

Message Three

The Four Living Creatures

JL *Hymns*: 1142, 1174

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 1:5-6, 10, 26

- Ezek 1:5 And from the midst of it there came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man.
- Ezek 1:6 And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings.
- Ezek 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and the four of them had the face of a lion on the right side, and the four of them had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four of them had the face of an eagle.
- Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.

I. When we experience God as the blowing wind, the overshadowing cloud, the burning fire, and the glowing electrum, we become the four living creatures, a corporate entity expressing Christ—Ezek. 1:5-6:

- Ezek 1:5 And from the midst of it there came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man.
- Ezek 1:6 And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings.
- A. In the Bible the number four is related to God's creation and signifies man as God's creature—Isa. 11:12; Jer. 49:36; Rev. 7:1.
- Isa 11:12 He will lift up a standard to the nations, / And will gather the outcasts of Israel; / And the dispersed of Judah He will assemble / From the four corners of the earth.
- Jer 49:36 And I will bring against Elam four winds / From the four ends of the heavens, / And I will scatter them into all these winds, / And there will not be a nation / To which those who are driven out from Elam will not go.
- Rev 7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any tree.
- B. The number four indicates that we are the people redeemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation—5:9.
- Rev 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
- C. The four living creatures are regarded as a group; they are counted as a single entity.

II. The more we experience the cycle of the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, the more living we become— 1:18; John 6:51; cf. Psa. 95:1-2:

- Rev 1:18 And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
- John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is My flesh, given for the life of the world.
- Psa 95:1 Come, let us sing for joy to Jehovah; / Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
- Psa 95:2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; / Let us make a joyful noise to Him with psalms.
- A. Through the experience of the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, we, who were dead, have been enlivened to become living creatures—John 5:25; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 1:13.
- John 5:25 Truly, truly, I say to you, An hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.
- Eph 2:1 And you, though dead in your offenses and sins,
- Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)
- Col 1:13 Who delivered us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

- B. If we continue to experience the cycle of the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, we will become living and vibrant in our inner being—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:4-5.
- 1 Pet 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.
- 1 Pet 2:4 Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious,
- 1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- C. There is a twofold proof by which we can know that we are living creatures:
1. The inward proof is the sense of life in our regenerated spirit—Rom. 8:6.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
 2. The outward proof is that we engage in a number of spiritual activities:
 - a. The first of these activities is prayer—1 Thes. 5:17; Col. 4:2; cf. Lam. 3:55-56.

1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,

Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,

Lam 3:55 I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit.

Lam 3:56 You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.
 - b. Other activities that prove that we are living creatures include reading the Bible (Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:15, 140), functioning in the meetings (1 Cor. 14:26, 31), serving God (1 Thes. 1:9; Rom. 1:9), and preaching the gospel (1:1; 1 Cor. 9:23).

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.

Psa 119:140 Your word is very pure, / And Your servant loves it.

1 Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

1 Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us what kind of entrance we had toward you and how you turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God

Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,

Rom 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

1 Cor 9:23 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel that I may become a fellow partaker of it.
 3. Every time we meet the Lord as the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, our inner being will be made alive, and we will become vital believers—those who are living and active—Dan. 11:32b.

Dan 11:32b ... But the people who know their God will show strength and take action.

III. The four living creatures bear the appearance of a man and are the corporate expression of the man on the throne— Ezek. 1:5, 26:

- Ezek 1:5 And from the midst of it there came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man.
- Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.
- A. The fact that the four living creatures bear the likeness of a man and that God on the throne also bears the appearance of a man indicates that God's central thought and His arrangement are related to man—Gen. 1:26.
- Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over

