



Theophany in Revelation

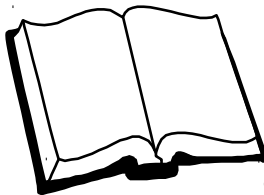
Vern Sheridan Poythress
Westminster Theological
Seminary

A. Theophany in General

Theophany as All-Encompassing

Theophany

Covenant

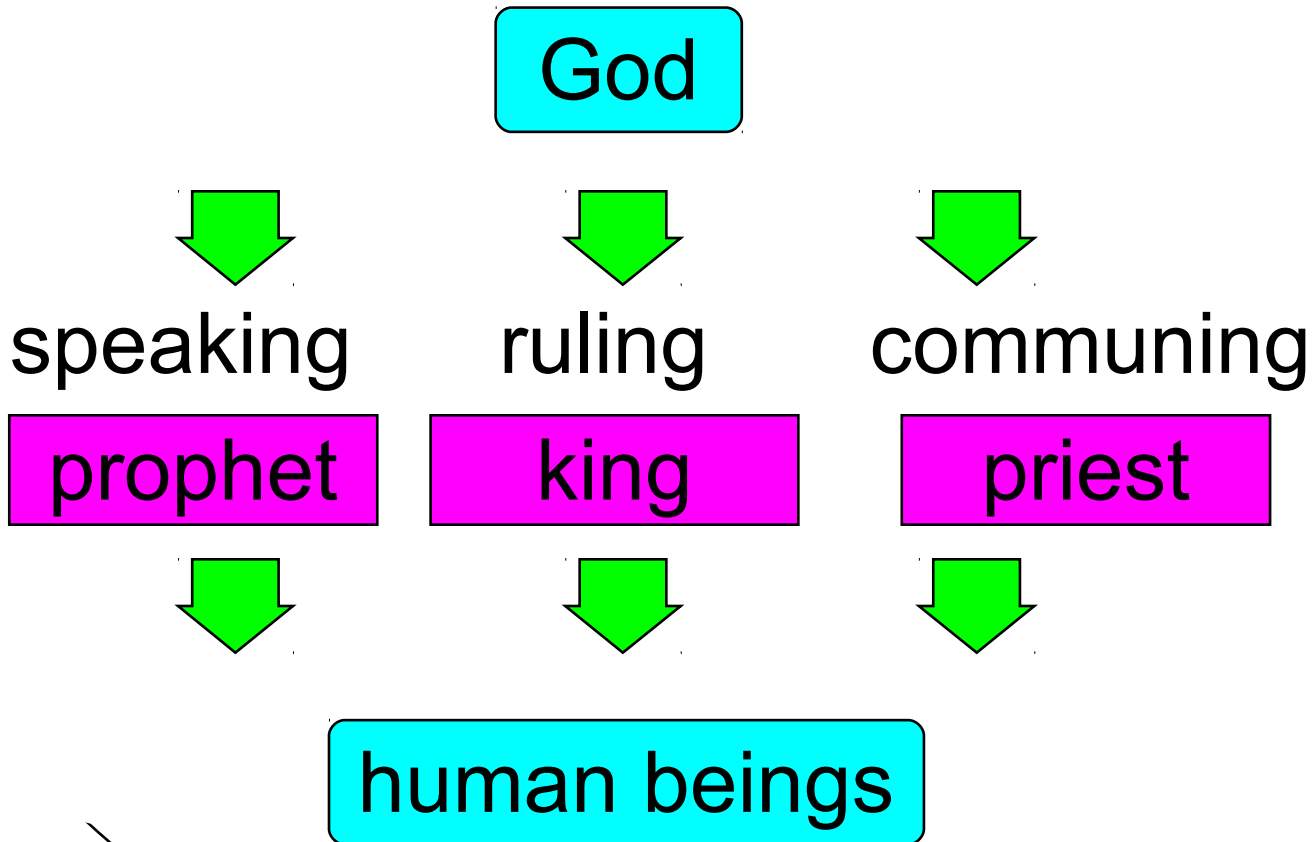


- See Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*

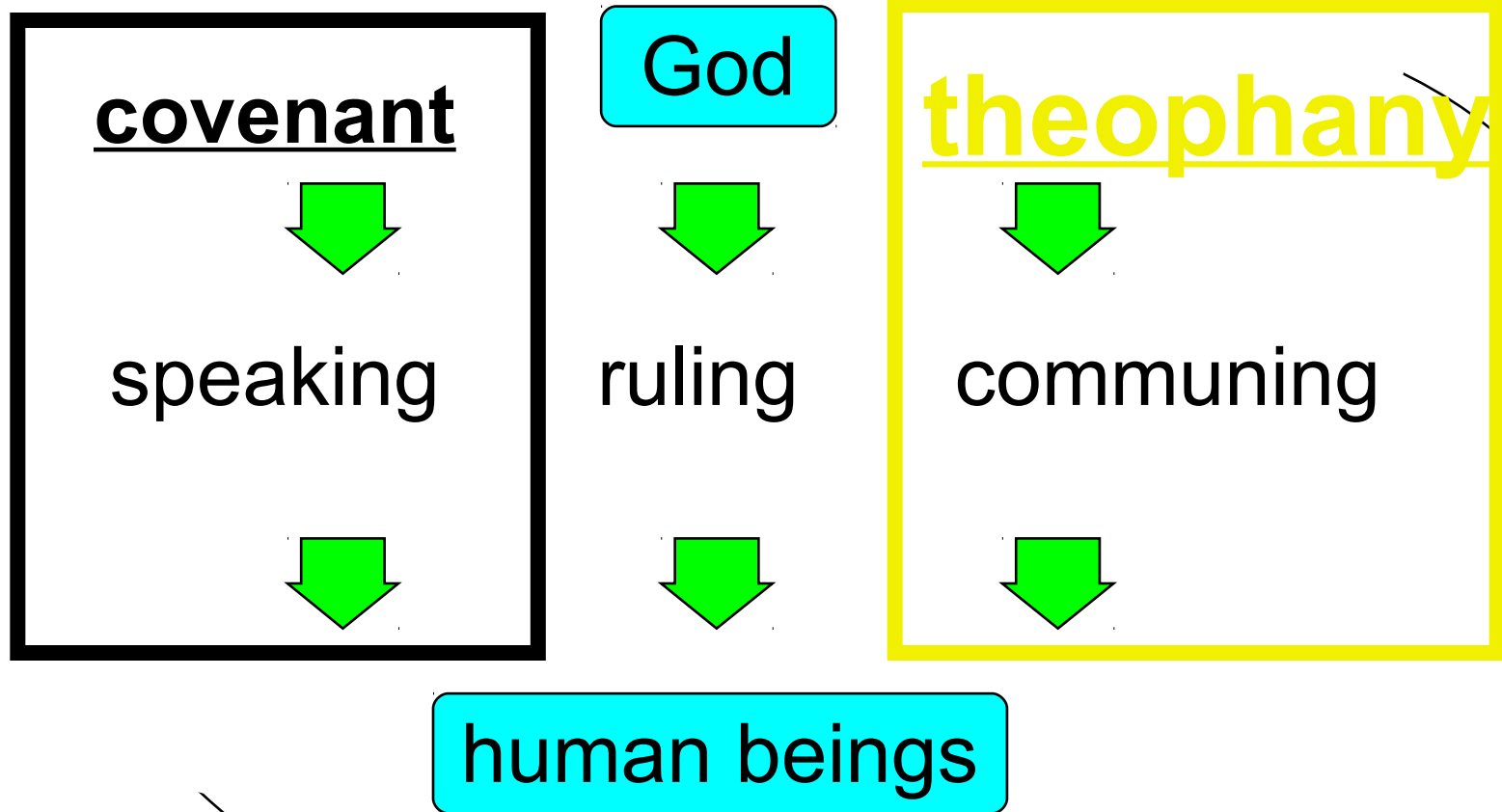
Definition of Theophany

- More than one definition is possible.
- I want a broad definition.
- “An encounter with divine presence accompanied by extraordinary manifestation or display mediating that presence.”
- Include veiled or elusive manifestations.

Theophany and Other Themes



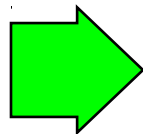
Theophany and Covenant



Theophany in Spiritual Growth

- Know God as revealed in Rev.
- 2 Cor. 3:18 applies theophanic language to the heart of Christian experience.
- Growth in Christ is unbounded, Eph. 3:18-19.

theophany
in Christ



transformation of
believers in Christ

Inexhaustible.



Theophany in Revelation

Christophany in 1:12-20

Theophany in 4:1-5:14

Empowers judgments 6:1-22:5

1:12-22:5 as a whole

B. Rev. 1:12-20

The Lampstands (1:12-13)

- **Primary connections: 1:20 (2:1).**
- **Significance: Christ is in the midst of the churches.**
- **Secondary connections:**
 - ◆ **tabernacle, temple**
 - ◆ **lights of heaven (stars in 1:20)**
 - ◆ **disciples as light, Matt 5:14**

Vision of Christ (1:12-16)

- **Primary connections: 14:14; Dan. 7:13; 7:9-10; 10:5-6; Ezek. 1.**
- **Significance: Christ is divine judge and ruler, both for blessing and for curse.**
- **Secondary and tertiary connections: OT theophanies.**

Judging as a Theme

- Judgment in Ezek. 1 and Dan. 7:9-10.
- From Rev. 1-3:
 - ◆ 1:18, keys of death
 - ◆ 1:20, stars in the hand, with authority
 - ◆ Rev. 2-3, warnings and commendations
 - ◆ 2:8, 10, authority over death
 - ◆ 2:18, eyes searching the heart
- 14:14; 10:1; 19:12,15; 15:6 have judgment.

C. Types of OT Theophanies

Thunderstorm Theophanies



- Mt. Sinai as primary.
