

WHAT ARE THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES?

(Excerpt from my book, “The Book of Revelation Decoded”, pages 155-160)

In Revelation 4:6^b, we read:

“And in the midst of the throne and around the throne (there were) four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.”

What are these living creatures?

Before we answer this question, we need to read verses 7 and 8 where John presents more details of their appearance.

Verses 7,8: *“⁷And the first living creature was like a lion; and the second living creature like a young bull; and the third living creature had the face of a man; and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. ⁸And the four living creatures had six wings each; and all around (the wings) and inside (and under their wings) they were full of eyes (like the rest of their bodies: verse 6). And they have no rest day and night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the One who was, and the One who is, and the One who is coming.” (AT)*

Explanation of verses 7 and 8

From all the above descriptions, we conclude that the four living creatures are heavenly angelic beings: **They are Seraphs!**

How do we know that they were Seraphs and not Cherubs?

They were Seraphs because **they had six wings each** (verse 8).

The prophet Isaiah, who also saw the same creatures, agrees with our conclusion (Isaiah 6:1-3). On the other hand, when the prophet Ezekiel saw cherubs, he described them as having **four wings each**. (Please read Ezekiel 1:6 and 10:20)

Here are two more characteristics of the appearance of the four living creatures:

1. Their bodies and their wings were full of eyes (verses 6 and 8), and
2. They all had different faces: The first living creature looked like ***“a lion”***, the second like ***“a young bull”***, the third had the face of ***“a man”***, and the fourth living creature was like an ***“eagle”***.

Is this how seraphs really look like?

Since the faces of the four living creatures are **all different**, the answer is **“No!”** After all, in Hebrews 1:7, we read that God makes ***“his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire”*** --- not different earthly looking animals! Therefore, since their faces **do not refer to their real angelic nature**, what do they declare?

The different forms of the four living creatures glorify Jesus and declare the everlasting gospel.

From Revelation 19:10 we learn that **the spirit of the prophecy is the testimony about Jesus** and in Colossians 1:16 Paul says that Jesus created all things, the visible **and the invisible** (even the seraphs and the cherubs), **for Himself --- for His glory!** Therefore, whatever we read from the book of Revelation, every action, and every description, bares testimony about Jesus --- of who He is (Revelation 1:8;

22:13,16), and of the work He has done for the redemption of the human race (Revelation 1:5,17)! Likewise, the forms of the four living creatures, as they are described in verse 7,

1. **glorify Jesus** and,
2. like the angel of Revelation 14:6,7, **declare the everlasting gospel!**

How do the different forms of the four living creatures declare the everlasting gospel?

The different forms of the four living creatures give the eternal testimony of **who Jesus is and of the work He did** for the redemption of those who will believe in Him. Let us consider the following:

1. The fact that their bodies are full of eyes, signifies that **Jesus**, whom they worship and praise (Revelation 5:8-14), **is the All Seeing, the Omniscient God**. According to Hebrews 4:12 and 13 He is **the living and active** Word of God (John 1:1) before whom no creature can hide ***“but all things are naked and open to His eyes, to whom we must give an account.”*** (EMTV)

Also, as the ***“eyes”*** are a symbol of **wisdom** and **knowledge** (Genesis 3:5,7; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 5:21; Ephesians 1:17,18), the very fact that their bodies are full of eyes declares that **in Jesus *“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge”*** (Colossians 2:3). Praise You Lord Jesus!

2. The fact that the first living creature looked like ***“a lion”***, bares testimony that **Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies** regarding the coming of the Messiah, of the King, who

would come **out of the tribe of Judah**. Let us pay attention to the following verses:

Genesis 49:9,10

“Judah is a lion's whelp. My son, you have risen up from the prey; ... The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawmaker from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and the obedience of the peoples to him.”

Hebrews 7:14

“For it is clear that our Lord has risen out of Judah ...”

Revelation 5:5

“And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, conquered ...”

Thank You, Jesus!

3. The fact that the second living creature looked like *“a young bull”*, signifies that Jesus offered His own blood for the sins of those who will believe in Him. **This action fulfilled the law of sacrificing bulls outside the camp as sin offerings** (Exodus 29:14,36; Hebrews 13:11-13; 10:4-10)

4. The fact that the third living creature had the face of *“a man”*, proclaims the everlasting truth that **God the Word** (John 1:1), the Creator of all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:8,10), who always existed in the form of God (Philippians 2:5-8), **became a man** (John 1:14) in order to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)!!!

5. The fourth living creature looked like *“a flying eagle”*. The fact that it appeared as *“flying”*, reminds us of **God's**

ability to deliver people from their captivity. In Exodus 19:4 YHWH said, *“You have seen what I did to Egypt; and I bore you on wings of eagles and brought you to Myself.”*

The eagle flies swiftly and has powerful vision which enables it to see a great distance and exercise judgment; thus, the face of an eagle shows us that God is a God of revelation vision, a God of understanding and insight who gives **wisdom** to His servants. In Proverbs 2:6, we read,

“For YHWH gives wisdom; and from His face come knowledge and understanding.”

Wisdom and understanding **free the believers in Christ from the shackles of religion!** And when the Word became a man, He accomplished just that!!! **He proclaimed freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and He brought them to Himself** (Luke 4:18; Matthew 23:37).

May the Name of the Lord Jesus be glorified!! Let us all praise the Lord Jesus for who He is and for the complete work He did for us on the cross. Let us join the Seraphs who are before the throne and say, *“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the One who was, and the One who is, and the One who is coming.”*

The Seraphs are not the only heavenly hosts who proclaim the everlasting gospel through their appearance.

The Cherubs of Ezekiel 1:10 and 10:20 appeared with the same faces. Let us read these verses:

“As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and

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they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.” (Ezekiel 1:10)

“This is the living creature which I saw ... and I knew that they were cherubs.” (Ezekiel 10:20)