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**THE  
FOUR-FACED  
VISITORS  
OF ... EZEKIEL**

**By ARTHUR W. ORTON**

*Ezekiel, they say, "saw de wheel"—but he saw somewhat more than that. And Orton suggests that what he saw made perfectly good sense ... to the understanding!*

**Illustrated by Orton**

We are told from our Sunday School days that the Bible is a "living book," the oldest of man's written works that is read and used anew, from generation to generation. It remains "living" because we are able to find new meaning to fit our daily lives.

Although it is not the usual kind of new meaning, I believe that I have found something of the sort in the very old prophesies of Ezekiel.

Bible scholars have long recognized the first chapter of Ezekiel as a strange and nearly unfathomable account of a vision. I suggest that it is strange only because it is written by a man far removed from us in time and experience, about a subject totally unfamiliar to men of his time. I do not think that this was a vision in the usual sense, nor was it meant to be mystical. This particular chapter has been called "Science fiction in the Bible" and many attempts have been made to unravel the meaning of the original author, along both spiritual and mundane lines. I am convinced that this chapter is the account of an actual happening; the landing of extraterrestrial beings, reported by a careful, truthful and self-possessed observer.

I am not a student of theology and therefore you may feel that I am being presumptive in attempting to throw light on a mystery as old and well-studied as Ezekiel's first chapter. I feel that any success that I may have in doing so will be due to the accident of my birth at the very beginning of an era when the events I have to describe are fact, or are about to become fact.

If, as I believe, this is an account of an actual encounter with men from space, I may be better able to interpret the meaning than a student of theology, who by training and interest, is looking for a theological meaning. I have worked with mechanical things, and as an instructor of aircraft mechanics for most of my adult life. During this time I have had to untangle a lot of mechanical misconceptions and misunderstandings. I think that this gives me some insight into this problem.

If you are not too familiar with the Old Testament, I suggest that you read through the first chapter of Ezekiel to get the feeling of the flow of words, and a general idea of what sort of material we will be covering. If you have done a considerable amount of reading in the Bible, I am sure you will notice at once how different and "un-Bible-like" this chapter sounds. It isn't long. The first chapter covers little more than one page. Don't expect to get a clear picture the first time through. It seems to have an elusive quality. About the time you feel that you have hold of a fact, it seems to be contradicted in a later verse. I am going to try to show you that this is due to your own preconceived notions of what some of the words and phrases mean. You, not Ezekiel, are supplying the contradictions.

You will see that I am not going to make excuses for the words, as written. It is my belief that those who had the task of translating the Bible from its original tongue and re-copying it through the ages were particularly careful of this chapter because they did not understand it and were afraid of damaging it.

Let us begin with the first verse of chapter one:

*The Book of The Prophet*

## ***EZEKIEL***

*Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.*

*2. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.*

*3. The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the Land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.*

This fixes the location of this incident on the outskirts of Bagdad. The Chebar is sometimes called "The Grand Canal of Bagdad." Although the entire book was supposed to have been written by Ezekiel, the second and third verses sound like an editor's note, inserted by a later writer.

*4. And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.*

Here is a man who had lived most of his life in arid desert country. He had probably seen whirlwinds of all kinds, from dust-devils to full-scale tornadoes. He was an accurate and honest observer, as we shall see later. If he said it was a whirlwind, it must have really been one, or at least it looked enough like one to fool him for a while. Notice that he does not say that it was high in the air, or that it came out of the sky, but, "... out of the north," or toward him from the north.

The first thing that he noticed was that it had fire associated with it, a strange companion for a whirlwind. There is something strange about the fire itself. He says that it "infolds itself," which suggests a fire of more active nature than Ezekiel would be accustomed to. The association of fire and whirlwind must have struck him as peculiar.

Also something amber colored was associated with the cloud and fire. He said that this color came "out of the midst," which might mean that it was above the cloud and flame, or appeared as the fire and cloud subsided, or blew to one side. Considering the detail he gives in later verses, this is quite vague, as it might be if he saw it from a distance.

