DID JESUS USE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE BIBLE?

TEN LINES OF EVIDENCE

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A common error assumes that biblical language is ‘only literal.’ This innocent-sounding statement is responsible for a lot of confusion. This brief article may be used to demonstrate a little of the figurative use of language in scripture.

1. EXAMPLES OF FOUR 'LITERAL' ERRORS.

IN JOHN 11:11-13 THE DISCIPLES MISTOOK THE FIGURE ‘SLEEP’ FOR PLAIN LANGUAGE.

In John 11 Jesus said to the disciples figuratively about sleep and death. "I go to waken [Lazarus] out of SLEEP." Jn 11:11. Sleep is figurative for death. His mistook this figurative term for a literal term. He corrected their error by saying; 'I tell you plainly Lazarus is DEAD.' The figurative term 'Sleep' signified death. (Jn 11:11-13) This is a distinction between literal and figurative language, therefore figurative language must exist.

By definition Jesus used ‘allegorical’ (Greek Paroimiai) language. 'Plain' (Greek Parresia laleis) language' means literal, or what the word usually, not prophetically, signifies. Thayer defines this Greek word as: "A dark saying which shadows forth some didactic truth. Esp. a symbolic or figurative saying – speech or discourse which is illustrated by similes and comparison; an allegory." (Thayer's Greek Lexicon)

IN JOHN 3:3-10. NICODEMUS MISTOOK THE FIGURE, 'BORN AGAIN;' FOR PLAIN LANGUAGE.

In John 3 in a famous example of figurative language Jesus said to old Nicodemus “You must be BORN AGAIN.’ Jn 3:3 The great scholar of Hebrew, Totally confused about figurative usage asked about the literal meaning; “Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb?” This 'spiritual' or covenantal use of the word had a specific meaning of spiritual rebirth, a choice, an intellectual commitment, not an accident of fleshly birth. (Jn 3:6-7)

IN JOHN 4:7-15. THE WOMAN MISTOOK THE FIGURE, ‘LIVING WATER’ FOR PLAIN LANGUAGE.
In John 4 Jesus spoke about water to a Samaritan woman saying; “If you knew the gift of God who it is that is speaking to you, you would ask him for LIVING WATER...” Jn 4:10 The woman thought He was talking about literal H 2 O – water. Jesus’ meaning was a spiritual message that satisfies the spiritual thirst, man’s life-long desire for eternal meaning beyond this short life. The woman mistook this figurative meaning for simple water.

**IN JOHN 4:32-33. THE DISCIPLES MISTOOK THE FIGURE, 'FOOD /MEAT' FOR Plain LANGUAGE.**

In John 4 Jesus spoke about food and hardship. He said to the disciples “I have FOOD TO EAT that you do not know about.” The disciples missed Jesus figurative use of ‘Food.’ Their personal literal-confusion was so great that they even began to question each other’s understanding. Did he say ‘food?’ We don’t have any food? Where did He get it from? “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?” (Jn 4:32-33) By 'food' Jesus meant the physical hardships He would have to undergo at Jerusalem.

**IN JOHN 16:25-29. JESUS TOLD THE DISCIPLES DIRECTLY HE USED 'FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE'.**

In John 16 Jesus told the disciples directly He used figurative language. 25“These things I have spoken to you in FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. 28“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

His previous use of parables, figures and circumlocutionary language had confused even the disciples. They now acknowledged this, and rejoiced that now He told them plainly about His divine purpose. 29His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are NOT USING A FIGURE OF SPEECH 30“Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.”

Jesus made a distinction between ‘Plain’ and ‘Figurative’ language. Here He used figurative language and the evidence shows (in context) that the disciples understood precisely what He meant. However hard literalists may try to deny this, the evidence still looks what it says;

“I have spoken to you in figurative language.”

