

Dispensational Theology Through Immersion in the Biblical Framework

By Jeremy Thomas

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Charles Clough

Introduction

I came in contact with the Framework when I met Robin Rogers, now my wife, back in the Summer of 1998. At the time I was attending Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX, and taking Biology and Chemistry courses in preparation for medical school. I was a part of Campus Crusade for Christ, and that Summer a few of us decided to stick around for Summer school. I needed a couple more classes to graduate the next semester. One of the Cru girls named Becky Walkup knew Robin's family and she was about to begin her first semester, so they invited her to get to know some of us from Campus Crusade. When we first met I immediately knew she was very different than your typical Christian girl in Campus Crusade for Christ. She was absolutely certain of the things she believed, and that was not what I was accustomed to with your typical college Christian girl. She had her own impressions of me. I asked different questions. The first day I met her I asked, "What do you want people to remember you by when you die?" A bit morbid I suppose, but we were able to talk about real things.

When I first met her father, Ron Rogers, he was on the back porch at his home and the first words out of his mouth were, "What do you think of pre-theoretical vs theoretical thought?" Little did I know that I would soon learn about these thought systems through Charlie's 1970's version of the Framework; Pamphlet 1, titled, Training for the Future. To date this material has yet to be published outside of that form, but it discusses the various apologetic methodologies and gives seven biblical examples in

favor of a presuppositional approach. That set me off on years of reading Francis Schaeffer, Cornelius Van Til, Greg Bahnsen, Scott Oliphint, and others in the Reformed Presuppositional tradition.

At the time, I was attending a college church called Indiana Avenue Baptist, and Robin was putting up with coming with me because I was seeking the truth. Every Sunday after church I was invited to her home for lunch where her father would proceed to speak way over my head. While everyone else dozed off to sleep on the couch I would be left there listening to this guy till 3:30-4:00 in the afternoon. I finally told Robin, "I don't know what your dad is talking about, but I do want to know." Ron quickly provided me with the 1970's pamphlets and encouraged me to go down to Exodus Prison Ministries on 34th Street. There I found Dorothy Hilton who had listened to Bob Thieme and Charlie Clough for years. She had a tape ministry to prisoners and when I told her who sent me she gave me a shoebox and started throwing tapes in it. She said, "Thieme is good, but you really need to listen to this Charlie Clough guy. These are the Divine Institutions, this is Basics, this is the Biblical Framework," and she sent me out the door exclaiming, "Come back when you finish." I came back.

When I graduated from Texas Tech I took a job at the USDA Plant Physiology and Cropping Research Center. My first job was scanning sorghum roots for surface area. The computer was a 1988 Tandy 1000, so it was extremely slow. I had hours on end by myself in a double wide trailer armed with Charlie's pamphlets, a Walkman, and tapes. I

listened seven hours a day. I couldn't get enough of it. At the time I was attending a discipleship class at Indiana Avenue Baptist. The director was a DTS grad who asked me to come alongside and teach. As he taught I remember him saying distinctly, "It doesn't matter how God created, it matters that God created." I had been in the Framework and this bothered me, so I wrote him a letter carefully explaining why I thought it mattered how God created. How someone does something is a reflection of who they are.

Newly married, I had also just started attending Tyndale Theological Seminary and studied nights and weekends. In the Prolegomena course my professor Mal Couch said, "If your pastor hasn't taught through Ephesians verse-by-verse in the last five years you need to leave that church." He had a whole series of "you need to leave your church if..." statements. So, we left the college church we'd been attending and started going to a Bible church. There we were studying the Bible for an hour each Sunday rather than 45 minutes of rock-and-roll and hand-waving followed by fifteen minutes of poorly taught and mis-taught Scripture. The final straw was a sermon on the church out of Isaiah. I wouldn't have even known that the church was not in the OT if it had not been for Charlie's teaching. I listened and listened and listened to Charlie. I studied and studied and studied the Framework and other series. I convinced other people to leave the college church and we eventually formed our own little apologetics group. It was tape #83 from the more recent Framework that convinced one of my friends, Jim McCulley, that he needed more doctrine. I sent him down to Dorothy Hilton on 34th Street to get

his box of tapes. He didn't tell me what he thought and about a month later I went in to get some tapes and Dorothy asked me about the guy that kept coming each week to get more tapes. That was Jim. He went on to Good Seed International with John Cross in Canada and my brother Joseph Thomas was in that group too. He also went to Good Seed. My life and these people's lives have been changed forever. I kept studying at the Seminary and listening to Charlie and here we are 25 years later. I've taught countless people the Framework and it just keeps going. People all over the world have benefitted in untold ways.

