

CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM

And assorted beings, events and places associated with them

When it comes to the topic of the heavenly spiritual beings known as Cherubim and Seraphim there are differing views as to what these creatures are, ranging from some form of angel, to mere symbols to teach certain aspects of the holiness or power of God on His throne.

When it comes to the term Cherub or Cherubim (singular and plural respectively), it appears 70 times in the word of God, mostly in the OT, with one reference found in the NT, (Heb.9:5), in association with the OT Ark of the Covenant.

When it comes to the term Seraph or Seraphim (again, singular and plural respectively), there are only two specific verses with that designation, both found in the book of Isaiah, though an implicit reference to these same creatures is found in the book of Revelation.

Many writers take the position that these fanciful looking creatures are merely borrowed representations of similar symbolic creatures found in other cultures of the days of the OT, and are nothing more than products of man's fertile imagination to depict super beings who are capable of either protecting or judging human beings on earth.

Though much has been written on this subject from these and other perspectives, much of which is extra biblical, I will attempt to exegete those related biblical passages of these creatures and try to arrive at what I believe is a proper understanding of the Cherubim and Seraphim, and their place in the Kingdom of God.

What is interesting about Cherubim and Seraphim is that there is no apparent definition of the terms Cherubim or Seraphim, though some suggest that it may be indicating "fiery ones" or "nobles."

And though this may be descriptive on one level it doesn't really satisfy what or who they are.

The Hebrew for Cherubim is *Kerub*, and the Hebrew for Seraphim is *Saraph*.

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible defines Cherubim this way.

“Meaning uncertain.” And then it goes on to give it a meaning.
“One of a rank of angelic beings.”

The same Encyclopedia defines Seraphim thus.

“Meaning questioned.” And then answers the question by stating,
“Rank of angelic beings.”

So, like so many others, the implied answer is that we don't know what Cherubim and Seraphim are, but they must be some type of angel since they're in heaven, ranked in some fashion like the Archangels who are only directly mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 1:9.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, *with the voice of the archangel* and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first..

Jude 1:9 ⁹ But *Michael the archangel*, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

The reasoning is that since there appears to be one specific type of angel in a particular category called Archangel, there must be other categories of angels (ranks) to which the Cherubim and Seraphim presumably belong.

So, how do we begin to identify these Cherubim and Seraphim?

Well, a good place to start is in the very sections of the word of God that address these creatures.

Since the fewest number of references address the Seraphim I thought that would be a good place to start.

As we move through this study we will look at most of the passages that are associated with the Seraphim and Cherubim. Let's look first at the book of Isaiah that explicitly identifies one of these creatures.

SERAPHIM

Isaiah 6:1-3 ^{NAU} In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² *Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* ³ *And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."*

Isaiah 6:6 ⁶ Then one of the *seraphim* flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.

The book of Isaiah was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit with the intent to warn Israel of God's impending judgment on them for their unfaithfulness to the Lord.

In light of this judgment Isaiah also shows how God would restore Israel to a glory that would outweigh any glory they had ever experienced culminating in what Isaiah describes as New Heavens and New Earth.

Isaiah 65:17 ¹⁷ "For behold, *I create new heavens and a new earth*; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

Isaiah 66:22 ²² "For just as *the new heavens and the new earth* Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure.

It is in this context that Isaiah is given a vision of God's rule from His throne.

But in Isaiah 6:1-6 we see the introduction of these Seraphim, where, (in the preceding immediate context, chapter 5), God warned rebellious Israel that a foreign nation would destroy them.

Isaiah 5:25-26 ²⁵ On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people, And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, But His hand is still stretched out. ²⁶ *He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth; And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.*

So, let's deal with the immediate context that leads up to the introduction of the seraphim.

Isaiah 6:1 ^{NAU} In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

Here Isaiah is giving us a time frame as to when he received this vision as he cites the year of King Uzziah's death.

King Uzziah, also known as Azzariah, was one of the Kings of Judah, who generally did good in the sight of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 26:1-5 ^{NAU} And all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah. ² He built Eloth and restored it to Judah after the king slept with his fathers. ³ ***Uzziah*** was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. ⁴ He ***did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done.*** ⁵ He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; ***and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him.***

But in his last years, as he grew strong, he rebelled against the Lord.

2 Chronicles 26:16-20 ¹⁶ ***But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God,*** for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. ¹⁷ Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. ¹⁸ They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God." ¹⁹ But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. ²⁰ Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he *was* leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the LORD had smitten him.

Uzziah died a leper at the age of 68 around 739 BC, which is the time frame in which Isaiah receives this vision from the Lord. This vision is in association with God's judgment on Judah, which

would come to fruition around 153 years later, as the Babylonians begin their conquest of Judah.

This is what the book of Isaiah is essentially all about and so when we look at this vision of God's throne this must be kept in mind as it relates to seraphim around the throne of God.

But the book of Isaiah reveals more than God's judgment on His people as he also points to the One who would redeem a people for Himself, and Jesus Christ makes this abundantly clear during His earthly ministry as He demonstrates that a stiff-necked and unbelieving people, during Isaiah's day, remain stiff-necked and unbelieving during His day as He fulfills what Isaiah spoke.

John 12:34-41 ³⁴ The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶ "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. ³⁷ But *though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.* ³⁸ *This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"* ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, for *Isaiah said again,* ⁴⁰ *"HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM."* ⁴¹ *These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.*

This quote from Isaiah is in the immediate context of chapter 6 of Isaiah where we find these seraphim surrounding the throne of God where the glory of the Lord is revealed to Isaiah, as John points out in the above quote.

And so, with this short background let us continue with the scene Isaiah shares which includes the Seraphim surrounding the throne of God, filled with His glory.

Isaiah 6:2-4 ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and

with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

The first thing we notice here is that in the context of God filling the temple with His glory, the Seraphim are also in the temple but are standing above the Lord. In a vision context this is another way of saying that these Seraphim take a prominent role in the temple scene as they take their stand in praising God as we will see in a moment.

But first, let's look at how Isaiah sees these Seraphim in the context of this vision.

Isaiah 6:2 each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

The issue has been raised that since this is a vision none of what is seen in this vision can be viewed literally. And so, the reasoning is that things like wings and the number of wings or even the existence of a creature like seraphim around the throne, are all meant to describe, not a literal being called seraphim, but the reality, (wrapped in symbolic language), of the glory of God that surrounds His throne.

And to the degree that Isaiah is given a vision of the throne room of God, (thus potentially, these creatures are therefore mere symbols), this may hold some water if it were not for the fact that there is someone else in this same throne room whom no one questions was there; namely God Himself, who is not a symbol but a person.

Simply because this is a vision, it does not negate the fact that Seraphim are real beings.

Now, does this mean that seraphim have six wings or is Isaiah simply seeing what God wants him to see so as to give the impression that wings are attached to these beings but are actually telling a different story regarding these beings?

In other words, are the wings symbolic of something that is identified with seraphim but are not really part of their being?

This is actually a fair question because in apocalyptic biblical literature symbolic language is often employed to paint a picture of one thing while not actually suggesting that that thing is what it appears to be in the vision.

Let me give an example from God's Revelation to John which is in the exact same throne room that Isaiah saw.

Revelation 5:1-6 ^{NAU} *I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne* a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. ² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. ⁴ Then I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; ⁵ and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, *the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.*" ⁶ *And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.*

There's a lot going on in this passage, not the least of which are the four living creatures who bear an uncanny resemblance to the creatures we have before us in Isaiah who have six wings.

Revelation 4:8 ⁸ *And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings*, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

But I digress for a moment as we will come back to this.

But for the sake of argument, it should be noted that the One who sits on the throne in the vision given to John, is necessarily Jehovah. And yet, between the throne, (that is between the four living creatures and the elders), there is a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

This Lamb is introduced as the *Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.*

With this introduction the Lion is linked with the Lamb, but the Lion is identified specifically with the tribe of Judah, the root of David.

Isaiah addresses this Root of David.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 11:1** Then *a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

The writer of Hebrews also points out the connection of Christ to this root of David.

^{NAU} **Hebrews 7:14** For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

And then finally, Jesus Himself tells us who this Root of David is.

^{NAU} **Revelation 22:16** "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. *I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.*"

And so, what was symbolic in both Isaiah and the book of Revelation, on one level of disclosure, is made clear on another, and so we know who this Lamb is, and therefore it is important to understand that simply because John sees a vision with this slain Lamb figure standing before him in Revelation 5, it does not necessarily mean that the figure is identical to the real nature of the being in question.

In other words, what John sees is not really what God intends for John to understand, as if this a real lamb.

But the only reason we know this is because of what the word of God reveals about this Lamb, and the same must be applied when looking at these seraphim in Isaiah.

In other words, one cannot conclude that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world, is not a real person simply because symbolic language in apocalyptic genre depicts Him in a way, (that of a slain lamb), that is not consistent with His real essence, the God/man.

In the same way, we cannot conclude that there are not real heavenly beings called seraphim simply because they are depicted in ways that may seem strange to us.

WINGS OF THE SERAPHIM

So, let me go back to my original question which relates to this whole issue of something being depicted in symbolic language.

Are the wings in Isaiah 6:2 symbolic of something that is identified with seraphim but not necessarily part of their being?

That is certainly possible, but let's ask a related question; is it possible that a being, albeit a heavenly being, could have wings that includes more than one pair of wings? Let's start there.

Well, we know in our present world that most insects have two pair of wings to help in flight. But, insects are one thing, surely there could not be an animal that has more than two wings.

From the National Geographic Website we read this:

*“Then, in 2003, the prolific Chinese dinosaur-hunter [Xing Xu](#) found an actual [four-winged dinosaur](#). He called it *Microraptor gui*. Xu saw the outlines of feathers clearly splaying from the creature's legs as well as its arms. These were clearly traces of long, flat and asymmetric plumes, much like those that keep today's flying birds aloft. While it lived, *Microraptor* probably looked like a starling wearing flares. Xu suggested that it may have used its leg wings to help it glide, while others later suggested that it could have [flown like a biplane](#).*

*Xu went on to find other dinosaurs with long leg feathers, such as *Anchiornis*, *Pedopenna* and [Xiaotingia](#). For a time, it looked like these feathers disappeared before true birds arrived on the scene, but Xu is now back with 11 new fossils that discount that idea.*

*The specimens include species like *Sapeornis*, *Confuciusornis*, *Cathayornis*, and *Yanornis*. All of them are early birds, perched on primitive branches of the group's family tree. All of them lived in China during the Cretaceous period. And **all of them had four wings, with long feathers on their legs.***

You can see them in the images throughout this post—dark shadows protruding from the bones of the lower leg. In some of the specimens, the leg feathers show a stiff, curved central rod (or “rachis”) with symmetrical vanes sticking out from either side. They protrude from the bones at right angles and seem to form a large flat surface.”

The point is that God's creation is very diverse and though modern birds only have two wings it does not mean that four wings were ever out of the question for the Creator, as it relates to birds, and so what may seem strange to us today was actually in existence thousands of years ago before, and quite possibly, after the flood.

With that said, it doesn't seem so strange that a heavenly creature could have four or even six wings especially in light of the fact that Scripture defines the purpose of each set of wings for Seraphim.

Again, unless we limit God to surrounding His throne with beings that only look human, (angels and deceased saints around the throne), then it should not surprise us that He may also surround Himself with beings that have actual wings, or for that matter, horses that pull chariots, (2Kings 2:11), that presumably have four legs.

So, let's go back again to the only text of Scripture that explicitly addresses Seraphim.

Isaiah 6:1-7 ^{NAU} In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² *Seraphim stood above Him*, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." ⁶ Then *one of the seraphim flew to me* with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

Keeping in mind that this is a vision, Isaiah sees the Lord on His throne and the Seraphim praising God in that same setting. Six wings are said to have a particular function which are all related to the worship of God.

With the first set of wings he covers his face.

In Scripture the covering of the face is a means of humbling oneself, especially as it relates to being in the presence of God.

Genesis 17:2-3 ² "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." ³ ***Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him,*** saying,

Exodus 3:6 ⁶ He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." ***Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.***

Exodus 33:20,23 ²⁰ But He said, "***You cannot see My face,*** for no man can see Me and live!" ²³ "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but ***My face shall not be seen.***"

And so, when we are told that one of the Seraphim had a set of wings to cover his face, this may be symbolic of his humbleness to be in the presence of the Lord. But again, at this point we cannot exclude the possibility that this is a real set of wings.

The second set of wings, in the context of Isaiah 6, are said to cover the feet of the Seraphim.

This may seem a strange thing but again a little reflection on this act reveals another aspect of humbling as in the case of Moses standing before the Lord.

Exodus 3:5 ⁵ Then He said, "Do not come near here; ***remove your sandals from your feet,*** for the place on which ***you are standing is holy ground.***"

We see a similar incident with Joshua as he is about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land as they are about to conquer Jericho.

^{NAU} **Joshua 5:15** The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "***Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.***" And Joshua did so.

And so, removing the sandals from the feet is a sign of humbling oneself before the Lord and in a similar way the Seraphim covering his feet with his wings in the presence of the Lord speaks to this same thing.

By the way, it should not be lost on us that the two sets of wings are covering things we should not overlook. It is quite clear from the description that the Seraphim has a face, (singular), and feet, presumably one pair, that is, two feet and also hands which are attached to arms.

The last set of wings also has a purpose which is to fly, which makes sense since that's what wings are also designed to do, which begs the question if these are real wings.

Flight takes place in an atmosphere where lift is involved with the dispersion of pressure over the wings from high to low which enables flight.

It may seem strange to us but could it be that what is being described, albeit in a vision, is a heaven with an atmosphere where air is necessarily present to support flight?

Now before someone protests that heaven is a spiritual, not a physical place, let me remind you that the present heaven is described in countless sections of Scripture as much more than a mere spiritual habitation, as we will see in a moment.

But it does raise other questions. Where is heaven, and what heaven are we talking about? The short answer is there are two heavens, the present heaven, and the eternal future heaven, a place where God dwells now and a separate place where He will dwell in the future.

As to the present heaven, it is the place described in Isaiah where believers in Christ go to be with the Lord when they die, as Paul made clear; to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

But what is this place? I'm not going to go into every detail at this juncture regarding what theologians call the intermediate state, but I will say that most people, including most theologians, regard the present heaven as purely spiritual.

In other words, since our spirits go to be with the Lord, while our physical bodies remain in the earth, then we must conclude that our existence in the present heaven is therefore spiritual. Fair enough. But we have to ask ourselves more questions.

Is Jesus Christ presently in heaven with a physical body, albeit a resurrected glorified body? When He told the repentant thief on the cross, who acknowledged the Messiah who hung opposite him, that today he would be with Christ in paradise, what are we to understand of this paradise?

When Enoch and Elijah were physically taken into heaven by God without dying, were their bodies transformed into spirits as their bodies were discarded between earth and heaven?

When Moses and Elijah came down from heaven and appeared before the Lord Jesus on the Mount of transfiguration was Jesus transfigured into a spirit and were Moses and Elijah spirits? What did Peter think they were when he was willing to build them temporary physical shelters so that they might recline and spend some time on earth?

What about other things in the present heaven that defy explanation other than to say they must be physical in some sort of way? Consider the time in which Elisha and his servant were surrounded by an army of enemy soldiers together with their chariots and horses.

2 Kings 6:15-17 15 Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And ***the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.***

Were these real heavenly horses and mechanical chariots that presumably contained angels, or is this some sort of metaphor for God's power as Elisha employs poetic language that was never meant to be taken literally?

Is 2Kings a poetic book or a book of history?

Are heavenly chariots spiritual chariots, along with spiritual horses presumably mounted by spiritual angels?

I don't doubt for a moment that we can call anything that resides in the present heaven, spiritual. But the same can be said of resurrected physical bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ ***it is sown a natural body, it is raised a***

spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Paul has spent the better part of 1Corinthians 15 arguing for the resurrection of the physical body. For him to suddenly abandon the very nature of what a resurrection is by now redefining a resurrection as some sort of spiritual resurrection, as it applies to a physical body, only confounds his entire argument and the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection.

Simply because something or someone is spiritual does not negate a possible aspect of some form of physicality of that spiritual being; again, I go back to the present reign and rule of the bodily, albeit glorified body, of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father in the present heaven.

So, we need to be a bit more circumspect as to what the possibilities of a present heaven are as it relates to the physical realities of what we know to be true of the present heaven where animals, especially horses, are known to exist this very moment.

Another thing to consider is time which is a creation by God that He purposefully attached to physical matter that God has formed into the universe. In fact, the very saints who have died in Christ and are now present with him, are described as praising God in a time setting, which is necessarily a physical time/space/matter, setting.

Revelation 7:14-15 ¹⁴ I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "***These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*** ¹⁵ "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and ***they serve Him day and night in His temple***; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.

Time operates in a physical universe and heaven is a creation, not for God, but for creatures who were created to love and serve Him, including angels, heavenly horses, saints in heaven and seraphim and cherubim.

Revelation 8:1 NAU When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, ***there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.***

Silence in heaven for about a half hour presumes that time exists in the present heaven where patience, (a time reference), is actually needed for those slain saints mentioned in Revelation.

Revelation 6:9-10 ⁹ When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; ¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "***How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?***"

And what is the answer from the Lord?

Revelation 6:11 they were told that they should *rest for a little while longer*, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

“A little while longer” is a time issue, which again, operates in a physical universe that includes the present heaven.

But back to the issue of angels living in a physical universe.

Even if we assume that angels are purely spiritual, as Hebrews 1:14 certainly suggests, this doesn't negate the fact that angels are creatures that operate in heaven and on earth, and when they appear on earth, every indication is that they can possess certain physical qualities to the degree that they can eat and drink, touch and be touched, as we see the two angels who met with Abram and ended up in Lot's house.

They were not invisible, and they could be seen by all, including the townspeople, many of whom wanted to abuse them.

This does not make them human it simply reveals additional aspects of their nature that many assume cannot be physical in any way.

It seems to me that the present heaven is sounding more and more like a real vibrant place that has more of a physical presence than we might have imagined, with animals, people, angels, time, space, music, singing of praises and a throne on which a physical resurrected Jesus sits, a paradise that demonstrates a well-groomed garden which is what paradise means, and what the repentant thief would have understood.

Granted, if there are physical aspects to the present heaven they are not the ultimate physical expression of what the eternal heaven is to be like. But, having said that, why would we limit the present heaven to some unfamiliar, esoteric, or other-worldly existence, when the Scriptures sure seem to be painting a picture of a place that is more familiar, with people knowing and expecting the final culmination of what Christ came to secure in His own resurrection; the new heavens and the new earth?

So, back to the issue of seraphim with wings. I agree that it would be difficult to make a case for the existence of heavenly creatures with bizarre features if we only had symbolic language to describe them as having not only multiple wings but many faces and in some cases wheels for transportation.

But as it turns out we have the introduction of one class of heavenly creature, not in apocalyptic genre as in Ezekiel, Isaiah or Revelation, but in a section of Scripture that is historic narrative; the book of Genesis.

But before we go there I would like to delve a little further into the four living creatures scattered throughout the book of Revelation, that are arguably the same creatures found in the book of Isaiah, identified as seraphim.

So, let's go back to Revelation.

Revelation 4:6-9 ⁶ and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. ⁷ The first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures, *each one of them having six wings*, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." ⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

Here we are given a description of these four living creatures where each one looks a little different from the previous with the exception of each having multiple eyes in front and behind them, and we'll look into that in a moment.

One was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had a face like that of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. And then John goes on to describe each of these four creatures as having six wings.

What is interesting about each of these four living creatures is that the one thing that stands out for each is that they all have animal features like a lion, a calf, face of a man, and flying eagle. Each has 6 wings, with one set specifically for flying, according to Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:2 ² *Seraphim* stood above Him, *each having six wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and *with two he flew*.

Wait a minute. The third creature has a face of a man. How can that be an animal feature? If John is being consistent with animal features then a creature with that of a face of a man does not have to be any more mysterious than having a face similar to that of a chimpanzee or orangutan.

You'll notice that in each case John does not identify any of these animal features as an actual lion, an actual calf, an actual man or an actual eagle, but are similar or resembling known animals to John.

And so, for lack of a better description, John uses the only reference point he has which are animals he is familiar with and then transposes that understanding of animals onto the one's he has never seen before in trying to describe these heavenly creatures.

However, with creature number 3 he apparently has never seen an animal that has a face, "like that of a man." Again, notice that he does not say that this creature has a face that is in fact human, but rather a face that resembles a human face.

John may have never seen a chimpanzee, orangutan, or gorilla, but we know that these and other primates do in fact have a face that in some respects is like that of a man. And of course a heavenly animal that is able to speak and praise God is probably much more advanced as animals go, and whose face may appear more like a man's than an earthly animal, in light of the fact that they actually speak.

But as we look at all of these animal features that can be connected to the seraphim it is still promoted by many that these creatures are still some type of angel.

However, when we look at the actual word that John uses to identify these creatures he does not use the word that is usually associated with angels, which is the Greek word *aggelos*. Instead he uses the word *zoon* that is consistently used to identify these six winged creatures.

This Greek word is used in the NT to describe animals. In fact, the word *zoon* is where we get our English word zoo which is where we house animals.

