

CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM

By Mary M. Bodie

"And before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind" - Revelation 4:6
Revised version.

These living ones or cherubim have a most wonderful place in the counsels of God. They are invariably seen in connection with the display of judicial authority - one with the throne of God. The very first view we get of them, at the gate of the garden of Eden, is in this character - guarding the entrance to Paradise with sword of flame - Genesis 3:24. They were witnessing to the holiness of God's house, of which that earthly garden was the figure; and they were also witnessing of the righteousness of God in putting sinners, Adam and Eve, out of His Presence. Later, we see them as one with the mercy seat which was made of pure gold - figure of Divine Life - and attached thus to the throne of God. We do not get their description here, but we see their wings hiding them, and suggesting their heavenly activity; and we see their faces directed toward each other and toward one common object - the blood upon the mercy seat - Exodus 25:17-20. They are here witnessing to the righteousness of God in demanding atonement for sin; and they are approving of His mercy in securing it.

Then we view them again in the Most Holy Place in the temple, built by King Solomon. Those were made of the olive tree and covered with gold. They still veiled the mercy seat as part of the throne of God - I Kings 8:6.

But in the book of consummations, the Revelation which John gives us of the Son of God, we get a further description of these glorious creatures. We behold them in Heaven as part of the throne - "in the midst of the throne." Also we read, there was "a Lamb as it had been slain" - God's righteous propitiatory. These are the real cherubim which John beholds; the other were but figures.

The prophet Ezekiel gives us a glimpse of them in his vision of judgment, and we are also indebted to Isaiah for another view; and these are always seen in connection with the throne of God. They are intimately and inseparably a part of the executive righteousness of His throne, which requires and finds its satisfaction in the blood of atonement. They experience a marvelous union with Christ - from the beginning of Ezekiel's vision of them, through John's vision, and to the consummation of Isaiah's vision. All the judgments of God are in their power. They are the executors of His wrath.

Christ Himself assured His disciples when they enquired of His return, that it would be as "the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west." It will be devastating and destructive, as the next verse implies: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" - Matthew 24:27, 28. The great supper, to which all the fowls of the air will be invited (Rev. 19:17, 18), will result from the judgment which will precede the coming reign of the Son of Man. We emphasize the fact which is especially interesting and instructive to us, that it is not Christ alone but His people also - His Body - who will have part in the thrilling scenes of the Day of the Lord. We notice the significant fact, that the living creatures will call the wrath of God into evidence - Rev. 6.

WHAT JOHN SAYS

We will notice John's record of the cherubim first; for though he was the later prophet, yet he gives us an earlier phase of their appearance than Isaiah - at the beginning of God's righteous dealings with the world. The very first moving picture which he throws upon the screen is, as was intimated, connected with the throne of God. This scene is exhibited in the beginning of the next age and immediately preceding the revelation of Christ as "Lord of lords, and King of kings." His judgment of the earth must precede His reign over it; thus the Judge is introduced first, then the Ruler. These living ones are in perfect accord with the movings of that judicial throne - one with all the will of God, in sympathy with all His ways in the universe, and ready to execute His commands.

The "eyes before and behind," refer to their fulness of vision - full of light. They see in every direction at once; nothing is hid from their sight. All God's purposes are fully known. The sevenfold Spirit fills them.

"The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle" - Rev. 4:7 R. V.

Notice the marvelous similarity of these glorious creatures to the Son of God, as characterized by

the four Gospel records. They each have four faces: One "like a LION," featuring the KINGLY character of Christ, which MATTHEW emphasizes; one "like a CALF," the lowly SERVANT character of MARK'S record; one with "a face as of a MAN," the perfect HUMAN which LUKE portrays; and one "like a FLYING EAGLE," the SON OF GOD, the Heavenly One presented by JOHN - Who flew out from the bosom of the Father "and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth" - John 1:14.

Here is a special item of importance: John does not refer to the third one as "like a man," but that he "had a face as of a man." This is undoubtedly an evidence that these cherubim are redeemed men, perfect humans - spirit, soul, and body - grown up into the measure of the fullness of Christ, the Last Adam. The other faces were just likenesses, symbols of the inward characteristics; but this was a reality. He was a man. These celestial beings present the highest earthly forms and powers of creation, in a harmonious and perfect unity.

