

Ezekiel 10:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

Analysis

Ezekiel's repeated identification—'this is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar'—serves multiple purposes. First, it authenticates the vision by connecting it to his prophetic call. Second, it emphasizes the title 'God of Israel,' reminding hearers of covenant relationship even in judgment. Third, it underscores that the same divine presence that commissioned Ezekiel now announces judgment.

The phrase 'under the God of Israel' indicates the cherubim's subordinate position. They serve beneath God's throne, not as independent powers. The Hebrew Elohei Yisrael (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'God of Israel') emphasizes covenant specificity—this is not a generic deity but Yahweh, who entered covenant with Abraham's descendants. The judgment falling on Jerusalem comes from Israel's own covenant Lord, not from a foreign god.

From a Reformed perspective, this reinforces that covenant relationship brings both blessing and curse, depending on faithfulness (Deuteronomy 28). God's covenant cannot be manipulated—it obligates the people to faithfulness while guaranteeing God's commitment to His redemptive purposes. Even in executing curse sanctions, God remains 'the God of Israel,' working toward ultimate restoration after necessary judgment purifies the remnant.

Historical Context

Ezekiel's ministry spanned approximately 593-571 BC among Babylonian exiles. His repeated references to the Chebar River vision (1:1-28) established his credentials. In an age without written credentials or institutional authorization, prophets authenticated their calling through consistency of message, fulfillment of predictions, and conformity to established revelation (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:21-22).

The title 'God of Israel' would resonate with exiles questioning their identity and God's faithfulness. Despite exile in pagan Babylon, Yahweh remained their God. The relationship continued, though its expression had changed from blessing to discipline. This maintained hope for eventual restoration—a disciplining father remains committed to his son's ultimate good (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the title 'God of Israel' (rather than 'former God of Israel') preserve hope even in judgment?
2. What does it mean that covenant relationship obligates both parties—God to His promises, us to faithfulness?
3. In what ways does understanding discipline as coming from 'our God' rather than from impersonal forces transform suffering's meaning?

Interlinear Text

הַ יֵּאֱלֹהִי	הַ חַי הַ חַי	אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי	בְּחַת	אֲלֵהִי	
H1931	This is the living creature	H834	that I saw	H8478	under the God
	H2416		H7200		H430
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּנֵהָר	כְּבָר	וְאֵדָע	כִּי	כְרוּבִים
of Israel	by the river	of Chebar	and I knew	H3588	that they were the cherubims
H3478	H5104	H3529	H3045		H3742
הֵמָּה:					
H1992					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 1:1 (References God): 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.

Ezekiel 10:15 (Parallel theme): And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.