So, why do all English translations not use the word animal when describing the seraphim in the book of Revelation? I believe it is because of a bias that assumes animals could not surround the throne of God and declare His praises day and night.

The only English translation that comes close is the KJV which describes these six winged creatures as beasts.

^{KJV} **Revelation 4:6** And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were four beasts* full of eyes before and behind.

But how can we be so sure that they may not in fact be angels? One reason is the clear distinction John makes when including this group of beasts/creatures/animals with two other classes of beings who simultaneously surround the throne to praise God; angels, and elders who are presumably human beings.

Revelation 5:11-12 ¹¹ Then I looked, and *I heard the voice of many angels* around the throne *and the living creatures and the elders*; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Revelation 7:11 ¹¹ And *all the angels* were standing around the throne and *around the elders and the four living creatures*; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

Revelation 15:7 ⁷ Then *one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels* seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

And so, when John describes these four living creatures he is clearly distinguishing them from angels and the elders and because the word used is *zoon* it is also clear that he is describing animals who happen to have wings and resemble other known animals that John tries to describe from his own experience with animals.

But what about the other strange description of these heavenly animals?

SERAPHIM FULL OF EYES IN FRONT AND BEHIND

Revelation 4:6 ⁶ and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, ***four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.***

If we were to take just the words that John uses to describe these four living creatures we would conclude that these beasts had multiple eyes dotting their bodies both in front and behind. But, despite what John sees in this vision, is this what the Holy Spirit is communicating as if to give an actual description of these beasts?

Keeping the context in mind we could ask the same question of the Holy Spirit Himself, along with the Son of God, as John also describes them in a previous verse in language that must not be taken literally.

Revelation 4:1-5 ^{NAU} After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and ***One sitting on the throne.*** ³ And ***He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance;*** and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And ***there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;***

One of the first things to notice in this vision of heaven is that someone is sitting on a throne, but the one sitting on it doesn't apparently look like a normal person but rather appears as a precious stone, jasper or sardius.

We know who is sitting on this throne as only a few verses later all of the creatures, and elders worship this One sitting on the throne.

Revelation 4:9-11 ⁹ *And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne,* to Him who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will *worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,* ¹¹ *"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God,* to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

The One sitting on the throne is the Lord God who lives forever and ever.

In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar addresses this same One who lives forever and ever in the same context of a King who rules a Kingdom from His throne.

^{NAU} **Daniel 4:34** "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and *I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever*; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.

The One who is the Most High who lives forever and whose Kingdom is an everlasting dominion is the same One spoken of to Mary the mother of Jesus who was given these words by an angel.

Luke 1:31-33 ³¹ "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and *you shall name Him Jesus.* ³² *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;* ³³ *and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."*

So, the point is that what John sees in Revelation 4, as he describes the One sitting on the throne as a jasper stone, is not a Son of God that literally looks like a costly stone but rather is relaying the glory of the One sitting on the throne.

SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD

The same can be said of the seven spirits of God who stand before the throne.

Revelation 4:5 And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the *seven Spirits of God*;

This same description is found in the very beginning of this revelation.

Revelation 1:4 ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from *the seven Spirits who are before His throne*,

The question is, what are these seven spirits?

As I have already implied, I believe these seven spirits are the Holy Spirit, which is why some translations capitalize the word Spirit.

But simply because a translation capitalizes a word it does not necessarily define that word in the context any more than a translation that refuses to identify an animal when the word *zoon* is clearly used to identify that creature.

So, how do we know that John is using symbolic language to describe a real person, called the Spirit of God?

Like anything else that needs further clarification we must first acknowledge that Scripture often uses symbolic language to describe spiritual realities. And we need to be astute enough to distinguish these uses of symbolic language when the context makes it clear.

And as we have already demonstrated the context of Rev.4 is a vision of heaven where John is shown the throne of God, and Jesus Christ on that throne, in very symbolic language, describing Christ as if He were like a jasper stone or sardius.

Jesus Christ is neither, but His appearance regarding His glory is something John describes in this way. In that same immediate context is where John goes on to describe this throne room experience as he explains what he sees in the way of seven lamps and then he associates these seven lamps as the seven spirits of God.

Notice what John does here. He goes from describing what he “sees” in this vision to “identifying” what he sees.

He sees seven lamps, but he identifies them as the seven spirits of God. How does he know they are the seven spirits of God? Did he arrive at that conclusion on his own or did Christ reveal it to him?

The context doesn't tell us. John seems to know with certainty that these seven lamps are in fact the seven spirits of God.

Interestingly enough what John sees in other portions of this Revelation he "sees" but does not know. And then the Lord reveals what he "sees" as that explanation is then made clear to John.

Revelation 7:13-14 ¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "*These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?*" ¹⁴ I said to him, "*My lord, you know.*" And he said to me, "*These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*"

In another portion of this Revelation John is told in advance what the definition is of what he sees, and is then given the symbolic picture that represents them.

Revelation 11:3-4 ³ "And I will grant *authority to my two witnesses*, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.*

And so, when John needs an explanation of what he "sees" the Lord is the One who provides the answer. But in our text, (John 4:5), John does not appear to need an explanation, but simply states that what he sees in the seven lamps is, in fact, the seven spirits of God.

One of two explanations may come into play here. Either the Lord reveals it to John, as John understands with spiritual eyes that which he sees with his physical eyes, or John already had a grasp of what these seven lamps were from prior biblical experience.

Keep in mind that when we see the English word, lamp, in the context of John writing this revelation, which we usually visualize as some ornate vessel that accommodates oil which in turn, when lit, produces light.

But, the Greek word *lampas* can also be translated torch, akin to a handheld stick with flammable material on one end which is then lit on fire to produce light.

This is something with which John would have been familiar within his culture and within his study of the OT Scriptures.

This would have been a vivid picture in the mind of John as he recounted the covenant that God made with Israel's founding father, if you will, Abram, as the Lord used this same imagery.

Genesis 15:17-18 ¹⁷ It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, *there appeared* a smoking oven and *a flaming torch which passed between these pieces*. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

But John would have also been familiar with a number of prophetic passages that deal with Israel's future as God revealed them to Isaiah.

Isaiah 62:1-2 ^{NAU} For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, And *her salvation like a torch that is burning*. ² The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the LORD will designate.

The prophet Zechariah also gives a picture of a future Israel that is reconciled to God and magnified His name.

Zechariah 12:6-10 ⁶ "In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and *a flaming torch among sheaves*, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem. ⁷ "The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah. ⁸ "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David *will be* like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. ⁹ "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ "*I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication*, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

And so, when John sees these seven lamps, he may have instinctively known, from his study of Scripture, that it was associated with the Spirit of God who illumined the hearts and minds of the saints in the past and was now about to illumine the hearts and minds of God's people whom John addresses in this revelation.

Keep in mind also, that it was not far in the distant past that the very ministry of the Holy Spirit was revealed to John with fire.

Luke 3:16 ¹⁶ John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but *One is coming who is mightier than I*, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire* .

Acts 2:1-4 ^{NAU} When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And *there appeared to them tongues as of fire* distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

But let's suppose that John does not understand that these seven lamps were lights to illumine men's hearts. How might he make the connection that seven lamps are seven spirits before the throne and how do we arrive at the conclusion that seven spirits are One Holy Spirit?

Well, we need to go back to chapter one and three of Revelation to get a sense of what John understood of these images and their connection to spiritual realities.

Revelation 1:4-6 ⁴ John *to the seven churches* that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, *and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne*, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood-- ⁶ and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father-- to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Here John uses the number seven for the church and for the spirits who are before His throne.

We know that angels, seraphim, (6 winged animals), and elders, surround the throne of God to declare His praises, but in Revelation 1:4 we have a different group who are before the throne of God, namely the seven spirits.

If John is using this number to describe seven literal spirits then who are these spirits? And what is the connection of the seven churches which is later described as seven lampstands?

And a further related question is what of the seven stars? Are they separate from the seven spirits?

Revelation 1:20 ²⁰ "As for the mystery of the *seven stars* which you saw in My right hand, and the *seven golden lampstands*: the *seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

If stars are used to define angels then why confuse the issue by utilizing the word spirits for angels unless the spirits are to be defining someone or something else?

In fact, John makes a clear distinction between the seven stars, (angels), and the seven spirits.

Revelation 3:1 ^{NAU} "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: *He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars*, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'

So, if the seven stars are not the equivalent of the seven spirits what are the seven spirits?

We know that the seven spirits are depicted as seven lamps of fire.

Revelation 4:5 ⁵ Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were seven lamps of fire* burning before the throne, *which are the seven Spirits of God*;

But this isn't the only depiction of the seven spirits of God.

Revelation 5:6 ⁶ And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having *seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God*, sent out into all the earth.

Here seven horns and seven eyes are an integral part of the slain Lamb, and then we are told that these seven horns and seven eyes that are inseparable from the slain Lamb are identified as the seven spirits of God.

SEVEN HORNS, SEVEN EYES

All throughout Scripture horns are symbols for power and authority.

Psalm 75:10 ¹⁰ And all the horns of the wicked He will cut off, *But* the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.

Here we have a comparison between the power and authority of the wicked whom God will cut off, and the power and authority of those who belong to God.

We get the same sense of power and authority when the Lord reveals to Daniel the four kingdoms that will rise up over the earth during all of history and within that fourth kingdom Daniel is shown this vision.

Daniel 7:24-25 ²⁴ 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. ²⁵ 'He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

And so, ten horns are associated with ten kings which clearly marks the power and authority each of those kings possess.

And so, when the Lamb of God in Revelation 5:6, who is Jesus Christ, is inextricably linked, with having seven horns and seven eyes, which is identified as the seven spirits of God, we know that the seven spirits identify an all-encompassing power and authority that is sent out into all the earth.

This is a similar description of Christ and the Spirit given to Zechariah.

Zechariah 3:7-9 ⁷ "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing *here*. ⁸

'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you-- indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, ***I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.*** ⁹ 'For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; ***on one stone are seven eyes.*** Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

Here, the Branch, Jesus Christ, is identified with a stone that has seven eyes, again a picture of an omniscient God who knows the hearts and minds of people.

This is a function of the work of the Holy Spirit as God the Father and God the Son work in concert to accomplish His will.

Isaiah 63:11-12 ¹¹ Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? ***Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,*** ¹² ***Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name,***

The Spirit of God always works intimately with the Son to accomplish the Father's will.

Matthew 1:20-21 ²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for ***the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*** ²¹ "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Matthew 3:11 ¹¹ "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; ***He (Jesus Christ) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

Here the fire is associated with the Spirit, who, as we have seen, is also identified as a lamp of fire. (**Revelation 4:5**)

And of course, it is the Spirit of God who came upon the disciples as He was depicted in tongues of fire, as we saw earlier.

Acts 2:3-4 ³ And there appeared to them ***tongues as of fire*** distributing themselves, ***and they rested on each one of them.*** ⁴ ***And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Regarding the power of the Spirit who is given to God's people Peter makes the connection as the prophet Joel foretold this work of the Spirit in the latter days.

Acts 2:14-17 ¹⁴ But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. ¹⁵ "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;

Here again, we see the Lord Jesus working with the Spirit, who is sent out into all the world to accomplish with power and wisdom and strength as He sees all, (seven eyes).

So, the seven horns and the seven eyes and the seven spirits all speak to one thing that is united to the Lamb, which is actually one person, the Holy Spirit, who is all powerful as He works in the lives of God's people, opening their eyes as He takes the heart of stone and converts it into a heart of flesh.

The seven eyes are sent out into all the world as the Spirit is sent out, as Joel prophesied, wherein He works on all mankind from every corner of the earth.

We also see this illumining aspect of the Holy Spirit in the very temple that Moses was to construct when, in conjunction with the Ark of the Covenant, there was to be a lampstand around the throne with seven bowls for seven lamps.

^{NAU} **Exodus 25:37** "Then you shall make its lamps seven *in number*; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it.

This is the same image that Zechariah sees in a vision which interestingly enough is a vision of a copy of the temple that Moses constructed.

Zechariah 4:2 ² He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;

And so, the lampstand that is constructed by Moses for the tabernacle, and acknowledged by Zechariah, and then identified

metaphorically in John's revelation as the church, (Revelation 1:20), is illumined by the seven lamps, or Holy Spirit, as He is a light for her path and a lamp to her feet as He reveals God's word to His people.

And then we have the multiplicity of the work of the Spirit that Isaiah is shown where seven different things demonstrate the work of the Spirit.

Isaiah 11:2-3 ² The *Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him*, The *spirit of wisdom* and *understanding*, The spirit of *counsel* and *strength*, The spirit of *knowledge* and the *fear of the LORD*. ³ And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

Here the Spirit of the Lord accomplishes seven things: resting on Christ as He empowers Him for service; administering wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear of the Lord.

All seven aspects of the Spirit's work are seen in the seven horns and the seven eyes who make up the complete and perfect work of the Spirit as seen in the designation, seven spirits around the throne.

The point to all of this, as we continue to identify these six winged animals around the throne, is that much symbolic language is being used to describe them, but like the images of seven horns and seven eyes for the Holy Spirit, it does not negate the fact that the Holy Spirit is one real person who makes up the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit does not have seven literal horns or seven literal eyes or is a composite of seven spirits. He is one of three persons in the Godhead and thus inseparable from the Father and the Son.

The Lamb who sits upon the throne as if slain is a real person who also makes up the Godhead. And in like manner the winged creatures who are full of eyes in front and behind are creatures that are being described in symbolic language but are none the less real animals around the throne of God.

And so, John is not necessarily describing what the four living creatures literally look like when he sees them with multiple eyes, just as he is not describing what the Spirit of God looks like, (as if seven lamps could describe Him), but rather is describing part of the function of the seraphim around the throne of God which is to

give glory as the eyes see clearly the beauty and majesty of the One they worship.

In this sense these creatures are described as “all seeing” as they are in a unique position to view the glory of God up close and personal, if you will, as they declare His praises, with full understanding of His majesty, as they witness it day and night.

By the way, when we come to the Cherubim we will see that these living creatures also possess some of the same characteristics as Ezekiel describes them in the same way.

Ezekiel 10:12 ¹² Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were *full of eyes all around*, the wheels belonging to all four of them.

We'll address the Cherubim a little later, but back to the Seraphim in Revelation.

John continues to describe these living creatures, as we have already seen, by showing how each one had different faces.

Again, is the Holy Spirit trying to convey to John that these creatures were specific animals like a lion or an eagle?

In light of the fact that these creatures are identified as animals, with the designation *zoon*, I don't think John excludes the idea that they are in a class of heavenly animals, but in choosing four descriptions of different animals; lion, calf, man (primate?), eagle, John is describing what I believe is an all-inclusive group of diverse heavenly animals that represents all Seraphim in and around the throne of God.

Remember, we know that horses, (a fifth animal), are also utilized in the Kingdom of God in the present heaven, as they pull chariots, as we saw with Elijah being transported to heaven by such beings, which could be part of the Seraphim described in this text or possibly Cherubim as we will see in a moment.

And though John seems to see only four of these living creatures around the throne in chapter 4, he sees myriads of them in chapter 5.

Revelation 5:11-12 ¹¹ Then I looked, and *I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and*

thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

So, again, what is being described in symbolic language is addressing realities that are seen in imagery that doesn't necessarily depict their actual form in only four types of animals, but a form that could include every heavenly animal from every corner of heaven.

The number 4 is often used in this way.

In fact, when Ezekiel describes the entire area, of which the Lord rules His people, he uses this imagery.

Ezekiel 7:2 ² "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on *the four corners of the land*.

Later Ezekiel will also use this same imagery when describing one of the courts in the temple area when describing the entire area.

Ezekiel 46:21-22 ²¹ Then he brought me out into the outer court and led me across to the *four corners of the court*; and behold, in every corner of the court *there was a small court*. ²² In the four corners of the court *there were* enclosed courts, forty *cubits* long and thirty wide; these four in the corners *were* the same size.

And finally, we see the Lord using this same number 4 to describe the entire earth.

Revelation 7:1 ^{NAU} After this *I saw four angels* standing at the *four corners of the earth*, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

Here, the entire earth is being represented by the number 4, along with the heavenly host of angels being represented by four angels.

And so, when we have four seraphim being represented in the inner court around the throne of God, I believe what John is actually being shown is a limited picture of something much bigger with a much larger group of angels, people and animals all around the throne, all giving glory to God.

Another thing I want to mention about the description of the seraphim has to do with what we normally think of as a human characteristic, that of hands and feet, and then we'll move to part of their function around the throne.

Isaiah 6:2,6 ^{NAU} ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two *he covered his feet*, and with two he flew. ⁶ Then one of the *seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand*, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.

This is the only place in Scripture where seraphim are described as having feet and hands.

By definition feet and hands are used for grasping and walking.

We usually use the term hands and feet for any type of being, be they human or animal, which necessarily means to walk and grasp.

For example, when we speak of a lion an eagle or a calf, those animals are not usually described as having feet or hands, but rather, paws.

However, when we speak of chimps or gorillas or humans, they all possess the ability to grasp because of an opposing thumb on their hands and they all can walk because of feet that are attached to legs that can stand upright.

My point is that simply because the seraphim are depicted with hands and feet it does not necessarily remove them from their creaturely status as being animals, as John clearly points out as he uses the term *zoon* to describe them.

But there is something interesting in this passage in Isaiah that is worth noting regarding one of the functions of the seraphim relating to hands.

Isaiah 6:6-7 ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

This particular seraph flew to John in this vision with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

What altar, and where is it situated in this vision?

And a related question is, what is an altar used for in the context of standing before the Lord?

To the last question first, an altar was a device that was constructed, usually from the things of the earth, to worship before God with an offering that was specifically designed to honor the Lord in His presence.

We see this early on with the first mention of an altar when Noah disembarked from the ark and then proceeded to thank and worship the Lord with burnt offerings.

Genesis 8:18-20 ¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark. ²⁰ Then *Noah built an altar to the LORD*, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Abram is also one who built an altar to the Lord out of thanks and praise for the covenant the Lord made with him.

Genesis 12:7-8 ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So *he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him*. ⁸ Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there *he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD*.

But when we come to Moses we see that the Lord Himself instructs him as to how to build an altar and what that altar is to be used for.

Exodus 20:24-26 ²⁴ *'You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen;* in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵ *'If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. ²⁶ 'And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.'*

This altar was to be the focal point for Moses and Israel to approach God in a way that acknowledged their need to be

reconciled according to God's prescription, which was through burnt offerings and peace offerings, which necessitated the slaughter of sheep and oxen.

And so, throughout redemptive history we see this same pattern of a blood offering from God's people so as to appease His wrath and enter into His presence in peace, going back as far as Adam and Eve, along with Cain and Abel.

Genesis 3:21 ²¹ *The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife*, and clothed them.

Genesis 4:3-5 ³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ *Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;* ⁵ *but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.* So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Therefore, when we see an altar in scripture that is directly tied to the worship of God the explicit meaning is that it is the means by which we enter into His presence so as to be pleasing and acceptable.

And so, when a seraph goes to this altar to extract a burning coal it is directly tied to the altars we see in all of Scripture where God's people take stone or wood, start a fire on it, and then burn an innocent victim, (animal), so as to appease God's wrath.

To answer the first question I raised, regarding the place of this particular altar in Isaiah, we see that it is in the context of a heavenly setting around the throne of God, which begs the question, why do we need an altar of sacrifice in heaven around the throne of God?

And the Lord actually answers this question when instructing Moses to build a tabernacle on earth for the specific purpose of God dwelling with Israel.

Exodus 25:8-9 ⁸ "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ "According to all that I am going to show you, *as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture*, just so you shall construct it.

What God is showing Moses is that He already has a pattern in mind for him to construct this Sanctuary.

Now, was this pattern simply in God's mind, or was the pattern something that actually existed of which Moses simply copied?

When making an argument for the need of a High priest after the order of Melchizedek, found in Jesus Christ, the writer of Hebrews writes this.

Hebrews 8:4-6 ⁴ Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; ⁵ who serve *a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle;* for, "SEE," He says, "**THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.**" ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

Does making a copy of heavenly things, which served as a shadow, necessarily mean that the copy was of a literal sanctuary in heaven?

Again, this raises the whole issue of a heavenly setting that has physical aspects to it, be it the resurrected physical body of Jesus Christ, physical chariots and horses that extracted the physical body of Elijah, along with a physical throne in the midst of a physical garden that the crucified Jesus promised the thief as He mentioned a Paradise to which both of them were destined.

Is it possible that there is a physical sanctuary in heaven that is meant to be used as a pattern for Moses as he builds this sanctuary on earth, along with all of the accoutrements that support it?

And the answer must be, it is certainly possible. Nothing would prevent it unless we think that the present heaven can only be spiritual in nature, with absolutely no aspect of physicality, which we know is not the case, even if Jesus Christ is the only physical thing in the present heaven.

But assuming that this vision with the seraph plucking the hot coal from the altar is just a vision, it does tell us something of the importance of being reconciled to God so as to enter into His presence, as only that which has touched the drippings of blood, so as to forgive sin.

And the irony here is that it is a heavenly animal that participates in a heavenly picture of a sacrifice of innocent victims, (earthly animals as Moses would have employed this pattern), which all points to the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 6:7 ⁷ He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

Here, the seraph is part of the means by which God brings salvation to Isaiah in this vision, which is to say that the seraph is a representative before God and men as he brings the good news of salvation to men.

