

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Four

(Part VIII) The Four Beasts

Rev. 4:6-8, “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. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come.”

In Revelation chapter four we see four beasts round about the throne of God and giving glory and praise to God. These four beasts were looking both to the future and to the past as they were “full of eyes” both “before and behind.” They were also unlocking and revealing some great mystery as they were “full of eyes within.” Furthermore, these four beasts are continually vigilant in their testimony as they “rest not day and night.” Furthermore, they declare unto us the characteristics of the triune God as they say, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” They declare the holiness of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. They also declare him to be the master, the creator, and the omnipotent one or “Lord God Almighty.” In addition they declare him to be the eternal one who never changes as they said, “which was, and is, and is to come.”

While these four beasts are in harmony with their testimony, yet they are different as they have different appearances. The appearance of these four beasts match the appearance of the four gospels. The first beast had the appearance of a lion, which in the scriptures is used to denote kings and kingdoms. The book of Matthew shows Christ as the king, who is over the kingdom of God. The lineage of Matthew chapter 1 shows Christ as the lawful heir of the throne of David of which the old testament prophesied that he would live and reign forever. Also there are more references to the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God in Matthew than in the other three gospels. Also in Matt. 21 we see his marvelous ascent up to Jerusalem according to the prophecy of the coming King. Furthermore in Matthew we see him as the triumphant King as he conquers sin, death, hell, and the grave on behalf of his people.

The gospel of Mark is like the ox or calf in its depiction of Jesus Christ. Mark gives us a picture of Christ in his labor or work even as an ox is a beast of burden. The key word in Mark is the word, “and,” as most verses begin with this word. Mark’s testimony is of Christ continually in his work. Mark begins with Christ being baptized and going immediately into his High Priestly work. Mark ends with Christ giving commandment to the apostles and laying out their work for them.

The gospel of Luke gives us a picture of the “man” Jesus Christ. Luke has much more detail of the humanity of Christ than the other three gospels. Luke begins by telling us of the conception of Christ, then of the birth of Christ, and then of the ceremonial fulfillment of the Christ child as he was brought into the temple to do for him after the custom of the law. Next we see Jesus at twelve years of age tarrying behind in Jerusalem and both hearing the doctors and asking them questions astonishing them with his understanding and answers. More details of the character of Jesus, the man, are given to us in Luke than the other gospels including the agony of Jesus in the garden “and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

The fourth beast had the face of a flying eagle and the gospel of John gives us an eagle’s eye view of Christ and his deity. John begins unlike the other gospels, declaring Christ to be the Word who was the creator of all things and the eternal God. In John we read clearly of the great doctrines of God’s sovereignty in the new birth and of his choice or election of a people to be his. We read of him being the great I AM and of his declaration of being the seven I am’s (light; door; way, truth, and life, true vine; good shepherd; the bread of life; the resurrection and the life. We also read of the glory that he had with the Father before the world began.

In conclusion, while the four gospels are in perfect harmony and testify of our glorious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, yet they give us four different views of Jesus - the King, the burden-bearer, the man, and the eternal God.