A classical painting depicting the Holy Trinity. At the top, God the Father is shown as a bearded man with his arms outstretched, holding the infant Jesus in his left arm. The Holy Spirit is represented as a dove perched on the Father's right hand. Below them, three cherubs (putti) are shown. In the foreground, the four Evangelists are depicted as animals: an eagle (John), an ox (Luke), a lion (Matthew), and a winged man (Mark). The scene is set against a dramatic, cloudy sky with a bright light source at the top. The title 'THE FOUR GOSPELS' is written in a stylized, arched font across the top of the image.

THE FOUR GOSPELS

M. M. NINAN

The Four Faces of Gospel

Prof. M.M. Ninan



Why is it that we have four gospels? The answer is: We do not have four gospels. We have only one gospel. That gospel is given in the person of Jesus Christ. In the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we are given four different perspectives on Jesus. Each of us see Jesus in our own personal way depending on our circumstances, needs and interaction. We present Jesus to others depending on the way they feel the need of Jesus. Mathew, Mark , Luke and John wrote the gospels presenting their view of Jesus for a people who were in particular need.

Early church fathers saw in the pictures of great visions of Ezekiel and John the pictures of Jesus in action. Every angel of God is a picture of Jesus. This gives us a good method of summarising the gospels.

Ezekiel saw the vision of the Holy Presence twice.

Ezekiel's first Vision by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians.

Ez 1:4-11 I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north--an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces.

Ezkeil's Second Vision sitting in his own house sitting with the elders of Judah

Ez. 10: 14-15 Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River.



Ezekiel's Vision - Raphael

The same creatures were seen in the vision of John

Vision of John

Rev. 4:7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man the fourth was like a flying eagle.



These were living creatures and were also angelic beings - cherubim. Cherubim are angels of mercy and therefore bearers of good news. They also represent all creatures in the universe who were redeemed. These are the four faces.



Old Testament Indications

Mesianic Prphecies

First, our Lord Jesus is pictured in many prophecies, like those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah, as coming as the King -- the King of Israel - Son of David. Their expectation of the messiah was restricted to this. The Jews lost sight of the other aspects of the messiah and they missed Him

Second, the Old Testament pictures speak of Messiah as the Servant, as the suffering One. The typology is given by Joseph who was sold into slavery by his own brothers

Third, we picture of Son of Man - born of a virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, not very comely, but an ordinary man

The Hebrews were so confused by these two kinds of pictures that they deduced that there must be two Messiahs. They called one "Messiah Ben-Yusif," or Messiah the son of Joseph, and the other "Messiah Ben-David,". They didn't see that the same Messiah had these varying aspects.

Finally Messiah was himself God, the Everlasting One. Micah says, "Out of Bethlehem shall come he who is to be the ruler of Israel, whose going forth is from everlasting." "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"

So we see that Old Testament picture of Messiah could not be contained by a simple picture. It is these completeness that is attained by the four gospels.

Mesianic Prophecies: The Branch



The King:

Jer. 23:5 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto DAVID *a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign* and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

The Servant:

Zech. 3:8 "Behold, I will bring forth *My Servant the Branch.*"

The Man:

Zech. 6:12 "Behold *the Man* whose name is *the Branch.*"

The Lord:

Isaiah 4:2 , "In that day shall *the Branch of the Lord* be beautiful and glorious."

Gospel: The Four Rivers that feeds the earth

Gen. 2:10 "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into *four heads.*"

Gospel in the Temple Furniture

Ex. 26:31, 32, "And you shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubim shall it be made. And you shall hang it upon *four pillars* of Shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver."

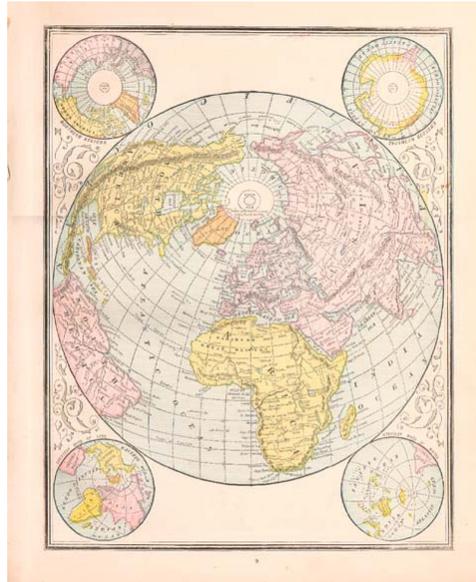
The veil is the flesh of Jesus: Heb 10:19-20

The veil is made with fine twined linen of four colors: Blue (for heaven); Purple (for Kingship); Scarlet (for Sacrifice) and linen (for Manhood)

The Pillars are the four Gospels.

