

Message Three

The Four Living Creatures

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 1:5-6, 10, 26

I. When we experience God as the blowing wind, the overshadowing cloud, the burning fire, and the glowing electrum, we become the four living creatures, a corporate entity expressing Christ—Ezek. 1:5-6:

- A. In the Bible the number four is related to God's creation and signifies man as God's creature—Isa. 11:12; Jer. 49:36; Rev. 7:1.
- B. The number four indicates that we are the people redeemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation—5:9.
- C. The four living creatures are regarded as a group; they are counted as a single entity.

II. The more we experience the cycle of the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, the more living we become—1:18; John 6:51; cf. Psa. 95:1-2:

- A. Through the experience of the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, we, who were dead, have been enlivened to become living creatures—John 5:25; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 1:13.
- B. If we continue to experience the cycle of the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, we will become living and vibrant in our inner being—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:4-5.
- C. There is a twofold proof by which we can know that we are living creatures:
 - 1. The inward proof is the sense of life in our regenerated spirit—Rom. 8:6.
 - 2. The outward proof is that we engage in a number of spiritual activities:
 - a. The first of these activities is prayer—1 Thes. 5:17; Col. 4:2; cf. Lam. 3:55-56.
 - b. Other activities that prove that we are living creatures include reading the Bible (Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:15, 140), functioning in the meetings (1 Cor. 14:26, 31), serving God (1 Thes. 1:9; Rom. 1:9), and preaching the gospel (1:1; 1 Cor. 9:23).
 - 3. Every time we meet the Lord as the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, our inner being will be made alive, and we will become vital believers—those who are living and active—Dan. 11:32b.

III. The four living creatures bear the appearance of a man and are the corporate expression of the man on the throne—Ezek. 1:5, 26:

- A. The fact that the four living creatures bear the likeness of a man and that God on the throne also bears the appearance of a man indicates that God's central thought and His arrangement are related to man—Gen. 1:26.
- B. We need to have a proper appreciation of the Lord's humanity, and we need to see how marvelous it is that we are men.
- C. In the Bible there are actually only four men: the first man, the second man, the new man, and the man-child; we were the first man; Christ is called the second man (1 Cor. 15:47); we have become the new man by regeneration (Eph.

2:15); and now there is the prospect that we may become the man-child (Rev. 12:5).

- D. The Christ whom the church must express is the man on the throne—3:21; cf. Acts 7:56.
- E. It is man who fulfills God's plan, it is man who expresses God, it is man who defeats the enemy, and it is man who brings the kingdom of God into the human race; God needs a man.
- F. In Ezekiel 1 there are three crucial matters concerning the four living creatures' bearing the appearance of a man:
 - 1. The living creatures are the means for God to manifest His glory; apart from their bearing the appearance of a man, God's glory cannot be manifested—v. 28.
 - 2. The living creatures are the means for God to move on the earth; God's move depends on them—vv. 12-21.
 - 3. The living creatures are the means for God to administrate on the throne—v. 26:
 - a. God's throne, the center of His administration, dominates everything on earth and everything recorded in Ezekiel—Rev. 4:2, 6.
 - b. Because the living creatures bear the appearance of a man, there is the administration of God's throne—Jer. 17:12.
 - c. Man is the means of God's manifestation, man is the means of God's move, and man is the means of God's administration.

IV. The four living creatures have four faces—Ezek. 1:6a, 10:

- A. The face of a man indicates that the living creatures live in a proper humanity, the humanity of Jesus—v. 10a:
 - 1. The glorious beauty of the Lord Jesus is manifested in His humanity—cf. Exo. 28:2; Rom. 13:14.
 - 2. The Lord's salvation is to make us proper human beings.
 - 3. The more spiritual we become, the more normal, ordinary, and human we will be—Col. 3:4, 10-11.
 - 4. We need to be human not by our natural humanity but by the humanity of Jesus; this is to be "Jesusly human."
 - 5. In the Epistles we are taught by the apostles to be proper human beings, in particular how to be proper husbands, wives, and parents—Eph. 5:22—6:9; Col. 3:18—4:1.
- B. The face of a lion—Ezek. 1:10b:
 - 1. In the Bible a lion signifies boldness, vigor, strength, victory, and reigning—Prov. 28:1; Gen. 49:9.
 - 2. If toward sin, the world, and Satan we are bold like lions, God will be able to establish His reign through us—Rev. 5:5; Rom. 5:17.
- C. The face of an ox—Ezek. 1:10c:
 - 1. An ox signifies one who is willing to labor, to bear the burden, and to sacrifice himself—1 Cor. 15:10, 58; Acts 20:24; Phil. 2:30.
 - 2. We all need to express the reality of serving others, of bearing responsibility, and of sacrificing our life—1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; Rom. 12:1.

- D. The face of an eagle—Ezek. 1:10d:
 - 1. In the Bible an eagle signifies the powerful, buoyant, transcendent God—Exo. 19:4.
 - 2. As believers in Christ, we have God's life within us; this life is transcendent and causes us to have an expression of buoyancy and transcendence—Isa. 40:31; John 6:15; Phil. 4:12-13:
 - a. We have the divine and almighty capacity to express God in every human situation.
 - b. We are indestructible, unconquerable, and invincible for the carrying out of God's economy—Rom. 8:37.
 - 3. We need to be like an eagle, not allowing anything to hold us, to suppress us, or to depress us; this means that we should be able to overcome both persecution and praise—cf. John 6:15; Phil. 4:12-13.
- V. **The four living creatures are a corporate, fourfold expression of Christ, living out the life of Christ in a corporate way—Ezek. 1:10:**
 - A. The four living creatures with their four faces signify a coordinated, corporate entity, the corporate Christ as the corporate expression of God among human beings—1 Cor. 12:12 and footnote 2.
 - B. The four faces of the living creatures correspond to the four Gospels: Matthew—Christ as a lion, the King of God's kingdom; Mark—Christ as an ox, the Servant of God; Luke—Christ as a man, the Man-Savior; John—Christ as an eagle, the very God.
 - C. The four living creatures are a corporate entity expressing Christ in a complete way, exactly as He was in His living on earth.