- Instances: Exod. 19; Ps. 18:7-15; Zech 9:14-15; Ps. 68:7-8(8-9); 144:5-6; 29:3-11; 50:3; 97:2-5; Isa. 64:1-3; Zeph. 1:15-16.
- Features: cloud, smoke, thunder, lightning, fire, maybe earthquake and wind.

Fire Theophanies

- **Exod. 3:1-6; Gen. 15:17; Exod. 13:21; 14:19, 24; Num. 9:15-23; Acts 2:1-3**
- **Connected with thunderstorm and glory theophanies**

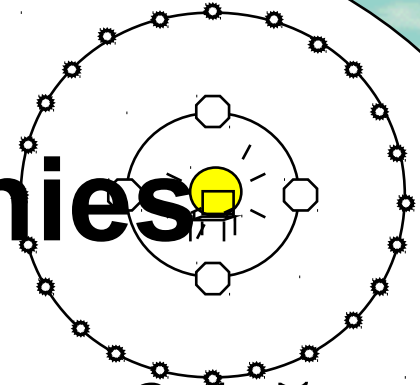
Temple/cloud Theophanies

- **Instances: Exod. 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-23; Deut. 4:32-36; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ezek. 8:4; 10:3-4, 18-19; 43:2-7; 44:4.**
- **Connected with dedication of the tabernacle or temple, or speech from the temple.**

Glory Theophanies

- **Instances: Isa. 60:1-2; Mal. 4:2; Ps. 80:1, 3, 7, 19; 94:1.**
- **Connected with thunderstorm and temple theophanies.**

Court Theophanies



- **Instances: 1 Kings 22:19-22; Isa. 6:1-5; Job 1:6; 2:1; Dan. 7:9-10; Ps. 82; 89:5-14.**
- **With a Man in the center.**
- **Connected with chariot through 1 Chron. 28:18, where chariot = cherubim (court ministers).**



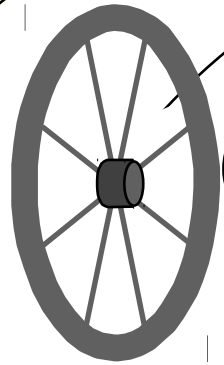
Individual Man Theophanies

- **Instances: Judg. 13:6-22; Gen. 18; Dan. 10:5; Rev. 10:1(?); Acts 9:3-7; Dan. 7:13; Rev. 19:11; etc.**
- **Second type of Man theophany.**
- **Some are preincarnate appearances of Christ.**

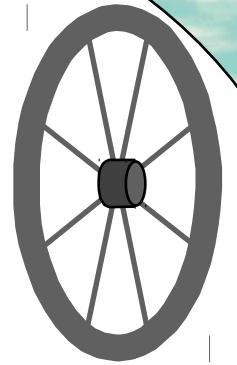
Warrior Theophanies



- Instances: Zech. 9:14-15; 14:3-5; Hab. 3:3-15; Isa. 63:1-6; 59:17-19; Zeph. 3:17; Josh. 5:13-15.
- A third type of Man theophany.



Chariot Theophanies



- **Instances: Isa. 66:15; Hab. 3:8; Dan. 7:9-10; 2 Kings 2:11-12; 6:17; Ps. 68:17(18), 4(5), 33(34); Deut. 33:26; Isa. 19:1; Ps. 65:11.**
- **Poetic, context of judgment.**
- **God going to war.**

Creation as Theophany

- Instances: Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:1-4; 93:1-2; 102:25-26. Building: Job 38:4-11; Prov. 8:27-31; Amos 9:5-6.
- Connected with temple theophanies, Ps. 78:69; 93:5; 11:4-5.

