



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 10

*Theme: The departure of God's glory
from the temple.*

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Theme: The departure of God's glory from the temple.

McGee: In chapter 10 we continue Ezekiel's vision of the departing glory of the Lord. God has supernaturally transported Ezekiel to Jerusalem to let him see these things and then return to report to the major portion of the people of Israel who were already in captivity in Babylon. They were being told there by the false prophets that everything was fine in Jerusalem and they would return there shortly. Ezekiel will be able to go back and tell them why God is going to destroy the city and permit judgment to come upon them. We saw in chapter 8 that there was sufficient proof of the sin in the life of the people in Jerusalem—God made that evident to Ezekiel.

We need to see the fact that God judges; it is one of the evidences we have of the living God. We do not get by with our sin, and the very fact that we don't get by with it is proof that God exists. The "wheels within wheels" which Ezekiel saw speak of the energy of God as He moves in the affairs of men.

The glory of the Lord was above the cherubim—between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies in the temple. The nation of Israel had what no other nation had and, indeed, that which the church does not have today: the visible presence of God. In the ninth chapter of Romans, Paul lists about eight different points of identification which were unique to the nation of Israel, and one of them was "the glory." These people had the Shekinah glory, the visible presence of God, that which Ezekiel saw in his vision in the first chapter.

The glory began its departure in the previous chapter, and will now continue to depart. It moved out from the temple and hovered over it. Now we read:¹

There are many connections between this chapter and chapter 1, the vision of God's glory. The basic truth of the chapter is that God controls all the forces of judgment that He employs.

Ezekiel 10:1

Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

Clarke: **As it were a sapphire stone**—See the note on Ezekiel 1:22-26 (note). The chariot, here mentioned by the prophet, was precisely the same as that which he saw at the river Chebar, as himself tells us, verse 15, of which see the description in Ezekiel 1.²

JFB: cherubim—in Ez 1:5, called "living creatures." The repetition of the vision implies that the judgments are approaching nearer and nearer. These two visions of Deity were granted in the beginning of Ezekiel's career, to qualify him for witnessing to God's glory amidst his God-forgetting people and to stamp truth on his announcements; also to signify the removal of God's manifestation from the visible temple (Ez 10:18) for a long

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 9:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Adam Clarke's commentary on the Old Testament

period (Ez 43:2). The feature (Ez 10:12) mentioned as to the cherubim that they were “full of eyes,” though omitted in the former vision, is not a difference, but a more specific detail observed by Ezekiel now on closer inspection. Also, here, there is no rainbow (the symbol of *mercy* after the flood of wrath) as in the former; for here *judgment* is the prominent thought, though the *marking* of the remnant in Ez 9:4, 6 shows that there was mercy in the background. The cherubim, perhaps, represent redeemed humanity combining in and with itself the highest forms of subordinate creaturely life (compare Ro 8:20). Therefore they are associated with the twenty-four elders and are distinguished from the angels (Rev 5:1–14). They stand on the mercy seat of the ark, and *on that ground* become the habitation of God from which His glory is to shine upon the world. The different forms symbolize the different phases of the Church. So the quadriform Gospel, in which the incarnate Saviour has lodged the revelation of Himself in a fourfold aspect, and from which His glory shines on the Christian world, answers to the emblematic throne from which He shone on the Jewish Church.³

BKC:1-2. God would not share His dwelling place with other “gods,” and the sanctuary had been polluted with idolatry. God’s worship center at Shiloh was removed shortly after His glory had departed from it (1 Sam. 4:1-4, 10-11, 19-23; Jer. 7:12-14); and the same fate awaited the Jerusalem temple.

Ezekiel, still standing beside the altar, looked at the sanctuary and saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. This was God’s azure-blue throne on His throne-chariot (see comments on Ezek. 1:26). Though God was at the entrance to the sanctuary, His throne-chariot was “on the south side of the temple” (10:3).

God told the angelic scribe, Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim and take burning coals ... and scatter them over the city. The “burning coals” among the cherubim had been seen by Ezekiel earlier (1:13; cf. Isa. 6:6). Now God was going to use similar coals to purge His “holy” city.⁴

Dake: [behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne] The 37-fold description of the cherubim:⁵

1. Above the heads of the cherubim was a firmament (Ezekiel 10:1).
2. A throne colored like a sapphire stone was above the firmament.
3. The wheels were under the cherubim (Ezekiel 10:2).
4. They stood on the right side of the temple facing it (Ezekiel 10:3).
5. The cloud filled the inner court.
6. The glory of God went up from the cherubim and stood over the threshold.
7. The cloud filled the house (Ezekiel 10:4).
8. Brightness filled the court.

² Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 10:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 10:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

9. The sound of the cherubim's wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of Almighty God (Ezekiel 10:5).
10. There was fire between the wheels and between the cherubim (Ezekiel 10:6).
11. One cherub stretched forth his hand between the cherubim into the fire and took thereof, and put it into the hands of a man (Ezekiel 10:7).
12. They had the hands of a man under their wings (Ezekiel 10:8).
13. Each one had a wheel by him, making four wheels in all (Ezekiel 10:9).
14. The wheels appeared like the color of a beryl stone.
15. All four cherubim had one likeness, as if a wheel had been within a wheel (Ezekiel 10:10).
16. When they went, they went upon their four sides (Ezekiel 10:11).
17. They turned not as they went.
18. Which way the head looked they went.
19. Their whole bodies, backs, hands, wings, and wheels were full of eyes round about (Ezekiel 10:12).
20. A voice cried to the wheels (Ezekiel 10:13).
21. Each of the cherubim had four faces: the face of a cherub (ox, Ezekiel 1:10), of a man, a lion, and an eagle (Ezekiel 10:14).
22. They were lifted up (Ezekiel 10:15).
23. When they went the wheels went with them (Ezekiel 10:16).
24. When they lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth the wheels turned not from beside them.
25. When they stood the wheels stood.
26. When they were lifted up the wheels were also lifted up (Ezekiel 10:17).
27. The spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.
28. The glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house and stood over the cherubim (Ezekiel 10:18).
29. They lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth (Ezekiel 10:19).
30. When they went out, the wheels also were beside them.
31. Every one stood at the door of the east gate of the temple.
32. The glory of God was over them above.
33. Every one had four faces (Ezekiel 10:21).
34. Every one had four wings.
35. They had the hands of a man under their wings.
36. The faces on them were alike (Ezekiel 10:22).
37. They went straight forward.

McGee 1-2: The man clothed with linen is to scatter these coals from off the altar. The blood of the sacrifice was taken from the altar and put on the mercy seat. These coals speak of judgment. The people had refused the grace and mercy and redemption of God; now they must bear the judgment.

It is just as simple as this: God sent His Son because He loves you. Because He is holy, He had to pay the penalty for your sin and mine; He had to die on the cross. Christ is the propitiation, He is the mercy seat for our sins—not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. There is a mercy seat which you can come to, but, if you reject it, the judgment of God must come upon you. Christ bore your judgment, and that is the only

way God forgives you. It is not because you are a sweet little boy or a nice little Pollyanna glad-girl. You are a sinner and in rebellion against Him. The best that Christians can say today is that we are *saved* sinners; we are not superior people at all.

Judgment is now going to come to Jerusalem, the city that is the center of the earth. It is the very navel of the earth—that is what God calls it. It will be the center of the millennial kingdom, and it will be the eternal center of the earth. It is today the most sensitive piece of real estate on topside of the earth. Someone has put it like this: “Palestine became the nerve-center of the earth in the days of Abraham. Later on, the country became the truth-center because of Moses and the prophets. Ultimately, it became the salvation-center by the manifestation of Christ. His rejection led to its becoming the storm-center, as it has continued to be throughout many centuries. The Scriptures predict that it is to be the peace-center under the messianic kingdom, and it will be the glory-center in a new universe yet to be experienced.” We are seeing through the vision of Ezekiel the departure of the glory from that city, but God has an eternal purpose in this city.

OTS 1-8: Ezekiel then saw the *merkabhah*, the throne chariot of God. For the first time he identifies the “living beings” (1:5) as “cherubim.” Cherubim were angels who are always depicted in the Scriptures as guarding something sacred. In the *merkabhah* the cherubim supported and guarded the throne of God. That sapphire-like throne was at the moment empty (10:1).

“The man clothed in linen” who had just completed his mission of marking those who were to be spared had another mission to perform. The Lord directed this agent to “enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim.” There he was to fill his hands with “coals of fire.” Then he was to scatter those hot coals over the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel observed the scribe obediently enter the *merkabhah* (10:1f.).

Parenthetically, Ezekiel described in more detail the scene. The cherubim which formed part of the *merkabhah* were standing “on the right side of the Temple” when the man entered. The “glory of the Lord,” i.e., the manifestation of God himself, went up from the cherub in the Holy of Holies to “the threshold of the Temple.” The cloud which signaled divine presence filled the Temple and inner courts. The “brightness” of the glory of the Lord filled the outer court. This awesome sight was accompanied by an awesome sound. The sound of the wings of the cherubim which formed the *merkabhah* was heard as far as the outer court. The sound was like “the voice of God almighty when he speaks,” i.e., like thunder (10:3–5).

The man clothed in linen entered among the whirling wheels and cherubim of the *merkabhah*. He stood beside one of the wheels. One of the cherubim stretched forth his hand from beneath his wing to the fire which burned in the midst of the *merkabhah* (cf. 1:13). He took some of the fire, i.e., coals of fire, and put it in the hand of the man dressed in linen (10:6–8). The stage was now set for the fiery destruction of Jerusalem which here is symbolically represented as coming from the Lord himself.⁶

ESV1–8: The **man clothed in linen** (v. 2), a “preserving angel” in ch. 9, here becomes an incendiary agent of destruction. The narrative remains elusive, as attention oscillates

⁶ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 10:1–8). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

between the angel (10:2, 6–7) and the cherubim, who are both the “throne” for God's presence and the source of the burning coals that will ignite the city (vv. 1, 3–5, 8). On a natural level, sword and fire would coincide; in the vision, they are distinct phases.

ESV: 1–22 The Fire and the Glory. Two actions are interwoven here: the second (visionary) phase of city destruction (vv. 1–8), and the further withdrawal of the glory of God from the temple (vv. 9–22).

Constable: Ezekiel next saw in his vision the cherubim that he had seen by the river Chebar (1:22, 26). "Cherubim" probably comes from the Akkadian *karabu*, meaning "intercede," "be gracious," or "bless."¹⁸³ Over their heads he again saw the throne-chariot that resembled a sapphire in its color and beauty. In 1:26 the throne-chariot resembled lapis lazuli, another expensive blue stone. Perhaps the blue color represented the heavenly origin of this throne.⁷

Ezekiel 10:2

And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter *them* over the city. And he went in in my sight.