And so, what we have seen in these passages in Isaiah and Revelation regarding the seraphim, these heavenly animals, is that they not only worship before God around His throne in the present heaven, but they participate and glory in the salvation of men whom the Father has given to the Son for salvation.

And so, from God's perspective His special creatures, the seraphim, play an important role in declaring His greatness. But again, it should not go unnoticed that these seraphim are not human beings, they are not angels, they are quite clearly described as *zoon*, animals. But they are heavenly animals with a purpose as they surround the throne of God and declare His glory.

A little later in this study we will compare and contrast the functions of the seraphim and the cherubim.

CHERUBIM

The other class of creature that is described around the throne of God are Cherubim.

One of the things that distinguishes the cherubim from the seraphim in Scripture is the number of wings each has and their function around the throne of God. As noted earlier the seraphim have six wings, but the cherubim have only four. The book of Ezekiel goes into some detail regarding the description of the cherubim.

But I think it's important to first deal with cherubim in an area of scripture that is not apocalyptic or prophetic in nature, but is part

of an historic narrative as found in books like Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles.

We also see cherubim being addressed in two of the Psalms as well as one passage in Isaiah.

And of course we will spend some time in the most controversial passages found in Ezekiel, with one last direct reference found in Hebrews 9:5.

And so, we need to consider God's perspective on the Cherubim as revealed in His word, and by extension, the Seraphim, as not being mythical characters or mere metaphors for some other spiritual reality, but as real beings with a real function around His throne.

And the first place where God mentions the Cherubim is in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 3:22-24 ²² Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "-- ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden ***He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.***

We need to keep in mind that this is not poetic or prophetic language that utilizes symbolism, but is historic narrative of real events in redemptive history.

And so, when Moses records this particular incident he is describing an historical account, which is to say, that these creatures called Cherubim were literally stationed outside of the Garden of Eden to stand guard so as to protect the integrity of the Tree of life.

By the way, this real event in history will be played out in symbolism as Moses will be charged by God to depict this historical event when constructing the ark of the covenant which, as we will see, is a picture of the first earthly Tabernacle where God met with His people, namely the Garden of Eden, where He walked in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve many times before that day of rebellion.

G.K. Beale in his book, "A New Testament Biblical Theology" makes the case that Moses' tabernacle, where God met with His people, is in fact a copy of the Tabernacle where God met with Adam and Eve and by extension a copy of the eternal Kingdom to come that encompasses the entire universe.

"Although the patriarchs constructed no buildings, [their] sacred spaces can be considered to be sanctuaries along the lines comparable to the first nonarchitectural sanctuary in the garden of Eden, particularly because a tree is often present at these sites." (pg.625)

"Psalm 78:69 says something amazing about Israel's temple: God 'built the sanctuary like the heights, [he built the sanctuary] like the earth which He has founded forever.'" This tells us that in some way God modeled the temple to be a little replica of the entire heaven and earth. Yet, in Isa.66:1 God says, "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me?" God never intended that Israel's little localized temple last forever, since, like the Eden temple, Israel's temple was a small model of something much bigger: God and His universal presence, which could never eternally be contained by any localized earthly structure." (pg. 627)

And so, when God introduces the cherubim in the garden after man's rebellion He is introducing a spiritual reality that will be played out in redemptive history until Moses is commanded to make a model of this spiritual reality that points to sin, separation from God, punishment, and the plan instituted by the Creator to reconcile man back to God as was promised in the garden.

In fact, as we take a closer look at what the cherubim were charged with we notice that their role is identical to the role of the priests in Israel, which included guarding the sanctuary, the altar and the mercy seat together with all of the articles that were contained in the ark of the covenant upon which the mercy seat was placed.

This is the first mention, outside of the Genesis account, (where the real cherubim were first stationed on earth), where we are given a glimpse into part of the cherubim's role, as Moses is given instructions to make a copy of that Edenic scene, where God originally met with His people, Adam and Eve.

Exodus 25:17-22 ¹⁷ "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. ¹⁸ "You shall *make two cherubim of gold*, make them of hammered work

at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ "Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of *one piece* with the mercy seat at its two ends. ²⁰ "***The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat.*** ²¹ "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²² "***There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.***

Since the cherubim were stationed at the entrance to Eden, as they stood guard to keep people from having access to the tree of life, it stands to reason that the pattern that Moses was given would mimic this scene at Eden.

And so, the mercy seat, together with the Ark of the Covenant, which the two golden cherubim are to cover or protect, stand as symbols of that original sanctuary in the Garden.

And the writer of Hebrews makes mention that this Ark was contained in the tabernacle called the Holy of holies and in this Ark were articles that represented the first earthly tabernacle, again which was the Edenic Garden where God met with His people.

Hebrews 9:3-5 ³ Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, ⁴ having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a ***golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant;*** ⁵ and ***above it were the cherubim of glory*** overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

As to the significance of the articles that were placed in the Ark of the Covenant they too would have depicted that first holy sanctuary where the bread of life sustained Adam and Eve in a garden that budded continually and where the word of the Lord set out the requirements of man's existence before God.

And so, when the Cherubim are assigned to guard the garden it is a clear picture that men no longer have access to any of these things that formerly were theirs in the presence of God.

No longer did they have access to the trees and the fruit of the Garden, nor the life that they had in the One who sustained them in the garden, nor the words of comfort they experienced as the Lord walked among them in the cool of the day.

All of these things were gone as God expelled them from this most holy sanctuary and in like manner in the pattern given to Moses, they are hid in the ark from the eyes of all.

Genesis 3:23-24 ²³ therefore *the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.* ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Man was to now work the ground by the sweat of his brow and suffer the curse of the ground that would never yield the same bounty that God provided in His special sanctuary for them.

And if they yearned for those glory days and were tempted to sneak back to the garden with its tree of life they would be met by God's soldiers, the cherubim, who guarded the entrance with a flaming sword.

By the way, this sword was meant to be a real deterrent and if anyone tried to approach the holy of holies in the garden they would be met with force and their lives would be in jeopardy.

This was no empty threat and the picture Moses was given, as he made copies of this original earthly holy of holies, with the ark and mercy seat in place in Israel, made sure that this threat was to be taken seriously.

Numbers 4:15 ¹⁵ "When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy *objects* and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die.* These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

^{NAU} **Numbers 1:51** "So when *the tabernacle is to set out*, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up. But *the layman who comes near shall be put to death.*

^{NAU} **Numbers 4:19-20** "But do this to them that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy *objects*: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his work and to his load; 20 ***but they shall not go in to see the holy objects even for a moment, or they will die.***"

2 Samuel 6:3-9 ³ They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart. ⁴ So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark. ⁵ Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of *instruments made of fir wood*, and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets and cymbals. ⁶ But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, ***Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it.*** ⁷ ***And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.*** ⁸ David became angry because of the LORD'S outburst against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. ⁹ ***So David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"***

God was serious when He stationed the cherubim at the entrance to the Garden with the flaming sword. To breach the Holy of holies without permission one must die.

This was also the picture that God painted for Moses and Israel, before they were given the pattern of the tabernacle, as God used a mountain to demonstrate His holiness and His heavenly tabernacle that previously came down to earth many years before, for Adam and Eve.

And now that holy mountain was again a place that represented the presence of the Lord that was off limits for man with the exception of one man who stood between God and men.

Exodus 19:9-12 ⁹ The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. ¹⁰ The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; ¹¹ and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² ***"You shall***

set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.

Moses was commissioned by God to approach the Lord on the holy mountain with the promise that God would allow access through a faith system of sacrifice where an innocent victim would be used to show how atonement through blood would allow entrance to the mountain, the tabernacle, a copy of the original Paradise Garden.

It is this mountain that God has purchased for His people through a perfect and sinless One who would dare approach the flaming sword of the cherubim, if you will, knowing that the sword of God's wrath would slay Him.

But death would not bind Him to the grave as He rose bodily and entered into the Holy of holies in victory through His sacrifice that was well pleasing to the Father.

Hebrews 1:3 ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. *When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

Ephesians 5:2 ² and walk in love, just as *Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

Hebrews 10:12-14 ¹² *but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,* ¹³ waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

What Adam was promised, if he rebelled, was death, which was both spiritual and eventually physical. But the promise of death was reinforced after he was cast out of the Holy of holies where God met with him and Eve before their rebellion.

The picture of death and judgment was seen in the flaming sword that accompanied the cherubim which I'm sure Adam and his family saw frequently as they would revisit the entrance to their original home in the Garden. And it was then that he saw the deterrent that God placed there to remind him of that penalty, "in the day you eat of the fruit you will surely die."

And now death stares him in the face each time he approaches the cherubim who will not be moved.

But we are told that it will be Christ Himself who will fall on that sword for His people as He takes the penalty for sin and dies on the cross for you and me. But the grave will not hold Him and He will rise to defeat death to restore us to a Paradise lost as we look forward to that future new heavens and new earth.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "**DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.**" ⁵⁵ "**O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"** ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ **but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

This is the prize that Christ purchased for us so as to reinstate His people to the new Mount Zion where Paradise is in fact restored in all its glory.

Hebrews 12:18-26 ¹⁸ For you have not come to *a mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, ¹⁹ and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED." ²¹ And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling." ²² But **you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,** ²³ **to the general assembly and church of the firstborn** who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel. ²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. ²⁶ And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."

BACK TO THE CHERUBIM FOUND IN EXODUS

Moses was also given instructions to utilize depictions of cherubim not just on top of the mercy seat but also in a setting surrounding the tabernacle as seen in the curtains that hung around the tabernacle.

Exodus 26:1 ^{NAU} "Moreover you shall *make the tabernacle with ten curtains* of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet material; *you shall make them with cherubim*, the work of a skillful workman.

Exodus 36:8 ⁸ All the skillful men among those who were performing the work *made the tabernacle with ten curtains*; of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet material, *with cherubim*, the work of a skillful workman, Bezalel made them.

Numbers 7:89 ⁸⁹ Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from *between the two cherubim*, so He spoke to him.

And so, as those very real cherubim were there to guard the way to the tree of life, the depiction of the cherubim carved to sit atop the mercy seat in the Moses' sanctuary tell the story of life, death and reconciliation as God institutes the means back to the garden sanctuary.

And so, it is very important that we don't lose sight of this historical event with historical figures called the Cherubim.

And by the way, what is interesting about the event at the entrance to the Garden, where the Cherubim guard the way to the tree of life, is that it is usually depicted in art as a single angel armed with a flaming sword. But the word cherubim is the plural form of cherub.

If this were a single creature then the word cherub would have been used, but instead we are told "the cherubim" were stationed at the east of the Garden of Eden, which means there were at least two and probably a host of them as the flaming sword accompanied them in power to keep everyone out.

And these Cherubim were stationed at the east entrance to the garden until the garden no longer existed, presumably destroyed during the flood.

Now, you might remember that we previously established that the seraphim were heavenly animals.

These six winged creatures were clearly identified in Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:2-3 ² *Seraphim* stood above Him, *each having six wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

It is these identical creatures, in the identical location, (that of heaven around God's throne), in an identical vision given to John many years later.

Revelation 4:8 ⁸ And the four *living creatures, each one of them having six wings*, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

As was noted earlier, the four *living creatures* with six wings are all described with one word in the Greek, which is *zoon*, which is the common Greek word for animal. Thus John has identified the seraphim as animals that surround the throne to declare God's praises day and night.

Well, what is interesting is that we get the same description of the Cherubim with the same designation for animal, both in Hebrew and in Greek, as found in the Septuagint.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's vision we read this.

Ezekiel 1:4-6 ⁴ As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. ⁵ Within it there were *figures resembling four living beings*. And this was their appearance: they had human form. ⁶ *Each of them had four faces and four wings*.

Here Ezekiel simply identifies the cherubim as four *living beings*, not unlike how John describes four *living beings* in Revelation associated with the seraphim.

In the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible, the phrase “living being” is the same word for “living being” in the New Testament, *zoon*.

But here in Ezekiel in the Hebrew bible he uses a Hebrew term for living beings which is *chayyah*. *Chayyah* simply means animal.

It is not the typical Hebrew word that is used for animal which is *behemah*. But it is the identical word that is used to describe the beasts of the field that God created on day six.

Genesis 1:29-30 ²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; ³⁰ and to every *beast* of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food"; and it was so.

In fact, it is the identical word that is associated with the serpent in the Garden that is identified with Satan.

Genesis 3:1 ^{NAU} Now the *serpent* was more crafty than any *beast* of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?"

It's the same word used for the beasts who disembarked from the ark after the flood.

Genesis 8:19 ¹⁹ Every *beast*, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

And so, *chayyah* carries an identification that is necessarily associated with beasts of the field, that is, animals.

It is these *chayyah*, “living beings” in Ezekiel 1:6, that are clearly identified as cherubim later in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 10:15 ¹⁵ Then *the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings (chayyah) that I saw by the river Chebar.*

And so, despite the fact that these living beings, these heavenly animals, are found in the context of apocalyptic revelation, and therefore rife with symbolic language, the language makes clear that what Ezekiel sees are animals with wings, four in this case.

So, how do we move from visions of animals that may or may not be symbolic of something else, to real beings that surround the throne in heaven declaring the praises of God?

With cherubim we actually have an advantage in making a determination because as mentioned earlier these creatures first show up on the scene in history as taking their stand at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, as God has placed them there to keep men from entering the garden and gaining access to the tree of life.

But when we are first introduced to the cherubim we are not told what they look like.

^{NAU} **Genesis 3:24** So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

So, what makes us think that we can assume that what is seen in symbolic language in Ezekiel, describing creatures with wings, can be used to determine that these creatures actually have wings or that they exist at all?

This is where we must return to portions of Scripture where symbolic language is generally not used and where historic narrative is utilized to describe these heavenly creatures. For this we return to the Pentateuch.

Exodus 25:18-20 ¹⁸ *"You shall make two cherubim of gold,* make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat.
¹⁹ *"Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. ²⁰ "The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward,* covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be *turned* toward the mercy seat.

The book of Exodus is certainly historic narrative but it sure looks to me that we are reentering the realm of symbolism as Moses is commanded to create little statues of beings with wings. What gives a statue the status of representing a real creature?

Only as that statue truly represents the original creature which, according to the text in Genesis, related to Eden as the cherubim guard the way to life, where now these statues of cherubim do the

same as they stand guard over the mercy seat which is the seat of life, as was the tree of life.

Keep in mind that Moses is commanded to make a true representation of the sanctuary of God with those parts of the sanctuary that would represent God's presence as found, for example, in the Ark of the Covenant.

Exodus 25:1-9 ^{NAU} Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. ³ "This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, ⁴ blue, purple and scarlet *material*, fine linen, goat *hair*, ⁵ rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, ⁶ oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁷ onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. ⁸ ***"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.*** ⁹ "According to all that I am going to show you, ***as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.***

As was pointed out earlier, the pattern that Moses is shown is a pattern of an existing Sanctuary that God wants represented on the earth to encourage Israel to know that God dwells among His people.

Hebrews 8:3-5 ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer. ⁴ Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; ⁵ who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as ***Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle;*** for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU ***MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.***"

Notice that the writer of Hebrews includes things like gifts and sacrifices in the context of the Tabernacle as those things that are copies and shadows of heavenly things. But in that same context he also includes the priests themselves as those who offer the gifts according to the law.

It is these men who also serve as copies and shadows of heavenly things, which is to say that real live human beings are being utilized to show heavenly realities, like a mediator who ministers before the throne, and is also the one to offer sacrifices in the

tabernacle, which is a copy of the true tabernacle and the true sacrifice who is Christ.

And so, simply because there are copies and shadows in the earthly representation that Moses is commanded to construct, it does not negate the fact that there are real heavenly aspects to what the copies and shadows represent.

Cherubim are used by the Lord to show how access to God was something to be limited until the time that God deemed it appropriate to approach Him in the way He revealed it.

And we know when that appropriate time was.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 ⁵ For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the man Christ Jesus*, ⁶ *who gave Himself as a ransom* for all, the testimony *given at the proper time*.

Hebrews 1:1-2 ^{NAU} God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son*, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Entrance into the Garden was guarded by the Cherubim and entrance into the Holy of holies in the temple, constructed by Moses and Solomon, was guarded in a symbolic way by the Cherubim whose wings cover the mercy seat above which God sat enthroned.

But the function of guarding or protecting the temple during the time of Moses, and national Israel onward, was seen in one particular group that God chose out from among the 12 tribes of Israel and that would be the Levites.

It is within that group, where a smaller group, the priests and the high priest, would be given special access to the inner sanctuary as they guarded that from the rest of the nation as they served at the pleasure of the Lord.

Numbers 3:6-8 ⁶ *"Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.* ⁷ *"They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle.* ⁸ *"They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.*

Numbers 18:1-8 ^{NAU} So the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood. ² "But *bring with you also your brothers, the tribe of Levi*, the tribe of your father, *that they may be joined with you and serve you, while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony.* ³ "And they shall thus attend to your obligation and the obligation of all the tent, but they shall not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die. ⁴ "They shall be joined with you and attend to the obligations of the tent of meeting, for all the service of the tent; but an outsider may not come near you. ⁵ "So you shall attend to the obligations of the sanctuary and the obligations of the altar, so that there will no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel. ⁶ "Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service for the tent of meeting. ⁷ "But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. *I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.*" ⁸ Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, "Now behold, I Myself have given you charge of My offerings, even all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual allotment.

1 Chronicles 23:27-32 ²⁷ For by the last words of David the sons of Levi *were* numbered from twenty years old and upward. ²⁸ For their office is to assist the sons of Aaron with the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts and in the chambers and in the purifying of all holy things, even the work of the service of the house of God, ²⁹ and with the showbread, and the fine flour for a grain offering, and unleavened wafers, or *what is baked in the pan* or what is well-mixed, and all measures of volume and size. ³⁰ They are to stand every morning to thank and to praise the LORD, and likewise at evening, ³¹ and to offer all burnt offerings to the LORD, on the sabbaths, the new moons and the fixed festivals in the number *set* by the ordinance concerning them, continually before the LORD. ³² Thus they are to *keep charge* (guard) of the tent of meeting, and charge of the holy place, and charge of the sons of Aaron their relatives, for the service of the house of the LORD.

Nehemiah 12:44-45 ⁴⁴ On that day men were also appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the

portions required by the law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served. ⁴⁵ For they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification, together with the singers and the *gatekeepers* in accordance with the command of David *and* of his son Solomon.

What we see in these verses regarding that chosen group of Levites and priests is that they were charged with performing the duties of the temple so as to care for that place where God met with His people.

This was the charge that was given to Adam, who was the first person, (priest), charged with taking care of that Edenic sanctuary where God met with him.

Genesis 2:15 ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and (*keep it*, rm;v' *shamar*: **Meaning:** *to keep, watch, preserve*).

Adam failed to guard the sanctuary from an enemy of whom he knew little, and in turn was tempted to doubt the goodness of God and subsequently relinquished the privilege to serve as protector of the sanctuary as he was now placed outside of the sanctuary, never to return, but given a promise that one day the seed of the woman would reestablish the holiness of the temple with a holy people serving before God once more.

This message of grace and mercy for God's people would be finally realized as entrance into His presence, without fear of judgment, was secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereupon the temple curtain was torn in two and the cherubim step aside, if you will, (*as they are quilted into the curtain*), to allow entrance to the throne and the tree of life found in Lamb of God.

Exodus 36:8 ⁸ All the skillful men among those who were performing the work *made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet material, with cherubim*, the work of a skillful workman, Bezalel made them.

It was this Lamb of God, (depicted outside of the Garden after Adam's rebellion), where we have Abel bringing a sacrifice from his flock that was pleasing to the Lord, as a promise that pointed to a future back to the garden, where life would be restored, and a paradise Kingdom would be given to man once again to rule and reign with the One who is life.

FLAMING SWORD

The flaming sword that is associated with the cherubim who guarded the way to the garden and the tree of life is ultimately God's authority to judge and condemn, and it is this sword that is used on the last day to finally put an end to the rebellion and evil that has followed man since that fateful day when the curse of sin was thrust upon man because of his sin.

Revelation 19:15-16 ¹⁵ *From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations,* and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Revelation 19:20-21 ²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. ²¹ *And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse,* and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

So, the sword is introduced in the very beginning of the rebellion as the cherubim guard the entrance to paradise lost and it is the sword reintroduced at the very end when the cherubim step aside as paradise is restored and the kingdoms of the world are judged and become the Kingdom of God in righteousness.

Revelation 11:15-16 ¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.*" ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

The Kingdom of the World that John saw is also the same picture that God gave to Daniel regarding the four kingdoms which would all be replaced by an eternal kingdom.

Daniel 2:37-44 ³⁷ "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; ³⁸ and wherever the sons of men dwell, *or* the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your

hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. ³⁹ "After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. ⁴¹ "In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. ⁴² "As the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of pottery, *so* some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. ⁴³ "And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. ⁴⁴ "***In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.***

These four kingdoms ultimately represent all earthly kingdoms that will not bow to the God of all creation wherein the last Kingdom shatters them all and "the kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."

It is important to see, in the shadows and copies of the heavenly things, the reality of what God will reestablish as He moves His kingdom forward until the last day when He finally puts an end to the rebellion and ushers in the promise of death being swallowed up in victory.

