Several features have been incorporated into the design of this commentary. The following comments are intended to assist readers in making full use of this volume.

**Pericopes of Scripture**
The scriptural text has been divided into pericopes, or passages, usually several verses in length. Each of these pericopes is given a heading, which appears at the beginning of the pericope. For example, the first pericope in the commentary on Ezekiel is “1:1-28 The Living Creatures and the Glory of the Lord.” This heading is followed by the Scripture passage quoted in the English Standard Version (ESV) across the full width of the page. The Scripture passage is provided for the convenience of readers, but it is also in keeping with Reformation-era commentaries, which followed the patristic and medieval commentary tradition, in which the citations of the reformers were arranged around the text of Scripture.

**Overviews**
Following each pericope of text is an overview of the Reformation authors’ comments on that pericope. The format of this overview varies among the volumes of this series, depending on the requirements of the specific book of Scripture. The function of the overview is to provide a brief summary of all the comments to follow. It tracks a reasonably cohesive thread of argument among reformers’ comments, even though they are derived from diverse sources and generations. Thus, the summaries do not proceed chronologically or by verse sequence. Rather, they seek to rehearse the overall course of the reformers’ comments on that pericope.

We do not assume that the commentators themselves anticipated or expressed a formally received cohesive argument but rather that the various arguments tend to flow in a plausible, recognizable pattern. Modern readers can thus glimpse aspects of continuity in the flow of diverse exegetical traditions representing various generations and geographical locations.

**Topical Headings**
An abundance of varied Reformation-era comment is available for each pericope. For
this reason we have broken the pericopes into two levels. First is the verse with its topical heading. The reformers’ comments are then focused on aspects of each verse, with topical headings summarizing the essence of the individual comment by evoking a key phrase, metaphor or idea. This feature provides a bridge by which modern readers can enter into the heart of the Reformation-era comment.

**Identifying the Reformation Texts**

Following the topical heading of each section of comment, the name of the Reformation commentator is given. An English translation (where needed) of the reformer’s comment is then provided. This is immediately followed by the title of the original work rendered in English.

Readers who wish to pursue a deeper investigation of the reformers’ works cited in this commentary will find full bibliographic detail for each reformation title provided in the bibliography at the back of the volume. Comments translated from original-language Reformation-era commentaries and sermon collections can be readily located in the source texts by Scripture reference. Information on English translations (where available) and standard original-language editions and critical editions of the works cited is found in the bibliography.

**The Footnotes**

To aid the reader in exploring the background and texts in further detail, this commentary utilizes footnotes. The use and content of footnotes may vary among the volumes in this series. Where footnotes appear, a footnote number directs the reader to a note at the bottom of the right-hand column, where one will find annotations (clarifications or bibli- cal cross references), information on English translations (where available) or standard original-language editions of the work cited.

Where original-language texts have remained untranslated into English, we provide new translations. Where there is any serious ambiguity or textual problem in the selection, we have tried to reflect the best available textual tradition. Wherever current English translations are already well rendered, they are utilized, but where necessary they are stylistically updated. A single asterisk (*) indicates that a previous English translation has been updated to modern English or amended for easier reading. We have standardized spellings and made grammatical variables uniform so that our English references will not reflect the linguistic oddities of the older English translations. For ease of reading we have in some cases edited out superfluous conjunctions.
Although the books of Ezekiel and Daniel were widely used in sermons and theological writings by the reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they elicited unequal attention when it came to writing formal commentaries on them. Among the major sixteenth-century reformers, there are twice as many commentaries on Daniel as there are on Ezekiel. Reasons ranging from the length of the book of Ezekiel and the complexity of his visions to the provocativeness of his language and the difficulty of the Hebrew text may be given to account for this. And yet these same concerns arise for the other major prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, which both received significantly more commentaries by the reformers. Although any number of explanations for the lack of sixteenth-century commentaries on Ezekiel may be given, the ultimate reason could be innocent: lack of time. The canonical placement of Ezekiel after Isaiah and Jeremiah put it, in a sense, third in the queue.

The book of Daniel, by contrast, is not only unique among the prophets with its explicit prophecies about Christ and his eternal kingdom but also is of manageable size. The book divides naturally between history (Dan 1–6) and prophecy (Dan 7–12). Indeed, for a book of such modest length, it contains some of the most well-known events and prophecies of the Old Testament. Of great interest to the lay reader and commentator alike are the histories of the monarchs in the first and second part of Daniel. The great miracles that occurred in Daniel’s day, such as the fiery furnace and the lions’ den, captivate our attention and provide an enduring image of God’s fatherly care for his faithful people. The striking punishment of Nebuchadnezzar and the unsettling handwriting on the wall before Belshazzar warn of God’s strict justice and punishment of the idolatrous and proud. The second part of Daniel reveals the precise time of Christ’s advent and gives a clear description of his saving benefits for us. Daniel’s lengthy prayer (Dan 9) teaches with clarity the sinfulness of all humans and justification by faith alone—themes touching directly on the heart of the Reformation. Finally, the book ends
with the promised deliverance of God’s saints and the resurrection of all, some to eternal
damnation and others to eternal life with Christ.

Whether it is concern over Ezekiel’s length or fascination with Daniel’s content, what-
ever the reason, the reformers produced more works on the book of Daniel. Although
Ezekiel has four times more chapters than Daniel, the commentary section of this volume
gives slightly more space to Daniel than Ezekiel because of the abundance of Reformation
material. The remainder of this introduction will provide the historical context of our
Reformation writers and their work on Ezekiel and Daniel, the theological themes dis-
cussed by them, the interpretive issues that arise in their works and, finally, the historical
reception of their commentaries.

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

Historical Context

Despite the fact that the reformers produced few formal commentaries on the book of
Ezekiel, there is no doubt that the prophet was widely read and used. Occasional com-
ments on Ezekiel are found in dogmatic works, sermons and official confessions of faith
throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is seen in such places as the index
to John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which shows an extensive use of Ezekiel
in his theological reflection.¹ Likewise, the index to the *Book of Concord* (1580), the official
confessions of sixteenth-century Lutheranism, reveals numerous citations and glosses on
various verses from Ezekiel.² These uses of Ezekiel, however, are occasional and casual.
That is to say, they are occasioned by specific theological issues, sometimes apologetically
motivated, other times polemically, but rarely accompanied by exegetical comment. This
type of engagement with Ezekiel is also casual. It lacks the formality of a sustained reading
of the text that attends to, among other things, the context of a particular passage within
the larger prophetic book, the historical and grammatical issues of the passage under con-
sideration and the enduring relevance of the text for present-day believers. Given the nature
of these sorts of comments, they are used only sparingly in this volume.

*Martin Luther (1483–1546).* Martin Luther wrote two prefaces for Ezekiel in
1532 and 1541, respectively. Luther’s first preface is brief and deals mostly with the
relationship between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. His only comment on the book of Ezekiel
discusses the meaning of the final fifteen chapters, which address the kingdom of
Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem. Luther’s second preface is longer and more detailed.
He offers lengthy comment on the opening and closing visions in Ezekiel, showing

¹ *Instit.* 2:1566.
especially their christological meaning. Luther’s second preface is best understood as a summary of Ezekiel’s principal visions.

**John Calvin (1509–1564).** John Calvin started lecturing on the book of Ezekiel at the end of his life. His lectures began on January 20, 1563, and came to an abrupt end on February 2, 1564. During that year, he endured numerous illnesses and, on occasion, needed to be physically carried to the lecture hall. His final lecture was on Ezekiel 20. After returning home that day, he was unable to continue and remained bedridden until his death on May 27, 1564. Although bedridden, Calvin remained alert and productive. From February to May, he continued to work on Ezekiel, completing Ezekiel 20 and revising his lectures for publication. The lectures on Ezekiel are Calvin’s last work. Here we read the final thoughts of the Calvin who had endured ecclesiastical and theological battles, suffered disappointment and personal hardship and labored on behalf of the Reformation for thirty years.

**John Mayer (1583–1664).** John Mayer, an English separatist, was educated at Cambridge and served as a rector his whole life. He spent his time thoroughly digesting the exegetical works of the reformers and the early church fathers. His life’s work was a commentary on the whole of Scripture, which was published in seven volumes from 1627 to 1653. The commentary on the prophets was published in 1652. Mayer’s lengthy and detailed exposition of Ezekiel offers comment on every chapter. These comments are not equal in length or interest. Mayer does not say much about the judgments against the nations (Ezek 25–32) or the oracles of Israel’s restoration (Ezek 33–39). His main interests are the visions of Ezekiel, especially the final vision of the new Jerusalem.

**William Greenhill (1591–1671).** William Greenhill, an Independent minister, was educated at Cambridge and attained facility in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, history and theology. He wrote an exhaustive and impressive commentary on Ezekiel. Greenhill delivered his *Exposition* as lectures in London and published them in five separate volumes (1645–1662). In the nineteenth century, these volumes were combined and circulated as a single volume. The *Exposition* remains in print to this day. Greenhill gives a detailed verse-by-verse exposition of the text. He begins by offering lexical and syntactical comments on the Hebrew, comparing, when appropriate, the Septuagint and Vulgate. Following these comments, Greenhill gives historical and theological observations on the verse. A good deal of engagement with earlier writers occurs in the “observations” section. Greenhill is aware, for example, of Calvin’s partial commentary on Ezekiel. He also engages the works of the early church fathers.

Finally, the section on Ezekiel includes occasional comments by Johannes Oecolampadius, Hans Denck, Johann Gerhard, Giovanni Diodati, Jakob Raupius, Thomas Manton, John Owen, John Bunyan, Richard Baxter and Matthew Meade.

---

3 ODNB 37:573.
Johannes Oecolampadius, who is introduced at length in the section on Daniel below, lectured on Ezekiel at the University of Basel. His lecture notes were posthumously edited and published by Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541), his friend and first biographer. These notes provide a general introduction to the theological themes of each chapter in Ezekiel and offer short comments on select verses.

**Hans Denck (c. 1500–1527).** The theology of Hans Denck is difficult to characterize. He was at home with the humanists, imbued with spiritualist notions and called the “pope of the Anabaptists” by Martin Bucer. Denck was critical of Luther’s teaching on justification by faith alone and, in a sense, held beliefs more reminiscent of the relativism and individualism of postmodernity. He was expelled from numerous cities because of his unorthodox views and was forced to wander for a time. Befriended by Oecolampadius and given refuge in Basel, he resisted all efforts to conform his theological positions to normative Protestant views. He died because of the plague in 1527. Denck coauthored a work on the book of Micah toward the end of his life. In this work, or reflection as it is styled, Denck appeals in places to Ezekiel.

**Johann Gerhard (1582–1637).** Johann Gerhard is the third most significant theologian in the Lutheran tradition after Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz. He was appointed professor of theology at the University of Jena in 1616 and served there until his death in 1637. He is known for his dogmatic and apologetic writings, especially his impressive *Theological Commonplaces* (1610–1622), and his various devotional works, *Sacred Meditations* (1606), *Handbook of Consolations* (1611) and *Schola Pietatis* (1622–1623). The statements used in the commentary below come from his collected sermons or Postilla, as these collections were termed, and from his summary of the book of Ezekiel in his *Theological Commonplaces*.

**Giovanni Diodati (1576–1649).** Giovanni Diodati fled Italy because of religious persecution and settled in Geneva, where he taught Hebrew and theology at the Academy of Geneva. Diodati participated in the famous synod of Dort (1618), translated the Bible into Italian and published notes and annotations on the books of the Bible. It is this last work that is used in the commentary below.

**Jakob Raupius (1604–1677).** Jakob Raupius was a Lutheran pastor for many years in Herleshausen, a small town in the north of Hesse. Although he never held an academic appointment, he wrote numerous commentaries on the Old Testament and one on the Gospels. His commentary on the major prophets was published in 1655. Raupius summarizes the main points of each chapter and provides an analysis of key verses in

---

5 OER 1:485-86.
the chapter. His comments are brief and concerned mostly with questions pertaining to
the Hebrew grammar. Raupius relied heavily on the works of others; he borrowed freely
without attribution from the works of Johann Gerhard and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645),
a Dutch theologian and jurist.

