

## EZEKIEL'S VISION

### *Ezekiel 1*

Review the background material concerning the four Major Prophets. Be sure that the pupils know what a prophet is, why these four were called “Major,” and that they can name the four. Even with the Primaries it is useful to say the names and have the children repeat them after you. Young children like to say new words, and most children will find the Bible names easy to speak and to remember if they become familiar with their sound early.

---

#### **Doctrinal Points**

*The Lord hides from us truths which we are not ready to use.*

*The visions of the prophets had a message to the Jewish people of their time, but they have a deeper message to us.*

*We should now be able to see rationally the working of Divine providence.*

*Sin is doing things which we know to be wrong.*

---

#### **Notes for Parents**

Did you ever wonder what cherubim are? In the first place the *-im* is just the plural ending in the Hebrew; so cherubim are cherubs. They are mentioned a number of times in the Bible. In the wonderful symbolic story of the Garden of Eden, for example, after Adam and Eve disobeyed and were driven out of the garden, we read that the Lord placed cherubim at the entrance with a flaming sword “to keep the way of the tree of life.” And in our lesson on the ark of the covenant we learned that by command they placed two golden figures of cherubim on the mercy seat on top of the ark, and that the Lord promised to speak to the people from “between the cherubim.” Today we have a lesson which describes cherubim, and they may not seem to be as we have pictured them.

Ezekiel the prophet was one of the priests of Judah. He was taken captive with several thousand of his countrymen when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took full control of the kingdom of Judah. He was carried into Chaldea and lived there by the river Chebar, and after five years the Lord called him to be a prophet. Over a period of about twenty years he was given visions and prophecies to tell to the captive people. Our chapter describes his first vision.

The word *cherubim* is not used in this chapter, but a little later (chapter 10) Ezekiel had another vision of the same living creatures and there he called them cherubim. So we know that the cherubim were these strange creatures of vision, with four faces and wings, with hands under their wings, and feet that shone like polished brass, and great wheels beside them full of eyes. No material person or animal could be like these; so we know that they were not actual beings but were symbolic representations of something the Lord wanted Ezekiel and wants us to know about. What they represent is divine providence which is always over us, seeing all that we do and are and watching and guarding every least thing in the world so that goodness will be protected, and so that from moment to moment each one of us may be free to think and to choose for himself what he wants to be. The vision was like a marvelous moving picture acted out before the eyes of Ezekiel's spirit to show him how close the all-wise Lord was to him all the time. You can imagine that after Ezekiel had once seen this, he would not hesitate to speak boldly the words which the Lord put into his mouth.

---

### Primary

Be sure the children know what a prophet is and the names of the four Major Prophets. Sketch briefly the story of the fall of Judah and Ezekiel's history so far as it is known. Then read them this first vision of his and tell them in general what the Lord was showing him by means of it.

When the king of Babylon conquered the kingdom of Judah, he made most of the people of Judah leave their homes and go to live

in Babylon. The people did not want to go, and they were very unhappy. But they had to learn that their country was a gift to them from the Lord and that if they wanted to keep it, they must love Him and do what He taught them was right. The Lord had sent prophets to warn them over and over again, but they would not listen. Now they had to learn the hard way.

But the Lord had not deserted them. He does the best He can for us always. So He gave them a new prophet to tell them that if they tried to do better, they would someday be allowed to go home again. This prophet's name was Ezekiel. He was one of their own priests, who had been carried away to Babylon with them.

After they had lived in Babylon for five years, the Lord began to give Ezekiel messages for them, and He gave him several wonderful visions.

A prophet in the Bible is one who speaks for the Lord.

Four of the prophets were called *Major Prophets*, because of the length of their books.

Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied in Judah.

Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied in Babylon after the people were taken captive.

Do you have dreams? Sometimes we try to tell people afterward what we have dreamed, and we find it hard to make them understand just what we have seen. A vision is like a dream, only it is about something that is really happening or going to happen.

What strange vision did Ezekiel see?

