

Running with

VISION

*“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it”*

- Habakkuk 2v 2



Session #1: VISIONS OF GOD

Ezekiel and the Babylonian bombshell

Ezekiel Chapter 1

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

www.sladebrook.org.uk

Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

If we are seeking after New Testament Christianity today, pursuing a biblical vision for the church is essential. Yet vision is not merely a case of conjuring up new ideas to combat spiritual malaise. Nor should it ever become a knee jerk reaction to the need of the hour, the whim of the people, or the constantly changing culture.

David once exclaimed "*I saw the Lord always before me...*" (Ps. 16v 8). Biblical vision is just that: constantly looking for the Lord to lead with a passion to be in His presence, a desire to serve His purposes and an expectation that He will always make the difference. When we genuinely *look unto Jesus*, faith starts to rise, vision forms and the road becomes clear. Ironically, *pursuing biblical vision* requires not so much that we come up with a new way of doing things, but that we return to the paths already found in Scripture, and rediscover their rewarding route.

In this new teaching series we will be ***Running with Vision***, looking at what happens when God grants heavenly revelation to His people. Each week we will study a specific God-given vision from the Bible and apply some key questions: *What was happening at the time? What was the vision like? What was God saying to/expecting from His people? How should Christians respond today?*

As we explore this collection of God-encounters, the aim is to see how these amazing visions communicated God's purposes to people who so desperately needed to embrace them at the time. May we also seek to be obey the heavenly vision of all that God reveals to us, that we might pursue a brave, biblical vision for our own lives and church in this generation, embracing all that Jesus intends for us today.

Running with VISION #1: VISIONS OF GOD

Ezekiel was a man in crisis: Trained to minister in the temple, yet now in exile and 3 months hike from the familiarity of Jerusalem, he took his place among his fellow exiles in Babylon. All Ezekiel had hoped for appeared dashed and a stark, uncertain future lay before him.

This rather bleak scene at the beginning of Ezekiel's book is interrupted when, quite literally, the heavens opened and he had "visions of God." From that moment on, Ezekiel and his erstwhile call to ministry would never be the same. **Despite huge setbacks and seemingly insurmountable challenges, Ezekiel embarked on a challenging but anointed ministry among his people.** What propelled him beyond the barriers he faced? How did he conquer his own doubts and fears to become a re-energized servant of the living God in a godless land? **What made the difference? Simply put, he had seen visions of God.**

Visions in the Bible transform people. There is something compelling about a supernatural vision that leaves people shaken and changed. Vision stirs; it interrupts the norm, highlighting not only what is wrong, but also what can be. Vision not only inspires God's servants, it implicates them as well: **It is one thing to see a vision, but it is another thing entirely to be seized by that vision and allow it to lead and fashion you after God's own heart!** At the beginning of his prophetic ministry in Babylon Ezekiel was party to a Divine spectacle; a bizarre image that broke into the Babylonian gloom with terrifying clarity. Ironically, so much of the detail is lost upon us as, no doubt, as it was on Ezekiel himself. But, as we shall see, some foundational facts were revealed in this biblical vision that prepared him for the tough task ahead. God was with Ezekiel, even in Babylon and that was enough to mobilize this man of God for mission.

As we study this amazing introduction to the book of Ezekiel, we discover that God reaches us however far we may feel from Him. He transcends the darkest of circumstances and seeks to shatter them with the hope of something better. **The Word of the Lord and the Hand of the Lord will confirm any vision of God.** May we strive to hear the Word of the Lord, and respond, whatever the circumstances, looking for the confirming hand of the Lord on the work we seek to do for Him.

Read: Ezekiel Chapter 1 verses 1-28

- **Visions of God:** *The source and subject of the vision – v1*
- **The Word of the Lord:** *The authority that backs the vision - v3*
- **The Hand of the Lord:** *The evidence that proves the vision – v3*

Running with VISION:

Discuss:

- *How would you describe the vision?*
- *Do you think you have vision? Explain your answer.*
- *What is your vision for your Christian life?
Where do you think that vision is at this point?*
- *What is God's ultimate vision for His church?*
- *What are the difficulties facing this church right now?
How do we discern God's vision to address them?*
- *How is vision communicated at Sladebrook? How could it be improved?
List your answers and give them to an elder to review.*

Pray:

Ask the Lord to give you vision for your Christian life, or to re-ignite your vision to serve Him. Pray for courage to run with it.

Respond:

Take some time this week to think about vision. Where is your Christian life going? List some aims you still have to serve Christ and the barriers that stand in the way, and think about how you can take some fresh steps in God's direction.