

Creation and Nature Metaphors

These often symbolize God's power, human frailty, or spiritual processes.

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Rainbow	God's covenant and promise of mercy after judgment	Links to Flood (judgment), Throne (God's glory), New creation (renewal)	Genesis 9:13; Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3
Stairway/Ladder	The way or access to God; mediation between heaven and earth	Links to Jesus (fulfillment as mediator), Angels (messengers), Heaven (destination)	Genesis 28:11-13; John 1:51
Pillar of Cloud and Fire	Divine guidance and protection	Links to Exodus (deliverance), Holy Spirit (presence), Light (truth)	Exodus 13:21
Grass	Human frailty and transience of life	Links to Flowers (fading beauty), Dust (mortality), Word of God (enduring contrast)	Psalms 90:5-6; 1 Peter 1:24; Isaiah 40:6-8
Clay and Potter	Humanity as molded by God; divine sovereignty over creation	Links to Father (God as creator), New creation (transformation), Vessel (purpose)	Isaiah 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1-6; Romans 9:20-21
Mustard Seed	Small beginnings leading to great growth; the Kingdom of God	Links to Faith (growth), Tree (maturity), Parables (kingdom illustrations)	Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19
Seed (general)	Reproduction of spiritual life; the Word of God implanted	Links to Sower (preaching), Harvest (judgment/fruiting), Imperishable seed (eternal life)	1 Peter 1:23; Matthew 13:3-9; Luke 8:4-8
Vine and Branches	Union with Christ; dependence for fruitfulness	Links to Fruit (good works), Pruning (discipline), Abiding (faith)	John 15:1-5
Salt of the Earth	Believers' preserving and flavoring influence in the world	Links to Covenant (permanence), Judgment (if lost), Light (paired role)	Matthew 5:13
Fountain of Life	Source of wisdom, sustenance, or eternal life	Links to Water (spiritual refreshment), Word of God (teaching), Holy Spirit (flow)	Proverbs 13:14; John 4:14; Revelation 21:6
Drop in a Bucket	Insignificance of nations or efforts before God	Links to Scales (judgment), Dust (frailty), Nations (under God's rule)	Isaiah 40:15

Judgment and Conflict Metaphors

These emphasize divine justice, spiritual warfare, or consequences.

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Fire & Brimstone	Divine judgment and destruction	Links to Sodom/Gomorrah (example), Lake of fire (eternal punishment), Purification (refining)	Genesis 19:24; Revelation 20:10; Psalm 11:6
Arrows	God's judgments or afflictions	Links to Bow (divine power), Quiver (stored wrath), Enemies (targeted)	Psalm 38:2; Psalm 120:4; Deuteronomy 32:23

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Sceptre	God's rule and authority	Links to King (Christ's reign), Iron rod (judgment), Throne (glory)	Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27; Revelation 19:15
Hammer	The Word of God shattering resistance	Links to Rock (hard hearts), Fire (consuming paired), Judgment (breaking)	Jeremiah 23:29
Two-Edged Sword	The piercing, discerning power of God's Word	Links to Judgment (division), Mouth of Christ (authority), Armor (spiritual warfare)	Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; Ephesians 6:17
Locusts	Plagues or God's judgment	Links to Plagues of Egypt (deliverance), Apocalypse (end times), Army (invasion)	Exodus 10:12; Joel 1:4; Revelation 9:3
Beasts	Earthly kingdoms or anti-God powers	Links to Dragon (Satan), Horns (authority), End times (opposition to God)	Daniel 7:2-7; Daniel 8:20-22; Revelation 13:1-2
Feet of Clay	Hidden flaws or instability in power	Links to Statue (empires), Fall (downfall), Idols (false strength)	Daniel 2:31-33
Writing on the Wall	Imminent doom or divine warning	Links to Judgment (weighed and found wanting), Hand (God's intervention), Feast (false security)	Daniel 5:5-6
Scapegoat	Bearing sins away; substitution	Links to Atonement (Day of Atonement), Wilderness (removal), Jesus (fulfillment)	Leviticus 16:20-22
Harvesting	Judgment day or reaping consequences	Links to Wheat/Tares (separation), Sickle (gathering), End times (finality)	Joel 3:12-13; Matthew 13:29-30; Revelation 14:15

Spiritual Guidance and Identity Metaphors

These relate to God's character, the believer's role, or divine revelation.