Summary of OT Theophany

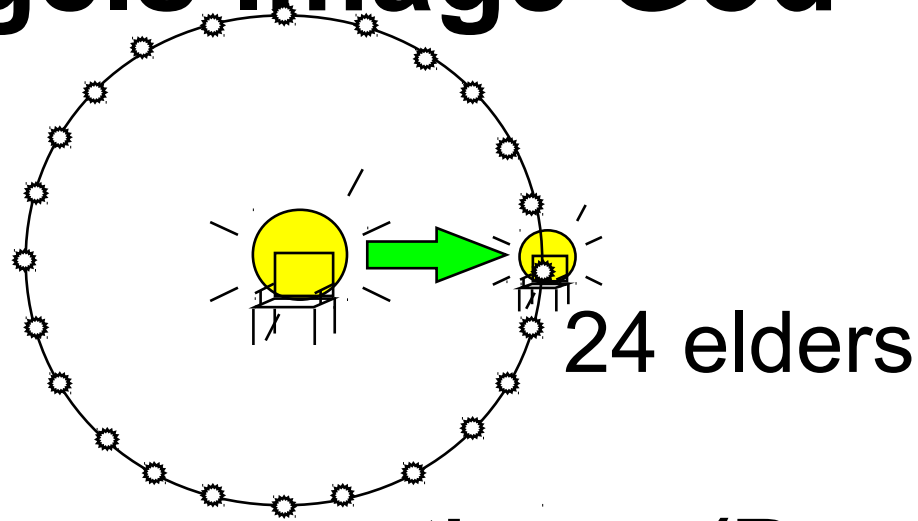
- **Diverse, showing richness.**
- **Interrelated, showing unity and mystery.**
- **Classifiable up to a point.**

Showing
God's wisdom.



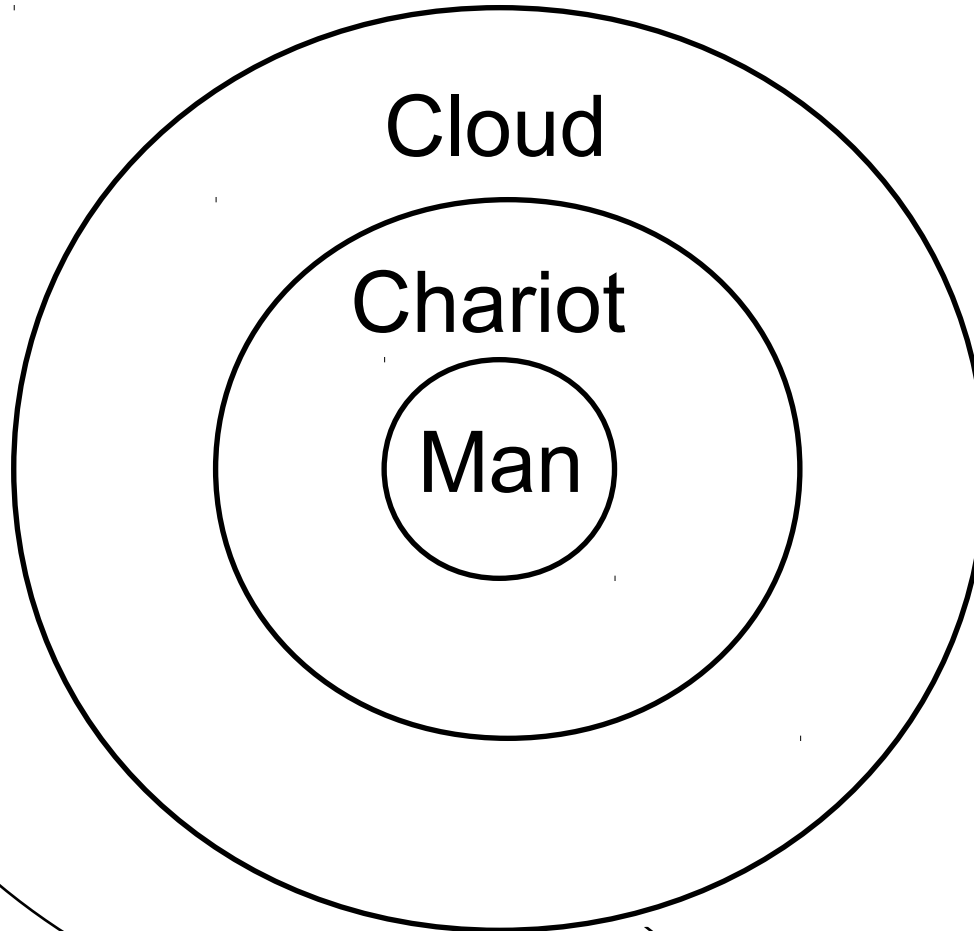
D. Imaging in Theophanies

Angels Image God

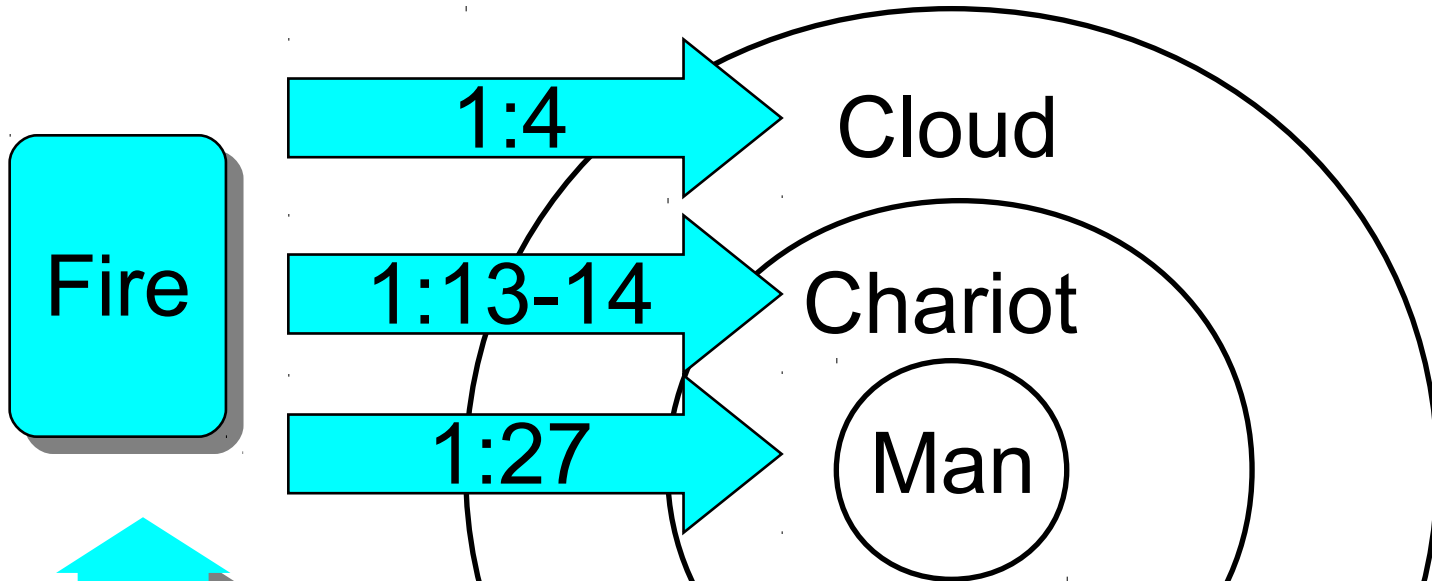


- **24 thrones image one throne (Rev. 4:4).**
- **Angels are “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1).**
- **They execute God’s decrees (Isa. 6:6-7; Ezek. 9:4; 10:2; Ps. 103:20-21).**

3 Layers in Ezekiel 1



Fire Imaging in Ezekiel 1



meaning:
God's judgment
(Isa. 66:15; Ps. 97:3)

Imaging in Ezekiel 1

Bronze

- 1:4
- 1:7
- 1:27; 8:2?

