

The Vision of God's Glory

1. Ezekiel's Calling and the Captives' Context (Ezekiel 1:1–3)

“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.”
(Ezekiel 1:1, NKJV)

Ezekiel was a priest turned prophet, called by God in one of the darkest hours of Israel's history. He was thirty years old—the age when a priest would normally begin ministry in the temple—but instead of serving in Jerusalem, he was serving in Babylon, among the exiles by the River Chebar. His surroundings were not holy ground but foreign soil; yet it was there that *the heavens opened*.

God met Ezekiel not in the temple, but in captivity. This reminds us that God's presence is not confined to a location. His glory is not restricted to Jerusalem's temple or to any building. Even in exile—when all seemed lost—God revealed Himself.

Practical Application:

God often speaks most clearly in our lowest places. When life feels like exile—when dreams are shattered, or the familiar is stripped away—those may be the very moments when “the heavens open” and we gain a new vision of Him. Our circumstances may change, but His presence does not.

Challenge for Believers:

Are you open to hearing from God even when you're not where you thought you'd be? Ezekiel could have mourned the loss of his priestly ministry, but he became a prophet instead. God's calling can meet you right where you are, if you will listen.

2. The Hand of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:3)

“The word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.” (Ezekiel 1:3, NKJV)

The phrase *“the hand of the Lord was upon him”* appears repeatedly throughout Ezekiel. It speaks of divine empowerment, a supernatural awareness of God's presence and purpose. This was not an abstract revelation; it was an overwhelming encounter that seized Ezekiel's attention and shaped the rest of his life.

Practical Application:

When God places His hand on your life, you cannot remain neutral. His touch will stir you, guide you, and at times, unsettle you. The same hand that comforts also commissions.

3. The Whirlwind and the Glory (Ezekiel 1:4–14)

“Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.” (Ezekiel 1:4, NKJV)

From the north—a direction often symbolizing divine majesty and judgment—came a *whirlwind*, a cloud, and fire enfolding itself. These elements consistently represent God’s power and presence throughout Scripture (Exodus 19:16–18; Psalm 18:9–13). The fire that enfolds itself is symbolic of God’s consuming holiness—self-sustaining, uncreated, eternal.

In the midst of the fire appeared four living creatures—angelic beings later identified as *cherubim* (Ezekiel 10:15). They each had four faces (man, lion, ox, eagle) representing intelligence, strength, service, and swiftness—the complete perfection of created life in service to the Creator.

Their movement was direct, unhesitating, and obedient to the Spirit. Their appearance was like “burning coals of fire” (Ezekiel 1:13)—radiant, alive, and pure. These creatures symbolize the harmony and purpose of heaven. Everything in God’s presence moves under the impulse of His Spirit, not human will.

Practical Application:

In God’s order, there is no confusion. Every movement in heaven is Spirit-directed. The same should be true of God’s people on earth. Our lives are meant to move “wherever the Spirit would go.” (Ezekiel 1:12, NKJV).

Challenge for Believers:

Ask yourself: Am I being directed by God’s Spirit, or driven by my own desires? The cherubim never turned aside. Likewise, believers should walk in obedience without hesitation or deviation.

4. The Wheels Within Wheels (Ezekiel 1:15–21)

“Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their workings was like the color of beryl... their rims were full of eyes all around.” (Ezekiel 1:15–18, NKJV)

These “wheels within wheels” symbolize the omnipresence and omniscience of God. The wheels move in every direction without turning—there are no obstacles to His purposes. The eyes around the wheels speak of His all-seeing wisdom; nothing escapes His sight.

Together, the living creatures and the wheels illustrate how heaven and earth are coordinated under God’s sovereign direction. What happens in the spiritual realm influences what happens in the physical. “The spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels” (Ezekiel 1:21, NKJV), showing that divine purpose drives all creation.

Practical Application:

We often see life as chaotic or random, but from God’s perspective, everything moves with divine precision. The “wheels” of history are not spinning aimlessly; they are turning under His control. Even in the confusion of exile—or in the storms of our lives—God’s plan is unfolding perfectly.

Challenge for Believers:

Will you trust God's unseen order when your world feels out of control? His purposes may be hidden now, but every "wheel within a wheel" turns according to His will.

5. The Firmament and the Throne (Ezekiel 1:22–27)

"And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it." (Ezekiel 1:26, NKJV)

Above the crystal-like expanse, Ezekiel saw the throne of God. Its appearance was like sapphire—deep, blue, and pure. And upon that throne was "the likeness of a man." This is one of the most striking pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament.

The "appearance of fire" from His waist upward and downward symbolizes holiness, judgment, and glory. Around Him was a rainbow, the same sign of covenant mercy seen in Genesis 9 and again in Revelation 4:3. Even in majesty, God's throne is encircled with grace.

Practical Application:

The One who reigns above all creation is not a distant force but a personal, relational God who reveals Himself in human likeness. The fire reminds us of His holiness; the rainbow reminds us of His mercy. Together they declare that He is both just and gracious, consuming in His purity yet compassionate in His covenant love.

Challenge for Believers:

Live with the awareness that the throne of God is not empty. Above every power, every government, every chaos, sits the Sovereign Lord. When life feels uncertain, fix your eyes upward. The throne has not changed hands.

6. Ezekiel's Response and Our Response (Ezekiel 1:28)

"Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking." (Ezekiel 1:28, NKJV)

Ezekiel's immediate reaction was humility and awe—he fell on his face. When confronted with God's glory, the only proper response is worship and surrender. The "voice of One speaking" reminds us that God reveals Himself not just through visions of glory, but through words of truth.

Practical Application:

Every genuine encounter with God produces humility, not pride. The closer we come to His holiness, the more aware we become of our need for grace. True worship begins when we stop speaking and fall before Him in reverence.

7. The Glory Revealed in Christ

The glory Ezekiel saw finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. John wrote, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory"* (John 1:14, NKJV). What Ezekiel saw as

fiery brilliance, John saw as love incarnate. The One seated on the throne became the Lamb slain on the cross.

Jesus shed His blood to redeem us from sin. The cross revealed the fire of God's holiness consuming the guilt of humanity, while the empty tomb declared that He is God, Savior, and Lord. His resurrection is the ultimate revelation of divine glory.

Invitation to Non-Believers:

If you have not yet surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, the same glorious Lord Ezekiel saw now calls to you. The God of majesty has stooped down in mercy. He died for your sins and rose again to give you life. You can pray today:

"Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God. I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. Forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new. I surrender my life to You as my Savior and Lord. Amen."

Challenge for Believers:

Let the vision of God's glory transform how you live. Lift your eyes from the chaos of earth to the calm of heaven's throne. Walk humbly, serve faithfully, and keep your life yielded to the Spirit who directs every "wheel" of your life with perfect wisdom.

Closing Reflection

Ezekiel's first chapter is not merely about angels, fire, or wheels—it's about the majesty of God who rules all creation. His power is beyond comprehension, His holiness beyond measure, and His grace beyond deserving.

When life feels uncertain or overwhelming, remember Ezekiel's vision: above it all—above the storm, above the nations, above every trial—there is a throne, and the Lord reigns upon it.

"The LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20, NKJV)