

## I) Principles of Biblical Interpretation

### A) Literal before Figurative

Cautioned knowing often men misunderstand God's Word when interpreting literally instead of figuratively.

The gospel of John has many examples.

John 2:18-21 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

John 3:3-4 Jesus answered and said to him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" Nicodemus \*said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

John 4:10-15 Jesus answered and said to her, "**If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.**" She \*said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" Jesus answered and said to her, "**Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.**" The woman \*said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."

John 4:31-34 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "**I have food to eat that you do not know about.**" So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?" Jesus \*said to them, "**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.**"

John 6:41-58 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "**I am the bread that came down out of heaven.**" They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" Jesus answered and said to them, "**Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.**"

Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.**"

John 8:21-22 Then He said again to them, "**I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.**" So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

John 8:31-34 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "**If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**" They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"

Jesus answered them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.**"

John 11:11-14 This He said, and after that He \*said to them, "**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.**" The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, "**Lazarus is dead,**

John 16:25-31 "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. "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; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." His disciples \*said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. "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 answered them, "Do you now believe?"

Matthew 16:5-12 And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? "Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? "How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

## B. Simple before Difficult

Hebrews 5:11-14 Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary 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 not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

2 Peter 3:14-18 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

## C. Broad before Narrow

Matthew 23:23-24 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

Luke 6:46-49 "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. "But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

Matthew 7:3-5 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

John 7:23-24 "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

## II) Humanity Time

### A) Passages/verses on the topic of time, that are broad, simple, and to be understood literally.

Matthew 12:32 "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in **this age** or in **the age to come**. (also Mark 3:29)

Ephesians 1:18-21 *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in **this age** but also in **the one to come**.

Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in **the present age**, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in **the age to come**, eternal life. (also Luke 18:29-30)

Luke 20:34-36 Jesus said to them, "The sons of **this age** marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to **that age** and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Matthew 13:36-43 Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the **end of the age**. "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

### B) Two Ages.

There is a **present age** and an **age to come**; these cover all time since Adam; and are separated by the resurrection of the dead, which occurs when Christ returns.

Time:	<b>This Age</b>	until	<b>The Age to Come</b> (eternal)
Event:	Adam (marriage)	through	Return of Christ, resurrection of the dead, (no more marriage)
Man:	Righteous/Wicked Mix	then	Righteous & Wicked Separated

### C) Premillennialism

Premillennial interpretations have the return of Christ followed by 1,000 years where there is yet a righteous/wicked mix.

Such an interpretation is in conflict with the Bible's basic paradigm of two ages, and therefore the difficult passage of Rev 20:1-10 must be understood figuratively.

Once again, Christ through John communicates with figurative language.

- Massive physical structures are not built in three days, John 2:18-21 must be figurative.
- Men do not reenter the womb, John 3:3-4 must be figurative.
- Eating literal flesh and drinking literal blood is cannibalism, John 6:41-58 must be figurative.
- Christ returning to rule a righteous/wicked mix conflicts with the two age paradigm, Rev 20:1-10 must be figurative.

D) Where does Rev 20:1-10 fit in the two ages?

The two ages form the basic, higher level framework of humanity time. There are periods of time within these ages, and an "overlapping" of these ages ... an "unfolding" of The Age to Come in This Age.

The Age to Come was prophesied by Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The Age to Come was inaugurated by Luke 2:11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

The Age to Come will be consummated by Matthew 16:27 **"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS."**

It looks like the best fit for the time described by Rev 20:1-10 is the period between the inauguration and the consummation of the Age to Come. Verses 1 through 3 and 7 through 10 describe this time on earth, verses 4 through 6 (middle paragraph) describe this time in heaven.

The parallels between Revelation 20:1-3 and Matthew 12:22-29, Luke 10:17-18, and John 12:27-31, leads to associating the beginning of the millennium with Christ's first advent, after which Satan's power was curtailed.

Revelation 20:1-10 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Matthew 12:22-29 Then a demon-possessed man *who was blind and mute* was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, **"Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? "If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."**

Luke 10:17-18 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, **"I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning."**

John 12:27-31 **"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. "Father, glorify Your name."** Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." So the crowd *of people* who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, **"This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."**

Satan's prison is described in symbols (key, chain, abyss) and thus his sentence is symbolic (1000 years) representing a long but definite time. After this long time there is a short time of intensified persecution of God's people (the church) which will end with Christ's second advent.

Note the parallels between Revelation 20:1-2, 7-10 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, each describing a brief period of intensified and concerted persecution of God's people that will end with Christ's return.

Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10 Then I saw **an angel** coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he **laid hold of** the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and **Satan, and bound him** for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to **deceive** the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And **the devil who deceived them** was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only **he who now restrains will do so** until he is taken out of the way.

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish*, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a **deluding influence so that they will believe what is false**, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

The Millenium in heaven.

