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Ezekiel 10.

(2014)

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Ezekiel 10.

Topics.

- The cherubim and an appearance like a throne.
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- The cherubim.
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Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel: Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the "likeness" of the LORD". Ezekiel was keenly aware of God's presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God's covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chapter 37) is a classic picture of God's ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

NOTE: Ezekiel's message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The Symbolism: the language of Ezekiel's visions can be difficult to understand, nevertheless even without fully grasping the meaning they inspire awe and wonder toward God. Perhaps LORD'S aim in using such vivid and mysterious symbols that represent something else was to stimulate the minds of the Jews and so that those who are rebellious and wilfully choose not to believe would be left in blindness, but those with an honest heart toward the LORD would be awakened to a deeper search into the things of God by the very obscurity of the symbols.

The modern Jews magnify this obscurity by ordaining that no one is to read the book of Ezekiel until they have passed their thirteenth year, for fear that by the difficulties of the language they would be prejudiced against the Scriptures, but if we read these difficult parts of Scripture with humility and reverence, and search

them diligently, though we may not be able to fully understand all the symbolism, we will gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith and the encouraging of our hope in the God we worship.

A personal note: this chapter is by no means a dogmatic interpretation. I am absolutely positive there is much more to this chapter than my limited mind is able to comprehend. There are no doubt many other interpretations that can be found in all the symbolism, hopefully the one I have given will give the passionate and enthusiastic Bible reader a launching pad to begin their own exiting discoveries and build and expand on what I have done.

NOTE: for Ezekiel's visions to mean anything to the people he is speaking to the symbolisms that are used would need to relate to the content and focus of the theme of the entire book of Ezekiel and the history of Israel at that time.

An overview: the following is an overview of the entire book of Ezekiel. At the time of his vision the priests and inhabitants of Jerusalem were corrupt and worshipping idols and Ezekiel and people of influence over Israel have been taken captive to Babylon but a remnant remained against Ezekiel's advice and against the word of the LORD at Jerusalem. Ezekiel chapter three, nine, ten and eleven link to Ezekiel's vision in chapter one.

In Ezekiel 3: the LORD tells Ezekiel to warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem that if they do not turn from their gross wickedness the LORD'S judgment will surely fall upon them.

In Ezekiel 9: Ezekiel in a vision sees executioners with weapons for slaughter entering the city of Jerusalem to administer God's judgment (Ezek. 9:1-2).

In Ezekiel 10: God's glory leaves the temple and Ezekiel has an almost identical vision to his vision by the Chebar canal in chapter one.

In Ezekiel 11: God shows Ezekiel in a vision that the priests in the temple are devising iniquity, giving wicked counsel, complaining about serving the LORD, killing the inhabitants of Jerusalem and that the whole house of Israel is not walking in His statutes, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around them. Therefore God is about to execute judgments upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and give them into the hands of foreigners.

Ezekiel is so horrified at what he sees in this vision that he cries to the LORD asking Him if He is about to destroy the entire remnant of Israel. The LORD comforts Ezekiel telling him that after their judgment He will gather them from the nations and establish them in their own land. Putting all this together it means that the entire focus of Ezekiel's vision at the Chebar canal is God's judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests in the temple.

Introduction to Ezekiel 10

This is the 6th year Ezekiel and the people of Judah who had authority and influence over Israel have been in captivity to Babylon (Jerusalem is doomed to be destroyed in 4 years' time) (Ezekiel 8:1).

The Cherubim and an Appearance like a Throne.

Ezekiel 10:1 -----¹Then I (Ezekiel) looked, and behold, on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in appearance like a throne.

The LORD'S throne is above the cherubim, God is pictured as sitting enthroned above the Mercy Seat and on the two golden cherubim and speaking from between them. The two cherubs sit facing each other, one cherub on each end of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place of the temple. Two of their wings touch each other and over shadowing the Mercy Seat with the law under it (the Ten Commandments) and the other two wings touch the wall of the Most Holy Place in which only the high priest entered once a year.

