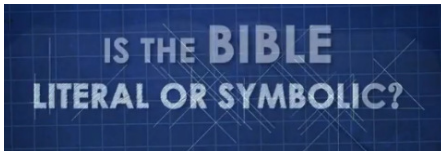




Is the Bible Literal or Symbolic?

2 Peter 3:16,17: (NASB) ¹⁶*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;* ¹⁷*so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*



Special Guest: David Stein

Christians who believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word have long recognized that Bible study requires interpretation. And it is no surprise that there are have been differences among students of the Bible about what various texts mean. One of the major areas of interpretation and difference is the question about if the Bible is to be understood literally or symbolically. It is a question we need to consider seriously if we truly want to learn what God has placed in His Word for us to know. It cannot be a matter of preference! It must be a commitment to seek the truth in full submission to God's will.

In our program today, we will also ask:

How can one know when a passage is symbolic and when it is literal?

What principles should one follow when interpreting scripture?

How can you know when you have arrived at truth?

So... is the Bible literal or symbolic? **The answer is: YES!**

This is probably not a surprising answer! It makes sense that God would use every literary means to instruct, and that is exactly what we find in the Bible.

(Source: Wikipedia) John Dominic Crossan is an Irish-American religious scholar and former Catholic priest. Crossan is a major figure in the fields of biblical archaeology, anthropology, and New Testament textual and higher criticism.

 **Defining Literalism and Fundamentalism, John Dominic Crossan, livingthequestions.com**

- *A Literalist takes everything literally that could be taken literally. Jesus as the Lamb of God does not mean that Mary had a little lamb. They recognize metaphors, but anything that could be taken literally would be taken literally.*
- *A Fundamentalist says if you don't take it literally, you're not a Christian and if you say it shouldn't be taken literally, then you're an anti-Christian.*

We consider ourselves as part of neither of these groups. We do try to understand the Bible literally as a first approach. Any symbolic understanding of the Scriptures has to be based on what it means literally. If you stray from a literal interpretation to any large degree, that is an area of preference and fancy. We want to be in areas of understanding instead.

With respect to Fundamentalism, there is an idea of judgment: "If you don't see it *my way*, there is something wrong with your theology and maybe your relationship with God." Jesus tells us not to judge.



An example of symbolic meaning in scripture:

John 1:29: (NASB) *The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, **the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!*

"**Lamb of God**" - obviously not literal! In using this to describe Jesus, John knew he was talking to a Jewish audience. They knew that every year a Passover lamb was a sacrifice to God and that it had something to do with the expiation of sin. So when he chose that symbol to describe Jesus, he triggered in the mind of his audience this connection with what he knew Jesus had come to the world to do.

Some examples of literal meaning in texts:

John 2:1: (NASB) *The first miracle of Jesus turning water into wine...*

Literally true! Although there may be a symbolic meaning, those who would deny it was literal because it was a miracle start to undermine the whole basis for understanding God's word as inspired. Remember our theme text that said in part, "*all scripture inspired by God is profitable for teaching.*" We have to believe the Bible is true.

John 3:14: (NASB) *As **Moses lifted up the serpent** in the wilderness, even so must the **Son of Man be lifted up.***

Literally true! Some Literalists worry that if you interpret the Bible symbolically you lower the value of a literal interpretation. Fundamentalists are very upset about that because they want to preserve the inspiration of the Bible. For example, it is not uncommon to hear in Christian circles that Adam and Eve, Moses in the wilderness, etc., are just metaphorical stories that didn't really happen. We believe that they were literally true but also have symbolic meanings.

Jesus was referring to a real event in the Old Testament. God was making a judgment on the people of Israel, who were dying. The way He enabled them to be able was to have Moses make a copper serpent and lift it up. If the people would gaze at it, they would live and survive the bites from fiery serpents. Jesus connects that literal happening with a symbolic happening of him being lifted up on the cross. He wants us to understand that the copper serpent then was in fact a symbol of HIM in a sacrificial capacity.

