

Ezekiel 1-3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 January 2006

Preacher: Angus Mackay

[0 : 00] The eminent Oxford professor of evolutionary biology has had on channel 4, called it the root of all evil and he was taking religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as being the root of all evil.

And when I was watching these programs, what I was amazed at was his antipathy, his hostility towards Christianity in particular.

But what I was also amazed at for a very logical individual, he couldn't seem to answer the question that wherever you go in the world, you find people. Where you go in the world, you find people, they have a need to have some super being, some God that they want to worship.

There is an innate need in us to worship. Now the scripture speaks of that innate need. And what I want to talk about this morning or think about this morning is this concept of the God of the Bible. This Christian God that we worship this morning. This Christian God that Ezekiel made. And the influence of this Christian God that we have should have on our lives.

[1 : 15] And I'm using Ezekiel if you like as the illustration of this God. And this evening we're going to read chapter 37 of this prophecy. And we're going to read another passage in the New Testament that speaks of the effect that God has on us and how we ought to live our lives in relation to this word.

But I want to think this morning about God. This God of Israel. This Jehovah. This Yahweh. This Lord who is the creator as taught to us by scripture.

We've all read the passage together. And it's at this type of passage you really want to see it. Explained and demonstrated and shown to you in CGI.

You want to see the computer generated images of this picture. Because this picture is an awesome picture. A lot of passage 1, chapter 1 relates to the cherubim that are there supporting the work of the Lord.

The hosts, the army of God. The machinery of God's army in action. And when you read it. And you see the awesome power that there is in this picture.

[2 : 29] This image we've given of God. You have to ask yourself. How did it affect Ezekiel? And that last verse we said.

As we read. Ezekiel was absolutely overwhelmed. He for seven days was awestruck. The awesome sight left him absolutely overwhelmed.

Our modern society with all our technology. With all our knowledge. We seem to be able to rationalize everything.

But I challenge anybody to rationalize. This image that Ezekiel tried to explain to us here. When Ezekiel wrote this passage.

He wrote of these cherubim etc. The imagery would have been relatively familiar to him. If you read the passage in Kings. Where you see Solomon building the temple.

[3 : 29] These cherubim images. Were used by Solomon. In the building of the temple. So. These sorts of images would have been familiar. To people in Ezekiel's day.

But to us. Unless you are a student of ancient biblical history. They don't really ring anything. In terms of our own knowledge.

But then. They would have had some inkling of. The relevance of these images. But we have here. Ezekiel trying to explain. This awesome power that is God.

And Ezekiel himself. At this time. He writes in his 30th year. And the authors tend to think. That that is what age Ezekiel himself was. He was 30.

He was a priest. That had been taken as a prisoner of war. As a hostage. By the Babylonian Empire. Out of Israel. And he was now in Babylon. With all the other aristocrats.

[4 : 26] And upper echelons of Israel. He was there. As an exile. His country had been overwhelmed. And he was now. Outside his own country.

Looking back at the disaster. That had befallen Israel. And here he was. Seeing this vision. In a position. In a place that was alien to him.

A place that he did not want to be in. And he was. Seeing this vision. And he was being. Chosen by God here. To become a prophet. Amongst the people. In exile.

In Babylon. And this man. Was given a task. He was given a task. To work amongst the people. Of Israel.

And who were the people of Israel. Well God's chosen people. What condition were these people in. Well they had been. In a. Since the death of Solomon.

[5 : 21] The two kingdoms. The northern kingdom. And Jerusalem. And the southern kingdom. They parted. They had fallen away. From the way of God. And had become. A backslidden people. And they had.

Lost the protection of God. All these external nations. That come in. And overrun Israel. And we see. In the works of Isaiah. And the works of Jeremiah. And in Ezekiel here.

We see the. History of. Israel unfolding before us. The judgment of God. Using external powers. Coming in. To trample. Underfoot. The people of God.

Because. They were backslidden. Because. They hadn't. Given God. His due place. And you can imagine. These people thought. They were the people of God.

And maybe some of them. Were bravely thinking. Well. We'll overcome. Maybe some were bitter. Maybe some were totally broken. We don't know. What situation.

