

Ezekiel 01 - Introduction; Ezekiel's Preparation for Ministry; Ezekiel's Vision of God's Throne

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Ezekiel 1

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(1) Ezekiel's preparation for ministry (Ezek 1:1—3:27)

(A) The Lord appears to Ezekiel (1:1-3)

(a) Time (1:1-2)

1 Now it came about in the **thirtieth year**, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar **among the exiles, the heavens were opened** and **I saw visions of**

God.

1 Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

1 On the fifth day of the fourth month of the thirtieth year of the exile to Babylon, while I was among the captives on the bank of the Chebar River, heaven opened up and I saw visions from God.

1 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.

— "...thirtieth year" - 30th year of what/from what?: most believe it was Ezekiel's 30th year...the year of maturity for a priest (Num 4:3)

— All the other dates in the prophecy are reckoned from either Jehoiachin's "reign" or his captivity [Pfeiffer, Charles F., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1962]

— This implies that Ezekiel was born in Judah around 623 BC. He was taken captive in 597 BC when he was 25 years old. Five years later, at the age of 30 (when he would've been officially ordained and appointed priest and began his temple service), he was taken into captivity and God called him as a prophet.

— It is significant that Ezekiel was called by God as a prophet at the same age he would've been ordained and appointed as a priest

— This verse gives the exact date as July 31, 593 BC (see chart: **Ezekiel's Visions** below)

— Ezekiel's ministry lasted 22 years, from July 31 593 BC to April 26, 571 BC (Cf. 29:17)

— "...I" - Ezekiel, the author, speaking in the first person

— "Ezekiel" (*Yekhezqe'l*) means "God strengthens" or "God will strengthen"

— Ezekiel was married, but no mention is made of his wife until 24:15-18 when God tells Ezekiel that his wife is about to die

— Her death in Babylon was a sign for Judah, and occurred at the time of the siege of Jerusalem before its final destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC

— "...among the exiles" - Ezekiel was one of two exilic prophets (Daniel), who wrote their books while in exile in Babylon

— "...the heavens were opened" - *niptechu hashamayim*, on July 31, 593 BC, Ezekiel, without any forewarning, saw the heavens opened and a vision in which he received his calling into prophetic office

— With the possible exception of Is 6:1, this is the only time in the OT that the heavens were opened to allow a human being to see what was going on in heaven. This IS the only place in the OT where it says "the heavens were opened"

— In the NT, this phrase is used 5x:

- Matt 3:16 - when Jesus began His earthly ministry, "the heavens were opened to Him"

- John 1:51 - Jesus told Nathanael "he would see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending from the Son of Man"
- Acts 7:55-56 - in Stephen's dying vision, he "saw the heavens opened" and "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of the Father"
- Rev 4:1 - "a door opened in heaven" and John was invited to enter so that God could show him visions of "the things which must come to pass after these things"
- Rev 19:11 - John saw heaven opened for Christ and His armies to return to earth at the Second Coming
- "...I saw visions of God" - after his path in life as a Levitical priest was interrupted (see notes on v3) by his exile to Babylon, Ezekiel received a dramatic vision from the Lord
 - He did his best to describe what he saw. His account of four-faced angelic beings moving on wheels within wheels has often been interpreted speculatively, and in many cases these interpretations have taken on bizarre forms.

- 2 (On the fifth of the month in the **fifth year of King Jehoiachin's** exile,
- 2 (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile,
- 2 On the fifth day of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's imprisonment in exile,
- 2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,
- "...fifth year" - June-July, 592 BC; this is the first of 14 date references in the book of Ezekiel (Cf. 1:2; 3:16; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 29:17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1; 32:17; 33:21; 40:1)
 - This would be five years after the 2nd siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin were both taken
 - Ezekiel provides a very detailed timeline throughout the book. He records both the visions he received from God with great accuracy, as well as the date he received those visions.
 - The Book of Ezekiel is chronological (the prophecies of Egypt being the only vision out of chronological order). Ezekiel's ministry lasted about 20 years (Daniel's was much longer...about 70 years).
 - "...King Jehoiachin" - the 18th and next to the last king of Judah, the son of the petty tyrant, Jehoiakim, and grandson of the godly Josiah
 - His name means "The Lord establishes"
 - Enthroned by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, he reigned only three months when he was deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC (in the 2nd siege of Jerusalem), along with the upper classes and craftsmen. The only people left were the poor and impoverished (2 Kings 24:8-16).
 - He was released by Evil Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, in 560 BC, the 37th year of his exile (2 Kings 25:27)

