

Ezekiel 10 - Description of the Cherubim; The 1st & 2nd Stages of the Shekinah's Departure

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Ezekiel 10

- (iii) Cherubim and God's departing glory (10:1-22)

Ezek 8 laid the groundwork for the events unfolding in Ezek 10-11. In a vision, Ezekiel journeyed from Babylon to Jerusalem, where he saw his fellow Jews engaging in four abominable practices in the heart of God's house. While paganism was prevalent throughout the land, the presence of such massive idolatry within the Temple compound itself was particularly troubling. The depth of Judah's spiritual degradation was shown by the fact that even the priests worshipped the sun instead of God, with their backs to the Temple and their faces to the east.

In Ezek 9, Ezekiel received a graphic vision of the impending judgment. There would be a massive slaughter, and only those who had received a divine mark on their foreheads (the believing remnant) would be spared. Ezek 10-11 shows what would make this slaughter possible: the departure of the Shekinah glory from the Temple.

- (a) Departure of God's glory to the Temple threshold (10:1-8)

1 Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim **something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling** a throne, appeared above them.

1 Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them.

1 As I continued to watch, there on the expanse above the heads of the cherubim was a massive sapphire stone that resembled a throne in form and appearance.

1 Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

- "Then I looked, and behold" - describes the first phase of Ezekiel's vision (Cf. v9)

- "...*something* like...in appearance resembling" - Ezekiel is trying his best to describe what he saw in this vision, but doesn't have the vocabulary to provide more detail

- "...sapphire stone" - Ezekiel compared the throne he saw to a sapphire stone

— In Ezek 1, Ezekiel noted that the throne rested above four living creatures. Here, he identifies those living creatures as cherubim.

2 And He spoke to **the man clothed in linen** and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter *them* over the city." And he entered in my sight.

2 And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter *them* over the city." And he entered in my sight.

2 The LORD spoke to the man who was clothed in white linen, telling him, "Go between the whirling wheels, under the cherubim, and fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim. Then scatter them over the city." So he entered as I watched.

2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.

- "...the man clothed in linen" - the man (angel) (Gabriel?) who had the "scribe's kit" and who placed a mark on the foreheads of the believing remnant (9:4,11)

— Now this same man (angel) was given another commission by God: to take some of the coals of fire found between the whirling wheels, even under the cherub

— The existence of these coals in the square between the cherubs was not mentioned in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 1), but coals symbolize divine judgment (Cf. Is 6:6-7)

— The man (angel) was to take these coals of judgment and scatter them over the city, referring to Jerusalem

3 Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the **cloud** filled the inner courtyard.

3 Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court.

3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the entrance to the Temple, when the man entered and a cloud filled the inner court.

3 Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

— "...cloud" - one of the ways the Shekinah (the manifestation of God's glory) became visible in the OT was in the form of a cloud (Cf. Ex 13:21-22)

— The cloud that filled the inner courtyard was the Shekinah Glory of God

4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD.

4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD.

4 The glory of the LORD rose above the cherub and moved to the threshold of the Temple. A cloud filled the Temple and the court was filled with the brilliance of the LORD's glory.

4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.

— This verse further describes the movement of the Shekinah from the Holy of Holies ("from the cherub") to the Inner Court ("the threshold of the temple"), and was positioned at the doorway of the Temple

— The resulting effects of this transfer of location on both the interior and exterior of the Temple: the interior was "filled with the cloud"; the exterior "was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD"

5 Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.

5 Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.

5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim, reminiscent of the voice of the Sovereign God when he speaks, could be heard as far as the outer court.

5 And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.

— Describes the phenomenon that accompanied the transition of the Shekinah from the first position (Holy of Holies, between the cherubim) to the second position (the doorway

to the Temple)

6 And it came about when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he entered and stood beside a wheel.

6 It came about when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he entered and stood beside a wheel.

6 He issued this order to the man who was clothed in white linen: "Take fire from within the whirling wheels, among the cherubim." So he went and stood beside the wheels.

6 And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

- The man (angel) clothed in linen (Gabriel?), when receiving the instruction, entered and stood beside a wheel

7 Then the cherub reached out with his hand from between the cherubim to the fire which was between the cherubim, took *some coals* and put *them* into the hands of the one clothed in linen; and he took *them* and went out.

7 Then the cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire which was between the cherubim, took *some* and put *it* into the hands of the one clothed in linen, who took *it* and went out.

7 Then a cherub stretched out his hand to the fire, which was among the cherubim, took some of the fire, and placed it in the hands of the one clothed in white linen, who took it and left.

7 And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.

- The man (angel) clothed in linen received the coals from one of the four living creatures
— Essentially, one of the four living creatures/cherubim stretched forth his hand into the hollow square formed by these creatures, and transferred some of the coals from the fire into the man's (angel's) hands

— The man (angel) wearing linen then left, to go scatter the coals over the city of Jerusalem (Cf. v2)

8 The cherubim appeared to have something like a human hand under their wings.

8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings.

8 There appeared to be human hands under the wings of the cherubim.

8 And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

(b) Wheels and cherubim (10:9-17)

Verses 9-17 focus again on the cherubim, with v9-14 focusing on their appearance. Ezekiel's description here largely repeats details that he previously provided in Ezek 1.