...So it is literal and symbolic.

 **Progressives' grasp of scripture, The Bible - Literal or Not, [youtube.com, RThortonTV](http://youtube.com/RThortonTV)**

- *Progressives often tend to read the Bible keeping in mind that it is filled with metaphor, symbolism and allegory.*
- *All of these are literary styles in which a word or phrase is used to connote something other than what it normally conveys, or something beyond what it normally conveys.*



Examples of mixed literal and symbolic meaning in texts:

Matthew 8:22: (NASB) *But Jesus said to him, Follow me, and allow **the dead to bury their own dead.***

We want to allow the Bible to interpret the symbol.

Here we have two different 'deads,' the literal dead and the metaphoric dead. The metaphoric dead are those judicially dead. That is, those who are dead from the standpoint of God's judgment upon all mankind.

Now we selected this example because the meanings here are obvious and intuitive. But the Bible is full of symbols. Most are intuitive, a few are not.



How can we be sure of what any specific symbol means?

 **Chisel words we don't like, *The Bible - Believe it or Not*, rtministriesTV**

- *When people don't like doctrine they chisel into words and start trying to change the meaning of the text.*
- *People only do it with doctrine they don't like - they try to change it.*

We like to look at the etymology of words - what they mean. Let's use an example with the word "submarine." It comes from the word "sub" (under) and "marine" (sea) - undersea.

We can use this technique with the Bible, but it is not concrete. Let's use the word "alto." We think of a higher-pitched singer than a bass. But alto actually means low. The etymology is high, but the usage is low.

2 Peter 1:20: (NASB): *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*

We cannot apply something we want it to mean and then interpret to get it there. Our desire is to find the truth - what God has in store for us. As students of the Bible we need to let the Bible interpret itself. How do we do that?

Psalms 46:1-5: (NASB) ¹*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* ²*Therefore we will not fear, though the **earth** should change and though the **mountains** slip into the heart of the sea;* ³*Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.* ⁴*There is a **river** whose streams make glad the **city** of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High.* ⁵*God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.*

Here are the symbols used in these verses:

earth mountains sea river city

We will look at this more closely as we continue.

God is very gracious in that He has provided symbols that allow us to do a study to see how they are used. We will see that often literal meanings also apply as symbols.



Christianity has become selective, "The Last Word," MSNBC, Lawrence O'Donnell

- *Christianity has matured into a selective process in which Christians take what makes sense to them in the Old and New Testaments and ignore the rest.*
- *To believe the book of Revelation literally, you have to believe in dragons. "And the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth."*

The truth has always been there, although obscured by a lot of error through the ages. It was very bright in the first century, but then there was an obscuring and a lot of error was introduced, but we are at the end of the age now where a lot of these things are becoming clear again. We wouldn't call that process "maturing," but rather "clarifying." It is time for truth to be revealed since we are getting so close to the setting up of the kingdom.

In terms of Revelation, we will discuss this book later in the program. Let's now go back to Psalms 45:1-5 and look closer at the symbols used.

The first thing we should note is that usually there is an association of symbolic meaning with the literal meaning of the symbol. We will see this in these symbols:

earth mountains sea river city

earth Note that the earth is solid, stable, especially in contrast with the sea. When we look for the symbolic meaning of this, we would expect it would be associated with some kind of stability.

Psalms 24:1: (NASB) *The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.*

We are given an association in this verse between the earth and the people of the world. They constitute a stable social structure - civilization.

Psalms 33:8: (NASB) *Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.*

In Hebrew it is common to state something and then state the same thing using slightly different language. The *earth* and the *inhabitants of the world* represent the same thing.

