



The Man of Chebar

A Study of Ezekiel



Frank Chesser



Publishing Designs, Inc.





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To Aiden and Brooke,
grandson and granddaughter,
young in age
but exceedingly mature
in spirituality, love for God,
and the old paths
of immutable gospel truth.





Books by Frank Chesser

Spirit of Liberalism

Portrait of God

Voyage of Faith

Thinking Right about God

The Heart of Isaiah





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Foreword

Frank Chesser gave me my first (and probably only) “Alexander Campbell moment.” When “Raccoon” John Smith first heard Campbell speak, he expressed disappointment at having ridden his horse fifty miles to hear a thirty-minute sermon. Someone told Smith to look at his watch. Campbell had spoken more than two-and-a-half hours!

When Frank Chesser came to preach in a gospel meeting at the Colvin Street Church of Christ in West Anniston, Alabama, I was an excited young preacher. I had heard of his unique style and was finally going to hear him. He rose with only a Bible in hand—no notes. I soon learned that the Bible was for nothing more than to assure the audience of the source of the sermon. He never looked up a verse. He never opened it; he never even glanced at it.

I was greatly impressed, but while a few other preachers use no notes, Frank’s method was not unique. What was unique about brother Frank’s presentation is how he used words. He strung them together as precious pearls on a golden string. The eloquence. The oratory. The vocabulary. The power. He grabbed my attention as a letter from a girlfriend grabs a love-struck teen boy. He riveted my mind as a storyteller spinning a yarn around a campfire—but his words were true (John 8:32). He lifted the congregation and carried us along a mesmerizing path through Scripture. Every word was carefully chosen. His voice rose and fell at just the right moments.

When he said, “And in conclusion . . .,” I thought, “No! You can’t stop after ten minutes. It was just getting good.” I looked down at my watch, and like “Raccoon” John, discovered I had listened much longer than it had seemed.

I have gotten to know this humble brother better through the years. My respect has never flagged. Now he pours the same care into the words he puts on pages as he did those he put into ears. It is a joy to read his books. The pages turn themselves; the minutes pass in the same way they did in that service long ago.

The Man of Chebar is no exception. Chesser does it again. He reeled me in with the first sentence. I found myself wanting to find out what the next paragraph said; then, the next chapter. It was like he knew Ezekiel personally and was talking about his friend. He tied the pieces together as I have never seen them before.

The Man of Chebar is really about Ezekiel’s God. (The word *God* is used more than 700 times in Ezekiel and 1,840 times in these pages.) Here is one of my favorite quotes in the book: “No words in the book of Ezekiel exceed the final four words in the name of this new spiritual city, temple, or church: ‘The Lord is there’” (Ezek. 48:35, p. 194). That is an insight worth noting in the margin of your Bible.

Ezekiel shows God's goodness and severity (Romans 11:22). God's faithful remnant received His approval; the unfaithful did not. Chesser brings the reader into the uncomfortable presence of God. That seems odd for me to write, but it is how I felt as I read of God's fiery fury against His disobedient people. It made me want to do right and stay on God's good side. Conversely, there are heart-warming sections that show God's tender love. Chesser notes, "Though evicted from the land of promise, they had not been banished from the love of God" (p. 188).

God loved all Israel, every one of them. He loved the exiles in Babylon even though they were rebellious . . . the seventy elders who burned incense to idols . . . the women who wept for their fertility god (8:14), the twenty-five men who expressed disdain for God by sitting with their backs toward the temple and worshiped the sun (8:16) . . . But God had special affection for the spiritual remnant that loved Him . . . He had a special "look" (Isa. 66:2) of affection for those who discerned their spiritual poverty (p. 65).

Chesser finds Christ, Calvary, and the church in Ezekiel's pages. (You will find *Jesus* 67 times in *The Man of Chebar*, *church* 67 times, and *Calvary / cross* 37 times—averaging more than one time per page.) The author connects the book back to the foundational prophecies of Genesis (3:15; 12:3) and shows how a scarlet thread runs through Ezekiel and on to Matthew, and beyond. The discussion on worship in the church from the temple analogy is rich (chapters 40–48). One can take this commentary and make practical applications to today's world that will connect this generation to a Bible book that has been for the most part ignored all their lives.