(Exod. 25:22) (Num. 7:89) (1 Sam. 4:4) (2 Sam. 6:2) (Psalm 80:1) (Psalm 99:1) (Isaiah 37:16) (Exod. 25:18-20) (Exod. 37:7-9) (1 Kings 6:23-27) (Hebrews 9:1-12) (1 Chron. 13:6) (2 Chron. 3:10-11) (2 Chron. 5:7-8).

The Symbolism: the cherubim are a symbol of God's presence, His glory and His protection and the picture of them watching over the lid (called the Mercy Seat) of the Ark that contains the law under it make the statement that God judges through the eyes of mercy. But the title cherubim is not limited to angels, we know this because the LORD says the King of Tyre was an, "Anointed guardian cherub" who was the signet of perfection full of wisdom and perfect in beauty and who was blameless from the day he was created until unrighteousness was found in him.

So we see that God even uses the title: "O Guardian Cherub" when referring to the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:11, 14, 16).

The king of Tyre is called a guardian cherub, because he was considered by all nations during his time as a glorious king and the protector of his people. The word cherub carries the idea of something glorious and outstanding they are not real angels, but symbols of something that inspires wonder and so distinguished that it merits praise and lasting fame, the title cherub can apply to God or an exceptional human king.

The LORD and Cherubs.

- Throughout the Bible the LORD is pictured riding on a golden chariot flying on a cherub on the wings of the wind (1 Chron. 28:18) (2 Sam. 22:11) (Psalm 18:10).
- In Ezekiel's vision in chapter one Ezekiel saw the throne and the glory of God over the heads of the cherubim (Ezekiel 1:26-28).
- In the context of this chapter the cherubim are a symbol of God's glory in the Most Holy Place of the temple and a symbol of His presence and mercy covering the law.

Whirling Wheels and Burning Coals.

Ezekiel 10:2 ----- ²And he (the LORD) said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city." And he went in before my eyes.

The man clothed in linen is a symbol of a man of righteousness while the wheels are a symbol of: -

- **Movement:** everything with wheels travels, moves, goes somewhere so they are a symbol of taking something somewhere.
- **War:** wheels throughout the Bible are identified with chariots carrying warriors to battle so they can be a symbol of war.
- **Re-shaping a thing:** God is pictured as a potter re-shaping or moulding Israel so a wheel (i.e. potter's wheel) can be a symbol of moulding a people or a nation.
- **God's judgment:** God throne is pictured with wheels of fire on it, so wheels can be seen as bringing God's judgment.
- **Whirling wheels:** throughout the Bible the word whirling is used with the following phrases, whirling dust like chaff before the wind, the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest. The word whirling is linked with the LORD'S wrath going out to those that are corrupt therefore whirling wheels are a symbol of God's judgment and His wrath going out upon the wicked.
- **Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim:** refers to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon who God calls his servant and who God uses to bring his wrath and judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The following verses show that God called Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon His Servant and used him to bring about His judgment upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah.

- The word that came to Jeremiah *concerning all the people of Judah*, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (*that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon*), ²which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to *all the people of Judah* and *all the inhabitants of Jerusalem* (Jer. 25:1-2).

Now go to verse nine.

- Behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for *Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant*, and *I will bring them against this land* and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. ¹⁰Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹*This whole land (of Judah) shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations (of Judah) shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years* (Jer. 25:9-11).

Jeremiah the prophet told all the people of Judah that God would use His servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to punish the people of Judah and bring their land to ruin and waste for seventy years (Jer. 25:1-2, 8-9) see also Jeremiah chapter 49, 50, 51, 52). In the context of Ezekiel chapter one, wheels are primarily a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon bringing his armies upon the land of Judah and against the city of Jerusalem, but they also embrace Edom, Tyre and Egypt (the four living creatures) who were also used to bring God's Judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1:15).

