



UNLOCKING THE SIGNS & SYMBOLS OF THE BIBLE

Abstract

The Bible is full of Signs and Symbols. This Study will not attempt to explain every word or phrase in the Bible that is a Sign or Symbol, rather take many common Signs and Symbols that are essential to understanding the Bible; the use of certain numbers in the Bible as a Sign or Symbol; and Prophetic Signs & Symbols that help explain the events of the today.

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Signs and Symbols of the Bible Introduction

The Bible is full of Signs and Symbols and we will look at over 70 of the most frequent ones during the next 10 weeks. Our study will not attempt to explain every word or phrase in the Bible that is a sign or a symbol; but take many common signs and symbols that are essential to understand the Bible in context. Let's start by defining a 'Sign' and a 'Symbol'

'Sign' Definition: something given or said to point to or draw attention to an object, purpose or concept. (A sign is literally 'a clue').

'Symbol' Definition: a picture that denotes an object, purpose or concept.

Signs and Symbols are used world-wide separately or combined: a restroom that denotes use for men or women; an airport sign that has a plate and utensils to designate a place to eat; traffic signs that are often symbols; no turn, or a sign showing a pedestrian crossing. Many times, in the bible, something is designated as a sign; The angels telling the shepherds about the birth of Jesus told them *'This shall be a sign. You will find an infant wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.'* The word for sign is often translated 'miracle' because that was a clear sign that God was at work. The word symbol is only used twice in the Bible, but it is a word that Bible teachers often use to explain what is being said or taught.

Study Series Objective

1. Eliminate background blindness. It is impossible to interpret the Bible using our cultural norms to define what is meant in the Bible.
2. Accept the fact that the Bible intends to interpret truth with signs and symbols.
3. Put the sign and symbol in context, for often the same word is used in several different ways often even in the same chapter of the Bible.
4. Realize the original languages of the Bible were primarily Hebrew and Greek not an English version from another era.

Bible signs and symbols enrich our lives by showing us how God uses what's common to prepare us for what has depth and meaning. The prophetic side of Biblical signs and symbols remind us that God is working out His plan everywhere, in everything, at all times. The value of signs, symbols and prophecy is partly because of their capacity to provoke our curiosity, but they come to their full significance when we remember that they all point to God and our never-ending need to understand and respond to Him more fully.

Lesson #1 "Understanding the Bible's Use of Signs & Symbols"

Symbol: 'Eden'

Eden was the beautiful garden where the first humans were created and lived. It is a symbol of a perfect beginning where God provided for the needs of every created item and had a face-to-face relationship with the man and the woman He had created. It has eroded since the humans were sent out of the Garden; but it is also used in the Bible as a symbol of New Heaven and the New Earth where an Eden-like environment will exist for all those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord. They will live there with God. Eden is used as 'paradise' most often in the Old Testament, especially five times in the prophesy of Ezekiel. It is a symbol in the Old Testament of perfection. In the New Testament, Eden is seen as a reference to the New Heaven and the New Earth and shares three elements with the original Eden and the New Eden: Tree of life; presence of God; and redeemed humanity. **Revelation 22:1-5** is a great example of Eden as a symbol.

Revelation 22:1-5 NIV

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Symbol: 'The Jordan River'

The Jordan was the Eastern boundary of Israel and it is often associated with boundaries: 'beyond the Jordan', 'on this side of the Jordan', 'on the other side of the Jordan', and 'over Jordan' all symbolize the coming out of the wilderness and going into the Promised Land or because of evil and sin, crossing from the Promised Land back into the wilderness. Because Israel crossed over the Jordan by the miracle of dry land, **Joshua 3:17**. The ideas of a miracle, a glorious crossing and even freedom are identified with the Jordan River. In the Bible crossing the Jordan has also been associated with leaving life on the earth and entering life in heaven. It is also the symbol of God's provision as the river starts in the Golan Heights Mountains of Syria and descends down into the Dead Sea bringing life and vegetation as it flows. It is associated with Elijah riding a fiery chariot, Naaman being healed of leprosy, John the Baptist declaring the Kingdom of Heaven and baptisms, especially the baptism of Jesus.

Symbol: 'Bethlehem'

Another geographical symbol is "Bethlehem". Bethlehem first symbolized death as Rachel, the beloved wife of Israel/Jacob died there bearing their son, Benjamin. But it was also the home of David, the greatest king of Israel until King Jesus was also born in Bethlehem. It was again a place of

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death as King Herod in his desire to eliminate any competition had all the baby boys killed in the area around Bethlehem.

The name of the city, Bethlehem, means 'House of Bread' and the word bread is one Jesus used to describe Himself. Perhaps the strongest symbolic tie between the two, Bethlehem as both the source of death and life, is the tie to the temple lambs. In the time of the Second Temple, the life of Jesus falls into this time, the ruling of the Rabbis was that all flocks in Israel had to be shepherded in the wilderness and the only exception was the temple lambs which were allowed to be raised near the Holy City in a rocky, hilly area conducive to raising sheep, the hills of Bethlehem. The Bible notes that this was where they were raised in the time of Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God was born in Bethlehem, a place where the sacrifice lambs were born and raised. So, just like the sacrificial lambs, the first ones to see Jesus were the shepherds who attend the birth of the lambs. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was born among the sacrificial lambs for the same reason, to be sacrificed in Jerusalem. ***Micah 5:2, Luke 2:8-20.***

Symbol: 'Sea of Galilee'

Another geographical sign is "The Sea of Galilee". The enclosure of the Sea of Galilee, nestled among mountains, 700 feet below Sea level and seemingly without a bottom allowed the Old Testament and New Testament to use it as a sign and symbol of the Abyss. The bottomless pit where demons resided, the demons pleaded with Jesus not to send them into the bottomless pit, ***Luke 8:31*** but He did. Because of how the Sea was situated, it was the scene of severe and frequent storms, and "*being tossed on the Sea of Galilee*" was a symbol of the severe personal storms a person experienced. It was on this Sea that Jesus calmed the storm, walked on the water and encouraged his disciple Peter to walk on the water. ***Matthew 14:30*** symbolizes the fear that Peter had when He began to sink. Jesus proved then and the bible states later in Revelation that God controls the Abyss.

Symbol: 'Two Jerusalem9(s)'

A great geographical symbol in the Bible are the two Jerusalem(s). Jerusalem was first named Salem where King Melchizedek received the tithe of Abraham. It was considered the home of Mt. Moriah (which we will examine as a symbol next week, signs & symbols of salvation) and it became a symbol of the nation. Many times, the Bible references Jerusalem when speaking either of all of Israel or just the nation of Judah. The city became a symbol of God and many Israelites felt it or the Temple could never be destroyed.

When Christ was born, Jerusalem became a symbol of the religious establishment and when Jerusalem rejected Jesus, the Gospel message was given to the entire world. Jesus spoke of His rejection as the Son of God in ***Luke 19:41-44*** and used the city of Jerusalem as a symbol of what would happen to all of Israel, they would be destroyed, scattered and eliminated as a nation.

But it is the Hebrew name of Jerusalem that gives it one other fantastic symbol. The Hebrew word for the city is Yerushalayim and it is a plural word (im), and the longer ending of (ayim) means that it is a duality, in other words every Hebrew that heard the name would know that there are two

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Jerusalem(s). The one you see and the one you do not. The Jerusalem that is and the Jerusalem that is to come. It is a symbol of each of us, the person you are and the person you are meant to be. The Bible freely uses the City of Jerusalem, that will be, as the name of Heaven. It is called the New Jerusalem.

Let's look at several very common items that the Bible used as signs and symbols:

Symbol: 'Fire'

It was a process in the Bible to produce fire. We merely turn on a stove or light a match. It was used throughout the Old Testament as the needed element to complete the animal sacrifices for God and the smell of cooking sacrificial meat was *"a soothing aroma to the Lord"*. 'Fire' was used as a sign in many instances throughout the Bible:

1. Fire was a sign of God's refining the believer; a means to purify the life of a believer; a spiritual cleansing.
2. Fire was used by God Himself in **Genesis 15:17** as He sealed the covenant between Abraham and Himself.
3. Fire was the sign at night that God was protecting the Israelites during the exodus.
4. Fire was how God appeared to Moses to commission him to return to Egypt and Biblically it symbolizes God's power, holiness and protection over His people.
5. Fire was used as a sign of the judgment of God; the sign that would test the works of believers; and a part of eternal punishment for those who refuse to accept God as Lord and Savior.
6. Fire was a symbol of the damage humans can do: "the tongue can be a fire," **James 3:5-6**; Jealousy can be a fire, **Deuteronomy 4:24**; so, can lust, **Proverbs 6:27**; love, **Song of Solomon 8:6** and anger, **Numbers 11:1, Psalms 89:46**.

Symbol: 'Body'

The 'Body' was Used as a symbol in the Bible in many ways:

1. Body was a symbol of aging and passing away
2. The Body symbolizes that we were created to accomplish something
3. The Body was the house for the spirit, that which lives on after the contents of the body have died
4. The Body represented the visual effect of what is going on inside of a person
5. The Body is used to symbolize the wealth of a person, wealthy have fat bodies while the poor wither away in Old Testament usage.
6. The 'Body' in the secular world was considered a symbol of evil, whereas the Bible always considered it one more part of a person that is to be redeemed. That concept of a dying

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body and a rising again like Christ did is spelled out in **1 Corinthians 15** as it talks about the body dying and being raised, a glorified body.

Symbol: 'Body of Christ'

Another strong symbol and sign of the Bible is the "Body of Christ". It became the symbol of the sacrifice of the body of Christ for our salvation and one of the two elements of the Lord's Supper or Communion. The body also symbolized all those who had been saved by Jesus Christ. To explain the uniqueness of spiritual gifts and individual talents/gifts the Bible speaks of Jesus as the Head of the body and all individual believers as separate but gifted parts of His body. **Ephesians 4:15-18**.

Symbol: 'Oil'

The oils of the Bible were harvested from animal fats, minerals, and vegetables. The Bible focuses on oil used in non-food purposes and draws many signs and symbols from oil.

1. Oil was used for medical purposes, **Psalms 23:5, Luke 10:34**
2. Oil was used to fuel lamps, **Matthew 25:1-13**
3. Oil in a bartering society was used as valuable commodity.
4. Oil involved many other Bible signs: Oil press, the oil trough, and the large oil grinding stone were all used.

Jesus often prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and was even arrested there. Gethsemane means 'oil press'.

Oil was the primary agent of anointing in the Bible: for rulers, for healing, for the dedication of religious leaders, and God Himself had even given the formula or recipe for anointing oil used in spiritual anointing to Moses in **Exodus 30:22-25**.

Oil was so valuable in Bible times that it took on many other signs and symbols:

1. An abundance of oil was a way to describe wealth.
2. The Lord's joy was like an anointing of oil
3. Unity and fellowship were like being anointed anew; David wrote in **Psalms 133**.

Oil in the Bible is used as a negative symbol only when speaking about, the false words of an enemy, **Psalms 55:21** or the kiss of an adulterous woman, **Proverbs 5:3**

The word led to some interesting prophecies:

1. The Song of Solomon speaks "your name is like oil poured. . ." **Song of Solomon 1:3**. It speaks of the bridegroom, who we know will be Jesus and His name is Messiah. Messiah means the Anointed One, the one anointed with oil. We are to delight ourselves in the name of Christ the Oil Anointed Messiah.
2. The crushing of the oils in the Garden of the Olive Press or the Garden of Gethsemane would symbolize the way Jesus went through His prayers of release that would allow Him

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to be crushed and thus to release the healing, joy, and the outpouring of His Spirit. As Jesus was pressed in sacrifice and death, He provided the spiritual oil for anointing, healing, and joy for those who believe.

Symbol: 'Sacrifice/ Offering'

A very common and instrumental sign and symbol in the Bible was Sacrifice/Offering. Sacrifice and offering were signs of true gratitude and repentance. The casual way Cain brought some vegetables from his garden contrasted to the very careful way that Able brought choice parts from the first born of his animals, sets the tone for how sacrifice and offering were viewed by God in the Bible. The sign and symbol are clear: God wanted the heart not the performance. This is seen as Hosea tells the people that God really wants their heart, **Hosea 6:6**; or Samuel's rebuke of King Saul pretending that sacrifice would cover his unrepentant sin **1 Samuel 15:22**; or David's telling his readers that God wanted a "broken and sorrowful heart" **Psalms 51:17**. It was a sign of restitution with God in worship, a sign of obedience as the people sacrificed the Sabbath day to worship and praise God; sacrificed the week of the Sabbaths—every 7 years the land lay fallow, as well as Sacrificed the Year of the Sabbath, the 50-year celebration of the Year of Jubilee.

The primary sign of sacrifice, especially a blood sacrifice, was that a substitute, an animal, would take the place of the offender, the worshipper and the blood sacrifice would be the key to the forgiveness of the sin of the worshipper. This prepared the Bible reader for the time when the greatest sacrifice, the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah, would sacrifice Himself on our behalf to ensure that we have fellowship with Him forever. **Hebrews 10:11-14** spells out how the first sacrifice of animals was only temporary in changing a life, but the last sacrifice of Jesus was eternal.

It is at the sign of sacrifice that the Old Testament and the New Testament blend into one gigantic unified sign. Let me share several symbols here:

1. The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, in its original state had a very solemn ceremony. The High Priest would stand before his people with two goats. They were presented to the people and a stone or lot was drawn out and put on first the head of the goat to the right and the second to the goat on the left. He would place his hand on the goats and declare which one would die and which would be left alive. Jesus was also presented as one of a pair, by the way, the two men, Jesus and Barabbas had the same name, bar-son and rabbas-of the father, and the Messiah means The Son of God. One was set free and the other was sacrificed for the sins of the people. These two men with identical names symbolizing the two matched goats of the early Yom Kippur Service.
2. The offering up of Isaac by his father Abraham is also a sign and a symbol of this sacrifice. Abraham brought his son on a donkey to Mt. Moriah and God brought His Son on a donkey to the city to the place of the sacrifice of His Son.

The father places the wood of the sacrifice on the shoulders of his son as God would allow the placement of the wood of the sacrifice, the cross, on the shoulders of his Son. The Son carries the wood up the mountain to the place of sacrifice just as the Messiah carries the

wood to the place of the sacrifice. The father lays his son upon the wood and binds him to it and God allows the Messiah to be laid on the wood of the cross and be bound to it. The father lifts up the knife of sacrifice but is stopped. . . And so the knife, the judgment of God is lifted up. . . but is not stopped. Messiah is killed on the wood of the sacrifice. In Genesis where Abraham is stopped from sacrificing his son, the Bible first uses the word 'love', the love of a Father for his Son and the capstone thought of love, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* **John 3:16** is written about the sacrifice of a Father, God giving up the life of His Son, Jesus Christ for the good of everyone.

3. The scapegoat ceremony of Leviticus required the priest to make physical contact with the goat that was to be slain with their hands. So, the sign was fulfilled after Jesus was condemned to death the priests began to strike Him repeatedly with their hands. They primarily struck his face, with the focus on the head. Finally, in the scapegoat ceremony called the Semikhah in Hebrew, the priest confessed the sins upon the goat of sacrifice. The sacrifice was not guilty of those sins and could only die for those sins, if the goat wasn't guilty of them. So, Caiaphas, the High Priest at the trial of Jesus condemned Jesus for blasphemy, saying He had called Himself the Son of God and should die. It was really Caiaphas and the rest of the priesthood that was blaspheming Jesus, who was and is the Son of God, and so the guilty accused the innocent of what the accuser had done. The sin was confessed over the sacrifice by the high priest and the priests touched the head of the sacrifice with their hands as they struck Jesus for being a blasphemer and so the substitution for the sins of mankind was completed as symbolized in the death of the scapegoat. The high priest confessed even our sins upon Jesus. So, the Bible says, *"He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us. . . that we. . . that you. . . might become the righteousness of God."* **II Corinthians 5:21.**

Lesson 2: "Understanding our Salvation, Knowing the Signs & Symbols"

The Bible is full of signs and symbols and tonight let's look at 7 common signs and symbols related to our Salvation. Salvation has several difficult areas to comprehend and God thoughtfully used signs and symbols to explain salvation in a way that allows us to fully wrap our minds around what it means to be saved.

Let's redefine the two terms of this study. "A Sign" is something given or said to point to or draw attention to an object, purpose or concept. It is literally a clue and signs are given and named many times in the Bible. The most frequent Biblical signs are connected to the word miracle. "A Symbol" is a picture that denotes an object, purpose or concept. The word is seldom used in the Bible but the concept is found on almost every page of the Bible. For those who studied theology, the concept of a symbol was called a "type" or "antitype." We will simply use the word symbol in this study.

Symbol: 'Blood'

Let's start with the key sign and symbol for salvation, the word 'blood.' The first use of the word blood in the Bible was as a symbol for humanity, being human. So, God included this warning in the blessing He gave upon Noah and his sons as they set out to rebuild and repopulate the earth.

Genesis 9:6.

"Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, because in the image of God, God made humans."

