

**Revelation 4: 8; “The Mission of the 4 Living Creatures”, Sermon #34 in the series-  
“The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

One of the great reasons that God had the Apostle John write this blessed book was to encourage God’s people; people who are facing oppositions to their witness for Christ; people who are being opposed in their attempts to promote His glorious kingdom. The Lord Himself wanted all of His dear people to be assured, that His Church shall one day be triumphant; that His Church shall someday come to spiritually reign upon the earth. Christ’s kingdom will one day come; “on earth as it is in heaven”. We should all understand that the Church will not be without sin until Christ returns for her personally and visibly in His glorious 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming. But nevertheless I believe as I read the Scriptures that they declare that a glorious time period is yet coming where the knowledge of the glory of Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. It will be a time where holiness will be seen a greater sense among societies and nations of the world. “In that day ‘holiness to the Lord shall be engraved on the bells of the horses, and the pots in the Lord’s house will be like the bowls before the altar, and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 14: 20) Whether we will live to see that day or not, it is our duty, as individuals, and as a church, to be faithful and true witnesses of Christ, and to make disciples of all the nations. Once we are Christ’s disciple we need to know what God expects of us in terms of our worship of Him; what He thinks worship and service are supposed to look like, during this whole Church age. This is what we find here in these verses. God will receive the Church’s worship and service if the Church remembers the significance of the ministers whom Christ has appointed; those who are called to preach his word and the gospel of His Son. This is what the 4 living creatures represent; the ministers of His infallible and unerring Word.

Ministers are very important in the plan of God, in terms of leading the worship of God in the church, and preaching the word of God faithfully. Theirs is a wide and varied ministry. It is well pictured by these 4 living creatures. In verse 7 we find 4 different aspects of their ministry represented by the lion, the calf, the man, and the flying eagle. The last time that I spoke to you I opened up the meaning of this hieroglyphic; these 4 aspects of what a minister should be like, and so I will not repeat them here. This afternoon I want to go on to describe the mission upon which these creatures are sent. Verse 8 says, “The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within.” “And they do not rest day or night saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!’” Their mission, which is described for us here, is 3-fold. It is found in the description of the wings, the description of the eyes, and the description of their speech. We will only be able to get through the description of the wings with the time remaining.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – These Living Creatures with their wings soar to lofty visionary heights of God’s prophetic word.**

Each of these Living Creatures has 6 wings. And with these wings they are taken to the lofty heights to more carefully consider the visions of the Old Testament prophets who spoke of Christ. I believe that these creatures of our text are the same creatures which Isaiah saw when he was commissioned as a prophet and sent to preach to Israel. And so I want you to turn with me over to Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1. “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.” “Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.” The creatures in this passage are specifically called Seraphim. Listen to John Gill on Isaiah 6: 2 concerning the meaning of this name: – “The name Seraphim signifies “burning”, and so Ezekiel’s living creatures are said to be “like burning coals of fire”, in Ezekiel 1:13, and the ministers of the Gospel are so called, because of their ministerial gifts, compared to fire, as the gifts of the spirit of God are, especially those which the apostles had bestowed on them, who were baptized with the

Holy Spirit and fire, Acts 1:5 2:3, and even the ordinary gifts of the spirit are signified by the same figure, 1 Timothy 1:6, and 1 Thessalonians 5:19, and because of their light, which they have in the truths of the Gospel; and because of their fervent and ardent love to Christ and immortal souls; and because of their flaming zeal for his cause and interest: and this also appears by their situation near the throne, (see Ezekiel 1:26, Revelation 4:6) and Christ on it; where they stand as servants waiting upon him, and in order to receive from him, and where they enjoy communion with him; or “above” it may mean the temple, the church, where they stand in the highest place in it, and are over others in the Lord; they stand as servants to Christ, but preside in the church as the rulers and governors of it; to which agrees the Targum, “holy ministers on high before him.” (End of Quote)