Micah 1:2: (NASB) *Hear, O peoples, all of you; Listen, O earth and all it contains, and let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple.*

Clearly the physical earth isn't going to listen because soil doesn't have ears! But this is typical of a pattern we find in these and many other examples. The Bible gives us the clues of what these symbols mean. This assures us that we are on the right track.

earth = the social structure of man, the stable portion of mankind, civilization, the community in which man resides.



mountains Mountains are large, controlling natural structures that impose their presence on man. Scientifically, all the weather on earth has to do with where the oceans are and where the mountains are.

Micah 4:1-2: (NASB) ¹And it will come about in the last days that *the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains*. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. ²Many nations will come and say, *Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob*, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths. For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Micah is talking about a kingdom. The verse is asking people to come to the kingdom of God, which would be established above all of the kingdoms of man - it will be the "chief of the mountains."

mountains = kingdoms, both the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of man

Can understanding Bible symbolism really be as easy as following directions?

It is exciting to see that symbols retain their meaning throughout the entire Bible. It is very rare that a symbol will change its meaning, which gives us a lot of confidence that we are achieving a level of understanding in what God wants us to know. Inconsistency would be a sign of error.

sea The sea is large, unstable and uncontrollable, especially in contrast to the earth.

Speaking of the sea...

 **Jonah is a metaphor, *The Bible - Literal or Not*, youtube.com, RThortonTV**

- *A Literalist would focus on the story elements of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish. They would say it actually happened.*
- *An Atheist would say this is just a great "fish story."*
- *If we put them in the same room, they would be debating that and miss the enduring truths that come out of this wonderful story.*
- *I (as a Progressive) would see it as a metaphor, indicating we cannot chose our own path when it contradicts what God would have us do.*

Is it just a metaphor or did it really happen? But more importantly, what did Jesus believe? Jesus believed it really happened. He talks about Jonah being in the belly of the great fish, so if Jesus believed it, we will believe it.

Isaiah 57:20: (NASB) *But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.*

This is another example of the Bible interpreting itself, using the simile of the tossing, restless sea being like the wicked, those that are lawless and unable to be restrained.

sea = the restless masses of mankind



river Literally a stream of water flowing from one place to another.

We note that rivers are made of water. Water is clearly a symbol of truth, especially the refreshing and purifying qualities of truth.

John 4:13,14: (NASB) ¹³Jesus answered and said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of **the water that I will give him shall never thirst**; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.

Revelation 22:1,17: (NASB) ¹Then he showed me **a river of the water of life**, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; **let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.**

Here there is a river of the water of life. No one will have life without the truth. Jesus said he had waters he would give that would satisfy forever. In other words, it would provide eternal water.

John 4:13-14: Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

river = a stream of truth that refreshes, purifies, energizes and brings knowledge of great joy.

Note: Revelation 21:1: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and **there is no longer any sea**. In the Kingdom of God in glory, there will be a new arrangement of mankind with true worship ("new heaven") and a righteous and stable social arrangement ("new earth"). But there will be no restless part of mankind anymore ("**no more sea**").

city A group of people living together with common geography, interests and polity.

Revelation 21:2: (NASB) And I saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready **as a bride adorned for her husband**.

Every Christian who has studied the relationship of the church to Jesus knows that the church is likened to a bride. Here the bride adorned for her husband is compared to the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Here the city represents the true church.

Revelation 17:18: (NASB) The woman whom you saw is **the great city**, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Here, however, the great city represents a false church. Earlier in verse 5, this city is identified as Babylon the great. Babylon was an ancient city of pagan religion, false ideas. Revelation uses this as a symbol to represent false Christian ideas.

city = A church, either the true church or the false church!

Now we have enough to suggest an interpretation of Psalm 46!

¹God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear, though the **earth** (the present social order) should change and though the **mountains** (the



kingdom of this world) slip into the heart of the sea (the restless masses of mankind desiring change through revolution and anarchy); ³Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah. ⁴There is a river (of truth and understanding) whose streams make glad the city of God (the true church), the holy dwelling places of the Most High. ⁵God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. (the dawn of God's Millennial Kingdom under Christ)

It isn't the physical earth that collapses on itself, but it is society that collapses.



