

Dispensationalism

{Part 5}

The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism

Intro:

We come this evening to the issue of how we interpret the word of God.

Or, if you like:

“The Principle’s of Interpretation”

One important principle of Interpretation is that of the different types of writing in the Scripture.

Or, different Genre’s within the text.

Ie.

Historic, Poetic, Prophetic, didactic, Apocalyptic etc.

Example:

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

This is a general principle not a salvific promise!

{There is much in Proverbs that would be completely out of place in Romans!}

Also:

Rev 13:1 {not a literal beast!}

Ryrie notes:

“ But one of the pitfalls is to claim that ‘each genre represents truth in its own way and makes unique demands for how it should be read’, and that ‘meaning is genre dependant.’” – pg 80

But,

As we have seen, it does matter very much what type of biblical literature we are referring to!

He shows his lack of appreciation for the different types of literature within the scriptures when he says:

“Of course, the dietary laws are just as much inspired scripture as the sermon on the mount – a fact that emotions easily overlook.” – pg 96

He goes on to say:

“Dispensationalists claim that their principal of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation. This means interpretation that gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking, or thinking.” – pg 80

But,

We must qualify this! Not only is the type of literature important but the context of a word!

Example:

Acts 19:32 “Assembly”

{very same GK word used for the church}

He argues:

“The scriptures, then, cannot be regarded as an illustration of some special use of language so that in the interpretation of these scriptures some deeper meaning of the words must be sought.” – pg 81

Now,

Those who hold to Covenant theology do not believe in what he terms “some deeper meaning”

In fact we strive for the simple meanings to words.

Again,

The most helpful example is the word “Church”, which is not some hidden group separate from Israel but are simply one with all the called out people of God from the beginning to the of time!

Compare:

Matthew 16:18

Matthew 18:17

Acts 7: 38

Acts 14:27

Acts 20:28

1 Cor. 10:32

1 Cor. 14:34

He Admits:

“Of course, literal interpretation is not the exclusive property of dispensationalists... ..

What, then, is the difference between the dispensationalist use of this hermeneutical principal and the non-dispensationalist? The difference lies in the dispensationalist claim to use the normal principal of interpretation *consistently* in *all* his study of the bible.....

The dispensationalist claims to be consistent in his use of this principal, and he accuses the non-dispensationalist of being inconsistent in his use of it.” – pg 82

Note,

No example is given here of inconsistency!

We agree with his next statement:

“Later revelation on a subject does not make the earlier revelation mean something different. **It may add to it or even supersede it**, but it does not contradict it. A word or concept cannot mean one thing in the Old Testament and take on opposite meaning in the New Testament.” - Pg 84

“Supersede”

“Take over from”

He quotes Daniel Fuller:

Fuller does plead for “the patience to pursue the inductive method of bible study. The inductive method of bible study, which is nothing more than the scientific method, seeks to gain all the facts before drawing some general conclusions from them.”

“But to do an induction on the basic words ‘Israel’ and ‘church’ would have been in order. He might then have seen more easily why the dispensationalist believes that God has two distinct pursues – one for Israel and one for the church. In the progress of revelation there has been no change in the meaning of these words, and they are kept distinct.” – pg 84

Compare:

1 Peter 2: 9-10

Q. Is this literal?

Note:

We are “the people of God”

You cannot have two groups called “the” people of God!!

He says:

“That is why the dispensationalist recognises two purposes of God and insists on maintaining the distinction between Israel and the church. And all of this is built on an inductive study of the use of two words, not a scheme superimposed on the bible.” Pg 85

Q. Where does the New Testament make such a distinction?

He goes on:

“In the prophecies of the Old Testament, plain interruption finds many promises that, if interpreted literally, have not yet been fulfilled. The amillennialist says that they will not be fulfilled literally but are being fulfilled spiritually in the church.” – pg 90

Q. What does literal mean?

Q. Is physical the only idea of literal?

Q. Is Spiritual not literal?

Compare:

Hosea 2: 23 with 1 Peter 2: 9-10

He Argues:

“.. in the New Testament the word Israel does not mean the church and vice versa. The dispensationalist, then, recognises the different peoples of God simply because of the distinction maintained by the text as literally interrupted.” – pg 90

Compare:

1 Cor. 10:18

Gal. 6: 16

Speaking of the Covenant of Grace:

He says:

“The so-called covenant of grace is the governing category by which all scripture is to be understood. God’s purpose in the world is to redeem, and men have been, are, and **will always be redeemed in the same manner throughout all time.**” – pg 93

Note,

This is what he is rejecting!!

He goes on:

“The dispensationalist sees a broader purpose in God’s program for the world than salvation, and that purpose is His own glory.” – pg 93

Both of these truths are intertwined!

He quotes John F. Walvoord:

“The error of covenant theologians is that they combine all the many facets of divine purpose in the one objective of the fulfilment of the covenant of grace.” – pg 93

He goes on:

“Without getting involved in all the questions concerning salvation during the period of Mosaic Law, **it is quite clear that God had some purposes under the law besides the purposes besides soteriological.** Otherwise, how can we take at face value Paul’s statement that the law was ‘the ministry of death’ and ‘the ministry of condemnation’ (2Cor 3:7, 9)? **These are not descriptions of salvation to say the least.**” – pg 94

Compare:

Galatians 3: 24

Addendum to ‘Sermon on the Mount’:

He gives 3 general Dispensational views regarding the Sermon:

“1. The sermon relates only to the millennial kingdom.... in order words, only when the millennial kingdom is established on this present earth under the kingship of Christ will the sermon become the rule of life. Such an understanding takes the sermon in its strict literal sense. One question about this view is simply, if the sermon will be the new rule of life for the millennial kingdom, what will be the purpose of praying ‘Thy kingdom come’ if it has

already come? (Matt 6:10) Another is this: if the sermon is for the future kingdom when righteousness will reign, why will some be persecuted? (Matt 5:10)

2. It relates to anytime the Messianic kingdom is offered. Thus, it is a detailed explanation of the Lord's call to Israel to repent.

3. It relates both to anytime the kingdom is offered (that is, during our Lord's earthly ministry as well as during the coming tribulation period.)" – pg 100

He quotes Mark Saucy:

“At the beginning of Jesus career he proclaimed and offered to Israel the restoration of the rule of Yahweh in their land, **which would bring His peace and righteousness, and through which they would be a blessing to the rest of the world.** This kingdom of which he spoke is physical, glorious and powerful, compelling the wicked either to repent or feel its wrath.” – pg 97

Q. What about the Cross?

Mark 8: 27-33

With:

1 Cor. 2:8