

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

This book is rightly placed after Jeremiah; since Ezekiel was among the captives in Chaldea, when prophesied; whereas Jeremiah began to prophesy long before that captivity, and concerning it. The name of this prophet signifies, as it is commonly interpreted, “the strength of God”, or “strengthened by God”, as he was, and as he needed to be, having great work to do, and a perverse people to deal with; see (~~2008~~ Ezekiel 3:8); but the learned Hillerus<sup>f1</sup> chooses to render it, “God shall prevail”; with which compare (~~2407~~ Jeremiah 20:7). There was a Levite of this name, of whom mention is made in (~~1346~~ 1 Chronicles 24:16); whose name is there read “Jehezkel”; and this prophet was a priest, (~~2008~~ Ezekiel 1:3); and both Clemens Alexandrinus<sup>f2</sup> and Eusebius<sup>f3</sup> cite a Jewish writer of tragedies, of the same name; which some have very wrongly thought to be the same with our prophet; but whether Ezekiel is not the same with Nazaratus or Zabratius, the master of Pythagoras, mentioned by Clemens as such, according to the opinion of some, is a matter of question; and which the learned Selden<sup>f4</sup> seems to think probable. According to the judgment and opinion of Jerom<sup>f5</sup>, his style is neither very eloquent, nor very rustic; but between both, and has a mixture of each. The visions he saw are very abstruse and difficult of interpretation, especially the vision of the living creatures and wheels; wherefore the Jews<sup>f6</sup> forbad the reading of it, as well as the end of this prophecy, until persons were thirty years of age. The divine visions in this book, the whole subject matter of it, its agreement with the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the accomplishment of events predicted in it, prove the authority of it; and its divine authority has always been allowed, both by the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church. There were indeed some ancient Jewish Rabbins, who were perplexed about some things in it, and consulted about laying it aside, because of some words in it, which seemed to them to be contrary to the law of Moses; but R. Chananiah ben Goron, a very famous doctor in those times, withdrew to his chamber, and wrote a commentary, in order to remove those difficulties to satisfaction<sup>f7</sup>. This book, in general, contains various visions the prophet saw; several threatenings against the people of the Jews; and prophecies against other nations; and an abundance of comfortable promises of the Messiah, and of blessings of grace by him; and of the state and condition of the Gospel church, and the worship of it. Josephus<sup>f8</sup> says Ezekiel left two

books written by him; one of which Athanasius<sup>f9</sup>: or the author of the Synopsis under his name, thinks is lost; but the learned Huetius<sup>f10</sup> is of opinion that the prophecy of Ezekiel, in the times of Josephus, was divided into two parts; the first containing the first thirty nine chapters, and the other the nine last chapters; which is not improbable. If the authorities of Epiphanius<sup>f11</sup>, or the writer of the lives of the prophets that goes by his name, and of Isidorus<sup>f12</sup>, are of any weight, Ezekiel was born in the land of Sarera; killed by the governor in Babylon; and buried by the people in the field of Maur or Mahurim, in the sepulchre of Shem and Arphaxad. The account R. Benjamin Tudelensis<sup>f13</sup> gives is, that there is a synagogue of the Prophet Ezekiel by the river Euphrates; and over against the synagogue sixty towers, ; and between every tower a synagogue. In the court of the synagogue is a library; and behind it the grave of Ezekiel the son of Buzi the priest; and over it a large vault, of a beautiful building, erected by Jeconiah king of Judah, and thirty five thousand Jews, who came with him, when Evilmerodach brought him out of prison; and over the grave a lamp burns night and day. The Cippi Hebraici say<sup>f14</sup> he was buried by, the river Hiddekel; and Menasseh ben Israel<sup>f15</sup> affirms that he died in Babylon, and was buried there; and so Kimchi<sup>f16</sup> says the tradition is.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 1

This chapter contains a vision, which is the introduction to the prophet's call and commission to perform his office; in the account of which may be observed the time when it was seen, (<sup><3003></sup>Ezekiel 1:1,2); and the place both where the prophet was when he saw it, and the object or things that were beheld by him; and the original, form, and manner of the vision, (<sup><3003></sup>Ezekiel 1:3,4); next follow the particulars of it; and first, four living creatures appear, described by their general likeness, as human, (<sup><3005></sup>Ezekiel 1:5); and, in particular, by their faces, feet, hands, and wings, (<sup><3006></sup>Ezekiel 1:6-11); by their motion and progress, and the spirit by which they were influenced, (<sup><3012></sup>Ezekiel 1:12); and by their forms of light, brightness, and heat, in which they appeared and moved, (<sup><3013></sup>Ezekiel 1:13,14); and next the wheels, described by their number; for, though they seemed to be as one, they were four; and by their situation on the earth, and by the side of the living creatures, (<sup><3015></sup>Ezekiel 1:15); by their appearance, which was alike in them all, and as the colour of beryl, and as a wheel within a wheel, (<sup><3016></sup>Ezekiel 1:16); by their motion, which was on their sides, and not retrograde, (<sup><3017></sup>Ezekiel 1:17); by their rings or circumferences, which were high, dreadful, and full of eyes, (<sup><3018></sup>Ezekiel 1:18); by their dependence on the living creatures, moving as they, having the same spirit they had, (<sup><3019></sup>Ezekiel 1:19-21); and then a firmament is seen, described by its situation, over the heads of the living creatures; and by its colour, as the terrible crystal, (<sup><3022></sup>Ezekiel 1:22); by what were under it, the wings of the living creatures of which a more particular account is given, (<sup><3023></sup>Ezekiel 1:23,24); by what was heard from it, a voice, (<sup><3025></sup>Ezekiel 1:25); and by what was above it, a throne; described by its colour, as a sapphire stone; and by a person on it, who had the appearance of a man, (<sup><3026></sup>Ezekiel 1:26); who, in general, looked like the colour of amber; within which was the appearance of fire from his loins upwards, and from his loins downwards; the fire had a brightness round about it; and that brightness was like a rainbow in a cloud, on a rainy day; and this appearance was no other than that of a divine and glorious Person; which, when seen by the prophet, caused him, through reverence, to fall upon his face; when he heard a voice

speaking to him what is recorded in the following chapter, (~~3017~~Ezekiel 1:27,28).

