

# The Book of Revelation: 5-The Cultural Context

Context is very important when studying the Bible. This must be taken into account in order to find out what the authors were expecting the reader to understand. This is required with every verse.

There are 2 types of biblical context:

- Textual context
- Cultural context

**Textural context** means that the surrounding text in the document gives meaning to every sentence and therefore this must be considered to get the correct understanding of any statement.

All the books of the Bible are narratives written for an ancient audience. As the audience read or listened to the text being read they formulated what the author was communicating with every statement by considering everything that preceded it and followed it.

We must do the same.

This is why there is the maxim:

**“Don’t take it out of context”**

**Cultural context** means that every statement must be understood in relation to the society the document was written for or written to.

All the books of the Bible are narratives written for an ancient audience. As the audience read or listened to the text being read they understood what the author was communicating in every statement by knowing the meanings of the words and what was ‘signalled’ in the way that a number of words were used together.

In our 21<sup>st</sup> century Western civilization we are totally ignorant of the cultural meaning that ancient people understood when they read the Bible texts which were written for them, in their time zone of history

We **may** understand the words when they are translated into our English Bibles, but the cultural understanding is missing – that is, unless a scholar of ancient languages explains every piece of the text to us.

The Amplified Bible translation assists with this but it is subject to the world-view of the translators. This means that inferences that are added in brackets **may** come from their understanding, not from knowing exactly what the author was trying to ‘get across’.

The Passion Translation may also be a help as it was written specifically to get across in modern everyday English what the ancient authors were wanting to convey to their readers

Cultural understanding of Bible text becomes even more difficult because of the presence of idioms in language.

Idioms are code that locals use in their communication which need deciphering.

Entrenched by usage in a locality, idioms are a group of words which have a meaning not understandable from the individual words themselves.

Some modern idioms we may use are:

- “raining cats & dogs”
- “see the light”
- “over the moon”
- “the old man”
- “blessing in disguise”
- “the best of both worlds”
- “once in a blue moon”
- “through thick and thin”

Someone from a non-English speaking background will need our Australian idiomatic expressions explained to them.

They may know what the words mean and can read and speak them, but their meaning together is peculiar to those who naturally use them as a group of words.

Idioms are figures of speech of which there are many types:

- Metaphors
- Euphemisms
- Similes
- Hyperboles
- Oxymorons
- Synecdoches
- And there is also symbolism



The vision component of Revelation is based on word pictures. It is full of symbols and metaphors which need to be properly understood.

# Idioms

There are too many idioms in scripture to  
come up with a number

( ↑ that's an English idiom right there)

The point to get from this is that you have to be very careful in reading the Bible so you get the intended meaning and not some other which you then incorporate into your spiritual life.

**That mistake is very easy to do**

Here are a few example to help you understand what biblical idioms are

★ ‘Cause someone’s soul to faint’ (1 Sam 2:33)  
= cause someone to feel deep sorrow

★ ‘One’s eyes become light’ (1 Sam 14:27, 29)  
= one’s joy and vitality increases

★ ‘Gird on strength’ (1 Sam 2:4)  
= be strengthened

★ ‘Whatever your hand will find’ (Eccles 9:10)  
= whatever opportunity presents itself

★ ‘Put hot coals on sb’s head’ (Prov 25:22)  
= make them feel guilty and ashamed

★ ‘Outer darkness’ (Mat 8:12)  
= a place away from righteous

= somebody’s

## An idiom explained:

“But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how dark it will be!”

Matthew 6:23 (GW)

Usually explained  
there days as a  
tendency toward  
sexual sin

The idea of an ‘evil eye’ was and is common in the Hebraic culture.

Those who heard Jesus use it would have immediately known what he meant.

In context, the idiom was followed by:

*“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”* (Matthew 6:23-24 NIV)

“Each time [Jesus] spoke of the eye being good or evil, or “plucking out the eye”, he was speaking of the issue of greed. An evil eye is a greedy eye. A person with an evil eye is controlled by the desire to receive for self.”

