

## 80 DECODING PROPHETIC LANGUAGE—PART 2

**Introduction:** Without a firm understanding of the symbolic apocalyptic language in the Old Testament, Bible students are likely to literalize and consequently misinterpret New Testament symbols. The following are common apocalyptic words and phrases. When we study the use of the word or phrase in the Old Testament we can rightly interpret the meaning in the New. (Listed in alphabetical order)

### 1. CARCASS, DEAD BODY = a spiritually dead and militarily defeated nation.

**A. (OT) Spiritually dead Israel and their imminent destruction by Assyrians:** “Therefore Yahweh’s anger burns against his people, and he has stretched out his hand against them and has struck them....and their dead bodies are as refuse in the middle of the streets.” Is 5:25

**B. (OT) King of Babylon’s defeat by Medo-Persians:** “But you are cast away from your tomb like an abominable branch...like a dead body trodden under foot.” Is 14:19

**C. (NT) Judah to be conquered by Rome:** “Where the body is, there the vultures will also be gathered...” Lk 17:37

### 2. CLOUD RIDING = invisible Divine power directing external events (see Preterist Paper #79)

### 3. DAY OF THE LORD = national judgment (see Preterist Papers #79)

### 4. FIRE = the power of God, judgment

**A. (OT) God’s judgment power:** “Isn’t my word like fire?’ says Yahweh...” Jer 23:29

**B. (OT) The Babylonian army, an expression of God’s fire nature, went against Judah:** “Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh’s wrath, but the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he will make an end, yes, a terrible end, of all those who dwell in the land.” Zeph 1:18

**C. (NT) Jesus brought judgment to Israel:** “I came to throw fire on the land. I wish it were already kindled.” Lk 12:49

### 5. HEAVEN AND EARTH = leaders and the land with its people. (See Preterist Paper #18)

**A. (OT) Edom’s people (earth) and leaders (heaven) will be destroyed:** “Let the earth and all it contains hear, the world, and everything that comes from it. For Yahweh is enraged against all the nations, and angry with all their armies.... All of the army of the heavens will be dissolved. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll, and all its armies will fade away, as a leaf fades from off a vine or a fig tree. For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens. Behold, it will come down on Edom, and on the people of my curse, for judgment.” Is 34:1-5

**B. (OT) Warning to leaders of Judah (heavens), and people of Judah (earth):** “Hear, heavens, and listen, earth; for Yahweh has spoken: ‘I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me.’... Hear Yahweh’s word, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!” Is 1:2, 10.

**C. (OT) Future dissolution of the Old Covenant:** “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish away like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment. Its inhabitants will die in the same way, but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will not be abolished.” Isa 51:6

**D. (NT) The Old Covenant ruling priesthood and followers would pass away with the coming war:** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Mt 5:18

**NOTE: The Jerusalem temple with the leaders were representative of heaven:** “There are priests who offer the gifts according to the law, who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.” Heb 8:40

### 6. HEAVENS ROLLED UP AS A SCROLL, DISSOLVED = leaders fail, social order destroyed

**A. (OT) Edom’s leaders to fall and be destroyed, along with her people:** “All of the army of the heavens will be dissolved. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll, and all its armies will fade away.” Is 34:4.

**B. (NT) To Israel, the temple and its leadership represented heaven (Heb 8:5), but they were removed AD 70:** “Heaven was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up.” Rev 6:14

### 7. LOCUSTS = destructive human armies

**A. (OT) Nebuchadnezzar to defeat Egypt, 605 BC:** “They will march with an army, and come against her with axes, as wood cutters. They will cut down her forest,” says Yahweh, “though it can’t be searched; because they are more than the locusts, and are innumerable.” Jer 46:22-23

**B. (OT) Joel foresaw complete devastation of Jerusalem:** “What the swarming locust has left, the great locust has eaten. What the great locust has left, the grasshopper has eaten. For a nation has come up on my land, strong, and without number.... Their appearance is as the appearance of horses, and they run as horsemen. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains, they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array.” Joel 1:4-6, 2: 4-5.

**C. (NT) Destroying armies against first century Judah:** “Then out of the smoke came locusts on the earth, and power was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.... The shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for war. On their heads were something like golden crowns, and their faces were like people’s faces.” Rev 9:3, 7

**8. MARK OR SIGN ON FOREHEAD, HAND = allegiance**

**A. (OT) In the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 587 BC, the faithful were symbolically marked and saved:**

“Yahweh said to him, ‘Go through the middle of the city, through the middle of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’” Ez 9:3-6.

**B. (OT) Dedication of the firstborn male:** “It shall be for a sign to you on your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that Yahweh’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt.” Ex 13:9

**C. (NT) The beast (zealots) required absolute allegiance to their cause:** “He causes all, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slave, to be given marks on their right hands or on their foreheads.” Rev 13:16

**D. (NT) The 144,000 had allegiance to Jesus:** “I saw...the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a number, one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.” Rev 14:1

**9. MOUNTAIN = a nation or large grouping of people (see P.P. #33 for Revelation and Josephus parallels)**

**A. (OT) Destruction of Babylon, a large powerful nation:** “Behold, I am against you, destroying mountain, says Yahweh, which destroys all the earth. I will stretch out my hand on you, roll you down from the rocks, and will make you a burned mountain.” Jer 51:25.

**B. (OT) Yahweh crushed Israel and Judah:** “The mountains melt under him, and the valleys split apart like wax before the fire, like waters that are poured down a steep place. All this is for the disobedience of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the disobedience of Jacob? Isn’t it Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Aren’t they Jerusalem?” Micah 1:4-5

**C. (NT) Could be the destruction of Joppa, Jerusalem, or all of Palestine:** “The second angel sounded, and something like a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea. One third of the sea became blood.” Rev 8:8

**10. PIT, ABYSS, SHEOL = destruction, darkness, death (See P.P. #34 “The Two Witnesses”)**

**A. (OT) Tyre was invaded and defeated:** “For the Lord Yahweh says...I will bring you down with those who descend into the pit, to the people of old time, and will make you dwell in the lower parts of the earth, in the places that are desolate of old, with those who go down to the pit, that you be not inhabited...” Ez 26:19-20.

