



# A SURPRISING APPEARANCE

EZEKIEL 1:9-28

“Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.” Ezekiel 1: 28



Written by  
**SCOTTIE HILL**  
Ministry Resident

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A common misconception believed by elementary students everywhere is that their teachers just live at school. After all, that is the only place they see them. Every morning when the young kids arrive, the teacher is there. When they get picked up, the teacher is still there. So, when they are strolling through the grocery store and see their teacher picking up some dinner supplies, it is a shocking appearance! This is a little bit like what happens in this passage when God shows himself to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was a priest from Jerusalem who ended up as a prisoner in Babylon after a Babylonian attack. And on the day of his 30th birthday, he finds himself sitting at the side of a river. As he is there, a storm rolls in, and Ezekiel describes an extraordinary, fantastic image.

There is a system of interconnected wheels and winged creatures with multiple faces of lions and oxen and eagles – oh my. Our imaginations fall short in understanding what is going on here. This extraordinary vision that Ezekiel saw included some powerful imagery. These cherubim, with their multiple faces, are embodiments of what one commentator calls the “highest forms of life.” Animals that are “kings” of their respective category – beasts, domestic animals, birds of the air. And as powerful and spectacular as this chariot with the creatures and their four faces and their giant, stretched out wings must have been – they are not the main event. They are simply background characters, part of the context for the most significant part of the vision.

Because over these magnificent, mysterious creatures was a throne with “the likeness with a human appearance.” This human looking

image was the “likeness of the glory of the Lord.” His position above the throne showcases the complete power that God’s coming King has, even greater than all the angels and beasts and mythical looking creatures. And this image of the glory of the Lord may have surprised Ezekiel in appearance because even in his glory he looked a lot like...us.

Perhaps even more surprising than the image of a man in this wild vision is the fact that Ezekiel was seeing the glory of God in Babylon. Like a child learning that their teacher does not in fact live at the school, Ezekiel is reminded that God is not confined to his temple. As an exile, cast away from his land and from the temple, Ezekiel was surely feeling distraught, wondering if he would ever encounter God again – and God shows up. He has not abandoned His people, and He shows himself to be a God who will come to them.

What Ezekiel saw in a vision; we have seen in the person of Christ. The all-powerful King of the Universe, reigning in the clouds and ruling over all things, who appeared not in a vision but in the flesh of a newborn baby, 2000 years ago. He truly is a God who comes to us.

God, we praise you that you are a God who comes near. In the most surprising places, and in the most surprising ways, you come to us. In the moments that we doubt, fear, and wonder if you could really be here. May we remember the glorious vision you showed Ezekiel to remind him, and us, that you are truly with us. Let us hold fast to that hope. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.