



# *The Four Evangelists*

**The Four Evangelists**  
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In the book of Revelation, the visionary sees about the throne of God four winged creatures: a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle.

It has traditionally been supposed that these represent the four Gospels, or the four Evangelists (Gospel-writers).

One way of matching them is to say that the man stands for Matthew, whose narrative begins with the human genealogy of Jesus; that the lion stands for Mark, whose narrative begins with John the Baptist crying out in the desert (a lion roars in the desert); that the ox, a sacrificial animal, stands for Luke, whose narrative begins in the Temple, and that the eagle stands for John, whose narrative begins in Heaven, with the eternal Word.

*The Book of Kells (800-899 CE) uses these symbols.*



# *Gospel of Mark*

The book of Acts mentions a Mark, or John Mark, a kinsman of Barnabas (Col 4:10). The house of his mother Mary was a meeting place for Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). When Paul and Barnabas, who had been in Antioch, came to Jerusalem, they brought Mark back to Antioch with them (12:25), and he accompanied them on their first missionary journey (13:5), but left them prematurely and returned to Jerusalem (13:13).

When Paul and Barnabas were about to set out on a second missionary journey, Barnabas proposed to take Mark, but Paul thought him unreliable, so that eventually Barnabas made one journey taking Mark, and Paul another journey taking Silas (15:36-40). Mark is not mentioned again in Acts. However, it appears that he became more reliable, for Paul mentions him as a trusted assistant in Colossians 4:10 and again in 2 Timothy 4:11.



# *Gospel of Mark*

The Apostle Peter had a co-worker whom he refers to as "my son Mark" (1 Peter 5:13). Papias, an early second century writer, in describing the origins of the Gospels, tells us that Mark was the "interpreter" of Peter, and that he wrote down ("but not in order") the stories that he had heard Peter tell in his preaching about the life and teachings of Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark, in describing the arrest of Jesus (14:51f), speaks of a young man who followed the arresting party, wearing only a linen cloth wrapped around his body, whom the arresting party tried to seize, but who left the cloth in their hands and fled naked. It is speculated that this young man was the writer himself, since the detail is hardly worth mentioning if he were not.

Tradition has it that after the death of Peter, Mark left Rome and went to preach in Alexandria, Egypt, where he was eventually martyred.



# Gospel of Mark

Mark's symbol in art is a Lion, usually winged, because he portrays Christ as the Messiah, the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy, "the lion of the tribe of Judah". Also, Marks Gospel begins with John the Baptist crying out in the desert like a lion in the wilderness, "prepare the way of the Lord."





# *Gospel of Matthew*

**Matthew the Evangelist** (מתי, "Gift of the LORD") is an important Christian figure best known as one of Jesus' Twelve Apostles.

His father's name is given as Alphaeus, which makes him a brother of another apostle, James, son of Alphaeus.

He is traditionally believed to be the author of the Gospel of Matthew,

Very little about his life is certain.

The Gospel of Matthew introduces him as a publican, or tax-collector, at Capernaum.



# *Gospel of Matthew*

He is called Levi in Luke (5:27). Although Mark calls him Matthew in his list of the Apostles, when recounting the story how the publican is called to be a disciple, he calls him Levi (2:14).

Legend has it that he preached the gospel for a long time after the ascension and carried it all the way to Ethiopia where he was killed.

The time and manner of his death are unknown. Some traditions say that Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia. Others say that he was martyred in Hierapolis of Parthia. According to Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, Matthew was martyred in Hierapolis, and Saint Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot among the



# *Gospel of Matthew*

Like the other three Evangelists, Matthew is often depicted in Christian art. His particular attribute is a winged man, a reference to the angel who is supposed to have dictated to him as he wrote.





# Gospel of Luke

St. Luke is believed to be the author of the Gospel that bears his name as well as of the *Acts of the Apostles*. According to Eusebius, he was probably born in Antioch, Syria of a prosperous Greek family and was trained as a physician.

He uses the best grammar and the most eloquent and correct Greek of the New Testament. He shows Jesus not as the Jewish Messiah, but as the world's Savior and Lord. He was a man of prayer, for his gospel is pre-occupied with the power of prayer. He had a high regard for the dignity of women for they played an important part of his writings.

He accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey and doubtless had the care of Paul's health. Luke was with Paul in his last days and final imprisonment in Rome.



# *Gospel of Luke*

After writing those famous words to Timothy, 'The time of my dissolution is at hand, I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith...' Paul goes on to say, 'Only Luke is with me.'

What happened to Luke after Paul's martyrdom we have no certain knowledge. But according to a fairly early and widespread tradition, he was unmarried and wrote his gospel in Greece at Boeotia, where he died at age 84.

Paul spoke of Luke as "the beloved physician." Together they evangelized Greece and Rome.



# *Gospel of Luke*

In art, Luke is represented by a winged ox because he begins his gospel with the account of the priest, Zachary, sacrificing in the temple. The ox represents Christ's sacrifice.





# *Gospel of John*

The Gospel according to John is quite different in character from the three synoptic gospels. It is highly literary and symbolic. It does not follow the same order or reproduce the same stories as the synoptic gospels. To a much greater degree, it is the product of a developed theological reflection and grows out of a different circle and tradition.

The gospel narrative contains a series of "signs"--the gospel's word for the wondrous deeds of Jesus. The author is primarily interested in the significance of these deeds, and so interprets them for the reader by various reflections, narratives, and discourses.

The fourth gospel is not simply history; the narrative has been organized and adapted to serve the evangelist's theological purposes as well.



# *Gospel of John*

John the Apostle was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. He is also known as John the Theologian, and John the Divine. According to the New Testament account, John the Apostle was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of James. They originally were fishermen and fished with their father in the Lake of Genesareth. He was first a disciple of John the Baptist, and later one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ.

John was traditionally held to be the author of five books of the New Testament, including the Gospel of John, but many scholars dispute this. Catholic/Orthodox tradition says that he and the Virgin Mary moved to Ephesus, where both eventually died.

# *Gospel of John*

John's symbol is the eagle because his gospel account is so theological it seems to fly high in the heavens. The introduction of John's gospel that begins with the Word in heaven is another reason why John is symbolized by the eagle.

