

Ezekiel 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The four faces—man, lion, ox, eagle—represent the fullness of created order under God's throne. Man signifies intelligence and dominion, lion denotes royal strength, ox represents faithful service and sacrifice, eagle conveys swiftness and transcendence. These cherubim guarding God's holiness display the comprehensive scope of His sovereign rule over all creation. Early church fathers saw these four faces as foreshadowing the four Gospels: Matthew (man/king), Mark (lion), Luke (ox/sacrifice), John (eagle/divine). The imagery emphasizes that all creation exists to display God's glory and serve His purposes.

Historical Context

Ezekiel's vision occurred by the Chebar canal in Babylonia (593 BC), where the exiled prophet witnessed God's mobile throne-chariot. Unlike pagan deities bound to temples or territories, Yahweh's throne moves with His people even into exile. Ancient Near Eastern iconography often depicted cherubim as composite creatures guarding sacred spaces, but Ezekiel's vision transcends mythological parallels by emphasizing Yahweh's unique holiness and universal sovereignty. The vision assured exiles that God had not abandoned them despite Jerusalem's destruction.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do the four faces reveal the comprehensive nature of God's dominion over all creation?
2. What comfort does God's mobile throne provide for believers living as spiritual exiles in this world?

Interlinear Text

וְדָמ וְת	וּפְנֵי	וּפְנֵי	אָדָם	וּפְנֵי
As for the likeness	also had the face	also had the face	of a man	also had the face
H1823	H6440	H6440	H120	H6440
אֶל אַרְיֵה הַ	הַיָּמִין	לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן:	וּפְנֵי	שׁ וָרֶ
of a lion	on the right side	and they four	also had the face	of an ox
H738	H3225	H702	H6440	H7794
לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן: מִהַשָּׂמֶל אֹל	וּפְנֵי	נְ שָׂר	לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן:	
on the left side	also had the face	of an eagle	and they four	
H8040	H6440	H5404	H702	

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 10:14 (Parallel theme): And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Revelation 4:7 (Parallel theme): 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.

