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**Bible Basics 4**

**What are the “elementary principles?”**

**“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” Hebrews 5:12-6:2**

**The Godhead** – Our God is unique, but shows Himself in three persons---the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This triple personhood is called the Trinity, and is somewhat a mystery, but the Bible speaks of God this way, so we believe it. The Bible says God has some unique attributes, that is, qualities that no created being shares, such as, infinite in being and perfection (Job 11:7-9), an invisible spirit (John 4:24; I Timothy 1:17), unchangeable (James 1:17; Malachi 3:6), eternal (Psalm 90:2), almighty (Genesis 17:1), absolute (Exodus 3:14), and all sufficient (Acts 17:24-25). He also has attributes or qualities that He shares with created beings to a lesser degree, such as being loving (I John 4:8,16), gracious, merciful and forgiving (Exodus 34:6). Some verses such as these speak of God without specifying which person, Father, Son or Holy Spirit; but other verses speak of a specific person, such as Jesus as God the Son being the eternally begotten of the Father (Philippians 2:6-8), despite choosing to humble Himself to become a human being. The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as being God as well, equal with Father and Son (I John 5:7), but appears as the One proceeding from the Father and sent out by the Son (John 15:26).[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Man, His Fall and Redemption** – Man is a created being, made in the likeness and image of God (Genesis 1:26). Through Adam’s transgressions and fall, sin came into the world (Genesis 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Romans 5:12). “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). As it is written, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10). Jesus Christ, the Son of God was manifested to become our righteousness and gave His life and shed His blood to redeem and restore man back to God (John 3:5, Romans 6:23). Salvation is the gift of God to man, separate from works of the law, and is made operative by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, producing works acceptable to God (Galatians 3:24; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:14; Philippians 2:13).

**Eternal Life and The New Birth** - Man’s first step toward salvation is repentance from sins and faith toward God, resulting in the New Birth. The New Birth is necessary to all men, and when experienced, results in eternal life (2 Corinthians 7:10, John 5:12).

**The Scriptures** - The bible is the inspired Word of God, given to us through holy men of old who spoke and wrote as the Holy Spirit led them. We accept the Scriptures as our infallible guide in matters pertaining to conduct and beliefs (2 Tim. 3:16, 1 Thess. 2:13, 2 Peter 1:21).

**Water Baptism** - Baptism, in water, is a direct commandment of our Lord Jesus to believers. The ordinance is a symbol of the Christian’s identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. (Matt. 28:19, Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12, Acts 8:36-39). Water Baptism is symbolic of what saves us---having a redeemed conscience toward God, through faith in the resurrection of Christ (I Peter 3:21).

**Baptism In The Holy Spirit** - The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift from God to empower all believers as promised by the Lord Jesus Christ and is received by faith and is a separate work of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11, John 14:16-17, Acts1:8, Acts2:38, Acts19:1-7, Acts 2:4).

**Sanctification** - We believe in sanctification (conformity to God’s standards) as a definite, yet progressive work of grace, commencing at the New Birth and continuing until the consummation of salvation at Christ’s return (Heb.12:14, 1Thes. 5:23, 2 Peter 3:12-14, 1Cor.1:30).

**Divine Healing** - We believe that divine healing is available and is wrought by the power of God through the prayer of faith, by the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and other means. It is provided for in the atonement of Christ, and is available to us today (Mark 16:18, James 5:14-15, 1Peter 2:24, Matt. 8:17, Isa. 53:4-5).

**Resurrection of The Dead and Return of Our Lord** - The angels said to Jesus’ disciples, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Our Lord Jesus shall return to earth as Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14).

 Source, Westminster Confession of Faith, 1658, 1688, 1983, Ch. 2, “Of God, and of the Holy Trinity.”

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***What are symbols? Why does God use them? What can we learn?***

What are symbols? A symbol stands for or suggests something else. They are visual or conceptual representations of that which is unseen.

Perhaps the most familiar symbol to many of us is our nation's flag. Another modern use of symbols appears under a different term—logo—but the principle and usage are the same. All of us instantly recognize a team, company, school or church logo. When one sees the familiar logo, one's thoughts transfer easily to the reality: the team, company, school or church itself.

