

# St Mark

## III – St Mark and the Other Gospels

### SYMBOLS OF THE FOUR EVANGELISTS

As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: their wings touched one another; they went every one straight forward, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back. Such were their faces. **Ezekiel 1:4-11**

Early views, perhaps first in **St Irenaeus (130-202)**, and later adopted by **St Jerome (342/7-420)** and **St Gregory the Great (540-604)** saw these as emblems of the Evangelists (though earlier on it was not consistent which was which). The following became the dominant version:

	<p>To St. Matthew was given the creature in human likeness, because he commences his gospel with the human generation of Christ, and because in his writings the human nature of Our Lord is more dwelt upon than the divine.</p>
	<p>The Lion was the symbol of St. Mark, who opens his gospel with the mission of John the Baptist, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He also sets forth the royal dignity of Christ and dwells upon His power manifested in the resurrection from the dead. The lion was accepted in early times as a symbol of the resurrection because the young lion was believed always to be born dead, but was awakened to vitality by the breath, the tongue, and roaring of its sire.</p>
	<p>The form of the ox, the beast of sacrifice, fitly sets forth the sacred office, and also the atonement for sin by blood, on which, in his gospel, he particularly dwells.</p>



The eagle was allotted to St. John because, as the eagle soars towards heaven, he soared in spirit upwards to the heaven of heavens to bring back to earth revelation of sublime and awful mysteries.

John Vinycomb, *Fictitious and Symbolic Creatures in Art*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1906.

## IDENTITIES OF THE EVANGELISTS

**Matthew** apostle (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13); Galilean tax collector (Matt 9:9; 10:3; "Levi" in Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27?)

**Mark** Jerusalem youth (Acts 12:12, 25 "John Mark"); missionary with Paul (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:36-40; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24); "cousin" of Barnabas (Col 4:10); Peter's "son" (1 Pet 5:13); Peter's "interpreter" (Papias)

**Luke** client of Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4); "co-worker" of Paul (Phlm 24; 2Tim 4:11); a Greek "physician" (Col 4:14)

**John** brother of James, son of Zebedee (Mark 3:17, par.); the "beloved disciple"? (John 13:23; 19:26-27; etc.); the "elder"? (2John, 3John); the same "John" who wrote Revelation? (Rev 1:4,9) - (see Eusebius, E.H. 3.39; 4.14; 7.25)

## TYPES OF COMMUNITY – IMPLIED READERS?

**Mark** bi-lingual Aramaic/Greek interpreter; persecuted Gentile community; late 60s (Rome? later Alexandria?)

**Matthew** Jewish-Christian scribe; educated community arguing with other Jews; 70s-80s (Galilee? Antioch?)

**Luke** Gentile Christian historian; wealthier urban community becoming complacent; 80s (Antioch? Greece?)

**John** Jewish Christian believers, in conflict with practicing Jews; 90s (Syria? later Ephesus?)

## MATERIAL UNIQUE TO MARK

- 1:1** Introductory Verse
- 3:19b-21** Jesus's Family Comes for Him
- 4:26-29** Parable of Seed Growing of Itself
- 7:31-37** Deaf Man in Decapolis
- 8:22-26** Blind Man of Bethsaida
- 14:51-52** Young Man runs Away after Jesus's Arrest
- [16:14-18** Commissioning of the Eleven]

	<b>MARK</b>	<b>MATTHEW</b>	<b>LUKE</b>	<b>JOHN</b>
Chapters	16	28	24	21
Verses/ words	678 / 11304	1071 / 18345	1151 / 19482	879 / 15635
Greek	grammatically poor	Semitic influences	good, elegant, literary	simple, but highly symbolic
Geography	Galilean towns & villages; some Gentile territory	Galilee, esp. mountains; mostly Jewish areas	one long journey to the goal: Jerusalem	multiple visits back & forth to Jerusalem
Literary Features	quick action ("and then"; "immediately"); episodes connected loosely, but grouped	five major discourses; well-organized sections of collected pericopes	any story pairs (with male/female characters); focus on prayer; many extra parables	"Amen, Amen, I say to you."; irony; paradox; double-meanings
First Words of Jesus	"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (1:15)	[to John the Baptist, before his baptism]: "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15)	[12-year-old, to his parents in Jerusalem]: "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (2:49)	[to two disciples of John the Baptist]: "What are you looking for?" (1:38) and "Come and See" (1:39)
Inaugural Event	Exorcism at Capernaum (1:21-28)	Sermon on the Mount (ch. 5-7)	Reading from Isaiah 61: Rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30)	Wedding Feast at Cana: first of Jesus' "signs" (2:1-11)
Main Titles for Jesus	Christ/Messiah & Son of God; Suffering Son of Man; Eschatological Judge	Son of David; Son of Abraham; King of the Jews; New Lawgiver & Great Teacher (like Moses); Emmanuel ("God with us")	great Prophet (in word & deed); Lord (of Israel, and of all nations); Saviour (of all, but esp. of the poor)	Eternal Logos; Divine Word made Flesh; Only/Unique Son; sent from the Father; Passover Lamb; "I Am"; "Equal to God"
Feast	25 April	21 September	18 October	27 December/ 6 May
Use in Sunday Lectionary	Year B	Year A	Year C	mixed, esp. Lent & Easter