

Ezekiel Part Seven

Living Creatures Birthed In Affliction



Introduction – “What Do You See?”

“And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures” (Ezek. 1:4-5).

Ezekiel begins his ministry surrounded with his brethren during a time of deep crisis. Verse four of chapter one begins with, *“And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north”*. These words are the beginning of Ezekiel’s vision, but they also describe the terrifying situation in the earth at that time. A storm had descended upon Judah and Jerusalem in the form of the Babylonian armies. Fear and trembling could overtake the heart of one who looked only at the temporal circumstances of that time. To behold

that storm from the earthly view one would only see destruction, loss, and tragedy. But God is giving Ezekiel insight into the spiritual view of these events through the vision described in chapter one. The vision describes a spectacular and glorious transformation that is occurring in the midst of the storm cloud. Hidden within this crisis is an eternal work of the Cross. Veiled in outward trial is the deep work of the Spirit to bring forth an increase of the Son in God's people.

“A Closer Look”

“As I looked, I saw a great storm coming from the north, driving before it a huge cloud that flashed with lightning and shone with brilliant light. There was fire inside the cloud, and in the middle of the fire glowed something like gleaming amber”
(Ezek. 1:4 NLT).

“As I watched, suddenly a driving storm came out of the north, a great cloud flashing fire, with brightness all around. At its center, in the middle of the fire, there was something like gleaming amber” (Ezek. 1:4 CEB).

Let us look closer at the scriptural description of the storm in this vision. It begins with a whirlwind coming from the north, referring to the Babylonian invasion upon Judah. That whirlwind involved a great cloud that had a fire within it that glowed like amber. This storm had an altar hidden within it. The fiery altar in that great cloud represents (to us) a living application of our death with Christ. The Cross being presented in these verses is not a teaching, but is likened unto an altar with coals ignited and gleaming like amber. The Spirit is emphasizing the need to move beyond religion and doctrine and experientially know our death with Christ so that His Life can be manifest through His people.

The captives with Ezekiel may have only beheld the storm, but the Spirit was trying to open their eyes to the eternal purpose hidden within this circumstance. We can hear the Spirit emphasizing this same reality through Paul to the church in Corinth; *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

“There Was Fire Inside The Cloud”

*“There was fire inside the cloud,
and in the middle of the fire glowed something like gleaming amber”*
(Ezek. 1:4b NLT).

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter. 1:6-7, 4:12).

Depression can result in certain people from a lack of sunlight. Endless cloudy and overcast days can become wearisome. In like manner, constant trial in someone's life can bring despair. Where is “THE SON” in the midst of all these cloudy days and what is the purpose of all this suffering? Going through many “Sonless days” or “constant tribulation” without seeing the purpose in it is depressing. God wants

to open up our “clouds” and show us the eternal work of the Cross hidden within them. He wants to open our eyes to His view and His heart. There is no storm that can blow God’s heart off course from our eternal destiny to be conformed to the image of His Son. The cloudiest day and most severe storm occurred on the day Christ was crucified. Hidden within the darkness of that storm was the eternal altar from which came eternal Life for all mankind.

Hundreds and hundreds of years after Ezekiel’s vision the Apostle Peter would exhort the saints scattered abroad to embrace the purifying flames found in times of trial. Peter knew that hidden within their trial was an opportunity to embrace the Cross in a real way. He saw the potential for ‘less of me and more of Jesus’ in the flame. Peter’s eyes had been opened to see the Cross of Christ at work in the midst of storms. This is the same Peter who, in his early years, stepped out of a boat into a raging storm and tried to walk on water just to get to Jesus. Even though he fell into the waves then, he learned to reach forth in faith and be lifted up in the Life and strength of the risen Son. He broke with fear and failure by embracing oneness with Christ. At the end of his letter Peter writes, *“The church that is at Babylon elected together with you greets you”*. Interestingly enough, the same eternal purpose revealed in Ezekiel’s vision at the Babylonian river Chebar has continued on to the saints in Babylon at the time of Peter’s epistle. God’s eternal purpose is always the same, He wants Christ to be formed in us through the storms of this life (Romans 8:28).