True statements may be tested empirically by observation. The term 'Literal' does not occur anywhere in the Bible. (Authority. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance.) It not observable in any passage in scripture, therefore it is not a true statement. ’Literal’ explanations failed in the cited four cases where Jesus used figurative terms.
2. JESUS USED FIGURES IN THE PARABLES.

Jesus used figurative language in forty-six parables to 'throw' a divine truth 'beside' an earthly tale. (The Greek Parabalein actually means 'To throw beside.') Jesus said so Himself in Mt 13:3,13,34; 22:1; Mk 3:23; 4:2,13,33; 12:1. If we say there's no figurative language, then ALL parables must be 'Only Literal, all;' sheep, goats, coins, pearls, fig tree, mustard tree, the lamp, oil, cloth, new garment, wheat, tares, field, seeds, a sower, robbers, barns, leaven, treasure, vineyard, virgins, bride, bridegroom, banquet, marriage feast – all these must be literal. If these parables aren't literal, then they must be figurative.

This principle occurs again and again in scripture: the natural and then the spiritual - the known and tangible to the unknown and intangible: first the physical, then the spiritual. Everywhere the prophets move from the simple to the more abstract. A quick survey shows:

Jeremiah’s potter’s wheel of Man’s desire vs. God’s will, Ezekiel’s parables of: the cow dung denoting uncleaness, sitting silent beside the river Chebar as incalcitrance, the razor which divided a city in three, the hole in the whitewashed wall through which he passed his bags as a type of fleeing, the valley of dry bones as a type of resurrection of Hades, Daniel’s dream of Nebuchadnezzar as foretelling the remote intangible future, Hosea’s Gomer as Israel’s visible immorality, Jesus’ agricultural parables of the Sower a picture of the human heart, the tares among the wheat as a type of end of age judgment, leaven as a type of waiting period, (and later as a type of Pharisaical influence) the fisher’s net (dragnet) as a type of gathering, a pearl as a type of sacrifice, the laborers in the vineyard as typical of reward, the ten virgins as a type of wise preparation, Paul the seed of the natural body then the spiritual as a type of spiritual life after physical death, the book of James; fruit then Christ as first-fruits and secondly Christians, a mirror and then the word of God, a tongue as a fire which precipitates a state of affairs that is uncontrollable (cf. Hosea, sow the wind; reap the whirlwind.) Peter’s literal fire and later ‘fire’ as period of perfecting trial (spiritual judgment as gold) and Jude’s mockers as: animals, hidden reefs, autumn trees without fruit, planets (wandering stars) and clouds without water – everywhere the principle is first the physical, then the spiritual. In the example of the term clouds we discover this transference of meaning from the physical to the spiritual, from that which is seen and proven by the physical eye, to that which is understood and transferred through the eyes of the heart /mind. (Eph 1:18)

The parables were designed to illustrate a divine lesson from objects to ideas. They were not literal objects to be handled and not literal words to be mishandled.

3. THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MAKING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ‘LITERAL.’

Making Jesus’ figurative language literal in John 6 caused many disciples to go back and “they walked with Him no more.’ (Jn 6:66.) In John 7 Jesus spoke about ‘Rivers of living water flowing from the belly,’ clearly figurative. In the following chapter the Pharisees and Sadducees are spoken of as ‘Blind’ and in ‘Darkness’ because they didn’t recognize the ‘Light of the world.’ (Jn 8:12) In John 10 we read ‘I am the Door of the Sheep. Next in John 12 the ‘Grain of Wheat and the Light,’ next in John 14 ‘Houses in
heaven,’ next in John 15 Jesus is a ‘Vine, men as Branches ... bearing Fruit.’ It is only after these figures that Jesus breaks the pattern of figurative language and reverts to ‘plain’ language in John 16.

4. EVIDENCE THE PROPHETS USED FIGURES.

The bulk of Historical and Legal material in the first seventeen books of scripture is mostly literal. However this cannot be applied in the next group of five books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, and the next seventeen prophetic books after that. EVERY biblical Poet and Prophet used Figurative language. In fact symbolic language is almost a test of Poetry and Prophecy.