These are words that some of our listeners may not be familiar with, so let's define and then relate back to the Bible.

To illustrate the meaning of type and antitype, consider a typewriter. The type is the reversed mirror image of a letter or number that is embossed on the character hammer. That hammer is directed to hit an ink ribbon above the paper. It presses its character through the ribbon and shows the typed character on the paper. That typed character is the "antitype." You can see the correspondence of the type to the antitype. They are a mirror image of each other.



A Biblical Type: A symbolic picture which points to a later reality.

A Biblical Antitype: The reality.



1 Corinthians 10:11: (NASB) *Now these things happened to them as an examples, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

The Greek word for "example" is τύπος - tupos - it means a die or stamp, (like a typewriter) an example of a type.



1 Peter 3:21: (NASB) *Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (Peter was corresponding the flood with baptism. The flood was the type, baptism was the antitype.)*

The Greek word for "corresponding to" is ἀντίτυπος - antitypos - it is that which corresponds to something else. KJV: "like figure"

1 Corinthians 2:10: *But God revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

This is of no interest to natural man - where God is coding His will in symbolic form. But those who want to discern spiritual truths, this is an exciting discovery! It is like mining for gold, discovering truths that link up ancient things with what is happening today.



Revelation says an asteroid will hit the earth, Pat Robertson, 700 Club

- *It seems like the only thing that would fulfill the words of Jesus in Revelation would be an asteroid hitting the earth. It's going to happen. The Bible says, "And I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven and he had a burning mountain and hurled it into the sea." What better description than an asteroid?*

That would be a literal interpretation. But as we look closer into Revelation, we find that it isn't meant to be interpreted that way. We already saw that "mountains" generally mean kingdoms. This would connect directly with Psalm 46 where the mountains are falling into the sea.

Here is a very brief list of some Biblical types and antitypes:

T Y P E		A N T I T Y P E
The Passover Lamb	→	Jesus as our sacrificial lamb
The Copper Serpent	→	Jesus on the cross
The Flood	→	The days of the Son of man
The Ark in the Flood	→	Baptism
The High Priest in Ancient Israel	→	Jesus, our High Priest
The Under Priests in Ancient Israel	→	The True Church

What about the partaking of Jesus' body and blood - literal? Symbolic?

The sacrifice of Jesus to redeem mankind is a common theme and thread of truth throughout the entire Bible.

Let's start at the very beginning:

Genesis 3:7, 21: (NASB) ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings...²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Fig leaves were insufficient, so God covered them with skins. Where are skins from? An animal had to be slain. God had a sacrificial animal covering them



from the beginning. This is another type - another picture - of the antitype of Jesus and our being covered by his sacrifice.

And what about the fig leaves? These are often a picture of Israel, who wanted to gain life by being obedient to the Law. But they couldn't. Just like Adam and Eve, who tried to prove themselves worthy by their own actions, Israel needed a covering from outside.

Hosea 9:10: *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season.*

God provided Jesus as our covering and the covering of mankind as he “tasted death for every man.” Hebrews 2:9

All of this is a symbolic indicator of both man's sinful condition and God's intention to save man from their sins by the blood sacrifice of Jesus. This brings us back to our starting point where John the Baptist called Jesus the “Lamb of God.”

The Memorial Emblems - Symbols or Literal?