**Ver. 1.** *Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year*, &c.] Either from the last jubilee, as R. Joseph Kimchi<sup>f17</sup>, Jarchi, and Abendana; or from the time that the book of the law was found by Hilkiyah the priest<sup>f18</sup>; so the Targum, which paraphrases the words thus,

“and it was in the thirtieth year after Hilkiyah the high priest found the book of the law, in the house of the sanctuary, in the court under the porch, in the middle of the night, after the moon was down, in the days of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah;”

or, according to Jerom<sup>f19</sup>, from the time of the prophet’s birth, who was now thirty years of age, and was just entered into his priestly office; or rather it was the thirtieth year of Nabopolassar, or the father of Nebuchadnezzar: this was the twelfth year of the captivity, reckoning from the third of Jehoiakim, which was the first captivity, and from whence the seventy years are to be reckoned, and also the twelfth of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign; and if two years are taken, as Vitringa<sup>f20</sup> observes, from the twenty one years, which are given to Nabopolassar in Ptolemy’s canon, in which Nebuchadnezzar his son reigned with him, there will be found thirty years from the beginning of Nabopolassar’s reign to the fifth of Jeconiah’s captivity, when Ezekiel began his prophecy, and which, as Bishop Usher<sup>f21</sup>, Mr. Bedford<sup>f22</sup>, Mr. Whiston<sup>f23</sup>, and the authors of the Universal History<sup>f24</sup>, place in the year 593, before the birth of Christ:

*in the fourth [month]*; the month Tammuz, as the Targum expresses it; which answers to part of June, and part of July:

*in the fifth [day] of the month*; which some take to be on a sabbath day; because, seven days after, the word of the Lord came to him again (~~3016~~Ezekiel 3:16); just as John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, (~~3010~~Revelation 1:10); between one of whose visions and this there is a very great likeness, as will be seen hereafter:

*as I [was] among the captives by the river of Chebar*; which is another agreement in circumstance between Ezekiel and John, when they had their visions: John was an exile in Patros, and Ezekiel among the captives by the river Chebar in Chaldea. Some think this is the same river which is called by Ptolemy<sup>f25</sup> Chaboras; and is said by him to pass through Mesopotamia: others say it was a river that was drawn off from the river

Euphrates, by the order of one Cobaris, or Gobaris, a governor, from whence it had its name; that the river Euphrates might not, by its rapid course, hurt the city of Babylon; and by the Assyrians it was called Armalchar, or Narmalcha<sup>f26</sup>, the king's river; though it seems to be no other than Euphrates itself; and Kimchi observes, that in some copies of the Targum on this place it is interpreted of the river Euphrates; and he says their Rabbins of blessed memory say, that Chebar is Euphrates; and so Abarbinel; see (<sup><9170></sup>Psalm 137:1). Monsieur Thevenot<sup>f27</sup> speaks of a river called Chabur, which is less than Alchabour, another mentioned by him; and has its source below Mosul, and on the left hand to those that go down the Tigris, and at Bagdad loses itself in the Tigris which he takes to be the same as here:

*that the heavens were opened*; as at our Lord's baptism, and at the stoning of Stephen; and so when John had his vision which corresponds with the following, a door was opened in heaven (<sup><604></sup>Revelation 4:1);

*and I saw the visions of God*; which God showed unto him, and which were great and excellent; as excellent things are called things of God, as mountains of God, and cedars of God, (<sup><916></sup>Psalm 36:6 80:10); and indeed he had a vision of a divine Person, in a human form; to which agrees the Targum,

“and I saw in the vision of prophecy, which abode on me, the vision of the glory of the majesty of the Lord.”

The Arabic and Syriac versions read, “the vision of God”.

**Ver. 2.** *In the fifth [day] of the month*, &c.] The month Tammuz, as before:

*(which [was] the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity)*; the same with Jeconiah and Coniah, as he is sometimes called; he was taken by the king of Babylon, when he had reigned but three months, and his captivity held seven and thirty years, (<sup><1248></sup>2 Kings 24:8,12 25:27).

**Ver. 3.** *The word of the Lord came expressly*, &c.] Or, “in being was”<sup>f28</sup>; which phrase denotes the reality, certainty, substantiality and evidence of the word of the Lord to him:

*unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi*; which Buzi, some say, was Jeremiah. Kimchi observes, that, in the Jerusalem Targum, the Prophet

Ezekiel is called the son of Jeremiah the prophet: and Jeremiah was called Buzi because they despised him; this is rejected by Abarbanel; nor is there any reason to believe it, any more than what Nazianzen<sup>f29</sup> says, that Ezekiel was a servant of Jeremiah:

*in the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Chebar*; (see Gill on “<sup><300></sup>Ezekiel 1:1”). The Chaldee paraphrase makes the word of the Lord to come to him at two distinct times and places;

“the word of prophecy from before the Lord was with Ezekiel the son of Buzi the priest in the land of Israel: it returned a second time, and spoke with him in the province, the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Chebar:”

*and the hand of the Lord was there upon him*; by which is meant the gift and word of prophecy, which came with power and efficacy, clearness and evidence; so the Targum, and the

“spirit of prophecy from before the Lord there abode by him;”

by which he saw all later visions, and delivered out the following prophecies; (see <sup><602></sup>2 Peter 1:21).

