

# Hermeneutics – NT Priority Presupposition

“Difference between dispensational and non-dispensational hermeneutics is found in these three areas: (1) the relation of the progress of revelation to the priority of one testament over the other; (2) the understanding and implications of the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament; and (3) the understanding and implication of typology.”

—— John Feinberg, *Systems of Discontinuity, in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester: Crossway Books), 73-74.

“Nondispensationalists begin with the NT teaching as having priority and then go back to the OT. Dispensationalists often begin with the OT, but wherever they begin they demand that the OT be taken on its own terms rather than reinterpreted in the light of the NT.”

—— John Feinberg, *Systems of Discontinuity, in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester: Crossway Books), 75.

“Some claim the NT transforms or transcends the storyline begun in the OT. But this work asserts that the NT continues the storyline of the OT prophets in a literal and straightforward manner. No transforming or transcending of the Bible’s storyline is necessary. God does not reinterpret His previous inspired revelation.”

—— Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God*, Epub, (Lampion Press, LLC, 2017), 16.

“Analyze the OT context both broadly and immediately, especially thoroughly interpreting the paragraph in which the quotation or allusion occurs. This is crucial! It may provide significant insights into the OT citation or allusion that may not have been seen before. One should go into the exegetical depths of the Hebrew text (or English text, if the researcher does not know Hebrew). Here one should interpret the OT on its own grounds and within its own redemptive-historical context, without allowing the NT text to influence the interpretation, since it represents a later stage of redemptive history.”

—— G K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament : Exegesis and Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2012), 44.

“Unless and until these hermeneutical differences between covenant theologians and dispensationalists are resolved, Reformed amillenarians and dispensationalists are not going to agree about Israel’s role in redemptive history, nor will we agree about the way in which the New Testament reinterprets the Old in the light of the coming of Jesus Christ and the dawn of the messianic age.”

—— Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2013), 20.

“No NT writer claims his new understanding of the OT passage cancels the meaning of the OT passage in its own context or that the new application is the only meaning of the OT passage. The NT writer merely offers a different application of an OT passage than the OT might have foreseen; he is not claiming the OT understanding is now irrelevant.”

—— John Feinberg, *Systems of Discontinuity, in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester: Crossway Books), 77.

“Is the New Testament to be allowed to interpret the Old as the best, most reliable interpretive tradition in the history of the church (and certainly the Reformed tradition) has always insisted? Does the New Testament as a whole—as the God-breathed record of the end point of the history of special revelation—provide the controlling vantage point for properly understanding the entire Old Testament, including its prophecies? Or alternatively, will the Old Testament . . . become the hermeneutical fulcrum?”

—— Richard B. Gaffin, *Theonomy and Eschatology, in Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, ed. William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 216–17.

“Testament priority is a “presuppositional preference of one testament over the other that determines a person’s literal historical-grammatical hermeneutical starting point.””

—— Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Dispensationalism Yesterday and Today, in Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 38.

"Here is the basic watershed between a dispensational and nondispensational theology. Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the NT into it. A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament."

— George E. Ladd, *Historic Premillennialism, The Meaning of the Millenium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1977), 28.

"The sense of any OT prediction must be determined through the application of historical-grammatical hermeneutics to that text."

— Paul Feinberg, *Hermeneutics of Discontinuity, in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester: Crossway Books), 123.

"We agree with this call for balance and for a forward reading of the OT into the NT text. To import "prior conclusions" from the New Testament into the Old Testament is outright eisegesis and worthy only of our rejection, no matter how noble its goals are."

— Walter Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 62.

"... it [Covenant Theology] failed to seize the true idea of development, and by an artificial system of typology and allegorizing interpretation, sought to read back practically the whole of the New Testament into the Old. But its most obvious defect was that, in using the idea of the covenant as an exhaustive category, and attempting to force into it the whole material of theology, it created an artificial scheme which could only repel minds of simple and natural notions. It is impossible, e.g. to justify by Scriptural proof the detailed elaboration of the idea of a covenant of works in Eden, with its parties, conditions, promises threatening, sacraments, etc. Thus also the Reformed theology—the more it had assumed this stiff and artificial shape—failed to satisfy the advancing intellect of the age. . ."

— James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 303-304. Brackets added by me.

"This hermeneutical principle of "either-or" reflects the profound degree to which supersessionists emphasize a New Testament priority over the Old—the Old Testament is viewed almost exclusively in a typological manner. This is not to say that, for non-supersessionists, the Old Testament does not provide types for the New. But it does mean that Old Testament typological constructs contain within them a "surplus of meaning" whereby the intent inherent in the language has significance in reference to its origin (the Jews), may have an application to the Church, and may also refer to elements within the Jewish and Christian community that will apply in the eschatological future."

— Steven D. Aguzzi, *Israel, the Church, and Millenarianism: A Way beyond Replacement Theology*, (2018), 30.

"Along with Vlach, Soulen traces and identifies a hermeneutical problem that has existed in supersessionist readings of the Hebrew Bible since the Church's earliest traditions. Soulen attributes the supersessionism of today to the hermeneutical commitments of the past. This is what Soulen calls the "standard model," which he likewise refers to as "a flaw in the heart of the crystal" of Christian Scriptural exegesis. This interpretation, a canonical narrative invented and applied by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, conceives of "God's history with human creation in four crucial episodes: God's intention to consummate the human pair whom God created, the first parents' disobedience and fall, the redemption of lost humanity in Christ, and final consummation."<sup>41</sup> This reading, Soulen claims, either leaves out everything from the first few chapters of Genesis through the advent of Christ, or collapses the history of Israel into the fulfillment of God's consummative act in the person of Christ, rendering Israel's role in salvation history almost entirely inconsequential. If one thinks in terms of the theological implications of exegesis, this standard canonical narrative makes Israel's history merely a "stepping stone" to its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and the Church. On its own, Israel has neither covenantal nor soteriological significance apart from God's future acts through the incarnation and the Apostolic Witness. Though continuity between the history of Israel and the advent of the Church is emphasized in both Justin and Irenaeus, Israel's history is simply a preparatory stage—a "prehistory."

— Steven D. Aguzzi, *Israel, the Church, and Millenarianism: A Way beyond Replacement Theology*, (2018), 32.