*5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.*

Why didn't he say that out came four men? Remember that he is telling this to very primitive, superstitious people. He was himself bred in a time when the supernatural was taken for granted. Under these conditions he has gone about as far as he could by saying that they certainly looked like four men. He does not say here that he took them for angels or any other kind of supernatural beings.

*6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.*

This short verse is very clear, yet you wonder how a creature with four faces and four wings could possibly be taken for a man, even by you or me.

Although he does not say so, we can imply that these creatures must have advanced much closer to him after they got out of the fire and cloud, for him to be able to see so much detail.

Imagine the courage it took for him to stay put in order to observe these creatures. Notice also how objective he is, never mentioning his own feelings.

*7. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.*

Each verse of the description covers one or two parts of the creatures. When Ezekiel mentions more than one part it becomes confusing, so that one verse seems to contradict another. These can usually be sorted out however. Nowhere will you find a direct contradiction.

Here he is describing the feet only. The word "straight" can be taken several ways. Does he mean *regular feet*, or feet that point straight forward, or feet that are straight up and down, like an elephant's? Probably he means regular, forward-pointing feet because he does not dwell on the point. In other places he leans heavily on simile to describe some unusual feature of the beings.

The sole of the foot sounds as if it was heavily cleated. What then has he described in this verse? For a person living in a warm climate who had never seen any footwear more complicated than a sandal, he has described a highly polished leather, plastic or metal boot very well.

*8. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.*

Notice carefully that he is *not* saying that each creature had four man-like hands, one on each of four sides. He is saying that each has the normal number of hands and they are located *below* their wings. Remember that he was a careful observer and he had probably noticed that birds have wings *instead* of arms. These had both. In addition, he has given us another bit of information about the distribution of the wings. They do not appear to be arranged like a biplane, but each wing is at a ninety-degree angle from its neighboring wing like a helicopter.

Ezekiel must have been something of a numerologist. He points out that there are four creatures, and each of the four has four faces each, and each has four wings each—but not four hands.

*9. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.*

He is not saying that the wings of one creature are joined to the wings of another creature. He is saying that each wing is joined to another wing, not directly to the creature.

The second and third parts of this verse present a mystery. We do not know what the "theys" refer to. There are three "theys" in this verse, one after another and we are given very few clues to which refer to *creatures* and which refer to wings. The first "they" most likely is tied to the first part of the verse and therefore refers to the wings. Given this, there are still three interpretations:

1. *The wings* turned not when *the wings* went; *The wings* went every one straight

forward.

2. *The wings* turned not when *the creatures* went; *The wings* went every one straight forward.

3. *The wings* turned not when *the creatures* went; *The creatures* went every one straight forward.

None of these three statements make much of a point, whether the creatures have helicopter wings, or bird-angel wings. Let us assume then that the first "they" refers to the creatures:

1. *The creatures* turned not when *the creatures* went; *The creatures* went every one straight forward.

2. *The creatures* turned not when *the wings* went; *The wings* went every one straight forward.

3. *The creatures* turned not when *the wings* went; *The creatures* went every one straight forward.

This last statement would pretty well describe the action of the blades of an inoperative helicopter being carried forward in a straight line. It would strike Ezekiel as odd that the wings might move and turn without turning the men under them. You might wonder why he would say "... wings went ..." instead of "... wings turned...." When a light breeze moves the blades of an inoperative helicopter the blades not only turn, but they change their pitch and plane in a most random manner.

Although Ezekiel has not completed his description of the creatures, we can try now to form a picture of what he saw. No matter how we bend and squeeze, we are not going to get a Michelangelo-type angel. Look at figure one. Go back over the points that Ezekiel has described. You will see that it fits quite well.

10. *As for the likeness of the faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.*

This again does not sound very man-like. You wonder what could have kept him from pronouncing them demons. If you will study figure two, you will see what Ezekiel described. Now look at figure three. How much better could a man living six centuries before Christ describe figure three?

