

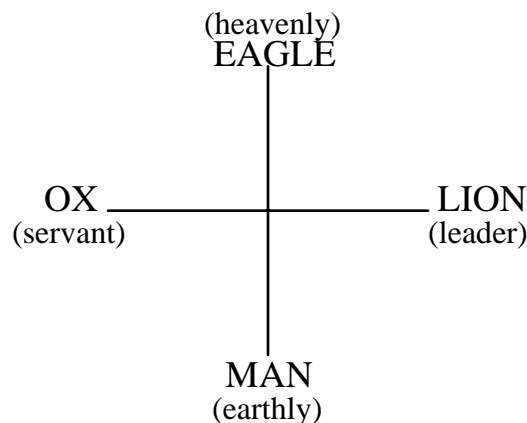
# THE FOUR FACES OF A SERVANT OF GOD

by Norman Holmes

Every born again Christian has a limitless potential placed within him, because God Himself dwells in us. Yet before we will see His great wisdom, power, and love revealed through us we must first become the prepared vessels or channels that will not limit God.

To help us towards this goal, the Bible contains many accounts of how the Lord has prepared and used His chosen servants. Among His greatest servants are the heavenly Cherubim. Ezekiel saw them carrying the throne and glory of God, while the Psalmist declared that God dwells between the Cherubim, Ps.80:1. Yet what has made them such great servants of God? If we can learn the secrets of their character and become like them, then the Lord will also be able to entrust us with great ministries.

An important key that unlocks these secrets is shown to us in their faces. We are told about them, "As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle," Ezek.1:10 NKJV. Here we see that each Cherub has four faces, one on each side of their head. These faces of the man, lion, ox, and eagle teach us how we can become servants of God with balanced character and ministry. Our following diagram shows the relationship among these faces and the character they reveal.



The natures of these four creatures are very opposite. The lion is a leader, the bold king of the animals. The ox has the nature of a servant as it patiently works for its master. The eagle can fly into the heavenlies, while man lives by his earthly works. Yet when these opposites work together they compliment and balance each other. And like the Cherubim, when any servant of the Lord has balanced character, then the Lord can entrust them with a great ministry.

## THE LION

The lion is a leader, known as 'The King of the Jungle.' He is strong, bold, and is not afraid of anyone (see Prov.30:30; 28:1; Is.31:4). The scriptures tell us that the roaring of a lion is like the fear of a king, and also like the proclaiming of God's word with authority, Prov.20:2; Hos.11:10; Rev.10:3. To have the character and ministry of a lion we need to be bold leaders, speaking God's word with the kingly authority of a lion's roar. An example of this is when Nathan the prophet boldly exposed the sin of King David and said, "You are the man," in 2 Samuel 12:7. King Saul lacked the character of a lion in 1 Samuel 15, so the Lord rejected him from being king. There are times when sin and defeat rule over Christians and churches because the ministry is weak and lacks the face of a lion.

Every servant of God will face situations where they will have to choose between pleasing God or pleasing man. When the Lord gives us a message to speak, will we try to change it if a wealthy or important person in the church may be offended? God wants to give us each the face of a lion to boldly declare His word!

A lion can also do much more than roar. With his strong teeth and claws he is able to tear his enemies into pieces. A servant of God must have more than strong words- he must also have strong actions. When sin is seeking to rule over God's people, it is our responsibility to act with God's authority. Do you know how to use the authority of a lion? When you do, sinners will fear the Lord and the people will submit to your leadership.

Years ago we had a church member who periodically would backslide into sin. Many times he led a consistent Christian life for a few weeks or months, only to always go back to gambling and drinking. Then we would spend hours and days trying to help him get back to the Lord. This kept going on for years with no final victory in sight, until we finally felt that a change of battle plans was in order. The next time the man backslid, he was "delivered over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh," 1 Cor.5:5. The prayer of the Spirit was, "Lord, let him suffer in his body to learn to fear You and hate his sin."

That night he was drinking and gambling. As usual, he won a lot of money. As the evening wore on he finally gathered all his money on the table and said that he was leaving. But before he could leave, the men who had lost all their money stood up and took out knives. Our backslidden friend was stabbed several times, and had to leave the money behind as he staggered away to finally get home.

For several weeks he stayed at home, recovering from the wounds. While he was suffering in bed the pain from his wounds preached to him louder than any of our sermons ever had! This event became a turning point in his life. For many years he has now lived a spotless life as a very beautiful Christian. It was not the roar of a lion that helped turn him around, but the lion's bite!

