

# EZEKIEL

## Chapter 1

### *Ezekiel in Babylon*

**1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.**

The opening chapter affords Ezekiel, the prophet-priest, a vision into the opened heavens of the enthroned Glory of God. Thus the book of Ezekiel grants a proleptic view in heaven of what the apostles would see on earth: “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). The incarnate Glory of God would atone for the sins of the world by his death on the cross and rise again from the dead. He then would ascend and, as our High Priest, be “seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb 8:1). In Revelation the apostle John sees through the opened heavens the enthroned Christ and the divine liturgy of the heavenly host. In particular, Revelation 4 recalls Ezekiel 1, down to the details of the mysterious creatures who support the divine throne in heaven. (CC)

As we ponder this most mysterious prophetic book, then, we bear in mind that the realities we strive to understand through Ezekiel’s eyes find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The vision of divine Glory in chapter 1, though it transcends human comprehension, reveals the divine Glory to be manifested in the God-man, Christ our Lord. Likewise, when Yahweh speaks throughout the rest of the book (beginning in chapter 2), the words can rightly be regarded as those of Christ, the Word made flesh. (CC)

**1:1** *thirtieth year*. Probably Ezekiel’s age. According to Nu 4:3, a person entered the Levitical priesthood in his 30th year. Denied the priesthood in exile, Ezekiel received another commission—that of prophet. (CSB)

Likely refers to the prophet’s age. As a priest (v 3), this was the age when, if he were still in Jerusalem, he could assume full priestly duties in the temple. The date may be calculated as July 31, 593 BC. The true God is not confined to the temple, but comes to Ezekiel and calls him to a ministry of another sort. (TLSB)

*among the exiles* – Ezekiel was “among the exiles” (1:1). Ezekiel uses the prepositional phrase *בְּתוֹךְ* (“among”) over one hundred times. Here it may simply indicate his general location in the exiled community. Although Ezekiel was living in that community, he may have temporarily gone to the banks of the river on the edge of the settlement, as 3:15 seems to imply. “Among the exiles” (1:1) may imply a consciousness on the part of the prophet that what he witnesses and speaks at God’s command is of central significance, not only for him and the little exilic community, but for all Israel. Because he was at the center of God’s work of judgment and salvation, his life and work has significance for the whole world and for all times. (CC)

*Kebar River*. A canal of the Euphrates near the city of Nippur, south of Babylon, and possibly a place of prayer for the exiles (see Ps 137:1; cf. Ac 16:13). (CSB)

Exact location unknown; likely in southwest Babylon (modern Iraq), near the ancient city of Nippur. Chebar is usually identified with the modern silted up river Shat-en-Nil, once fed by the Euphrates. (TLSB)

*canal*. Hbr “river”; often specifically the Euphrates. Feeder canals often are as large as many rivers. (TLSB)

“The Kebar Canal” (1:1) probably was a large feeder canal, which, then as now, can often be as big as many rivers. נָהָר usually means “river” and often refers to the Euphrates, but here “canal” is the accurate translation. This canal was large enough to receive a proper name, “Kebar.” Its precise location eludes us. It has often been identified with the modern, dry Shat en-Nil. We hear of it again somewhat over a century later in the archives of the Jewish Murashu family, whose members were bankers in the Babylonian city of Nippur. (See the map in the back of this book.) However, there it is described as merely “near” Nippur, not running through the middle of it, as the Sha en-Nil did in antiquity. (CC)