Later, in chapter 10, he calls these same living creatures *cherubim*.

You remember the figures of cherubim on the cover of the ark.

What four faces did the living creatures have?

What went beside them on the earth?

What else can you tell about them?

Now read verses 22 to 28.

What did Ezekiel see above the living creatures?

From the last verse we see that they knew that the man on the throne was the Lord.

Long afterward the Apostle John had a similar vision, which is recorded in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation.

Ezekiel's visions gave the good people among the captives hope that sometime they would be able to return to their homes.

It showed Ezekiel that the Lord was near His people taking care of them.

## Junior

Do more in this class with the historical position of the four Major Prophets and with the history of the fall of Judah. Discuss in general the office of prophet and what it meant to the people to have a prophet given to them in their captivity. Be familiar with the methods of revelation, as given in AC 6000, as the children may ask how the Lord spoke to the prophets. Then take up the literal details of Ezekiel's first vision, and the meaning and purpose of the vision as a whole.

You remember that when Hezekiah showed the messengers from Babylon all his treasures, Isaiah said to him, "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord." (II Kings 20:17) This prophecy was fulfilled about a hundred years later. Of the seven kings of Judah who followed Hezekiah only one, Josiah, was good. Finally Babylon gained complete control of the kingdom. Under Jehoiakim King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began to carry away to Babylon, in addition to the treasures, some of the most promising of the young men of Judah. Among these was Daniel (Daniel 1:1-6). After Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin was himself carried to Babylon, together with all his family and "his officers, and the mighty of the land . . . and all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war" (II Kings 24:15-16). The king of Babylon set up an uncle of Jehoiachin to rule in Judah, but when he also rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and carried away to Babylon all but the poorest of the people.

As we learn from the beginning of our chapter for today, Ezekiel was a priest and was among those carried away to Babylon, and in the fifth year after king Jehoiachin was brought there Ezekiel was called by the Lord to prophesy to the captives. He and Daniel, together with Isaiah and Jeremiah, are called the *Major* Prophets because their prophecies, as we find them in the Bible, are long books in comparison with the short books of the twelve *Minor* Prophets.

All the prophets whose messages are recorded in the Word were inspired by the Lord. They all heard the voice of the Lord speaking to them, and they all had visions as well. Most of us have strange dreams sometimes, and when we try to describe them afterward, other people find them very hard to picture. Our dreams usually are the result of conditions in our own minds and bodies and may have no special meaning, but the visions and dreams of the prophets, which seem equally strange to us, were given them by the Lord and did have a meaning. The prophets themselves seldom knew what this meaning was any more than did the people to whom they spoke, but they did know that they were to write them down, using just the words that were put into their minds to describe them. We know now that the inner meaning of these visions can be read, just as the meaning of the parables and all the other stories of the Word can, for they are written in the same language, the language of the correspondence of the things of nature to the things of the spirit which produce them. So the visions and messages which were recorded in the Word through the prophets are for our instruction and enlightenment, and when you are older, you will find what a wonderful study they are.

Read carefully our chapter for today.

What were the four faces of the living creatures?

How many wings did they have?

What were their feet like?

What did they have under their wings?

What did Ezekiel see beside them on the earth?

What were the wheels like?

How was their motion governed?

What did the wings sound like when they moved?

What did Ezekiel see above the living creatures?

And what was above the firmament?

Whom did he finally know this man on the throne to be?

This vision taught Ezekiel that the Lord was not far away but was always near and at work in the affairs of men. In the tenth chapter of this same book, when Ezekiel was carried in the spirit to Jerusalem, he saw the same vision again there. This time he called

the living creatures “the cherubim.” Do you remember that on the cover or mercy seat of the ark Moses was commanded to place two golden cherubim and that the Lord promised to speak to the Israelites “from between the cherubim”? Now read Genesis 3:24.

What was the work of the cherubim there?

