



Symbols of the 144000

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Thoughts on Ezekiel 1; 10; Revelation 4; and the 144,000

I think many of us have had times where we feel a little frustrated by the seeming lack of details in Inspiration regarding the 144,000.

We see at first glance only this passage:

Revelation 14:1 "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. . . 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

Seems like very little is said about this group; but wait; the chapter continues:

Revelation 14:4 "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, **being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.** 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."

Now we actually have a lot of detail as to just what these people are like who compose this group, and we are given symbolism that when we follow it up, we could write volumes from the light thus shed on the subject. We will be unfolding some of this light further in this study; but for now we want to look at what is meant by the term, "Firstfruits".

The ancient sanctuary ceremony of the "Firstfruits" had two parts; the first part had to do with the "Wave Sheaf". This took place during the time of the Passover. Although all of the lambs and animals offered in the various sanctuary services, with the exception of the Scapegoat, pointed in some way to Christ, it was the Passover Lamb which more specifically typified Christ's crucifixion. Jesus died on the cross at exactly the same hour as that Passover lamb was to be slain. We are told that the lamb escaped his fate and that at that moment type had met antitype.

Then what was to take place? The following day the people were to bring to the priests a sheaf of the first ripe heads of barley. Notice the instructions:

Leviticus 23:10 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest."

It is important to carefully note the details of this transaction which shows how exactly the ancient ceremonies prove the Word of God to be of Divine and not human origin! Who gathered the sheaf? The people gathered it and brought it to the Priest. What did he then do with it?

11 "And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it."

What was this wave sheaf pointing to? We find out in Matthew 27:52:

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

When Jesus died a selection of the righteous dead were cast out of their graves and on resurrection day, the same day the wave sheaf was to be gathered, they arose from the dead and appeared to many people and also the universe of God. Jesus presented the wave sheaf before God!

"And after Christ came up from the Resurrection, what did He do? He grasped His power and held His scepter. He opened the graves and brought up the multitude of captives, testifying to everyone in our world and in creation that He had the power over death and that He rescued the captives of death." FW 74

We would all like to know just who came up in that resurrection, someday we will, if we are faithful! But notice, they are not yet taken to heaven to present before the Father; something else has to be done first and we find out what it is in the ceremony instructions.

Leviticus 23:12 And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD."

Yes that Lamb had to be offered and presented to the Father. Jesus ascended to His Father right after His resurrection; He had to receive from the Father's lips the assurance that the great sacrifice had been sufficient and that it was accepted by the Father before Jesus could take His duties as High Priest and bring that sheaf before God! It was the people who gathered the sheaf; Jesus as Son of man gathered those captives from their graves; but only a Priest could wave that sheaf before God! Something else was offered with the Lamb that day:

Leviticus 23:13 "And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin."

What do we see here? Fine Flour, Oil, and Wine; I am sure this has vast meaning but on a simple level it represents Jesus' life he lived in the flesh, the oil of His Words and teachings, His Blood (the blood thereof is the life thereof); in other words His entire perfect sinless life had to be offered and accepted or the sacrifice would be no good. The Lamb and the Life together are offered before the Father on that wave sheaf day before the wave sheaf of captives can be official and before Jesus can act as our High Priest.

Ephesians 4:8 "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Psalm 68:18 "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; . . ."

1 Corinthians 15:20 "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

Jesus, himself was the first of the 'firstfruits'; as He came forth from the dead, He provided the Key to the prison-house of death. The few who had been taken to heaven before this time were there on condition of this event being performed. Had any part of this failed, they would have had to return to the grave. But now it is official! Jesus has the Keys to Death! Then Jesus returned having won the right to carry out the duties of the High Priest, to free the captives and to come forth and 'bless the people' by bestowing Heaven's richest gifts.

"Not all that believed in Jesus were brought to life at that time. It was only a specimen of what would be, that we may know that death and the grave are not to hold the captives, because Christ took them to heaven. And when He comes again with power and great glory, He will open the graves. The prison house will be opened, and the dead will come forth again to a glorious immortality." FW 74.

When Jesus ascended to heaven that wave sheaf was taken with Him and officially accepted of the Father.