Dake: [Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city] Three commands from the throne of God:

1. He (God who sat on the throne) spoke to the man clothed with linen saying, Go in between the wheels under the cherub (Ezekiel 10:2,6).
2. Fill your hand with the coals of fire from between the cherubim.
3. Scatter them over the city (Ezekiel 10:2).

Clarke: Coals of fire—These were to signify the burning of the city by the Chaldeans. It seems that the space between the four wheels, which was all on fire, was that from which those coals were taken.

coals of fire—the wrath of God is about to *burn the city*, as His sword had previously *slain* its guilty inhabitants. This “fire,” how different from *the fire on the altar never going out* (Le 6:12, 13), whereby, in type, peace was made with God! Compare Is 33:12, 14. It is therefore not taken from the altar of reconciliation, but from between the wheels of the cherubim, representing the providence of God, whereby, and not by chance, judgment is to fall.

LAN: God’s perfect holiness demands judgment for sin. The cherubim are mighty angels. The burning coals scattered over the city represent the purging of sin. For Jerusalem, this meant the destruction of all the people who blatantly sinned and refused

⁷ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 Edition

to repent. Shortly after this prophecy, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem by fire (2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chron. 36:19).⁸

Scattering the “coals of fire” over the city is a symbol of purification by judgment, like that which Isaiah experienced in his vision (Isa 6:6).

he—Jehovah; He who sat on the “throne.”

Constable: Ezekiel saw the Lord instruct the man in linen (9:2-4, 11) to go among the whirling wheels under the cherubim (1:15-21) and to collect coals of fire from between them (1:13). He was then to scatter the coals over the city symbolizing its judgment and cleansing (Gen. 19:24; Ps. 18:10-15; Isa. 6:6; 33:14; Rev. 8:5). The man obeyed as the prophet watched.

Ezekiel 10:3

Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

“**Cloud**” - the Shekinah Glory, the Presence of the God, the presence of His holiness. In Egypt, it was the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. It dwelt in the Tabernacle and lead the people for 40 years through the wilderness (Ex 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11).⁹

Clarke: On the right side of the house—The right hand always marked the south among the Hebrews.

JFB: right ... of ... house—The scene of the locality whence judgment emanates is the temple, to mark God’s vindication of His holiness injured there. The cherubim here are not those in the holy of holies, for the latter had not “wheels.” They stood on “the right of the house,” that is, the south, for the Chaldean power, guided by them, had already advanced from the north (the direction of Babylon), and had destroyed *the men in the temple*, and was now proceeding to destroy the *city*, which lay south and west.

BKC 3-5: Ezekiel’s attention shifted back to God’s throne-chariot beside the sanctuary. A cloud filled the inner court, signifying God’s presence at the threshold of the sanctuary (cf. Ex. 33:9-10; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Isa. 6:1-4). Ezekiel repeated the fact that the glory of the LORD had moved from the throne-chariot to the threshold (Ezek. 10:4; cf. 9:3). As the cloud filled the temple ... the court was full of the radiance of the glory (cf. comments on 1:28) of the LORD. The manifestation of God’s glory pierced through the cloud to illuminate the plaza where Ezekiel stood. Along with this dazzling brightness was the sound of the cherubim’s wings, so loud that it was heard in the outer court (cf. 1:24).¹⁰

⁸ Life Application Bible Notes

⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

¹⁰ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 10:3–5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Constable: Ezekiel explained that in his vision the cherubim were positioned on the right or south side of the temple building, looking east. The south side of the temple was closest to the city. A cloud, symbolizing God's presence (cf. Exod. 33:9-10; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Isa. 6:1-4), covered the inner courtyard of the temple where the cherubim stood. . . . the presence of the Lord was as glorious in His departure as it was in His entrance (Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11).

Ezekiel 10:4

Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.

The sixth vision of the glory of God (Ezekiel 1:4-28; Ezekiel 3:12-14,22-23; Ezekiel 8:1-4; Ezekiel 9:3; Ezekiel 10:1-22).

Clarke: The house was filled with the cloud—This is a fact similar to what occurred frequently at the tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the dedication of the temple by Solomon. What is mentioned here was the Divine Shekinah, the symbolical representation of the majesty of God.

The Shekinah glory had been confined to the Holy Place, the place which denoted the approach of these people to God. However, now the glory leaves the Holy Place there between the cherubim and hovers over the temple to see if the people will return to God.

Constable 4-5: The prophet saw the glory of the Lord, perhaps personified, move from among the cherubim to the doorway of the temple building a second time (cf. 9:3). As God moved, the cloud representing His glory filled the temple and illuminated the courtyard (cf. Exod. 13:21-22). The sound of the cherubim's wings (1:6-9) also filled the whole temple area as far as the outer courtyard. That sound was like the voice of Almighty God, the sovereign of all creation, when He speaks (cf. 1:24; Ps. 29:3).

Ezekiel 10:5

And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.

Remember the idioms of Chapter 1.