Ezekiel was standing by a stream of flowing (living) water on the occasion of his inaugural vision. Some of Daniel’s visions also came by streams: the Ulai (Daniel 8) was in Susa (in modern Iran), and the vision recorded in Daniel 10 occurred by “the great river, the Tigris” (Dan 10:4), roughly halfway between the Ulai and the Kebar. Since foreign lands were considered unclean (see Amos 7:17), exiled Israelites might naturally seek communion with God near flowing water, which was often used in purification rites (see “living water” in Lev 14:5–6, 50–52; 15:13; Num 19:17). The triune God is the source of “living water” for his people (Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8; Song 4:15). Israelites would also recall God’s miracles of redemption through water such as the dry crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14–15); the dry crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3–4); and the salvation of Noah and his family through the flood waters (Genesis 6–9), which is a type of Christian Baptism (1 Pet 3:18–22). Flowing water would recall the river of Eden (Gen 2:10–14). It would also anticipate the eschatological, life-giving river in the new creation that flows from the temple (Ezek 47:1–12), which seems to be (in OT imagery) the same “river of the water of life” that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev 22:1–2). (CC)

*the heavens were opened*. The vision did not arise from within Ezekiel but from without. The almighty God came to him at a time and place of His choosing. (TLSB)

In “the heavens were opened” (Ezek 1:1), the passive (Niphal) form of the verb should be emphasized: the unspoken agent is God himself. The expression is unique in the OT (most similar is Gen 7:11). In some other theophanies, the heavens are “torn” open (נָקַע in Is 63:19) or “stretched” open (נָטַח) like the curtains of a tent (2 Sam 22:10 || Ps 18:10). In Ezek 1:1 the verb “open” (פָּתַח) may be evocative of the opening of the “windows” (אֲרָבֹת) of heaven for either judgment (the deluge in Gen 7:11) or for blessing (2 Ki 7:2; Mal 3:10). The immediate import in Ezekiel 1–24 will be judgment upon unfaithful Israel, but God’s ultimate purpose is to reveal the Gospel (Ezekiel 25–48. At the Baptism of our Lord, Jesus, like Ezekiel, sees the heavens opened and hears the spoken words of God by a river (Mt 3:16–17 || Lk 3:21–22). (CC)

*visions of God*. A special term, always in the plural and always with the word “God” (not with the more personal “LORD”). The expression precedes this and the two other major visions of the prophet (8:3; 40:2). (CSB)

In the divine vision, Ezekiel saw God’s glory but not God Himself (cf v 28). Iren: “The prophets saw the dispensations of God in part, but not actually God Himself.... When he set forth all the rest of the vision of the thrones, lest anyone might happen to think that in those [visions] he had actually seen God, he added: ‘This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God’ ” (ANF 1:490–91). *visions*. Probably not a typical plural, but intensive, a Hbr idiom for the greatness of the vision. (TLSB)

The opened heavens revealed to Ezekiel “a divine vision” (1:1). There are more divine visions in Ezekiel than in any other OT book except for Daniel, and than in any NT book save Revelation. (CC)

1:2 *fifth year of the exile*. Verses 2–3, written in the third person (the only third-person narrative in the book), clarify the date in v. 1. (CSB)

Mid-593 BC, counting inclusively, as the OT usually does. Twelve other dates throughout Ezk follow the same pattern, the last in 40:1. All of these record times when Ezekiel received divine messages, except for 33:21, which reports the arrival of a messenger reporting the fall of Jerusalem. Even more noteworthy, all are in chronological order with the one exception of 29:17, which is dated 571 BC, the latest date in the Book. Ezekiel ministered some 22 years. (TLSB)

*King Jehoiachin*. Led an early group of exiles to Babylon in 597 B.C. Ezekiel was among them and received his prophetic call in 593. (CSB)

The rightful heir to the Davidic throne. Faithful Israelites centered their messianic hopes on him. (Cf 2Ki 24:8–17; 25:27–30; Jer 52.) (TLSB)

It is of no little significance that the date formula in this verse and in all other dates throughout the rest of the book (besides “the thirtieth year” in 1:1) is anchored to the date of King Jehoiachin’s exile. Jehoiachin was a son of David, and as long as he lived, he was the only legitimate claimant to the throne in Jerusalem. Both the Israelites and the Babylonians knew that. Thus, by no accident, 2 Kings 25 (and its doublet in Jeremiah 52) ends on the positive note that special favors, befitting royalty, had been shown to the exiled Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar’s son and successor, Evil-Merodach. That favor (as well as some previous favor by Nebuchadnezzar himself) is also attested extrabiblically in Babylonian sources. Zedekiah (Jehoiachin’s uncle) had been placed on the throne after Jehoiachin’s deportation in 597 B.C. Zedekiah is often considered the last king of Judah, but he was really no more than a puppet of the Babylonians, and he obviously enjoyed the respect of neither his masters nor his subjects. (CC)

