



Allegory Replaces Israel with the Church: Earthly Promises to Israel Are Spiritualized Making God a Liar; Salvation Is But One Means of Glorifying God

5. One of the major principles of dispensational theology is that of progressive revelation. Ryrie demonstrates that those who spiritualize and allegorize Scripture turn divine revelation into a hodgepodge of contradictions:

Ryrie, 93-95:

The premillennialist who is antidispenational also compromises the literal principle. This is done by what Daniel P. Fuller calls theological interpretations. He explains:

In Covenant Theology there is the tendency to impute to passages a meaning which would not be gained merely from their historical and grammatical associations. This phase of interpretation is called the "theological" interpretation. (p. 93)

An example of this hybrid literal-theological principle in action is given by Fuller in connection with the promises made to Abraham. He states (correctly) that the dispensationalist understands the promises to require two seeds, a physical and a spiritual seed for Abraham. He notes that the amillennialist "depreciates the physical aspect of the seed of Abraham so much that the promises made to Abraham's physical seed no longer mean what they say, but are interpreted strictly in spiritual terms. (pp. 93-94)

Fuller's problem is that apparently his concept of progressive revelation includes the possibility that subsequent revelation may completely change the meaning of something previously revealed. It is true that progressive revelation brings additional light, but does it completely reverse to the point of contradiction what has been previously revealed? Fuller's concept apparently allows for such, but the literal principle built upon a sound philosophy of the purpose of language does not. New revelation cannot mean contradictory revelation. 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. If this were so, then the Bible would be filled with contradictions, and God would have to be conceived as deceiving the Old Testament prophets when He revealed to them a nationalistic kingdom, since He would have known all the time that He would completely reverse the concept in later revelation. (pp. 94-95)

The true concept of progressive revelation is like a building—and certainly the superstructure does not replace the foundation. The same hermeneutical principles must be applied to all revelation, regardless of the time in which it was given.

To pursue the illustration of Israel and the Church further, the amillennialist's hermeneutics allow him to blur completely the meanings of the two words in the New Testament so that the Church takes over the fulfillment of the promises to Israel. In that view true Israel is the Church. (p. 95)

6. The system that allows the Word of God to speak clearly to the believer without allowing preconceived opinions to pollute the interpretation is the literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic.
7. When utilized objectively it will result not only in revealing a dispensational economy of God's dealings with the human race, but the clear plan of God will be exposed to the believer.
8. In order to discover the perfect order of divine revelation and through which the plan of God for mankind can be perceived, one of the most important distinctions that must be made is between Israel and the Church.



9. There are three principles in this regard that must be noted:

Ryrie, 44-47:

- (1) A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct. Lewis Sperry Chafer summarized it as follows:

The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity. Over against this, the partial dispensationalist bases his interpretation on the supposition that God is doing but one thing, namely, the general separation of the good from the bad, and, in spite of all the confusion this limited theory creates, contends that the earthly people merge into the heavenly people; that the earthly program must be given a spiritual interpretation or disregarded altogether. [Chafer. *Dispensationalism*. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1936), 107.] (pp. 44-45)

A man who fails to distinguish Israel and the Church will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does, will.

- (2) This distinction between Israel and the Church is born out of a system of hermeneutics which is usually called literal interpretation. It does not spiritualize or allegorize as nondispensational interpretation does. (p. 45)
- (3) The underlying purpose of God in the world. The covenant theologian in practice makes this purpose salvation, and the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that, namely, the glory of God. To the dispensationalist the soteriological or saving program of God is not the only program but one of the means God is using in the total program of glorifying Himself. Scripture is not man-centered as though salvation were the main theme, but it is God-centered because His glory is the center. The Bible itself clearly teaches that salvation, important and wonderful as it is, is not an end in itself but is rather a means to the end of glorifying God. (p. 46)