

THE WHEEL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WHEEL

TEXT: Ezekiel 1:15-16

The story I bring to your attention today is a story that bespeaks of mystery and the spectacular. I Corinthians 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This verse is most applicable to our text today. We must have the aid of God's Holy Spirit to understand what is being said. I appreciate the reminder of I John 2:27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." For those of you whom I have pastored for any length of time you will notice that I claim this Bible verse every time I preach or teach. Without God's Spirit anointing our teaching, we will be very apt to miss what He is saying. People who don't have personal relationship with God through Christ have not the Spirit of God and therefore the understanding will be withheld. I have heard this text given to try to prove that UFOs and alien abductions are facts. Friends, believe me, this is not the message!

Like Daniel and John in the book of the Revelation, Ezekiel prophesied out of the land and his prophecy, like theirs, follows as Dr. C. I. Schofield said "the method of symbol and vision." We need to discern the symbols and visions and ask ourselves, what is God saying to us? I want to highlight some verses that will take us into the mind and heart of God as shown through His servant Ezekiel.

A. God sees and experiences everything His people go through.

Ezekiel 1:1: "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." Now tie this in to Ezekiel 3:15: "Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days."

B. God gives a brilliant witness of His identity.

Ezekiel 1:10: "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." We see the four-fold representatives of the Gospels. In Matthew we see the King of Kings (the lion); in Mark we see the Servant of the LORD (the ox); in Luke we see the Son of Man (the man) and in John we see the Son of God (the eagle).

C. God gives a commanding show of His glory.

Ezekiel 1:28: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the

appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.”

D. God teaches us through the wheels that there is more going on in our lives and world in which we live than meets the naked eye.

Ezekiel 1:16: “The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.”

And it is about this last thought that I wish to make ramification. The words to the old spiritual based upon Ezekiel’s vision are, “ Ezekiel saw the wheel way up in the middle of the air...And the little wheel run by faith and the big wheel run by the grace of God.” Catching the spirit of this prophecy, William Levi Dawson was a genius at seizing traditional African-American spirituals and arranging them into masterpieces such as, *There is a Balm in Gilead* (1939); *Steal Away* (1942); *Every Time I Feel the Spirit* (1946); *Swing Low* (1946); *Mary Had a Baby* (1947); *Ain’a That Good News* (1967), and of course one of Dawson’s most famous arrangements, *Ezekiel Saw the Wheel*. Dawson and his resources see the interaction of the wheels as representing two truths that operate like two concentric circles bringing the plan and purposes of God to fruition. Allow me to add what I believe the Lord is revealing to all His children. What is the purpose of the wheel in the middle of the wheel? It will serve to:

I. PROVOKE THE AWARENESS OF GOD’S PRESENCE

Genesis 28:16-20; Genesis 31:13

The phrase that Jacob used in Genesis 28:16 speaks volumes: “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.” Jacob referred to this place as the Gate of Heaven and named it “Bethel,” meaning the House of God. Then in Genesis 31:13, God commands Jacob to come back to Bethel.

We ought always to keep in mind that God wants us to recognize who He is, what He does and that in this Church age He is right here in person to be everything that we need. Genesis 44:30 refers to the relationship between Jacob and His son Benjamin. Judah made this remarkable statement of their relationship: “...seeing that his life is bound up in the lad’s life.” Does not this brief statement supersede the human interaction of parent and child to show us God’s love and watch care of His children? Jesus said in John 17:10, “And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” When we are aware that we are one with Him and He is with us always, everything changes.

II. PRODUCE AVAILABILITY FOR SERVICE

Isaiah 6:8; Revelation 3:8

When God revealed Himself to Isaiah, the prophet saw himself as unclean. But God used His seraphims to help him understand by God’s grace and goodness, he (Isaiah) is available to be used of God by virtue of the Lord’s cleansing power. When we see God for who He is, we simultaneously see ourselves as His servants.

The Lord Jesus said to the church at Philadelphia, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8). When we surrender our life to Christ, He opens a unique door of service.

III. PROVIDE TRACTION FOR ACTION

Isaiah 55:8, 9

In these two verses our Lord makes it clear, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). I see the gyroscope as an illustration of a wheel in the middle of the wheel. The gyroscope is used in the Hubble space telescope, air, land and sea travel and even used as a child's toy. A gyroscope is defined as a device used for measuring or maintaining orientation and angular velocity. It is a spinning wheel or disc in which the axis of rotation is free to assume any orientation by itself. When rotating, the orientation of the axis is unaffected by tilting or rotation of the mounting.

God is telling His people, even though they have been carried away in captivity, He is with them; therefore He is saying, "Give me your all!" And as the heaven is above the earth, so are my plans bigger than yours and although you may see your plans disintegrate into oblivion, like the wheel in the middle of the wheel, God is still working and He is unaffected by our errors! His plan will go on. Now the beautiful thing about our passage is the reminder that God keeps the balance of our wheel with the inner wheel of His stability. The wheels of God encompass Heaven (Ezekiel 1:26; Exodus 24:10) and Earth (Ezekiel 1:19; Exodus 9:29; Psalm 24:1). Knowing this fact, we can pray with total confidence, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mathew 6:10). The result: we find traction for action in God's plan.

-Pastor Pope-