[6 : 14] Ezekiel himself. Was in. But they were in a hard place. In a hard world. Away. From their own land. They were prisoners. Others.

And Ezekiel. Was given. This direction. By God. He met. This God. And he was given. A role. As prophet. To go. With a word.

To the children. Of Israel. And when you look. At the picture. We have. Of God himself. What they would call. A theophany. This picture.

Of God. In the old testament. The Lord himself. Above. This. Awesome. Army of God. This awesome. War machine.

That was. Invincible. Whichever direction. It went in. Nothing could stop it. If it chose. To go this direction. It would go this direction. And it couldn't be stopped.

[7 : 07] If it chose. To go left. Right. It could not be stopped. It was invincible. The power of it. Was beyond. His comprehension. Because. There was nothing.

That could stop it. It could go anywhere. It could lift up. It could move in any direction. And it couldn't be stopped. This is the power. Of the army of God. But this isn't God himself.

Either. The army. The seraphim. These angels. We are seeing. With the four heads. The four faces. The wings. These are the angels. The army of God. They aren't God.

To see God. Ezekiel had to look up. And what did he see? Above. These seraphim. These angels. These angelic. He saw God.

And you read. The description there. Of God. There came a voice. From above the expanse. Over their heads. And looked like. A throne of sapphire. Imagine it. In your own mind.

[8 : 04] A throne of sapphire. And on it. Was the figure. Like that of a man. He looked. From the waist up. Like he had. Glowing metal. He was. Full of fire.

He was. So awesome. Remember. When Moses. Wanted to see God. God put him. In the cleft. Of the rock. Because his power. Was so great. Moses couldn't comprehend him.

And this man. Ezekiel. Saw this image. Of this. Molten. Seemingly. Molten. Glowing body. The brilliant. Light.

Surrounded him. Like the appearance. Of a rainbow. In the clouds. On a rainy day. So was the radiance. Around him. And this was the likeness. Of the glory of God. Imagine the picture then.

Imagine it. Seeing what. Ezekiel was seeing. And this was. God. Showing himself. To Ezekiel.

[9 : 01] And giving him. A message. And he said to me. Son of man. Eat what is put. Before you. And. Before him. Was a scroll.

And on the scroll. Was written words. Words of lament. Words of mourning. And words of woe. Because the children of Israel. Were in a bad way. I am sending you.

Ezekiel. With a message. Of warning. A message. Of repentance. From your position. Turn back. And turn back. To God. Repent of your sins. Repent of all the terrible things. That you are doing. Because you are in a terrible position. I can see. Jerusalem. Going to be trodden under foot. I can see. The country of Israel. Being ravaged. Totally. The temple. Being destroyed. And the effect. That would have had. On the people of Israel. Would have been devastating. This was. Their symbol. Of power.
[9 : 58] That. Solomon's temple. They had built there. As a mark. Of the power. Of our God. And this itself. Was going to be destroyed. This was.

The vision. That. Ezekiel. Was going to go. And send. To the people of Israel. This anchor. That was their anchor. In the world. That their strength. Emanated. From all that they saw. In Israel. Was going to be demolished. And utterly. Devastated. Put yourself. In their position. Everything. That you hold here. Everything. That you hold. In your lives. As being something. That gives you sustenance. That gives you strength. That gives you support. Gone. Imagine a UK. Without a health service. Imagine a UK. Without armed forces. Imagine a UK. Without an infrastructure. That protects us. As a society. It's all gone. And we are.
[10 : 51] Taken prisoner. As refugees. Taken out of our. Counties. Taken out of our homes. Our villages. And sent somewhere. As exiles. We've all seen.

Pictures. Of the displaced. In Africa. We've seen. The hopelessness. In their eyes. We've seen. The despair. In their faces. As they are taken away. By their enemies. Because they were. Overrun. Because they lost the war. They lost the battle. There was no one there. To help them. They were hopeless. This is the picture. Of Israel. The same Israel. Whose forebears. Walked across. The Red Sea. On dry land. The same Israel. Who ate manna. From heaven. The same Israel. Who saw. Whose forefathers. Saw the walls. Of Jericho. Collapse. But the Israel.
[11 : 52] Who had everything. Who had God. On their side. But who turned away. From him. Turned away. From this God. That protected them.