We may see that this vision which Ezekiel saw describes something which is not a mere temporary appearance, for many years later the Apostle John saw the same thing. Read Revelation 4. Here the cherubim are called “beasts” [KJV], which is unfortunate because we use the word *beast* in such a different way. Actually the Greek word translated “beast” means simply “living creature.”

From all this we can see that the cherubim are symbolic figures picturing the power of the Lord to see and provide for all things. The Lord knows us through and through. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, He is there taking care of us as well as we will let Him. The Psalmist says: “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” (Psalm 139:8)

The captives in Babylon needed reassurance that even in their affliction and exile, their God was with them. Even though most of the people of Judah had turned from the Lord to idolatry, there were some good people left, and after some thirty-five chapters of reproof and denunciation of the wicked, Ezekiel is given a message of hope for the good, promising them that they would be restored to their own land and allowed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. This prophecy was literally fulfilled, but its importance for us is in the fact that its real meaning concerns the heavenly character which the Lord is able to rebuild in us after we have done wrong, if only we will listen to Him and try to obey Him.

---

### Intermediate

The lesson for this class is the general meaning in the spiritual sense of the captivity of Judah and of the first vision of Ezekiel in relation to that meaning. As many of the details of the vision can be explained as you have time for.

The attention of the class should be called to the mention of cherubim in other places in the Word.

Babylon, we may recall, represents the “love of dominion from the love of self.” In simple language this means the feeling that everybody should do what we want. This feeling is natural to us in the beginning, for we are born selfish; but unless we are badly spoiled by our parents, we grow up knowing that it is wrong, and we learn to control it and even, with the Lord’s help, acquire the new will of love to the Lord and the neighbor, which is regeneration. We have seen that the story of the Hebrew nation, as recorded in the Word, pictures this gradual change which is completed in the happy and peaceful reign of Solomon. But then we saw that even a regenerate man can still be tempted and that his temptation is to take into his mind all sorts of ideas which are foreign to his true purpose of serving the Lord. His very success “goes to his head.” False ideas gradually get control of his mind: Assyria has carried Israel away into captivity. Then little by little the sense of his own importance steals away the goodness which the Lord has put into his heart: Babylon has carried away Judah. We should notice that Assyria was always attacking with armies, but Babylon stole in by pretending friendship.

The good king Hezekiah postponed the fall of Judah, just as we have times when we see our faults and reform for a time. But Hezekiah’s son Manasseh undid all his father’s good work. There was only one more good king in Judah—Josiah—and after he was killed in battle, things grew rapidly worse. Under king Jehoiakim Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, gained sufficient control to carry off to Babylon part of the treasures of the temple and several of the young princes, among whom was Daniel. Then after Jehoiakim died, Nebuchadnezzar came in again and carried off his son Jehoiachin, who had reigned only three months, with all his family and his officers and some eight thousand of the most able men of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar set up Jehoiachin’s uncle Zedekiah as a sort of puppet ruler, but when he rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar put an end to the kingdom, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and

carried off all the rest of the people except the poorest, who were left to care for the fields and vineyards.

This history is the background of the life and work of the prophet Ezekiel. He was a priest, and was probably carried away among those who were taken with Jehoiachin. He tells us himself (Ezekiel 1:1-3) that he was placed in the land of Chaldea by the river Chebar, and that he received his call to be a prophet in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. The first twenty-four chapters of the book are visions of the evil state of the people and prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem was destroyed and after that for some fourteen years more Ezekiel was given visions of the doom which would fall eventually on the enemies of Judah, and then visions of the restoration to their own land of those who were faithful, ending with a long and detailed vision (chapters 40-48) of the new temple which would be built. For the people of Judah in captivity, these visions and promises had an encouraging literal meaning, but we know that they really picture the building of a new Church in the world and also the rebuilding of a heavenly character in us which is possible as long as we are here in this world, if we will only recognize our faults and try with the Lord's help to change. We should note that the visions of the Apostle John which are recorded in the book of Revelation are strikingly similar to some of Ezekiel's visions.