Ezekiel's Visions

Date	Event	Scripture
7/31/593	Call to ministry	1:1-2
8/7/593	Appointment as a watchman	3:16
9/17/592	Temple vision	8:1
8/14/591	Review of Israel's history	20:1-2
1/15/588	Siege of Jerusalem begins	24:1
4/23/587–4/13/586	Message Against <u>Tyre</u>	26:1
1/7/587	Message Against Egypt	29:1
4/26/571	Egypt given as payment for Babylon's siege	29:17
4/29/587	Message Against Pharaoh	30:20
6/21/587	Message Against Pharaoh	31:1
3/3/585	Lament over Pharaoh	32:1
4/13/586–4/1/585	Announcement of Egypt's "death"	32:17
1/8/585	News of Jerusalem's destruction reaches Ezekiel	33:21
4/28/573	Vision of the future temple	40:1

Dates gleaned from Egyptologist Richard A. Parker and Middle East defense expert Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*.

Nebuchadnezzar's 3 sieges of Judah

	1	2	3
Year	605	597	586
Scripture	2 Kings 24:1; Dan 1:1	2 Kings 24:10-16; <u>Ezek</u> 1:1-2	2 Kings 25:1-2; Ezek 33:21
Judah's king	Jehoiakim	Jehoiachin	Zedekiah
Those taken	Daniel & some princes	Ezekiel & majority 10k	Remnant captured; Jerusalem & Temple destroyed

Judah was warned over and over again (by the prophets) that if they didn't repent and return to obey the Mosaic Law, God was going to send them into captivity. They maligned

the prophets, killing most of them. God's patience ran out, so He allowed Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to take Judah captive.

Siege #1 - 605 BC (2 Kings 24:1; Dan 1:1) - Nebuchadnezzar's first siege only took Daniel, his friends, and some of the princes. He renamed them (indicating ownership) and educated (brainwashed) them into pagan Babylonianism.

Siege #2: 597 BC (2 Kings 24:10-16; Ezek 1:1-2) - the majority of the population of Judah (~10,000 people), including Ezekiel

Siege #3: 586 BC (2 Kings 25:1-2; Ezek 33:21) - captured the remaining Jews (remnant), and completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

- Actual siege of Jerusalem was July/August 587 BC, and was followed by the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC

This is likely the time that Jeremiah wrote Lamentations, which is a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem. But Jeremiah inserts into the middle of the book that God's mercies are new every morning. If God's promises were faithful in the destruction of the temple, the prophecies of the restoration of the temple would be faithful as well.

Ezekiel, taken in the second siege, begins seeing his visions from God after the second siege, but before the third siege. So the city and the temple were still standing when Ezekiel began seeing his visions.

The exiles believed that they would only spend a short time in Babylon, and that they'd soon be traveling back to Judah and Jerusalem and getting back to their daily lives. Ezekiel warned them that they should go ahead and get comfortable in Babylon because they wouldn't be going back anytime soon.

(b) Recipient: Ezekiel (1:3a)

(c) Place: Kebar (1:3b)

3 the word of the LORD **came expressly** to **Ezekiel the priest**, son of Buzi, **in the land of the Chaldeans** by the **river Chebar**; and there **the hand of the LORD came upon him.**)

3 the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.)

3 a message from the LORD came directly to Buzi's son Ezekiel, the priest, by the Chebar River in the land of the Chaldeans. The hand of the LORD rested upon him there.

