

Ezekiel 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

Analysis

Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. This verse describes the theophany—visible manifestation of divine glory—that introduces Ezekiel vision of temple abominations. The fire and amber imagery establishes this as divine presence, recalling chapter 1 throne vision.

A likeness as the appearance of fire indicates indescribable divine glory approximated through human language. Ezekiel uses phrases like likeness, appearance, as the colour repeatedly, acknowledging finite human inability to fully describe infinite divine majesty. Fire represents God holiness, judgment, and transcendent glory throughout Scripture (Exodus 3:2, 19:18, Hebrews 12:29).

From the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness describes a human-like form (anthropomorphic theophany) radiating divine glory. The colour of amber (or electrum, a gold-silver alloy) appeared in 1:4, 27, symbolizing divine glory and purity. This is Yahweh divine presence manifesting to His prophet.

From Reformed perspective, this demonstrates God condescension in revelation—He accommodates human limitations by appearing in forms we can partially

comprehend. This anticipates the ultimate theophany in Christ incarnation where God glory dwelt among us in fully human form (John 1:14). The fire also reminds believers that our God is consuming fire who will judge all unholiness.

Historical Context

Theophanic appearances of God in fire and glory occur throughout biblical history: burning bush (Exodus 3), Sinai mountain (Exodus 19:18, 24:17), pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21), and glory filling tabernacle/temple (Exodus 40:34, 1 Kings 8:10-11). Ezekiel stands in this tradition of prophets who received direct divine revelations through visible manifestations.

The anthropomorphic (human-like) description reflects ancient Near Eastern convention where deity might appear in semi-human form while maintaining transcendent elements like fire and radiance. However, unlike pagan deities imagined as essentially human, Ezekiel carefully uses qualifying language (likeness, appearance) to maintain divine transcendence.

This vision comes to Ezekiel in Babylon, far from Jerusalem temple. This demonstrates God presence is not confined to temple geography. Even as He is about to reveal temple corruption to Ezekiel, He manifests His glory in exile, showing He has not abandoned His people despite judgment.

For Ezekiel contemporary audience, this theophany would establish divine authority for the shocking revelations to follow. The vision is not Ezekiel imagination but genuine divine communication validated by God glorious presence.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does God appearing in fire teach about His holiness and our need for reverence?
2. How do anthropomorphic descriptions of God balance revealing and concealing His nature?
3. Why does God accommodate human limitations through visible theophanies?
4. How does this vision anticipate the incarnation where divine glory dwells in human flesh (John 1:14)?
5. What does God appearing to Ezekiel in exile teach about His omnipresence?

Interlinear Text

וְאָרָא הָ	דְמוֹת	וְהִנֵּה	כְּמַרְאָה	אֵשׁ
Then I beheld	H2009	and lo a likeness	as the appearance	fire
H7200		H1823	H4758	H784
כְּמַרְאָה	וּמִמְתַּן יְ	וְלֹם טָה	אֵשׁ	וּמִמְתַּן יְ
as the appearance	and from his loins	even downward	fire	and from his loins
H4758	H4975	H4295	H784	H4975
וְלֹם עָלָה	כְּמַרְאָה	זְהִיר	כְּעֵדָה	כְּפָשָׁמְלָה:
even upward	as the appearance	of brightness	as the colour	of amber
H4605	H4758	H2096	H5869	H2830

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 1:4 (Parallel theme): And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.