Chesser proposes to take readers on a "spiritual voyage" in the introduction. Join him!

Allen Webster, Minister
July 15, 2018



Publisher's Preface

Not many weeks before his death, Wendell Winkler, a preacher and teacher of great esteem in the Lord's church, approached me at a gathering in Huntsville: "Brother Andrews, don't you publish for Frank Chesser?" "Yes sir, we do." Then brother Winkler continued, "Give Frank a message for me the next time you see him. Tell him to quit preaching, get a pen and a yellow pad, find a corner, and write for the rest of his life."

Brother Winkler's words were precious to me. I took the message to Frank. He did not quit preaching, but he has also continued to write. I am very happy about that, and if brother Winkler were still among us, he would be also.

Frank Chesser is a unique writer. He uses good grammar. He is concise. He has a passion for writing. But more than those things, Frank employs a unique style. He literally stands alone in his eloquent ink-on-paper presentation of Truth. A reader not familiar with Chesser's style might ask, *What is he saying?* But the real question comes to be, *How can he so fluently pour out this great message?*

Chesser's mind never rests, and evidence of the truth in God's Word flows continually from his pen. He never hesitates. He says what is needed at just the right time. His words are magnetic, always tugging at the reader's heart, pulling them toward Jesus Christ and His word—and holding them there.

We are happy to attach *The Man of Chebar* to Frank's list of works, from *The Spirit of Liberalism* (2001) to *The Heart of Isaiah* (2016). Often the prophetic book of Ezekiel is slighted in Bible study simply because it is alive with figurative language. If you are one who has longed for an overview of the man and the book, begin now with *The Man of Chebar*. My guess is you will like it. And God's word coming from Frank Chesser's pen will find lodging in the hearts of many and will make a difference for them in eternity.

James B. Andrews, President
Publishing Designs, Inc.
July 15, 2018



Acknowledgments

To my dear friend of over forty years, James Andrews, for the long and laborious journey he traveled to bring this book to publication, and many thanks for his kind and encouraging words in the editor's preface regarding this work.

To Peggy Coulter for her usual and noted expertise in marketing and design.

To Allen Webster, a multi-talented man, meek like Moses and industrious like Paul, for his exceedingly gracious commendation of this work.

And to Cherry, my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual helpmeet of fifty years, who taught the book of Ezekiel to a ladies Bible class in 1998-99, for her grammar and typing skills, and her continuous encouragement of this book.







Introduction

He lived in his own house by the Chebar River in Babylon with his wife, the delight of his heart and the “desire” (Ezek. 24:16) of his eyes. It had been five years since Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon knocked on the gates of Jerusalem and conveyed Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and ten thousand others into Babylonian captivity. Moses opened and closed his final sermon to the second generation from Egypt with a forward look to Israel’s potential for apostasy and loss of the land of promise (Deut. 4:25–28; 28:61–68). Decades of prophetic thunderings had reverberated throughout the nation, warning of this tragic day.

Most likely, it was the “thirtieth year” (Ezek. 1:1) of his own life, that Ezekiel, “by the river of Chebar” (Ezek. 1:1), looked upward and “saw visions of God” (Ezek. 1:1), and what he saw left him prostrate upon his face (Ezek. 1:28). When Ezekiel beheld God in all of His transcendent majesty and holiness, he saw the object of his mission in the manacles of captivity, yet “rebellious” (Ezek. 2:7), “impudent and hardhearted” (Ezek. 3:7), led by elders like unto themselves with “idols in their heart” (Ezek. 14:3). Seven years of preaching and signs prior to Jerusalem’s destruction were futile in effecting penitence in the hearts of the masses, and except for a preserving “mark upon the foreheads” (Ezek. 9:4) of a spiritual remnant, the “dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols” (Ezek. 6:5) constituted a striking contrast to Ezekiel in venerate prostration before God.