Thus, not only do the Israelites’ political hopes rest on Jehoiachin, but their religious ones as well. The messianic promise of the Savior, first given right after the fall into sin (Gen 3:15), explained further to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3) and his descendants, and elaborated especially by Nathan to King David (2 Samuel 7), rested on Jehoiachin and his heirs: his “house” would never fail until the advent of Christ, who would reign on David’s throne forever (e.g., Is 9:5–6). By no means were all the implications of that promise understood until after the ascension of Christ (see Acts 1:6–9), and even we Christians today may not fully “understand” them. Nevertheless, this chronological framework of the book of Ezekiel remains a major part of the implicit theology of the book. The exile of Jehoiachin attests that God had executed judgment on unfaithful Israel, but his continued life, albeit in exile, signifies that God will still fulfill his promise of salvation for the entire world through the greater Son of David and King of Israel. (CC)

Up to a point, Ezekiel and his audience doubtless agreed on Jehoiachin’s importance. On a key point, however, they totally disagree. The populace, encouraged by false prophets, cherished the false expectation that their exile would be of short duration; if they had sinned, their transgression was mild, and the punishment they had already received was enough, or was even more than was fair (Ezekiel 18). They expected that they would be released soon, the Davidic monarchy would be restored in Jerusalem, and life could continue at least as well as before; perhaps even a truly “messianic” era would be instituted shortly. Virtually the first two-thirds of the book of Ezekiel is devoted to demolishing such false hopes. On this point, Ezekiel and Jeremiah are in total agreement, as Jeremiah now preaches to those still in Jerusalem, who were not included in the deportation in 597. Superficially, Ezekiel’s initial message is

sometimes compared to Cato's diatribes to the Roman senate: *Carthago delenda est*, "Carthage [here substitute Jerusalem] must be destroyed." (CC)

Only after all such false hopes have been dashed and the people were driven to repent and learned to depend solely on God's promise of salvation by grace alone—whenever and however he sees fit to implement that promise in history (cf. Gal 4:4)—could salvation come to them. In Christological terms, this is Law and Gospel, a theology of the cross, a cruciform way of believing and living. The Christian recognizes in Ezekiel's message the foreshadowing of Good Friday, when God's judgment climaxed in the death of his own Son, and Easter Sunday, when God's verdict of justification by grace alone was published to the whole world. The Christian pastor who preaches and teaches Ezekiel proclaims its message of Law and Gospel as part and parcel of God's constant action *sub contrario* (working through apparent opposites). Ezekiel's message is not rendered irrelevant by its climactic expression in Christ; rather, through Christ and his Spirit, it has been made part of the history of *our* salvation. (CC)

**1:3** The rest of his Book is autobiographical. Ezekiel likely added this historical note for the benefit of later readers. This chronological reckoning will be used throughout Ezk. (TLSB)

*the word of the LORD came.* The Bible often uses "word" and "vision" interchangeably. An actual vision comes in ch 1, but we hear no words until ch 2. Neither are artificial or magical means used to induce inspiration, as was common in paganism. God cannot be manipulated; He comes in grace of His own free will. (TLSB)

