

# SECOND DISCOURSE UPON EZEKIEL'S VISION

## A SERMON

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“For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.” Ezekiel 1:21

LAST Lord's day morning we observed that the main design of this vision, of Ezekiel is to set forth the gospel dispensation, including as it does the people of God under the character of living creatures, showing their association with the gospel, here represented by four transverse wheels, those wheels constituting, as we then observed, a globe. And upon these wheels, upon this constituted order of things, rested a throne, and that throne progressed with these creatures here described. Just as in the wilderness the throne of mercy, or the mercy-seat, rested upon the ark, and progressed with the ark, with the tabernacle, with the people, all through the wilderness, until they reached the promised land. Just so here is a gospel which progresses, and here is the throne of God resting upon these wheels, which we took last Lord's day morning to mean the truths of the gospel. And so, the gospel throne of God rests upon the gospel; and if the gospel gives way, then down comes the mediatorial throne of Jesus Christ, down comes the throne of grace, and away goes all our hope. But though heaven and earth may pass away, the Lord's word shall not pass away; but as the mercy-seat rested upon the ark, to set forth the delightful truth that the mercy of God rests upon the ark of a sworn covenant, so here the throne of God in this vision is represented as resting over the heads of the cherubim's, hereby showing the oneness of these living creatures with the truth of God and with the throne of God. They are the same living creatures that you read of in the 5th and 6th chapters of the Book of Revelation. You read there of the four beasts, which all modern scholars prefer rendering “living creatures;” and that these four living creatures in the Book of Revelation join in the song of eternal redemption, a song which none can join in but those that are redeemed from among men. So that the vision of Ezekiel and the vision of John, notwithstanding the circumstantial variations of the two, are essentially the same, and intended to set forth the people of God in a blessedness which no language can fully and properly describe. I may just observe that their four faces and wings are intended, not to indicate that the saints of God are formed into that shape, but that those faces and wings are intended to set forth certain qualities which we have noticed, and which I need not remind you of now. There are no such creatures in nature, and therefore they are represented in that shape, that form, to set forth the various qualities expressive of the superiority of the people of God above all other people. And hence the wheels do not arise from anything that is in nature, but it is something made of exquisite workmanship. And so, the gospel of God is not a matter of course, but a matter of divine sovereignty and pleasure.

It pleased the Lord to form a covenant; it pleased the Lord to have a gospel; it pleased the Lord to have a church; and therefore, I say, we have here set forth the superiority of the people of God to all other people, the superiority of the gospel to everything else, and the superiority of the mediatorial throne of Christ, in its relation to man, to everything else. Hence, I may just hint, before I enter upon the subject, that the living creatures have four faces; and you observe that each face is taken from the king of each department. Here is the face of the lion; there is the king of the forest, expressive of the Christian's dominion over the world. There is the face of the ox, the king of the meadow, superiority again, to denote the Christian's patient labor in the things of God. And then there is the face of the eagle, the king of the air, superiority again, to denote the Christian's rising into eternal things, and ranging at large in the wonders of a vast eternity. And the face of a man, superiority again, you see. So that all those faces are intended thus to set forth the superiority of the Christian; that the righteous is bold as a lion; that the righteous is laborious as the ox; that the righteous shall rise with wings as eagles; that the righteous possesses the holiness, wisdom, and prudence of the man, the man Christ Jesus. I need not now enter minutely into these matters, but all would bear spiritualizing.

'Now I have this morning, in addition to what we said last Lord's day morning, to try to bring out the doctrines which are contained in our text, in addition to those we have already advanced. And you will observe here that the same spirit that was in the living creature was in the wheels. And this is not the only scripture where the gospel is called wheels, as we shall see presently. The same spirit that was in the wheels was in the living creature; there was but one spirit in both. What a solemnly important doctrine this brings before us! If I am not of the same spirit as the new covenant; if I am not of a gospel spirit; if I am not of the same spirit precisely as is the mediatorial work, or new covenant of the blessed God, then, though I may have a religious spirit, a very religious spirit, and a very earnest spirit, a very zealous spirit, and a spirit highly gifted, but at the same time, if it be a legal spirit, if it be a spirit in any way opposed to the spirit of the gospel, which is a spirit of free grace from first to last; if this be not my spirit, if my spirit be not one with the gospel, then I do not possess the spirit of Christ; and if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. You see the importance of it.

