

Aim of lesson

To show through the witness of Ezekiel that God is not limited to 'holy' places or 'important' people.

Bible background

Ezekiel 1, 2 and 3.

Outline of lesson

A displaced person

When Ezekiel was a young man of about 17, living in his country of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land and carried several important people captive. These included Daniel (Daniel 1:1-6). Seven or eight years later Nebuchadnezzar invaded again and took other captives to Babylon with the young King Jehoiachin. This time Ezekiel at about the age of 25 was included in the large number of Israelites deported (2 Kings 24:8-16; Ezekiel 1:1-2). Ezekiel was of a priestly family. At the age of thirty he would have begun his work as a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem (Numbers 4:3). It is generally thought that the thirtieth year of Ezekiel 1:1 was his age. The class could refer to the time chart and label the figure of Ezekiel.

The Workbook

Most people moving from one country to another nowadays need to fill in forms with personal details. Ask the class to fill in the identity card in the workbook with the details for Ezekiel. Most of the information they can find in Ezekiel 1:1-2; but Ezekiel 24:18 refers to his wife. His present status could be 'refugee' or 'captive'.

Thirty years old

As Ezekiel approached his thirtieth birthday he must have thought, with sadness, of the role he would have played had he still been in Jerusalem. He would have served God in his Temple, but exiled in Babylon he could not be sanctified by sacrifice for the job nor could he enter the Temple courts. He must have felt very cut off from God's presence. Let the class express some of this in the space for Ezekiel's thoughts on in the workbook. Psalm 137:1-6 expresses some of the general sorrow of the exile and could be read at this point.

The glory of God

It is in this context that Ezekiel sees this vision of the glory of God. It would be difficult from Ezekiel's description to draw out exactly what he saw, but the details of the vision give the idea of God through his Spirit seeing in all directions. The image of heavenly fiery chariots is used elsewhere in Scripture – 2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; 1 Chronicles 28:18; Psalm 68:17; Isaiah 31:3 and indicates his absolute power over all that happens.

This vision must have been a tremendous encouragement to Ezekiel. Instead of seeing himself as far away from God and without his job of service he is suddenly in the presence of the glory of God, much closer than he would ever expect to be as a priest. He also is given a job to do – Ezekiel 2:1-3:11. Ask the class to write what they think Ezekiel might have said later, when able to, (see Ezekiel 3:15) in the space in the workbook.

Digging deeper

Babylon

This section looks at Babylon and its history.

Relevance to our lives

Ezekiel learned that God is very near wherever we are. In spite of circumstances God can use us in his service. Ask the class about how this should affect our lives and dedication to God.

Prayer

'Dear Lord, please show me how I can work for you.'

The class could consider what Ezekiel might have prayed before and after this vision, or they could write what he might have prayed when considering his call to preach to a nation that he is told will not listen.

Other suggestions for activities

- A newspaper run by the exiles in Babylon could be begun to give the background to the life of Ezekiel.
- Jeremiah 29 is a letter from Jeremiah to people in exile like Ezekiel. List what God told Jeremiah that the people were to do, v5-9.