Sunday, 24th May 2026

A Christ-Centered Reflection on Biblical Symbolism

My Dearest Christian Family,
Let us on this glorious day of God reflect on Biblical symbolism that all points to our beloved Christ.
This is a more granular insight to supplement last Sunday's reflection that the whole Bible points to Christ.

The symbols of the Bible are not random religious images scattered across different books, but part of one connected language running through the entire story of Scripture?

That question matters more than most people realise, because for many of us biblical symbolism feels either confusing or unimportant. Some people see the symbols in the Bible and simply move past them. Others become fascinated by them in the wrong way, treating them almost like hidden mystical codes waiting to be unlocked.

And then there are readers who reach books like Ezekiel, Daniel, or Revelation and quietly feel overwhelmed by the strange imagery: beasts, horns, dragons, fire, rivers, scrolls, lamps, crowns, trees, temples. Suddenly, the Bible can begin to feel distant and difficult, almost like a

symbolic world that belongs to someone else.

But the deeper problem is not that the Bible uses symbols. The deeper problem is that most of us never learn how the Bible actually uses them.

Because the symbols in Scripture are not random decorations added to religious stories. They are not arbitrary images dropped into the text for atmosphere. And they are not secret codes designed only for experts. The Bible uses symbols as a way of carrying meaning across the story itself.

Symbols connect themes. Symbols create memory. Symbols tie books together that were written centuries apart.

Symbols allow earlier parts of Scripture to echo into later parts of Scripture in ways that make the Bible feel astonishingly unified once those patterns become visible.

That is why this subject matters so much.

Because once we begin seeing how the Bible's symbolic language works, the Scriptures themselves start feeling different. Genesis begins connecting to

Revelation. The prophets begin connecting to the Gospels. Images that once felt isolated suddenly reveal long patterns developing beneath the surface.

The Bible stops feeling fragmented and begins feeling deeply interconnected.

Scripture is one unified revelation from God, centred upon our beloved Christ.

As John Calvin taught, Scripture is its own interpreter. We are not free to invent meanings, speculate wildly, or turn biblical symbols into mystical fantasies. God Himself explains His

symbols through the unfolding story of redemption.

Scriptures: Luke 24:27; Luke 24:44–45; John 5:39; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

The Bible Teaches Through Symbolic Memory.

One of the most important realities in biblical symbolism is this: the Scriptures constantly expect readers to remember earlier parts of the story when symbols appear again later.

The Bible is full of symbolic echoes.

Light and darkness. Water and rivers. Trees and gardens. Mountains and cities. Bread and wine. Lambs and shepherds. Crowns and thrones. Temples and sacrifices. Fire and wind.

The repetition is deliberate.

The Bible wants readers to recognize these images when they reappear. It wants earlier meanings to remain alive in the imagination. It wants later scenes to awaken memory of earlier scenes.

In many ways, the Bible teaches through repeated symbolic patterns just as much as it teaches through direct instruction.

This becomes especially important in Revelation. Many of us approach Revelation expecting completely new symbolic material that appears without connection to the rest of Scripture. But Revelation assumes that we already understand much of the Bible's earlier symbolic language.

The dragon connects back to the serpent in Genesis.
The Lamb connects back to Passover sacrifice.
The river connects back to Eden.
The temple connects back to Exodus and God dwelling among His people.
The throne connects back to kingdom imagery throughout the Bible.

Revelation is not inventing a new symbolic universe. It is gathering together a symbolic language God has already been developing for centuries.

Geerhardus Vos explained that revelation unfolds organically through covenant history.
God reveals truth progressively, not randomly. The symbols deepen as redemption unfolds.

Scriptures: Hebrews 1:1–2; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; Colossians 2:16–17.

Symbols Are Not Mechanical Codes

Modern readers often expect symbols to function like mathematical equations: one image equals one fixed meaning every time.

But biblical symbolism usually works more like poetic theology than mechanical code-breaking.