Proverbs 22:9 shows that this is the correct understanding:

*“The good of eye – he is blessed, for he hath given of his bread to the poor.”*

(Young's Literal Translation)

“[Jesus] was not literally suggesting his followers mutilate themselves. Such a literal suggestion and teaching would be a direct contradiction and violation of the Torah... [Jesus] in the previous verse was suggesting that we run away from greed and idolatry. We should take precautions to guard and protect ourselves from the evil eye of want, to get rid of the evil eye of desire.”

Here is an example of the danger of not understanding ancient idioms that are in the Bible

**Mark 16:18 (NIV)** – they will pick up snakes with their hands; and...it will not hurt them at all;

*“They translated many Eastern idioms and metaphors literally, not knowing their true meaning. For instance, ‘You shall handle snakes.’ They did not know that the word ‘snake’ refers to ‘an enemy’.”*

[Dr. George Mamishisho Lamsa]

A better reading for that section of the verse would be “they will handle their enemies”.

This mistranslation has even cost the lives of many people.

The verse should read like this:

“but if you have an ‘evil eye’ [if you are stingy] your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Matthew 6:23 (CJB)

For a comprehensive list of 124 different Hebrew idioms read my article:

★ “Some Hebrew Idioms”

→ [canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Some-Hebrew-Idioms.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Some-Hebrew-Idioms.pdf)

# Resources:

- “Idioms in Biblical Hebrew: Towards their identification”  
[www.academia.edu/9686424/Idioms\\_in\\_Biblical\\_Hebrew\\_Towards\\_their\\_identification](http://www.academia.edu/9686424/Idioms_in_Biblical_Hebrew_Towards_their_identification)
- “Biblical idioms that have changed their meaning in Modern Hebrew”  
[www.researchgate.net/publication/309351529\\_Biblical\\_idioms\\_that\\_have\\_changed](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/309351529_Biblical_idioms_that_have_changed)
- “Semitic Idioms in the New Testament, Suggest Peshitta Primacy”  
[www.peshitta.org/pdf/Idioms.pdf](http://www.peshitta.org/pdf/Idioms.pdf)
- “Figures of speech used in the Bible” [1,164 pages]  
[www.charleswelch.net/figuresofspeechbullinger.pdf](http://www.charleswelch.net/figuresofspeechbullinger.pdf)

# Hidden Hebrew Idioms

Emet Articles

Meet John, John Idiom. John is a middle-aged businessman stuck in the rat race of life. He had planned a corporate outdoor picnic until the rain clouds violently rolled in. John was so mad he blew a fuse because of the wet conditions. His big plans were now ruined and he was boiling over. “It’s raining cats and dogs,” he complained to himself. A meteorologist had told him, straight from the horses’ mouth, that it was supposed to rain hard. John thought his friend was just pulling his leg, yet now he was really up the creek without a paddle. How could John host a cookout with mouthwatering burgers in the pouring rain? “Well, I guess that’s just the way the cookie crumbles”, John said under his breath as he pushed his grill back to his carport. He worried that because of this failure, his boss would give him the axe. Poor John.

As we might guess, John Idiom is a fictional character, yet his life is just like ours – full of clichés and idiomatic expressions to explain life.

What is an idiom?

I'll email  
you a  
copy of  
the list  
from this  
article

# Euphemisms

A euphemism is “a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing”.

[www.lexico.com/en/definition/euphemism](http://www.lexico.com/en/definition/euphemism)

A reader of the Bible must understand the euphemisms that are written in it if they are to truly understand what the author was communicating to their readers

This task is too difficult for the majority of bible-reading Christians.

This is part of the reason why focussing on the Bible as the main source of spiritual knowledge is not as productive as receiving ‘sound’ teaching and talking spirit-to-Spirit with the Trinity.