Now, when we meet with a wicked, profligate, good for nothing character, we are not at a loss about that man; we see that man is on his way to hell, as fast as his passions, his sins, and Satan, and circumstances, can drive him. But when we come to those for whom we entertain a considerable amount of respect, owing to the natural, the moral, and the intellectual worth that there may be about them, yet when we come to test them spiritually, by the truth of God, then we fall short of fellowship with them. They do not enter into that conviction of their state that we have been favored to enter into; they do not enter into that knowledge of their helplessness which the real child of God possesses; and they do not drink in the truths of the new covenant with that thirst, and earnestness, and eagerness, that the soul does which is born of God. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." The consequence is that there is that degree of antagonism between our spirit in these things and their spirit that we cannot feel a brotherly love to them, and I will give them credit for most heartily hating us; and so the Lord has put enmity between the two seeds, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. I might dwell here for an hour upon this essentially important matter; that the same Spirit that indited the Scriptures, and the same Spirit that dwells in the Scriptures, and has in all ages dwelt in the saints; surely, surely, surely, the Holy Spirit would never indite by the prophets and apostles one order of things, and

then teach the people another order of things; no. “The words that I have put into your mouth,” said God the Father in relation to Christ, “shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed”, the apostles, “nor out of the mouth of your seed’s seed”, those that in after ages should be brought to know the same things, “henceforth and forever.” Therefore, my hearer, let us test ourselves by the spirit of the gospel, and see whether we are believers in that gospel, whether we are lovers of that gospel, whether we glory in that gospel, whether we delight in that gospel; for they shall delight themselves in the Lord their God; but it must be after this gospel order.

Now there are three doctrines I will dwell upon this morning. First, the doctrine of *decision for God*; I think this is one doctrine contained in our text. Second, that while it is a spirit of decision, it is also *a spirit of revelation*. Third, *a spirit of ultimate glorification*.

First, then, that it is *a spirit of decision for God*. Now the people of God here are called living creatures; their decision for God, therefore, is in that order of things by which they have eternal life. Life is the theme, and indeed that includes everything, everlasting life includes every blessing of the gospel. And here is a spirit of decision for that order of things in which we have eternal life. Let us have just a word upon this. First, then, it is made clear unto such that the dear Savior has swallowed up death in victory. But how has he swallowed up death in victory? It denotes that it is entirely gone. What could be a stronger phrase? Swallowed it up as by the bottomless, fathomless depths of his almighty power; swallowed it up in victory. Now, how has he done that? Did it ever strike you, the great secret of that scripture, that he has swallowed up death in victory? That sin is the cause of death, that death is the result of sin? Know you not, if the Savior had left one sin unatoned for it would not then be true that he had swallowed up death in victory? Sin, some unatoned sin, would rise from some quarter, and come forth and minister death where God designed life, would come and minister death where the gospel had promised life, would come and inflict death where the soul was seeking life. But so completely did an Incarnate God compass every fault of the people of God, that the effect, namely, death, he has swallowed up by an entire destruction of the cause, by an entire sacrifice for the cause, by an entire abolition of the cause. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He interposed his eternal self between sin and us. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” If you are a Christian you will take your stand here; you will be decided for this; you will say, Here it is that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. The spirit, therefore, of the gospel is a spirit of mediatorial perfection, and if you are taught of God your soul will be restless, dissatisfied, and, like the dove, will find no rest for the sole of the foot until you find this mediatorial perfection; and when you find that, you will stand out decided for it. Why, you say, to be moved from this, move me if you please from all that is dear to me on earth; move me from mortal life itself; grind my body to powder; but, God Almighty keeping me, I am determined never to be moved from this mediatorial perfection. That is one with my soul, my soul is one with that; that is one with God, God is one with that; thus says Christ, “One with them, they with me, and I with you, and you in me;” that all may be one, even as the Eternal Three are one. Here, then, the spirit of the living creature is in this gospel; and all must live together; the Savior’s priesthood can never die, his people can never die, they are priests forever. But again, how is this life attained? First, by the gift of God. The Scriptures roundly assert that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” When was this life given? How was this life given? “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” It was, therefore, given after the order of eternal sovereignty; God having mercy upon whom he would have mercy. This is the spirit of the gospel,

