

Ezekiel's Vision, Part 2

(1b) Ezekiel 1:11-28

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Ezekiel's Vision of God, Ezekiel 1:12-28

¹¹ Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. ¹² And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. ¹⁴ And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.

¹⁵ Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. ¹⁶ The appearance of the wheels and their workings was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. ¹⁷ When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. ¹⁸ As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims were full of eyes, all around the four of them. ¹⁹ When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. ²¹ When those went, these went; when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

²² The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads. ²³ And under the firmament their wings spread out straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. ²⁴ When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. ²⁵ A voice came from

above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.

²⁶ And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. ²⁷ Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. ²⁸ Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

v11 – What did Ezekiel observe about the wings of the cherubim?

Each had 6 wings... two stretched upward giving God glory, two touching their fellow cherubim having fellowship with one another, two covered their bodies showing humble modesty before God (speculation on my part because Scripture doesn't say).

v12 – What is the significance of the straightness of the cherubim being repeated here (v9)?

The idea from Ezekiel 1:9 is repeated for emphasis. As these beings did not turn when they went, God is moving forward undeviatingly, unhesitatingly toward the accomplishment of His purpose. Nothing will deter Him—nothing can sidetrack Him at all.

What does it mean the cherubim went wherever the spirit wanted to go?

This either refers to the *spirit* of the cherub or the Holy Spirit. If the former, it means there is no battle between flesh and spirit for these beings; their "flesh" does exactly what their spirit desires (unlike men, as in Mark 14:38). If the latter, then they are perfectly responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

v13 – What is the significance of the cherubim being in appearance like burning coals of fire?

There was something radiant, bright, and even “warm” about the appearance of these cherubim. Isaiah described them as *burning ones* (seraphim, Isaiah 6:2), and so did Ezekiel. Out of the fire went lightning shows the power and awe associated with these creatures.

v14 – What was the significance of the cherubim running back and forth?

The cherubim were *active*, seeming to not stand still for a moment. Their movements were as quick as a flash of lightning.

v15-21 – What do you think the wheels beside each living creature represented?

This is probably some concept that is hard for our mortal minds to understand but it is probably the idea of a grand four-wheeled chariot bringing the throne of God. The general impression is of constant activity and motion, not only by the living creatures themselves (v14), but also by the throne of God (specifically mentioned in Ezekiel 1:26).

What is the color of beryl?

The mineral beryl can come in many different colors, but one of the more notable and precious is the emerald or aquamarine. This may mean that the wheels gave off a green color.

What would be a wheel in the middle of a wheel?

Each wheel is composed of two wheels apparently at right angles to each other... maybe 3-D wheels. This is impossible in reality, but in the vision it enables the chariot to run instantly in any direction without turning.

- *When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went:* The sense seems to be that the wheels and their workings could move in any direction, but there was no sense of chaos or disorder to their movements.

v18 – What could the rims of the wheels represent?

The description of high and awesome are characteristics of God, their being full of eyes was how John described the cherubim themselves (Revelation 4:6). The sense is of great knowledge and intelligence.

- The wheels symbolize the omnipresence of God, while the eyes on their rims suggest the omniscience of God, seeing and knowing everything.

v19-20 – How were the wheels connected to the cherubim?

As the four cherubim moved, so did the four wheels and their workings. They were so closely connected that Ezekiel could write; *the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.*

- In 13 months the cherubim and this heavenly chariot will return to remove the glory of the Lord from the temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9-10). Yet, graciously, God also gave Ezekiel a vision of the return of God’s glory to the temple, along with these cherubim and the heavenly chariot (Ezekiel 43:1-5).

v22 – How was the sky above the cherubim described?

As Ezekiel looked above the cherubim, he saw space like the color of an awesome crystal. There was something spectacular about the “sky” above the cherubim.

- In the book of Revelation this same phrase becomes ‘a sea of glass, like crystal’ before the throne of God (Rev. 4:6).

v24 – What is the significance of the noise of their wings being like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty?

This seems to describe the loud and majestic noise of a great waterfall. John used this phrase to describe the voice of the ascended Jesus (Revelation 1:15), the voice of God (Revelation 14:2), and the voice of a great multitude (Revelation 19:6).

v25 – What was this voice that came from above the firmament?

Obviously God... The living creatures responded to this voice that came from above all...above all things: the throne and He who sat upon the throne.

v26-28 – What was above the firmament over their heads?

The likeness of a throne: Since the wheels and their working seemed to be on the earth beside each living creatures (Ezekiel 1:15) and the voice and the throne came from above the firmament (Ezekiel 1:25-26), the presence of God was *above* the cherubim and the wheels and their workings.

How was the throne described?

