

Ezekiel 10

- Let's return to Ezekiel's vision of the movement of God's glory out of His temple
 - Last week in chapter 9 the Lord's glory moved out of the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the temple
 - At the same time, Ezekiel saw a vision of the coming judgment for the people in Jerusalem
 - That scene continues today into chapter 10
 - And we're going to see something familiar in Ezekiel's vision today
 - Because the cherubim with their wheels return

Ezek. 10:1 Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them.

Ezek. 10:2 And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And he entered in my sight.

Ezek. 10:3 Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court.

Ezek. 10:4 Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord.

Ezek. 10:5 Moreover, 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.

- Ezekiel has just witnessed the destroying angels striking down the people in the city
 - It was a traumatic moment for the prophet
 - It caused him to ask the Lord in horror if He was putting all the remnant of Israel to death
 - It's the low point so far in the visions Ezekiel has seen
 - But from that moment, the scene changes again and in a profound way

- Ezekiel looks up from the temple and the city to see that same heavenly expanse he saw in chapter 1
- The expanse held the throne of God just as it did in chapter 1
- And below the expanse, upholding the the glory of God, are the same cherubim we saw in chapter 1
 - You'll remember these strange creatures
 - They have four wings and four faces on a neck that doesn't turn
 - Their feet are like that of an ox and they move like lightening on strange wheels
 - Ezekiel will describe them again in detail for us later in this chapter
- Their reappearance at this moment reminds us that their assignment is to guard the glory of God
 - So it only make sense that as God's glory prepares to depart, the cherubim have arrived as escorts
 - But they also participate in the judging of the city
 - Notice the One on this exalted throne calls down to the man clothed in linen and gives him instructions
 - He's told to enter underneath the wheels of the cherubim to fill his hands with burning coals
 - Earlier in chapter 1 Ezekiel described these coals

Ezek. 1:13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.

- Ezekiel said these burning coals were in the midst of the living beings
- And now in chapter 10 he clarifies that the coal fire was inside the space created by the four wheels under the living beings
- Into this space, the man in linen (who I suggested was preincarnate Christ) reached to fill his hands with burning coals

- Then he's told to scatter these coals on to the city
- Scattering burning coals is a picture of God's judgment
- Remember, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone
- And remember Paul when he wrote these words

Rom. 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Rom. 12:20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

- So here we're seeing the destruction of the city foretold in this vision
 - In the previous chapter Ezekiel's vision foretold the death of the city's residents apart from the remnant
 - Here we see the destruction of the structures and walls of the city
- Then Ezekiel broadens our view of the scene by changing our vantage point within his vision
 - He tells us that the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple itself
 - He means on the south side of the building, looking east
 - The south end of the Temple was the side facing the old city of David
 - So they are stationed between the city as it's being destroyed and the holy temple where the glory of God dwells
 - Once again, they have assumed the position of guarding the glory of God
 - As they stand guard, the man in linen enters the court of the temple
 - And in v.3 Ezekiel says that as this happens, the court is filled with the cloud
 - The glory of the Lord is commonly pictured as either fire or a cloud

- The people of Israel followed both in their desert wandering
- At night they followed a pillar of fire which gave light in the dark
- And in the day they followed a pillar of cloud which obscured the sun to give them shade in the desert heat
- So as the man in linen enters the courtyard, the presence of the Lord fills that space in the form of a cloud
 - This cloud forms in preparation to receive the Shechinah glory as it leaves the temple
 - Remember we read last week how the glory of the Lord moved from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the temple
 - The threshold was the doorway of the temple leading into the open court
 - But now Ezekiel explains that movement again in more detail
 - In v.4 the glory of the Lord goes up from its place under the cherub on the mercy seat of the ark
 - It moves through the length of the Holy Place in the temple, Ezekiel says, and as it does the temple was filled with the cloud
 - And the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord
 - You're watching a handoff of sorts taking place
 - The cloud comes in to escort the glory out
 - This gives us a better appreciation of how special the appearance of God's glory is
 - God's glory is so holy, so exalted that it cannot be viewed in its fullness
 - It must be obscured by cloud from the eyes of sinful mankind
 - You may remember that Moses' face used to shine after an encounter with the glory of God in the tent of meeting
 - Moses' face was reflecting the glory of God, but even that reflection was too intense for sinful Israel to behold

- So Moses took to wearing a veil when he stood before Israel to obscure the reflected glory of God
- Even Moses himself couldn't behold the full glory of God on the mountain but had to be shielded from God's glory
- Finally, Ezekiel says the cherubim stand by beating their wings as if they are preparing to take off at any second
 - They make a sound like the Almighty God speaking
 - So imagine the brightest light you've ever seen emerging from the temple
 - Met by the loudest sound you've ever heard as these fearsome cherubim beat their wings atop their gigantic whirling wheels
- This whole scene reminds me of a military hostage rescue operation
 - It's as if the glory of the Lord has been held hostage in the temple by the ungodly and wicked of Israel
 - The glory of God remained captive there for a while but the time as come for the glory of God to be rescued
 - So in come the Apache cherubim whirling their wheels like the rotors of a helicopter
 - They land just outside the temple, rotors turning, holding off the enemy to the south
 - Meanwhile, the special forces soldier (dressed in camouflaged linen) enters the courtyard under cover of smoke
 - They escort the glory of God out of the building and to the safety of the cherubim
 - Before they leave, it's they need a diversion, so they lay down some suppression fire

Ezek. 10:6 It came about when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he entered and stood beside a wheel.