McGee 5-8: Again, this “hand” denotes the activity of God in performing certain things. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork [actually, *fingerwork*]” (Ps. 19:1). The universe is the fingerwork of God, but God’s work in His redemption of man was greater than that in creation. Isaiah said, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the *arm* of the LORD revealed?” (Isa. 53:1, italics mine). He used His *bared* arm. The only way that I can understand the work of God is to use terms with which I am acquainted. I use my *fingers* to do certain things, my *hands* to

do other tasks, and my *arms* to do even heavier tasks. The greatest thing God has done is to perform the wonderful redemptive love act at the cross of Christ—that was His bared arm; but when God created the universe He just used His fingers, or, as John Wesley put it: “God created the universe and didn’t even half try.” Ezekiel says here that the *hand* of God is moving in judgment.

Chuck Smith (5-11): So, they are the four cherubs. Their wings are each touching each other and they are faced inwardly. So their movements are in straight type of movements, not turning their heads as they move, but each head just following in a straight type of movement.

Ezekiel 10:6

And it came to pass, *that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.*

[**Take fire from between the wheels**] The coals of fire were scattered over Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:2,6). This indicated judgment on the city (cp. Rev. 8:5).

when He commanded ... he went in: These words display the man’s unquestioning obedience to God (see v. 5; 1:24; 8:2–5).

BKC 6-7: Ezekiel returned from his momentary digression to continue his account of the man in linen. The messenger approached God’s throne-chariot and stood beside one of its four wheels and the cherubim (cf. 1:15-18). One of the cherubim then took some of the fire and put it into the hands of the man in linen, thus enacting the divine purification of Jerusalem.

God’s judgment as a fire scattered on Jerusalem is interesting in light of her ultimate fate, for the Babylonian army destroyed her by fire (cf. 2 Kings 25:8-9). The man in linen took the fire and went out. Though Ezekiel did not write that the man scattered the fire over Jerusalem, it can be assumed. Possibly the prophet’s eyes were still transfixed on God’s throne-chariot.

Constable 6-8: The man dressed in linen entered among the wheels of the cherubim to collect coals of fire. He stood beside one of the wheels. One of the cherubim then put some coals of fire that it had taken from between the cherubim and placed them in the man's hands. The man then went out of the cherubim's presence with the coals in his hands (cf. 2 Kings 23:4-9). Ezekiel saw again that the cherubim had what looked like human hands under their wings (1:8). Perhaps he mentioned this to clarify how the cherub could pick up coals and place them in the man's hand.

Ezekiel 10:7

And *one* cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took *thereof*, and put *it* into the hands of *him that was clothed with linen*: who took *it*, and went out.

Dake: [took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen] Fire evidently has no power over this kind of being. Nothing is said about tongs as in Isaiah 6, so it would be as stated here—taking up coals with his bare hands.

Ezekiel 10:8

And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

Dake: [form of a man's hand under their wings] They are like men in general bodily form, the only difference being in the feet, wings, number of hands, number and kind of faces, eyes, and a few other details. Compare the 42-fold description of note, Ezekiel 1:5, with the description here.

Ezekiel 10:9

And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone.

[beryl stone] The beryl is blue-green and the sapphire is a transparent deep blue (Ezekiel 10:1).

JFB: wheels—(See on Ez 1:15,16). The things which, from Ez 10:8 to the end of the chapter, are repeated from the first chapter are expressed more decidedly, now that he gets a nearer view: the words “as it were,” and “as if,” so often occurring in the first chapter, are therefore mostly omitted. The “wheels” express the manifold changes and revolutions in the world; also that in the chariot of His providence God transports the Church from one place to another and everywhere can preserve it; a truth calculated to alarm the people in Jerusalem and to console the exiles [POLANUS].

McGee: Have you ever watched a wheel when it is going around? There's that flashing light, you know, like that of a precious stone. These wheels are in ceaseless activity and speak of the fact that God is busy. The Lord Jesus said, “... My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). The Lord Jesus has been very busy on our behalf ever since He ascended back to heaven.

OTS: In this unit Ezekiel again describes in detail the *merkabah*, the throne chariot of God. The description is almost identical with that in chapter 1. The repetition underscored the impression which this symbolic chariot made on the prophet. It also served to make the point that the same glory of God which once had occupied the Temple, now abode with the captives in Babylon.

The description of the *merkabhah* here differs from that in chapter 1 in a few details. In reference to the wheels, Ezekiel added one point. They had the gleam of a Tarshish stone. The identity of the Tarshish stone is not known. The bodies, backs, wings and hands of the cherubim were full of eyes as well as the wheels (cf. 1:18). Whereas the cherubim in chapter 1 each had the faces of an ox, a man, a lion, and an eagle, here the face of the ox has become “the face of the cherub.” This suggests that the primary or normal face of a cherub resembled that of an ox (10:9–17).

Ezekiel then observed as the “glory of the Lord” left the threshold of the Temple and “stood over the cherubim” who were stationed in the courtyard. The divine rider had rejoined his chariot! The *merkabhah* then rose from the earth as the cherubim “lifted up their wings.” The *merkabhah* with the “glory of the Lord” above it paused momentarily at the eastern gate of the Temple (10:18f.).

