

Welcome back! I am glad that I did not scare you away with the Introduction to Ezekiel.

I left one thing out last time. I mentioned that Jeremiah was a contemporary of Ezekiel. However, I forgot to mention that Daniel was also a contemporary. Daniel was taken in the first conquest of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, Daniel is mentioned in Ezekiel in chapters 14 and 28.

By the way, although they are not contemporaries with Ezekiel, Noah and Job are also mentioned in chapter 14. We will see why when we get there.

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OVERVIEW

Visions of God (Ezek 1)

- Setting the Stage
- Living Creatures
- Wheels
- The Throne



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So you are asking “Why the cat?” I like cats. Otherwise it has nothing to do with this study. This is definitely not what Ezekiel saw.

In this lesson we will read and consider Chapter 1 of Ezekiel.

We will begin by looking at the way the Book starts and how that sets the stage for the rest of the book.

We will then look at the amazing imagery in Chapter 1 and we will consider

- The “Living creatures”
- The Wheels
and
- The Throne

I actually looked at some youtube videos of Ezekiel chapter 1. They are pretty interesting, but you can quickly see the wide difference in the views of the chapter 1 vision. If you are interested you can just search youtube for Ezekiel Chapter 1.

So let’s begin...

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Setting the Stage

- **Living in Babylon**
 - In Exile – 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity
 - Ezekiel, a priest, with other exiles
 - 30 years old when he has vision (Num 4:43)
- **The Heavens Opened**
 - What does this mean?
 - What are visions?

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Just as a reminder, Ezekiel is a priest from Jerusalem. He was taken 5 years ago in 598 B.C. to Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's second conquest of Jerusalem. This was at the start of the reign of Jehoiachin. Ezekiel was 30 years old at this time, which just happens to be the age when a priest would start to serve in the Temple (see Num 4:43).

Let's look at chapter 1 of Ezekiel verses 1 – 3. I am reading from the ESV translation.

(Read verses 1-3.)

Ezekiel is with a group of exiles by the Chebar canal. It has been 5 years since he came to Babylon, so this is the year 593 B.C. It is the 5th day of the fourth month, so this is the Jewish month Tammuz, or the end of June. The Jewish calendar is lunar, and today is Tishri 23 5778.

While standing with other exiles, something amazing happens to Ezekiel. The heavens are opened and he sees visions of God! Let that sink in for a moment... Just what does that mean?

God lives outside our dimension. He inhabits the heavenly realm, which is usually invisible to us. On occasion He allows individuals, mostly prophets, to glimpse that realm. Here the LORD has opened a view of heaven to Ezekiel. The other exiles with Ezekiel don't see and hear what Ezekiel sees and hears.

God gives Ezekiel visions. Visions are waking dreams. Ezekiel sees, hears, and feels the effects of what he experiences. We don't know if God is limiting the things Ezekiel sees to what Ezekiel can safely comprehend. We do know that this is what God wants Ezekiel to see and report. That is what is meant by the "hand of the LORD" being upon him. In fact Ezekiel uses the expressions, "the word of the LORD" and "the hand of the LORD was there upon me" seven times each.

Others have seen visions of God: Abraham in Gen 17 and 18, Moses repeatedly, Isaiah in chapter six, and John in the book of Revelation to name a few.

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The Vision Begins

- Stormy wind = mighty hurricane or whirlwind
- From the North (Ps 48:2, Is 14:13)
- Glowing cloud
- Flames
- Something like glowing metal

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In verse 4 Ezekiel begins to describe what he saw in the vision.

(Read verse 4)

The Hebrew used here for stormy wind is רוּחַ רוּחַ (roo'-akh) (sa'-ar). Ruwach means wind or spirit. When you see the word spirit in the Old Testament, it usually is the word ruwach. Saar means hurricane or whirlwind. So Ezekiel sees an awesome and powerful storm coming at him from the north. In Bible times God's abode was at times described as being in the north (e.g. Ps 48:2, Is 14:13).

Ezekiel further sees a huge cloud that is glowing around the edge as though it was lit from behind by a very bright light. Fire is flashing like lightning constantly from the cloud.