Voice

- 9:3-4
- 1:24
- 1:25,28

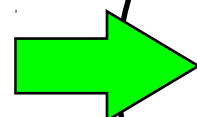
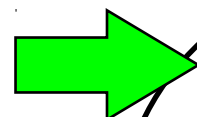
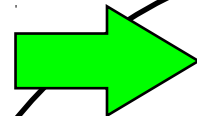
Cloud

Chariot

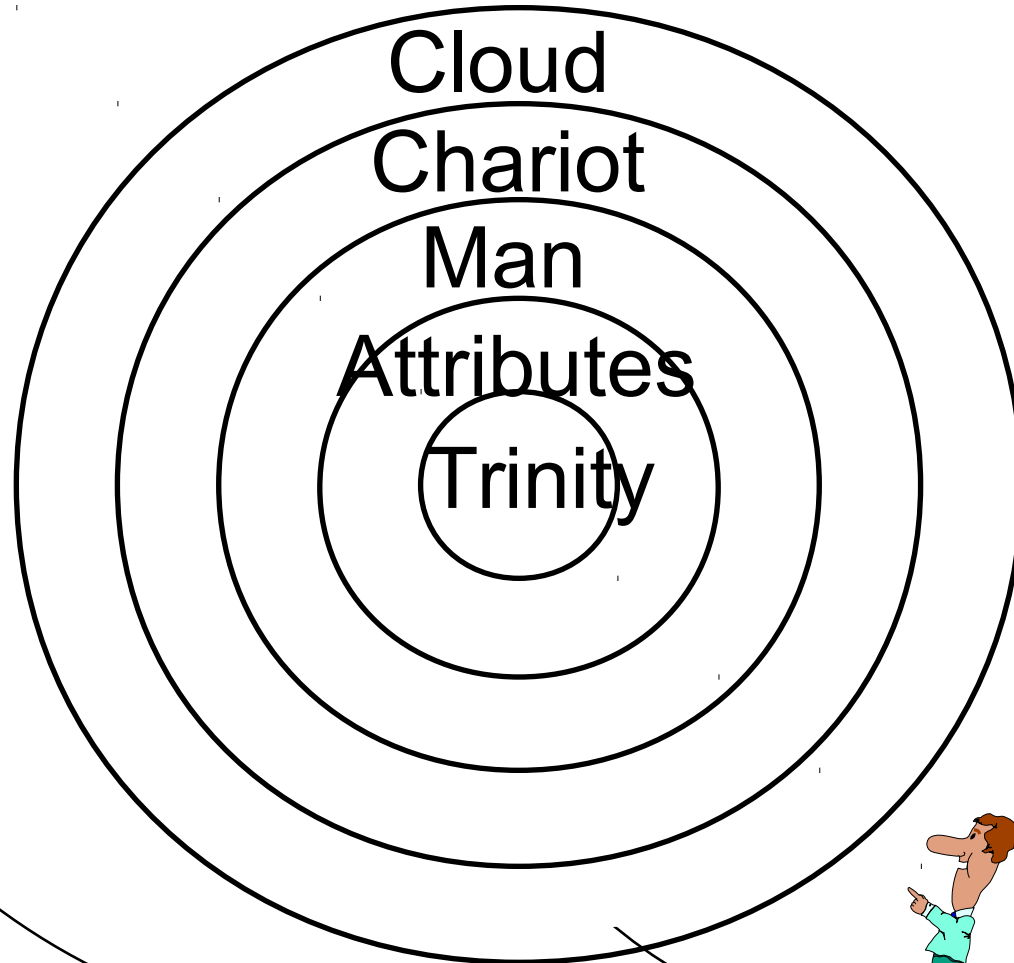
Man

meaning:
firm-ness of
judgment

pronounce
judgment



Inner Meaning of Man Theophany



deep



Attributes in Human Form

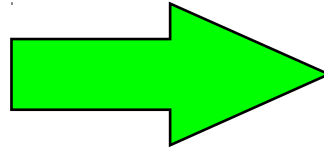
- **Eyes** ● Knowledge, Prov. 15:3; 2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 80:14; Jer. 32:19; Ps. 11:4.
- **Ears** ● Answering prayer, Ps. 34:15.
- **Arm** ● Power, Luke 1:51; Ps. 44:3.
- **Hand** ● Care, Isa. 49:2; Ezek. 8:1; 37:1.
- **Feet** ● Dominion, Isa. 60:13; 63:3.
- **Face** ● Presence, Exod. 33:9-11, 18-23.
- **Nostrils** ● Wrath, Ps. 18:15, 8.
- **Mouth** ● Articulate speech.

Attributes and Spirit

- **Face** ● Ps. 139:7; 51:11; Ezek. 39:29
- **Eyes** ● Rev. 5:6; 1:4-5.
- **Hand** ● Ezek. 8:1 vs. 11:5.
- **Finger** ● Luke 11:20 vs. Matt. 12:28; 2 Cor. 3:3.
- **Breath** ● Ps. 18:15; Ezek. 37 (Ps. 104:3)
- **Power** ● Luke 1:35.
- **Many** ● Exod. 14:24; 15:6, 8, 12; Isa. 63:10-14.