Important

Understanding euphemisms  
in the Bible will completely  
change your understanding  
of what's written there



The remainder of this topic on  
euphemisms is for mature  
audiences only

# Here are some of our modern euphemisms:

**Toilet** – ‘bathroom’, ‘washroom’, ‘loo’, ‘WC’,  
‘KYBO’, ‘little lady’s room’

**Sexual intercourse** – ‘have sex’, ‘make love’,  
‘throw the leg over’, ‘sleep with’



Here are some biblical euphemisms

## Euphemism #1:

“And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet; and David and his men were abiding in the recesses of the cave.”

1 Samuel 24:3 (DARBY)

## וילגרְתָא רִיסָה

This Hebrew expression literally means:  
“to cover one’s feet”.

Inference: “relieve oneself”, “go to the toilet”.

The meaning is relatively easy to discern:  
When a man wearing a robe crouches, his feet  
are covered.

A man from the Middle East crouches down in  
order to defecate.

The verse should read like this in English:

“He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.”

1 Samuel 24:3 (NIV)

## Euphemism #2:

“I am your servant Ruth,” she said.  
“Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.”

Ruth 3:9 (NKJV)

לע ופנכ שְׁרֵפָה

This Hebrew expression literally means:  
“to spread one’s wing over somebody”

Inference: “commit oneself to marry somebody”.

In this case the man commits himself to marry  
the woman

There is a double metaphor here:

- ‘Wing’ corresponds to the flap of a man’s coat, and
- The significant gesture of raising the arm to lift the coat flap has the symbol of the man’s commitment to marry the woman.

So, the verse should read like this:

“She replied, “I am Ruth, your servant.  
Marry your servant, for you are a  
guardian of the family interests.”

1 Samuel 24:3 (NET)

“Scholars of the Hebrew Bible have long recognized that what Ruth does at the threshing floor (Ruth 3) is overtly sexual. Ruth exposes the "feet" of Boaz while he is sleeping after he had "eaten and drunk" when "his heart was merry", and then lies down (Ruth 3:7).”

“The Hebrew word translated "feet" (*regel*) is a well-known euphemism for genitalia in the Hebrew Bible. By uncovering Boaz's "feet" (genitalia), Ruth is, in effect, offering herself as a wife to Boaz. Given the patriarchal setting of Israelite culture, this was a transgression of the way things were usually done – it was the man who would solicit marriage or take a concubine of his choice.”

## Euphemism #3:

“None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord.”

Leviticus 18:6 (KJV)

‘Uncover nakedness’ is a euphemism for sexual intercourse throughout the Bible.

Leviticus has a large number of rules  
which use this same euphemism

So, the verse should read like this:

“You are not to come near any close relative for sexual intercourse; I am the Lord.”

Leviticus 18:6 (CSB)

Genesis 9:22-25 states that Ham saw the nakedness of his father Noah. When Noah found out, he cursed Ham's son Canaan for what Ham had done. What would deserve a curse?

Knowing what 'uncover nakedness' is a euphemism for, could it mean that Ham saw his father's genitals and not just his naked body? (See ISV & TLV)

**Actually, Ham could have done more than that knowing the culture he had come from**

## Euphemism #4:

**Matthew 1:25** – “And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.”

“knew her” = had sex with her

## Euphemism #5:

**Genesis 31:35** – “And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.”

“The custom of women” = menstruation

## Euphemisms #6 & #7:

**Leviticus 20:18** – “And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness...”

“lie with a woman” = intending to have sex

“her sickness” = menstruation

(“uncover her nakedness” = have sex)

## Euphemism #8:

**Job 31:10** – Let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down upon her.

“bow down upon” = have sex with

## Euphemism #9:

**1 Samuel 25:22** – “So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.”

“any that pisseth against the wall” = a man

By the way, translators of the Bible into English can also use euphemisms to tone down the frankness of the ancient writers.

