



## A Christmas Carol

By  
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*"In the sixth year, in the sixth month on the fifth day, while I was sitting in my house and the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign Lord came on me there. I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God He took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood." Ezekiel 8:1-3*

Anyone who knows me at all knows that I LOVE Christmas and my favorite movie is "It's a Wonderful Life". However, my 2<sup>nd</sup> favorite story/movie at Christmastime is the timeless story of Ebenezer Scrooge, the ruthless miser who is shaken to his core by a visitation by three Spirits. It is such a gripping story, one to which we can all relate, and one which helps us gain the proper perspective on Christmas. I love the end of the story, when Scrooge awakens from his nightmare, only to realize "it's not too late!" He hasn't missed Christmas, and there is still time for him to rewrite the rest of his life. I've never read a biography on Charles Dickens, but I suspect he knew about the things of God, and I believe this story, as with many others, was inspired by Scripture.

I was reading the Book of Ezekiel the other day, and I came across the account referenced above, and it reminded me so much of Scrooge's spiritual encounter. The Spirit lifted Ezekiel off the ground by his hair and transported him around Jerusalem. He allowed him to see into the secret places to see how his people were dishonoring God. He sees 27 Elders worshiping other gods and idols. He saw women who were crying out to another false god. He saw 25 men bowing down and worshiping the Sun.

Then he witnessed the Lord's anger and His judgment upon all the wickedness. Six men with deadly weapons appeared, along with men with writing kits. The men with the writing kits were instructed to go throughout the city, putting a mark on all the foreheads on all those who grieve and lament the detestable things. Then, the assassins followed, slaughtering those without a mark on their forehead, *"without showing pity or compassion."* The Spirit told them, *"Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, the mothers and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark."*

All of this horror was too much for Ezekiel to take, and he fell face down, crying out, *"Alas, Sovereign Lord! Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring of Your wrath on Jerusalem?"* The Spirit answered, *"The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land; the Lord does not see.' So I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own heads what they have done."* He continued to take Ezekiel through this nightmare, as he encountered holy "cherubs" who also participated in executing judgment. These were not cute baby-like creatures with wings and in diapers. No, it says each one had four faces, one like a cherub, the second like a human being, the third like a lion and the fourth like an eagle. Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and wings were completely covered with eyes. Do you think creatures like that might strike some fear in your heart?

Finally, at the end of this experience, the Lord delivers hope in the midst of Ezekiel's torment. He lets him know that there is a "remnant" of His people whom He wants to save. He says, *"I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again. They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws. They will be My people, and I will be their God."*

The vision finally ended, and Ezekiel, the prophet, had quite a message for the people of his day. I'm sure he was never quite the same after that.

When Jesus died, He sent us His Spirit to live with us forever. Jesus said the Spirit would teach us all things. I believe the Spirit wants to show us many things, even

things we may not want to see. In this cold, selfish world, it is so easy to become hardened to the things of God. When we encounter the Spirit, in all His holiness, His glory casts a blinding light upon the sinfulness of man and even the sinfulness of our own hearts. We should pray for such an encounter as Ezekiel experienced for we need to be shaken out of our complacency and self-interest. We need to see mankind from God's perspective and grieve for the things He grieves about. He may need to show us such a vision so we can be a source of truth and hope for others who do not see.

As you approach this Christmas season, pray that God would visit you in a powerful way. Let it not just be about the birth of the baby Jesus, who became our Savior. Pray that the Holiness of God and the Holiness of this Savior and the Holiness of His Spirit would visit you in a powerful way. Let it carry you away and show you your own heart and the hearts of those in your spheres of influence. Let it awaken your soul with a new message of love and hope for mankind. Like Scrooge, you will be excited to discover...

**"It's not too late. You haven't missed Christmas!"**