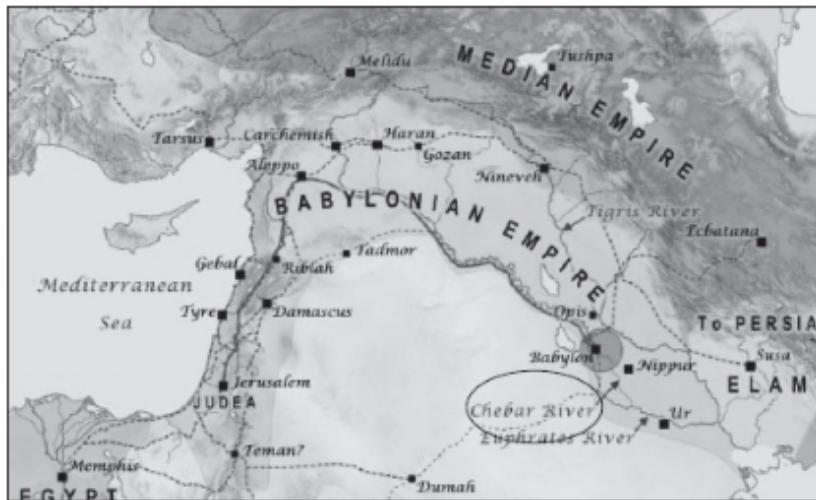
3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

- "...came expressly" - the prophet had a personal encounter with the Lord

- "...Ezekiel the priest" - once you understand that Ezekiel was a priest, you can

understand why God disclosed certain things to him, and you can understand a little more about his writing style

- As a priest, he was of the tribe of Levi, and may have belonged to the specific faction within the tribe known as the "sons of Zadok" (Cf. 44:15), a group destined to play a major role in the future
- As a priest, his path in life would've been mapped out to consist of duties such as preparing sacrifices, instructing the Israelites in God's Law, or adjudicating disputes (Lev 9; 10:11; Deut 17:8-10; 33:10)
- However, his path in life was interrupted in 597 BC when he was taken captive to Babylon
 - "...in the land of the Chaldeans" - Ezekiel's call to be a prophet occurred while he was outside of the Land of Israel, something the rabbis criticized about the authenticity of Ezekiel as Scripture, as the rabbis believed that every prophet must have received his call to prophetic office in Israel
 - "...river Chebar" - the main canal that came off the Euphrates River, which watered that area
- This area was removed by quite a few miles from Babylon. Evidently, the Jewish captives were put there to till the land.
- Ezekiel had a private house on the banks of this river (Cf. 8:1), which shows that the Jewish captives enjoyed a high level of freedom after they settled in Babylon. They were not slaves in Babylon as they were in Egypt.
- "...the hand of the LORD came upon him" - sidelined as an exiled priest, stranded in a foreign land, but upheld by God, Ezekiel was called to serve as a prophet.
- v1-3 outline four ways that the Lord revealed His Word to Ezekiel:
 1. "the heavens were opened" (v1)
 2. Ezekiel "saw visions of God" (v1)
 3. "the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel" (v3)
 4. "the hand of the LORD came upon him" (v3)



The River Chebar

"The great river," "the grand canal," the River Chebar was an artificial watercourse of the Euphrates

- Beginning above Babylon, it flowed southeast, passed through Nippur, site of ancient Jewish settlements (and of the wealthy banking house of Murashu and Sons, whose archives from 464-405 BC contain many Jewish names)
- It joined the Euphrates again below Ur
- This area was removed by quite a few miles from Babylon and, evidently, the Jewish captives were put there to till the land. Ezekiel's home was on the river Chebar, at Tel-aviv, the principal colony of the exiles, near the city of Nippur, southeast of Babylon

Ezekiel lived during the reign of the last five kings of Judah. The first of these kings was Josiah, who reigned from 640-609 BC. As mentioned, Ezekiel was born in the year 623 BC. Hence, for the first 14 years of his life, the ruling monarch was Josiah—the last good king of Judah.

When Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho in 609 BC (2 Kings 23:29-30), the people elected his son Jehoahaz (or Shallum) as successor. However, Jehoahaz refused to follow in his father's footsteps and instead did evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 23:31-32). He only held power for three months before the king of Egypt captured him and installed his brother Eliakim in his place (2 Kings 23:34; 2 Chr 36:4). The Egyptian king renamed Eliakim "Jehoiakim."

Jehoiakim reigned from 609 BC to 597 BC and also did evil in the eyes of the Lord (II Kgs. 23:36-37). Because the nation of Judah did not repent of her sin, God sent invading armies to capture and enslave the people. Nebuchadnezzar captured Jehoiakim and put him in chains before transporting him to Babylon (2 Kings 24:1; 2 Chr 36:5-6). Daniel and his

three companions were also taken to Babylon at this time (Dan 1:1-2). Jehoiakim was later returned to Jerusalem, but he had to serve as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal and pay tribute to him for three years.

