

The name *Ezekiel* means *God will strengthen*. The prophet lives beside the Chebar canal in exile in Babylon, yet writes of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. This means that he was taken from Jerusalem in the first deportation after Jehoiachin's capture (2 Kings 24:10-14). Ezekiel then receives his visions before the capture of the final rebellious king, Zedekiah, and the razing of the city (2 Kings 25), an interval of about eight years.

The scene is set with an awe-inspiring picture of the glory of the Lord seated above four cherubim. The theme of the Lord's glory permeates the book. His holiness demands that He remove His glory from the defiled temple in Jerusalem and subject His rebellious people to anguish, defeat, and exile for a time. But He also promises He will regather His scattered children and return His glory to a new temple.

What are cherubim?

Cherubim is the plural of *cherub*. They are one class of angelic beings. The others are angels, archangels, seraphim, and demons, or fallen angels. The living

creatures we see here are identified as cherubim in Ezekiel 10. The living creatures of Revelation 4 are very similar but their continual proclamation of God's holiness resembles the seraphim of Isaiah 6:

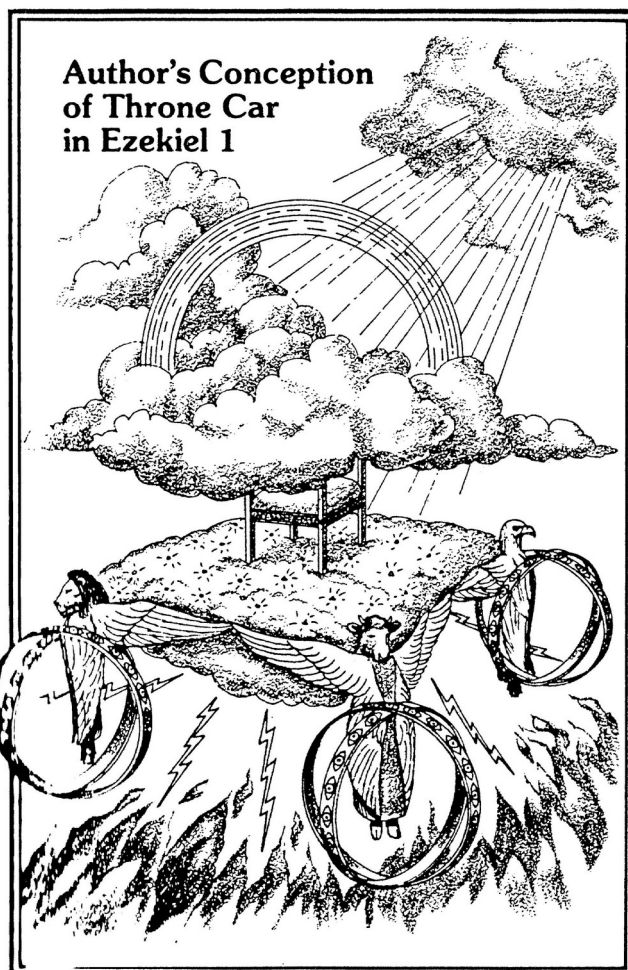
"And one called to another and said:

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory!'" (Isaiah 6:3)

We also find cherubim guarding the entrance to the garden of Eden after the expulsion of Adam and Eve. Two golden cherubim adorn the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, also known as the Mercy Seat, with their wings touching as described here. It seems that cherubim **guard** God's holiness while seraphim **proclaim** it.

We know the names of two archangels: Gabriel and Michael. And we know the name of one cherub: Satan (actually his later name). Surprised? Ezekiel 28:14 says of the king of Tyre, a stand-in for Satan, "You were an anointed guardian cherub." It's hard to conceive, but Satan was a guardian of God's holiness before being ruined by his pride. More on that when we get to chapter 28.



At left is William MacDonald's conception of the scene in Ezekiel 1. The faces of the cherubim have been simplified.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. The next several chapters will tell of God's righteous wrath toward the rebellious and idolatrous children of Israel. How does this picture of the Lord on His throne serve to prepare us for that?
2. Verse 10 tells us the four faces on each of the cherubim. Several commentators have linked each face with one of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), and an aspect of Christ illustrated by both the face and the particular emphasis of the gospel. Fill in the blanks below.

<u>Face</u>	<u>Gospel</u>	<u>Aspect of Christ demonstrated</u>
Human	_____	_____
Lion (King)	_____	_____
Ox (Servant)	_____	_____
Eagle (Heavenly)	_____	_____

3. What does "son of man" mean here?
4. What is the basic message given to Ezekiel regarding Israel and Judah?
5. Is there any advice for us in Chapter 2?