

Prayer

Praise You, Lord Jesus Christ, for You have come to live among us in this world, to share our thoughts and feelings, our joys and struggles. Thank You for showing us the way of love that is always true, and unyielding to evil. Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us so that we may live as You did; not in small measure, but in ever greater abundance until our lives are transformed! Praise You Lord Jesus Christ, for all eternity; AMEN!

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Let the Lord rule in your heart in silence, for more than 10 minutes, or if you feel comfortable, perhaps half an hour or more. The time will depend on how used you are to being quiet before God

On-going prayers

- **Pray for the carers in your church:** *Pray for those for who you have a special responsibility of care, even though you may not do this formally, or full time. Alternatively, pray for those who care for you*
- *Give thanks to God for your work, and if you are retired, then give thanks for everything in which you are involved*
- *Continue to pray for the Middle East and the regional unrest caused by the situation in Egypt*

Meditation

Sin persists, as a fearsome and persistent enemy;
It suggests, tempts, and draws us into its deception.

We wander slowly from the truth we know, little by little,
And find too quickly we have strayed away from God.

We come across some task that faith requires of us,
The devil whispers, 'Surely not!' So it is never done.

We hold on to awful habits, not thinking they are bad,
And fail to let the Lord deliver us from our daily sins.

We tolerate the vices of our culture; casual sex, dishonesty ...
And turn away from what the Bible says about morality.

We reserve the right to speak as we want and when we want,
And forget the wisdom of precise and thoughtful speech.

Save us, Father, and give us courage to face the enemy,
To reject his temptations, and turn again, to You.

Bible passage - Ezekiel 1:15-21

¹⁵ As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.

¹⁶ As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl; and the four had the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel.

¹⁷ When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved.

¹⁸ Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. ¹⁹ When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

²¹ When they moved, the others moved; when they stopped, the others stopped; and when they rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Bible Study

Review

This is an extraordinary vision. The picture Ezekiel describes in the passage today is part of his vision of the glory of God (1:28), yet it is a deeply mysterious vision. Some think that its strangeness comes from the fact that Ezekiel wrote in a mysterious code, so if the code can be cracked, all manner of things may be found out about this Scripture, things that are not evident on the surface.

Yet no one has proved conclusively to the community of the church that such code exists, and until such a time comes, we would be wise to remain sceptical of this. On the other hand, the strangeness of the vision could well come from the fact that Ezekiel was trying to report something too great for ordinary words. This is the best he could do! But we should not apologise for what Ezekiel wrote. With all of its difficulties and mysteries, there is plenty for us to discover within this passage.

In the first part of the vision (1:4-14), we discover that God was coming in awesome power to meet His people in Babylon. Ezekiel's vision reveals that God intervenes in human history for many reasons, and certainly, to help His people. More than that, Ezekiel's vision reveals some of God's complexity. The vision describes Him as four creatures with human-like form, each with the faces of three creatures and a man (1:10).

Remember, the whole of Ezekiel's vision is about the glory of God, so everything we read within it tells us something about God, so clearly, God has human characteristics. If you think about it, Genesis tells us that God made men and women in His own 'image' (Genesis 1:27), so it is not surprising that Ezekiel sees human characteristics in his vision of God.

In addition, almost everything Ezekiel describes is surrounded by uncertainty. He does not say that he saw a creature, a person, a wheel, a fire, or a cloud, for example. He describes what he saw as 'like' a person, a wheel, or a fire. This is not just because Ezekiel was unable to be precise, it is because the glory of God was something far greater than human experience, and Ezekiel only had normal language with which to speak. As a prophet, he tried to convey the magnificence of what he saw, and it was something no one else had ever seen before or described.

So what does our passage add to what we know about God? Fundamentally, it tells us that God moves. This might not strike us as interesting, but it is significant. This part of Ezekiel's vision is not a description of a mechanism designed for moving God around, it is a description of God moving within both heavenly and earthly worlds!

Throughout history, people have been amazed that Ezekiel saw wheels, and that these were responsible for the motion of God. People might naturally think of gods as flying, running, walking, even swimming, but perhaps not moving smoothly on wheels! It is as if Ezekiel was trying to describe a car before such a thing was invented! Now there are a number of ways of picturing Ezekiel's words '*a wheel within a wheel*' (1:16). Perhaps the most simple and logical way is to imagine two wheels set at right angles to each other so that they form something like a sphere, capable of moving in different directions, as Ezekiel says (1:17).

The clear purpose of wheels is to move seamlessly and smoothly in different directions, and in Ezekiel's vision, this is aided by the eyes situated around the rims of the wheels. These are capable of guiding the movement, they are God's eyes, which see all things in each direction. This is an awesome if not scary thought, but this tells us that God is constantly on the move and capable of going anywhere, because he sees and knows all things. He will go anywhere in heaven or on earth in power and authority to do His will; '*wherever the Spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels*' (1:20).

Lastly, the powerful impression left by this part of Ezekiel's vision is that of unity of purpose and movement. The Spirit, the wheels, and the creatures all move together (1:21). So God's purpose is never divided, it is one, and although this may seem incredible, perhaps incredulous, this is Ezekiel's clear prophetic word.

Let people today not imagine that God is sitting on His throne, inactive and unmoved except by the prayers offered to Him by the saints. From the beginning of time, through the vision of Ezekiel, through His work through Jesus Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, God has consistently shown that He is active in this world. If we do not know this, then we have perhaps allowed faith to become an idol, and Christianity

to become a religion. Surely, we are servants of Almighty God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. We believe that in Him, it is our privilege and duty to be caught up in the magnificence and glory of God's work within His world.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Does it change anything about your beliefs in God to know that He is moving and not stuck in one place? Is this an adequate picture of God in the light of all else that we know about Him?
2. In your group, discuss the characteristics of the wheels and how you picture them in your minds. What do they tell you about God?
3. What else does this passage of Scripture tell you about God?

Personal comments by author

I have always thought that God is 'everywhere', but somehow, my mind cannot really cope with this! Perhaps like so many people, the idea of infinity, or the idea of omnipresence or all consuming power is quite beyond my comprehension, even though I believe it! So Ezekiel's vision of God moving rapidly and seamlessly around the created world is quite exciting. It gives me permission to think radically differently about God's movement, though I must surely allow that He is able to be wherever He wants at any moment of time!

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Write down a list of the things you believe about God. Over a period of a few days, return to the list and amend it, purely in order to try and make it an accurate reflection of your faith. Pray about this exercise and let the Lord guide you as you seek to know more.*
- *Reflect on the many forms of movement that there are within the world. To what extent do they each tell us something about God, if at all?*

Final Prayer

Lord God, You are capable of going anywhere at any time to do anything. You are able to pay attention to my needs, and yet do the same for every one of Your creatures who calls on You at any moment! I cannot understand how You do this, but I am supremely grateful that You do! Bless all of us who have faith in You this day, Lord God, and sustain our trust in You. AMEN
