

### Ezekiel's Vision of the Departure of God's Glory from the Temple

#### Ezekiel 10

Ezekiel 10: *"And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne. <sup>2</sup> Then He spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, "Go in among the wheels, under the cherub, fill your hands with coals of fire from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city." And he went in as I watched.*

*<sup>3</sup> Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner court. <sup>4</sup> Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. <sup>5</sup> And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even in the outer court, like the voice of Almighty God when He speaks.*

*<sup>6</sup> Then it happened, when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim," that he went in and stood beside the wheels. <sup>7</sup> And the cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim to the fire that was among the cherubim, and took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed with linen, who took it and went out. <sup>8</sup> The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings.*

*<sup>9</sup> And when I looked, there were four wheels by the cherubim, one wheel by one cherub and another wheel by each other cherub; the wheels appeared to have the color of a beryl stone. <sup>10</sup> As for their appearance, all four looked alike—as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. <sup>11</sup> When they went, they went toward any of their four directions; they did not turn aside when they went, but followed in the direction the head was facing. They did not turn aside when they went. <sup>12</sup> And their whole body, with their back, their hands, their wings, and the wheels that the four had, were full of eyes all around.*

*<sup>13</sup> As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, "Wheel."*

*<sup>14</sup> Each one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, the second face the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. <sup>15</sup> And the cherubim were lifted up. This was the living creature I saw by the River Chebar. <sup>16</sup> When the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also did not turn from beside them. <sup>17</sup> When the cherubim stood still, the wheels stood still, and when one was lifted up, the other lifted itself up, for the spirit of the living creature was in them.*

*<sup>18</sup> Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. <sup>19</sup> And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.*

*<sup>20</sup> This is the living creature I saw under the God of Israel by the River Chebar, and I knew they were cherubim. <sup>21</sup> Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. <sup>22</sup> And the likeness of their faces was the same as the faces which I had seen by the River Chebar, their appearance and their persons. They each went straight forward."*

## Background Notes

Ezekiel 10 is the account of the third part of Ezekiel's four-part vision covered in Ezekiel 8-11. In chapter 8 Ezekiel saw the extent of the idolatry and wickedness that was being practiced in the Temple courts in Jerusalem. In chapter 9 Ezekiel saw the inhabitants of Jerusalem being executed for their sins. In chapter 10, Ezekiel saw the departure of the glory of the Lord from the Temple, and the burning of the city of Jerusalem.

The content of Ezekiel 10 has a lot in common with Ezekiel 1. In both chapters Ezekiel described the throne chariot of God that he saw visions from the Lord. While there are many similarities to the two descriptions, there are also significant differences as well.

In chapter 1, Ezekiel saw that great vision of the glory of the Lord, and in that vision God's throne chariot was in Babylon where Ezekiel and the captives live. In the vision described in chapter 10, Ezekiel saw God's throne chariot hovering over the Temple area in Jerusalem - a significant difference. In chapter 1, the rims of the wheels of God's throne chariot were full of eyes. In chapter 10, the four cherubim associated with the whirling wheels were also full of eyes, further emphasizing the omniscience of God. God sees all and knows all. As to the whirling wheels, it seems that these "wheels within wheels" were gyroscopic in nature, giving stability to God's throne chariot.

The "living creatures" of Ezekiel 1 appear to be the same as the "cherubim" of chapter 10. The word "cherubim" is the Hebrew plural of "cherub." Cherubim are a high-ranking class of angels. The cherub of verse 4 is one of the two cherubim that overlooked the mercy seat - part of the Ark of the Covenant.

Don't get confused by all the cherubim mentioned in this chapter. Except for verse 4, in every other verse where cherubim are mentioned in this chapter, the four cherubim associated with God's throne chariot are in view - not the cherubim associated with the Ark of the Covenant. In verse 18, for example, the four cherubim of God's throne chariot are in view: *"Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim,"*

The glory of the Lord departed from over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies and moved to the threshold of the Temple (9:4 & 10:4). God's "glory cloud," known as the "Shekinah glory," filled the Holy Place and the courts of the Temple. *"Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory" (v4).*

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The judgment of God must fall on unholy people.