Having witnessed the “glory of the Lord” (Ezek. 1:28), Ezekiel commenced his journey through the mind of God wherein he was informed of “lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (Ezek. 2:10) which were to befall Judah. Manifold visions of human evil, so egregious as to surpass the power of human expression to adequately describe, witness the flight of divine “pity” (Ezek. 8:18) and judgment so severe and extensive that Ezekiel falls upon his face and exclaims, “Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?” (Ezek. 9:8).

The verbal expressions in the bulk of the book of Ezekiel that inspiration utilizes to delineate the depravity and vileness of Israel and the pagan nations are so candid and poignant as to render the biblically uneducated and non-spiritual mind incapable of mental and emotional acceptance and appropriation. The divine portraits that God repeatedly paints of His wrath, fiery fury, and merciless judgment are so repugnant to the mind of liberalism that it cries, “This is not the God of love and grace of the gospel.”

This study is a spiritual voyage with God and Ezekiel through the preponderance of the book of Ezekiel that depicts God’s mighty wrath against horrendous evil to its exquisite portrayal of Israel’s restoration to life, God, Canaan, and one another



(Ezek. 37). It points to God's sovereignty, His judgment upon the enemies of His people, and His special regard for the righteous remnant (Ezek. 38–39), to the reality of His spiritual kingdom, the church (Ezek. 40–48), emanating from Christ and Calvary, the consummating work of redemption commencing in Genesis 3:15 and 12:3. It is a divine narrative of the nature of God, sin, judgment, and redemption that will have a profound and immeasurable impact upon the heart and mind, and mightily enrich the soul.





Chapter 1

Hiding among the trees, Adam and Eve quivered with fear as the voice of God moved through the garden (Gen. 3:8–10). Jacob went to his grave with a limp as a ceaseless reminder of his encounter with God (Gen. 32:31). Moses “hid his face” (Exod. 3:6) in fear and reverence as God’s voice emanated from the burning bush. Just a physical manifestation of God’s descent upon Mount Sinai provoked him to exclaim, “I exceedingly fear and quake” (Heb. 12:21). In reverential awe, Aaron “held his peace” (Lev. 10:3) as he viewed two of his sons in a fiery death at the hand of God. Just the hearing of God’s great wonders at the Red Sea and His victory over the Amorites with the sword of Israel melted the hearts of the Canaanites and dispelled their courage (Josh. 2:9–11).

Gideon, as well as Manoah and his wife, feared death upon discerning that they had been standing in the presence of an angel of God (Judg. 6:22–23; 13:20–22). Even the manifestation of God in thunder and rain incited great fear and veneration in the hearts of Israel (1 Sam. 12:18). A vision from God left Daniel void of strength (Dan. 10:5–8), and a blinding light and a word from Christ impelled trembling Saul to Damascus to await a visit from Ananias (Acts 9:1–18). This brief engagement with Christ was a thunderbolt from heaven, driving him to his knees and reversing the course of his life. As did Isaiah (Isa. 6:1–7), he saw God, his sin, and his need of redemption. He discerned his hands, stained with the blood of the saints of God. He looked back but never went back. A few moments with Christ transformed the entirety of his being.

Reason demands faith, and faith demands reason. It is irrational to behold the indescribable magnitude, wonder, and intricacy of the universe and all of its components and deny the existence and omnipotence of God. Inspiration affirms that such a man is a “fool” (Ps. 14:1). “In the beginning God” (Gen. 1:1), the first four words from God attest to the reality and eternal nature of His Being. They hang suspended in picturesque resplendent solemnity. They stand alone. They are complete within themselves. They constitute the seed from which everything else grows. They pierce the reflective mind with unutterable awe. The eyes of the mind are transfixed at the sublime nature of this initial pronouncement from God. Every subsequent word is a verbal portrait of some attribute of this timeless, omnipotent, omniscient God.

