Ezekiel Chapter One: The Visions

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1. INTERESTING MATTERS
   1. Yesterday was **Shemini Atzeret:** “The eighth [day] of assembly.” Refers to the end of Succoth and is based on Num 29.35: “On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work.”
   2. Today is **Simchat Torah:** “Joy of Torah.”
      1. Lots of dancing, singing, festivities of thankfulness of God’s Word. May the joy of receiving the law from Sinai reverberate in our joy of having the Holy Scriptures as our guide.
      2. Prayers for rain begin. (Prayers end at Passover.)
2. PROLOGUE: VERSES 1 – 3
   1. When? Around 593 B.C., age of 30, priest
   2. Where? Babylonia by the Kebar (Chebar) river/canal at Tel Aviv
      1. A note on present-day Tel Aviv
      2. The “hand of the Lord” ==> strength,
   3. Why? The exile from Judah and Jerusalem.
      1. Policy differences between Assyria, Babylon, Persia
      2. A note on how dispirited the exiles were and how they needed a “heavenly vision” for encouragement. (Cf. Ps 137.)
      3. Ezekiel will have a message of judgement for the exiles and for those back in Jerusalem, and he needs to be strengthened for this message, which will be bitter (chaps. 2 & 3).
3. SHORT NOTES ON VISIONS
   1. These are “theophanies” as are the burning bush, pillar of fire and cloud, Isaiah’s vision in Is 6.
   2. What Ezekiel describes is *what he sees*, not, say, 21st century drones that he can't describe and is making up what he feels will be a more understandable description to his listeners.
4. VERSES 4 – 28: THE VISIONS
   1. Verses 4 – 21: Beings and wheels
   2. Verses 22 – 27: God’s glory described
   3. Verse 28 Postlude: “And when I saw it, I fell on my face….”
5. SUMMARIES FOR EACH VERSE
6. Verse 4 (Major points)
   1. Storm from the north (Why north?)
      1. Storm wind. The word for storm used in 2 Kgs 2.1, 11; job 38.1; Ps 107.25, 29; 148.8.
      2. Direction of Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Judah
      3. “From the north” became a general term from which terrible things will come
   2. Great cloud w/ fire flashing [lightening?]. Shades of Mt. Sinai.
   3. Bright light around (coronal glow)
   4. Glowing metal in the midst (as though something is being forged)
7. Verse 5: Four living beings. The word for “living being” or “living creature” is used of humans as well.
8. VERSES 6 – 14: DESCRIPTION OF THE BEINGS
   1. Vs. 6: Four faces and four wings
   2. Vs. 7: Legs like a calf’s foot made w/ burnished bronze
   3. Vs. 8: Human hands on the sides of the beings
   4. Vs. 9: The wings touched one another; the beings could move without turning
   5. Vs. 10: The four faces: man, lion, ox, eagle
   6. Vs. 11: Two wings spread out and touching; two covering their bodies
   7. Vs. 12: Picks up from vs. 9 concerning movement
      1. They would go the way the spirit directed them
      2. But the word for spirit and for wind (Heb. *ruach*) is the same, so it may be the wind was blowing them in one direction or the other.
   8. Vs. 13
      1. Burning coals of fire (uses for judgment in chap. 10; note also Is chapter 6)
      2. Darting torches (reference to Eden)
      3. Lightning (back to Sinai)
   9. Vs. 14: Beings running to and fro—very kinetic!
9. VERSES 15 – 22 THE WHEELS
   1. Vs. 15: One wheel on earth (or ground) for each being
   2. Vs. 16: Now we have a wheel within a wheel
   3. Vs. 17: The wheels, like the beings, moved without turning
   4. Vs. 18: The wheels were “lofty” (“grand,” “exalted”; in Mod. Heb. “circumference”)
   5. Vs. 19: The wheels followed the movement of the beings: front/back: left/right; up/down. The beings are the emotive force for the wheels (“for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.” [Lit. for the spirit of *the being*.” LXX: “*spirit of life*.]
   6. Vs. 20: “them” refers to the beings
      1. The wind (*ruach*) [of the storm?] was the driving force for the beings
      2. The spirit (*ruach*) of the beings was the driving force for the wheels
      3. Volition resides w/ the beings, not w/ the wheels.
   7. Vs. 21: Further description of what we find in vss. 19, 20.
10. VERSES 22 – 28 VISIONS OF GLORY
    1. Vs. 22: A crystal-like expanse/firmament/dome [Heb. *raqiah*](Cf. Gen 1.6, 7, 8) was above the beings/wheels complex
    2. Vs. 23: Same description as vs. 9, 11
    3. Vs. 24: When the beings flapped their wings, it sounded like
       1. Rushing water [Lit. many waters]
       2. Voice of the Almighty [Heb. *shaddai*: almighty, most powerful. Maybe an adjective here, but in 10.5 we read “like the voice of God Almighty [*el-shaddai*] when he speaks,” so probably that here as well.
       3. The tumult of an army camp (Shouting over a victory?)
       4. The beings dropped their wings when still. [This phrase would go well w/ vs. 23.]
    4. Vs. 25: the voice is emanating from above the expanse/firmament/dome. [Note the same phrase about lowering the wings as in the previous verse. Diplography? Missing from the LXX.]
    5. Vs. 26: A throne above the expanse, and higher yet a throne made of sapphire (or *lapis lazuli*) w/ a human figure sitting on the throne.
    6. Vs. 27: Of the figure on the throne:
       1. Loins and above: glowing metal (cf. vs 4) w/ fire within it
       2. Loins and below: fire w/ a glow all around
    7. Vs. 28: The radiance like a [very bright] rainbow

“SUCH WAS THE APPEARANCE OF THE LIKENESS OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD”

Ezekiel can only fall on his face after his viewing this awesome vision.

Lessons: (Modified from Daniel Block, Vol. I, p. 106 – 9)

1. All the visions shout “GLORY!” (Cf. Ps 29.9)
2. Unlike Mesopotamian images of other gods w/ their minions about them, Jehovah/Yahweh sits alone on his throne.
3. Jehovah/Yahweh is above all creatures. Note that all the representative creatures are *below* his throne.
4. Ezekiel describes the “glory” (Jehovah/Yahweh) as “a likeness as the appearance of a man” (vs. 26). Take this to mean he is interested in humanity—*and that means you and me!*
5. God is among the exiles. Remember, the temple in Jerusalem is destroyed. Since God’s presence was in the temple, does that mean God’s presence is not w/ the exiles in Babylon? *Absolutely not!* Remember what Jesus proclaimed to the woman from Sychar re: where God is worshipped.
6. Part of the vision implies judgement upon the temple in Jerusalem. Why? Note the coals in the middle of the creatures (vs. 13). These same coals will be spread over Jerusalem as judgement in chapter 10.2 when the glory of the Lord leaves his Jerusalem temple.