

## Prayer

Almighty Lord and God, receive my prayers today;  
Forgive my wayward nature, and listen to my heartfelt concerns;  
Fill me with Your power and love, and tell me what I need to hear;  
Make me complete in You, so I may praise You all my life;  
Almighty Lord and God, receive my prayers today; AMEN

## Prayer Suggestions

### Prayer ideas

*In the midst of your day, imagine what would happen if you were to break away from the usual habits of your routine. Pray about these, and let the Lord inspire you to greater, more original thinking ...*

### On-going prayers

- **Pray for the carers in your church:** *Pray for people who make it their business to look after you; each one of us will know who such people are and pray for them with love and affection.*
- *Pray for Christians in Arab countries, whose lives and communities are often under threat*
- *Give thanks to God for your work, and if you are retired, then give thanks for everything in which you are involved*

## Meditation

Why not try? Why not live a life of faith  
And find out if your soul is really free?

Why not see if faith will hold you up when all else fails,  
And whether 'God is love' means more when life is tough?

Why not help the poor unstintingly, and suffer for it,  
Not feel pain for doing what is wrong, but what is right?

Why not pray when all seems irredeemably lost,  
And find out if the Saviour really saves the perishing?

Why not tread the impossibly narrow path of faith?  
Friends will think you foolish; God will think you wise!

Why not open up your heart to feel the Spirit's wind?  
To explore the riches of the life that God has given you?

Why not take the plunge and be fulfilled in Christ;  
Then die with Him, and in His time, be raised again in glory?

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## Bible passage - Ezekiel 1:22-28

<sup>22</sup> Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads.

<sup>23</sup> Under the dome their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body. <sup>24</sup> When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings. <sup>25</sup> And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings.

<sup>26</sup> And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human

form. <sup>27</sup> Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendour all around. <sup>28</sup> Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendour all around.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

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## Bible Study

### Review

In this passage, Ezekiel's description of Almighty God comes to a climax. Dominating the reading is Ezekiel's description of a dome, supported by the human-like creatures and the wheels of the earlier part of the vision (1:4-21). Our eyes are drawn higher and higher above the dome, to see a figure sat upon a throne (1:26), and as Ezekiel describes the sight, a voice is heard (1:28)!

How tempting it is to think that the human figure on the throne is God, and all else is structure. Yet we must resist this thought. The whole vision is that of God, and the figure on the throne is the part of the vision describing God's ultimate authority and power. Perhaps it is Christ sat upon the throne, we do not know, and Ezekiel does not say this. The Christian should remember that although Christ is God, the figure of Jesus is but one way in which the Bible describes God; for example, God is the Alpha and Omega of Creation, God is the Holy Spirit, God is the Redeemer, and much more. We should not be concerned to be literal about a vision of God containing many human-like characteristics, but with one figure raised up and seated on a throne. Each part of this description tells us something about God, each part of it is important.

One feature of this chapter is Ezekiel's description of precious stones. Yesterday, we read that the wheels underneath the human-like forms were like *'beryl'*. Here, the dome is set to shine like *'crystal'*, and finally, the throne has the appearance of *'sapphire'* (1:26). Unfortunately, there is no consensus about what stones Ezekiel really knew or wrote about. This is because of the complicated development of languages over the years. Indeed, if you read different translations of the Bible, you will find that various translators refer to different precious stones here in Ezekiel. There is one exception to this, however. When Ezekiel describes the throne as like *'sapphire'*, the word he uses refers to the famous blue Egyptian stone *'lapis lazuli'*, which was one of the most precious of naturally occurring gem stones in ancient times. If Egyptian kings had funeral masks decorated with *'lapis lazuli'*, then Almighty God could have a whole throne made of it!

Another feature of Ezekiel's vision here is that of sound. Up to this point the only sound mentioned has been that of lightning (1:13,14), but in this passage, the sound crescendos until the end, when we hear a voice. Some might argue that Ezekiel does not say that God Himself spoke (1: 28). The whole vision makes little sense however, unless this was God's voice, as we will see in the next study.

God is a God of sound, and the sounds within this vision dramatic. When the wheels move the creatures above them, Ezekiel describes the sound of their wings as *'like the sound of mighty waters'* (1:24). Now, either their wings are immensely large and have millions of feathers beating the air thus making a large noise, or the vision only reports part of what exists, and there are many more wings making up the large sound! The sound rises and falls with the movement of God, but after we read about a figure sitting on a throne, and after Ezekiel himself had fallen on his face, we hear another sound, *'the voice of someone speaking'* (1:28).

So God does not exist in silence, and Creation is full of sound, everything from the apparently random noises of nature, to the beautifully blended sounds of music. Perhaps even more complex than this, is the sound of the human voice. Here in Ezekiel's vision, we discover a God who speaks and communicates with His creation. At the end of our passage, we find that God wishes to communicate with Ezekiel, and as we read on in this great prophetic book, we will learn a great deal about what He has to say. Let people today not think that God has ever stopped speaking to the prophets and revealing His will to His people.

It is hardly possible to go into all the details of this vision in a short summary. There will be more to explore when a full study is available of this passage within this series. At the climax of his vision, Ezekiel confirms what all of the people of Israel knew about God from the beginning. God is a God who communicates; He wants a covenant relationship with His people (see the rainbow in 1:28, which is the sign of God's covenant with Noah - Genesis 9:13,14). God is active and ready to intervene in the life of his people, and just as the burning bush summoned Moses' attention in the desert (Exodus 3:1-15), and countless prophets had heard

God's voice speak to them in different personal circumstances, Ezekiel's vision in Babylon grabbed his attention so that God could speak to him. We can hardly wait to find out what he had to say.

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## Discipleship

### **Questions** (for use in groups)

1. In your group, discuss your understanding of this passage of Scripture. Share what you think about the dome, the throne, the figure on the throne, and the voice.
2. How does God speak to people today?
3. How can anyone know that it is God who speaks to them? What does the example of the prophets tell us about the way in which God speaks to people today?

### **Personal comments by author**

*The idea that God speaks is powerful. But I have come across so many Christians who have believed that God is basically silent. They certainly would not expect Almighty God to say anything to them. The activity of listening to sermons is for them more about assessing wisdom and seeking knowledge about the things of God, but hardly about hearing an authoritative word communicated by God through the preacher. How sad. For myself, I have only heard God speaking rarely as an audible voice, but God's communication to me both directly and indirectly has been extraordinary. I do not know how it is possible to sustain Christian faith without meaningful communication with God.*

### **Ideas for exploring discipleship**

- *Look back over your life, and think about the times that God has either spoken to you directly, or reveal something important to you, in such a way that you know God has spoken to you. If possible, share this with one other member of the local church. Make sure that you reciprocate, and ask your friends about their experience of God's voice.*
- *Pray, and be ready to hear God's voice. If necessary, wait in quietness, sing a song, or listen to some music. Perhaps we do not hear God speak because we are not expectant, not ready, not willing to hear. So give him the opportunity.*

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## Final Prayer

Speak to us tonight good Lord, and reassure us of your love for us. Bless us in our work bless us in our rest, bless us in our day, bless us in our night. Enrich our heart and bless our lives, and lead us through each day towards the greater things of Your Kingdom. We ask this in Jesus' name; AMEN

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