**Ver. 4.** *And I looked*, &c.] Being under the influence of the Spirit and power of God:

*and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north*; which some understand of Nebuchadnezzar and his army coming from Babylon, which lay north of Judea: (see <sup><2014></sup>Jeremiah 1:14); but it seems to me to be, with what follows, only an apparatus to the following vision: and is designed to awaken the mind of the prophet, and to fix his attention to what should proceed from hence, and be seen by him; just as the Lord speared in and answered Job out of, the whirlwind, (<sup><880></sup>Job 38:1);

*a great cloud*; as is usual when there is much thunder and lightning; though some understand this also of Nebuchadnezzar’s army, which came in great human, swiftly and powerfully, as a cloud:

*and a fire infolding itself*: in the cloud; rolling within it, when it burst out in thunder and lightning. The Targum renders it, “fire inflamed”, the same phrase is used of the storm of thunder, lightning, and hail, in (<sup><0024></sup>Exodus 9:24). Some understand this of the wrath of the Babylonian monarch; or of the wrath of God by him; or of the sins of men, the cause thereof:

*and a brightness [was] about it*; that is, the cloud. This brightness was an emblem of the glory of the divine Being; who was now present, an enlightened the mind of the prophet to see the following things, and which all proceeded from him:

*and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber out of the midst of the fire*; that is, out of the midst of the fire, and out of the midst of the brightness about it, there was something which was as “the colour of amber”; or, “like the chasmal”<sup>f30</sup>; which, the Jews<sup>f31</sup> say, is the name of an angel. It is asked<sup>f32</sup>, what is “chasmal?” R. Judah says, *twhmm ца twyj*, “fiery animals speaking”: who, when God speaks, are silent; and when he does not speak, they speak; but Christ is meant; for the appearance of the man upon the throne is said to be as the colour of “chasmal”, (<sup>2017</sup>Ezekiel 1:27). The word, read the contrary way, is the Messiah, or the anointed, or to be anointed. Jarchi thinks it is the name of a colour, nearest to the colour of fire, Junius and Tremellius render it, “a most lively colour”; and perhaps may mean the colour of a burning coal; and Buxtorf translates it, “a coal exceedingly fired”; a clear, burning, red-hot coal; which may denote the pure light of Christ, who is the brightness of his Father’s glory; his flaming love for his people; his burning zeal for the glory of God, and the good of his church; and his fiery indignation against his enemies. We render the word amber, as do others; by which must be meant, not that which is the juice of certain trees, which is hardened by the air, and is of a yellowish colour; nor that liquid substance which comes from sea shores and rocks, and, being hardened in the same way, is of the colour of wax; but a sort of mixed metal, compounded of gold and silver; the fifth part of it is silver, as Pliny<sup>f33</sup> says, and four parts gold; though Bochart is of opinion that the “*quichalcum*”, a metal made of gold and brass, is meant; which is the most fine brass; to which the feet of Christ are compared in (<sup>2015</sup>Revelation 1:15); and so this “chasmal” may denote the two natures in Christ; the preciousness of his person; his brightness and glory; and his great strength and power. R. Abendana<sup>f34</sup> conjectures, that the colour of “chasmal” means the colour of some precious stone, as the colour of “*tarshish*”, or “*beryl*”, (<sup>2016</sup>Ezekiel 1:16); and so he that sat upon the throne, in (<sup>2018</sup>Revelation 4:3); was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.

**Ver. 5.** *Also out of the midst thereof, &c.]* The fire; or out of the whole that was seen; the whirlwind, cloud, fire, and the brightness about it:

*[came] the likeness of four living creatures*; not really four living creatures; they appeared like to such they were in the form of such; by which we are to understand, not the four monarchies; nor the four Gospels; nor the angels; but ministers of the Gospel; the true key for the opening of this vision is that which John saw, (<sup>606</sup>Revelation 4:6-8); the four beasts there, or living creatures, as it should be rendered, are the same with these here, and these the same with them; and who manifestly appear to be not only worshippers of the true God, but to be men redeemed by the blood of Christ; and are distinguished from angels, and also from the four and twenty elders, the representatives of the Gospel churches; and so can design no other than the ministers of the word, with whom all the characters of them agree, as in that vision, so in this; (see <sup>608</sup>Revelation 4:8,9 5:8-11). “Creatures” they are; not gods, but men; they are indeed in God’s stead, and represent him, being ambassadors of his; but they are frail, mortal, sinful men, of like passions with others; and therefore great allowances must be made for their infirmities and weaknesses: yea, as ministers, they are the creatures of God; he, and not men, has made them able ministers of the New Testament: and they are “living” creatures; they have spiritual life in themselves, and are the means of quickening others; and have need to be, and should be, lively and fervent in their ministrations. Their number, “four”, respects the four parts of the, world, to which their commission to preach the Gospel reaches; and whither they are sent, whensoever it is the will and pleasure of God they should go and he has work for them to do;

*and this [was] their appearance, they had the likeness of a man*; their general likeness was the human form, except in some particulars after mentioned, because they represented men; men humane, tender, kind and pitiful; knowing, and understanding, and acting like men.

**Ver. 6.** *And or but everyone had four faces*, &c.] Which are described, (see Gill on “<sup>300</sup>Ezekiel 1:10”). The Targum multiplies the faces in a strange monstrous manner, paraphrasing the words thus,

“each had four faces, and there were four faces to everyone “of them”, and every creature had sixteen faces; the number of the faces of the four creatures was sixty and four;”

*and everyone had four wings*; the seraphim in (<sup>200</sup>Isaiah 6:2); and the four beasts or living creatures in (<sup>608</sup>Revelation 4:8); had six wings; and so it seems that these had also, from (<sup>300</sup>Ezekiel 1:11,23); as will be seen there;



nor is this any contradiction to the account here given, since it is not said they had only four wings. The Targum gives the same monstrous account of their wings as of their faces, saying,

“each had four wings, and there were four wings for everyone of them, sixteen wings to every face, and sixty four to every creature; and the number of the wings of the four living creatures were two hundred and fifty six.”

Jarchi is of the same opinion, and confirms it in his note on the text, which is this,

““four faces to one”; that is, to the face of a man only were four faces, and so, to the lion, to the eagle, and to the ox, lo, sixteen to a living creature, and so to every living creature; and four wings to everyone of the faces, lo, sixty and four wings to a living creatures and which, according to the Targum of Jonathan, amounts to two hundred and fifty six wings;”

what these wings signified, (see Gill on “<sup><3011></sup>Ezekiel 1:11”);

**Ver. 7.** *And their feet [were] straight feet, &c.*] And they went straight forward, as in (<sup><3012></sup>Ezekiel 1:12); they made straight paths for their feet, and walked uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel; did not go into crooked paths, or turn to the right hand, or the left; and having put their hand to the plough of the Gospel neither looked back, nor turned back.