Of the total 1,189 chapters in scripture, a rough count of figurative chapters amounts to 503 chapters, or about 41%. (Ie. Chapters containing at least some figurative language:- Job 42, Psalms 150, Proverbs 31, Ecclesiastes 12, Songs 8, Isaiah 66, Jeremiah 52, Lamentations 4, Ezekiel 12, Daniel 12, Hosea 14, Joel, Amos 9, Obadiah 1, Micah 7, Nahum 3, Habakkuk 3, Zephaniah 3, Haggai 2, Zechariah 14, Malachi 4, Matthew 1 (ch. 24), Mark 1 (ch.13), Luke 1 (ch. 21), Revelation 22 chapters containing figures. (The calculation of 503 chapters is a minimum number.) The evidence can show many of Jesus’ parables were drawn from the figures first used by David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Zechariah. Etc. Revelation draws figurative language from nearly every prophetic writer.

5. EVIDENCE OF FIGURES WHICH ARE IMPOSSIBLE ‘LITERALLY.’

The following figures serve as an ad absurdum argument for the extremist ‘only literal’ theory.

In the biblical world of the prophets male ideas ruled. There, men were worms\(^1\), (and their mother and sisters were worms too\(^2\)) but creatures weren’t only critters,\(^3\) and winds weren’t just air\(^4\), and it was quite essential that good man be a wall\(^5\). In biblical times there were only seven kinds of wheels\(^6\), where traders were stars\(^7\) and clouds were the dust of God’s feet.\(^8\) It was an ancient world which foretold of a super-highway from Egypt to Iran,\(^9\) but strangely it didn’t carry any cars. In the

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\(^{1}\) Worm Ps 22:16; Is 41:14; Job 17:14; Man a maggot Job 25:6.  
\(^{2}\) Worm Job 17:14  
\(^{3}\) Creatures 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Jas 1:18  
\(^{4}\) Wind Pr 11:29  
\(^{5}\) Wall 1 Sam 25:16  
\(^{6}\) Cart wheel, Chariot wheel, Potter’s wheel, Well wheel, Temple trolley-wheel, Mill wheel, Ezekiel’s wheel.  
\(^{7}\) Stars Nahum 3:16  
\(^{8}\) Dust Nahum 1:3  
\(^{9}\) Highway Is 19:23; 35:8
Prophets, kings, and governors were spoken of as; arms, foxes, craniums, nails, nations were made from sticks, and dead armies were dust! There the blind saw and the seeing were blind, dead men spoke from the grave, and armies of skeletons at once rose to their feet with a rattle and a clunk, and a whole nation gave birth not over nine months, but in a single day. In the prophetic world you didn’t need a bed because there was no night; infants spoke wisdom before they left their mother’s breast, and ants, beasts, birds, and fish were all teachers, while grey-bearded men were new-born in old-age.

Compare:—

6. EXAMPLES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN SCRIPTURE WITH REFERENCES.

MEN AS ANIMALS and INSECTS:-
Docile SHEEP (1 Pet 2:25) as truculent GOATS (Mt 25:33) hapless FISH (Mt 13:47) a wily FOX (Lk 13:32) unreasoning CATTLE (Jude 10) implacable as VIPERS (Mt 23:33)
as unclean DOGS (Rev 22:15) insignificant as a WORM (Ps 22:16). In this picture-world gentiles are spoken of as BEES (Is 7:18) FLIES and LICE (Ps 105) numerous as LOCUSTS (Judg 7:12). Further, in scripture men are also spoken of symbolically as vegetation.

MEN AS VEGETATION:-
BRANCHES (Jn 15:5) men as transient as GRASS (Jas 1:10) as SEED (Jer 31:27) wicked men as TARES (Mt 13:25) the righteous as WHEAT (Jn 12:24) and as a TREE (Ps 1:3).