Ezekiel concluded this unit by making explicit what had been implicit throughout. He had seen these cherubim before in Babylon by the river Chebar. They were the living beings which he had seen “beneath the God of Israel.” The faces, wings, hands and movements were exactly the same (10:20–22). Thus Ezekiel made the point that God had deserted the Jerusalem Temple. He had now taken up residence among the captives in Babylon.¹¹

ESV: 9–22 Much of the description of the cherubim here overlaps with the account of the “living creatures” in ch. 1, and reference should be made to that passage for an explanation of the common features. Although the description itself already signals this equivalence, the visionary account makes it explicit in 10:15, 20–22. The assault of sight and sound on the senses seems overpowering, as it was in the inaugural vision. While description dominates this section, the action, confined to vv. 18–19, is crucial. At the threshold (v. 18) of **the** east gate (v. 19), the glory of the God of Israel is poised to depart from the midst of his sinful people slowly and in stages (perhaps symbolizing how he gives the people every opportunity to repent). The language is deliberate: “God of Israel” is used five times in this vision (8:4; 9:3; 10:19–20; 11:22), and four of those with “glory of.” Beyond these, this phrasing occurs in Ezekiel only at 43:2 and 44:2, when God’s glory returns.

Constable 9-11: God would not share His dwelling place with other 'gods,' and the sanctuary had been polluted with idolatry.

Ezekiel 10:9-22 provides one of the most obvious illustrations of echo literary strategy in Scripture, the affinities between these verses and 1:6-21 being apparent even to the casual reader.

Ezekiel again saw the wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each of the four cherubim. This time he compared the wheels to Tarshish (lit. refinery) stones in appearance (cf. 1:16). Again, the exact identity of the stones that Ezekiel saw is impossible to determine with certainty today, but they were obviously expensive and beautiful. Tarshish was probably modern Spain or part of it, so this description identifies

¹¹ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 10:9–22). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

the stones by their quality or place of origin. Secondary vertical wheels evidently intersected the primary wheels and made it possible for these wheels to move in any direction horizontally (cf. 1:16-17).

Ezekiel 10:10

And *as for* their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

wheel ... in ... a wheel—cutting one another at right angles, so that the whole might move in any of the four directions or quarters of the world. God’s doings, however involved they seem to us, cohere, so that lower causes subserve the higher.

McGee: God has never had to come back to pick up something He has forgotten. He doesn’t need to deviate from one side to the other; He never detours. He goes straight forward today toward the accomplishment of His purpose in the world.

Ezekiel 10:11

When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

turned not—without accomplishing their course (Is 55:11) [GROTIUS]. Rather, “they moved *straight on* without turning” (so Ez 1:9). Having a face towards each of the four quarters, they needed not to turn around when changing their direction.

JFB: whither ... head looked—that is, “whither the head” of the animal cherub-form, belonging to and directing each wheel, “looked,” thither the wheel “followed.” The wheels were not guided by some external adventitious impetus, but by some secret divine impulse of the cherubim themselves.

Ezekiel 10:12

And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

Dake: [And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had] To us these creatures with their whole body, backs, hands, wings, and wheels full of eyes would appear as very peculiar. In Ezekiel 1 the rims of the wheels were referred to as full of eyes, but here other parts of their bodies are so described.

JFB: wheels ... full of eyes—The description (Ez 1:18) attributes eyes to the “*wheels*” alone; here there is added, on closer observation, that the *cherubim* themselves had them. The “eyes” imply that God, by His wisdom, beautifully reconciles seeming contrarities (compare 2Ch 16:9; Pr 15:3; Zec 4:10).

McGee: This, of course, is highly figurative, and I do not want to press this point, but I believe we have the messages of the four Gospels set before us. In the face of the eagle is pictured the *deity* of Christ—that's John's Gospel. In the face of the lion is pictured the *kingship* of Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah—that's Matthew's Gospel. In the face of the man is pictured the *humanity* of Christ—that's Luke's Gospel. Finally, the face of the cherub (sometimes it is the ox) pictures the *servanthood* of Christ—that's Mark's Gospel. He shed His blood that you and I might have eternal life—He made a mercy seat. In the temple the cherubim looked down upon the blood of the, sacrifice.

Chuck Smith (12-14): Now, in chapter 1 he said the face was like an ox. Here he's getting a look at it from a different perspective. He is standing down and looking up, as it has now ascended upward, and in looking up at it from this angle, it looks more like a cherub, whatever a cherub looks like.

Constable 12-14: Eyes covered the cherubim and the wheels symbolizing the great perception and knowledge of these beings (1:18; cf. Gen. 16:13; Zech. 4:10; Rev. 4:6). Ezekiel heard the wheels called whirling (Heb. *galgal*, "rotating," "rolling," or "revolving") wheels, described in terms of their function. Each of the cherubim had four faces—the faces of a cherub, a man, a lion, and an eagle (cf. 1:10).

In 1:10 the faces were of a man, a lion, a bull, and an eagle. Evidently the cherubim appeared more like bulls than anything else. This conclusion harmonizes with ancient Near Eastern art that pictured winged bulls and lions with human or bird heads guarding palaces. Probably the ancients chose these symbols of combined human and animal creatures to represent characteristics of those beings that they respected. Evidently God represented the cherubim in similar terms to communicate that His angelic servants possessed these same characteristics.

Ezekiel 10:13

As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

Remember Chapter 1 vision.

[the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel] The wheels either had the ability to hear, or they have been personified like this.

JFB: O wheel—rather, “they were called, whirling,” that is, they were *most rapid in their revolutions* [MAURER]; or, better, “It was cried unto them, The whirling” [FAIRBAIRN]. *Galgal* here used for “wheel,” is different from *ophan*, the simple word for “wheel.” *Galgal* is the whole *wheelwork* machinery with its *whirlwind-like rotation*. Their being so addressed is in order to call them immediately to put themselves in rapid motion.

