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Symbolisms of Revelation

In

Chapter Twelve.

(2017)

The Bible not only reveals God’s eternal Plans, Purposes and Promises,
But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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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 special knowledge or perfect understanding.

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Symbolisms of Revelation in Chapter Twelve.

Topics.

- The great dragon cast out of heaven made war with the woman’s offspring.
- A woman clothed with the sun, twelve stars and the moon under her feet.
- A Man Child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron.
- Michael the LORDS angel, a beast with seven heads, ten horns and a tail.
- The serpent pours a river out of his mouth to sweep the woman away with a flood.
- Overview of the story of John’s vision in Revelation chapter twelve.

A personal note: though I have always loved reading and studying the Scriptures and have now walked with Christ and in God’s grace for around fifty years the following studies should not be taken to be dogmatic, inflexible or the final word on the matter since I am fully aware that my mind is limited by mortality and that greater understanding of God’s revelation is continually becoming clearer before our eyes as we move closer to the time of Christ’s glorious return in glory.

Introduction: this study gives a brief overview of various symbolisms used in chapter twelve of the book of Revelation.

The great dragon: is a symbol of the greatest power of evil. He is that old serpent called the devil and Satan which deceives the whole world (Rev. 12:9), each of these evil entities are all part of the dragon. It could be said that the serpent, the devil and Satan are the body of the dragon. This, is why the dragon is presented as a most fearful and powerful creature. The dragon the serpent, the devil and Satan are all different aspects of the same entity and a symbol of powerful world ruler’s and leaders of organizations (secular and religious) that have great power and deceptive and corrupting influence over the minds of the masses.

The dragon and Adam and Eve: the character of the dragon, embraces both the serpent and the devil and it was the serpent who by lies that spiritually corrupted Eve (Gen. 3:1-7) and the devil is a liar and murder from the beginning for there is no truth in him. (John 8:44). This means that all who use lies and deception to lead people away from God, can be rightly said to be of the spirit of the serpent and the devil.

The dragon and Jesus generation: during Jesus generations the title “the great red dragon,” could be applied to the religious leaders the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes who plotted to murder Jesus. Jesus himself referred to them as a generation of vipers and serpents and tells them they are of their father the devil who is a liar and murder (John 8:44) identifying them with the dragon, Satan the devil and the serpent.

The word viper comes from the Hebrew word (‘eph’eh), and the Greek word (echidna), it refers to an asp or any other poisonous’ snake, adder or venomous serpent, it carries the idea of bringing to nothing.

- When Jesus saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! (Matt. 3:7).
- Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34).
• Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees, “You serpents you brood of vipers (Matthew 23:33).

Jesus is basically calling the religious leaders of his generation (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) devils, serpents and Satan’s. It would be proper and right to liken these religious leaders as a collective group to a fierce evil dragon that has flames of fire coming out of his mouth destroying everything in its path and by extension, it would also be proper and right to apply this picture to any organisation or government (religious or secular) of all generations who has great power and influence and is hostile toward the Lord Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

**Generally, the title the dragon:** can apply the following: -

• To Herod who killed all infant children in Bethlehem around two years old in the hope of killing the child Jesus

• The chief priest, the Pharisees and the scribes who plotted the murder of Jesus

• The hostile antichristian emperors of Rome who set about to destroy Christianity.

• To powerful, authoritative and influential false teachers who twist and distort the Scriptures and powerful false religious leaders and their organisations that spread errors throughout the churches and the global world of Christianity, especially to those who teach salvation is obtained by works and adhering to religious ceremonial rites and keeping religious customs and traditions.

• To any individual, nation or worldly governments that are opposed to God’s will, plans and purposes and are seeking to destroy Israel, Christ’s Kingdom and those that follow him.

• To the evil in the human heart that is in rebellion to God and aggressively seeks to destroy those that belong to Christ.

• On a lesser scale, to those whose minds are set on the flesh (self, pride, ego and greed etc.), for the Scripture states, “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.” (Rom. 8:7). When the mind is set and focused only on the flesh it is always hostile toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and hostile toward those who faithfully follow him. This is because a mind fixed upon ego, pride and greed etc., has only one focus in life and that is to gratify self and therefore will always aggressively oppose anyone or any message that is contrary to what self and the flesh crave after.