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

See figure one again. The arrangement is like he describes. Notice that when he talks about "... the wings ..." of one creature, he apparently means the whole system of wings and attachments.

12. *And they went every one straight forward: wither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not as they went.*

Again we have trouble with the "theys." Notice however, that the first part of this verse repeats the last part of verse nine. If we were right in that verse, the first "they" in this refers to the creatures again. The second part of this verse contains a new idea, "whither the spirit was to go ...", has an opposite meaning from "... they went ... straight

forward ..." and, "... they turned not when they went." The first and last part sounds like the four creatures were marching purposefully in one direction. If then the second or middle part refers to the wings, we could read it:

"And *the creatures* went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, *the wings* went; and *the creatures* turned not when *the wings* went."

Again we have a picture of four men walking with their inoperative helicopters moving in several different ways as the breeze and the men's motions cause them to move slightly.

Notice that Ezekiel seems to be more impressed with the wings and their motion than with any other feature of what he witnessed.

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

Here he is describing their over-all appearance. We can assume that creatures that look like men but has a surface that resembles lights, coals and fire must be wearing suits with a brightly colored metallic surface. The modern anodized aluminium coatings glisten and sparkle with an effect like he describes. If these are space-suits, there is a good reason for making them gaudy. If they were worn in space while working on and around a ship, they should be as bright and eye-catching as possible, in the case the man became detached and floated away. He would be quite visible against the blackness of space.

*14. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.*

This might mean that they moved swiftly, but more than likely it means that they sparkled and shined on all sides, and this was visible as they moved about.

This ends the description for a while. There are two later verses of description, but we will take this when we come to it. It is surprising that Ezekiel has organized his material so well. It reads like a scientific report. If he had headed the section that we just covered, "Description," we would not have been too surprised to find the following section headed, "Action":

*15. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.*

If we read Ezekiel correctly and the creatures did have helicopter attachments on their backs, we can assume that one of them now started his helicopter, which would appear as a "wheel" to Ezekiel, and probably surprised him greatly.

*16. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of Beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*

Here we must digress in order to put ourselves into the life and time of this man because he has mentioned the wheel. A wheel did not have quite the same meaning for him as it does for you and I, living in a mechanical age. The wheel in 600 B.C. in the area

around the eastern end of the Mediterranean, the most civilized part of the world at that time, had only a few very limited uses.

One use, old even in Ezekiel's time was the potter's wheel; a simple platform mounted on crude vertical bearings so that it could be turned with one hand while the clay was worked with the other. From this the grindstone and the lapidary wheel developed for working metal and stone. These early machines probably employed some form of foot treadle but even these could not turn the wheel very fast. If the stone had a large enough diameter, it was possible to get the speed at the outer edge high enough to produce sparks when grinding hard material. The "work" took place at some distance from the axis, usually at the edge of the stone.

The wheel we usually associate with ancient times is the cart wheel. In its earliest form it was a solid wheel, like those still in use in primitive sections of Mexico. Even with the cart wheel, ancient man would associate the edge of the wheel with the "work" of the wheel. This was the part that left a track in the mud and dust, crushed an occasional rock and fractured an occasional toe.

In order to increase the efficiency of military chariots it was necessary to build a wheel that was lighter, yet just as strong as the solid model. This was first done by cutting out "lightening holes" between the hub and rim. Pressing this invention to the ultimate produced a spoked wheel. The Egyptians used a six-spoked chariot wheel thousands of years before Ezekiel's time, and the Greeks and others had four-spoke models. This was quite an invention and in addition to its useful aspects, it produced some rather unusual, even magical side-effects. As every child knows, if you turn your tricycle upside-down and spin the wheel, the spokes seem to vanish. All that can be seen is the rim and the parts of the hub near the center of rotation. No matter what shape the hub actually is, it too looks round like a wheel. It is very likely that such an effect was referred to as "a wheel within a wheel."