*"Then He spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, 'Go in among the wheels, under the cherub, fill your hands with coals of fire from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city.' And he went in as I watched" (v2).* The man

clothed in linen is the same angelic being of chapter 9, the one who placed a mark on the foreheads of the godly Jewish remnant, because they sighed over the sin of the city. The man clothed in white linen may have been more than just an angel taking on the form of a man. Although we can't say for sure, this "man" may have been *the angel of the Lord* - the Lord Himself, the pre-incarnate Christ. He was given coals of fire from beneath the throne chariot of God to be scattered over the city of Jerusalem.

In Ezekiel 10, the burning of Jerusalem was judgment for the idolatry and wickedness of the people (Ezekiel 8-9). The judgment of God must fall on unholy people. The burning of the city literally happened when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and burned the city. 2 Kings 25:8-9: "*Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the Lord and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire.*" Why did God let this happen? Because the judgment of God must fall on ungodly people.

Let me ask you a question: is there any escape from the judgment of God? Yes - but there is only **one way** of escape, and that is through Jesus Christ. There is salvation in Jesus Christ, because God's judgment against sin fell on Jesus when He died on the cross. He paid the penalty of our sins. He died as our substitute. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "*He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.*" Do you believe this? Have you received Christ as your personal Savior?

*"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"* (Hebrews 2:3). There is no escape from the judgment of God apart from Christ. The judgment of God must fall on ungodly people.

## **2. The glory of God must withdraw from unholy worship.**

In Ezekiel 8, the idolatry and unholy worship going on in the Temple area was revealed, and thus the glory of the Lord departed from the temple. The glory of God must withdraw from unholy worship.

Remember, the theme of Ezekiel is "the glory of God," and the first 24 chapters could be subtitled "the departure of God's glory." In verse 4 of chapter 10 (a repeat of 9:3), the first stage of the departure of God's glory was seen. The glory of God left the Holy of Holies of the Temple, where it had been focused over the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant. The glory cloud moved to the threshold of the Temple.

The second stage of the departure of God's glory was seen in verse 18, when the glory cloud moved from the temple threshold to God's throne chariot: "*Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.*" (These cherubim were the cherubim of God's throne chariot.)

Verse 19 describes the third stage of the departure of God's glory, as God's throne chariot moved from the Temple courtyard to the east gate of the Temple complex: "*And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in*

*my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them."*

In the fourth stage of the departure of God's glory (Ezekiel 11), the glory cloud left the city in the direction of the east. The glory of God must withdraw from unholy worship.

What was true in Ezekiel's day is just as true today. The glory of God must withdraw from unholy worship. Many churches that once preached the gospel and were spiritually alive are now spiritually dead. The worship in those churches is no longer Christ-centered, and is now merely religious ritual. The Lord is no longer in the midst of the people. The glory of God must withdraw from unholy worship.

## **Practical Application**

### **Don't let "Icabod" ruin your church or ministry!**

The name "Icabod" comes from 1 Samuel 4, and it means "no glory" or "the glory has departed." In 1 Samuel 4, when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and took it away from Israel, a grandson was born to Eli the high priest. He was named "Icabod." *"Then she named the child Icabod saying, 'The glory has departed from Israel because the ark of God has been captured'" (1 Samuel 4:21).*

Has the glory of God departed from your church or ministry? Is the focus no longer on Jesus Christ - and on bringing souls to salvation through Him and bringing honor to Him? Is the emphasis no longer on the accurate and practical teaching of the Word of God?

If so, it's no wonder that the glory has departed! It's no wonder that your church or ministry is spiritually languishing - or even spiritually dead. I trust that this is not true of your church or ministry. Don't allow sin and idolatry (such as jealousy and greed for power or money) to creep in and cause the Lord's blessing to depart. Don't let "Icabod" ruin your church or ministry!