

Interpreting Apocalyptic: Ezekiel and His Strange Visions

(Dr. Carl Laney, 2019)

Introducing... Ezekiel

The Prophet of Pantomime

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Hosea's Gomer



*“OK, Ezekiel, what is God saying to us
today?”*

This is from J Carl Laney's video "Interpreting Apocalyptic: Ezekiel and His Strange Visions" at:
<http://www.Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/25StudyGod'sWord/zJCarlLaney.aspx>

Facts on Ezekiel

- Author: God Strengthens
- Date: 570 B.C.
- Setting: Exiled in 597 B.C

Three Captivities to Bablyon

605 B.C.	Daniel & friends
597 B.C.	Ezekiel & 10,000
586 B.C.	The Remnant (the good figs)

Tel Abib

<u>Judgment</u>	<u>Consolation</u>
593-586 B.C	586-570 B.C.


The Fall of Jerusalem

Facts on Ezekiel

- Author: God Strengthens
- Date: 570 B.C.
- Setting: Exiled in 597 B.C.
- Purpose: “Yahweh is God!”
- Theme: Destruction and restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple
- Theology: “the glory of Yahweh”

Ezekiel, the “Son of Man”

- Used 93 times to refer to Ezekiel.
- Means “mortal man.”
- Expresses human weakness in the presence of God.

Ezekiel the Watchman 3:17

“Eat this book!” 3:1

Lamentations, mourning and woe. Ezekiel 3:10

Ezekiel's Physical Limitations

Literal *or* figurative

- Secluded in his house 3:24
- Bound with ropes 3:25
- Mute 3:26

Ezekiel's Call and Commissioning

Ezekiel Among the Exiles in Babylon



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What did Ezekiel see?

4 Creatures; 4 Wheels

Cherub?

What is your interpretation of Ezekiel's vision?

The *Merkavah*

The four wheeled chariot-throne of God driven by the four living creatures.

The *Merkabah* is the central theme for Jewish mysticism and esoteric literature such as the Kabbalah.

Dream Visions

6th & 7th Century Mesopotamia

The Setting

The Vision

The Interpretation

Apocalyptic

From the Greek word, *apokalypsis* which means “uncovering” or “revelation.”

The *apokalypsis* of John” (Rev. 1:1)

Apocalyptic literature is . . .

"symbolic, visionary, prophetic literature, composed during oppressive conditions consisting of visions whose events are recorded exactly as they were seen by the author and explained through a divine interpreter, and whose theological content is primarily eschatological."

Dr. Ralph Alexander

Major Elements of Apocalyptic

- Description of the Setting
 - Date
 - Recipient
 - Place
 - Circumstances
- Record of the Vision
- Interpretation of the Vision

Hermeneutical Principles for Apocalyptic Visions

1. Use normal, grammatical-historical interpretation.
2. Look for the interpretation provided in the text.
3. Don't add to the interpretation of the divine interpreter.

Hermeneutical Principles for Apocalyptic Visions

4. Do not seek to interpret the minute details of the vision.
5. Exception: When a symbol has revelatory significance on the basis of antecedent theology or analogy of Scripture.

Winken, Blynken and Nod, by Eugene Field

Applying the Principles

1. Interpreted normally.
2. Look for the text says.
3. Don't add to the interpretation.
4. Don't interpret the details.
(there may be exceptions)

Laney's additional rule

We may be more accurate interpreters...
...when we say *less*.

Speculating
Guessing
Hopeful
Confident

Now, how do you interpret Ezekiel's vision?

"Such was the likeness of the *glory of God!*"

How did God intend for Ezekiel to respond to this unusual vision?

How should *we* respond to Ezekiel's vision?

Another Example: Revelation 1

- Description of the Setting 1-11
- Record of the Vision 1:12-17
- Interpretation of the Vision 1:18-20

How should we interpret this apocalyptic vision?

What explanation does Jesus provide?

7 Stars = “angels” (*aggeloi*)

Who are the *aggeloi*?

- Human leaders or pastor
- Guardian angels of the churches
- Human *messengers* of the churches

The Seven Churches of Revelation

- Ephesus
- Smyrna
- Pergamum
- Thyatira
- Sardis
- Philadelphia
- Laodicea

Responding to Apocalyptic

1. Follow normal interpretation.
2. Focus on what the text itself says.
3. Avoid speculation on details.
4. Greater accuracy *and confidence* comes with saying less.
5. Respond with awe and worship.