*And* or “for”

*the sole of their feet [was] like the sole of a calf’s foot*; round, and the hoof divided, and fit for treading out the corn, in which oxen were employed; denoting the firmness and constancy of ministers in their work, treading out the corn of the word for the nourishment of souls, to whom they minister. The Septuagint render it, “their feet were winged”; or “flying”, as the Arabic version; in like manner as Mercury, the Heathen god, is painted: this may denote the readiness and swiftness of Gospel ministers to do their master’s work; their feet being shod with the preparation of the Gospel, and so very beautiful, (<sup><4015></sup>Ephesians 6:15 <sup><2511></sup>Isaiah 52:7). The Targum is,

“the sole of their feet as the sole of feet that are round<sup>f35</sup>, and they moved the world where they went;”

*and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass*; that is, their feet; being burning and shining lights in their conversation, as well as in their doctrine; (see <sup>4015</sup>Revelation 1:15).

**Ver. 8.** *And [they had] the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides, &c.*] “Hands of a man” denote action, according to knowledge; ministers of the Gospel are men of practice and business, as well as have the theory and knowledge of things; and they act like men in a rational way, according to the will of God revealed in the word: and these being “on their four sides”, show that they have much work to do all around, on every side; in ministering the word, administering ordinances; visiting their people; giving counsel, caution, comfort, exhortation, instruction, &c. and that they have many hands to do, it with, much grace and strength from above; and they have need of all the hands they have; and what they have they constantly employ, and are steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Briareus, a man of business, is represented by the poets as having a hundred hands. These being “under their wings”, show that, besides their public ministrations, they do much work secretly and privately, in their closet and studies, where no eye sees them but the eye of God, as well as in private houses, by their visits and conversation; and is also expressive of their modesty and humility, not doing what they do to be seen of men, nor boasting of their works; but ascribing all to the grace of God, and strength of Christ, by which they perform them, and which give them success The Jews, in the Talmud<sup>136</sup>, interpret this of the hand of God himself which is stretched out under the wings of the living creatures, to receive penitent persons; because it is written *wdy*, “his hand”, but read *ydy*, “hands”. And they four had their faces and their wings; that is, on their four sides; a face and a wing before, and a face and a wing behind, and a face and a wing on each side; and under each wing a man’s hand and arm. The Targum of the whole is,

“and hands, as the hands of a man, were made for them under their wings on their four sides; to take in them coals of fire from between the cherubim under the firmament, which was over their seats, to, put them into the hands of the seraphim, to scatter upon the place of the ungodly, to destroy the wicked that transgress his word; and their faces and their wings were equal to them four;”

(see <sup>3002</sup>Ezekiel 10:2,6-8).

**Ver. 9.** *Their wings [were] joined one to another, &c.*] “A woman to her sister”<sup>f37</sup>, in the Hebrew; denoting the concord, harmony, and agreement of Gospel ministers, and their affection to one another; they preach the same Gospel; administer the same ordinances; do the same work of the Lord; have the same zeal for the glory of God; the same love for Christ, and affection for the souls of men; are of the same mind and judgment, and help each other in the service of the Lord; and especially so it will be in the latter day glory, when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, (<sup>2518</sup>Isaiah 52:8);

*they turned not when they went; they went everyone straight forward;* they go not into the path of error and immorality; they do not become apostates from the truth; they are not of them that draw back unto perdition; they go on in the course of their ministry straightforward; let what will be in their way, nothing diverts them from it; notwithstanding all difficulties and discouragements in themselves; reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions from men; and the temptations of Satan; (see Gill on “<sup>4007</sup>Ezekiel 1:7”).

**Ver. 10.** *As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, &c.*] For these living creatures are men, redeemed from among men by the blood of Christ; their business lies with men, to preach the Gospel to them: and they should be humane, kind, and tender in their behaviour towards them; wounded consciences of weak believers, distressed and disconsolate souls, requiring such usage; and they should be men in understanding, have a large knowledge of the Scriptures, of the truths of the Gospel, and of Jesus Christ, since their work is to feed men with knowledge and understanding; and should act the manly part, quit themselves like men in defence of the Gospel, and the truths of it;

*and the face of a lion on the right side;* denoting the strength of Gospel ministers, the lion being the strongest among beasts, (<sup>2100</sup>Proverbs 30:30); and they have need to be strong in the grace of Christ, and in the power of his might, to do the several parts of their work; to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ; to wrestle with principalities and powers, and to bear the infirmities of the weak: and also their courage and fortitude of mind; their boldness in preaching the Gospel of Christ, not fearing the faces of men, nor their revilings; (see <sup>2100</sup>Proverbs 28:1);

*and they four had the face of an ox on the left side;* expressive of the patience of Gospel ministers in bearing the yoke that is upon them, not only of the ministry, but of the weaknesses of saints, and the reproaches and indignities of the wicked; and in instructing those that oppose

themselves, and in waiting the issue of their ministry: and also of their laboriousness in their ministrations; particularly in treading out the corn of the word, for the subsistence of the saints: (see <sup>f38</sup>1 Corinthians 9:9,10);

*they four also had the face of an eagle*; showing their strong and clear sight of the Gospel, and the mysteries of it; the eagle having so strong an eye, that it is able to look full and steadfastly upon the sun; and their diligence in searching into the deep things of God, and particularly to find out where the carcass is, a crucified Christ, to feed upon themselves, and to direct others to it likewise. It seems as if these four living creatures had four distinct heads, as well as faces, and that the position of them was in this manner; the face of a man before; the face of a lion on the right side; the face of an ox on the left; and the face of an eagle behind, These four are the most excellent of creatures. The Talmudists have a saying,

“there are four that are proud (or excel) in the world; the lion among beasts; the ox among cattle; the eagle among birds; and man, whom God has exalted above all, for he rules over all<sup>f38</sup>.”