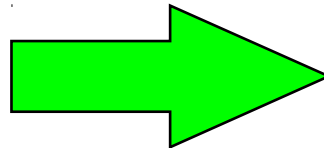
Attributes and Trinity

Individual
attributes



Holy
Spirit

Whole human
figure

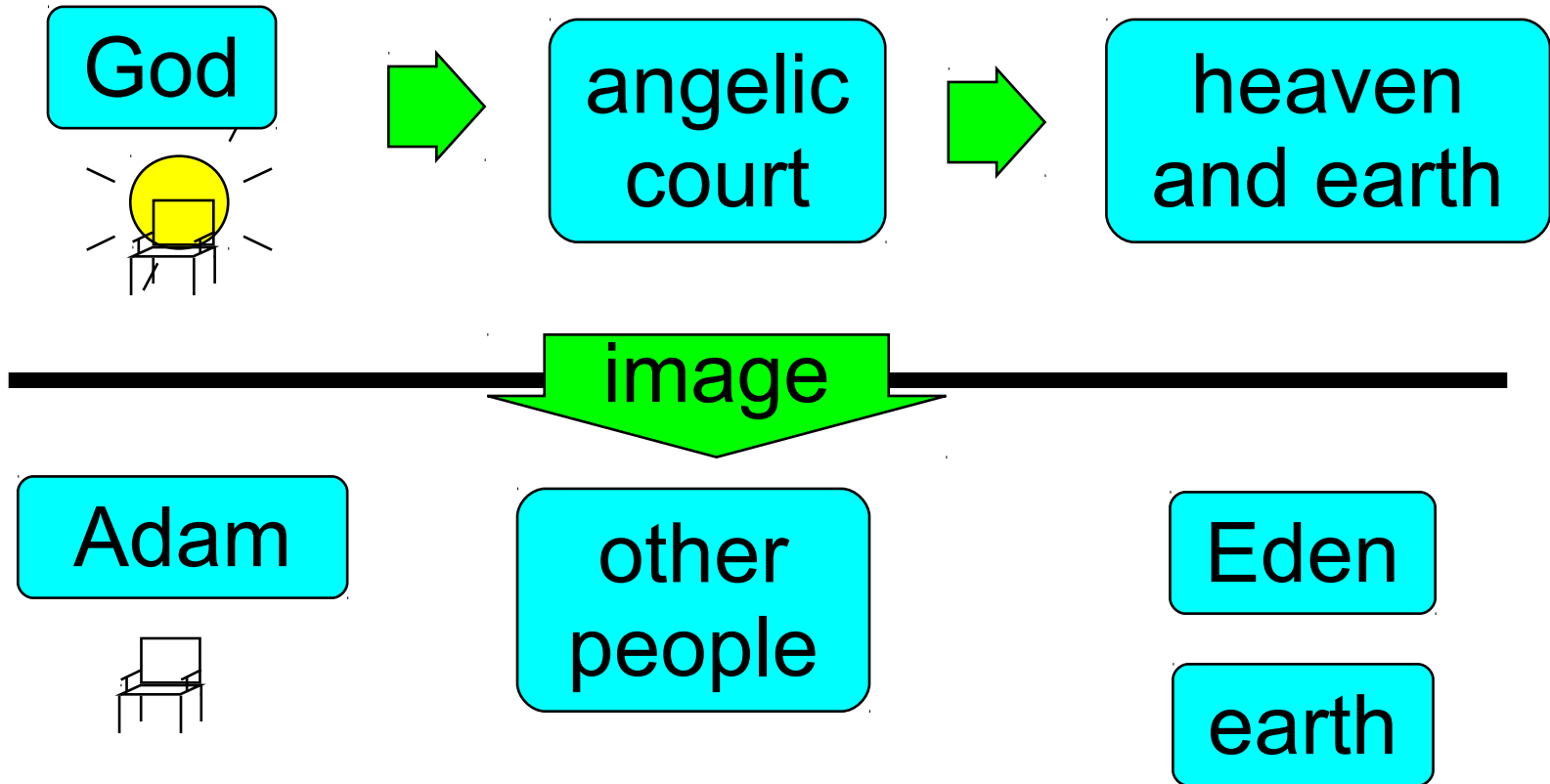


Christ
Incarnate

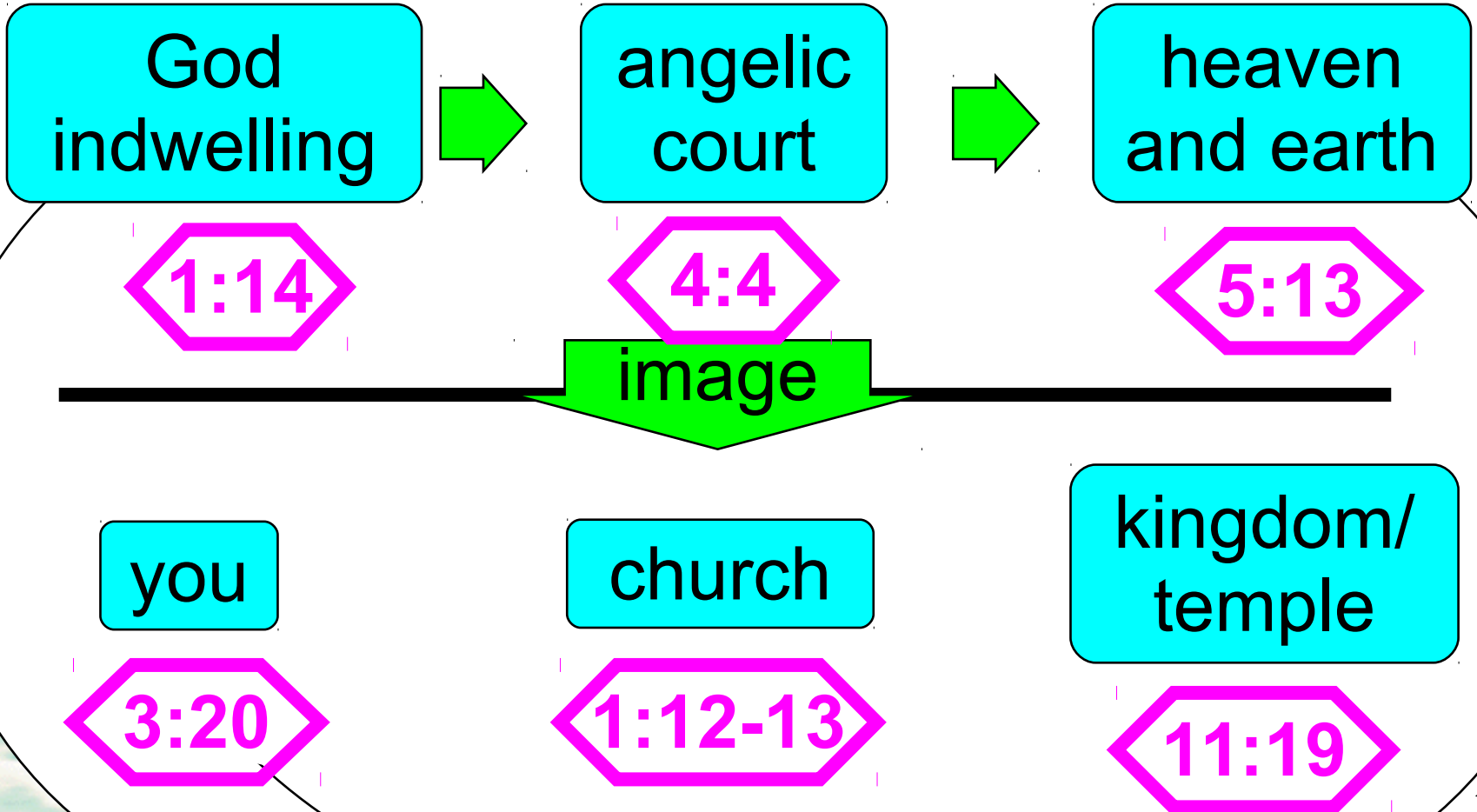


E. Imaging and Spatial Structure

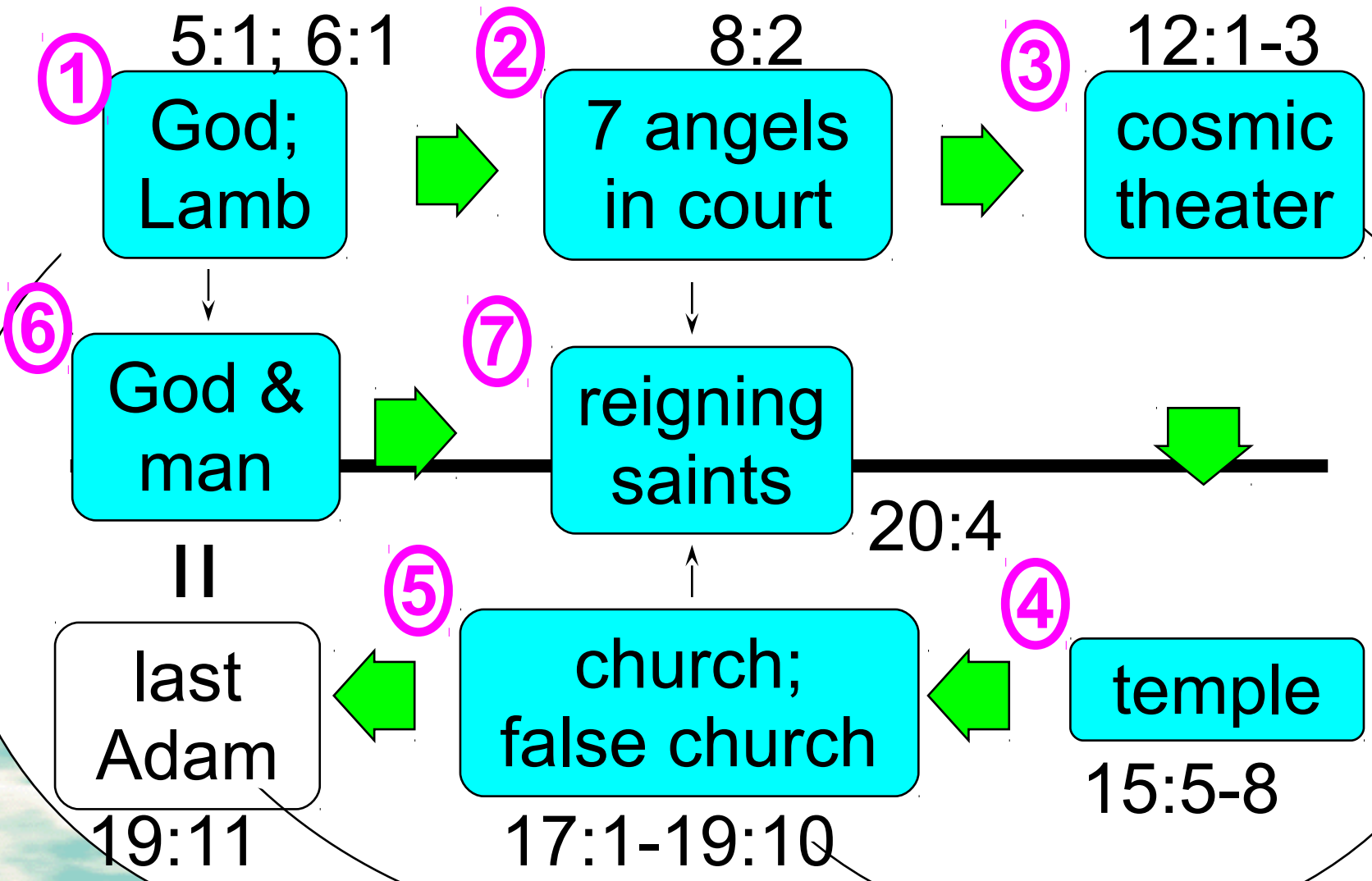
Kingship Reflected



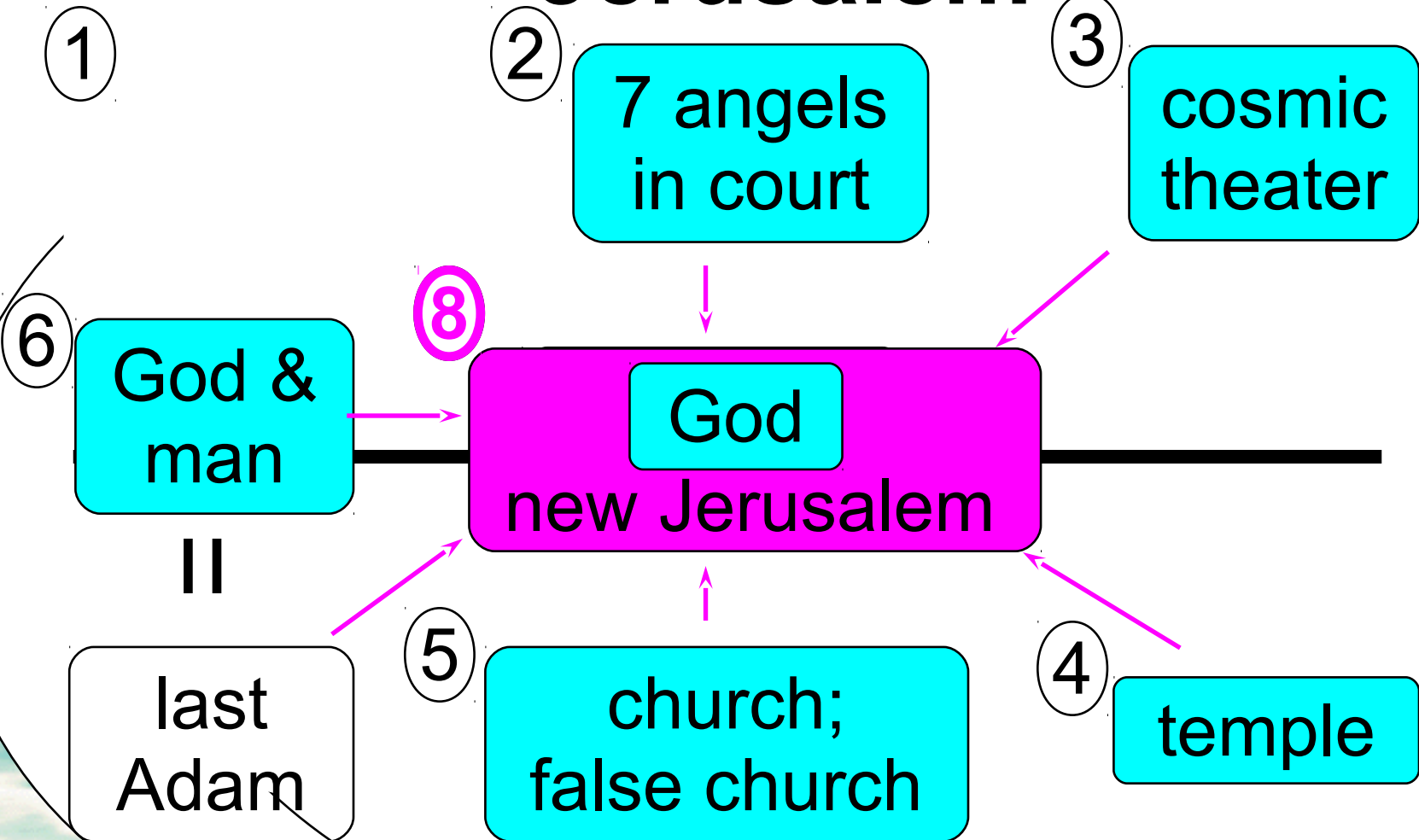
Presence Reflected



7 Cycles Follow Reflection



