

Ezekiel 1:5-9 – The Cherubim

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.**

Visions of God



For Ezekiel, the Lord opened a view into heaven and offered Ezekiel a vision of God. Certainly each of us wonder what does God look like?



In Ezekiel chapter 1 we are offered a limited picture of God the Father and His throne. We will begin our understanding of what Ezekiel saw, by starting with what we already know.



We know that God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is both God and man, and in His glorified and risen body we can easily picture Him.

²⁶ And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. ²⁷ Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

John 20:26-28

¹² Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. ¹⁴ This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

John 21:12-14

⁴¹ And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? ⁴² And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. ⁴³ And he took it, and did eat before them.

Luke 24:41-43

⁴¹ Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

Acts 10:41



But when we next consider the Holy Spirit, it becomes harder to picture Him because He is a spirit and at best can be perceived through His working and the effects He causes – like the wind.

¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like

as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1-4



Like the Spirit, God the Father is a spirit, who no one can see – 1 Timothy 6:15, 16:

¹⁵ Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ¹⁶ Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

But here in Ezekiel we see the heavens opened and we are given a look into heaven to see God and His throne.

What is a Throne?

God's throne represents His authority, sovereignty, power, etc. From it, He **sends forth orders**, appointments, or edicts.¹



Thus, in verse 3, God began His orders to Ezekiel, who is God's agent or representative in a special way because **the hand of the LORD was upon him**.

The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi [Boo-zie], in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and **the hand of the LORD was there upon him**.

Ezekiel 1:3

“The hand of the Lord was upon him’ connotes the idea of God’s strength on behalf of the person involved (Ezekiel 3:14; cf. Isaiah 25:10; 41:10, 20), a concept inherent in the name ‘Ezekiel’ (*yehezqel*), which means ‘God strengthens.’” (Alexander)

This was needed for the things Ezekiel saw from the throne would require God’s strength, for it was overwhelming.

The first mention of this throne is by the prophet Micaiah when speaking to rebellious Ahab, 1 Kings 22:19

And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the **LORD sitting on his throne**, and **all the host of heaven standing by him** on his right hand and on his left.

Who are the Four Living Creatures?



In verse 4 of Ezekiel 1, Ezekiel now begins to describe his vision of God and His throne.

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.

God manifests Himself with a whirlwind, a Cloud (the Shekinah Glory) and a fire; similar to that experienced by Job (38:1) and by Moses in the wilderness.

¹ Mal Couch, “Throne of God” Harvest Handbook of Bible Prophecy.

There in the center or midst of it, were “four living creatures” supporting God’s throne. They were in appearance like “a man” (v. 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**.

Here, Ezekiel is trying to express what he is seeing in terms we can understand.

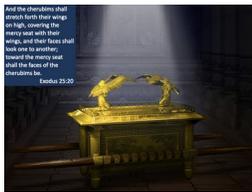
He does not here say what these living creatures are, but in a subsequent vision, when he saw them again in connection with the Temple, **Ezekiel recognized them as the same creatures in chapter 1 and now identifies them as cherubim** (Ezekiel 10:15; Ezekiel 10:20).²

¹⁵ And the cherubim were lifted up. This is the **living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar**...²⁰ This is the living creature that I saw **under the God of Israel** by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubim.

Cherubim first appeared in the garden of Eden as they guarded the way to the tree of life, and a flaming sword (Genesis 3:24).

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden **Cherubim**, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

As we move in time to the book of Exodus, we see that there are artistic designs of cherubim prominently on the lid of the **ark of the covenant, the mercy seat** (Exodus 25:18-20) in the Tabernacle.



¹⁸ And thou shalt make two **cherubim** of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ And make **one cherub [singular for cherubim]** on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubim on the two ends thereof. ²⁰ And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.

The term, ‘cherubim’ is actually the plural of cherub, but these are no Valentine cupids – but God’s servants with **mighty power**.

Since the ark of the covenant represented the presence of God among Israel, Scripture repeatedly declares that God “dwells **between** the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4, 2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalm 80:1, 99:1; Isaiah 37:16).

1 Chronicles 13:6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjathjearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubim, whose name is called on it.

Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved. **According to McClain this is future, possibly New Jerusalem on the New Earth?**

2 Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers



Isaiah 37:16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. 2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

From the writer of Hebrews (8:5) we see that the depiction of Cherubim at the throne of God in the Tabernacle served as earthly artistic expressions of a heavenly reality. Sometimes the phrase speaks of the earthly picture, and sometimes the **heavenly reality**.

*Who serve unto the **example and shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of [by] 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.* Hebrews 8:5

Additionally, the interior of the tabernacle was decorated with designs of cherubim, giving the impression to anyone in the tabernacle that they were **surrounded by cherubim** (Exodus 26:1).

Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubim of cunning work shalt thou make them.

As the High Priest approached the veil separating the most holy place of the tabernacle, he was reminded that he was about **to enter into the presence of God** (Exodus 26:31).

And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubim shall it be made:[woven, made with]

When the Temple was constructed, the designs of cherubim were again very prominent, to serve as a constant reminder that as Israelites entered the Tabernacle or later the Temple, they were approaching God's earthly manifestation to **worship** (1 Kings 6:23-35).

²³ *And within the oracle he made two cherubim of olive tree, each ten [approx 15 feet] cubits high. ²⁴ And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other were ten cubits. ²⁵ And the other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubim were of one measure and one size.*

This is a good reminder to us as we approach God to worship at church or in prayer, Hebrews 4:15, 16:



¹⁵ *For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

¹⁶ **Let us therefore come boldly [meaning with confidence] unto the throne of grace,** that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The apostle John also saw them surrounding the throne of God (Revelation 4:6-8).

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 [living beings] full of eyes before and behind. 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.

Before his fall, Satan was among the cherubim covering God's throne (Ezekiel 28:14-16).

¹⁴ *Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁵ Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. ¹⁶ By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.*

In our next session, we will see the descriptions of these angels and how they support and move the throne at God's bidding. We will then see Ezekiel's description of "the glory of the Lord" (v. 28).