For example:

**Philippians 3:8 (NKJV)** – *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

## σκύβαλον

“The Greek word translated ‘rubbish’ is *skybalon*; while the term appears only here in the New Testament, it is found in classical Greek literature as a word for dung or manure. ”



Important

“The Bible provides a model of transparency without indecency that’s worth imitating.”

# Metaphors

A metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable”.

[www.lexico.com/en/definition/metaphor](http://www.lexico.com/en/definition/metaphor)

A reader of the Bible must understand every metaphor written in it if they are to truly understand what the authors were communicating to their readers

This is too difficult for the majority of bible-reading Christians.

Again, this is part of the reason why focussing on the Bible as the main source of spiritual knowledge is not as productive as receiving ‘sound’ teaching and talking spirit-to-Spirit with the Trinity.

The thing about metaphors is that they should not be taken at face value – i.e. they don't mean what they say

Metaphors are used to get a message across more strongly because it uses language that contains ‘pictures’ that the reader can readily identify.

This means that what they are communicating needs much less explanation to the intended reader, not us.

## Metaphor #1:

“The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps 23:1)

A shepherd is someone whose duty it is to look after and care for a flock of sheep. God is compared to a shepherd because he diligently and carefully looks after us like a shepherd looks after his sheep.

## Metaphor #2:

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life’  
(John 6:35)

Bread is a staple food that sustains life. Jesus compares himself to bread because he is able to sustain us spiritually.

## Metaphor #3:

“His bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7)

Jesus’ relationship with his people is like a bridegroom and a bride. But, we don’t marry Jesus. He wants us to be in an intimate, love relationship with him, which are the hallmarks of newly weds who are ‘in love’ with each other.

## Metaphor #4:

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." (Revelation 21:6)

This is a self-explained metaphor. Like the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, Jesus is the originator of our lives and he is the end purpose of our lives. We were created to relate to him this way.

## Metaphor #5 & #6:

**"I am the vine; you are the branches."** (John 15:5)

In the same way a branch draws nutriments from the grape vine plant, so we draw spiritual nourishment from him and him only. Just as a branch dies when it's pruned off the vine, so we die spiritually when we are disconnected to him.

## Metaphor #7:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,” (1 Peter 5:8)

Just as a lion prowls around looking for the weak to catch and eat, so the Devil is always looking for our weaknesses which he uses to ‘kill’ or impair our spiritual walk.

## Metaphor #8:

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body” (Romans 6:12)

‘Reign’ refers to a king ruling, so this is a metaphor indicating that sinfulness can rule (fully control) our lives. This is like a king having total control of the populace.

## Metaphor #9 & #10:

“You are our Father, we are the clay, and you our potter” (Isaiah 64:8)

God is in control. He is our Father who molds us into who he wants us to be. Like clay which can't stop the potter from shaping it, so what happens to us is out of our control – if we let him take control of our lives, that is.

Metaphors are sometimes easy to interpret, but many times they are not because they are rooted in the mind and experience of ancient people

Metaphors are great for creating impact that is lasting because it is in the form of word pictures. They help people get the idea quickly and efficiently.

Impacting metaphors were used by God when he spoke to ancient Israel and Judah through the his prophets.

Here's an example →

**Ezekiel 39:18 (NIV)** – You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan.

This verse is a metaphorical statement.

It needs to be deciphered using the mind  
of the ancient Israelite.

They weren't going to cannibalise their enemies.

This is a metaphor for totally defeating them. Just like consuming the carcass of a butchered animal which is defenceless, so their enemies will be easy for them to eliminate.

“The association of Mount Hermon with Mount Bashan would have made sense to Second-Temple Jews familiar with 1 Enoch as well as the earlier Israelites who read Genesis 6:1-4 supernaturally, in accord with its original Mesopotamian context. English readers, centuries or millennia removed from the original readers, are largely unaware of why →

→ this is so. In a word, in Old Testament times, the whole region of Bashan was associated with giants and evil spirits – the spawn of the Watchers according to Genesis 6:1-4 and 1 Enoch.”