and if your spirit be hostile to this, then your spirit is hostile to God; but if your spirit be one with this, and you are humbled to the dust, and you feel if you have eternal life you are indebted to God, and God alone, for it; then so far you are a partaker of the spirit of Christ. And then, how is this attained manifestively? By the quickening power of the Eternal Spirit. "You has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." And you are brought to see that you are in such a state as a sinner, and that the majesty of God's law is such, that the breach between you and your Judge can be made up, and matters set right, only by that mediatorial perfection of which I have spoken; that perfection you will receive, and upon that you will rest. And how is this secured, the eternity of it secured? By an immutable oath; by two immutable things, the immutability of God's counsel and the immutability of his oath; these two immutable things; a faithful and unchanging God.

Now these truths of the gospel, the several truths I have named, are in the 7th of Daniel called thrones. They are thrones of dignity, of power, of honor, of glory. Think you that there is not a present meaning to these words, "Raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ"? What are those places but the several truths that make up the gospel of God, the love of God, the electing grace of God, the great decree of God's mercy, mediatorial perfection, promises? Now the enemy, in all ages, has aimed to cast these truths down. Daniel says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down." I believe that the thrones there are the truths of the gospel, and I believe that Satan has, in a vast variety of ways, in all ages labored to cast these truths down. Say you, Where is your scripture? 8th chapter of Daniel: "He", the little horn, the Roman power, combined with the Jewish power, for they were one, "magnified himself even to the prince of the host;" and who is that prince/ Christ, the Prince of life; Christ, the Prince of peace. And it was by a combination of Rome and Israel that Christ was crucified. And now mark: "And it", this hostile power, "cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised and prospered." What can be clearer? And is it not so now? In a vast variety of ways Satan tries to cast these thrones down. Ah, says one, I should think it no honor to be enthroned by electing grace; I hate that. I should think it no honor to be enthroned by predestination; I hate that. I should think it no honor to be enthroned by a mediatorial perfection to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken. I should not think it an honor to be enthroned by a sworn covenant; no, certainly not. These doctrines have an evil name in the world. The minister will start with a free-grace sermon in the morning; then, in the evening, he will come and say, in substance, Christian friends, I have discovered my mistake: I told you in the morning it is all of grace; I am now come to tell you it is not all of grace. Then, next Sunday morning, he discovers that he was mistaken in saying that. And so, he goes on, You can and you can't; you can and you can't; constantly contradicting himself. The holy apostle says, "If we or an angel from heaven bring any other gospel or preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached, let him be accursed." "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit." When Christ comes in, in his eternity, then he throws down all their chaff and rubbish, sets up these thrones, enthrones his people. When, these thrones are cast down, the people of God will rather go down with them than be set up falsely without them; and when these doctrines are rejected, the people of God are quite willing to be rejected with them; when these truths have an evil name, the people of God are quite willing to share in that reproach, one with the truth, let the truth be treated how it may. They are willing to abide by it through all the circumstances of this sin-blasted world. "Till the Ancient of days did sit", So, when Christ comes in, in his eternity, that shuts the creature doing out altogether; no room for anything belonging to the creature, from a thread to a shoe-latchet; and they are taught, by the incoming of Christ's eternity, that all is of God, from first to last. And the real Christian, that feels his need of this