(B) God's visions (1:4—2:7)

(a) Four living creatures (1:4-14)

In his vision, Ezekiel saw four living creatures emerge from a whirlwind. Verses 4-11 discuss the appearance of these creatures, while v12-14 describe their actions. These creatures have a total of nine distinguishing traits.

(i) Their advent (1:4)

4 As I looked, behold, a **high wind** was coming **from the north**, a **great cloud** with fire **flashing intermittently** and a **bright light around it**, and in its midst *something* like **gleaming metal in the midst of the fire**.

4 As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire.

4 I was amazed to see a wind storm blow in from the north, consisting of a massive cloud and fire that was flashing back and forth, surrounded by bright light. From deep within the cloud, something was shining that appeared to have a color like bronze that had been placed in fire until it glowed.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

- Ezekiel's prophetic calling and ministry began with a majestic vision of God's glory (Cf. Ex 33:12-23; Is 6:1-4; 2 Chr 36)

— This vision, in contrast to Isaiah's more static vision (Cf. Is 6:1-4), is full of energy and movement, constant motion that Ezekiel struggled to capture. Ezekiel's vision is more troubling than comforting, focusing on God's judgment.

- Verse 4 is an introductory statement that provides a general outline of what Ezekiel saw...the four living creatures (v4-14), the wheels (v15-21), and the throne of God's glory (v22-28)

- "...high wind" - a "stormy" wind or a whirlwind

- "...from the north" - the direction from which Judah's judgment would come from; for Israel, only enemies came in from the north (Cf. Is 14:31; Jer 1:13-15; 4:6; Joel 2:20)

— Although Babylon is east of Israel, any army trying to reach the Land from the east would go northwest, then attack Israel from the north, to avoid the Arabian Desert. Babylonian attacks on Israel always came from the north.

- "...great cloud" - the modifying phrases following this expression show that this was no ordinary cloud, but a symbol for something else
- When a cloud is used symbolically in Scripture, it refers to God's *Shekinah* Glory (Cf. Ex 13:21-22; 24:15-18)
- The three subordinate clauses that describe this "great cloud" are reminiscent of descriptions of God's manifestations in Ex 19-20...
- "...flashing intermittently" - *mitlaquchat*, could be translated "taking hold of itself"; so what Ezekiel saw was a "ball of fire," which is another symbol of God's presence (Cf. Ex 3:2; 19:18; Num 9:15-16)
- "...bright light around it" - bright or "radiance"; another symbol of God's glory (Cf. Is 60:1)
- "...gleaming metal in the midst of the fire" - in the LXX, the term for "gleaming metal" is translated as *elektron*, which is where we get the word "electricity"
- The Hebrew word for "electricity" is *chashmal*, which combines two Hebrew words that mean "the glowing of God"
- This seems to express that what Ezekiel saw glowing within this fire was God Himself
- In summary, v4 provides a general outline of what Ezekiel saw, and the *Shekinah* Glory of God communicated to Ezekiel that judgment would come against Judah from the north

(ii) Their appearance (1:5-14)

(a) Generally (1:5-6)

5 And within it there were figures resembling **four living beings**. And this was their appearance: they had **human form**.

5 Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form.

5 Deep inside it, the likenesses of four living beings were visible. Their appearances were similar to human forms,

5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

- Verses 5-11 continue describing the vision but providing greater detail...

- "...four living beings" - these "living beings" are described as cherubim (Cf. 10:15,20); they are similar to the four living creatures in John's vision (Cf. Rev 4:6-9)

— Cherubim are heavenly guardians and celebrants of God's holiness (Cf. Gen 3:24; Ex 25:18-22; 26:1; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Kings 19:15; Ps 99:1)

- "...human form" - the most distinguishing feature of these cherubim is that they appeared similar to, although not identical with, a human being (Cf. v26); expresses the general form and appearance

6 Each of them had four faces and four wings.

- 6 Each of them had four faces and four wings.
- 6 except that they each had four faces, four pairs of wings,
- 6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.
- The four faces are subsequently described in v10

- (b) Specifically (1:7-14)
 - (1) Body parts (1:7-11)
 - a. Legs (1:7)

7 Their legs were **straight** and their feet were **like a calf's hoof**, and they sparkled like polished **bronze**.

7 Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze.