**Thomas Manton (1620–1677).** Thomas Manton, educated at Oxford, was a
nonconformist minister and strong advocate of Presbyterianism. He was known as a
rigorous evangelical Calvinist who preached long expository sermons. At different times
in his ecclesial career he worked side by side with Richard Baxter and John Owen. In his
later life, Manton’s nonconformist position led to his ejection as a clergyman from the
Church of England (1662) and eventual imprisonment (1670). Although a voluminous
writer, Manton was best known for his preaching. At his funeral in 1677, he was dubbed
“the King of Preachers.” The commentary below makes use of two sermons by Manton
on Ezekiel 18.

**John Owen (1616–1683).** John Owen, theologian and Independent minister, was
educated at Oxford. Owen was a prolific writer, unrelenting opponent of Arminianism
and renowned preacher. Owen published devotional works on sanctification and the
Christian life, theological works on the Trinity and especially the Holy Spirit, numerous
polemical and apologetic pieces, an extensive correspondence and collections of sermons.
Owen’s sermons are used below in the commentary.

**John Bunyan (1628–1688).** John Bunyan, a self-educated Independent preacher, is best
known as the author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. His life was fraught with bouts of spiritual
depression, controversy and imprisonment. In the commentary below, Bunyan’s *Solomon’s
Temple Spiritualized* is used. In this work, Bunyan offers a spiritual interpretation of the
temple and its various utensils. Bunyan’s comments on the heavenly temple at the end of
Ezekiel are used below.

**Richard Baxter (1615–1691).** Richard Baxter, largely self-educated, was a reluctant
nonconformist who sought to bridge the theological and ecclesiological differences
between the Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Independent groups in England. Although
disputatious, Baxter valued moderation and reasonableness. Theologically he sought a
middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism, rejecting double predestination and
limited atonement. He was a prolific writer, composing devotional, pastoral, historical
and exegetical works. In the commentary below, Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted* (1658),
a lengthy reflection on Ezekiel 33, is used.

**Matthew Meade (1628/29–1699).** Matthew Meade, educated at Cambridge, was
an uncompromising nonconformist. Early in his ecclesial career he associated with

---

8 ODNB 36:565-68.
10 ODNB 8:702-11.
11 ODNB 4:418-33.
William Greenhill, eventually joining his congregation at Stepney and becoming his assistant. Following Greenhill’s death in 1671, Meade was called to serve as pastor in the church at Stepney. John Owen participated in Meade’s ordination service. Meade was repeatedly fined as a nonconformist, along with Owen, and eventually imprisoned. Following Owen’s death in 1683, Meade succeeded him as lecturer at Pinner’s Hall in London. Meade’s sermons on Ezekiel and lectures on Ezekiel’s vision of the wheels are used below in the commentary.

**Theological Themes**

The book of Ezekiel may be divided into five sections: Ezekiel’s call and opening visions (Ezek 1–3), prophecies of judgment against Israel (Ezek 4–24), judgments against the nations (Ezek 25–32), oracles of Israel’s restoration (Ezek 33–39) and the vision of the new temple (Ezek 40–48). Certain themes recur throughout Ezekiel for our commentators. They emphasize God’s covenantal promise to his people, who turn from him by embracing idolatry and the worship of the nations. God repeatedly warns his people of judgment and destruction. Despite these constant warnings through the prophet, the people persist in their idolatry and are punished. Although God speaks judgment against sin and idolatry, against his people, their city and temple, he always ends with comfort and words of promise. Restoration follows judgment. This restoration points to Christ and his eternal kingdom; he is the one who atones for our sins and clothes us with his righteousness. Here the visions of Ezekiel offer much. We glimpse through the prophet’s words the advent of Christ, his saving work for us, his second coming, the new Jerusalem and the eternal city in which the saints will dwell forever with God. The larger point observed is that God continually cares for the faithful, who dwell amid an idolatrous and rebellious people.

The sections of Ezekiel that elicit the most comment are his visions (Ezek 1–3; 8–11; 37; 40–48). Our commentators emphasize the appearance of Christ to Ezekiel and the comfort of Christ’s eternal kingdom as proclaimed in these visions. The final section in particular is a lengthy prophetic reflection on the new Jerusalem. This final section is regarded by our commentators as the most difficult as it is filled with numerous types and figures of the restoration of the church of God under the gospel.

There are other sections worthy of note. The allegory of unfaithful Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16 receives the greatest amount of comment outside of the vision narratives. A number of themes are emphasized in this chapter. God alone calls us to faith by his grace and adorns us with his benefits. Our great sin is to boast in these blessings from God as if we were the author of them. God judges such ingratitude and sinful boasting harshly. The chapter ends with comfort and the promise of God’s everlasting faithfulness in keeping his covenant. This promise points to Christ’s atonement for our sins.

Two of the best-known sections of Ezekiel for readers today receive only minimal attention from our commentators. The death of Ezekiel’s wife is discussed almost in pass-
ing (Ezek 24:15-27) and commented on only in relation to the destruction of the temple and city. Her sudden death and Ezekiel’s prohibition to mourn for her, who was his dearest comfort and the desire of his eyes, elicits no comment of sympathy for the double hardship now endured by the prophet, who not only loses his wife but also is prevented from mourning for her. Similarly, the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14) receives unequal attention from commentators. The preferred reading is that this section points to the restoration of Israel from captivity. The minority reading, which requires argument from those accepting it, is that this section concerns the general resurrection of the dead. For all of our commentators, however, the second part of the chapter, which promises the unification of Israel and Judah under the image of two sticks (Ezek 37:15-28), elicits more interest. The reason for this seems to be the number of exegetical and theological questions surrounding the image of two sticks. When does such reunification occur? Does this imply the salvation of the Jews? Who is this servant David who will be their one king and one shepherd forever? These questions occupy the attention of our commentators far more than the valley of dry bones.

**Interpretive Issues**

Attention to detail characterizes the observations of our commentators. From the peculiar beginning of the book to the description of heavenly Jerusalem at the end, our commentators are captivated by the inspired character of every detail recorded by Ezekiel. For example, why does the book begin with the word “and”? “And it came to pass” is a peculiar beginning to a book. There is no antecedent. There is no apparent need for the word and. Yet that is how this inspired book begins. To pass over something like this as trivial or to suggest that it is a mere Hebrew idiom, characteristic of many other books of the Bible, fails to appreciate the instruction for us in this word, which is also inspired. To think otherwise suggests that God’s revelation to us is at times irrelevant and superfluous—a position not held by our commentators. Once this peculiar beginning is accounted for our commentators stumble on an equally perplexing phrase, “the thirtieth year.” The thirtieth year of what or of whom? The text does not say. Again, a detail not to be overlooked. This attention to detail is especially observed throughout the final vision of the new temple. Nothing escapes notice or comment. Whether it is the wall, gates, chambers, steps and windows or the courts, porch and pillars of the temple, everything receives comment because all of Scripture is recorded for our learning.

The book of Ezekiel also raises a number of theological issues central to the Reformation that require a fair amount of exegetical comment. For example, in Ezekiel 14, God uses the example of Noah, Daniel and Job, who were all declared righteous. Ezekiel explains that even if these righteous men were amid God’s sinful people, to whom the prophet Ezekiel is speaking, their righteousness would save only themselves. Likewise those to whom Ezekiel speaks will deliver their souls by their own righteousness (Ezek
14:20). If no person can stand before God by his own righteousness, then what does this verse mean? Our commentators argue that the righteousness here spoken about is not the righteousness of faith, which alone avails for our salvation, but the righteousness of the Christian life.

There are also issues that arise in Ezekiel that divide our commentators and reveal their confessional differences. In both Ezekiel 18 and Ezekiel 33, God declares through Ezekiel that he does not desire the death of the wicked but that all should repent and live. The question arises for our commentators whether God wishes all to be saved. Here differences emerge. At issue is election and whether God predestines to both salvation and damnation. Mayer and Gerhard reject double predestination. Gerhard explicitly argues against the Calvinists in his comment. Baxter and Manton both insist that sinners are to blame for their sins; they alone are the principal cause of their own destruction. Calvin and Greenhill argue that these two passages are not addressing election and God’s sovereign decrees. Rather, these texts comfort those who repent with the knowledge that God indeed is ready to forgive.

A second issue, indeed what is perhaps a surprising exegetical issue for our commentators, occurs at the beginning of Ezekiel 44. Ezekiel is led back to the east gate and told that the gate is to remain shut forever. No man shall enter in by it because the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered in by it (Ezek 44:1-2). The early church fathers understood this text to be about the incarnation and the perpetual virginity of Mary. The gate that is closed and shall no more be opened indicates that Mary remained always a pure virgin. The reader will not be surprised, however, to see this theological position dismissed as “popish” by Greenhill. The reader may be surprised to see that both Gerhard and Mayer agree with the early church fathers. The blessed Virgin Mary is the closed gate. Joseph never knew her; brothers are cousins.

Finally, for Greenhill and Meade, an interpretive issue arises with God’s promise of reuniting the houses of Israel and Judah (Ezek 37:21-22), his promise of an everlasting covenant (Ezek 37:26-27) and his promise to restore Israel (Ezek 39:25-29). These promises have not yet been fulfilled and point to the future conversion of the Jews when they will be gathered by one king, one shepherd, the Messiah, who is Christ.

**Historical Reception of These Works**
The historical reception of these works on Ezekiel is found within the works themselves. Although Luther wrote only prefaces on Ezekiel, these comments were known and used by Calvin. In turn, both Mayer and Greenhill engaged Calvin throughout their respective works. The enduring value of these works for modern readers follows a different trajectory. Luther and Calvin remain the two most significant Reformation voices for us today. Their works are widely available in English, and modern commentators, whether agreeing or disagreeing with them, must take their labors into account. The same cannot be said
for our seventeenth-century writers. These figures are lesser known, and their works are less accessible. Mayer’s impressive commentary on Ezekiel is not engaged by any major commentary series in our day. Greenhill’s massive and detailed exposition of Ezekiel appears in only one series. In the commentary below, however, Mayer and Greenhill are the featured writers. Therefore, their voices once again sound forth to instruct us on the book of Ezekiel.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Historical Context
The book of Daniel, like the book of Ezekiel, elicited broad interest from the reformers. Citations and glosses from Daniel appear throughout theological works, sermons, confessional documents, and other such writings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Unlike the book of Ezekiel, however, the reformers also produced a number of commentaries on the whole of Daniel or select portions.

Martin Luther (1483–1546). In 1530, Martin Luther published separately his German translation of the prophet Daniel (Der Prophet Daniel Deutsch) with a detailed and lengthy preface. Luther intended the preface to provide a short introduction to this book by “St. Daniel” so that simple believers could know and understand the histories related by him. Luther summarizes the content of each chapter and offers detailed comment on such things as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2), God’s punishment of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4), Daniel’s visions and prophecies of future kingdoms (Dan 7–8) and the seventy weeks (Dan 9). Luther also gives a lengthy explanation of the histories contained in Daniel 11. Although he spends a significant amount of time on the histories contained in Daniel, Luther ends by encouraging readers not to be so consumed with the history that they fail to refresh and comfort their hearts with the promises of Christ contained in Daniel. We read the history to better understand the advent of Christ. Put another way, biblical history has a purpose and an end: Jesus Christ.

Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531). Johannes Oecolampadius is not as well known as Luther or Zwingli but was just as active in the Reformation efforts of the 1520s. He studied law at Bologna and theology at Heidelberg, Tübingen and Basel. Around the year 1514, Oecolampadius came into contact with Philipp Melanchthon and began an association with Melanchthon’s great-uncle, the distinguished Hebrew scholar Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522). He was a close friend of Erasmus, whom he assisted with the publication of the Greek New Testament. At this time, he also taught theology at the

---

14LW 35:294-316.
15P. G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutshler, eds., Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and

Copyrighted Material. www.ivpress.com/permissions
University of Basel and Heidelberg. Among his students were Hans Denck, with whom he would maintain a close friendship and eventually provide refuge in Basel at the end of his life, and Johannes Brenz (1499–1570), who unhesitatingly sided with Luther against Oecolampadius during the eucharistic controversy in the 1520s when Oecolampadius changed his position from Luther to Zwingli.\textsuperscript{16}

Oecolampadius was appointed preacher and confessor at the cathedral of Augsburg in 1518, and, to the surprise of many, entered a monastery near Augsburg in 1520. He began a friendship with Zwingli in 1522 and theologically began to move in the direction of Zurich. At this point, he accepted an invitation to come to Basel to secure the budding Reformation in that city. It is here that Oecolampadius expended his efforts for the Reformation. He began lecturing at the University of Basel in 1523 and subsequently joined his reforming efforts with Zurich.\textsuperscript{17} He died in 1531, a mere month after Zwingli’s death at the battle of Kappel.