Blood was also used as a symbol of the temporariness of the body. So, flesh and blood, which decay were contrasted to the glorified body which does not decay. **Genesis 6:3, I Corinthians 15:50.**

Blood, often was connected with injury or illness and was considered a bad omen in the Bible when it appeared in unusual places. The Nile River turned to blood as God through Moses brought plagues on the Egyptian people to get them to release the Israelites. The water in Moab looked like blood and helped the Israelites be victorious over the Moabites, **II Kings 3:22.** The End of the World refers to blood in the sky and water. **Revelation 16:4, Joel 2:30-31.** Peter also said that blood in the sky and upon the earth would be a part of the final Day of the Lord. **Acts 2:19**

Blood was associated with guilt. The blood of Able cried out to God after Cain had slain him, **Genesis 4:10.** It is associated with the evil mistreatment of others: Israel had "bloody footprints," **Hosea 6:5;** "hands covered with blood", **Isaiah 1:15;** violent people were called "bloodthirsty", **Psalms 139:19;** the land where violence had occurred was called "polluted with blood," **Psalms 106:38;** and hands stained with blood were also, "stained with sin," **Isaiah 59:3.**

Blood was also a symbol of impurity in the Bible: it was seen as a sign of illness or injury and so **Lamentations 4:14; Leviticus 12:1;** and **Luke 8:43** all tell of not being able to participate in the regular life of the Jewish community because of continual bleeding. The bible even commands "never eat any fat or blood", **Leviticus 3:17** and this verse is one of the basic foundations of kosher dietary laws.

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But blood and our salvation are completely intertwined. Blood had many spiritual symbols connected with it and they all seem to foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ, the very foundation of our salvation. It is the key component in our salvation, the sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His blood. Let's see how the symbols and signs connect: blood is the key component in the system of atonement from sins as instituted by God. The lifeblood of a sacrificial animal symbolically represented the life of each individual. Leviticus explains that the life is in the blood, "*Blood contains life. I have given this blood to you to make peace with me on the altar. Blood is needed to make peace with me*", **Leviticus 17:11, 14**. In the Old Testament the blood of the sacrificed animal met the basic requirement that a life for a life had been offered. But in the New Testament we see that the perfect sacrifice for all time was the blood poured out by Jesus Christ on the cross. "*God was also pleased to bring everything on earth and in heaven back to himself through Christ. He did this by making peace through Christ's blood sacrificed on the cross.*" **Colossians 1:20**. The animal sacrifices were a sign pointing to the final sacrifice of the spotless Lamb—Jesus. The price for all sin had been paid by Christ and the shedding of blood was no longer necessary. Just as the sacrificial blood of animals was used to seal the covenant between God and Abram, **Genesis 15**; the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross instituted a new covenant between God and humanity. Once again, we will turn to the Hebrew language to see the fullness of this sign.

Symbol: 'Shedding of Jesus Blood'

There is a great promise and prophecy in the Book of **Jeremiah, Chapter 31** where God promises a new covenant. Let me share that Scripture: it starts. . . "*Behold the days are coming,*" says the Lord, "*when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*". and it ends "*I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*" **Jeremiah 31:31-34**. But in Hebrew it does not say, "*I will make a new covenant.*" The Hebrew word is '*karat*' and it means to cut, as in offering up a sacrifice. The prophecy literally says, "*I will cut a covenant*" or "*I will make a new covenant through the cutting of a sacrifice.*" So according to the Hebrew prophecies, the new covenant can only begin with a sacrifice. Only then can sin be forgiven. The Book of Daniel spells out how and when this new covenant would happen. **Daniel 9:24-26** tells us that "*It will happen when the Messiah shall be cut off.*" The same Hebrew word, '*karat*' is used to signify that the new covenant will begin with the cutting of the sacrifice. Messiah will be the sacrifice that is offered up to begin the new covenant. Daniel's "70 Weeks" prophecy reveals the timing. Messiah would be killed and then Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 and that means that the Messiah has come, His sacrifice has been offered up and the new covenant has been cut and has definitely begun. For each of us, that also means that your iniquities are without question, forgiven and your sins are absolutely and conclusively remembered no more. **Hebrews 9:14**, and **Hebrews 13: 20-21**.

Symbol: 'Passover Lamb'

Let's explore for a moment just how magnificent that symbol is for each of us. The Bible said that the Passover Lamb, another symbol of Jesus, was to be '*tamim*' or without spot, unblemished, undefiled, whole, innocent, and perfect. The original Passover Lamb had to be '*tamim*' in order to set the

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Hebrews free from the curse of the tenth plague. This was also true of the Lamb of God, Jesus; He had to be unblemished so that the blemishes of our sins could be removed. He had to be spotless so that the stains of our past could be undone. And He had to be innocent and undefiled to take away the defilements of our lives. Jesus was given this power, the '*miracle of tamim*' by which the guilty can once again become innocent and that the defiled can live an unblemished life with an unblemished record and an unblemished conscience, and even with unstained memories. And to receive that '*tamim*' from Jesus, each person has to apply the blood of the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ to the doorposts of their life. So, people say, "How can I claim to be sinless and unblemished when I have committed so many sins in my life?" The Bible tells us by receiving Jesus as the sacrifice for your sins, you must then apply the power of '*tamim*' to every shameful act of defilement in your past, your memory, your conscience and your life and claim and receive this new life that is without spot, blemish, defilement, and has a renewed innocence. Blood is the essential element for our salvation. We often today speak of accepting Jesus into your heart to be saved, but the Bible is clear, we must accept the blood sacrifice that Jesus gave, He died for me, or we do not accept Jesus as God intended for salvation.

Symbol: 'Mt. Moriah'

Let's look at the symbol, Mt. Moriah and see how this mountain relates to our salvation. Mt. Moriah was a mountain where God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his own son Isaac as a burnt offering, **Genesis 22**. Abraham obeyed God and took the three-day journey. **Hebrews 11:19** explains, "*Abraham believed that God could bring Isaac back from the dead. Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead in a figurative sense.*" But the key to this story is that God stopped the sacrifice of Isaac and provided a sacrifice for the burnt offering. Abraham named the place '*The Lord Will Provide*'. It is still said today, "*On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.*" **Genesis 22:14**. Mt. Moriah was later the location of Solomon's Temple. This link between the Temple and Abraham's sacrifice make the location of the temple all the more significant because not only was it the place where God provided the sacrifice, but later He would do it again through Christ, who was condemned to death in the area of the Temple and Herod's Palace, all on Mt. Moriah. It is essential to our salvation, because it shows the plan of God to provide the perfect sacrifice for sins was always a part of the plan of salvation.

Symbol: 'Cornerstone'

One other sign and symbol of our salvation in Jesus Christ is the use of the word, 'cornerstone' and also 'capstone'. The first use of the word, cornerstone is in **Job 38:6** where it says, "*On what were its (the creation of the world) footings set, or who laid its cornerstone,*" The implied answer to all the questions of **Job 38** is that it was God who did all the things needed for creation. But every other reference to cornerstone is to Christ as the cornerstone of our faith (salvation) and/or the cornerstone of the Church. Jesus is the foundation or cornerstone because He is the foundation upon which all other matters of Christian faith rest. Without His perfect sacrifice, which was the foundation of the Christian Church, we have no salvation or Church at all. **Acts 4:10-11; Ephesians**

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2:20. *I Peter II 2:4-5* says, "As you come to Him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." The teaching of Peter also says that those who reject the cornerstone, stumble over the stone and never receive the blessing of being a part of God's Church, His family.

The Hebrew word for cornerstone really adds to the symbolism of our salvation. "The stone which the builder's rejected has become the chief cornerstone." **Psalms 118:22-23**. Jesus is that Cornerstone. The Hebrew word for cornerstone is 'rosh pinah' and it not only means Cornerstone, but also Capstone.

How does that apply to our salvation? This Scripture is primarily read at Passover and on Passover, the death of Jesus Christ allowed Him, our Messiah, to become the Capstone or completion of salvation. In His death on the cross, Jesus became the Capstone of a fallen world, the Capstone on the curse put upon mankind for sin; the Capstone of the old covenant and the Capstone of all sin. Everything had led up to that moment for Jesus the Messiah to fulfill all the prophecies, the guilt, and every longing for redemption. At His death, they all converged on Jesus our Messiah, the burden of the world, the weight of all sin, the brunt of all evil, and the judgment of God. The capstone is the stone which symbolizes the work is finished. So, it was then, at the very moment of His death, that He said, "It is finished." He is both the Cornerstone and the Capstone. How? Only after the old is ended, can there be a new beginning. After the Capstone event, His death, comes the Cornerstone event, the resurrection. So, let all that must be ended find its ending in that Capstone. . .and you will find on the other side is the cornerstone of new beginnings.

Symbol: 'Cross / Crucifixion'

Paramount to understanding our salvation are the words cross/crucifixion as signs and symbols. Although the cross is a common symbol in our culture, it was not a sign of the church in the bible. The death was so horrible that the Church did not quickly come to terms with the disgrace and horror of the cross. It was forbidden to be a part of any art forms by the early Church fathers until Constantine saw the cross in a vision and used it as a sign for those loyal to him. He also banned it as a form of execution. It was C. S. Lewis who said, "the crucifixion did not become common in art until all who had seen a real one died off". The Cross had always been a strong part of the Bible's teaching on salvation: "The message about the cross is nonsense to those who are being destroyed, but it is God's power to us who are being saved." **I Cor 1:18**; the preaching of the cross is the heart of the mission of the church, "Our message is that Christ was crucified" **I Cor. 1:23**; and it was the basis of salvation and therefore the death of Jesus on the cross is the central event in Christian history. Despite the shame and sadness of it all, what took place on that cross along with the 3-day resurrection became the most important fact not only of the life of Jesus but in all of human history. For this reason, the cross has become the symbol of the Christian faith. The design, a horizontal beam reaching out to represent the love of God and the vertical beam reaching up, just as the

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holiness of God does. One represents the width of His love; the other reflects the height of His holiness. The cross is a symbol of His sacrifice on our behalf and His victory over death.

Symbol: 'Name of Jesus'

The name of Jesus is a sign or symbol of several things in the Bible but I want to show how it is used in teaching us about our salvation.

Yeshua, Hebrew or the translation, Jesus was not always the name of the Son of God. Before the creation, when the Son was with the Father or the Word was with God, He was the Son of God and He was the Word but was not called Jesus. In light of eternity, the Son of God was called 'Yeshua' for a short time. The name means "God is salvation". It was not His Name from the beginning, because in the beginning there was no sin, no darkness, no fall, no crisis, no brokenness, no judgment, no death, and no need for salvation. The Name Yeshua became necessary because of the sin of humans. So, The Son of God took the name because of us. We needed to be saved. Every time His Name is spoken, it proclaims His being joined to us. And He chose to bear that name forever. We are in that name "God is salvation". Each time someone receives Jesus they are added to His name. God is the salvation of Tom or Brenda or Larry etc. His name is a mystery of which we all are a part. When you receive the name, then the name is fulfilled. Each time you hear the name Yeshua or Jesus remember it was taken by the Son of God in His mission to offer salvation to the world.

Salvation Focus

Finally, I would remind us that many of the words used in the bible to speak about salvation focus on two aspects of salvation.

- 1) It is taking a person out of danger, rescued, restored, saved.
- 2) It is allowing a person to be right with God, redeemed, justified, and forgiven.

Colossians 1:13-14

"For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

You have been a part of a legal transaction redeemed by the blood of Jesus, who traded his blood for your life and qualified you to share in the inheritance of men and women of faith who have lived and died before you.

Lesson 3: "The Unexplainable Explains God in Signs & Symbols"

This study focuses on signs and symbols that God uses to explain Himself as thoroughly as our human minds can understand. I would remind all of us, a sign was primarily a clue given to explain or highlight areas. Miracles were the most common signs God displayed but God also intricately chose words for His Bible authors to use that would explain exactly what God wanted His people to know. A symbol was a picture that would explain or highlight areas that might otherwise not have been understandable.

This lesson looks at what I think was one of the most difficult tasks that God did. He had to give signs and symbols for our understanding to explain Himself, heaven, His work and His plans to people with only finite intelligence. We will barely scratch the surface of the signs and symbols that were used.

Symbol: 'Father'

Let's start with the key sign and symbol for God today, 'Father'. The use of God being called Father was not a very dominant part of the Old Testament but it is significant. David writes more about God as Father in the Psalms than any other Old Testament writer. David links God to the role of a protecting Father in:

Psalms 68:5

"The God who is in His holy dwelling place is the father of the fatherless and the defender of widows."

David goes ahead in ***Psalms 89:26*** to speak of the special relationship that Jesus will teach us about God the Father and prophetically spells out how Jesus will talk to the Father, *"He will call out to me. 'You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.'"* David also summarizes what an excellent and good Father God is when he writes in:

Psalms 103:13

"As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him."

The Old Testament teaches us that the relationship of God the Father to all of His children will be mutual and the most helpful relationship anyone can have.

The symbolism of God as our Father intersects with human fathering in two ways.

- God is the ideal or perfect father and He will always do what is right for us.
- God as Father is able to overcome the disappointment that invariably occurs as mistake-making fathers attempt to live out their responsibilities with their children.

All the good fathers in Scriptures from Adam to Zechariah, point to God the ultimate Father. They also exhibit some good or evil behaviors and often some of both, that draw their children to God or away from God. Even when earthly fathers have all-too-obvious faults. It is a reminder that they were never intended to replace God in our lives.

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It is Jesus who fleshed out God our Father as the symbol of who God is in our life. When asked by His disciples for instruction in praying, Jesus said, *"When you pray, say this: 'Father, let your name be kept holy. Let your kingdom come.'" Luke 11* Jesus in the longer model prayer, often called the Lord's Prayer, said the way to pray is: *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. . ."* **Matthew 6:9-12**. Jesus frequently instructed and directed His followers to call God, Father. He taught them about the inner working of God the Father and God the Son when He said,

John 10:27-30

"My sheep respond to my voice, and I know who they are. They follow me and I give them eternal life. They will never be lost, and no one will tear them away from me. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than everyone else, and no one can tear them away from my Father. The Father and I are one."

Jesus clearly connected Himself to God the Father and told all believers:

John 14:1-2

"Don't be troubled. Believe in God, and believe in me. My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not true, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place for you?"

The link that Jesus taught in His use of the term Father is undeniable. God the Father controls the houses of Heaven but Jesus promised to prepare each place. It was Jesus who fleshed-out-the symbol or picture of the Father as God in the story of the prodigal son, also called the story of the Loving Father in Luke 15. About this story Henri Nouwen wrote in his book 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' these words: "God, creator of heaven and earth, has chosen to be first and foremost, a Father. As Father, He wants His children to be free, free to love. That freedom includes the possibility of their leaving home, going to a 'distant country,' and losing everything. The Father's heart knows all the pain that will come from that choice, but His love makes Him powerless to prevent it."

The Apostle Paul in the New Testament letters that he wrote, takes the intimate invitation given over and over by Jesus to address God as Father and deepens it to the endearing term- 'Abba', a child's simple cry of, 'Daddy.' He writes in:

Romans 8:14-15

"Certainly, all who are guided by God's Spirit are God's children. You haven't received the spirit of slaves that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the spirit of God's adopted children by which we call out, 'Abba! Father!'"

The Bible tells us that we are born again and uses the language of birth to describe the relationship with God as a miraculous transformation that makes God our true Father and we His true children. **John 3:1-21, Ephesians 2:1-10**. But when God is spoken of as our Father, the word adoptions is also used; emphasizing God's choosing us to be in His family. He chooses to become our Father. Salvation and God's forgiveness are neither earned or deserved but are poured into our lives through the

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graciousness of God. Whether we are thinking of our new birth or our adoption, the words of John are true:

1 John 3:1

"Consider this. 'The Father has given us His love. He loves us so much that we are actually called God's dear children. And that's what we are. For this reason, the world doesn't recognize us, since it didn't recognize him either.'"

God definitely could not have chosen a more personal or comforting name for us to call Him than Father or the child-like cry of Abba-Daddy, they show the relationship between God and His children.

There is an Old Testament story analyzed by Joseph Cahn that brings this symbol home. He calls it the secret name of God. It is the story of Jacob wrestling with God. When they wrestled God asked him for his name and when Jacob spoke it, God changed his name from Jacob to Israel. But in that same story in **Genesis 32 & 33** Jacob also asked God for His Name that night. The Bible doesn't record what God said; but soon after the encounter, Jacob would reveal the learned Name of God. He would build an altar and call it El Elohai Yisrael, which means God, the God of Israel. What was he saying?

Israel was Jacob's own name and not yet the name of the nation. So, for Jacob to call Him 'the God of Israel is the same as naming Him 'the God of me!' God throughout the Scriptures would refer to Himself as the God of Israel. God's will be to join His Name to the name of His people. The Scriptures say that if you're born again, you are also a part of the new Israel. So, you join your name to the name of God. It means it is not enough to call Him God. You must give Him a new name." He must become the God of you, the God of. . .your name. If your name is John, He is the God of John. If your name is Mary, He is the God of Mary. This means the name you now give God means He is the God of your existence, your life, the God of your past, the God of your needs, the God of your wounds, the God of your heaven, and the God of you. Jacob asked God for His Name and discovered it. And for those who truly know Him, this is the name they took and discovered. . .the secret Name is: *"The God of You,"* or personalized, *"The God of Me."*

Symbol: 'God's Name, I AM'

God explained Himself with many other phrases (symbols) and explanatory words (signs). I want us to understand the explanation for a name God gave Himself, *"I Am"*. 'YHVH' means I am. It's the Name of the Eternal, the Name of God. His Name is I Am. It is a phrase woven into the fabric of existence and even when you speak of yourself, 'I am going here' or 'I am doing this job right now', you must say His name. It tells us that our existence comes from His existence and He is the I Am of all existence. The I Am of all I Am's. It is a constant reminder for His followers that we live from His living, we move from His moving, we act from His actions, we feel from His heart and to become who you will become, comes from who He is *" . . .I am."* **Exodus 3**

"I Am" was a common symbol that Jesus used to explain Himself to His followers: Jesus said:

- *"I Am the door of the sheep"*

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- *"I Am the way, the truth and the life"*
- *"I Am the bread of life"*
- *"I Am the light of the world"*
- *"I Am the resurrection and the life"*
- *"I Am the good shepherd"*
- *"I Am the true vine."*

Each of those statements from Jesus is a clarifying symbol to let His people know that He will lead them in a way that will give them a full life. He tells everyone that He is the way by leading or by giving direction.

