

A WHEEL IN THE MIDDLE OF A WHEEL

Key Verse: *"Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." (Ezekiel 11:16 KJV)*

Introduction:

The prophet Ezekiel stands as a testament to divine revelation amidst despair. Captive beside the river Chebar in Babylon, Ezekiel viewed a desolate scene of hopelessness and despair, but God infused light into that darkness with a vision of a heavenly wheel within a wheel. This captivating imagery contains deep significance: It illustrates that while we are like small wheels within God's immense plan, He, the Great Wheel, moves our wheels and directs our paths. This sermon will delve into the multifaceted meanings of this vision, the themes of God's unwavering sovereignty, and His promise to be a sanctuary for His people, even in exile.

1. The Vision of the Wheel within a Wheel:

Ezekiel's vision begins with a whirlwind from the north, a great cloud filled with fire and brightness, leading to the appearance of living creatures and, ultimately, a wheel within a wheel (Ezekiel 1:15-21). This striking imagery symbolizes divine power and omnipresence—a God whose authority extends infinitely beyond earthly realms. The wheels, which move in perfect coordination under the guidance of the Spirit, depict how God orchestrates the flow of history, encompassing every aspect of our lives.

The juxtaposition is stark: while the Israelites found themselves in captivity under Babylonian rule, God assures them that His sovereignty transcends any earthly power. Thus, within the wheel imagery lies affirmation of God's ultimate control, illustrating that even when we feel distant from Him, He is all-knowing and intentional about our destinies. The wheels signify motion and forward momentum. They convey the idea that God is always at work, propelling His creation toward its ultimate purpose. The movement of the wheels reflects God's active engagement in history and in individual lives, guiding the course of events. The intricate

design of the wheels underscores the complexity of God's plans, and the ability to see beyond immediate circumstances toward a greater divine narrative.

2. God as the Master Architect:

If we consider ourselves as small wheels within the larger structure of God's design, we recognize our dependence on the Great Wheel. Just as the wheels in Ezekiel's vision operate according to a divine plan, so too do our lives function under God's guidance. Proverbs 16:9 poignantly reinforces this idea: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." While we navigate our paths, it is God who ultimately shapes our journeys, establishing the purpose and direction necessary for fulfillment.

In our day-to-day lives, we often encounter moments that seem random or chaotic. Yet, like Ezekiel's vision depicts, God's overarching sovereignty ensures that everything is interwoven within His divine plan. He moves us, nudges us, and sometimes redirects us, inviting us to trust in His intentions and purpose.

3. The Sanctuary in Exile:

For the Israelites, who found themselves displaced and disheartened, God's promise to be a "little sanctuary" (Ezekiel 11:16) resonated deeply within their hearts. This assurance illustrates a critical truth: that God's presence is not confined to monastic structures or sacred spaces. Even in their captivity, God offers a spiritual refuge, a home that transcends physical location.

Understanding God as a sanctuary provides comfort in vulnerable times. When the world feels hostile, or when we've wandered far from the ideal, He invites us into a relationship of intimacy and safety. As believers, we often face our own forms of exile—be it emotional strife, loss, or doubt. God's promise to be our sanctuary reassures us that He will accompany us, providing sustenance and shelter from life's storms.

4. Confronting Idolatry and Sinfulness:

Ezekiel's visions also confronted the idolatry and spiritual corruption rampant among the Israelites in Jerusalem. Through vivid imagery, especially in Ezekiel 8, he uncovers the hidden sins of the elders, revealing a community engrossed in rebellion against God. For the

Israelites, this confrontation was a call to repentance and awareness—recognizing their failure to remain faithful to God amidst material distractions.

Even within the pain of exile, God's awareness of His people's sins serves as a vital reminder of His commitment to righteousness. While He does not overlook wrongdoing, He continuously extends the opportunity for renewal and restoration. This act of confronting sin reflects God's love—a desire for His people to return to the right path.

Just as God exposed the idolatry of Israel, He can illuminate our own blind spots today. He desires for us to engage in introspection, to examine our hearts and behaviors, reminding us that our allegiance must be to Him above all else.

