

# EZEKIEL

## Hard to Heart

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“Up”

3:12-15

The April 13, 2009 article was titled, *Tornado Lifts Man Out of Home*.<sup>1</sup>

Leonard Hilley was napping in his [Murfreesboro TN] home when the tornado passed through. The storm sucked him out of his home and into the air.

"When I woke up I was in the air, I thought I was having a nightmare at first, but when I hit - it was reality," said Hilley. "I have three broken ribs, and my back hurts pretty bad."

For all that was found at the Hilley house, something was still missing. "My teeth came out when I was flying through the air, I didn't find my teeth," said Hilley.

Being picked-up and transported from one place to another was apparently quite common in the Old Testament, at least among prophets.

In the Old Testament book of First Kings the prophet Elijah tells Obadiah to convey a message from him to wicked King Ahab. Obadiah protests on the basis that God might suddenly pick-up and transport Elijah away to another location leaving Ahab to think Obadiah had lied to him.

The encounter between Elijah and Ahab reads like this:

1 Kings 18:7 Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, "Is that you, my lord Elijah?"

1 Kings 18:8 And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"

1 Kings 18:9 So he said, "How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?"

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.newschannel5.com/Global/story.asp?S=10176369&nav=menu374\\_2](http://www.newschannel5.com/Global/story.asp?S=10176369&nav=menu374_2)

1 Kings 18:10 As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you.

1 Kings 18:11 And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, "Elijah is here" '!

1 Kings 18:12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.

Obadiah feared that Elijah would be suddenly carried away by the Spirit of God.

This was so common that, in Second Kings chapter two, a group of prophets supposed that Elijah had been transported by the Spirit to some remote location when, in fact, he had been taken to Heaven. They said to Elijah's successor, Elisha,

2 Kings 2:16 ... "Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley..."

They didn't think it strange whatsoever that the Spirit of God might transport a prophet from one location to the next.

Neither was this unheard of in New Testament times. Philip the evangelist had been sent to wait along the road to share Jesus Christ with the Ethiopian eunuch. He did; and upon baptizing him we read,

Acts 8:39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Old Testament or New Testament, no one seemed to think this was strange. If God needed to get you someplace in a hurry He might transport you there by His Spirit.

Ezekiel was another Old Testament saint who experienced sudden transport. Let's see what we can glean from his experience.

Ezekiel 3:12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place!"

Ezekiel had seen the glory of the Lord in a vision as the heavens opened. It served as his calling and commission into the ministry.

There ought to be times in our lives when we get a fresh 'vision' of or for the Lord. I don't mean that the heavens will open and we'll see the Lord. We don't really need for that to happen because we already have such a full revelation of Him in the Bible.

I mean something like what we read about in the Book of Acts. Once while the believers met for prayer we read,

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Or like when the leaders of the church at Antioch were praying together and we read,

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

That's fresh vision. Notice in both cases the fresh vision was granted after prayer and so that the believers might go forth in boldness sharing the Word.

Pray, and especially about moving forward to serve others, and trust that God will give you vision.

Ezekiel heard behind him "a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place." If you think of this whole episode as a kind of ceremony in which God called and commissioned Ezekiel then this is its benediction. Ezekiel was setting out in the glory of the Lord he had experienced in that place.

Our public meetings and our private devotions should propel us forward out into the world to serve the Lord. People should get a sense from us that we've been in the presence of the Lord.

Ezekiel 3:13 I also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise.

The "living creatures" are the cherubim associated with the throne of God. Unlike owls who can fly without noise, the cherubim make noise when they use their wings.

The "wheels" represent the cloud chariot upon which the Lord was riding through the heavens. Apparently it had a modified exhaust system cause it was real noisy!

Lots of noise, thunderous noise. It reminds us of another time of commissioning that was accompanied by great noise.

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

"Suddenly" means they weren't really expecting the sound. It sounded like "a rushing mighty wind." There was no wind; only the sound of it. All of a sudden, without any build-up, they were in the midst of a windless spiritual hurricane!