Our chapter is about Ezekiel's first vision. It was a strange one and, try as we may, we cannot picture in our own minds just what he saw. We know that even our own dreams—which are not visions—have a shifting quality that is hard to put into form afterward. In chapter 10, where Ezekiel tells of seeing the same living creatures again, he calls them “cherubim.” We remember that “cherubim, and a flaming sword” were placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were driven out, “to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24). And we remember the two golden figures of cherubim that were placed on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, and that the Lord promised to speak to the people from between the cherubim.



The cherubim are symbolic figures and they usually picture divine providence,\* especially as it works to protect goodness. You know that there is a difference between evil and sin. All selfish desires are evils and they have bad consequences. The Lord wants us to get rid of them. But we cannot overcome them all at once. If we should see them all, we should be so discouraged we should give up trying. So the Lord shows them to us one by one as He sees we are ready to fight them, and He hides from us the things we would not try to fight. For sin is doing things that we know to be wrong, and it is sin that really hurts our souls.

In Ezekiel's vision the cherubim had wings. Wings picture truth about heavenly things, which has the power to lift our thoughts above the world. The creatures had the hands of a man under their wings, and hands represent the power to accomplish. They had "straight" feet which sparkled like burnished brass. The feet, which walk on the ground, stand for our daily lives, and brass is the metal which pictures goodness in outward things. They had four faces. The face is the part of us which expresses our character; so the four faces of the cherubim express the Lord's character as we see it in the action of divine providence: the face of a man is intelligence; the face of a lion is the power of divine truth; the face of an ox is goodness in natural things; the face of an eagle is rationality, which sees from a great height. Then there are the wheels. Wheels are things which enable us to move rapidly from place to place and especially to transport things easily. In the vision they picture divine foresight, and that is why they were "full of eyes." And the fact that all this brightness and activity and sound came from the Lord was shown Ezekiel by the vision of the throne and the figure of the Lord upon it.

We may wish we could have such a vision; but, you know, we actually do have it with our minds whenever we remember that, no matter where we are or what state we are in, the Lord is always at hand, seeing us just as we are, and providing for us just the

---

\*Cf., however, *Apocalypse Revealed* 239. —*Editor*

experiences which are most likely to check our wrongdoing and lead us to goodness.

*Basic Correspondences*

- cherubim = divine providence protecting
  - wings = truth which can lift us above the worldly plane of thinking
  - the hands = power to accomplish
  - the feet = the outward conduct
  - the face = the inner character
- 

**Senior**

With this class more may be done with the nature of vision and prophecy and the methods of revelation. Stress the fact that only a knowledge of correspondence really “opens” the Prophets. Point out the timeless and universal character of Ezekiel’s vision and discuss the details in relation to the general meaning.

The four Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, prophesied to the people of Judah over a period of about two hundred years, from a little over a century before the kingdom of Judah fell until well along in the period of the captivity. Isaiah, as we have seen, told Hezekiah that the kingdom was doomed, although its fall was delayed by Hezekiah’s reforms and by those of one of the later kings, Josiah. The book of Jeremiah is full of condemnation and warning, and he lived to see Jerusalem and the temple destroyed.

The books of Ezekiel and Daniel are of a different character. The blow had fallen. The people had been carried away to Babylon, and warning was no longer in order. But on the other hand some of the people at least were more ready to listen when told of their evils. Jeremiah had been hated and bitterly persecuted for his prophecies. Ezekiel and Daniel were honored. It was a comfort to the people to feel that even in captivity in a foreign land they still had authentic prophets.

Ezekiel was apparently among those carried away with king

Jehoiachin in the first major captivity. Judah continued as a puppet state for another eleven years before Jerusalem and the temple were finally destroyed. So the first twenty-four chapters of Ezekiel were largely concerned with that coming destruction, but they were written, as he tells us himself (Ezekiel 1:1-3), from captivity, and to the captives who had already lost their country. Later Ezekiel was given a message for them which promised the return of the faithful and the rebuilding of the temple.