The Firstfruit Wave Loaves

But there is another ceremony we need to look at; that of the Firstfruits; Revelation tells us that the 144,000 are the Firstfruits. The wave sheaf was a 'Firstfruits' offering; and they were officially presented at Pentecost when Jesus was inaugurated as High Priest and sent the special bestowal of the Holy Spirit as a gift and a signal to His people on earth that this was taking place.

Leviticus 23:16 "Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. 17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations **two wave loaves** of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD."

But if the 144,000 are "Firstfruits" to God and the Lamb, it means there is a second application of this ceremonial type to take place in the future. Let's look at a few things we can see in this type to learn characteristics of the 144,000.

Did you realize that this was the only offering that was to contain leaven? Yes, and what does 'leaven' represent? Sin, right? What! An offering that contained sin being presented before God; how can that be? We know all the offerings had to be without blemish, but this one has leaven in it. But wait a minute; what was to be done with these leavened loaves? They were to be baked. What happens to leaven when it is well baked? It dies out in the loaf, right?

So we see a very clear picture that these 'Firstfruits' were sinners who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb and have had all sin 'baked' out of their experience through the fiery trials they have passed through. A well-baked loaf of bread does not generate any more yeast; and these firstfruits will stand at the End Time without sin and without an intercessor before God and the universe as a final proof and demonstration that Humanity united with Divinity, does not commit sin!

These loaves had to be presented before the Lord before the remainder of the harvest could be garnered. So too the 144,000 have to be presented as the final clinching evidence that Satan is wrong about God's Law, and Jesus has the right to raise the remaining righteous dead, and take all His people home!

Revelation 4:

Now we want to continue our exploration of inspiration, types and symbols that the Word has given us to inspire us to strive to be among the 144,000. Come with me to Revelation 4 where we are taken into a special scene in the Holy place in the sanctuary of Heaven. How do we know it was the Holy Place? Well, for one thing we know that is where Jesus went after His ascension and also we see the 'seven lamps of fire' which are the same as the earthly candlesticks found in the Holy Place.

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." Revelation 4:6, 7

Here we see something very different; four 'beasts' or 'living creatures' are before God's throne. Now it may be nice to imagine that God has some wonderful and strange beings in His universe and I am sure that He does; but this is prophecy, and in prophecy everything has a meaning and is shown us for a reason. Read about these 'creatures' and then turn over in your Bible to Ezekiel 1 and also 10, and there you will find similar descriptions of these four 'creatures' which we will look at shortly. Both of these word pictures are telling us the same story, and both are symbols with much meaning for us today.

These are symbols that represent, for one thing, God's true people and their work on earth. They are shown as if they are already right there in heaven. They are in front of God's throne, because God's attention is focused on them; but they are actually here on earth. It is the same as the lamps or candlesticks, (Revelation 1) they are shown as if they are in heaven, but they are God's congregations here on earth. But these creatures represent most of all, the 144,000 and the work they will accomplish in the end time.

Let's look at what this interesting word picture shows us. 'Full of eyes'; eyes in prophecy mean several things; knowledge, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual awareness. Remember that the last church, Laodicea, is 'blind'; it is not 'full of eyes'. But the people of God represented by these 'creatures' have the Holy Spirit, in fact they are filled with the Latter Rain outpouring without measure, and He has been teaching them the increase of knowledge from God's Word. They are using the 'eyesalve', and are spiritually aware of what God is doing in this world.

We'll look at their faces later; but notice what they are saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." They are telling others about God and their lives are bringing honor to Him. When we live the way Jesus has taught us to live, our lives are like Jesus' life on earth was, and we bring honor and glory to Him that sits on the throne. It is just as if we were right there before God's throne, praising Him. But there is more to their message because they are carrying the final warning of the Three Angels' Messages and warning about the coming of Christ.

"And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." Revelation 4:7

These four symbols were also around the earthly sanctuary on banners in ancient Israel, and represented the four main tribes, one on each side, North, South, East and West. Now in Ezekiel we see that each 'creature' had four faces; here they have one each, but the same four faces. The meaning of the faces is the same. Traditionally these four symbols are also used for the writers of the four gospels.

