

Ezekiel's vision of glory

Is this vision symbolic of the future?

A selection of references to read

The vision briefly considered here: Ezekiel 1:4-28

Other visions in Ezekiel: ch3:12-15, 23, 8:2-4, 10:1-22, 11:22-24

Other visions of glory: Isaiah ch6; Daniel 7:9-14; Revelation ch4

● Where did Ezekiel's first vision occur?

Ezekiel was contemporary with Daniel in captivity in Babylon. Daniel was close to the ruling powers whereas Ezekiel was close to the captives of Israel north of the city. Ezekiel's vision was by the river Chebar, being a great canal running from the Euphrates north of Babylon near the city of Nippur, the site of the Jewish settlement. Many visions of Glory are symbolic in nature and it is a challenge that God gives us to try and understand their true significance.

● What is 'God's Glory'?

God's Glory can be understood in both a physical and spiritual sense. Jesus emphasises the spiritual sense when speaking of His relationship with His Father and His disciples (John 17:21-22). God's Glory is somewhat like the fruit of the Spirit because we have **one singular identity composed of several important qualities**. As we progress in life we should aim at reflecting God's Glory in the sense of **His character** so that in the future we will be able, with an incorruptible body, to also reflect His glory in the physical sense (Rom.2:7, 10).

● 'Cherubim' and 'Seraphim'

Cherubim* and Seraphim are creatures shown in vision or solid figure presentations as on the Ark of the Covenant. These cherubim would **represent angelic beings** who show God's glory and execute His judgements throughout the universe. Since the elect of God have been promised equality with the angels then it follows that cherubim can also be a symbol of the saints in the age to come. Throughout the early visions of Ezekiel the cherubim play an integral part as demonstrators of God's glory, honour and power and play an important part in showing God's judgements on a godless generation of the day.

● Some 'Cherubim' examples from Scripture

In Genesis we are introduced to cherubim where they are used as a means of showing God's authority after Adam sinned.

Solomon had two giant cherubim around five metres high with a five metre wing span placed in the inner sanctuary of the temple. The ark which had two cherubim was placed between these two giant cherubim under the shelter of their wings (1 Kings 6:23-28, 8:6-7).

In Isaiah's vision of glory the living creatures are called Seraphim. These Seraphim had six wings and one face each like the living creatures in Revelation (Isa.6:2; Rev.4:7).

Seraphim comes from the Hebrew word, 'saraph' which refers to their fiery copper or bronze colour.

Moses and Isaiah use this word 'saraph' to describe 'fiery serpents' (Num.21:8; Isa.14:29, 30:6).

● Use of the number four

Note the use of the number four throughout Ezekiel's vision. **Four living creatures, four faces, four wings and four possible directions** for them to travel in. In Scripture number four can speak of perfection in the sense of organisation or government.

Spiritual Jerusalem (the saints) of the age to come is depicted symbolically as a four square cubed city (Rev.21:16).

*Cherub (singular) and Cherubim (plural) are Anglicised forms of the Hebrew word 'keruwb', pronounced 'ker-oob'. Although this word is found over 90 times in Scripture, its meaning is obscure. Strong's (3742) does not give a meaning and Young's claims the word means 'one grasped, 'held fast' or 'seized'. J B Jackson gives the meaning, 'as if contending'.

A brief chart with some suggested interpretations is on the next page 

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The vision ch1:4-28

Some suggested meanings

<p>v4: The whirlwind from the north, a great cloud with raging fire and the colour of amber in the midst of the fire.</p>	<p>Both fire and whirlwinds in Scripture speak of judgement. This whirlwind is depicted in the Hebrew as a "ruwach cearah" which we could call a, "spirit strengthened hurricane". The word 'north' is not necessarily the direction but rather coming from, 'the hidden or dark unknown'. This is the only time in Scripture that these two words are used together. Could this be a symbol of God's final judgement at the time of the end?</p>
<p>v5-10: Four living creatures from within the whirlwind each with four faces.</p>	<p>These creatures styled "cherubim" in Ezek.ch10, represent spirit motivated beings who do God's will at all times. Their four faces represent the fourfold purpose of God which will be demonstrated through Jesus and His faithful followers: Man: King Lion: Judge Ox: Lawgiver Eagle: Saviour This fourfold purpose can also be seen in Isa.33:22.</p>
<p>v13: Fire and lightning proceed from the creatures.</p>	<p>Another reference to judgement that the saints will be directing under Jesus' authority. Lightning is used in a figure to describe the punishments of the Armageddon period (Rev.16:18). Some other lightning references: Psa.18:14, 144:6; Zech.9:14; Rev.4:5, 8:5, 11:19</p>
<p>v16: Wheels within wheels and full of eyes are used to motivate the living creatures in any of four directions.</p>	<p>The wheels full of eyes would represent the all seeing all powerful spirit of God used to energise and direct the saints in the age to come. The four directions could once again speak of the fourfold purpose of Jesus and the saints. In Ezek.10:12 the cherubim's bodies are covered in eyes.</p>
<p>v22: The awesome crystal firmament (sky) above the creatures heads.</p>	<p>The sky or heavens represent the ruling authority and the crystal* make up of this sky would symbolise the purity of God's heavenly rulership which will soon be on earth. * "crystal" is translated from Heb. 'qorach' which means rock crystal, ice, frost or hail.</p>
<p>v24: The noise of the wings of the creatures like the noise of many waters, the voice of the Almighty or the noise of an army.</p>	<p>The noise of the wings describes a great army which is under the command of the LORD of Hosts (Yahweh Sabbaoth). We can be a part of this great army, performing only the requests of The Almighty through the direct leadership and command of His Son, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" Rev.5:5.</p>
<p>v25: The voice from above the firmament.</p>	<p>The authority comes from the LORD of Hosts. This authority has been given to His Son in heaven and on earth (John 5:22).</p>
<p>v26: A sapphire throne above the firmament with the likeness of a man. The man's waist and upward of amber and fire.</p>	<p>God is depicted in the sense of His refining justice (amber and fire) that must first be established in the earth before the peace depicted by the rainbow can be enjoyed. The blue sapphire* throne represents God's heavenly authority. Sapphire is a very hard stone historically used for ornamental purposes or ground down as a blue pigment for paint (ultra-marine). *This is not the common Sapphire gemstone of today (blue corundum). The Sapphire of Biblical times answers to 'Lapis Lazuli'. This is a hard deep blue stone with golden flecks of iron pyrites. This was the fifth stone on the priest's breastplate (Exod.28:18). Check the following wikipedia page for more historic info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lapis_lazuli</p>
<p>v27: Fire, amber and brightness all around.</p>	<p>Fire, coals and the colour of copper (bronze, amber) are all used consistently in Biblical visions of Glory which involve cherubim and symbolic depictions of God in a judgement sense (Dan7:9). Judgement must come first before the promised peace arrives depicted in the next verse.</p>
<p>v28: The likeness of a rainbow on a rainy day use to depict a likeness of the Glory of God.</p>	<p>The rainbow was used as a token of God's everlasting covenant with all flesh in Genesis after His judgement on mankind (Gen.9:11-17). This vision of a rainbow on a rainy day is a fitting symbol of peace and tranquility and the refreshing atmosphere after the storm of Armageddon has passed. This is God's Glory in the sense of peace and righteousness (Isa.32:16-18). Raindows are also mentioned in Revelation (Rev.4:3, 10:1). The mention of the rainbow and glory of God here is a good indication that Ezekiel's vision refers to the Armageddon period followed by God's Kingdom.</p>