Somewhere in the mix of this very abbreviated story you may have realized that I decided not to go to medical school and to go to seminary instead. That's when I met people like Andy Woods, Clay Ward, and Mike Stallard. Eventually I became a pastor-teacher, and now seminary professor at what I consider the best seminary in the world, Chafer Theological Seminary. God altered my life tremendously through you Charlie Clough, and I am forever indebted to God for using this brainiac believer from Brooklyn who thought through the Scriptures and how to make them relevant to contemporary life to change my life.

My paper is titled Dispensational Theology Through Immersion in the Biblical Framework, and what I mean by that is that even though Charlie includes a few lectures that directly deal with dispensationalism, even if you never heard the words dispensational theology, if you listen to the Framework you will naturally be a

dispensationalist. It's part of the content as well as part of the methodology, and I want to highlight it.

Progressive Revelation, Forward Reading, and Passage Priority

Ryrie said, "Progressive revelation is the recognition that God's message to man was not given in one single act but was unfolded in a series of successive acts."ⁱ The power of consistent recognition of progressive revelation is perhaps not as realized as it should be in dispensational theology.ⁱⁱ Specifically, the implicit forward reading methodology of the Biblical storyline as instrumental in the structural development of dispensational theology. The Framework's emphasis on successive historic events of the Bible as a divine pedagogy trains the student to read the Bible in a forward direction. Event by event, Charlie coaxes the reader to follow the unfolding plan of God that simultaneously unveils concrete revelation of doctrine against its cultural environment.ⁱⁱⁱ

His main focus on twenty-two events is not without Biblical warrant. Major addresses, speeches, and sermons are highlighted as justification for reading the Bible in this progressive fashion. Moses address of Israel cites the Call of Abraham, the Exodus, and Mt. Sinai (Dt. 1:6-37). Joshua's address to Israel cites the Call of Abraham, the Exodus, and the Conquest (Josh. 24:1-13). Stephen's historical recital before the Sanhedrin cites the Call of Abraham, the Exodus, Mt. Sinai, the Conquest and Settlement, the Election and Reign of King David, the Golden Era of Solomon, the Life of the King, the Death of the King, and the Resurrection of the King (Acts 7:1-60). Paul's

speech at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch cited the Call of Abraham, the Exodus, the Conquest and Settlement, the Election and Reign of King David, the Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of the King (Acts 13:13-41). His speech before the Gentile audience at Lystra cited Creation, the Death, and Resurrection of the King. At Athens the Creation, Flood, Death, and Resurrection of the King (Acts 17:22-34). The compilation of twenty-two major historical events covering Genesis to Revelation forms the backbone of the Framework methodology. Significantly, the addresses, speeches, and sermons each follow a chronological approach showing how the minds of the authors and speakers in Scripture thought in a forward direction in accordance with progressive revelation.

Forward reading, as a principle derived from progressive revelation, is fundamental to the structural formation of dispensational theology which allows major themes such as kingdom, seed, covenants, and dispensations to develop to a climax in the future earthly kingdom. It insists that the New Testament is to be read in light of the Old Testament in contrast to non-dispensationalism's insistence that the New Testament be read in light of the Old Testament. For example, Progressive Covenantalist Stephen Wellum seems on the right track when he stated we ought to "interpret Scripture in light of what it actually is as God's unfolding revelation across time."^{iv} While giving tacit admission to progressive revelation, he later turned the principle on its head when he said, "As texts along the storyline of Scripture are ultimately interpreted in light of the culmination of God's plan in Christ, we begin to read Scripture in the way God intended

and thus 'biblically.'"^v By 'biblically' he means, "The New Testament's interpretation of the Old is definitive in interpreting the details of the Old but not in such a way that contravenes the earlier texts."^{vi} This is a sleight of hand attempt to undermine the concept of reading forward derived from progressive revelation.

Behind the scenes, Progressive Covenantalism's typological link between Adam and Christ is controlling how the New Testament is read into the Old Testament. In this view, God made a creation covenant with Adam and the biblical covenants are deprecated to mere out-workings of this covenant. Where Adam failed to keep the creation covenant, his anti-type Christ succeeded. Thus, the covenant is fulfilled in Christ. Details of the biblical covenants such as the land and future temple are simply absorbed into Christ Himself.^{vii}