The Lion: refers to royalty. God's children are 'Kings and Princes' of the heavenly kingdom; we are 'children of the Heavenly King'. Also, Jesus is the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah', and His children are like Him. It also stands for courage and bravery.

The Calf, or Ox: This stands for sacrifice, as these animals were used for sacrifices. It also means service, as the ox was a hard working beast of burden. These people of God have sacrificed all for Jesus, and they serve faithfully as did Jesus when He was on earth.

The Man: These are real people, doing a real task on earth. The symbol of a man stands for wisdom and knowledge.

The Eagle: The eagle, like the lion, can stand for courage, and the wings also mean speed; but the main thing that the eagle means in this prophecy is 'eyesight'. The eagle can see details at great distances; they have some of the most wonderful eyes in all creation.

We see here a people, who have the messages of Prophecy, which gives them the ability to see spiritual things and also to see great distances into the future. They are going forward with speed and courage to carry this message to others.

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Revelation 4:8

Wings in prophecy stand for speed, and the carrying of a message, and here we see six of them. Even the fastest prophecy beast in Daniel 7 only had four wings.

Wings represent many things: In Exodus 19:4, wings "carried" the Israelites out of bondage. Ecclesiastes 10:20 says, "that which hath wings shall tell the matter." One of the things that wings represent is that they carry something; in the case of God's last day people, it is the final warning from God. Another thing that wings represent is speed, as in Daniel's vision concerning Alexander the Great. The final work will be rapid and the message of warning shall go out to the world very quickly by simple ways.

Another very common usage of wings in the Bible is as a covering, such as this text:

Ruth 2:12: "A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

In Ezekiel 1, two of the wings "covered their bodies." God's people will be 'Under His Wings' of protection and love, as they speed on errands of mercy and carry the message to the entire world. In this verse we also see a clue about the message they carry; they talk about God 'which was, and is, and is to come.' Notice the start of the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14:7, we see that same message; God who was: He was our Creator and Redeemer; He is: He is our God and is with us right now and the judgment is happening; and He is to come: Jesus is soon coming back to earth to take His people home.

These are very exciting times to live in, when the most wonderful messages ever given are going out to the world and Jesus is coming very soon.

"And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:9-11

Who are these special 'elders' and why are they called 'elders'? We know that no one will be old in heaven, so these are not heaven's 'senior citizens' in that way. We have reason to think that these are some of those other 'Firstfruits', the wave sheaf, which Jesus took home with Him when He ascended. These heavenly beings are thrilled as they learn more and more of the Goodness and Love of our

Wonderful Heavenly Father and the Lamb, and they are overcome with joy and gratitude and fall down on their faces and offer their crowns to Him.

There are some other mentions of the “Four Beasts” in Revelation that give us some added insight. One is in Revelation 6 where they call attention to the first four seals. Certainly part of the message of the 144,000 includes calling attention to these events of prophetic past history.

Then we see these living creatures mentioned again in Revelation 15 where we are told that one of them gives the seven angels the vials of the Seven Last Plagues. Now why would that be? It is because of the work of the 144,000 in vindicating the name of God and carrying forth the Loud Cry message to the world that Jesus can finish the work in the Sanctuary, and bring judgment upon the impenitent transgressors of God’s Law.

The Symbols in Ezekiel 1 and 10

Ezekiel is a special book, written for a special people—the peculiar people of God in the End of Time. As God’s remnant people, we must understand Ezekiel’s writings. Just prior to the time when every means of earthly support is cut off; when every desire of your eyes and all worldly thoughts will have been removed; when your wives, husbands and children become your foes; when difficulties seem about to overwhelm us, as in the days following the Great Disappointment, heaven will open with an increase of light to those who would escape the snares of Satan. Ezekiel’s mouth will be opened and he shall speak to that final remnant.

Ezekiel 1:1: “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.”

As Seventh-day Adventists, we live among those who are in bondage to sin. The river Chebar is the river of Babylon. Rivers feed into the sea and nourish the land they pass through. Babylon is nourished and made rich and drunken by her wine of false doctrines and these abominations are fed to the sea, that is, the “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues,” as “all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” Revelation 17:15; 18:3.

