# Epilogue



# Reviewing the themes and purpose of the Revelation

A s a conclusion to this study, let's briefly summarize the last Revelation of Christ to His people, and evaluate whether the theme and purpose set forth at the beginning of this book is correct. The purpose of the Revelation is to reveal Christ and His spiritual Kingdom on earth and in heaven. It is really nothing new or different from the rest of the New Testament, though it does explain some NT concepts in a different way. The Book of Revelation could be called the Fifth Gospel, for its foremost theme is to reveal Christ; not as the Four Gospels, which revealed His earthly life, but a Gospel revealing Him exalted on high, ruling the world with all power and wisdom from His heavenly Throne.

The Bride is the most valuable possession of Christ, and He gave His own blood to purchase her for Himself. He is not interested in the world's kingdoms; He desires a Kingdom of people who love Him for who He is. He is as jealous of that love as a husband is jealous for the love of his wife. He is deeply hurt when her love for Him fades, or when she disobeys His commands (which are not grievous). The Revelation provides many illustrations of this coveted relationship of Christ for His Church. It is deeply theological, and explains not only the Church's mandate, but what she will face as she attempts to carry out that mandate.

It is sad that disagreements over the details of this great Book have forced it out of our Bible readings and sermons, and its beautiful illustrations and pictures are unused and forgotten. The parables of Jesus are figurative illustrations of the Kingdom of Christ, as are the visions of the Revelation. Parables and figurative language are the most effective literary devices for describing the spiritual realm and the spiritual Kingdom of Christ because they are easy to remember, and they are emotionally more meaningful than bare facts.

The goal of the Revelation is to inspire men and women to press into the Kingdom regardless of the personal cost. The Revelation shows again and again that the heavenly, eternal rewards far outweigh the earthly costs. The blessings promised to those who overcome are beyond our comprehension: *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne* (Rev 3:21). *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son* (Rev 21:7). Blessed beyond measure are those who trust in Christ.

# Pre's and A's

One usually doesn't need to talk long to a friend about Christ's return before finding out if he is a Pre-millennialist or an A-millennialist. Often our discussions over-emphasize our disagreements and barely acknowledge what we do agree on. We all believe that this world is going to come to an end and that Christ is going to return for those who have been faithful to him, and that He will dwell with them in a new heaven and new earth forever. Does it really matter whether there will be a Rapture before the Second Coming, or whether the saints of all ages will live again on this fallen world for 1,000 years before going to heaven? The answer is an emphatic no, as far as salvation is concerned. But we should be careful to present a Biblically sound interpretation of prophecy that does not contradict other Scriptures.

One of the greatest mistakes of evangelism is to promote teachings that Biblically contradict. Most people are not dumb, and they are quick to spot such things. An excellent example of promoting a teaching that contradicts the Bible is the now discredited scientific theory of evolution. How sad that back in the 1800's when this idea was publicized, the first people to jump on the bandwagon were ministers and leaders within nominal Christianity (Darwin himself was a minister). These well-meaning individuals, thinking that science and Scripture were in conflict, were quick to find ways to fit millions of years into the Biblical six-day Creation record. But not without immense spiritual cost and consequences, for it is not possible to reconcile the Genesis creation account with millions of years of evolution. Many, many people gave up their faith because of this error, and the teaching of most churches made the problem even worse. Recently, many Christian scientists have been able to organize and research in order to arm lay-members with facts and arguments that support the Biblical account of Creation in six days, and for this we are thankful.

We choose to believe the Bible in its entirety <u>and on its own terms</u>, not those imposed on it by human intellect. When the Word explains an earlier passage (especially prophecy), we must accept that as its correct and true meaning. Whether in theology, eschatology, or basic doctrine, the Scripture is the best and highest commentary on itself. Forcing a passage to be read in the way a man has decided it must be read quickly leads to strange teachings, misinterpretations and even complete deception.

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy (Rev 1:3).

# Glossary of symbolic words in the Revelation



ANGEL—Angels are spiritual beings that cannot be seen by men. When God chooses to allow a form of them to be seen by men, they always appear in human form, talking and walking like men. Symbolically, angels represent leaders and authority figures, both in the earthly and spirit worlds. The leaders of the seven churches are called *angels* (Rev 1:20). In our view, Jesus is represented by an angel in 7:2, 8:3, 10:1, 12:7, 20:1, and Satan is called an angel in 9:11. Both Jesus and Satan are symbolized by a *star* too (9:1, 22:16). To those who do not like the thought of an angel symbolizing Christ, we would point out that this is not the only place in the Bible outside of the Revelation that Christ is called an angel. Jacob spoke of *the Angel which redeemed me from all evil* (Gen 48:16; see also Ex 23:20-23). Jesus is represented by much lower objects than an angel—*lion, lamb, morning star*—so that is not the issue. Some groups, like the Mormons, teach that Jesus is only an angel—a falsity of the highest order—and this is probably why some Christians are uncomfortable with Christ being represented by an angel. But we should not over-react

to false teaching by denying the obvious. Jesus never appears in the visions of Revelation as literally Himself (Chapters 2-21). He is always symbolized. Angels are spiritual beings of the highest order, and there is nothing that would make them an inappropriate symbol for Christ. Christ is not an angel, but He is represented at times by an angel.