These are all personified as a dragon because a dragon is a perfect picture of a creature that is not only very fierce and powerful, but also very destructive.

**The dragon was cast out of heaven:** and his angels were cast out with him, this carries the idea that those in great positions of power and authority (especially corrupt religious leaders in God’s Kingdom) on earth have had their power and authority taken from them.

**The dragon and the river:** (v15) refers to a powerful head nation and all nations aligned to it that are aggressively against Israel and the people of God.

**The dragon stood on the sand of the sea:** (v17) most likely refers to an ungodly powerful antichristian empire, nation or kingdom that has power and influence over the vast mass of populations of the world, but could also refer to a nation that had power over Israel and over those who belong to God’s Kingdom (as certain Caesars and emperors of Rome did).

**The dragon was furious with the woman and made war with her seed:** (v17) here the dragon is presented as being wrath with the woman and going to make war with the remnant of her seed who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The symbolism: -

• The woman refers to Israel and Mary for it is from the nation of Israel and the Virgin Mary that the Messiah the Christ the Saviour of the world came.
The remnant of the woman’s offspring (seed in KJV) refers to faithful Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

The dragon refers to all who are hostile and aggressively against God, against Christ, his Kingdom and his people.

Those who are hostile and aggressively against the Lord will continue to persecute the faithful until Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God’s Kingdom of righteousness, justice joy and peace on earth and the kingdom of men become the Kingdom of Christ.

The ancient serpent: is a symbol of subtlety and seducing enticement, meaning its character is such that it entices and persuades somebody to do something by making it seem desirable, pleasurable or exciting. The tree that Eve ate from was not an ugly rotten tree, but one that looked good for food, and was a delight to the eyes, and was to be desired to make one wise. (Gen. 3:6). This, is why the serpent and deception is so powerful, they appeal to what we do like, not what we don’t.

The face of the serpent: refers to deception and enticing temptations.

The serpent: refers to deceptive religious leaders and authorities who cunningly and cleverly deceive the faithful of Israel and those seeking Christ.

The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman: that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood, carries the idea that from the time of Christ’s death and resurrection, Satan has raised-up powerful, authoritative, skillful speakers and preachers whose messages are full of subtle errors and false teachings. During Christ generation such messages would refer to the teaching of the Jews who confessed Christ and much of his teaching, but still held fast to salvation by religious works, (i.e., no one could be saved apart from adhering to their ceremonial rites, their holy days and keeping their religious customs and traditions).

This was one of the greatest spiritual battles Paul had with new converts, since there were certain powerful Jewish religious leaders that did accept many aspects of Christ and his teaching, but still believed salvation could only be attained by adhering to Moses Law and by keeping their Jewish religious customs and traditions and were therefore constantly attempting to draw new converts back under the law.

Today the expression, “the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood,” would refer to all who by authoritative skillful oratory and powerful messages deceive their followers into believing a false gospel of prosperity, health and a charmed life and to all who embrace much of the Bibles teachings and Christ’s word, but still teach salvation by works.

The following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote:

- I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ’s death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul states:

- When we forsake grace, we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ (Gal 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that:

- It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in, regard to eternal salvation, Christ, God, Grace
and Faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. Though salvation by works is still a great deception worldwide (especially religious works) in some Christian churches and religious originations there is another great flood of deception being proclaimed today that is deceiving the world and future generations on a global scale, this as many will have guessed is the worldwide teaching of evolution.

This teaching denies the God of creation and is embraced and believed worldwide and not only does the global media, speak of it as scientific fact, but it is also taught in our schools as being scientifically proven.

NOTE: the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth is by no means limited to the teaching of salvation by works or the teaching of evolution but embraces any message that entices people (Christian or secular) away from God, away from grace and away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan: generally, refers to the collective power of a group, organization (religious and secular) and of nations that are hostile toward God and aggressively against the Lord Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

The devil: generally, refers to the evil and sin in the human heart and the mind, especially all evil that is against God, Christ, his Kingdom and his people. It is outwardly manifested in all forms of violence, persecution and ungodly works of evil that are designed to destroy Christ’s Kingdom.

The devil is come down having great wrath: because he knows that he has a short time” can refer to the following three things: -

1. The religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief priest, the Pharisees and the scribes) who feared that Jesus kingdom would become a threat to their religious empire, and therefore plotted his murder before his following became too large and widespread that it would be almost impossible to carry out such an evil plot. After they had Rome crucify him they then, aggressively set about to destroy the church and brutally and cruelly persecute those who followed him.