1 Corinthians 15:54 ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

^{NAU} **Jeremiah 23:29** "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

THE SWORD SPEAKS

But as we consider the cherubim at the entrance to the Garden sanctuary, with the flaming sword of judgment, there is also seen in the sword a hope as that sword speaks to the promise in the Garden where the seed of the serpent bruises the heel of the seed of the woman who in turn crushes the head of the serpent.

It is this aspect of the sword that gives hope as God declares His gospel in the midst of judgment that shatters His enemies.

Hebrews 4:12 ¹² For the *word of God* is living and active and *sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit*, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Ephesians 6:17 ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*.

The word of God is the only thing that gives hope as He is faithful to fulfill all the promises that were given to Adam and Eve as they looked back to the Garden from which they were expelled, knowing that one day they, all who embrace those promises by faith, will return to a new Eden, the new heavens and the new earth.

Adam was created in the image of God to reflect His glory and to minister before God in His sanctuary in that Garden Paradise and to advance this Kingdom in righteousness as he was commissioned to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over all the earth.

ADAM AS ANOINTED CHERUB

Adam fell from a very high position and Ezekiel describes this position before God.

Ezekiel 28:12-19 ¹² "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³ *"You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you.* On the day that you were created They were prepared. ¹⁴ "You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁵ "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. ¹⁶ "By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁷ "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You

corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. ¹⁸ "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. ¹⁹ "All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever. ""

It is often viewed that Ezekiel is describing the fall of Satan as he utilizes the King of Tyre to depict this powerful and privileged being as a cherub that fell from heaven, the holy mountain of God.

But a closer examination shows that this is actually a picture of a human being clothed in royal priestly garments before the throne of God as G.K. Beale points out in his book, "A New Testament Biblical Theology", (pg. 618).

"Some identify this figure as Satan, but that this figure is Adam is pointed to by the description in Ezek.28:13. The jewels that are said to be his covering in Ezek.28:13 are uniquely listed in Exod.28:17-21, which describes the jewels on the ephod of Israel's high priest, who is a human and not an angel.... Therefore Adam was to be the first priest to serve in and guard God's temple."

As Beale points out, Exodus 28 parallels the jewels of the priest's ephod in Ezekiel's figure.

Exodus 28:15-22 ¹⁵ "You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a skillful workman; like the work of *the ephod you shall make it: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen you shall make it.* ¹⁶ "It shall be square and folded double, a span in length and a span in width. ¹⁷ "*You shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald;* ¹⁸ *and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond;* ¹⁹ *and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst;* ²⁰ *and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree.* ²¹ "The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names; they shall be *like* the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes. ²² "You shall make on the breastpiece chains of twisted cordage work in pure gold.

SATAN IS AN ANGEL NOT A CHERUB

But Ezekiel 28 does describe this one in Eden, in the garden of God, as a cherub. Does this mean that Adam was a cherub, or for those who believe that this figure is Satan, he also is a cherub?

The answer is no to both. Satan is an angel, not a cherub, which Scripture establishes as a heavenly animal.

As such, animals, even heavenly animals, are not charged with sin. Sinning is limited to only angels and people.

1 John 3:8 ⁸ *the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.* The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Romans 3:21-23 ²¹ But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Even though animals don't sin, an angel, in the form of a serpent, acted worse than an animal in the garden as he essentially murdered those made in the image of God.

John 8:44 ⁴⁴ "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.*

Genesis 3:14-15 ¹⁴ *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life;* ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Revelation 12:7-9 ⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. *The dragon and his angels waged war,* ⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is *called the devil and Satan,* who deceives the whole world; he *was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

Satan, as a serpent or dragon, is seen as base as an earthly animal, not an angelic being who should be following and serving the one true God as even the cherubim and seraphim do, who are both heavenly animals.

The other thing to consider is that Satan is described as ruler of the demons, which would necessarily make him a rebellious angel, not a heavenly animal.

Matthew 25:41 ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the *eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*;

Matthew 12:24 ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "*This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.*"

Matthew 12:26-27 ²⁶ "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges.

Luke 10:17-18 ¹⁷ The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, *even the demons are subject to us in Your name.*" ¹⁸ And **He** said to them, "*I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*

Revelation 12:9 ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and *Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

This next verse seems to imply that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light. This would seem to make him by default of the order of angels, since only an angel, albeit a rebel angel, can deceptively disguise himself as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:14 ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

One more example will show that demons and the devil act in concert with one another as the same type of agents with the same goal of murdering those made in the image of God.

Acts 10:38 ³⁸ "*You know of Jesus of Nazareth*, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and *how He*

went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

The healing to which Luke alludes is the healing from blindness, lameness and all sorts of diseases, but also includes demon possession. To be oppressed with a demon, who inhabits the body of a human being, is to be oppressed with Satan's rule to the degree that he uses his angels to accomplish such a task.

In this sense both rebellious angels and Satan are seen to be of the same type of being.

So, in summary, for those who believe that angels and cherubs are of the same type of being, it would make sense to equate the cherub of Ezekiel 28 as an angel and not a human being, and therefore conclude that the angel in question, who was thrown from the "holy mountain of God," is none other than Satan.

But as has been demonstrated time and again, the Scriptures are clear that *chayyah* and *zoon*, as they describe both seraphim and cherubim, are heavenly animals.

Adam, however, was a man who is equated with the king of Tyre, whose heart [was] lifted up and said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods in the heart of the seas'; (**Ezekiel 28:2**)

ADAM AS A CHERUB

How is this possible that Adam's heart could even entertain such a notion?

Let me remind you of the promise the serpent, Satan, made to Eve, and by extension to Adam, who was told this in the garden, the holy mountain of God's earthly sanctuary.

Genesis 3:5 ⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and ***you will be like God, knowing good and evil.***"

There is no question that Adam understood the implication of this promise as it was expressed in the actions of Eve and then embraced by Adam in the very next verse.

Genesis 3:6 ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was

desirable to make *one* wise, *she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

To be like God may have been ill-advised, but Adam didn't appear to blink.

And God would remind both the King of Tyre, and by extension backwards to Adam, what they really were.

Ezekiel 28:2 Yet you are a man and not God, Although you make your heart like the heart of God—

In the vision that God shows Ezekiel he further describes this scene in Eden and the consequences of his sin.

Ezekiel 28:13-16 ¹³ *"You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. **On the day that you were created They were prepared.*** ¹⁴ *"You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.* ¹⁵ *"You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you.* ¹⁶ *"By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; **Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire.***

So, in summary, the figure in Ezekiel 28, described as a cherub, is not Satan, but Adam, which begs the question, how then can Adam be regarded a cherub in the context?

In the same way that Judas could be described as a devil.

John 6:70-71 ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet *one of you is a devil?*" ⁷¹ Now ***He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot***, for he, one of the twelve, ***was going to betray Him.***

Jesus did not mean to say that Judas was in fact a devil in the sense that he was an angel who fights against God and His kingdom. Rather our Lord equates the actions of Judas on a par with Satan to the degree that he becomes an accuser of the One who is righteous,

and ultimately betrays that One he accused of wrong-doing, as he delivered Jesus over to the authorities.

And so, in John 6:70-71 Judas is a devil through his actions as he is associated with “the” devil.

In the same way, Adam is described as a cherub, not in the sense that he is literally a heavenly animal, but to the extent that he shares the same role of the cherubim, that of guardian of his domain, can he be equated as a cherub.

Remember the role of the cherubim. They stand as guardians around the throne of God, even as they were given the role to stand as guardians at the entrance to the earthly throne of God, that sanctuary contained in the Garden of Eden.

In fact, the very words used in Ezekiel 28:14 demonstrates this role.

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 28:14** *"You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.*

The word “covers” in the Hebrew means to overshadow or cover in the sense of guarding that which it overshadows.

In fact, this is how other translations treat that verse.

^{NIV} **Ezekiel 28:14** You were anointed as a *guardian cherub*, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

^{ESV} **Ezekiel 28:14** You were an anointed *guardian cherub*. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

^{NET} **Ezekiel 28:14** I placed you there with an anointed *guardian cherub*; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked about amidst fiery stones.

Again, the immediate context in Ezekiel is of this cherub being in Eden as a priest who was to guard the garden.

Ezekiel 28:13 ¹³ *"You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the*

turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared.

And so, to call Adam a cherub is designating him as a priest in the sanctuary of Eden as one responsible to guard the way to the presence of God and defend the integrity of the One who created him perfect and beautiful.

Ezekiel 28:15 ¹⁵ "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created *Until unrighteousness was found in you.*

THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

On the day that unrighteousness was found in Adam was the day he died.

And how is that depicted here in Ezekiel?

Ezekiel 28:18 ¹⁸ "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you.

Adam's sanctuary, that he profaned, found its central meeting place with God as both Adam and God met in the cool of the day in the Garden, but that sanctuary was meant to be extended to the whole earth as a kingdom filled with his offspring who carried the name of God in righteousness as they declared His praises.

Instead, God turned him to ashes, according to Ezek.28:18, just as He promised in the day that he rebelled.

Genesis 3:19 ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; *For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.*"

By the way, the Hebrew word for dust in this Genesis passage is *aphar*, and there are two other passages that use this same word in a context that brings to light the need for fire to consume something so as to turn them to ashes or dust, as we see in the case of Adam being turned to ashes.

Ezekiel 28:18 Therefore *I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth* In the eyes of all who see you.

The Hebrew word ashes here in Ezekiel, *epher*, is similar to the word for dust found in Genesis 3:9.

But in the book of Numbers where *aphar* is used we read this.

^{NAU} **Numbers 19:17** "Then for the unclean *person* they shall take some of the *ashes* (dust) *of the burnt purification from sin* and flowing water shall be added to them in a vessel.

The other reference where *aphar* is used is found in 2Kings as it related to vessels used to worship false gods.

^{NAU} **2 Kings 23:4** Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to *bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.*

Notice here also, the reference to the priests who were also doorkeepers, and by implication, guards to the entrance into the temple of the Lord. In this case the idols, the serpent, if you will, has already made it into the sanctuary, but God commands them to take the tainted vessels and burn them to dust as they carry them to Bethel, which means house of God.

Just as the serpent precipitated the death of Adam, as he rebelled against the word of God, the cherubim would, in a sense, carry these two people who were now dead to God, outside of the sanctuary where they were ceremoniously burned to ashes as their bodies eventually returned to the earth in the form of dust from which they were made.

But as was seen in their obedience to the word of the Lord through a burnt offering, (that would one day restore their bodies to a resurrection state), was the very thing they practiced at the command of the Lord to demonstrate how that offering would be pleasing to the Lord as He would restore them to Paradise through that offering of faith.

Genesis 4:1-5 ^{NAU} Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have

gotten a manchild with *the help of the LORD.*" ² Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ ***Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;*** ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Hebrews 11:4 ⁴ ***By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain,*** through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

And to what does Abel still speak?

Hebrews 12:22-24 ²² ***But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,*** and to myriads of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, ***and to God,*** the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, ²⁴ ***and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.***

Ezekiel, in chapter 28, is describing a man who had it all, who was given unfettered access to the living God in a Kingdom that God prepared for him to share in, and yet in his heart he desired to be like God, knowing good and evil, and for that he was cast off of the holy Mountain of Eden only to return to the dust of the earth.

But as the grace of God was extended to Adam he found a righteousness in the promise of the seed of the woman whereby he would be reconciled back to his Creator found in Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, whose sprinkled blood on his behalf was demonstrated every time he and his family came before God, in faith, with their acceptable sacrifice.

He was designated a cherub, a protector and guardian of this Kingdom, and he gave it all up for a lie from the father of lies.

The cherubim described in the book of Ezekiel are a reminder of the role they play in the kingdom of God as we will see when we revisit this book in some detail. But first, let's move through some of the other places that address the cherubim.

So far we have seen the cherubim stationed at the entrance to the Garden sanctuary of Eden in the book of Genesis.

We have seen the pattern given to Moses on the mountain sanctuary where the tabernacle was to be constructed with statues depicting the real cherubim as they stood guard with their wings presumably spread upward, as Adam and Eve would certainly have seen them at the entrance to Eden.

These facsimiles were crafted with gold and were relatively small as they stood on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant which was to demonstrate the Edenic sanctuary where God met with Adam and Eve, as Moses now had a place where God would meet with him above this Ark.

Exodus 25:21-22 ²¹ "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²² *"There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.*

The cherubim would have been the size that covered the mercy seat.

Exodus 37:6 ⁶ He made a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide.

If a typical cubit was around 20 inches the total wingspan of the two cherubim would have been around 60 inches, (2.5 cubits = 30 inches x 2 = 60 inches), or five feet.

Since there were two cherubim, one on each end with their wings spread upward meeting in the middle of the mercy seat, the total length in wingspan for one of the cherubim statues would have been around 30 inches, or 2 1/2 feet.

Keep in mind that this Ark and Mercy seat had to be mobile as Moses and Israel would be traveling around the desert for the next 40 years. And so, when it was time to move, as was often the case, the Ark had to be small enough for the priests to utilize its gold rings as they placed poles through them and carried it to their next destination.

Throughout the book of Exodus we see the Ark moving about the desert as Israel is protected by God. And since the Ark of the

Covenant cannot be separated from the cherubim statues that are attached to the mercy seat, we will take what I hope to be a quick look at the history of the Ark in Israel; we'll see.

ARK OF THE COVENANT

As was noted earlier, the ark was constructed shortly after Moses's encounter with God on the mountain where he was given the pattern to its construction.

For 40 years Israel wandered the desert with the ark. But after 40 years it would be Joshua who is commissioned by God to bring the ark into the Promised Land.

Joshua 3:7-8 ⁷ Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. ⁸ "You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, "When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand *still* in the Jordan."

Joshua 6:1-5 ^{NAU} Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. ² The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king *and* the valiant warriors. ³ "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. ⁴ "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵ "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

For many years the Ark of the Covenant moved throughout Canaan with the Israelites as they took possession of the land at God's command.

But, there is a chapter in Israel's history, and thus the history of the Ark of the Covenant, where the darkness of Israel's sin resulted in the cutting off of God's protection as the Ark is captured by the Philistines.

This was the result of a breakdown in the priesthood where the sons of the priest, Eli, did not carry on the tradition of following in

their father's blessing and they broke covenant with the Lord in this respect.

1 Samuel 2:12-17 ¹² Now *the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD* ¹³ *and the custom of the priests with the people.* When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴ Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵ Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." ¹⁶ If the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "No, but you shall give *it to me* now; and if not, I will take it by force." ¹⁷ Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD.

As a result of these men, (who were representatives for the entire nation of Israel), despising the offering of the Lord, God would no longer meet with Israel above the mercy seat on the ark, just as all of mankind was denied access to God through their one representative, Adam.

At this point in history Israel then tried to use the ark as a weapon instead of a sanctuary to meet with God as the Lord would take the Ark out of their hands. This is precisely what the prophet Samuel would address.

1 Samuel 3:11-14 ¹¹ The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. ¹² "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. ¹⁴ "Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

As the day approached to meet the Philistines in battle Israel relied on what they thought was their trump card; a gold covered box with statues of cherubim on the top to deliver them.

1 Samuel 4:4-5 ⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits *above* the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God. ⁵ As the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded.

Of course, the Philistines heard all of the noise and became afraid.

1 Samuel 4:7-8 ⁷ The Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ "Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all *kinds of* plagues in the wilderness.

But like soldiers, they decided to engage Israel in battle, not knowing that God was not in or on the box.

1 Samuel 4:10-11 ¹⁰ So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹ And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

Again, when we understand the implications of how God dwells among His people, we can be certain that mere religious ceremony is not what God desires, and though Israel has the box, they don't have God, as their priests, whose role is that of guardians/protectors, cherubim, if you will, was relinquished and with that God's presence was taken from them, as they, like Adam and Eve, were cast from His presence.

Having said that, it does not mean that God does not still identify Himself with the means by which He is to be approached in righteousness and the Philistines would learn this lesson as they experienced the wrath of God through the Ark.

It didn't take them long to figure out that having the Ark of God in their midst was not a smart move as God judged them for improperly possessing the Ark, and they made a plan to return it to the Israelites, which they did.

1 Samuel 6:11-13 ¹¹ They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the likenesses of their tumors. ¹² And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went,

and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh. ¹³ Now *the people of Beth-shemesh* were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see *it*.

But their gladness would turn to mourning as some men of Beth-shemesh looked into the ark and were punished that day as over 50,000 were cut down by the Lord. This precipitated the need to move the ark.

1 Samuel 6:21 - 7:2 ²¹ So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up to you."

^{NAU} **1 Samuel 7:1** And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the LORD and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. ² From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

And so, the Ark of the Covenant stayed in this city for 20 years. It would not be until the time of King Saul where it appears that the ark moved with the sons of Israel when they went into battle.

1 Samuel 14:17-20 ¹⁷ Saul said to the people who *were* with him, "Number now and see who has gone from us." And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not *there*. ¹⁸ Then Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God was at that time with the sons of Israel. ¹⁹ While Saul talked to the priest, the commotion in the camp of the Philistines continued and increased; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." ²⁰ Then Saul and all the people who *were* with him rallied and came to the battle; and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* very great confusion.

After God took the Kingship of Israel out of the hand of Saul and gave it to David, David then made Jerusalem the capital city and made plans to bring the ark to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 6:2-3 ² And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, *the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim*. ³ They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of

Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart.

As the cart was en-route to Jerusalem, along with all of the ceremony and celebration that accompanied it, the ark began to tip over and another fateful incident surrounding the ark ensued.

2 Samuel 6:6-7 ⁶ But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset *it*. ⁷ And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.

Fear gripped David because of this and so he essentially decided to leave the ark where it was and allowed the ark to stay in that region in the house of Obed-edom.

2 Samuel 6:10-11 ¹⁰ And David was unwilling to move the ark of the LORD into the city of David with him; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹¹ Thus the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

Now keep in mind that the Ark of the Covenant, the place where God would meet with His people, has never been housed in a permanent dwelling up to this point in the history of Israel.

Even after David finally brought the ark to Jerusalem, he placed it inside another temporary shelter.

2 Samuel 6:17-18 ¹⁷ So they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

But as David lived in luxury in his own residence in Jerusalem he longed for the day when he could build a permanent structure for the Lord and the Lord responds in this way.

2 Samuel 7:1-16 ^{NAU} Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, ² that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains." ³ Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your

mind, for the LORD is with you." ⁴ But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, ⁵ "Go and say to My servant David, "Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? ⁶ "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. ⁷ "Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'" ⁸ "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. ⁹ "I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. ¹⁰ "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, ¹¹ even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. ¹² "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""

David would glory in this promise and would pronounce his delight in a psalm that gives glory to God.

Psalm 89:34-37 ³⁴ "My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. ³⁵ "Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶ "His descendants shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me. ³⁷ "It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful."

What is interesting about these sections of Scripture as it relates to the house of the Lord and the ark's placement in it, is that God makes a covenant with David and his house which many take to

mean that Israel will be a nation forever and the promises described to Israel that revolve around the children of Abraham.

But we know that this is not the case as Israel was and is a nation that always rebelled against God in rejecting His Messiah and ultimately were shown to be of their father the devil.

The eternal house and throne of David is not ultimately addressing Solomon, or any other leader over the nation of Israel, at any time in history.

This is biblical and covenantal short-sidedness. What God promised David was a promise of a return to the original kingdom given to Adam, and now in David there was a covenant that pointed to the kingdom which is eternal in nature, not temporal.

And we know who the last David will be as we know who the last Adam is, as Jesus Christ is that son of David who will rule on this eternal throne given to the Israel of God made up of Jews and Gentiles.

Speaking to Gentiles in the context of the Jews of the covenant, Paul made this statement.

Ephesians 2:13-16 ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For *He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,* ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

The son of David was known to be equated with the Messiah during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and in fact our Lord addressed this issue to the Jewish leaders who seemed to acknowledge this truth.

Mark 12:35-37 ³⁵ And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, "THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'" ³⁷ "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

Jesus acknowledges two things. He acknowledges a common understanding that the Messiah would be the son of David, but that David himself understood this son of his to be his Lord.

David's son cannot be both an offspring, and thereby an inferior to the senior, and at the same time be his superior.

Jesus is simply pointing out that David had a proper understanding of his son as being the Lord Himself and Jesus is that son of David who has come to crush the head of Satan, the seed of the woman.

This is the same son of David about which Isaiah prophesied.

Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.* ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, *On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore.* The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

The one born to us as a son of David is the same child announced by an angel to Mary who was a virgin.

Luke 1:30-33 ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹ "And behold, *you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.* ³² *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;* ³³ *and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."*

And so, when we talk about the Ark of the Covenant being housed in a place of meeting where God dwelled with His people we must understand that all of these articles of wood and gold are mere shadows of that eternal abode where God dwells with His people.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;* for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and*

God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And *He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."* And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

And so, as we come back to the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim strategically placed on top of the mercy seat that covers the ark, we see that our Lord's promise to David that his son would build a permanent structure in Jerusalem to house this ark is about to come to fruition.

And it would be the house that Solomon built for the Lord where there would be a dramatic change in the inner sanctuary, containing the Ark and the Cherubim that stood atop it, where God promised to dwell there among His people.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE SANCTUARY

1 Kings 6:11-14 ¹¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon saying, ¹² "Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. ¹³ "I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel." ¹⁴ So Solomon built the house and finished it.