**BEAST**—Beasts, or wild animals, are used to symbolize nations and governments that oppose the Kingdom of Christ. The four beasts of Daniel 7 each represent an earthly kingdom, and the same beasts are used as a single symbol in Revelation 13. Unreasonable men are called *brute beasts* (II Peter 2:12), and Paul said that he *fought with beasts at Ephesus* (I Cor 15:32), a figure of speech in which he likens the hostility he faced in Ephesus to a gladiator fight with wild animals (Acts 19:21-41, II Cor 11:23-27). In the OT, the enemies of Israel are likened to beasts, though usually they are specific beasts like lions, bears, and dragons. Assyria and Babylon, for example, are two *lions* that scattered Israel (Jer 50:17, see also Pro 28:15; Jer 5:6; Eze 29:3; Hosea 13:8; Micah 5:8; Hab 1:8). A *beast* in the Revelation appears to be a powerful human force controlled by the Dragon to war against the Church of Christ.

BIRD—See Fowl.

**BLACKNESS**—Black, when used figuratively, represents mourning, suffering, and anguish. *Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness* (Joel 2:6). Sin is the cause of this suffering. Jeremiah 14:2 says, *Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground (they sit on the ground in mourning*—NASB). (See also Job 30:30; Jer 4:28, 8:21; Lam 4:8; Nahum 2:10.) The symbolic meanings of black and darkness are closely related. Their use in imagery involves physical anguish and pain, mental torment as it relates to the unseen spiritual kingdom of Satan, and the lack of spiritual discernment in men living on the earth. *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?* (Jer 8:20-21). (See also Darkness.) **BLOOD**—The Israelite sacrifices and feasts had a tremendous amount of animal bloodshed. *The life of all flesh is the blood thereof* (Lev 17:14). These sacrifices looked forward to the day the innocent Son of God would give His own blood in the place of guilty man. God made it clear that murder was wrong: *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, and surely your blood of your lives will I require* (Gen 9:5-6, see also 42:22). In that shedding blood is murder, blood became a euphemism for wicked men killing the innocent, as illustrated in Ezekiel 35:6, *Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: [since] thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.* A land *filled with blood* is a lawless place of murder. Blood symbolizes death of the innocent by murder and killing in war. (See also Eze 9:9, 14:19; Ps 94:21; Pr 6:17; Rev 8:7, 16:6, 17:6.)

**BRASS**—Brass was the third-most important metal in ancient times, behind gold and silver. Several items of the temple were made of brass, and it was used in battle and defense. Brass is used as a symbol of judgment or punishment several times in the Bible. *And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass* (Lev 26:19; see also Micah 4:13 and Zec 6:1). The feet of clear, white brass *treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God* (19:15) definitely describes the awful punishment of the wicked.

**CROWN**—Crowns are symbols of authority, royalty, and social elites (Jer 13:18; 48:45; Eze 21:26; Nah 3:17; Zec 6:11). The High Priest wore a *holy crown of pure gold* (Ex 39:30). Crowns are often given as a reward from God for righteousness and responsibility (Ps 21:3; Pro 12:4, 17:6; Is 62:3; II Tim 4:8; James 1:12; I Peter 5:4; Rev 2:10). At His first coming, Jesus was given a *crown of thorns* to mock his kingly claim; at His second He will be wearing *many crowns*. Crowns are used to describe the evil creatures of Revelation 9:7, 12:3, and 13:1 too, and in those contexts represent authority and strength in the evil *principalities, powers*, and *rulers of the darkness* (Eph 6:12). There are two different Greek words for *crown*; see page 204 for their meanings.