the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

- B. We need to have a proper appreciation of the Lord's humanity, and we need to see how marvelous it is that we are men.
- C. In the Bible there are actually only four men: the first man, the second man, the new man, and the man-child; we were the first man; Christ is called the second man (1 Cor. 15:47); we have become the new man by regeneration (Eph. 2:15); and now there is the prospect that we may become the man-child (Rev. 12:5).
1 Cor 15:47 The first man is out of the earth, earthy; the second man is out of heaven.
Eph 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,
Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.
- D. The Christ whom the church must express is the man on the throne—3:21; cf. Acts 7:56.
Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.
Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.
- E. It is man who fulfills God's plan, it is man who expresses God, it is man who defeats the enemy, and it is man who brings the kingdom of God into the human race; God needs a man.
- F. In Ezekiel 1 there are three crucial matters concerning the four living creatures' bearing the appearance of a man:
Ezek 1 be omitted.
1. The living creatures are the means for God to manifest His glory; apart from their bearing the appearance of a man, God's glory cannot be manifested—v. 28.
Ezek 1:28 Like the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and I heard the voice of someone speaking.
 2. The living creatures are the means for God to move on the earth; God's move depends on them—vv. 12-21.
Ezek 1:12 And each went straight forward; wherever the Spirit was to go, they went; they did not turn as they went.
Ezek 1:13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches; the fire went to and fro among the living creatures, and the fire was bright; and out of the fire went forth lightning.
Ezek 1:14 And the living creatures ran to and fro like the appearance of a lightning bolt.
Ezek 1:15 And as I watched the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of their four faces.
Ezek 1:16 The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship were like the sight of beryl. And the four of them had one likeness; that is, their appearance and their workmanship were as it were a wheel within a wheel.
Ezek 1:17 Whenever they went, they went in their four directions; they did not turn as they went.
Ezek 1:18 As for their rims, they were high and they were awesome; and the rims of the four of them were full of eyes all around.
Ezek 1:19 And whenever the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and whenever the living creatures were lifted up above the earth, the wheels were lifted up also.
Ezek 1:20 Wherever the Spirit was to go, they went-wherever the Spirit was to go. And the wheels were lifted up alongside them, for the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.
Ezek 1:21 Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those stood still, these stood still; and whenever those were lifted up above the earth, the wheels were lifted up alongside them; for the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

3. The living creatures are the means for God to administrate on the throne—v. 26:
 - Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.
 - a. God’s throne, the center of His administration, dominates everything on earth and everything recorded in Ezekiel—Rev. 4:2, 6.
 - Rev 4:2 Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting;
 - Rev 4:6 And before the throne there was as it were a glassy sea like crystal; and in the midst of the throne and around the throne, there were four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.
 - b. Because the living creatures bear the appearance of a man, there is the administration of God’s throne—Jer. 17:12.
 - Jer 17:12 A throne of glory set on high from the beginning / Is the place of our sanctuary.
 - c. Man is the means of God’s manifestation, man is the means of God’s move, and man is the means of God’s administration.

IV. The four living creatures have four faces—Ezek. 1:6a, 10:

- Ezek 1:6a And every one had four faces, ...
 - Ezek 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and the four of them had the face of a lion on the right side, and the four of them had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four of them had the face of an eagle.
- A. The face of a man indicates that the living creatures live in a proper humanity, the humanity of Jesus—v. 10a:
 - Ezek 1:10a As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; ...
 - 1. The glorious beauty of the Lord Jesus is manifested in His humanity—cf. Exo. 28:2; Rom. 13:14.
 - Exo 28:2 And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.
 - Rom 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.
 - 2. The Lord’s salvation is to make us proper human beings.
 - 3. The more spiritual we become, the more normal, ordinary, and human we will be—Col. 3:4, 10-11.
 - Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
 - Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
 - Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
 - 4. We need to be human not by our natural humanity but by the humanity of Jesus; this is to be “Jesusly human.”
 - 5. In the Epistles we are taught by the apostles to be proper human beings, in particular how to be proper husbands, wives, and parents—Eph. 5:22—6:9; Col. 3:18—4:1.
 - Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord;
 - Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.
 - Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.
 - Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
 - Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
 - Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle

or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 In the same way the husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his own wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,

Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.

Eph 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.

Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Eph 5:33 Nevertheless you also, each one of you, in the same way love your own wife as yourself; and the wife should fear her husband.

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Eph 6:2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise,

Eph 6:3 "That it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth."

Eph 6:4 And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord.

Eph 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to Christ;

Eph 6:6 Not with eye-service as men-pleasers but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the soul;

Eph 6:7 With good will serving as slaves, as serving the Lord and not men;

Eph 6:8 Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or a free man.

