

The *Cherubim*

This Is Appendix 41 From The Companion Bible.

It is hopeless to arrive at the meaning of the *Cherubim* from etymology. Only by the *usage* of the whole of Scripture can we form an approximately true idea.

Their description is twice given (Ezekiel 1:5-14; 10:20; and Revelation 4:6-9).

By a process of elimination we arrive at the fact that they are a celestial order of spirit-beings, and we can form no more notion of them than we can of other heavenly orders which are named, but not explained, and for the want of better words are called "Thrones," "Dominions," "Principalities," "Powers," etc.

They are to be distinguished from the symbolic figures of them, which were made to represent them.

Negatively, we may note :

1. That they cannot be the Godhead, or Divine in their nature, for (1) likeness of any kind was strictly forbidden (Deuteronomy 4:15, 16, etc.); and (2) the Godhead is distinguished from them by being mentioned at the same time.
2. Though heavenly, or celestial and spiritual in their nature and character, they are distinguished from the *angels* (who, as their name implies, were spirits used as *messengers*). Compare Revelation 5:8, 11 and 7:11, where, first the *cherubim* offer worship, and then the angels. They must therefore be real spirit-beings, for they could hardly be represented emblematically and really in the same verse. Moreover, they are never dismissed on errands as angels are, and are never seen apart from the Throne.
3. They cannot be *merely* symbols, for, though symbolic and emblematic representations of them were allowed to be

made, they themselves are not symbolic, or we should have symbolic symbols of symbols, and no reality at all.

4. They cannot be a symbol of the "Church" or any portion of redeemed humanity, for they are distinguished from them in Revelation 5:9, 10, according to the best readings of the most ancient Manuscripts and critical Greek texts, where the "us" of verse 9 should be omitted, and the "us" and "we" of verse 10 should be "them" and "they." Compare also Revelation 7:9-11.
5. For the same reason they cannot be symbols of "the four gospels" or books of any kind, for the cherubim are ministers associated with wrath; and call for the judgment plagues. See Revelation 6 and 15:7. Moreover, there is no connection between these and the presence of the cherubim in Eden, in the Tabernacle, in the Temple, and the Throne of God.

Positively, we may note :

1. That the three root letters of *k^erub*, כ = k, ר = r, and ב = b, are the root letters of the word KaRaB, which reappear in our GRiP, GRaB, GRiPe, GRasP. In a passive sense the notion would be that of *holding* something in safe keeping; and, as a matter of fact, the symbolic representation of them were held fast to the mercy-seat, being made out of the same piece of gold (Exodus 25:18, 23).
2. In Genesis 3:24 they were placed to KEEP (or guard) the way to the tree of life, and *preserve* the hope of re-genesis for a ruined creation (compare Genesis 2:15, where we have the word "keep" in this sense).
3. Their presence on the mercy-seat binds this hope with atonement, and with Israel.
4. On the vail the hope is bound up with the coming of the Christ in incarnation and redemption.
5. They are four in number, and four is the number of Creation (see Appendix 10).

6. They are represented by the symbolic heads of the four great divisions of animate creation : the lion (of wild beasts), the ox (of tame beasts), the eagle (of birds), man (of humanity).
7. They are *beneath* the Throne, for the earth is Jehovah's footstool.
8. Their song, when they speak, is of *creation* (Revelation 4:11), and is in connection with *the earth*. Redemption is a "new song" for them, relating to others.
9. We conclude therefore, that the *cherubim* are celestial or real spirit-beings, associated in some way with the embodiment of *creation's hope* as expressed in Romans 8:19-23. The emblematic representations made of them connect that hope with "the hope of Israel" and associate it with the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, and the rent veil (Hebrews 10:10, 20.)

Appendix List