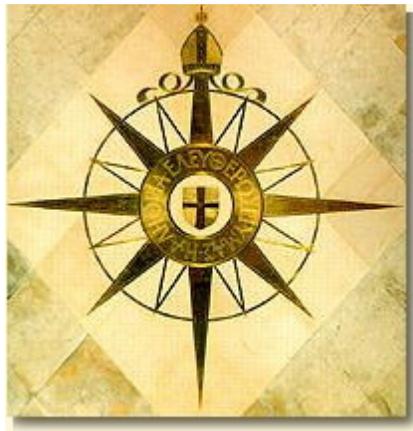
Cherubims are the mercy messengers- the messengers of Good News.

Four : Gospel for the World

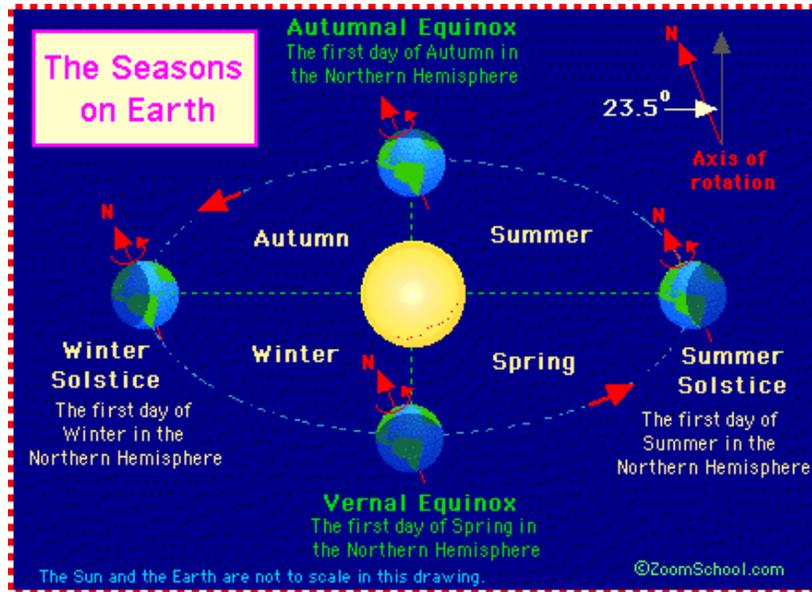


Every number has a meaning and significance in Hebrew culture and we can see this employed all through the Bible. Thus four is the number of the earth. Four is always connected with earth. Three is number for God.

There are four points to earth's compass - north, east, south, and west.



There are four seasons to earth's year - spring, summer, autumn, and winter



There are four elements connected with our world - earth, air, fire, and water.



There have been four great world-Empires - the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman.

Scripture divides earth's inhabitants into four classes - "kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9 etc.).

Parable of the Sower, our Lord divided the field into four kinds of soil, and later He identified the field as: "the field is the world."

Four Gospels

Gospels can be associated with each of these aspects. Though early fathers ascribed the gospel to each of these symbols they were not always unanimous in their identification as shown below:

Early fathers connected the four evangelists with the four living creatures in various combinations based on varying reasons.

	Human/Angel	Lion	Ox	Eagle	Reason
<u>St. Irenaeus of Lyons</u> (130 - 200 AD)	Matthew	John	Luke	Mark	the order in which the beasts appear in Ezekiel 1:10 (Man, Lion, Ox, Eagle) combined with the order in which the canonical gospels appeared in some pre-Vulgate Latin versions (Matthew, John, Luke, Mark).
<u>St. Augustine of Hippo</u>	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John	Augustine protested that the whole of each gospel needed to be taken into account when making these correlations rather than just the beginning of each gospel. The Lion with Matthew (emphasizing the Kingly Human Nature of Christ) The Ox with Luke (emphasizing the Priestly Human Nature of Christ) The Man with Mark (emphasizing both the Priestly and the Kingly Aspects of the One Human Nature of Christ) and The Eagle with John (emphasizing the Divine Nature of Christ).
<u>Pseudo-Athanasius</u>	Matthew	Luke	Mark	John	
<u>St. Jerome</u> 347-420 AD	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	

Gospel Of Matthew

The Lion of Judah, King of Kings

The Mesiah



The gospel of Matthew was written by a Jew, about a Jew, to other Jews Jesus of Nazareth is to be found the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecy

Within the first few verses he would read of the genealogy of Christ along the Royal Line showing that Jesus indeed was the legitimate King of the Jews in the line of David and Solomon. .