Ezekiel 1:2-3: In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, [disrespect:--contempt, despised, shamed] in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.”

In this verse the word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel the “priest”, who is the son of those who are despised and shamed in the land of the Chaldeans. We are all to be a “royal priesthood.” The words God spoke to Ezekiel are expressly for us; today we again live on enemy ground, captive in the land of the “Chaldeans,” and we are the descendants of those who had disrespect and contempt for the ‘old paths’ wherein we were to be walking; the fourth generation of Adventism.

Ezekiel 1:4: “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.”

Here we see something that helps us to pinpoint the time this vision is to be especially applicable. Winds represent strife. This is a “*whirl-wind*.” A whirlwind comes up as an overwhelming surprise and is very intense. Notice that this wind comes out of the north; trouble always comes from the north in prophecy,

both ancient Babylon, Pagan Rome, and modern day Rome, the papacy, are called the "king of the north." This is 1989; Daniel, speaking of this same time period says,

"The king of the north shall come against him (atheistic communism) like a whirlwind . . ." Daniel 11:40.

Ezekiel also describes this whirlwind as "a great cloud, a fire infolding itself." Isaiah 9:18 speaks of wickedness thusly:

"For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke."

The wicked and the rebellious of God's people are these briars and thorns and are referred to as such in Ezekiel 2:6.

"And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

The wicked shall be consumed in and by their own wickedness and rebellion. And of the trees of the thickets of the forest, Jesus, on the way to Calvary said,

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke 23:31.

Those who have not drank of the waters of life; those who have a "form of Godliness," but are not sanctified through obedience to God, are these dry trees. Of these we are told;

"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them." GC, 608.

Ezekiel's "cloud" or Isaiah's "smoke," both blacken the sky and cut off the light of the *Son* through their false teachings and moral depravity.

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Habakkuk 2:3

Out of the "midst of the fire" comes the "color of amber." The word translated to amber is "chashmal;" polished bronze. Bronze, like brass is a mixed metal. Jesus Christ became as flesh that He might become one with us and our High Priest and Advocate. Bronze, being an alloy, is much stronger than iron; stronger than the iron teeth of "the beast that was and is not" and will reign again. Christ has built a church that "the gates of hell" will not prevail against.

When the Hebrew worthies were cast into the fiery furnace, Christ walked with them and He will do no less for us. In His strength we stand.

Out of the midst of this whirlwind fire of the Time of the End in Ezekiel's vision the 'color of Amber' is seen coming out of the fire, representing the increase of prophetic knowledge that Jesus began to unseal to His students of Prophecy at that time, which was to give us a clearer view of Him and His work in these Last Days.

In verse 27, we see this same description given of Christ.

Ezekiel 1:27 “And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.”

More than anything else, the increase of knowledge that has been unfolding since the Papal whirlwind, combined with the USA, as she stepped into her role as the modern ‘army of Rome’, to overthrow atheistic Communism in 1989, this increase is to reveal to us the Lion of Judah as he enters upon His final work to gather and prepare a people, the 144,000, to stand in the Day of the Lord. Please note that this word Amber, and its original Hebrew word ‘chashmal’, only appears three times and only in the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:5. “Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.”

Remember the time period we are viewing—the Time of the End—and now in this sequence we are introduced to the living creatures. They look like men and for good reason: These living creatures represent God’s elect, the 144,000. James 1:18 says that “of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His *creatures*.”

Ezekiel 1:6-7. “And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.”

The feet are strait and have the sole of a calf. A calf was used as a sacrificial animal. These men have sacrificed all for Christ and their fellow man. The Advent movement started with great sacrifice and it will end that way as well! Those who only give what they can spare, or what they have to, will not be part of this group. Only those who value heaven more than their own temporal welfare will be among the 144,000. That their feet are “strait” indicates that they walk that “strait and narrow” path of righteousness. Matthew 7:14.

In Sister Harmon’s first vision, published in the Day Star in 1845 we read:

“At this, I raised my eyes and see a strait and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the City, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble. And if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the City, they were safe.”

