

Ezekiel 10:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings;
and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

Analysis

The detailed description—'every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings'—reiterates the cherubim's characteristics, emphasizing their reality and consistency. Repetition in biblical prophecy serves pedagogical purposes, ensuring the audience grasps essential truths. The fourfold pattern (faces, wings) suggests completeness and universality.

The presence of human hands under the wings indicates purposeful action guided by intelligence. These are not mindless forces but rational agents executing God's will. The hands represent capacity for work, creation, and judgment. That the hands are human in likeness suggests these agents perform tasks comprehensible to humanity—their service to God has observable effects in human history.

The Reformed doctrine of God's decree includes the doctrine of secondary causes—God accomplishes His purposes through creaturely agents, whether human, angelic, or natural. The cherubim's hands under wings illustrate this principle: heavenly agents execute divine purposes through directed action. This avoids both deism (God distant from creation) and occasionalism (God as sole immediate cause of all events). God works through means while remaining sovereign over outcomes.

Historical Context

Cherubim appear throughout Scripture as guardians of divine holiness. After Eden's fall, cherubim with flaming sword barred re-entry (Genesis 3:24). The ark's mercy seat featured two golden cherubim (Exodus 25:18-22). Solomon's temple included massive cherubim in the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 6:23-28). Archaeological discoveries from Phoenicia and Assyria show winged guardian figures flanking thrones and temple entrances.

Israel's cherubim were unique in representing Yahweh's throne rather than independent deities. Their function as holiness-guardians explains their role here—they attend God's glory as it departs from a defiled temple. The people's sin has made God's dwelling place intolerable to His holiness, necessitating the glory's withdrawal and the cherubim's escort in that departure.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the presence of hands (action) with wings (heavenly nature) illustrate that heaven's purposes engage earthly realities?
2. What does the role of cherubim as holiness-guardians teach about God's character and the seriousness of sin?
3. In what ways does recognizing angelic involvement in divine judgment shape your understanding of spiritual warfare?

Interlinear Text

וְאַרְבַּע	וְאַרְבַּע	פָּנִים	לְאֶחָד	וְאַרְבַּע	כְּנִפֵּיהֶם:
four	four	faces	Every one	four	was under their wings
H702	H702	H6440	H259	H702	H3671
לְאֶחָד	וְדָמוֹת	יְדֵי	אֶחָד	תַּחַת	כְּנִפֵּיהֶם:
Every one	and the likeness	of the hands	of a man	H8478	was under their wings
H259	H1823	H3027	H120		H3671

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 10:14 (Parallel theme): And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Ezekiel 1:6 (Parallel theme): And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.