5. The Prophetic Life of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel's prophetic acts reveal profound truths about God's expectations for His people. In doing things like lying on his side as a sign of Israel's sin, or eating defiled bread to showcase their impurity (Ezekiel 4:4-17), Ezekiel becomes a living sermon—a tangible representation of God's message to His people. His life and actions served a dual purpose, revealing not only the seriousness of their transgressions but also embodying divine communication. Through these prophetic acts, God was actively engaging His people, demonstrating that even in their darkest hours, He remained present and involved.

Ezekiel's extreme measures compel us to consider how God may ask us to step outside our comfort zones in order to convey His messages today. Just as Ezekiel faced ridicule and misunderstanding for his prophetic actions, we may find ourselves called to bear witness to the truth in unconventional ways. Instead of fleeing from the challenges, we can embrace the role of God's ambassadors, sharing hope and embodying the message of His grace and redemption in a world often marred by anguish.

6. God's Continuous Guidance Amidst Trials:

An essential aspect of understanding our small wheels within the Great Wheel is recognizing that trials and tribulations do not disqualify us from God's purpose. The Israelites faced harsh realities in Babylon, yet God's message remained clear: even amid their captivity, He was directing their paths, guiding them to hope and renewal. Romans 8:28 reassures us that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to

his purpose." This promise underscores the truth that we can trust God's hand at work in every situation.

Just as the wheels within Ezekiel's vision moved in harmony, mimicking the divine orchestration of events, we can find solace in knowing that our struggles are not without purpose. God may allow us to face hardships, but He does so with the intention of preparing us for future blessings and growth. When we navigate our trials with faith, we become part of the greater tapestry of God's plan—every tear, every setback, contributing to the profound story He is weaving.

7. The Empowerment Found in Faith:

Understanding the relationship between our small wheels and the Great Wheel empowers us to live with a renewed sense of purpose. When we recognize that we are part of a divine design, we can lean into our unique roles within God's kingdom. This perspective cultivates resilience, enabling us to face life's uncertainties with assurance and grace. We are not merely subjects of fate; we are participants in a greater narrative orchestrated by a loving and sovereign God.

As Ezekiel became an instrument of God's word, we too can find ways to express our faith actively. By embracing our identity as small wheels energized by the Great Wheel, we can engage in community service, support one another, and share the love of Christ in meaningful ways. Our individual journeys contribute to a collective mission—the mission of demonstrating God's love, mercy, and sovereignty to a world craving hope.

8. A Call to Surrender:

The imagery of the wheels within wheels culminates in a profound invitation: to trust and surrender our lives to the Great Wheel. While the concept of surrender may evoke feelings of loss control, it is, in fact, an act of faith. Hebrews 12:1 urges us to "run with patience the race that is set before us," reminding us that God has paved the way before us, calling us to embrace His plan with open hearts.

When we submit our ambitions, fears, and plans to God, we create space for His guidance. This surrender is where peace is found—the serenity of knowing that we are not alone in our journeys. Instead of being weighed down by uncertainty, we can find assurance in the promise

that God is actively moving our wheels, directing our steps even when the path ahead appears unclear.

Conclusion:

In Ezekiel's narrative, we discover that while we are small wheels within God's grand design, the Great Wheel moves our wheels, guiding our lives with purpose and intention. God's sovereign presence reassures us that even in times of trial and exile, His hand is ever active in our stories. He promises to be our sanctuary, providing refuge amid despair, and remains committed to guiding us through the intricacies of life.

As we reflect on the visions given to Ezekiel, we are reminded of our vital role in God's plan. Our lives are interwoven within the greater tapestry of His purpose. We are called to trust in His sovereignty, relying on His direction, and being willing to convey His messages to the world around us. In every circumstance—whether joyous or challenging—may we embrace the truth that we are part of a magnificent journey, led by the Great Wheel, as we navigate our paths, finding hope, healing, and fulfillment in Him. Let us emerge from every season of life confident that, as small wheels, we are moving in accordance with the divine orchestration of the One who is eternally on the throne, shaping our destinies and leading us toward His glory.