Take water as an example.

At creation, water is connected with life and the Spirit of God moving over the deep. During the flood, water becomes judgment. In the Exodus, water becomes deliverance. At the Jordan River, water

becomes entrance into promise. In the prophets, water symbolizes restoration. Jesus offers living water. Revelation ends with the river of life.

The image develops. The meaning expands. The symbolism deepens.

The symbols are narrative. They move with the story.

And because of that, understanding biblical symbolism requires seeing how the whole Bible fits together.

Christ: The Fulfilment of Biblical Symbolism

Eventually another realization emerges beneath all of this: the Bible's symbolic language ultimately converges in our beloved Lord Jesus Christ.

This is one of the greatest truths in all of Scripture.

Our beloved Christ Himself taught this after His resurrection when He opened the Scriptures to His disciples and showed them that Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms spoke concerning Him.

Scriptures: Luke 24:25–27; Luke 24:44–47; John 1:45; John 5:46.

Lord Jesus does not invent the symbolic language. He fulfils it.

He is:

- The Lamb
- The Light
- The Shepherd
- The Bread
- The Temple
- The Living Water
- The King
- The True Vine

Again and again, Christ steps directly into symbolic categories Scripture had already been developing for centuries.

The symbols stop feeling like disconnected religious imagery and begin revealing one unfolding story centred in Christ.

The Tree: From Eden to Calvary to Glory

Genesis introduces one of the Bible's most powerful symbols: the tree.

The Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil stand at the centre of sacred space.

The tree becomes connected to life, wisdom, obedience, covenant, and humanity's relationship with God.

But the symbolism does not stop in Eden.

Psalm 1 describes the righteous man as a tree planted by rivers of water. Proverbs calls wisdom a tree of life. The prophets use trees to symbolize kingdoms and restoration.

Then the New Testament presents Christ hanging upon a tree.

Adam took from a forbidden tree and brought death. Christ bore the curse

upon another tree and brought redemption.

Herman Bavinck beautifully taught that grace restores creation rather than destroying it.
The Bible begins with humanity losing access to the tree of life and ends with restored access through Christ.
Scriptures: Genesis 2:9; Genesis 3:22–24; Psalm 1:3; Proverbs 3:18; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 22:2.

Water: Judgment, Cleansing, and Life

Few symbols appear more consistently throughout Scripture than water.

Water represents life, cleansing, renewal, chaos, judgment, and salvation.

The flood judged the old world.
The Red Sea destroyed Egypt but delivered Israel.
The Jordan River marked entrance into promise.
The prophets described rivers flowing in dry places.
Jesus offered living water.
Revelation ends with the river of life flowing from God's throne.

John Calvin described the sacraments as visible signs confirming God's promises to weak believers. Water in Scripture

always points beyond itself toward spiritual realities accomplished by God.

Scriptures: Genesis 1:2; Exodus 14:21–31; Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:25–27; John 4:14; John 7:37–39; Titus 3:5; Revelation 22:1.

Light: Revelation and Divine Glory

The first spoken words recorded in Scripture are:
“Let there be light.”

Immediately, light becomes associated with life, truth, order, holiness, revelation, and the presence of God.

Darkness becomes associated with chaos, confusion, judgment, and separation.

God led Israel by light.
The lampstand represented divine presence.
The Psalms call God's Word a lamp.
The prophets promised light dawning upon darkness.
Then Lord Jesus declared:
"I am the light of the world."

This is not random metaphor. Christ steps into one of the oldest symbolic themes in Scripture.

Jonathan Edwards often spoke of divine light illuminating the soul. True spiritual sight is not merely intellectual understanding, but the Spirit opening blind eyes to behold the glory of Christ.

Scriptures: Genesis 1:3; Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 9:2; John 1:4–9; John 8:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 21:23.

The Garden and the Temple
Eden was more than a beautiful location. It was sacred space where God dwelt with humanity.

