

1035 The four living creatures in Book Revelation and the Church (Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

Here we'll share one thought which we couldn't find on the web through our limited search. We are not trying to act outside the box, but we really couldn't figure out any mistakes from what the Bible says and through logic. First, we have to say that the consistency of the Bible means what God tells us through the Bible is consistent, not means the consistency literally. If the latter is true, then there are apparent contradictions. We'll use one example to illustrate this point. If we do believe that the Bible is inspired by God, and use the Bible as our absolute standard, then we'll believe what the Bible says without adding our own opinions. In this case, we can see that the four living creatures is unique which is our second subtopic. In this same direction, the third subtopic will be to use the original language of the Bible in Strong's Concordance to discuss why the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders form one body. Finally, we can see the relationship of the four living creatures representing the Church in heaven. This viewpoint will lead to different observations for the relevant portions in the Book of Revelations, and we'll share these in the future when the occasion arises.

1. Preface: Bible is our absolute standard

We know in Isaiah 55:8-9, it says, ""For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."" God has the absolute authority. And the Bible is inspired by God, so we should regard the Bible as our absolute standard. We should be in very deed as Psalms 119:147-148 says, "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words. My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word." Here I might perceive differently from other people. Putting God's words on a person doesn't implies the person has to be able to recite the words. As long as the words are buried inside a person, God can make him through Holy Spirit to recall the words just like what Peter did, "And I (Peter) remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"(Acts 11:16)

We often quote Isaiah 40:31, "Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary." If we are in Christ, we can indeed be mount up with wings like eagles and fly like an eagle in the kingdom of heaven because He can. Yes, we have to wait upon the Lord, and wait for His time too since everything has a predestined time by Him. If we indeed believe what Bible says, we know that we have already in the kingdom of His Son as said in Colossians 1:13, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." We can indeed fly like an eagle in the kingdom of heaven as said in Hebrews 4:16, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Let us emphasize again that we must use the Bible as our absolute standard. We shared before that logic was merely an instrument. If a hypothesis is different, then the result will

be different when we put it into the logic machine. If we firmly believe what the Bible says, we'll come up with a different hypothesis.

2. What does the consistency in the Bible mean?

The consistency of the Bible means what the Bible tells us is consistent. I checked with limited examples and used extrapolation to get this result. I have no choice but to use extrapolation as God is infinite and man is finite. If we indeed believe that the Bible is inspired by God, then we'll believe what the Bible says for sure. It isn't easy, particularly when there are apparent contradictions literally speaking. In these cases, people normally try to explain the contradictions away and forgot that God is omniscient. He knows the apparent contradictions and still put them there. What does He want to convey to us through them?

Along this line, let us use one controversial example regarding the mountain of transfiguration. According to Matthew 17:1 and Mark 9:2, "Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves." (Matthew 17:1) But according to Luke 9:28, it is eight days later. Is it important if the time is in six days or eight days? There are people saying that it all depends on how you count a day. If you can count differently, the six days are the same as the eight days. I have no idea if such counting is correct. If the explanation is correct, will it edify people? It is merely knowledge. Whether it edifies people is the question we should ask. How many days are not really important here? The emphasis is the similar words used in three Gospels, "And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone."(Matthew 17:8) In other words, we should turn our eyes to Jesus, and only on Him. We have to be in Christ. Of course, there are other things that happened on the mountain of transfiguration such as the appearance of Moses and Elijah. We'll share about them when opportunities arise.

3. The four living beings in the book of Revelation is unique

Next, we'll use the Bible as our absolute standard to explain what the four living beings in the book of Revelation are. In other words, our hypothesis in logic is that the Bible is our absolute standard. In the Bible, the only other time mentioning the four living beings is in the book of Ezekiel, where the time and the place are clearly described in Ezekiel 1:1, "Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." Regarding the four living beings, there are quite a few statements. We will look at Ezekiel 1:5-6 which will suffice for our purpose, "...And this was their appearance: ...Each of them had four faces and four wings." And it also says in Ezekiel 10:20-22, "These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim. Each one had four faces and each one four wings, ...As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar..." Thus, the Bible says clearly that the four living beings are the same cherubim with four wings.