Ezek. 10:7 Then the cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire which was between the cherubim, took some and put it into the hands of the one clothed in linen, who took it and went out.

Ezek. 10:8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings.

- As the man in linen was ordered, he approached the wheels of the cherubim
 - The cherub reached out to pick up some of the fiery coals burning in the midst of the four cherubim
 - Later in v.8 Ezekiel explains that this was possible because underneath each cherub's wing was the hand of a man
 - Then the cherub deposited these coals into the hands of the man in linen who went out
 - He went out to use these coals in the destruction of the city
 - Remember, last week we said that the death of the people in the city didn't happen in the way depicted by the vision
 - Angels didn't kill the people
 - Soldiers in an army did the dirty work
 - But the purpose of the vision was to explain that the Lord had decreed the deaths of the ungodly
 - Similarly, here we see the a fantastic vision of the Lord using supernatural fire from cherubim to destroy the city itself
 - But we know that the city was razed by an army bent on making an example of rebellious Israel
 - But once again, we're learning that the end of the city, wall and temple was an act of God
 - But we also learn that this destruction happens only after the Lord has moved His glory out of the way first
 - So far, the glory has moved to the threshold of the temple
 - But of course, that is only the first movement of the God's glory
 - It has several stages of movement remaining
- The next stage of the movement is described in the next passage in this chapter
 - But the passage is rather long and most of it consistent of a lengthy description of the cherubim
 - This description is very similar to the one we received in chapter 1

- So we won't spend much time revisiting the details here
- Instead, we can look at the bigger picture of what's going on here
 - But first let's read the account

Ezek. 10:9 Then I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like the gleam of a Tarshish stone.

Ezek. 10:10 As for their appearance, all four of them had the same likeness, as if one wheel were within another wheel.

Ezek. 10:11 When they moved, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went; but they followed in the direction which they faced, without turning as they went.

Ezek. 10:12 Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them.

Ezek. 10:13 The wheels were called in my hearing, the whirling wheels.

Ezek. 10:14 And each one had four faces. The first face was the face of a cherub, the second face was the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Ezek. 10:15 Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw by the river Chebar.

Ezek. 10:16 Now when the cherubim moved, the wheels would go beside them; also when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels would not turn from beside them.

Ezek. 10:17 When the cherubim stood still, the wheels would stand still; and when they rose up, the wheels would rise with them, for the spirit of the living beings was in them.

Ezek. 10:18 Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.

Ezek. 10:19 When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.

Ezek. 10:20 These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim.

Ezek. 10:21 Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings was the form of human hands.

Ezek. 10:22 As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one went straight ahead.

- From vs.9-17 we find a second description of the cherubim that largely matches the one we received in chapter 1
 - There are a couple of differences though, and so I'll spend a moment on those parts

- First, in v.12 Ezekiel tells us that these living beings had eye over their whole body
- In chapter 1, we heard that the wheels were covered in eyes
- But now we learn that there were eyes literally everywhere on the cherubim
- The presence of so many eyes reinforces the conclusion we made in chapter 1
 - These creatures are present with God at all times, seeing all that He sees
 - Nothing escapes their attention
- Secondly, the faces of these creatures are described a little differently
 - In v.14 Ezekiel says they had faces of a cherub, man, lion and eagle
 - In chapter 1, it was ox, man, lion and eagle
- Apparently, the cherubim mostly resemble oxen, so Ezekiel called the ox face the face of the cherub
 - That makes sense when we remember that these creatures had feet like a calf
 - So we should imagine a living creature with a body torso that largely resembles an ox
 - And therefore the ox face is the cherub's natural primarily face, so to speak
- Then in v.18, we find the second movement of the glory of God
 - It departs from the threshold of the temple to ride above the cherubim
 - At that point, the Apache cherubim lifted off and carried the glory of God to the top of the east gate in the court wall
 - Here the glory of God hovered above the east gate of the temple
 - This gate is commonly called the Beautiful Gate
 - And here the glory of God remained for a time during these visions

- There is still one more stop for the glory of God, which we will study next week
- But before we get there, I want to direct your attention to a picture that the Lord is forming in this account
- First, let's remember that Christ is the ultimate manifestation of the invisible God, as Paul says:

Col. 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.