It is within this house that Solomon builds an inner sanctuary to contain the Ark of the Covenant. And here the Cherubim take center stage, literally.

1 Kings 6:21-35 ²¹ So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold. And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary, and he overlaid it with gold. ²² He overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar which was by the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold. ²³ *Also in the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high.* ²⁴ Five cubits was the one wing of the cherub and five cubits the other wing of the cherub; from the end of one wing to the end of the other wing were ten cubits. ²⁵ The other cherub was ten cubits; both the cherubim were of the same measure and the same form. ²⁶ The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was the other cherub. ²⁷ *He placed the cherubim in the midst of the inner house,* and the wings of the cherubim were spread out, so that the wing of the one was

touching the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall. So their wings were touching each other in the center of the house. ²⁸ ***He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.*** ²⁹ Then he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner and outer *sanctuaries*. ³⁰ He overlaid the floor of the house with gold, inner and outer *sanctuaries*. ³¹ For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood, the lintel *and* five-sided doorposts. ³² *So he made* two doors of olive wood, and he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. ³³ So also he made for the entrance of the nave four-sided doorposts of olive wood ³⁴ and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots. ³⁵ He carved *on it* cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; and he overlaid *them* with gold evenly applied on the engraved work.

There is obviously a lot going on here and we'll touch on some of it, but the big picture must not be lost on us, nor was it lost on Solomon.

This inner sanctuary is the place where God would dwell with His people, which necessarily means that this is a picture of the original earthly sanctuary where God met with His people, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden.

And as we move through this description of the inner sanctuary this will become quite apparent.

Starting with verses 21 and 22 of 1Kings 6, what is conspicuously apparent is that the house of God that Solomon constructed is overlaid with gold.

Gold is one of those elements of the earth that men deem precious, and therefore are classified as special as its price in the market place is quite high compared to other elements of the earth.

The first time that gold is mentioned in Scripture, interestingly enough, it is found in Eden in relationship to the garden sanctuary.

Genesis 2:8-14 ⁸ The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil. ¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ ***The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.*** ¹² ***The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.*** ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

What we are told here is that there was a main river that flowed out of the land of Eden with the specific purpose of watering the garden sanctuary. It appears that from the garden the river divides into four rivers that waters four different lands: the land of Havilah, the land of Cush, the land of Assyria and a fourth land that is not specifically mentioned that is watered by the river Euphrates.

As a side note, we again see the number four being used here in the beginning of creation to define the known world. In this sense God is declaring the four corners of the world, if you will, and this is apparent in other parts of Scripture.

Isaiah 11:12 ¹² And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah ***From the four corners of the earth.***

Ezekiel 7:2 ² "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on ***the four corners of the land.***

Revelation 7:1 ^{NAU} After this I saw four angels standing at ***the four corners of the earth***, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

Revelation 20:7-8 ⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in ***the four corners of the earth***, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

But back to our description of the four lands extending from Eden. It is interesting that in the names of all of these lands mentioned in Genesis 2, and three of the rivers that supply them, they all reappear in history after the flood.

It would stand to reason that the entire world, including Eden, the garden, and all surrounding lands and rivers, would have been destroyed during and after the flood as it receded.

So, assuming that the lands and rivers mentioned in Genesis 2 were the original lands before the flood, the people of the world, after God's watery judgment, reused these familiar names to have some continuity between the two worlds, one pre-flood and one post flood.

But, be that as it may, the point I want to make is that though Moses, and certainly the rest of mankind, would deem gold as a valuable commodity, it is God who first deems it valuable and special as He has placed it in the earth to be mined and used by men.

Now gold, in and of itself, is no more special in God's sight than quartz, limestone or any other organic substance since these substances were all made in the same way; by the word of the Lord. He spoke and they were created out of nothing. Thus, in this sense, every created thing is marvelous and worthy to declare God's greatness.

But it is apparent that God created these substances to be used by men to declare the glory of God in a special way. From man's perspective, gold and the other elements mentioned in Genesis 2, are rarer than, say, dirt.

Gold was placed in the earth by God to stand out for a purpose and this will be seen all throughout the history of man as it was a measure of wealth.

Genesis 13:2 ² Now *Abram was very rich* in livestock, in silver and *in gold*.

And so, when Solomon takes an element of the earth that defines wealth, to cover an entire building, he is making a statement about that building, in this case, the house of God that is meant to stand out among all other houses.

This is why it is no surprise to see many of these same elements of wealth found in jewels and costly stones in God's sanctuary that John sees in his vision from God.

Revelation 21:15-23 ¹⁵ The one who spoke with me had a *gold measuring rod* to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. ¹⁶

The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.* ¹⁸ ***The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.*** ¹⁹ ***The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone.*** The first foundation stone was *jasper*; the second, *sapphire*; the third, *chalcidony*; the fourth, *emerald*; ²⁰ the fifth, *sardonyx*; the sixth, *sardius*; the seventh, *chrysolite*; the eighth, *beryl*; the ninth, *topaz*; the tenth, *chrysolite*; the eleventh, *jacinth*; the twelfth, *amethyst*. ²¹ And the *twelve gates were twelve pearls*; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the *street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.* ²² I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Now, again, it must be understood that the use of these earthly costly materials are designed to impress upon men the glory that is seen in the sanctuary of God where the Lord meets with His people.

The city that is mentioned in Revelation 21 is described with walls, foundations and gates that are made with precious materials. Does this mean that there will be a city on the new earth that looks like what is described in Revelation?

Is it beyond the scope of God's ability to construct a sanctuary that is made of any material of His choosing?

Keep in mind that what John is describing is a picture of a sanctuary in a vision setting, which means that he is describing, in symbolic language, a reality that will exist in the future, with the understanding that some of what he is shown is meant to represent the bigger picture of what God's sanctuary actually is.

And it could not be clearer that what John is shown is bigger than any one particular "city", even a city that is described as 1,500 miles cubed. We're told that this "city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it and its lamp is the Lamb."

So, is John saying that the sun and the moon do not exist for the illumination of this city? Not at all. This vision is a picture of a

sanctuary, not just a localized city. The word city is meant to explain this sanctuary where God dwells among His people in a Kingdom that expands well beyond the borders of planet earth.

As Beale noted: “God never intended that Israel’s little localized temple last forever, since, like the Eden temple, Israel’s temple was a small model of something much bigger: God and His universal presence, which could never eternally be contained by any localized earthly structure.” (pg. 627)

Revelation 21:2-3 ² And *I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,*

In fact, the word city is also used to describe, not just a localized setting where streets and walls and gates are seen, but also flesh and blood saints who dwell in such a place.

Revelation 21:2 ² And *I saw the holy city*, new Jerusalem, *coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

A city that is coming down out of heaven made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. In what sense is any city adorned as a bride for her husband?

How about a city that is not really a city composed of brick and mortar, or for that matter gold, silver or costly stones, but a community of people made ready for the bridegroom?

Matthew 25:1 ^{NAU} "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

How can a kingdom be compared to virgins who are looking for the bridegroom? Only if that kingdom is identified first and foremost with the people who are being ruled by a King.

And who is this bridegroom in this kingdom?

Well, that is precisely what John is describing in this vision from God where we have this awesome picture of a city that is built with

all of these precious jewels in Rev. 21:15-23, which is lit by the Lamb.

But if we go back to the immediate context of this portion of Scripture we are told what this city actually is.

Revelation 21:9-10 ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "***Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.***" ¹⁰ ***And he*** carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and ***showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,***

This is the holy city that John introduced in Rev.21:2 that was "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

People have gone to great lengths to try and give us a picture of a city that is 1,500 miles cubed and then speculate how such a city could be situated on an earth where the top of this city extends well beyond our atmosphere.

I'm not arguing that there won't be a city or multiple cities on the new earth where people will dwell with their God. My argument is that when we don't see the symbolic language, particularly in this case where John clearly articulates it, then we miss the most important aspects of what God is trying to convey.

In this particular case of Revelation 21, the city is a people in a Kingdom who are illumined by their Savior as they need nothing else in this world to define them, which is why this city, this bride, shines with the glory of her Savior, thus no lamp of this world is needed, nor even the sun or moon's glory to define them.

Matthew 5:12-16 ¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for ***your reward in heaven is great***; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴ "***You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden***; ¹⁵ ***nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*** ¹⁶ "***Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.***

They have no need for any of the glory of such things of this created universe when they have Christ Himself who is the light of the world. The prophet Malachi points this truth out.

Malachi 1:11 ¹¹ "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts

God is the light among the nations and will continue to be the light on the new earth. But not even a new earth can contain the presence of God, for the entire creation is part of the sanctuary that God has described in His word as being the Kingdom to which His people have an inheritance and who will rule with God for eternity.

1 Kings 8:27 ²⁷ "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

SUN AND MOON: TO EXIST OR NOT TO EXIST? ... THAT IS THE QUESTION

By the way, just as a side note to this notion that the sun and the moon will not exist in the new universe, according to **Revelation 21:23** ²³ And the *city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it*, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb," let's take a brief look at a number of verses related to this issue.

When we deal with the immediate context of Rev.21:23 the first thing to notice is the entire chapter is not describing a literal city but a people who are called by God to reflect the glory of their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's look at the broader context of verse 23 as we go back to verse 2 as John is describing the new heavens and new earth.

Revelation 21:2 ² And *I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, *made ready as a bride adorned for her husband*.

Notice that the city is identified as new Jerusalem and its beauty is compared to a bride adorned for her husband. And so, the inference is that this particular city has features compared to a bride on her wedding day.

This is a theme we see elsewhere in Revelation.

Revelation 19:7-9 ⁷ "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for *the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.*" ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Write, *'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'*" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Is the book of Revelation, which utilizes a great deal of symbolic language, suggesting that the bride at the wedding feast is identified as a great city called the new Jerusalem?

Well, we know that this new Jerusalem is made up of pillars that are prominent in this city and that these pillars are people who are described as overcomers.

Revelation 3:12 ¹² *'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

So, is what John sees in this vision an actual city or a people described as a city?

John will be given the answer only a few verses later in chapter 21.

Revelation 21:9-10 ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, *"Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* ¹⁰ And *he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

It is quite apparent that what John is shown, (which is identified as the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, the pillar in the temple of God), is not describing a literal city, but a literal people of God who will dwell with Him forever on the new earth.

This doesn't mean that John was not shown a city in this vision. It simply means that what John was shown and what God intended to show John through this vision, was that the city represents something else, namely Christ's bride.

It is this same city that Jesus describes to His disciples.

Matthew 5:12-16 ¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴ "***You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;*** ¹⁵ ***nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*** ¹⁶ "***Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.***

The light that God's people reflect, as one's who are described as a city on a hill who are in Christ, is the light that originates from Christ.

John 8:12 ¹² Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 12:36 ³⁶ "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

And so, once again, as we come back to the context of Revelation 21, we see that the inference to a city and a temple that shines, is quite clear, as the Creator of that city illumines it with His glory.

Paul would also include the premise that this temple is made up of the people of God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? ***For we are the temple of the living God;*** just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

So, when John hears the voice of one of the seven angels in this vision, he hears how great care is made to measure this city, which has already been identified as the bride of Christ.

Again, this doesn't mean that the vision that John sees with his eyes is not a literal city. In the vision he may actually be shown

structures that he would identify as pillars and buildings and roads, but the angel has made it clear in chapter 21 that what John sees as a city is actually describing the people of God.

This is why we read of what appears to be actual structures that can be measured.

Revelation 21:15 ¹⁵ The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.

Keep in mind that the angel is not communicating to John that he is measuring a literal city, but the people who make up this city.

Revelation 21:16 ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

So, the city, the bride of the Lamb, is laid out as a square where all measurements in all directions are equal.

Where have we seen this before?

We have seen this in the house of the Lord that Solomon constructed to house the Ark of the Covenant, that Most Holy of holies where God met with His people.

1 Kings 6:19-22 ¹⁹ Then he prepared an inner sanctuary within the house in order to place there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ²⁰ *The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.* ²¹ *So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold.*

And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary, and he overlaid it with gold. ²² He overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar which was by the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

When the light of the lamps that were contained inside of this inner sanctuary shone on it, it would have gleamed as it manifested its glory to those high priests who witnessed it, which represented the glory of the Lord.

Again, this is all symbolic language to describe where God dwells with His people. It is not describing, either in 1Kings or Revelation 21, a literal square city that extends 1,500 miles into the earth's atmosphere and beyond.

So, as we come back to the text in question, regarding the city not needing the light of the sun or moon, it must be placed within the context of the city being the bride of the Lamb not needing any illumination other than that of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:23 ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp *is* the Lamb.

When we understand that the city is the body of Christ then it becomes clear that those who belong to the Lord gain their glory from the King of kings and Lord of lords who is risen in glory from the dead.

Matthew 13:43 ⁴³ "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

But what about those passages that clearly tell us that the sun and moon are destroyed at some future time?

SUN AND MOON DESTROYED?

Psalms 72:5-7 ⁵ Let them fear You while the sun *endures*, And as long as the moon, throughout all generations. ⁶ May he come down like rain upon the mown grass, Like showers that water the earth. ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish, ***And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.***

Isaiah 13:9-11 ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. ¹⁰ ***For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.*** ¹¹ Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

Isaiah 24:21-23 ²¹ So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth. ²² They will be gathered together *Like* prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they *will be* punished. ²³ ***Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,*** For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And *His* glory will be before His elders.

Isaiah 60:19-20 ¹⁹ *"No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;* But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. ²⁰ *"Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over.*

Joel 2:10-11 ¹⁰ Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, *The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.* ¹¹ The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

Since this study is not about the sun and the moon I need to move a little more quickly, but it's important, in light of cherubim and seraphim being a part of God's creation, to note that the sun and moon are also part of this creation as God has designed them to declare His glory.

With this in mind let's address these passages in the order I gave above.

Psalms 72 is a psalm of Solomon that essentially acknowledges the righteous and holy judgments of God, even toward His own people, along with the hope that He will not ultimately abandon His people.

And so, Solomon utilizes the sun and moon in a way that shows how God stands eternally above all of His creation, and though creation in its present cursed state will come to an end, God's peace will endure to the end.

Of course, though the present creation comes to an end, it is not annihilated since the Scriptures are clear that there will be new heavens and a new earth. But if one wants to suggest that Solomon is indicating that the moon and the sun will in fact cease to exist, those who make this claim should read down to the end of his psalm.

Psalms 72:17 ¹⁷ *May his name endure forever; May his name increase as long as the sun shines;* And let men bless themselves by him; Let all nations call him blessed.

God's name will not cease to increase if the sun ceases to shine because like His name enduring forever, so will the sun.

Isaiah 13:10 ¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

Here again, context is very important for explaining how the stars of heaven and the sun and moon cease to shed their light.

But, like Rev.21:23, where we're told that the sun and moon are not needed to shine their light on the city, (which is the bride of the Lamb, not a literal city), so too, Isaiah makes no mention of the sun and moon, and of course this must include all the stars of heaven, as ceasing to exist.

Rather, he simply points out that all of creation outside of the earth will cease to shine. But remember, the context is describing the great day of God's wrath.

Isaiah 13:9 ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

This is the final judgment that Isaiah addresses which is the same scene that Jesus describes when He comes to gather the nations for judgment.

Matthew 24:27-30 ²⁷ "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, *so will the coming of the Son of Man be.* ²⁸ "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ "But immediately after the tribulation of those days ***THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*** ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and ***they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.***

Jesus is not using this language to suggest that the sun and the moon and the stars will literally fall from the sky or cease to exist, but rather is utilizing the kind of language that paints a very dark picture of that Day of Judgment.

This is the same scene that Isaiah uses later with the same result where judgment is equated with darkness.

Isaiah 24:21-23 ²¹ So it will happen in that day, That *the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth.* ²² They will be gathered together *Like* prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And *after many days they will be punished.* ²³ *Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,*

As Isaiah moves toward the end of his writings he approaches the culmination of what God's judgment actually accomplishes as He finally eliminates all wickedness, but brings in the everlasting city.

Isaiah 60:18-19 ¹⁸ "Violence will not be heard again in your land, Nor devastation or destruction within your borders; But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise. ¹⁹ "*No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory.*

This is the identical picture we have in Rev. 21:23. And where Isaiah is speaking prophetically to Israel and their place of habitation including a city with walls and gates, where they no longer need the sun or moon to provide light for them, John makes it clear what this city is (the bride of the Lamb), and what light that city will be lit with, (the Lamb).

In fact, Isaiah continues by describing how the sun and moon, (which moments ago was apparently not needed), is reintroduced back into the picture.

Isaiah 60:20-21 ²⁰ "*Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane;* For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over. ²¹ "Then all your people *will be* righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified.

Here Isaiah is saying that, like the everlasting light of the Lord, the sun will shine perpetually and the moon will never wane, which is to say that both sun and moon will continue to shine in the context of possessing the land forever in righteousness, which Isaiah will define with the introduction of the new heavens and new earth in chapter 66.

Isaiah 66:22-23 ²² "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So

your offspring and your name will endure. ²³ ***"And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD.***

Notice that in the new heavens and new earth which God makes to endure we continue to experience new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath as God's people bow down before Him on the new earth. From one new moon to the next, the moon gets brighter not darker.

And of course, we know that the entire creation, which would include the sun, the moon, the stars, planet earth and every other created thing, continues to fall under the curse, but also continues to yearn for that final day when Christ returns to judge the world and subsequently to set up His kingdom forever when all men are raised, and He establishes the new heavens and new earth, which will include a new sun and a new moon, as all are recreated by God from the old.

Romans 8:20-22 ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that ***the whole creation groans*** and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

The last verse I addressed earlier that some use to confirm that the sun and moon will one day cease to exist is found in Joel.

Joel 2:10-11 ¹⁰ Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, ***The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.*** ¹¹ The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. ***The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?***

Again, the prophet is not suggesting that that the sun and moon will cease to exist only that their brightness will turn to darkness. And as was pointed out earlier, this is in the context of the great and terrible day of the Lord in His final judgment, of which Joel tells us in verse 11.

JUDGMENT

Will this mean that the sun and the moon will still exist after God's great judgment on the last day?

Of course, why wouldn't it?, unless you take Rev.21:23 out of its context and decide that verse, in the context of the entire chapter, has anything to do with a physical city without the sun and moon.

David had an understanding of God's decree to create a universe that would accommodate His people forever in a Kingdom that magnified the name of the Lord.

Psalm 89:36-37 ³⁶ "His descendants *shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me.* ³⁷ "*It shall be established forever like the moon,* And the witness in the sky is faithful." Selah.

Forever, is how long the sun and moon shall last to declare the glory of God, because the sun and moon were created to determine times and seasons that will last forever on the new earth.

Psalm 104:19-24 ¹⁹ *He made the moon for the seasons; The sun knows the place of its setting.* ²⁰ You appoint darkness and it becomes night, In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about. ²¹ The young lions roar after their prey And seek their food from God. ²² *When* the sun rises they withdraw And lie down in their dens. ²³ Man goes forth to his work And to his labor until evening. ²⁴ O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions.

Psalm 148:2-6 ² Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! ³ *Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light!* ⁴ Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! ⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. ⁶ *He has also established them forever and ever;* He has made a decree which will not pass away.

So, I know we took a little detour but I hope this encourages you as we come back to our friends, the Cherubim.

SOLOMON'S CHERUBIM

So, let's get back to **1 Kings 6:21-35**, and Solomon's description of the cherubim.

1 Kings 6:23-28 ²³ Also in the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. ²⁴ Five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub and five cubits the other wing of the

cherub; from the end of one wing to the end of the other wing *were* ten cubits. ²⁵ The other cherub *was* ten cubits; both the cherubim were of the same measure and the same form. ²⁶ The height of the one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was* the other cherub. ²⁷ He placed the cherubim in the midst of the inner house, and the wings of the cherubim were spread out, so that the wing of the one was touching the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall. So their wings were touching each other in the center of the house. ²⁸ He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

Remember, the inner sanctuary was a separate room inside the house of God that Solomon was constructing.

1 Kings 6:19-20 ¹⁹ Then he prepared an inner sanctuary within the house in order to place there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ²⁰ ***The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height,*** and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.

Again, if we take a cubit to be around 20 inches the dimensions would be a little over 33 feet in length, width, and height.

It's a perfect cube which we have already seen in the vision given to the apostle John by God when the Lord describes the New Jerusalem in terms of a perfect cube.

Revelation 21:16 ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; ***its length and width and height are equal.***

Again, as I mentioned before, the dimensions of such a city would place the height of the city well beyond the atmosphere of the earth. In fact, most man made satellites orbit the earth at around 200 to 300 miles above our planet.

I'm not suggesting that it is impossible for God to prepare such a city that could have these dimensions, but in the genre of the book of Revelation most of the language is symbolic, as it represents real events, places and things.

The perfect cube that God commanded Solomon to construct mimics the perfect cube that God Himself constructs in the book of Revelation, which is to say, that where God meets with His people is the perfect place, meeting all the requirements for a Kingdom that reflects His glory.

It is within these walls in the sanctuary of Solomon's temple that he constructs two cherubim made of olive wood.

This is the same wood from which one of Noah's doves would retrieve leaves from this tree and which spoke to the grace and the mercy that God showed Noah as He began to abate the waters from the face of the land.