MEN AS INANIMATE OBJECTS:-
Wicked men as CHAFF (Ps 1) men as CLAY (Jer 18:4-6) men as CLOUDS (Jude 12) DUST (Ps 103:14) gentiles as ISLANDS (Job 9:5-6) as destructive as a REEF (Jude 12) wicked as WILD WAVES OF THE SEA (Jas 1:6; Jude 13) numerous as STARS (Dan 12:3) and SAND (Judges 7:12) high status kings as MOUNTAINS (Rev 17:9-10) the wicked as a WELL without water (2 Pet 2:17) righteous as a WELL of LIVING WATER (Jn 4:14) a STONE (1 Pet 2:5) the lowly as a VALLEY (Lk 3:4-6).

7. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH DERIVED FROM END-TIME PROPHECY.

In English it is not uncommon to hear figures derived from biblical use applied to unfamiliar situations.

“The doctrine of the saviour, like the rays of the sun, quickly irradiated the whole world.”
Eusebius. History Bk II ch 3.

“.It was the expectation of many that upon the setting of the great Occidental star, Queen Elizabeth of most happy memory...some thick and palpable clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this land”
Dedication to King James. King James Bible 1611

“Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York.”
Shakespeare. King Richard III Act 1:1:1

I am a - "a shimmering, glowing star in the cinema firmament."
Singing in the Rain.

The peer [Lord Barrymore] retired suddenly, and the commoner resumed his great career. Only here, however, can one read the real reason for this sudden eclipse of a star.
The Fall of Lord Barrymore.
Conan Doyle. P.77

Indeed as Shirley Temple she was the most bankable star in the Hollywood firmament being its highest grossing performer in the mid-Thirties.
John Baldoni. Forbes Magazine
He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.

Confucius

Set your course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship.

Omar N. Bradley

Men are like the stars; some generate their own light while others reflect the brilliance they receive.

Jose Marti

What is the good of your stars and trees, your sunrise and the wind, if they do not enter into our daily lives?

E. M. Forster

Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storm of time can never destroy. Write your name in kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of thousands you come in contact with year by year; you will never be forgotten. No, your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as the stars of heaven.

Thomas Chalmers

Man is whole when he is in tune with the winds, the stars, and the hills... Being in tune with the universe is the entire secrets.

William O. Douglas

I will love the light for it shows me the way. Yet I will endure the darkness for it shows me the stars.

Og Mandino

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Martin Luther King, JR

8. MOSES MAIMONIDES ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE. 24

As these figures are frequent in Isaiah, I explained an of them. But we meet with them also in the words of other prophets. Jeremiah, in describing the destruction of Jerusalem in consequence of our sins, says (iv. 23): "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void," etc. Ezekiel (xxxii. 7, 8) foretells the destruction of the kingdom of Egypt, and the death of Pharaoh, through Nebuchadnezzar, in the following words:

"And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord."

24. Maimonides 1135-1204AD generally considered the greatest Jewish Scholar. Guide for the Perplexed. Selected from PART II Chapter xxix (Simplified)
Joel, the son of Pethuel (ii. 10), describes the multitude of locusts that came in his days as follows:

"The earth shall quake before them: the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."

Amos (viii. 9, 10), speaking of the destruction of Samaria, says:

"I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day; and I will turn your feasts," etc.

Micah (i. 3, 4), in relating the fall of Samaria, uses the following well-known rhetorical figures:

"For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten," etc.

Similarly Haggai (ii. 6, 7), in describing the destruction of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians:

"I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations," etc.

When [David] (Ps. lx. 4) describes how, during the expedition of Joab against the Edomites, the nation was low and weak, and how he prayed to God for His assistance, he says:

"Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof: for it shaketh."

In another instance he expresses the idea that we need not fear when we see other nations die and perish, because we rely on God's support, and not on our sword and strength, in accordance with the words:

"A people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help" (Deut. xxxiii. 29); he says (Ps. xlvi. 2): "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be shaken in the midst of the sea."