Symbol: 'I Am the Good Shepard'

I want to look at one other name Jesus gave Himself to show that when God gives a sign or a symbol it will be accurate in every way that it is used. Jesus in **John 10:11f** said: *"I am the Good Shepherd."* But for 2,000 years the people that Jesus first spoke that too have not had His leadership or His shepherding. They have shown the signs of a scattered flock separated from the shepherd. Yet, we know that the Messiah is the protector of Israel, *"Yeshua. . . Jesus."* It was written in **Ezekiel 34**: *"Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered."* It is because Jesus is the true Shepherd, their protection, their provider, and their keeper is the Messiah. This is a sign for all of us, if we try to live without Him, we end up wandering this life, lost, unprotected and without hope, and bear the signs of shepherd lessness. But it is foretold that in the last days the people of Israel will return to their Shepherd, and He will bind up their brokenness, heal their wounds, and keep them as a shepherd keeps his flock. So, it will be for each of us, and for every wandering sheep that returns. They will be sheltered in the Shepherd's arms."

Symbol: 'I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last':

But one other I Am statement by Jesus in **Revelation 1:11** and **Revelation 22:13** is a symbol used in the Bible to explain God the Father and God the Son. In the New Testament the phrase is: *"I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."* In the Old Testament it is: *"I am the first, I also am the last"*, **Isaiah 48:12** and also used in **Isaiah 41:4**; **Isaiah 44:6**. But of great insight is the passage in Zechariah:

Zechariah 12:10

"And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look upon me when they have pierced and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son."

Not only does this passage present, 500 years before the Messiah of Israel is crucified, the *"One Whom they have pierced"* a prophetic symbol of the death of Jesus; it also has an untranslated word, the Hebrew letters of *'the aleph and the tau'*. It would be the Hebrew equivalent of Alpha and Omega and would then read, *"and they shall look upon me, the Aleph and the Tau, whom they have pierced."* The same phrase is used in Genesis would read:

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God, the aleph and the tau, created the heaven and the earth."

It was God telling all of His creation that He is the source of all that is needed, the first to the last.

Symbol: 'Heaven'

One of the most symbolic descriptions God has given to us is His signs and symbols of heaven. The Bible lists several things that tell us in a literal sense, heaven is the eternal dwelling place of God **Genesis 24:7**; the angels **Genesis 28:12** and the saints, and believers who have died. **Ephesians 2:6 & Revelation 20:4**. The Biblical imagery of heaven in Scripture is filled with pictures of an otherworldly paradise, the world as it was meant to be in all of its original perfection. Heaven itself is not an image in Scripture, it is a real place, just like the earth. But it is surrounded by images that express truths about heaven, a place so different from our daily experiences on earth that we cannot comprehend it and images for what heaven symbolizes the hoped-for destination of people, a place beyond death and better than anything we can imagine, where God Himself prepares a place for us to live with Him forever.

Heaven is so different from this fallen world that the only way biblical writers can explain it is through the use of cryptic images. It is a remote place that we can only see dimly, as if through a cloud or smoked glass due to our physical limitations. But the Bible writers try to give us signs and symbols of heaven through familiar pictures in our life. One common symbol is that Heaven is a royal throne room where God sits in glory and judgment, with His robe filling the space of heaven: **Psalms 11:4; 47:8, 103:19; Isaiah 6:1**. Heaven is viewed as a Temple, although no Temple is present, because it is the eternal place of worship and a place where God dwells with His people.

Most frequently, heaven is portrayed as a city.

Revelation 21:2

"Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband".

In all of these instances' heaven is a place of splendor, majesty and beauty. It is an enameled and regal city of jewels and gold, **Ezra 1, Revelation 21**. But it is also a place designed with us in mind. **John 14:1-6**.

It seems otherworldly because there is no sin in heaven. Those that live there will live in ultimate perfection and with the satisfaction of every good desire. Every tear is dried and every wound is healed, every thirst is satisfied and every person dwell in the light. In fact, heaven has no darkness and it is always light, the Son of God is the light of heaven. Heaven is a Biblical sign for all the good that God has waiting for His believers.

Because heaven is presented in the Bible as the fulfillment of the longings of people on earth, it has many symbols that signify how this happens. Heaven is seen as a place of rest and **Hebrews 3 & 4** tell us that the Sabbath is a sign of the eternal rest we will have in heaven. It is also seen as a place of

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reward where all decisions about who is in heaven and who is not are done by God with total justice. Heaven is also pictured in the Bible as our home, eternally. We will never feel like strangers or sojourners like we might here on earth, but we will feel completely at home and loved and cared for by God.

That is why Christians speak of death as a home-going, heaven is the place where we will truly be at home, unlike this world, where we are in some sense often uncomfortable.

All of these images for heaven, both those that portray a reality about the place of heaven and those that portray a reality about what heaven will mean for us individually, make us long for the day we will be in the Lord's presence. In a prophetic sense, heaven holds out the hope God offers to each person because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Without the graciousness of God and the singular alternative (faith in Christ), heaven would be an empty hope. With Christ as our way, truth, and life we don't have to be troubled, **John 14:1-3**

Heaven symbolizes wholly positive images, and together they make up a picture that shows us the grand day when we enter our heavenly reward. Every longing we experience on earth will be perfectly fulfilled as we worship God for eternity in a place of ultimate beauty and comfort. We were made for heaven, and only then will we be truly at home.

Let me conclude with one last symbol and sign about heaven. One that is vastly misunderstood even in the Christian world. Almost everyone wants to go to heaven, so how can you get there? Most religions would say that, if you do enough good works, if you avoid enough evil, if you master the right teachings, if you end the glorification of self, if you attain the enlightenment, then you get into heaven. But is that the teaching of the Bible? If getting to heaven is based on what we do, then the source of our salvation is ourselves. And if we could save ourselves by ourselves, then we wouldn't need salvation in the first place. How can the answer come from the one in need of the answer? It's like telling a drowning man that if he would only swim well enough, he could save himself. If he could swim well enough, he wouldn't be drowning, He'd be the lifeguard.

The answer is that the problem can never answer itself. Only the answer can answer. So, the earthly can never attain the heavenly, but the heavenly can attain the earthly! Salvation can never come from earth to heaven. . .but only from heaven to earth. All these paths are hands reaching up to heaven. But the answer is radically different. It's a hand reaching down to earth. The answer must come from the Answer. So, salvation can never just end in heaven. It must begin there. So, it is not so much about getting into heaven, it is about heaven getting into you. Heaven coming down. . .to us. It is the descent of heaven, the heavenly visiting the earthly. The heavenly One becoming earthly so that the earthly might become heavenly. It is really not about attaining anything. It is all about receiving everything and that starts with heaven.

Lesson 4: "What Do the Common Numbers in the Bible Mean?"

In this lesson, we will specifically look at the use of numbers as both signs and symbols. God used a lot of shorthand like signs and symbols and numbers were one of the most frequent and useful shorthand tools. Let's see what God meant by certain numbers. I will share and explain the 12 most common numbers used in the Bible as primarily a symbol but also often as a sign. Specific numbers are often a part of prophetic passages.

Symbol: 'Number 7'

Let's start with the Number 7. The Number 7 takes on symbolic importance from the start of the Bible. God not only created the world in seven days, He also reserved the seventh day of creation as a personal day of re-creation, or rest. Later when God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, **Exodus 20:1-17**, the seventh day, or Sabbath, was identified as, "*the day of worship dedicated to the Lord your God*" **Exodus 20:10-11** spells out the significance of Day 7: "*In six days the Lord made heaven, earth, and the sea, along with everything in them.*" He didn't work on the seventh day. That's why the Lord blessed the day, He stopped His work and set this day apart as holy.

This early use of 7 explains why it became a symbol of perfection and completeness. The significant use of 7 extends to the spiritual practices of Israel: Aaron and his sons were instructed to "*sprinkle some of the blood with (their) finger seven times in front of the throne of mercy*", to cover their sins and the sins of the people. The Sabbath, 7 days, was also used in Israel as a Sabbath of weeks or 7 years; and the Sabbath of years, 49 years (7X7) plus the Sabbath year for the year of Jubilee.

It was frequently used as a sign of completeness:

- The 7 deadly sins, **Proverbs 6:16-19**
- The Menorah lampstand with 7 branches, **Exodus 25:37**
- The 7 priests with 7 rams' horns preceded around Jericho, which was performed 7 times, **Joshua 6; 7**
- The seven baskets of food left over after Jesus fed the 4,000 men plus women and children.

Groupings of 7 events were also a sign in the Bible:

- The 7 parables in **Matthew 13** all teaching about the kingdom of God
- The 7 miracles in the Gospel of John
- The 7 sets of I Am(s) that describe Jesus
- The 7 sets of I Am(s) that explain the ministry of Jesus
- The 7 descriptive words explaining wisdom in **James 3:17**
- The 7 messages to the 7 churches of **Revelation 2-3**.

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It is the area of prophecy where God frequently used the number 7 to explain and show signs. In **Zechariah 4:10**, God's intimate awareness of all things is described as the 'seven eyes of the Lord.' Daniel prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar would be out of his mind for seven years **Daniel 4:19-37**; the Book of Revelation refers to the seven spirits of God, **Revelation 1:4, 3:1-4; 4:5; 5:6** and each time they represent the completeness of Jesus Christ. Jesus in **Revelation 5:6** is described as the Lamb with seven eyes, complete knowledge; and 7 horns, complete power. The Bible also uses 7 to show completeness in the area of evil: **Revelation 12:3**, the 7-headed 7-crowned serpent or Satan and the 7-headed beast who assists him, **Revelation 13:1; 17:1; and 17:9-11**. The final judgment of God in Revelation, meaning the completion of life as we know it on this earth is symbolized in: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. In each of these, the seventh item contains the next set of horrors.

There is no doubt what God conveyed in sign and symbol when He had John write in:

Revelation 21:9-11

"One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the last seven plagues came to me and said, 'Come! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. He carried me by his power away to a large high mountain. He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. It had the glory of God."

After God's judgment has been fully completed, the true perfection of eternal life in his presence will become reality, both perfect and complete. It is the most significant number sign in the Bible.

Symbol: 'Number 1'

The next number we will look at is the Number 1. It was used as a sign or symbol in the Bible in three ways:

1. It referred to God as a One. **Deuteronomy 6:4**
2. It showed one Church and one nation of all people who are one under God: **Psalms 22:28; Acts 17** The Church was to be one just as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were one. **John 17:22-23**
3. It showed the value that God put on each (one) or individual life: the one lost sheep **Luke 15:1-10**; each one who believes is saved **John 3:16**; and the marriage bed was created by God to make a oneness between one woman and one man. **Genesis 2:24**

Symbol: 'Number 2'

The next number is the Number 2. It was used as a sign or symbol in the Bible in two ways:

1. It showed relationship. Siblings such as Cain and Able, Isaac and Ishmael; Jacob and Esau, Mary and Martha were listed to show good and bad relationships. Solomon spoke of the positiveness of this symbol when he wrote:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

"Two people are better than one because together they have a good reward for their hard work. If one falls, the other helps his friend get up. But how tragic—it is for the one who is all alone when he falls. There is no one to help get him up."

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2. The Number 2 was often used in the Bible as a symbol of the choices that we have in life. Usually, a good and bad choice as when Moses concluded his final sermon in Deuteronomy by saying:

Deuteronomy 30:15-19

"Today I offer you life and prosperity or death and destruction. . . I call on heaven and earth as witnesses today that I have offered you life and death, blessings or curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants will live."

Joshua used this symbol when he preached:

Joshua 24:15

"But if you don't want to serve the lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Even if you choose the gods your ancestors served on the other side of the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live, my family and I will serve the Lord."

Jesus called the two choices, the narrow way that leads to life eternal or the broad way that leads to destruction. **Matthew 7:13-14**. The word two is frequently a symbol that God offers people a choice to do what God wants or anything else—the concept of either—or!

Symbol: 'Number 3'

The number three in the Bible was primarily used for emphasis and was also a symbol of establishing a pattern, to do something three times was often seen as the intentional direction of a person. If you see the same word repeated three times in the Bible, it is always for emphasis.

Symbol: 'Number 4'

The number 4 has two purposes as a symbol in the Bible.

1. It is often used in the Apocalyptic prophetic scriptures to show that it is speaking about all the earth. Just as the four winds of heaven, **Daniel 7:2**, shows that God is in charge of all; the 4 horsemen of **Revelation 6:1-7** show all the judgments of God; the phrase 'every tribe, language, people and nation', is used 6 times in Revelation to show that it will affect everyone; and the dual prophecy of **Ezekiel 1:5-8** and the vision of **Revelation 7:11-12** both show the 4 living creatures that worship God in the throne room of heaven, they covered all the worship areas.
2. It also represented geographical completeness. God designed heaven as a giant square, or cube, where the four sides were all equal anyway you wanted to measure the city. God instructed Moses how to build the Tabernacle when the children of Israel were fleeing Egypt and it is filled with the Number 4. Four golden rings on the Ark of the Covenant; four bronze carrying rings on the bronze sacrificial altar; four bronze posts with four bronze bases to support the screen that was at the entry to the Tabernacle. The Number 4 speaks about including everyone and being geographically complete. It even was used

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to speak of the four corners of the earth, meaning all the earth or the four winds of heaven, meaning all the wind was under the control of God.

Symbol: 'Number 8'

The number 8 is not used often and it is one of the numbers that has a veiled reference to it in Scripture and therefore is seldom used. We find the connection in the Hebrew language where the word for oil is shemen and the word for eight in Hebrew is Shemini. Oil, especially anointing oil, is the symbol of the Spirit and is linked with the number 8 just like the word Spirit. What does that mean for us? Seven, as we have seen is the number of perfection and completeness. Therefore, eight is the number over and above completeness. The seventh day is the end of the week but the eighth day is beyond the end and over all limitations. So, what is the 8th day? It is the first day of the new beginning. It is the number of the mystery day, Shemini Atzeret, the day that signifies what comes after the end. It tells us of Heaven and Eternity. Therefore, live in the Spirit, and you will have the power of heaven or sheman working for you. You will anticipate the 8th day or the Shemini Atzeret.

Symbol: 'Number 12'

The next Number 12 is a significant number and God frequently used it to speak of the people of God, the Hebrews in the Old Testament and all believers in the New Testament.

The Number 12 has also been a significant symbol in the secular world because the year has been divided into 12 months and it has often represented the cycles of life. But when God established the 12 tribes of Israel, and Jesus chose 12 disciples. The number 12 has been linked symbolically in the Bible to the entire group of God's people. The Old Testament starts with the use of 12 when Israel (Jacob) stood and gave an individual blessing to each son and to the two sons of Joseph, **Genesis 49:28**. The Number 12 represented the entire Israelite nation from then on: Moses built an altar to God at Mt. Sinai with 12 stones; he sent 12 spies, one from each tribe, into the promised land to scout it out; Joshua had a member of each tribe, 12 total, choose a stone to create a lasting memorial to the historic crossing of the dry Jordan River when the Israelites entered the promised land; and Elijah built an altar of 12 stones when he had the great spiritual battle with the 450 priests of Baal.

In the New Testament the Number 12 is synonymous with the disciples that Jesus called and "the 12" is a frequent name given to the group in the New Testament. Jesus did not select a man from each of the twelve tribes but He did distinctly stop at 12 disciples. After the betrayal of Judas and his suicide, the disciples replaced him to have 12 and used a prophetic scripture for their reason to do that. **Acts 1** In fact, five times they are just called "the twelve". Jesus also promised His disciples, "*When the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne in the world to come, you my followers, will also sit on the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" **Matthew 19:28**

It was used in prophecy in **James 1:1** when James wrote to "the twelve tribes." Jewish believers scattered abroad and instructed them how to live as they wait for the Lord. But it is the book of Revelation where the Number 12 is seen in prophetic fulfillment. It is there that the 12 tribes of Israel again play a key role in the end-times. John is told in his vision in **Revelation 7:5-8** that 144,000

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persons, 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel, will be 'sealed' for God, along with 'a large crowd from every nation, tribe, people and language. The use of 4 which we saw was how God foretold that everyone qualified would be included so the passage ends with these words, "No one was able to count how many there were." **Revelation 7:9.**

The description of the New Jerusalem, Heaven (Revelation 21:2) is described in many ways by the Number 12:

1. The 12 gates featuring the names of the 12 tribes with 12 angels at the gates
2. The wall of the city had 12 foundations
3. The 12 names of the 12 apostles were written on them.
4. The measurements of the city are all multiples of 12
5. The Tree of Life, first seen in the Garden of Eden, will be a part of Heaven and there will be 12 trees of life that produce 12 kinds of fruit, each for its own month and the leaves of the trees will heal the nations.

The Number 12 is a continual symbol in Scripture that points to God's covenant promise to the 12 tribes of Israel and the covenant to the church started by the 12 apostles. Every time we see the Number 12, we are reminded of God's redemption of all of His people.