In appearance like a sapphire stone: Moses described parts of his heavenly vision with the blue color and brilliance of a sapphire stone (Exodus 24:10). ...One of the most precious stones known to the ancients.

Why do you think Ezekiel kept using the word *likeness* in his descriptions?

The repetition of the word *likeness* means that Ezekiel emphasized that what he saw were representations of the real. Ezekiel might very well deny that he saw the *actual* throne of God or God Himself; he saw their *likeness* – it was a vision; God revealed only what He chose to reveal.

How was the occupant of the throne described?

With the appearance of a man: The representation Ezekiel saw of God was *something* like a man. This is consistent with the other descriptions of God in heavenly visions (such as Isaiah 6:1-4 and Revelation 4-5) and the general idea that God made man in His image (Genesis 1:26-27).

- The description suggests that Ezekiel did not see a face and a body that he could have drawn, but rather a fiery brightness that had a human shape and that he knew to be living and personal

How is it encouraging that the occupant of the throne in heaven looked like a man?

This reveals the importance of people to God...

Genesis 1:27 – *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

This also brings to mind Jesus, the Son of God who came as a man...

Hebrews 4:15 – *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus is the only one who could pay the penalty of our sin because He was without sin and He is resurrected in a glorified body and is ruling from His throne in heaven.

In what ways are people in the image of God?

Eternal beings – While each of us had a beginning and God did not since He has always existed, we, like God will exist for eternity.

Creative – Anytime someone invents a machine, writes a book, paints a landscape, enjoys a symphony, calculates a sum, or names a pet, he or she is proclaiming the fact that we are made in God's image.

Mentally – humanity was created as a rational, volitional agent. In other words, human beings can reason and choose. This is a reflection of God's intellect and freedom.

Morally – humanity was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God's holiness. God saw all He had made (humanity included) and called it "*very good*" (Genesis 1:31). Our conscience or "moral compass" is a vestige of that original state. Whenever someone writes a law, recoils from evil, praises good behavior, or feels guilty, he or she is confirming the fact that we are made in God's own image.

Socially – humanity was created for fellowship. This reflects God's triune nature and His love. In Eden, humanity's primary relationship was with God (Genesis 3:8 implies fellowship with God), and God made the first woman *because "it is not good for the man to be alone"* (Genesis 2:18). Every time someone marries, makes a friend, hugs a child, or attends church, he or she is demonstrating the fact that we are made in the likeness of God.

Triunity – As God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all people exist as body, soul, and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 – *may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*

While many use spirit and soul interchangeably, the Bible distinguishes them...

Hebrews 4:12 – *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The soul is our intellect, the seat of our emotions, our personality; the spirit is that part of us that has the capacity to know God and commune with Him. All people are born with a human spirit that is dead to God. Those who are born again have had their spirits made alive to God and the Holy Spirit indwells us to enable us to Know Him...

1 Corinthians 3:16 – *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

The Holy Spirit speaks to our human spirits...

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*

The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee of our eventual bodily resurrection...

Ephesians 1:13-14 – *having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*

What does the color amber bring to mind?

The word translated *amber* (*hasmal*) is more literally "glowing metal," and has the idea of something that shines, such as a shining metal, golden brown in color.

What does the image of fire and brightness from His waist extending downward depict?

The suggestion is of His power and radiance going from heaven down to earth. The symbolism points to God as high and lifted up above the heavens, far removed from this world. Yet he still gives direction and order to his creation from his heavenly throne.

What does the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day with brightness all around represent?

The whole picture is of colorful, bright, happy radiance

- In John's heavenly vision, he saw the throne of God surrounded by a rainbow (Revelation 4:3).
- The rainbow was a *reminder* of His promise to never destroy the earth again with water (Genesis 9:13-16); Thus, it reveals His promise-keeping and is also a reminder of His power and sovereignty.

If there was any doubt about the identity of this One on the throne, Ezekiel clears that up saying that the appearance was the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

How did Ezekiel respond to this vision of the Lord on His throne?

He fell on his face... a response of humble surrender. And He heard the one speaking.

- If Ezekiel didn't know it before, now he clearly understood that the glory of God is *not* restricted to Jerusalem and the temple.
- Whenever Ezekiel spoke the messages entrusted to him, he did so having the glory of God as he had seen Him in this vision

What does this vision of God tell us about Him?

He is more amazing than we can even imagine and there are creatures there that reflect the amazingness of God...

1 Corinthians 2:9 – *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*

How does this vision of God provide encouragement for us in the here and now?

There is more to creation than what we can see in this physical universe. Likewise, there is more to life than this mortal existence. Those with an eternal perspective will be blessed in eternity. If you don't know God, there is no better time than right now.