In the second chapter the wise men (the Three Kings) from the Orient comes in search asking : "Where is He that is born *King* of the Jews?",

"The Sermon on the Mount" lays down the the Laws of the Kingdom of God. Jesus speaks with authority and acts with authority - an authority greater than that of Moses "Moses said to you thus, but I say to you"

Seven Kingdom Parables of chapter 13 elaborate on the development of the Kingdom of God on Earth. The key phrase of this book is "the kingdom of heaven."

When he was crucified he was announced as the King of the Jews. In Matthew's Gospel there is no account of the ascension of Christ because the King continues to reign without interruption on the earth.

There are more than forty Old Testament passages quoted in Matthew in order to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy concerning the Mesiah

Christ was born of a virgin "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (Matt. 1:22; Isa. 7:14).

Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, "for thus it is written by the prophet" (Matt. 2:5; Micah 5:2).

Slaughter of the innocent children by Herod was a fulfillment of "what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet" (Matt. 2:17; Hos. 11:1).

John the Baptist the forrunner fulfilled:, "for this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah" (Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3).

Christ began His ministry in "Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the

prophet" (Matt. 4:13–14; Isa. 9:1–2).

"Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.'" (Matt. 13:34–35; Psa. 78:2).

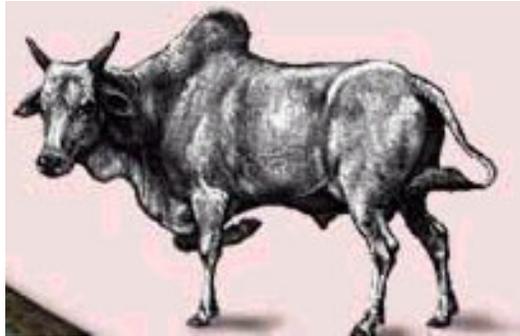
Betrayal and the price of thirty pieces of silver were prophesied in Jeremiah (Matt. 27:9–10; Jer. 32:6–9).

The soldiers "divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: 'They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.'" (Matt. 27:35; Psa. 22:18).

The Gospel Of Mark

The Ox or Calf

The Suffering Servant - Sacrificial Beast



The theme of the book is: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). They represent the Servant of Jehovah -- the suffering Servant whom Isaiah paints in his 53rd chapter. In the Old Testament a Calf was one of the prescribed sacrificial beasts for sin.

Mark was written for Romans. The Roman Empire was built on slavery. In contrast Mark presents the new Kingdom which is based on servanthood.

Mark 10:42 -44 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

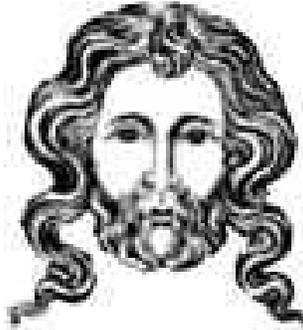
Mk 9:35 Jesus states this principle. "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

In the book of Mark Christ is presented as the ideal servant. Unlike Matthew, Mark does not give us the genealogy of Christ, for the genealogy of a servant is not important. He do not give any introduction. Jesus simply appears. He gets his witnesses from John the Baptist and from Holy Spirit - two witnesses as required by law. Then he swings into action.

The key word in this Gospel is *immediately or starightway* which is repeated endlessly. Mark reports only four parables and only those related to servants. Jesus is never called "Lord" in Mark before the resurrection.