Oecolampadius published his commentary on Daniel in 1530.\textsuperscript{18} The commentary covers the whole of Daniel and is divided into two books, corresponding to the division in Daniel between the historical (Dan 1–6) and prophetic books (Dan 7–12). Oecolampadius uses the Vulgate to introduce the text. He then offers detailed textual comments in light of the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, when appropriate. Finally, he provides lengthy historical and theological comments that are arranged according to verse or half-verse. Oecolampadius’s love of the church fathers, as witnesses of the truth (testes veritatis), is evident throughout. The modern reader will be struck by how christological Oecolampadius’s commentary is. Although Luther wrote only a preface, there is a good deal of agreement between the two reformers in their approach to Daniel.

\textbf{Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560).} Philipp Melanchthon, humanist and reformer, is one of the most remarkable and interesting theologians of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{19} His eloquence and calm demeanor made him an attractive figure to kings and princes, moderate cardinals and fellow evangelicals, who all requested his presence at imperial diets and theological colloquies in Germany, England and France. His literary efforts, erudition and persuasiveness garnered attention from gifted humanists like Erasmus, sympathetic reformers like Bucer and Calvin and undeniable foes like Eck and Cochlaeus. Melanchthon was an ecclesiastical statesman, gifted linguist, careful historian, insightful theologian and committed evangelical.

\textsuperscript{16} On Brenz, see Steinmetz, \textit{Reformers in the Wings}, pp. 76-82, 182.
Trained in Latin and Greek, Melanchthon accepted a call to teach Greek and New Testament at the University of Wittenberg in 1518. Luther and Melanchthon quickly became close associates and theological allies. Melanchthon brought theological order and systematic presentation to Luther’s reforming efforts. Although they did not share the same theological demeanor and did not always agree on such things as the Lord’s Supper, they remained colaborers on behalf of the Reformation in Germany and beyond throughout Luther’s life.

Following Luther’s death, Melanchthon struggled to maintain unity among the Lutherans during the difficult times of the Smalcald War (1546–1547) and the Augsburg and so-called Leipzig interims (1548). His continued modification of the Augsburg Confession and theological departure from Luther on such issues as free will and the relationship between good works and the article of justification by faith led to the rise of two opposing parties within Lutheranism: the so-called Philippists, supporters of Melanchthon’s changing positions, and the Gnesio-Lutherans, the “genuine” Lutherans, who were faithful to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and committed to the spirit of Luther’s reforming efforts.

Melanchthon wrote some of the most influential works of the sixteenth century. He was the main author of the Augsburg Confession (1530) and its Apology (1531). He attempted to give order to Luther’s theology by composing the first Protestant systematic theology, the *Loci Communes*. This dogmatic work was a brief outline of the chief points of Scripture. Melanchthon also wrote on philosophical topics and church history; he published numerous letters, sermons and commentaries.

In 1543, Melanchthon wrote a commentary on Daniel. The reader of this commentary immediately discovers that he is reading the work of a dogmatic theologian. Melanchthon comments on a whole chapter at a time. In the first part of the commentary (Dan 1–6), he begins by giving the Vulgate text and then lists the dogmatic topics raised in the chapter. The commentary continues with subheadings that correspond to the list of dogmatic topics made by Melanchthon. He does not offer a separate comment for each dogmatic topic that he identifies. The second half of the commentary (Dan 7–12) offers a narrative exposition of the text with lengthy historical and theological excurses on such things as the antichrist, Alexander the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the various kings mentioned in Daniel. An impressive amount of historical material is furnished by Melanchthon throughout the commentary.

**John Calvin (1509–1564).** John Calvin began his lectures on Daniel during the summer of 1559 and completed them in the spring of 1560. The lectures were lightly edited and

---

20 In the *Tischreden*, Martin Luther famously said, "If anybody wishes to become a theologian, he has a great advantage, first of all, in having the Bible. This is now so clear that he can read it without any trouble. Afterward he should read Philipp’s *Loci Communes*. This he should read diligently and well, until he has its contents fixed in his head. If he has these two he is a theologian, and neither the devil nor a heretic can shake him." Again, Luther is reported as saying, "There’s no book under the sun in which the whole of theology is so compactly presented as in the *Loci Communes*. If you read all the fathers and sententiaries you have nothing. No better book has been written after the Holy Scriptures than Philipp’s." See LW 54:439; WA, Tr 5, 204, no. 5511.
published in 1561. The published commentary, however, retains the feel and atmosphere of the lecture hall. Those elements often removed from polished prose, such as repetition, digressions and explicit verbal transitions, remain in the commentary. We are told that Calvin lectured without notes. He began by reading aloud the Hebrew or Aramaic, offering a translation of the text (glossing it as he went) and then giving his exposition. \(^{21}\) Calvin shows an awareness of alternative translations and different theological interpretations. He is also familiar with the earlier commentaries by Oecolampadius and Melanchthon.

**Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575).** Heinrich Bullinger, born out of wedlock, was the son of a Roman Catholic parish priest. \(^{22}\) In 1519, he entered the University of Cologne to study the humanities. Here he began to kindle his lifelong interest in the early church fathers. His conversion to Protestantism came by reading the early works of Luther and Melanchthon’s *Loci Communes* (1521). Their teaching, he determined, was in accord with Scripture and the church fathers in a way that Roman Catholic teaching was not. In 1523, he began teaching at the Cistercian monastery at Kappel and, at the same time, developed a close relationship with Huldrych Zwingli, which would continue until Zwingli’s untimely death. In 1531, he was chosen as Zwingli’s successor to be the chief minister (*antistes*) of the Grossmünster, a principal church in Zurich.

Bullinger actively participated in the eucharistic controversy between Wittenberg and Zurich. In 1549, he joined with John Calvin in producing the *Consensus Tigurinus*, which was a thorough rejection of the Lutheran position and the *Wittenberg Concord* of 1536. He authored the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), which was intended to be his personal testament of faith but instead became the most widely recognized Reformed confession of faith. Bullinger was also a tireless and profuse preacher. For the first ten years as chief minister of the Grossmünster, he preached six to eight sermons a week. By the end of his life, he had preached through all the books of the Bible (*lectio continua*). It is estimated that Bullinger delivered between seven thousand and seventy-five hundred sermons to the people of Zurich.

In 1565, Bullinger published sixty-six sermons on the book of Daniel. His homilies offer a running commentary on the entire text. \(^{23}\) Bullinger’s comments attend to textual, historical and theological issues. As with Oecolampadius, Bullinger’s comments are often christological and, as would be expected of a homily, directed toward the current social and religious concerns of his hearers.

**Johann Wigand (1523–1587).** Johann Wigand was a staunch Lutheran who labored to secure Luther’s reforming efforts amid the turmoil and divisions of sixteenth-century Lutheranism. \(^{24}\) He was raised by devout Lutheran parents. He studied theology at the

---


\(^{23}\) On Bullinger’s interpretation of Scripture, see R. L. Petersen, “Bullinger, Heinrich,” *DMBI*, 256-60.

\(^{24}\) For the following, see Ronald Diener, “Johann Wigand, 1523-1587,” in *Shapers of Religious Tradition in Germany, Switzerland*
University of Wittenberg, where he heard lectures by Luther and Melanchthon. From the 1550s onward, Wigand became active in the theological controversies plaguing Lutheranism. He collaborated with Matthias Flacius (1520–1575) in vehemently opposing the Philippists. In 1573, he became acquainted with Martin Chemnitz and was appointed professor of theology at the University of Königsberg. In 1575, he became the bishop of Pomerania. Here he remained until his death in 1587 preaching, teaching, writing and visiting churches to ensure their faithfulness to the Scriptures and Lutheran theology.

Wigand wrote numerous theological and historical works, which were often motivated by controversy and written with polemical interest. He wrote catechetical works for the churches under his care. He proposed and implemented a theological program for the University of Königsberg. His sermons and sermon outlines were collected and disseminated for use among parish pastors. In addition to these works, Wigand wrote a commentary on Daniel in 1571. The commentary is orderly and clear. He divides each chapter into historical and theological parts. He first offers a Latin translation of the text with comment. He then proceeds with annotations on nearly every verse. A section on the doctrinal points raised by the text is given next. Finally, at various places in the commentary, Wigand offers lengthy excurses on doctrinal issues related to the text, such as the ceremonial law, idolatry, pride, drunkenness, dreams, angels, and so on.

Andrew Willet (1562–1621). Andrew Willet was a prolific writer, controversialist and parish pastor. He was born at Ely in 1562 and attended both Cambridge and Oxford. He took holy orders in 1585. Willet received his father's prebendal stall at Ely in 1587 and was appointed to the rectory of Barley in 1598. He retained both sources of revenue until his death in 1621, providing him a substantial income. Willet read extensively in the church fathers, canon law, the schoolmen and the chief writings of his own day, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. He composed works in Latin and English, publishing forty-two books in his lifetime. He wrote significant commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, 1 and 2 Samuel, Daniel and Romans—the latter being his most well-known. In 1610, he wrote a sixfold commentary on Daniel.

Willet's commentary is extraordinarily detailed and thorough. He discusses each chapter under six points. He begins by stating the argument of the chapter and then introduces the reader to the various renderings of the text from the original language to its various translations (Greek, Latin, English). Third, he turns to the questions and doubts raised throughout the history of interpretation. Fourth, he discusses the doctrinal topics raised in the chapter under consideration. Willet then addresses the places of controversy...
in the fifth part. He ends each chapter, the sixth part, with moral observations from the text.

Throughout the commentary, Willet cites the authors he is engaging by placing their names in parentheses at the end of the sentence. These references add a significant amount of theological and ecclesial diversity to Willet’s commentary. A figure who influenced most sixteenth-century Protestants and is used frequently by Willet is Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349). Nicholas was a Franciscan and noted biblical exegete. He was well-versed in Hebrew and had a rich knowledge of the early church. The reformers from Luther to Willet were especially attracted to Nicholas because of his attention to the plain sense of Scripture.27

Willet incorporates comments from two sixteenth-century Roman Catholic theologians. Benedict Pereira (1535–1610), whom Willet refers to as Pererius, was a Spanish Jesuit theologian and philosopher who wrote a commentary on Daniel in 1587.28 Hector Pintus (1528–1584) was a Portuguese theologian and professor at Coimbra who published a commentary on Daniel in 1582. In addition to Calvin and Bullinger, Willet regularly cites two other Reformed theologians. Amandus Polanus (1561–1610), an important contributor to the development of Reformed orthodoxy, published a commentary on Daniel in 1599. Polanus published numerous commentaries on the Old Testament and later turned his attention to dogmatics.29 Francis Junius (1545–1602), a Huguenot theologian, published an exposition on Daniel in 1593. Willet’s esteem for Junius can be seen in the appendix attached to end of his commentary. In 1608, Conrad Graser (1557–1613), a historian and professor of Hebrew at the Reformed gymnasium in Thorn (modern-day Toruń, Poland), published an exposition of Daniel 9 that challenged the arguments of Francis Junius. Willet appends to his commentary on Daniel a refutation of Graser and defense of Junius.

Finally, in addition to Luther and Melanchthon, Willet appeals to Andreas Osiander (1498–1552), an accomplished Hebraist, controversialist and part-time Lutheran.30 Osiander opposed nearly every friend he made: Philipp Melanchthon, Hans Denck, John Calvin and Martin Chemnitz, to name only a few. He participated in the Marburg Colloquy of 1529 with Luther and Zwingli but later opposed Luther’s teaching on justification by faith. Osiander believed that Christ’s righteousness was not merely imputed to the believer but substantially transferred to the individual. This position, referred to as Osiandrianism, was rejected by the Lutherans and others during the sixteenth century.

John Mayer (1583–1664). As mentioned above in the introduction to Ezekiel, Mayer wrote a commentary on the whole Bible. In his commentary on Daniel, Mayer comments

28TCE 11:664.
30Steinmetz, Reformers in the Wings, pp. 64-69, 166.
with interest on every chapter. He demonstrates familiarity with most of the Protestant commentaries on Daniel noted above. He has a great interest in the historical details of the monarchies and the christological prophecies of Daniel.