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Lamp/Light to Path	God's Word as guidance in darkness	Links to Feet (direction), Word (illumination), Salvation (path to life)	Psalm 119:105
Mirror	God's Word revealing true self	Links to Self-examination (introspection), Transformation (renewal), Law (standard)	James 1:23
Milk	Nourishing foundational truth of God's Word	Links to Growth (spiritual maturity), Babies (new believers), Meat (advanced teaching)	1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-13
Alpha and Omega	God/Jesus as beginning and end; completeness	Links to First/Last (eternity), Creation (origin), End times (fulfillment)	Revelation 1:8; Revelation 21:6; Revelation 22:13

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Lion of Judah	Jesus' royal strength and victory	Links to Tribe of Judah (lineage), Lamb (contrast in sacrifice), Conqueror (triumph)	Genesis 49:9; Revelation 5:5
Root of Jesse	Jesus as descendant and source of life	Links to Branch (growth), David (lineage), Banner (rallying point)	Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12
Good Shepherd	Jesus as protector and guide	Links to Sheep (followers), Door (entry to safety), Sacrifice (lays down life)	Psalms 23:1; John 10:11; Ezekiel 34:15-16
Hen and Chicks	God's protective care	Links to Jerusalem (gathering), Wings (shelter), Motherly love (compassion)	Matthew 23:37; Psalm 91:4
Pearl of Great Price	The Kingdom of God as invaluable treasure	Links to Merchant (seeker), Selling all (total commitment), Hidden treasure (discovery)	Matthew 13:45-46
Hidden Treasure	The Kingdom's worth, worth sacrificing for	Links to Field (world), Joy (finding), Selling all (commitment)	Matthew 13:44
Wheat and Tares	Separation of righteous and wicked at judgment	Links to Field (world), Harvest (end times), Burning (punishment)	Matthew 13:24-30
Dry Bones	Spiritual death and revival	Links to Valley (desolation), Breath (Spirit's life), Resurrection (restoration)	Ezekiel 37:1-11
Circumcision	Covenant sign; spiritual removal of sin nature (circumcision of the heart)	Links to Abrahamic covenant (physical sign), New Covenant (spiritual fulfillment), Baptism (NT parallel for cleansing)	Genesis 17:10-14; Deuteronomy 10:16; Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11-12

Other Metaphors (Actions, States, and Misc.)

These include symbolic actions or states not covered.

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Forbidden Fruit	Temptation and disobedience	Links to Tree of Knowledge (choice), Fall (consequences), Sin (entry)	Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 3:6
Golden Calf	Idolatry and false worship	Links to Exodus (rebellion), Aaron (leadership failure), Judgment (destruction)	Exodus 32:4
Capstone/Cornerstone	Christ's pre-eminence and foundation	Links to Builders (rejection), Rock (stability), Stumbling stone (offense)	Psalms 118:22; Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6-7
Signet Ring	Authority and sealing	Links to King (delegation), Adoption (sonship), Holy Spirit (seal)	Esther 8:10; Haggai 2:23; Ephesians 1:13

Metaphor/Symbol	Represents	Links Within the Bible	Bible References
Stars and Lampstands	God's ministers or churches	Links to Angels (messengers), Light (witness), Seven (completeness)	Revelation 1:20
Baptism	Union with Christ's death and resurrection; salvation	Links to Water (cleansing), Burial (dying to sin), New life (resurrection)	Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21
Lord's Supper	Communion with Christ; remembrance of sacrifice	Links to Bread/Wine (body/blood), Covenant (new), Unity (one body)	Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Anointing (action)	Empowerment by the Spirit	Links to Oil (symbol), Kings/Priests (calling), Healing (restoration)	1 Samuel 16:13; Luke 4:18
Sackcloth and Ashes	Repentance and mourning	Links to Dust (humility), Fasting (sorrow), Judgment (averted)	Jonah 3:5-6; Matthew 11:21
White Hair	Wisdom and purity	Links to Ancient of Days (God), Crown (glory), Age (honor)	Daniel 7:9; Revelation 1:14