eternity of the gospel, lifts up his eyes to heaven with all the affections of his heart, and he says, "O God, from everlasting to everlasting you are God: your throne is from everlasting. Blessed be the Lord God of hosts, from everlasting to everlasting." So, you read of the angel that had the everlasting gospel to preach unto men. "Till the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool," Do you say that this refers to Christ's exaltation, and that his garment being as white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool, cannot, say you, apply to him in his humiliation? I think it can. I think that Christ's garment being white as snow means Christ in the perfection, first, of his purity. Was he not born in a perfection of holiness? "That holy thing." Did he not live in a perfection of purity? Did he not die in a perfection of purity? Did he not rise in a perfection of holiness? And does he not bring his people into that perfection of holiness in which they shall shine forth before God bright as the sun, and that forever? Second, the garment means a perfection of righteousness. Did he not live in that? Did he not die in the perfection of righteousness? Third, the garment signifies victory, the dress of conquest. And was the Savior ever conquered? No. "The hairs of his head like the pure wool," conveying the same idea. No dark thoughts in that head, that pure head of his; no wrong thoughts, no sinful thoughts; all was light, all was luminous. God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him. And what kind of a throne is that upon which he reigns? Not like the Vatican throne, dark as the lower world; not a Puseyite throne; not a humanly devised throne. Christ reigns in all the perfection of light. "His throne was like the fiery flame." It does not say his throne was a fiery flame, but *like* the fiery flame. What does it mean? The luminous truths of the gospel. He reigns in all the light of God's presence, in all the light of his mediatorial perfection, in all the light of eternal glory, till time shall be no more. And then, this progressive throne through time, connected with the gospel; the gospel is there again, in Daniel, called *wheels*: "His wheels are burning fire;" the glorious gospel goes rolling on. "Is not my word like fire?" "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him." Oh, what luminous rays fell into the souls of men, what luminous rays played upon the Old Testament Scriptures, when the dear Savior came; what light he shed around; sinners then had light they never had before, and exclaimed they never saw it on this fashion before. What a Savior! what a King! what a wonderful Person! Now, if we possess the spirit of Christ, we shall have a spirit of decision for this order of things, for this mediatorial throne of Christ, for his perfection, and for the luminosity of the gospel. I like the gospel compared to a fiery stream that issues from before him. I would not give three straws for the ministry of any man that is not as a fiery stream, for when the testimony comes luminously, warningly, burns off your fetters, warms your heart, kindles your zeal, endears the Savior, throws open eternity, and makes everything look little by the side of the person, the work, and the glory of Jesus; that is the true light that puts the world, Satan, and all those things under our feet, and enables us to take our stand upon the rock of ages, and glory in the light of that sun that will never go down.

Then this same gospel is also called *books*. "Thousand thousands", the angels and the saints; all the Old Testament saints, "ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened." How came the books closed? What were the books that Daniel saw opened? The books of the Old Testament. You have nothing to do but to go to the 23rd of Matthew, and see how the Pharisees had closed the Old Testament; see how they had put by everything essential to the sinner's welfare, to make way for their traditions. Daniel saw the judgment was set. When was the judgment set? I will tell you. First, when the Savior was born, what was the judgment then? "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." That is the judgment, 'that is the decision. Now he is not a Savior who tries to