**B. (OT) Violent downfall of Assyria, an example to Egypt:** “Their mighty ones don’t stand up on their height, even all who drink water; for they are all delivered to death, to the lower parts of the earth, among the children of men, with those who go down to the pit.” “The Lord Yahweh says: ‘In the day when he went down to Sheol, I caused a mourning. I covered the deep for him, and I restrained its rivers. The great waters were stopped.’” Ez 31:11,14-16.

**C. (NT) Widespread death during the War:** “He opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke from a burning furnace. The sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke from the pit.” Rev 9:2

**11. PROSTITUTION, HARLOTRY, ADULTERY = unfaithfulness, idolatry, carnality (see P.P. #4 Harlot’s identity)**

**A. (OT) Jerusalem was idolatrous:** “How the faithful city has become a prostitute! She was full of justice. Righteousness lodged in her, but now there are murderers.” Is 1:21

**B. (OT) Jerusalem unfaithful to Yahweh:** “You trusted in your beauty, and played the prostitute because of your renown, and poured out your prostitution on everyone who passed by.... You have also committed sexual immorality with the Egyptians...You have played the prostitute also with the Assyrians...You have moreover multiplied your prostitution to the land of merchants, to Chaldea....” Ez16:14-15, 26-29

**C. (OT) Israel went her own way:** “...She is not my wife, neither am I [Yahweh] her husband; and let her put away her prostitution from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts.” Hos 1:2

**D. (NT) Jesus’ generation was adulterous, i.e. unfaithful:** “For whoever will be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” Mk 8:38 (also see Mt 16:4, 12:39)

**E. (NT) Jerusalem was the great Harlot of Revelation:** “For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.” Rev 19:2.

**12. SMOKE = desolation and destruction**

**A. (OT) Edom’s destruction:** “It won’t be quenched night or day. Its smoke will go up forever. From generation to generation, it will lie waste. No one will pass through it [Edom] forever and ever.” Is 34:10

**B. (OT) Philistia destroyed by Babylonian armies:** “Howl, gate! Cry, city! You are melted away, Philistia, all of you; for smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks.” Is 14:31.

**C. (NT) Destruction unleashed during war:** “... smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke from a burning furnace. The sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke from the pit.” Rev 9:2

**D. (NT) Destruction of the great prostitute, apostate Israel:** “For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.” A second said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up forever and ever.” Rev 19:2

### 13. SHAKING, TREMBLING = attacking human armies

**A. (OT) Destruction of Babylon:** “The land trembles and is in pain; for the purposes of Yahweh against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant.” Jer 51:29

**B. (OT) Coming destruction of Jerusalem:** “For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath I have spoken. Surely in that day there will be a great shaking in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals of the field, all creeping things who creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the surface of the earth will shake at my presence. Then the mountains will be thrown down, the steep places will fall, and every wall will fall to the ground.” Ez 38:19-20

**N.T. (OT) Imminent war with Rome:** “The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind.” Rev 6:13

### 14. SUN MOON AND STARS DARKENED = national judgement (see Preterist Paper #79)

#### 15. TRUMPET = announcement of big change for better or worse

**A. (OT) Trumpet heralds war:** “We will go into the land of Egypt, where we will see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there we will dwell.” Jer 42:14.

**B. (OT) Trumpet heralds joyful gathering of Israel in their land:** “It will happen in that day that a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and those who were outcasts in the land of Egypt, shall come; and they will worship Yahweh in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.” Isa 27:13.

**C. (NT) Imminent national judgment for Israel:** “The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” Rev 8:6

#### 16. WATER OR SEA = a nation, many peoples

**A. (OT) Assyrian army against Judah:** “Behold, the Lord brings upon them the mighty flood waters of the river: the king of Assyria and all his glory. It will come up over all its channels, and go over all its banks. It will sweep onward into Judah. It will overflow and pass through. It will reach even to the neck. The stretching out of its wings will fill the width of your land, O Immanuel.” Isa 8: 7-8.

**B. (OT) Potential conquerors from Assyria to Israel:** “Ah, the uproar of many peoples who roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations that rush like the rushing of mighty waters!” Isa 17:12

**C. (OT) Four nations arose:** “Four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.” Dan 7:3

**D. (NT) Jewish zealots came from all over the Roman Empire to oppose Rome:** “I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads.” Rev 13:1

**E. (NT) Jerusalem ruled over the Jews who lived throughout the Roman Empire:** “One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here. I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters.” Rev 17:1.

#### 17. WORMWOOD = bitterness, toxicity (see Preterist Paper #33)

**A. (OT) Evil is bitter:** “You who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth!” Amos 5:7

**B. (OT) Suffering, war coming to Jerusalem from Babylon 597 BC:** “I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink poisoned water; for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone out into all the land.” Jer 23:15

**C. (NT) The bitterness of the Roman/Jewish War (AD 67-70):** “The name of the star is ‘Wormwood’. One third of the waters became wormwood. Many people died from the waters, because they were made bitter.” Rev 8:11

**Closing thoughts:** You can test the meanings of these terms by reading the Old Testament passages we have listed, as well as looking up other prophetic passages using the same word or phrase. We recommend biblehub.com, an excellent resource for students of the Bible. What is essential is that the prophetic interpretation of the word or phrase in the New Testament be in alignment with the meaning in the Tanakh. Preterist Paper #1 is foundational to these studies.