

Cherubim, wings of, LeGrand Baker

These wings are both real and symbolic.

The cherubim who surround the celestial throne of God are represented as having wings (sometimes called the wings of an eagle), by Isaiah (ch. 6), Ezekiel (ch. 1), Daniel (ch. 7), and John (Rev. 4). But, we are told by the Prophet Joseph that "their wings are a representation of power, to move, to act, etc." (D&C 77:4)

Similarly, there were cherubim whose wings overreached the throne of God in the Tabernacle of Moses, which throne was the Ark of the Covenant. (Exodus 25:20). When Solomon built his temple, he constructed a huge throne in the Holy of Holies. There, cherubim with a wingspan of about 16 feet (1 Kings 6:24) spread their wings over a golden throne; over whomever sat upon that throne; and over the Ark of the Covenant, which now served as the throne's footstool.

Only one who had been anointed a son of God, and thereby also anointed a legitimate heir and king, could sit upon this earthly representation of the heavenly throne. Therefore, sitting upon the throne, under the wings of the cherubim represented not only priesthood power and temporal majesty, but also security and peace, as is expressed in the 63rd psalm, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." (Psalm 63:7. See also Psalms 17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 61:4, 91:4.)

Because the throne and its overshadowing wings were symbolic of priesthood kingship, they were also symbolic of the invitation to receive the gift of eternal life. The Saviour used that symbolism repeatedly, as a lament for those who would not accept the invitation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
(Matthew 23:37, see also Luke 13:34, 3 Nephi 10:4-6, D&C 43:24)

And also as a promise to those how would,

Who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer. (D&C 29:2, see also 10:65) (The phrase "mighty prayer" has an obvious significance in this enthronement context.)

Thus, the symbolism of those enthroning wings is the same as the symbolism of the powerful wings of the celestial cherubim, upon whose majesty, God himself may ride. "And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. (Psalms 18:10 and 2 Samuel 22:11)" And upon whose wings he invites his children to ride also. "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)"

So Nephi's statement resounds with the clarity of the ancient enthronement ordinances, is a testimony of the validity of those ordinances, and an example of their fulfilment.

And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceedingly high mountains. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them. (2 Nephi 4:25)

The wings have a further and expected symbolism, which is an extension of the ones mentioned so far. It is the association of the ideas of enthronement and peace. "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall." And, as Nephi adds, "all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. (3 Nephi 25:2 and 2 Ne. 25:13)

12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust (Ruth 2:12).