7 and straight legs. Their feet resembled calves' hooves, but they gleamed like polished bronze.

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

- "...straight" - emphasizes strength and stability
- "...like a calf's hoof" - seraphim, cherubim, and demons all tend to have animal-like features (Cf. Is 13:21; 34:14; 43:20; Micah 1:8)
- "...bronze" - commonly used in Scripture as a symbol for judgment (Cf. Ex 27:2; Lev 26:19; Num 21:9)

- b. Hands (1:8a)
- c. Wings (1:8b-9)

8 Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

8 Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

8 From under their wings there were human hands on their four sides. Now as to their four faces and four pairs of wings,

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward.

9 their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward.

9 their pairs of wings overlapped each other. They moved in straight directions without turning their faces around as they moved.

9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straightforward.

- These living creatures could see in all directions and move in all directions without turning
— In other words, no matter which direction they went, they would always be facing forward

d. Faces (1:10)

10 As for the form of their faces, *each had* a human face; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle.

10 As for the form of their faces, *each had* the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle.

10 The form of their faces was human, but each of the four also had the face of a lion to the right, the face of an ox to the left, and the face of an eagle behind them.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

- Each of the faces was unique: the first face, which was prominent and always faced outward, was that of a man. The man's face was always directed toward the prophet. Man is the highest order of God's creation, bearing God's image.

— On the right side was the face of a lion; the lion is the king of all wild animals, but he is also known in Scripture for his ferocity and courage (Cf. Judges 14:18; 2 Sam 1:23; 17:10)

— The left side featured the face of an ox, which in ancient times was considered the most valuable of all domesticated animals (Cf. Prov 14:4)

— At the rear was the face of an eagle, the mightiest of the birds (Cf. Deut 28:49; Is 40:31; Jer 48:40)

— These four faces were combined into one head, supported by one neck. Therefore, Ezekiel saw four heads and sixteen faces in total.

e. Wings (1:11)

11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another *being*, and two covering their bodies.

11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another *being*, and two covering their bodies.

11 That's what their faces were like. Their wings spread out above and around them, one pair overlapping another, with one pair covering themselves.

11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

- Every cherub had four wings, with the two upper wings joined to one another

— Meaning, the top upper-right wing was connected to the top-upper left wing of the neighboring cherub, forming a square formation

(2) Movement (1:12-14)

12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.

12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.

12 Each moved in straight directions. Wherever they decided to go, they went without turning themselves.

12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

- All four living creatures moved in unison, no single cherub acted independently

- The driving force behind their movement was "the spirit," which in the context of Ezekiel is the spirit of life issuing from God (Cf. 1:20-21; 10:17). When God commanded, the cherubim moved.

- The cherubim never turned around...they didn't need to since they formed a square, each cherub always looked in one direction. They could see no matter which way they moved.

13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like **burning coals** of fire, like **torches** moving among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.

13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.

13 Now, in the midst of the living beings there was something that appeared to glow like coals kindled by a fire, like torches that moved back and forth between the living beings. The fire was dazzling, and lightning flashed from the fire.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

- "...burning coals" - either represent purification (Cf. Lev 16:11-13; Is 6:6-7) or judgment (Cf. Ps 140:10) in Scripture. In Ezekiel, the primary sense of the term is judgment.

- "...torches" - *lappidim*, first used in Gen 15:17 to describe the *Shekinah* Glory of God who passed between the pieces as God confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant

- These "torches" were burning up and down, but were not consumed. Out of the fire of the burning torches, lightning proceeded.
- The fact that v12 mentions God's spirit of life and v13 essentially describes the *Shekinah* Glory indicates that God's glory filled the hollow square surrounded by the four cherubim

- 14 And the living beings ran back and forth like bolts of lightning.
- 14 And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.
- 14 The living beings moved around, in appearance resembling lightning.
- 14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.
- These living creatures ran and returned at the speed of lightning; they were in constant motion