The Gospel Of Luke

Son of Man = Perfect Man



Luke was written for the Greeks. In general it is written for the mankind as a whole. Greeks were known for their learning and for their ideals of Manhood. **Luke** gives us the picture of Christ as Man. Here he is seen in the perfection of his manhood -- the glory, beauty, strength, and dignity of his manhood. Luke therefore gives the biological genealogy of Jesus tracing it back all the way to Adam, the first man, (instead of to Abraham only, as in Matthew) and to God. Thus Luke establishes the principle that Man is Son of God. Christ came to redeem the fallen Mankind to its original Sonship. Thus to Luke Humanization is Christianisation. Beginning with Jesus, Christian is the man in the likeness of Jesus.

Matthew 10, Jesus sends the disciples out, , "Don't go into any of the towns of the Gentiles but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But in Luke 9, they were sent out to preach the gospel and the restriction is not mentioned.

As the perfect Man He is seen here so frequently in prayer. Luke records seven prayers of Jesus Christ which are not mentioned elsewhere. . Prayer is a picture of man's proper relationship to God, his father. That is why you see Christ in the act of prayer many, many times throughout the Gospel of Luke.

Luke was a physician and had tremendous sympathy. In Luke Jesus is shown as someone who really cared. He wept over the city of Jerusalem; he healed even the servant whose ear Peter cut off in the midst of an arrest. No other Gospel tells us about these two incidents. In Luke we also have the detailed account of Christ's agony of Gethsemane as he sweats blood .

The Gospel Of John

The Eagle = the Exalted God



John's gospel is totally different from all the other three gospels. Here we are carried back to a point before time began, and we are shown Christ as the Word. We have only two persons in this genealogy -- the Father and the Son. The whole purpose of the gospel of John was to prove the Deity of Jesus Christ.

There is no mention of agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Instead we see that temple soldiers were forced back to their knees when they came to arrest him. Jn 18: 4-6 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Four fold description of a Christian.

Since every Christian is Christ like and every mission is carried by christian messengers i.e angels the four creatures also represent the faces of the Christian in the mission field.

1. Lion likeness: Authority.



The fact that, in Christ, we are complete. And that completeness includes the authority given to us by the risen Christ. We have been given authority to proclaim the Gospel. Authority in spiritual warfare, authority in prayer. This authority extends to the heavenly realms as well as on earth. Jesus. Has given to us the same authority as Jesus. Why don't we see more of God's power? Because we don't use more of God's authority . And we don't use it for a number of reasons. The main reasons are

A/ Fear of failing

B/ Doubt

C/ Sin

2. Ox or Calf the Servant.



We were made a new creation in Christ to serve. We are saved to serve. The church, except for a few pockets here and there, has basically lost the art of serving. Dwight Moody once said The measure of a person is not how many servants he has, but how many people he serves.

Only those who are secure can serve. Only the person who is being loved by the Father is free to give that love. We cannot love our neighbour if we cannot love ourselves.

3. The face of a Man: Being authentically human. Transparency



The true Christian is not afraid to be who he is. The fear of being who we are, the fear of letting people see the imperfections in our life has kept many from being effective evangelists. All of us have our flaws and blemishes, all of us have our faults and failings. That is what it is to be human. If God were to wait for perfect men to take his message, He would never have found one. To be an Ambassador doesn't mean you have to be perfect. People are afraid to be themselves and real. They act as though they are somebody else in front of others. They almost always puts on a mask - a front. Pastors and Preachers try to be super-spiritual,;holier even than God. In so doing we cease to be real people and become legalistic puppets.

4. The flying Eagle - Vision



Willing to soar. Willing to leave the known and venture into the unknown. Willing to take the trips that He calls us to. Every one of us has, what is called, a comfort zone That environment in which we feel comfortable. We feel comfortable because it is familiar. We feel comfortable because we can control it, at least to a degree. We feel comfortable because it is known.

Are you willing to venture into the unknown with God?

As we get to the heights of an eagle that we can get a hold on the big picture. Sparrows and other low flying birds can only see a small section. The eagle, as it ascends up...up...up gets a much bigger picture.

The balance of any Christian involves the balance of the lion, the ox, the man and the eagle. Be an Ambassador using the authority of Christ with an attitude of servanthood. Be yourself knowing that "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)

The Progression in Gospel Conclusion

There is a striking order in the way the four gospels close.

Matthew' end with *the Resurrection of Christ* (28:1-8).

Mark end with *the Ascension of Christ* (16:19).

Luke end with the *the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (24:49).

John closes with the great proclamation of *the Return of Christ* (21:21-23)!