Genesis 8:11 ¹¹ The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.

It is also the same wood that supported the fruit of the olive tree from which the priests would take the oil of its fruit to illumine the house of the Lord.

Exodus 27:20-21 ²⁰ "You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. ²¹ "In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; *it shall be* a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.

In keeping with the importance of the olive tree Solomon constructed the inner sanctuary, as well as the carvings of the cherubim, with olive wood.

Again, as we consider that the inner sanctuary that Solomon constructed was 20 cubits in every direction, he places the carvings of the cherubim inside of this sanctuary where God will meet with His priest, to completely fill this space.

The wingspan of each carving was a combined 10 cubits, (left and right wing 5 cubits each), and each carving was placed in the center of the sanctuary so that between the two cherubim the wingspan was 20 cubits wherein the wings of each cherubim touched the opposing walls which were 20 cubits wide.

1 Kings 6:24 ²⁴ Five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub and five cubits the other wing of the cherub; from the end of one wing to the end of the other wing *were* ten cubits.

But if this is not imposing enough, Solomon constructs the height of the cherubim to be 10 cubits high according to 1Kings 6:23.

And so, the total dimensions of the height and width of this spectacle of two cherubim, guarding the inner sanctuary in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, was about 33.5 feet wide and 17 feet high.

But this leaves an almost additional 17 feet above the Cherubim. Why wouldn't Solomon be instructed by God to have the width, length and height of the Cherubim fill the whole room?

Because this room is a representation of the Throne of God where the Cherubim guard the mercy seat that sits atop the Ark of the Covenant, the place of man's atoning salvation.

And what stands above the Cherubim?

The Lord God.

Isaiah 37:16 ¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

So from man's perspective there needed to be space above the Cherubim, in the inner sanctuary, in which God would meet with His people; a space that would fill the rest of the room when His glory was revealed in that inner sanctuary that was approximately 33+ feet wide, 33+ feet in length, and 33+ feet high.

Again, to put that into some perspective, a basketball hoop is 10 feet high which most people couldn't jump to reach, while most living rooms are about 15-20 feet in length. These cherubim would not fit in your house where your largest room is probably around 15x20 feet with a ceiling height of 8 feet.

By the way, according to Guinness World Records, in 2013 the world's largest wooden sculpture was unveiled in the Palace Museum in Beijing that was carved by Chinese artist Zheng Chunhui. The sculpture is based on the famous scroll painting [*Along the River During the Qingming Festival*](#) (c 1085-1145), which captures the daily life of people and the landscape of the capital, *Bianjing*

Its dimensions are about 40 feet long and 10 feet high; certainly an impressive sculpture, but it still falls short of the majesty of winged creatures who would dominate a room some 33 feet in length and height as the wings span the entire room and halfway to the 33 foot ceiling.

But as if the wood carving was not impressive enough Solomon adds a feature that Zheng Chunhui could have only dreamed of.

1 Kings 6:28 ²⁸ He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

Now, when we consider the time and the money that went into just the construction of the cherubim it begs the question that Jesus' disciples asked of Him when an act of conspicuous consumption was placed upon Him.

Matthew 26:6-9 ⁶ Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, ⁷ *a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table.* ⁸ *But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, "Why this waste?"* ⁹ *"For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor."*

But notice Jesus' answer.

Matthew 26:10-13 ¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. ¹¹ *"For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me.* ¹² *"For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.* ¹³ *"Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."*

Christ's response was that the costly perfume spoke to setting Him apart for a special work of grace and mercy that would result in the salvation of His people. And for that, this one time act of opulence spoke volumes to God's glory and majesty.

In the same way, the entire building project of Solomon, including this opulent sculpture of the cherubim, spoke to a work that God was doing from His throne as he bent toward the earth in an act of grace to demonstrate how He would meet with His people, despite the fact that they deserved only His wrath, as is seen in the cherubim guarding the way to the mercy seat and Ark of the covenant, again, not unlike how the real live cherubim at the entrance to the Garden guarded the way to the tree of life.

But as we come back to that inner sanctuary where God would meet with His people, (a depiction of Adam and Eve meeting with the Lord in the garden sanctuary so many years ago), it becomes

apparent that this sanctuary that Solomon has constructed has all the trappings of Eden and the garden.

1 Kings 6:29-30 ²⁹ Then *he carved all the walls* of the house round about *with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner and outer sanctuaries.* ³⁰ He overlaid the floor of the house with gold, inner and outer *sanctuaries.*

1 Kings 6:32 ³² So *he made* two doors of olive wood, and *he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers,* and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

1 Kings 6:33-35 ³³ So also he made for the entrance of the nave four-sided doorposts of olive wood ³⁴ and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots. ³⁵ *He carved on it cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers;* and he overlaid *them* with gold evenly applied on the engraved work.

To walk into this sanctuary was to walk into a paradise scene with palm trees and open flowers everywhere you looked. And intermingled among the trees and flowers, Solomon included carvings of the guardians, the cherubim, which tells us that entrance into the paradise was still restricted.

By the way, it should not be lost on us that the Feast of Booths, which was to commemorate the wanderings of the Jews during their 40 years in the desert, which God had commanded His people to memorialize each year, uses this same paradise imagery.

Leviticus 23:34, 39-43 ³⁴ "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD.

39-43 ³⁹ 'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. ⁴⁰ *'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.* ⁴¹ 'You shall thus celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It *shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² 'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, ⁴³ so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live

in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

We see the same imagery and the same excitement of God's care for His people in the commemoration of the Feast of Booths in the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 8:15-17 ¹⁵ So they proclaimed and circulated a proclamation in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "***Go out to the hills, and bring olive branches and wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches and branches of other leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written.***" ¹⁶ So the people went out and brought *them* and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷ The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was great rejoicing.

God makes it clear that the wanderings in the desert was to show His provision as well as His presence in their midst. But why do it with a little house made of green foliage for these seven days, according to Lev.23:34?

The Jews would have understood immediately the connection to a seven day week which is a direct reference to the first seven days of God's brand new creation.

Genesis 2:2-3 ² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then ***God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it***, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

The giving of the commandments to Moses on the mountain are prefaced with this very same message.

Exodus 20:11-12 ¹¹ "***For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.***" ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Seven was a number of completion and perfection and it was on the seventh day, that is the first full day of Adam and Eve's existence in the garden sanctuary, in the presence of God, with trees and flowers and animals everywhere, for the two of them to enjoy as they glory in this creation of God's.

It was always God's intention for man to dwell in His presence in Paradise with Him. And in many places in the word of God these pictures are given to us to remind us of what we lost in Eden so many years before, be it in lush green leafy booths where the Jews would dwell in the presence of their God, as they commemorate His goodness and glory, or in carvings of palm trees and open flowers on the walls of the sanctuary that Solomon built to honor God, who would dwell among the Jews, as He would meet with them above the mercy seat that is guarded by the cherubim.

It is not a coincidence that palm branches are utilized by God's people to declare their King as these branches pointed to the paradise that God created, and in a sense God's people are taking what God has graciously given them and are throwing them at the feet of the Creator so as honor the One who gives life.

This is why the Jews of Christ's day utilized palm branches for their King as they supposed that the Lord was saving them from Rome and they desired to honor their conqueror during the feast of the Passover.

John 12:12-13 ¹² On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and *began* to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel."

It's interesting that palm branches and the Passover and the phrase, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, are all placed in the same context.

It is this phrase, attached to the King who comes in the name of the Lord, whereby the Lamb of God is to be slain so as to allow entrance into the sanctuary which will be clearly seen as in a few days the curtain in the sanctuary will be torn in two from top to bottom.

The gate to the inner sanctuary will be opened as the guardians will step aside, as the Lamb will lead the procession into the presence of God. But it is through this gate where this Lamb will first have

to suffer the sacrificial death as the flaming sword of God's wrath is brought to bear.

It is this gate into the entrance of Paradise that has been guarded since the fall, that is now opened, and to which David spoke, as he pens the words those Jews used to magnify this King of the Jews.

Psalm 118:20-29 ²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD; The righteous will enter through it.* ²¹ I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And You have become my salvation. ²² The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. ²³ This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! ²⁶ *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;* We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. ²⁷ The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. ²⁸ You are my God, and I give thanks to You; *You are my God, I extol You.* ²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

It is this same paradise gate that has been opened to all of God's people, of which John acknowledges, as he includes the great multitude of not only the saints, but all others who surround the throne of God, including the angels and the seraphim, as they declare His greatness.

Revelation 7:9-12 ⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, *a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;* ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ¹¹ And *all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,* ¹² saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

The cherubim and the seraphim and the angels and the saints will one day raise their collective voices around the throne of God and His kingdom found in the new heavens and new earth.

This is the culmination of God's plan to restore Paradise on earth where God will dwell with His people and all living creatures of

His making in that eternal sanctuary that had been guarded for so many years, but is now accessible through the gate that has been torn down by the Lamb of God.

Revelation 21:1-7 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ***"Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,*** ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." ⁶ Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷ "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

The sanctuary that housed the Ark of the Covenant that Solomon constructed was symbolically guarded by these huge carvings of the cherubim covered in gold and now in Christ we all have access to this sanctuary depicted in Solomon's temple.

But as we come back to the house of God that Solomon constructed it appears that his carvings are at odds with other depictions of these cherubim. As was noted earlier, Moses does not give us a description of the cherubim who were guarding the way to the tree of life in the book of Genesis.

It is not until we come to the book of Exodus that wings come into play describing these *chayyah*, animals standing above and guarding the ark as they sit atop the mercy seat.

In fact, in both Exodus and in 1Kings it appears that these creatures have only two wings and yet, as we have also noted in the book of Ezekiel, it is quite clear that the prophet sees four wings with each set of wings having a particular function.

And we will visit this apparent discrepancy when we come to Ezekiel. But as we look at the other places of Scripture where the cherubim are addressed, in each case they are displayed in statuary form in the sanctuary as they stand above the ark.

1 Kings 8:6-7 ⁶ Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim. ⁷ For the cherubim spread *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles from above.

But the place of the cherubim in the sanctuary was always to depict their function of guarding as God stood above them.

2 Kings 19:15 ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, who are *enthroned above the cherubim*, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

1 Chronicles 13:6 ⁶ David and all Israel went up to Baalah, *that is*, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, *the LORD who is enthroned above the cherubim*, where His name is called.

And then when the sanctuary was finally completed by Solomon there was that day in which the presence of the Lord came upon that place as the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the sanctuary.

2 Chronicles 5:6-14 ⁶ And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. ⁷ *Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the holy of holies, under the wings of the cherubim.* ⁸ *For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles.* ⁹ The poles were so long that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen in front of the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; and they are there to this day. ¹⁰ There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put *there* at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of Egypt. ¹¹ When the priests came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), ¹² and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets ¹³ in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and *when they lifted up their voice accompanied by*

trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting," then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

After many years of God's presence being removed from Israel, in a formal setting, the house of God and the presence of God were now reunited to depict the sanctuary in Eden once more as the carvings of trees and flowers adorned the entire area, along with the cherubim.

The Psalmist Asaph would express this scene that the Lord inspired for him to write.

Psalm 80:1 ^{NAU} For the choir director; *set to* El Shoshannim; Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph. Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; ***You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!***

In Psalm 99 this same scene in the sanctuary is then defined as the place called Zion where God is exalted above all the peoples.

Psalm 99:1-3 ^{NAU} The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; ***He is enthroned above the cherubim***, let the earth shake! ² ***The LORD is great in Zion***, And He is exalted above all the peoples. ³ Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He.

And so, this takes us back to the garden sanctuary where God is enthroned above the cherubim and is deemed great, awesome and Holy.

The last mention of the cherubim in relationship to God's holy presence, outside of the book of Ezekiel, is found in the book of Isaiah. And here is where God's kingdom is associated with Him being creator of heaven and earth.

Isaiah 37:16 ¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ***who is enthroned above the cherubim***, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. ***You have made heaven and earth.***

And so, in summary, what we have seen in the primarily historic narrative sections of Scripture, related to the cherubim, is that real live heavenly animals were commissioned by God, after man's

fall, to guard the entrance into the garden so as to keep man from the life that was found in the tree of the same name.

These real live heavenly guardians would have been seen by all people who would camp near or travel by the entrance to the garden and be reminded of how God had taken His presence from mankind through the rebellion of Adam, and the consequences of this sin, which is death, as is seen in the flaming sword that spoke to God's judgment that would result in the death of anyone who would try to breach that gate.

This would also turn out to be the means by which man would be restored to the garden as the Lamb of God would enter through the inner sanctuary through His sacrifice, and this was shown to be the way as God prescribed it, as both Cain and Abel, and therefore Adam and Eve and the rest of their families, by faith in God's promise of restoration, would offer animal sacrifices to find favor with God.

And so, all of these images, as found in the construction of the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat and cherubim, all speak to the salvation that God has revealed to men so as to reenter the garden sanctuary to have unhindered fellowship with God as He walks among them.

CHERUBIM IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

But the last OT book in which we find the cherubim is a book that reveals this sanctuary in a vision given by God to Ezekiel. And this is where we will camp for a while since there is much said here regarding the cherubim

Ezekiel 1:1 ^{NAU} Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth *day* of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, *the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.*

In this vision Ezekiel will be taken into the heavenly throne room of God.

But this vision takes place in the context of the Babylonian captivity as God's people have been defeated and are now displaced to the land of their captors. It is King Jehoiachin who is in exile at this time as Ezekiel receives this vision.

2 Kings 24:6-15 ⁶ So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and ***Jehoiachin his son became king in his place.*** ⁷ The king of Egypt did not come out of his land again, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates. ⁸ ***Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem;*** and his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. ⁹ ***He did evil in the sight of the LORD,*** according to all that his father had done. ¹⁰ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. ¹¹ And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. ¹² ***Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign.*** ¹³ He carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and ***cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said.*** ¹⁴ Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. ¹⁵ ***So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon;*** also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Jehoiakin was an evil king in the sight of the Lord and it is during his reign that Nebuchadnezzar pillages Jerusalem, and desecrates those gold articles in the house of the Lord by cutting them in pieces.

At the time of this vision Ezekiel is among the exiles in Babylon and it is in the fifth year of King Jehoiakin's incarceration.

Ezekiel 1:2 ² (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile,

And so, the context of this vision is once again showing God's holiness and greatness as well as His mercy as He shows Ezekiel, not only the justice of God who sits on His throne, but the salvation of God for His people as He promises a restoration of the Kingdom of Israel in the last chapters of this book.

And so, now we can begin to turn our attention to this vision which includes the cherubim, referred to early on in the vision as “living beings” in the NAU, or “living creatures” in the NIV.

The Hebrew word, as we have already noted earlier in this study, is the word *chayyah*, and it is the same word used for beasts of the field, which is to say, animals.

And so, what Ezekiel sees are heavenly creatures around the throne of God and as he further explains what he sees it becomes quite apparent that these are in fact a type of animal, not unlike the heavenly animals of Isaiah and Revelation, which describe the seraphim, where in the NT they are called *zoon*, which is Greek for animal.

Ezekiel 1:3-4 ³ the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.) ⁴ As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire.

Ezekiel is part of the dispersion to Babylon and so the vision is given to him by God in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar.

At the time of this vision he sees a storm wind and in the midst of this storm is a cloud with fire flashing, as a bright light surrounds it, and in the midst of this scene is what Ezekiel describes as glowing metal.

Part of what this image conveys is seen in other parts of the word of God that describe God’s holiness along with His justice whereby He stands as Judge of all men.

Nahum 1:3-6 ³ The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished. ***In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.*** ⁴ He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither. ⁵ ***Mountains quake because of Him And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence,*** The world and all the inhabitants in it. ⁶ Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him.

We know who is associated with the storm clouds and the whirlwind as this same throne room scene is given to the apostle John as it relates to God's justice.

Revelation 1:7-8 ⁷ ***BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS***, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

As this vision in Ezekiel continues, some of these sights begin to be defined as Ezekiel is given more information so as to make some sense of these sights. And so, what was seen in the distance as simply a cloud with fire flashing and glowing metal, now comes into sharper focus as this scene comes closer to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:26-28 ²⁶ Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was a figure with the appearance of a man.* ²⁷ ***Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.*** ²⁸ As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.* And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

This image of fire and glowing metal that Ezekiel is shown is not an unfamiliar image in the word of God. In fact, when we are introduced to fire in the word of God it is in the context of judgment that God enacts on those who are guilty before Him.

The first time in the Scriptures where the fire of God is inferred is with the offering of a burnt sacrifice on the part of Abel as such a burnt offering was pleasing to the Lord.

Genesis 4:4 ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

It is the fire of God that also shows the Lord's holiness and our need to honor God in humbleness in the midst of this fire. Moses first encountered this at the beginning of his ministry.

Exodus 3:2-6 ² *The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire* from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, *the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.* ³ So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

It would be later in the ministry of Moses, where God led him and the Israelites out into the desert, where the nation of Israel would see the presence of the Lord on Mount Zion in a scene similar to what Ezekiel experiences.

Exodus 19:9 ⁹ The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, *I will come to you in a thick cloud*, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

Exodus 19:14-21 ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ He said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." ¹⁶ So it came about *on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.* ¹⁷ *And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.* ¹⁸ Now *Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.* ¹⁹ When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. ²⁰ The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "*Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.*"

What Ezekiel is experiencing in this vision from God is what Moses and Israel saw on the mountain and in this sense Ezekiel is

taken to the mountain of God in this vision; what he acknowledges as the throne of God.

Ezekiel 1:26 ²⁶ Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was *something resembling a throne,*

What is interesting about this throne is the way Ezekiel describes it.

Ezekiel 1:26 ²⁶ Now above the expanse that was over their heads *there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance;*

In describing the New Jerusalem the apostle John sees a similar vision with an expanded look at this throne room of God, which is actually a city, not so much of brick and mortar, or in this case precious stones, but a people adorned with the brightness of God's glory as the context of the entire chapter makes clear.

Revelation 21:18-21 ¹⁸ The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

What Ezekiel is experiencing in this vision is exactly what John describes to a greater degree, but with no less reverence on the part of either of these men.

It is in this setting where we have both cherubim, expressed in Ezekiel, and seraphim, expressed in Isaiah and Revelation, as we will now look at what Ezekiel will describe in what he sees of these four winged creatures.

Ezekiel 1:4-6 ⁴ As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. ⁵ *Within it there were figures resembling four living beings.* And this was their appearance: they had human form. ⁶ Each of them had four faces and four wings.

The first thing we should note about these living beings is the Hebrew word used for these beings, which we have already identified as *chayyah*, which is one of several words for animal; this is what they *resembled*, according to Ezekiel.

Again, keeping in mind that in this vision Ezekiel is undoubtedly being introduced to beings he has never seen before and so what appears to be heavenly animals is certainly strange, but even stranger is that these heavenly animals have human form, according to verse 5.

The word in our passage says they *resembled* animals, and then that they had the *form* of a human which is the same Hebrew word, *demuth*, which means likeness or similar.

Ezekiel is saying that what he sees he has seen before in different contexts on earth, but in this context, in this vision before the throne, he says they appear in both animal and human form, which is to say they have characteristics of both.

As we will see shortly it becomes obvious why he might conclude these are a type of heavenly animal, and the same will be true as he further explains some of the human characteristics.

He begins by identifying each of these creatures as having four faces and four wings.

Next in this description he says, “Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf’s hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. (**Ezekiel 1:7**)

What Ezekiel describes here is that aspect of appearing as both an animal and yet human. Notice that the legs were straight. In the animal world most animals have four legs, where two are usually bent to some degree.

But at this point Ezekiel gives no hint that he is describing any more than one set of legs. And yet, though their legs were straight, hinting that this is the human aspect of their appearance, what was attached to this straight leg, was an animal foot.

Ezekiel 1:7 “...and their feet were like a calf’s hoof,...”

This is looking stranger and stranger, in fact, we’ve seen similar beasts in all sorts of pagan cultures throughout the ages, often

called centaur, where the upper half of the creature is a human with the lower half as a horse.

Similar creatures are depicted with animal features such as the head of a bull and the body of a man, called minotaur.

But it should not surprise us that at this time in Assyro/Babylonian culture, when Ezekiel was in captivity in Babylon, there were creatures depicted in their art that would have looked quite similar to what Ezekiel is being shown.

This is not to suggest that Ezekiel, or the Holy Spirit who is revealing this vision to him, are depending on the cultural norm of their day to paint a picture of beasts that are other-worldly looking, as if God needs to borrow from pagan cultures to tell a story.

But what is being conveyed are hidden truths that are displayed before the eyes of Ezekiel so as to reveal certain aspects of the throne room of God and those creatures before His throne, that play a role in man's redemption and God's glory, which the word of God shows to be angels, seraphim, cherubim and departed saints, along with at least horses in the present heaven, according to 2Kings 2:11.

And so, these creatures that Ezekiel sees, up to this point, have animal features and human features which include human looking legs juxtaposed with animal feet, namely something that appears as a calf's foot.

The next thing we see is a description of these appendages.

Ezekiel 1:7 and they gleamed like burnished bronze.

The imagery being displayed here is one of glory as these creatures surround the throne. This is common symbolic language that is employed to describe God's messengers and the Son of God in particular.