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DARKNESS—The opposite of light, darkness is the preferred environment for wickedness and sinful behavior (Pro 7:9). Christians are *called out of dark*ness (I Peter 2:9), not being like those who hate the light because their deeds are evil (John 3:20), and rejecting God so that their foolish heart [is] darkened (Rom 1:21; see also Eph 5:8, 6:12; Col 1:13; I Thes 5:4). In Micah 3 there is an extended passage describing the spiritual darkness that descended on Judah so that the prophets and leaders no longer could discern the will of God. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened...all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone (Is 9:19, 24:11). Darkness is a symbol for wickedness, sin, and the resulting disfavor of God against those people involved. It shows a complete lack of spiritual understanding and disinterest in the true things of God. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness (Jer 13:16). God created light on Day One, but it is unclear when darkness was created; it may have existed before the universe was formed. God is sometimes described as shrouded in darkness: Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne. (Ps 97:2; also Ex 20:21; II Sam 22:10). Mysterious, unknowable, secret, and beyond human comprehension would be the figurative meaning of this kind of darkness. (See Blackness.)

DAY OF THE LORD—This is a figurative expression used frequently in the Bible in relation to the judgment of God upon a people or individual. Though the ultimate *Day of the Lord* will take place at the end of the world, the prophets often used the phrase as a title for any Godly judgment of human wickedness.

EAGLE—In the OT, the eagle was unclean because it was a bird of prey, and the Israelites were not permitted to eat them (Lev 11:13). Many of the references to eagles however, are positive images showing strength, swiftness, and deliverance (II Sam 1:23; Is 40:31; Jer 4:13). Because of their hunting skills and sudden attacks, eagles were often used to represent enemy armies bringing judgment upon Israel after their disobedience to God (Deut 28:49; Eze 17:3; Hosea 8:1; Hab 1:8). Maybe this is why we read that eagles gather at

the final Day of the Lord (Mt 24:28; Luke 17:37), though according to <u>Vine's</u> <u>Dictionary</u>, the Greek word *aetos* is used for both "eagle" and "vulture," and many of our translations read *vulture*. Eagles mate for life and care for their young longer than most animals, providing the reason they are used as a figure of God caring for His children: *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him* (Deut 32:11; see also Ex 19:4; Is 40:31; Rev 12:14). These qualities of an eagle form part of the symbolism involving the cherubim of Ezekiel 10:14 and Revelation 4.

EARTH—In the Bible, *earth* is used literally and figuratively, and one must determine by the context which meaning is intended by the writer. The figurative meaning refers to the people of the earth, as in Is 34:1, Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein. The symbolic meaning is specific and concerns the people of the world who have heard the Gospel. Compare the symbolic meaning of the sea, which refers to the <u>heathen</u> nations and people groups of the world. Usually Israel is the subject of the *earth* that David and the prophets spoke against (Is 24, 66:8; Jer 4:28, 25:26f; Ps 76:8). Jeremiah cried out to his people, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord (Jer 22:29). In the Book of Revelation, earth seems to represent the nominally Christian nations and people groups of the world, and it is to these that many of the warnings and signs speak. (See Rev 7:3, 8:5-7, 9:1-4, 11:6, 12:16, 13:11, 14:19, 16:1-2.) It can be a real challenge to decide if a passage is to be taken to mean the physical earth, or the people of the earth, as in Isaiah 24: the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard. This is true of several passages in the Revelation (see 6:8, 7:1, 8:7, 10:2, 13:11, 16:2). In the OT, earth and land are translated from the same Hebrew word, eretz. The same thing happens in the NT except that the Greek word is ge.

EARTHQUAKE—It is a terrifying experience to feel the ground shake, tremble, and roll like the ocean waves. To realize that the earth, one of the most reliable foundations of man, is not trustworthy after all is a scary and tumultuous event. Almost every time the end of the world is described, an

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earthquake is mentioned. In OT and NT literature earthquakes symbolize and signal an event of great importance, often the appearance of God to man. When God appeared to Moses at Sinai, and to Isaiah in the temple, the earth shook. Jesus' death, then His resurrection, and also His return are announced by earthquakes, and just as a rainbow should remind us of the promises of God, so an earthquake should remind us that someday He will return to *shake terribly the earth*. (See also Is 24, 29; and Zec 14:5.)

**EYE**—The eye symbolizes knowledge and wisdom. The all-knowing, allseeing *eyes* of God *look to and fro throughout the whole earth* (II Chr 16:9) *beholding the evil and the good* (Pro 15:3), not sparing the wicked (Eze 9:10). His *eyes test the children of men* (Ps 11:4) and nothing is hidden from His sight, *all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do* (Heb 4:13). True wisdom leads one to God, as illustrated in the parable of the *single eye* in Mt 6:22.