The formula of the coming (יְהוָה בָּרָא) of Yahweh's Word, here and repeatedly throughout the book, surely implies the personal agency of God. Words emanate from people, who use words to communicate. If the speaker is God, an anthropomorphism is implied, and probably a personal, "incarnational" element as well. The sort of element that is merely implied here is made explicit in 3:17, for example, where the Lord refers to Ezekiel hearing "a word *from my mouth*." In chapter 1, the incarnational element is even more up front because the vision described in the following verses obviously depicts the invisible God in anthropomorphic terms (albeit highly circumscribed, so no literalistic and idolatrous misunderstandings might ensue). Especially since the divine "Glory" (1:28, כְּבוֹד) reappears often in the book, that personal form of the God who utters the divine Word is reinforced throughout the book. Sometimes in the OT too, the divine Word is a hypostasis of God, just as in the NT Christ is the incarnate Word of God—the Word who is God (e.g., Jn 1:1–3, 14; Rev 19:13). (CC)

*Ezekiel.* See 24:24. Means "God is strong" (cf. 3:14), "God strengthens" (cf. 30:25; 34:16) or "God makes hard" (cf. 3:8). Jehezkel (1Ch 24:16) is the same name in Hebrew but does not refer to the same person. (CSB)

The only place in the entire Book where Ezekiel does not use the first person ("I"). (TLSB)

*priest.* Member of a priestly family. (CSB)

By adding "the son of Buzi" it implies that his father was also a priest. The Priesthood was hereditary in the OT. (TLSB)

*Chaldeans.* Used almost interchangeably with "Babylonians" (e.g., 12:13; 23:15, 23). The city of Babylon was the capital, but had been invaded by the Chaldeans, an Aramaic-speaking people from the northwest (modern Syria). In alliance with the Medes, the Chaldeans defeated and replaced the original Babylonian people as the world power at about the time Ezekiel came of age. This explains why Aramaic appears in Dn and Ezr and also influences Ezekiel's language at points. See p 720. Since there had been a

great Babylonian Empire a millennium earlier, historians call the empire of Ezekiel's era "neo-Babylonian." (TLSB)

*hand of the LORD.* A phrase repeated six times in the book (3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1), indicating an overpowering experience of divine revelation. (CSB)

First of seven appearances in Ezekiel. Ezekiel esp associates this expression with his receipt of a vision. (TLSB)

This expression too is anything but unique to Ezekiel, since it and similar expressions occur throughout the OT. God's almighty "hand" may bring either judgment and destruction or salvation and eternal life. Its role is such that it could almost be counted as another of the OT hypostases, pointing to the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ. However, since the divine "hand" is qualified by "of Yahweh" rather than standing independently, it is usually classified rather as one of the major anthropomorphisms. Its classical expression probably comes in connection with the exodus: God redeemed his people "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (e.g., *Deut 4:34; 5:15*). In many other contexts, it refers to God's (active) power or omnipotence. This biblical significance continues in the familiar assertion in the Apostles' Creed of our risen Lord's session "at the right *hand* of God the Father Almighty" (similar phrases occur in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds). (CC)

Ezekiel refers to "the hand of Yahweh" six times, usually with *יָדוֹ* and *לָלַע* ("was ... upon me"), as here, although sometimes stronger language is used (e.g., the adjective *קָוֶץ*, "strong," in *3:14* and the verb *נָפַל*, "fall," in *8:1*). Thus "the hand of Yahweh" embodies divine urgency, pressure, or compulsion upon the prophet to do something. One may compare the effect of Yahweh's hand on this OT prophet to the way Jesus, the supreme Prophet, used *δεῖ*, "it is necessary," to describe his obligation to make his way to Calvary. The most striking applications of "the hand of Yahweh" in Ezekiel are his transportations from Babylon to Jerusalem in *8:1–3* and *40:1*, where we shall have to discuss the expression further. Most often in Ezekiel, Yahweh's "hand" is associated with the prophet's personal receipt of a vision. (CC)

**1:1–3** The presence of the exiles "in the land of the Chaldeans" far from home is a manifestation of God's judgment upon an unfaithful people. But a remnant has remained faithful, among them Ezekiel the priest, whom God chooses as His instrument to explain why that judgment had come. Ezekiel will call the exiles to repentance and describe God's mercy promised to them. • Lord, because of our sins, we are in "exile" from our true home. But we give You thanks daily that You send ministers to preach the Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection, to absolve us of our sins in His name, and thus lead us to our spiritual home, now and in eternity. Amen. (TLSB)

