

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 5-Chapter One Part Two (Ezekiel 1:12-21)

Executive Summary

This briefing document analyzes the systematic description of the prophet Ezekiel's divine vision as recorded in Ezekiel 1:12-21. The source context, curated by Dr. Luther Ray Smith, highlights Ezekiel's meticulous efforts to document an otherworldly encounter through specific dating, geographical markers, and highly detailed physical descriptions. Central to this vision are four "living beings" (identified as cherubim) and a complex system of "wheels within wheels." These entities are characterized by their unified movement, an internal "spirit" that directs their actions, and an appearance defined by fire, lightning, and precious stones. The analysis underscores the terrifying and grandiose nature of the divine, as evidenced by the physical dimensions of the vision's components and their synchronization with the "Word of the LORD."

I. The Nature and Movement of the Living Beings

Ezekiel provides a detailed account of the "living beings" (cherubim) and their interaction with a divine fire. Their movement and appearance suggest a state of existence beyond natural laws.

- **Directed Movement:** The creatures move with absolute purpose. They go "straight forward" in whatever direction "the spirit" moves, notably doing so "without turning as they went."
- **The Presence of Fire:** Ezekiel describes a fiery environment "in the midst of" (Hebrew: *demuth*) the living beings. This fire is characterized by:
 - Something resembling burning coals of fire.
 - The appearance of "torches" (*lapid*) darting back and forth.
 - Brightness and flashes of lightning (*bārāq*) emanating from the fire.
- **Velocity:** The living beings themselves are described as moving "to and fro" with the speed and appearance of bolts of lightning.

II. The Mechanism of the Divine Wheels

The vision introduces a secondary complex structure: the wheels (*ōpān*), which are located "on the earth" beside each of the four living beings.

Physical Construction and Appearance

Ezekiel identifies four wheels, one for each creature, yet describes them with a singular unity in verse 15, shifting to a plural form in verse 16 to indicate their internal complexity.

- **Workmanship:** The wheels are described as having the appearance of "sparkling beryl" (a yellowish jasper stone associated with Tarshish). Their construction is described as "one wheel... within another."
- **Dimensions and Rims:** The rims of these wheels are characterized as:
 - **Lofty (*gōḥah*):** Referring to a grandiose, colossal physical height.
 - **Awesome (*yir'ā*):** Underscoring a response of literal physiological fear and terror in the observer.
 - **Eyes:** The rims of all four wheels were "full of eyes round about," highlighting a state of constant observation or "sight" (*'ayin*).

Movement Synchronicity

Similar to the living beings, the wheels move in any of their four directions without turning. Their movement is entirely dependent on the living beings:

- When the living beings move, the wheels move.
- When the living beings rise from the earth, the wheels rise beside them.

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 5-Chapter One Part Two (Ezekiel 1:12-21)

III. The Role of "The Spirit"

A critical element of the vision is the "spirit" that governs the entire apparatus. This spirit acts as the animating force and the source of direction for both the cherubim and the wheels.

- **Unified Direction:** Verse 20 notes that "wherever the spirit was about to go," the creatures and wheels followed.
- **Internal Essence:** Ezekiel concludes that the "spirit of the living beings was in the wheels." This indicates that the essence of life for the cherubim is shared with or contained within the wheel structures, ensuring perfect coordination in movement and rest.

IV. Lexical Analysis of Key Hebrew Terminology

The following table outlines the specific Hebrew terms used by Ezekiel to convey the otherworldly qualities of his vision.

Term (Hebrew)	Transliteration	Meaning/Context	Frequency in Ezekiel
לַפִּיד	<i>lapîd</i>	Lamp or torch; an object giving off light.	1 time
בָּרָק	<i>bārāq</i>	Lightning; comes from <i>bāraq</i> ("to cast forth").	4 times
אֶרְבָּן	<i>ôpān</i>	Wheel; can refer to physical wheels like those on a chariot.	25 times
אַרְבַּע	<i>arba</i> ´	Four; cardinal number derived from "square."	53 times
פָּנִים	<i>pānîm</i>	Face or "before"; written in plural form in this context.	155 times
עֵינַי	<i>´ayin</i>	Eye, sight, or "sparkling"; highlights features observed.	71 times
תַּרְשִׁישׁ	<i>taršîš</i>	Beryl; a yellowish jasper stone.	3 times
גְּבוּהָ	<i>gôbāh</i>	Height, lofty, or grandiose size.	6 times
יִרְאָה	<i>yir´ā</i>	Fear; underscores the response to the size of the rims.	2 times

V. Comparative Scriptural Context

The source notes that Ezekiel's descriptions of otherworldly qualities are consistent with other prophetic visions in Scripture, particularly regarding the appearance of divine beings.

- **The Pre-incarnate Christ:** Based on the language used, the "Word of the LORD" that appeared to Ezekiel is identified as the pre-incarnate Christ.
- **Daniel 10:5-6:** Describes a figure with a body like beryl, a face like lightning, eyes like flaming torches, and arms/feet like polished bronze.
- **Revelation 1:14:** John's vision of Jesus includes eyes "like a flame of fire," mirroring the imagery of fire and brilliance found in Ezekiel.
- **Consistency of Symbols:** The use of "burnished bronze" and "beryl" across these texts serves to express the "otherworldly nature of the divine creatures."

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 5-Chapter One Part Two (Ezekiel 1:12-21)

VI. Conclusion

Ezekiel 1:12-21 represents a systematic effort by the prophet to communicate a vision that defies standard human experience. By documenting the exact dating (Babylonian and Israelite), lineage, and geography, and by employing a dense array of sensory and lexical descriptors, Ezekiel underscores the importance and reality of the divine manifestation. The vision portrays a highly organized, terrifyingly vast, and spiritually unified celestial vehicle where the "spirit" of the living beings and the mechanics of the "wheels within wheels" operate in perfect tandem with the will of God.