But we know that all the utterances of the prophets which were recorded in the Word were only in a very limited sense messages to the people of that day. Their real import is spiritual, and directed to men and women of all nations and times. Throughout the history of the Christian Church many devout students of the Bible have felt that the prophecies must have some hidden meaning. Their very strangeness shows that they were not meant to be taken literally, and their power is felt even in those passages which are least understandable in the letter. Without a knowledge of the law of correspondence, however, attempts at interpretation were fanciful and aroused among scholars an antipathy to what they called "allegorizing on Scripture" which makes it almost impossible today to get even a hearing among them for the truths concerning the spiritual sense revealed in the Second Coming.

But the law of correspondence makes it possible to read the prophets with ever-increasing understanding and reward. They speak, in the internal sense, to the human mind and heart, exposing and condemning evil, explaining the working of the Lord in the individual and in the world, and showing us the way to happiness and peace.

Take our chapter for today as an example. It was Ezekiel's first vision, and he was impelled by the spirit to describe it in detail, although it presented a strange picture. The first thing which helps us to understand it is to note the fact that the "living creatures" when seen again by Ezekiel (chapter 10) are called "cherubim" and that the "beasts" [KJV] seen by the Apostle John long afterward (Revelation 4) were the same symbolic figures. (The Greek

word translated “beasts” means simply “living creatures.”) Swedenborg’s explanation that the cherubim picture divine providence in one of its special functions—that of protecting the highest or celestial good from profanation—is borne out by the other mentions of cherubim in the Word, such as the cherubim placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden after the fall “to keep the way of the tree of life,” and the two golden figures of cherubim which were by command placed on the mercy seat of the ark.

When we think of this vision of Ezekiel as a representation of the marvelous ever-present activity of divine providence in the affairs of men, all the details fall into order. How hard it is for us to understand divine providence! It comes to us as “a whirlwind out of the north, a great cloud,” inscrutable at first but gradually revealing the divine love that is within it, the fire and brightness. We see that it applies to every phase of our lives—the four faces. It comes with spiritual truths which like wings are capable of lifting us above the plane of worldly and natural thinking. Yet it enters into the details of our daily living—its feet are on the ground. The hands under the wings are the power of spiritual truth for accomplishment in our lives. Compare verse 14 with Matthew 24:27. The wheels—the symbols of the intelligence which facilitates action and reaction—are “full of eyes round about”; the Lord sees and knows everything we are and have been and the results of our choices to eternity. It is not until near the end of the vision that the noise of the wings is mentioned. In the Bible the voice of the Lord is twice said to be like the sound of many waters (Ezekiel 43:2, Revelation 1:15), and we know that this means divine truth speaking to our minds. At first it is a confused noise, but gradually what it is saying becomes clear to us. Ezekiel becomes conscious of an actual voice and of the appearance of a throne above the cherubim and “the appearance of a man above upon it” surrounded by color and brightness and finally by the rainbow, which is “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” Then the Lord speaks to Ezekiel giving him the first message he is to carry to the people.

Ezekiel, like the many devout people who have read the chapter since, did not have to understand the meaning of the details of this vision in order to feel certain of its source and to recognize its impelling power. He knew that he was being given a glimpse of the supernatural forces at work in the affairs of men, and that when the Lord spoke to him, he must obey. Today men do not need to see supernatural visions. The Word is finished and is given to us to study, and its meaning has been opened. It is with our rational minds that we now recognize the working of divine providence in the world and look to the Lord for instruction and guidance from day to day.

---

### Adult

Center the discussion on the general meaning of the cherubim, illustrating it from other parts of the Word. Swedenborg's statement of the various methods of revelation (AC 6000) is another good subject. Still another is the distinction between the prophet's message to the people of his time and its universal meaning.