In the midst of the fire there was the appearance of glowing metal or amber. The term amber here is not the fossilized, yellow, pine tree resin, but a bronze or golden colored metal. So, it appeared as a glowing yellow or copperish-colored surface.

Now imagine this for a moment... You are standing with some friends from church over by Strawberry Creek. Suddenly you hear a tremendous sound! You look, and there is a massive hurricane-like storm coming at you. There is a huge black cloud glowing around the edges, and out of the cloud great bursts of fire are spewing. As you are transfixed by the terrifying sight, you notice that there is something like gleaming yellow metal in the center of all this cloud and fire.

Do you think this might just disturb you a little? Well you can be certain that, although Ezekiel was a priest, he was not ready for anything like this.

As he continues to watch the vision continues to unfold.

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Living Creatures

- Why living creatures?
- How do we know they are cherubim?
 - Ezek 9:3
 - Ezek 10:2
- Where else do we find cherubim in the Bible?
 - 2 Samuel 22:11
 - 1 Kings 6:27
 - Revelation 4:6-8

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Now I will read verses 5 to 14. (*Read verses 5 – 14*)

The Hebrew word used for “living creature” is **חַי** (*chay* (khah'-ee)). Chay means alive or a living thing. So Ezekiel is proclaiming that the beings he is seeing are alive. They have a “human likeness”, but they are not human as he is. Ezekiel sees **4** living creatures.

These are in fact cherubim **כְּרוּבִים** (*ker-oo-v'*) or *ker-oo-v-eem'*. They are spoken of elsewhere in the Bible. In 2 Samuel 22:11 David makes a statement in a psalm that sounds like the picture in Ezekiel, “And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.”

But, how do we know that these “living creatures” are cherubim? Because Ezekiel calls them cherubs or cherubim later in the book. For example in Ezek 9:3, 10:2.

We read of cherubim elsewhere in the Bible such as 1 Kings 6:27, where it describes 15-foot carved cherubim in Solomon’s Temple. And two cherubs face each other forming the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant.

John sees a very similar sight and creatures in Revelation 4:6-8. So these are **real** beings. They are not imaginary or allegorical. They are associated with the LORD and with His throne.

In Ezek 28:14 **Satan** is called “the anointed cherub that covereth” or the “anointed guardian cherub.” We will have **a lot** to say about this when we get to chapter 28.

The scripture indicates that the cherubim move fast! They dart to and fro like a flash of lightning.

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Here are some artist's depictions of cherubim. They will at least give a feel for the living creatures that Ezekiel saw.

Ezekiel's description orients on the human face and the orientation is from the human face's perspective. Thus, it says the face of a lion was on the right, the face of the ox was on the left, and the eagle's face would have been opposite the human face.

All of these pictures depict the cherubim having hooves or goat-like legs and feet. This may be accurate, but the text says that the creatures have straight legs and the soles of the feet were like the soles of a calf's foot. So it is not clear to me whether or not they have hooves.

They have the appearance according to the text of burnished bronze. Bronze is the metal of judgement, and this would be significant to Ezekiel the priest. The Hebrew is קָלָל (kaw-lawl') חֹשֶׁת (nekh-o'-sheth), which means polished copper, but is usually translated brass or bronze. So, the lower right picture is more like the description, except Ezekiel says they were like torches or burning coals of fire. So they were glowing with light like flames and sending out cracks of lightning, like the picture on the top left.

These creatures move from place to place like lightning. When they move they don't turn because they don't have to. They are facing in all directions at once.

Each has four wings. They use two wings to cover themselves. Their other two wings are held out so the tips touch the wing tips of the other cherubim. In chapter 10 we get more detail of the cherubim, and we learn that their entire bodies, hands, backs, and wings were full of eyes. So, they can see everything around them at all times.

It appears that they are either in a row like a chorus line, or they are forming a square with the wing tips touching at the corners. Most of the depictions I have seen show the square idea. The Hebrew for "straight forward" is עֵבֶר ('ay-ver) פָּנִים (paniyim), which mean "straight face". So the text seems to me to support either formation.