Symbol: 'Number 40'

The Number 40 is a significant symbol in the Bible. The first use of 40 as a symbol is the great flood upon the earth that lasted 40 days and 40 nights, **Genesis 7**; and the last time is a reference in **Hebrews 3:10** and again in verse 17 of the four decades or 40 years that the Israelites had to wander outside of the Promised Land. In between those two references we have:

1. Moses at the top of Mt. Sinai for 40 days to receive the 10 commandments
2. The punishment for most severe crimes in Israel was limited to 40 lashes, **Deuteronomy 25:3, II Cor. 11:24**
3. Samson freed the people from 40 years of domination by the Philistines
4. Elijah was miraculously fed by ravens and by God for 40 days on Mt. Horeb, **I Kings 19:1-18**
5. Ezekiel lay on his right side for 40 years to show the amount of time Israel would be in bondage **Ezekiel 4:6**
6. God told Jonah to tell the city of Nineveh they had 40 days to repent or be destroyed
7. Jesus went into the wilderness to fast, pray and be tested for 40 days, **Matthew 4:2.**

The number 40 is equated with a trial period or a time set by God to avoid judgment. It is always seen as a time of hardship and difficulties. A testing time.

Symbol: 'Number 666'

The number 666 is ominous and only used once in the Scripture, but it is the one number that God said a wise mind can discern.

Revelation 13:18

"In this situation wisdom is needed. Let the person who has insight figure out the number of the beast, because it is a human number. The beast's number is 666."

Many scholars believe a name is hidden in the numbers. They assume that Hebrew or Aramaic letters are used, all consonants and no vowels, and that figured out, using gematria, gives a value of 666 to the name of Nero Caesar. It is good to remember that Nero might even be a sign or symbol here but it is hard to imagine that Nero was the beast spoken about in Revelation when he lived in the first century AD. I think it is better that we see the number 666 as a number that is the number of men. It is on the 6th day that man was created, God has chosen the 7th day, a day of perfection and completion to signify His day. Man will always be quite short of reaching perfection and Nero was a perfect example of humanity at its cruelest. We will discuss this more when we look next week at "Who are the End-Time Villains, Look at the Prophecies!" The answer is not reincarnated people, but people who live in the spirit of the Biblical villains, just as John the Baptist was not a reincarnation of Elijah but had the spirit of Elijah, a positive reference to the same phenomena.

Symbol: 'Number 144,000'

The next Number is 144,000 and it is used only three times in the bible and all are in Revelation. It is used to speak of completeness each time:

1. The 144,000 saved, or 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel; **Revelation 7:4-8**
2. The 144,000 in the passage of **Revelation 14:1-4** speaks of a group identified not by race but by their inclusion in being able to sing a unique song about being bought by Jesus on the cross. This song would be one only they could learn and sing.
3. The final use of 144,000 is in **Revelation 14: 1-5** and speaks of those with special qualifications to receive glory and praise in heaven. They are sexually chaste; they follow the Lamb without hesitation. They never lie and they are blameless. They prove the Gospel by their very lives.

The number 144,000 is a symbol that summarizes a large group and a complete group that God will give great favor and praise too.

Symbol: 'Number 1,000'

Finally, let's look at the Number 1,000. The numbers 1,000 and 10,000 are symbols of huge counts and large groups. So, Moses blesses the people as they get ready to enter the promised land in **Deuteronomy 1:11** by saying, "May the Lord God of your ancestors make you a thousand times more numerous. . ." Or again Moses says ". . .He is a faithful God who keeps His promise and is merciful to thousands of generations of those who love Him and obey His commands." Even in the giving of the 10 commandments, God said, "But I show mercy to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments." **Exodus 20:5-6** Some references are quite familiar:

"God owns the cattle on a thousand hills." Proverbs 50:10

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"One day in your courtyard is better than a thousand anywhere else." Psalms 84:10

"Indeed, in your sight a thousand years are like a single day, like yesterday, already past, like an hour in the night." Psalm 90:4

Peter in ***1 Peter 3:8-9*** uses the same phrase of a thousand years is like a day in the sight of the Lord when it comes to the time of the return of Jesus.

The Millennium, or 1,000-year reign of Jesus, prophesied as the golden age of Israel is another long-time frame that God defines with the Number 1,000.

The Number 1,000 was used to show the power of God over time, events and history.

Lesson 5: "Who are the End-Time Villains—Look at the Signs"

In this lesson, we will specifically look at the End-Time Villains and let the signs and symbols of scripture lead the way. God describes through these signs and symbols the nature, evilness, and allegiances of these villains by taking traits from the enemies of Israel and the Church and explaining what we should know about them.

The Bible uses: World Powers; Cities; Kings; and insects/reptiles/and animals to describe these evil characters, in addition to their spiritual names: Satan, the Anti-Christ, and the spiritual beast. We will reference them in this study as Satan, Anti-Christ, and the One-World Church Leader, a Partner of the Anti-Christ. We will study the most common 8 signs and symbols about End-Times villains.

Symbol: 'City of Babylon'

No reference is any more frequent than the references to Babylon. When Satan attempts to build a visible kingdom on earth, the Bible tells us he will call that city Babylon. It is a city that is the culmination of evil because it will oppose God at every possible direction.

We first hear about Babylon in Genesis 11 as a place that people decided to build a tower and declare themselves god-like. The results of this were that the world was divided by languages and the idea of a human revolt to establish humans as gods failed. But the City of Babylon and the area around it prospered both in size and splendor. Historically, Babylon greatly affected and interacted with Israel. The nation became one of the arms God used to discipline the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. The books of *II Chronicles* and *II Kings* are full of references to Babylon. Each of the major prophets of the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel speak often about the city. Isaiah writes about the demise of Babylon and Jeremiah writes about the effects of Babylon conquering the nation of Israel. You cannot read the Old Testament without seeing what an important role Babylon played in the life of the Hebrews and their nation. The symbolic use of Babylon was based on facts.

It is this symbolic use of Babylon that fills the New Testament and with the exception of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew which tells that the exiles kept the genealogy going and how God was not thwarted by the exile in providing the line from King David to King Jesus, while the rest of the New Testament speaks most often of Babylon as a wicked and powerful city rather than references to the actual ancient city.

Babylon had long disappeared from the scene of being a world power by the time of Christ and the new Babylon for the early Christians was the Nation of Rome. Like Babylon, Rome was also both a city of wealth and importance and a world power. Rome oppressed the nation of Israel, under Pontius Pilate they sentenced Jesus Christ to death; they persecuted Christians all over the cities of the Bible, and so Peter writes to an oppressed and persecuted group of Christians: "*Your sister church in Babylon, chosen by God, and my son Mark greet you.*" **I Peter 5:13** it is a certain reference to the city of Rome. Babylon is mentioned six times in **Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21**. Some believe that the ancient City of Babylon will be rebuilt and will play this vital role in the End-Times.

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Revelation 17:9 seems to refer to another city than the one in the desert, the city of 7 hills, perhaps Rome. It says, *"Babylon calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits."* Without a doubt the city and world power of Rome would be the only city the original readers would identify as Babylon as they read this passage.

Perhaps the best explanation is that Babylon, in the End-Times serves in the same way it did in the Bible. It is a symbol named for a city of evil people who do evil things, holding anti-Christian beliefs, and having a desire to oppose God in every way. Let's look at the things said about this city in Revelation. It is not only a city that opposes God but a city that is full of every kind of abuse of power. The arrogance of opposing God meets its logical end in the murder of the martyrs, exploitation of the weak, and every imaginable type of debauchery. **Revelation 17: 5-6** paints a terrible picture of this city: *"The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony of Jesus."* As the book of Revelation closes and gives the application of what happens in history, the prophecy tells us that Babylon stands for whatever seat of power represents the final rebellion of Satan against the kingdom of God. It is the symbol representing the gathered multitude of humanity that insists on making its last stand against God. God rescues those that belong to Him and the final scenes of Revelation show Babylon in total collapse and being destroyed. Before the final description of the destruction of Babylon, **Revelation 18:21-24**, John writes:

Revelation 18:9-10

"When the kings of the earths who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: 'Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour, your doom has come!'"

Symbol: 'City of Rome':

That leads us to the City of Rome as a symbol and sign. The first time we hear of Rome in the Bible it is a portion of that great prophecy of Daniel about the first four world powers: Babylon; Medes and Persians; Greeks, and the Romans, given as he interprets the dream of Nebuchadnezzar **Daniel 2**. But by the time of Christ, Rome had conquered much of the world and had established rule over the lands they conquered. In fact, the taxation of Judah by Rome, was the very means that God used to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the birth of their son Jesus Christ. Rome served as a tool for God to use to accomplish His will, a Roman leader, Pontius Pilate, signed the death certificate to have Jesus Christ killed and in doing so created the one-true sacrifice for all of our sins. It was the Roman government's desire to control everything, that allowed Paul to be taken to Rome as a prisoner and spread the gospel even into the palaces of Rome.

But again, it is the **Book of Revelation** where the symbol of Rome is on display for the Church and future believers. By the time Revelation was written, official persecutions were being carried out under the authority of the Roman Empire. Christianity was becoming an outlawed religion ironically

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because it was considered 'atheistic', it would not accept and follow the Roman practice of emperor worship. But once again we see that Revelation seems to reveal much more than simply a veiled picture of conditions and an encouraging prophecy regarding the eventual fall of Rome. It taught a pattern for how the First Century Christians could exist in a world led by Rome and has become the pattern for all oppressed believers to courageously keep the faith in the face of strong opposition from ruthless, pagan governments. Rome was a symbol of a nation that never intended to bring true justice to the people that it controlled but just to protect itself from threats without and within. It is easy to see why such a symbol has and always will produce resentment among people.

Symbol: 'City of Sodom'

We need to look at one last city symbol used in the Bible to point out End-Time Villains, Sodom. Sodom is used in the Bible as a symbol for sin and the judgment that comes from God upon sin. It did reference the sexual sins of the city in some passages that use Sodom but it also was used as a warning for not living a Godly life **Romans 9:29** says: *"It is just as Isaiah said previously: 'Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah;"* a warning to ungodly, unrepentant people, **II Peter 2:6**; and also in Jude.

John describes Sodom as a symbol in Revelation and says: *"Their bodies will be in the public square at the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified."* **Revelation 11:8**. The tragedy of Sodom lies buried in history, but the lessons of Sodom continue with us every day. The Day of the Lord will bring the total and irrevocable judgment of God epitomized by Sodom.

Symbol: 'Day of the Lord'

Of all the End-Time symbols and signs, it is the 'Day of the Lord' that has created many different interpretations of what the Day of the Lord really is. We have already seen that the word day or days can be used as a symbol for times or even years. The Hebrew language often used day as a way to explain age- *"full of days"* **I Chronicles 23:1**; *"Days of trouble"* **Psalms 20:1**.

Day was also used as a symbol of doing what is good or right, in that sense it was contrasted to night and dark. Christians were to be people of the light or of the day.

The most common use of the phrase, "Last Days" means the time before the second coming of Jesus Christ, **Hebrews 1:2**. This Book written in the First Century calls even the days of the writing of the Book *"the Last Days"*.

Let's take a closer look at the phrase *"The Day of the Lord"*. The phrase is used to describe what only God can do and highlights the control God has over all events. Some have occurred, some will occur and some will happen only at the last specific day. **Joel 1:8; Amos 5:18, 20**. It is used as God's intervention into the affairs of the earth **Lamentations 2:22**.

But the most frequent and perhaps confusing symbol is when it is used by the prophets to tell of an event of the day of the writing as well as a future event in the End-Times. Let's look at **Isaiah 13:5-**

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10—in this prophecy Isaiah tells of a time when the Babylonians will fall. It is a prophecy about those who will band together and destroy the nation of Babylon. But Jesus in **Mark 13:24-37** takes the very same passage from Isaiah and paints a picture of the final day of the Lord at the end of human history. Joel in **Joel 2:31** talks about *“the terrifying day of the Lord”*, and Peter takes the same passage to show that these last days are already being fulfilled in the First Century. Here we see that *“the Day of the Lord”* represents years and centuries that only come to a close when God reveals His final day.

The Day of the Lord had many prophetic references to Jesus. He has fulfilled all that He came to accomplish and for many the Day of the Lord will be an anticipation of reward, not a day of judgment. It will be a day that the guilty and the innocents are defined by God. **I Corinthians 1:8; 5:5-2; II Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:10; and Philippians 2:16.**

Symbol: 'Locust'

The Bible also uses the symbol of insects the locust to tell of the villains of the End-Times. It is in the book of **Joel, 2:3-5** that the Bible describes for us the ravaging effect of a locust invasion. Its judgment, some are given human faces, noting the characteristics of the locust but knowing who the person is. They are given lions teeth, to show that the villains will be people of great destruction; and they will be given armor-like protection to show their invincibility and scorpion-like stingers to show the willingness to use lethal, even nuclear weapons.

Today we can read this passage as an almost literal description of what the Battle of Armageddon might be like. There is one great passage of hope in the symbol of locusts where God writes:

Joel 2:25

“I will restore to you the years the locust has eaten.”

It is a theme of the End-Times, God will protect His own while the rest of mankind is destroyed.

Symbol: 'Beasts'

It is the next few symbols that lead us to know the most about the End-Time villains. They are called 'Beasts' and not just any beast but beasts that are under the guidance and tutelage of Satan. They will end up being possessed by Satan.

In Biblical language, the primary beast of Revelation is the Anti-Christ. **I John 2:18-19** defines the fact that there will be many Anti-Christes including some who began in the Church; but one special Anti-Christ will gain power over all the physical earth. He is introduced as a beast from the sea, **Revelation 13:1** and in a complete mockery of the creation of God, man was created in the image of God, he appears to be made in the image of the dragon/serpent/Satan. He will be worshipped by many, **Revelation 13: 3-4** and is a symbol of all that is opposed to God. Specifically, he will be an evil leader and use his authority to demolish and destroy anything that resembles Christian virtues or Godly actions. *“He will be given by the Devil: power, kingdoms, and far-reaching authority.”* **Revelation 13:2b**

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He will control every country that Satan controls, all atheistic lands, those controlled by animism, idolatry, and false religion. His power will be unrivaled in the annals of history because he will have constant supernatural demonic power. He will control the known world, all of it that he wants to control. I hope this moves your thinking away from deciding which American President or Secretary of State, etc. is the Anti-Christ.

Symbol: 'Second Beast'

The Second Beast is also described in Revelation. He has a much more mundane appearance and comes from the land. In other words, he has grown up just as each of us has but he will function as the enforcer for the Anti-Christ or first beast, **Revelation 13:11-14**. They will form an unholy trinity with Satan and will be the first occupants of the burning lake of fire **Revelation 19:20-21**. They will be the primary agents leading the final rebellion of Satan against God. Satan had many symbols or names in the bible, each chosen to point out the destruction that he can bring. He was called the serpent, symbolic of the sinister deception first revealed in the Garden of Eden and then traced throughout the history of mankind. He was also given the name or symbol of 'dragon', in the Greek it is '*darken*' used 12 times in Revelation and not used in the rest of the Scriptures. We might wonder why a new villainous name at this point of the Bible. **Revelation 12:7f** holds the clue. Satan was expelled from Heaven; we might clearly see that was from any of the three heavens the Bible defines for us and he ended up on the earth without a physical body. This dragon symbol became the image of what happens when Satan inhabits a person, the Anti-Christ and controls all the actions of the one he possesses.

So, we see some more clues on who these End-Time villains will be. They will be demonic in their approach to life and will oppose anything that even appears to show goodness.

The Bible lists many villains and we see some of the most sinister and depraved actions done by these villains; but when the Bible compares Satan to earthly kings, we only find two. In **Isaiah 14**, the prophet speaks of the final destruction of the King of Babylon and Jesus tells us in **Luke 10:18** that this also speaks of the fall of Satan. Why would Isaiah use the King of Babylon and Satan in the same comparison? It was a rebuke of the king and the Devil who energized him. These traits are highlighted that each possessed-the King of Babylon and Satan:

Unbridled arrogance, full of pride, conceit, and deceit. They both wanted to be rulers over the gods and Gods. They opposed God in every way.

The second king that is linked in comparison with Satan is in **Ezekiel 28:12-17** where the King of Tyre and Satan are intermeshed in a prophecy. He desired to be a god and to be worshipped as a god. He was motivated and controlled by Satan. He and his country were skilled and talented and were considered the wealthiest, most beautiful, wisest and most perfect city of their time.

More clues on the Anti-Christ. He will be skilled and surrounded by skilled and talented people and will have great arrogance in his talent and his entourage. He will have an unquenchable desire for people to worship him, not just admire him or popularize him, but truly to worship him.

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I recently read a teaching from Pastor Joseph Cahn that sums up my understanding of the End-Time villains. They will be so obvious that we will not need to speculate, God is not a God of confusion and this story will illustrate that.

Symbol: 'The Wolf'

The Bible uses another symbol for the Devil 'Satan', it is 'the wolf'. It came true for the Jewish people. The ultimate wolf for the Jewish people would be Hitler and his Nazi army. He hunted down Jewish people, herded them together, and led them as sheep to be slaughtered. He drove his followers to exterminate all Jews.

The name of his military headquarters was 'Wolfsschanze', it means a wolf's quarters, another he named, 'Wolfschlucht'-the wolf's gorge, and yet another he called 'Werewolf'. He had his closest friends call him 'the wolf' and the name he was given was Adolf-which means 'the wolf'. That is how real the villains of God's people are and that is how real our Messiah is. If there is a flock and a wolf, there must also be a shepherd.

We will not have to question when the villains of the End-Times appear. They will be as obvious to believers as "the wolf analogy was to any German speaking Jew." We will know because we have been taught by God how these villains will act and what they will do to reveal themselves.

Take care and be blessed—we are all in the hands of God Almighty.

Lesson 6: "The Lord is in the Prophetic Details"

In this lesson, we will see how God gets all the specific details exactly right as His people approach the End-Times. He uses familiar events to explain the unfamiliar and so brings spiritual peace and expectation to His followers. Let's look closely at the details that God focuses our attention on with signs and symbols.

