

James Rafferty Q2 L7 2025 Tuesday *May 13* Like Burning Coals of Fire

Cherubim, either as living beings (*Ezek. 10:8*) or the gold symbols of them (*Exod. 25:18*), appear all through the Old Testament. They are often depicted as standing immediately next to God's throne, radiating His glory to the universe. Cherubim are also embroidered into the curtain before the Holy of Holies (*Exod. 26:1*). In the book of Psalms, God's supreme power over creation is poetically pictured as God being borne through the air by cherubim (*Ps. 18:10*). God commanded that the ark of the covenant be topped by two solid gold cherubim with their wings extended toward one another (*Exod. 25:18–20*).

**Read Ezekiel 1:4–14. What similarities do you see between this passage and the scenes depicted in Isaiah 6:1–6 and Revelation 4:1–11?  
AND ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE!**

Ezekiel is presented with an impressive display of God's power. It is a confusing scene to begin with, matching the predicament that God's people found themselves living with at the moment: the chosen people not in the land of promise but in Babylonian captivity. As Ezekiel studies the scene placed before him, he looks up and sees God's throne above it all.

Notice the important similarities with other "throne" visions. The living creatures that Ezekiel witnesses have the same faces as the living creatures in John's vision: a lion, an eagle, an ox, and a man.

## THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES ARE FOUND IN REVELATION 4:6–9; 5:6–14; 6:1–8; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; AND 19:4. THE TEXTS THAT DESCRIBE THESE CREATURES DO NOT INDICATE THAT THEY ARE FIGURATIVE—THEY ARE REAL, ACTUAL BEINGS. THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES (LITERALLY “BEINGS”) ARE ANGELIC BEINGS OR CHERUBIM. THIS IS CLEAR BY THEIR CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE THRONE OF GOD. EZEKIEL 1:12–20 SUGGESTS THAT THEY ARE IN CONSTANT MOTION AROUND THE THRONE.

HOWEVER, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BEINGS COVERED WITH EYES AND HAVING THE FACES OF A LION, CALF, EAGLE AND MAN IS QUITE FIGURATIVE. IT SUGGESTS THE ALL-SEEING MINISTRY OF HEAVENLY ANGELS WHO ARE SENT FORTH TO EARTH AS:

HUMANS = FACE OF MAN (HEBREWS 13:2; GENESIS 18)  
TO SERVE = LIKE A CALF (HEBREWS 1:14; MATTHEW 18:10)

WITH SWIFT SPEED = LIKE AN EAGLE (DANIEL 9:21)  
WITH KINGLY/HEAVENLY AUTHORITY = LIKE A LION (REVELATION 5:5; 10:3)

THE PURPOSE OF THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES ALSO HAS TO DO WITH DECLARING THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND LEADING IN WORSHIP AND ADORATION OF GOD.

THEY ARE ALSO INVOLVED IN SOME WAY WITH GOD'S JUSTICE. THAT POWER IS SEEN AGAIN IN REVELATION 15:7 WHEN ONE OF THE FOUR UNLEASHES THE LAST SEVEN PLAGUES OF GOD'S WRATH ON MANKIND.

THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES ARE VERY SIMILAR, IF NOT THE SAME BEINGS AS THOSE IN EZEKIEL 10:2, 14, AND 20 AND ISAIAH 6:1–3. THEY ARE FOUR IN NUMBER, FULL OF EYES, HAVE FACES LIKE THE BEINGS IN EZEKIEL 1:10, HAVE SIX WINGS (ISAIAH 6:2), AND OFFER WORSHIP AS THE BEINGS IN ISAIAH 6:3, SAYING, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD."

YET THE NUMBER FOUR IS SYMBOLIC NOT LITERAL. THE ANGELIC BEINGS OF HEAVEN NUMBER THOUSANDS OF THOUSANDS AND TEN THOUSAND TIMES TEN THOUSAND (DANIEL 7:10). THE NUMBER FOUR REPRESENTS THE FOUR DIRECTIONS OF THE COMPASS, NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST. IT IS THEREFORE SYMBOLIC OF ALL THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN AS IT IS SYMBOLIC OF ALL THE PEOPLE OF EARTH IN THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST.

IN SUMMARY, THESE BEINGS ARE ANGELS WHOSE PURPOSE TO MINISTER TO EARTH'S INHABITANTS AND INITIATE THE EXALTATION AND WORSHIP OF THE HOLY, LOVING CREATOR GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (REVELATION 19:4). THEY ARE THE VERY BEINGS IN EZEKIEL 10 AND ISAIAH 6:1–3, AND THEY ARE IN SOME WAYS INVOLVED IN GOD'S DIVINE JUSTICE AS WELL

## AS IN HIS CONTINUING WORK OF MINISTRY TO ALL HUMANITY.

The mysterious creatures with four faces are not specifically named in Ezekiel's initial description; but later, in another throne room scene (*see Ezek. 10:1–21*), they are called “cherubim,” and we also find the burning coals from Isaiah's vision of the seraphs. They share the faces of the living creatures mentioned in John's vision.

Whenever we see God's throne—whether in the typical ark of the covenant, which served as God's meeting place with Moses (*Exod. 25:22*), or the breathtaking visions of the prophets—the cherubim are *always* there. They are intimately tied to the throne of God. All of God's creatures were designed to reflect His glory—whether we are talking about the human race made in His image or the angelic beings who are posted immediately next to His glorious throne.

***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. How do you measure up in contrast to the holiness that Ezekiel witnesses here? What does your answer tell you about your need of the gospel?***