Dispensationalists are criticized as missing the bigger redemptive picture, but such a reading of the New into the Old runs rather rough-shod over the story that is being built piece-by-piece chronologically in the Old Testament. For Progressive Covenantalism the climax comes at Christ's first coming, but that is actually the anti-climax (Rom. 11:12, 15). The true climax is the second coming where Israel accepts Jesus as their Messiah and He descends to restore His earthly kingdom (2 Thess. 1:10), the kingdom projected by all the prophets (Amos 9:11-12). To change the story line with typological interpretation does not allow the Old Testament texts to have what Michael Vlach called, "passage priority."^{viii} In passage priority a later text cannot re-interpret an

earlier text. Each text is to be interpreted within its own context. This is, to a great degree, due to the implicit nature of progressive revelation. If the principle is not consistently recognized, the original audiences of these passages could not have possibly known the meanings of the sentences. What would have seemed from the words like a literal, future land and temple to be given to a restored national Israel would have been entirely wrong since God intended something very different than what the words express. Yet such claims have ethical implications for the nature of God. As George N. H. Peter said, "If no restoration was intended; if all was to be understood typically, or spiritually, or conditionally, then surely the language was most eminently calculated to deceive the hearers..."^{ix}

God is not a liar and deceiver (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Dispensationalists are not "missing the bigger picture." They are presenting the bigger picture. They are recognizing the anti-climactic first coming and the climactic second coming. The picture enlarges beyond a first coming to the second where the full vision is realized. Every *yodh* and *serif* will be fulfilled exactly as His word proclaims (Mt. 5:18). The nation Israel will be shown mercy as we have been shown mercy and restored to their promised land, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:26-32). No amount of tortured exegesis can twist the anti-climax of Christ's first coming into the climax of the second. Charlie's Framework naturally teaches this forward momentum so the student, without even studying dispensationalism, naturally reads the Bible in a forward direction,

respects passage priority, and sees the bigger picture of a future national restoration of Israel to her covenanted land.

Biblically Derived Hermeneutics

There has been much dispute over literal hermeneutics and many attempts to clarify it by such simple terms as plain, normal,^x straightforward^{xi} or more complex ordinary-literal vs figurative literal,^{xii} denotative vs connotative.^{xiii} Such 'clarifying' terms have been used by friend and foe of dispensationalism, though foe Vern Poythress termed it "flat interpretation"^{xiv} because it does not take into account "allusions."^{xv} Poythress ends up reading the New Testament into the Old Testament to uphold his one people of God concept derived from the theological covenants.^{xvi}

The pertinent issue is the source of our hermeneutic. Is it derived from the text itself or is it brought to the text so it is imposed on it? If a hermeneutic must be imposed on the text, then there is no final meaning. The issue of how New Testament authors quote the Old Testament is critical to the entire discussion. Two views exist that often claim to adopt the single meaning principle, which seems impossible in once view.

First, Dispensationalist Robert Thomas suggested two categories; "the grammatical-historical sense of the Old Testament passage and the other in which the New Testament writer goes beyond the grammatical-historical sense in using a passage."^{xvii} He defines this latter usage as "Inspired sensus plenior application (ISPA)."^{xviii} In this view there is a "fuller sense" that the New Testament author supplies

under inspiration that goes beyond the grammatical-historical intent. In Thomas's view the exegesis of the New Testament authors *cannot* be reproduced because interpreters are not inspired. Covenant Theologians are quite comfortable with *sensus plenior*, but in a more extreme way. The fuller meaning is not discovered by exegesis of the text, but by the use of typological interpretation which sees historical events as foreshadowing later events.^{xix} The bottom line is the *sensus plenior* approach does not permit one to find an objective hermeneutic in the text itself. Nor does it study enough to understand the authors thinking.

Second, Dispensationalist Arnold Fruchtenbaum, citing Emil Shuer and David L. Cooper, claimed that the Rabbi's held to a fourfold meaning of Scripture and that while the Rabbi's got into extravagances, "The inspiration of the Holy Spirit kept the New Testament writers from doing so. Thus the New Testament writers, while using rabbinic methodology, never changed the meaning of the Old Testament text."^{xx} This is a *sensus plenus* position, which means the "full sense" of the Old Testament text was understood by the New Testament author who did not go beyond the original grammatical-historical sense in his exposition. These four categories are literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment, literal plus typical, literal plus application, and summation. Michael Rydelnik follows these same four categories with slightly different names of direct, typological, applicational, and summary fulfillment, but the same result, a *sensus plenus* position that allows us to duplicate the exegesis of the New Testament authors without claiming

inspiration.^{xxi} Such an approach requires intense study of the Old Testament texts cited by NT authors. While D. A. Carson attempted to avoid a *sensus plenior* usage of Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 he was not successful when he projected that Hosea would not have disapproved "...even if messianic nuances were not in his mind when he wrote that verse."^{xxii} If Carson were correct then our hermeneutic could not derive from the text and any hermeneutic we adopt is merely arbitrary with no final meaning possible.

Dispensationalist Abner Chou has demonstrated persuasively that biblical authors were deeply involved in previous texts when they wrote their own texts so that "the prophetic hermeneutic becomes the apostolic hermeneutic and thus becomes our hermeneutic."^{xxiii} In other words, we learn from the biblical authors how to connect the dots and understand the text. Any other approach is purely arbitrary and insignificant.