FIRE—Fire has a two-fold meaning symbolically, though they are closely linked. Definitely it symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The only time the person of the Holy Ghost was manifested He appeared as *cloven tongues like as of fire* (Acts 2:3). In the OT, He was typified in the *pillar of fire* that led the children of Israel through the wilderness (Ex 13:21). John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the *Holy Ghost and with fire* (Mt 3:11). In the Revelation, the *seven Spirits of God* are seen as *burning lamps of fire* (4:5), and Deuteronomy 4:24 says *the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God*. Fire is also shown to be one of the weapons of God in punishing those who are disobedient. Fire consumed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24) and the rebellious Jews (Lev 10:2; Num 11:1). Fire is therefore a symbol for punishment also. (See Psalms 18:12; Isaiah 30:27; Ezekiel 1:13.)

FLOOD—A flood is used figuratively to describe the overwhelming army forces of an enemy. *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him* (Is 59:19). The armies of Egypt and Babylon are represented by floods (Is 28:2; Jer 46:7-8, 47:2; Dan 11:22). And the Roman army that destroyed Jerusalem is also called a flood (Dan 9:26).

FOUNTAIN—Fresh, running water symbolizes spiritual life, Godly nutrition, and the Word of God. We read this in the Bible in several forms, like *fountains of water, rivers, streams*, and *water*. The Lord is called a *fountain of living waters* (Jer 17:13) which will be opened for *sin and uncleanness* (Zec 13:1). *The river of God* (Ps 65:9) nurtures the earth, and flows from the temple in Ezekiel's vision (Eze 47). Jesus builds on these verses: *He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (John 7:38). When Jesus died, water flowed from His pierced side, foretelling the source and beginning of true spiritual life. The Revelation indicates that in heaven there will be an everlasting spring of water that flows as a pure river of life to all (Rev 7:17, 22:1-2). Other passages include: Ps 36:9, 46:4; Is 66:12; Jer 2:13, 17:8; Eze 47.

FOUR—The number four in Biblical numerology represents the entire creation of God, the world. The four Gospels, four directions, four horns, four living ones, and four horsemen all point to the tangible world in which we live. Christ's sacrifice for the whole world is seen in the animal sacrifices of the OT, of which there were exactly four different animals used. The four horsechariots of Zechariah 6 are explained by the angel of the vision to be the four angelic beings sent out by God to each direction of the world—north, south, east, west—in order to carry out His will in the *four corners of the earth*. (Is 11:12; Jer 49:36; Mt 24:31; Rev 7:1; 20:8)

FOWL—In figurative language, birds must be distinguished by their species before they can be evaluated as symbols. A dove symbolizes love; pelicans and owls speak of barrenness and desolation; an eagle of swiftness and strength. We will only study the *fowl* as it is found in the Revelation. The *hateful bird* in Rev 18:2 and the *fowls* of Rev 19:17, 21 come from the same Greek word (*orneon*) found only in these verses of the Bible. Fowls eating the flesh of the dead on a battlefield is a common depiction in the Bible (Deut 28:26; I Sam 17:46; Ps 79:2; Is 18:6; Jer 16:4; Mt 24:28; Rev 19:17) and speaks of dishonorable death and widespread slaughter. See also "eagle" in this glossary.

GRASS-Grass is used in the Bible as an object of comparison with man's

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short life and the futility of his earthly accomplishments. *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away* (I Peter 1:24; see also Ps 103:15; Is 40:6, 51:12; James 1:10). In the Revelation, grass is always used with trees and living green things, which are symbols for the righteous (see Tree). This narrows the meaning of grass as a symbol to the immature Christian, as the sower of the seed describes in Matthew 13. The grass sprang up quickly but thorns, poor soil, and the birds choked it out. So is the green grass, which springs up quickly but soon withers (Ps 102:11).

GOLD—Gold is a symbol of pure holiness and righteousness—the kind that belongs to God and which He imputes to the meek and contrite of heart. Gold is valuable, rare, and beautiful, analogous to the cost of true holiness in self-denial and sacrifice. Christians become *partakers of His holiness* (Heb 12:10), and of His own *divine nature* (II Peter 1:4) when Christ clothes them with the robes of His righteousness (Rom 4:11; Rev 19:8). Pure gold will never rust, tarnish, or fade, and is almost indestructible, another apt analogy to true holiness. Gold as a symbol of holiness is evident in that the Ark of the Covenant, the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table of shewbread were all made of gold. The High Priest wore a golden ephod and breastplate on which was engraved Holiness to the Lord (Ex 28:36, 39:30). A recurring theme in the Scripture is comparing the process of purifying gold to the life of a Christian: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:7; see also Rev 3:18; Mal 3:3; Zec 13:9; Job 23:10; Pro 17:3). Besides being a symbol for purity and holiness, gold is also used figuratively of worldly wealth and materialism: Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days (James 5:3). Notice that it is gold <u>and silver</u>. Virtually every time that gold is used in a negative way it is accompanied with silver (see Rev 9:20; 17:4; 18:12, 16; Ecc 2:8; Is 2:20; Eze 7:19; Zec 9:3). In the Revelation, gold is the chief material of the *New Jerusalem* (21:18). Silver is not costly enough to be mentioned and is found only once in the Book of Revelation (18:12).