Based on these insights the whirling wheels in the context of this chapter (Ezek. 10) are a symbol of the LORD'S wrath and His judgment going out upon those who are wicked. It is a picture of the LORD'S judgment going out to the corrupt priests of the temple in the Most Holy Place (where the cherubim are), then out to the priests in the outer court and ultimately upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Burning coals: God's judgment and His wrath, is being brought about by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. His armies entered the city of Jerusalem burned the houses, slaughtered the people, destroyed the city, entered the temple and defiled it. They killed the priests and pillaged the temple and took the gold and silver and the sacred items back to Babylon.

Those who survived the terror of Babylon's armies were taken captive to Babylon for seventy years. This clearly shows that the burning coals are a symbol of God's wrath and His judgment on the wicked and rebellious inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people of Judah brought about by the fierce armies of Babylon.

The words: -

- Fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city (Ezek. 10:2).

Mean take the LORD'S wrath and His judgment out from God's presence. The burning coals are primarily the armies of Babylon, but they also embrace Edom, Tyre and Egypt and their allied nations and the words, "scatter them over the city," refers to Nebuchadnezzar and his armies entering the city of Jerusalem.

God's Glory Leaves the Most Holy Place.

Ezekiel 10:3-5 ----- ³Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house, when the man (clothed in linen) (v2) went in (to the Most Holy Place), and a cloud filled the inner court (of the temple). ⁴And the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. ⁵And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.

Remember this is a vision, the cherubim and the Mercy Seat were made of one piece of solid gold, but in the vision Ezekiel sees the cherubim standing on the south side of the house meaning the Mercy Seat is not over the Ark and covering the law of the LORD. This is because God is about to judge the inhabitants of Jerusalem without mercy. The glory of God leaves the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place and goes out to the steps of the temple and the temple is then filled with the glory of God and then the wings of the cherubim carry the Glory of the LORD into the outer Court.

The glory of the LORD in this context is God's judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. God is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice. The inhabitants of Jerusalem have become so rebellious and corrupt in gross sin that God is about to judge them.

God's punishment in this context is called His glory because it is an act of justice, witnessing to all nations that God will not excuse the wrongdoing of Israel even though they are His people. The symbolism of God's glory (His judgment) being carried from the Most Holy Place, into the temple and on out into the outer court, is that God is going to judge the priest of the Most Holy Place, the priests who serve the temple and the priest's in the outer court and eventually all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Take Fire from Between the Whirling Wheels.

Ezekiel 10:6-7 ----- ⁶And when he commanded the man clothed in linen, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he went in and stood beside a wheel. ⁷And a cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that was between the cherubim, and took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out.

Whirling wheels between the cherubim mean that the judgment of God is over the Mercy Seat and that the Mercy Seat between the wings of the cherubim is now replaced with God's wrath and his judgment. In practical terms this means that the LORD is about to use Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (the whirling wheel) to bring God's wrath and judgment on those who have not been marked in their forehead with the seal of God spoken of in the previous chapter (Ezekiel 9:3-11).

The cloud then travels into the outer court taking God's glory with it then the righteous man is told to take God's wrath and His judgment from between the whirling wheels (symbol of Babylon) from between the cherubim (a symbol of Babylon being in the will of God and being used by God) then a cherub gives the fire (God's judgment) to the righteous man who takes it out of the temple and into the outer court and eventually into the entire city of Jerusalem.

The Cherubim.

Ezekiel 10:8-9 ----- ⁸The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings. ⁹And I looked, and behold, there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub, and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling beryl.

The Cherubim: for greater detail of the cherubim see notes following (Ezek. 10:1).

Human hands: speaks of power, strength and destruction.

Four wheels beside the cherubim: for greater detail on wheels see notes following (Ezekiel 10:2).

