

**The Cherubim (Gen. iii. 24).  
The hope of Creation.  
pp. 164-167**

Gen. iii. is a complete section of Scripture, as its wonderfully complete structure shows. We do no more here, however, than call attention to the opening and closing members. The chapter opens with the “serpent” and closes with the “cherubim”. The serpent is connected with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the cherubim with the tree of life. The serpent is the medium of a supernatural tempter, the cherubim, afterward

described as comprised of animal and human forms, are always associated with the Divine presence and purpose. The fact that the structure of Gen. iii. puts the serpent and the cherubim in correspondence should make us consider what the parallelism teaches. There is a passage in Ezekiel xxviii. that will throw light upon the subject. Ezekiel's prophetic lamentation upon the king of Tyrus uses language that goes beyond the possibilities of any human king.

“Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum (thou art the finished pattern), full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God. . . . thou art (wast) the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (verses 12-19).

We believe that this passage can find its fulfillment in but one person – Satan. As a fallen being he is introduced into the narrative of Gen. iii. He had, by then, been deprived of his character of the covering cherub, and after the fall of Adam the cherubim appear—this time a combination of symbols taken from the six days' creation. “By pride fell the angels”. Lucifer, son of the morning, said,

“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the Most High” (Isa. xiv. 12-14).

Here, the king of Babylon is linked with this supernatural being, like the king of Tyrus was in Ezek. xxviii. His temptation to man was along similar lines, “Ye shall be as God”.

It would seem from a due consideration of these things that into the place forfeited by Satan, the cherubim of Gen. iii. were placed. It appears from Ezekiel that one of the functions of the cherubim was to “cover”. Heb. ix. 5 speaks of “the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat”, and I Kings viii. 7 tells “the cherubim covered the ark”, showing that this was in some measure continued. The cherubim occur in the symbolism of the Tabernacle and of the Temple (Exod. xxv. 18-22; xxxvi. 35; I Kings vi. 23-29). They are specially connected with God's dwelling place (I Sam. iv. 4; II Kings xix. 15; I Chron. xiii. 6; Psa. lxxx. 1; xcix. 1; Isa. xxxvii. 16), and throne (Ezek. i. and x.).

The description given of the living creatures in Ezek. i. is the description of the cherubim (see x. 20). Ezekiel tells us that they had “the likeness of a man” (i. 5). They had four faces, and one was the face of a man, one of a lion, one of an ox, and one of an eagle (i. 10). These cherubim are seen under the throne, which had the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. The cherubim are particularly connected in Ezekiel with the purposes of God pertaining to Israel. The departing, and the returning glory (iii. 23 and xliii. 2) is associated with them. The living creatures of the book of the Revelation (wrongly called “beasts”) are likewise associated with the throne, the glory and with Israel, and also, forming a link with Genesis, the living creatures are closely associated with creation. The serpent is judged and set aside, while the cherubim are placed to preserve the way of the tree of life. The long line of redemptive purposes, passing from Eden to the Tabernacle, from the Tabernacle to the Temple of Solomon, from the

desecrated Temple of the Captivity to the Temple yet to be, is definitely linked with the cherubim. Man had dominion over the cattle, the beast of the field, and the fowl of the air. These are all represented in the cherubim. The sea and its inhabitants do not figure in these symbols, and stand rather as types of evil. The pledge that God's purpose in creation should stand was given at the east of the garden of Eden.

In Gen. iii. 24 the word translated "placed" is literally, "to dwell as in a tabernacle". The fire that turned every way, represents the same word as used in Ezek. i. 4, "infolding itself"; the word "keep" means to preserve. Gen. iii. 24 therefore may read:--

"And He tabernacled (between) the cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a fierce fire infolding itself to preserve the way of the tree of life."

The cherubim foreshadow the great work of Christ in its redemptive aspect. The way of the tree of life has been preserved. Man fallen and undone as he is need not be hopeless, for even Adam and Eve had this blessed symbol and tabernacle of hope before them, telling of a day when this groaning creation shall enter into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. The dark ending of the first dispensation is illuminated by promise and hope. Every succeeding dispensation partakes of this character. This earth, cursed for Adam's sake, ceases to be his rest or his hope. Over the darkness and death of creature failure grace has triumphed. No longer surrounded by everything that was good for food and pleasant to the eyes (which require no spirituality to appreciate), Adam and Eve are turned into the world outside of the garden, to walk by faith, to worship by faith, to live by faith (in short, a spiritual experience had become a possibility), and are pointed to the only escape from the effects of disobedience.

Truly, the Lord overruled the tempter's designs for good, and while by no means condoning sin, did of His own rich grace provide a Saviour. As in our case:--

"He commanded light to shine out of darkness."