Symbol: 'Marriage / Bride'

The Bible uses several references to the relationship of Jesus the Messiah and His followers but primarily focuses on the sign of 'Marriage'. His Church (followers) are the Bride and Jesus is the Bridegroom. It is much different than when He was on the earth and had a special relationship with 12 disciples; here He has a special relationship with all of His followers.

What does the symbol of a bride mean in the Bible? It is clear that in the Bible, with the exception of Song of Solomon which speaks both of an earthly bride and groom and the heavenly bride (the Church and Israel) with her groom, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the rest of the references in the Old Testament speak of the bride as Israel and in the New Testament, the bride is the Church. A bride in the Old Testament was "paid for" by the bride-price and then wooed by her husband. It always involved a cost.

The references are very distinct:

Isaiah 61:10

"I will find joy in the Lord, I will delight in my god. He has dressed me in the clothes of salvation. He has wrapped me in the robe of righteousness like a bridegroom with a priest's turban and like a bride with her jewels."

Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 2:2-3

"This is what the lord says. I remember the unfading loyalty of your youth, the love you had for me as a bride,"

Jeremiah 2:32

"A young woman can't forget her jewelry or a bride her veils."

The relationship was such a strong relationship that God spoke of a husband-and-wife relationship about Israel and Him all through the Old Testament. When Israel turned their back on God; God said they were unfaithful, and He called their worship of idols and other gods than Him--adultery. In **Ezekiel 16** and most of the prophetic book of Hosea, the symbol of Israel and Judah are compared to an unfaithful wife. But God did have Hosea write:

Hosea 2:19-20

"Israel, I will make you my wife forever. I will be honest and faithful to you. I will show you my love and compassion. I will be true to you, my wife. Then you will know the Lord".

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The picture of a faithful bride and wife is also spoken of by both Paul and John in the New Testament to symbolize the relationship God wants to have through Christ with all those who make up the church. Believers have been bought by Christ with the bride-price of the blood of Christ and now He is wooing them by His love.

When Paul gets ready in ***Ephesians 5:22-33***, to teach how a husband and wife are to relate as Christians, he draws a parallel to the relationship of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, to His bride, the Church. Paul makes this symbol so obvious when he writes: "This is a great mystery. (I'm talking about Christ's relationship to the Church)" ***Ephesians 5:32***. Paul makes it clear that he sees himself as giving the church as a bride to Jesus as the only proper suitor. He says in ***II Corinthians 11:2***: "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."

But it is in the end of the Book of Revelation, where the symbol of the bride, who ultimately represents all believers, is put in clear focus:

1. **First**, we read the formal announcement of the wedding day. "Let us rejoice and be happy and give Him glory because it's time for the marriage of the lamb.

Revelation 19:7-9

"His bride has made herself ready. She has been given the privilege of wearing dazzling, pure linen. This fine linen represents the things that God's holy people do have God's blessing and approval."

Just like the other references in the Bible, the bride has meticulously prepared for the marriage, and this is a symbol for the Christian faith and actions that have been a part of the believer's life.

2. **Second**, the bride of Christ, every believer, becomes fully prepared with an appearance far beyond anything imaginable. John writes of that moment the bride is presented to Jesus the Bridegroom.

Revelation 21:2-4

"Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne say, 'God lives with humans! God will make His home with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won't be any more death, there won't be any grief, crying or pain, because the first things have all disappeared.'"

The Bride in the Bible is the symbol of all believing people. They have been bought with the ultimate price, the blood of Jesus, paid on the cross by giving His life and wearing His righteousness for all eternity.

I want to quote what Charles Spurgeon wrote about this symbol of Christ.

“Christ Jesus has no quarrel with His spouse. She often wanders from Him and grieves Him, but He does not allow her faults to affect His love. He may chide, but it is always in the tenderest manner, with the kindest intention, it is “my love” even then. There is not a remembrance of her follies. He does not cherish ill thoughts of her, but He pardons and loves as well after the offense, as before it.

Symbol: “Bridegroom / Jesus Christ’

What does the Bible say about the bridegroom, Jesus Christ? This symbol is more often than not just stated. But Paul in **Ephesians 5:22-33** tells us the model of Jesus as the bridegroom and believers as the bride is the very model for how to have a great marriage that God can bless.

Jesus is making all the preparations needed for the care of His bride and **Matthew 25** tells a story of how the bride needs to be ready for Jesus. It is also the thrust of **John 14:1-3**, where Jesus in a marriage-task-like narrative tells His followers to be ready for Him, because He will return and take them to a place, He has prepared for them to live with Him.

In **Revelation**, the symbol of Jesus as our Bridegroom reaches a climax. The very throne of God in heaven announces:

Revelation 19:7

“Let us rejoice, be happy, and give him glory because it’s time for the marriage of the lamb. His bride has made herself ready.”

The last four chapters of **Revelation** contain several more times that Jesus as the bridegroom is used as a sign for the believers. The Bible’s final picture of Christ is as a Bridegroom. What a great picture and invitation that is.

We lose a lot of the significance of this symbol because our marriage customs are so much different than those in the Bible. The role of the bridegroom is significant in Jewish history and culture. After he visits the home of the bride to secure the blessing on the two of them getting married, he leaves her dwelling, her home. She prepares herself by getting ready to be an excellent wife, but he has very specific tasks that he is to perform before he can return and claim her as his wife. First, he prepares for her a home where they can live; now you see the thought behind what Jesus says to His disciples in **John 14** to comfort them about His leaving. She was born into the first house where she lived, but her married home will be built just for her and her husband to make a life. The symbol is very clear for us who have accepted Christ. We were born into our first life but through Jesus you are rebuilt by being born again, something that Jesus has just for you. Jesus is preparing a special place so that we can be where He is and He has prepared us so that we will belong in that place.

There is a second part of the courting and marriage customs of the Hebrews that expands the symbolism of the bride and bridegroom. The bridegroom always took a trip to come and get the bride in every Jewish marriage. There cannot be a wedding unless the bridegroom makes a journey

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to the bride's house. It did not make a difference where she lived, across the camp or across the desert; wherever she was, he had to journey to her." The bridegroom is a symbol of God. And we are born to be the bride. But in order for there to be a marriage, the bridegroom must always journey from his house to the house of the bride. So according to this custom, 2,000 years ago the Bridegroom, God, undertook the journey of the bridegroom. He traveled not across a city or desert, but across time and space. . .from heaven, the house of the bridegroom, to earth, the house of the bride. The bride never took a journey to the bridegroom. It is God who journeys to you. And no matter where you find yourself, He will be the one who comes to you. . .and who knocks on the door of your heart. We, like the bride of the Hebrew custom are to open up and let Him in.

Jesus made clear that the wedding he had in mind was a future event. He told a parable about that wedding in **Matthew 22:1-4** where a king planned a wedding for his son and many people were invited that did not come. Perhaps they thought they would just be observers, but we see in the signs of the Bible that they would have actually been the bride in the wedding. This ceremony does finally take place in **Revelation 21:2** where the bride, all the believers in Jesus Christ, are ready to have an eternal marriage with Jesus.

In marriage, the first human relationship, we find the ultimate sign of God's purpose in creating us; that we might live with him forever in the holy bonds of matrimony. God will eternally live with people who believe in Him.

Symbol: 'Feasts / Festivals'

God also used the feasts/festivals of Israel as a symbol to remember some of the greatest events in the life of Israel. The festival has become the holiday in our time, but it is just a compilation of the two words, holy and day. The seven feasts or festivals God asked the Hebrews to celebrate were:

1. Feast of Passover
2. Feast of First Fruits
3. Feast of Pentecost
4. Feast of Unleavened Bread
5. Feast of Trumpets
6. Feast of Day of Atonement
7. Feast of Tabernacles

Three of those Feasts have New Testament significance: The Feast of Passover was fulfilled in the death and burial of Jesus and the institution of the Lord's Supper; the Feast of First Fruits was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the first fruits of the dead; and the Feast of Pentecost, representing the harvest of produce, was fulfilled when the Church of Jesus Christ started in Jerusalem guided and led by the Holy Spirit and the Disciples of Jesus, and added 3,000 baptized people that day. The other four will all be fulfilled at the end of times when Jesus comes again, and it will start when the trumpets sound to raise the dead in Christ.

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Symbol: 'Canaan / Heaven'

God used signs and symbols to teach His followers that He would have a special relationship with them also in heaven. We have looked at heaven as a special sign and in this study, I want us to also look at Canaan, another symbol of Heaven. We have shortened the symbol of Canaan today and often just speak of Heaven as the Promised Land.

The Land of Canaan came to have **two** symbolic meanings for believers.

- 1.** It can remind us of our life before Christ. It was a time when several of us were held in bondage to many different things, like the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and it was a time when many of us wandered in the desert like the Israelites did for 40 years. But for each of these dire circumstances that we had caused, the Lord has stepped out and ushered us into Canaan, The Promised Land, where He is our Lord and Savior. It is interesting with this symbol and the way that it was lived out that God not only changed those who lived in the Promised Land, He changed the land by their very presence. So, the Hebrews as they pushed the idolaters out of the land created the promised land that God had promised.
- 2.** The symbol here is also very clear. When we give territory in our mind, our life, our lifestyle, and our heart over to God we create even in ourselves the promised land that God has given. So, we who were created in the image of God and then took sin into our life have had the sin cleansed and once more stand before Jesus without sin. That may not sound like a great change, but the Bible tells us, it is what God wants to put in your life right now.

Symbol: "Horse"

I want to look at one unusual symbol in the Lord's use of biblical details to bring peace and expectation to His believers. It is the 'Horse'. The horse was first written about in **Job 39:19-25** to illustrate the symbol of God's creative power in creating something with such beauty and strength. The horse throughout the Bible became a sign of power and military might. Horses were seldom ridden into battle during Bible times, but they were used to pull chariots, the ultimate military weapon of both the Old and New Testament eras.

So, when God wants to reassure those who are experiencing the Roman persecution of the First Century in the book of Revelation, He frequently uses horses and they are under the control of God. Interesting, God wants the readers to know that He is the one with power during the times of trial and tribulation and He is the source of salvation, physically and spiritually. Horses in Revelation are the most famous ones in the bible. They are always war horses, and they signal the final wars and time of tribulation. These are four different colors of horses in **Revelation 6**: White, Red, Black, and Pale. Each symbolizes a form of judgment that will come upon the earth. They will signal destruction.

One other horse is quite prominent in Revelation. It is the White horse that Jesus will ride as He leads the army of believers to earth. His description is one of majesty and power: He has a host of crowns

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on His head; His name is written on Him but only He knows what it means; He wears clothes dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God **Revelation 19**. He also leads a huge herd of white horses that carry His believers. The horse in the bible is an animal of value and military might and God is seen riding on it with supernatural horsepower.

As Habakkuk wrote:

"You march with your horses into the sea, into the mighty raging water". Habakkuk 3:15

Symbol: 'Seal'

When God is in the details it carries through in every way. A Seal or Mark was a sign of authority in the bible. They spoke of power and authority and in a vain attempt to keep Jesus from rising again, the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to place his seal on the tomb and guard it with soldiers, **Matthew 27:62-66**. It did not keep Jesus from rising from the dead nor the angels from rolling the stone back so that all could see the tomb was empty, **Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-7; and John 20:1-10**. God and Jesus were so close, that John could write: **"After all, the Father has placed his seal of approval on him (Jesus)."**

The Book of Revelation shows through the use of the 'Seal' that Jesus has the power and authority to open this last chapter of history and let it unfold. He is the only one in **Revelation 5** that is worthy to break those seven seals and He does in the vision as the punishments unfold. We remember that the number '7' was a symbol of perfection, so these seven judgements all opened by Jesus are the perfect ones. We see in **Revelation** that everyone who belongs to Christ will be sealed by Jesus. This may not mean protection from suffering in this life, but it is anticipation of an eternity with God, where the Lamb, **"will wipe every tear from their eyes."** **Revelation 7:7**

Perhaps the most fearsome and worrisome mark or seal is the mark of the beast in **Revelation 13:16-17**. It will control who can do commerce and business in the very last days of tribulation and the mark will be the brand of the beast upon people. **Revelation 13:16-17**. This "Seal" may seem to give preferential treatment to people here on earth, but it is only temporary, for their future is unfortunately tied to the face of the beast with whom they will spend eternity in torment.

Power & Authority of God

We see through the use of marriage, the bride, the groom, the holidays or feasts, the items of power and authority God will show that we truly belong to Him and will even in this life begin to remove the fear and trepidation, of what evil can do to us.

Symbol: 'Khatan / He Who Joins Himself'

It leads to one last thought I want us to see when Jesus is our bridegroom. In Hebrew the word for bridegroom is 'khatan'. It means, **"He who joins himself."** It is another definition for God, 'He who joins himself.' If you let that symbol become real for you, it can change your life. Many consider God very distant as someone they have to convince to love and forgive them. They plead with God for His forgiveness because they think it is so hard to gain. But the word tells us that if we allow God to join

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Himself to us, we will be radically different when He is our **khatan**. How? When God joins Himself to you, you have His nature, His heart, you do not need to convince Him to love you and you know that He already does.

God is the **Khatan**, and so He has joined Himself to us. He has put all that is Him into all that is you. So, there's no part of you that he will not attach Himself to. . .no matter how dark it is, or sinful, or ugly. Because He is the **Khatan**, He has even joined Himself to your sins. That is what the death of Messiah on the cross really is—He who joins himself to you, joins Himself to everything you are, even the ugliest parts of your life. Because of this miracle, there is now nothing that can separates you anymore from His love. For He is the **Khatan, the One who has joined Himself. . .completely, totally, and forever. . .to you.**" He is your **Khatan**, Bridegroom.

The symbolism of the Bible tells us: We are Loved by God!

Lesson 7: "Why Signs and Symbols About Heaven?"

In this lesson, we will see why God used so many signs and symbols to describe Heaven. We see glimpse after glimpse of Heaven and many times we have a full view. Why not just let Heaven be Heaven; why all the signs and symbols to explain it to us? We will see that the original Old Testament language of Hebrew and the New Testament language of Greek are vital to what God tells us about Heaven.

Let's start with three of the valuable earthly items that God said are in Heaven:

1. Precious Stones
2. Clear Crystal/Transparent Items
3. Gold

Perhaps God has much more to tell us than just that earthly valuable things will be foundations and paving in Heaven.

Symbol: 'Precious Stones'

We find a long symbolic connection between precious stones or jewels and valuable items in the Kingdom of God. As a whole, in the Bible they symbolize beauty, value and permanence, just as they do in our mind today. The first mention in the Bible of precious stones or jewels is in the description of the high priest's breastplate in **Exodus 28:17-21**. The stones are all given Old Testament names and the type of stone does not seem to be the most important thing about the breastplate but the 12 together represent the enduring value and preciousness of the 12 tribes of Israel in God's eyes.

Precious stones and jewels were signs of wealth, status and authority, they were often the spoils of war and therefore they became symbols for wealth and power. They were primarily used for adornment in the world at the time of the Bible.

However, God taught two kinds of symbolic precious stones or jewels:

1. **Character Jewels.** So, a person could and should adorn themselves with jewels of wisdom and gentleness. **Proverbs 1:9** says, "*discipline and teachings are a graceful garland on your head and a golden chain around your neck.*" **Proverbs 8:11** says, "*Wisdom is better than jewels. Nothing you desire can equal it.*" Peter states the same in **1 Peter 3:3-4** when he writes: "*Beauty doesn't come from hairstyles, gold jewelry, or clothes. Rather, beauty is something internal that can't be destroyed. Beauty expresses itself in a gentle and quiet attitude which God considers precious.*" **Proverbs 31:10** says, "*A wife with these qualities is more precious than jewels.*" The earthly value placed on jewels pales in comparison with the value believers should place on inner character.
2. **Kingdom Jewels.** Precious stones and jewels were used to portray the value of God's kingdom. Jesus told two parables in **Matthew 13** to prove this. The first was about a man who found a treasure hidden in his field and since it had more value than all he owned; he

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took all he owned, sold it and bought the field so he could own the treasure. The second spoke of a pearl merchant who found a pearl so valuable that he sold all of his collection to buy this one pearl. The jewels of Heaven are more valuable than any jewels on this earth.

The people of God are the jewels of God in **Zechariah 9:16**; but it is in Revelation that the precious stones and jewels are described as an integral part of Heaven. In **Revelation 21** we read that the Heavenly city is constructed of gold and precious jewels, built on a foundation of precious stones representing the 12-tribes of Israel. The high priest's breastplate was a miniature representation of this ultimate reality. The gates to the city are huge single pearls, engraved with the names of the 12-tribes of Israel. The resplendence and beauty of the precious stones in Heaven are symbols representing the infinite power and worthiness of God, the King above all kings. So, the precious stones and jewels in Heaven are symbols of God and His Divine power and majesty, not a sign of how plush and lush Heaven will be. We serve a God above every other Lord and every other King and of course He would have items of value far beyond what any other lord or king had.

One precious stone had even more significance and symbolism than the others. The Hebrew word for sapphire is '*sappir*' and it means to speak, to tell, or to declare. So, to the Hebrew listener, even though they probably did not own any sapphires, when they heard the name of the jewel it would remind them that every Word of God is a sapphire, a spoken sapphire, and is more precious than the jewel. If one has no treasures in this world, but has the Word of God then one is rich. Every Word of God is a treasure of priceless value. So, when you read or hear a Word from God receive it as if you were receiving a precious jewel. And they gave it in the same way. They gave jewels of blessing; jewels of encouragement, jewels of worth, jewels of mercy, jewels of love, jewels of forgiveness, jewels of joy, and jewels of hope. They gave spoken sapphires.

