

## **The Cherubim as Symbols of the Redeemed Saints in Christ**

*Kel Hammond – First written in February 2025, but last updated - 24 February 2025.*

The Cherubim of the Bible—mysterious, multi-faceted beings associated with God’s presence—have long been understood as angelic guardians or throne-bearers. However, a deeper examination of their appearances across Scripture suggests they may symbolize more: the redeemed saints, transformed by Christ’s atoning work and embodying His character as God’s living vehicle.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Cherubim’s evolving depictions—guarding Eden, adorning the mercy seat, animating Ezekiel’s chariot, and praising the Lamb—point to their role as a foreshadowing of God’s people, restored to His presence and reflecting His nature as King and Priest. This essay explores this interpretation through key biblical texts, Jewish and Christian traditions, and the pivotal event of the torn temple veil.

### **Guardians of the Way: Genesis and the Path to Redemption**

The Cherubim first appear in Genesis 3:24, stationed east of Eden with a flaming sword to “guard the way to the Tree of Life” after Adam and Eve’s expulsion. The Hebrew verb *shamar* (“to guard” or “keep”) implies not just barring access but preserving or maintaining the path for a purpose. Rather than mere sentinels, the Cherubim may symbolize the characteristics required to return to God’s presence—traits fulfilled in Christ, the “way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and imparted to His redeemed people.

Jewish tradition, as recorded in Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah, links their four faces—Lion, Ox, Man, Eagle—to the tribal standards of Israel in the wilderness (Numbers 2): Judah (Lion), Ephraim (Ox), Reuben (Man), and Dan (Eagle). These tribes encircled the Tabernacle, God’s dwelling, foreshadowing the saints as a community oriented toward Him, “keeping” the way through their transformed nature.

### **The Mercy Seat: Cherubim and Christ’s Atonement**

This symbolism deepens in Exodus 25:18-22, where two golden Cherubim adorn the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant. Facing downward, they gaze at the lid where blood is sprinkled on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:14-15), the place where God meets Israel (Exodus 25:22).

Hebrews 9:11-12 identifies this as a type of Christ, whose blood secures eternal redemption. If the mercy seat represents Christ’s atoning work, the Cherubim—molded into it—could symbolize the redeemed saints, inseparably tied to His sacrifice, beholding the blood that restores them.

This prefigures Revelation 4-5, where the four living creatures (Cherubim-like, with four faces) worship the slain Lamb, singing of redemption “by thy blood” (Revelation 5:9-10). Their song—making “us kings and priests” to “reign on the earth”—suggests they represent the saints, not just angelic beings, aligning with 1 Peter 2:9’s “royal priesthood.”

### **Ezekiel’s Chariot: God’s Presence in His People**

Ezekiel’s visions (Ezekiel 1, 10) amplify this picture. The Cherubim, with four faces, wings, and wheels-within-wheels, bear God’s throne, animated by His Spirit: “the spirit of the living creatures was in them” (Ezekiel 1:20). These wheels, moving without rotating, signify divine purpose—motion directed by God’s will.

Psalm 18:10 reinforces this: “He rode upon a cherub and flew.” Here, the Cherubim are God’s chariot, a vehicle for His presence. This resonates with 2 Kings 2:12 and 13:14, where Elijah and Elisha are called “the chariot of Israel and its horsemen.” As prophets, they embody God’s voice and power, prefiguring the saints as His living instruments.

Today, God & Christ dwell in believers (1 Cor 3:16, Eph 3:17) just as God dwelt in the midst of Israel in the days of Moses (Exod 24:8). They become this chariot—God manifesting His character through them, spiritually now (2 Cor 3:18) and physically in the resurrection (1 John 3:2).

### **The Four Gospels: Christ's Character in the Saints**

An ancient Christian tradition ties the Cherubim's four faces to the Gospels' portrayal of Christ: Matthew's Lion (King), Mark's Ox (Servant), Luke's Man (Son of Man), and John's Eagle (God's Son). This fourfold revelation of Jesus—kingly, sacrificial, human, transcendent—mirrors the Cherubim's features, suggesting the saints, as “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), reflect these traits through Him. The redeemed reign as kings (Lion), serve as He served (Ox), bear His human image (Man), and rise with spiritual renewal (Eagle). This connection bridges the Cherubim's symbolic role to their redemptive significance, uniting Old and New Testament imagery.

### **The Torn Veil: Access Restored**

The temple veil, woven with Cherubim (Exodus 26:31), stood as a barrier between the Holy Place and Most Holy Place—symbolizing Christ's flesh (Hebrews 10:20). When Jesus died, this veil tore from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51), a divine act opening access to God's presence.

The Cherubim on the veil, once guardians of a closed way, now witness the atonement that redeems the saints. This event transforms their role: no longer barring entry, they represent the redeemed, woven into Christ's sacrifice, entering the Most Holy Place through His blood (Hebrews 10:19). The veil's tearing fulfills Genesis 3:24—the way to the Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2) is restored.

### **Ezekiel's Future Temple: The King-Priest Reign**

In Ezekiel 41:18-19, the future temple's Cherubim have only two faces—Lion and Man—carved alongside palm trees. This shift from four to two may portray Christ's future reign as King-Priest, after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:17).

The Lion (kingship) and Man (priesthood) reflect His dual role in the millennial (Zechariah 6:12-13), with the Ox (servant) and Eagle (divinity) fulfilled at the cross and assumed in His exaltation. The saints, as these Cherubim, share this destiny: reigning as kings and serving as priests with Him (Revelation 20:6). The palm trees (victory, life) echo Revelation 7:9, linking this temple to Eden's restoration.

### **Conclusion: A Redemptive Arc**

The Cherubim trace a redemptive arc across Scripture. In Genesis, they “keep” the way back to Eden, symbolizing the traits of the redeemed. On the mercy seat, they gaze at Christ's atonement. In Ezekiel and the Psalms, they become God's chariot, manifesting His presence through His people. The torn veil marks their transition—saints entering God's presence through Christ's flesh. In Ezekiel's future temple, they herald His King-Priest reign, with the redeemed as co-heirs. Far from mere angels, the Cherubim embody the saints' transformation in Christ—spiritually now, physically later—reflecting His fourfold character and fulfilling God's promise to dwell with His people forever.