save merely, but he who does save. So, Jesus Christ does save. Not “you shall call his name Jesus,” and he shall do his humble best toward saving his people from their sins. No; our God would have been ashamed to have sent such a Christ into the world; but “he shall save his people.” How that opened the Old Testament books to good old Simeon and to the shepherds. Simeon says, Why, I can read the Old Testament now in the light of this sure Savior, this sent Savior, this suited Savior. Here we may behold the glory of God, here we have the peace that passes all understanding. Judgment was set in favor of the saints, and that opened the Old Testament books. Second, the judgment was set at the river Jordan. Jesus went down into the water, and was baptized, and came up out of the water. You that are not Baptists, I advise you not to read the 3rd of Matthew, because, if you do, as likely to make Baptists of you as not; as likely to strike your mind, and make you say, Jesus Christ was a Baptist, and yet I refuse to be what he was. Jesus Christ did not mind the inconveniences of a river, and yet, where there is every accommodation for me in the chapel, everything provided, and all comfortable, yet I refuse to follow him. Jesus Christ came somewhere about forty or fifty miles to be baptized; I do not live above two miles from the chapel, I do not see my way clear to come. So, you see how dangerous that chapter is; I advise you not to read it, as likely to make Baptists of you as not. Well, now, when Jesus Christ came up out of the water, judgment was set, and the books were opened. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And the Holy Ghost descended upon him in bodily shape like a dove. Now go to the 42nd of Isaiah. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him.” There it is judgment set in favor of the saints; the books were opened. Now then, African traveler that has come so far to worship Jehovah only in a formal way, you are going back again, reading Esaias the prophet, but you have not yet got the secret; but the Lord knows the desire of your heart, he will send Philip to you, and he shall show you there that the judgment is set in favor of every one that believed with all his heart; that the books are opened. “And he began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.” And now just mark that at Jordan the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily shape like a dove, to be unto him a spirit of meekness and lowliness. Now see the 42nd of Isaiah: “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” As the New Testament renders it, “judgment unto victory.” There it is you see. “And the books were opened.” If we would understand everything pertaining to our eternal welfare, it must be in the knowledge of Christ. This made the apostle say, “That I may know him;” because, if I know him I shall know everything; for in him are hidden all the meanings of the Scriptures, in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. Do I believe, then, that Jesus Christ is the Savior? Then the books will be opened. Do I receive him as appearing there at Jordan? Then in what I get there the books will be opened to me, and that to my eternal life, to my eternal delight, and God’s eternal glory.” Third, judgment was set in favor of poor sinners, and the books opened, at Calvary’s cross, when he said, “It is finished.” Now go to the 9th of Daniel and see what is there said as to his terminating sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness. Fourth, when he rose from the dead, “Beginning at Moses,” the first writer, he did not pass by four or five books and say, They do not relate to me; there is nothing concerning me in those books. No; “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself,” and opened their understanding also, that they might understand the Scriptures. So, then, his resurrection set the judgment in our favor; “Who is he that condemns, it is Christ that rose from the dead.” 26th of Isaiah. “Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body,” says Christ, “shall they arise.” “Awake,” says the Holy Ghost, “and sing, you that dwell in dust, for your dew is as the dew of

herbs." Fifth, the judgment was set, and the books opened, on the day of Pentecost. Down came the eternal Spirit; off goes Peter to Joel; then to the 16th Psalm, then to the 110th Psalm, and thus judgment was set in favor of poor sinners; the Old Testament books were opened, they rushed into the kingdom of God with his fear in their hearts, walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and with singleness of heart did eat their bread, and were happy beyond description. And thus, the books were opened, and it made the Pharisees look like what they were. Now, then, Daniel saw this; he saw the truths cast down, he saw Christ come in, set those truths up, and the people became enthroned; he saw the brilliancy of the gospel, called, his throne, like the fiery flame, the wheels thereof progressing like burning fire; and the preaching of the gospel, like a fiery stream, issued from before him; and at mount Zion there are ten thousand times ten thousand angels that hover over ministers, watch them in their work, that hover over the saints of God, and watch them in their progress. Even the falling tear of repentance is a delight to an angel. They stand connected with the progress of the gospel, and I would to God that we felt, if it was only one-tenth of the interest in the progress of the gospel in our own souls, and in the souls of others, that angels feel. They prefer Mount Zion to any other place. Jesus Christ in the center of attraction to all; draws angels, such are his charms, angels are charmed with him; draws poor sinners, such are his remedial and saving attractions; draws God the Father, he approves of him; draws the Holy Spirit to himself; and all things are to be gathered together in Christ Jesus. He is the great meeting-place, heaven's center, heaven's light, heaven's glory; in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It is a spirit, then, of decision and of revelation.