The kingdom of Judah lasted only a little over a century after the death of Hezekiah. All the later kings were evil except one, Josiah. They were in constant difficulty, for Egypt was at war with Assyria and Judah lay between. But Babylon was their final conqueror. In Daniel 1:3-6 we learn that in the third year of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar gained control of Judah, he carried to Babylon part of the treasures of the temple and also some of the most promising of the young princes, of whom Daniel was one. This is not mentioned in the books of Kings, but II Kings 24:10-16 does tell us that several years before the final destruction of Jerusalem the king of Babylon carried away captive Jehoiakim's son and successor Jehoiachin, together with his family and his officers and the mighty of the land, "and all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war." Ezekiel was probably one of those removed at this time, and our chapter shows us that he was settled with a group of captives in Chaldea by the river Chebar.

He was a priest, the son of Buzi. He tells us himself that his first vision came to him in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. This was several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and chapters 1 to 24 of Ezekiel are concerned with prophecies of this event. The king of Judah during this period was Zedekiah, an uncle of Jehoiachin, who had been set up as a puppet ruler by Nebuchadnezzar, but rebelled and brought about the final catastrophe. After the destruction of Jerusalem, when all the rest of the people except the "poorest" were also carried away, Ezekiel continued to prophesy for at least fourteen more years, about twenty years in all. He is called "the prophet of the captivity."

The book of Ezekiel is full of strange visions which have puzzled Bible commentators throughout the history of the Church. They have a striking similarity to the visions of John in the book of Revelation, and like those visions have been subject to all sorts of interpretations and applications. The law of correspondences revealed through Swedenborg is the only key which can unlock the mysteries of these two books and lead to a consistent and reasonable interpretation. In the first twenty-four chapters Ezekiel is told to do strange things and is told that these are symbolic of the character of Judah and of what will happen to Jerusalem and its people; the complete destruction and desolation of Jerusalem is foretold. Then follow eight chapters of judgment upon various foreign nations, similar to chapters 46 to 50 of Jeremiah. Chapters 43 to 48 foretell the restoration, ending with a long, detailed vision of the Holy City and the temple. So again in Ezekiel the prophet's mission is exemplified—judgment, warning for the evil, and promise of salvation for the good.

Swedenborg tells us (AE 619<sup>3</sup>) that the reason why Ezekiel and John were given such searching visions of the inner conditions of men and of the Lord's dealings with them through the medium of the spiritual world was that "the prophets Ezekiel and John represent the doctrine of truth and the Word, therefore the exploration was made by them." The visions of Isaiah and Jeremiah at the time of their call to the Lord's mission (Isaiah 6 and Jeremiah 1)

are simple and comprehensible in the letter as compared to this first vision of Ezekiel.

The key to the understanding of our chapter lies in recognizing that the living creatures were what elsewhere in the Word are called “cherubim.” Indeed Ezekiel himself (chapter 10:20) tells us so. Cherubim generally picture divine providence protecting holy things against profanation. We recall the cherubim which were placed at the gate of the Garden of Eden “to keep the way of the tree of life,” and the cherubim on the mercy seat above the ark. Cherubim are not a race of created heavenly beings, as the Church in the past has imagined. They are always symbolic figures. So our first impulse to try to picture for ourselves just what Ezekiel saw is not very productive, and instead we should give our attention to the symbolic details which he records. Swedenborg explains all these details in connection with John’s vision of the four beasts (Revelation 4:6-8) in AE 276-86. It is necessary to note that the Greek word translated “beasts” [KJV] means simply “living creatures” and would be better so translated on account of our modern connotation of the word “beast.”

As Ezekiel was called to examine into and record the perverted state of the Church, it was altogether fitting that his call should be accompanied by a vision of the Lord’s providence protecting holy things from such profanation. A brief outline of the vision and its meaning is all we can provide in these notes, but it may form a basis for thought.