(1) Description (10:9-14)

9 Then I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like the gleam of a Tarshish stone.

9 Then I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like the gleam of a Tarshish stone.

9 As I continued to watch, I observed four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub. The wheels resembled beryl stone.

9 And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone.

- "Then I looked, and behold" - introduces the second phase of Ezekiel's vision (Cf. v1)

- This part of the description emphasizes two wheels bisecting each other at right angles so that they can travel in all four directions without having to be steered

10 And as for their appearance, *all* four of them had the same likeness, as if one wheel were within another wheel.

10 As for their appearance, all four of them had the same likeness, as if one wheel were within another wheel.

10 In appearance, the four wheels looked like they consisted of a wheel within a wheel.

10 And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

11 When they moved, they went in *any* of their four directions without turning as they went; but they followed in the direction which they faced, without turning as they went.

11 When they moved, they went in *any* of their four directions without turning as they went; but they followed in the direction which they faced, without turning as they went.

11 Whenever they moved, they proceeded without turning around as they moved, but they followed in the direction where their head was facing, without looking around as they moved.

11 When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

- The setup of the wheels allowed for the cherubim to move as a unit without having to turn as they went

12 And their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were covered with eyes all around, the wheels belonging to *all* four of them.

12 Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them.

12 Their entire bodies, backs, hands, and wings were filled with eyes around, including each of their four wheels.

12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

- In 1:18 we learned that only the rims of the wheels were full of eyes; now we learn that the bodies of the cherubs were covered with eyes as well, including their backs, hands, and wings

— Even the inside of the wheels, which were not part of the rims, were full of eyes

— In both the OT & NT, "full of eyes" signifies the omniscience and omnipresence of God. He sees and knows everything because He is everywhere.

13 The wheels were called, as I heard, the whirling wheels.

13 The wheels were called in my hearing, the whirling wheels.

13 The wheels whose sound I was hearing were called "the whirling wheels".

13 As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

- The wheels evidently have a name: "whirling wheels"

14 And each one had four faces. The first face was the face of a cherub, the second face was the face of a human, the third, the face of a lion, and the fourth, the face of an eagle.

14 And each one had four faces. The first face was the face of a cherub, the second face was the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

14 Each had four faces. The first one was the face of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

- A new detail: in 1:10, the living creatures had four faces—a man, an ox, an eagle, and a lion

— In this verse, there is a distinct description provided for the face of the ox: it is referred to as the face of the cherub

- This suggests that the primary identifying feature of a cherub is represented by the face of an ox

(2) Movement (10:15-17)

The information regarding the cherubs' movements was presented in Ezek 1, and Ezekiel's descriptions here do not offer anything notably different. Verse 15 outlines the start of their actions, while v16-17 highlight the movements of the wheels.

15 Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw by the river Chebar.

15 Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw by the river Chebar.

15 The cherubim arose. These were the same beings that I had seen at the Chebar River.

15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

16 Now when the cherubim moved, the wheels would move beside them; also when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels themselves would not turn away from beside them.

16 Now when the cherubim moved, the wheels would go beside them; also when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels would not turn from beside them.

16 When the cherubim moved, the wheels went alongside them. But when the cherubim started to ascend, beating their wings to rise above the earth, the wheels beside them didn't turn.

16 And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubim's lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

17 When the cherubim stood still, the wheels would stand still; and when they rose up, the wheels would rise with them, because the spirit of the living beings was in them.

17 When the cherubim stood still, the wheels would stand still; and when they rose up, the wheels would rise with them, for the spirit of the living beings was in them.

17 When they stood still, the wheels stood still. When they rose up, the wheels rose up, too, because they were alive.

17 When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

(c) Departure of God's glory to the East gate (10:18-19)

Verses 18-19 record the second of the four stages of the Shekinah Glory's departure from the Temple.

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.

18 Then the glory of the LORD moved away from the threshold of the Temple and stood over the cherubim.

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

- The Shekinah now leaves the second position (the threshold of the Temple)

19 When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the ground in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD'S house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.

19 When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.

19 The cherubim lifted their wings and rose above the earth while I watched. They went out, along with their wheels, and stood at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's Temple as the glory of Israel's God remained above, covering them.

19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

- The cherubim set their wings in motion and rose from the earth. As they moved, the wheels moved with them to reach the third position: the door of the east gate (located in the Outer Wall of the Temple compound)

(d) Cherubim identified (10:20-22)

In v20-22, Ezekiel confirmed that the living creatures he had described in Ezek 1 were indeed cherubs.

20 These are the living beings that I saw beneath **the God of Israel** by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim.

20 These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim.

20 These were the living beings that I had seen under the God of Israel on the bank of the Chebar River. I knew that they were cherubim.

20 This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

- Ezekiel unmistakably identifies the living creature he saw (Cf. 9:3; 10:4) as cherubim
- "...the God of Israel" - Ezekiel confirms that the likeness as the appearance of a man that he saw in 1:26 was, in fact, God Himself
- This statement confirms that the Shekinah Glory is the visible manifestation of God Himself

21 Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings was the form of human hands.

21 Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings was the form of human hands.

21 Each one had four faces. Each one had four wings, and the form of human hands could be seen under their wings.

21 Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

22 As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one went straight ahead.

22 As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one went straight ahead.

22 As to the likeness of their faces, they were like what I had seen on the bank of the Chebar River. They each moved straight ahead.

22 And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.