**Ver. 11.** *Thus [were] their faces: and their wings [were] stretched upward, &c.*] The former clause, “thus [were] their faces”, either belongs to (<sup>f38</sup>Ezekiel 1:10); and the meaning is, this, as now represented, was the likeness of their faces, and this the position of them: or it may be read in connection with the following clause, and be rendered, “and their faces and their wings were stretched upwards”; as they are in the Chaldee paraphrase, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions: “their faces were stretched upwards”, showing that the ministers of the Gospel look up to Christ for fresh supplies of gifts and grace, of light, knowledge, wisdom, and strength, to enable them to perform their work: “and their wings were stretched upwards”, that is, two of them; not four, as the Arabic version has it; for two covered their bodies, as is after said. Those that were stretched upwards answer to the two with which Isaiah’s seraphim flew; for these were, as in the original text, “parted upwards”<sup>f39</sup>; though they were joined together at the bottom of them, as in (<sup>f38</sup>Ezekiel 1:9); yet being spread in flying, they opened wider and wider, and were at a greater distance from each other in their extreme points. This may design the agility, swiftness, and readiness of ministers in the performance of their work;

*two [wings] of everyone [were] joined one to another*: with which they, covered their heads and faces, as did Isaiah’s seraphim, as conscious of

their unworthiness and infirmities; looking upon themselves to be less than the least of all saints, unfit to be ministers of the Gospel; acknowledging they have nothing but what they have received and therefore would not glory as though they had not received, and as ashamed of their poor performances and ministrations;

*and two covered their bodies*; their lower and secret parts called their feet in Isaiah; which however to others beautiful upon the mountains, running and bringing the good news of peace, righteousness, and salvation by Christ; yet sensible of their deficiencies, they cover them, and confess, when they have done all they can, they are but unprofitable servants; from hence it appears that these living creatures had six wings, as the seraphim in Isaiah, and the four beasts in John's vision.

**Ver. 12.** *And they went everyone straight forward, &c.*] Or, "over against his face"<sup>f40</sup>; for, which way soever they went, whether forward or backward, or on either side, they had a face to go before them, to direct the way, and steer their course; so the ministers of the Gospel have a face to go by and follow after, the word of God, to look to and direct them, which way soever they go, or whatsoever service they are called unto;

*whither the spirit was to go they went*; which may be meant of their own spirit, will, and inclination; so the Targum,

"to the place where it was their good pleasure to go they went;"

so Jarchi and Kimchi; but this is not always the case, (see ~~4416~~ Acts 16:6-9); rather the Holy Spirit of God is intended, by whom holy men of God were moved, and spoke formerly; and by whom Gospel ministers are led into the truth, as it is in Jesus; and by whom they are directed where to go, and what to do; and they are sent, and go where the Spirit of God is designed to go, in order to work upon the hearts of men and effectually call them by his grace, which is usually done by the ministry of the word; and therefore Gospel ministers must go, and they do go where the Spirit of God has work to do by them; (see ~~4416~~ Acts 16:6,7);

*[and] they turned not when they went*; they had no occasion to turn their bodies, because, which way soever they went, they had a face to go before them, and direct the way; (see Gill on "~~3000~~ Ezekiel 1:9").

**Ver. 13.** *As for the likeness of the living creatures, &c.*] That is, of their bodies; for their faces, feet, hands, and wings are described before:

*their appearance [was] like burning coals of fire*: because of their ministerial gifts; the gifts of the Spirit are compared to fire, and like coals of fire are to be stirred up, and not covered or quenched; (<sup><40B></sup>Acts 2:3 <sup><5006></sup>2 Timothy 1:6 <sup><5159></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:19); and because of their clear shining light in the truths of the Gospel; and because of their ardent love to Christ, and the souls of men; the coals whereof give a most vehement flame, which all the waters of reproach and persecution cannot quench, (<sup><2186></sup>Song of Solomon 8:6,7); and because of their burning zeal for the glory of God, and the interest of the Redeemer; hence they are called “seraphim”, fiery or burning (<sup><230E></sup>Isaiah 6:2);

*[and] like the appearance of lamps*: so the ministers of the Gospel are compared to lamps, which hold forth the light of the Gospel to the sons of men; they are the lights or lamps of the world, and some of them are bright burning and shining ones, as John was, (<sup><4154></sup>Matthew 5:14 <sup><4355></sup>John 5:35);

*it went up and down among the living creatures*; that is, fire went up and down among them; so the Targum,

“and fire inflamed was among the creatures;”

by which may be meant the word of God, comparable to fire, (<sup><240B></sup>Jeremiah 20:9 23:29); common to all the ministers of the Gospel, by which their minds are enlightened, and their hearts are warmed and filled with zeal, and by which they are the means of enlightening and warming others:

*and the fire was bright*; and clear, as the word of God is:

*and out of the fire went forth lightning*; by means of the ministry of the word, the kingdom and interest of Christ spread like lightning in the world, from east to west; so the coming of the son of man in his kingdom and power is compared to lightning, (<sup><4127></sup>Matthew 24:27); it denotes the quick, penetrating, and enlightening power and efficacy of the word.

**Ver. 14.** *And the living creatures ran*, &c.] Did their work with great readiness and swiftness; so, especially in the latter day, ministers of the Gospel shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, (<sup><2714></sup>Daniel 12:4);

*and returned*; for though before it is said, “they turned not when they went”, they kept straight on till they had done their work; but when they

have done it, then they return, and give an account of it to him that has sent them: and their running and returning are said to be,

*as the appearance of a flash of lightning*; very sudden and swift.

