God’s Glory on a Flying Chariot
Ezekiel 1:4-- 2:1

There has already been two deportations from Judah to Babylon; the third will be more consequential; Jerusalem will be burned and the temple reduced to rubble; God’s glory has departed; the captives in Babylon will be saying: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion” (Psalm 137:1); to Ezekiel God shows His glory in the form of a flying chariot; John Calvin wrote: “If anyone asks if the vision is lucid, I confess its obscurity and that I can scarcely understand it.” J. Vernon McGee confessed: “I am certainly a Calvinist in the sense that I must concur with his statement--- neither do I understand Ezekiel’s vision clearly.”

Though this will be a challenge, let’s do our best to make sense of the vision.

The Coming of a Windstorm (1:4-14)

The cloud (1:4)... A storm cloud is coming out of the north; this is significant in that astronomers have located apparent empty space in the region of the North Star; there is empty space with an illuminous glow (Job 26:7; Psalm 75:6); The psalmist says that “exaltation comes from the north; the word “exaltation” (ruwn) could be translated “salvation;” could heaven be beyond the empty space of the north?

The cherubs... “within it came the likeness of four living creatures...(1:5a); they are angels referred to as “cherubim” (10:1).

1. Their form was that of a man (1:5b-9)...

Their faces were that of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (1:10); they look in all directions and reveal God’s sovereign rule over the universe; they portray the coming Messiah as set forth in the four gospels; Luke as Intelligent Man; Matthew as the Lion King; Mark as the the Ox Servant; John as the God Man in the heavenly Eagle; there you have God’s intelligence, strength, and power ruling the universe;
you have God’s faithfulness as a Servant to man (Matthew 20:28); you have Jesus’
deity-- the God Man-- who came to earth to reveal the true God to mankind.

When you add it all up these four living creatures have 16 faces and 16 wings; no
matter where Ezekiel was standing he could see all four faces; as they moved
forward he could see all the characteristics of God’s rule and character.

2. Their flight on wings was directed by the Holy Spirit (1:11-14)... Two of their wings stretched upward and touched each other; the other two wings
covered their body; under their wings were the hands of a man; they were like the
hands of God reaching down to comfort His people in time of need; they were also
ready to strike judgment when needed.

These cherubim moved under the control and power of the Holy Spirit; they could
not be diverted; they kept looking straight forward while obeying the leadership of
the Spirit; there is fire going up and down among the creatures along with lightning
and thunder and bright amber flames; this represents the manifest presence of the
Shekinah glory of God that once shown over the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the
Covenant--- the glory that had departed from Solomon’s Temple.

The Chariot of God’s Glory (1:15-21)

The wheels of the chariot (1:15)... The creatures begin to fade into the background
and terrifying wheels move toward Ezekiel.

1. Their design had the appearance like the color of beryl which varies from
white to yellow and even to greenish blue (1:16a)....

Each wheel had a wheel in the middle of a wheel and the rim of the wheels was full of
eyes; these wheels were parallel to each other--- at right angles to one another; they
were constantly turning and they can move in any direction; but the four living
creatures never turned for they already faced in all directions (1:17).

The living creatures always went in the direction of the moving wheels for the wheels
were always beside them; whenever the living creatures were lifted up, the wheels
were lifted up; wherever the Spirit wanted the living creatures to go the wheels
would go; the wheels became an extension of the cherubim and both contained the Spirit of God.

Ezekiel has envisioned the glory of God on a mobile platform that can be likened to a chariot; as God directed the cherubim the wheels responded and the chariot was propelled by the Spirit in the direction God wanted it to go; what are we to make of these wheels?

2. Their description was that of wheels in the middle of the four wheels (1:16b)...

It speaks of God’s omnipresence (1:16); the wheels were full of eyes and could move in any direction at any time (Jeremiah 23:24); there have been attempts to limit God; the Israelites only saw God confined to the Ark of the Covenant; the Syrians who worship the god of the valleys believed the God of Israel to be the God of the mountains (1 Kings 20:23); the Samaritans believed God could only be worshipped on Mt. Gerizim while the Jews believed He could be worshipped only in Jerusalem (John 4: 20-21).

People get uncomfortable with a God that can see them so they want a god that remains in one place; they can see him when they choose or hide from him when they don’t want Him to see them, pantheism teaches that god is an impersonal force as popularized in Star Wars: “May the Force be with you;” people who believe this want to remove the God who created nature and limit Him to nature; Deism teaches God’s power but we know nothing about His presence; this is convenient for this means they are not morally accountable to God.

The wisdom of the rims on the wheels (1:18)...

1. The rims on the wheels were “so high they were awesome” (1:18a)...

This speaks of God’s omnipotence; sometimes the wheels touched the earth, sometimes they hovered over the earth, sometimes they took off into outer space; see Revelation 19:6; Psalm 115:3; Jeremiah 32:17.
2. The rims on the wheels “were full of eyes all around the four of them” (1:18b)...

This speaks of God’s omniscience; see 2 Chronicles 16:9; 1 John 3:20; Psalm 147:4; Psalm 139:16; Jeremiah 1:5; Hebrews 4:13; Proverbs 15:3; Psalm 139:1-6; Psalm 1:6; John 10:27; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Samuel 2:3.

The workings of the wheels (1:20-21)...

1. The wheels move by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:20)... God is Spirit; He is in both the living creatures and in the wheels as they are an extension of the cherubim; so God dwells in the life of every believer and directs us by His power to do His will (John 14:16-18,23; Philippians 2:13).

2. The wheels move in participation with the cherubs (1:21)... The Triune God is in us and partners with us for His glory; we are never alone (Hebrews 5b-6); as the cherubs were connected to the wheels on the platform of God’s chariot and in the wheels of that chariot, so God’s presence is not only in us but with us!

Ezekiel found comfort from this vision even though greater danger lie ahead for the people of Jerusalem and Judah; Ezekiel got to see God’s glory like no one else as it came out of a whirlwind with cherubs and wings and wheels; the winged cherubs spoke of God’s intelligence (Man), kingship (Lion), servanthood (Ox), and deity (Eagle); all of this was to remind Ezekiel, though difficult times have come and are yet to come, God’s glory will return and by His power and presence, His people Israel will never be forsaken; every believer ought to find comfort from that vision.
The Culmination of the Vision (1:22-2:1)

The firmament with God’s throne (1:22)...

The firmament is like a platform on which rests the likeness of the throne of God (1:26); God is still on his throne; it was comforting to Ezekiel to know that while mankind in accordance with His perfect will.

1. Under the firmament were the cherubim (1:23-24)… Whatever the meaning it is clear the cherubim were under the canopy of God’s protection.

2. Above the firmament and over the heads of the cherubim was the likeness of a throne (1:25-28)… The significant thing is that on the throne was a Man who is “the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (1:28b); that God-Man is Jesus for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9; John 1:14).

The falling before God (2:1a)...

When Ezekiel realizes he is in the presence of God he falls prostrate out of respect for God; the most common word in the Old Testament to express worship is “to bow down” or “to prostrate oneself;” the most common New Testament word for worship, proskyneto which has exactly the same meaning; Ezekiel falls flat on his face when he realizes the glory of God will come again--- not in smoke and fire as appeared in the temple, but His glory will come in the Person of Jesus Christ! (John 1:14; Matthew 24:30). Amen!