Symbol: 'Clear Crystal / The Transparent'

Another item of value in Heaven is the 'Clear Crystal/ The Transparent'. Crystal or the transparent were not a common Bible thought or symbols but it was used to show clarity or understanding. It was not a color but was considered a gem since glass was practically unknown at this time. Even in the Old Testament, Ezekiel uses crystal to explain the unexplainable: First, he sees creatures and wheels that float and hover in a fantastic display of unearthly power and says, "*Something like a dome was spread over the heads of the living creatures. It looked like dazzling crystal.*" **Ezekiel 1:22.**

Again, it is in **Revelation** where the vision of John is filled with references to crystal. The brilliant transparency of several parts of Heaven were just like '*crystal*' to John., His first view of Heaven shows,

Revelation 4:6

"In front of the throne, there was something like a sea of glass as clear as crystal. In the center near the throne and around the throne were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and in back."

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When John first sees New Jerusalem, he highlights the transparency that he sees.

Revelation 21:9-11

"He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven. It had the glory of God. Its light was like a valuable gem, like gray quartz, as clear as crystal."

Heaven, the new city of Jerusalem, had a special river flowing from the throne and John said,

Revelation 22:1

"The angel showed me a river filled with the water of life, as clear a crystal. It was flowing from the throne of God and of the lamb."

The writers of the Bible were telling us that everything about Heaven will be clearer than ever before. We will know and see as we have never seen before. Suddenly, everything will be as clear as it can be, crystal clear!!

This contrast is spoken of in the Bible. Paul writes:

I Corinthians 13:12,

"Now we see a blurred image in a mirror. Then we will see very clearly. Now my knowledge is incomplete. Then I will have complete knowledge as God has complete knowledge of me."

The symbol and image of crystal and transparency in Heaven highlights the truth that the life we live here on earth is but a shadow of what is to come. It is a symbol that points to the greater spiritual truth that Heaven is more real than anything anyone has ever seen before.

Symbol: 'Gold'

We have looked at two items of great earthly value and see that neither is in Heaven to show wealth, but to tell us more about Heaven. One other item of value in Heaven is gold, let's see what the symbolism of 'gold' in Heaven is.

Gold has always been prized for its rarity and permanence. It is useful in its pure state even before it is refined and it never tarnishes like other metals do. It was first used in the Bible in **Genesis 13** to show wealth and royalty; it is shown in **II Samuel** as the core of royal status, scepters and crowns; and it was a symbol of the kingship of Jesus when the wise men gave their gifts, including gold, to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

Gold was used as an important part of worship in the Tabernacle, Temple, the Ark of the Covenant, utensils of worship, and even the instruments played in the Temple.

The use of gold in the tabernacle and temple symbolized the value the worshiper placed on the God they were worshiping. It was considered the greatest of earthly items and was used in comparison to the greatest parts of the life of a believer. **Psalms 19:10** tells us that the teachings of God's Word are more desirable than gold; **Proverbs 3:14** tells us that wisdom is more to be desired than gold; yes, wisdom is to be desired more than gold. In **Job 28:12-15** golden idols were often worshipped by the Israelites instead of the creator of the gold; so, God said:

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Haggai 2:8

"The silver is mine, the gold is mine, declares the Lord of Armies." Gold might be a standard of superiority and value but God is of infinitely higher worth than any earthly standard.

The Bible says that the refinement of our faith and personality is like the process of refining gold and the end product is wonderful, **1 Peter 1:7**.

The final use of gold in the Scripture is in the depictions of gold in Heaven. It is a city of pure gold with streets made of pure gold, **Revelation 21:18-21**. It is an eternal home for those who spent their lives living for the things that last, symbolized by the gold, silver, and precious stones representing a life lived for Christ and for His kingdom, **1 Corinthians 2:12**.

The symbol of gold in Heaven is: gold is an image for value and permanence. Just as God had the Israelites cover the temple and tabernacle with gold, for those who have been refined and saved by God, as believers who persevered to the end, their faith has been proven to be as genuine as gold. They are to enjoy eternal life in the city of gold with the King who is above all things.

Symbol: 'Throne of God'

The throne of God is a symbol of His power and His care for His people. The first throne in Scripture is the throne on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, **Exodus 25:17-22**, and **Numbers 7:89**. The glory of the Lord filled the temple like it filled the throne room of Heaven, **Isaiah 6:1**. It was the area on the top of the Ark between the two angels. God was the king of Israel at that time, so He alone possessed the throne.

God's throne symbolizes His authority and majesty. We see it clearly in the metaphor of **Isaiah 66:1** where God declares, *"Heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool."* Other passages tell us that the throne of God is symbolic of His omnipotent sovereignty over human events and human governments; it is regal, made of gold, and gemstones, and surrounded by a rainbow, **Revelation 4:3**; and in the Heaven that John saw, it had lesser throne, **Revelation 4:4**, a sea of glass **Revelation 4-6**, and a myriad of angels, **Revelation 5:11**. It is dazzling, inspiring awe in those who saw it in a way that earthly thrones can only begin to impress, **Ezekiel 1:26**, **Daniel 7:9**, and **Revelation 4:5** and **20:11**. It is an eternal representation of God's authority.

It is also symbolic of His judgment and many passages speak of a time where people appear before the throne of God for judgment, where he is the supreme judge.

God's throne also points to His presence among his people.

Revelation 21:5-6

"He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' He said to me, 'It is done, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.'"

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A description of the passage in Ezekiel tells us more about the throne and the rainbow that surrounded it. Ezekiel used a Hebrew word that meant, like the appearance of a rainbow, and another like the appearance of a throne, and one for even like the appearance of the glory of God. It was more than Ezekiel could describe. It was the appearance of the similitude of all these things. Why? Because no matter how hard Ezekiel tried, he could not describe what he saw in the vision. It was beyond the highest praise, the deepest thought and the most sophisticated theology. So, when you think of the throne of God and remember the Hebrew words Ezekiel used to describe it, remember that God is always more than you think He is, and there is always more to find. Therefore, you must seek Him every day and every moment. Draw near to Him with an open heart, and He will meet you, way beyond the appearance of the likeness of the similitude.

Symbol: 'Scrolls'

A series of scrolls are also a part of Revelation and a strong part of Heaven. In **Revelation 5:1-2**, we find John the Revelator so upset because no one is able to open the scroll but a powerful angel announces in the vision that the Lamb-Jesus is worthy to open and unroll the scroll and all the seals that went with it. It is later in the **Book of Revelation** where we see another vital and important scroll, it is the Book of Life and the symbolism is right out of the Jewish custom of keeping a citizenship book of the people who lived in each town, **Nehemiah 7:5, 64**. If your name was blotted out of that official register, your citizenship had been revoked. So, only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life can enter Heaven, **Revelation 21:27**.

Symbol: 'Water'

Water will be a part of Heaven and some of the most powerful water imagery in the Bible appears in John's vision of the end times. In the pages of Revelation Jesus is at last pictured in his full glory having a voice, *"like the sound of raging waters."* **Revelation 1:15**; John reveals that the Good Shepherd will lead believers to *"springs filled with the water of life, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes,"* **Revelation 7:17**; and even to the last chapter of Revelation the triumphant call is to come to the water of Heaven as it says, *"Let those who are thirsty come! Let those who want the water of life take it as a gift."* **Revelation 22:17**.

Symbol: 'River'

The final view of Heaven in Revelation starts:

Revelation 22:1

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life as clear as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city."

Symbol: 'Horns'

The Book of Revelation uses the symbolism of horns to contrast the power of the Anti-Christ, the Religious Beast and Christ. The concept of a horn speaks of ten kings, co-conspirators in the Bible

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against Jesus, the Lord of lords and the King of kings. But only one horn of power will be in Heaven, all authority will belong to Christ.

Symbol: 'Eden'

The last symbol I want to examine is Eden. This beautiful garden is found at the start of creation and it is seen in symbol as Heaven appears. Ezekiel mentions Eden the most often of all writers in the Bible and five times he speaks of Eden as a place where all was right in the world and everything was just as God had intended it to be. Eden is synonymous with perfection, with everything being the best it can be. Things are beautiful and fruitful there, with no negatives or difficulties to hamper daily life and no sin or shame to mar relationships.

It is in **Revelation** that we see three elements of Eden that will be a part of the eternal paradise.

1. The Tree of life will be present along with the River of Life.
2. God will be present with His creation and all will live together.
3. All present will be redeemed and have the mind and heart of Jesus. **Revelation 22**

Every aspect of Eden, including rivers and trees, has been redeemed and re-created only now with eternal life. And best of all, the close relationship between human beings and God has been rekindled as they see God face-to-face. Like the first man and woman, those who become citizens in the kingdom of Heaven.

Revelation 22:14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

The paradise that sin changed has now been restored without any sin. Eden is a symbol and sign that everything in Heaven will be perfect.

Lesson 8: "End-Time Signs and Symbols—Easy Enough for a Child to Understand"

Now we will look closely at several end-time signs and symbols that were explained by very simple and ordinary objects. It was as though God was making sure that everyone of us, regardless of intellectual ability and acumen could understand what He was going to do.

Symbol: 'Bread'

We will begin with a common and frequent sign in the Bible 'Bread' that was often used as a symbol as well. Bread was first used in the Bible in **Genesis 3:19** where God told Adam, "*By the sweat of your brow, you will produce food (the Hebrew word for bread) to eat,*" Bread often is a symbol for food and even survival. Satan used bread as a temptation to Jesus after Jesus had fasted 40 days in the wilderness, **Matthew 4:3**. Bread was shown by Jesus to be a temporary fix while the bread of God, His Word, will get us to eternal life. He said,

Matthew 4:4

"A person cannot live on bread alone, but on every word that God speaks."

God led the Israelites out of slavery in the land of Egypt and made bread a forever symbol. He had the Israelites consume unleavened bread and it became a symbol not only of their departing meal from Egypt, it became the central element in the Passover Feast called by God, The Feast of Unleavened Bread; and it became a permanent part of the act of communion in the Church as bread and juice/wine are consumed to remember the sacrifice of Christ for His Church.

It is on this very point that the symbolism is so clear in the Hebrew but not so clear in the English. Jesus at the Last Supper, the Messiah's last Passover on earth, lifted up a plate with the unleavened bread. In Hebrew the word for bread is '*lechem*'. Jesus took the bread, gave a Passover blessing over the lechem and passed it to all to take. Then, Jesus took the cup and gave thanks. He again gave a Passover blessing for the fruit of the vine, passed it for them to drink as a symbol of His blood. Those two elements, the bread-*lechem* and the fruit of the vine-the-*peree* were to represent His body and blood. Where was Jesus first revealed as body and blood? In Bethlehem when He was born. Bethlehem has two names in **Micah 5:2**: Bethlehem which means *the Place of Lechem* or the *House of Bread* and also *Ephrathah*, which is the base for the word *peree*, fruit of the vine. So, the place of the birth of Jesus, where He first appeared in flesh and blood, contains the same words He spoke over the bread and the wine. The name of the town where Jesus first appeared on earth, is bread and fruit of the vine. It was all there from the beginning.

It was also the mystery bread of the **Exodus** and for 40 years God was in the bread making business. God provided manna or bread for His people for 40-years as they wandered in the desert. *Manna* is an interesting symbol. It is taken from two Hebrew words, '*mah*' and '*nah*' and literally means, "*What is it?*" They called it *manna* because they had no idea what it was. It didn't fit into any of their preconceptions. So, they named it *mahnah*, and defined it as '*the bread of God.*' It became the symbol of the times when God intercedes into our lives with blessings that we do not yet understand, they come as 'manna' or 'what is it?'

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Bread also becomes the sign and symbol of the End-Times when it centers around Jesus. In **John 6**, Jesus continually identifies Himself as *"The Bread of Life"*: "Jesus told them,

John 6:35

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never become hungry and whoever believes in me will never become thirsty."

What a simple but profound teaching, coming to Jesus and believing in Him are comparable to eating bread. The last leads to maintaining physical life, but the first leads to spiritual life. This truth was underscored by the miraculous provision of bread for 5,000 men plus women and children, **John 6:5-13**.

In the original languages bread is also mentioned as part of the coming kingdom; **Luke 14:15-24**; **Isaiah 25:6-8**; and **Revelation 19:9**. Those who enter heaven participate in a wedding feast that includes bread from heaven, **Nehemiah 9:15** and **Revelation 2:17**, God's provisions for all spiritual needs in the person of Jesus Christ.

Even though bread was a common object all through the history of mankind, God used bread as a symbol of the history of salvation:

1. Daily provisions of God
2. Sustaining us through the desert times of our lives
3. Partaking in the celebration of the death of Christ
4. Participation in the coming kingdom through faith in Christ

Symbol: 'Gate'

The next common object that the Bible uses as an end-time symbol is the *Gate*. Every person of all ages was familiar with gates. Only cities that invited destruction were without walls and gates and in most cities of the Old and New Testament times, the gate was the meeting place; the site of the courtroom; and the scene for most of the bartering, buying and selling that went on in the city. It was the hub of action in the city.

Jesus painted a picture of what a special symbol the gate was when he said:

Matthew 7:13-14

"Enter through the narrow gate because the gate and road that lead to destruction are wide. Many enter through the wide gate. But the narrow gate and the road that lead to life are full of trouble. Only a few people find the narrow gate."

Jesus said the two basic choices of life boils down to choosing the right gate; and He said,

John 10:9

"I am the gate. Those who enter the sheep pen through me will be saved. They will go in and out of the sheep pen and find food."

The gate is a symbol of Jesus Himself, the only means of salvation. Just as one could only gain entrance to an earthly city through the gate, so one can only enter the heavenly city through the gate

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of Jesus Christ. It was in that spirit that Jesus drew a great contrast of that choice and put it in End-Time terms.

Jesus spoke to His disciples of a very ominous set of gates, the gates of hell; but He promised that the church that would be born after His death and resurrection would confront those gates and be victorious over them.

Matthew 16:18

"You are Peter, and I can guarantee that on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not overpower it."

This is the contrast to the Book of Revelation which tells about the gates of the New Jerusalem, Heaven, in all their glory, **Revelation 21:12-25**. The gates of heaven will never be closed:

Revelation 21:25

"Its gates will be open all day. They will never close because there won't be any night there."

In the New Heaven, gates will be decorative memorials, no longer needed for protection since God's presence will make heaven the ultimate secure and safe place.

Symbol: 'Building'

Another common word that became a symbol for the End-Times is 'Building.' A building was used in the Bible to tell many stories as a symbol:

1. **House** - It was a way to describe the foundation of your life and your life was a house. This house could be built on either sand or a rock foundation.
2. **Individual Life** - The Apostle Paul in the Book of Corinthians tells us that the individual life is like a building and even when given the same foundation by Jesus Christ, each individual needs to build carefully so that what they have built will last when it goes through the trials of fire.
3. **Christian Life** - Many times, in the New Testament, **Ephesians 2:20; Colossians 2:7; I Timothy 3:15** and **II Timothy 2:19** it is shown symbolically that as each individual Christian life is built and joined together, the resulting building is where God takes up His residence.
4. **Eternal City** - God has always intended to build a great and eternal city for those who follow Him. This was the place that Abraham desired, and so the Book of Hebrews tells us:

Hebrews 11:9-10

"Faith led Abraham to live as a foreigner in the country that God had promised to him. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who received the same promise from God. Abraham was waiting for the city that God had designed and built, the city with permanent foundations."

John tells us in **Revelation 21** that God allowed Him to see that city in his prophetic dream and it was built to the specifications that Jesus had described in **John 14**. Clearly God has told all of His

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followers that they are destined to live in an eternal city, a building where they will live forever with God.

Symbol: 'Candlestick, Lampstand'

Another common symbol of the End-Times is the 'Candlestick' or 'Lamp Stand'. It was the source of light in both the Old Testament and New Testament times, it was the electricity of the Bible. No one went to the wall and turned on a light, or turned on a light switch located on the light or asked Alexius to turn on their lights. It was candlesticks, lampstands, and lamps that brought light to the home, business, Temple or any other structure that needed light.

Jesus called Himself the light of the world and encouraged all of His followers to be a light to the nations and take His gospel message to them. But it was the light that God designed that tells of what is to come. The menorah or lampstand in the Tabernacle was made of a single sheet of pure gold and had seven branches, each topped with a lamp in the shape of an almond blossom, **Exodus 25:31**. Solomon's Temple had ten of these lampstands, **I Kings 7:49**. Each lamp burned olive oil and was kept on all night as a symbol that God was with His chosen people at all times, **Exodus 27:21, I Samuel 3:3**. Sources of the time suggest that in later times the middle light, which represented God, was kept burning at all times. In Temple worship, this object of beauty was symbolic of the light of God, the presence of the shekinah glory among the chosen people. As long as the lamps kept burning, the Jews were aware of God's presence and leadership among them. The act of trimming the lamps each day was a tactile reminder of God's promises. The seven branches stood for perfection and seven was a common symbol in the Bible. The ever-burning light from the menorah was a sign that pointed to Jesus. It is a reference to Jesus Christ in prophetic form in **I Kings 11:36** that says, *"My servant David will always have a lamp in my presence in Jerusalem, the city where I choose to place my name."* The Book of Revelation teaches about the lampstand again in **Revelation 1-3** and tells of the seven churches that have a special message in that passage. **Revelation 1:20**. The menorah of the Old Testament became the Church of the New Testament and will not be needed in heaven because, *"The city doesn't need any sun or moon to give it light because the glory of God gave it light. The lamb was its lamp."* **Revelation 21:23**.