There are no double-minded hypocrites here in this group; these have one aim and one interest.

“It demands firmness of purpose to enter in at the strait gate and to travel in the narrow path that leads to eternal life, for on every hand are voices inviting the soul into bye and forbidden paths. Those who love wealth and honor and high position will not enter in at the strait gate unless they part with their idols. There is not room to enter in at the strait gate and carry the things of this world along.” YRP 110.

“Self-love and selfish ambition cannot pass the strait gate and walk the narrow, upward way.” 5T 434.

They Sparkled like Brass; Brass is a mixed metal and signifies the union of the human with the Divine. Brass was used on the altar in the courtyard of the sanctuary, which was where heaven and earth met. The fire of the altar represented both the working of the Holy Spirit and the fiery trials we are to go

through to purge us of all our earthliness, and just as the flesh of the sacrifices was consumed by the fire; we are to become “burnished” (polished) brass. Ellen White says,

“It is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.” GC, 621.

What is the secret of the power of these servants of God?

Ezekiel 1:8. “And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.”

Of the “hands of a man under their wings,” Ellen White says,

“In Ezekiel's vision God had His hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach His servants that it is divine power that gives them success. He will work with them if they put away iniquity and become pure in heart and life.” 5T 754.

Now we are shown something very interesting to us who live today in this atmosphere of shaking and conflict within and without. Those who are found among the 144,000 will have undergone a great change in attitude.

Ezekiel 1:9. “Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.”

These “creatures” are unified in their mission as signified by the joining of their wings. They do not turn aside to follow the distractions of the world; they go straight forward on their mission and nothing earth or hell can throw at them, will stop the progress of the final message they carry!

There is another factor that is important to understand about these ‘creatures’ and we can see it in Ezekiel 1:9 above, but also in the following:

Joel 2:7 . . . and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: . . .”

In each description of this final army we see that they advance side by side, they go straight forward each in his own path and you do not see any mention made of leaders of these people, only the obvious Heavenly Powers that are guiding them.

Ezekiel 1:10. “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.”

Now, we will address the faces; each one of these has all four faces; all who will form part of this actual final group will have all of these characteristics.

The first face is the face of a man. These are men, but the symbol also refers to the knowledge they carry. These men also have the face of a lion, that is, the Lion of the tribe of Judah; they show the courage and boldness given them of the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 28:1 “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”

They also reflect Christ; and we see that the Loud Cry is a Prophetic message that comes as Christ roars as a Lion.

Amos 3:8 “The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?”

On the left side, they have the face of an ox, a beast of burden. These are men who have a true burden for their brethren and an overwhelming desire to vindicate the Lord. Ellen White says of the 144,000 in the time of Jacob's Trouble,

"If they could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached." GC, 619.

Lastly, they have the face of an eagle. An eagle in prophecy, among other things, represents power and vision. As overcomers, these men have "*power* with God and with men and have prevailed." Gen 32:28. The vision these men have received is the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Prophecy: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18. By this great spiritual eyesalve, they have been prepared to carry forth the message of the Third Angel, which combines all Three Angels' Messages.

We already looked at these same creatures in the book of Revelation 4. There we see twenty-four elders seated around the throne of God, and before the throne four beasts of the same description as these in Ezekiel. We see books being opened, so we know we are being pointed to the Investigative Judgment--where Christ is found worthy to open the books, and judgment is given to Him.

We see the beasts crying Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! It is obvious that these are symbolic creatures—what do they symbolize? Again they symbolize the faithful remnant, whose deeds will be constantly giving glory to God. The 4 creatures represent God's Faithful who are shown symbolically before His throne giving Him glory; but in reality they are on earth, and by their faithfulness and earnest lives giving praise to God. The key to seeing that the vision is referring to the same group, is the mention of being 'full of eyes', the Holy Spirit, and where ever they go, the eyes of men are opened to the truth.

Ezekiel 1:11. "Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies."

We already discussed these wings when we looked at Revelation 4; also we note that the Woman of Revelation 12 was given two wings like an eagle to carry her to a safe place where she is nourished.

Ezekiel 1:12. "And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went."