2. Any individual, group or organization (religious or secular) and any ruler or nation that is aggressively hostile toward God and aggressively against the Lord Jesus Christ and those who follow him, because they feel threatened by their existence and their faith.

3. The latter days man of lawlessness (man of sin in KJV) (an antichrist) (1 John 2:22) the son of destruction (perdition in KJV) meaning utter disaster, ruin and destruction who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god. (2 Thess. 2:1-4) and his global beats empire.

The woman: is a symbol of the nation of Israel and the Virgin Mary, because it is though Israel’s bloodline that the Messiah the Christ and Saviour of the world came and therefore it can be rightly said that the nation of Israel gave birth to the Messiah, but it also embraces Mary (also of the bloodline of Israel) who gave birth to him, and it is through her child the Lord Jesus Christ, that the church came.

Clothed with the sun: carries the idea of being clothed in the glory of God.

The moon under the woman’s feet: symbolizes the nation of Israel standing with the earth under her feet, by extension it can also signify the earth being under the feet of the faithful church since the church was birthed out of Israel.

Upon the woman’s head a crown of twelve stars: refers to the twelve tribes of Israel according to the following dream of Joseph and by extension to the twelve apostles.
Joseph dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" (Gen. 37:9-10).

The eleven stars refer to the eleven sons of Jacob (Joseph is the twelfth son), from them came the twelve tribes of Israel and from them the nation of Israel and from the nation came the Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour of the world and from him came the church.

**Travailing in birth to be delivered:** can refer to the persecution Israel suffered as a nation giving birth to Christ and to Mary giving birth to Jesus and by extension to the earth travailing and groaning to give birth to the sons and daughters of God on the day of the first resurrection. (Rom. 8:19-25) (Rev. 20:5-6).

**The woman’s child was caught up to God and his throne:** refers to the resurrection of Christ and by extension to the resurrection of the sons and daughters of God.

**The woman fled into the wilderness:** refers to Mary fleeing from Herod to Egypt for safety and to faithful Israel fleeing from their own land into the Gentile nations, because of the persecution of Rome and the persecution of the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes. After Jesus death and resurrection Rome and the religious leaders aggressively set about to destroy the church and those who confessed to follow Jesus. By extension it can also refer to the body of Christ abiding in the darkness of this fallen world (i.e., the wilderness) until the Lord returns.

**Where God will feed and nourish them:** carries the idea that God will spiritually prosper and keep the nation Israel from being wiped off the face of the earth while they dwell in the wilderness, which can mean while they are scattered in the world, since any place away from Jerusalem and the land of Judah and Israel would be considered a wilderness to a Jew or while they are without their Messiah through unbelief until Christ returns, for figuratively speaking as long as they are without their Messiah they are in a wilderness.

**The woman might fly into the wilderness:** most likely carries the idea, that due to the great persecution the faithful (especially the faithful who lived in the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel) fled into various secular nations of the world where God nourishes them by His Spirit of love and grace and prospers the nation until He draws them back to their own land or until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

For a Jew to be in any other place than Jerusalem, God’s Holy city or the land of Israel, the land God promised them would be considered a wilderness. Jerusalem and the land is the Jews spiritual home, because of this it is proper and right to speak of a Jew who is separated from Jerusalem and the land of Israel and scattered amongst the Gentile nations as being in a wilderness (especially a spiritual wilderness).

**The woman’s offspring:** the woman refers to Israel and Mary her offspring refers to Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ and accept him as their Saviour and King.

**The earth helped the woman:** the words, “the earth helped the woman and opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. Is a difficult verse, but if we suppose that the flood refers to every kind of deception (i.e., salvation by works, evolution and such like teachings) and the dragon refers to those who are hostile toward God and aggressively against Israel and the Christian faith, then the earth opening its mouth and swallowed up the flood would refer to the men and woman in the secular world who helped the faithful in the Lord and protected them against the fury and wrath of those who were hostile toward Christ and who were aggressively going about seeking to persecute and destroy the church and those who belonged to his Kingdom.

