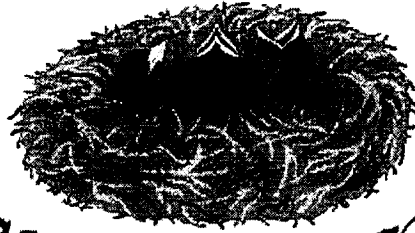
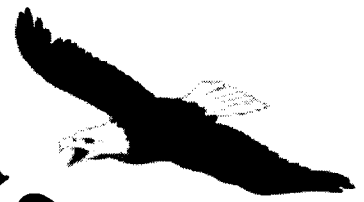


They shall mount up...

ON EAGLES' WINGS



AERY NUGGETS

...with wings as eagles.

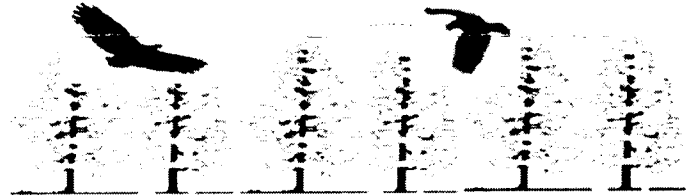
Isaiah 40:31

May 2011

Chebar *Ezekiel 1:1-3*

Steven J. Faulkner

Far to the northeast of Jerusalem, somewhere near the ancient city of Babylon, was a river or a canal called Chebar. It was along this stream, perhaps 26 centuries ago, where the children of Israel experienced one of the saddest times in all of their history. The utter humiliation of this once proud people, and the uncertainty of their future, was no doubt troubling in the extreme for many who were gathered here. By way of background, the events recorded in the first three verses of Ezekiel occur during the deportation of the people of Judah to Babylon. Recall that the nation of Israel had long since become lax in their devotion to the things of the Lord, and that idolatry had become rampant throughout the land. The kings of the northern kingdom of Israel had failed to follow the Lord since the days of Jeroboam, and that kingdom had already been removed years before by the Assyrians. In the days referred to in this portion, the southern kingdom of Judah had now been attacked and conquered by the Babylonians. Many of the people of Judah had been rounded up and marched away into captivity, and all of the treasure from the Temple had been loaded up and hauled away to distant Babylon by the victorious invader. Can you only imagine the dreadful realities facing the people described in these verses? At this point, they had all been collected along the Chebar Canal near the City of Babylon in what may have been a kind of concentration camp. Ezekiel was among those gathered here along the Chebar, and my guess is that there were a great number of people—they were taken in Nebuchadnezzar's second visit to Jerusalem; all of them had been stripped of their possessions, their personal dignity, and certainly their freedom. To add to their misery, their homeland had been conquered, the Temple of God plundered, and they themselves were destined to be slaves in a heathen land. What an utterly miserable development for the people of God!



I would guess that for many of the people encamped by Chebar, it must have seemed that God had completely forgotten them. Yet, as we read the first three verses of Ezekiel 1, we find that even in such an apparently hopeless, helpless circumstance, God was not at all far from His people. In verses 1-3 we read, "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him."

Just think of what we see here! Even at such a time of shattered dreams and dismal prospects, God knew the suffering of His people, and He revealed Himself to His faithful servant, right there at the place of suffering. Glorious visions burst forth from Heaven, sent by an ever faithful and loving God, to encourage the hearts of His people. The Lord was very near indeed, even though it may not have seemed so to many who had not the eyes of faith. But, this encouragement from God did not mean that the troubling times were all over for Judah; These visions of wonder were for the comfort of a people who had strayed from God, yet the realization of these blessings would only come at a later time—the people would need to be patient in their current trial, not seeking the deliverance of men, but the faithfulness of God. The children of God, as should ever be the case, must wait patiently on the Lord for His deliverance.

Sometimes, it is so hard to wait, is it not?



Perhaps you yourself are waiting for deliverance and relief just now, and maybe you have endured a considerable wait already. Perhaps you have lost income, possessions or even health due to infirmities, business reverses, or calamities of some other type; perhaps your hopes and dreams for the future appear to have been wrecked like a ship running aground in a violent storm. Those long, lonely hours of prayer and fasting go on and on, yet the heavens are silent, and there is no glorious vision from above to show that the matter will be resolved any time soon. My dear friend, take courage—your loving Father knows your situation: “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry,” (Psalm 34:15). Let these lovely words from Jeremiah be the glorious beam from Heaven to brighten your days: “It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD,” (Lamentations 3:22-26). The proper place for the child of God is to wait patiently on the Lord. Waiting patiently implies submissiveness to His will; the submissive heart is not discouraged, even though the wait be ever so long. In Psalm 130:5, 6, we see a beautiful example of the expectant heart of the child of God who is waiting on the Lord: “I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.”

A loving and faithful God revealed Himself centuries ago to His servant Ezekiel along the banks of Chebar in order to comfort His people right where they were, and in the very hour of their suffering; This same faithful and loving God comes to us in our times of need today as well, bringing words of comfort and encouragement. As believers in Christ, we can certainly be sure that the Lord is aware of whatever situation confronts us. And, God will act, though indeed, sometimes there are lessons of faith that can only be learned through patiently waiting on Him. Though it may seem that we are quite alone as we endure periods of trial, He comes to His own in time of need! In this world, Christians may experience afflictions which may try our very souls, yet we have the assurance of His presence during such times. The Lord Jesus was very aware of the peril of His

disciples on the Sea of Galilee one stormy night, and He came to them in the night watches, in just their hour of need, calming the sea and comforting their souls (Matthew 14:22-33). Likewise, He immediately knew and understood well the hearts of His sorrowing disciples on the Emmaus road, and He joined them there just when they needed Him, opening their eyes to Himself and encouraging their hearts (Luke 24:13-35). Our Lord Jesus is in the glory today, yet His care for His own is the same even as you read these words. He is aware of our every trouble and disappointment; He hears and comes to His dear ones just when we need Him, and right where we are, encouraging our hearts through His Word. If our hearts be submissive to His will, we will not be overwhelmed: “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,” (Psalm 121:3, 4).

My dear friend, are you a child of God? Do you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If you do, then you realize that you are so very special to God, the God of the universe. We read in Romans 8:16-18: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” These are comforting words indeed for the child of God; if, on the other hand, you are not yet a child of God, there is good news for you: this same God who revealed Himself to Ezekiel so long ago, loves you very much, so much that He once sent His Son into the world to die for your sins, that by believing on Him, you might become one of His dear children.” But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name,” (John 1:12).

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation,” (Habakkuk 3:17, 18).

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