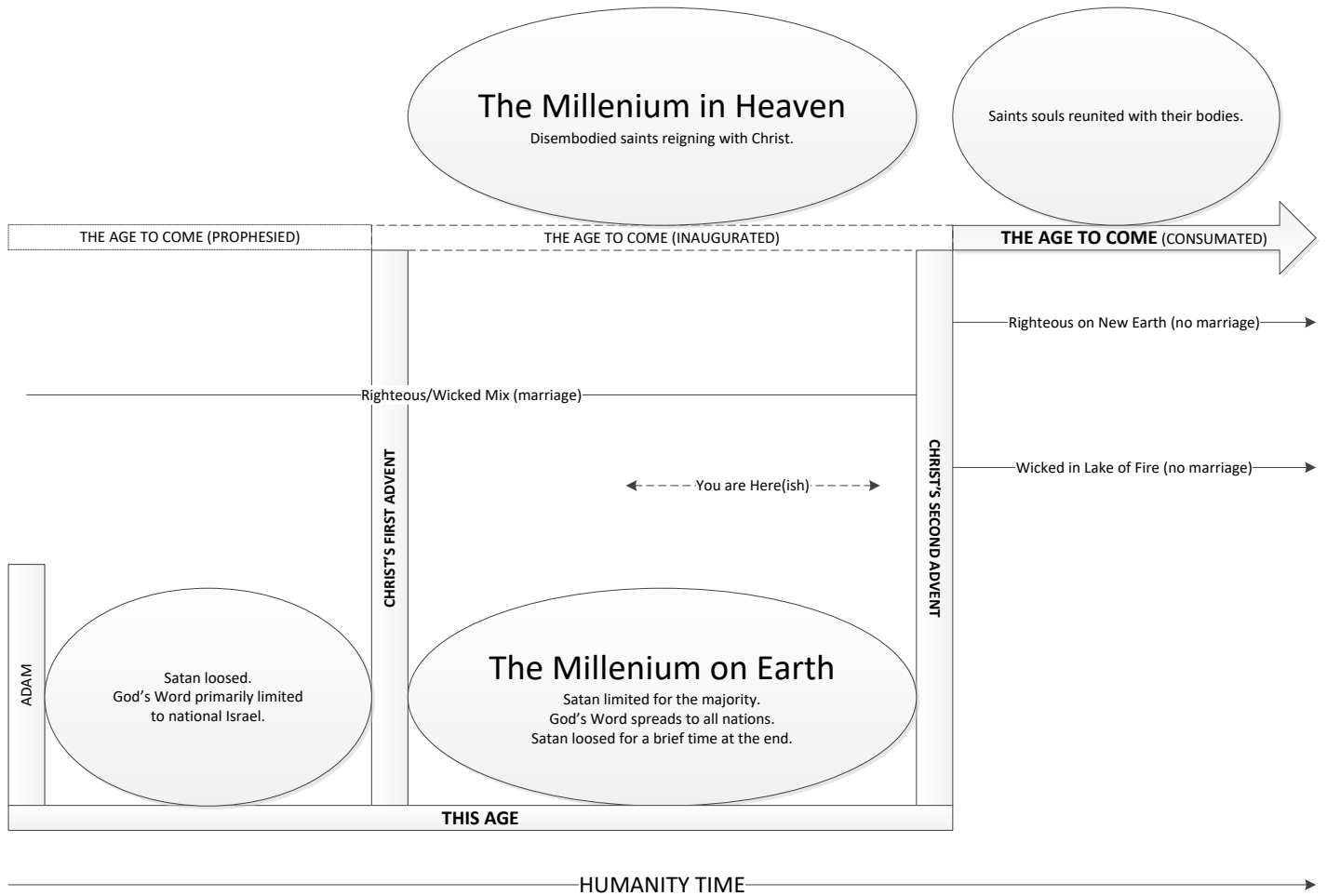
Here is the intermediate state of all believers, disembodied souls with Christ. How relevant and comforting to the early persecuted church.

Revelation 20:4-6 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent *to constitute* the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

Revelation 3:21 **'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne**

## A Humanity Time Diagram



### III) Summary

The Covenant Baptist takes care before determining that a passage is figurative. The broad, simple, and clearly literal passages of Scripture lay out a basic two age framework for humanity time that must not be violated by interpretations of narrower and more difficult passages. This is not a reckless or stubborn refusal to apply a historical, grammatical method of interpretation; but an application of the fact that Scripture is inerrant, interprets itself, is full of figurative language, and that commonly misunderstood by its audience. (I cannot think of a passage where God's Word was understood figuratively when it was meant to be understood literally. There may be some, but they haven't come to mind.)

Complex eschatologies misrepresent God as a propounder of bewildering anachronisms, scattering prophecy like jigsaw puzzle pieces to befuddle His servants. The ensuing frustration is a stumbling block to the simple gospel and therefore promoting such is not benign. James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Take a dear and clear saint who recently admitted that she didn't know that the Comforter was one in the same with the Holy Spirit. The intricacies and complexities of premillennial dispensationalism (I watched a Dr. Showers video presentation – mind boggling stuff that this common person did not hear gladly - ouch) are out of reach to such a one.

But the Bible's two age framework is much simpler to grasp and filled with comfort and profitable instruction. May God help you to develop a more biblical understanding of eschatology for the sake of those to whom you minister.