When Ezekiel saw the cherubim of God (Ezek. 1:4–14), the chariot of God (vv. 15–21), and the throne of God (vv. 22–28), he was changed forever. His mind was as open and receptive to every word from God as are lungs to the air they breathe. Viewing the symbolic siege of Jerusalem (4:1–3) as “children’s play,” physical posture (4:4–8), diet restrictions (4:9–15), and expunging his hair and beard with a sword,



knife, and fire (5:1–4) as unreasonable, and the death of his wife as cruel (24:15–18) were alien thoughts to the mind of Ezekiel. On his face in fear and trembling before God, as he is portrayed in this chapter, Ezekiel was left with Samuel's spirit who exclaimed, "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:10). The momentous nature of this vision of God and Ezekiel's need of it is seen in its multiple occurrences in the book.

1. (v. 1) What date is given for the commencement of Ezekiel's prophetic work?
Note: The year noted is most likely a reference to Ezekiel's age.
2. (v. 1) With whom was he living; at what location?

What occurred; and what did he see?

3. (v. 2) What additional dating notation is given regarding the beginning of Ezekiel's work? (See 2 Kings 24:8–16.)
4. (v. 3) How is Ezekiel described; who was his father; and in what two ways is his inspiration depicted?

With eyes of impeccable purity, Adam and Eve beheld the transcendent glory of God in His resplendent creative wonders, of which they themselves were the crowning jewels. In the throes of temptation, Eve's perfect vision of God's majesty was supplanted by a desire to be godlike, and when joined by Adam, the serpent of sin coiled about their hearts. Moses saw God in a burning bush on Mount Sinai, and he carried that sight to his lonely, unmarked grave in the land of Moab. Israel observed the omnipotent power of God in Egypt and at the Red Sea, in a cloud by day and fire by night, at the waters of Marah, and in provisions of manna and quail in the Wilderness of Sin, in water from a rock in Horeb and at quaking Mount Sinai, in judgment by fire in the camp and the leprosy and healing of Miriam, only to rebel against God, call for the death of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, and move God to say, "How long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" (Num. 14:11).

God halted the cycle of nature for three and one-half years. He used ravens to feed Elijah, prolonged a widow's oil and meal, raised her son from the dead, and answered the prophet's prayer with consuming fire on Mount Carmel, only to be left with the same spiritual remnant that He had prior to Israel's knowledge of His mighty works. Isaiah saw the pre-incarnate Christ on His throne, surrounded by seraphim singing praises to His perfect holiness, and it changed his life forever.



Israel beheld the omnipotence in the vast works of Christ, yet cried for His blood and hanged Him on a cross of wood. John gazed through an open door into heaven with inexpressible wonder and then painted a picture of every living being external to God Himself affirming, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and forever” (Rev. 5:13). Unlike Adam, Eve, and Israel, but like Moses, Isaiah, and John, when Ezekiel saw the glory of God (Ezek. 1:4–28), he was never to be the same, and the twenty-two years of his prophetic life was a ceaseless reflection of that experience.

5. (v. 4) What did Ezekiel see; from which direction was it coming; what two things accompanied it; and in what was the entire scene encompassed?
6. (v. 5) What appeared in the midst of this scene; to what are they likened; and how are they later identified? (Ezek. 10:15–20).
7. (v. 6) How many faces and wings did each possess?
8. (v. 7) In what three ways are their feet described?
9. (v. 8) What was under each of their four wings?
10. (vv. 9, 12) When in flight, what three things are stated about their wings?
11. (v. 10) What was the likeness of each of their four faces?
12. (vv. 13–14) What three additional descriptive statements are made concerning the appearance of these cherubim?

The chains of despair hung heavily around the neck of David (Ps. 18). He shuddered with fear as the cords of death attempted to strangle him. He was drowning in a flood of ungodly men. Death and Hades were pursuing him like a hunter on the trail of his prey. He sought the aid of God, whom he described as his “rock, fortress, deliverer, strength, buckler, horn of salvation, and high tower” (Ps. 18:2). God is portrayed as coming to assist him, riding upon a cherub and flying “upon the wings of the wind” (v. 10).