Daniel 10:4-6 ⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, ⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was *a certain man dressed in linen*, whose waist was girded with *a belt of pure gold of Uphaz*. ⁶ His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, *his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze*, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

Revelation 1:13-15 ¹³ and in the middle of the lampstands *I saw one like a son of man*, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ *His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace*, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters.

Revelation 2:18 ¹⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: *The Son of God*, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and *His feet are like burnished bronze*, says this:

We know that our Lord's feet are not made of bronze that appears burnished or polished. Rather, it is simply conveying the glory of the one being described around the throne of God.

And in the case of these creatures, not yet identified as Cherubim, these living beings share a glory reserved only for the present heaven around the throne.

And by the way, gleaming animals are not new in the heavenly realm. Elijah and Elisha can testify to this in the verse noted below.

2 Kings 2:11 ¹¹ As they were going along and talking, behold, *there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them*. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

The word fire in this verse can also be translated blazing or flashing.

Back to our text.

Ezekiel 1:8 ⁸ Under their wings on their four sides *were* human hands.

We know they have four wings, according to verse 6, and now we know that they have human hands along with their legs.

Again, it's important to keep in mind that Ezekiel is not being shown some sort of mythical half human half beast sort of creature. The Holy Spirit is purposefully using symbolic figures to describe spiritual realities.

The reality is that there is a real place called heaven where God dwells with His people, and every other created thing in this present heaven to declare His glory, be they heavenly animals, humans who have died in the Lord, or angels.

It is a marvelous place that Ezekiel is getting a glimpse of in a vision that is shown to him amidst much symbolism.

Could God have transported Ezekiel into His presence and shown him heaven without any of this strange imagery?

Absolutely. But that's not what He does any more than He did it with the apostle John who was shown a Lamb as if slain, or Satan as a dragon.

Realities described in symbols is what God has chosen to do to hide certain things, just as Jesus did with parables.

Matthew 13:10-11 ¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "*Why do You speak to them in parables?*" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, "*To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.*"

In fact, this is precisely the way God says He communicated with Israel on different occasions through the prophets for the exact same reasons.

Hosea 12:10 ¹⁰ I have also spoken to the prophets, And I gave numerous visions, *And through the prophets I gave parables.*

In a sense, this vision given to Ezekiel is a symbolic parable to teach a truth in language that keeps His people's interest in the realities behind the symbols so as to seek for the answer, but not in a literal way.

But one who has the Spirit of God is able to discern what is being conveyed in these vision/parables.

Revelation 2:29 ²⁹ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

The message of Ezekiel is meant to show the glory of God in the age to come, which is to encourage God's people who are given eyes to see and ears to hear, but part of the vision is to admonish the world as they continue to refuse to see because of their spiritual blindness based on their rebellion and sin.

And because God owes nothing to anyone, (unless He opens the eyes and ears, to see and hear), we remain spiritually dead as was the case for Israel.

Deuteronomy 29:4 ⁴ "Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

Isaiah 29:10 ¹⁰ For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers.

Matthew 13:7-16 ⁷ "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸ "And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹ "He who has ears, let him hear." ¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, *"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.* ¹² *"For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.* ¹³ *"Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.* ¹⁴ *"In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; ¹⁵ FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'* ¹⁶ *"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*

Ezekiel may not have understood everything he was seeing, but he did know that God was revealing to Him hidden things that spoke very clearly to His glory and to the salvation for His people and that he was to pass this information along to Israel.

Ezekiel 40:4 ⁴ The man said to me, "Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show *it* to you. *Declare to the house of Israel all that you see.*"

As for the cherubim, Ezekiel will go to great lengths to reveal what he sees and as we come back to those related passages, hopefully we will see more clearly what God is revealing to us.

EZEKIEL'S FOURS

Ezekiel 1:8 ⁸ Under their wings on their four sides *were* human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

With their wings in place we also see here that they have four sides, or what could also be translated, four parts. Again, the number 4 becomes significant, not so much to define a being that is blocked out with four different looking sides to himself, but because of what these four parts or sides represent in the vision.

The vision shows us four of these creatures, with four faces, four wings, four sides, four wheels, one wheel for each, so they can move in four directions. Later in this vision Ezekiel is given a message that all of Israel will be judged using the number four.

Ezekiel 7:2 ² "And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on the *four corners of the land*.

The way in which this judgment will come will be through four separate judgments from the hand of God.

Ezekiel 14:21 ²¹ For thus says the Lord GOD, "How much more when *I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it!*

When the Lord begins to reveal to Ezekiel that He will save a remnant of Israel He shows him dry bones, but then explains how He will bring life to the dry bones through His breath using the wind. And where do you think the breath comes from?

Ezekiel 37:9 ⁹ Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "*Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.*"

When describing the vision of the new temple in the last chapters of the book of Ezekiel the number four continues to be brought to bear to describe different parts of the temple.

The point is that the number four is often used to describe the totality of something or the completeness of something.

The four winds that accompany God's breath coming into the dry bones is describing God's life giving breath coming from every corner of the earth; north, south, east and west.

The four severe judgments encompassing the four corners of the land of Israel speaks to complete and total judgment that no one will escape.

And so, when we see four wings, four faces, four parts or four wheels, in relationship to the cherubim, it is giving us a composite picture of the entire being as that being is described as a complete and a functioning member of heaven designed to magnify the Lord in every corner of the throne room.

Does this mean that wings and faces and wheels have no significance other than to speak to four of something? No. But as we look at these different features it will speak to more than four of anything related to them, while still showing us that these heavenly animals do have features about which God wants us to know.

If this were not the case we would not have as much detail given to us about these cherubim being differentiated from the seraphim, for example, where clearly they are similar and yet different with different functions around the throne.

So, back to the four of everything related to the cherubim.

In examining these features, it is imperative to understand that whatever else the four of everything speaks to, it all must be in the context of the role of the cherubim which is clearly laid out in non-apocalyptic, non-symbolic language found in the Genesis account.

It is in this section of Scripture where real live cherubim guarded the entrance to the tree of life in the garden, together with those other portions of non-apocalyptic Scripture describing the role of protecting or guarding the Ark of the Covenant that represents the new life found in the new covenant where God promises to restore Eden.

With no mention of their wings in Genesis and with an indication of two wings in Exodus, with the pattern given to Moses, and the 1Kings description of two winged cherubim in Solomon's Temple

sanctuary, are we to conclude that Ezekiel's description of four wings is simply a symbolic embellishment of the two winged creature?

Well, as we have already seen in different places in apocalyptic portions of God's word, there are many times where someone or something is described in such a way that we know it does not literally reflect that thing or person being identified in the passage.

We've looked at a few. Here is another one describing the church and angels.

^{NAU} **Revelation 1:16** In His right hand He held *seven stars*, and *out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword*; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Revelation 1:20 ²⁰ "As for the mystery of the *seven stars* which you saw in My right hand, and the *seven golden lampstands*: the *seven stars are the angels* of the seven churches, and the *seven lampstands are the seven churches*.

So, again, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that these winged creatures, as seen in the vision given to Ezekiel, do not necessarily have four wings. But, since God doesn't describe the cherubim in Genesis 3:24, is it safe to say that the pattern given to Moses also may be taken symbolically, which is to say, do they have wings at all?

And again, this brings up the issue of the nature of these creatures, which are shown to be animals, albeit heavenly animals.

If they are animals, is it not also possible that they could be an animal with wings? Is that so out of the question?

We know the four wings in Ezekiel's vision have a function. One set covers their bodies, one set flies.

Is that simply a metaphor for humbleness and swiftness?

I don't think it has to be though, again, I would argue that what Ezekiel is conveying is certainly language that must be seen within the larger context of the reality it represents even though it is in symbolic language.

And so, it is apparent that Ezekiel is drawn up into the throne room of God which is described in language that makes it look more like

a severe thunderstorm with people on fire than it does a real place where saints, angels, animals and yes, our Creator resides.

FOUR FACES OF EZEKIEL'S CHERUBIM

So, as if four wings were not strange enough, now we come to that portion that describes these creatures with four faces.

Ezekiel 1:8-11 As for the faces and wings of the four of them, ⁹ their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. ¹⁰ As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. ¹¹ Such were their faces.

What Ezekiel is describing here, for lack of a better explanation, is a being that moves, but doesn't move like a normal person or animal.

“Their faces did not turn when they moved.”

For this to make any sense it would seem apparent that their four faces, which obviously occupy one side of their head, are not on a swivel, if you will.

Most people and animals, when they look at something, are able to turn their heads to see something to the side. The imagery here is that if this creature wants to identify something to the side of it, it simply shifts its attention to the face that is facing what it wants to identify.

In other words, the imagery is of a very stiff moving creature where, though it is able to move, it can only move in one direction at a time. And so each face faces in only one direction all of the time. It gives the impression that each face is dedicated to looking at either north, south, east or west.

And this may very well be the point of this imagery as it is always aware of its space and that nothing can sneak up on it, if you will, so as to take it by surprise.

And here again, it is essential to see this phenomenon in the context of the original duty of these cherubim at the entrance to the garden.

Genesis 3:24 ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden *He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.*

The cherubim, together with the flaming sword, turn in every direction, which is to say, that their task of guarding the entrance demonstrated complete security and that nothing and nobody would be able to get into the garden because of their ability to absolutely guard that entrance from any direction.

And so, here the symbolism of these four faces turning and moving in only one direction at a time, is not so much describing a robot approach to movement as it is the complete coverage of the four corners of the garden where these creatures were commissioned by God to guard the entrance. Nothing would go unnoticed and therefore nothing would get by them.

So, I think it is safe to say that four faces are not meant to describe what these creatures actually look like, as if they possess four different faces, one on each side of their head.

This then leads to the next aspect of these faces described in Ezekiel, which may better describe their actual appearance, which is more in line with the nature of these living creatures, that of animals, (*chayyah*).

Ezekiel 1:10-11 ¹⁰ As for the form of their faces, *each* had the *face of a man*; all four had the *face of a lion on the right* and the *face of a bull on the left*, and *all four had the face of an eagle.* ¹¹ Such were their faces.

As I have noted before, this aspect of four, as it relates to the four faces of the cherubim, is almost identical to the four living creatures in Revelation, who are the same creatures described in Isaiah as seraphim, where both accounts address the six wings of these creatures.

Later in this study we will look more closely at the resemblances of the cherubim and seraphim and arrive at what I believe is a proper understanding of their natures and functions and it will probably surprise most as to the association between these two creatures.

Like the seraphim, I believe that these four faces in Ezekiel, attached to these cherubim, are representations of an entire group of heavenly animals not limited to these four descriptions.

But, using the number four as that which describes the entirety of something, we are being shown, not just four, but myriads of these creatures, as in the case of the seraphim that we saw earlier.

Revelation 5:11-12 ¹¹ Then I looked, and *I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders*; and *the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

I don't believe that John would limit these myriads to just the angels, elders or seraphim, but like the vision that Daniel was given of this same heavenly scene, it includes all creatures that attend God at His throne, which would logically include the Cherubim.

Daniel 7:9-10 ⁹ "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire. ¹⁰ "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; *Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him*; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Daniel does not specifically identify those who attend the Lord, and he puts no limitations to any of the types of beings who stand before the throne, only that there are myriads of them, and therefore it must include the cherubim.

But what about the actual images of these faces? Is there anything in their description that might be instructive as it relates to the faces of a man, a bull, a lion or an eagle?

Well, it is certainly true that all of these images have been addressed previously throughout the OT and certainly can be descriptive of some aspect of the creation that speaks to the characteristics of such beings as eagles, where both swiftness and strength are associated with such animals.

Isaiah 40:31 ³¹ Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; *They will mount up with wings like eagles*, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

Lamentations 4:19 ¹⁹ Our pursuers were *swifter Than the eagles of the sky*; They chased us on the mountains, They waited in ambush for us in the wilderness.

Jeremiah 48:40 ⁴⁰ For thus says the LORD: "Behold, *one will fly swiftly like an eagle* And spread out his wings against Moab.

As to the lion's characteristics we see strength, power and a ferociousness that cannot be dismissed in the cherubim who would have demonstrated all of these characteristics at the entrance to Eden's Garden.

Proverbs 20:2 ² The terror of a king is like the *growling of a lion*; *He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.*

Proverbs 28:1 ^{NAU} The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But *the righteous are bold as a lion.*

Proverbs 30:29-30 ²⁹ There are three things which are stately in *their* march, Even four which are stately when they walk: ³⁰ *The lion which is mighty among beasts And does not retreat before any,*

By the way, the imagery of any beast can also be attributed to people, not just cherubim.

1 Chronicles 12:8 ⁸ From the Gadites there came over to David in the stronghold in the wilderness, *mighty men of valor*, men trained for war, who could handle shield and spear, and *whose faces were like the faces of lions*, and *they were as swift as the gazelles on the mountains.*

This passage is not suggesting that when David saw these men that they had actual faces of lions, but that their demeanor and warlike constitution took on the look of fierce lions who would devour their prey in a swiftness that would compare with any gazelle, without actually resembling a gazelle or a lion.

In like manner, these cherubim are being displayed before Ezekiel as heavenly animals who share the characteristics of all of these animals including bulls whose strength and power could not be challenged.

As for the face of a man, I have argued in the section on the seraphim that what the apostle John saw could very well have been

the face of a primate whose face is similar to that of a man, as the Greek language could be interpreted in that section.

But here in Ezekiel the vision seems to point to a being that, while identified as an animal, (*chayyah*), it also says that these creatures look like humans.

Ezekiel 1:5 ⁵ Within it *there were figures resembling four living beings* (*chayyah*). And this was their appearance: *they had human (adam) form*.

This is apparently why the passage in verse 10 does not say that the creatures had the face similar to that of a man, but rather it says, “each had the face of a man;” (**Ezekiel 1:10**)

It could literally be translated, “each had the face of adam.” If it is the case that Ezekiel sees an actual human face on one side of the cherubim’s head, and since this is the same throne room scene that the apostle John will see, it could be argued that this is an actual human face that both Ezekiel and John sees.

So, the question arises, what characteristic found in a human being does this heavenly animal possess, as it also possesses the characteristics of these other animals?

We know that man was made in the image of God, while animals are not, and for that matter, we are not told that angels are made in the image of God.

But as to sharing qualities of men, both angels and animals can be seen to share wisdom, understanding, self-awareness, compassion, and other human qualities that can certainly be seen in this throne room setting where the ability to worship and praise God are central characteristics that some might limit to human beings, but is apparent that that is not the case here in this vision.

For example, if one rejects the ability of a brute animal to practice what appears to be wisdom then we might be reminded of what God says of ants.

Proverbs 6:6-8 ⁶ *Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,* ⁷ *Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler,* ⁸ *Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.*

Now, obviously God is not suggesting that ants have an innate ability to think through problems and devise complex answers to their problems, but it is apparent that God has designed all of His creatures to practice those aspects of life that would certainly appear “wise” as He has designed all creatures with an instinct that suits their ability to survive and thrive.

Thus, maybe human beings, especially lazy human beings, who are being addressed in Proverbs 6, could learn something from a much lower creature on the totem pole.

But as we move through the first chapter of Ezekiel we continue to see some very bizarre images related to the cherubim as it pertains to the mode of their movement.

In fact, because of the odd imagery there have been some bizarre interpretations of this section that have permeated our culture today to where the biblical text has become more of a blueprint for an other-worldly understanding of this text.

Erich von Däniken in his book, “Chariots of the gods”, has popularized the idea that this is a description of aliens who were responsible for seeding our earth with their kind in what has come to be known as the ancient astronaut theory.

Others simply dismiss the whole notion of the one true God communicating biblical truths and have replaced it with a naturalistic explanation of mythical gods in dramatic language to describe things as mundane as weather and seasons of the earth.

D.M. Murdock/Acharya S, in an article entitled, “Ezekiel's Wheel within a Wheel Revealed” summarize this perspective.

“Knowing these facts of Jewish astrolatry, the enigmatic imagery in the biblical book of Ezekiel (c. 6th cent. BCE) can be analyzed as depicting many aspects of astral religion/astrotheology. In this regard, Ezekiel's mysterious vision in chapter 1 has been said for centuries to have occurred at the summer solstice. Summer solstice myths hold that the solar hero attains to his or her full glory at this time of year, when the days are the longest and are victorious over the night or "prince of darkness.”

“In any event, the "wheel within a wheel" in Ezekiel's vision clearly refers to the zodiac, with its four fixed signs, not a spaceship with alien creatures.”

(<http://www.stellarhousepublishing.com/ezekielwheel.html>)

Simply because the text is difficult to wrap our heads around does not mean the Holy Spirit, who inspired Ezekiel to write this portion of Scripture after showing him these heavenly images, does not mean that there isn't a proper biblical interpretation or that God is trying to simply hide something from His people.

As noted earlier, there were parable type messages that God revealed to His prophets so as to purposely cloud what might otherwise be obvious. Searching the word of God for answers to some of the harder passages is part of what the Lord wants His people to do since He has given us His Spirit who leads us into all truth.

John 14:16-18 ¹⁶ "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

And so, as we come to these passages in question we still need to be faithful to seek the whole counsel of God's word and keep this and other related passages in a proper context.

So, let's push forward keeping in mind that this strange scene is in the context of Ezekiel seeing these creatures around the throne of God whose glory fills the heavenly temple as His power and majesty is declared in the midst of a judgment that God has meted out to His people in exile.

EZEKIEL'S FOUR WINGED CHERUBIM

Ezekiel 1:11 Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another *being*, and two covering their bodies.

Two of their four wings were serving the purpose of covering their bodies and two wings were spread above in such a fashion that they touched the wings of the cherubim next to them.

As this is a picture of a heavenly sanctuary in the holy of holies it should not be lost on us that this is also a scene of the first earthly sanctuary in the Garden of Eden where Adam was commissioned to serve before the Lord as guardian of the garden.

You'll remember that when Adam and Eve were created they were sinless and without shame and were not in need of being clothed. But after Adam fell it was God Himself who clothed them with garments of skin.

Heavenly animals would not be in need of covering their bodies, just like earthly animals are not in need of covering their bodies. Animals of any type have no shame in themselves.

But in reverence to their God and creator these creatures humbly acknowledge His majesty as they cover themselves before His throne. And their other set of wings are spread above in a posture of worship.

Again, this leads us back to whether or not these cherubim actually have four wings. I don't believe the text demands that they do in light of the plethora of other symbols that are associated with both the cherubim and their surroundings, as we will see.

But, does this mean they have no wings? Again, the text does not demand that either. In fact, because of the imagery that God uses to portray the cherubim, where He gives Moses the pattern of cherubim to be carved above the mercy seat, with what appears to be only two wings, it might be argued that the symbolic language of Ezekiel must be tempered with the historic narrative sections, albeit in statuary form, where Moses constructs the ark with cherubim having their wings touch each other over the top of the mercy seat.

In this sense I don't think the idea of wings, associated with these heavenly animals that surround the throne, have to be abandoned simply because of the symbolism involved, any more than the symbolism of Jesus Christ as a slain Lamb nullifies His existence as the Savior of His people, the God/man.

In other words, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that these heavenly creatures, which are necessarily animals, according to the very words that Ezekiel and John use, (*chayyah, zoon*), may indeed have wings that could be used for flight.

God's creation is very diverse on planet earth, which some could argue is a copy of the original found in the present heaven where animals of all types, both winged, and non-winged, (as in the case of horses that pull chariots), dwell, serve, and bring glory to their creator around His throne.

And so, Ezekiel's vision is a parable type revelation of the throne room of God and is portrayed in very dramatic fashion as it teaches the truths of the glory of God where His servants, be they angels, seraphim, cherubim or saints who have died in the faith, come together under the safeguard of His glory.

Again, it is important to keep in mind that the book of Ezekiel is not about winged creatures, or any heavenly creatures of any type, taking center stage, but are simply a small sampling of the entire cast, myriads upon myriads, if you will, that surrounds the throne where God alone is center stage as this entire heavenly scene is but a glimpse into the holiness of God who judges sin and then holds out the grace and mercy to be shown to a remnant of His people, the Israel of God.

Ezekiel 1:12 ¹² And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.

This is a reference back to verse 9.

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 1:9** their wings touched one another; **their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward.**

When these creatures move in this vision they move with purpose as the Spirit moves them according to the will of the one whose throne they surround. Nothing but the glory of God captures their attention.

Ezekiel 1:13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like *burning coals of fire*, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.

In this account of the vision we have what appears as a separate entity that is moving independent of the living beings, (*chayyah*, animals), as they dart back and forth among the living beings.

This is a similar image of coals around the throne that Isaiah records for us.

Isaiah 6:5-7 ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." ⁶ Then *one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand*, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my

mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

Later in Ezekiel he is shown another picture of this scene.

Ezekiel 10:1-2 ^{NAU} Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them. ² And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim *and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.*" And he entered in my sight.

These coals are in association with an altar as Isaiah records this same heavenly scene where the coals are identified with salvation as sins are forgiven, again a picture of the atoning sacrifice of an innocent animal pointing to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Ezekiel then adds this additional scene with respect to the burning coals.

Ezekiel 1:13-14 ¹³ In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. ¹⁴ And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.

What we see in this part of the vision, with images of burning coals, flaming torches and lightning flashing in and around these luminaries, is a scene of frenetic activity as if these lights and living beings are both moving in and around each other as if playing a game of tag.