### *The Glory of the LORD*

**4** As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal. **5** And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, **6** but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. **7** Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. **8** Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: **9** their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. **10** As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. **11** Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. **12** And each went straight forward. Wherever the

spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14 And the living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning. 15 Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. 16 As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl. And the four had the same likeness, their appearance and construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. 17 When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. 18 And their rims were tall and awesome, and the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. 19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. 20 Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 22 Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads. 23 And under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another. And each creature had two wings covering its body. 24 And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings. 25 And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads. When they stood still, they let down their wings. 26 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. 28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.

1:4 *I looked.* Introduces the first part of the vision: storm and living creatures (vv. 4–14). The “I looked” of v. 15 introduces the second part: wheels and the glory of the Lord. (CSB)

*windstorm.* See Ps 18:10–12. (CSB)

The head of the Persian Gulf is characterized by strong sand storms in the summer months. Ezekiel may be describing this natural phenomenon, which God transfigures for him (cf Ex 3, the burning bush). Neighboring pagans associated such storms with a storm-god. But here, the almighty Creator uses the storm to address the prophet in a land where He was not worshiped. (TLSB)

What is to be made of the storm cloud coming “from the north” (Ezek 1:4)? It may simply be another case where something ostensibly quite ordinary is transmuted into a divine appearance (cf. the burning bush of Exodus 3). In this case, it would be God’s use of a natural meteorological circumstance. The head of the Persian Gulf is dominated by a zone of very low pressure during the summer months, often producing severe sand or dust storms. Various details of the vision might be read as “transfigurations” of a storm. However, “north” (צפון) is often the direction from which evil—especially military invasions—comes upon Israel and Judah in the judgment oracles of the prophets. This direction is determined by geography: Canaan sat at the western leg of the Fertile Crescent, while the Persian Gulf forms the end of the eastern leg (with mostly desert in between). (CC)

*fire flashing.* Perhaps lightning. (TLSB)

*as it were.* One of many expressions (including “like,” “likeness,” and “appearance”) Ezekiel uses to show he describes the indescribable. (TLSB)

*gleaming metal.* Something bright and reddish-yellow in color. Ancient translators often translated the Hbr word as “electrum,” a natural alloy of gold and silver. Another ancient parallel suggests “amber” (TLSB)

חֲמֻשָּׁה (translated “electrum”) is of uncertain meaning, but its other uses by Ezekiel (in 1:27 and 8:2), as well as an apparent Akkadian cognate (*elmeshu*, a quasi-mythical precious stone), indicate something of a dazzling brilliance. The word prepares us for the supernatural description that follows. (CC)

**1:5** *four living creatures.* “Four,” which stands for completeness (cf. the four directions in Ge 13:14 and the four quarters of the earth in Isa 11:12), is used often in this chapter—and over 40 times in the book. The living creatures, called “cherubim” in ch. 10, are throne attendants, here (see v. 10) representing God’s creation: “man,” God’s ordained ruler of creation (see Ge 1:26–28; Ps 8); “lion,” the strongest of the wild beasts; “ox,” the most powerful of the domesticated animals; “eagle,” the mightiest of the birds. These four creatures appear again in Rev 4:7 and often are seen in the paintings and sculpture of the Middle Ages, where they represent the four Gospels. (CSB)

Frequently used in Ezk, perhaps signifying completeness or totality. Living creatures. Later, Ezekiel will call these creatures “cherubim” (10:1); he may be reluctant to do so initially because their appearance was different from the cherubim above the ark of the covenant in both the tabernacle and the temple. (TLSB)

**1:6** *four faces ... four wings.* The creatures could see and move in all directions. A contrast may be intended with the hybrid creatures of Babylonian mythology, to which magical powers were ascribed. This vision stresses that all power and activity is under the control of the one omnipotent and omnipresent God. (TLSB)