That preserved them. They had effectively. Cut off the hand. That was feeding them. And that is the reality. Of Ezekiel's task. Before him. But this is the God. Of Ezekiel. The God of Ezekiel. That had shown himself. To Ezekiel. As the powerful one. And Ezekiel's mind. Was made up. That image. That image. Left him awestruck. For seven days. He was in shock. For seven days. You can almost see him. Numbed. Almost comatose. Because of the power. That he had seen. And this power.
[12 : 51] That is God. Had said to Ezekiel. Son of man. Ezekiel. You. You. You. Are going to go. With this message. To these hopeless people.

You. Are going to go. With this message. And he saw the message. He saw the scroll. What was written on the scroll. Words of woe. Words of despair. There is nothing good. In the world. It is all. Repent. Repent. It is bad news. Ezekiel. We do not want to hear. Bad news. That was the message. That he had to go. To the children of Israel. With. Words of woe. But it is interesting. When you see that scroll. Placed before him. And upon it. Were words of woe. And despair. Yet when he ate. That scroll. How did it taste? The taste. Wasn't bitter. No. The taste.
[13 : 48] Wasn't acidic. The taste. To Ezekiel's palate. Was as. Sweet. As honey. Now that is an interesting.

Opposite there. Isn't it? Words of woe and despair. But it tasted as sweet as honey. You notice. That the spirit of the Lord. Had come upon Ezekiel. The spirit of the Lord. Had come. Upon Ezekiel. And when he took of that scroll. He took and partook of the word of God. It was sweet to his taste. He recognized the power of God. He recognized the word of God. And it was sweet to his taste. When we read the word of God. We can read in it. Terrible things. We can read in it. Terrible deeds.

[14 : 48] But people within whom. The spirit of God has worked. Read the word of God. And although terrible. We see hope.

We see in there. Food for our souls. We see in the word of God. A strength that is beyond us. We see experiences of people. That should encourage us. We see in the word of God. The food that will sustain us. In all the hard times.

In all the difficult days. So do we eat of it. The way we ought to. He ate. Of this scroll.

And it was as sweet as honey. The spirit of the Lord came upon him. Gave him this message. And he was to go to the people with it. He was going to go to these people.

[15 : 43] Who were hopeless. And he was going to preach to them. He was going to share this sweet message. With the people. And that is his calling.

Who is this God. We know. God. It has not lasted long since we have celebrated Christmas.

As a society. Christmas. God has revealed himself to this world. In the person of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament.

We know. That Christ lived. The history books will tell us. The biggest mistake. Professor Dawkins made was. He never asked.

Any of the Christians that he spoke to. Whether they had met. With this God. This Dawkins. Obviously. Obviously hasn't studied.

[16 : 42] Christianity. Because if he had met a Christian. Who was concerned. For Professor Dawkins. He would have tried to introduce.

Professor Dawkins to Christ. You know. Richard. You are a very smart man. You have got so many PhDs. And you are there in Oxford. As a professor. I will ask you to go back to the 40s.

And read about one of your predecessors there. C.S. Lewis. He was a great intelligent man. A professor in Oxford too. He was a Christian.

And he didn't want to be a Christian. But he met God. He saw. As Ezekiel saw. This God. This power. That was greater than he was. And although C.S. Lewis.

Was no mean intellect himself. He recognized himself as nothing. Compared to God. So it is. With Ezekiel.

[17 : 38] He saw himself. And every power in the world. The Babylonian power. The Assyrian powers. The powers of all mankind. Whereas nothing. Nothing could stop.

The machinery of God. If God unleashed it. Nothing could stop it. God. So we have here. A picture of this God. But we have this picture of Jesus in the New Testament also.

This picture of the babe in the manger. This baby. This sweet. Meek and mild. And gentle child. But he grew up.

And in the three years of ministry that we have in the New Testament. Of this God. This same God. Who is this powerful God. This God sitting in this throne.