THE NUMBERS FOUR AND SIX

"And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings" - Rev. 4:8 R. V. The wings speak of the activity of the living creatures. They are equipped perfectly to execute the Lord's commands. Spirit, soul, and body are symbolized in the completeness of redemption. No limitation nor infirmity is visible in their service.

EZEKIEL sees only FOUR WINGS on each of these divine-humans, because he views them as on earth. That is, that glorious company of which he gives us a moving picture, is seen on earth. He sees them around the throne of the Son of Man. They are a part of that judgment throne.

They are in perfect harmony with all its movings and workings. In fact, they are the workers, the agencies, by the power of God, to bring to pass the will of God. But, they are fitted for earth activity only, as seen by Ezekiel here. Hence, the earth number "four" is emphasized in their wings. Spirit, soul, and body are alive unto God and are engaged actively in His service.

ISAIAH, as JOHN, sees SIX WINGS upon these glorious beings. He informs us that with two of these propellers, they did fly; with two of them, they covered their faces; and with two, they covered their feet - Isaiah 6:2. He visions them at a later period than Ezekiel and John. Christ is shown as on His throne, in Isaiah's description of them; hence, their activity is partially obscured in the glory of the throne of God. They are beheld as resting in a work accomplished. Judgment is symbolized by the inspired picture which Isaiah threw upon the screen.

In Revelation six, we view these same living ones as actually calling into action this very judgment. For when the Lamb, as the Judge, opens the seals - the unfulfilled counsels of God - one of the living ones, with a voice as "the noise of thunder," exclaims: "Come." Immediately the wrath of God, figured by the different colored horses, begins to break forth upon a Christ-rejecting, Satan-filled world.

"And they were full of eyes within" - their activity is in the light. They have undimmed vision, regarding God's purpose for His "strange work" of judgment. They have the mind of Christ, concerning the counsels of God. And they are ready and quick to fly to execute His will.

"And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" - Revelation 4:8.

They are unceasingly active, yet never tired; for they are partakers of the Divine nature. They continually bear witness to the holiness of God that He is righteous; and that all His actions in the past, in the present, and even in judgment, proceed from this source. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever," is their testimony - Psalm 93:5. They lead in the worship of Heaven. For when they "give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne," the four and twenty elders who are associated with them, fall down "and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever." The four living ones and the twenty-four elders constitute the first rank of the redeemed.

WHO THEY ARE

As was intimated, these are redeemed men not simply angels, as is plainly evident in the fifth chapter. There we see them in connection with the twenty-four elders; while the "Lamb as it had been slain" is in their midst, as one with them. And they fall down before Him and worship, "having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." Observe that they are called "saints," which surely is conclusive evidence that they have been "sinners"; for it is only "sinners" who become "saints."

But there is more. They sing a song with which the redeemed are all more or less familiar, that is with the essence of it, and which they only can sing - the song of redemption. It is "a new song." It has never been sung before. These favored ones will lead the heavenly choir, and teach the later

companies how to sing the glorious anthem to the Lamb. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" - Revelation 5:9. They acknowledge the worthiness of the Lamb to judge the world, which He has redeemed by His blood. They acknowledge their own unworthiness, in that they needed redemption. They are gazing upon a blood-sprinkled mercy seat, and owning both the justice of God in demanding atonement and the mercy of God in providing it. They are witnesses to the universe, of the righteousness as well as of the grace of Jehovah - "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" - Exodus 34:7. Marvelous words!

Even the angels, myriads of them, are constrained to follow their example and ascribe glory to the Lamb. But notice, they do not sing redemption's story, though the mighty praise meeting continues until "every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth," has praised the Lamb. The living ones, by the compelling power of their glorious anthem, have led them all. Thus we see that these are wonderful human beings, most majestic and sublime, with an office and place in the throne that is surpassed by none other, except the Lamb Himself. This is the view that John has of them, just previous to the great Day of the Lord.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE CHERUBIM

"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 color of amber, out of the midst of the fire" - Ezekiel 1:4.

Ezekiel, like John, commences his prophecy with a view of the cherubim. His description of them is similar in many respects, though there are some points of difference because they are seen under different circumstances and at a different point of time. John beholds them in Heaven, as one in the midst of the throne, at the time of the judgment of the earth. Ezekiel sees them on earth afterward, actually putting forth the judgment, joined to the throne above them, directing the moving of the judgment of which they are a part. They are rolling it along - "holy rollers" indeed. The word which they proclaim is judging the world, in view of the judgment that John portrays.

