

**Revelation 4: 8-11; "The Service of the Living Creatures", Sermon #
35 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 8th, 2006
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have been looking at the living creatures in chapter 4, giving them a real consideration, because they are of great significance to the Church of Jesus Christ and to the fulfillment of God's purpose upon the earth in every generation. I believe that they represent a hieroglyphic composite picture of what the ideal minister or pastor and his ministry should be like. There may be plurality of eldership and this is good but this is what it should look like, which is symbolized by the living creatures having the faces of the lion, the calf, the man, and an eagle. You might be asking yourself why doesn't the Lord just come right out and tell us what all these things are without our having to grapple so much with the symbolic representation. You will understand this better as we proceed through the book. It is because visions and messages given to Christ's people through prophets like John, need to be understood especially by ministers and also by their people so that they would have a means to be strengthened by the truth while they are being opposed by Satan's malicious forces. They will be able to have this take place if wicked men cannot understand the meaning of that which gives the Christian strength. This symbolic representation is a great aid in the spiritual battle that we face.

All Christians in all generations and cultures down through the Church age need this kind of holy secrecy of understanding which comes from God Himself. I say holy secrecy because there are secret societies like the Masons which delve into mysteries which are contained in the Scriptures and do not understand them rightly. They will be judged according to how they have twisted and misapplied the Scriptures. Indeed all men will be judged in relation to how they have handled or mishandled, received or rejected the Word of God. Ministers are stewards of the mysteries of God. They must study to be good stewards and good interpreters of the word of God. Jesus says in John 12: 46 - "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness." "And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." There it is, plain and simple; the word which Jesus has spoken will judge us. And many of the things that Jesus preached and taught were given to the people in parabolic form. Often he used picture language. Prophecy is not only the conveyance of pictures of what

will take place in the future history of the Church and the world. It is the conveyance of God's will for His people concerning the most practical spiritual activities of their soul. "He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men," it says in 1 Corinthians 14: 3. This, I believe, is why God has chosen to use the form of picture language and symbolic representation in the book of Revelation as well as in other portions of His word. God wants the particulars of historic fulfillment of prophecy shrouded in mystery, so that we cannot determine when Christ will return, and yet so that we can see the overview of what the Church will face in oppositions to the preaching of the gospel and God's word, and see that Christ has overcome them and will enable us to overcome them and to bear fruit in doing so, as well. So it is good and practical to study this book, as well as edifying and encouraging to God's saints. Spiritual study is practical study when it has regard to how we should think and how we should live our lives. This book is eminently practical as we shall see.

But we also need to see that the kingdom of God advances through the instrumentality of faithful saints and ministers. The 24 elders represent the holy, wise, and discerning Christians in every true church in every generation who have come to understand and to remember how God wants to be worshipped. It is not by entertainment, but by a reverent and joyful worship that truly considers the word that is preached to us by our pastor or ministers. It is by remembering that the Holy Spirit is in the ministry of the pastor and He is encouraging the response of the people as well. The ministry is a living thing. The pastor or minister is simply a man, but the Lord of hosts is with him if he is faithful. His ministry and how you are receiving it are of special and particular interest to God, because it is how God communicates to you the truth that He wants you to consider, so that you will be a holy and good witness.

We have been looking at the pastor's ministry for several weeks now, and have seen his ministry, what it is like. We have seen that it is his mission to fly as a seraph with the gospel of Christ to the aid of sinners and saints alike. Ideally he will be bold like a lion in his preaching, hard working and persevering like an ox, having compassion and sympathy for all whom he ministers to, like a man in that regard, and like an eagle in his discernment and vision of all that the Christ's people will be endangered by or what they will need. This is a very high standard, and it is held up for us here with the realization, as we said last week, that in many things each man who is a minister will fall short of it. Let us remember that our focus is not to be so much on the minister as being someone great, but as Christ and His grace making that man sufficient and able in his ministry to help you to understand spiritual things better so that you will serve and worship God with your life. His job and calling are to preach Christ and not himself even though he is to be a good example of the believer. It is the service

of ministers that I want us to look at this afternoon. And this is represented for us here in this passage by the eyes. Last week we looked at the wings, this week we will look at the eyes, because they represent a great portion of what the minister or pastor does in his service to you and to Christ. We will look at the eyes of the minister first, and then we will look at the eyes of the Church with the time that we have remaining.

1st- The eyes of the minister in relation to the church that he pastors.