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HAIL—Hail is used figuratively in the OT as God's tool of punishment. It is applied to armies of Assyria (Is 28) and to God's arm in punishing a nation (Is 30:30). In Ezekiel 38:22, hail, fire, and brimstone are the weapons God uses to punish Gog, and when Joshua told the sun to stand still, *the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon* the Canaanites, and more *died with hail-stones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword* (Joshua 10:11). Hail is also seen in Revelation as being at the disposal of God in the Temple of heaven for warning and punishing the inhabitants of the earth (11:19, 16:21). In its broadest sense, hail represents the acts of God upon the earth in punishing the wicked and defending the saints. *Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word* (Ps 148:8). *I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord* (Hag 2:17).

HARLOT—The OT prophets used the example of a harlot to illustrate the apostasy of the Jewish nation. The entire Book of Hosea is based around this symbolic meaning. Adultery involves leaving one's first and rightful love for another. A people who have rejected God's love for the pleasures of Babylon are adulterous and are represented by an immoral woman—a harlot.

HEAD—A man's head may be lifted up in pride, bowed in humility, shaken in disapproval, etc. It is symbolic of authority and dominion. A man's head should be uncovered but a woman's head covered (I Cor 11). The king or leader is often called the head (Is 9:15). The human head is the pinnacle of God's creation. Even unbelievers have said that the human brain is the most complex group of matter in the universe.

HORN—A horn is symbolic of power and strength. In the OT, God is often called *the horn of my salvation* (II Sam 22:3, Ps 18:2, Luke 1:69). The *horn of Moab, the horn of Israel, the horn of David*, etc. is said to be *exalted* or *cut off,* speaking of their strength. The altars of the temple had four horns on them (Ex 27:2) and were often anointed with the blood of the offerings (Ex 30:10, Lev 4:7), again representing power. Horns were also used by prophets and priests to anoint kings with oil (I Kings 1:39). In the Book of Daniel, several

*horns* speak like men and wield great power (Dan 7-8), and are interpreted by the angel as symbolizing individual kings or nations (Dan 8:20, Rev 17:12). The *Dragon* of Revelation 12 reappears in Chapters 13 and 17 in slightly different form, but still having seven heads and ten horns, symbolizing the power of evil.

**HORSE**—The horse implies battle, swiftness, and strength (Job 39:19; Ps 20:7; Pro 21:31; Hab 1:8). The Israelites were forbidden to use horses for God wanted them to rely on Him and not their own strength (Deut 17:16). Horses are frequently associated with angels and spirit beings. When Elijah ascended into heaven there appeared a chariot with *horses of fire* (II Kings 2:11). Later, Elisha saw many *horses of fire* in the mountains surrounding and protecting the city (II Kings 6:17). The four horses of Zechariah 6 are said to be *four spirits of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth* (v5). These powerful angel beings do the commands of God in the countries of the earth. The horses of Revelation 6 are probably similar, but they take a more supporting role in the vision—the key figures being the riders of the horses.

**IRON**—Iron and brass are very similar in figurative meaning, often they are used together: *thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass* (Is 48:4). Iron conveys the idea of invincibility, solidity and permanence (Deut 28:48, 33:25; Job 40:18; Ps 107:16; Jer 1:18; Dan 7:19). It was highly valued in Bible times, but was strictly forbidden from use in making stone altars to the Lord (Deut 27:5). The temple stones were sculpted at a distance so *that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building* (I Kings 6:7). Iron rusts easily and contrasts with gold.

LIGHTNING—When used by itself, lightning represents the ultimate in swiftness and brightness, and is almost always used in descriptions of Christ's countenance and His coming (Eze 1:13; Dan 10:6; Zec 9:14; Mt 24:27, 28:3; Luke 10:18; 17:24). In the Revelation, lightning always occurs with thunder, voices, and earthquakes (Rev 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:18). The figurative meaning is different within that context, as confirmed by their OT usage. *The voice* 

of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook (Ps 77:18). This represents God's actions on the earth— His warning voice in the natural calamities of the world and His hand in judgment on wicked nations. (See also Jer 10:13, 51:16; Ex 19:16, 20:18.)

