

## What an Eyeful

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March 13, 2017

### Ezek 10:12a

(BHS)

וְכָל־בְּשָׂרָם וְגִבָּתָם  
וְיָדֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם וְהָאֹפְנִים  
מִלְאִים עֵינַיִם סָבִיב

(NCV)

All their bodies, their backs,  
their hands, their wings, and the wheels  
were full of eyes all over.

The text actually ends a little after *athnach* ( אַ ), so technically it includes 10:12ba. (Want even more geekiness? I set aside the usual presentation of a Hebrew verse by showing *zaqeph*: םֹ . This proves that dividing the verse where I did is reasonable. Go ahead, google *zaqeph* if you don't believe me.) Some translations assume that the organic terms like “body” and “back” are describing parts of a wheel, so “hands” become “spokes” and so on.

Ezekiel is describing cherubim. The word *cherub* is built from the same consonants as *rachab* (“to ride”), from which “chariot” is derived. See 1 Chr 28:18, “the chariot of the cherubim.” The main characteristic of cherubs is that Yahweh rides on them. “He rode on a cherub and flew; he was seen on the wings of the wind” (2 Sam 22:11). “The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!” (Psa 99:1). This is symbolized by the manmade golden cherubim in the Holy of Holies. From between their wings, God spoke to Moses (Num 7:89).

In Ezekiel, the concept is embellished and developed into a complex system of theriomorphic creatures with wheels, wings, and human elements. From a distance it looks like a thunderstorm. But up close, whirling beings

metallically gleam within (Ezek 1:4ff). The Glory of God sits on his sky-blue throne above their chassis (10:1). They are God's steed, his vehicle. (And the prophet also is similarly carried from place to place, to observe happenings in Jerusalem and distant lands.)

Take a look at Dan 7:9. Here is a vision of the throne of the Ancient of Days. It is made of fire. And do you notice what else? It has wheels. It is a mobile chair—in other words, a war-chariot. Ezekiel's vision is similar, but it includes wings. God's throne is an ornithopter of spinning wheels.

God is seated on his throne. From there he judges and rules the world. But where is his throne? The answer in Ezekiel is: wherever he wants it to be. Wherever it needs to be. His throne is in the secret places where apostates are conspiring by the Temple. His throne is in Chaldea with the exiles. His throne is up among the clouds. In other words, the whole portraiture is a symbolic expression of the divine attribute of Omnipresence. God is everywhere and anywhere.

But it is more than that. Our verse makes the point that every surface of the hybrid construct is full of eyes. It means this: God sees everywhere. He knows everything. Nothing escapes his notice. In other words, this is a symbolic expression of the divine attribute of Omniscience. The elders were quite wrong then, when they said to one another in secret, "The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land" (Ezek 8:12). (Thank goodness this is symbolism! Can you imagine creatures literally rolling around on wheels with eyeballs along the tread? Ouch!)

I believe that every aspect of our theology has practical implications. Show me a point of doctrine that makes no difference to our lives, and I will show you something not worth defending. But what is the significance of God's omnipresence and omniscience? How does that affect you and me?

God's omnipresence means that he is always present to save you. There is nowhere you can go that he is not there with you to hear your prayers. And his omniscience means that he knows everything about you and your needs. You don't have to worry about him not understanding. You don't have to explain anything to him. He knows. And he is there.

Jesus was slain as a sacrificial lamb, yet is alive today. In John's apocalyptic vision of ultimate reality, there he is, a living Lamb that had been slain—with seven eyes (Rev 5:6). His eyes are the seven spirits of God sent out in all the earth. In other words, he sees everything. He knows everything. He hears the prayers of the saints.

He knows your sorrows. He knows your needs. And he is powerful to act (he has seven horns too). But remember: he also sees what you do in secret that you think no one knows about. The challenge is to let this vision of ultimate reality rearrange your priorities—as Ezekiel's vision encouraged and challenged the exiles. We are called to live consistently with our confessed doctrines of God's omnipresence and omniscience.

Something to think about.