The following figurative language is employed in Scripture in referring to the death of the Egyptians in the Red Sea:

"The waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled, etc. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook" (Ps. lxxvii. 17-19). "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?" etc. (Hab. iii. 8). "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils," etc. (Ps. xviii. 9). "The earth trembled," etc. (Judges v. 4, in the Song of Deborah). There are many other instances; but those which I have not quoted can be explained in accordance with those which I have cited.

Let us now consider the words of Joel (iii. 3-5):

"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance;" etc.

I refer them to the defeat of Sennacherib near Jerusalem; but they may be taken as an account of the defeat of Gog and Magog near Jerusalem in the days of the Messiah, if this appears preferable, although nothing is mentioned in this passage but great slaughter, destruction, fire, and the diminution of the light of the two luminaries. You may perhaps object: How can the day of the fall of Sennacherib, according to our explanation, be called "the great and the terrible day of the Lord?" But you must know that a day of great salvation or of great distress is called "the great and terrible day of
the Lord." Thus Joel (ii. 11) says of the day on which the locusts came over the land, "For the day of the Lord is great and terrible, and who can abide it?"

9. ISAAC NEWTON ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.25

Isaac Newton wrote more on religion than he did on the natural world.26 He came to believe that the biblical books all contained a unity with unique 'biblical' meanings, as opposed to our own 'literal' meaning.

John did not write in one language, Daniel in another, Isaiah in a third, and the rest in languages peculiar to themselves, but they all write in one and the same mystical language...[which] which as far as I can find, was as certain and definite in its significations as is the vulgar language of any nation whatsoever.

The Language of the Prophets.27

He explains how to understand the ancient prophecies in Observations and Daniel and the Apocalypse. There he he writes of an analogy between things of the natural world and the nation considered as a world.

For understanding the prophecies, we are also to acquaint ourselves with the figurative language of the prophets. This language is taken from the analogy between the world natural, and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politic. Accordingly the whole world natural consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politic consisting of thrones and people, or as much of it as considered by the prophecy. For the heavens and the things therein, signify thrones and dignities, and those that enjoy them, and the earth with the things thereon, the inferior people... 'Whence ascending or descending toward heaven, and descending to the earth, are put for the rising and falling in power or honour.'


Newton returns to this analogy in his theological MSS28, in which he writes of his personal quest for demonstrable biblical knowledge.

'I received much light in this search by the analogy between the world natural and the world politic. For the mystical language was founded in this analogy, and will be best understood by considering its original.' 29

He explains his method of finding the meanings of figurative language in these words.

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25. 1642-1727.
26. Quantity varies according to sources but 2.5 million words on theology is commonly reported. https://isaac-newton.org/ (Retr'd 8 March 2017)
29. Ibid p. 120. He then goes on to give an account of a number of biblical terms and their significations.
He...that would understand the old prophets, (as all divines ought to do) must fix the signification of their types and phrases in the beginning of his studies. Something of the kind had been done by former writers; and as in the following discourse I have attempted to carry on the design further, so I hope that others might bring it to more perfection.

On the Language of the Prophets. TH. MSS McLaughlan p 119

He continues;

The rule I have followed has been to compare the several mystical places of scripture where the same prophetic phrase or type is used, and to fix such a signification to that phrase as agrees best with all places; and if more significations than one be necessary, to note the circumstances by which it might be known in what signification the phrase is taken in any place; and when I had found the necessary significations, to reject all others as the offspring of luxuriant fancy, for no more significations are to be admitted for true ones than can be proved.

On the Language of the Prophets. TH. MSS McLaughlan p 120

This clause; ‘for no more significations are to be admitted for true ones than can be proved,’ is typical scientist-speak for checking biblical facts for usage, and rejecting all other meanings. This is in line with the simplicity principle of Occam’s Razor where unnecessary units of meaning mean nothing unless the meaning derives from bible use itself. Reading literal, concrete meanings into biblical words imposes a foreign ‘modern’ meaning and interrupts the logical semantic-unity of scripture.

