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Q&A#85 The Cherubic Faces of Solomon's Water Chariots

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Today's question: "Why are the stands and basins of the Solomonic temple decorated with bulls, lions and cherubim? The bulls have sacrificial associations, the lions - kingly, and the cherubim just divine, I guess. But is there any specific significance to these three appearing together? I am reminded of the four creatures, but the eagle is missing here. Do you think there's anything to this?"

I reference James Jordan's article 'Chariots of Water', available from WordMP3 as part of his collected writings (<http://www.wordmp3.com/product-group.aspx?id=432>) or complete works (<http://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=13689>), which I cannot recommend highly enough.

If you have any questions, you can leave them on my Curious Cat account: <https://curiouscat.me/zugzwanged>.

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The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is, why are the stands and basins of the Solomonic Temple decorated with bulls, lions, and cherubim? The bulls have sacrificial associations, the lions kingly, and the cherubim just divine, I guess. But is there any specific significance to these three appearing together? I'm reminded of the four creatures, but the eagle is missing here.

Do you think there's anything to this? I think the association with the cherubim is correct. Although when we read about the bulls, the lions, and the cherubim, it could be read as

bulls and lions to wit cherubim. That the bulls and the lions are the cherubim in question.

We see later on in Ezekiel chapter 41, verse 19, it says, or actually 18 following. And it was made with cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces so that the face of the man was towards the palm tree on one side, and the face of a young lion towards the palm tree on the other side.

Thus, it was made throughout the temple all around. So we have similar imagery here as we find in 1 Kings chapter 7, verses 27 following. And it involves palm trees, cherubim.

But what we have here is cherubim with two faces, a lion and a man. Whereas in chapter 7 of Kings, we have cherubim with two faces of the lion and the ox. We've already seen ox symbolism in the Bronze Sea, which is born on the shoulders of 12 oxen, representing Israel as a priestly nation.

The priests are represented by bulls or oxen. If we think about the sacrifice for the high priest, it is a bull. And then the king is represented by a lion.

We already see kingly and priestly imagery in the two pillars, Yachin and Boaz, Boaz associated with the king and Yachin associated with the priest. And so what we find here, I think, is building out that imagery a bit more. That the cherubim, which are lion and ox-faced creatures, bear on their shoulders these water chariots, these water chariots that flow like a gauntlet out from the east, out towards the east from the temple.

So bringing water out from the temple. We see this imagery explored later on in Ezekiel as well, as the water flows out from the temple. And they're associated with the Bronze Sea as well.

There's a lot more I could say about this, but that, I think, is the heart of it. That Israel is associated with kings and priests at this particular point, especially. The prophetic ministry of Israel has not yet come to the fore.

And so I think the emphasis upon the ox and the lion face of the cherubim is in part a result of the situation of Israel at that time. That the king and the priest are the two key figures that represent Israel. We don't yet have the eagle face coming to prominence, nor yet the face of the man, which happens later.

And the four creatures of the cherubim, I think, we only have two here. Later on in Ezekiel, we'll see the full set of four. And then we'll see in certain occasions, like chapter 41, two faces of the cherubim that have specific significance at that point.

There is a great deal more that could be said about the water chariots. James Jordan has a lengthy piece discussing the form of the water chariots, trying to piece out the different details and put them all together, understand the symbolism and try and understand what they would have looked like. That's a very helpful piece.

I think it's available from Biblical Horizons. It's in the collected works of James Jordan anyway, that you can get from Word MP3, which I highly recommend. I'll leave the link for that.

It's something I've found endless hours of help from. So I would recommend that if you want a detailed treatment of the symbolism here. Thank you very much for listening.

If you have any further questions, please leave them on my Curious Cat account. If you would like to support this and future videos, please do so using my Patreon account. I think this is my hundredth video and I hope that there will be many more.

For my hundredth question and answer video, I'll hopefully answer a large number of short questions. If you have any questions for that, please start sending them. Thank you very much for listening and God bless.

See you again tomorrow.