Again, they follow that strait and narrow way and turn not to one side or another from their work, driven by the unction of the Spirit. Notice how Joel describes these same messengers of God as they carry the final warning:

Joel 2:7 "They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded."

The time of shaking and conflict is past; the infighting and struggle is ended and there is harmony and total dedication among God's final army of righteous. Ellen White says,

"They have faithfully given the warning, looking to God and to His word alone. God's Spirit, moving upon their hearts, has constrained them to speak. Stimulated with holy zeal, and with the divine impulse strong upon them, they entered upon the performance of their duties without coldly calculating the consequences of speaking to the people the word which the Lord had given them. They have not consulted their temporal interests, nor sought to preserve their reputation or their lives." GC, 608-9.

Next we see another amazing characteristic of those who this type is indicating.

Ezekiel 1:13. "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning."

Joel states:

Joel 2:3 "A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them."

Coals of the fire on the altar in the courtyard represented the work of the Holy Spirit. These "creatures" also have the appearance of "lamps." They are God's light-bearers, exposing the falsehoods of Babylon and crying for the true in heart to "Come out of her My People!" the message lightens the earth with its glory like the flash of fire or lightening breaking through the darkness. (Revelation 18:1) As for the lightning, Ellen White says,

"The heavenly messengers seen by Ezekiel, like a bright light going among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning, represent the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion." 4BC, 1161.

The time of testing is approaching rapidly, we need to be preparing earnestly because when it hits, events will move so rapidly if we are not ready we will be overthrown, and there is not going to be any time to prepare then; no second chances for God's professed people in that day.

Ezekiel 1:14. "And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

God's final messengers who are prepared and stand true against the Mark of the Beast will finish the work rapidly.

"The bright light going among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning represents the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion. He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked men, and He will bring to confusion the counsels of them that plot mischief against His people." 5T 754.

Now we see something more:

Ezekiel 1:15-16. "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."

We are now introduced to the wheels. The work of the wheels is the color of a beryl. A beryl is a green stone. Of the color green, in vision Ellen White was handed a green cord:

"The green cord represented faith to my mind, and the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God began to dawn upon my benighted soul." EW 81

Green represents the work of faith. Notice the work of faith in the heart illustrated by the flourishing tree drinking of the living waters of the Holy Spirit:

Jeremiah 17:8 "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

The wheels are the workings of salvation through faith. Of the wheel within a wheel, we read,

"There is at work a wheel within a wheel. Apparently the complication of machinery is so intricate that man can see only a complete entanglement. But the divine hand, as seen by the prophet Ezekiel, is placed upon the wheels, and every part moves in complete harmony, each doing its specified work, yet with individual freedom of action." MS 13, 1898.

It is clear these 'wheels' are also part of the illustration of how heavenly power unites with the 144,000 to carry forth the final warning message to hurry all honest hearted out of Babylon, before the door closes forever and the judgements fall on her.

Ezekiel 1:17-18. "When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful (gobahh); and their rings were full of eyes round about them four."

The wheels turn not, the work goes forward, there will be no stopping the "loud cry." (see Joel 2:1-11) The rings of the wheels are "gobahh;" grand and dreadful. The message is a fearful one to the dwellers on earth; Joel says:

Joel 2:6 "Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness."

And Daniel put it:

Daniel 11:44 "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: (King of the North) therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many."

The Loud Cry of the Third Angel is to lighten the earth with God's glory. Inspiration tells us that:

"The most fearful threatening ever addressed to mortals is contained in the third angel's message. That must be a terrible sin which calls down the wrath of God unmingled with mercy." GC, 450.

The eyes on these wheels represent the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit; and also show the eyes of men being open to the great truths for our time. Ellen White says,

"At the loud cry of the angel from heaven who joins the third angel, thousands will awake from the stupor that has held the world for ages, and will see the beauty and value of the truth." RH, Dec. 15, 1885.

Ezekiel 1:19. "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up."