Eph 6:9 And masters, do the same things toward them, giving up your threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in the heavens, and there is no respect of persons with Him.

Col 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter against them.

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the Lord.

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not vex your children, that they may not be disheartened.

Col 3:22 Slaves, obey in all things those who are your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing the Lord.

Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work from the soul as to the Lord and not to men,

Col 3:24 Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as recompense. You serve the Lord Christ.

Col 3:25 For he who does unrighteously will receive what he unrighteously did, and there is no respect of persons.

Col 4:1 Masters, grant to your slaves that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

B. The face of a lion—Ezek. 1:10b:

Ezek 1:10b ... and the four of them had the face of a lion on the right side, ...

1. In the Bible a lion signifies boldness, vigor, strength, victory, and reigning—Prov. 28:1; Gen. 49:9.

Prov 28:1 The wicked flee when no man pursues, / But the righteous are as bold as a lion.

Gen 49:9 Judah is a young lion; / From the prey, my son, you have gone up. / He couches, he stretches out like a lion, / And like a lioness; who will rouse him up?

2. If toward sin, the world, and Satan we are bold like lions, God will be able to establish His reign through us—Rev. 5:5; Rom. 5:17.

Rev 5:5 And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals.

Rom 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

C. The face of an ox—Ezek. 1:10c:

Ezek 1:10c ... and the four of them had the face of an ox on the left side, ...

1. An ox signifies one who is willing to labor, to bear the burden, and to sacrifice himself—1 Cor. 15:10, 58; Acts 20:24; Phil. 2:30.
 - 1 Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.
 - 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
 - Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
 - Phil 2:30 Because for the work of Christ he drew near unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me.
2. We all need to express the reality of serving others, of bearing responsibility, and of sacrificing our life—1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; Rom. 12:1.
 - 1 Cor 9:9 For in the law of Moses it is written: "You shall not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God cares?
 - 1 Tim 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox that is treading out the grain," and, "The workman is worthy of his pay."
 - Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

D. The face of an eagle—Ezek. 1:10d:

Ezek 1:10 ...and the four of them had the face of an eagle.

1. In the Bible an eagle signifies the powerful, buoyant, transcendent God—Exo. 19:4.
 - Exo 19:4 You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.
2. As believers in Christ, we have God's life within us; this life is transcendent and causes us to have an expression of buoyancy and transcendence—Isa. 40:31; John 6:15; Phil. 4:12-13:
 - Isa 40:31 Yet those who wait on Jehovah will renew their strength; / They will mount up with wings like eagles; / They will run and will not faint; / They will walk and will not become weary.
 - John 6:15 Then Jesus, knowing that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him King, withdrew again to the mountain, Himself alone.
 - Phil 4:12 I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.
 - Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.
 - a. We have the divine and almighty capacity to express God in every human situation.
 - b. We are indestructible, unconquerable, and invincible for the carrying out of God's economy—Rom. 8:37.
 - Rom 8:37 But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.
3. We need to be like an eagle, not allowing anything to hold us, to suppress us, or to depress us; this means that we should be able to overcome both persecution and praise— cf. John 6:15; Phil. 4:12-13.
 - John 6:15 Then Jesus, knowing that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him King, withdrew again to the mountain, Himself alone.
 - Phil 4:12 I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack.
 - Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

V. The four living creatures are a corporate, fourfold expression of Christ, living

out the life of Christ in a corporate way—Ezek. 1:10:

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

A. The four living creatures with their four faces signify a coordinated, corporate entity, the corporate Christ as the corporate expression of God among human beings—1 Cor. 12:12 and footnote 2.

1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is ²the Christ.

note 2 Referring to the corporate Christ, composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as members. All the believers of Christ are organically united with Him and constituted with His life and element and have thus become His Body, an organism, to express Him. Hence, He is not only the Head but also the Body. As our physical body has many members yet is one, so is this Christ.

B. The four faces of the living creatures correspond to the four Gospels: Matthew—Christ as a lion, the King of God’s kingdom; Mark—Christ as an ox, the Servant of God; Luke—Christ as a man, the Man-Savior; John—Christ as an eagle, the very God.

C. The four living creatures are a corporate entity expressing Christ in a complete way, exactly as He was in His living on earth.