(b) Four wheels (1:15-21)

- 15 Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the ground beside the living beings, for each of the four of them.
- 15 Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for each of the four of them.
- 15 As I observed the living beings, I noticed one wheel on the earth beside each being—that is, for the four of them.
- 15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.
- Ezekiel saw four wheels, one per cherub
- These wheels stood beside the cherubs, making contact between them and the earth

- 16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling **topaz**, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if **one wheel were within another**.
- 16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship was like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship being as if one wheel were within another.
- 16 Their wheels and their construction details looked like gold-colored beryl. Each wheel was identical in form to the others, and they appeared to have been constructed and designed as if one wheel were within another.
- 16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.
- "...topaz" - *tarshish*, "beryl"; debated, but most likely refers to chrysolite [Fruchtenbaum]

- The fact that all four wheels had the same form means that they were uniform in their appearance
- "...one wheel were within another" - the second wheel was inserted into the first wheel at a right angle, which is how the wheels were able to move in all four directions without having to turn (v17)

17 Whenever they moved, they moved in *any* of their four directions without turning as they moved.

17 Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved.

17 Whenever the four moved, no matter which of four directions, they moved without turning around.

17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

18 As for their rims, they were **high and awesome**, and the rims of all four of them were covered with eyes all around.

18 As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about.

18 Their wheel rims were ornate and terrifying. They were full of eyes that surrounded the four of them.

18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

- "...high and awesome" - the Hebrew here is emphatic; the rims of these wheels were terrifying

— Besides their height, another reason they were terrifying may be that they were "covered with eyes" which represents the omnipresence and omniscience of God (Cf. 2 Chr 16:9; Ps 33:18; 139:16; Job 34:21)

19 Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*.

19 Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*.

19 Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved, too. Whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*.

19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

- The wheels were attached to the cherubim...they moved when the cherub moved and they were lifted up when the cherub was lifted up

20 Wherever **the spirit** was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose just as they *did*; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

20 Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

20 Whatever direction these spirits went, the wheels would be lifted up along with them, because the wheels were alive.

20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

- "...the spirit" - *ruach*, the spirit of life issuing from God (rather than the Holy Spirit, Cf. v12)

21 Whenever those went, they went; and whenever those stopped, they stopped. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose just as they *did*; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

21 Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

21 They moved around whenever they wanted to move around, and they stood still whenever they wanted to stand still; and whenever they rose from the earth, the wheels remained close beside them, because the wheels were also alive.

21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

- In perfect synchrony with the cherubim, the wheels went wherever the living creatures went. In their moving and resting, their standing and rising up, both were completely in sync with the spirit of life.

(c) Firmament (1:22-25)

22 Now over the heads of the living beings *there was* something like an **expanse**, like the **awesome** gleam of **crystal**, spread out over their heads.

22 Now over the heads of the living beings *there was* something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads.

22 There was spread out over the heads of the living beings what looked like a canopy, in outward appearance resembling ice,

22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

- "...expanse" - *rakia*, "firmament" (Cf. Gen 1:6); it is the root word of *raka*, meaning "to beat out" or "to spread out"
- So this "expanse" is a hammered-out piece of metal, similar to the dome of the sky; a solid expanse
- The Hebrew word *rakia* occurs 17x in the Scriptures (Gen 1; Ezek 1; 10:1; Ps 19:1; 150:1; Dan 12:3). This was a beautiful "platform" above the wheels and the cherubim, containing the throne of God.
- "...awesome" - *yare'*, fearful, dreadful; to cause astonishment or awe
- "...crystal" - *kerach*, means "frost" or "ice"
- So what Ezekiel saw resembled a solid sheet of gleaming ice that was terrifying to look at, which was spread above the heads of the cherubs

23 Under the expanse their wings were *stretched out* straight, one toward the other; each one also had two *wings* covering its body on the one side and on the other.

23 Under the expanse their wings were *stretched out* straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other.

23 and underneath the canopy, their wings spread out straight over their heads toward each other. They each also had two wings with which they covered themselves, one wing covering its body on one side and one wing covering itself on the other side.

