

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel

Message 23

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Ezekiel's Vision by Pat Marvenko Smith

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Ezekiel
Message Three
THE CHARIOT & GOD
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THE LIVING CREATURES & THE SHEKINAH GLORY

Ezekiel 1:15-28

¹⁵Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces thereof. ¹⁶The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto a beryl: and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel. ¹⁷When they went, they went in their four directions: they turned not when they went. ¹⁸As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and they four had their rims full of eyes round about. ¹⁹And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. ²⁰Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went; thither was the spirit to go: and the wheels were lifted up beside them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. ²¹When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

²²And over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of a firmament, like the terrible crystal to look upon, stretched forth over their heads above. ²³And 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. ²⁴And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings. ²⁵And there was a voice above the firmament that was over their heads: when they stood, they let down their wings.

²⁶And 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 a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above. ²⁷And I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. ²⁸As 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 Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake (ASV, 1901).

THE CHARIOT

Ezekiel 1:15

¹⁵Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces thereof (ASV 1901).

Ezekiel next sees the Cherubim as having mobility with a set of wheels (Hebrew *opan*; a celestial being's name). Even though this vision was of a Heavenly scene the wheels of the Cherubim (living creatures) extend to the earth indicating God's sovereignty over the earth. He saw four wheels, one for each set of faces the four Cherubim have. The wheels are said to be beside the Cherubim. The wheels Ezekiel saw were the lowest part of the chariot-throne and sat on the ground below the cherubim. We get imagery of the Cherubim being attached to the wheels as if they are the wagon or platform of the wheels themselves completing the vehicle for which God will be transported or supported from one location to another. The Mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant was made of gold after a pattern of the chariot of the Cherubim, which spread out its wings over the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. This description was conveyed to David from God.

I Chronicles 28:18-19

¹⁸and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot, even the cherubim, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. ¹⁹All this, said David, have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of Jehovah, even all the works of this pattern (ASV, 1901).

The prophet Daniel was allowed to see a vision of a similar nature. He saw the glory of God on His Throne and the wheels of the Cherubim's chariot of fire.

Daniel 7:9-10

⁹I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. ¹⁰A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened (ASV, 1901).

Ezekiel 1:16

¹⁶The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto a beryl: and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel (ASV, 1901).

Ezekiel begins to describe the wheels of the chariot and he first says it had a color of beryl (Hebrew *tarsheesh*). Its color was probably a green or turquoise as the name Tarshish, the region that produced it suggests. This is a divine color since it was on the fourth row of the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:20). The wheels sparkled with the color. Each of the four wheels had another wheel within itself at a right angle. It had the appearance of a

gyroscope. This device is a spinning wheel consisting of another wheel within it that spins rapidly like a child's top. The spinning motion keeps the stability evenly fixed regardless of the direction in which it moves. The gyroscope is an accurate navigational instrument and an effective stabilizing device in ships and airplanes. The chariot having a wheel inside a wheel allows it to immediately change direction. This high level of mobility symbolizes the omnipresence of God. This is a crude comparison but helpful to try and describe God's great motion as He is moved by the Cherubim in their chariot.

Ezekiel 1:17-18

¹⁷When they went, they went in their four directions: they turned not when they went. ¹⁸As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and they four had their rims full of eyes round about (ASV, 1901).

The sparkling wheels were to Ezekiel the appearance of precious stones which could roll in four directions without turning themselves. It is as if the wheel inside a wheel produces a Heavenly freedom of movement apart from the constraints of the physics of time and space in the Universe. They can be said to "hover" as opposed to simply move. Ezekiel describes the wheels as rims and says they were *high and dreadful* (Hebrew *yerah*). His description is one of witnessing an awesome sight, not frightening but astounding. He saw and conveyed the wheels as large while awesome. His vision is further compounded by the appearance of eyes all around the rims of the wheels. These are symbolic of divine omniscience in the creation at all levels and all times (II Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 16:3; Zechariah 3:9, 4:10; Revelation 4:6). They demonstrate complete, perfect divine intellect. God knows everything, including our thoughts.

Ezekiel 1:19-21

¹⁹And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. ²⁰Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went; thither was the spirit to go: and the wheels were lifted up beside them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. ²¹When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels (ASV, 1901).

The Cherubim clearly moved in concert with the chariot and its wheels also in what so ever direction it moved. Since they were seen through the vision as being on the earth as well as in Heaven now their direction of movement was being lifted up from the earth toward Heaven. The directions for the movement are from the Spirit of God Himself. The Hebrew word *ruach* (wind) is used by Ezekiel to describe the Spirit of God. So the will of the movement of the Cherubim and their chariot was given over entirely to the Spirit of God Who directed them. Ezekiel begins in verse 20 to describe the four Cherubim as one by specifying them as singular. He says that *the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels*. In some way the Spirit of God was in the wheels, directing the motion of the Cherubim through the wheels of the chariot but all three were interconnected or bound up together as they moved from position to position. In this instance the activity Ezekiel sees is the single unit of God's Spirit, the Cherubim and the wheels of the chariot moving in concert up from the earth. This interconnectedness is important for us to grasp since it is repeated in verse 21. The only difference between the two verses is that verse 20 describes

the Spirit's designation of direction and verse 22 is affirming this with the added statement, "When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood."