Now, it may be hard for you perhaps, having thought of these Seraphim as angelic creatures, to now begin to think of them as human ministers. But let’s think about this for a few moments. Angels are ministering spirits, and pastors and teachers are ministering men; but still, there are many things that are similar in their callings, even if they are in different dimensional spheres. Let us consider that if these Seraphim are truly angelic beings, still the truth of the application of this vision to ministers must be linked to them. But remember, Isaiah, just as John at Patmos, is seeing a vision, not the actual state of things in heaven where the actual angels are; and in this case, the actual state of things in relation to the worship of God and the preaching of Christ is what Isaiah is beholding in visionary form. It is Christ, here, whose train fills the temple. This is confirmed for us by the Apostle John in John 12: 41 – “These things Isaiah said when he saw Christ’s glory and spoke of Him.” So here in this vision Isaiah was seeing the glory of the Christ whom he would preach and write about, so that many people would believe. And a vision is often full of pictures and symbolic representations that refer to a spiritual reality that needs to be considered by all who read it. It is Christ who is to be preached and worshiped in the temple of God, His Church. We, the people of God, aren’t called so much to consider angels and their mission for God, as much as we are being drawn to consider Isaiah and his calling, and also the calling of those who preach to us; and the mission that they are on.

The Living Creatures here in this passage we are studying are redeemed creatures, if we will remember the words of Revelation Chapter 5, and verses 8 and 9. “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign upon the earth.’” Is it angels who are redeemed to God? No, for we are specifically told in Hebrews 2: 16 – “For indeed, Christ does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.” And is it angels who will someday reign upon the earth? No, we are specifically told here in verse 9 that it will be Christ’s Church who will reign upon the earth, and the Living Creatures are a part of this great assemblage of saints. These ministers see the glory of preaching Christ and His redemption; Christ and Him crucified, for this is how people are saved.

### **Now 2ndly – With their wings these Living Creatures cover their faces.**

As we read the Bible we find that there are angels who pose as men on their missions for God, and then there are also men who are called to preach who resemble angels in their mission. They stand in the presence of God as they preach and they deliver His word. Prophets in both Old Testament and New saw visions of these Seraphims and Cherubims, Living Creatures who look like angels, and their ministry is being represented as angelic in terms of their service to God. This is certainly true of both Isaiah and Ezekiel. I believe that what Isaiah was seeing here in this vision in Isaiah 6 is directly related to His being called and commissioned by God as a prophet. He was being given a pictured ideal of what all ministers of God’s Word are called to be like spiritually. Each of these sets of wings has a real significance. With the first set the Seraph covers his face. This shows us that a minister, as he stands in the presence of God, has a sense of his own

unworthiness to be there. Again, this cannot be an angel for an angel is often standing in the immediate presence of God. A holy angel has nothing to be ashamed of, as he has not sinned, and he is continually doing and performing his duties as an angelic being in the very presence of God. He is not unworthy of the office which God has placed him in. But a minister is a sinful man, whom God has changed by His mighty grace, and raised him up to a position of service unto Himself. He is unworthy of such a high calling. He is a man who realizes that his heart and his thoughts and even the best of his actions have sin attached to them and he cannot think about this fact, or behold the Divine Glory in any measure, without feeling ashamed of Himself. God is so infinitely Holy, Wise, and Just, that the man who is being raised up to the ministry cannot comprehend why God would choose him to speak and preach for him. He considers himself the “chief of sinners” and “less than the least of all the saints” as Paul did. It is hard for him to think of the Lord’s steady gaze upon him without feeling embarrassment. What is he doing there in the pulpit, delivering the inspired, inerrant, infallible word of God when he perceives himself to be vile in so many ways? It is only grace which has made him to differ, and he feels his own insufficiency for such a task.

You can see an example of this in Exodus 3 when God reveals Himself to Moses in the burning bush. In verse 5 it says, “Then God said to him, ‘Do not draw near this place.’ ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’ ‘Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’” Then it says, “And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” This is how a true minister feels in the presence of God. Angels have none of this sin to worry about. The Lord Jesus says of them in Matthew 18: 10 that we should not despise little children because, “their angels always see the face of My Father in heaven.” But men have every reason to cover their face. Elijah, when he heard the still small voice of God in 1 Kings 19: 12 and 13, he “wrapped his face in his mantle,” it says and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. This is appropriate in the great prophet, and how much more so in the heart and mind of the gospel preacher. I think that there is, in general, a lack of this kind of attitude in our own day among many of the preachers of the Word; that they do not understand themselves as standing before an infinitely holy God, and it keeps them from being able to communicate their message in the power of the Lord. Often, people want everything in worship to be casual, everything in God’s presence to be relaxing. They want everything in the teaching to be centered around man. People come to think that they have to always be comfortable in the presence of God, and that the fear of God has no place in worship. But it is the minister’s calling that the majesty and glory and holiness and justice of God be set forth to his congregation just as much as His love and compassion and mercy. All of these things find their focus in the minister “seeing Christ”, the Lord of Hosts. Let us pray that many men will be called to the ministry and come to fulfill their duties with a sense of reverential awe; that they stand in the presence of the holy God. Perhaps we will then come to experience revival in our churches.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – With their wings these Living Creatures cover their feet.**