**1:7** *Their legs were straight.* Could imply “unjointed” (i.e., having no knees) because the creatures did not walk, but flew. Alternatively, it may mean they were standing, not lying down with their legs folded beneath them. (TLSB)

*like those of a calf.* Perhaps indicates agility (cf. Ps 29:6; Mal 4:2). (CSB)

Probably a hoof. (TLSB)

*they sparkled.* Likely the creatures as a whole, not merely their legs (cf v 4). (TLSB)

**1:8** Unlike birds, these hybrid creatures had human hands under their wings. (TLSB)

**1:9** *wings touched one another.* Cf 1Ki 6:27. Although there were four distinct creatures, they appeared to be a single creature (cf v 11). (TLSB)

*touched.* Or, “joined,” implying that each wing moved in perfect concert with the others. (TLSB)

*straight forward.* In unison of purpose. Any direction was straight ahead for one of the creatures. (TLSB)

**1:10** They appear to be listed in the order in which they came into the prophet’s field of vision. So, looking at the creatures head-on, the human face was the first discernible, then the lion on the right, the ox on the left, and finally an eagle at the rear. At the head of all three is man, made in the image of God, but

also to have dominion over the rest. Early in the history of the Christian Church, these four faces came to be identified with the four evangelists, who, in spite of their different accents, all proclaim the same Gospel. (TLSB)

*The four.* Described as a unit. (TLSB)

*lion.* Representing strength, courage, and royalty (“the king of beasts”). (TLSB)

*ox.* Common symbol of fertility and divinity in addition to its domestic utility. (TLSB)

*eagle.* Renowned for its speed and stateliness. (TLSB)

**1:11** Partially repeats v 9. (TLSB)

*two covered their bodies.* Apparently out of modesty, just as in Isaiah’s inaugural vision. (TLSB)

**1:12** Neither wings nor legs play any role in the movement of the creatures.

*the spirit.* See v. 20. (CSB)

Hbr *ruach*. In v 4, it meant “wind.” Here, it must mean “spirit,” but whose? It could refer to the will of the creatures. But God’s Spirit plays a prominent role elsewhere in Ezk, often lifting Ezekiel himself up and carrying him various places. The divine element cannot be eliminated here, much as the NT describes our human spirits as indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Christians will not hesitate to identify this divine Spirit with the Third Person of the Trinity. Bas: “Now of the rest of the Powers each is believed to be in a circumscribed place.... But the Spirit is believed to have been operating at the same time in Habakkuk and in Daniel at Babylon, and to have been at the prison with Jeremiah, and with Ezekiel at the Chebar. For the Spirit of the Lord fills the world” (NPNF 2 8:34–35). (TLSB)

**1:15** *wheel on the earth.* Appears to anticipate the vehicle’s landing in v 24b. Such a premature notice is an indication of Ezekiel’s excitement. When the vision is repeated in ch 10, Ezekiel is calmer. (TLSB)

**1:16** *chrysolite.* The precise identification of this stone is uncertain. See Ex 28:20 where the stone appears in the priestly breastplate. (CSB)

*beryl.* Likely a bluish-green stone, one of the precious stones in the breastpiece of the high priest (Ex 28:30; 39:13). Cf 28:13. (TLSB)

*a wheel intersecting a wheel.* Probably two wheels intersecting at right angles in order to move in all four directions (see v. 17). The imagery symbolizes the omnipresence of God. (CSB)

Two wheels intersecting at right angles. Concentric rims is also possible, but less likely. (TLSB)

**1:17** The wheels can move freely in any direction (like a round caster on chair legs allowing the chair to roll in any direction without turning the direction the chair faces). (TLSB)

**1:18–21** *full of eyes.* Stresses that the entire vehicle is alive. Even the wheels were under the guidance of the Spirit. (TLSB)

