

THE CHERUBIM'S OF GLORY

A SERMON

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by Mister JAMES WELLS

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“The Cherubim’s of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.” Hebrews 9:5

WE have seen that the living creatures in Ezekiel and the living creatures in the Book of Revelation are one and the same, and that there is no people that answer to the description but the people of God. We have seen also that the same living creatures set before us in the 1st of Ezekiel, are found in the 43rd of Ezekiel in the city of God, to show the certainty of the destiny of all that are thus one with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have also seen that the living creatures spoken of in the 4th and 5th of Revelation are found, in the 19th chapter, among the hallelujahs of the progressive triumphs and glories of the Savior. And thus, we see the origin of these living creatures, the character of these living creatures, and the destiny of these living creatures. Looking then at these things, I still remain in the conclusion, that the cherubim’s on the mercy-seat are a part of that dispensation which was a shadow of things to come. And perhaps some would take these two cherubim on the mercy-seat, as expressive of the ministers of the gospel. I shall not do so. There may be, no doubt, some perhaps valuable remarks made upon them under that view, but my object will be to go on as I did before upon this subject, just to show up this morning some of the things that are set before us by these two cherubim on the mercy-seat, and worthy of our attention. Of course, these cherubim’s are not the things themselves, but only representations of them, only symbolizing the reality intended by these cherubim’s. And in so doing, I shall first notice *their nature*; secondly, *their place*; and thirdly, *their glory*; “the cherubim’s of glory.”

I first then notice *their nature*. They were of pure gold. And the Lord’s people are in the reality of their religion frequently, as you are aware, set forth under this figure. Hence Job says, “When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” Now what is that kind of gold that Job appeared to be at the last? It was this; that Job’s losses and afflictions, although, like the rest of us, under his afflictions he had rebelled, yet he remained a believer in the truth, he remained a sincere lover of the truth, he did not give up the truth; and in his 23rd chapter, where he speaks of his own helplessness, unable to find the Lord, and where he speaks, as you are aware, of the Lord’s immutability, and sovereignty in appointing this scene of things for him, nevertheless, he says, “When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” And, therefore, to answer to this character it

means the man who is tried in the way I will presently describe, and proves to be a real believer, possessing that faith that works by love. Now Peter gives us a very beautiful description of this; after setting before us our election, setting before us the Father's abundant mercy and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and our being begotten by the abundant mercy of the Father, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ unto a lively hope, the hope of "an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Now here is an epitome, shall I say, of the new covenant. And Peter well knew that persons must be made thoroughly acquainted with their state as sinners, in order to appreciate this order of things, and so, after reminding them that they did rejoice in Jesus, "though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith," let us set the word "faith" aside for a minute or two, in order clearly to understand it, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes," that the trial of your character, as to what it really is, being much more precious than of gold, you observe that the term "precious" there means valuable or important; so that, however, important it is for human purposes, and for the purposes of this world, that gold should be purified from its dross, and become that representative of property, and that means of commerce, by which men carry on the affairs of this world, however important that matter is for worldly purposes, yet your separation from false confidences, your separation from dross, and your purification, and your sanctification, and your fitness for divine purposes, for eternal purposes, for heavenly purposes, your fitness for the Lord's presence, is a matter of much more value, the trial of your faith, it is a more important matter than the trial of gold that perishes, "though it be tried with fire." That is an important matter for the purposes of this world, but your consecration is a matter infinitely more important than the mere purification of gold. That your character, that is the idea, that the trial of your character. Now let us see what there is there, then, that will try a character. There is in the first-place electing grace, and we must be purified from ignorance of that electing grace, and we must be purified from enmity against that electing grace. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." And what but a consciousness of our utter ruin, what but an experimental acquaintance with the utter depravity of our fallen nature and of our own hearts, will bring us down low enough to reconcile us to electing grace, and to make us bless God for electing grace, and to enable us to glory in him for electing grace, and to rejoice in electing grace? for if that one truth be taken away, it leaves a gap that neither angelic nor human power could ever fill up. But if 'twas grace inscribed our names, and if you can stand the test of that truth, and not be offended, but be pleased; if that truth inspires you with love to God instead of hatred; if that truth inspires you with gratitude to God instead of rebellion, we are bound to give thanks that God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation; if that truth inspire you thus with love to God, then your trials have been of some value to you, for you are purified from ignorance of it, and from enmity against it. The trial of your faith, the trial of your character. Let us see this; "for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;" but, as I have lately said, the real people of God, when once brought to know the truth, can endure nothing else. Then, again, you have, in that same connection, the abundant mercy of God the Father; that we are blessed with a hope in him, according to his abundant mercy. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy." Let us here again stop for a moment. Does the truth of abundant mercy inspire your soul with love to God? Does the truth of the eternity of his mercy, the amplitudes of his mercy, that mercy rolling in like a mighty ocean, and swallowing up all your sins, fill your heart with gratitude to God? Why, my hearer, when I get upon this subject, I feel I cannot speak too freely or too largely. Mercy! lay anything to the charge of a vessel of mercy?