LION—A lion is a symbol for strength and ferocity, from the *two lionlike men of Moab* (II Sam 23:20) to the wrath of a king (Pr 19:12) to the 12 lions on the steps of the temple (I Kings 10:20). Being predators and the *strongest among beasts* (Pro 30:30), lions are an appropriate and oft-used symbol for destroying armies of kings (I Chr 12:8; Num 23:24; II Sam 1:23). The locusts of the prophet Joel were *strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion* (Joel 1:6). The Devil goes about as a roaring lion (I Peter 5:8), but in the Kingdom of Christ the lions become peaceful, meaning that violent men are changed when they turn to Christ (Is 35:9, 65:25). Jesus is called *the Lion of the tribe of Juda* (Rev 5:5) and *the righteous are bold as a lion* (Pro 28:1).

**MOUNTAIN**—In the OT, Israel is often called *Mount Zion*, or a *holy mountain*. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets foretold of a day the pure Israel of God would be a *holy mountain of God*. There are probably more than a hundred examples that could be given, but we offer one from Micah 4:1, *But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it*. Daniel's vision of the huge statue concluded with a stone being hewn without hands out of a mountain. That stone smashed the statue to rubble and *became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* (Dan 2:35). This is speaking of the Kingdom that Christ has set up on this earth. Several parables of Jesus, the "mustard seed" for example, present the same thought. Ungodly nations are also called *mountains* (Jer 51:25; Deut 1:19; Gen 36:8; Joshua 20:7; Amos 4:1; John 4:21). Like the symbolism of trees, the characteristics of the mountain in question should be used to determine if the Kingdom of Christ is signified, or an ungodly nation.

**MOUTH**—The mouth often symbolizes speech: *the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked* (Pro 10:11).

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**NUMBERS**—The numbers of the Revelation, like those in the rest of the Bible, often have symbolic meaning. See the individual numbers in this glossary for their meanings. Sometimes the base number is increased by multiplying it by ten, one hundred, or a thousand to emphasize the number's meaning. Twelve thousand were sealed from the tribes of Israel (7:3-8); *ten thousand times ten thousand* angels (5:11); seven thousand slain in an earthquake (11:13). On two occasions the multiple of a base number is used to increase the symbolism—144 is the square of twelve and 16 is the square of 4. Here is a listing of some of the numbers in the Revelation.

**One**—*hour* (17:12, 18:10, 18:17, 18:19); *day* (18:8).

- **Two**—*witnesses, olive trees, candlesticks, prophets* (11:3-10); *wings* (12:14); *horns* (13:11).
- Three—measures of wheat (6:6); woes (9:12); third part (8:7-12, 9:15-18); types of death (9:18); third part of the stars (12:4); frogs (16:13); three parts of the great city (16:19); gates (21:13).
- Three and one-half—*times* (12:14); *days* (11:9, 11:11). Equivalent to 1,260 days and 42 months.
- Four—living ones (4:6, 5:6, 14:3, 15:7,); angels, corners of the earth, winds (7:1); fourth part of the earth (6:8); horns, angels (9:13-15); quarters of the earth (20:8).
- Five—*five months*: the duration of the scorpions (9:5).
- Six—*six wings* on the living ones (4:8); the number of the beast, 666 (13:18).
- Seven—churches (1:4); candlesticks (1:13); stars (1:20); lamps of fire (4:5); seals (5:1); horns, eyes (5:6); trumpets (8:6); thunders (10:4); seven thousand slain (11:13); heads, crowns (12:3, 13:1); last plagues (15:1); heads, mountains, kings (17:3-10).

Eight—the *eighth* beast (17:11).

- Ten—tribulation ten days (2:10); ten thousand times ten thousand angels (5:11); a tenth part of the city falls (11:13); ten horns (12:3); ten horns, ten crowns (13:1); ten horns (17:3-16).
- Twelve—twelve thousand sealed from each tribe (7:5-8); stars (12:1); pearls, gates, angels, tribes (21:12, 21); foundations, Apostles, precious stones (21:14, 20); fruits (22:2); twelve thousand furlongs (21:16).
- 24—elders (4:4, 5:8, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 14:3, 19:4).
- 42-months (11:2, 13:5). Equivalent to 1260 days and 3-1/2 years.
- 144—144,000 sealed (7:4); redeemed (14:1); cubits (21:17).
- 1,000—years (20:2-7).
- 1,260—*days* (11:3, 12:6). Equivalent to 42 months and 3-1/2 years.
- 1,600—blood flows out of the winepress of God (14:20).
- 12,000—sealed from each tribe (7:5-8); length, width, height of the City (21:16).
- 144,000—total sealed (7:4); the redeemed (14:1-3).