Now in this 7th of Daniel we read there is an enemy to be overcome. I will just read the scripture, which most of the learned are dreadfully puzzled to understand. It is a good thing to be a plain Christian. Now it says in the next verse, "I beheld, then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." What horn is this? The horn is the symbol of power. The beast here spoken of was the Jewish nation, in combination with the Roman. The crucifiers of Christ are called wild beasts. "They gaped upon me as a roaring lion." The nation is here spoken of in the singular and called a wild beast. Now, "because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke." Watch me; it may be useful to you another day. The great words, words of great malice to Christ Jesus? words of great enmity against him? words of great delusion? Oh! little did they think they were putting to death God's darling Son. They fulfilled the Scriptures in condemning him. What a delusion they were under! What an awful prayer; "His blood be upon us and upon our children"! They were words, therefore, of great malice and great delusion. Third, the words the horn spoke were words of great blasphemy. How they blasphemed his name, spat upon him, buffeted him, and despised him! They were great words, words of great blasphemy. Lastly, they were great words, inasmuch as they were the greatest words, in other words, they were the words, which this hostile power spoke, of the greatest crime ever perpetrated under the canopy of heaven. Bad indeed for Cain to slay Abel; bad indeed for the generation of vipers to shed the blood of the righteous; but to slay the Son of God! What was this but Deicide, slaying, as far as man could do it, God Almighty? Words of the greatest crime that ever was or ever can be perpetrated. And now let us see what is to be done with this apostate nation, this wild beast; let us see if we plain Christians can understand our own book. Do not let us go down to Egypt for help. I would be second to no man in prizing and eulogizing human learning, only let it be kept in its place. Now, then, this beast was slain. Was not the Jewish nation slain? No question about that. Was it not slain testimonially by the Savior, 24th of Matthew, 13th of Mark, 21st of Luke; those three chapters? Second, the

body was destroyed; that is, their organization was destroyed; and the national, organization of the Jews was destroyed, and the Jews have been from that day to this scattered over the face of the earth, like bones upon the grave's mouth. And now mark, "and given to the burning flame." And was it not so? Is there a doubt about this? Not a burning flame literally, but that judgment of God that went burning on and on for forty long years, from the Savior's resurrection until the last stone of the temple's foundation was torn up. The burning flame continued progressing until the beast was destroyed. Oh, my hearer, what an awful thing to be an enemy to the gospel, to be a hater of Christ, to be a despiser of the Son of God and of the people of God! For what is done unto them is done unto him. May God cause these words to sink down deep into our hearts. "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." Their dominion was taken away. Know you not, brethren, that all the Old Testament age God suffered the nations to walk in their own way, and that the special government of Christ was confined to one nation? Now notice, when Christ rose from the dead, he took the dominion of all nations away; all power in heaven and in earth was given unto him. So that now emperors, kings of all departments, none of them have a government of their own, though they think they have. Jesus Christ has the keys of hell and of death, as well as the gates of heaven. He took their dominion away. But he let Persia live, and Persia lives till this day; he let Greece live, and Greece lives till this day; and he let Rome live, and it lives to this day, and a pretty Rome it is! And he lets other ungodly nations live, but they have no dominion apart from him. The throne of Russia is in the hands of Christ; the power of Napoleon is in the hands of Christ; the power of America is in the hands of Christ. And so, their dominion was taken away. Then Daniel in the next words shows the coming of the Son of man, and how "there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Thus, then, the spirit of the living creature is a spirit of decision for God; second, a spirit of revelation, by which these things are opened; they understand them, distinguish the enemy from the friend, stand against the enemy, side with the friend, and thus all shall come right at the last.