Matthew 26:26-28: (NASB) ²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, he broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; **this is my body**. ²⁷And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸for **this is my blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

 Facts say that Jesus' words “Eat my flesh and drink my blood” literal, *EWTN Global Catholic Radio Network*

- *Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22 Jesus says of the bread, “this IS my body” and of the wine, “this IS my blood.” He doesn't say these are representations.*
- *In John 6 he repeats himself like he does nowhere else in Scripture to emphasize the fact that he expects us to eat his flesh and drink his blood and that his flesh is real food and his blood is real drink.*
- *Anyone who says he is speaking symbolically and not literally simply is refusing to look at all the facts!*

We know that a large segment of Christendom believes this is absolutely literal. In the Catholic mass there is a ritual known as TRANSUBSTANTIATION where the emblems are believed to be literally converted into the actual body and blood of Jesus though the senses are said to be veiled to the ‘fact.’ The mass becomes a fresh sacrifice of Jesus for believers.

 Listing out the facts - Eat my flesh and drink my blood literal, *EWTN Global Catholic Radio Network*

- *The facts: John 6:52 - the Jews took him literally. His disciples took him literally in verse 60. The apostles took him literally in verses 67-69. If everyone who heard him speak at the time took him literally, then why would anyone 2,000 years later take him symbolically? Also, in verse 51 Jesus says that the bread which he will give for the life of the world is his flesh. When did he give his flesh for the life of the world? On the cross! Was that symbolic?*



We agree that the Jews back then took him literally. Under the Law, it was absolutely forbidden to eat or drink blood. So when Jesus makes the statement, "unless you drink the blood and eat the flesh of the son of man, you will have no life in you," that turned them off. Why did he say that? Many left him after this, and he asked his disciples if they were going to leave him, too. They didn't understand what he meant - they did take it literally because of the way that he stated it. Did he say this on purpose to drive certain ones away?

Now the problems (as we see them) with the literal translation:

1. How could the emblem literally be Jesus' body in the upper room? He was there! His body was actually holding the piece of bread. Was it another body? Was there no blood in his veins when he held up the wine? Was it extra blood? Remember, he hadn't given his life yet - he was still alive.
2. This was not the view of early Christian writers.
3. "Transubstantiation" as a word did not come into existence until the 12th century.
4. Jesus broke the bread and said it was his body. But in fact, not a bone of his was broken. It gives us the sense of the breaking apart being a picture of the sacrificing of the life of Jesus.
5. Under the Law, the ingestion of blood was illegal. As a Jew, he would have been violating the Law and encouraging others to do so. We are told he was sinless and did not violate the Law.
6. The mass requires Jesus to be "re-sacrificed" every time, even though Paul says in Hebrews 9:28, so Christ also, *having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await him.*
7. Jesus wanted us to remember this anniversary. Paul actually includes us in this by saying we are all one body. 1 Corinthians 10:15-17: *¹⁵I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. ¹⁶Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*

If the bread represents the literal body of Jesus, then the bread also has to represent our literal bodies, but that doesn't make sense. Rather, it is our participation in what these things mean. For example, when I exercise faith in the blood of Jesus, I am symbolically drinking his blood, saying, "I need this to live, I need this for salvation." When I exercise faith in the body of Jesus, I'm saying, "He died for me. I have to eat of the value of his merit, in order that I may have life." Christians are not taught to drink literal blood or be cannibals! The thought here is that we are to be blessed by his sacrifice by participating with Jesus in living a life of daily sacrifice, putting to death our flesh (our earthly desires and earthly wants) as Jesus did his.

It always points back to his original event of giving his body on the cross. In pointing back to that singular event, from a symbolic perspective, it makes



that event so much greater than having to redo the event literally over and over again. To us, that would diminish the original.

1 Corinthians 10:15-17: ¹⁵I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Communion means "common union" - the idea of participating with Jesus is our common union with our Lord. Paul says that we are part of the one bread because we have the unity with Jesus in the bread. Partaking of his goodness and his merit helps us do the will of God. This is a spiritual discernment.

Now - what about the book of Revelation? Literal? Symbolic???

This book appears to most to be highly symbolic, but many still insist on a literal interpretation and run into a lot of trouble trying to provide literal explanations.