**Ver. 15.** *Now as I beheld the living creatures*, &c.] While he had the vision of them, and when he was considering their form and likeness, and what should be the meaning of them:

*behold, one wheel upon the earth*; the Jews<sup>f41</sup> understand this of an angel, who stood upon the earth, and his head reached to the living creatures, and his name is Sandalphon; and so many expositors interpret the wheels of angels: but the more common interpretation of them is, that they design the visible world, and all things in it, which are movable and uncertain; though the true interpretation of them, as of the living creatures, is to be fetched from the vision in the fourth chapter of Revelation and as the four living creatures here are the same with the four beasts there; so the wheels are the same with the four and twenty elders, the representatives of Gospel churches, as appears by both being in the same situation; as there is a throne, and next to that the four beasts, and next to them the four and twenty elders, (<sup>400B</sup>Revelation 4:3,4,6 5:6,11); here also is a throne, and next to the throne the four living creatures or cherubim, and next the living creatures, and by the side of them the wheels, (<sup>300B</sup>Ezekiel 10:1,2,6,7, 9); and this is further manifest by their being both under the same influence and motion; as the four beasts were the first agents and movers, and the four and twenty elders were directed by them, who went before them in their devotion, (<sup>400B</sup>Revelation 4:9,10 5:14); so the wheels moved as the living creatures did; when the living creatures went, they went; when they stood, the wheels stood; and when the creatures were lifted up, the wheels were also, (<sup>300B</sup>Ezekiel 1:19,21 10:16,17,19); and the wheels are a very proper emblem of churches under the Gospel dispensation; partly for their round form, a symbol of perfection; the churches of Christ being more perfect under the gospel dispensation than the church was under the legal one: and partly for their movableness from place to place; churches are not always in the same place; they have been removed from Judea into the Gentile world; and they have wheeled about there, sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another: as also for their changeable state and situation; being sometimes in prosperity, and sometimes in adversity: likewise for the work done by them; many things are done by the help and with the use of wheels; much work is done in and by the churches of Christ; here the

Gospel is preached, ordinances administered, divine worship in all its parts performed, sinners are converted, and saints are edified and comforted; and as, when wheels are in motion, they make a great noise and rattling; so when there is any great work going on in the churches of Christ, it makes a great noise in the world; as at the first preaching and spread of the Gospel, both in Judea, and among the Gentiles; and at the time of the Reformation; and as there will be when antichrist shall be destroyed, and the Gospel shall be spread all the world over, (~~690B~~ Revelation 19:1-6); to which may be added, that these wheels, together with the cherubim or living creatures, make a chariot; and as the cherubim in the temple are called the chariot of the cherubim, (~~138B~~ 1 Chronicles 28:18); so the author of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha,

“It was Ezekiel who saw the glorious vision, which was shewed him upon the chariot of the cherubims.” (Sirach 49:8)

says, that Ezekiel was shown the glorious vision upon the chariot of the cherubim; and nothing is more common with the Jews than to call this vision of Ezekiel **hbkrm**, “mercavah”, or “chariot”. So in the Targum on (~~107B~~ 1 Kings 7:33); it is said,

“the work of the wheels was as the work of the wheels of the glorious chariot;”

meaning this in Ezekiel; and a chariot is a fit emblem of the churches of Christ, in which he rides about the world, and does his work; (see ~~218B~~ Song of Solomon 3:9); and though but one wheel is here mentioned, yet it appears that there were “four”, as in (~~201B~~ Ezekiel 1:16 10:9); a wheel by every living creature; so though there is but one general assembly and church of the firstborn written in heaven, of which Christ is the head, and for which he gave himself; yet there are many particular congregated churches, which may be signified by the number “four”; partly with respect to the four parts of the world, where Christ has an interest, and which will more manifestly appear in the latter day; and partly with respect to the four living creatures, a wheel to every cherub, a church to every minister and pastor; for though sometimes there have been more pastors than one to a church, when large, yet never more than one church under the care of one pastor: moreover, this wheel or wheels were seen “upon the earth”; which is observed, to distinguish the church militant from the church triumphant in heaven; and to point out the place where the churches are; which though they consist of men that are not of the world, yet they are in the world: as



also to denote the firmness of them; they are on the earth, not in the air or sea, where wheels cannot move and rolls; but upon “terra firma”, and that to the churches, is Christ Jesus; and may also signify, that the mutability and movableness of churches are only while they are on earth, in, the present state of things: it follows,

*by the living creatures*: that is, the wheel or wheels were seen by the side of the living creatures; which is more fully expressed in (<sup>3509</sup>Ezekiel 10:9); churches are placed by the ministers of the Gospel, to direct them in matters of faith and worship; to put them in motion; to stir them up to the exercise of grace, and the discharge of duty; to watch over them in the Lord; and to feed them with spiritual knowledge and understanding:

*with his four faces*; either the living creatures; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “having four faces”: and the meaning is that the wheel or wheels were on, the four sides of the living creatures: or rather, as Jarchi, the wheels, four faces; for upon every wheel there were the same four faces as were in the living creatures, as, is clear from (<sup>3513</sup>Ezekiel 10:13,14); there being a great likeness between Gospel churches and Gospel ministers: the “first” was the face of a “cherub” or “ox”; which may denote the patience of Gospel churches, and the members thereof, in bearing afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, for the sake of Christ; their meditation on the word of God continually, the ox being a creature that chews the cud; and their constancy and laboriousness in the work of the Lord: the “second” was the face of a “man”; which may be expressive of their knowledge and understanding of divine and spiritual things; and of their tenderheartedness, sympathy, and compassion, one towards another, in distressed circumstances: the “third” was the face of a “lion”; signifying their boldness and intrepidity in, the cause of Christ, and the profession of his name: and the “fourth” was the face of an “eagle”; showing that they mount up on the wings of faith and love, as on eagles’ wings; that they soar aloft, and dwell on high, and have their affections set on things in heaven, and not on earth. Cocceius interprets the wheel or wheels of the word of God, and the course of the ministry of it, under the influence of the Spirit; and so Starckius of late.

