

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON 11 – EZEKIEL

I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal,⁵ and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. Ezekiel 1:1-6

GOD'S RESTORING GRACE

Ezekiel reads from the prophet Jeremiah and discovers that GOD will restore the captives who are in Babylon after 70 years of exile.

He realizes the 70th year is about to begin and prays that GOD keep His promise.

GOD sends the angel Gabriel to instruct Ezekiel what to say to the people of Israel in exile.

GOD explains in visions that the reason for their restoration is not simply to continue in their sin, but to fulfill their special role in history, that is, to usher in the Messiah (the "He" promised to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15).

GOD reinforces this with a symbolic vision of a storm cloud, lightning, GOD's light coming out of the cloud, mysterious creatures representing both the power of GOD and the power of those who follow GOD and, finally, the focus of GOD's blessing on Israel, the "He" who sits on the throne of GOD in glory.

SON OF MAN

Ezekiel uses this title to signify he is communicating a message direct from GOD. When Jesus uses this title of Himself, those around him understand He is communicating both a message direct from GOD and, fulfillment of that message.

Those listening to Jesus, would understand clearly He is somehow connecting Himself directly with the "One" in the visions of Ezekiel.

THE FIRST VISION

Ezekiel begins in Chapter 1 with this remarkable vision which contains many elements.

In it, Ezekiel sees a windstorm and immense cloud flashing lightning coming out of the north. A brilliant light surrounds the cloud and either from the light surrounding the cloud or from the cloud itself he sees what might be called a ball of fire so brilliant it reminds him of metal as it is being forged.

Coming out of this brilliant-hot fire Ezekiel sees four living creatures.

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE STORM AND CLOUD (KEEP FOCUSED ON THE CONTEXT)

The One

Later we will see that the focal point of the vision is the One who comes and sits on the Throne of GOD (the same One who sits on the Throne in the Book of Revelation).

The Immense Cloud and Windstorm

The vision begins with a terrible windstorm and lightening from the north. The storm is terrible in its nature, surrounded by a brilliant light and at the center a ball of fire like glowing metal. The emphasis on coming from the north and the power of the storm, suggests the Babylonian empire.

The Center of the Storm

At first it would seem reasonable that the center of the storm would be the king of Babylon. However as Ezekiel looks closely, coming out of the glowing metal, the hottest and brightest part of the storm, are four "living creatures". These living creatures which are a wonder to behold, immediately capture his attention.

THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

In appearance their form was that of a man, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. (Ezekiel 1:6-9)

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE FOUR CREATURES

Four Creatures

Four depicts completeness, north, south, east, and west. These cover the full extent of the sky. The four creatures, therefore symbolize God's omnipresence; "He is all and in all..." (Ephesians 1:20-23) This describes totality. There is no 5th direction from which the creatures may emerge.

Man-like Creatures

I've read from scholars that in Hebrew the word "creatures" may also be translated "beasts".

I believe the point here is that these resemble men in form but possess the nature of **man**, a **lion**, an **ox**, and an **eagle**. Notice also that each of these four creatures also had four wings. (Completeness) Also, Ezekiel could see that underneath the wings all had hands of a man connecting the nature of each symbolic animal to what has been given to man. (knowledge)

The Four Faces

The face of a man represents God's creation (thinking man). GOD's instructions to Ezekiel is that the Israelites have been hard-headed. (Ezekiel 3:4-7). Man has the ability to become wise through knowledge and understanding *if he wants*. Man is the one earth creation of GOD that can know GOD.

The lion represents strength greater than man's strength to both reveal and protect the Divine Word. (Samson and David killed lions through the strength of the Lord, not through their own strength)

The ox represents Israel's strength and ability to be a people who withstand and overcome the Satanic empires of the world and to protect God's Word and Purpose while taking it into the world. 12 oxen surround the basin sea at the Temple. The sea represents the world. The 12 Oxen represent the 12 tribes of Israel.

The eagle represents protection of young by forcing them to take flight.

NOTE: Deuteronomy 32:11 (God is like) "an eagle that *stirs up its nest*, that hovers over its young...". Naturalists tell us that an eagle builds her nest using large sticks which makes the nest very uncomfortable for the young. But then the eagle pads the nest using the skin of animals, grass and feathers. When the birds are of age to fly the mother begins to *stir up* the nest. She removes the padding, and then hovers over her young. The hovering, powerful flapping and jagged sticks force/encourage the chicks to leave the nest. When they come back after their first flight, the condition of the nest is no longer one of comfort. Immediately after she stirs the nest, however, the eagle goes and prepares to catch them on her wings, teaching them to fly. This is a common Jewish symbolism for GOD and His raising man up to be soar above the heights.