**Miscellaneous Commentators.** The book of Daniel elicited comments from many writers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although most of these comments, like those mentioned above with Ezekiel, are occasional and casual, some of them have been incorporated into the commentary below to further broaden the ecclesiastical diversity of the volume. Brief comments are again found from Hans Denck (c. 1500–1527), Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and Giovanni Diodati (1576–1649), who were introduced above. In addition to Denck, two other Anabaptists, Menno Simons (c. 1496–1561) and Tieleman J. van Bragt (1625–1664), are briefly cited in the commentary. Simons, a Roman Catholic priest, was rebaptized in 1536 and became the most significant Anabaptist theologian in the sixteenth century. Tieleman J. van Bragt, a Dutch Mennonite, published sermons, hymns and a book on Christian martyrs. Comments from the book on martyrs are used below. A handful of other comments are added by Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586, Lutheran), William Pemble (1591/92–1623, Puritan) and Joseph Mede (1586–1638, Anglican). Chemnitz, a German Lutheran, labored to unite the divided voices of sixteenth-century Lutheranism around the Book of Concord (1580). Pemble, a Puritan divine and committed Calvinist, was a well-known preacher who published exegetical and historical works. His historical work on the Persian monarchy is used below. Mede, an Anglican biblical scholar known for his encyclopedic knowledge on various subjects and for his skill in Hebrew, produced a work on Daniel’s seventy weeks.

**Theological Themes**

The book of Daniel is divided into two parts by our commentators. The first part, Daniel 1–6, deals with well-known events like the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment, the lions’ den and the handwriting on the wall. These chapters, for the most part, describe events that occurred in Babylon during the exile. The second part, Daniel 7–12, presents numerous visions about the monarchies of the world, the kingdom of Christ and antichrist and the end of the world.

According to Heinrich Bullinger, some people in the sixteenth century refused to read Daniel, or indeed anything from the prophets, because they now possessed the Gospels and the apostolic teaching of the New Testament. Our commentators find such a view shameful and arrogant. They are not only committed to the continued study and preaching of the Old Testament but also are convinced that the teaching of

---

32 ODNB 43:508-10.
33 ODNB 37:683-85.
the prophets provides great comfort and benefit to those who stand on the far side of the apostles. Christian experience commends the use of the prophets; the New Testament Scriptures direct us to their study (Mt 24:15; 1 Pet 1:10-12). As Peter puts it, the prophets served us and not themselves in searching out the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

Our commentators note many benefits in reading Daniel. The histories of the monarchs, the great miracles that occurred in Daniel’s day and the comfort of God’s fatherly care and watchful providence over his saints are all recorded for the encouragement of our faith. Moreover, we find explicit prophecies concerning Christ, the precise time of his coming and the promises of his benefits to us. Daniel’s thorough description of the office of Christ (Dan 9) is a compendium of the chief articles of the Christian faith. Here Daniel gives clear testimony concerning the advent and death of Christ, the atonement for sins, justification by faith and the everlasting righteousness of Christ. All of these teachings are preceded by Daniel’s great prayer of repentance. Here we learn that prayer is the chief exercise of faith; indeed, it is the prerogative of faith.

A constant theme for our commentators throughout their reading of Daniel, whether it is part one or two, is the continued appearance of or allusion to Christ in nearly every chapter of the book. For example, Christ is the stone cut out of the mountain (Dan 2); the one like the Son of God in the fiery furnace (Dan 3); the watcher and holy one (Dan 4); the Ancient of Days and Son of Man (Dan 7); the holy one or Palmoni (Dan 8); the atonement for sins and everlasting righteousness (Dan 9); the one in the likeness of man (Dan 10); and the one called Michael, who is the Son of God, Jesus Christ (Dan 12). To be sure, our commentators are not always in agreement on these appearances of Christ. Calvin is the most reluctant to find Christ in the places listed above; Wigand is the most willing.

**Interpretive Issues**

There are two types of interpretive issues for our commentators. First, there are issues where our commentators are in complete agreement with one another in their opposition to either Roman Catholic or Jewish interpretation. For example, our commentators devote significant space to questions concerning the canonicity and authority of Daniel and the apocryphal additions to the book.

Our commentators show some knowledge of the Jewish debate over the canonical placement of Daniel and the third-century attack on the authority of Daniel by the pagan philosopher Porphyry. Both of these issues touch on the character of Daniel’s prophecy. Was the book of Daniel written by Daniel the prophet or was it composed years later, perhaps during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, as argued by Porphyry? To take the latter position rejects the inspiration of Daniel and introduces falsehood into the Scriptures. Our commentators reject this position. To accept the canonicity of Daniel in a provisional
way, which is how they characterize the Jewish position, is motivated more by theological convictions than historical conclusions. Because Daniel presents the advent and death of the Messiah, his atoning work for all people and his eternal kingdom with more clarity and precision than any other Old Testament writer, this book is classed among the hagiographa (kethubim) and rarely read by the rabbis. Although modern scholars may take issue with how the reformers frame this question and characterize the rabbinic view, the significant point for us to observe is the theological motivation for their conclusion. All of our commentators see Daniel giving explicit and comforting prophecies about Christ and his eternal kingdom. This is why all good Christians read Daniel, as Luther puts it.

There are four additions to Daniel not found in the Masoretic text but only in the Greek versions of Daniel: Prayer of Azariah, Song of the Three Youths, Story of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1546–1563) declared these to be canonical. Our commentators regard them as apocryphal and endorse the arguments of Jerome against their inclusion in the canon. For the most part, these additions do not occupy the attention of our commentators.

Second, there are a number of exegetical and interpretive issues within the book of Daniel that create difficulties for our commentators and yield diverse conclusions. These difficulties range from chronological questions concerning the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:1) to textual questions regarding the identity of Palmoni (Dan 8:13) and Michael (Dan 10:13; 12:1). As with Ezekiel, our commentators demonstrate throughout their commitment to a close reading of the text. When the reformers read that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed “in the second year of his reign,” a number of issues arise. How does this agree with Daniel 1, which declares that he besieged Jerusalem in the first year of his reign? There would not be enough time for Daniel to be reckoned among the wise men and astrologers, as the text declares. A number of proposals are made by our commentators to account for the reckoning of years in Daniel 1 and Daniel 2.

We again see their concern for detail and their close reading of the text with two textual questions that arise in the second part of Daniel. First, should the Hebrew word Palmoni, which is used at Daniel 8:13, be translated or not? Willet, Mayer and Melanchthon all agree that this word should remain untranslated and understood as Christ. If translated, the word would be “excellent” or “wonderful” angel. When we consider that this “angel” or Palmoni is instructing and revealing mysteries known only to God and that it is another angel, perhaps Gabriel, who makes the inquiry on Daniel’s behalf to this other “angel,” the reformers conclude that this must be Christ himself. It is better, then, to keep the word Palmoni untranslated. If we were to translate it, Melanchthon suggests “somebody wonderful,” which corresponds to “wonderful counselor,” as Christ is elsewhere called (Is 9:6).

A similar issue arises with the identity of Michael (Dan 10:13; 12:1). Although some commentators are more reserved than others in their judgment on this question, nearly
all acknowledge that Michael is the Son of God. Mayer and, to some extent, Calvin are
the lone dissenters. Again, the reformers' conclusions arise from a close reading of the text
and a theological consideration of the "work" assigned Michael. Since our commentators
assume that "person" and "work" go together, when they read that Michael is the prince
of the people, an office belonging only to Christ, they conclude that "Michael" is not to
be understood as the angel but rather translated and understood as the one who is like
God.

Two further examples show our commentators' concern for the details of the text and
the hermeneutical challenges presented by an overly literal reading of it. When God pun-
ishes Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4), Daniel relates that the king was driven from human
society, forced to make his dwelling among the beasts of the field and made to eat grass as
the oxen. The question arises to what extent this punishment is to be read according to
the letter. Did God change Nebuchadnezzar's nature into that of a beast in order for him
to be sustained by grass, something humans are incapable of doing, or was this change
in mind only and not in body? Although none of the commentators suggest that Nebu-
chadnezzar underwent some sort of metamorphosis, nearly all of them are concerned to
prevent their readers from drawing such a conclusion.

Another issue arises with Daniel's vision in Daniel 8. Was he physically in Susa, as the
text says, or did he remain in Babylon? Calvin argues that he was in Babylon and in Susa
by vision only. Any other argument is unreasonable. Mayer dismisses Calvin's position
as contrary to what the text says. Mayer argues that Daniel was indeed taken to Susa by
the Spirit as Ezekiel and Elijah had also been transported miraculously by the Spirit.
Wigand finds the question too difficult to answer one way or the other.

Finally, as mentioned above, our commentators find an appearance or allusion to Christ
in nearly every chapter in Daniel. They do not, however, all agree when and where these
appearances occur. For example, who appeared in the fiery furnace with the three youths?
Calvin says it was an angel; Bullinger argues it was an angel but type of Christ; Wigand
and Mayer assert it was the very Son of God. All four offer exegetical support for their
conclusion. The pattern of some seeing Christ and others not is repeated throughout the
book of Daniel.

**Historical Reception of These Works**
The historical reception of the commentaries on Daniel begins with the reformers them-
selves. Luther's preface is used and known by Melanchthon and Wigand. Oecolampa-
dius's commentary, which is the earliest one produced by the reformers on Daniel, is used
by Melanchthon, Calvin, Bullinger, Willet and Mayer. Melanchthon is used by Calvin,
Bullinger, Willet and Mayer. For modern commentators on Daniel, Luther and Calvin
retain their place of significance. They are read and engaged, whether the reader agrees
or disagrees with their interpretations. The other commentators, however, are less acces-
sible to the modern reader. The works by Oecolampadius, Melanchthon, Bullinger and Wigand are available only in Latin. Although Willet and Mayer wrote in English, their works are not readily available and their English is cumbersome.

The commentary on Daniel that follows retains the importance of Luther and Calvin but gives the majority of space to these other reformers from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What follows is only a sampling of the erudition and theological insight of their respective works; works that all deserve, in my estimation, to be translated into English and made available once again to a broad readership interested in the important and comforting words of the prophet Daniel.
OVERVIEW: Our commentators begin with the place of Ezekiel’s prophesy in relationship to Jeremiah, highlighting specifically the role Ezekiel was to play for God. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, tempers his harsh judgments against the people with promises of Christ’s kingdom and the heavenly Jerusalem. Moreover, Ezekiel proved a real comfort to Jeremiah, who now had a companion in speaking the things of God. Finally, some comment is made about the reading restrictions historically placed on parts of Ezekiel among Jews and the various difficulties to be encountered in the book.

JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL. JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: In the order of the books of the prophets, Ezekiel follows Jeremiah. They both have the same argument and both flourished at the same time. Jeremiah was older and preceded Ezekiel into the office of prophet. Jeremiah preached in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylon. They both corroborated each other’s prophecy. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon at the time of Jeconiah. Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel.¹

JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL. MARTIN LUTHER: Ezekiel, like Daniel and many more, along with King Jeconiah, went willingly into captivity in Babylon, following the counsel of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah constantly advised that the people should surrender to the king of Babylon—and thus live; they should not resist—or they would be destroyed (Jeremiah 21). Now when the people arrived in Babylon, as Jeremiah shows in chapter 24, they became impatient and regretted beyond measure that they submitted. For they saw that those who stayed in Jerusalem and had not surrendered still possessed the city and everything else, and hoped to make Jeremiah a liar and to defend themselves against the king of Babylon and remain in their own land.

In Jerusalem the false prophets helped this notion along by constantly consoling the people that their city would not be captured, and that Jeremiah was a lying heretic. Along with this (as it usually does) went the fact that those at Jerusalem boasted that they were holding honestly and firmly to God and fatherland. They claimed that the others who had surrendered had deserted God and fatherland and were thus faithless traitors who were unable to trust or hope in God, but had gone over to the enemy because of the vile talking of Jeremiah, the liar. This hurt and embittered greatly those who had surrendered to Babylon, and their captivity became a double one. O how many a hefty curse they must have wished on Jeremiah, whom they had followed and who had led them astray so miserably!

For this reason God raised up in Babylon this prophet Ezekiel, to encourage the captives and to prophesy against the false prophets at Jerusalem, as well as to substantiate the word of Jeremiah. Ezekiel does this thoroughly; he prophesies much harder and far more than Jeremiah that Jerusalem shall be destroyed and the people perish, along with the king and princes. Yet he promises also that the captives

¹Commentarius in Ezechielum (1553), 3.
shall return home to the land of Judah. This is the most important thing that Ezekiel did in his time; he deals with this matter down to chapter twenty-five.