Second-temple Israelites of Jesus' time were familiar with the OT, the Book of Enoch, Mesopotamian (Babylonian) folk law and their own history in connection with the land of Bashan. This was the area where Joshua cleaned out the giant clans (Rephaim, Anakim, Zamzummin, Amorites & Emim).

# Bet you didn't know all that!

You can see that studying widely is required to interpret the Bible properly, so you can understand what the writers who contributed to the Bible actually wanted their readers to know.

This requires the study of books on ancient Transjordan, Mesopotamian and Babylon.

Michael Heiser has done this which is why his books and teaching are so insightful.

His website: [drmsh.com](http://drmsh.com)

# Resources:

- A Tentative Catalogue of Biblical Metaphors

[www.jstor.org/stable/1450042?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1450042?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

- Bible verses about Biblical Metaphors

[www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/7374/Biblical-Metaphors.htm](http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/7374/Biblical-Metaphors.htm)

- Metaphors - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament

[www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hdn/m/metaphors.html](http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hdn/m/metaphors.html)

# Symbolism

Symbolism can be the use of one or two words to stand for something or “a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else”.

[www.lexico.com/en/definition/metaphor](http://www.lexico.com/en/definition/metaphor)

A reader of the Bible must understand every symbol written in it if they are to truly understand what the authors were communicating to their readers

This is too difficult for the majority of bible-reading Christians.

And again, this is part of the reason why focussing on the Bible as the main source of spiritual knowledge is not as productive as receiving ‘sound’ teaching and talking spirit-to-Spirit with the Trinity.

# What does a symbol look like?

The Bible sometimes explains symbols as they were things set up by God in earlier times that pointed to the Messiah and what he would do for humanity.

For example:

**Hebrews 9:8-9** (NKJV) – But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience →

→ concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

There are many, many symbols used in the Bible. However, the Bible doesn't explain most of them.

There are three cardinal rules used to interpret the meaning of symbol used in the Bible.

First, know that several different symbols may represent the same thing.

Secondly, know that a symbol may represent different things.

Thirdly, allow the Bible to interpret its own symbols.



Understanding symbols may seem quite easy when these rules are followed, but it's fraught with danger – the danger of getting it wrong

Using the Bible to interpret the symbols, although sounding logical is actually a best-guess technique.

It seems to work, but is it what the readers would have automatically understood by the symbol in ancient times?

Here's an example of making a BIG mistake when interpreting a symbol.

Symbolic statement:

*“The Kingdom like leaven”*

Leaven (yeast for making bread) is said to be symbolic of sin, false doctrine & hypocrisy.

Why?

It's what Bible teachers have decided it meant and that's they taught us.

However, the only reference for interpreting the symbol this way is:

**Luke 12:1 (NKJV)** – “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*”

In the Torah, leaven was to be removed from the house before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Failure to do so was to be excommunicated from the nation.

(Exodus 12:15; 13:3)

The reason for removing leaven from their house was not ‘sin’, but so they couldn’t bake bread with yeast, it had to be done without yeast – viz. make flat bread.

The reason for this was to remind them of their flight from Egypt when they didn’t have time to make bread with dough that had time to rise.

( See Exodus 12:39)

So ‘leaven’ doesn’t only mean ‘evil’.

It has multiple meanings which must be understood each time the term is used.

With the mindset that leaven represents evil, the following statement of Jesus makes no sense:

**Matthew 13:33 (NKJV)** – “*The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.*” [No explanation given]

If leaven represents evil, as any evangelicals will tell you, does this mean that the Kingdom of Heaven is evil? NO!

Here Jesus is not using it as a symbol of evil, but as a simile. Just as leaven distributes throughout the whole dough, so the Kingdom will spread throughout all the Earth once his people inoculate it.