BKC: Again Ezekiel described the cherubim and the wheels (vv. 8-11; cf. 1:15-21). However, Ezekiel noted some additional details (10:12-13). Their entire bodies ... were completely full of eyes. Probably their eyes represent divine omniscience as did the eyes

on the wheels (see comments on 1:15-18). The four creatures John saw surrounding God's throne were also covered with eyes (Rev. 4:8).

Then Ezekiel heard the wheels referred to as whirling wheels. "Whirling" (*hagalgal*) means rolling or revolving. Thus the wheels were named for their function: they set God's throne-chariot in motion by revolving. The naming of the wheels here seems to prepare the way for their departure (to be described in Ezek. 10:15-19). God's glory was about to whirl out of His temple on "the whirling wheels."

Ezekiel 10:14

And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Missler: The Four faces: Man, eagle, lion, ox. Why isn't the ox mentioned? The simplest answer may be that the face was towards Ezekiel; it was the face of the cherub which happened to be the ox. He merely mentions the other 3 faces to tie it to Chapter 1.

JFB: cherub—but in Ez 1:10 it is *an ox*. The chief of the four cherubic forms was not the *ox, but man*. Therefore "cherub" cannot be synonymous with "ox." Probably Ezekiel, standing in front of one of the cherubim (namely, that which handed the coals to the man in linen), saw of him, not merely the ox-form, but the *whole fourfold* form, and therefore calls him simply "cherub"; whereas of the other three, having only a side view, he specifies the form of each which met his eye [FAIRBAIRN]. As to the likelihood of the lower animals sharing in "the restoration of all things," see Is 11:6; 65:25; Ro 8:20, 21; this accords with the animal forms combined with the human to typify redeemed man.

BKC: Ezekiel then described the faces of the **cherubim** a second time (see comments on 1:10). However, an apparent discrepancy exists between these two descriptions. In chapter 1 the cherubim had the faces of a man, a lion, an eagle, and an ox; but in chapter 10 they had the faces of **a cherub ... a man ... a lion, and an eagle**. Some have suggested that a later scribe mistakenly copied "a cherub" in place of "face of an ox." A second view is that the face of an ox was, in fact, the normal understanding of the face of a cherub. In Akkadian literature the *kuribu* (cognate of "cherub") appear to have nonhuman faces.¹²

¹² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 10:14). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Ezekiel 10:15

And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

[**This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar**] The prophet assured us that they were the same living creatures whom he saw before, as in Ezekiel 1 (Ezekiel 10:15,20,22).

BKC: 15-22. It was now time for God's glory to depart. Then the cherubim rose upward. God's throne ascended from the court of Israel into the air. Ezekiel's description of the movement of the cherubim and wheels (vv. 15-17) uses the same words he employed in chapter 1 (see comments on 1:19-20). God's glory, which had been standing at the entrance to the temple, departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim (10:18). God was mounting His throne-chariot to ride out of His temple and city. The throne-chariot began moving toward the east; but as the cherubim approached the edge of the temple precincts, they stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory (cf. comments on 1:28) of the God of Israel was above them. These creatures (vv. 20-22) were unquestionably the same cherubim Ezekiel had seen earlier. Before God left both the temple and the city, there was a final pause. Once God passed from the gate, the inscription "Ichabod" ("the glory has departed") could be written over Jerusalem (cf. 1 Sam. 4:21-22). As if to delay this final movement in the departure of God's glory, Ezekiel inserted the story of 25 wicked rulers (Ezek. 11:1-21).

Constable 15-17: Then Ezekiel saw these same cherubim, which he had seen in his vision by the river Chebar, rise up. As they moved, the wheels beside them stayed right with them. Likewise when they stood still the wheels also stood still beside them. The spirit of the cherubim extended to the wheels so that whatever one did the other did. Perhaps the mobility of these creatures to do whatever God commanded them to do is what the wheels represent.

Ezekiel 10:16

And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

Ezekiel 10:17

When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also*: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them.

A description of the throne-chariot similar to that given in chap. 1. In 1:10 the four faces of the living creatures are described as that of a man (in front as they moved toward Ezekiel), of a lion (on the right), of a bull (on the left), and of an eagle (in back). Here (10:14) they are south of Ezekiel moving east, placing the bull face toward Ezekiel, which he calls the cherub face, perhaps because he saw it first.

Ezekiel 10:18

Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

This seems to be a formal, almost ceremonial departure.
See note, Ezekiel 10:4.

Clarke: God's glory departed from the temple and was never completely present again until Christ himself visited it in New Testament times. God's holiness required that he leave the temple because the people had so defiled it. God had to completely destroy what people had perverted in order for true worship to be revived. We must commit ourselves, our families, our churches, and our nation to follow God faithfully so that we never have to experience God's abandoning us.

