

The Four Gospels

Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures... (Ezekiel 1:5)

As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. (Ezekiel 1:10)

Each of the Gospels has its own character. From the time of Irenaeus (end of 2nd century) they were likened to the Cherubim of Ezekiel's vision, and there are traces of this in Christian art, as far back as the fifth century.

Every possible allocation of the figures has been made, but that which seems best to agree with the character of the Gospels is the Lion to Matthew, the Ox to Mark, the Man to Luke, and the Eagle to John; because Matthew presents the King; Mark, the servant; Luke the Son of Man; and John, the Son of God.

Early Christian writers compared these Gospels to the river which flowed out of Eden to water the Garden of God, and which was parted into four (Gen. ii. 10-14), and truly 'the gold of that land *is* good.' Matthew's Gospel is for the Jews; Mark's is for the Romans; Luke's is for the Greeks; and John is for the Christian Church.

Matthew's is the Gospel of the Past; Mark's, of the Present; Luke's, of the Future; and John's is the Gospel of Eternity. Matthew's Gospel is Didactic; Mark's is Anecdotal; Luke's is Historical; and John's is Spiritual. These generalizations are sufficiently distinctive to be worthy of note...

(A Guide to the Gospels by W. Graham Scroggie, London: Pickering & Inglis LTD., 1958 [1948], 129, Text and Paragraph Structure Modified)