Above this machinery. Of most awesome power. However. We see Jesus Christ. As shown to us in the Bible. Ah.

[18 : 37] You ask yourself. But how do we know that the Bible is true? How do we know that the Bible is accurate? Well. We can go into the history of it. And we can argue as well as anything else with respect to history.

The historicity of the prophets. When we see Christ himself debate and discuss the Old Testament. We have the canon of Old Testament scripture there. That was accepted by Christ.

As we have it here. The Jewish religion. The Jewish people. Had given us the Old Testament canon. That's taken. And approved if you like by Christ. But we have the New Testament canon.

And when you meet Christ. You recognize. In the historicity of Christ himself. Look at it historically. You can prove. That Christ existed. History.

Not only from the Christian side. But from the Roman side. From the Jewish side. The history of Christ is well documented. But there are people who challenge that today. They'll come up with all sorts of excuses.

[19 : 39] They're even coming out with new. ways of describing history. They talk about the common era. Instead of A.D. Anno Domini. The year of our Lord Jesus.

They now talk about the common era. Or what we used to call before Christ. They call now before the common era. They want to get rid of Christ. Even in terms of that history.

So. You see yourself. In relation to this God. As Ezekiel saw. You see yourself.

In relation to 2006. And you see yourself. In relation to Jesus. And the New Testament. I'll ask you a question. Who do you want to follow?

The people who want to change. B.C. And to. Before the common era. Or do you want to follow. This God. That Ezekiel saw. Or do you want to follow.

[20 : 36] This Jesus. That walked on water. This Jesus. That raised people from the dead. This Jesus. Who died. Why did he die?

So that you wouldn't have to. It's the same God. We're talking about here. This Jesus. This Lord. That Ezekiel saw. Was all powerful.

And this image. That I'm trying to get across. To you this morning. Is this most wonderful image. Of the awesome. Most powerful. High.

Holy God. You all sang. Psalm 29. The rumbling. The thundering. The making Kadesh.

To shake. This power. That is. Almighty. This power. That is awesome. Isn't it amazing. Those of you. Who have been to sea. Those of you.

[21 : 31] Have seen. A storm. At sea. And you see. These waves. That are far. Greater. In height. Than the vessel. You're sitting on. When you see.

The power. Of these waves. Smashing into the coastline. And you wonder. At it. You're feeling. The ground beneath you. The vessel beneath you. Shake. With the power of it.

That power. Is nothing. Compared to this awesome power. That we see before us. In Ezekiel. I watched the program.

About Mount St. Helens. This eruption. They could actually measure. And see. The deformation. Of the mountain. As the magma chamber. Expanded.

As the power. Expanded. So that this solid rock. Bent out. And bulged out. Of the side. Of the mountain. And one of the scientists. Said. We're going to set up.

[22 : 26] A sampling point. There. A measurement point. There. And. One of the others. Oh. I wouldn't put it there. If I were you. The pyroclastic flow. Will wipe that place out.

And in Providence. That's where he himself. Found himself. And he was wiped out. Within a minute. Of the eruption. They called it. In power terms. Five hundred times.

Greater than the bomb. That was dropped. In Hiroshima. The devastation. Was immense. Was awesome. Was terrifying. And that poor Trojan.

Who stayed. Just a minute. Away from the summit. An old bottle. Who wouldn't move. Because he thought. I've been on this mountain. Fifty years. It's never. Exploded in my time. It won't explode now.

He was the first. Casualty. Of the eruption. Science. And we're so clever. That they couldn't even predict.

[23 : 21] When the eruption. Would happen. And the newspapers. Looked at this man. Who was a scientist. Said. You mean you can't tell me. When this is going to erupt. No. He couldn't. Well the challenge is.

If science. Can't even predict. Earthquakes. Or volcanoes. Or these things. Which. We are endeavouring. To try to predict. And. Our science is developing.

That way. But we still don't know. So much. And that's. In worldly terms. We look at this. God of Ezekiel. And we look at.