200,000,000—two hundred thousand thousand horsemen (9:16).

RIVER—See fountain.

**SEA**—The sea figuratively represents heathen nations and people. *Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas* (Is 17:12). *The wicked are like the troubled sea* (Is 57:20), which was also the setting for Daniel's vision of the four world kingdoms (Dan 7:2). The many waters that the Harlot sat upon in Revelation 17:15 are directly interpreted by an angel to be *peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues* (see also Jude 1:13, James 1:6). A molten *sea* stood in the temple, and was actually a huge

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washbasin (II Chr 4), also called the *laver*. The *laver-sea* is an entirely different symbol. The sea is also used as an expression to show great distance (Deut 30:13 and Ps 139:9). Interestingly, while there is to be a *new heaven and a new earth* someday, there will be no sea there (Rev 21:1). The sea as a symbol of the general world population can also be seen in a prophetic vision of the New Covenant Church: *the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee* (Is 60:5; see also Mt 13:47; Ps 65:7; Jer 51:42).

SEVEN—Biblical numerologists agree that the number seven is used often in Scripture to signify completeness or totality in the plan of God. God created the universe in six days and rested the seventh; He then instituted the seven day week as a reminder of that fact. There are seven colors of the rainbow, seven sprinkles of blood on the altar, seven days of purification for uncleanness, seven Jewish feasts, seven priests with seven horns marching around Jericho for seven days, seven washings in the Jordan by Naaman, and the righteous man falling seven times and rising again (Pro 24:16). In the Revelation, there are seven churches, seven seals, seven Spirits of God, seven trumpets, seven angels standing before God, seven vials, seven horns, etc. Seven implies fullness or totality; the complete, perfect, God-ordained program of events. The seven Jewish feasts, for instance, form a complete, step-by-step picture of man's way to God, from confession to eternal heavenly rest. The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice seven times indicates complete purification. The Church as a whole is represented by seven churches, which together form a complete representation of it. Groups of seven are not always immediately evident. There are seven beatitudes in the Revelation and seven "signs" of Jesus in the Gospel of John that will not be seen with just a surface reading. Seven in figurative contexts means the designed program is full and complete.

STAR—Stars are used in the OT to describe a large, uncountable number (Gen 15:5, 26:4; Ex 32:13; Ps 147:4). Especially when used by themselves, stars symbolize angelic beings (Gen 37:9; Judges 5:20; Job 38:7; Is 14:13; Dan 8:10, 12:3; Rev 1:20, 8:10, 9:1, 12:4), including Christ (Num 24:17; Mt 2:2; Rev 2:28, 22:16), and evil angels (Rev 8:10, 9:1; Jude 13). It may

seem strange that a star may represent angels in general and both Christ and Satan, but the common link is that all three are spiritual beings. Stars are also used symbolically within the larger motif of "sun, moon, and stars." Though related, the meanings are not the same. (See entry below.)

SUN, MOON, STARS—God created the Sun *to rule the day* and the Moon *to rule the night* (Gen 1:16). Probably nothing in all God's creation is more sure and steadfast than the heavens. The Israelites' calendar of feasts and sacrifices were based on the Moon. When they are used together the heavenly bodies seem to be symbols of stability and authority. The sun, moon, and stars are said to be darkened when the terrible Day of the Lord comes upon a people in judgment (Is 13, 24; Eze 32; Joel 2-3). This seems to be a figurative way to express great earthly calamities, social upheaval, and strife of nations (Luke 21:25). The final Day of the Lord will occur at the end of the world, when the sun goes black, the moon turns to blood, and the stars fall from heaven (Mt 24:29; Mark 13:25; Rev 6:14). The heavens will pass away with a great noise on the Day of Judgment. Joseph's dream of the sun, moon, and stars bowing down to him, figuratively foretold of a day that his father (sun), mother (moon), and brothers (stars) would honor him (Gen 37).

SUN—The sun by itself is a symbol of God's justice and righteousness. Christ is called *the Sun of righteousness [risen] with healing in His wings* (Mal 4:2). And God's justice is symbolized by the light of the sun in several OT accounts like Numbers 25, the story of how the children of Israel sinned by committing fornication with the Moabites. God spoke to Moses and commanded that these immoral men be killed, and that they should *take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord <u>against the sun</u>, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel* (Num 25:4, see also II Sam 12:11. Likewise, the going down of the sun released one from uncleanness under the OT law (Lev 22:7; Deut 23:11, Ex 22:26). The activities of man under the sun are brought out and exposed by the light of the sun, and this is what God wants to happen. The all-seeing eye of God rewards righteousness and metes out justice. We see this illustrated in Psalms 84:11, *For the Lord God is a <u>sun</u> and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold* 

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*from them that walk uprightly*. A related theme regarding the sun in figurative language concerns the picture of the sun going *down at noon* (Amos 8:9), or the sun going *down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them* (Mic 3:6). This darkening of the light of the sun would show the lack of God's attention and favor. Evil things happen in the dark, and without the sun's light they continue unchecked. (See also the glossary entry above.)