I want to share with you one way that this symbol has been restored. In the year AD 70, the armies of Rome, under the command of the general Titus, destroyed the land of Israel and the ancient nation. To commemorate the end of Israel along with other Roman victories, a monument was built and called the Arch of Titus. If you have ever visited the coliseum in Rome, in front of the ruin is the Arch of Titus, standing guard over the Apian Way and the entrance into the ruins of the ancient city of Rome. Inside the arch were several images of



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Israel's destruction including the carrying away of the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem. Two thousand years later, the Roman Empire lay in destruction but the nation of Israel was miraculously raised from the dead. The new nation needed a symbol, and do you know where they found it? The nation of Israel chose to copy the Menorah found in the Arch of Titus. By building a monument to seal in stone the destruction of Israel, the Romans ended up doing the very opposite. They preserved in stone the image of Israel's sacred golden seven-branch menorah for two thousand years. And that very image from that arch became the symbol of resurrection and the national seal of the newborn nation. . .the menorah. It truly was God's light overcoming the darkness. It proves that you cannot stop the purpose of God. In fact, God can not only overcome evil, He can take what was meant for evil and use it for good. It is all there in the menorah of God's design kept safe for the ages on the Arch of Titus.



Symbol: 'Lion'

I want to share another common symbol for the End-Times the 'Lion.' The lion was a common symbol in the Bible and it was used both to symbolize the good and the bad. Peter writes, *"Keep your mind clear, and be alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion as he looks for someone to devour."* **1 Peter 5:8** But the fearlessness of the lion is used to speak of a righteous person, *"A wicked person flees when no one is chasing him, but righteous people are as bold as lions."* **Proverbs 28:1**. Daniel as he interprets the vision of Nebuchadnezzar describes one of the future nations to control the earth as part-lion and probably the most famous lion story in the Bible is Daniel being saved from a den of hungry lions as the angels kept the lion's mouths shut the entire night.

But the symbol of the lion comes into focus in the End-Times when it is used to describe Jesus Christ. It is **Revelation 5:5** that says, *"Then one of the leaders said to me, 'Stop crying! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has won the victory. He can open the scroll and the seven seals on it."* It fulfilled the prophetic blessing of Israel/Jacob in **Genesis 49:9**, where Israel said, *"Judah, you are a lion cub. You have come back from the kill, my son. He lies down and rests like a lion. He is like a lioness. Who dares to disturb him? A scepter will never depart from Judah, nor a ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes and the people obey him."*

The symbol is one of power and might, Jesus the Lion of Judah, but the work of the Lord has mostly been as the Lamb of God, sacrificing and dying for each of us and our sins. The symbolism is clear, Jesus is the Lion who did much of His work as the lamb. The reign of Christ at the end of time in the Millennial Kingdom will totally fulfill the prophecy about lions and lambs as it says: *"Calves, young lions and year-old lambs will be together and little children will lead them."* **Isaiah 11:6**

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Symbol: 'Eagle / Vulture'

Another common word that became a symbol for the end times is the 'Eagle/Vulture.' Now I know in our mind those seem like very opposite birds, one majestic and the other quite ugly; one a symbol of victory and conquest and the other a symbol of feasting on dead things. But, in the Hebrew, the word is the same for both birds and speaks more of their ability to fly using the thermal currents of the air and soar high above the earth while still observing their prey/food.

The Eagle represented God as a symbol for His quick deliverance of those persecuted by evil and that is one of the great references in Revelation. It talks about the greatest escape plan of the 7-years of Tribulation at the end of all time. It talks about a woman who receives the wings of a large eagle, which allows her to escape Satan, the snake and survive in a wilderness hideout for three and a half years, **Revelation 12:1-4**. The eagle's wings symbolizing the swift getaway from danger that God provides for His people. Scholars feel this woman either represents believing Israel at that time or possibly all believers left on earth during the time of Satan's final rebellion.

God renews the strength of His followers like an eagle; grants them the youth of an eagle; and takes them to safety with the help of objects that look like the wings of an eagle. That is how God rescues His people. He uses that which is common and obvious to explain what is difficult to grasp.

Symbol: 'Grace of God'

Saul was a blasphemer, a violent man, and a murderer and he hunted down the followers of the Messiah and delivered them to the Jewish court for judgment. He was on the road to do that in Damascus when there was a flash of light that blinded him. God had approached a believer in the city of Damascus named Ananias and asked him to go to Saul. When Ananias approached the blind persecutor, he reached out and touched him and Saul regained his sight. The first sight Saul ever saw as a believer was the man Ananias. The name Ananias is a translation of the Hebrew name, Khannayah, which means the Grace of God. So, the first thing Saul saw was a man named, "the Grace of God." It was the grace of God that touched him and allowed him to see. This is a strong symbol for us as well, the first thing we will see after our conversion is 'the grace of God' and it continues to be there for us. God uses animals, birds, names, bread, buildings, gates, and lampstands to show us what He will and has done for each one of us.

Symbol: 'Serpent on a Pole'

I want to share one last symbol with you. It would have been a common symbol in the mind of the Hebrews and the early Christians but is often seen as an abstruse and elusive symbol today. It is the symbol of a 'Serpent on a Pole.' Now to those of you who are as old as I am, we often saw them in our childhood. Almost every Doctor's Office, Clinic, and even some Hospitals had one somewhere near their front entrance. It was a pole with a serpent or snake wrapped around it. But to the Jewish people and the Christians, many who were Jewish in ancestry, the symbol would have brought back to mind what they had been taught in Sabbath School, how the Israelites had wandered away from following God while they were on the Exodus to the Promised Land and how God had sent 'fiery

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serpents' to cause them to turn back. They did turn back to God and asked Moses to help them in the battle against these fiery poisonous serpents. God had Moses create a bronze serpent and put it on a pole and put it in the middle of the camp. **Numbers 21:4-9** and when anyone was bitten by one of the serpents, all they had to do was look to the pole and they would be healed. The saving power was not in the bronze serpent but the God who saves His people when they turn to Him in faith and obedience.

The children of Israel took the serpent on a pole into the promised land but over the decades and centuries, it became an object of worship instead of an object of remembrance, so the righteous King Hezekiah had it destroyed, **II Kings 18:4**. But the serpent on a pole was always a story of the willingness of God to save His people when they return to Him

It also became a sign and symbol of the Messiah Jesus and the eternal life that He would give to those who believe in Him. **John 3:14-15** says, "*As Moses lifted up the snake on a pole in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. Then everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.*" "*Christ became that one without sin to become sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" **II Corinthians 5:21**. It is a sign of deliverance; just as the Israelites had looked in faith to the serpent on a pole to be saved from death, we also look in faith to the crucified Savior to have eternal life.

Why Would God use Common Objects as Signs and Symbols of the End-Times? Because, it is what the average person can understand and relate to and it by-passes what some theologians and religious teachers teach in words and phrases un-understandable to the average person that do not reveal all the truth. Let me share a story from a Messianic Jewish Rabbi.

He said, it is recorded by the rabbis, that in the time of the second Temple, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a scarlet cord, representing the sins of the people, was tied to the Temple doors. When the ordinances of Yom Kippur were completed, the cord on the Temple doors would turn from scarlet to white. . . as the Scripture: "*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*" **Isiah 1:18** They recorded that happened every year on the Day of Atonement to signify that the atonement had been completed and accepted. But then something happened. The rabbis write that at a certain point in the first century a sign appeared in the Temple signifying a change of cosmic proportions. The cord stopped changing from scarlet to white. It was not a sign that the sacrifices were no longer accepted as the rabbis thought; but that they were no longer central to the forgiveness of sins. Because the final atonement had been offered up. . . the final sacrifice for sin. They said this change occurred about 40 years before the destruction of the Temple. The temple was destroyed in AD 70 and 40 years before that happens to be the time that the Messiah, Jesus came to Jerusalem to die as the final sacrifice for sin, the final atonement. The Book of Hebrews declares we are no longer saved by the sacrifices of the Temple or of Yom Kippur, but by the atonement of Messiah. The time the 1st century rabbis tabbed for this change was the time Jesus died for sins. It was a sign of history written in scarlet that the final atonement had absolutely taken place.

Lesson # 9: "What Signs and Symbols Demand our Attention?"

In this lesson we will look at several end-time signs and symbols that demand our attention. God is not only a God of order, but He is a God that follows through in everything that He has ever said. We will take a look tonight at some signs and symbols that must happen for us to see the return of the Lord Jesus. God does not want His followers scared; He wants His followers excited that He is coming back to make it right.

Symbol: 'Trumpet / Shofar'

Let's start with one that has to be a part of announcing all of the last days and end-times; the 'Trumpet or Shofar'. Interesting that the holy days of Israel appear, in one form or another in the New Testament. . .except for one, the Feast of Trumpets. We might ask why it is missing. The answer is; it is not missing but it is found in different things said about it, unlike the other feasts. The Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled at the end of time and so the trumpets or shofars will announce the closing of the sacred cycle or age and the beginning of the next. Let's look again at what you find when the Bible says we come to the end of the age and the earth as we know it is no more?

1. The trumpets of Israel announce the coming of kings and kingdoms and the approaching of armies.
2. The trumpets called the people of Israel to gather before God. So, it is prophesied that at the sound of the trumpet, God's people will be gathered up to His presence. The sound of the trumpet will be a wake-up call. The dead in Messiah will be awoken.
3. It was the sound of the trumpet that announced the beginning of a king's reign. It is foretold that when the trumpets sound, they will announce the reign of the King and the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of the Lord and He shall reign forever and ever.
4. The Feast of trumpets and the holy days of autumn are just a much a part of the new covenant as are the holy days of spring. They tell us that our faith is not only in what was, but in what is yet to come. . .the Messiah returns in triumph. We live because of salvation and yet look to redemption, and still, are above all, a people of hope.

We will clearly know that all is falling into place when the trumpets sound for the leaders of Israel and they begin to battle the enemies around them that attack them. We will clearly know that all is falling in place when we see the Lord use the sound of the loud trumpet to call His believers to Him. We will see and hear the trumpets as Jesus enters the fray to defeat the enemies of God and establish a perfect kingdom here on this earth for a period of time.

We might ask, why are the trumpets/shofars such a dominant sign of the end? Trumpets in the Bible were made of metal or bone and formed into a musical instrument that was at least two feet long. They had a high sound that could be regulated to some degree, but they were used more for signaling than for making music. Ram's horns, called shofar's, were signaling instruments used to assemble the

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army, **Judges 3:27**; **I Samuel 13:3**; or to sound an alarm, **Job 30:24**; **Jeremiah 6:1** and **Amos 3:6**. They are the most commonly mentioned instrument in the Bible, with 72 references.

They were also used to announce items of joy: health, prestige, and strength. Hannah in the dedication of Samuel to the Lord speaks of *"her horn being exalted"* which allowed her head to be lifted up **I Samuel 2:1**; and David, when he wanted to express the new level that God had placed him in said a phrase that also meant *"you have lifted my horn"* in **Psalms 92:10**.

The trumpet was used to signal war, even the New Testament, in **I Corinthians 14:8**, it was a weapon in the destruction of the city of Jericho; and was used continually in the 40 years that Israel was in the wilderness to tell the people what was happening.

But it was also a heavenly messenger for God to reveal things to His people. Just as a new king was announced in Israel by the sound of the shofar, so shall the new King of kings and Lord of lords be announced by the sound of a shofar/trumpet. Even now trumpets are in heaven and John writes in **Revelation 1:10**, *"I heard a loud voice behind me like a trumpet."* In **Revelation 8** when John was ushered into heaven, a trumpet announced each new event in the end times. It has continually been used by the people of God as an alarm of danger and a summons to action. We see all contained in that passage of prophecy in:

I Thessalonians 4:16-17,

"The Lord will come from heaven with a command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the dead who believed in Christ will come back to life. Then, together with them, we who are still alive will be taken in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In this way we will always be with the Lord."

Symbol: 'Son'

The second sign and symbol of the Bible that demands our attention in the End-Times is the 'Son'. I personally feel that much of the confusion and ridiculousness of our time over the End-Times has to do with way too much concentration on events in our lives and categorizing the people that we know. When the Anti-Christ gets more attention in the end times than the arrival of Jesus, we have the plan for chaos and wild-confusion over the End-Times. We already know the end of the Anti-Christ and no matter how evil or destructive he is, he will end up in the lake of fire for eternity, **Revelation 19:20**. His end will be no better than when the soldiers found the body of Adolph Hitler with a single bullet to his brain in his bunker in Berlin along with his mistress who had suffered the same fate; or Mussolini who along with his wife were lynched by a mob of irate Italians; or any other tyrant who has lived on this earth. They are all dead and so will the Anti-Christ be, eternally living in the lake of fire and dead in his ability to influence or hurt anyone. What a contrast to Jesus, the Son of God, who has always been eternal and who will make all of His believer's eternal and live with them forever. It only makes sense that we keep our eyes open to the Son of God and see what happens with Him to read and understand what is happening. You might ask how do we do that? The other people are alive and here on the earth and it is easy to track them but the Son of God is not present with us and it is hard to track what He is doing.

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You have to look to the areas where the Son of God operates. The Scriptures tell us that God is love and if He is the greatest love, then He will put Himself in the place of those He loves. God would have to be willing to walk in our shoes and feel our feelings and cry our tears, and take upon Himself our burdens, and take our judgment and death to save us and give us life. To do that He would have to give up His own life. So, the greatest possible manifestation of love has already been manifested on our planet. God putting Himself in our place. There is no greater love you could ever know. Whether you feel it or do not feel it makes no difference, it doesn't change anything. Nothing can alter this love. No good work can increase it, and no sin can lessen it. Whether you feel it or do not feel it—it's there nevertheless. We cannot change it, we can only receive it and be changed by it. We can only let it change us. So, we need to have a relationship with the Son so we know what the Son is doing.

Symbol: 'Son of God'

The 'Son of God' is a sign or symbol that Jesus often used to describe Himself, 150 times, and these descriptions are considered essential for us to understand God-the Father; God-the Son; and God-the Holy Spirit; the Trinity existed from the beginning is seen as the intimate relationship that it is. When the Church began, the bible extended the symbol of Son of God to include all those who followed after Jesus as their Lord and Savior and so calls us heirs of God,

Romans 8:17

"If we are His children, we are also God's heirs. If we share in Christ's suffering in order to share His glory, we are heirs together with Him."

In the eternal kingdom of God, these symbols of sonship will reach their fulfillment and full understanding. So, when all things are renewed at the arrival of the New Jerusalem and the re-creation of a new heaven and earth, God will make His declaration, because of God's Son, we will be God's children.

Revelation 21:7

"Everyone who wins the victory will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my children."

It is that relationship fully realized only in heaven that makes it more difficult to focus on what the Son of God is doing now. But we have some very definite advantages.

1. As we know more about Him, we understand more of what He will do.
2. When we take our eyes off of the materialism of this world, we see more clearly the spiritual direction that Jesus is mapping.

The children of Israel living in tents had a much better appreciation for all that God and Moses were doing to get them to a better place to live. We often dwell in tents for a season, tents are another Bible symbol. We have a childhood tent and each stage of our life can be seen as a separate tent experience but we need to realize one thing—all that is temporary. It is what shaped us but it is not what determines our future. No matter what happens in this world or in your life, you are not home.

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You are only journeying through. Every problem and every temptation will fade. So, treat lightly and do not take quite so seriously the things that disappoint you and do not label them as sure-fire end-time signs. Keep Jesus the Son as your giver of advice and remember when our heart is fixed on our destination, the Promised Land we will remember and keep in perspective, we are only campers in our tents in this life.

Watch for those spiritual signs along the way and see where and when Jesus is making an impact today. It will guide you to focus on signs and symbols of the Son of God that demand our attention.

Symbol: 'Stone'

I would tell you that another sign and symbol we should pay strong attention to is the one that does not fit the ideas of the world, that is the word 'stone'. Every Passover in the world ends with the singing of part of the ***Psalms 114-118***. In ***Psalm 118*** we find these words, "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*" The word here for rejected means despised and abhorred. We accept the fact that the rejected stone is Jesus Christ, but next spring there will be thousands of Passover celebrations all over the world and the same song will be sung again, even though it was fulfilled when people of faith rejected the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the sign of God. The most pivotal, world-changing life on this planet is that of a crucified Jewish teacher. . .the stone of rejection. And that crucified teacher becomes the cornerstone of history. In God, the object of man's hatred becomes the center of His love, and the object of man's despising becomes the vessel of His glory. How amazing is that?" And it was all there, that night, in the song of the stone.

So stone is a symbol and sign of people looking the wrong way to fulfill prophecy because it does not fit their idea of what will happen. But just like 'stone' is a symbol of the foolish rejection of Jesus, we need to remember that God is not bound to do what we have decided is going to be the fate of our world in the end-times. Even some of the signs that are rejected by the Church may be the very signs God is using to tell His people to have peace and get excited about what is to happen and leave this fear behind.

Symbol: 'Eye'

One other sign or symbol that demands our attention as we study the end-times is the 'Eye'. Eyesight is a common metaphor or symbol in the Bible. It represents: the ability to understand spiritual truth; the idea that we all start out blind but God opens our eyes and gives us understanding; and that habitual sin and rebellion can circumvent our spiritual eyesight and actually cause us to lose it.

God's omniscience is often symbolized in eye-related imagery.

II Chronicles 16:9

"The Lord's eyes scan the whole world to find those whose hearts are committed to Him and to strengthen them."