In Ezekiel, Chapter 10, we are told these four creatures are "*cherubim*"

Cherubim

It is Cherubim, you will recall, that cover the mercy seat of the arc of the covenant. (NOTE: Their wings touch one another, another reference to the arc of the covenant.) Cherubim protect the Garden of Eden from sin (Man's current condition) from entering into that which is perfect. Four Cherubim stand around and thus protecting the throne of GOD in Revelation 4. (Symbols abound)

Cherubim are winged angels of great splendor and power in the service of the Lord as protectors of what belongs to the Lord. Again, four symbolizes completeness; Cherubim symbolize the power of GOD to perfectly and completely protect what belongs to GOD.

Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, one touching the wing of another creature on either side, and two wings covering its body. Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning. Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels.

Ezekiel 1:11-14; 10:12

These Cherubim are all powerful, all seeing, above anything human and are controlled by the Spirit of GOD.

THE FOUR WHEELS WITHIN THE WHEELS

As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like chrysolite, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not turn about as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around. Wherever the spirit would go, .. when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Ezekiel 1:19 –21

The four wheels are extensions in purpose to the four Cherubim and are full of eyes just as the four Cherubim are full of eyes.

This represents GOD's all-seeing nature.

Wheels are interesting symbols common to many ancient cultures. Even today, we talk about how the "wheels are turning in my mind", meaning we are figuring something out.

Wheels seem almost mystical how they can move in any direction with little effort. They completely unleash transportation and in fact, help us progress through life much more freely.

IN CONTEXT

Remember, these are symbols, not flying saucers. Remember the context of Israel 40 years in captivity and how GOD is about to return his people back to Israel to resume the work GOD set out at Sinai (namely to take the Word or Knowledge of GOD into the whole world as priests to the nations of the world through the power of the "He" of Genesis 3:15).

The Wheels that belong to the Cherubim most likely signify the same kind of thing arms and feet represent for humans, namely the power of acting and advancing with regard to things pertaining to religious truth.

The eyes probably mean wisdom or knowledge to see truth.

Therefore, in this context the wheels almost certainly represent how we can travel to unlimited levels of insight, understanding and victory if we allow the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit to direct our mind and bodies rather than taking the path of the children of Israel. (A wheel allows us to travel more freely and farther)

THE ONE

Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Ezekiel 1:26 - 27

Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle."

Revelation 4:6-8

THE "HE" OF GENESIS 3:15

As we would expect, the focal point of the entire vision is the ONE who appears sitting on the Throne of GOD (the same ONE who sits on the Throne in the Book of Revelation).

It is from Him that all power comes.

If there is any question as to the meaning of the vision, Ezekiel takes up the vision with the ONE directing Ezekiel to eat a scroll.

THE BITTER-SWEET SCROLL

Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

Ezekiel 2:1-2

THE SCROLL IS SWEET

Despite Ezekiel's expectation that an old and dirty scroll filled with words of lament, mourning and woe, would be dirty and bitter to the taste, Ezekiel discovers the scroll is sweet.

GOD is able to turn bitterness to sweetness.

The mission GOD desires Ezekiel to give to the children Israel is the same mission Christ gives when He departs planet earth.

The children of Israel are to become priests to the nations of the world.

This vision demonstrates GOD's power to overcome anything that man (or Satan), can put up against His People.

The mission is protected by an all-seeing GOD and by Cherubim more awesome and powerful than anything found on Babylonian walls or by the most powerful forces in nature itself.

The point of the vision is that Israel will become the conduit through which the "He" comes to save the world.

EZEKIEL'S FOUR CHERIBUM AND FOUR WHEELS MOVE TO THE TEMPLE MOUNT

Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

Ezekiel 10:19

THE FOCUS ON THE TEMPLE

In Ezekiel Chapter 1 we are introduced to the storm, the four creatures, their wheels and the One who sits on the throne of GOD.

It is not until Chapter 10 that we are told the creatures with the four faces representing GOD's various creations and their associated wheels which can travel in all directions through the Spirit of GOD, are in fact Cherubim.

Again, Cherubim are special angels with the specific role of protection.

HINT: Everything we are talking about involves GOD trying to help us understand our power over evil and accept our role to restore Eden through the "He" of Genesis 3:15 (the same One who emerges out of the storm and Ezekiel sees sitting on the throne of GOD above the crystal sea).

THE GLORY OF GOD DEPARTS FROM THE TEMPLE

If this is about the “He” of Genesis 3:15 and not “flying saucers”, you would expect the vision of Ezekiel to provide us some insight into the coming of Christ Messiah.