## **THE OX**

While every servant of God needs to have the face of a lion, if we only have that one face then our ministry will be unbalanced. If you are a church leader standing at the door of the church on Sunday morning, should you roar like a lion and attack all the members of the church as they try to walk in? If you want to try this, let me assure you that by the next Sunday you will have removed all the problems from your church - and all the people, too!

Our Lord Jesus declared how the ministry of the leader must be balanced by the ministry of the servant. He declared, "whoever wants to be the first must be slave of all," Mk.10:44 NIV. This is shown in our previous diagram by the face of the ox balancing the face of the lion.

The ox is a servant, a domesticated animal that works for its master. It is strong to work and brings forth an increase by its labor, Ps.144:14; Prov.14:4. The Apostle Paul refers to the ox as being a type of a minister who spiritually labors in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor.9:9-11; 1 Tim.5:17-18.

A servant of God must learn to patiently work day after day, carrying the burdens and serving the needs of the people, Gal.6:1-2; II Tim.2:24. Service after service, work upon work, we are to patiently plod on without complaint. This nature of the ox is the opposite of the lion, who will quickly roar, attack, and rule. Yet together these opposite natures can bring balance to our character and ministry.

## **THE LION AND THE OX**

We can see how the faces of the lion and the ox worked together in the ministry of Christ when He cleansed the temple. "Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them," Mt.21:12-14 NKJV.

In this story Jesus came in like a lion, but then we see Him like an ox patiently helping the people by healing all the sick. Like a lion and an ox, as a leader and then a servant, these two ministries together accomplished a full and balanced work.

## **THE EAGLE**

As we look into the Scriptures to see what the eagle's face means, we see an exalted, heavenly character revealed. Job 39:27 tells us that the eagle makes "its nest on high," even as we are to dwell "in the heavenly places in Christ," Eph.2:6. Then Proverbs 23:5 says, "They fly away like an eagle toward heaven." We can learn to do this also, for "they who wait upon the Lord...shall mount up with wings as eagles," Is.40:31 KJV.

Unlike most other birds, the eagle does not have to use a lot of effort to fly. It is not by the flapping of its wings that the eagle ascends higher than any other bird, but it is by discerning and using the wind currents. As an eagle effortlessly glides along and learns to face into the blowing of the wind, it is the power of the wind that lifts it higher and higher.

This is what we must spiritually learn to do as we seek to wait upon the Lord. Our Lord Jesus said that the moving of the Spirit is like the blowing wind, Jn.3:8. We must learn to direct our heart into the moving of the Spirit, just as the eagle must learn to face into the wind to be carried higher. When you have private devotional times seeking the Lord, do you often feel yourself entering into the manifest presence of God? Our hearts can become sensitive to discern the stirring of His Spirit, and as we face our heart into the blowing wind we can find that the currents of God's Spirit can lift us higher and higher into the heavenlies.

Another remarkable ability of the eagle is its' sharp vision, Job.39:29. An eagle can see a small animal over two kilometers away, far beyond human eyesight. Similarly, we need to become men and women of spiritual vision that can see the secret things of God from afar off, Eph.1:17-19: Prov.29:18. May the Lord help us all to have the heavenly character and ministry illustrated by the eagle!

## **THE MAN**

The last face that Ezekiel saw, which was opposite the eagle, is the man. The character of man is portrayed in the Scriptures as being earthly. We read that from Adam, "we have borne the image of the earthy," 1 Cor.15:49 KJV. In our present earthly life we must be involved with such things as food, shelter, work and rest. We need to be practical 'down to earth' people not only to exist, but also to relate and minister to other people.

We know that God Himself became a man to relate and minister to the sons of men. The Apostle Paul said, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," 1 Cor.9:22 NKJV. In a similar manner Romans 12:15 NKJV tells us we are to, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." We must learn how to have the face of a man so that we can relate and minister to the needs of humanity.

## **THE EAGLE AND THE MAN**

These two faces of the eagle and the man are to balance each other in our character and ministry. An 'eagle saint' will be visionary and spiritually minded, but may not know how to share his experiences to bring any practical benefit to others. To the opposite imbalance, a natural Christian can be excessively absorbed in the things of this life and not be able to minister anything of spiritual benefit to others.

Jesus illustrated how these opposite faces of the eagle and the man could work together and bring a balanced ministry when He met the woman at the well in John 4:6-26. At the beginning of this story we see how Jesus first related to her with the face of a man: “Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’”

The first thing that this Samaritan woman probably noticed about Jesus was that he was a tired, thirsty man. However, there was something more about this man that caught her attention. We read, “Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans,” v.9.