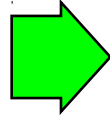
Final Reflection: New Jerusalem



Completed Reflection

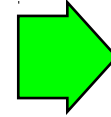
God
indwelling

22:1



angelic
court

21:12



heaven
and earth

21:23

you

22:4

church

1:12-13;

21:9

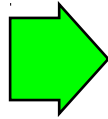
kingdom

21:16

Beauty Reflected

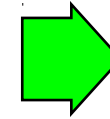
God

Rev. 4:3;
splendor



angelic
court

Ezek. 1:16



heaven
and earth

Rev.
21:19-21

you

Exod.
28:15-21

church

Isa. 61:10;
62:3

kingdom

Rev.
21:19-21

F. Lessons from Theophany

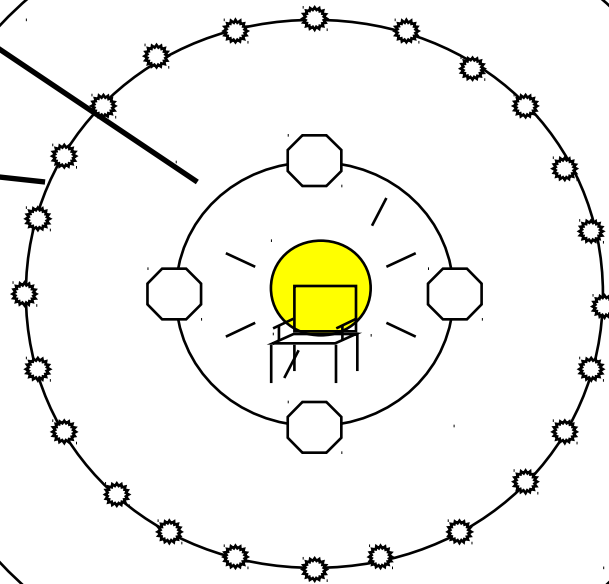
God Centered Universe

4 living creatures

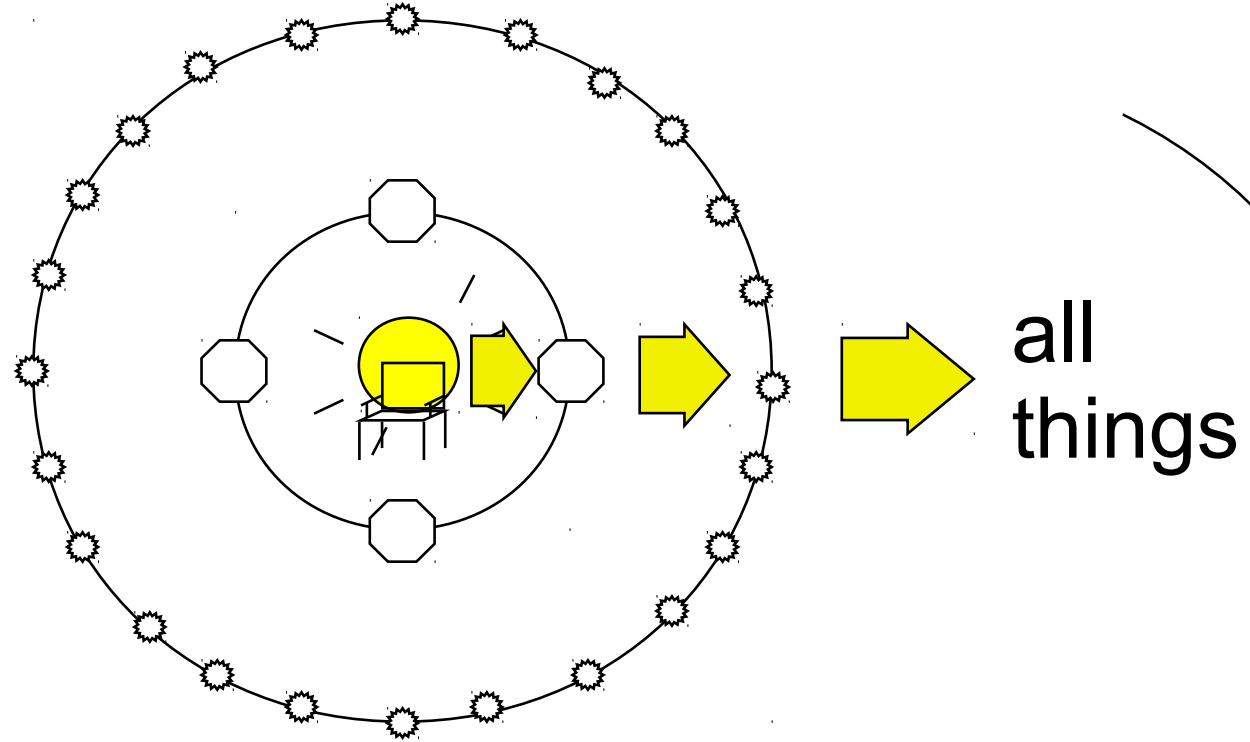
24 elders

myriads of angels

every creature
in heaven, earth,
under the earth, sea



God's Glory in History



Unstoppable.