As Ezekiel says, he "looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud." This is the "Shekinah Cloud," the distinct expression of the Presence of God with His people Israel. Ezekiel continues to gaze at this wondrous sight, and the cloud unfolds before his eyes. Within the cloud are the cherubim, and with them four wheels. Over this he beholds the firmament of the "terrible crystal," and upon this a throne as of "a sapphire stone"; and seated thereon in regal majesty, "a Man" - the Son of Man, "the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Again we see, that the cherubim are a part of the throne. Ezekiel 1:15-28.

Their feet of "burnished brass" convey the same thought; for they correspond with the feet of the Son of Man walking in judgment "in the midst of the seven candlesticks" - the churches - Revelation 1:13. Also, they correspond with Daniel's vision of the same wondrous Person, with "feet like in color to polished brass." This metal "brass" is generally significant of judgment. We are impressed with the description of Daniel's vision, for there is a marvelous similarity to the language of that of Ezekiel concerning the cherubim; though Daniel apparently sees only a "Man" - "His body also was like the beryl, and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude" - Daniel 10:6. This, no doubt, is the mystical Christ - the Head with the Body; for Daniel is undoubtedly gazing upon a judgment scene too. How else can we reconcile his words? "O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength" - Daniel 10:16. He was in spirit, suffering with his beloved people, at the time to which the vision applies. It is the same time with which Ezekiel also is concerned - the "latter days" - the end of this present age and the beginning of the next age.

EZEKIEL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHERUBIM

"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 the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" - Ezekiel 1:13, 14. Ezekiel saw the living creatures in action. They are the powerful Divinely-authorized agents of Divine judgment. These living ones have four wheels, in which is their spirit, rolling over the earth. Four is the earth number, the number of the four corners - east, west, north, and south. They are judging the whole world today, by their uncompromising declaration of the whole Truth. They are judging Christendom, answering Paul's question, "Shall I come unto

you with a rod?" - I Cor. 4:21. The wheels are like unto "a beryl stone" - Ezekiel 1:16; 10:9. This is the same description which Daniel gives of the body of the Man who appeared to him: "His body also was like the beryl" - Daniel 10:6. The wheels speak of the mobility of the cherubim, in executing judgment.

"The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel" - Ezekiel 1:16. Their actions are according to their appearance, perfect harmony prevails. They are all united in one, yet each separate and distinct; a marvelous picture of unity.

These "wheels" move along, one after the other, in the perfect will of God. "And they turned not when they went" - no letting up, nor slowing down, in their course. The purposes of God must be fulfilled; nothing else holds their attention. The rims of the "wheels" reached to the firmament; "they were so high that they were dreadful" - majestic, sublime - and they touched the throne of God. Their very "rings were full of eyes round about them" - the sevenfold Spirit everywhere in evidence. The wheels move by His power in the fullness of light.

"And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them" - the wheels were joined and subject to the cherubim. "And when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up ... for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels" - they were inseparable. Ezekiel 1:19, 20.

The living creatures of Ezekiel each had four wings - two on each side of their body. They were equipped for earth activity, and were seen in the perfection of redemption. Their activity was limited. When they went, "the noise of their wings" (their goings) was "like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty" - Ezekiel 1:24. Daniel says, "The voice of His words like the voice of a multitude" - Daniel 10:6 where the saints' voices in Heaven are "as the voice of many waters." All of this is easy of interpretation. These cherubim are saints whose activity is that of God. They are in harmony with all the movings of the throne. And their voice has power. It brings results with its commands. It rolls the judgment chariot along, but all in connection with the throne of God which is over their heads. When they stood and let down their wings, "there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads" - direction and instruction from the throne; for there "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" - Ezekiel 1:26.

PARTAKERS WITH CHRIST

Now observe the similarity of the description of this "Man" and that of the "living creatures." There was the same "color of amber," the clear yellowish tones, springing from "the appearance of fire" which enveloped Him. He seemed to be all fire and brightness even as the cherubim coming out of the fire, "as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire" - Ezekiel 1:4, 27. There is no doubt that these cherubim are the saints who loved not their lives unto death, who were delivered unto death daily for Jesus' sake, who had the Life of Christ manifested in them. They judged the world, the flesh, and the devil, and reigned in life through the abundance of grace over all things, and will reap the reward. They acknowledge the righteousness, justice, and mercy of God; they own His sovereignty over their individual lives; they have let Him put down all rule and authority and power - "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (II Cor. 10:5); and thus they became fitted to put it down in the world. They conquered themselves through the abundance of grace in Christ Jesus, and thus become able to conquer others.

