

THE LIVING ONES

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"AND IMMEDIATELY I WAS IN SPIRIT: AND, BEHOLD, A THRONE WAS SET IN HEAVEN, AND ONE SAT ON THE THRONE ... AND IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE, AND ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE, WERE FOUR LIVING CREATURES FULL OF EYES BEFORE AND BEHIND." -- Revelation 4:2, 6.

The word translated "beasts" is "zoon" (Greek), meaning "living creatures." They are beings of great intelligence, and are always in close proximity to the throne of God. Reference is made to them 30 times in Scripture. Ezekiel refers to these same marvelous ones as the "living creatures" (Ezekiel 1:4-8). There is no doubt that these are the same company. In each portion, they are seen with four faces and are close to the throne. In Ezekiel ten, they are called "cherubim."

They always show us the glory of God. In Hebrews 9:5, Paul declares that they are the "cherubim of glory"; and says that he, at that time and in that epistle, could not "speak particularly" of them. When Israel prepared a habitation for the Lord upon the earth, His Presence was called the "Shekinah." He dwelt in the most Holy Place upon the Mercy Seat, and the cherubim were in the midst (Exodus 37:1-9). We have the same symbolic picture again of them in the book of Revelation -- "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living ones, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain" (Revelation 5:6).

The throne seen in Revelation is a judicial one. The son of God, envisioned as the Lamb, is about to judge the world; but He has the sons of God associated with Him. They are ready to assert themselves with power and authority. This scene pictures Christ being crowned and installed on His own throne, to reign over the earth. He must judge everything which is out of harmony with God.

We are especially interested in the cherubim as partakers with the Lamb in His great executive office. Some teachers would insist that these living ones are only angelic beings, and change the pronouns "us" and "we" in the song, to "them" and "they." This is one translation, while many others prefer the Authorized Version. There are many other proofs that the cherubim are redeemed humans.

Angels are never said to sing, as we read here of these living ones. It is the redeemed creature's heart that can bring melody to God, a creature filled with a sense of God's love and grace manifested at Calvary. Angels know nothing of the results of redemption, but they desire to look into it (I Peter 1:12). They are servants of the "heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

There are four of these cherubim. "The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf (ox), the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle" (Revelation 4:7). "Four" is the number of the world. Here it represents myriad saints of the same rank. The faces are not of angelic beings, but are chosen from the animal creation -- the highest type of each class. Man, the king of God's animal creation, exemplifies intelligence, wisdom, and reason. The lion, the

king of the jungle, speaks of majesty and strength. The calf, or ox, represents the family that is the king of the fields. The eagle shows the king of the air, the rapid flight and keen sight.

We emphasize the fact that there are four of these cherubim with their four faces. The race of men is composed of four divisions -- nations, kindreds, people, and tongues. We have four seasons on the earth. There are four elements, four winds, four world empires (as Daniel instructs), four Gospel records in which the four faces of Christ are portrayed. These cherubim are positively identified with Him by the likeness to His four faces, and positively marked out as mankind.

Angels are never manifested in the place of judgment. They are seen as servants of God and man. All the "angels" mentioned in connection with judgment scenes in Revelation are glorified human beings. See Revelation 19:10 and 22:8-9. In the new Godly administration, Man will be the head. Christ as Ruler and His Body with Him, shall preside over a new dynasty. The Church, even now, is constituted a royal priesthood and will appear in that capacity in glory--one with Christ, the royal High Priest.

Angels are never said to reign over men nor over the world. "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection in the world to come." This is given unto man, as the following verses indicate: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels (or, "for a little while lower"); Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him" (Hebrews 2:5-8).

The first man Adam was made lower than the angels; but, even then, God did not put angels over man. Now, in Christ, man is raised up to a higher estate than these wonderful unfallen creatures. The new creation of sons are born of God through Jesus Christ.

The living creatures are seen associated with the 24 elders whom no one would ever designate as angels. These living creatures and elders fall down together and worship the Lamb, "having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints" (Revelation 5:8). Compare Isaiah 6:3. Observe the word "saint." No angel can ever become a saint. Only a redeemed sinner, saved and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, can become such. These living ones are joined to Christ in His judicial throne; and as He opens the seals of judgment, they call forth these acts upon the earth. For instance, when the Lord opens the first seal, one of the living creatures calls the white horse into action, and he gallops away; and so on, until the four horses, speaking of peace, war, famine, and death, are manifested on the earth.

This scene presented in the opening of the seals is truly magnificent. The consummation of redemption, the last act in the drama of buying back man's lost inheritance, is being put into action. The Cross represents the purchase price of redemption, but the throne represents the power of that redemption. The first part, the buying back, was accomplished at the first coming of Christ; the second part, the results of such purchase, will be seen as His second coming. And visualize this fact, if possible, that a company of the redeemed will be present at that marvelous scene where the Redeemer's power will be seen. It is almost unbelievable to read of the exalted place that redemption has given man.

He will be raised up to be like Christ, His Head, and sit with Him on the throne, to exercise judicial authority and sovereignty over the earth.

Redeemed men will jointly share with Christ in the new order of things on the earth. They will have a most important part in putting these things into action. The Lamb has the Book in His possession. His rights will at last be fully disclosed and demonstrated. He will open the seals which represent all the unfulfilled prophecy of the ages, which represent all the unfulfilled prophecy of the ages, and fulfill every jot and tittle of that which is written. That momentous day will come. Christ will be triumphant and will take the title deed to the world which He purchased by His death upon the Cross. His Church, His body of people, will share His glory. The 24 elders and the four living creatures will be with Him on that day. Let us pray to be of that number, and yield to the Spirit that we may be prepared for that great honor.

IS THIS THE DAY?

"Is this the day that He shall come?"
I ask myself each morning.
The price I pay, this race to run,
Determines my adorning.
So may I rise and walk so strong,
His will in love to do.
For well I know, it won' t be long,
I' ll rise beyond the blue.
The things of earth shall fade away
And peace shall reign with love.
So until that wonderful day
I' ll expect Him from above.
--Nina Brooks