In a single word, person, object, place, title, time, action or name, symbols explain what might be a complex concept. One simple image conveys the essence of the reality.

 Jesus deliberately chose the symbols of water, bread, wine, light, blood, vines and shepherds to convey His meaning. Our understanding of what may otherwise be a very difficult concept is greatly enhanced by an everyday object used as a symbol.

In [Hebrews 9:9](http://bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/30115/eVerseID/30115%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), at the end of several verses describing the Tabernacle and its furniture, the author says, "It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the [conscience](http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Audio.details/ID/257/Conscience-Part-1.htm). . . ." Under the Old Covenant each article in the Tabernacle was used in rituals those performing them may never have understood. But now, the symbols of those rituals and articles give us understanding of humanity's relationship with God under both Covenants. They clarify our privilege and [responsibility](http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Audio.details/ID/191/Self-Government-Responsibility-Part-2.htm) to such a startling degree that it should fill us with wonder and thanksgiving.

In [I Corinthians 11:24-25](http://bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/28625/eVerseID/28626%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) Paul states concerning the [Passover](http://sabbath.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sa/subj/passover/passover-articles.htm) symbols:

and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

How much more meaningful the Passover service becomes by holding the bread and wine in one's hand and then in eating them consciously making them a part of our bodies! What would the Passover service be like without them? It is almost unimaginable.

One author said that through symbols, "God takes His Son to pieces." Through them He brings within the range of our comprehension specific details of Christ's work and character. Thus we find in men like [Moses](http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Audio.details/ID/2226/Moses-Servant-God.htm), Joseph and David, and in animals like the lion and lamb, characteristics that were completely expressed in Jesus Christ.

When working with biblical symbolism, one must follow two cardinal rules. First, understand that several different symbols may represent the same reality in the Bible. For instance, the church is symbolized as a woman, a building in which Christians are living stones, a human body of which Christ is the Head, and a family of which Christians are brothers. Be sure to check the context in which a symbol appears and do not try to force a symbol where it does not fit.

Secondly, allow the Bible to interpret its own symbols. In [Revelation 1:20](http://bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/30718/eVerseID/30718%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), within the context of John's vision, Christ explains the meaning of the seven stars and the seven lampstands: "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the [angels](http://cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/artb/k/509/Ministry-Angels.htm) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches." The meanings of other symbols may be harder to locate, but usually the Bible explains itself to those who study it diligently.

Even so, sometimes a symbol is shrouded in mystery and difficult to understand. Perhaps we fail to understand the symbol because we are unfamiliar with the reality. Imagine the apostle John's struggle with symbols that represent twentieth-century warfare! Likewise, we struggle with the symbolism of sheep with whose characteristics we in turn are unfamiliar.

In the end we must learn to see symbols as pictures drawn by the hand of God through which He teaches us things that might otherwise be all but incomprehensible. It behooves us not to take them lightly. In studying symbols, take the time to research the characteristics of the symbol to deepen and clarify your understanding of God, Christ and Their purpose.

ByJohnW.Ritenbaugh
*Forerunner*, "Personal," July 1992

**The Bride of Christ**

Genesis 15, 24

Song of Solomon

Hosea 2:19

Isaiah 61:10

Isaiah 62:5

Jeremiah 3:14

Matthew 25:1-13

John 3:29

John 14:1-6

Ephesians 5:22-6

Revelation 19:7-12

**Jesus in the Old Testament**

**People**

Adam-

Abel-death of a Shepherd

Melchizedek-Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 7

Joseph

Moses

Jonah

**Not People**

The Ark

The lamb

All Offerings

The Brazen Serpent

Bread

Wine

Anything that is crushed, beaten, bruised

Water

\*Most of these references above were taken from Study of the Types by Ada R. Habershon

\*I also recommend Wilson’s Dictionary of Bible Types, Dream Interpretation books by Ira Milligan, James Goll and Barbi Breathit

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)