BSB 18-19: The glory of God was seen departing from the temple by way of the east gate, which was the main processional gate. God does not remain where He is unwanted, and His temple had been desecrated by idols, pagan rites, and superficial worship. How tragic the day when God must forsake His house in protest of such practices. Though the departure was announced here, it was postponed until the events described in 11:1-25 were concluded, but it was accomplished before the destruction of Jerusalem. His glory will return to Jerusalem during the millennial age (43:2).¹³

JFB: The departure of the symbol of God's presence from the temple preparatory to the destruction of the city. Foretold in De 31:17. Woe be to those from whom God departs (Ho 9:12)! Compare 1Sa 28:15, 16; 4:21: "I-chabod, Thy glory is departed." Successive steps are marked in His departure; so slowly and reluctantly does the merciful God leave His house. First He leaves the sanctuary (Ez 9:3); He elevates His throne above the threshold of the house (Ez 10:1); leaving the cherubim He sits on the throne (Ez 10:4); He and the cherubim, after *standing* for a time *at the door of the east gate* (where was the exit to the lower court of the people), leave the house altogether (Ez 10:18, 19), not to return till Ez 43:2.

The glory of the Lord lifts up from the temple.

Constable 18-19: Ezekiel then saw God move from the front door of the temple (v. 4) to a position above the cherubim. In the former vision, the cherubim supported a platform on which the throne rested (1:22-26). The Lord was mounting his throne-chariot, which the cherubim would carry, to ride out of the temple and the city. The cherubim taxied God in His throne-chariot up to a position above the east gate of the temple (cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; 28:18; Ps. 18:10; 80:1; 99:1). This was the main entrance into the temple courtyards from the outside world. The Lord in His glory and the cherubim then hovered above this gate.

God had warned His people that He would remove the glory of His presence from them if they departed from His will (cf. Deut. 31:17; 1 Sam. 4:21; Hos. 9:12). One of the

¹³ Belever's Study Bible

greatest blessings that Christians enjoy is that God has promised never to withdraw His indwelling presence from our bodies, His present temples (Matt. 28:20; cf. John 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19).

Ezekiel 10:19

And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them, and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.

The cherubim mounted up, and the glory moved out and stood at the east gate.

Ezekiel 10:20

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 cherubims.

BSB: The “living creatures” which Ezekiel saw in his initial vision (1:4-28) are here named “cherubim.” In addition to the “cherubim,” another order of angels mentioned in Scripture is that of the “seraphim” (Isa 6:2, note). The Hebrew word *mal'ak* and the Greek word *angelos* both have the basic etymological meaning of “messenger” or “envoy.” Angels are mentioned more than 200 times in 35 different books of the Bible. They are beings created by God, prior to the creation of the physical universe, to serve Him (Heb 1:6). The same verse declares that their nature is “spiritual.” Angels apparently may assume various forms. In Ezekiel the cherubim appear as attendants to the chariot of YAHWEH (1:4-25). When the heavenly messengers approached Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, they at first appeared to be men (Gen 18:2). Other characteristics are attributable to angels who appear in Scripture. They may have wings (Isa 6:2), they may appear as a host (Luke 2:13), or they may appear individually or in small groups (Luke 24:4). At times they may resemble human beings, though they are in fact spiritual beings. Hence, Jesus said that they have no sexuality or marital relations (Matt 22:30). They are also described by Paul as “principalities” (*archai* Gk.), “dominions” (*kuriotetes*, Gk.), and “powers” (*exousiai*, Gk.) in his epistles (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 6:12; Col 1:16). At least some of these latter references are to evil angels who were ejected from heaven in the pre-creation fall of Satan (28:11-19; Isa 14:12-17; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Angels are mentioned as possible visitors (Heb 13:2) and as attending believers when the church gathers to worship (1 Cor 11:10). The particular assignments given to angels are doubtless far more extensive than those revealed in the Scriptures, but the Scriptures do provide a broad outline of angelic activities. They are called “ministers” *leitourgous*, Gk., (Heb 1:7) of God. As such, they are particularly involved in the heralding of meaningful redemptive events. Angels announced the birth of John the Baptist and of Christ (Luke 1:26; 2:8-14). They sometimes became agents of God’s judgment (2 Chr 32:21; Acts 12:23; Rev 20:1-3). As messengers of God’s mercy, they strengthened Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:11) and comforted Paul in the midst of a storm at sea (Acts 27:23). Ultimately, angels will be judged by redeemed men (1 Cor 6:3).

JFB: I knew ... cherubim—By the second sight of the cherubim, he learned to identify them with the angelic forms situated above the ark of the covenant in the temple, which as a priest, he “knew” about from the high priest.

Constable 20-22: Ezekiel explained that the cherubim were the same creatures that he had formerly called living beings in his description of his earlier vision (1:5). Why did Ezekiel not call them cherubim in chapter 1? Perhaps this vision of Solomon's temple, which contained representations of cherubim (Exod. 25:18-20; 1 Kings 6:29, 35; 7:29, 36), helped Ezekiel identify the living creatures that he had seen before. Each one had four faces, four wings, and human-like hands under their wings (1:6, 8). The faces of the cherubim were the same as the faces of the living creatures in the previous vision. Each cherub moved straight forward, in the direction of the front of its body (1:9, 12). This description may stress the purposefulness with which the cherubim moved to carry out God's will.

Once God passed from the gate, the name Ichabod ("the glory has departed") could have been applied to Jerusalem just as it had been applied earlier to Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:21-22).

... the departure of the glory signals the end of a relationship that had existed for almost four centuries. The divine king has abandoned his residence.

Ezekiel 10:21

Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings.