Mercy for one moment neglect its object? No; the Lord delights in mercy; and if you are tried, and know what a poor depraved creature you are, you will delight in mercy too; so that you will stand the test. This is the meaning of all the darkness, this is the meaning of all the besetments you have. This is the meaning of all the crooks you have in your families, those that have crooks, and the crooks you have in the world! this is the meaning of it all. It is all to humble you; it is all because you cannot be, it is an utter impossibility for you to be on good terms with yourself, and, at the same time, be on good terms with God. No; you must be brought to loathe yourself in your own sight, I mean, when you come before God, there to reject self, and acknowledge, from your own soul's experience. that it is of his mercy you are not consumed. Then you have the resurrection of Christ; that this lively hope is by Christ's resurrection, because he rose from the dead for others. He rose from the dead, not merely for himself, but for others. He is our resurrection; and his resurrection is an open demonstration of the perfection of his work. And then you have, connected with this electing grace, this abundant mercy, and this resurrection of Christ, an inheritance incorruptible, undenied, and that fades not away. And it is really well for us that the Lord hides this inheritance, in a great measure, from us. I am sure the apostle Paul was never so happy in this life, if I may so speak, after he had seen the third heaven, as he was before. You may depend upon it, he never lost the impression; he never, after that, lost sight of it. You may depend upon it, that the contrast of that inheritance, up into which, for a few moments, he was caught, not knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body, you may depend upon it, that the contrast he was then enabled to draw between that scene of things, and this sin-smitten, sin-blighted, sin-blasted, sin-cursed, and sin-ruined world, the contrast to him must have appeared more conspicuous than ever. And perhaps he alluded to this when he said he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, which was far better. And why did the apostle desire to live a little longer? Oh! how noble his motive! how pure, spiritual, and affectionate, his motive! "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you; and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." He wished to live only as he could live in Christ; he wished to live only as he could be a helper of the faith and joy of those who were journeying forward to the same blissful scene. But then, too, here is not only an inheritance, but we "are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Now, then, the trial of your character is this, that you shall be exercised, and humbled, and broken to pieces, and torn to pieces, in order that you might stand the test of the truth; that your religion "might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Now, just take the appearances of Jesus Christ, in the way I have hinted. He will appear at the last in electing grace; he will appear in abundant mercy; he will appear in resurrection glory; he will appear in the kingdom's possession; he will appear as having substantiated what is there said, being "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation;" he will appear in all these relations, which I need not now stop to prove. So that, if you can stand the test of these truths, and if these sweet truths do unite your soul to God, and, so far from their inspiring you with enmity and rebellion, they inspire the soul with sweet affection to God; if you are prepared to bear a testimony that you are that sin-smitten, law-smitten, Satan-smitten, depraved, ruined, helpless, poor worm of the earth, that if you are not saved in this way, you can be saved in none other, then all this downward experience will endear the truth, so that when Christ shall appear, then your religion will be found unto praise, and he will say, "Well done, you good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord." And it will be found unto honor because you have honorably held fast the truth,