This idea is not difficult to understand, since there has always been throughout all generations secular men and woman with kind and compassionate hearts that have been greatly offended as they watched Christians being unjustly and brutally beaten, tortured, imprisoned and put to death, moved by compassion to do what they could
to protect them from such horrors. A good example of this is the good and kind-hearted secular men and woman that during the Jewish holocaust at the risk of their own lives hid Jews and their families to save them from the gas chambers.

The Man Child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron: symbolically refers to three things, firstly, to the Lord Jesus Christ, secondly, to the Gentile Gospel church that Christ brought to birth, and ultimately to Christ and his government which will rule with great authority over the earth when he returns in glory.

Michael the LORDS angel: is God's angel that fights for the nation of Israel, he is referred to as (Daniel's) prince (Dan. 12:21) and as the great prince who has charge of Daniels people (Israel) and thereby Israel's prince (Dan. 12:1), which means he is a prince of God's people and as such the prince of faithful Jews and Gentiles who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The accuser: refers to the devil personified through all who falsely accuse those in Christ, it can be applied to the condemnation of the law accusing Christians, to the chief priests, the Pharisees, the scribes, the Levitical priesthood accusing those in Christ of not being saved unless they adhere to the law and Jewish ceremonial rites, and to all today who falsely accuse Christians, especially ministers and preachers who accuse believers of not being saved, because they do not attend their church, or conform to certain religious practises, customs and traditions of their church.

Seven heads: refer to seven powerful global nations that are against Christ and his Kingdom.

Ten horns: refer to the ten-powerful antichristian Roman emperors who aggressively persecuted Christians and to the latter days ten-powerful global king/rulers of the ten horned nations that are against Christ and his Kingdom, perhaps made up of an alliance of ten sovereign countries similar, to NATO today. For further information concerning these ten-horned kingdoms click or tap Overview of Topics in Revelation and select the title: The Ten-Horned Beast and the Man of Sin.

The tail: refers to weaker nations that are affiliated to a head nation that is the far more powerful nation. In John's vision concerning the latter days, it applies to the man of sin and lawlessness the head of the ten-horned beast empire and all the smaller and weaker nations aligned to him. (Symbolized as his tail).

Cast down to the earth: carries the idea that authority and power was taken. It means that powerful authoritative rulers (secular and religious) that had great influence, power and authority over the global world, over nations and over corrupt churches was taken away, meaning they were brought to ruin.

Cast a third of the stars to the earth: symbolizes the following three things: -

- To the fierce and aggressive Roman persecution of Christians.
- To the persecution of the religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) who had Jesus brutally and cruelly killed and aggressively set about to destroy the church (the body of Christ).
• To all persecution against Christ Kingdom and especially the hostile persecution of the antichristian beast rulers and kingdoms that rise-up just prior to his return.

The expression, “third of the stars to the earth,” does not mean an exact third of the earth, but a portion of it in contrast to the whole earth.

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The warfare: is between false religious leaders who want power and control over their followers and those who belong to Christ. In Johns visions recorded in the book of Revelation, lust for power and control is seen working through the following groups: -

• The religious leaders of Jesus day (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes).

• Pagan Roman and its emperors' and Papal Rome and its Popes, Cardinals and Bishops etc., hostile to true Christianity.

• The latter-day man of sin and lawlessness and the ten-horned beast powers.

• The global warfare between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of men.

This craving for power and control is personified as the dragon, Satan, the serpent and the devil, which are different aspects of the same spirit and all represent various aspects of sin in the human heart and of the flesh (pride, ego and greed etc.), which outwardly manifests itself in violence, murders and wars etc., especially against God, Christ, his Kingdom and his people.

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No place was found for them in heaven: symbolically means, they no longer have their position of authority, power and rulership that they previously had in God's Kingdom, a Good example of this is the religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief, priests, Pharisees and scribes), who lost their power and control over those seeking God after Christ's death and resurrection for by it he abolished the need for the Levitical priesthood; a human high priest; the temple; sacrifices and the ceremonial law of Moses.

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Two wings of the great eagle: (v14) could refer to: -

• The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ or the Gospel of faith and God's grace.

• To secular nations and individuals helping persecuted Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

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The serpent poured a river out of his mouth to sweep the woman away with a flood: the serpent can refer to anyone who is hostile toward God, the Lord Jesus Christ and those who faithfully follow him. The expression, “poured out a river,” refers to the following three things: -

• To wars and persecution against God's people.