After that, to chapter thirty-four, he extends his prophecy also to all the other lands round about, which the king of Babylon was to afflict. There follow in addition four chapters [34–37] on the spirit and kingdom of Christ, and after that on the last tyrant in Christ’s kingdom, Gog and Magog [38–39]. At the end Jerusalem is rebuilt, and Ezekiel encourages the people to believe that they shall go home again [40–48]. Yet in the Spirit he means the eternal city, the heavenly Jerusalem, of which the Apocalypse also speaks [Rev 21].

Jeremiah and Ezekiel. John Calvin: Before I proceed any farther, I will briefly consider the themes that Ezekiel discusses. He has almost everything in common with Jeremiah, as we have said, but especially this: that he announces final destruction to the people, because they were not holding back from piling evil deed upon evil deed, thereby inciting the vengeance of God more and more. Therefore, he threatens them, and not just once, because the hard-heartedness of the people was so great, that to utter the threats of God only three or four times would not be enough, unless he were to repeat them incessantly.

Yet Ezekiel also shows the reasons why God decided to deal with his people so severely, certainly because they were so polluted with many superstitions, because they were deceitful, greedy, merciless, filled with crime, given to extravagance, and depraved by lust. All these things are listed by our prophet, to show that the vengeance of God is not too severe, since the people continued to reach the greatest godlessness and to amass a great pile of evil deeds. . . .

The prophets demonstrate the guilt of the people with no other intention than to stir them to repentance, if only they would believe it is possible for those who are estranged from God to be reconciled to him. Accordingly this is the reason why whenever our prophet, as well as Jeremiah, rebukes the people, he tempers the severity of correction by weaving in promises. . . .

But after chapter 40 he deals more richly and extensively with the rebuilding of the temple and the city. According to this declaration he announces a new position of the people, royal authority would flourish and the priesthood would recover its former excellence. For the rest of the book he will explain the remarkable kindnesses of God, which were to be hoped for after the close of the seventy years. Here it is useful to remember what we observed in the case of Jeremiah. While the false prophets were promising the people a return after three or five years, the true prophets were proclaiming what would really happen, so the people might submit themselves patiently to God, enduring his just corrections, not discouraged by the duration of years. Ezekiel 1.

Difficulty of Ezekiel. Matthew Meade: It must be said of this prophecy, as was said of Paul’s epistles, that there are some things in them hard to be understood, full of obscurity and difficulty, which made Jerome say, there is in this book a sea of Scripture so deep and a labyrinth of the mysteries of God so difficult, and therefore as the reading of the beginning of Genesis and the book of Canticles was forbidden to the Jews (as Jerome says) until they were thirty years of age, so was the beginning and ending of this prophecy.

There are in it dark visions hard to be unfolded, uncertain chronologies difficult to be found out, mystical parables hard to be opened and many enigmatic hieroglyphics not easily understood. Such as the portrait tile (Ezek 4),

the removing of the household baggage (Ezek 12), the useless vine branch (Ezek 15), the two eagles and a vine (Ezek 17), the boiling pot (Ezek 24), the dry bones (Ezek 37), and the like. But among all of them none has more darkness and difficulty attending it than of the wheel and cherubim mentioned in the first and tenth chapters. The Vision of the Wheels.4

Who Should Read Ezekiel? Martin Luther: St. Jerome and others write that it was, and still is, forbidden among the Jews for anyone under thirty years of age to read the first and last parts of the Prophet Ezekiel [1:4–28; 40:2–48:35] and the first chapter of Genesis. To be sure, there was no need of this prohibition among the Jews, for Isaiah [29:11-12] prophesies that the entire Holy Scriptures are sealed and closed to the unbelieving Jews. St. Paul says as much in 2 Corinthians 8:14-16, that the veil of Moses remains over the Scriptures, so long as they do not believe in Christ. A New Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel.5

The Need For Ezekiel. John Calvin: Now we must consider God’s purpose for selecting Ezekiel as his prophet. For thirty-five years Jeremiah had not ceased to cry out, but with little success. Therefore, seeing that the prophet, Jeremiah, had worn himself out, God wanted to give him a helper. And it was certainly no small relief, when Jeremiah, who was in Jerusalem, learned that the Holy Spirit was speaking harmoniously through another mouth. Indeed in this way the truth of his teaching was confirmed. . . . Still this was his bitter duty, to announce loudly and continually for thirty-five years to the deaf, actually even to the insane. Therefore, to minister to his servant, God gave him an companion, who would teach the Babylonians the same things, which Jeremiah had not stopped proclaiming to Jerusalem. . . . But the usefulness of his teaching spread much further, since those in Jerusalem were compelled to listen to the prophecies Ezekiel spoke to the Chaldeans. When they understood that these prophecies agreed with Jeremiah’s, they could not but at least ask why this was so. Indeed it is not normal for one prophet in Jerusalem, another in Chaldea, to proclaim their prophecies as if with one voice, like two singers harmonizing. Truly it is not possible to ask for a more pleasant or well-composed melody than what was found between these two servants of God. Ezekiel 1.6

In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.  

On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal, and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.  

As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf’s foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. And each went straight forward. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning.  

Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl. And the four had the same likeness, their appearance and construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. And their rims were tall and awesome, and the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.  

Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal, spread out above their heads. And under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another. And each creature had two wings covering its body. And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of
many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army.
When they stood still, they let down their wings. And there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads. When they stood still, they let down their wings.

26 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. 28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around.

Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

Overview: Our commentators begin this lengthy and difficult chapter by considering the identity of Ezekiel and his location in Babylon. Attention is also given to the peculiar beginning of the book, which is often overlooked by translators and commentators. After one difficulty comes another. What is meant by “in the thirtieth year”? Some suggest that the date proceeds from a jubilee; others reckon it from the discovery of the Law by Josiah.

Although a review of historical opinion is given on who the four living creatures are, our commentators agree that they are to be understood as four angels or cherubim. Less agreement is found with the four wheels. Some understand this generally as representing change; some see the four parts of the world represented; and others, understanding the whole prophecy to be about the kingdom of Christ, suggest that the four wheels, pointing to the New Testament, represent the Word of God, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the office of the keys. Finally, all the commentators are agreed that Ezekiel beheld the person of Christ, the very Son of God.

Two general meanings of the vision are put forward by our commentators. For some, it is a vision about the sovereignty of God; he alone directs all things to his glory. For others, it is a vision about Christ and his kingdom; here great agreement exists between Ezekiel and Jeremiah 31.

1:1-3 Ezekiel in Babylon

Ezekiel. John Mayer: Ezekiel is said to be the son of Buzi and a priest in order to purchase him the greater authority, as being none of the vulgar sort, but a priest. Ezekiel signifies the strength of God; Buzi, contempt; whereon Origen gathers that he was a figure of Christ, who was the mighty power of God but despised by the Jews. . . .

The time of his prophesying and the place where is exactly set down, that we might know that he prophesied in the land of the Chaldeans in some part of the time when Jeremiah prophesied in the land of Judah. . . . In this time then they prophesied both together, Ezekiel, being by the Lord, was stirred up to confirm that which Jeremiah said. Commentary upon All the Prophets. . . .

A Peculiar Beginning. William Greenhill: “Now.” The word in the original is “and.” “And it came to pass.” It seems a strange
beginning of a book, especially when it refers to nothing said or written before. Many books of sacred Writ begin in this manner, as Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, and many others show. In historical books, it may note the series and connect things antecedent with things consequent. But in prophetical books, it cannot note or make a connection with things foregoing. Jonah begins his prophecy so, and what was the antecedent to make up the connection? Here is the query, and difficulty, why the prophet should begin his book in this manner, "And it came to pass."

Some satisfy the issue this way. They make it an idiom or propriety of the Hebrew tongue to begin books with this particle, and, or now. And so they make nothing of it. But surely this is not all. There is something wrapped up in this now, or and, which may be of instruction and use to us.

"Now," or, "and it came to pass." The prophet doubtless was meditating on the condition he was in; meditating on the condition he had been in. There was a time when we were at Jerusalem, that we went with joy to the temple and to the solemn assemblies. A time that we heard the voice of God, that we saw his glory, his beauty, his power and his strength there. A time when we had communion with the saints and sang songs of Sion together with cheerfulness and with joy. We had precious ordinances, honorable sabbaths, sacrifices that did cheer our hearts, seal up pardon of our sins to us and intimate the good will of God in Christ to our souls. We sat under our vines and our fig trees and were in safety. But now, now we eat the bread of mourners, we drink our own tears. Now we are deprived of all ordinances, stripped of all our comforts. We are sold into the hands of enemies. We are become captives to a heathen prince. Our bondage is grievous and must continue seventy years. It is the fruit of our sin. God is righteous in all his judgments, and if we willingly accept the punishment of our iniquity, he will in wrath remember mercy and regard us in our low estate. He will sweeten and sanctify our captivity to us. Such thoughts as these were in the breast of the prophet. An Exposition of Ezekiel.

**The Thirtieth Year.** John Calvin: We see that our prophet was called to the teaching office in the fifth year after Jehoiachin had voluntarily surrendered himself to the King of Babylon, and had been dragged into exile along with his mother. He says, however, that it was the thirtieth year. Most commentators follow the Chaldean paraphraser, understanding this date to refer to the rediscovery of the Book of Law. It is clear enough, that this year was the nineteenth of King Josiah’s rule, but according to my calculations I do not agree with those who think the date refers to the rediscovery of the Book of Law. Truly this phrase, the thirtieth year, would be too obscure and forced. Nowhere do we read authors who started counting from there. Besides there is no doubt that the usual method among the Jews was to start counting from a year of Jubilee, which truly was the start pointing for the next era. Thus, I do not doubt that the thirtieth year followed a Jubilee. Nor is this a new argument. For example, Jerome also mentions this same method, although he incorrectly rejects it, because he is misled by another opinion. However, it is certain that the Jews used this method of counting, starting from a Jubilee, that is, a Jubilee. This best explains the thirtieth year. If someone objects that nowhere do we read that the eighteenth year of King Josiah’s rule was that festival year when everyone returned to their own field, slaves were given their freedom, and the restoration of the entire people took place, the answer is simple. Although nothing is found about which year the Jobel happened, it is still enough for us, that the Jubilee was a festival year. The Israelites

2 Exposition, 8.
followed this tradition of counting years. Just like the Greeks had their Olympiads, the Romans had their Consuls, and calculated their festivals from that time. So also the Hebrews were accustomed to begin counting from a Jobel year to the next restoration, as I said. Ezekiel 1.

IN THE THIRTIETH YEAR. William Greenhill: “In the thirtieth year.” This time troubles interpreters very much. It is not said in the thirtieth year of what, or of whom, but only in the thirtieth year. Here is an uncertain chronology, which makes a difficulty in the prophet.

1. “In the thirtieth year.” Not the thirtieth year from the jubilee, as some make it, for the fifth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity corresponds not with the thirtieth from the jubilee. As Franciscus Junius and some others (that take pains in searching out the truth here stated) observe that falls during the ninth year from the jubilee. Therefore we let that pass.

2. “In the thirtieth year.” Some make this to be the thirtieth year of his age. The prophet was thirty years old and then he began to prophesy. But this is not the practice of the penmen of Scripture to compute the prophecies from their own age and birth. And there is good reason for it, because prophecies, and things that concern the good of the church so nearly and so much, receive witness and strength from the time wherein they are extant. Those times must not be particular times, times of particular men that are not known, but the times must be such as are known to the world, that all may be convinced the thing was done at such a time. Now the birth of one that afterward was to be a prophet is not likely to be a time so noted in the world that the world then should take notice that Ezekiel was born. Therefore, they would not begin the computation of his prophecy from that point. It is not likely that this should be the meaning of the thirtieth year. If so, he would have said, “In the thirtieth year of my life.”

3. “In the thirtieth year.” That is, in the thirtieth year since the law was found in Josiah’s days, and since that great Passover that was kept by him. In 2 Kings 22, there is mention of finding the Book of the Law. And in 2 Kings 23, of the great Passover, and this was in the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign [2 Kings 23:33].

Now if we compute the time from the eighteenth year of Josiah, it amounts even to the thirtieth year, in which our prophet had his vision and began his prophecy. An Exposition of Ezekiel.

THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED. William Greenhill: “The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.” The word opening, among the Jews, denotes sometimes not the reality, but the effect of a thing. Genesis 3:7, “Their eyes were opened.” They were not shut before, and so their eyes are said to be opened. In the gospel, Christ is said to open the eyes of the blind, the ears and mouth of the deaf and dumb. It is not that their mouths were absolutely so closed that they could not stir their eyelids, but Christ opened them so, as he made them to see, hear and speak, to do that which they could not do before. For that reason, in regard of the effect, they are said to be opened. Sometimes again it denotes the truth of a thing. So Stephen saw heaven opened and Christ standing at the right hand of God. Peter saw heaven opened and a sheet coming down to him.

The question is, which of these ways it is to be taken here? Origen says that the heavens were open to the eyes of his body, there was a division of the heavens, and so in a literal sense he saw the visions and the things presented to him. Jerome says the heavens were opened, not by the rending of the firmament, but by

the faith of the believer. You may take it in the literal sense, and according to the truth of the thing. The inconvenience objected against it is not considerable. For it is said, if the heavens were literally opened, how could Ezekiel see so far, as to see things in heaven? The strength of his eyes could not reach it. For if the sun, and fixed stars that are far above the sun, are greater bodies than the earth and seem so little to us, how little would anything in heaven seem to the eye, when it is exceedingly beyond both these? 

Answer: When it says the heavens were opened, it does not follow that Ezekiel must see the visions in heaven. The things he saw might be nearer than the stars or sun. The dove came down and lighted on Christ, and the sheet was let down from heaven to Peter. As such the visions might be nearer to Ezekiel than the highest heavens. “The heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God.” It is not said that he saw visions of heaven. And grant it to be heaven, Stephen saw Christ there, and so might Ezekiel see the object of his vision there. Yet neither did Stephen by his natural strength see Christ, nor Ezekiel these visions, but he that opened heaven did open their eyes, strengthened them to see at such a distance.

AN Exposition of Ezekiel. 

THE WORD OF YAHWEH. JOHN CALVIN: He says the word of Yahweh was given to him, for we know God alone should be heard. The prophets should only be listened to, if they proclaim what is from God alone. It is necessary, therefore, that all teachers of the church have first been students, so that God alone maintains his right as the sole leader and teacher, and accordingly the authority rests in God alone. Whenever prophets demand to be heard, they also add that they do not carry their own words, but faithfully deliver a word from God. And so it was with our prophet.

. . . Now he adds the hand of the Lord was on him. Some explain “hand” to mean “prophecy,” however, to me this seems trivial and watered-down. I myself understand “hand” to mean “power,” as if Ezekiel were saying that he had been clothed in the power of God. In this way he made clear that he himself was chosen to be a prophet. The hand of the Lord, then, was evidence of a new grace, so that Ezekiel could place all the captives under himself, since he carried the authority of God.

This could also mean the effectiveness of his teaching. Indeed the Lord not only provides the words for his servants, but also he works by the secret inspiration of his Spirit. He will not allow their labors to be for nothing. And so this passage should be understood in this way. But since the prophet here merely takes for himself what was necessary, thus claiming for himself the rank and office of prophet, I do not doubt that when he speaks of the “hand,” that he means an internal working of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 1. 6

GOD MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO THE PROPHETS. WILLIAM GREENHILL: God has manifested himself to his prophets several ways.

1. By speaking immediately to them without interposition of any medium, even mouth to mouth and face to face. So he spoke to Adam in paradise; to Moses, “The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33:11). This manner of God’s manifesting himself was peculiar to Moses above any, or all the prophets besides, as you may read (Deut 34:10).

2. God manifested himself to his people by dreams, which was in the night season. There was some representation of something to them when they were asleep. Thus God manifested himself to Jacob (Gen 28:12). And Jacob said that “the angel of God spoke to him in a dream” (Gen 31:11).

3. God has manifested himself to his people by visions: “You spoke in vision to your holy

5Exposition, 16-17. 6CTS 22:61 (CO 18:28-29).
one” (Ps 89:19). And Genesis 15:1, “The word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision.” These three you have together in two verses (Num 12). And part of the eighth, “If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision and speak to him in a dream; and to Moses will I speak mouth to mouth.” Here in the text it is by way of vision that God speaks or appears to Ezekiel, “I saw visions of God.” An Exposition of Ezekiel.\(^7\)

1:4-14 The Four Creatures

God’s Judgment. Johannes Oecolampadius: That God is the just judge of the world, such that he himself protects the elect and punishes the reprobate, is plainly stated; indeed, his glory is declared throughout both Testaments. Mention of judgment occurs many times in the Scriptures; often he is angry but, on account of his covenant, he turns to mercy. . . . Now it is Christ through whom God judges the world, as it is stated, “To the Son he gave the authority to execute judgment” (Jn 5:27). Therefore it is proved that he judges the world, beginning with his death, to which pertains his whole life in the flesh, all his words and deeds, and then with his resurrection, by which he was exalted in glory by the Holy Spirit, according to the Father’s promise, after being condemned by people, according to the flesh, to death, he was raised by the Spirit, according to the Father, to eternal life. . . . Therefore, in this opening verse, the prophet makes us aware of the terrible judgment of the Lord against Jerusalem. Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel.\(^8\)

A Revelation of Christ. Martin Luther: This vision in the first part of Ezekiel [1:4-28], however, is nothing else than a revelation of the kingdom of Christ in faith here upon earth, in all four corners of the whole world as said in Psalm 19:4, In omnem terram.

This is how I understand it (let someone else improve on it). For no one can be a prophet, as St. Peter testifies, unless he has the Spirit of Christ [2 Pet 1:21]. But to give an interpretation of the entire vision is too long a matter for an introduction. To put it briefly: this vision is the spiritual chariot of Christ in which he rides here in the world, meaning thereby his entire holy church. A New Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel.\(^9\)

The Four Creatures. John Calvin: Now as to the vision itself, some understand the four animals to be the four seasons of the year, supposing that here the power of God in the management of the entire world is celebrated. But that is too far-fetched. Others believe four virtues are depicted, for, they say, the image of justice is inherent in humanity, wisdom in the eagle, courage in the lion, and self-control in the ox. Despite how cleverly this is devised, still it is not trustworthy.

Others take yet another view, thinking “obviously four passions are denoted: fear and hope, sorrow and joy.” While others find three aspects of the soul to be indicated here: to be sure in the soul, to logikon, is the seat of reason, thymikon is the office of the emotions, epithymetikon is the desires, they add synteresis as the fourth, that is the conscience. But these all are merely childish babblings.

For a long time it was the accepted view that the four evangelists were portrayed by this image. They believed that Matthew was compared to a human, because he starts with the genealogy of Christ. Mark was compared to a lion, because he begins with John the Baptist’s preaching. Luke, they believed to resemble an ox, because he begins by talking about the priesthood. While John was compared to an eagle, because he pierces through the secrets of heaven. But also in this fable there is noth-
ing sturdy, in fact all of this disappears, if it is examined closer.

Others find the glory of God in the church described, therefore they believe the animals are to be taken as the saints who have already passed on in the faith, while the wheels are for the weak and the undisciplined. After this they continue stacking up even more nonsense, which is better buried at once, rather than wasting a lot of time refuting it. Therefore, I reject all of these. Ezekiel 1.10

The Four Living Creatures. William Greenhill: Now we come to that part of the vision that concerns the living creatures [Ezek 1:5-15], where God’s glory and government of the world are set out from superior causes, namely, celestial things. . . .

What these living creatures are is the great dispute among expositors. Some make them to be the four covenants of God: Adamic, Noachic, Mosaic and apostolic; Some make them to be all the creatures. Some, the four cardinal virtues: justice, wisdom, fortitude, temperance. Some, the four faculties in the soul: the rational, irascible, concupiscible and conscience. Some, the four chief passions: joy, grief, hope and fear. Some, the four monarchies: Assyrian, Persian, Grecian and Roman. Some, the twelve tribes of Israel, in their stations, east, west, north, south, when in the wilderness. Some, the four elements, of which the human body consists. Some, the four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. And this, being the opinion of Jerome and Gregory the Great, prevailed much but now is deserted. Others understand by these four creatures those who are complete and more perfect in the church. Others expound them to be Christ. But Christ is brought in, in the latter end of the chapter, sitting on the throne. These creatures are distinct from him and inferior to him. By them then we are to understand the angels, which have a great part under God in the government of the world. . . .

"Four living creatures." These were four angels in particular. Some conceive Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, which were chief over the rest of the whole host of angels. But that is not the sense. It is also not true that God only uses four angels in his service, for many thousands are employed. “There was a multitude of the heavenly host" (Lk 2:13), and there was an army with the prophet (2 Kings 6:17). But it relates to the object, namely, the world, which is distinguished into four parts: east, west, north and south. The work of these angels laid in all those parts, and none of them were exempt from the presence, observation and operation of the angels. An Exposition of Ezekiel.11

On the Four Creatures. John Mayer: By these four animals, the angels of God or cherubim are set forth, who were of old made by Solomon at God’s direction, like to young men having wings; and placed in the Holy of Holies over the mercy seat. Now four appear to Ezekiel (Is 6). He sees seraphim about God’s throne, but not telling how many, yet it may be conceived that they were but two, for one cried to another, Holy, Holy, Holy. But why do four appear now? To this Calvin says well (who holds the cherubim and seraphim to be the same) that the Jews being degenerated to idolatry, and so from the way of worship prescribed in the sanctuary, the Lord would not now set forth his ruling by his providence, by two cherubim only. Rather he does this by four, whereby they might know that his providence was not cooped up within the limits of Canaan but extended itself to all the four parts of the world, in which he had his angels both to govern as presidents over all countries, as is expressed elsewhere of Persia and Greece (Dan 10:20), and to bring them against, and to arm them with power, for the destruction of any that rebelled against him. These four came out

of the midst of the fire, and amber representing the Lord, who is a consuming fire, to show that no power should be able to stand against him, as the fire consumes all things. Commentary upon All the Prophets.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{The Four Living Creatures.} Matthew Meade: In Ezekiel 1:5 you read of four living creatures, every one of which had four faces (Ezek 1:6). He does not say who, or what these living creatures are in that vision, but in the tenth chapter he does. He tells you they are the angels: “The living creatures that I saw, under the God of Israel, I knew that they were the cherubim, every one had four faces apiece” (Ezek 10:20-21). The vision in Ezekiel 1 was at Chebar; the vision in Ezekiel 10 in the temple. God discovers himself more in the temple than at Chebar. Visions in Babylon are not as clear as visions in Zion. “In his temple everyone speaks of his glory” (Ps 29:9).

\ldots Wisdom and Prudence typed out by the face of a man; courage and boldness by the face of a lion; diligence and industry by the face of an ox; and expedition and dispatch by the face of an eagle. These were the likenesses of the four faces. \ldots The angels, called here the four living creatures, are the great ministers of Christ in the government of the world, not because Christ uses that number and no more, but the number relates to the object, namely, the world, which is constantly divided into four parts: east, west, north and south. These are called the four quarters of the earth (Rev 20:8). And the four quarters of heaven (Jer 49:36). The Vision of the Wheels.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{The Faces.} William Greenhill: The face of a man represents to us the understandings of angels, and that their administrations are with knowledge and equity. Of this we have already spoken. This face is put first to show the excellence of reason, which must have the introduction into and managing of all actions, else they are neither human nor angelical. By this face also is noted their love to humanity.\ldots

The face of a lion signifies the strength of angels. \ldots The next face is that of an ox; and it shows the willing obedience, faithfulness, patience and usefulness of angels in their ministrations. For an ox accustomed to the yoke is very tractable, not stubborn, as untamed heifers are. \ldots The last face is of an eagle, and in it, as in a glass, we may see the perspicacity, swiftness and vivacity of the angels. These three things are observable in eagles.

\textbf{An Exposition of Ezekiel.}\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{The Living Creatures Ran.} Matthew Meade: “The living creatures ran—as the appearance of a flash of lightning” (Ezek 1:14), which notes their great speed and swiftness in doing the will of God, and therefore they are described with wings: “Every one had four wings” (Ezek 1:6), which are ascribed to them to express the agility of their nature and the swiftness of their motion in the execution of their office.