10. JESUS' SECOND COMING NOT 'PERSONAL PHYSICAL VISIBLE' – BUT ALWAYS 'IN CLOUDS.'

It is often said Jesus' second coming is ‘literal, personal, physical and visible’. This is held as gospel truth. But is it? Can we find it in scripture? Are the terms 'literal, personal, physical and visible' observable in the bible?

If you do the test like I did and searched the pages of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of every word in the bible, you may also be surprised to find also that not one of these three terms occur anywhere in the sixty-six books of the bible.

If they didn't come from any divine penman, from whence did they come? The answer is they come from a human tradition not found in the biblical evidence. Logic can only fail when units of meaning fail, and here there is a failure in the units: ‘literal, personal, physical and visible,’ therefore the logic must fail also.

Rather the New Testament nearly always connects Jesus' coming (Literally parousia, presence) to clouds (Occurs eleven times referring to the end time event.) Did Jesus ever say He would come personally, physically and visibly? Or did He say He would come in clouds with power? Compare:
... coming in the cloud of heaven with power  
Mt 24:30

... coming in the clouds of heaven with power  
Mt 26:64

... coming in the clouds with great power  
Mk 13:26

... coming in the clouds of heaven  
Mk 14:62

... Son of man coming in a cloud with power  
Lk 21:27

...from heaven clothed with a cloud  
Rev 10:1

...they ascended up to heaven in a cloud  
11:12

... And I looked and behold a white cloud  
14:14

... upon the cloud sat one like unto the  
14:14

... voice to him that sat on the cloud  
14:15

... he that sat on a cloud thrust in his sickle  
14:16

Studying the use of clouds in the Hebrew scriptures demonstrates God's presence is always 'In clouds' in the tabernacle, in the temple, and in judgment. Compare the way the term ‘clouds’ is used in the Old Testament.

| His glory seen in clouds | Ex 16:10 |
| Calls out of clouds | Ex 24:16 |
| Seen face to face in clouds | Ex33:11 |
| Descends in clouds | Ex 34:5 |
| Appears in clouds | Lev 16:2 |
| Dwells in clouds | 1 Kgs 8:10-12 |
| Judgment in clouds | Job 22:13 |
| Came down in clouds | Ps 18:9-11 |
| His strength in the clouds | Ps 68:34 |
| His rides on clouds to Egypt | Is 19:1 |
| Clouds are the dust of his feet | Nah 1:3 |

Thus in Matthew 24:1-2 the sign of Jesus' second coming in clouds, a Divine Judgment to destroy the apostate generation and the Jerusalem temple as evidence of His Divine Mission. Is this explanation consistent with a first century coming in that generation? What saith the scripture? The coming in clouds of the son of man was to occur;

. before they had finished preaching to all the cities of Israel (Mtt 10:23).
. a coming of the kingdom in the lifetime of some of you standing here (Mk 9:1)
. a coming on clouds apparent to Caiaphas the high priest (Mtt 26:64) and a
. coming in the lifetime of that generation (Mtt 23:34; Lk 21:32)
. a coming seen even by those who pierced Him. (Rev 1:7)
. “... coming (parousia) of the Lord is near...” (Jas 5:8) and
. “...the judge is standing right at the door.” (Jas 5:9)

all spoken, promised and written to people in the first century generation.

CONCLUSION.

The statement that biblical language is "ONLY LITERAL" is false. The statement there is "NO FIGURATIVE" language used in scripture is also false. Observation demonstrates that at least 41% of scripture contains figurative as well as literal language.
Usage makes meaning. How a word is used tells you its meaning. This is standard practice among writers of dictionaries.

The Hebrew scriptures contain over 1000 years of biblical usage. The Hebrew scriptures are the 'dictionary' of New testament words – they explain the usage and meaning, a meaning based on the concept of the nation as the world, as observation, Maimonides and Newton demonstrate.

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