**Ver. 16.** *The appearance of the wheels, and their work, [was] like unto the colour of a beryl, &c.*] Which is a precious stone; (see <sup>1280</sup>Exodus 28:20 <sup>621</sup>Revelation 21:20); the Syriac version renders it a chrysolite; the Arabic, a jasper; and so may denote the preciousness, glory, and excellency of the

churches, and the true members of them, which are as jewels and pearls of great price in the esteem of Christ; and the colour of this stone being a sea green, from whence it has here the name of “tarshish”, a word sometimes used for the sea, may signify the fluctuating and uncertain state of the churches in this world, and in their present circumstances:

*and they four had one likeness*: this shows that there were four wheels, and that they were all alike, as the true churches of Christ are; they are alike gathered out of the world, and consist of the same sort of persons, true believers in Christ; they profess the same faith; they have the same officers and ordinances; keep up the same discipline, and are under the same form of government, and have all the same power and authority:

*and their appearance and work [was] as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel*; not as if one wheel was comprehended and included in another; for then one must be lesser than another; whereas all the wheels were alike, as for form, so for size; but the work or make of them was in a transverse way, or cross way; just as two hoops may be put together cross ways, and so form four semicircles, and these a globe or sphere; hence this wheel is called **l g l g**, “an orb” or “globe”, in (<sup>2013</sup>Ezekiel 10:13); and it was on those four semicircles that the four faces of the ox, the man, the lion, and eagle, were engraved; the reason of their being wrought in this form was, for the motion of them; as follows:

**Ver. 17.** *When they went, they went upon their four sides*, &c.] On either of their crossing rings, as they were directed by the living creatures, at whose side they stood:

*[and] they returned not when they went*; they had no need to turn about when they were to go east, west, north, or south, as wheels usually do; but they turned upon the crossing ring, which was towards either of the four points. This denotes the perseverance of the churches, and the true members thereof, in faith and practice; they do not turn back, nor look back, but go right on, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in all his, ways and ordinances.

**Ver. 18.** *As for their rings, they were so high, that they were dreadful*, &c.] The circles and circumferences of them were “high”: which may denote the visibility and extensiveness of the churches of Christ, especially in the latter day; when they shall be exalted above the mountains and hills, the kingdoms and states of this world; and there shall be such numerous

additions to them, that the place will be too strait for the members of them to dwell in, (<sup><2311D></sup>Isaiah 2:2 49:20); and “they were dreadful”; terrible, as the churches of Christ will be to their enemies to look at, when they shall be in their exalted state, (<sup><611D></sup>Revelation 11:12,13); or the words may be rendered, “and they had fear”<sup>f42</sup>; there was fear and reverence in them; the fear of God, and a reverential affection for him; they were waiting on him, and attending his worship with great reverence and godly fear:

*and their rings [were] full of eyes round about them four*; everyone of the four wheels, and each of their four semicircles, were full of eyes; expressive of the knowledge of the Gospel, and the truths of it, in church members; their continual looking to Christ for fresh supplies of grace and strength; and their constant watchfulness over each other.

**Ver. 19.** *And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them,* &c.] When the ministers of the Gospel begin the worship of God, and move in acts of devotion, the churches join with them; (see <sup><611D></sup>Revelation 4:9,10 5:14); and in their lives and conversations they are examples to them; and churches and members ought to walk as they have them, for an example in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;

*and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up*; when the ministers of the word have their affections raised, and are in lively frames of soul in preaching the Gospel, generally speaking, so it is with the churches and the members thereof, that sit under their ministrations; their hearts burn within them; their affections are raised, and their souls are lifted up heavenwards, while the Scriptures of truth are opened unto them.

**Ver. 20.** *Whithersoever the spirit was to go they went,* &c.] That is, the Spirit of God; wherever that leads and directs, whether in the paths of faith or duty, they follow; they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; he guides their feet in the way of peace, and into all truth; and leads them in a right way to the land of uprightness:

*thither [was their] spirit to go*; their spirits or souls being regenerated by the spirit of God, are moved and actuated by him, and readily go where that directs:

*and the wheels were lifted up over against them*; that is, over against the living creatures; being by their sides going where they go, and being lifted up when they are:

*for the spirit of the living creature [was] in the wheels*; the same Spirit of God, which is a spirit of life, a quickening spirit, and a free spirit; which gives motion and liberty in religious exercises; that which is in the ministers of the Gospel is in the churches of God; there is but one Spirit, and ministers and members are actuated and influenced by it; (see <sup><404></sup>Ephesians 4:4,5).

**Ver. 21.** *When those went, [these] went; and when those stood, [these] stood, &c.*] When ministers are active and lively, then the churches are; but when they are indolent, dull, and inactive, then the churches are so likewise:

*and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them*; (see Gill on “<sup><3019></sup>Ezekiel 1:19”);

*for the spirit of the living creature [was] in the wheels*; or, “the spirit of life”, as in (<sup><3020></sup>Ezekiel 1:20); (see <sup><6111></sup>Revelation 11:11).

**Ver. 22.** *And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature, &c.*] This was not a real firmament, but the likeness of one; it was like the firmament which God created on the second day, which divided between the waters above and below, and which he called Heaven; and is no other than the airy and starry heavens. Its name is in Hebrew **[yqr]**, “an expanse”; from its being stretched out as a curtain, and a tent to dwell in; and a “firmament” from its firmness and continuance; and therefore called the firmament of his power, (<sup><0008></sup>Genesis 1:8 <sup><3402></sup>Isaiah 40:22) (<sup><3900></sup>Psalms 150:1); and this visionary one was “over the heads of the living creatures”; which shows that they could not be angels, for those have their habitation in the third heaven, above the firmament; much less in hieroglyphic of the trinity of Persons, who are the three that bear record in heaven, and are not under the firmament; but ministers of the Gospel, who are on earth, and are subject to Christ, whose throne is above the firmament, (<sup><3026></sup>Ezekiel 1:26); and who receive their commission and gifts from him, and are accountable to him. This firmament

*[was] as the colony of the tenable crystal*; crystal is a very white, transparent, precious stone, resembling ice, from whence it has its name; hence Pliny<sup>f43</sup> thought it was no other than ice vehemently frozen; and here it is called “terrible”, because exceeding clear and bright, so that there was no looking upon it, without the eyes being dazzled with the glory of it. The sky is called a molten looking glass, in which the glory of God, and his

handiwork, may be seen, (<sup><183718></sup>Job 37:18) (<sup><19101></sup>Psalm 19:1); and as the throne of Christ was over this crystal firmament, it shows that, though he is in heaven, he sees all that is done on earth, and in his churches, and by his ministers; and the saints also see him by faith, and through the glass of the Gospel: it is only a crystal firmament that is between them,

*stretched forth over their heads above*; that is, over the heads of the living creatures, as before; said to be stretched out, in allusion to its name, an expanse, as before observed.

