

The Four Gospels in the Book of Ezekiel
 March 4, 1986

Let us turn to the book of Ezekiel, the very first chapter. (Reading text ch. 1:1-10). The verse I want to look at particularly is the last verse I just read, v.10. So I shall read it again . . .

This is indeed a strange vision that Ezekiel had. Like all the books of the prophets there is much in them that is clear. And there is much that is not so clear. That is natural to expect not only because the prophets wrote in days when many of the exiles were in circumstances == when many of the external circumstances were very different from what they are today, but also because they wrote as they were directed by the Spirit of God. They wrote not just for their own generation. They wrote for future generations. If anyone were to doubt this he should look at 1 Peter 1:10-12. There we read (the verses. . . .10-12)

Here is the clear proof from the word of God that the prophets spoke not only to the people of their own generation, though they had much of great importance to tell them, but that they looked forward to the future time and particularly at the salvation that the Lord was going to bring. Therefore they said many things which might not be clear immediately but which would become clear when the time came.

In Heb. 1:1-2a we read that in the past God spoke through the prophets but in these last days He has spoken by His Son, and the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being. So I feel that we are quite justified in considering that this strange verse here, this part of the vision that Ezekiel saw, was a glimpse of the way in which God would reveal himself to men at a day long after that but in the course of events they were tremendously important both for the people of His own day and in our day.

So the vision looks forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to learn about the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ you have to look at the NT, and you look at the Four Gospels. I'm sure one who has never read the Bible would immediately say, Why do we have those four gospels? Why don't we have simply a biography of Christ? Tell about one incident and then another incident and another incident! We have some things told in all four gospels; some in two or three of them; others only in one. Why do we have four gospels? Well that's not a new question.

In the 2nd century A.D. Tatian decided people needed a story of the life of Christ--one story that would tell of everything instead of four gospels. So he took the four gospels and scissors and paste and he cut out all the all the different parts, and where the same thing was told in three or four different gospels, he selected one of them. Thus he put together one life of Christ. He thought that his Diatessaron would replace the four gospels and give us the story of Christ's earthly life. For a time many in the church accepted that. But eventually they went back to the four gospels and Tatian's Diatessaron disappeared until it was rediscovered in modern times. God gave us not one story of the life of Christ, but four gospels and actually these four gospels are not accounts of the life of Christ