But what is happening here is the movement of a Spirit directed dance where these torches of light are speaking to the will of the living God moving throughout His throne room wherein He spreads that atoning fire, taken from the altar, throughout the earth to draw all men to Himself.

In fact, it is this same message that was given to the crowds of Jews on the day of Pentecost who saw the outworking of the Holy Spirit with power, where Peter tells them that this was prophesied long before by the prophet Joel.

Acts 2:15-21 ¹⁵ "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; ¹⁸ EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ '**AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.** ²⁰ '**THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.** ²¹ 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

The same scene is played out again for the apostle John where we have this awesome and frightening revelation of lighting and fire coming from the throne just as we see in Ezekiel.

^{NAU} **Revelation 4:5** Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

John further identifies this scene, not as some bizarre game of tag between cherubim and these torches of light, but as the Holy Spirit whose complete redemptive will is being accomplished before the throne as it is realized on the earth.

It would be easy to get so caught up with all the imagery that we see in Ezekiel but lose sight of the fact that the entire book is about the glory of God as it is revealed in redeeming a people for Himself as He ushers in His new kingdom among the Israel of God.

And this is further brought out in the next section of Ezekiel's vision in the wheels that accompany the cherubim.

EZEKIEL'S WHEELS

Ezekiel 1:15-21 ¹⁵ Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for *each* of the four of them. ¹⁶ The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship *was* like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the

same form, their appearance and workmanship *being* as if one wheel were within another. ¹⁷ Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved. ¹⁸ As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about. ¹⁹ Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels. ²¹ Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still. And whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels.

By the way, this is a similar scene that Ezekiel repeats over the course of the entire 10th chapter.

People have speculated as to what these wheels could be as they are associated with the cherubim. As was noted earlier, some have thought of how this could be a reference to gleaming spaceships coming down to earth.

Some in the Christian community contend that these wheels are descriptive of God's omniscience and omnipresence.

But as was noted earlier these wheels are associated with the throne of God whereby the cherubim below the throne take coals from the altar and spread them throughout the earth as the wheels move with them in whatever direction they go.

Ezekiel 10:1-2 ^{NAU} Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them. ² And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter *them* over the city." And he entered in my sight.

So, the wheels associated with the cherubim, (identified as the "spirit of the living beings"), also play a role in the movement of God's will to not only distribute the grace found in the coals of fire, but also to distribute His justice as is seen in the description of these wheels that are said to be on the earth.

Ezekiel 10:12-13 ¹² Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels

belonging to all four of them. ¹³ *The wheels were called in my hearing, the whirling wheels.*

This aspect of the wheels whirling can also be translated whirlwind which can be associated with the judgment. This is the same word in the Hebrew that the psalmist uses.

^{NAU} **Psalm 77:18** The sound of Your thunder was in the *whirlwind*; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook.

The same concept of judgment is found in other portions of the OT where God is seen in the midst of a storm, if you will.

^{NAU} **Job 38:1** Then the LORD answered Job out of the *whirlwind*.....,

^{NAU} **Isaiah 29:6** From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, *With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.*

^{NAU} **Isaiah 66:15** For behold, *the LORD will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire.*

In fact, it is this last aspect of judgment that Isaiah addresses where the whirlwind is associated with chariots, and that brings us back to Ezekiel's description of the whirling wheels under the cherubim that demonstrate the vision that he sees around the throne is a scene where God's chariots of fire cannot be stopped as He enacts judgment on Israel.

It's the same scene that Jeremiah records for us under the same circumstances of God judging His people for their unfaithfulness.

^{NAU} **Jeremiah 4:13** "Behold, he goes up like clouds, And *his chariots like the whirlwind*; His horses are swifter than eagles. *Woe to us, for we are ruined!*"

Ezekiel is describing the same judgment from God in language that cannot be mistaken, albeit symbolic and somewhat bizarre, but it is clear that what he sees is God's chariot of fire moving throughout the earth in judgment.

Notice again the way Ezekiel describes this scene.

Ezekiel 1:13-14 ¹³ In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, *like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.* ¹⁴ *And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.*

Keep in mind that this is in the context of the whirling wheels under the cherubim. Now compare this with the whirling wheels found in chariots of judgment that the prophet Nahum describes.

Nahum 2:2-4 ² For the LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob Like the splendor of Israel, Even though devastators have devastated them And destroyed their vine branches. ³ The shields of his mighty men are *colored* red, The warriors are dressed in scarlet, The chariots are *enveloped* in flashing steel When he is prepared *to march*, And the cypress *spears* are brandished. ⁴ *The chariots race madly in the streets, They rush wildly in the squares, Their appearance is like torches, They dash to and fro like lightning flashes.*

This is identical language describing God's judgment on the nations as Nahum continues to use this same language later in his book.

Nahum 3:1-6 ^{NAU} Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage; *Her* prey never departs. ² The noise of the whip, *The noise of the rattling of the wheel, Galloping horses And bounding chariots!* ³ *Horsemen charging, Swords flashing, spears gleaming*, Many slain, a mass of corpses, And countless dead bodies-- They stumble over the dead bodies! ⁴ *All* because of the many harlotries of the harlot, The charming one, the mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her harlotries And families by her sorceries. ⁵ "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of hosts; "And I will lift up your skirts over your face, And show to the nations your nakedness And to the kingdoms your disgrace. ⁶ "I will throw filth on you And make you vile, And set you up as a spectacle.

The chariots of war in judgment are also found in the book of Ezekiel as the Lord makes clear that not just Israel, but Israel's enemies will feel His wrath, as Tyre would discover.

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 26:10** "Because of the multitude of his horses, the dust *raised by* them will cover you; your walls will shake at the noise of cavalry and wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city that is breached.

The chariots of God found in many different places in the OT are seen to display His holiness and His justice and all who are trampled by these chariots are found to be laid waste as they continue to war against the Lord.

Psalm 68:17 ¹⁷ The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them *as at Sinai*, in holiness.

But there is an aspect of the wheels that the chariots of judgment point to and that is the very throne of God where the Lord's holiness is seen to be a burning fire which the prophet Daniel sees in his vision given to him by God.

Daniel 7:9-10 ⁹ "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And *the Ancient of Days took His seat*; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. *His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.* ¹⁰ "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

By the way, what Daniel prophesied regarding the Ancient of Days sitting on a blazing throne is the same scene John describes as the great white throne judgment at the end of the age where the books are opened.

Revelation 20:11-15 ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

As we come back to Ezekiel we see that the rest of the first chapter of Ezekiel describes the throne that stood above the cherubim and the one who stood above these living beings portrayed in gleaming glory.

Ezekiel 1:26-28 ²⁶ Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was* a figure with the appearance of a man. ²⁷ Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him. ²⁸ As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

Again, this is the same throne room scene that the apostle John saw.

Revelation 4:2-5 ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. ³ And He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

What is interesting about John's account is that within the immediate context of the above verses he goes on to explain the living creatures around the throne as being those creatures having six wings; the same creatures that Isaiah identifies as seraphim.

Revelation 4:6-8 ⁶ and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. ⁷ The first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ And *the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings*, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

If both John and Ezekiel are describing the same throne room scene, why are their descriptions of the living creatures different,

as Ezekiel's living beings have four wings, whereas John's has six?

CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM: MATCHING CREATURES

This is where I believe that what these two visions show is that the cherubim and the seraphim are not being described as different in kind, but different in ministry as the cherubim and the seraphim are the same type of living beings described in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation.

Let's take a look at what the prophets and the apostle John actually describe.

SERAPHIM FACE

Revelation 4:7 ⁷ The first creature *was* like a ***lion***, and the second creature like a ***cal****f*, and the third creature had a face like that of a ***man***, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying ***eagle***.

CHERUBIM FACE

Ezekiel 1:10 ¹⁰ As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a ***man***; all four had the face of a ***lion*** on the right and the face of a ***bull*** on the left, and all four had the face of an ***eagle***.

Unlike what Ezekiel is shown, where each cherubim has four separate faces, the description given to John of the seraphim is that each of the four creatures has one unique face which is different from the others, but it is quite apparent that the similarities are there between cherubim and seraphim.

Both describe a creature that has a face of a man, both describe a creature that has a face of a lion, both have a description of a calf or bull, and both have a description of an eagle.

SERAPHIM FULL OF EYES

Revelation 4:6 ⁶ and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, ***four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind***.

CHERUBIM FULL OF EYES

^{NAU} **Ezekiel 10:12** *Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them.*

SERAPHIM HANDS AND FEET

Isaiah 6:5-7 ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." ⁶ Then *one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand*, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

Isaiah 6:2 ² *Seraphim stood above Him*, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two *he covered his feet*, and with two he flew.

CHERUBIM HANDS AND FEET

Ezekiel 1:8 ⁸ *Under their wings on their four sides were human hands*. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

Ezekiel 1:7 ⁷ Their legs were straight and *their feet were like a calf's hoof*, and they gleamed like burnished bronze.

By the way, you'll notice that Ezekiel states that the cherubim's feet were like a calf's foot, but Isaiah, in describing the seraphim, states only that the seraphim have feet, without identifying what those feet look like.

And so, we should not automatically assume that the feet in Isaiah are necessarily different from those found in Ezekiel.

SERAPHIM WINGS

^{NAU} **Isaiah 6:2** *Seraphim* stood above Him, *each having six wings*: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Revelation 4:8 ⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having *six wings*,

CHERUBIM WINGS

Ezekiel 10:20-21 ²⁰ These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they *were cherubim*. ²¹ Each one had four faces and each one *four wings*, and beneath their wings *was* the form of human hands.

As we stated earlier in this study the issue of wings on both of these creatures is always in the context of God Himself making the statement, either to Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel or John, that they either possess two, four or six wings.

Because many of these depictions of cherubim and seraphim are found within apocalyptic books, and because most of the depictions are bound by symbolic language, there may be honest debate as to whether God means to give a literal depiction of these creatures with wings in any number.

Having said that, it does not mean that they could not have wings since we are dealing with heavenly animals. We know earthly animals that have wings and so one cannot preclude that animals of the heavenly persuasion may not also have wings in some form.

SUMMARY

So, what do we have here as it relates to these visions given by God to Isaiah, Ezekiel and John?

All of these visions are in the context of God's holiness around His throne as He dispenses both judgment for rebels and hope for the Israel of God, His chosen people (those found "in Christ" both old and new testament).

His glory is the focal point in all of these visions around which all His creatures; angels, people and heavenly animals, declare His greatness and sing His praises for the salvation He has secured for His people in Christ Jesus.

Revelation 5:11-12 ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many *angels* around the throne and the *living creatures* and the *elders*; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² *saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."*

The cherubim and the seraphim are one group of heavenly creatures who join in the praises of God their creator.

This particular group is exclusively identified as *zoon* and *chayyah* in both Greek and Hebrew and it can only mean animal. These particular heavenly animals share common characteristics that describe a wide array of diversity among an animal group that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, having an appearance as that of lions, bulls, eagles and man looking creatures.

They can fly, run, think, speak, and worship the living God.

But more than that, they have a function around God's throne. And at least as far as cherubim and angels are concerned, their ministry is manifest in a personal interaction among people on earth.

In the case of angels they are found to actually have personal fellowship in sharing meals, communicating one on one and comforting the saints under various circumstances.

With the cherubim they were planted on earth by God to guard the way to the tree of life and they are depicted in statuary form or in the form of visions among men like Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and John.

Genesis 3:24 ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

It is this real life encounter that was put in statuary form by Moses, and continued with all subsequent leaders in Israel, to be depicted in the form of winged creatures affixed to the top of the mercy seat which was placed over the ark of the covenant, which was designated by God as the place where He would meet with His people; again a depiction of that original place of meeting with His people in that Garden sanctuary, the holy of holies, if you will.

This is where we are first introduced to the cherubim.

These heavenly animals are the only creatures of their type, explicitly stated in scripture, whose residence is in the present heaven, and who were commissioned to leave heaven and spend time on earth, presumably hundreds of years, as they stood their ground with the flaming sword, until the flood was sent by God to judge and destroy all things on the earth, because of the sinfulness of man.

Genesis 6:5-7 ⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

These very creatures still exist and they still surround the throne of God to guard the integrity of the holiness of their creator and it is these creatures that are displayed in both statuary form and in vision as God has revealed them.

These creatures are revealed in differing forms as far as their looks are concerned; differing faces, differing modes of movement, (eg., wings, feet, hands, chariot wheels, running).

But in all cases this is to describe their original function of moving about to serve and worship the living God at His good pleasure according to His will.

By the way, nowhere in Scripture are seraphim described as having a role on planet earth as did the cherubim. But I do not believe, as I have argued, that the seraphim are different in kind.

In other words, they are not different than the cherubim, and in fact, seraphim could probably not be distinguished from the cherubim if they stood next to each other, which is to say that they must be different only in their respective roles in service to God.

And so, as has been stated above, the terms cherubim and seraphim are not describing two different animal groups, but one type of animal group with two different roles around the throne of God, not unlike how two human beings could serve God in a different role.

Two human beings would not be different in kind but are different in their responsibilities before God. And in fact, this is clear by the way God has made such a differentiation among members of the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:4-14 ⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is

given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. ¹² For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many.

In the same way, different gifts and ministries are given to the members of each heavenly group, be they angels, elders, or heavenly animals.

Angels may have different gifts and functions as the Holy Spirit empowers them for works of service, but they all remain one group called, angels, and yet may have a distinction within that angel group called archangels, for example.

Heavenly animals are also apparently given different roles around the throne of God, whereby one group is given the role of protector and guardian while another group is given the privilege to raise their voices above the throne of God, while still maintaining their animal status.

What is interesting about the seraphim and cherubim is that both groups are identified with the number four which I believe is an all-encompassing number that is not simply identifying these heavenly animals as creatures that only fall into four categories of animals, but that all heavenly animals are being represented in these four creatures.

This is why John can distinguish the four seraphim in one sentence and then expand that number to myriads of myriads in the very same context.

Revelation 5:8 ⁸ When He had taken the book, *the four living creatures* and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 5:11-12 ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and *the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Keeping in mind that Isaiah, Ezekiel and John are all given a vision by God, despite small differences in the appearances in these living creatures or heavenly animals, the similarities between the cherubim and seraphim are uncanny.

CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM: DIFFERENT MINISTRIES

And so, I contend, based on the evidence, that both cherubim and seraphim are actually the same type of being as each represent a class of similar heavenly animal, but with distinctions more in line with their function, rather than their animal status.

And so, just as human beings are of the same kind, their actual appearances may be quite different, from skin color, to height, weight, hair differences, tone of voice, etc., and therefore, seraphim and cherubim would be of the same kind, (that of animals), but some would have four legs, some two legs, some with wings, some with no wings, their colors would vary, some may have feathers while some have thick coats of fur, etc., as is demonstrated in the varied faces seen in the visions, from likenesses of bulls, lions, eagles and man.

For example, cherubim, not seraphim, were given the task of guarding the entrance to Eden. Cherubim, not seraphim, are depicted as guarding the Ark of the Covenant as they sit atop the mercy seat.

In this case, if we were to use the four different images of faces found in Ezekiel describing the cherubim, it could be argued that varied looking heavenly animals were placed by God at the entrance to the Garden to guard the tree of life.

And since the book of Revelation gives the same description of four different images of faces describing the seraphim, it is apparent that we are looking at the same pool of heavenly animals who are given different names according to function, since seraphim are not included in guarding Eden.

So, you could have identical animals in the pool from which God would choose and yet they would be identified differently because of where God chose to use them as we also see in the case with believers who are named differently according to their role; elder vs. deacon.

Part of this differing role between cherubim and seraphim is demonstrated all throughout the OT where God is seen to be enthroned above the cherubim as His throne is above the mercy seat whereas the seraphim fly above God on His throne as they do not cease to declare His greatness.

1 Samuel 4:4 ⁴ So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the ***LORD of hosts who sits above the cherubim***;

2 Samuel 6:2 ² And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of ***the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim***.

2 Kings 19:15 ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, "***O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim***, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

From an earthly perspective one might argue that these references have to do with that earthly sanctuary whereby God ministers to Israel above the actual mercy seat with these statues of cherubim.

But, being enthroned above the cherubim has more to do with God's present throne which is not housed above a little box in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 10:1-2 Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was ***over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them***.

² And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter ***them*** over the city." And he entered in my sight.

Those inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen the very words of God would not have confused where God's rightful throne was.

Psalm 45:6 ⁶ Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

Solomon knew very well where God's throne was and it was not limited to the earth, or for that matter any part of this physical universe.

1 Kings 8:27 ²⁷ "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

And so, when Isaiah speaks of the Lord of hosts being enthroned above the cherubim, it was not ultimately to mean the top of a box in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 37:16 ¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, *the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim*, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Therefore, God has chosen a group of heavenly animals to serve in this role and because of their role they are described as either cherubim or seraphim.

By the way, only Isaiah makes a clear distinction, using the terms cherubim and seraphim in the same book, so as not to confuse the two groups where God is enthroned above the cherubim as seen in the verse above, but he states that the seraphim stood above the throne of God as they declare His praises, as John would also confirm.

Isaiah 6:1-2 ^{NAU} In the year of King Uzziah's death *I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted*, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² *Seraphim stood above Him*, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Revelation 4:8-9 ⁸ And *the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings*, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they *do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."* ⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

With this honored position the seraphim also play a role in declaring God's atoning work for mankind as seen in Isaiah's vision.

Isaiah 6:5-7 ⁶ Then *one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.* ⁷ He touched my mouth *with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."*

Here the burning coal is associated with the altar upon which a sacrifice has been made and through which Isaiah's sin is taken away.

It is the same visionary image that shows up later in Isaiah, where the vision gives way to the reality it represents, found in the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

^{NAU} **Isaiah 53:5,11** But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. **11** As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

And so, what the seraphim were declaring in the vision to Isaiah is the same message that was fulfilled in Christ of which the apostle John spoke.

^{NAU} **1 John 1:7** but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

And so, the seraphim are allowed to share in the redemptive message around the throne of God as Isaiah and John are transported into the presence of God.

This is what seraphim declare with the rest of the host of heaven.

Revelation 5:10-12 ¹¹ Then I looked, and *I heard the voice of many angels* around the throne and *the living creatures* and the *elders*; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² *saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."*

But part of this message of hope is tempered with the reality that God must judge sin as He is a holy God, and the seraphim are also tasked with this message in both Old and New testaments as we see in Isaiah and John.

Isaiah 6:3-5 ³ And one called out to another and said, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts*, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴ And *the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.* ⁵ Then I said, "*Woe is me, for I am ruined!* Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Revelation 15:6 - 8 ⁷ Then *one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God*, who lives forever and ever. ⁸ And *the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple* until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Along with declaring the wrath of God found in the bowls of wrath the seraphim also participate in directing John to the 7 seals that God breaks to reveal His message of wrath to come in the last days.

Revelation 6:6-8 ⁶ And I heard *something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying*, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine." ⁷ *When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."* ⁸ I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

And finally, we see the seraphim participating in the ultimate expression of God's justice on the apostate church and the world, together with them joining the host of heaven in declaring the praises of our great God and Savior.

Revelation 19:1-7 ^{NAU} After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; ² BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her

immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER." ³ And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER." ⁴ And *the twenty-four elders* and *the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"* ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." ⁶ Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns." ⁷ "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

This is the crescendo that the four living beings with six wings, (that Isaiah describes as seraphim), enter into with all of mankind as their message is inscribed in the pages of God's holy word forever.

It is these creatures, these heavenly animals described as seraphim, who share in the ministries of other heavenly animals described as cherubim, all of whom share in the privilege to praise and honor the Creator God who has purchased a people for Himself.

This is the central message of the word of God and both angels and heavenly animals share in the praise along with the recipients of this special grace, the Israel of God, throughout all generations, starting with post-fall Adam and Eve, as they believe in the promises given to them by God, that the seed of the woman would crush the seed of the serpent.

This is the Israel of God that Paul addresses as including Jews and Gentiles who are of the same faith as Abraham, whom many Jews did not embrace.

^{NAU} **Romans 9:6** But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For *they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;*

^{NAU} **Galatians 3:29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 6:14-16 ¹⁴ *But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

¹⁶ And *those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

This promise of hope was only enhanced each time Adam and Eve traveled near the entrance to their former home as the cherubim were stationed there by God with the flaming sword.

They were reminded of their rebellion and sin along with the hope of one day being restored to paradise through the shed blood of an innocent victim who would atone for their sin and rebellion.

All creation, in this sense, joins in with the heavenly host. And so, whether they are animals, humans, angels, or even inanimate bodies like stars and planets, they all are to give glory to God, their Creator.

Nehemiah 9:6-7a ⁶ "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You. ⁷ "You are the LORD God,

Psalms 19:1 ^{NAU} ...The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

The heavenly host in the present heaven will one day be the earthly host in the eternal heaven as the new heavens and new earth will host all of creation where neither moth nor rust destroys.

In that day, we who are in Christ will enjoy the company of angels, seraphim, cherubim and all of redeemed resurrected humanity and those that had the breath of life, (deceased animals of every kind in every age, including our pets), as we all declare the glory of God enjoying His presence and the inheritance He purchased for us in Christ.

Romans 8:19-21 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Philippians 2:9-11 ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of

those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.