Then there was the sight of "fire." The description seems to indicate that fire appeared over them, which divided and spread until a single flame-tongue of fire was over each one of them. It was in the form of a tongue perhaps because it would be through their Spirit-empowered speech that the Gospel would be spread.

The wind preceded the fire. The Church Age is an age of hearing. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

Wind is a divinely chosen symbol of God the Holy Spirit. He comes from Heaven; He's in the world; He moves at will.

There are many things fire symbolizes in Scripture. In this case, let's not miss the obvious. Wind affects fire. The wind spread the fire until it sat upon each of the one-hundred twenty believers in equal measure.

The Holy Spirit was sent from Heaven upon the disciples. He spread a fire over each of them. Baptized by Him, as these men and women spread throughout the world preaching the Gospel, that initial fire would also spread. *That is what wind-whipped fire always does!*

We're to go forth each day remembering the noise of Pentecost. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, the empowering for service, is the normal Christian experience.

There is a one-time baptism with the Holy Spirit that is available to every believer. You are baptized with the Holy Spirit when, sometime in your Christian walk, you realize and then receive, by faith, that God the Holy Spirit has empowered you to be witnesses.

All believers are also commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to go on being filled, as they daily yield to His influence and cooperate with His work in their lives.

Ezekiel 3:14 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.

Ezekiel was literally, physically "lifted" up and carried "away." It was an unusual but not totally unexpected work of the Holy Spirit. *I suppose it could still happen today!*

We are more likely to be led by or driven by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 reads, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." How does the Spirit lead you? It's not so much discovering the "how," as if there were some lessons to learn. God the Holy Spirit is a Person. He leads you as you grow in your relationship with Him. Over time you can

become more sensitive to His still small voice guiding you and directing you.

You can also be driven by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was, immediately after His baptism. The Spirit drove Him out into the wilderness. In our lives this would correspond to the times we simply find ourselves in a place of God's choosing for us. It might be a trial or it might be a triumph but, either way, it was the Lord's doing.

I like the attitude of the apostle Paul regarding God's leading. He just kept pressing forward believing God would either close doors of ministry or open them. At one point he and Timothy and Silas were going around trying to evangelize but the Spirit prevented them. Finally a vision appeared to Paul in the night of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over here to Macedonia and help us." Then, when they got to Macedonia, the first converts were women! Go figure.

Since I mentioned it let me say a word about the Spirit preventing you from doing something. While it is desirable to continually press and press forward, you must remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's ministry of prevention. Just because you want to do something, and in and of itself it is a good thing, it doesn't mean God is leading you there. Pray and wait while you continue to move forward.

The "bitterness and... heat" of his spirit is best thought of as Ezekiel entering in to the 'spirit' of the message he was about to share.

1. It would be "bitterness" to the hearers in that they were convinced God would never remove His glory from their midst. They were in for a rude awakening.
2. The "heat of [his] spirit" means, quite simply, that Ezekiel was 'fired-up' to serve the Lord.

Then Ezekiel reported, "the hand of the Lord was strong upon me." Exactly how the Holy Spirit was transporting Ezekiel is not said. He pictures it as if the Lord had reached out to pick him up and was carrying him. It's probably the best we can do in explaining what occurred in human terms.

We do stuff like this with kids. We hold their hands. We sometimes put our hand over their shoulder to turn them.

Whether we ‘feel’ when this is happening to us we ought to be able to look back at our experiences and get the sense God was holding our hand, guiding us by His strong hand away from danger and in to duty.

Ezekiel 3:15 Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

More on this next time. Tonight I include it only to show us Ezekiel’s touching-down at Tel Abib. He had been divinely, supernaturally transported from one location to the next.

There are a couple of issues you can talk to the Lord about tonight:

1. Get a fresh vision for serving the Lord.
2. Be sure you’ve been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Then we can all go forth into the world, to our various mission fields, declaring, “Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place.”

