

## INTRUDUCTORY MATTERS

- Due to the size and the nature of the content, we will be studying Ezekiel “oracle by oracle” rather than “verse by verse.”
  - Verse by verse is necessary when studying doctrinal content.
  - Ezekiel is historical and prophetic content. Our goal is to understand the setting, the message, and the meaning.
- We will use the outline divisions of EW Bullinger from *The Companion Bible*, except where I see a compelling reason to divide elsewhere.
  - For Bullinger, the meaning of the passage could not be understood without the structure of the passage.
  - Bullinger was a master at spotting patterns in scripture.

## EZEKIEL 1:1-12:28 | THE DESOLATION

## EZEKIEL 1:1–3:27 | FIRST VISION (BY CHEBAR)

## EZEKIEL 1:1-28 | THE CHERUBIM

- Verses 1-3: Visions of God
  - The book begins with a conjunction, which is unexpected for the first word of a book. The conjunction is often translated “and”.
    - This tells us that Ezekiel recognized that the prophecies fit in a “prophetic chain” to reveal the whole.
    - Notice that Jeremiah had sent a letter **to the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests...** (Jer. 29:1, the letter is Jer. 29:1-32). Since Ezekiel was a priest in captivity (v. 3) he had certainly seen this letter.
    - It seems that Ezekiel knows that he picks up where Jeremiah left off.
  - Verse one references **the thirtieth year**, but the text isn’t clear as to the reference.
    - The text does tell us that the thirtieth year was also **the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity**. This is the same name as Jeconiah and Coniah. His captivity is mentioned in 2 Kings 25:1-21.
    - It was 25 years prior to Jehoiachin’s captivity that the Book of the Law was discovered by Josiah and the Passover reinstated, so this could very well be the reference point.
  - Ezekiel had been taken captive in one of the earlier invasions of Nebuchadnezzar, even before Jehoiachin (who was a puppet king). He was a priest. At the time of this oracle, he **was in the land of the Chaldeans** and saw the vision **by the river Chebar**.
- Verse 4: The Cloud
  - Ezekiel begins to see the vision from **a whirlwind**. This was a storm that was **a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself**. This “storm” is also seen at the throne of God in Revelation 4:5.
  - Notice that the storm **came out of the north**. There are a number of Biblical references that put the throne of God to the north, including Job 26:7, Isaiah 14:12-14 (especially 13), and Psalm 75:6.
- Verses 5-21: The Living Creatures
  - From the midst of the vision comes an extended description of **four living creatures**, only described here and (arguably) Revelation 4:6-9.
  - These are (presumably) the Cherubim, who are mentioned by name (though not described) in Genesis 3:24 and seen on the mercy seat. For a full study of the Cherubim, see Appendix 41 of *The Companion Bible*.

- The Cherubim **had the likeness of a man** (that is, the shape/form of a man), yet **had four faces** and **four wings** (v. 6).
- They had **straight feet** (that is, unjointed, thus not used for walking). When they move, they fly, always **straight forward** (v. 9, 12), by virtue of the four sides each being a “front.”
- The faces of the Cherubim represent the great kingdoms of creation.
  - Man, the chief of all creation.
  - Lion, the chief of the wild.
  - Ox, the chief of the domesticated animals.
  - Eagle, the chief of birds.
- The collective appearance had a light in the midst, **like the appearance of lamps**. This appearance **went up and down among the living creatures** and brought forth brightness and lightening (v. 13). The creatures seem to be in constant motion (v. 14).
- It appears that each creature had a **wheel** that was **as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel** (vv. 15-16).
  - That is, like the creatures, the wheel did not need to turn, but could always go straight (v. 17).
  - The wheels (on wheel for each creature) were awesome in height and were **full of eyes** (v. 18).
- The entire scene is one of the *mobile throne* of God, who comes down to Babylon to give Ezekiel this vision.
- Verse 22: The Firmament
  - The **firmament** is literally an “expanse,” or, even more, a solid surface (see Strong’s Hebrew #7549).
  - Whether a literal solid surface or figurative, it serves to hold and divide. Compare Genesis 1:6.
  - The purpose of this firmament was to serve as a platform upon which the throne of God would rest.
  - This platform was **as the colour of the terrible crystal**. This sounds bad to the modern American ear, but is describing an “awesome” crystal that is **stretched forth over their heads**. This makes the **sea of glass like unto crystal** (Rev. 4:6) in the throne room to be present when God “travels.”
- Verses 23-28a: The Living Creatures
  - Neither the wings nor the hands held up the firmament. Their wings were **straight**, covering their bodies (which are never seen, save the hands and the feet). Note that [Ezekiel 1:11](#) says that their wings are **stretched upward** and verse 24 says their wings are covering each side of the creature. The Young’s Literal Translation says that the wings are “separate from above” rather than “stretched upward” (v. 11). The KJV also has a footnote to this effect. However, the wings do move, as noted in verse 24. When moving, the **noise of their wings** was like a **voice** that is **as the voice of the Almighty** (v. 24). It is the **voice of speech**, yet not utterable, articulate speech that can be discerned.
  - When a **voice from the firmament** spoke they seem to stand at attention (v. 25).
  - Above the firmament there was **the likeness of a throne** in great beauty, and upon the throne was **the likeness as the appearance of a man**. Around this Man was the bright **appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain**. What is this? We are told clearly it is **the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord**.
- Verse 28b: The Prostration of Ezekiel
  - The vision has not yet been announced (as it will be beginning in chapter 2), but the Lord has come down to share the vision. Simply the appearance of the Lord