Like sparkling beryl: Ezekiel in chapter one sees a huge fiery storm with shiny metal and in chapter twenty-seven Tyre's army is described as being so vast that when the sun reflected on their shields that they had hung on all the walls of the city it made Tyre appear perfect in beauty (Ezek. 1:24) (Ezek. 27:10-11). Based on these sparkling like beryl in this context is a picture of shiny metal (i.e., shields, swords and chariots) (weapons of war) all four wheels (armies of the four nations) (Babylon, Edom, Tyre and Egypt) looked all the same, meaning all four were ready for war.

A Wheel within a Wheel.

Ezekiel 10:10-13 ----- ¹⁰And as for their appearance, the four had the same likeness, as if *a wheel were within a wheel*. ¹¹When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went, but in whatever direction the front wheel faced, the others followed without turning as they went. ¹²And their whole body, their rims, and their spokes, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around—the wheels that the four of them had. ¹³As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing "the whirling wheels."

in Ezekiel's vision even though the armies come from four separate nations, they appeared so much alike in outward appearance that they looked like the same army making them in the vision appear as a wheel (army) in a wheel (army) (i.e., armies within armies).

Wheels within wheels: in the secular world this expression means powers within powers and since the wheels symbolise chariots, armies and weapons of war I suspect this is most likely what it means in Scripture.

Went in four directions: means, whatever direction the four armies were coming from (i.e. north, south, west or east) they were all headed in one direction, which of course was toward Jerusalem.

The front wheel: refers to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, (Edom, Tyre and Egypt followed him).

The wheels were full of eyes: means each army and their soldiers (symbolised by the wheels) of each of the four nations knew what was happening around them concerning their supporting armies and enemy (i.e. Israel) and were especially aware of the weak state of Jerusalem and the land of Judah.

The Living Creatures and the Wheels (continued).

- As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming (colour in KJV) of beryl. And the four (wheels) had the same likeness, their appearance and construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel (Ezekiel 1:16).

The wheels shone as beryl: for the meaning of shining like beryl see notes following (Ezek. 10:8-9).

Wheel within a wheel: means the armies of all four nations (Babylon, Tyre, Edom and Egypt) (symbolised by wheels) looked the same and had the same purpose and the same goal (see notes following Ezek. 10:12).

The Face of a Cherub, of a Human, of a Lion and of an Eagle.

Ezekiel 10:14-15 ----- ¹⁴And every one (wheel) had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was a human face, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. ¹⁵And the cherubim mounted up. These (wheels) were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal.

The wheels were the living creatures Ezekiel saw in his vision by the Chebar canal in chapter one. The four nations (the living creatures) cannot be separated from the wheels, (their armies) simply because they are the same nation. It is in this sense the living creatures and the wheels can be referred to as being the same. For greater detail of the living creatures see Ezekiel chapter one.

Each wheel (the armies of the four nations) had four faces. Faces speak of character, who a person is, their personality, goal, purposes, motivation etc., so when the word face is used figuratively it speaks of the character of a king, nation, army or an individual. When the secular world uses the expression, "That person has two faces," they are not saying they have got two heads, they mean they are deceitful and have two characters (i.e., while they are with you they are full of flattery but behind your back they are speaking against you or plotting wickedness).

The faces of the four wheels speak of the character of the four nations and their armies each one has the same faces so they all have the same character and the same goal which is to see the inhabitants of Jerusalem defeated.

Face of the cherub: probably means they are fulfilling the LORD'S purposes, which is bringing God's judgment onto the inhabitants of Jerusalem because of their blatant rebellion and gross wickedness.

Face of a human: a human face when used in contrast to a cherub or God carries the idea of the sinful side of human nature which is cruel, destructive and without mercy (especially when it is used in the context of the armies of a nation).

Face of a lion: a lion is the king of wild animals they are fierce and when they capture their prey they tear it apart.

Face of an eagle: the eagle is the king of birds they are swift and quick to their prey.

SUMMARY: of the Face of a Cherub, of a Human, of a Lion and of an Eagle.