The cherubim sometimes serve as guardians (see Gen. 3:24). They are associated with God's throne and presence (the mercy seat on the ark; Ex. 25:18-22; 1 Chr. 13:6). They are also associated with God's chariot-like throne (v. 1; 1:20-26; Ps. 18:10).

JFB: The repetition is in order that the people about to live without the temple might have, instead, the knowledge of the temple mysteries, thus preparing them for a future restoration of the covenant. So perverse were they that they would say, “Ezekiel fancies he saw what has no existence.” He, therefore, repeats it over and over again.

Ezekiel 10:22

And the likeness of their faces *was* the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

Missler: Whatever Ezekiel is seeing, it is expressed by the same idioms he used when he spoke of his vision of the Throne of God in Ch.1.

The staggering implication is that this Shekinah in the Temple was Leaving, and as it was moving it was being met by the four cherubim that protect and guard the Throne of God. The 4 cherubim are always with the Throne of God (see Ez 1, Isa 6, or Rev 4).

These creatures with the 4 faces, are clearly the ultimate agencies that are assigned to protect God's holiness. It is interesting to see them participate in picking up the Shekinah Glory from the Temple as it leaves.

The Glory was departing from Israel, but notice that it does this reluctantly, He lingers. He leaves the Holy of Holies, and He is in the Temple court, and lingers over the threshold. The departure of the Shekinah was warned by Moses and by Hosea. See Deut 31:16-21 and Hos 9:12.

The Shekinah Glory left the Temple from threshold, the threshold is east of the Temple, and east of the Temple was the Mount of Olives.

The Glory left the Temple and was not seen there again until Jesus Christ came. So the Glory of God returned to Israel in the form of a man. When Jesus left, He left from the Mount of Olives. When Jesus returns He will return upon the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4).

Chuck Smith: Now, you have the difficulty of trying to describe in human language an indescribable kind of a thing like you've never seen before, as you observe these cherubim, these angelic beings. *Cherubim* is plural for cherub. The *im* is the plural in Hebrew. So, a cherub would be singular, a cherubim is plural, because there are four cherubim involved in this vision that Ezekiel saw, he uses the term cherubim, because it is plural.

There are these colors, there are these eyes, there are these faces, there are all of these aspects that he describes in human language as best he can. To us, it comes out as some kind of a monstrosity as far as the appearance is concerned, because we have never seen anything with four faces that in any wise would resemble what he's talking about here. The lights that are flashing, the colors, when they move, the lightening, look at their movements.

And so Ezekiel is bound to language that he has, trying to describe these heavenly beings. Now, there is always that difficulty in trying in human language to describe that which is divine or heavenly.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Hey, if I've told you earthly things and you didn't believe them, how are you going to believe if I tell you heavenly things?" Now, if we have difficulty describing earthly things, how in the world can you describe heavenly things? How would you describe to an aborigine in Australia a computer and how it operates? You'd have trouble, wouldn't you? Because he has such a limited vocabulary, no understanding of modern technical instruments, how that you can punch out on this keyboard, but he doesn't understand what a keyboard is.

Paul the apostle was caught up into heaven, but he was pretty smart, he said, "There is no language that can describe what I heard," so he just left it there. He said, "It would be a crime for me to try to describe it in human language. There's no way to do it," so he didn't even try. You know, when I get to heaven I'm going to talk to him about that. I think he should have at least tried. But he said it would be a crime to try and do it, because nothing that you could...there are no words that can describe that which Paul heard. So far beyond that any attempt would be less than what it was. It would be a crime, it would be so much less than what it actually was, that there's just no way you can do it.

So, I'm certain that with everything else we get in heaven will be a new vocabulary. In order that we might again describe to each other those things that are of the heavens, those things that are heavenly.

So, Ezekiel is taking human language and trying to describe spiritual creatures, spiritual events. Doing the best that he can, but limited by his age and the technology and all that they had at that time, in his use of words, in describing these things.

Now, when you see the cherubim, it would be interesting if in this modern, more technical age, we would see them, if our descriptions would vary much from Ezekiel's. Now, I really don't know. He talked about their having the wings and touching each other. We think of Ezekiel and wings, you think of bird type wings. Maybe they're not. Maybe we'd say, "They had wings like an F-04. And the noise sounds like a jet taking off." And it could be that in using terms today we would use different terminology to describe these angelic heavenly creatures that are there about the throne of God, that are described here in Ezekiel 1-10.

But, for parallel passages read Revelation, chapter 4, as John also describes these same creatures in the heavenly scene. Familiarize yourself with them because when John gets to heaven, the first thing that attracts his attention is the throne of God and these cherubim around the throne of God and their activity there. So, you might as well familiarize yourself with them, because that's probably the first thing that you'll be seeing when you get to heaven. And if you aren't a little familiar with it, you're going to be going around with your mouth wide open looking like someone who didn't do their homework.

So, interesting what we have to look forward to as we one day will leave this three-dimensional plane or three-dimensional living and enter into that spiritual dimension where we too will see the real world, not this temporal world of fantasy that is about us, but the eternal world, God's kingdom.

But as Christians be alert, keep your eyes on the Lord, keep them looking up, because our redemption is so very, very close. God be with you and bless and keep you through the week. May the Lord strengthen you as the evil days are waxing worse and worse. As perilous times have come because of the pleasure madness of man. May the Lord establish your life in Christ and may your faith increase and your love and devotion for the things of God, for the things of the Spirit. In Jesus' name.