

Theme: The ancient church saw the Gospels as a fulfillment of Ezekiel and John's visions, and as testimonies to Christ - who is the focal point of all of God's revelation.

I. The Importance of Symbols

- A. God's prophets often saw visions of symbols
- B. Prophets often used symbols to communicate the Word
- C. Some famous Christian symbols - the fish
- D. Fish - ἰχθύς - an effective symbol!
- E. Lent - 4 ancient symbols for the Gospels - point to Christ

II. A Heavenly Vision

- A. Ezekiel prophesied at a critical time
 - 1. The people of God are in exile
 - 2. The covenant seems to have fallen and failed
 - 3. But God is not done with His covenant people!
 - 4. So God gives Ezekiel a vision into heaven
- B. Ezekiel's vision of the creatures

In the fire was what looked like four living creatures...¹⁰ 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. Ezekiel 1:5, 10

 - 1. There are four living creatures in heaven
 - 2. There is also a figure "like a man" who is God
 - Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man.²⁷ I saw

that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.²⁸ Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking. Ezekiel 1:26–28

- 3. Ezekiel is then commissioned to speak God's word
 - He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you."² As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.³ He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. Ezekiel 2:1–3

C. John's vision in Revelation

- 1. John is in exile and receives God's word
- 2. John has a vision of "the son of man" - Jesus
 - I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Revelation 1:12–17

3. John has a vision into heaven of the creatures
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. Revelation 4:7
4. Some differences, but clearly related visions

III. Four Creatures, Four Gospels - One Christ

- A. A long history relating the 4 creatures to the 4 gospels
 1. This was done from very early days in the church
 2. Different orders by Irenaeus, Augustine, Jerome
 3. In art, Jerome's order came to dominate
 - a. Matthew the Man; Mark the Lion; Luke the Ox; John the Eagle
 "The book of Ezekiel also proves that these four Gospels had been predicted much earlier. Its first vision is described as follows: "And in the midst there was a likeness of four animals. Their countenances were the face of a man and the face of a lion and the face of a calf and the face of an eagle." The first face of a man signifies Matthew, who began his narrative as though about a man: The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." The second [face signifies] Mark in whom the voice of a lion roaring in the wilderness is heard: "a voice of one shouting in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The third is the face of the calf which prefigures that the evangelist Luke began with Zechariah the priest. The fourth [face signifies] John the evangelist who, having taken up eagles wings and hastening toward higher matters, discusses the Word of God." (Jerome, Preface on commentary on Matthew, written to Eusebius)
 - b. This is the order we will use in the series as well

- B. Photos of examples of the symbols in church history
 1. Book of Kells
 2. Walters Art Gallery statues
 3. Venice - St. Mark's Cathedral - (and whole city!)
- C. Four gospels - one Christ!
 1. This is important because Gospels point to Jesus
 2. Clearly "son of man" figure in Revelation is Jesus
 3. So we relate Ezekiel's heavenly man to Jesus too
 4. But Fathers saw all of Scripture as pointing to Jesus
 5. So the four symbols are given to point to Christ
 6. They speak of aspects of Christ each writer covers
 7. Four creatures, four gospels - but one Christ!
 8. But much more could be said about Jesus
 9. We will never exhaust all of Who He is!
- D. Jesus - the focus of all Scripture
 1. Jesus said this multiple times
He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe **all that the prophets have spoken!**²⁶ Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"²⁷ **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.** Luke 24:25-27

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:45–47

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. **These are the Scriptures that testify about me,** ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39–40

2. The NT presents Jesus as the fulfillment of everything in the OT
 - a. He is the our judge and deliverer
 - b. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King
 - c. He is the fulfillment of the Law & the Passover Lamb
 - d. He is the High Priest, the Sacrificial offering & the Temple
 - e. He is the Seed of Abraham, the True Israel, God’s Son
3. God’s call is for us to behold Christ in all His glory
4. We want motivational talks and tips for living - but what we need is to behold Christ!

IV. Applying the Word

- A. This Lent - behold Christ!
 1. We are reading Scriptures about Him
 2. We will be reading the 4 Gospels - behold Him!
 3. He is the lens through which we read Scripture

4. He is the lens through which we “read” life!
5. To behold Him is to be made like Him
6. This is not just information transference - it is soul formation

- B. Come to the Table - Behold and Feed Upon Christ!
 1. Come to the Table - & behold Christ broken for you
 2. Come to the Table - & feed upon Christ given to you

Behold Christ!

Ezekiel 1:4-11; Revelation 4:6-11

February 22, 2015

Communion

Hebrews 13:20-21

Teaching keywords: Lent, Christology, Deity of Christ, hermeneutics, typology

20 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20–21

4 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, 5 and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, 6 but each of them had four faces and four wings. 7 Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. 8 Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, 9 and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. 10 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. 11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, one touching the wing of another creature on either side, and two wings covering its body.
Ezekiel 1:4–11

6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 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. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” Revelation 4:6–11