Bur wait,,, there's more...
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Wheels

- Wheel = אֵפוֹן (o-fawn') just means wheel
- Each wheel is really two wheels – an outer and an inner at right angles to each other
- Move in unison with the living creatures
- The spirit of the living creatures is in or empowers the wheels

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Now I will read verses 15 to 21. *(Read verses 15 – 21)*

Now this must have been something to see! Ezekiel now describes that each of the cherubim has a companion, a wheel. Whenever the cherubim move, the wheels go with them.

The wheels are huge and they are actually a wheel within a wheel. However, they are not concentric circles, like a target. There is an outer wheel, and an inner wheel at right angles to the outer wheel. So they can move in any direction.

The wheels were very large and frightening. The Hebrew word translated “awesome” in the ESV and “dreadful” in the King James is יִרְאָה (yir-aw'), which means fear. So this was an overwhelming sight.

And if that was not enough, the rims of the wheels are covered with eyes! So the wheels can see everything around them just as the cherubim can.

There is an apparent connection between the cherubim and the wheels. There are four cherubim and four wheels. The text says one wheel for each cherub. It also says “the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels”. Spirit used here is again ruwach. Hence, it appears that the wheels are empowered by the spirits of the cherubim.

When the cherubim move the wheels move in unison.

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Here are some artist's depictions of the wheels that Ezekiel saw.

Notice that the inner wheel within the outer wheel is perpendicular to the outer wheel. These wheels can move in all four directions without turning just as the cherubim do.

Ezekiel describes the wheels as looking like gleaming beryl (bay-rul). A beryl is a precious stone that is usually green as you see in the picture. However, beryl also comes in blue, rose, white, and golden. Well know varieties of beryl are emerald and aquamarine. Pure beryl is colorless.

I tend to think of the wheels as golden, but that is just a hunch based upon the description earlier in verse 4. They could have been one of the other colors.

Now we come to the most incredible part of Eekiel's vision...

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The Throne

- Expanse like awe-inspiring crystal
 - רָקִיעַraqiya: expanse, visible arch of the sky
 - יָרֵא קָרָחyare qerach: frightening ice or crystal
- Sound of the Almighty ... tumult
- Likeness of a Throne ... like sapphire




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Now I will read the last verses in chapter 1. (*Read verses 22- 28*)

Ezekiel now sees a vast expanse over the heads of the cherubim. It is so spectacular it is frightening to Ezekiel. It looks like it is made of transparent ice or crystal. In Rev 4:6 John sees, “before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal:” “Expanse” used here is the Hebrew word *raqiya*, which also means the visible arch of the sky. So, this expanse took up Ezekiel’s field of vision.

Ezekiel in his descriptions is using the figure of speech known as a simile, which uses the words *as* or *like* to make a comparison. Hence, Ezekiel says the expanse was like crystal, not that it was crystal. It seems that it is transparent, since Ezekiel is able to see what is above it.

The cherubim stay under the expanse. When they move, the tips of their wings touch. When they stop, they let their wings down.

Ezekiel says the sound of the wings was like many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a tumult like an army. In Rev 1:15 John describes Jesus’ voice as “the sound of many waters”.

Ezekiel hears a voice from the expanse, and the expanse and the cherubim come to a halt.

Now, Ezekiel notes that there is a structure like a throne above the expanse. The throne looks like a sapphire to Ezekiel. Sapphires are a brilliant blue as shown at the bottom left of the slide. A sapphire is a gemstone, a variety of the mineral corundum and is very hard. Some translations say the material was like lapis lazuli, which is an opaque stone with a bright blue color such as the one shown at the bottom right of the slide. The Hebrew word used is סַפִּיר *sappiyr* (sap-peer’).

The word for throne in the Hebrew is כִּסֵּא *kisce’* (kis-say’), which means covered or canopied. It is translated “throne” in all of the several translations that I checked.