SWORD—Symbolic of war and killing.

TEN—The number ten is often used figuratively in the same way the number one thousand is used, and sometimes they are even used together. There were ten commandments, ten virgins, ten days tribulation, ten thousand times ten thousand, tenth of the city falls, ten plagues of Egypt, ten curtains in the tabernacle, ten lavers in the temple, ten horns on the Dragon, ten servants with ten pounds. (See thousand.)

THOUSAND—In figurative language, a thousand is used to mean a large, uncounted and yet all-encompassing number. God's word will stand for a *thousand generations* (Ps 105:8). For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night (Ps 90:4; see also Ps 50:10, 91:7; Ecc 7:28; Job 33:23; Deut 7:9). Sometimes another number is multiplied by a thousand for increased emphasis: A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. (Dan 7:10; see also Deut 32:30; Ps 68:17, 91:7; Song 5:10). Though the number may be used in a figurative sense, this does not imply the object of the language is unknowable. A thousand shall fall at thy side simply declares that all the many enemies of the righteous will fail to overcome them.

**THUNDER**—Thunder is used in the OT to figuratively illustrate the voice of God in action upon the inhabitants of the earth. The *Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel* (I Sam 7:10). *God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend* (Job 37:5). *The voice*  *of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth* (Ps 29:3). In the Revelation, thunder often occurs with *voices* and *earthquakes* (Rev 8:5, 11:19, 16:18).

**TREE**—The most common symbolic meaning for a tree is in comparisons to a righteous man. *Trees of righteousness* they are called in Is 61:3; see also Ps 1:3; 52:8; 92:12; Jer 17:8). This leads to comparisons between good and bad trees such as Jesus made in Matthew 7:17, *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* (See also Mt 3:10; 12:33; Luke 6:43; Jude 1:12; Eze 17:24.) Sometimes whole nations are represented as trees, in connection again with moral choice (see Judges 9; Eze 31; Dan 4; Num 24:6; Rom 11:17). A tree symbolizes human moral choice—green, live, fruitful trees equal Christians, but barren trees, *twice dead, plucked up by the roots* (Jude 1:12) are *brute beasts.* 

**TRUMPET**—Trumpets were used in the OT to announce an important event—gathering the people for feasts and sacrifices, coronations, or special proclamations (II Sam 2:28; II Kings 9:13; Joshua 6:13; Num 10:10). The children of Israel carried two special trumpets each made from one solid piece of beaten silver, which were used in traveling and during war (Num 10:1-10). Many times throughout Israel's history, blowing a trumpet was a sounding of alarm, of danger. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins* (Is 58:1). *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand* (Joel 2:1; see also Jer 4:5; Eze 33; Zeph 1:16; Ps 47:5). The end of the world will also be announced with the sound of a trumpet (I Cor 15:52).

TWELVE—The number twelve represents God's elect, those whom He has chosen because of their faithfulness. There were twelve patriarchs beginning the twelve tribes of Israel under the Old Covenant. Jesus chose twelve Apostles to begin the New Covenant. The number twelve is seen many times in the tabernacle and temple, and it has the same meaning there. Twelve is the number of justified mankind, much like seven is the number of perfection in God and His purpose.

WHITE—The color white represents purity, righteousness, and holiness. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow* (Is 1:18). *And to her* [the church] *was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints* (Rev 19:8; see also Dan 7:9, 11:35, 12:10; Rev 3:4, 6:11, 7:14).

WILDERNESS—The wilderness is used extensively in Biblical literature, and has two different symbolic meanings, though they are related. One meaning relates to the individual and the idea of examination, trial, and testing. Moses, Elijah, and Christ are just a few of the men who experienced testing in the wilderness. The second meaning relates to a nation or people, and involves the idea of punishment, of being outside of the will of God. The children of Israel were forced to wander for 40 years in the wilderness because of their disobedience. And the prophets often spoke of a nation becoming a desolate wilderness by the hand of God because of their sin and wickedness. Today, when we learn a lesson the hard way, we sometimes call it a "wilderness experience."

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