**Ver. 23.** *And under the firmament [were] their wings straight, the one toward the other, &c.*] A further account is here given of the wings of the living creatures, which were under the firmament: two of their wings were stretched straight upwards towards the firmament, and joined each other; (see Gill on "<sup><2100></sup>Ezekiel 1:9");

*everyone had two, which covered on this side*; besides the two that were carried straight upright towards heaven, they had other two, which covered their back and belly: and

*everyone had two, which covered on that side, their bodies*; that is, on each side of their bodies; so that there were in all six wings, as in Isaiah's vision, and in that of the Revelation of John: as their wings in general denote the swiftness and readiness of Gospel ministers to do the work of Christ, for which they exact help and assistance from above, signified by two being stretched straight upwards; (see <sup><2111></sup>Ezekiel 1:11); so covering the several parts of their bodies with the rest shows their modesty and humility, as being ashamed of themselves and their services, when performed in the best manor; it being altogether owing to the grace of God they are what they are, have and do; they themselves being the chief of sinners, and the least of saints, in their own account.

**Ver. 24.** *And when they went, &c.*] In their ministrations, preaching the Gospel, and administering ordinances:

*I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters*: so the voice of Christ, which is no other than his Gospel preached by his ministers, is said to be as the sound of many waters, (<sup><2115></sup>Revelation 1:15); which is heard a great way off, as the Gospel ministry is, even to the ends of the earth; thither the sound of the apostles' words reached, (<sup><2108></sup>Romans 10:18); and which, as they move with great force, yield a pleasant sound of and may denote both the energy of the word, and the delightfulness of it:

*as the voice of the Almighty*; the Gospel being the word of God, and not of man; which is quick and powerful, and full of majesty, and works effectually in them that believe:

*the voice of speech*; an articulate voice, a human one, pronounced by men, whom God employs to deliver out his mind and will:

*as the noise of an host*; the church being militant, to whom they minister; so that their voice, in their ministry, is sometimes reproofing, convincing, confuting, contending, and disputing, as well as teaching and instructing. The Targum is,

“and the voice of their words, when they confess and bless the Lord, the living everlasting King, is as the voice of the host of angels on high:”

*when they stood, they let down their wings*; those two with which they flew, and with them covered their faces, or some part of their bodies, as ashamed of their own unworthiness and imperfections; or this may denote their having done their work, and finished their course.

**Ver. 25.** *And there was a voice from the firmament that [was] over their heads, &c.*] Which was the voice of Christ upon the throne, above the firmament, over the heads of the living creatures; which directed them when and where to go, and what to do, and when and where to stop:

*when they stood, [and] had let down their wings*; either encouraging them to lift them up, and go on in their work, notwithstanding the sense they had of their own weakness and unworthiness; or, having done their work, calling them to himself in heaven.

**Ver. 26.** *And above the firmament that [was] over their heads, &c.*] The heads of the living creatures:

*[was] the likeness of a throne*; a symbol of Christ's kingly power and authority, who is the person that sat upon it; as he is God, he is on the same throne with his Father; as Mediator, he is King of saints, and was so from eternity; he exercised his office before his incarnation; and as he was prophesied of as a King, he came as one, though little known, and his kingdom was not with observation; upon his ascension he was declared Lord and Christ; and will appear on a throne, when he shall come to judge

the world, and particularly in the New Jerusalem church state: and this throne was

*as the appearance of a sapphire stone*; which is a stone very clear and transparent; very hard, solid, and durable; very precious and excellent; and of an azure sky colour; denoting the clear manifestation of Christ's righteous judgments, in the ministration of his kingly office; the duration of his government; the excellency of it; and its heavenly nature and original:

*and upon the likeness of the throne [was] the likeness of the appearance of a man above upon it*; this was no other than Christ; who, though he was not really man before his incarnation, yet often appeared in the form of a man; and, through his incarnation, he was found in fashion as a man; and was really man, though not a mere man; nor was the person here designed; for that was the appearance and likeness of the glory of the Lord, (<sup>2012</sup>Ezekiel 1:28); and this shows, that when Christ, as man, had done his work, he should sit down upon his throne above the firmament, being made higher than the heavens,

**Ver. 27.** *And I saw as the colour of amber, &c.*] That is, the man upon the throne looked like the colour of amber; of which (see Gill on "<sup>2010</sup>Ezekiel 1:4");

*as the appearance of fire round about within it*; which may denote the deity of Christ, or Christ as God, who is a consuming fire to his enemies; a fire enlightening and warming to his people; as a wall of fire protecting them; and as a pillar of fire guiding and directing them, as he did the Israelites in the wilderness; and who has such light and glory in him, as is incomprehensible to us; and therefore this fire appeared round about within, the colour of amber, and under his human nature, through which it broke forth:

*from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire*; it reached upwards and downwards, as well as all around him:

*and it had brightness round about*; the fire; which shone through the human nature, and was upon it, in virtue of its union to the Son of God; and through the Gospel, in which, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord is seen; and which will be brighter and brighter in the latter day; which may be signified by the appearance of his loins downward.

**Ver. 28.** *As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, &c.]* The rainbow, which is no other than the reflection of the rays of the sun in a thin watery cloud on a rainy day:

*so [was] the appearance of the brightness round about it;* so Christ is represented as clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow about his head, (~~600~~ Revelation 10:1); which is a token of the covenant of grace, in which Christ is concerned; it is round about him; he is the head mediator, surety, and messenger of it; all the blessings and promises of it are in him; and he is that itself, which is only a reverberation him, the sun of righteousness; and it is also about the throne on which he sits, which is upheld by mercy and truth; and it is ever in his view and he is always mindful of it: this part of the vision agrees with (~~604B~~ Revelation 4:3);

*this [was] the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God:* of the divine Shechinah; the Word of God that was made flesh and dwelt among us; whose glory is as the only begotten of the Father; and who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person:

*and when I saw [it], I fell upon my face;* through fear and reverence of the glorious Person that appeared to him; (see ~~607~~ Revelation 1:17);

*and I heard a voice of one that spake:* what is delivered in the following chapter; which contains Ezekiel's commission from Christ, who is the person that spake unto him.