\ldots There is the return of the living creatures. So it is said, “The living creatures ran and returned” (Ezek 1:14), but this seems to contradict Ezekiel 1:9 and Ezekiel 1:12. There it is said that they turned not when they went. But this receives an easy solution. They turned not from going and doing the work appointed them, but when that work was done, then they returned. They turned not from executing their commission, but then they returned to receive new instructions. They went not back from the work till they had finished what was begun, and then they returned, both to give an account of their work and to watch and wait for a new charge, and hence they are called watchers. “Behold a watcher and a holy one” (Dan 4:13) and “This matter is by the decree of the watchers” (Dan 4:17). They watch for God’s orders to execute them for the church’s

\textsuperscript{12}Prophets, 367. \textsuperscript{13}Vision of the Wheels, 7-8. \textsuperscript{14}Exposition, 31-32.
good. The Vision of the Wheels.\(^{15}\)

**Christ Rides on Cherubim. Martin Luther:** There are the four living creatures, which Ezekiel calls in chapter 10 “cherubim,” for Christ sits, rides, and travels on cherubim, as the Scriptures often declare. Each living creature has four faces. They stand foursquare like four horses, but inside and between the wheels. For about the living creatures there are also four perfect wheels, by each beast a wheel. All is so arranged that they can go to the four corners of the world—that is, forward, backward, and to both sides—without needing to turn. Likewise the living creatures go on calves’ feet toward the four corners of the world without having to turn. There is no axle, pole, frame, pin, rack, wagon, rope, or trace, but the Spirit drives it all surely from within. Overhead is the firmament, like a saddlecloth, and in it a throne for a saddle. And on the throne sits God, that is, Christ. A New Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel.\(^{16}\)

**The Problem of the Cherub and Ox.**

**John Calvin:** Still one question remains, and a difficult one. In chapter ten Ezekiel writes cherub instead of ox. Some think, or at least they say, that at a distance it looked like the face of an ox, but up close it was a cherub. Everyone sees that this is mere banter, because they are not able to avoid, that they have imagined a fable which is not trustworthy. Others judge the cherub and ox to be the same. This is easily disproved by a number of passages, since there is no doubt that cherubim do not have heads of oxen, as is well known.

Therefore I have no doubt that there was some difference in the second vision, when God appeared to his prophet in the temple. It is called the same vision because of its similarity, but it does not follow that all the details were the same. Nor should this interpretation be rejected, since when God revealed himself to his servant in Chaldea, as I have already said, he wanted to deaden the people’s stupidity with this complicated image. However, when he appeared in the temple a second time, there was something more heavenly. Therefore the difference, that each animal had the face of a cherub instead of an ox. Consequently, other than the shape of the whole body, there was a remarkable feature, that caused the prophet to recognize these creatures more easily and intimately as cherubim or angels. Ezekiel 1.\(^{17}\)

**The Fire and Lightning.**

**John Calvin:** It is not without reason that he says, *fire walked among the creatures.* For the prophet sees what seems to be a burning figure, but he also sees flashing fire everywhere, as if burning torches moved all around the creatures. God wanted to show the power of his Spirit in every deed, so that we do not measure him by our own standard according to the wickedness inherent in us. When we talk about the works of God, we understand what our reason is able to grasp, in this way we try to confine God to our own world. God, however, shows that when he works there is an astonishing power, like fire moving all around. Now, this power is too great for our reason.

Next he says, *the fire was brilliant and lightning came out of it.* When the prophet saw fire radiantly shining in such an unaccustomed manner, this greatly affected his mind. We know that fire is often bright, especially when the flame is near to us. But the prophet here is trying to describe something very unusual, as if he were saying that the fire was not like what comes from wood, but even more brilliant. Consequently it is made clear here that God is displaying his glory visibly. This, too, is why he says, *lightning came out of the fire.* The brilliance just mentioned has to do with the fire being mixed with the lightning. We know that it is not possible for lightning to be seen.

without trembling, for in that moment the heavens seem to be on fire, as if God wanted in some way to swallow up the world. So, the sight of lightning is always terrible to us. In order to frighten the prophet more so by the vision, God showed him this flashing figure, although this was not merely to terrify Ezekiel, but to humble him.

As I already warned, this vision was not given to the prophet for his own private use, but rather for the benefit of all the people. The prophet himself, being merely human, needed this preparation so that he would be humbled. For we are always ignorantly prideful, causing our senses to be dulled, so that we are incapable of God’s glory. Whenever God wants to make himself known to us, he strips away all of our pride and security. In the end humility is the beginning of true understanding. Now we understand why lightning came out of the fire. Later this same point is confirmed.

The Holy Spirit Rules Through Angels. Matthew Meade: Although Christ rules absolutely, yet he does not rule unmediately. He governs the world by the agency of the eternal Spirit. As Christ rules for God, so the Spirit rules for Christ. He is the great administrator of the government throughout the mediatorial kingdom. He sets all a-going; therefore you read, “whither the Spirit was to go, they went” (Ezek 1:12) and again, “whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went, thither was their Spirit to go” (Ezek 1:20). By the Spirit here no other can be meant but the Holy Ghost, who is coessential, and coequal with the Father and the Son. All the angels of God are under the command and conduct of the Spirit. What great things have angels done, defending, comforting and guarding the people of God, destroying their enemies:

“An angel of the Lord smote a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians in one night” (2 Kings 19:35). If angels contend against princes, overturn kingdoms, it is all done by the conduct of the Spirit. He has the great hand in all. The Vision of the Wheels.

115-28 The Wheels of the Chariot

Are the Wheels a Vision? Matthew Meade: The wheels are on the earth: “As I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel on the earth by the living creatures” (Ezek 1:15). He mentions but one wheel because he that saw one, saw all, by reason of their likeness, for they were all as one. But how could the wheel be seen on the earth, when the prophet saw the vision in heaven (Ezek 1:1)? As the wheels were not material wheels but visional, so this earth was not the material earth but earth in a vision, and so it was not the earth beneath but an earth above. “The wheel was on the earth,” but that earth was in heaven. So that this earth was in representation only, as it is in landscapes, where you have things in representation but not in reality. There are rivers, and earth, and trees in view, but not in verity.

The wheels are said to be seen on the earth, and not in heaven, to intimate to us the difference between this state and that. This is a state of changes, but that state is unchangeable; the wheels are on the earth, there are none in heaven. As there are no changes in God (I am the Lord, I change not, Mal 3:6) so there are no changes in the glory that results from his presence. All things in that state are durable and permanent. The things of the other world admit of no change, neither in hell nor in heaven. This is the place of changes, which is one difference our Lord Christ puts between treasures on earth and treasures in heaven; those are subject to “the moth, the rust and the thief,” but these are not (Mt 6:19-20). The Vision of the Wheels.
The Kingdom of Christ. Martin Luther: The four wheels run alike, for all churches in the four corners of the earth, that is, in the whole world, have one and the same harmonious course, in faith, hope, love, the cross, and all spiritual things; they are not driven from without by doctrines of men, but from within by one Spirit, Romans 8:2-27, 1 Corinthians 12:3-13, Ephesians 4:4.

Now the four living creatures go with the wheels—or rather the wheels with them—forward, backward, upward, and to both sides. For the apostles, or the preaching ministry, the word of God, baptism, sacrament, keys, and all that belongs to the spiritual government of the church are also alike and in agreement throughout the world. And the living creatures and the wheels hold firmly and surely together, so that the chariot is one, without any external hitching, fastening, or yoking. Thus, everything is in fours: four living creatures, four faces, feet, hands and wings to each living creature, and four wheels and four spokes to a wheel. This signifies, as said, that Christendom, or the kingdom of Christ in faith, is to go to the four corners, that is, into all the world.

The Government of Wheels. Matthew Meade: Christ, who rules all, sends his Spirit; the Spirit acts the angels; the angels rule the world. Therefore you have in the next place a vision of wheels. By these wheels the world is resembled and all the affairs of it. All kingdoms and nations, all countries and cities, all places and people, all actions and affairs are intended and represented by these wheels. Now these wheels are wholly under the conduct and guidance of the living creatures. They acted the wheels. Therefore, it is said, “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” (Ezek 1:19). . . . Here you have a short view of the whole subordination of causes in order-

The Four Wheels. John Calvin: As to the four wheels, I have no doubt that they signify all the upheavals, which are commonly called changes. For we see the world constantly changing, as if it were putting on a new face. It is like a wheel turning itself or being turned by some external force. We know that there is nothing stable in the world, but everything is in constant upheaval. Therefore the prophet here connects the wheels with angels, as if he were saying that no change happens in the world accidentally, but depends on some external force, namely angels. Not that they move things by their own power, but only to the extent that they are God’s hands, like we have already said. Ezekiel 1.23

On the Four Wheels. William Greenhill: These wheels, being four, represent to us the four parts of the world (eastern, western, northern, southern) and that in them are great stirs and changes. . . . There are turnings and wheelings in all estates and parts of the world. The four living creatures denote the four parts of the world, and their agencies in them and by them. Now are presented the wheels. Every living creature had a wheel by it. This strongly implies that there are wheeling, turnings and changes in all parts; indeed, the very same that are in one part are at one time or other in another part. The wheels are alike. Are wars, plagues, famine in one country? They are, or will be, in another too. Do people die here?

So they did in all parts. Are people unfaithful now? So they were unfaithful of old. In David’s days he said, “Men of high degree are a lie, and men of low degree vanity” (Ps 62:9). Are there unseasonable times here? Such are abroad as well. Are things carried by violence, oppression, injustice here? So they are elsewhere too. Are there designs, plots on our kingdom and church? So there are on others as well. Whatever befalls one state befalls another, internally and externally. The wheels are the same and move alike, though sometimes backward in one part of the world and forward in another. There is no stability anywhere, but all things are changing. In vain then do people travel the world to find certainty and contentment. In vain do we go up and down, here and there, thinking to find settledness and something satisfactory. The world is like itself everywhere. Go east or west, and there is nothing but a wheel, and wheel running. An Exposition of Ezekiel.24

The Wheels. John Mayer: From animals the prophet proceeds to wheels, which he also saw, and most probably they portended the same things that the animals did, their number, faces and motions being the same. It is not unusual with the Lord to represent one thing by various things showed in vision. He does this in Jeremiah 1 by an almond rod and a seething pot toward the north.

But what does he mean by saying, one wheel, and later on he speaks of wheels (Ezek 1:16), as of more, indeed, and expressly of four wheels (Ezek 10:9), one wheel by one cherubim, and another by another? Solution. It is meant as there, one wheel by one living creature, and another by another. There being by the four animals, four wheels, near to each of which wheels one stood, as it were to guard it, “with his four faces,” each wheel having four faces carved on it, of a man, lion, ox and eagle, as the animal had, showing that this vision tended to the same with the other. Commen-

tary upon All the Prophets.25

The Holy Spirit and the Wheels. Matthew Meade: Here is another thing ascribed to these wheels, and that is, the influencing virtue of the same spirit which acted the living creatures. “The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels” (Ezek 1:20). The question is, What Spirit is this? I shall not trouble you with any other sense than that which I take to be the sense of the Holy Spirit, and that is, that by the spirit here is meant the divine Spirit, the eternal Spirit of God; the same Spirit that acts the living creatures acts the wheels also, which in Ezekiel 10:17 is called the Spirit of life, and this is that Spirit who guided all their motions. Therefore it is said, “Whither the Spirit was to go, they went” (Ezek 1:12). There is not an angel in heaven or a wheel on earth, but are all acted and governed by the same Spirit. The Vision of the Wheels.26

God Directs All Things. John Calvin: In this verse (v. 19) the prophet teaches that all the upheaval in the world depends on some external force, obviously heavenly power. As we have already said the creatures symbolize to us angels, whom God inspires with secret power, so that he works through their hands. Now consequently when Ezekiel says that the wheels moved through a higher power than their own, it follows that nothing happens accidentally in the world, but God through his own incomprehensible wisdom directs everything, so that nothing happens without his hidden orchestration, which we cannot see with our eyes. . . .

So, we understand that the wheels are moved, although not just because of the creatures’ influence over the wheels. For God does not grant to winter or summer, to peace or war, to calm or storm, to death or anything

else its own judgment and desire. So, how do these things happen? Truly neither heaven, nor sea, nor earth have any power by themselves, but only to the extent that God, through his angels, directs the earth, or molds the plans of people either to war or to peace.