What God. Shows us. In the word. We spoke to these children. And I used my little. Toys there. To try to make a point. To them. We're trying to teach.

Our children. To live. Good. Upright lives. Are you going to teach. Your children. And would you like. Your children. To be courteous. To their moms and dads. Would you like them.

[24 : 18] To look after their friends. To be friendly. To one another. Would you like them. To share. If they can. Not. To be greedy. Not. To be jealous. Or envious.

Not. To be money grabbing. Or would you rather. They followed. The example. Of Jesus. This man. Who thought. Of others. Before himself.

This man. Whose gospel. Was nothing. But peace. And good will. Come to me. And I will save you. From your sin. Israel.

Thought. They would do better. With a king. Israel. Thought. That they would follow. The way of other places. But because God. Looked after us. In the past. He will always look after us. The question is.

What are we. Relying on. Today. We've. Thought about God. Throughout. Most of our lives. Those of us. Who are brought up. In church circles.

[25 : 15] Heard about God. We find ourselves. Living. In 2006. And there are. Church of England. Bishops. Now. Who are preventing. Priests.

Who are converted men. From preaching the gospel. Because. They won't support. Homosexuality. Why won't they support. Homosexuality. The bible says. It's sinful. Who's right.

Who's wrong. God says. In his word. That we should love God. With all our hearts. Minds. And souls. And our neighbors.

As ourselves. You treat your neighbors. The way you want them. To treat you. And if everybody did that. And had God first. Well.

Why do you want. God first. Surely. If God. Is on your side. Who can be against us. Surely.

[26 : 11] We all want. This God. This awesome God. To be on our side. I want these children. To grow up. To know God themselves. I want these children. To be saved. I've got a wee boy at home.

Five years old. I want him. To know Jesus. I want him. To live a life. The way Jesus taught us. To live lives. For those of us.

Who are Christians. We have a choice. One place. Ezekiel was given a task spread the good news you come into contact with people as a Christian do we want to teach people about this God do we want to spread the good news of this this God that Ezekiel saw this man Jesus that is our God I know for a fact that if you are a Christian and you have children you want to teach them the Bible you want to teach them God is that not the challenge for us all as Christians to share this God that we have and this evening we will be looking at chapter 37 and Ephesians and we will be trying to see about our relationship that we have with God and applying it in our relationship with others let us join together in prayer our gracious Lord we give you thanks for your word we give you thanks for the pictures it shows us of God of ways that you explain yourself to us in order to lead us and to guide us in the way that our thinking and our lives ought to be our Father we pray that you would help us to take these images away and help us to see them as relevant to ourselves we pray for every soul gathered here this morning we pray for those of us who are believers that you would enthuse us that you would move us to think about what we have read and think how it challenges us in the way we live our lives for those who are yet out with Christ who yet do not believe in the Lord our Savior who do not yet know this God we pray that your spirit would work in their hearts and that they would see God for what he is creator ruler and their ultimate judge before whom they will kneel and give obeisance our Father we pray that you would help us all to grasp this gospel message this offer of the gospel that we have in Christ for if God is with us who else can be against us forgive us all our sins we pray in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen now we will sing in conclusion this morning in Psalm 63 Psalm 63 which you find on page 80 page 80 in the blue book and if you look at the thread through all the the Psalms we have read today it is spoken of God his power our refuge our strength of the hope of these people when they were in bondage as prisoners and here we see the Psalm that speaks of the Psalmist's hope that this God is his God alone I seek your face with eagerness my soul and my body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness I have seen you in your holy place your power and glory held my gaze far better far better is your love than life and so my lips will sing your praise

Christians can we not join together in singing this Psalm and mean it and for the others can we commend this God to you as we sing to his praise oh God you are my God alone I seek your face with eagerness this cross of prayer our gracious Lord help us all to meet with yourself and help us Lord to recognize that you are the God of hosts that you are the God who made us and that you are the God of heaven help us to trust in you help us to believe in you and help us to recognize in the word in the Bible before us the secret to everlasting life that is open to all for the invitation is come come to the Lord come to the Lord Jesus now in this the day of salvation for we ask this in Jesus name and for his sake Amen