Here's a symbol we can easily  
use the Bible to interpret:

**‘Son of Man’**

What follows is how the ancient Israelites created a religious symbol. It became one they were totally familiar with, and knew what it stood for.

Of course for them, it arose out of their cosmology and theology. This means we have to look backwards in history to discover it from ancient documents – e.g. the OT.

Here are examples of where it is used:

**Matthew 26:24** (NKJV) – The Son of Man indeed goes just as *it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*

**Matthew 25:31** – *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.*

**John 3:13** – *No one has ascended into Heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*

**1 Enoch 46:3 – And he answered me and said to me, “This is the Son of Man, to whom belongs righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells. And he will open all the hidden storerooms; for the Lord of the Spirits has chosen him, and he is destined to be victorious before the Lord of the Spirits in eternal uprightness.”**

**1 Enoch 69:27** – *Then there came to them a great joy. And they blessed, glorified, and exalted the Lord on account of the fact that the name of that Son of Man was revealed to them. He shall never pass away or perish from before the face of the earth.*

**1 Enoch 70:1-4** – *And it happened after this that his living name was raised up before that Son of Man and to the Lord from among those who dwell upon the earth; it was lifted up in a wind chariot and it disappeared from among them. From that day on, I was not counted among them. But he placed me between two winds, between the northeast and the west, where the angels took a cord to measure for me the place for the elect and the righteous ones. And there I saw the first (human) ancestors and the righteous ones of old, dwelling in that place.*

“The main theme [in the book of Enoch] is the coming judgment, ‘when the Righteous One appears before the chosen righteous whose works are weighed by the Lord of Spirits’ (1 Enoch 38:2). Then the rulers of the Earth will be dumbfounded and humbled. The Righteous One is also called the Chosen One and ‘that Son of Man’ who accompanies the ‘Head of Days’ as in Daniel 7 (1 Enoch 46:1–2).”

**Daniel 7:13-14** – “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.

**Matthew 26:64-65** – Jesus said to him, “*It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven*”. Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!”

“In what seems like a cryptic answer to a very clear question, Jesus quotes Daniel 7:13 to answer Caiaphas. The reaction is swift and unyielding. Caiaphas understood that Jesus was claiming to be the second Yahweh figure of Daniel 7:13 – and that was an intolerable blasphemy. Jesus’ answer provides the high priest with the accusation he needs for a death sentence, but also gives us a clear testimony of Jesus as the final son of David, Yahweh incarnate, through whom Yahweh will reclaim the nations disinherited at Babel.”

‘The Son of Man’ was a symbol to the Israelis of the Son of God incarnate – i.e. Almighty God appearing as a man.

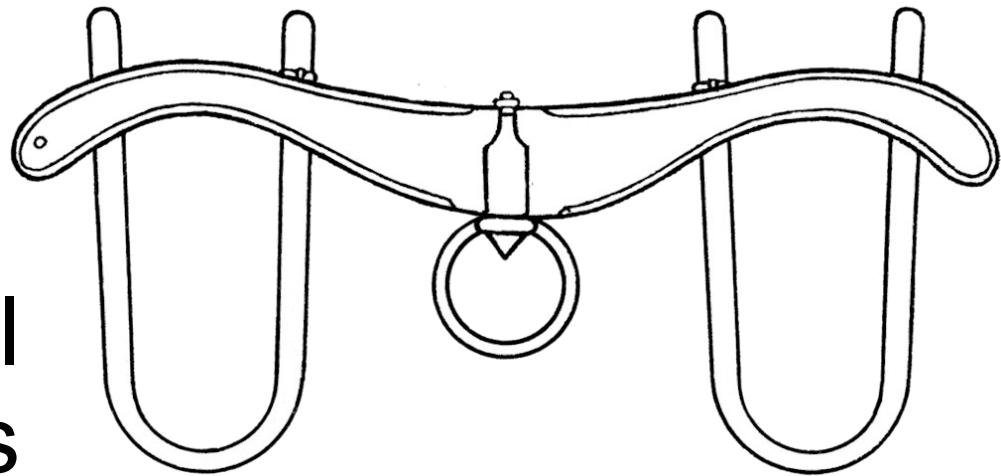
The symbol came from Daniel chapter 7 and the Book of Enoch, a scroll widely read in ancient times.

The symbol was unmistakeable when Jesus used it.

Here's one last symbol

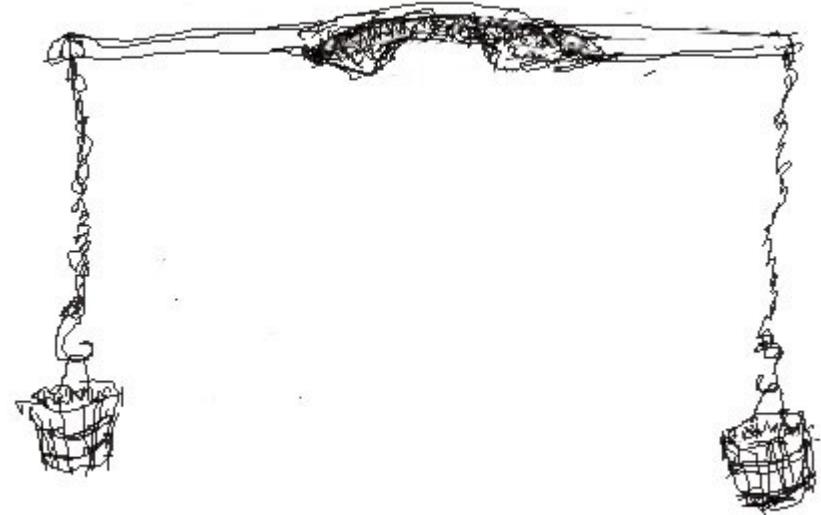
**Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV)** – Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

The yoke was well known to Jesus' hearers



In ancient times, and even in some countries today, it is used to link an ox or oxen to a plough or cart.

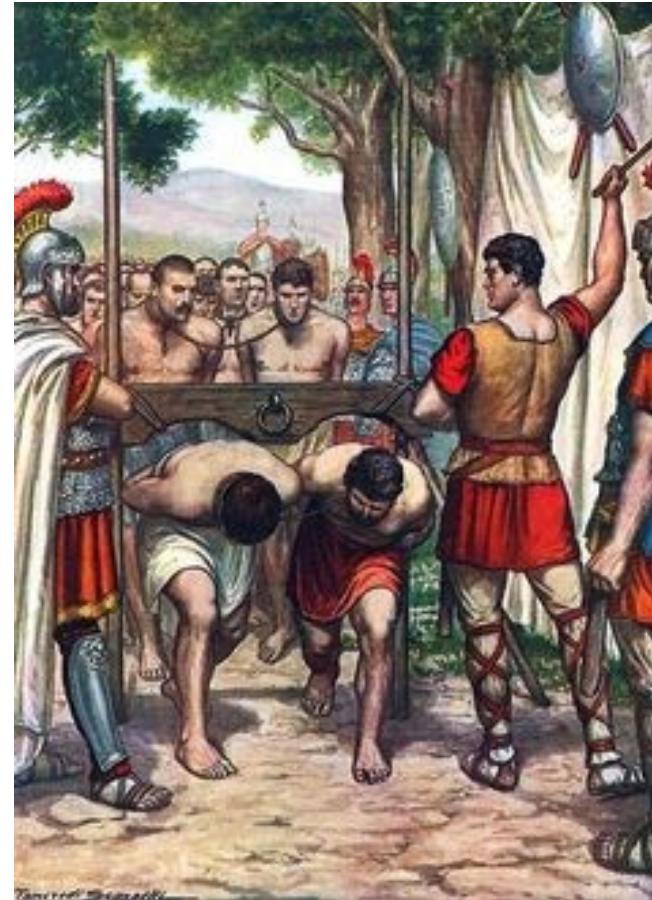
There were also human yokes



Servants carried a yoke on their shoulders to support containers they carried on either side. Slaves were put in a different type of yoke to prevent them from escaping.

There is also ‘the yoke of bondage’.

When Roman soldiers caught prisoners they were forced to bow and go under a yoke as a sign that they were now ‘beasts of burden’ (slaves) of the Roman empire.



When anyone heard the mention of ‘yoke’ in ancient Israel, outside of farm talk, they would automatically think of living under the yoke of Rome.

‘Yoke’ became their symbol of bondage.

## Be careful

Bible teachers pride themselves in being able to decipher the Bible's symbols, but this is usually 'hot air' to impress the congregation.

I know – 'been there, done that'.

The only way for us to understand what the writer wanted the readers to translate the symbols into is to actually know the mind of the Jews of the ancient world.

It's very easy to confuse the use of symbols when a person uses them metaphorically or spiritually.

Remember the High Priest who screamed, “Blasphemy”, against Jesus because he used the temple symbol to represent his body because that's where Holy Spirit was? He got it wrong!

The only way to really what a symbol means in the instance it is being used is to ask Father for an interpretation. This is for the purpose of receiving a *rhema* from a piece of text.

When you do that, be prepared for what you receive to be for you only and for your situation.

# Resources:

- The A to Z Guide to Bible Signs and Symbols:  
Understanding Their Meaning and Significance

[www.amazon.com.au/Guide-Bible-Signs-Symbols-Understanding-ebook/dp/B00MBTY63K](http://www.amazon.com.au/Guide-Bible-Signs-Symbols-Understanding-ebook/dp/B00MBTY63K)

- Interpreting the Symbols and Types

[www.amazon.com.au/Interpreting-Symbols-Types-Kevin-Conner/dp/0914936514](http://www.amazon.com.au/Interpreting-Symbols-Types-Kevin-Conner/dp/0914936514)

- Biblical Symbolism

[www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/BS/k/182/Biblical-Symbolism.htm](http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/BS/k/182/Biblical-Symbolism.htm)

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# The Book of Revelation



Important

The vision component of Revelation is based on word pictures.

It is full of symbols and metaphors which need to be properly understood. This is not easy because we are interpreting them with a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset.

What do we learn from this long study of picture language?

The vision component of the Book of Revelation cannot be taken at face value in any way. It must be interpreted through the a 1<sup>st</sup> century believer's mind.

Some verses cannot be taken as symbolic and others as literal.

And, we cannot interpret the symbols using our 21<sup>st</sup> century equivalents

We cannot go with the premise that what was seen were pictures of things to happen millennia later.

Jesus told John that what he viewed would shortly take place – i.e. they would happen very soon.

# All this means:

An idiom

We cannot stick, hard and fast, to our pet interpretation of Revelation or our Christian doctrines drawn from it – viz. Jesus' return, eternity, salvation, the Judgement, Heaven & Hell

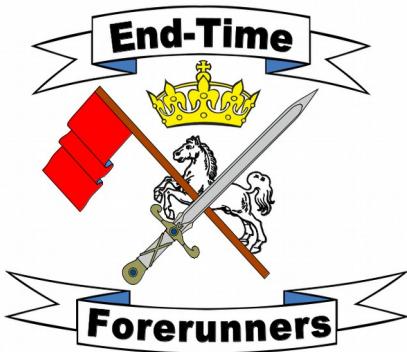


# NOTE

What John was shown in the vision was only what Jesus wanted him to see.

It wasn't an experience of normal 'every-day' life in Heaven.

Visions are always like that – limited to what is required to be transmitted



L.D. Smart

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