Many of us have noted the temple-like imagery in Eden:

- Rivers flowing outward

- Priest-like responsibilities
- Sacred space
- The presence of God

The tabernacle echoed Eden.
The temple echoed Eden.
The prophets described restoration using garden imagery.

Then Lord Jesus declared:
“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Christ Himself became the true temple — the true meeting place between God and man.

And through union with Christ, we become the dwelling place of God by the Spirit.

Scriptures: Genesis 2:8–15; Exodus 25:8; John 1:14; John 2:19–21; Ephesians 2:19–22; Revelation 21:22.

The Lamb and the Blood

Perhaps no symbol carries more emotional and theological power than the lamb.

At Passover, the blood of the lamb marked Israel for deliverance. Judgment passed over those covered by blood.

The lamb became associated with:

- Sacrifice
- Deliverance
- Innocence
- Substitution
- Covenant mercy

Isaiah described the suffering servant as a lamb led to slaughter.

Then John the Baptist declared:
“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

The symbolic world already existed before Lord Jesus arrived.

John Owen defended the glorious truth that Christ did not merely make salvation possible. He truly redeemed His people through His blood.

The Lamb upon the throne in Revelation is one of the most astonishing images in Scripture.
The sacrificed One reigns as King.

Scriptures: Exodus 12:3–13; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:12–14; Revelation 5:6–14.

Kingdom Symbols: Throne, Lion, Crown

As Scripture unfolds, symbols

increasingly point toward kingdom and kingship.

Crowns. Thrones. Lions. Shepherds. Cities.

All ask one central question:
Who will restore God's rule over creation?
Earthly empires rise through pride and violence. Babylon becomes symbolic of human rebellion. Egypt becomes symbolic of oppression.

But above every earthly throne stands the throne of God.

Daniel sees heavenly thrones established before the Ancient of Days. Revelation is filled with throne imagery.

Then comes one of the greatest symbolic reversals in Scripture.

John hears of the Lion of Judah — but when he turns, he sees a Lamb.

The conquering King appears as a sacrificed Lamb.

Power and sacrifice converge.

The kingdom of God triumphs not through sinful domination, but through covenant faithfulness and redemption.

Scriptures: Genesis 49:9–10; Daniel 7:9–14; Philippians 2:5–11; Revelation 5:5–6.

Revelation Completes Genesis

Revelation does not abandon Genesis. It completes it.

The Bible begins with:

- A garden
- A river
- A tree
- Light
- God dwelling with humanity

The Bible ends with:

- A greater garden city
- The river of life

- The tree of life restored
- Eternal light
- God dwelling with humanity forever

The curse is removed.

The symbolism reaches completion.
The Bible's repeated images are not accidental. They reveal one unified redemptive story moving toward restoration.

Conclusion:

My Dearest Christian Family,
biblical symbolism should never lead us into empty speculation or mystical obsession. The purpose of these symbols

is not to make us clever, but to make us worship.

The symbols are windows into the glory of our beloved Christ.

The tree, the river, the lamb, the light, the temple, the throne — all reveal the wisdom of God unfolding through redemptive history.

And at the centre of that story stands Lord Jesus Christ:

- The Light in the darkness
- The Bread from heaven
- The Living Water
- The Good Shepherd
- The True Temple

- The Lamb upon the throne

The one toward whom the symbolic world of Scripture has always been moving.

So the next time we encounter a strange image in Scripture — a river, a mountain, a lamb, a serpent, a tree, a temple, or a throne — remember this:

The Bible is inviting us to see the larger pattern.

Because the symbols are not random.

They are part of one connected language telling one connected story.

A story about creation and fall.
A story about covenant and redemption.
A story about kingdom and restoration.
A story about God dwelling with His people forever.
And every symbol ultimately bows before Christ, the fulfilment of Scripture, the glory of redemption, and the centre of the whole Bible.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Much love,

Francis