In verse 16 Ezekiel says that, "wheels and their work was the colour of beryl ...", a blue-green color. This sounds like the emphasis is on the color at the *edge* of the wheel. This could be from a flame coming from jets on the tips of the rotors.

All of the creatures must have started their rotors. ("... they four had one likeness.") They looked like "... a wheel in the middle of a wheel." Or the spinning spokes of a wheel. Notice also that he never mentions "wings" and "wheels" at the same time, for when one appears the other vanishes.

*17. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.*

If four men were standing fairly close together on the ground with running helicopters, they would tend to spread out as they left the ground, so as to not run into each other. Moreover, with a helicopter, it is not necessary to *face* the direction you intend to go. This sounds like four men lifting off the ground, spreading out slightly and starting up and away, in formation.

*18. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.*

The four creatures are now high in the air above Ezekiel, a dreadful and awe-inspiring sight for a man of Ezekiel's time. Their "rings" obviously are the flames

from their tip-jets, seen from below—the only part of the wheel now visible from far below. And the rings *would* be full of eyes. When a jet or rocket motor is operating there is a shock wave generated in the tailpipe which tends to cut the exhaust gas into segments. Time exposures of jet aircraft at night often show this. When a tip-jet is operating, these bright, evenly spaced spots give it the appearance of a string of pearls, "... full of eyes round about them...."

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

Ezekiel makes it clear that he does not know whether the men are lifting the wheels or the wheels lifting the men, but both went up together.

*20. Withersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.*

This is a most sophisticated opinion. Although Ezekiel was describing only what he saw, he could not help but have some opinions about the creatures. In verse nineteen he makes it clear that he does not know whether man is lifting the machine, or the other way around, but here he makes it clear that whichever, there is no doubt that the creatures are *controlling*. They are not being carried off by the will of the wheel.

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

This carries the idea of control one step farther. Not only are the men controlling the wheels, but they are self-controlled: They are flying in formation.

*22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the colour of terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.*

Perhaps this verse was moved out of its original position, for it returns to the description of the creatures. You may have noticed that many of the verses are written so that it is in part, an enlargement of the thought put forward in the preceding verse, and part new thought, to be enlarged upon in the following verse. Verses twenty-two and twenty-three *seem* to go together. Both would fit the rest of the chapter better if they were between verses twelve and thirteen.

What is meant by "firmament"? These people had no term for a hollow-sphere. Most spherical objects were not hollow. They had no soap, so they had no soap bubbles. The most common thing to compare a hollow sphere to was the sky, the bowl of the heavens—the firmament. This crystal-clear bubble was over the heads of the creatures, one on each creature.

We will come to the word firmament again, but notice that this is, "... the *likeness* of the firmament ...", not the firmament itself. Later verses speak only of the "firmament".

*23. And under the firmaments were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies.*

If you changed "... under the firmament ..." to, "... below the sky" you would get a clearer picture. If you look at the picture of a house, the roof is, "below the sky," if you start at the top and work down. If you start at the ground and work up, the roof is, "at the top" of the house. Ezekiel's description of the wings, which is continued in this verse, concerns the wings "at the top." They are (connected), "... one toward the other, about like in figure one."

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

If you have ever stood near a running jet, or any jet engine, I think you will know what Ezekiel means. The last statement is most interesting. It seems that when the creatures landed again they detached the helicopter mechanisms and set them down, as anyone will with a heavy back-pack who is resting or waiting.

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

This voice, or sound, was not from the *likeness* of the firmament, but from the sky, as they stood there with their wings off.

This is the end of Ezekiel's attention to the four creatures.

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

Out of the sky comes a man on a green seat. But a throne is more than a chair. It is usually associated with a platform. This may be some kind of flying platform similar to those being tested for the transporting of infantry.

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

Since this thing was high over their heads, and he saw fire round about it, the fire may have been on the under side. What he says about the man is very like what he said about the other four, except that he describes the man from the waist, up and down, as if he could not see the area near the man's waist.