This Samaritan woman began to quickly see that Jesus was not an ordinary man. She saw that He was an unusual Jew who was above the usual prejudices that the Jews had against the other nations of Gentile ‘dogs.’ As she began to look to Jesus, He lifted her vision higher with the following reply: “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’ The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob?’”

Here we see Jesus becoming much more than a tired, thirsty man to this woman at the well. As Christ began to use the face of the eagle to soar into the heavenlies, He started speaking to her about spiritual things. The Samaritan woman began to have her vision lifted higher and understood that Jesus might be greater than Jacob- and Jacob was one of the great Patriarchs! As the woman became spiritually thirsty and asked Jesus for the water of eternal life, the Lord then looked at her with the piercing vision of the eagle to see what hindered her from receiving His living water. When Jesus so accurately exposed her sinful lifestyle, the woman had her vision lifted higher to declare, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet,” in verse 19. As their conversation was lifted up higher and higher into the heavenlies, Christ began to prophesy, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,” in verse 23. Finally the woman’s vision was lifted up high enough for Jesus to be able to share with her the revelation that He was the Christ in verse 26.

Jesus did not first approach the woman at the well with the face of an eagle to declare He was the heavenly Christ. She would not have known how to relate to Him! Christ first related to her as an unprejudiced Jew, and spoke to her about a subject she understood; which was water. However, by the end of their conversation she was able to see Him as the exalted Christ of God. A skillful use of these two faces of the man and eagle caused a great work of salvation to start among the Samaritans (see John 4:39-42; Acts 8:5-25).

## **THE 4 FACES OF THE CHERUBIM**

## **ARE THE 4 FACES OF CHRIST**

As we study these four faces of the Cherubim, we can see how their balanced character and ministry enabled them to be such great servants of God. However, their four faces actually have a deeper significance. These four faces actually reveal the nature of Christ! We can see this as we study how the four Gospels portray our Lord. Each Gospel reveals a different side of Christ's character that corresponds to each of the four faces of the Cherubim.

The Gospel of Matthew reveals Christ as the King. In the first verse of the Gospel, the first thing we are told is that Jesus is the Son of David, of royal lineage. At the beginning of chapter two we can read about the wise men from the East who came to worship the King of the Jews. Throughout Matthew's gospel we see Christ revealed as a king, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The Gospel of Mark was written to reveal Christ as the Servant. A key word used more in Mark than in all the rest of the New Testament combined is the word, 'immediately,' showing Christ's ready service to the needs around Him. This Gospel also has the least amount of Christ's own words recorded. Instead it emphasizes His miracles and works of service. In the Gospel of Mark we see Christ with the face of the ox.

Luke reveals Christ in a different perspective as the Son of Man. His humanity is emphasized, beginning with the first two long chapters about the circumstances around His birth. The genealogy in chapter 3 points us back to His human nature as being a descendant of Adam. Christ's favorite title that He repeatedly used to describe Himself in this Gospel is "The Son of Man." Here we see the Lord presented to us with the face of a man.

The Gospel of John portrays the Lord as the heavenly Son of God. We immediately see His deity in the beginning as the Word who was God. John describes Christ as "He who came down from heaven...who is in heaven," Jn.3:13. Christ is called the bread of God who comes down from heaven in John 6:33, as the Light of the World in John 8:12, and as the Resurrection and the Life in John 11:25. Throughout this Gospel we see Christ as the Heavenly One with the face of an eagle.

So as we study about the Cherubim, we see that their faces actually reveal how they partake of the character of Christ. While our Lord obviously does not have four faces on His head, He clearly has these four aspects of personality and ministry as shown to us in the four Gospels.

## **CONCLUSION**

The faces of the Cherubim teach us how we need four aspects of character in our own lives. As we are trained and balanced by the Spirit of God, these four opposite

personalities can build godly character into us. Together they can reveal the power and glory of God through our lives, to the praise of His wisdom and grace!

Do you desire to be greatly used of the Lord in these last days? God desires to raise up great leaders, but to obtain this we must learn to become great servants. We must become heavenly-minded visionaries while remaining down-to-earth practical people. These are the four faces of a servant of God.

God is looking for balanced, trustworthy servants to whom He can safely entrust His authority and glory in these last days. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to him," 2 Chron.16:9. Will He see that you are ready? By His grace, let us allow the Lord to make us each a prepared servant of God.

- This article by Norman Holmes was adapted from his book, "The Hope of the Christian." Rev. Holmes directs a Bible school in the Philippines and conducts pastors seminars in many Asian nations.