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Psalms 139:16

"The Lord's eyes are on those who fear him, on those who wait with hope for his mercy:"

In ***Psalms 33:18*** He sees us before we are even conceived, and throughout our lives, ***Hebrews 4:13***. God is covered with eyes, ***Ezekiel 1:18; 10:12*** and God sees everything that takes place on this earth, ***Job 34:21***. As we think of a God who sees all and passes that onto His followers, we need to realize His desire is to give us clear insight into the last days and not have us look and try to understand them with muddy eyes.

Symbol: 'Thorns'

Many people have a very materialistic interpretation of the end-times and see the money, economics, gathering of influence and status as the keys to all that will happen. But a simple look at the war of ***Psalms 83***, and the wars of Gog and Magog show us that they are not won by the size of armies or the amount of wealth each nation possesses; but because the winning nation or people are a part of the future plan of God. The Crown of Jesus, already worn has set that tone. Jesus on the day of His crucifixion wore a crown of thorns. Did you ever wonder why? Thorns were a sign of the curse and God told Adam that thorns would be a cursed part of his life. It is a sign of the curse, the sign of a fallen world, a creation that can no longer bears the fruit it was called to produce; but now brings forth thorns. When a crown is placed on a man's head, he becomes king. When the crown of thorns was placed on the head of Jesus, He became the King of Thorns and the King of the curse. At that moment the weight of the kingdom rested upon Him. So, He was pierced, He wore the pain and tears of man, He died from the curse upon sin, and was the king of the broken, the wounded, the rejected, and those who are in tears. It is ironic and prophetic that Jesus took a crown of thorns that He might save us from the sins that we have committed; but He also gives crowns, and it will be permanent. As it is written:

I Corinthians 9:25

"Everyone who enters an athletic contest goes into strict training. They do it to win a temporary crown, but we do it to win one that will be permanent."

James 1:12 and I Peter 5:4 says,

"Then, when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

Symbol: 'Church, God's Chosen People'

One last sign that demands our attention to observe the End-Times is to remember that God grafted the Church into the olive tree as part of God's chosen people. They were not a separate nation, the Church or Christians, but all one chosen people saved by God's grace. God has not abandoned the special days and prophetic signs of the Old Testament but has incorporated them into the End-Times for the Church as well as for the Hebrew children. Paul tells the Gentile believers not to think they were better than the original branches.

Romans 11:17-18

"Some of the olive branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive branch, have been grafted in their place. You get your nourishment from the roots of the olive tree. So, don't brag about being better than the other branches. If you brag, remember that you don't support the root, the root supports you."

It is vital that to really be prepared and understand the end-times prophecies, we must see the Hebraic roots many of them have. God will fulfill everything that He has ever presented and it will be a fulfillment of the Old Testament teachings of God as well as the unfolding of the end-times.

Let me share just two stories in the death of Christ that illustrate this point that the directives of God to the Israelites were fulfilled in the elements that started the Church.

First, God commanded, **Exodus 12:3** that the 10th day of Nisan was to be a holy day to the Lord. It is the day that the Hebrews were to choose a lamb and take it to their home to be offered up on Passover. The 10th of Nisan was the day of the Lamb and it was the day that Jesus was being led from the Mount of olives into the city gates. As the people were taking their Passover lambs home to their homes the Passover lamb Jesus was brought to Jerusalem and to the Temple. The Lamb of God had to come to the house of God before the blessings of salvation could come.

Second, one other fulfillment was told happened in the law of the Tamid. The Tamid was the name given to the sacrifices that were to be offered every day in the Temple. So, each day the offerings would begin with the sacrifice of the morning lamb and finish with the sacrifice of the evening lamb. All the other sacrifices would come in between the two, **Exodus 29:38-39**. It followed a schedule or ritual. The morning lamb would be offered up at the third hour of the day. With its death, the Temple trumpets would sound and the Temple gates would be opened. Then at about the ninth hour, the evening sacrifice would be slain and offered on the altar, at which time all the sacrifices would be finished.

The morning lamb was offered up at 9:00 am and that was when the Messiah was crucified. The same hour, nine in the morning. So as the morning lamb was slain on the altar, the Lamb of God was lifted on the altar of the cross, and the trumpets sounded to announce the sacrifice, and the Temple gates were opened. The evening lamb was offered at 3:00 pm, the same time that the Messiah died on the cross. All the Temple sacrifices for the day occurred in that 6-hour time span. The Lamb of God, is all in all and covers every moment, every need, every sin, every problem and every answer. He is like the Tamid---which means---a continual, daily, perpetual, always and forever event. Jesus is there for you always, and will be our answer continuously, every day and forever. He died to not only be our source of salvation, He also died as our Tamid, our daily need for a Savior.

Familiarize yourself with the holy days and special days that God gave to His chosen people, first the Hebrews and then added the Church. History will unfold on those dates.

Lesson # 10 "End-Time Prophecies Include Signs & Symbols of Eternal Significance"

This lesson will conclude our study on Unlocking the Signs and Symbols of The Bible. One of the amazing things that our God did was give us many signs and symbols that directed us to Heaven and yet they will not be in heaven. Like the direction signs along our road of travel, they direct us to our destination but are not there when we arrive.

We might ask why would God use temporal things as key signs and symbols, and the answer is clear. God did that because He was more interested in our understanding and interpreting His signs and symbols than in only speaking about things that are eternal. We will find that several of these were in the working heaven, the first heaven that John the Revelator was taken too but will not be a part of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Symbol: 'Altar'

One that fits that description completely is the 'Altar'. An altar was usually constructed of stones that had not been fashioned with tools and was on a raised platform where a fire would be kindled on top of a table-like platform. Altars for tabernacle use were made of metal and the four corners rose, forming points and they were called the 'horns of the altar.

Noah was the first man in the Bible to build an altar to express thanks to God for preserving him and his family through the flood. Abraham built many altars, **Genesis 12:7; 12:8; and 13:18**. His sons did also and these altars were to expand the outreach of the covenant of God.

The Tabernacle had two prominent altars, the Altar of Sacrifice, **Exodus 27:1-8** and the Altar of Incense, **Exodus 30:1-10**. An altar was a place of slaughter or death. In fact, the words altar and slaughter are almost identical in the Hebrew language. The blood of the animal was consumed first by the fire and then the blood of the animal would be officially sprinkled against the altar where the heat would consume it or be spread on the horns of the altar. This animal was the sacrifice for sin and stood in place of the sinner. The animal died instead of the person.

But by the New Testament times, the emphasis on sacrifice and altars had shifted to what Jesus had done through his beatings, mistreatment and crucifixion on the cross. His blood was a one-time offering for all sin. So even today when believers gather, they share in communion and drink from a cup, the fruit of the vine that symbolizes the blood of Jesus. In the end the altar reminds all believers of the sacrifice of Jesus and the provision of God the Father. Therefore, there is no need for an altar in the worship of Jesus Christ because His once for all sacrifice has taken care of all sin.

The Book of Revelation, when John entered into the working heaven of Jesus, while Jesus still directed everything from the nerve center of the universe, John saw both the Altar of Incense, **Revelation 5:8** and the Altar of Sacrifice, Revelation 6:9. But, the New Heaven and the New Earth will not contain any altars for we will walk with the provider of the sacrifice, Jesus and the one who provided this gift of life, God the Father.

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Why all the emphasis on an altar in this life, if we will not have even one in heaven? Because, God wanted a relationship with His creation and it could not occur until people had glorified or eternal-ready bodies. That could not happen until they had been forgiven of their sins and stood before the Father as forgiven and faultless. When the second happened because of the sacrifice of Jesus, it set in motion all that could happen that would allow those eternal bodies. Without the Altar of Jesus and our acceptance of His death for our sins and therefore our new life, we could never had been given glorified bodies where we could live with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever.

Symbol: 'Tabernacle'

The next sign and symbol that God used on earth that will not make it into heaven is the 'Tabernacle'. The Tabernacle was a portable tent that God had the Israelites fill with beautiful items where they could worship Him. It and the Ark of the Covenant which was maintained in the Tabernacle led the children of Israel where ever they were to go.

We might think the symbol of the tabernacle ended when the Israelites built a permanent Temple but that is not true. The literal Tabernacle was destroyed but it was a great symbol to the Hebrews and John, in, wrote in the Greek,

John 1:14 YLT

"And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth."

The true tabernacle, God's holy presence, had come to dwell among the people on earth. It is the writer of Hebrews that unpacks this sign especially for people of Jewish descent when he wrote:

Hebrews 9:9, 11-12

"The first part of the tent is an example for the present time. The gifts and sacrifices that were brought there could not give the worshiper a clear conscience. . .But Christ came as a chief priest of the good things that are now here. Christ went through a better, more perfect tent that was not made by human hands and that is not part of the created world. He used his own blood, not the blood of goats and bulls, for the sacrifice. He went into the most holy place and offered this sacrifice once and for all to free us forever."

The tabernacle is a key image to show believers how Christ's once-for-all sacrifice breaks down the barrier between sinful humanity, us, and a holy God. Because Christ came to tabernacle among us, we can now enter the holy of holies, the throne room of God through Christ's blood instead of animal blood and the work of a human priest.

Why is the Tabernacle not in Heaven? Because the voice of God said,

Revelation 21:3

"God lives with humans! God will make his home with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

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But what a comforting symbol, the earthly image of a God who lives among His people in tents, traveling with them and leading them. It is easy to believe that kind of a God will be with His people forever.

Symbol: 'Temple'

The next key sign and symbol of God that will not be in Heaven is the 'Temple'. The Temple of Solomon, the first Israeli Temple was magnificent. It was covered with gold and almost every item in the temple, except for the altar and laver were made of gold. The Temple was destroyed and restored again by Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah but it was rather mundane in appearance until Herod began his remodeling and reshaping of the temple. It never came up to the standard that Solomon had set, but it was also magnificent in its own way. It was under remodeling construction the entire life of Jesus and forty years after his death in Jerusalem, AD 70, it was destroyed.

The Temple was a key to the life of Jesus. He was dedicated there as a boy, visited with family often for the feast days, at age 12 called it "His Father's House", He cleansed the temple twice, chasing out the money changers and the animal sellers and spoke of the temple and its future destruction. When the Church first started, it started in the Porch of Solomon and the Church met there for a while. Paul told his readers in **Ephesians 2:21, II Cor. 6:36**. In these verses and:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NIV

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

The symbol of the Temple and why it will not be Heaven became very clear when John had a vision of the New Jerusalem in **Revelation 21:22**. He wrote, "I did not see any temple in it, because the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are its temple." In its earliest form, the temple symbolized God's willingness to live among his people and in its later understanding, the temple became a forward-looking picture of a time when a visible building would no longer be required as a reminder of God's presence. He would be present. A symbol and sign that even the disciples thought would be eternal, the temple, was really one more directional sign pointing to the time when God would live with His people.

Symbol: 'Branch'

The 'Branch' is a symbol in the Bible but it seldom represented the arms of a tree. It is first of all a branch that represents genealogy. Six times the Branch is a reference to the coming Messiah: **Isaiah 4:2-6; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12**. They claimed that the Branch would represent God like no other. Jeremiah writes:

Jeremiah 23:5 NIV

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be

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saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior”.

So, in the New Testament both Matthew and Luke begin their Gospel records of the life of Jesus with a genealogy that proves that Jesus is the legitimate branch from the root of Jesse or the tree of David. He fulfilled in every way what Zechariah said,

Zechariah 6:12 NIV

“Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD.”

The image of the branch was also used to show that it can only come from the main trunk from which all branches grow. **John 15:1-4** uses the vine and the branch to explain how this has to happen before anyone can become a real branch. Paul in **Romans 11** tells with great detail of how the natural branches of the olive tree were broken off, the Israelites did not all accept Jesus as the Branch, and God grafted in some unnatural or Gentile branches.

The image of the branch comes to us with an invitation to share connection with a common trunk from which we all gain life and nourishment. But again, genealogy will not be a reference in heaven nor will it be important. No one will be heaven because of a righteous relative or because they are a part of a righteous ethnicity. Heaven will be for those who chose to attach to the vine and become a branch of Jesus. It will also not represent those who belong to Jesus, for everyone in heaven will belong to Him and so the idea of branch genealogy or branch attachment will not be needed in heaven. We will all follow the direction and leadership of the Branch.

The branch was also involved in the worship of the Israelites. When God called them to worship Him in the Feast of the Tabernacles, living for a week in tents or home-made shelters to remember when God led their ancestors out of Egypt and into freedom, God asked them to wave three branches as a symbol of worship to Him for what had happened. The first branch was the palm. It grew in the valleys and represented the fact that when they travelled in the valleys God was with them. The second was the myrtle branch and it grew on the mountains. So, it reminded them as they journeyed through mountains God was with them. The third was the willow and the willow grew by the water brooks. It reminded them of their journeys through the dry places and that God was with them helping them find water in the desert. It was to remind the people that God would be with them in all situations and in their other hand they were to have a fruit-that would remind them of the Promised Land. The entire package, three branches and a fruit were called the Lulav. Reminding all that as you travel through this life you have not arrived until you are in the Promised Land.

Matthew 2:23 says that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. He appeals to prophecy but no one prophet said Jesus would be a Nazarene; however, the passage in Matthew says that the prophets said it. The prophets spoke often of Jesus the branch and in Hebrew, one of the words for branch is 'nezer'. It's the word used by Isaiah in his prophecy of Messiah as the branch that would come forth from the line of David. If you add the ending, the word becomes 'netzeret', in Hebrew the name of the city Nazareth. So, Nazareth speaks of the Messiah as the Branch, the place where the branch was

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from. The perfect name for the place where messiah would grow up, as a branch, and from where He would branch out. It was considered a nothing place, the most obscure and unlikely of places. But God chose it because it was the unlikely place and because it is about what comes through Nazareth and not about Nazareth itself. In some ways it is a symbol that we are all called to be His Nazareth.

Symbol: 'Light / Darkness'

The last words I would like to add to this lesson is the contrast of 'Light and Darkness'. Darkness will not be in heaven just like the Sea/Ocean will not be in heaven; many people like many elements about darkness and the sea/ocean. Let's take darkness, why would something that has been almost one-half of all of our lives, and used by God as a sign and symbol of so much not be a part of eternal life? We must remember that darkness is not a property of itself, but is defined as simply the absence of light. It was the description of the earth in **Genesis 1:2**, "*darkness covered the deep water.*" The first thing God created was light and then He separated it into the light, which He called the day and the darkness, which God called night, **Genesis 1:4-5**. Darkness was shown as a symbol in the Old Testament of the times when people lacked spiritual insight and their spiritual vision was obscured.

All other symbolism in the Bible of darkness has a negative connotation. It speaks of judgment of the wicked and the environment where sin is most prominent. A little Biblical history will illustrate this even more. When the Israelites came out of Egypt in the Exodus one of the first nations, they faced were the Amalekites, who attacked them, the Israelites defeated them but the war would go on. Centuries later there arose a king named Agag, an evil man, and God declared that Agag would be eliminated by Samuel. That happened but it was not the final battle between the two nations. Centuries later, the Jewish people were scattered throughout the Persian Empire. A Persian official named Haman rose to power and he also was an evil man. He devised a plot to destroy the Jewish people throughout the empire, every man, woman, and child. But he didn't succeed. God used the Jewish queen, Esther and her relative, Mordecai, to eliminate Haman's plan. Haman in the book of Esther is called the Agagite and that connected him with Amalek. So, the ancient war continued, in another setting, another language and another land. Yet it was the same war. It was one more descendant of Amalek attacking God's people and again losing the battle.

God's Word is true and His word is the Light. Darkness will always war against the light. The light must always war against the darkness, and there is no neutrality. You either let the darkness overcome you, or you overcome the darkness. There is no middle ground. Either the darkness will destroy the light, or the light will destroy the darkness. In the end, they war; but only the light will prevail because in heaven Jesus and God the Father will be the light.

Jesus alluded to His divinity by saying,

John 8:12

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have a life filled with light and will never live in the dark,".

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He was the light dawning, **Isaiah 9:2** and He also was the Pillar of fire by night and the lamp of the temple. All believers Peter says, **1 Peter 2:9** *"All were called out of darkness and into His marvelous light"*. Satan controls the kingdom of darkness but for the saved, they shall be transferred to the Kingdom of light, **Colossians 1:13**.

Symbol: 'Peace'

I want to leave you with this great sign that shall be fully realized in Heaven. When Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, He greeted them with these words, *"Peace be to you!"* **John 20:21**. It is the only record of Jesus saying these words. It was the first thing Jesus said to them. He could have said anything, but He chose to say, *"Peace be to you."* He said it twice in this interchange, but the big question is why do you think He said it only after the resurrection and not before?

When Isaiah prophesied about the saving death of the Messiah, he wrote this:

Isaiah 53:5

"He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The punishment for our peace was upon Him."

Peace is only promised after the atoning death has been made. So, it was only after Messiah died on the cross and rose that peace could be given. But wait, Isaiah's prophecy doesn't say *'our peace.'* It says, *'our shalom'* and when Messiah spoke the blessing to His disciples. He didn't say *'peace'* either. He said *"Shalom Aleichem - Shalom be upon you."* The difference between our English word *'peace'* and the Hebrew word *'shalom'* is everything. For shalom means much more than peace. It means safety, rest, prosperity, wholeness, welfare, completion, fullness, soundness, and even well-being. So, what was Jesus speaking to His disciples, His blessing could easily read: *"May you be blessed with safety, with rest, with prosperity, with wholeness, with completion, with fullness, with soundness, with well-being and with peace."* All that is in shalom and all is in His sacrifice. This is the blessing that God gives to you who believe in Him.

May you find the shalom of Jesus Christ filling your life as you explore the rich history and meaning of the signs and symbols found in the Word of God.