

EZEKIEL

Chapter 1

The Vision

Ezekiel is down by the river Chebar among a settlement of the Jewish captives from Jerusalem. The Jewish captives were in a state of somberness and depression over their deportation out of the land (Ps. 137!). However, in the midst of this sorrow Ezekiel sees a vision; what mercy and grace.

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him. (Ezekiel 1:1-3)

The Call of the Prophet (1-3): Ezekiel is in captivity about 5 years (vs. 2) when he receives this first vision. He is about 30 years old at this time (vs. 1) and therefore, though he was a priest (vs. 3), he does not fulfill that role being called at this time to be a prophet for God (2:1-3).

The Vision of God's Movable Throne: The vision that Ezekiel sees is the movable throne of God. He is not describing an aircraft or a UFO (*in the classic sense of the word*). It is heavenly in nature, and therefore Ezekiel "likens" it to things you and I are familiar with. Note how many times Ezekiel uses the terms "like" "likeness" "as" and "as the appearance of" in describing the things he sees. Thus "likeness of a man..." means similar, not identical with (cf. v. 26), expressing the general form; while "appearance" expresses a general aspect. Thus, the prophet senses the inadequacy of human speech to describe the unspeakable.

This chapter needs to be considered with chapters 8 through 11 in which the throne of God moves to the temple in Jerusalem for a specific task. John will see this same throne as well (Rev. 4:6-7).

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 1:4)

The Whirlwind of God's Judgment (4): Ezekiel sees a whirlwind out of the north. This is as we mentioned in our introduction, Ezekiel is seeing the vision as though he were in Jerusalem; even though he is in Babylonian captivity. The judgment of God coming from the north is Babylon. The north is also a reference to the place God dwells (Ps 75:6, 7) and therefore the judgment coming against Jerusalem is from God.

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. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 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. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. 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. 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. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. 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. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. (Ezekiel 1:5-14)

The Four Living Creatures (5-14): These four living creatures are called "Cherubim" (see 10:15, 22). Cherubim are four-winged creatures each having multiple faces (v.10). They each have a face that is "likened" to a man, lion, ox and eagle. These four faces are associated with the 12 tribes of Israel:

- **Lion** ensign for the tribe of Judah (*East*)

(*Issachar and Zebulun*)

- **Ox** ensign for the tribe of Ephraim (*West*)

(*Manasseh and Benjamin*)

- **Man** ensign for the tribe of Reuben (*South*)

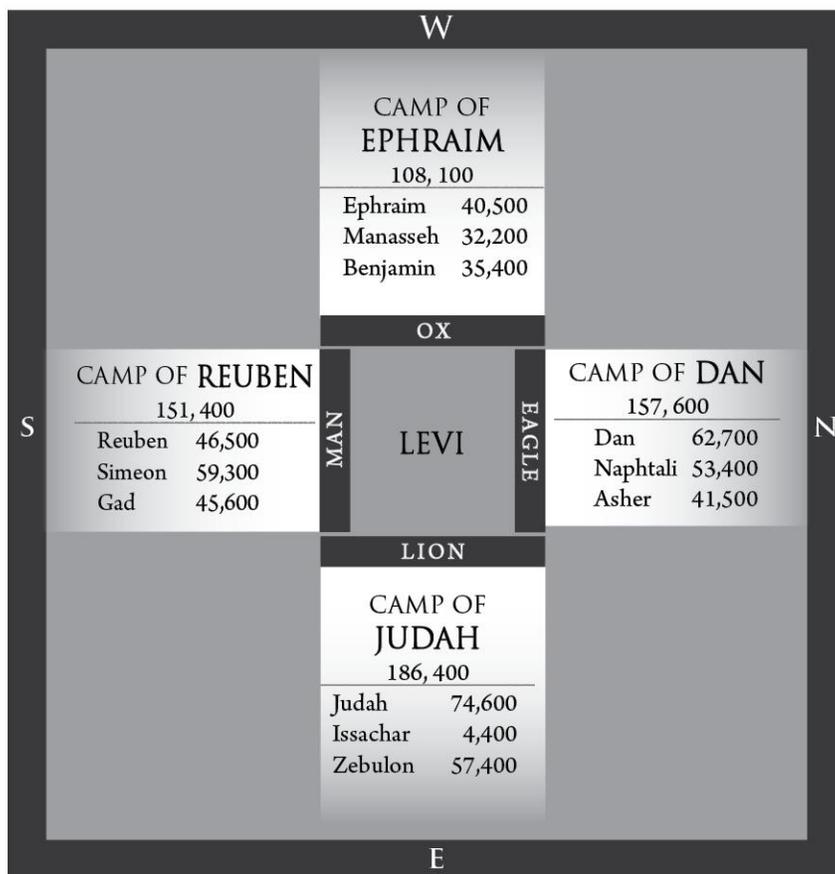
(*Simeon and Gad*)

- **Eagle** ensign for the tribe of Dan (*North*)

(*Asher and Naphtali*)

These were to be the respective leaders of Israel camped in the four cardinal directions around the Tabernacle.

THE CAMP OF ISRAEL



(Note: when each of these tribes are numbered on their respective sides (Num. Ch. 2) an interesting truth is seen – Judah, Issachar and Zebullun = 186,400; Ruben, Simeon and Gad = 151,450; Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin = 108,100; Dan, Asher and Naphtali = 157,600. This arrangement places the people in the shape of a cross surrounding the Tabernacle.)

These Cherubim are Associated with the Throne of God:

- They guard the way to the tree of life (Gen.3:24)
- They covered the mercy seat in the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:18-20; 37:7-9) and Solomon's Temple (I Kings 6:23-28)
- They support the throne of God (I Samuel 4:2; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1)
- They form the chariot of God's throne (2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 104:3; I Chr. 28:18)

These various actions are all presented in Ezekiel, especially their function as bearers of the throne of God.

Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 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. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. 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. 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. 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. (Ezekiel 1:15-21)

The Wheels of God's Throne (15-21): Ezekiel now sees the "likeness" of wheels in the middle of wheels (v.16). These wheels were located next to each of the Cherubim moving wherever the spirit (*spirit of the Cherubim*) commanded to go, given direction from the one on the throne, God the Father (v. 17-20,25). Wheels being associated with God's throne is nothing new, see Daniel 7:9.

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. 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. 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. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings. (Ezekiel 1:22-25)

The Firmament Platform of God's Throne (22-25): The Cherubim and the wheels within the wheels are located under a "firmament," a sea of glass as crystal (v. 22, 23 Ezek. 10:1 cf. Rev. 4:6-7). This is the firmament platform that God's throne sits upon (v. 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. 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. 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. (Ezekiel 1:26-28)

God the Father on the Throne (26-28): Now Ezekiel describes what he sees and hears above the Cherubim. He first describes a voice over the firmament (v. 25) The voice is that of God Almighty (v. 1, 28). Ezekiel describes the "likeness" of Him on the throne having the "likeness" of a man (v.26) in the appearance of burning fire, amber. The Glory of the LORD is used throughout the book of Ezekiel for the person of God who is manifested.

Conclusion:

Ezekiel sees God appear in great glory coming out of the north to commission him as prophet (2:3) and lay the final judgment against His people. Ezekiel sees God seated on a throne above a firmament of crystal; under which are wheels and Cherubim which move at His demand. Thus God is moving in judgment against Jerusalem (remember chapters 1-24 are prior to the destruction of the temple).