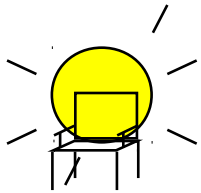


spread of glory

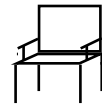
God's Glory Copied

reality

man-centered
thinking



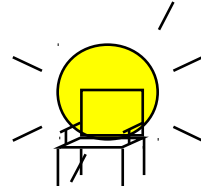
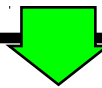
original
King



literal
human king



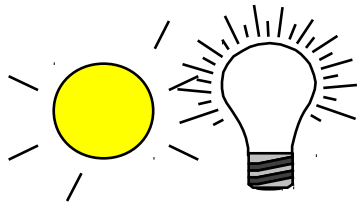
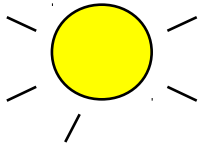
copy
king



God as merely
metaphorical
King

God's Glory Reflected

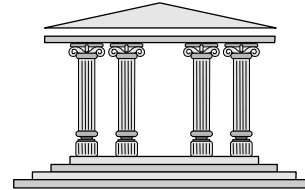
light



kingship



presence

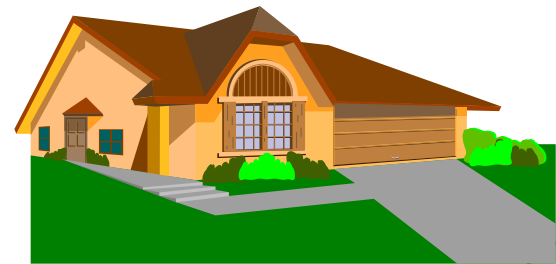
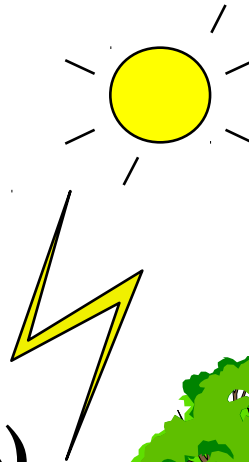
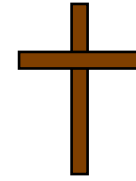


beauty

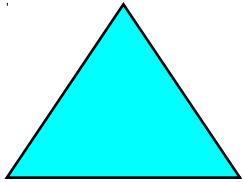


God's Glory Now

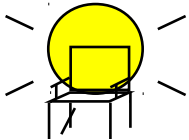
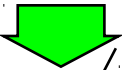
- In redemption, 5:2-6
- In creation, 4:11
 - ◆ Light
 - ◆ Cloud
 - ◆ Thunder
 - ◆ Trees (life)
 - ◆ Houses



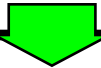
God's Mystery Reflected in Symbols



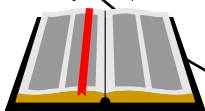
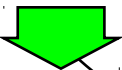
God's Trinitarian nature



God's appearing in Rev.



God's surroundings



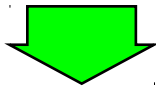
all of Revelation

Evangelism from Theophany

- Don Richardson, *Peace Child*, illustrates the challenges.
- You may start from general revelation: water, trees, the sun, marriage, power (kingship).

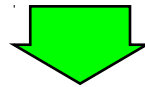
Worship from Theophany

Seeing God in majesty



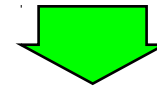
Praise

4:8



Awe

1:17



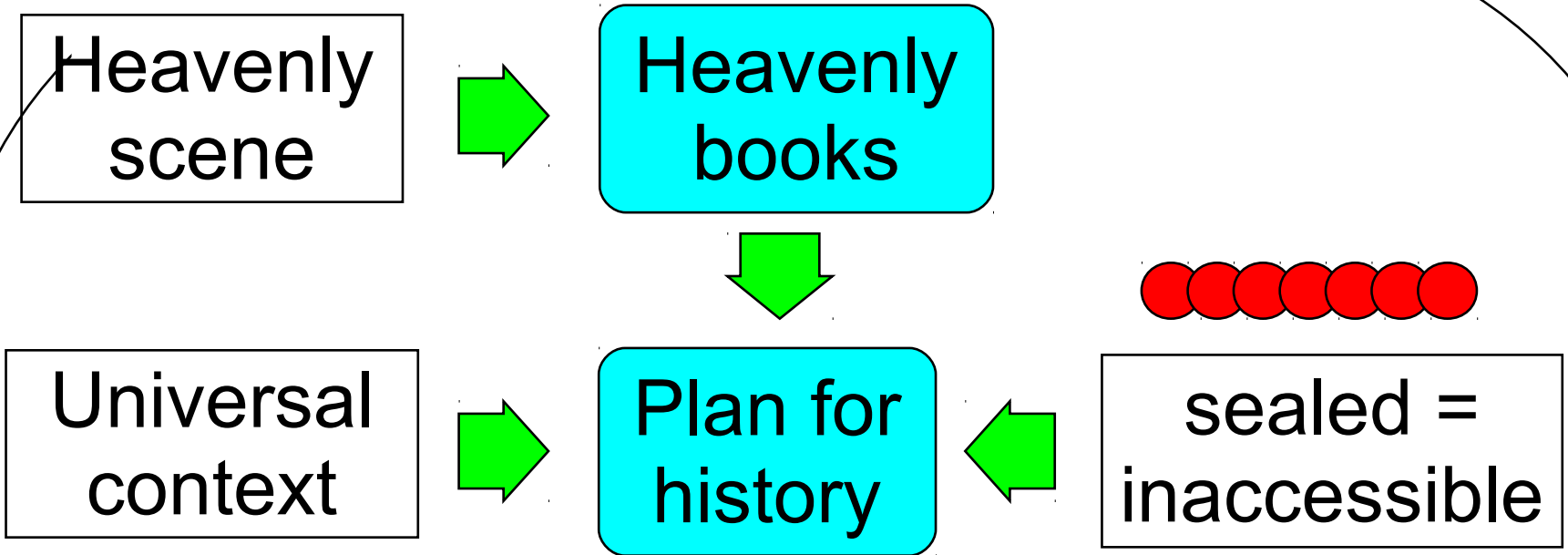
Imitation

2 Cor. 3:18

G. The Lamb and the Scroll

God's Scroll

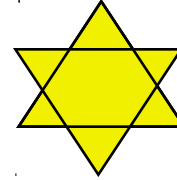
- Heavenly books contain God's plans, Dan. 10:21; 12:4, 9; (8:26)



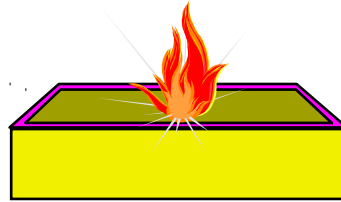
Who can bring God's plan to realization?

The Lamb's Ability (5:5-6)

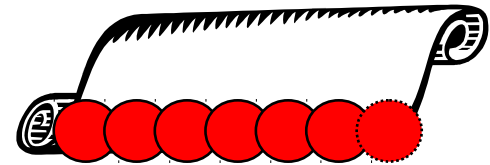
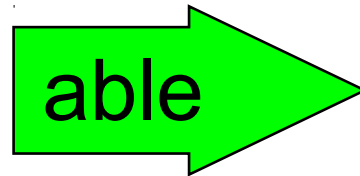
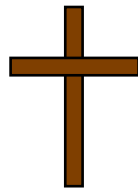
● **Lion, Root of David**



● **Lamb**



● **Slain**



● **With Spirit**