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

What prismatic effect, brighter than the outdoor desert sunshine is hard to imagine, but a large shining object close at hand would be pretty terrifying. It seems strange that Ezekiel would not throw himself upon the ground, after withstanding all he had seen up till now, but we must remember that a man seated on a throne, a flying throne at that might have a lot more meaning for him than it would for you and me. If this object

happened to come down closer to him than the other creatures had, he might well have broken.

We have now covered every verse of the first chapter quite thoroughly. Since the Book of Ezekiel contains forty-eight chapters, we might fear that this is just the beginning of a long and tiring study. Fortunately or unfortunately this is not the case. The second chapter begins:

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*And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee.*

*2. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.*

*3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.*

This typically prophetic writing goes on for many pages, telling the woes and sins of the Israelites. Reference is made in a few places to the material in the first chapter, but even this dies out before the end of the book.

No mention is made again of the living creatures till chapter three where the following verse is found:

*13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of great rushing.*

This combines some of the ideas of earlier verses without adding any new information. Notice that writer has the notion that the wings of one creature touched those of another, or that the creatures touched one another.

This verse is typical of several more scattered throughout the first third of the book. All the verses mentioning the living creatures after the first chapter are more dramatic and all fail to continue the style of a careful reporter. No new ideas are advanced, but some rather unusual contradictions are introduced, by using several parts of several verses of Chapter One. Chapter Ten reads like an attempt at rephrasing Chapter One and Chapter Eleven is the last mention of the living creatures in the entire book.

Although it contains no further information on the living creatures, Chapter Three has a verse that should be mentioned. Verse fifteen sounds like a fitting conclusion to the first chapter:

*15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-Abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them for seven days.*

Just what do we have? We have a description of four spacesuited and helicopter-equipped men, getting off of, or out of something that landed in a cloud of dust or smoke. The four men start their helicopters, take off and fly to some height. On returning to the ground they remove their flying gear and wait. They are met by a fifth

man, riding on a flying platform. Such an event would cause some interest in any community today, but in those times it could only be interpreted as supernatural—a miracle. The miracle may well be that the story has been preserved for us, twenty-six centuries later.

A word for word interpretation is only part of the oddity of this chapter. Several other aspects are worth pondering. The whole chapter has a well-worn feeling, as though the author had told and re-told it many times. It reads like a deposition, taken down by a police officer, after the witness, who prides himself on truthfulness, has told the story over and over to his incredulous friends. It has a certain poetic beauty. It has the style of one who is telling you the truth, no matter whether you are going to believe it or not. It is the presentation of a tableau that makes no sense to the man who witnessed it, or to those to whom he is describing it.

The product of a man's imagination is tied to his own experience, his own time. A wonderful tale of the supernatural may sound very imaginative to the contemporary of the teller, but it will date itself to a later generation. The lives of the Greek gods are related to the lives of the early Greeks. An imaginative science-fiction writer such as Jules Verne is limited in the same way. As good as he was, experience has set an outer limit to his imagination. Ezekiel's tale is not in this class. To his contemporaries, it was out of step with reality. To us it is real enough, but out of step with time. The most credible explanation is that it really happened.

Perhaps there are some points of my interpretation that you do not agree with, but as a whole the story does hang together rather well. If you have the feeling that it would be easy to fit the words around an entirely different set of circumstances, I suggest that you try.

It is interesting to know that some years ago a verbal battle raged in theological circles as to whether Ezekiel wrote the Book of Ezekiel. One school of thought held that he did, while the other school held that the first chapter was a "forgery," written in the third century before Christ, and tacked on as a sort of "leader" to Ezekiel's book. For our purposes it cannot be a forgery. It makes little difference how long ago it was written, so long as it was not since World War II!

Suppose Ezekiel or some ancient man actually saw what I have proposed. What are the possible explanations? Is it possible that some ancient race, unknown to us, could have developed such equipment? It is not likely. During the last one hundred years we have been prodding about in the earth and finding so many ancient records that someone else besides Ezekiel would certainly have left us a report on them.

