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Do Cherubim and Seraphim Have Wings?

Author(s): John A. Widtsoe

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Abstract: This article argues that the depiction of wings on cherubim and seraphim is symbolic, rather than physical.

EVIDENCES AND RECONCILIATIONS

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LITTLE is known about the beings known under the above names beyond the fact that they are creatures in the service of the Lord. Genesis states that the Lord, after driving Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, "placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword."

Israel, while in the wilderness, was directed to make a "mercy seat" above the ark, between "two cherubims of gold" which were to "stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings." There are frequent references in the Old Testament to these winged cherubims.

Seraphims are mentioned by Isaiah. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." (Isaiah 6:1, 2.)

These references would at first imply that cherubim

and seraphim really did have wings. Yet it is more probable that the beings who dwell in the presence of the Lord, and serve as his messengers, are, as man, made in the image of God.

An indirect answer to the above question was given by the Prophet Joseph Smith. In explaining a part of the Revelation of John, he says that the four beasts spoken of in chapter four of Revelation "are figurative expressions." Later on, he further explains that the eyes and wings of the beasts are also symbolical. "Their eyes are a representation of light and knowledge, that is, they are full of knowledge; and their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc." (D. & C., section 77.)

Undoubtedly, the golden cherubim of the mercy seat, and the seraphim seen in vision by Isaiah were, similarly, figurative of certain heavenly beings. Their wings were symbolical of their power to move and act as in the case of the four beasts of the book of Revelation. Such symbolical representations in scripture and painting, of human or divine qualities, have always been commonly used for the easier comprehension of the mind. The symbolic use of wings is however never used in the Church today.—J. A. W.

Editorials

Commencement Day at Brigham Young University

IT WAS a glorious sight! Nearly eight hundred young men and women, looking straight and stalwart, crossed the platform of the Joseph Smith Building to receive their diplomas of graduation from Brigham Young University. One of them, the valedictorian, Richard Kent Watts, reflected in his excellent address the spirit of the gospel which is the spirit of the institution. Each of the class, if the spirit of B.Y.U. is retained, would be a power for good, a builder of peace in a distraught world. It thrilled the imagination! It stirred feelings of gratitude for the heaped-up blessings of this day. The promises of the Lord to Joseph Smith have not failed. Zion is moving towards its destined goal. As usual at B. Y. U. some lifting music glorified the occasion.

Behind the pulpit, crowding the platform, sat the faculty, three hundred strong, who for four years or more had led the graduates into ever-opening fields of truth. Their hearts swelled no doubt with satisfaction. The labor and toil, the weighing and measuring of man against learning were forgotten. Pride in their profession surely crept into their thoughts. The teacher who molds men to the Lord's desires lives a rich life. Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher!

There also sat President Howard S. McDonald. There was a glow in his face. This class had

begun work four years ago when he assumed the presidency. They were his class! There was a note of fellowship in his heartfelt words before conferring the degrees.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., was the commencement speaker. Eloquent, in scholarly fashion, and with flashes of subtle wit, he pointed the way to life's happiness, and the nature of that way. He closed with a forceful testimony of the truth of the work resting upon the mission of Joseph Smith. The graduates could profitably keep the message near at hand, as a major help on life's journey. The message is eternal.

Then Elder Stephen L Richards, representing the B.Y.U. board, paid tribute to the noble men and women who had helped the institution financially throughout the struggling years—and it is still struggling. He mentioned especially "Uncle" Jesse Knight, whose generosity continues to be felt through the legacies he left behind. Elder Richards pleaded that others, blessed temporally, would share their possessions with the coming day. Endowed scholarships and professorships, laboratories and libraries would be a blessing to ambitious youth, and enduring memorials to the donors.

It was a great day in the history of a unique institution. There are many institutions of learning, which foster splendidly the learning gains of the centuries. But, there is only one, offering full collegiate training, Brigham Young University, in which the wisdom of men is saturated and made alive with the wisdom of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the gospel restored through Joseph Smith.

Commencement day at Brigham Young University was a great event. The Lord bless B.Y.U. and all connected with it.—J. A. W.