Let us then take a look at the four living beings in the Book of Revelation, "...and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; ..." (Revelation 4:6-8) These are four different creatures and each of them with six wings. If we believe fully what the Bible says, how can these be the same as what Ezekiel saw? There are people saying that they are similar. They are correct since the four living creatures are similar but different. God is faithful and they are similar, and He cannot describe as if they are the same. In fact, if those people say that they're similar according to the Bible, they have already admitted that they are different.

We can clearly see the obedience of John in Revelation 10:4. It says, "When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." He indeed didn't write what the seven peals of thunder said. What he wrote is what he saw, is believable. Like what he said in Revelation 22:18-19, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." From another aspect, the Bible is inspired by God. If he made a mistake, won't God know about it and correct it? Yes, He would. We in every deed should be 'let God be God' and not discount His words, so that we have a chance not to distort the Bible like what Peter warned. Peter is definitely qualified to give such warnings since his mind was opened by Jesus Himself so that he could understand the Scriptures.

Let us mention it by passing, the Bible describes only one time regarding the usage of the six wings when Seraphim was mentioned in Isaiah 6:1-2, "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew." Seraphim is the same and is apparently different from the four living creatures described in the Book of Revelations. So, the four living creatures are unique. But we do know that they are in heaven, and are spiritual.

4. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders

When we see the four living creatures are unique, we'll think along this direction. Because I don't understand the original languages used in the Bible, I have to use books like the Strong's Concordance as instrument to see how Bibles in the original languages say. First, we notice the first appearance of the four creatures and the twenty-four elders is in Revelation 4:4-6, "Around the throne were ...twenty-four elders sitting, ...and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind." Then we see that the four creatures and the twenty-four elders are often mentioned together, and let see all such verses. In Revelation 4:9-10, it says, "And when the living creatures give glory and

honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, ...the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, ..." In Revelation 5:11-14, it says, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; ...And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped." In Revelation 7:11, it says, "And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God." In Revelation 14:3, it says, "And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth." In Revelation 19:4, it says, "And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped ..." Finally, in Revelation 5:6-8 (KJV used in Concordance), it says, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, ...And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having (G2192) every one (G1538) of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

Some people may think that there are only the twenty-four elders that hold the harp and golden bowls. So, we have to use the Bible in the original language to determine this. If the verse only means the twenty-four elders, then it should use G3588 which means who or which, just like in Revelation 2:1, it says, "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who (G3588) walks among the seven golden lampstands, ..." The words G3588 appears in the Book of revelation sixty-six times already. If it means only for the twenty-four elders, it'll not hurt to use it once more? Instead, it uses the present participle "having G2192." The Bible wants us to make sure that we know that it means both the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Therefore, they are one.

5. Why do we say the four living creatures stand for the Church in heaven?

The verses alone in here mention the twenty-four elders only by themselves, "Then the seventh angel sounded; ...And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.""(Revelation 11:15-18) Isn't what said by the twenty-four elders the prayer by churches on earth, which are churches hope for? Furthermore, the golden bowls are full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. Therefore, the twenty-four elders represent the Church in heaven since we are talking about what happens in heaven. Since the four creatures and the twenty-four elders are one, they also have the golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. At this time, the churches on earth have not yet become His bride yet as said in Revelation 19:7, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself

ready." Therefore, we see the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders represent the only Church in heaven.

In fact, when we see the twenty-four elders offer the golden bowls, it is ordinarily said with basically no disagreement that they represent the Church. Meanwhile, the four living creatures also offer the prayers of the saints, how can they not represent the Church in heaven? This viewpoint will lead to different observations for the relevant portions in the Book of Revelation, which only mention the live creatures. We'll share these in the future when occasions arise.