

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

**EZEKIEL**

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**Ezek. 1:1** 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.

**Ezek. 1:2** In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

Note: Ezekiel prophesied from 593-571 BC.

My first thought upon reading these verses was that Ezekiel had been in captivity for 30 years; after all, how many 30 year olds are counting their birthday by the month and day. After reading the second verse, however, the date is clarified by stating that it is the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, and he was taken in the second deportation in 597 BC along with Ezekiel. So it seems more likely that this would be a reference to Ezekiel's age. Since Ezekiel was a priest, age 30 would hold special significance to him because that is the age at which one was allowed to assume the functions associated with that office (mentioned several times in Numbers 4). Since he was in captivity, he was not getting the opportunity to serve in the temple, and since that captivity was to last for 70 years (according to the prophet Jeremiah), he would never get to serve in the temple because you were only allowed to serve from ages 30-50. This would be very disappointing to Ezekiel and would explain why he was so aware of the passage of each day.

**Jer. 25:11** And this whole land shall be a desolation, *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

**Jer. 25:12** And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

**Jer. 29:10** For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

On the fifth day of that fourth month Ezekiel was by the river of Chebar with some of the other captives. Maybe this was the location of one of the Jewish settlements in Babylon.

Focht notes that this is five years before the temple in Jerusalem is destroyed.

**Ezek. 1:3** 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.

Point is made that Ezekiel was a priest, the son of Buzi. Buzi gave his son a name with a promise; it means "God will strengthen." "The *hand* of the Lord" is a reference to God's power, and I think it would be safe to make a connection with the Holy Spirit in the context, since it is the Spirit through Whom God empowers His people. It would seem that the Lord is saying that He would empower Ezekiel to deliver the message he was receiving.

**Ezek. 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 colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Not only is Ezekiel given a message, he is evidently given a vision—“And I looked.” A *whirlwind* is a reference to a big storm, a hurricane. The whirlwind is coming from the north (often the direction from which God sent judgment). The vision is of a great cloud that makes me think of a tornado more than a hurricane. The word *amber* included a reference to bronze/brass. The description of this oncoming storm screams of judgment—the direction from which the cloud is coming, the fact that it is a big storm, the fire, the color.

**Ezek. 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.**

The word *likeness* alerts us to the fact that Ezekiel is trying to describe something unfamiliar in terms that can be understood. He sees four living creatures formed similar to a man.

**Ezek. 1:6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.**

**Ezek. 1:7 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.**

Each creature has four faces and four wings. Their legs were supported by feet that were more like those of a calf and were the color of shiny polished brass.

**Ezek. 1:8 And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.**

They had human hands under their wings. I don't know—I get a picture of creatures on two hoofed legs with rectangularly proportioned bodies and a head with four faces and no hair. Were there eight hands, four hands or two?

**Ezek. 1:9 Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.**

The wings of these creatures are connected. Since they are referenced as individual creatures, I am assuming this is referencing the four wings on each creature. It would seem that no matter in which direction they moved, they would be moving forward since they “face” every direction.

**Ezek. 1:10 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.**

Now we learn that the appearance of each face is different—one is human, one is like a lion (designated right), one is like an ox (designated left), and one is like an eagle. I am assuming that right and left are from the perspective of the human face that is mentioned first. This certainly differs from the images that we normally see relating to the temple and the ark of the covenant.

At least now I can begin to make some connections. I have long been taught how the gospels all present Jesus in a different perspective, and these faces tie in with those perspectives. In Matthew Jesus is presented as King of the Jews, the lion of Judah. In Mark He is presented as the servant, i.e. the ox. In Luke He is presented as a man. In John He is presented as the Son of God, as represented by the eagle.

Guzik quoting the Midrash: "Perhaps it is safest to say that the four faces are important because they represent all of animate creation, in its utmost excellence. The lion is the mightiest of wild animals, the ox strongest of domesticated animals, the eagle king of all birds, and man is highest of all creation. "Man is exalted among creatures; the eagle is exalted among birds; the ox is exalted domestic animals; the lion is exalted among wild beasts; and all of them have received dominion, and greatness has been given them, yet they are stationed below the chariot of the Holy One." (*Midrash R. Shemoth*, cited in Feinberg)

I think that more important than being able to make an exact picture from Ezekiel's description is to understand that Ezekiel is envisioning a messenger from God.

**Ezek. 1:11** 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.

**Ezek. 1:12** And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

It would seem that two wings of each creature were used in movement or to connect them, and two wings of each creature covered their bodies. Their movement was governed by "the spirit," singular.

Again, these are created beings, as are we, and it doesn't surprise me that God would choose to give them direction through His Spirit just as He does us (those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior). I think the Holy Spirit is the life force of heaven, replacing the blood, the life source of our corruptible body on earth.

*1 Corinthians 15:50* "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

**Ezek. 1:13** 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. Evidently, these creatures appeared to glow with flashing brightness that looked like bolts of lightning.

**Ezek. 1:14** And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The movement of the creatures was just as quick as lightning.