Now, therefore, we clearly see the meaning of the spirit of the creatures is in the wheels, truly God pours his power into the world through angels, so that not even a sparrow falls to the earth without his providence, as Christ says. For this reason, whenever the stresses of our lives incite us to despair, may this thought come to our minds: the spirit of the creatures indeed is in the wheels. Surely, whenever we tremble due to uncertain circumstances, what else can we do, but find rest in this teaching? It is true that, the end of everything happens as God determines, since nothing happens without his permission. There is no movement, no disturbance under the heavens, unless he himself orchestrates it through his angels.

God's Infinite Wisdom. Matthew Meade: The wheels are said to be lifted up from the earth, and to be high and dreadful (Ezek 1:18-21). This is to teach us that God's wisdom is infinite and unsearchable, and his providences full of mystery. Sometimes they move in an ordinary way, then the wheels move on the earth. Sometimes God goes out of the usual road and acts in extraordinary ways and in unaccountable methods that reason cannot reach or the short line of human wisdom fathom. Then the wheels are said to be high and lifted up from the earth. Who can trace God in his motions, whose ways are far above our sight? The Vision of the Wheels.

The Glory of Christ. William Greenhill: In these verses (Ezek 1:22-25), we have the fourth vision, or fourth part of the general vision, which is concerning the firmament. This vision, as formerly has been shown, holds forth to us the glory of God. . . . There is yet more and higher glory to be spoken of, and that is, the glory of God in the person of Christ. . . .

The scope of Ezekiel 1:23 is to show that the ministry of the angels refers to and sets out the glory of Christ. This is seen in the observations to be given. (1) That where Christ is, there the angels are near to him. He was above the firmament, and they just under it. The firmament was on their heads. There was only a glorious transparent firmament between Christ and them. Distanced from Christ they are, but not far. (2) The angels, wise, strong, serviceable, swift and glorious creatures, attend Christ's throne and are subject to him. They were under the firmament about his throne. . . . (3) They are ready to exercise the will and pleasure of Christ. This further advances the honor of Christ. Their wings were stretched out, and they were willing to move in any service, if their Lord gave out the word. An Exposition of Ezekiel.

It is worth noting that Ezekiel says, he saw the likeness of an appearance (v. 26). From this we gather that he did not actually see heaven, nor was the throne made from any real substance, nor was it a real and natural body of a human. The prophet expresses this clearly, so that no one would imagine that there is anything visible in God, like the fanatics, supposing him to be material. And so no one would ignorantly gather from this passage that God can be seen with the eye, that he is confined in space, and that he is seated like a person. So these false images do not sneak into people's minds, the prophet here testifies that it was not a human body, nor did he see a material throne, but that these shapes and sights were merely presented to him. . . .

Now someone might complain: why did God present himself in the form of a person in this vision, as well as in others? I gladly embrace the opinion of the fathers, who say this is a foretaste of that mystery, which was eventually revealed, and which Paul lifts up so splendidly, when he cries out: “Great is this mystery—at last God is revealed in the flesh.” Jerome’s view is drastic; he applies the words to the Father himself. We know that the Father never presented himself in human flesh. If he had merely said that God is shown here, nothing would have been out of place. Remove all mention of persons, then it is true: that person seated on the throne was God. . . .

But, considering the passage at hand, it should be enough for us, that the prophet saw God only in the person of Christ, since what is said about the likeness of a person cannot be transferred to the person of Father, or to the Spirit. Indeed neither the Father nor the Spirit were revealed in flesh, but God was revealed in flesh when Christ appeared to us, and the fullness of divinity resides in him. . . .

The point is that the likeness of a body was only so in appearance, as the prophet says, but not in essence. From this we gather that when simple mention is made of God, the whole essence is understood, which is common to the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as the Father. To be sure it is absurd to understand Christ only under the name Jehovah. It follows, then, that the whole essence of God is here understood. And yet, when the persons are compared together, it only applies to Christ, when it is said “in the form of a human.” So, the whole deity appeared to his prophet, and in the form of a human at that. However, neither Father nor Holy Spirit appeared, because the distinction of the persons only begins to appear when the unique attributes of Christ are revealed. Ezekiel 1.30

**The Vision About Christ,** John Mayer: This is now spoken that we might not doubt, but know assuredly, who was before represented sitting on a throne above the firmament, namely, God the Son, who together with the Father is Jehovah, one and the same essence. Here then is a representation of God sitting in great majesty on high, portending his incarnation to come. He is set forth with a chariot going on four wheels, the tops of it reached to the firmament under him, typifying his ministers going out into the four parts of the world, or being in the four parts preaching and publishing his gospel, together with the books of the Old and New Testament, out of which they preach. Therefore here are wheels seen within wheels, the New Testament within the Old, because nothing else is herein set forth but what was before in the Old spoken of and typified.

To the wheels of a chariot they are compared, above which the Lord sits, because they are guided by him. They are said to have the Spirit in them and eyes, because it is both by the Holy Spirit that they are enabled to this blessed work. Moreover, he accompanies their teaching, making it effectual, and enlightens them, making them clearly to discern all things. As it is said, the spiritual man discerns all things (1 Cor 2:15). They are eyes or lights to others round about them. Or vigilant bishops, overseers of the Lord’s flocks, are intimated by all these eyes.

Let me touch on the Lord appearing like amber, both from his loins upward and from his loins downward. The part upward may well be understood of his divinity, and the part downward of his humanity. By virtue of the union with his divinity, the humanity partakes of the same most resplendent glory. Therefore it is further said to be as fire and brightness round about. It is fire because his day is as a refiner’s fire, destructive to dross and purifying to the sons of Levi, who are the elect. And it is brightness for the bright shining of his gospel.
It being now daylight, as when the sun shines, being before as the dark night, for which he is also called the Sun of righteousness. . . .

Now for the living creatures, which were four, I dislike not their exposition who think the four Evangelists to be here set forth. But as they only expound it of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I conceive rather both them and the whole New Testament, all books and epistles therein contained, to be by these four figured out also. And as they understand the four faces of them, ascribing the face of a man to one, of a lion to another, of an ox to a third and of an eagle to a fourth, I rather think these faces to agree to all these writings in common. Each one setting him forth, that was as a man, by his taking flesh of the Virgin Mary; as a lion, by his coming of the tribe of Judah, whose emblem was a lion; as an ox, for his being offered up in sacrifice; and as an eagle, for his quick-sightedness, being able to see into the thoughts of people's hearts. Commentary upon All the Prophets. 31

A Vision of Christ. Matthew Meade: “Above the firmament was the likeness of a throne, and on the throne was the likeness of a man about on it” (Ezek 1:26). Who is this but the Lord Christ in the person of the mediator? Question: But Christ was not as yet come in the flesh. Why then is he here represented in the likeness of a man? Answer: It was to prefigure his incarnation, his divine nature being in the fullness of time to assume our flesh into the unity of his person. It was to show that the government of the world was put into his hand as Mediator, and that he possessed the throne of the world, not as God only, but according to his human nature. The government of the world was put into the hand of Christ from the time of the fall. . . . Therefore it is said, “By him all things consist” (Col 1:17). And hence it is that God the Father calls him “my king” (Ps 2:6). He has set him up to rule and given him a universal dominion, so that he that is above on the throne, in the likeness of a man, rules all. The Vision of the Wheels. 32

Meaning of Vision. Martin Luther: This vision, moreover (as Ezekiel himself shows in chapters 8–9), signified the end and destruction of the synagogue, or of Judaism, that is, of the priesthood, the worship, and the [ceremonial] organization instituted and given them by Moses. For all of these were instituted only until Christ should come, as St. Paul says in Romans 8:2-3 and 2 Corinthians 3:6, as Christ himself says in Matthew 11:13, and as the Epistle to the Hebrews says repeatedly. . . .

For this prophecy contains two things. The first is that Israel and Judah shall return to their land after their captivity. This came to pass through King Cyrus and the Persians, before the birth of Christ, at the time when the Jews returned to their land and to Jerusalem from all countries. They also came to Jerusalem every year to the feasts, even from foreign countries where they maintained their residence, drawing many Gentiles with them and to them. . . .

The second thing, and the best thing in this prophecy—that which the Jews will neither see nor heed—is that God promises to create something new in the land, to make a new covenant unlike the old covenant of Moses that they dream about. This is plain from Jeremiah 31:31-32 and from many more passages. No longer are there to be two kingdoms but one kingdom, under their King David who is to come; and his shall be an everlasting kingdom, even in that same physical land.

This, too, has been fulfilled. For when Christ came and found the people of both Israel and Judah gathered again out of all lands so that the country was full, he started something new: he established the promised new covenant. He did this not at a spiritual place,
or at some other physical place, but exactly in that same physical land of Canaan, and at that same physical Jerusalem—as had been promised—to which they had been brought back out of all lands.

And although the Jews did not want this covenant—or at least not many of them would accept it—it has, nevertheless, remained an everlasting covenant, and not only at Jerusalem and in that land. It has broken forth from there into all the four corners of the world, and remains to the present day, both at Jerusalem and everywhere. For the place, Jerusalem, is still there, and Christ is Lord and King there as he is in all the world. He helps and hears all who are there or who come there, as he does those in all the world. . . . Christ is and remains Lord over all. A New Preface to the Prophet Ezekiel. 33

Most Important Part of Vision. John Calvin: Now the prophet states the most important part of the vision: God was seated on his throne. If he only went so far as to mention the creatures and wheels, the vision would have been less helpful—incomplete at the least. But since he places God on his throne, we can understand that the angels, who orchestrate movement in other things, do not have any motion or power themselves. Altogether, the prophet is teaching here, that angels cause all things under heaven to be set in motion, so that no motion should be ascribed to those things themselves. And why? Because God presides over all things and directs their actions. That is the main point of the vision, which is now clarified. Ezekiel 1. 34

The Glory of God Revealed to Ezekiel. William Greenhill: The scope of this vision is to set forth the glory of God. This appears from the last verse of the chapter where it is said, “This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” The Spirit interprets all to be a manifestation of the glory of God. . . . This glory of God is presented to Ezekiel in this vision for these ends:

1. To breed in him a high reverence of divine majesty. The sight of great and glorious things do awaken our dull, heavy, sensual spirits. Naturally we are indifferent to the things of God, and unless something transcendent and glorious is presented to us. . . . Therefore in Exodus 19:16, when the people saw the lightning and heard the thunder, when God came down on the mount in that glorious manner, this awakened them and bred an awful reverence in them of divine majesty: “All the people that were in the camp trembled.”

2. To prepare and fit him for entertainment of what God should speak to him. We are not always in a frame to hear God speak. There are great distempers in our spirits. You have all experience enough of the truth of this. Therefore it is said, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). Be still, let not your spirit be in a rage, taken up with the world, the cares, fears, pleasures and businesses of it. Be not parleying with a lust, but be still, and know that I am God.

3. It is to encourage him to his work and to frame his spirit to a ready execution of it. Ezekiel was to enter on a heavy task. He was to deal with the stubborn Jews, a rebellious people. He knew that Jeremiah had preached thirty-five years, and other prophets in times better than he was in, and little or no good had been done on this hard-hearted people. Therefore lest Ezekiel should be discouraged, that his heart might not faint but be quickened to the work, the Lord shows him his glory in these hieroglyphics, his glory in these creatures, his glory in his Son. That so seeing the glory of God, he might be warmed, oiled and encouraged to run about his work. For the sight of glory is potent with a gracious heart, to make it active for God. “We cannot,” say

Peter and John, in Acts 4:20, "but speak the things that we have seen and heard." Now they had seen his "glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn 1:14). They had been on the mount, seen Christ transfigured and his face shine as the sun (Mt 17:1-2). And having seen his glory and heard his voice, this encouraged them, notwithstanding all difficulties, to be active for him. This was God’s way to appear to his servants, to encourage them to the work he would set them about. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush (Ex 3). To Joshua in a vision like a man with a sword in his hand (Josh 5:13). To Elisha by horses and chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:17). Peter, being confirmed by a vision of a sheet let down from heaven, goes and preaches to the Gentiles (Acts 10). And Ezekiel here has vision on vision, that being so strongly confirmed, he might not fear the faces of Jews or Babylonians but proceed with life and spirit about the work he was sent. **An Exposition of Ezekiel.**

---

2:1–3:27 EZEKIEL’S CALL AND A WARNING TO ISRAEL

1 And he said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.” 2 And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ 5 And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 7 And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.

8 “But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” 9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. 10 And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

3 And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.