ISAIAH'S VISION OF THE CHERUBIM

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly" - Isaiah 6:1, 2.

The prophet Isaiah beholds the "seraphim" - "burning ones" as they are called here - at a later period of time than either John or Ezekiel. He views them after the judgment is past. They are still in connection with the throne; their voices are still witnessing to its holiness, its righteousness, its justice. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," they cry. "The whole earth is full of His glory," is their triumphant boast. He reigns supreme, and they are satisfied.

"And the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" - Isaiah 6:4. Their power has not waned. Still effectual and compelling are their voices, "as the voice of the Almighty" - Ezekiel 1:24.

Isaiah, the prophet, stands here as the figure of the Jews at the end of the tribulation with the judgment all past; who will view the actual substance, of which this vision was but the shadow.

They will see the Lord with their physical eyes, "high and lifted up" in the heavens. They will cry like the prophet, "Woe is me! for I am undone." They will behold their condition in the light of His holiness, and the contrast will overwhelm them.

Now observe the finale. One of the seraphim, these holy messengers of God, flies with a live coal from off the altar and touches the mouth of Isaiah - figure of the nation - saying, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" - Isaiah 6:7.

They have a part in the cleansing of Israel, as one with the throne of God. They are joined to the mercy seat, which is Christ. They have authority to make effectual the cleansing purchased by the blood of Calvary. They are seen here in this latest view on earth, as still witnessing to the justice as well as the mercy of God. He can be just and yet justify the ungodly, is their testimony.

THE COVERING CHERUB

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" - Ezekiel 28:14.

The above language is addressed apparently to the king of Tyrus; but he is only the figure of Satan, as is plainly evident. Tyrus, or Tyre as it is more often called, was a famous city of Phoenicia. It was built by a colony of Zidonians, descendants of Canaan, a son of Ham; hence, is also named "daughter of Zidon" - Isaiah 23:12. It was the great mercantile center of its day. This, too, is but figurative of a greater city that rules over the kingdoms of the world - the church of this world, "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots," false to her Heavenly calling and false to her Heavenly Lover - Isaiah 23:15; Revelation 17:5.

As was said, the king of this city is none other than that old serpent the devil. But Satan was not created a devil. He was the angel of light, Lucifer, the star of the morning. He was perfect in his ways from the day that he was created, till iniquity was found in him - Ezekiel 28:15.

Ezekiel sketches a most comprehensive and remarkable personality in the above chapter. Lucifer was "in Eden the garden of God," of which the earthly Eden was but the type. He was covered with every precious stone - enveloped in light. "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty," was said to him. He was filled with music - a whole pipe organ in himself, as it were. Melody and harmony were the essence of his being - Ezekiel 28:13.

But was he satisfied? Alas, no. He aspired to become as God; and so he fell. Iniquity was found in him. He exalted himself; so he must be abased, according to the principle of God's throne. Afterward he injected this same poison into man, thus exalting self. "Ye shall be as gods," was the tempter's bait. Man, innocent and good, fell from his standing and became what he is - vile and sinful.

Was God defeated? No, indeed! He did a new thing. He brought His First-born into the world. A Man, whom Satan cannot move, came on the scene. He proved to be the Master. He conquered in this desert place of ruin, and thus He redeemed man.

Now what is the sequel? Ah! It is so wonderful, so far beyond our greatest thought: Man not only regains his lost estate, though this was good, but more - he gets Lucifer's estate also. The exalted office of "the anointed cherub that covereth," that "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire," that is the throne that is given to the One that was abased - Christ, and "to them for whom it is prepared" of the Father - Matthew 20:23. They not only get dominion over the earth, the place of the first man whom Satan robbed; but they get the high and lifted up throne of Lucifer in the heavenlies, and all that he possessed as the angel of light. These are the living creatures which John saw "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne ... full of eyes before and behind," Truly, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" - Matthew 23:12.

But they that wait
upon the Lord shall
renew their strength;
they shall mount up
with wings as eagles;
they shall run, and not
be weary; and they shall
walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

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