- When you think of the glory of an invisible God, you must imagine something physical, for how else could you witness it?
 - And the physical manifestation of the Glory of God is found in Jesus Christ
 - Any time the Father manifests Himself into His Creation, He does so through His Son
 - As Hebrews says:

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

- Like rays of light that emanate from the sun, Jesus is the radiance of the Father that reaches our eyes
- He is an exact representation of who the Father is
- So we can accurately describe the glory of God as Jesus Christ
 - Here in the times of Ezekiel that glory is in a pre-incarnate form, which we call the Shechinah glory
 - But in a later day, the glory of God would reach its fullness in Christ Himself
- Moreover, the glory of God is called the Shechinah glory because it is the dwelling of God among men
 - Remember, the word Shechinah incorporates a root meaning of to dwell

- So God's Shechinah glory is that part of Himself that dwells among men
- The glory we see departing here is a lesser form of glory, for one day a greater glory would dwell among men
- As Haggai the prophet explains:

Hag. 2:6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.

Hag. 2:7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.

Hag. 2:8 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the Lord of hosts.

Hag. 2:9 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the Lord of hosts."

- Haggai was called to chastise Israel for not being willing to make the necessary sacrifices to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem
 - The remnant had returned from exile in Babylon, the same exile that Ezekiel is now experiencing
 - But after they returned, they became distracted in their own pursuits
 - And they neglected the temple construction
 - As the prophet speaks to them, he tells them that a day is coming when the Lord will not need to beg His people to build His temple
 - He will shake the nations of the world and all the wealth of the nations will come to the temple
 - More importantly, the glory of God will fill this house with glory, the Lord says
 - These details point to the temple that will exist in the Millennial Kingdom
 - But when the Lord refers to "this" house, he's referring to the second temple
 - After Babylon destroyed the first temple, the returning exiles rebuilt the temple

- That second temple, some call Zerubbabel's Temple, eventually became Herod's temple
- So the Lord promises that the latter glory of this second temple will be greater than the glory of the former temple
- And this principle will continue into the Kingdom, as the glory of the Kingdom temple will be greater than Herod's temple
- Christ is the fulfillment of these promises
- So with that background, we can begin to understand how the departure of God's glory out of the first temple connects to Christ
 - As the glory of God leaves the temple at this time, the glory of God will never again inhabit the temple in the same way
 - It never enters the first temple again since this temple is soon to be destroyed
 - And even after the second temple is completed, the Shechinah glory of God does not enter it as it once did before
 - Nevertheless, the glory of God did occupy the second temple and He did so in a more glorious way than the former

[John 1:9](#) There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

[John 1:10](#) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

[John 1:11](#) He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

[John 1:12](#) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

[John 1:13](#) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

[John 1:14](#) And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- The glory of God did, in fact, occupy the second temple
- But it didn't occupy it in the same way as before, but as Haggai said it would
- God's glory came in a much greater way, in the form of Jesus Christ

- Ironically, that form appeared less glorious to the religious leaders of Israel who opposed Him
 - But in reality, He was the fullness of God's glory

Col. 1:19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

- The glory of God entered that temple on multiple occasions
- And once Christ departed the earth, His glory continues to dwell in His temple, and again in a new and better way
- Today the glory of God dwells in the temple of the Body of Christ, the Church
 - Today, you are the temple of God because the Spirit of God has set up residence inside every believer
 - And this is still greater glory
 - Because collectively, the Church is an even greater display of God's glory in Christ than was Christ Himself in His body
 - As Jesus said to the disciples:

John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the **works** that I do, he will do also; and **greater works** than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

- Later, we know in the temple of the Kingdom, Christ will return to occupy His temple in His full glory
 - This will be the greatest display of God's glory in His temple
 - So that as the prophet said, the latter glory will exceed the former
- But sometimes we don't fulfill the mission we've been given to shine the glory of God among the nations
 - Sometimes, we let sin reign in our mortal bodies
 - We grieve the Spirit of God
 - We compromise our witness
 - We pollute the temple of God

- On a personal level, we can run the risk of repeating the abominations that Ezekiel witnessed in the temple in Jerusalem
 - As Paul warned

1Cor. 6:18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

1Cor. 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- We should consider our every action and thought from the perspective of how it reflects glory on the Lord
- We should ask ourselves whether we are creating a suitable dwelling place for the Spirit of God by our choices
- And as we experience conviction in that regard, look to the Spirit to guide you and empower you into making better choices
 - He will do it
 - And you can follow Him
 - If you make the glory of God your priority
- Remember the contrast of chapter 9 and chapter 10
 - Are you living like those in Jerusalem who perverted the temple for selfish reasons?
 - Or are you like those cherubim, who dedicated themselves to protecting and honoring the glory of God
 - Of rescuing Him from the abuse of sin in your temple?