Sister White has commented on these wheels and their unified action:

"God is acquainted with every man. Could our eyes be opened we would see that eternal justice is at work in our world. A powerful influence, not under man's control, is working. Man may fancy that he is directing matters, but there are higher than human influences at work. The servants of God know that He is working to counteract Satan's plans. Those who know not God cannot comprehend His movements. There is at work a wheel within a wheel. Apparently the complication of machinery is so intricate that man can see only a complete entanglement. But the divine hand, as seen by the prophet Ezekiel, is placed upon the wheels, and every part

moves in complete harmony, each doing its specified work, yet with individual freedom of action." MS 13, 1898

Here are more comments upon this very vision we are looking at:

"Ezekiel, the mourning exile prophet, in the land of the Chaldeans, was given a vision teaching the same lesson of faith in the mighty God of Israel. As he was upon the banks of the river Chebar, a whirlwind seemed to come from the north, "a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber." A number of wheels of strange appearance, intersecting one another, were moved by four living creatures. High above all these was "the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning." "And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings."

"There were wheels within wheels in an arrangement so complicated that at first sight they appeared to Ezekiel to be all in confusion. But when they moved, it was with beautiful exactness and in perfect harmony. Heavenly beings were impelling these wheels, and, above all, upon the glorious sapphire throne, was the Eternal One; while round about the throne was the encircling rainbow, emblem of grace and love. Overpowered by the terrible glory of the scene, Ezekiel fell upon his face, when a voice bade him arise and hear the word of the Lord. Then there was given him a message of warning for Israel." 5T 751

We are also shown that these visions are to bring courage and comfort to our hearts as we look upon a world that seems hell-bent to destroy itself and also the Seventh-Day Adventist organization that seems to be blind to its impending danger.

"This vision was given to Ezekiel at a time when his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings. He saw the land of his fathers lying desolate. The city that was once full of people was no longer inhabited. The voice of mirth and the song of praise were no more heard within her walls. The prophet himself was a stranger in a strange land, where boundless ambition and savage cruelty reigned supreme. That which he saw and heard of human tyranny and wrong distressed his soul, and he mourned bitterly day and night. But the wonderful symbols presented before him beside the river Chebar revealed an overruling power mightier than that of earthly rulers. Above the proud and cruel monarchs of Assyria and Babylon the God of mercy and truth was enthroned.

"The wheellike complications that appeared to the prophet to be involved in such confusion were under the guidance of an infinite hand. The Spirit of God, revealed to him as moving and directing these wheels, brought harmony out of confusion; so the whole world was under His control. Myriads of glorified beings were ready at His word to overrule the power and policy of evil men, and bring good to His faithful ones." 5T 752.

We can take courage as we allow our minds to unravel these word pictures found in Holy Writ for our edification:

"God's servants are not to trust to themselves in this great emergency. In the visions given to Isaiah, to Ezekiel, and to John we see how closely heaven is connected with the events taking place upon the earth and how great is the care of God for those who are loyal to Him. The world is not without a ruler. The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge.

“We permit ourselves to feel altogether too much care, trouble, and perplexity in the Lord's work. Finite men are not left to carry the burden of responsibility. We need to trust in God, believe in Him, and go forward. The tireless vigilance of the heavenly messengers, and their unceasing employment in their ministry in connection with the beings of earth, show us how God's hand is guiding the wheel within a wheel. The divine Instructor is saying to every actor in His work, as He said to Cyrus of old: "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." 5T 753.

“In Ezekiel's vision God had His hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach His servants that it is divine power that gives them success. He will work with them if they will put away iniquity and become pure in heart and life.” 5T 754.

Ezekiel 1:20. “Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.”

These men are under the direction of the Holy Spirit:

“The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of his Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them.” GC, 606.

Notice that it says that the “spirit of the creature was in the wheels.” The servants of God are given life from the Holy Spirit and they in turn offer life to the dying world.

Ezekiel 1:21. “When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.”

When God's servants cease the proclamation of the final warning, the work of redemption ends; probation closes forever.

Ezekiel 1:22. “And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.”

A firmament, “raqiya,” is the “solid arch of the sky.” The original firmament canopy protected the earth; for the living creatures, this canopy is their “helmet of salvation.”

Ezekiel 1:23. “And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.” See verse 11.

Ezekiel 1:24. “And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.”

