

The Kingdom-Driven Life #1

The Book of Matthew

The Four Faces of Christ

I. The Four Faces of Christ

A. Ezekiel's Vision

1. 600 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Ezekiel was caught up into heaven:

And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings...

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.

Ezek 1:4-6, 10 KJV

2. 700 years later another man of God, the Apostle John, was caught up into heaven:

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne...

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

Rev 4:1-2, 6-7 KJV

3. These two identical visions, occurring 700 years apart, answer the question: "Why are there four gospels and not just one?"

B. The Four "Faces" of Christ

1. Many Bible scholars agree that each of the four gospels perfectly complement the others in presenting us with a full-faceted revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

For in Him (Christ) all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.
Colossians 2:9 NASB

2. The “fullness” of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, could not be accomplished from just one perspective!

3. And so it is that we see Christ’s perfections presented as four “faces”, four dimensions or aspects of His divine nature and character:

- a. In Matthew, we see the face of the *LION*
- b. In Mark, we see the face of the *OX*
- c. In Luke, we see the face of the *MAN*
- d. In John, we see the face of the *EAGLE*

Matthew : The Face of the Lion

- Primarily written to the JEWS, with an emphasis on Christ as the KING, the “LION” of the Tribe of Judah
- Matthew, a Levitical Jew, mentions the term “kingdom” approximately 60 times, which is as much as the other three gospels combined
- This Gospel might be called “The Gospel of the Kingdom” because its purpose was to reveal to the Jews that their Messiah-King had come, and that His entire ministry was a fulfillment of all they had been awaiting.

Mark: The Face of the Ox

- The ox was the symbol of lowly service, of patient, productive labor
- The ox was the most valuable and highly regarded of all the “service” animals-the ox was stronger, more dependable and stable than other stock
- This gospel contains no genealogies-it is a book of action where Jesus is moving and ministering constantly; the term “immediately” is used 43 times!
- It contains no long teachings or discourses
- It was written primarily to the ROMANS, an empire built upon slavery, to show that the highest form of leadership in the Kingdom of God is servanthood.

Luke: The Face of the Man

- Luke’s gospel emphasized the human side of Jesus; from the beginning we see much detail about His conception and birth.
- The term “son of man” was commonly used in the Old Testament to identify those God was speaking to; Jesus’ favorite acronym for Himself in Luke is “Son of man” which He uses 25 times!
- Whereas Matthew’s genealogy of Christ took the line back to Abraham, Luke takes it back to Adam!
- Many believe Luke’s gospel was written with the GREEKS and Greek philosophy in mind, serving as a repudiation of their gnostic philosophies and idolatrous ideas of man’s beauty and intellect.

John: The Face of the Eagle

- Then, as now, the Eagle has always been noted for its regal bearing and high-flying nature.
- The Eagle is often used as a symbol of deity or power.
- The Eagle dwells high above all the other creatures and only interacts with living things, the opposite of vultures and ravens, which interact with dead things
- The Gospel of John focuses on the deity of Jesus Christ, beginning by identifying Him as God in John 1:1 and as the God Who became flesh in John 1:14.
- The Gospel of John is written primarily to the CHURCH.

4. So we see the fullness of God in Christ from four perspectives:

In Matthew, we see the Messiah-King (the Lion)
In Mark, we see Jehovah's Servant (the Ox)
In Luke, we see the Son of Man (Man)
In John, we see the Son of God (Eagle)

5. Since CCC is focusing on the Kingdom of God this year, perhaps you can see why we'll be studying the Gospel of Matthew!

II. The Gospel of the Kingdom

A. Why Matthew Comes First

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true...
2 Timothy 3:16 NLT

1. Not only is all scripture "inspired of God", we can easily see how the order of the canon was inspired as well.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...
Matthew 6:33

2. The Gospel of Matthew is placed first because of His preeminence in all things as Creator King.

(God) has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Excerpted from Colossians 1:13-18 KJV

3. The first thing we must see about Jesus of Nazareth is that He is more than a Prophet, (Muslims believe that), more than a good Teacher, (throughout the

centuries, many have believed that...but that He is God in flesh...Son of man and Son of God with no confusion of essence.*

**Theologians call this the "hypostatic union", the mystery of the incarnation whereby Christ is all God and all man at the same time. Any theology or statement of faith that fails here is not orthodox Christianity.*

4. So the Gospel of Matthew is placed first in the canonical order.

B. Contextualizing the Gospels

1. God called Abraham and through him established the nation of Israel under the ministry of Moses.

2. Abraham was the father of Isaac, who was the father of Jacob, who was the father of the 12 patriarchs who became the fathers of the "12 Tribes of Israel".

3. Just before Jacob died, he called his 12 sons together and prophesied over each one of them, including his son Judah:

**"The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
Gen 49:10 NASB**

This is one of the earliest references to Messiah, the "king" of the Jews.

4. Later, this coming king was mentioned in prophecy by Moses: Deut 18:15-16

Moses continued, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

"Then the Lord said to me, 'What they have said is right. I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf.

Excerpts from Deuteronomy 18:15, 17-19 New Living Translation

5. Even later, God promised a Messiah-King to David:

The Lord swore an oath to David with a promise he will never take back:

**"I will place one of your descendants on your throne.
If your descendants obey the terms of my covenant
and the laws that I teach them, then your royal line
will continue forever and ever."**

Psalm 132:11-12 New Living Translation

6. By the time of the New Testament, expectations of the coming Messiah-King had reached fever pitch. The Jews were chafing under Roman rule, hungry for the Promised One to come set them free and re-establish the throne and kingdom of David.

C. The Rejection of the Kingdom

1. The Jews had a picture in their minds of what their Messiah would look like and what He would do.
2. Jesus did not match the picture.
3. The Jews rejected Christ.

**He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
John 1:10-11 KJV**

4. The Gospel of Matthew is the “face of the Lion” written to the Jews telling the story of how the Kingdom of God came to earth in Jesus Christ, how they rejected Him, and thereby lost the kingdom!

Jesus said to them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”

**Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.
Matt 21:42-43 KJV**

(In our next message, you will see who that “nation” is... it includes you!)

D. The Presuppositional Disqualification

1. The greatest curse of all is to have the light and love the darkness instead. (John 3:19)
2. The Kingdom of God, the focus of our study, is most clearly set forth in the Gospel of Matthew.
3. The Kingdom of God has three elements:
 - **Definitive**-The Kingdom of God came with Christ and was established on earth.
 - **Progressive**-The Kingdom is here now in an ever-increasing, ever-expanding influence for righteousness, peace and joy, an unstoppable and growing expression of God’s rule “on earth, as it is in heaven.”
 - **Final**-The Bible clearly points forward to a time where the Kingdom of God will prevail over all the earth and all of creation.

**And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
Revelation 11:15 KJV**

4. The Gospel of Matthew, the “face of the lion,” is the Gospel of the Kingdom!