

Ezekiel 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The word of the LORD came expressly unto 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 upon him.

Analysis

This verse introduces one of Scripture's most extraordinary visions with precise historical and prophetic credentials. The phrase 'the word of the LORD came expressly' uses the Hebrew 'hayoh hayah' (הָיָה הָיָה), an emphatic construction meaning 'certainly came' or 'definitely came,' emphasizing the undeniable reality of divine revelation. Ezekiel's priestly lineage ('the son of Buzi') is significant—as a priest, he should have been serving in Jerusalem's temple, but instead ministers among exiles by Babylon's irrigation canals. The 'hand of the LORD' (yad-Yahweh, יַד־יְהוָה) denotes powerful divine enablement and prophetic empowerment, a phrase appearing seven times in Ezekiel. This theophany occurs in exile, demonstrating that God's presence is not confined to Jerusalem's temple. The vision transforms Ezekiel from priest to prophet, from temple servant to exilic spokesman for God.

Historical Context

This vision occurred in 593 BC, the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, exactly five years after Nebuchadnezzar's first conquest of Jerusalem (597 BC). Ezekiel was among the 10,000 skilled workers, nobles, and leaders deported to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14-16). The 'river Chebar' (modern Shatt en-Nil) was a major irrigation canal southeast of Babylon near Nippur, where a Jewish settlement existed. Archaeological discoveries at Nippur confirm significant Jewish presence. As a priest approximately 30 years old (the age priests began temple service, Numbers 4:3), Ezekiel faced crushing disappointment—he would never serve in Jerusalem's

temple. Yet God commissioned him for a different, vital ministry: calling exiles to repentance and offering hope of future restoration.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's appearance to Ezekiel in exile challenge our assumptions about where and how God meets His people?
2. What disappointments or displaced expectations in your life might God be transforming into new ministry opportunities?

Interlinear Text

הִי הָ	הָ הָ	דָּבַר	יְהוָה:	אֵל	יִחְזֹק אֶל	בֶּן
H1961	H1961	The word	of the LORD	H413	came expressly unto Ezekiel	the son
		H1697	H3068		H3168	H1121
בּוֹזִי	הַכֹּהֵן	בְּאֶרֶץ	כַּשְׂדִּים	עַל	נְהַר	כְּבָר
of Buzi	the priest	in the land	of the Chaldeans	H5921	by the river	Chebar
H941	H3548	H776	H3778		H5104	H3529
וַתֵּהָ	עָלַי	שֵׁם	יָד	יְהוָה:		
H1961	H5921	H8033	and the hand	of the LORD		
			H3027	H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 3:14 (References Lord): So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Ezekiel 3:22 (References Lord): And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

2 Kings 3:15 (References Lord): But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

1 Kings 18:46 (References Lord): And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Ezekiel 8:1 (References Lord): And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.

Ezekiel 37:1 (References Lord): The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

Ezekiel 33:22 (References Lord): Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

Ezekiel 40:1 (References Lord): In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither.