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**Lofty Language
of the
Bible**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Lofty Language of the Bible.

Introduction: many times, Bible writers very skillfully and very beautifully use lofty (i.e., grand, and elevated) figurative language, and extreme colorful exaggerations and overstatements to:

- Amplify the story, the message, the moral, and the teaching.
- Highlight God's power and glory.
- Dramatize the battle or event in focus.

The bible is not a history book, but it does record history, but the history it does record primarily centres around Israel, and the nations that affected it.

Language and hyperbole: a hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration or an exaggerated statement that is not meant to be taken literally, it is used to magnify or diminish an object. Flowing is an example, "I slept for a week after that tough practice, the speaker did not literally sleep for a week, but they are using hyperbole to express that they slept for a long time. It is common in the Hebrew language for Jewish writers to use hyperbole in their writings for the purpose of emphasis.

Following are some examples of lofty language:

In Genesis: Joseph said, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to him. (Gen. 37:9). Here the sun and moon symbolize Jacob and Rachel, while the eleven stars symbolize Joseph's eleven brothers.

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In Numbers: Balaam said, "the people who came out of Egypt, covered the face of the earth." (Num. 22:11). Clearly, they did not cover the entire face of the earth, but that area of earth the writer had in view.

In Deuteronomy: Moses said, "give ear, O ye heavens and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." (Deut. 32:1). Moses was speaking to the nation of Israel; the heavens symbolize the high priest, the Levitical priesthood, and the prophets while the earth symbolizes the common folk.

In Samuel: David wrote, the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. (2 Sam 22:8-10). Obviously, smoke did not come out of God's nostrils, nor did fire come out of his mouth, it is lofty language to highlight the enormous anger of God against His enemies.

In Kings: we read, the earth was split by the music and joy of the people (1 Kings 1:40), obviously the earth was not split, its lofty language to magnify the enormous joy the people were feeling.

In Chronicles: Solomon said, "God's people are as numerous as the dust of the earth." (2 Chron. 1:9-10). Clearly the people of Israel have never been as the dust of the earth.

In Ezra: Cyrus, king of Persia, said, "The Lord, the god of heaven and earth, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth." (Ezra. 1:2). Cyrus never ruled over Egypt (one of the most important nations on earth at the time), Greece, India, or Rome.

In Job: Zophar said, "Though man's head reaches into the clouds, yet he will die." (Job 20:4-7). Obviously, a man's head does not reach into the clouds; the focus is upon extreme pride.

In Psalms: prophets speak as God, as themselves, often in Scripture (especially in the Psalms and prophecies) the writer changes the tone from himself speaking, to God speaking. This is commonly seen in the Scriptures, because they are being inspired by God's Spirit and speaking as His voice, so it is natural for the language to change back and forward, from them speaking, to God speaking.

In Isaiah: we read, the earth staggers like a drunken man, because its transgression lies heavy upon it (Isaiah 24:18-23). The earth did not stagger; the focus is the extreme sin that is rampant across the face of the earth.

In Isaiah: it is written, the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner. (Isaiah 51:6). Some believe Isaiah's words literally mean that the sky, the heavenly planets, and the stars will all vanish and the earth will be destroyed. Others believe Isaiah is using biblical lofty language in which the heavens signify Israel's high priest and the Levitical priesthood while the earth signifies the common people of Israel, or heaven signifies Judah (the faithful) while earth signifies Israel (the unfaithful).

In Daniel: it is written Alexander the Great's empire would, rule the whole earth. (Dan. 3:29). Alexander never conquered all of India, Central Asia, Europe, North Africa (except for Egypt), Arabia or Africa, neither did he rule over the Pacific Islands etc. The point Daniel is making is that Alexander's empire will be enormously large and cover vast areas of land, and embrace vast populations of many countries and nations. The expression, "the whole earth or world," in Aramaic refers to a large, but limited area, when a Bible writer says "the whole world" it does not always mean the entirety of humanity.

In Daniel: we read, A little horn cast some stars down from heaven to the ground and stamped on them. (Dan. 8:9-10). Obviously literal stars were not cast to the ground, it is lofty language to signify people in high positions of authority, importance and influence are totally stripped of their power, authority, and influence.

In Hosea: we read, the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. (Hosea 1:10). This is lofty language to highlight the vast population of Israel.

In Luke: we read, "all the world should be taxed." (Luke 2:1). What the text is speaking of is taxation of all the Roman Empire, which would be, all the world to those living within the borders of the empire.

In Luke: Jesus said, "Capernaum will be exalted to heaven." (Luke 10:15). Jesus is using lofty language to highlight the extreme pride of Capernaum.

In Acts: we read, John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance, to all Israel. (Acts. 13:24). This should not be taken literally, because it is not literally correct.

LOFTY LANGUAGE IN SAMUEL'S WRITINGS

- **2 Samuel 22:8:** The earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry. (2 Sam. 22:8).

This carries the idea that the battle was so great, the fear so intense, the destruction so enormous, and the hundreds of thousands of bodies that are left on the surface of the earth for birds to feast on was so vast that the only way to describe the alarm, panic, terror, horror and magnitude of the battle and the widespread destruction of the land and its cities was to say, "the heavens trembled, and the earth reeled and rocked."

The writer is using biblical lofty language to convey to the reader the magnitude and enormity of the awful events and the overwhelming killing, bloodshed and incalculable and gigantic number of deaths that took place on this horrific day. The heavens trembled, and the earth shook was used in a song of David regarding the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul (2 Sam 22:8).

LOFTY LANGUAGE IN PSALM EIGHTEEN

- **Psalm 18:7-15:** Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. ⁸ Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. ⁹ He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. ¹⁰ He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind. ¹¹ He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water. ¹² Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds. ¹³ The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. ¹⁴ And he sent out his arrows and scattered them; he flashed forth lightnings and routed them. ¹⁵ Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

David in this poetic Psalm uses extremely lofty, vivid, and intense language to picture the fury of the storm and tempest, when all the elements of nature are in commotion; it is a picture of God going forth in the greatness of His majesty and the terror of his power, to lay waste everything before him. It is a view of nature in its most destructive power, first there is the rumbling of the earth, most likely an earthquake preceding the storm.

The language here is not to be regarded as descriptive of anything which literally occurred, but rather as if the LORD came forth in the greatness of his power. There is no question that in some of the dangerous periods of David's life, when surrounded by enemies, or even during a battle, a furious tempest may have occurred that seemed to be a special divine action on his behalf, but we have no distinct record of such an event, and it is not necessary to suppose that such an event occurred to correctly understand the passage. David is using extreme lofty language to picture the fierceness of the battles and the tremendous victories that were won.

Verse seven to fifteen: can refer to fierce battles of kingdoms and nations and their destruction and obliteration, remember in David's generation it was common during war for around twenty thousand men to be slaughtered on the battlefield, and hundreds of horses with chariots would charge without fear into the battle their hooves sounding like thunder and shaking the earth.

The heavens trembled, and the earth shook: means the battle was so great, the fear so intense, the destruction so enormous and the hundreds of thousands of human bodies that were left on the surface of the earth for birds to feast on is so vast that the only way to describe the alarm, panic, terror, horror and magnitude of the battle and the widespread destruction of the land and its cities is to say, the heavens trembled, and the earth shook out of its place. David is using biblical lofty

language to convey to the reader the magnitude and enormity of the awful events and the overwhelming killing, bloodshed and incalculable and gigantic number of deaths that had taken place on this horrific day.

- **2 Samuel 22:16:** The foundations of the world were laid bare at the blast of the breath of God's nostrils.

In these verses David is using lofty language to highlight the extreme sense of anger and wrath God was feeling.

LOFTY LANGUAGE IN HABAKKUK'S WRITINGS

- **Habakkuk 1:8:** Horsemen fly like an eagle swift to devour.
- **Habakkuk 3:6:** God shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered.
- **Habakkuk 3:8:** The LORD rode on horses and a chariot of salvation.
- **Habakkuk 3:9:** The LORD is a warrior with a bow and arrows.
- **Habakkuk 3:11:** When the sun and moon saw God's arrows and His spear they stood still.

These are all expressions of lofty language the writer uses, to highlight the power of the warriors and speed and power of the horsemen and their horses.

SUMMARY BIBLICAL LANGUAGE

These verses (there are many others like them) show that at various times Bible writers very skillfully and very beautifully use figurative lofty language and colorful exaggerations and overstatements to amplify the story, the battle, the message, the moral and the teaching or to highlight God's power and glory, or to dramatize the event in focus so it has a powerful impact upon the mind. When such lofty language is used prophetically it can refer to the following:

- The removing and abolishment of the Old Testament Covenant, and the replacing of it with the New Covenant of salvation and grace which will remain unshaken forever.
- The abolition of the Jewish ecclesiastical state, the Levitical priesthood, and the Old Testament ceremonial rites, which quickly came about upon the death of Christ and his resurrection.
- The abolition of the civil and political state of the Jews which came about in 70 A.D., when Rome invaded Jerusalem.
- The ruin of Rome Pagan, and then of Rome Papal.
- The final battle of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of men when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the world is changed as we know it.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