It says in verse 8 it says that the four living creatures were "full of eyes around and within." This is an indication of the primary duty and service of ministers and pastors; it is that they watch and look out for the souls of people over whom they are appointed. They are under-shepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ and overseers of the flock. Let me turn you to a few verses which will show this. The 1st verse that comes to my mind is Hebrews 13: 17. "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give an account." "Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable to you." God has appointed pastors to "keep watch" over your soul. He uses his physical eyes to observe you and his "spiritual eyes" to think about what he has observed. He is appointed by God to do this for your good, not for your grief. The believers in the church are called in this verse to submit to this good work, for it is a good work; not with a blind submission, but with a thoughtful submission. They should thoughtfully examine the Scriptures to see if the things that they are being taught by him are so, and they should also thoughtfully receive his counsels and advise in relation to concerns that he may have about their spiritual state. The minister is also watchful for evil and error which may come to the flock from outside or even be raised up in the church itself. Turn to Acts 20, verse 28. Here Paul is giving a charge to the elders at Ephesus before he departs from them. He will never see them again and so his words are in relation to what they ought to consider their duty in relation to the holy ministry. He says, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace..." Paul is leaving them with that all important word to a pastor-- "watch." Ezekiel is spoken of several times as having been made a "watchman" to the house of Israel. In Ezekiel 3: 17, He was to give Israel the warning of God's judgments upon them if they did not repent, and if he did not warn them, their blood would be required

at Ezekiel's hand. He would be chastised for not warning both the wicked man who would not repent and the righteous man who turned from his righteousness.

The beautiful thing which is shown to us in our text of the verses in Revelation is that these living creatures are "full of eyes around and within." This means that the minister is one who watches his own heart and prays to God to reveal to him what he needs to see about himself as well as those for whom he will give an account for in his congregation. If anyone is overtaken in any trespass, he remembers the words of Galatians 6: 1, "Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." If anyone is excelling in good things, He prays thanking God that it is so, and asking God for grace to be full of good things himself. He is a man who watches his own heart and life as well as the people of the congregation which he pastors. He watches both to warn and to commend. Will you not pray for your pastor that his discernment of each of you, and his discernment of himself would be accurate and righteous so that a good account can be given to God for both? This is a very important thing in God's sight.

Now 2ndly- Let's look at the eyes of the Church in relation to the eyes of their minister.

Where do we find this in the text? We do not find here in the text in Revelation. But we do find a number of things related to our study in the book of Ezekiel chapter 1. Turn with me to this chapter. Here we find Ezekiel among the exiles of the captivity, by the river Chebar. He saw a great vision there which is given to us in some detail. He sees in verses 5-10 the four living creatures which we have been studying in the context of the book of Revelation. The description is slightly different from John's but it is similar enough to know that the same creatures are being spoken of. Here we find that the character of their faces is described as they are in Revelation. Their likenesses are the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle. Their wings are numbered as 4, whereas there were 6 in Isaiah's vision, but I think that in Ezekiel's vision he saw the flying wings as one set and the wings covering the hands and feet as one set of two joined together. There seems to be an indication of this in verse 23 where it is said, "And under the firmament their wings spread out straight, one toward another." "Each one had two which covered one side and each had two which covered the other side of the body." I believe this two on the one side and two on the other side are 4 wings all together and then the 2 with which the creature flew are the other set which would equal Isaiah's creature's six wings. Verse 11 says, "Their wings stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another and two covered their bodies." These living creatures, these ministers of God are always thinking in a

practical way of how they can lift the thoughts of themselves and their congregation up to God so that they will remember God's holiness and so that they will live holy lives. Their appearance in verse 13 is like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures." "The fire was bright , and out of the fire went lightning." The apostles on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came, there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them." "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." The gospel was then sounded forth from them to all the people who had gathered that day from other surrounding places. (Acts 2: 5-12) Ministers are torch bearers of the gospel, bearing the light before the people of the congregation and before unbelievers as well. Verse 14 of Ezekiel 1 says, "And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.". This shows the great desire of ministers of the gospel for the Word of God to "run swiftly and be glorified" among the people that they minister to and to the community that they live in, and even to ends of the world. They strike with their words at error and unbelief like lightning to bring conviction of sin and to establish the truth of righteousness. They preach and spread the word by running back and forth from the church to the community in every way that they can find, to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Then in verse 15 we find another very interesting aspect of this vision. "Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces." "The appearance of the wheels and their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel." This too, is the same reality being represented as in the book of Revelation, but here a different symbolic representation is used. It is of a "a wheel on the earth beside every living creature." In Revelation it is the 24 elders representing the church that are next to the living creatures. Here it is a wheel beside every living creature. They represent the same entity; the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. These symbolic representations of the Living Creatures and the wheels are the same as the representation of the Living Creatures and the Elders in the book of Revelation. They show forth the close relationship between ministers and the churches that they pastor. They show forth the way that the church and its ministers are to work together in the work of the Lord; that the ministry of both will be to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and that all of the strength of their worship and their service would be to the praise of God's glorious grace, that the truth of God's word will be lived out in a unity of purpose between pastor and people. We will look more at this the next time we are together. We will see the living creatures leading in the worship of God and the twenty four elders falling down before Him Who sits on the throne. We will see that the

wheels in Ezekiel have rims that were "full of eyes all around the four of them."
We will see that the "spirit of the living creatures is in the wheels."