Ezekiel 1:22-24

²²And over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of a firmament, like the terrible crystal to look upon, stretched forth over their heads above. ²³And 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 ²⁴And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings ²⁵And there was a voice above the firmament that was over their heads: when they stood, they let down their wings (ASV, 1901).

The Cherubim had their wings outstretched to rise above their heads. The imagery let us see the adoration the Cherubim have for the almighty God. The wings extended into a firmament or space (Hebrew *rakeeah*). This space had the appearance of crystal. This Hebrew word *rakeeah* means to spread out or stretch. Some other places in Scripture where this same expression is used are:

1. Job 9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens.
2. Psalm 104:2 The heavens are stretched out like a tent curtain.
3. Isaiah 40: 22 God stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.
4. Jeremiah 10: 12 The Lord has stretched out the heavens.
5. Zechariah 12:1 God stretched out the heavens.

These usages of the Hebrew word for stretch (*rakeeah*) are not quaint poetic hyperbole or exaggerations. They mean to express the properties of the heavens that we cannot see or fully understand. Space is not an empty vacuum. We have difficulty defining space and understanding the concept of the property of space. Scripture gives us some insight as to some of its properties.

1. Space can be torn (Isaiah 64: 1);
2. It can be worn out like a garment (Psalm 102: 25),
3. It can be shaken (Hebrews 12:26; Haggai 2:6; Isaiah 13:13).
4. It can be burnt up (II Peter 3:12).
5. It can be split apart like a scroll (Revelation 6:14);
6. It can be rolled up like a mantle (Hebrews 1:12) or scroll (Isaiah 34: 4).

The shining brilliance of the expanse above the Cherubim that Ezekiel saw reminded him of sparkling crystals in the light of the sun. When the Apostle John was spiritized on the Isle of Patmos to see into the Throne Room of God he said the expanse around God's throne is "clear as crystal" (Revelation 4:6). As the Cherubim moved their wings they created a sound that Ezekiel likened to a great waterfall with its deafening sound so loud that it overpowered any other sounds. As the creature moved, Ezekiel also hears the second sound "like the voice of the Almighty," which resembles thunder or the movement of ancient armed forces (host). These sounds only occurred as the Cherubim were in

motion. Clearly their wings enabled them to propel themselves as the motion stopped when their wings stopped moving.

THE THRONE OF GOD

Ezekiel 1:26

²⁶And 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 a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above (ASV, 1901).

As the Cherubim came to a stop Ezekiel noticed another sound. It was a voice from the firmament over the heads and upstretched wings of the Cherubim. This is the voice of God on His Throne in heaven but connected to the earth in divine sovereignty. He had the appearance of a man. Daniel also saw and commented on God also having the appearance of a man (Daniel 7:9). Since humans were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), this appears to be the form of God. That is, He has a semblance of a human being, which are His created creatures. In the incarnation when God stepped out of Heaven and entered a human body it was corruption He took on in similar form but for the purpose of atonement and Heavenly cleansing. In the Revelation He has a dual appearance as God on the Throne and the Lamb. The Lamb is the Lord Jesus and is distinct from God the Father. In this vision it appears that the two characteristics of Spirit and human form are combined. The preincarnate visions of the Lord given to Ezekiel and Daniel allowed them only to see the human like characteristic of God. It was only given to them and was not given to Moses.

The Throne itself is the color blue as a sapphire, which appears to resemble the lapis lazuli stone. This vision is similar to that which was witnessed by Moses and the seventy elders.

Exodus 24:10

¹⁰and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness (ASV, 1901).

Ezekiel 1:27

²⁷And I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him (ASV, 1901).

Focusing his entire attention on the Lord of all creation Ezekiel sees again the Hebrew text designating the color of the fire and the metal like object as *chashmal*. The chashmal seems to be divided at the waist of God on His Throne. Fire seems to begin at the waist and extend upward and downward in both directions simultaneously. The brightness he saw extended all around Him. All Ezekiel could do was to convey the magnificence of the color and burning brilliance. Daniel again had a similar vision and experience.

Daniel 10:5-6

⁵I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz: ⁶his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like unto burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude (ASV, 1901).

The apostle John had a similar vision. The similarity of these visions lets us know the general human like appearance of God and certainly when He entered the world as the Lord Jesus. John's vision was of the risen Lord in His glorified state.

Revelation 1:13-15

¹³ and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁴ His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵ and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters (KJV).

Ezekiel 1:28

²⁸As 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 Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake (ASV, 1901).

As Ezekiel saw the brilliance of the fire and brightness of the glory of the Lord he only saw the shape or form of a man in its midst. Surrounding the Throne was a brilliance that appeared to be a rainbow. Ezekiel was overcome with what he saw and immediately sensed the need to prostrate himself in front of Him in worship. The opening vision of Ezekiel's ministry affirmed three significant truths about God that are summarized here.

1. The vision was a reaffirmation of the nature of God as holy, powerful, and majestic.
2. The rainbow was a reminder of God's promise-making and promise-keeping character (Genesis 9:13, 16). It was a reminder of hope that God could and would help humanity.
3. It was an assurance that nothing, including geographic location, separated one from God (Romans 8:38-39).

NEXT MESSAGE: EZEKIEL MOVEMENT & SHEKINAH GLORY

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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