and not compromised it, nor altered it, nor corrupted it, but held it fast, just as you have received it, from the Lord. And it will be found unto glory. Glory there means two things, victory, and the possession of eternal glory. And so, if my soul be one with these blessed truths, then I am pure gold, then I shall come forth as gold. If I come forth as gold, it must be by Jesus Christ, after the order I have stated, being made all and in all. This, I think, is one thing fairly implied in the cherubim's of glory.

But I notice, secondly, *their place*. Now, they were on the mercy-seat. This is to show their eternal oneness with God's mercy, that the Lord, in the counsels of eternity, made his people and his eternal mercy one; so that whatever there was in the way of that mercy, the Lord undertook to remove out of the way. And so, Jesus Christ came and put away sin, and magnified the law, and brought mercy and truth together. I cannot speak too strongly upon this part, the oneness of the cherubim with the mercy-seat, for if you go to the 25th chapter of Exodus and the nineteenth verse, you will actually find and it is a delightful truth, it is one of the most lovely truths in all the Bible, and the meaning, I should think, would immediately strike your minds, you will there find that these cherubim's were actually made out of the mercy-seat; they were actually made out of the same as the mercy-seat was. What a wonderful thing is this? See the sweet truth. What made you a Christian before time was, in God's counsel? His mercy. What made you a Christian relatively at Calvary's cross? His mercy. What made you a Christian when you were regenerated? Mercy. What is it keeps you a Christian safely? and what is it that will confirm you in all that God has given, and in all the blessedness forever to be enjoyed? Mercy. So, they were made out of the mercy-seat. Then I come to this conclusion, that if God had not been pleased to have a mercy-seat, no sinner could have been saved. But he was determined, therefore, to make his government, for that is what the mercy-seat conveys, and the people one. I like it myself exceedingly. I do not know anything that is more clear to me than this, that it was mercy that gave me to Christ; that Christ in his mercy took all my sins and sorrows, and put them away; that the Lord in his mercy watched over us while in a state of nature; in his mercy he remembered us in our low estate; in his mercy he found us out; in his mercy he deals with us; he never comes to us without mercy; he never does anything in his dealings with us only in remembrance of mercy; "He has holpen (i.e. came to the aid of) Israel in remembrance of his mercy." I glory in this delightful truth then, friends, that they are one with that mercy that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. I am sure, if the Blessed Spirit were pleased to enlighten our minds, and to give us to see a little deeper into the counsels of God in the matter of salvation, that God would be dearer to us, that Christ would be more precious to us, that death would be a less terror to us, that this world would lose a great deal of its attraction; we should sing with the poet, with more intensity,

"'Tis Christ, the bright and morning star,
Draws my affections from afar."

But again, I ask, how came these cherubim's on the mercy-seat? Why, they were there by Divine choice. The Lord chose a place for them and chose them for the place. So, the Lord has chosen a place for us, and chosen us for the place, "the place prepared for you", and it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. They were there, therefore, by Divine choice, Divine appointment, and Divine authority, and by living power. The cherubim's did not put themselves there; no, there must be some living power; they had no power. And have not you and I known something of this? Just for a moment look back at the time when you were under guilt, and under the law; when you saw