• To religious propaganda and deception that has the potential to destroy the faithful of Israel and the faithful honestly seeking God.

• To the faithful of Israel being swept away from God, Jerusalem, Judah, and the land of Israel by wars.

• To all false teaching and errors that comes out of the mouth of false religious leaders.
The earth: (v16) can refer to the literal earth or to its secular inhabitants, the context determines to which of the two it applies to.

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Johns vision in Revelation chapter twelve can be viewed in the following two ways: -

1. As the past battle on earth between the dragon (Satan) and his angels and Michael and His angels. With the dragon and his angels symbolising the hostile, prideful, hypocritical and false religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes), and the twelve apostles and Paul etc., symbolised by Michael and his angels. It was the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes who did everything they could to destroy God’s Kingdom from being established, they even plotted and succeeded in having Jesus the head of God’s Kingdom murdered.

In contrast to their ungodly hostility, the twelve apostles and Paul established Christ’s Church. For these reasons the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes can be likened to the dragon, because of their enormous hostile ungodly power toward God’s Kingdom, while the twelve apostles and Paul can be likened to Michael and his angels, because of the enormous heavenly and godly power they were granted to establish Christ’s Kingdom on earth.

2. As the final future battle between the kingdom of men and the Kingdom of God on earth. In this battle the dragon (Satan) and his angels symbolise the false religious leaders and ungodly hostile antichristian secular kings and their governments, while Michael and his angels symbolise the faithful Jews and Gentiles in Christ who will bring about the eternal and literal Kingdom of God on earth. The faithful in Christ can be likened to Michael and his angels, because the heavenly Kingdom that exist in their heart and mind in this present age will be outwardly manifested when the sons and daughters of God are revealed to the world at Christ’s return.

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Overview of the story of John’s vision: the nation Israel through the Virgin Mary gives birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the religious leaders of his generation, the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes (symbolised by the dragon) do all they can to destroy his ministry from succeeding. Their evil ungodly power climaxes in having Jesus crucified. He ascends to heaven and becomes God’s perfect eternal High Priest who intercedes for his people and his apostles filled with the Holy Spirit establish the Gospel amongst Gentile nations.

Form this point forward no man or woman needs a priesthood, a temple or a human high priest to be saved, because everyone now comes to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which means that the religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief priests, the Pharisees and the scribes) power and control over the people was taken away by Jesus death and resurrection.

Since the primary spirit of the dragon and Satan is power and control over people and the primary spirit of the serpent is deception clothed in beauty. The religious leaders (the chief priests, the Pharisees and the scribes), know they have only a short while to regain their power so they desperately do all they can to bring the newly converted Jewish people of Israel back under the law and the Old Testament ceremonial rites, holy days and Jewish religious customs and traditions.

Galatians chapter three shows that certain Jews with authority and skilful oratory do all they can to entice new converts away from the Gospel of grace and back under the law and the authority of the Jewish religious leaders, this was one of Paul’s greatest concerns as the following verses show: -

- Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 2Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:1-29).
The chief priests, Pharisees and scribes, symbolised by the dragon attempt to stop the Kingdom of Christ growing by bringing new converts back under the old covenant, and by aggressively setting about to destroy the church and put in prison and kill anyone who confessed to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

This same symbolism, battle and warfare between the dragon and Michael, the ungodly and the godly, the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of Christ is not limited to the chief priests, the Pharisees and the scribes, but continues through the hostile antichristian Roman emperors, the Papal Church, Muhammad and all others hostile toward Christ’s people, and greatly increases during the latter day hostile ungodly beast rulers and empires just prior to Christ returning in glory.

Those who have the love of the Lord dwelling in their heart have overcome the devil because they love Christ more than their own life, which means that no matter what form of persecution, suffering, and hardships of life the devil tempts them with they would rather die than deny their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have also overcome the condemnation of the law, because salvation in Christ is by faith and by grace and not by works of the Law.

For further information concerning these symbolisms click or tap Revelation and select: Chapter Twelve.

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A personal note: since much of the language of this entire study is very symbolic, what has been said is in no way a legalistic or dogmatic interpretation of all the symbolisms, but hopefully will help and inspire those who are interested in biblical symbolisms to take their Bibles and go on their own spiritual search to expand what has been written here.

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FOOTNOTE: 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.