**1:18** *rims.* Outer surfaces of the wheels. (TLSB)

*full of eyes.* Symbolizes God’s all-seeing nature. (CSB)



**1:22** *expanse*. The same word occurs in Ge 1:6–8, where its function is to separate the waters above from the waters below. Here it separates the creatures from the glory of the Lord. (CSB)

Traditionally translated “firmament”; used in Gn 1:6–8 for the vault of heaven, which to the naked eye looks like an inverted bowl stretching to the horizon. God’s throne stands in heaven above. God reigns over the entire universe, everything beneath the heavens. King Jehoiachin may have been dethroned (v 2), but God’s universal rule continues forever. (TLSB)

*crystal*. Usually means “ice,” which looks very much like glass. (TLSB)

**1:23–24** Cf v 11. Their flight now ends and they relax. (TLSB)

**1:24** Three similes describe the sound the creatures make while active. (TLSB)

*many waters*. Like the awesome roar of ocean breakers (cf Ps 93:4). Sometimes, esp in Ps, waters represent the forces of threatening evil, although sometimes God uses water for salvation (e.g., the exodus). (TLSB)

*sound of the Almighty*. Or, “voice of the Almighty.” (TLSB)

*tumult ... sound of an army*. Preparing for battle will make quite a din. (TLSB)

**1:25** When the living creatures fall silent, Ezekiel is able to make out another sound—a voice coming from the expanse above. The words of the voice are not reported until ch 2. (TLSB)

**1:26** *likeness ... appearance like*. Ezekiel attempts to describe the new scene surrounding God Himself. (TLSB)

*throne*. Meant to be occupied by the King of heaven. (TLSB)

*sapphire*. Not the blue stone we know by that name, but rather lapis lazuli. (TLSB)

*a figure like that of a man*. Ezekiel is reporting his vision of God, but he carefully avoids saying he saw God directly (see Ge 16:13; Ex 3:6; Jdg 13:22). (CSB)

**1:27** *gleaming ... fire ... brightness*. Different words describe the same appearance. (TLSB)

*fire enclosed all around*. Seems to imply that fire was enclosed in the metal-like upper torso. (TLSB)

**1:28** Climax and conclusion. (TLSB)

*glory of the LORD*. When God’s glory was symbolically revealed, it took the form of brilliant light (see Ex 40:34; Isa 6:3). What is remarkable about Ezekiel’s experience is that God’s glory had for centuries been associated with the temple in Jerusalem (see 1Ki 8:11; Ps 26:8; 63:2; 96:6; 102:16). Now God had left his temple and was appearing to his exiled people in Babylon—a major theme in the first half of Ezekiel’s message (see 10:4; 11:23). In his vision of the restored Jerusalem the prophet saw the glory of the Lord returning (43:2). (CSB)

Hbr *kebod yahweh*. Esp important in Ezk. Sometimes “glory” simply implies “splendor, fame.” But here it implies nothing less than God Himself in preincarnate revelation (cf Ex 33:18). The word refers not only to the divine figure on the throne but also to the apparatus underneath it. After the incarnation, the

NT describes Christ as glorious (e.g., at the transfiguration [Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2–3; Lk 9:29–31]; at the throne scene [Rv 4]; in Isaiah’s vision [Jn 12:41]; at the second coming, [Mt 19:28; 25:31]). (TLSB)

*fell on my face.* Act of submission and worship. (TLSB)

*the voice of one speaking.* God’s message forms the contents of chs 2–3. (TLSB)

**1:4–28** Ezekiel describes the movement of the living creatures and the revelation of God’s glory and voice. Today, God does not send us visions with new revelations, but works through the Word to convince us that we are “poor, miserable sinners.” Yet God does not show His glory in Christ to terrify us. Through repentance and absolution, He desires to raise us with Christ in newness of life. • Lord, lead us to daily repentance and a life of thanksgiving for the revelation of Your glory in Your Son, who will through His Holy Spirit lead us into the blessings of eternal life. Amen. (TLSB)