

House of Wisdom

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Ezekiel - Part I - First Vision

Introduction: Ezekiel 1:1-3: *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 2. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, 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.* The Prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah the prophet, was part of the second deportment of Israelites to Babylon, and called to minister to those in Babylon. At age 30, when a man normally began his work as a priest (Num 4:23), the Lord gave him his first vision. He was called to speak God's words to a rebellious nation (Eze 2:3), *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious* (Eze 2:7). Consider Ezekiel as a type of our calling to serve God and to spread the gospel. (Cp Lk 3:21-23 - Jesus; three 10s - dedicated to hearing and obeying the voice of God)

The location God chose to give Ezekiel his first vision was appropriate for the condition of the leaders of Judah, as well as the church today. The Hebrew root of *Chebar* means to twist together, and a river is a symbol for a stream of thought (Pr 18:4). We all essentially begin our spiritual journey in the same spiritual river, with two things that are twisted together and cause us to be bound in sin: 1) We are led astray by other's and our own interpretation of the Bible; and 2) we are misled by our experiences, all because we deceived ourselves with our belief about God. Notice this figure: Proverbs 5:22: *His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.* Now, add a third strand to the cord - the conscience, through which the Spirit of God speaks, and if we listen, we can correctly interpret the Bible and our experiences, whether they are from God or not, and *a three-fold cord is not easily broken* (Eccl 4:12). Think of yourself joined to the Father and Son, and *The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked* (Ps 129:4). Isaiah 33:20: *Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken.* (RSV) It is the 144,000 who first dwell in Zion - *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads.* (Rev 14:1) The visions God gave Ezekiel have a dual application, and applying not only to literal Israel, but also to spiritual Israel, the church of the last generation. Captivity in Babylon represents man's confusion (cf Gen 11:7) about God, our twisted, crooked, thinking, and it is a symbol of the land between our ears, out of which all need to be delivered.

Whirlwind: Ezekiel 1:4: *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 color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.* North is the direction of Babylon (Jer 4:6-7; Eze 26:7). A "great cloud," or a large group of people (Eze 38:16; 2 Pet 2:17) are coming like a "whirlwind" out of Babylon. The Jews experienced this 70 years later. However, picture it as happening to yourself now, as your confusion about God is being straightened out, and you become excited and begin to share the truth God has shown you. This is how it is in the last generation.

The Hebrew word for "infolding" is *laqach*, Strong's #3947. The basic meaning is "to take hold with the hand," but it has a wide variety of applications. In Exodus 9:24 it is rendered "flashing" in the Hebrew Interlinear, as fire flashing amidst the hail. Clouds carry lightning, which is a symbol for flashes of truth. (consider fire in verse 13 & Jer 20:9) Fire from God is not literal, but spiritual truth that will cause some to hear, and others to forbear

(Eze 2:7). Notice how Isaiah describes the experience in 42:23-25: 23. *Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come?* 24. *Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.* 25. *Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.* God, with the fire of His word, is looking to destroy out of His people, the sin in their lives, and straighten out the crooked thinking.

There is another phrase to consider: *out of the midst thereof as the color of amber* - Out of the midst of the cloud was seen the color of amber, indicative of the people having the Spirit of Christ. Ezekiel 1:26-28: 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.* 27. *And I saw as the color 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.* 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.* When these verses are compared to Revelation 4:1-5, it becomes clear that these people are responding to the voice of Christ (Eze 1:25; Rev 4:1), who is bringing them to a another level of the understanding of our heavenly Father, the one sitting on the throne. Also, consider Ezekiel as a type of a person who has come into a fuller, more vivid understanding of Jesus Christ, and listens to his conscience on a more regular basis.

Living Creatures: Ezekiel 1:5: *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.* Out of a great multitude (Rev 7:9), a cloud of people, came the likeness of four living creatures, similar to what John saw (Rev 4:6), but with some differences, addressed below. In the last generation there will be a great multitude of people (Rev 7:9) serving God to the best of their knowledge. Out of these will come forth a smaller group called the 144,000 who have advanced in their spiritual understanding, and who will be used by God to spread the truth in a mighty way. Individuals are not saved by how much they know, but by being faithful to what they believe so that God can correct them.

Ezekiel 1:6-9: 6. *And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.* 7. *And their feet were straight feet (no more crooked thinking); and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot (servant): and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass (perfected by suffering).* 8. *And they had the hands of a man (still carry man's works) under their wings (symbol for the heart) on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.* 9. *Their wings (hearts) were joined one to another (in truth); they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward (cannot be moved away from truth - Col 1:23). Four is a symbol for earthly. This group is singled out for their diligence in seeking God's understanding, as they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went (verse 12).*

Ezekiel 1:10-11: 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.* 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.* The four faces are the characteristics of Christ - man, king, servant and divine.

Differences: Revelation 1:7-8: 7. *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.* 8. *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy,*

Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. There are at least three differences between the two accounts: 1) the order listed; 2) number of wings & 3) difference in the eagles.

1. Order listed - In Ezekiel: man, lion, ox, eagle; In Revelation: lion, calf, man, flying eagle.
2. Wings - In Ezekiel: four wings; In Revelation: six wings.
3. Eagles - In Ezekiel: not flying; In Revelation: the eagle is flying.

In Ezekiel, with two wings they were joined to one another; and with two wings they covered their bodies (works). The wings were stretched toward heaven, indicating that they were not flying, i.e. earthly in their thinking, but with hearts toward God. To understand what the living beings are doing with their wings in Revelation, we need to consider their experience further down the spiritual path. Isaiah 6:2: *Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.* Past studies on Isaiah 6 and Revelation 10 explained that these chapters describe the antitypical Day of Atonement, when the 144,000 become high priests, and they have come to stand on Mount Zion, having the Lamb's Father's name (God's character) in their foreheads (Rev 14:1). They are dead to self (wings over face), their way of thinking is replaced with God's (wings cover feet). They continually dwell in a spiritual oneness with the Father and Son, having partaken of the divine nature (flying eagle; cf 2 Pet 1:4).

In Ezekiel, other details are revealed about the development of the 144,000 (represented by living creatures), and some different details of their experiences. In this vision, they are to the point of listening to the voice of the Spirit in their conscience and constantly seeking truth. They are aware and begin to change their outward works (wings cover bodies), but do not yet know how to inactivate the sin nature so that their thoughts are pure. Therefore, four wings indicate an earthly heart, whereas, six wings indicate a spiritual heart, and coming into the stature and fulness of Jesus Christ (Eph 4:13), who is in the fulness of the Father (Eph 3:19; Col 2:9). It is indicative of the sixth day of creation and being made in the image of God. Whereas Ezekiel was sent to a rebellious church in his day (Eze 2:1-5), so the 144,000 will be sent to a rebellious church in the last generation (Rev 8:8-13). *Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.* (Jer 23:19-20)

Some Conclusions: Ezekiel is told to do several things in chapters two through six, to elevate the thinking from earthly to heavenly. Some respond and many do not. Ezekiel 7:2-3, 14-16: 2. *...thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land.* 3. *Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations....* 14. *They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goes to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.* 15. *The sword (Bible - 1st cord) is without, and the pestilence and the famine (2nd cord) within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.* 16. *But they that escape of them shall escape (added 3rd cord), and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.*

Twice Christ's voice is like a trumpet. The first call is to see your experience in the seven churches (Rev 1:10), and second call is to ascend into (Rev 4:1) a heavenly understanding so that Christ can show you the Father, and open the book (of self) sealed with seven seals (Rev 5:5). So, now is the time to push forward, and seek God's will for your life. *...knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* (Rom 13:11) Amen!