cross.
8. ***God sees the Big Picture*** – Like Israel, individually, we rebel, murmur, complain and deserve “judgment” but God looks upon us and sees us in the Light of the Cross.

II. THE BIG PICTURE IN PROVIDENCE – Vs. 14-21

A. Our providence is based on a command – Providence is a term that in theology designates the continual care that God exercises over the universe He has created. This includes the two facts of ***preservation and government***. What God guards, He governs. Many want His security but not His sovereignty. Israel loved Moses as a Savior but not as a Sovereign.

1. Providence is Here Compared to a “...*wheel in the middle of a wheel.*” (Vs. 16).
 - a. God’s ways are past finding out. Sometimes to us, it looks confusing but everything moves not by blind fate but by intelligent direction.
 - b. The living God is moving in time and eternity and we just live in Time.
2. Illustrate – There will be times when you can’t calculate God, figure out God but you can always “count” on God and have “faith” in God.
3. ***God sees the big picture*** – God sees what I was, what I am, and what I shall be.
4. Point: God is before time, after time, and in time, all the time and on time.

B. Our providence is bound on a circle – Vs. 16 – “...*a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*” Why a circle, a wheel? Because a circle or a wheel has no beginning or end. The plans & purposes for our life are bound in the Eternal God.

1. Providence is Like a Wheel – Because sometimes one part of the wheel is at the top, and then it is at the bottom “**BUT IT’S STILL A WHEEL.**”
 - a. Never think that you’ll always be at the top – The wheel turns. 1 Cor 10:12 – “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*”
 - b. Never despair that you’ll always be at the bottom – The wheel turns. Ps 30:5 – “...*weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*”
2. Providence is like a wheel – Because there is one part of the wheel that never turns round, and that is the axle.
 - a. The axle is our standing – The wheel turning is our state.
 - b. Our axle is salvation by grace – The exterior wheel is changing, but the center stands for ever fixed. Examples – David, Peter, Noah, Moses, etc. Their state was variable but their standing was fixed.
3. Providence is like a wheel – Because when the wheel moves very fast, you can see nothing but the exterior circle.
 - a. If you stop the wheel – You see all the indentions but if you spin it you only see the circle.
 - b. Our problem – We look at TODAY’S troubles but when you put all your troubles together since you’ve been saved, you will not complain and cry but you’ll say, “God has been working in my life, God has been so good to me.”
 - c. Point – Do not base your life on one day.

C. Our providence is bound on corners

1. Providence is like four wheels – A wheel on every corner. There is no place I am in that God does not

see me. No condition or circumstance can hide me from Him.

2. Providence is like four wheels – Every wheel is alike. Sometimes it looks like life is contradictory – But someday we’ll see the big picture.

a. Esther – God saw her and the wheels of Providence began to turn and Haman is hung on his own gallows.

b. Joseph – God saw him and the wheels of Providence began to turn and he goes from the pit to the palace.

c. Illustration – My Mama was crocheting an afghan – I said, “Mama, that afghan looks ugly down here.” She said, “Crawl up into my lap and see it from my side.” I did and there was a beautiful multicolored afghan.

d. Illustration – Corvette Plant – Illinois – If you saw only one piece at a time, you would say, “You mean to tell me this is a Corvette?” The engineer would say, “Yes, but only a part of a Corvette.” He would then direct to the end of the plant and there coming out of the end of the assembly line was be a beautiful complete Corvette. ***We need to see the Big Picture.***

Conclusion: We need to see the Big Picture

THE UNSEEN HAND

There is an unseen Hand to me, That lead thru ways I cannot see
While going thru this world of woe, This hand still leads me as I go.

His hand has led thru shadows drear, And while it leads I have no fear,
I know ‘twill lead me to that home, Where sin nor sorrows e’er can come.
I long to see my Savior’s face, And sing the story saved by grace,
And there upon that golden strand, I’ll praise Him for His guiding hand.

Chorus:

I’m trusting to the unseen hand, That guides me thru this weary land,
And some sweet day, I’ll reach that strand, Still guided by the unseen hand.