The nature of the four armies is likened to a cherub meaning they are all kings of nations in the will of God bringing His judgment without mercy on the inhabitants of Jerusalem because of their blatant rebellion and gross wickedness. Collectively the expressions, "The face of a human, the face of a Lion and the face of an eagle," are all symbols of the character and nature of the nations of Babylon, Edom, Tyre and Egypt.

It is a symbolic way of saying that the armies of these nations will be fierce, cruel, strong and swift to destroy and take their prey (i.e. Israel's houses were burned; Jerusalem and the temple of God destroyed, the people slaughtered and those who did survive were taken into captivity for seventy years to Babylon) during which time the nations living in the surrounding lands of Israel and Judah robbed their farms pillaged Jerusalem and took possession of Israel's houses and farms. For greater detail of the living creatures see Ezekiel chapter one.

The Wheels went where the Cherubim Went.

Ezekiel 10:16-17 ----- ¹⁶And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them. And when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels did not turn from beside them.

¹⁷When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them, for the spirit of the *living creatures* was in them.

The spirit of the living creatures (the nations) was in the wheels (a symbol of their armies), means that the same hatred and desire to defeat the inhabitants of Jerusalem that was in the kings was also in their nations and their armies that is why the armies willingly carried out the will of their nation and their king. The wings of the cherubim are a symbol of the four nations being carried by God's will to fulfil His judgment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Babylon, Edom, Tyre and Egypt are pictured in the vision as creatures with wings carrying them through time to fulfil God purpose and His judgment. In the vision these four nations are pictured as living creatures all with the same spirit (i.e., the same motivation, purpose and character) which is to see the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem defeated.

NOTE: these nations are not limited to Babylon, Edom, Tyre and Egypt, but embrace every nation in league with them (there are many), but for simplicity of this study Babylon, Edom, Tyre and Egypt are used as the primary characters. For greater detail of these nations see Ezekiel chapter one.

The Glory of God Leaves the Temple.

Ezekiel 10:18-19 ----- ¹⁸Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.

In the previous verses God's glory left the Most Holy Place and went to the entrance of the temple and on into the outer court, this is symbolic of God removing His presence and His mercy from the temple and replacing it with His judgment on the corrupt high priest who served in the Most Holy Place and the priests who served the LORD in the Holy Place and the priests who served in the outer court of the temple (Ezekiel 10:3-4). Now the cherubim are pictured taking the LORD'S glory totally out of the temple altogether.

When the cherubim left the earth the wheels went with them: the cherubim are a symbol of God's presence; His mercy and His will. God through His prophets warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem countless times that if they did not turn from their rebellion and gross wickedness He would bring a nation from the north (Babylon) against them and they would be defeated and taken into captivity for seventy years. Sadly the people of Judah made their hearts diamond hard and refused to listen to the prophets so now Ezekiel is seeing in vision and symbolic form the climax of God's judgment against the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The people of Judah are being carried away captive for seventy years in Babylon symbolised by the cherubim (God's will and judgment) and the wheels (Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his armies) rising from the earth and leaving the temple of God with its priests and all its sacred furniture.

The Living Creatures by the Chebar canal.

Ezekiel 10:20-22 ----- ²⁰These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the Chebar canal; and I knew that they were cherubim. ²¹Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the likeness of human hands. ²²And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the Chebar canal. Each one of them went straight forward.

When the living creatures (the kings, the nations and their armies) are seen in the vision as a whole or single creature they are spoken of as cherubim because in the vision they appear as a single, glorious and powerful creature with wings fulfilling God's will and His judgment and each of the individual nations that form this single creature is identical in motivation and purpose (i.e., to destroy Jerusalem) (see Ezekiel 11:22-25). These were the same creatures Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel chapter one so for greater detail concerning them see chapter One.

For further information concerning cherubim see the title: -

- Cherub and Cherubim (Two of Solid Gold and Two of Olivewood).

In Articles (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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