The things that were science fiction twenty years ago are solid fact now. We know that a landing on the Moon is only a question of time, a few years at the most. The planets of our Solar System will follow, at least some before the turn of the century, probably. As for the planets of neighboring stars we cannot say. We have no way of exploring them at present, but that is not the same as saying that we never will. If the past performance of the human race is any measure, they will likely fall to exploration within two hundred years.

If you concede that it is possible that we can visit other star systems in a future not too distant, why then could we not have been visited some time in the past? It may tend to deflate our ego to think that there may be intelligent beings not too different from us who are advanced beyond us. It need not. One of the most striking features of

Ezekiel's story, if it has been decoded correctly, is that these beings are very much like we are, right at the present time. That puts them three or four thousand years ahead of us, a very small amount indeed when we consider the long sweep of human life and development before the dawn of written history.

We are so used to stories of "Bug-eyed Monsters" coming to Earth, that the idea of beings from other worlds looking and acting human seems fantastic. It should not. There is good sound scientific reason to believe that there is little chance of it being any other way. Life is a delicate and fragile thing when compared to cosmic extremes of temperature and environment in our universe. If life formed on earth as science now believes that it did, we must have had just the right size planet at just the right distance from a particular type of star. While such extremely narrow limits are going to reduce the number of places in the universe where life can develop, it is also going to limit the *differences*. In our creation things operate by rule. The rule is that in similar circumstance there are similar solutions to a problem. Man is the solution of the problem of building the highest form of life on Earth. On a similar planet we can expect to find a similar solution. This is simply the extension of the theory of *parallel evolution* to a cosmic scale.

If then, we were visited by people from another world, what were they doing here? Strangely enough, there is considerable evidence of what they were up to from Ezekiel's own testimony. Let us suppose that these creatures were very much like we expect to be in five hundred years. They have come from some other star system in a ship whose principle of operation is as yet unknown to us. We can assume that it was a rather large ship, being that there were five beings on board at once, and we can presume that enough of a crew remained aboard to return it home in case something happened to the explorers. How would we proceed in such a case?

It is not likely that such a large ship would be brought down to the surface of the earth. After arriving in the neighborhood of the earth, it would be put into orbit, and the surface of the earth would be studied through telescopes for days or weeks. The entire radio spectrum would be scanned to determine if there were inhabitants below, capable of operating electrical equipment. A small—manned or unmanned—flyer would be sent down into the upper atmosphere to determine the level of radioactivity, air components, spore and bacteria count and radio signals incapable of penetrating the atmosphere. From the ship the land areas would be mapped and studied. Any large object on the ground that appeared to be of an artificial nature would be given particular attention. During the night-time hours below, these objects and areas would be very carefully observed for signs of light.

In the case of our visitors of twenty-six centuries ago, this is what they would have found: Quite a few artificial works could be seen. Cultivated fields and large buildings would be easily visible in many places around the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The Pyramids were old even then. (The Great Wall in China probably had not been started.) There would be no radio sounds, except for an occasional lightning click. We do not know how well their cities were lighted at night, but they were probably too dim to see. Tiny orange pinpoints of light from outdoor bonfires could probably be seen around the globe, but there would be more of them around the Mediterranean and in the East and Near East than anywhere else. The radioactivity level would be low. Our visitors would conclude that the inhabitants were either in the early stages of civilization,

or were once highly civilized and now sunk back to a primitive stage. They would know that this was due to something other than atomic war.

We have to conclude that these were moral beings. If the conditions below were as they seemed to be, that of an early civilization, they would not want to interfere. They would want to observe without being observed, so even if it were technically possible they would not want to bring a large ship down. They would send down as small and inconspicuous a vehicle as possible.