“A Faith Response”

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:18-20).

The message of the Cross may be carried to us in written form, spoken word or some other method of communication through which we can receive. But when the Cross is carried to us in the middle of a storm in the form of a trial, it tends to be embraced on a level that is deeper than a doctrinal belief. There is a faith response that cleaves to Christ with purpose of heart (Acts 11:23). It is a faith that says, “When you died I died, and now you are my Life”. It holds fast through the wind and in the flame allowing the Spirit to work deep within. This faith response can only occur when someone’s eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see the heart desire of God to purify His bride in the flame. Just like Peter looked at Jesus instead of the raging storm around him, we can choose to fix our eyes on Jesus in the midst of our storms (Matthew 14:29). As we focus on Him, the things on earth grow dim in comparison. The eternal work that the Spirit is doing in us becomes more important than what is happening in the temporal. We embrace the altar and let Christ be formed within. Soon we find ourselves “walking on stormy seas” with eyes filled with Jesus. In time, our walking turns into flying as we are lifted up in the Spirit of Life and experience glorious liberty as Christ lives through us! We can become as those who are governed by the heavens rather than tossed to and fro by every storm in the earth. Like caterpillars that were once earthbound, we can experience a true metamorphosis and grow wings. Hidden within every storm is the potential to grow wings!

“Glorious Transformation”

“And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings” (Ezekiel 1:6).

When our eyes see beyond the circumstance into the needs of God’s heart, we will press past the affliction and into Him. Our hearts turn away from the earth and unto the Lord. As our hearts turn the heavens open and we see the very throne of God in glory. We become caught-up in the purpose of God’s heart and abandon our fears as we surrender to Him. As we open to His intention, we find ourselves carried forth in the movements of God rather than tossed to and fro in the winds of the storm. Now a transformation can occur, for we have opened ourselves to the in-working of the Cross. The Cross in power begins to eradicate the flesh that was crucified with Christ, and His Life is released in glory. Out from the midst of the storm comes forth “a living creature” for a transformation has occurred in the flame. Christ is coming forth in Life through this person!

Incredible spiritual things begin to break free within us when we make the leap from dwelling in the earth to abiding in the risen Son. Eyes that we did not know we had start opening all over our being and we see the Lamb above everything in the temporal. Wings appear and begin spreading themselves in flight as Christ. Wheels of Life start moving and carrying us forth in the power of the Spirit. We begin to experience what it really means to be a New Creation in Christ. We are not studying doctrines about the New Creation; we are breaking forth as the manifestation of the New Creation. All of this can manifest because someone chose to love Him more than themselves in the pressure and heat of the furnace within the storm. Remember, from the very midst of the storm these living creatures emerged (Ezek. 1:5). It was hidden within the crisis where they were changed in the flames of the fiery trial. All these changes are the result of a transformation within the altar wherein someone embraced their death with Christ and allowed Him to form within as Life.

“Filled With Coals of Christ Crucified”

“As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire” (Ezekiel 1:13a).

“And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims” (Ezekiel 10:2).

Part of the appearance of those who emerged from the storm transformed into living creatures is that they appear as burning coals of fire, and are filled with coals of fire. Those who have been transformed by the Cross carry within themselves those ignited coals from Calvary. The message of the Cross is not a doctrine in their brains, but a burning reality that fills their entire being. They are on fire with the power of the Cross to liberate us from the flesh and form Christ in us. If someone who was struggling in the earth came to these living creatures for help, they could reach into the midst of them and “grab a coal” of the living power of the Cross and find true answers. All is of LIFE and REALITY with these transformed beings. They bear in their bodies the marks of the Cross that has gone deep and brought forth Christ in manifest ways that show forth His glory and manifest the Son, enthroned and governing as Life. ***