Joel says of the sound:

Joel 2:5 “Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.”

Again, as in verse 11, wings carry things; in this case they carry the message of warning. Of the noise of the waters (representing people; Revelation 17:15), Ellen White says,

“By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given.” GC, 612.

Their voice is as the voice of the Almighty who has given them the words to speak. When they stop, they will let down their wings, that is, cease from the proclamation of the final warning. Probation is over, the travail for souls is no more; they now await their rewards.

Ezekiel 1:25. "And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings."

When Probation is closed for all mankind, their travail of soul is over.

"All heaven had united with Jesus, as they heard the fearful words, "It is done. It is finished." The plan of salvation had been accomplished, but few had chosen to accept it. And as mercy's sweet voice died away, fear and horror seized the wicked. With terrible distinctness they heard the words, "Too late! too late!" EW 281.

Jesus declares:

Revelation 22:11 "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

The Seven Last Plagues begin to fall as Jesus leaves the Heavenly Sanctuary, placing the sins of the redeemed upon the head of the Scapegoat as He finishes His priestly duties prior to donning His robes of vengeance. This is the Day of the wrath of God

In verses 26-28, Ezekiel sees the throne of the Son of man signifying the time of judgements:

Ezekiel 1:26 "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it."

Notice the "sapphire stone." This is a *blue stone*; blue symbolizing the righteousness of God's Law.

Ezekiel 1:27. "And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about."

Here is seen again the color of amber or the polished bronze as in verse 4 showing us that this is definitely Christ walking with His servants in the fires of affliction.

Ezekiel 1:28. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake."

The rainbow is a particular sign of God's mercy as shown in Jesus Christ; also the covenant which God has made with the faithful remnant; as the wrath of God is being poured out on the shelter-less heads of the wicked, His hand of mercy is over the faithful.

But we see Ezekiel falling on his face here, and as we know, a prophet represents God's people when he is mentioned in the vision. When do we see the 144,000 falling on their face before God? It is during the time of Jacob's trouble. As the sins of the righteous have been placed upon the head of Satan, he makes a special effort to escape this judgement.

"He has an accurate knowledge of the sins which he has tempted them to commit, and he presents these before God in the most exaggerated light, representing this people to be just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. He declares that the Lord cannot in justice forgive their sins, and yet destroy him and his angels. He claims them as his prey, and demands that they be given into his hands to destroy.

“As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes to so destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, and turn from their allegiance to God.” GC88 618.

“On every hand they hear the plottings of treason, and see the active working of rebellion; and there is aroused within them an intense desire, an earnest yearning of soul, that this great apostasy may be terminated, and the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end. But while they plead with God to stay the work of rebellion, it is with a keen sense of self-reproach that they themselves have no more power to resist and urge back the mighty tide of evil. They feel that had they always employed all their ability in the service of Christ, going forward from strength to strength, Satan's forces would have less power to prevail against them.

“They afflict their souls before God, pointing to their past repentance of their many sins, and pleading the Saviour's promise, “Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.” [Isaiah 27:5.] Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” GC88 619.

“Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God would not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So, in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to Judgment, and have been blotted out; and they cannot bring them to remembrance. GC88 620.

But as Satan urges on the wicked to destroy the little company of the faithful, the Voice of God is heard; of this moment, the Spirit of Prophecy says,

“With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens, and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant, and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.” GC88 635.

“The voice of God is heard from Heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to his people. Like peals of loudest thunder, his words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with his glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when the blessing is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping his Sabbath holy, there is a mighty shout of victory.” GC88 640.

The triumph of the 144,000 is amazing to contemplate; but the time of preparation is now. If we allow worldly distractions, whether pleasures or just busy-ness to keep us from forming the trusting

relationship with Jesus who alone can keep us in That Day, then there will be no time to make up the deficit once the testing time arrives.

“A mere profession of Christ is not enough to prepare one to stand the test of the Judgment. True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and bent of the heart should be turned, and the life should become new in Christ. There should be a perfect trust in God, a childlike dependence on his promises, and an entire consecration of self to his will, remembering that the observance of mere external forms will never meet the great want of the human soul.” BEcho, September 1, 1888