And, that is exactly what we find.

Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it.

Ezekiel 10:23

In the vision, Ezekiel sees the Cherubim and wheels go to the City of Jerusalem and then to the Temple.

(Remember, Ezekiel is in Babylon looking for the Children of Israel to return to Israel as promised by GOD to Jeremiah...but for what purpose? To go back into sin as before, to simply be the “children of Israel”...no, there is a purpose and GOD provides an explanation in His vision.)

He then sees the Cherubim rise from the Temple, travel to a mountain top “east” of the Temple.

Do you see the connection?

THE MOUNTAIN ABOVE THE TEMPLE

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is quite high. That is why in the Bible you will always read of going “up” to Jerusalem even when you are going south. The Temple mount is approximately 2,441 feet high.

The only higher peak in Jerusalem is 2,549 feet (Incidentally, I have always wondered that this peak is 777 meters)

The peak I am speaking of is called, GOLGOTHA.

What Ezekiel sees some 500 years before the event, is the Glory of the Lord leaving the Temple, going “up” in the direction of a higher mountain peak, then hovering above this peak which will later be named, Golgotha.

THE CHERUBIM, THEIR INFINITE WHEELS AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD HOVER ABOVE GOLGOTHA!

The vision given by GOD is a perfect picture of Christ as he is sacrificed for our salvation.

The question raised by Ezekiel is in essence, “GOD, what is to become of Israel? We have been exiled because of our sin against you. What about the promise you gave to Abraham? What is to come of us?”

The answer given by God is in essence, “I will not desert you. I am your Father and I love you. But, salvation promised to Abraham, and which I will keep for the sake of Abraham, can not come through attempts by man or even a Temple once dedicated to me.

It can only come through My sacrifice. My Sacrifice of My “HE” OF GENESIS 3:15 at the same place where Father Abraham sacrificed his only son Isaac because of his faith in the resurrection from the dead.

THE PLACE WHERE ABRAHAM SACRIFICED ISAAC

That's right. This is the place Abraham made the ultimate sacrifice and it is through Abraham's sacrifice Ezekiel and all of the children of Israel are given this special mission to usher in the "He" of Genesis 3:15.

500 years later, Christ follows the same route seen by Ezekiel to the very same spot where Abraham made his sacrifice and GOD Himself would later provide the ultimate sacrifice.

Ezekiel sees the route of our Lord as he moves out of the temple, down across the Kidron Valley, up the side of the Mount of Olives, and into the Garden of Gethsemane.

He then sees the spot where the "He" of Genesis 3:15 (the One sitting on the throne of GOD) ascends into glory fulfilling the Promise of salvation and restoration made to Abraham and, all his descendents both Jew and Gentile.

THE RIVER OF LIFE AND NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. As I went back, I saw upon the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish; for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes."

Ezekiel 47:1-9

THE RIVER OF LIFE (CHAPTER 47)

The book of Ezekiel begins to close with this wonderful passage in chapter 47 that describes the prophet's vision of the throne of GOD.

Underneath the throne of GOD comes the river of GOD, sweeping through the Temple and out the eastern side then, down across the land and into "the Arabah" to heal its polluted waters.

The Arabah

The name Arabah in Hebrew specifically applies to the deep valley of the Jordan also called, the Ghor of the Arabs. The word is significant because it combines all of the following; a wilderness, plains, waste land, uncultivated country and, the desert of the peninsula of Arabia the most terrible of all deserts with which the Israelites were familiar. (see Numbers 21:20)

It is almost impossible to not see a connection to the Islamic nations listed in the Gog, Magog (Chapter 38) passages along with this amazing passage where the living waters of GOD flow from the Temple in Jerusalem out to the regions of the Arabs to finally restore the pollution brought about by their error to its original beauty (Eden).

The covenant story of Jacob and Ishmael continues even today.

Then he [the angel] brought me back to the door of the temple; and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the

altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside of the outer gate, that faces toward the east; and the water was coming out on the south side.

Going on eastward with a line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the loins. Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?"

Ezekiel 47

John's Revelation and the River of Life

John sees the same river, in Revelation. "**Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God...through the middle of the street of the city...**" (Rev. 22:1, 2).

The river of life in both Ezekiel and the Revelation of John is the salvation brought through the "He" of Genesis 3:15 and ultimately through the Church accepting our mission.

As Christians we read both the prophets and the end of the book (the Book of Revelation) and, know without doubt this evil we see in our generation will be won in our favor.

The river of life will one day refresh the lands of Arabia.