We usually picture such a craft as a small version of the larger ship, or a large—by our standards—rocket, or an aircraft similar to our Dyna-soar. For people this advanced technologically something a lot simpler might be used. It might be an open vehicle, similar to our flying platforms, but with vastly more powerful nuclear power plants. The men going down would have to wear air-tight suits—spacesuits, and would have to leave them on all the time they were below, for fear of becoming infected with molds and viruses that the natives would long since have become immune to. One man, the pilot, would stay with the platform while the others did the observing and recording.

The flying platform would have no need for rapid forward motion, at least inside the atmosphere and therefore would have little need for streamlining or protective covering for the passengers, who would carry their equipment with them. Most of the equipment for the survey would be built into the suits. They would each carry a set of portable helicopter attachments so they could cover more ground in a hurry. Like small helicopters of our time, these probably would have a rather limited speed and range, but they would be extremely maneuverable.

The platform on the other hand, being nuclear powered, would probably be very powerful and have almost unlimited range, but it would be less maneuverable. The products of its exhaust might be radioactive and therefore its operators would be reluctant to operate it above or near the natives of the planet, or places that they frequented.

As they push away from the mother-ship the spacemen would be in free-fall and would tend to "float" nearby until they turned the bottom side of the platform toward the direction of their orbit and applied power. They would then drop toward the surface, but with almost unlimited power available they could keep the downward component of their fall within limits and prevent overheating. They could probably be on the surface in less than an hour.

The first and most likely area of exploration would be Egypt. The platform could be landed a few miles back from the Nile and be in completely unoccupied desert. The four helicopter-equipped explorers could put on their rotating-wing backpacks and by keeping low, come up very close to some center of civilization without being seen. By going up to a few thousand feet they could observe a fairly large area. Even if they were spotted, they would be small and unrecognizable, and cause a minimum amount of excitement.

Like any tourist in any age they would probably be most interested in the territory around the pyramids. When they had finished here they might want to look over the country around what is now Bagdad, but *then* only near the capital city of Nebuchadnezzar's empire. This is about eight hundred miles away, an impractical trip by helicopter, so they would return to the platform, climb to a few hundred thousand feet, and scoot over in a few minutes. Here they would land again in some uninhabited spot and repeat the maneuver. This country was probably sprinkled with more people than

they expected. Maybe that's why this is the legendary flying carpet country, or maybe not. At any rate, one lonely military prisoner, working by himself near the banks of a stream must have seen them. Even if they did notice him, what possible harm could he do? In the present state of the civilization who would remember what he said or even believe him? I do.

**THE END**



(6) Four faces. The cherubim, being merely symbolical figures, are variously represented. Those placed in the Tabernacle and in the Temple of Solomon appear to have had only a single face; those described in Ezekiel's vision of the Temple (Ezekiel 41:18-19) had two; the four living creatures of Revelation 4:7 were each different from the other: one like a man, one like a lion, one like an ox, and one like an eagle, and these four are combined here in each one of the cherubim (Ezekiel 1:10). Man is the head of the whole animal creation, the lion of wild beasts, the ox of the domestic animals, ... Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary. 1:1-14 It is a mercy to have the word of God brought to us, and a duty to attend to it diligently, when we are in affliction. Start of this project gutenber ebook the four-faced visitors of ezeziel. Produced by Sankar Viswanathan, Greg Weeks, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>. Transcriber's Note: This etext was produced from Analog Science Fact & Fiction March 1961. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Notice that Ezekiel seems to be more impressed with the wings and their motion than with any other feature of what he witnessed. 13. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. The. Four faced. Visitors. Of Ezekiel. By ARTHUR W. ORTON. Ezekiel, they say, "saw de wheel" but he saw somewhat more than that. And Orton suggests that what he saw made perfectly good sense to the understanding! Illustrated by Orton. We are told from our Sunday School days that the Bible is a "living book," the oldest of man's written works that is read and used anew, from generation to generation. It remains "living" because we are able to find new meaning to fit our daily lives. Although it is not the usual kind of new meaning, I believe that I hav