God was preparing Ezekiel to preach to the captives in Babylon. They were like their elders who later came to see Ezekiel with “idols in their heart” (Ezek. 14:3).



They needed to see the God that David saw who would be their Deliverer and Savior, if they would forsake their idolatry and the sins it had generated in their lives and turn to God in penitence. Verses 15–21 add to the scene already witnessed by Ezekiel in order to encourage them to adopt David’s spirit as their own.

13. (v. 15) In conjunction with each of the four cherubim, what did Ezekiel see; and where was it located?
14. (v. 16) What two additional statements are made about the appearance of each of the four wheels?
15. (v. 17) Relative to movement, what were the four wheels able to do?
16. (v. 18) What three things are stated about the rings or rims of the wheels?
17. (vv. 19–21) What would appear to be the primary truth being pressed in these verses?
18. (vv. 22–23) As part of the foundation of the throne of God, what stretched above the heads of the cherubim; and to what is it likened?
19. (vv. 24–25) As the cherubim flew, what three characteristics are given to describe the sound made by their wings?

What two expressions of reverence occur when God speaks?

20. (v. 26) What did Ezekiel see above the cherubim and crystal-like firmament; how was its beauty set forth; and who sat upon it?
21. (vv. 27–28) What three specifics are utilized in an inadequate attempt to describe the majestic splendor of the likeness of the man upon the throne; and in what was the entire scene bathed?

To what does it point; what was Ezekiel’s response; and what did he hear?



Chapter 2

A man is not ready to hear God until he sees God. If a man is unwilling to listen to God's revelation regarding Him, he has closed the door through which he must pass in perceiving his own nature and status before God. The natural world is a revelation of God (Ps. 19:1–3). It possesses a language all its own. It speaks to the mind of man. It is a ceaseless declaration of the “glory of God” (Ps. 19:1). It is a storehouse of endless knowledge. It illuminates the darkest mental corners of the earth. It allows God to be “clearly seen” and leaves man “without excuse” for his unbelief (Rom. 1:20). It enables man to behold the infinite power, knowledge, wisdom, grace, and love of God in creating and designing a world of immeasurable beauty and limitless provisions to satisfy every physical need. It furnishes such an abundance of evidence that every rational person should confess, “There is a God in heaven” (Dan. 2:28).

This conviction of mind postures man to accept God's special revelation of Himself as narrated in the Bible. The Bible is God's mind in verbal form. It is a portrait of God. It informs man of God's nature, attributes, and will. Ezekiel was not prepared to receive the word of God until he had beheld the glory of God. He was not ready to embark on a mission of proclaiming “lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (Ezek. 2:10) to a “rebellious nation” (2:3), possessing a disposition to inflict harm like briars, thorns, and scorpions (2:6) until he had witnessed God's flying on the wings of cherubim and sitting in perfect holiness on a throne of unmitigated sovereignty. Until a man sees God's eternalness, immutability, sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, holiness, justice, wrath, love, grace, mercy, goodness, longsuffering, and faithfulness, he is not mentally and emotionally equipped to relinquish his pride and human reasoning and embrace the gospel and the demands that it makes upon his life.

God's thoughts and ways are not like man's (Isa. 55:8). He declared, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:9). As long as man clings to Naaman's “behold I thought” (2 Kings 5:11), he will never be able to think like God and walk in the ways of God. God's thinking and ways are embedded in His word. Can a man think the thoughts of God and adopt God's ways as his own when he refuses or neglects to study and honor the word of God? Ezekiel's audience by the Chebar River was in captivity, because they had rejected the thinking and ways of God preached by former prophets and went “a whoring after their idols” (Ezek. 6:9). Jeremiah preached to Judah for forty years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the full captivity of the nation. He attested to their inane and irrational thinking by viewing a tree as their father and a stone as the source of their life (Jer. 2:27).