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The Throne

- Likeness on the throne had a human appearance
 - ' אָדָם adam: human or man
- Waist up like metal enclosing fire
- Waist down was fire
- Brightness all around was like a bow (rainbow)
- Revelation 4:2-3

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Ezekiel now informs us that seated on the likeness of the throne there was a human likeness. The word for “human” in Hebrew is adam, which means man or human. Yes, this is the same as the name of Adam the first man. But, this is not that Adam.

1 Cor 15:45 says, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” This is in reference to Jesus, but we will talk about that later.

Ezekiel tells us that, from the waist up, the male figure on the throne looked like fire enclose by gleaming metal. So, the figure was glowing as though heated in the fire. From the waist down, the figure just looked like fire.

There was brightness around the figure that Ezekiel describes like a bow in a cloud when it rains, that is a rainbow. What does the rainbow remind us of? Correct. God’s covenant after Noah not to destroy the Earth again by water.

Now, let’s look at Revelation 4 verse 2 and 3:

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.


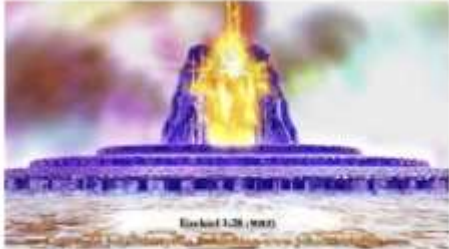
And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

It seems very much as though John was seeing the same or a very similar sight to Ezekiel.

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The Throne



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Here are a few artist's renderings of the throne.

You can see how differently these descriptions can be depicted.

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Is This God The Father?

- God - אֱלֹהִים elohiym
- LORD - יְהוָה Yhovah
 - Tetragrammaton
 - self-Existent or Eternal
- The Lord GOD – Adonay Yhovih

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You may be asking yourself, “Is the being on the throne God the Father?”

We know in verse 1 that Ezekiel calls the figure God, that is אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem'). This literally means “gods”, but in context it means the supreme God. David frequently used elohiym to refer to God in the psalms.

In the third verse Ezekiel says that the word of the LORD came to him and that the hand of the LORD was upon him. The word LORD in all capital letters is the Tetragrammaton or the Hebrew letters yod, he, vav, and he, representing the name of God. Jews will usually say “Adonai” (Lord) or “ha Shem” (the Name) in substitution for the original pronunciation which has been forbidden since the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. Strong’s renders this as Yehovah.

In chapter 3 verse 11 God calls himself “the Lord GOD”, which in Hebrew is Adonay Yhovih.

Daniel has a vision of God and the throne in chapter 7 verse 9: “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.” Compare this to John’s description of Jesus in Rev 1.

So could this be God the Father? Yes, it could.

Could this be the pre-incarnate Jesus? Yes, it could. However, I associate Ancient of days more with the Father than the Son. Also, in the Old Testament Israel is looked at as the bride of the Father. Who is Jesus’ bride? Correct. It is the Church.

We do not see the face or the LORD, which is consistent with John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Therefore, this would appear to me to be God the Father.

So, just what does this whole vision represent? What is Ezekiel seeing here? There are a number of differing views.

Here is my opinion...

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Babylonian Chariot



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Here is a depiction of a Babylonia style chariot. These were the tanks of their time, and they were feared.

Notice that these chariots have wheels with a platform above where the king sat or stood, and they were pulled by horses who are connected to the platform and the wheels.

Now let's compare that with God's chariot.

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Kind of makes the Babylonian chariot look like a tinker toy doesn't it? The LORD's chariot has awesome wheels and it is pulled or powered by cherubim.

Joan calls this God's tricked out Harley. How would you like to drive down the 91 freeway in this?

Is this a flying saucer? I don't think so. Is it a UFO, an Unidentified Flying Object? Actually, I think it is an IGO, and Identified Godly Object. However, that is just my opinion. As I said before, there are many others with different views of what Ezekiel saw.

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Here are some other artist renderings of the chariot of God. I really don't feel like any really do it justice, but this would be really difficult to depict.

Once Ezekiel saw the glory of the LORD, he fell on his face. Then, Ezekiel heard a voice speaking.

And we will find out what the voice had to say next time.

Questions?