

Four Living Creatures And The Twenty-four Elders

Ezekiel 1:4 to 28: "As I looked, behold, a great cloud with a fire enveloping it and flashing continually; a brightness was about it and out of the midst of it there seemed to glow amber metal, out of the midst of the fire. Out of the midst of that came the likeness of four living creatures, and this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man, but each had four faces and each one had four wings. Their legs were straight legs, and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot, and they sparkled like polished bronze. They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and the four of them had four faces and their wings touched one another; they turned not when they went but went straight forward. **As for the likeness of their faces; they each had the face of a man in the front, and each had the face of a lion on the right side and the face of an ox on the left side; the four also had the face of an eagle at the back of their heads. Such were their faces, and their four wings were stretched out upward; two wings of each one were touching the adjacent wing of the creatures on either side of it, and the remaining two wings of each creature covered its body. And they went every one straight forward; wherever the spirit would go, they went, and they turned not when they went. In the midst of the living creatures there was what looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright and out of the fire went forth lightning. The living creatures darted back and forth like a flash of lightning. Now as I was still looking at the living creatures, I saw one wheel upon the ground beside each of the living creatures with its four faces. The wheels gleamed like crystallite and the four were formed alike, and their construction work was as it were, a wheel within a wheel. When they went, they went in one of their four directions without turning, for they were facing that way. Their rims were so high that they were dreadful; and the four had their rims full of eyes round about. When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifting up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Wherever the spirit went, the creatures went and the wheels rose along with them, for the spirit, or life of the four living creatures were in the wheels. When those went, these went; when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up high beside them, for the spirit or life of the living creature was in the wheels.

Over the head of the living creature, there was a firmament, looking like awesome crystal, stretched across the expanse of sky over their heads. Under the firmament, their wings were stretched out straight; one toward another. Every living creature had two wings which covered its body on this side, and two which covered it on that side. And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the sound of the Almighty, the sound of tumult like the sound of a host. When they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice above the firmament that was over their heads; when they stood they let down their wings. Above the firmament that was above their heads was a throne; in appearance like a sapphire stone, and seated above the throne, was a Man. I saw lustre as it were, a glowing metal with the appearance of fire enclosed round about it, and there was a brightness of a halo round about Him, like the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

That description is awe inspiring! Revelation 4:2 to 11. "At once I came under the Holy Spirit's power, and behold a throne stood in heaven with One seated on the throne, and He Who sat there appeared like the crystalline brightness of jasper and the fiery sardius, and encircling the throne there was a halo that looked like a rainbow of emerald. Twenty-four other thrones surrounded the throne, and seated on these thrones were twenty-four elders, arrayed in white clothing, with crowns of gold upon their heads. In front of the throne was what looked like a transparent glassy sea, as if of crystal. Around the throne, in the centre at each side of the throne, were four living creatures who were full of eyes in front and behind.

**The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature was like an ox; the third living creature had the face of a man and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, individually having six wings, were full of eyes all over and within, underneath their wings; and day and night they never stop saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come."

Whenever the living creatures offer glory and honour and thanksgiving to Him Who sits on the throne – Who lives forever and ever – through the eternities of the eternities – the twenty-four elders fall prostrate before Him Who is sitting on the throne, and they worship Him Who lives forever and ever; and they throw down their crowns before the throne, crying out: "Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and the honour and dominion, for You created all things; by Your will they were created."

Revelation 5:6 to 14: 'There between the throne and the four living creatures and among the twenty-four elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain ... When the Lamb had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before the Lamb. Each was holding a harp, and they had golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people ... Then I looked and I heard the voice of many angels on every side of the throne and of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, and they numbered ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying in a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain, to receive all the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, majesty, glory and blessing!" I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the

earth (Hades, the place of departed spirits) and on the sea and all that is in it, crying out together, "To Him Who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb, be ascribed the blessing and the honour and the glory and the majesty and the power forever and ever." Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves and worshipped Him.