**Ezek. 1:15** Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

After getting used to the dominance of the brightness and uniqueness of these creatures, Ezekiel begins to see more details. He sees a wheel on the earth. The wheel is beside or near or joined to (all choices from the Hebrew) the creatures.

**Ezek. 1:16** 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.

This verse implies that there is a wheel associated with each creature. The *work* or action of the wheel produced a color that the prophet called *beryl*, which the Hebrew

indicates might be similar to topaz (yellowish or golden). The four wheels were alike. This description makes me think the wheels are interconnected and functioning as one unit.

**Ezek. 1:17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: *and they turned not when they went.***

They didn't have to turn since they had eyes facing every direction. I think, however, that the significant point in this verse is that they were unified in action and direction.

**Ezek. 1:18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings *were full of eyes round about them four.***

The Hebrew for *high* can be a reference to grandeur as well as height. The Hebrew for *dreadful* indicates that they instilled a spirit of fear or reverence. The *rings* or rims of the four wheels were full of eyes. Since all of creation is a declaration of God in some way, these wheels full of eyes definitely remind us of God's omniscience.

**Ezek. 1:19 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.**

This verse indicates that the living creatures and wheels were unified in their movement, but still leaves room to picture them as distinct from one another. It seems that movement was initiated by the living creatures.

**Ezek. 1:20 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.***

**Ezek. 1:21 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.***

The movement of the living creatures, however, was directed by the Spirit. These verses makes me think that the wheels are joined to the living creatures, since they are identified as possessing the spirit of the creatures. Emphasis is again given to the fact that they move in unison.

Unity of spirit is an important characteristic for those who claim faith in God. It is unity of spirit in the body of believers that is supposed to prove to unbelievers that Jesus was sent by God in love to redeem them.

**John 17:21** That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

**John 17:22** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

**John 17:23** I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

I think one of Satan's greatest victories has been his ability to cause division within the body of believers.

**Ezek. 1:22 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.***

Ezekiel now begins to describe the appearance of the sky over the creatures. The Hebrew for “terrible crystal” indicates an icy color that again instills fear and reverence. This made me think of a verse in Revelation.

**Rev. 4:6** And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal:

**Ezek. 1:23** 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.

Although I can't get a confident picture in my mind's eye, I think there is an emphasis on being properly clothed or covered.

**Ezek. 1:24** 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.

Now Ezekiel begins to describe sounds associated with his vision. The wings of the creatures made a sound similar to rushing waters or like a great group of people talking. I think he compared it to the voice of God because he was student of scripture.

**Psa. 93:4** The LORD on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.

I think the main point is that the noise was loud and powerful with authority.

**Ezek. 1:25** And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.

When the creatures stopped moving and got still, Ezekiel hears the voice coming from the sky over them.

**Ezek. 1:26** 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.

In the sky above the creatures Ezekiel sees something that he equates with a covered throne that looks like it is made of sapphire. Seated on the throne is a figure that looks like a man—the preincarnate Jesus.

Guzik quoting Wright: “The description suggests that Ezekiel did not see a face and a body that he could have drawn, but rather a fiery brightness that had a human shape and that he knew to be living and personal.”

**Ezek. 1:27** 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.

The throne and its occupant are surrounded with a brilliance like flaming polished brass.

This verse and verse 25 together brought to mind John's vision of the Lord.

**Rev. 1:15** And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

**Ezek. 1:28** 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.

Ezekiel also sees this throne encircled by a rainbow. Ezekiel realizes that this is a vision of the glory of YHWH, and he immediately falls on his face in worship and reverence. Then he hears the occupant of the throne speak.

I liked Wiersbe's observation: "Noah saw the rainbow after the storm, the Apostle John saw it before the storm, but Ezekiel saw it over the storm and in control of the storm.

In my study of prophecy to this point, I have come across other passages that have descriptions of God's throne similar to this passage. Revelation 4 comes to mind first.

**Rev. 4:2** And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.

**Rev. 4:3** And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

**Rev. 4:6** And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were* four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

**Rev. 4:7** 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.

Another is in Isaiah.

**Is. 6:1** In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

**Is. 6:2** Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

**Is. 6:3** And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

**Is. 6:4** And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

**Is. 6:5** Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Although there are differences in Isaiah's seraphim and Ezekiel's cherubim, both visions see the Lord on a throne that is high and lifted up surrounded by winged creatures. Both visions humble the prophet. (10/12) Both Ezekiel and John make mention of the rainbow around the throne.

Ezekiel later identifies these creatures as cherubim in chapter 10.

**Ezek. 10:15** And the cherubims were lifted up. This *is* the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

This is especially interesting to me since there were cherubim at each end of the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant. It would seem that Ezekiel, as a priest, would identify them as cherubim from the first. I would imagine, as I expect will be true of everything else associated with heaven, that everything associated with the presence of God will be far beyond our expectations even when based on patterns given by God. Things here are described as but shadows of the real thing.

**Heb. 8:1** Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

**Heb. 8:2** A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

**Heb. 8:3** For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

**Heb. 8:4** For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

**Heb. 8:5** **Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.