First there is the general impression of the Lord’s power and love, the whirlwind and fire. These assume to the evil a terrifying aspect since their object is to destroy evil. Then follow the specific representations of the operation of this power and love through divine providence, the four living creatures. The protecting power of divine providence has four aspects—the four faces. On the right side, the side of clear perception, are the face of a man, picturing divine wisdom, and the face of a lion, “the good of love and truth thence derived in their power” (AC 6367). On the left side, the side of relative obscurity, are the face of an ox, “natural good,”

and the face of an eagle, “the rational” (AC 3901<sup>5</sup>). Except by means of these things men cannot approach the holy things of the Lord’s kingdom. The wings picture spiritual truths, which both lift and protect. The hands of a man under the wings picture the Lord’s power to carry out the truth, and the feet are the ultimate expression of that truth in conduct. “For ‘feet’ in general signify the natural; a ‘straight foot’ the natural in respect to good; ‘the sole of the foot,’ the ultimate of the natural; ‘burnished brass,’ also signifies good in the natural. From this it is clear that good in the natural is signified by a ‘calf,’ and that in this is the ultimate good that guards and protects lest the heavens be approached except through the good of love and charity” (AE 279<sup>2</sup>). A wheel signifies the power of advancing, and thus the understanding, by means of which we progress in the truth and in right living. The wheels appearing beside the living creatures, which went when the living creatures went and stayed when they stayed because the spirit of life was in them, picture the “Divine intelligence, or foresight.” Hence they were full of eyes (AC 8215). And above all appeared the Lord upon His throne.

It is significant that Ezekiel was given this vision before he was allowed to view the depths to which the human race had fallen. John was given a similar vision before he was permitted to see the devastation of the earth. These general truths apply to our regeneration. We are never tempted beyond our power to resist [I Corinthians 10:13]. Our eyes are not opened to see the deep evils within us before we have had a vision of the Lord’s protecting and saving power. We cannot fight against our temptations if we doubt the omniscience and omnipotence of divine providence. We may not be able to see why things happen to us and to others, but we are sure that they do not happen without the Lord’s knowledge and permission, and that behind the permission are perfect love and perfect wisdom.

---

**From the Writings of Swedenborg**

*Apocalypse Explained*, n. 600<sup>14</sup>: “The faces of the man and the lion were



seen 'on the right side' because 'man' signifies Divine truth in light and intelligence, and a 'lion' Divine truth in power therefrom, such as it is in heaven in the south; and the face of the ox was seen 'on the left side,' to signify the good of truth in obscurity, for an 'ox' signifies the good of the natural man, which is in obscurity in those who in heaven dwell in the north."

*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 3901<sup>5</sup>: "That the 'face of an eagle' is circumspection and consequently Providence is manifest; for the cherubs represented by the living creatures in Ezekiel signify the Providence of the Lord lest man should enter into the mysteries of faith from himself and his own rational . . . This shows that when it is predicated of a man, the 'eagle' is in the internal sense the rational; and this for the reason that the eagle flies high, and from above has a wide view of the things that are below."

---

### Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. Who are the four Major Prophets? *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel*  
J. Where did Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesy? *Judah*  
J. Where did Ezekiel and Daniel prophesy? *Babylon*  
J. What office besides prophet did Ezekiel hold? *priest*  
J. After he was taken captive, where did he live? *by the river Chebar*  
P. How was he first shown that he was to be a prophet? *vision*  
P. How many living creatures did he see? *four*  
P. How many faces did each one have? *four*  
P. What were the faces? *man, lion, ox, eagle*  
J. What were their feet like? *"straight," soles like calves' hoofs*  
J. What did they have under their wings? *human hands*  
P. What went on the earth beside them? *wheels*  
J. How did they move? *with the creatures*  
J. What did the noise of their wings sound like? *rushing water, thunder, army*  
P. What did Ezekiel see above the living creatures? *throne*  
P. Who sat on the throne? *the Lord*  
J. By what other name did Ezekiel afterward call the living creatures? *cherubim*  
P. Where have we heard of cherubim before? *Garden of Eden, ark of the covenant*  
S. What do cherubim represent? *divine providence protecting holy things from profanation*