Jesus Christ in the distance; when you saw the mercy of God in the distance; when you saw both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, that sinners had obtained mercy. Ah, said you, if I could have a place on the mercy-seat; if I could have a place in the Holy of Holies, a place in sweet association with the ark of the everlasting covenant, and the covenant presence of a covenant God, then I should be happy. Ah, could you place yourself there? And what was the consequence of this experience? We waited, and looked, and longed; and in the Lord's own time he lifted us up by his mercy; he became our glory, and the lifter up of our head; and ever since he has given us sweet association with his mercy; we have had no desire, God is our witness we have had no desire to be severed therefrom. Much, indeed, reproach this gospel meets with among professors; but I think the less attention we pay to the twaddle, the empty, the harrowing sound, I would not be bound, to hear the greater part of the men that preach, nor to read their sermons, for the world; if I read one now and then, just to see where they are, there is a parcel of legal, fleshly, feasible remarks; it harrows up your old legal nature, and makes you say, Well, I don't know, this man insists very much upon piety, and this, and that, and the other; I don't know now whether, perhaps, he may not be right. And you will find that these feasible, harrowing sermons will always lead you away from Christ, away from God's mercy, away from God's covenant. And these agents of Satan will even tell us it is dangerous to dwell too much upon these things. I know an instance of a man that having preached a gospel sermon accidentally, I believe he did it accidentally, apologized for it the next Sunday morning, by telling the people that he had preached so much gospel last Sunday, that if he did not now lay down the law a little strictly, he was afraid they would take advantage of it. I suppose he was judging other people by himself. So that, really, the more I look into the gospel of God, and then contrast it with the gospels of men, the more I repudiate, reject, detest, loathe, abhor, hate, despise the one, and delight in, glory in, sing of, and rejoice in the other. Give me a covenant God in Christ, in his eternal mercy, then all is well. So that I know, if I have a place in his mercy, he himself has raised me to that place:

“He raised me from the gates of gaping hell,
And fixed my standing more secure
Then 'twas before I fell.”

Then again, had these cherubim's any hand, pray, in making themselves cherubim? Did they choose how many faces they should have? Did they choose precisely what their stature should be? Not a word about it; no. The two cherubim, which I take to mean, first, the Old and the New Testament saints; secondly, I take them to mean Jew and Gentile, now, mark! they were beaten out of one piece of gold; and so Jew and Gentile are but one in God's election; the Old and New Testament saints are but one in God's election; they are but one in Christ, as witness's the apostle, “You are all, whether Jew or Greek, Scythian, bond or free, male or female, you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Now, it had to undergo a very laborious process in order to be brought into the cherubic shape; they were beaten out. And so, a sinner must undergo a pretty painful process before he is brought into the right shape. I know it was a long time before I was beaten really into conformity to the mercy-seat; before I was beaten into real submission to God's sovereignty. But the Lord will go on, trial upon trial, trial upon trial, and however laborious the process may be, yet he that began the good work, and bless his dear name, he is almighty to perform, will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ. It was indeed, and I ought not to pass by that, it was a most laborious process to the dear Redeemer; he had to bring us relatively into shape. Sin had put us into Satanic shape; sin had made us as wild beasts, and everything infinitely and

eternally hateful to God. Christ, by the laborious process of a holy life and an agonizing death, he took upon him our likeness, the likeness of sinful flesh; he has put that likeness eternally away, and confirmed for us all that beauty, and glory, and excellency indicated in the cherubim's, here called "cherubim's of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Thus then, if we look at their character, at their place, and how they came there, how expressive it is of the sovereignty of God, of the mercy of God, and the sweet privileges of the people of God.