 **Why Glenn Beck is enraged at me, The Bible - Literal or not, "The Last Word," MSNBC with Lawrence O'Donnell**

- *I have told you the truth that I know it is not the end of the world.*
- *I know that the book of Revelation has nothing to do with what is going on in the world today.*
- *Good and thoughtful Christians do not believe the book of Revelation, just as they do not believe everything in the Bible. If you did, then the proper penalty for not keeping the Sabbath is death, the proper penalty for dishonoring your father and mother is death and you truly should be killed for that.*

We view the book of Revelation as a very symbolic book.

Revelation 1:1: (NASB) *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; (a prophetic book) and he sent and communicated it by his angel to his bond-servant John...*

In the King James that word "communicated" is translated as "signified."

The Greek word here is **σημαίνω** - *sēmainō*, and it means to signify. It is the same word that is the basis for our English word **semaphore**. What is a semaphore? It is a code! Our Navy uses a semaphore coding system with flags.

So the Book of Revelation was "sign-a-fied" - i.e. it is a book of coded symbols. And as such, it must be interpreted symbolically. As we understand the signs, we understand the prophecy.

We note first of all that in Verse 1 this is a prophetic book as well as symbolic, since it concerns "*the things which must soon take place...*" so it is relevant for today.

God's word is presented in symbols and in literal stories. We don't dismiss any part of God's inspired word. He presented it to us on many levels. The chief theme that runs through the whole Bible is the sacrificial death of Jesus for all of mankind.



The Bible is a book that is given to us by God and tells us the history of mankind from before he was created to eons of time after we live now. It gives us everything we need to know, but some of it is veiled in symbols and in parables. We need to be students to figure it out!

So is the Bible literal or symbolic...?

*For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions.
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



Examples of mixed literal and symbolic meaning in texts:

John 11:11-14: (NASB) ¹¹This he said, and after that he said to them, Our friend **Lazarus has fallen asleep**; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep. ¹²The disciples then said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. ¹³Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he was speaking of literal sleep. ¹⁴So Jesus then said to them plainly, **Lazarus is dead**,

Lazarus was literally dead. But Jesus says he is sleeping! But not a literal sleep or night's rest, rather a metaphor for death - the full and complete unconsciousness of death. But one from which there will be an awakening in the kingdom.

In the Atonement Day ritual sacrifices described in Leviticus 16, a literal bull and a literal goat were sacrificed to God as part of the Law. But these two sacrifices PICTURE Jesus → the bullock and the Church → the Lord's goat. The bullock is a type of Christ and Jesus is the reality.

Now the type is real, is literal. But by God's overruling providence these real events and real objects of the past prefigure or 'typify' **greater realities of the future.**

Ezekiel 16:60-62: (NASB) ⁶⁰Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive **your sisters**, both **your older and your younger**; and I will give them to you **as daughters**, but not because of your covenant. ⁶²Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD...

- the "sisters" of Israel
 - o "elder" - the nations that preceded Israel in time
 - o "younger" - the nations that came after Israel in time



John sees a marvelous vision of amazing things:

Revelation 1:12-16: (NASB) ¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one *like a son of man*, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Symbols here in these verses:

- Robe → faithful servant
- Gold → divine nature
- White → righteousness
- Fire → judgment
- Bronze - Copper → perfect humanity (feet here representing his sacrificed human nature)
- Waters → truth
- Seven → divine completeness or perfection
- Sword → God's word
- Sun → the ruling authority

Clearly a picture of Jesus! Is this how he literally looks? NO - it is a symbolic, "sign-i-fied" picture to reveal the details of his righteous character.

And Revelation sometimes interprets itself!

"like a son of man" = the seven stars:

Verse 20: *As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

The Greek word for angels is "angelos" which means 'messengers.' So the seven stars represent seven messengers to the seven churches! What do the seven churches mean? Well, here we have a choice that they represent the literal churches in Asia minor or something else. Since the book of Revelation is a prophecy, we conclude they represent seven different churches during the Gospel Age up to the return and presence of Jesus.