23 And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

- The visual Ezekiel saw was that the cherubs' two upper wings were stretched out horizontally, supporting the firmament like a platform

24 And I also heard the sound of their wings, like **the sound of abundant waters** as they went, **like the voice of the Almighty**, a sound of **a crowd like the sound of an army camp**; whenever they stopped, they let down their wings.

24 I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

24 I also heard the sound of their wings, like the sound of roaring water, like the voice of the Almighty, or like a boisterous crowd within an army camp. Whenever they stopped flying, they lowered their wings.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

- Ezekiel now describes three different sounds he heard as the cherubs flew with their wings
 - "...the sound of abundant waters" - like Niagara Falls
 - "...like the voice of the Almighty" - we see other passage that describe the voice of God as rolling thunder (Cf. Ex 19:16; Ps 18:13)
 - "...a crowd like the sound of an army camp" - an army marching/on the move
 - When the cherub landed/stopped flying, they lowered their wings and the sounds ceased

25 And **a voice came from above** the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they let down their wings.

25 And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

25 A sound came from above the canopy that was spread out over their heads. Whenever they stood still, they lowered their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

- "...a voice came from above" - the voice of God the Father (v26-28)

(d) God's throne (1:26-28)

26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, **was a figure with the appearance of a man**.

26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, **was a figure with the appearance of a man**.

26 From above the canopy that was spread out over their heads, there appeared to be something reminiscent of a throne, resembling sapphire in form.

There was the likeness of the appearance of a human being seated on the likeness of the throne high above.

26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

- Ezekiel now sees what is above the heads of the cherub, past the platform/expanse held up by the wings of the cherub, to what was above...

— What he saw was so complex and majestic that he lacked the vocabulary to describe it. Thus, he repeatedly used words such as "like" or "appearance".

- The first thing Ezekiel saw was something resembling a throne. Its appearance reminded him of a sapphire stone (lapis lazuli), which has deep blue hues, sometimes veined in gold

(Cf. Ps 18:10).

- "...a figure with the appearance of a man" - this is God showing Himself in the form of a human being (Cf. 10:20)

27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His waist and upward *something* like gleaming metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him.

27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him.

27 I noticed that from what appeared to look like his waist upward there was something that looked like metal that glowed as if it were immersed in fire. Below this there was something resembling fire, with a radiant light surrounding him.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

- Ezekiel described something that had the appearance of fire coming from within and wrapping itself round about. This fire was somehow divided at the Man's waist.

— As he looked upward, the fire seemed to be flashing upward, but as he looked downward, the fire appeared to be flashing downward

— There is an obvious distinction between above and below as Ezekiel looked at this Person

28 Like the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I **fell on my face** and **heard a voice speaking**.

28 As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

28 The appearance of the radiant light resembled that of a rainbow shining in a cloud on a rainy day. This was what the appearance of the form of the glory of the LORD resembled. When I saw all of this, I fell flat on my face. Then I heard a voice speaking.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

- "...I fell on my face" - the result of this vision was total collapse on the part of Ezekiel

- Ezekiel didn't see a glimpse of God's glory on Mount Sinai or in the temple in Jerusalem, but in Babylon. God had not abandoned His people, although their persistent rebellion promised them even more judgment.
- Ezekiel's involuntary response to God's greatness; a proper view of God decimates human pride and self-defense. Ezekiel had just witnessed the glory of God, and he was flattened. We cannot understand God's presence and power until we accurately assess our own position before Him.
- Throughout the OT when men came into the presence of God, they went down on their faces:
 - Abraham (Gen 17:3)
 - "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Is 6:5).
 - That was the position Daniel took also (Dan 10:6-8)
 - Saul (Acts 9:4)
 - John, on the isle of Patmos: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead" (Rev 1:17)
- However, God did not leave Ezekiel paralyzed in helplessness, but simultaneously called him to stand, and enabled him to do so (2:1-3). **God must work in us what He requires of us.**
- "...heard a voice speaking" - what Ezekiel heard was God's call of him as a prophet, which is recorded in 2:1-7

This vision will be repeated to Ezekiel three more times: the first is in 3:22-23, to predict the coming siege of Jerusalem. The second is in 8:4, where the *Shekinah* Glory comes to predict its own departure from Jerusalem in four stages. The third is in 43:1-3, which predicts the return of the *Shekinah* to the millennial temple.