Now, these cherubim, their wings touched each other; there was unity between them. And so, the Lord's people's wings touch each other; that is, you read of the unity of the faith; and so all the people of God believe in the same God, in the same truth, and they all have a union of soul to each other in proportion as they stand manifest to each other as the people of God. And this is a very close point. It is one thing to feel a great respect for people, to hold them in high esteem because of many excellencies about them, and because of their assent to the letter of God's word; do not mistake that for real brotherly love or real unity of spirit. Real unity of spirit must arise from several things. First, sympathy. There must be made to you a statement of soul-trouble, and you, knowing something of that soul-trouble, your soul unites with that man in his testimony of soul-trouble. You can weep with those that weep. Second, of sentiment. He must give you some account of how he came by these sentiments, and what these truths are to him; and if you find these truths are to him very dear, very precious, and that they are at times to him, he can give you some instances of it, wherein they have been to him sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, then there is a unity of spirit in the truth, but not the mere confession of the letter; there must be vitality. And then there must be rejoicing; he must give you some account of the joy of salvation; he must give you some account of the joy of the Lord's presence; he must give you some account of realizing this mercy, and of rejoicing in the Lord. And when you can see this, then the soul enters into unity, enters into sympathy, there is real unity of spirit. Now, there are some persons I meet with that I could say concerning them, and that is perhaps all I can say, when I look at them in their acquiescence, mental acquiescence, with the letter of the truth, I say, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." I cannot see that you are brought into the Holy of Holies, but still, you are not far from it; you are standing on the threshold of it; you are admitting the truth of it, and the order of it; but still, I cannot see you hungry, weary, humbled, smitten, tried, trembling, doubting, or fearing; I cannot see you sighing after personal realization of this for yourself; and I cannot see that you have realized it. So, we say to such, You are not far from the kingdom; and we say something else, we say, May that God who has, in the mysterious leadings of his providence, brought you near to his kingdom, bring you into the kingdom. We should like to see you in soul-trouble; like to see it become a personal matter in a way it has not been before. I think, therefore, that their wings touching each other is expressive of unity, not only with the mercy-seat, but with each other. We know we are passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. It is one thing to have a great natural respect for a person, and another thing to have this vital, spiritual union of soul, wherein you feel that there is in that man's soul, life; so that you can join with him as a real living soul, born of God, and one with the mercy-seat. But, again, these cherubim's were in the Holy of Holies. There was no place upon the face of the earth so holy as where the cherubim were. And I take this to mean two things, and I glory in both; first, that there is no holiness possessed by any creature that can equal that holiness that is possessed by the Christian; there is no holiness, or righteousness, or beauty, or dignity, possessed by any creature to equal that possessed by the Christian. Christ is the brightness of God's glory, the express image of his person; and the people of God are ordained to this conformity to Christ; he is their sanctification. Ah, what

a Holy of Holies is this to be in, untarnishable holiness! The holiness of the saints can no more fail than God Almighty can fail. Christ is God, and he is their sanctification; and, therefore, being one with Christ; holy by his blood cleansing them from all sin; and he being their sanctification, their holiness is as infallible as God is infallible; their righteousness is as infallible as God is infallible. “Jehovah our righteousness.” Here, then, is something that Satan cannot defile. Satan could defile his own holiness and the holiness of his fellow angels; he could defile the original holiness of the whole human race. But here, says John (an apostle perhaps less understood than any one apostle besides: because John uses the word love so much, they think John was a very loving man; so, he was, to the truth; not to anything else, though); here, says John, when touching upon this very subject, of those that are in Christ, “he abides, and the wicked one touches him not.” Such was the place of the cherubim’s; such is the place of the believer. Your sins cannot affect the holiness which Christ is to you; your guilt cannot affect the righteousness with which you are justified; your misery cannot affect in a way of lessening, but only make way for his mercy. Oh, how sweet to step out of self. See the transition of these cherubim’s. There they were, a kind of shapeless piece of nothing, they were nothing, as it were; and the Lord formed them, put them into this Holy of Holies, and they are consecrated to God in a way no others are. I take this Holy of Holies also to mean heaven; that these cherubim are virtually in heaven, as far as the presence of God is concerned. The presence of God in the Holy of Holies, in a way it was nowhere else, made the Holy of Holies a type of heaven itself; as the apostle witnesses, that Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, but entered into heaven itself. The cherubim’s, therefore, being in the holy place, denotes, not only that superiority of holiness, untarnishable holiness, which the saints of God have, but is, at the same time, declarative of the fact that all who are thus brought to receive Christ as their sanctification, justification, and redemption, that they shall reach the Holy of Holies, they shall not come short of that glory the Lord has for them; and so they are rightly called “the cherubim’s of glory.” But again, there were no creatures like them. This the ancients took notice of. There is no creature in nature like a cherubim, its four faces and its construction make it a different kind of creature altogether from any other. And if you take a fourfold view of it, it is a winged creature in all four views you take. Their wings denote they are on the wing for something. Ah! the wings of faith and love. They are on the wing,

“Their soul anticipates the day;
Would stretch its wings and soar sway.”

