

EZEKIEL

Chapter 10

The Glory of the LORD Leaves the Temple

Then I 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. 2 And he 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. 3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house, when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 And 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. 5 And 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. 6 And 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. 7 And 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. 8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings. 9 And 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. 10 And as for their appearance, the four had the same likeness, as if a wheel were within a wheel. 11 When 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. 12 And 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. 13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing “the whirling wheels.” 14 And every one 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. 15 And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the Chebar canal. 16 And 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. 17 When 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. 18 Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. 19 And 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. 20 These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the Chebar canal; and I knew that they were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces, and each four wings, and underneath their wings the likeness of human hands. 22 And 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.

Ch 10 The chapter divides into two parts, each introduced by “I looked, and behold.” The first part describes the earthly judgment executed by the “man clothed in linen” (vv 2, 6–7). The second part describes the heavenly judgment as the glory abandons the temple (vv 4, 15, 18–19), expanding on the descriptions in ch 1. (TLSB)

Especially in chapter 10 one almost gets the impression that Ezekiel is taking notes as he observes the scene before him, sometimes reporting the action, but more often attempting to verbalize what he saw.

After the vision was over, Ezekiel could have converted his notes with relatively minimal change into the text we now find in his book. To be sure, this text really does not give us any more information about the external aspect of the process of its divine inspiration than other texts in the book do. But what I have submitted seems to be at least a plausible speculation. (CC)

10:1 *I looked.* Ch. 10 echoes ch. 1, underscoring the identity of what Ezekiel saw at the Kebar River with what he now sees in his vision (see 8:4). The creatures in ch. 1 are here called cherubim. (CSB)

cherubim. The “living creatures” of 1:5, having animal and human features. These beings, mentioned over 90 times in the Bible, are most commonly associated with the presence of God (cf Ex 25:22). They guard the throne of God (Ps 80:1) and are probably the “living creatures” referred to as standing around the throne in Rv 4:6. “Cherubim” is probably best understood as a common noun referring to a variety of beings (described differently in the Bible) rather than as the name of a specific type of being. The term is also known from the ancient Near East, where it is sometimes used for the mythological beasts that stand guard over the gates of cities, an example of how the truth about God and His ways is often preserved in a distorted form in ancient mythology (e.g., the widespread accounts of the flood in various cultures). (TLSB)

10:2 *man clothed in linen.* Appeared in 9:2; here he has an entirely different assignment. (TLSB)

burning coals.† Taken from among the living creatures. (CSB)

scatter them over the city. A judgment by fire (see Ge 19:24; Am 7:4). (CSB)

The conflagration to be wreaked on the city evokes comparisons with Sodom, the wicked city infamous for homosexuality, upon which God rained down “brimstone and fire” (Gen 19:24); Ezekiel in 16:46–56 will refer to Sodom and its destruction (16:50). Other passages that speak of similar judgments include Ps 11:6; Is 34:9; Ezek 38:22; Rev 11:5; 14:10; 19:20; 20:9; and the “lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” to which all who do not believe in Christ are consigned for eternity (Rev 21:8). (CC)

10:3 *standing on the south side.* Possibly to distance themselves as far as possible from the “image of jealousy” at the north gate (8:5) or the gate from which the executioners entered (9:2). (CSB)

cloud. Signifies God’s presence, as on the desert journeys (Ex 13:21) and at the consecration of the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–35) and the temple (1Ki 8:10–11). (CSB)

10:4 God begins His abandonment of the temple (9:3) by moving from the cherubim in the Most Holy Place to the threshold of the temple. (TLSB)

cherub. Singular here but probably collective. (TLSB)

brightness. Cf 1:4, 13. (TLSB)

10:5 *sound ... heard as far as the outer court.* Since Ezekiel is in the inner court (8:3), the description illustrates how loud the wing beats were. (TLSB)

10:6–7 Essentially completes the account in this ch; resumed and concluded in vv 18–19. (TLSB)

10:6 *fire.* Easily obtained from the burning coals (v 2). (TLSB)

10:7 *cherubim stretched out his hand.* Though the “man clothed in linen” was initially commanded to get the coals himself (v. 2), he received them from the hand of one of the creatures (see 1:8). (CSB)

took some of it and put it into hands. No further report is given, but the destructive spreading of the coals over Jerusalem is assumed. (CDB)

Clarifies v 2; the man obtained the coals through the agency of a cherub (cf Rv 8:5). (TLSB)

10:8 *a human hand under their wings.* The mention of the hands leads into a description of the cherubim in their entirety, concentrating esp on the wheels. (TLSB)

10:9–13 Parallel to 1:18–21, but with some differences. (TLSB)

10:13 *whirling wheels.* Cf v 2. Here, the motion is explicitly called to the prophet's attention. (TLSB)

10:14 *One face was that of a cherub.* While the faces of the man, lion and eagle are identical with those in 1:10, the ox is here called a cherub. (CSB)

four faces. The subject shifts from the wheels to the cherubim as a whole. We were introduced to their four faces already in 1:6, 10. The face of an ox (1:10) is replaced with that of a cherub, the features of which may have resembled an ox. (TLSB)

10:15 *mounted.* A brief note of the action, anticipating v 19. The identity of the living creatures of ch 1 with the cherubim here is made explicit. (TLSB)

10:17 This spirit or life force animated both the wheels and the cherubim. (TLSB)

10:18 *went out from the threshold.* The Lord's abandonment of the temple takes place in stages. The first stage was reported in 9:3 and 10:4; the third and final stage will be reported at the end of ch 11. In this second phase, the glory resumes His place on the throne above the cherubim, though no longer in the Most Holy Place. (TLSB)

10:19 *to the east gate ... and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.* A second movement of the glory, again in an easterly direction (see 9:3; 10:4). (CSB)

The divine chariot now moves to the east gate of the temple compound, poised to leave the defiled area completely. (TLSB)

10:20–22 Underscores what was already stated. (TLSB)

10:20 *living creatures ... they were cherubim.* Expands v 15b. (TLSB)

underneath the God of Israel. The cherubim bore the platform on which God was enthroned (cf 1:26–28). (TLSB)

Ch 10 The vision of the throne-chariot on which the glory sat, first described in ch 1, is here repeated and expanded. The glory takes another step away from the Most Holy Place; the Lord will totally abandon His temple. Yet, the glory of our incarnate Lord will not depart forever. He is gloriously enthroned through Baptism in those who have died with Him and risen again in holiness (cf Rm 6). • Lord, keep us from rejecting Your Word, of which the fate of Jerusalem warns. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen. (TLSB)