Revelation 6:1 to 7: Then I saw as the Lamb broke open one of the seven seals, and as if in a voice of thunder I heard one of the four living creatures call out, "Come!" ... And when He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, "Come!" ... When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, "Come and see!" ... And I heard what seemed to be a voice from the midst of the four living creatures ... When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living creature call out, "Come!"

Revelation 7:11: All the angels were standing around the throne and around the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, and they fell prostrate before the throne and worshipped God.

Revelation 14:3: They sang a new song before the throne of God and before the four living creatures and before the twenty-four elders.

Revelation 19:4: The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell prostrate and worshipped God, Who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!"

Who, or what were the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders mentioned in Ezekiel and Revelation? By studying the description of the four living creatures, we can see they are clearly a different created being to humans or animals. The Bible says they were cherubim (Ezekiel 10:1 & 2). The description of them is nothing like anything we have on earth, so they are an amazing display of God's vast, creative and exciting imagination. They are spiritual beings that we cannot see unless God opens our spiritual eyes, and they have had an exact role to play in the service and worship of God, over thousands of years and are still doing so. They would have been serving God long before Ezekiel wrote about them, and were probably created at about the same time as the angels. If we read the two verses marked with two asterisks ** again, we can see the four living creatures are symbolic of the four Gospels; the portraits of Jesus. The face of the lion represents our Lord as the King; as seen in Matthew. The face of the ox represents Jesus as the servant; as seen in Mark. The face of the man represents Jesus' humanity; as shown in Luke. The face of the eagle represents Jesus' deity; as shown in John.

The four living creatures are mentioned in Ezekiel, in the Old Testament, but the twenty-four elders are not. They were not mentioned until John penned Revelation. The elders also have an exact role to play in the service and worship of the Lord and clearly work side by side with the four living creatures; as per the scriptures in Revelation. So why were the twenty-four elders not mentioned in the Old Testament? Actually, they were. Every one of them was written about from Genesis to Malachi, and some of them even wrote down what God told them to record, and their writings became the holy scriptures: the Old Testament. Any of the important men written about in the Old Testament could be the twenty-four elders. Men like Abraham, Daniel, Elijah, Elisha, Enoch, Ezekiel, Isaac, Isaiah, Jacob, Job, Joseph, Joshua, Moses, Noah, Samuel and other men like them who are not listed here. It is wonderful to know we will meet them, along with the four living creatures when we finally get to heaven. Jesus met some of these men on earth before He was born to be our Saviour. In fact if we look at the whole picture – the truth of it is – Jesus' story is a factual and real life, genuine 'back to the future' story that goes back thousands of years. Here are a few occasions when Jesus met these men long before His birth. Jesus met Abraham approximately 2,000 BC (Genesis 18:1 to 33); and Jesus confirmed that in John 8:56 & 58. Jesus in turn became a descendant of Abraham when He was born on earth (Matthew 1:1 & 2; Luke 3:34).

Enoch and Elijah did not die in the usual way as we know death to occur, but they suddenly went home to be with the Lord. Enoch disappeared unexpectedly and was not, because God took him home (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). Elijah went up to heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). Throughout the first five books of the Bible, we read how Moses and the Lord spoke face to face like friends (Exodus 33:11). When Moses died aged 120, God Himself buried Moses' body in a secret location in the valley of the land of Moab; present day Jordan (Deuteronomy 34:5 to 7). Moses and Elijah appeared when Jesus was on a high mountain with Peter, James and John (Matthew 17:3; Mark 9:4 & Luke 9:30). Jacob wrestled with Jesus (then known as the Angel of the Lord) and Jacob recognised Him as being God Himself (Genesis 32:24 to 30). Then in Matthew 1:2 & Luke 3:34, we can read that Jesus was a descendant of Jacob. Jesus was born as a descendant and Saviour of these men, thousands of years after He met them. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I Am." (John 8:58). Meaning, before Abraham was born, Jesus already existed. Praise the Lord! Jesus our Saviour is alive!

Amen and God bless you.

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