It is on the wing. So, if the lion’s face turn towards me, and I am asked what I have seen, I should say a flying lion. If the face of the ox be turned towards me, then it would be a flying ox. If the face of the man be turned towards me, it will look like a flying man; and if the face of the eagle be turned towards me, as a matter of course, it flies. So in every shape and form they are on the wing, to denote that they live upon something above the earth, that they have a destiny above the earth, that they have wings to carry them away from sublunary things, to carry them away from things beneath; they shall rise with wings as eagles, and yet carry with them the discretion of the man, the boldness of the lion, the devotedness of the ox, and the visual power of the eagle. And then, here again you will notice there is something like royalty indicated in the character of these cherubim’s, to indicate their dignity. Hence, man is the king of the world, the lion is the king of the forest, the ox is the king of the meadow, and the eagle is the king of the air. So that there is a kind of royalty, no creatures like them. And I am sure there is no people like the people of God anywhere. I don’t wonder at the world looking at us as monsters; it would be strange if they did

not. It was so with the prophets; they always appeared to be a monstrous sort of men in the eyes of the world; and so, did the apostles; and so, do real ministers now, that do not conform to the world. Just conform to the world and set something else forth as your hope besides what we have set forth this morning, then you cease to be offensive to the world, as witnesses the apostle; bring something invented by men, then directly the offence of the Cross ceases.

Such, then, is the character, and such is the position, and such the place, and such the dignity of these cherubim. I have said nothing relative to their being in the presence of God, nor have I said anything of the way in which they were confirmed there; but if you just take the sixteenth of Leviticus, you will find that these cherubim were confirmed there ceremonially by blood. There was the atonement, there was the sprinkling of the blood between the altar and the mercy-seat, to show that the blood is the way to the mercy-seat; and then the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy-seat, to show that these living creatures, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, should enjoy all the peace, all the dignity, and all the glory to which that atonement could bring them. And when you read of the Lord dwelling between the cherubim's, most of the learned agree that by noticing very closely the original, the idea there intended is this, "You that inhabit the cherubim's." So that God inhabits the cherubim's; he inhabits them, and they inhabit him. This wants nothing in a way of illustration; why, it tells for itself. The Lord inhabits his people; "Built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." They are his inheritance, he is their inheritance; he inhabits them, they inhabit him. Sweet mutuality! God with man, man with God, and love for ever reigns.

But *their glory*. The people shall be named after the great God; "They shall put my name upon the children of Israel." Say some, "Are you not going too far to say the people shall be named after the great God?" Why, the Lord says so himself. "They shall put my name upon the children of Israel" call them after my name, not after their own name; their own natural name is associated with all their sins, but the name that I give them is associated with everything that is free from sin. "This is the name wherewith he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." And then the ultimate prospects. Well, now then, the Lord has blessed, and will never curse; the Lord keeps, and will never leave nor forsake; the Lord reveals his glory, and will never hide the gospel from you, for it is hidden to them that are lost, not to them that are saved; and he approves of you, and will never disapprove; he will give you peace, and terminate all your vexations; he will name you after the dignity of his own name and righteousness, and will make the last declaration eternally good; "And I will bless them." These are the prospects.

Such, then, are "the cherubim's of glory shadowing the mercy-seat;" figures and emblems to set forth the blessedness we have in the love, and promise, and power, and salvation of our God.