We also notice here in the passage that we are studying, that with two wings the Seraph covered his feet. This would refer to the walk of the minister, because his feet relate to his walk which would be his speech, conduct, and behavior. When a minister looks at himself as he is entering the ministry, if he has a realistic view of himself, he believes that he is falling short of God’s glory and God’s expectation of what he should be doing. If we look at verse 5 we can see that Isaiah understood himself to be undone in this regard. He had just been hearing one Seraph crying to another and saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” And in the vision he sees the “posts of the doors were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.” Now he perceives that his own heart and life are being shaken by this voice and that he is being called to preach God’s holiness and His righteousness, when his own speech had been much less than acceptable in this regard. He understood, as we should understand, that a man’s whole life can be evaluated by God simply on the basis of his speech. On the day of judgment Jesus says we shall “render account for every careless or idle word that we

speak.” It was very evident to Isaiah that he was undone, because “he was a man of unclean lips,” he says, “and he dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” “For his eyes had seen the Lord of Hosts.” The more that a true Christian man or minister sees the glory of Christ and of God, the more he will also see of his own inadequacies and weaknesses. The things that a minister says are a very important part of his ministry, and what he does in relation to what he says is just as important. James tells us in James 3, verse 2, “For we all stumble in many things.” “If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” This was what Isaiah wanted for himself. If he was to preach to others, he himself did not want to be disqualified. Much prayer and humility is required for a man to be an effective minister. Therefore he covers his feet.

**And then 4<sup>th</sup> - As we look at this description of the Seraphim we see that with their final set of wings they fly.**

“Then,” it says in verse 6, “one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.” “And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged.’” Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’” Isaiah needed to understand that the mission of the minister of the gospel is to “fly” to the side of people who are sensible of their sin; people who have confessed that they are sinners, and minister to them. The “live coal that is in the Seraph’s hand” was the preaching of the truth of the forgiveness of Isaiah’s sins through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ our Lord, for it was that coal touching the lips of Isaiah that took away his iniquity and purged his sin. Having had his own sins forgiven, he now longed that others in Israel would be saved from their sins as well. He was told in the vision that his ministry would not see many great results in his day. But still he was enabled to preach and write, for Christ was with him.

Let me be the seraphim who proclaims this great truth to you today. If you see yourself today as a Christian, but one who has fallen short of the glory of God in some important ways, take heart from this passage. So did the prophet Isaiah. You may be a person who feels that you have fallen far short of God’s expectation of you. You have received much grace and received much good teaching, and yet you do not believe that you have lived up to it. Your eyes have beheld the King, the Lord of hosts, in His glory this afternoon in the preaching of the world. And now you long to be a more useful servant to your King. Christ is still saying in these days to all such Christians – “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” You may not have not lived up to all the truth that you have learned, but you want to do better job of it in the future. You do desire to live for Him and to promote His glory by your living a holy life. Why not covenant with Him in prayer right now? Let me take a live coal from off the altar of Christ’s finished work and touch your lips with it. Christ died so that all of your sins and shortcomings could be forgiven. Christ died so that you would come to have full assurance of your salvation. Christ rose from the dead so that you would have the power to live a godly life, and be able to be of service to Him. May these truths burn in your heart and may you then understand the perfect peace and pardon that come through Jesus Christ. With 2 of his wings, the Seraph flew. I hope that you will pray for the ministry of God’s Word in this place and for myself as I minister to you. The ministry is a living creature before the throne of God. And we will look more at it this next Sunday again, as God enables us.