Charlie's demonstration of how Jesus and the apostles interpreted early Genesis texts about Creation, the Fall, and the Flood set the pattern for the *sensus plenus* biblical hermeneutic of dispensationalism. Despite the modern tendency toward accommodating and capitulating strategies to cope with the purportedly strong but truly vacuous arguments of scientism, Charlie says,

Authors of the rest of the Bible continually refer to these chapters as literal, straight-forward history. From Genesis 1:1 and subsequent quotes of God's creative speaking the world into existence, John derives the Trinity (John 1:1-3). The six days of creation are reiterated at Mt. Sinai in an obviously literal way (Exod. 20:11). Jesus speaks of both accounts of man's creation as constituting one event (Matt. 19:4-6). Paul utilizes the distinct biological "kinds" as models for profound qualitative differences in God's eternal plan of salvation (I Cor. 15:21-47). An obvious symmetry exists between the miraculous origin of the creation

and the miraculous recreation (Rev. 21-22). Many references exist showing that the people mentioned in Genesis 1-11 were considered real, historical persons by other biblical authors (Isa. 54:9; Matt. 23:35; 24:37-39; Luke 3:38; Rom 5:12-14; I Tim. 2:13-14; I John 3:12; Jude 11, 14-15).^{xxiv}

Jesus and the apostle's interpretation of Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament establishes the intended meaning of the language in the text and it does so from the text itself. In other words, we learn our hermeneutic from the biblical authors. It is not arbitrarily selected. They are the source of and supply us with the meaning of literal hermeneutics which is the grammatical-historical method used in exegesis. They are not being unfair in their treatment of the text. They are deeply enmeshed in it and our failure to see this is just that; our failure. We must study more carefully.

Therefore, the hermeneutic of Jesus and the apostles can be duplicated by modern interpreters to arrive at the same conclusions, albeit without being Spirit-inspired in our interpretations, merely Spirit illumination. As a final rejoinder, of course the Spirit's inspirational involvement was required for any additional revelation supplied through a biblical author who accessed the meaning from the original grammatical-historical method, but that is to be expected based on progressive revelation. The end product is a seamless integration of the plan of God in the progress of revelation.

By calling our attention to how Jesus and the apostles understood Genesis, Charlie's framework is immersing us in the dispensational hermeneutic and setting the student up for proper interpretation of the word of God in a forward reading, unfolding narrative climaxing with the second coming and establishment of the earthly kingdom.

The Distinction of Israel Established by Contractual Language

As Charlie demonstrates, the language of Creation, Fall, and Flood motifs established unequivocally by later authors quotations of those motifs sets the stage for understanding Israel's unconditional and conditional covenants. Repeatedly he draws our attention to W. F. Albright's observation that only the Hebrews made a covenant with their God.^{xxv} Israel is a unique covenantal people of God. To dubiously roll the biblical covenants into prior theological covenants as Covenant Theology does, warps the details of the biblical covenants into redemptive images only.

Charlie makes the strategic point that a covenant (*berith*) is a legal contract with certain parties that contains definite terms. The literary genre of a legal contract is the use of literal terms.^{xxvi} No one enters into metaphorical, symbolic, or shadow contracts characteristic of poetic literature. What one says in a contract is what one means in its most literal sense. Legal literature is not the playground of figures of speech. When God told Abram to go forth from his country to a land, he meant a physical piece of earth (Gen. 12:1). When God said "To your descendants I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7) He meant this piece of real estate and not another. When Abram and Lot separated and the Lord told him "look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever" (Gen. 13:14-15), He meant the space of land would be theirs forever. If non-dispensationalists claim God meant heaven or the land promise has

already been fulfilled, it is certainly fulfilled in the most wildly imaginable way not associated with the actual words He used. God would have been teaching us that what one says does not have a correspondence to what is meant. This is a complete departure from reality. Communication even between ourselves breaks down under such interpretive practices.^{xxvii} The level of subjectivity is difficult to quantify. Perhaps a better approach would be to reject the theological covenants that are not explicitly taught in the text and simply submit to the words of Scripture as revelatory of God's thinking. The pieces fall in place naturally as one plays fair with the text.

Charlie's description of the Abrahamic covenant as the "drive-train of history," again sets the student in forward reading mode, producing excited anticipation as each new event unfolds and God's faithfulness to His covenants is observed. Indeed, at the heart of a covenant is the measurement of one's behavior, and if God does not say what He means and mean what He says then we have no reason to trust Him. The integrity of God is at stake. In order for God's integrity to be maintained one must give priority to the biblical covenants so that the details involving land, seed, kingdom, temple, and sacrifice are given their full due and not absorbed or transformed into a purely redemptive context. Will God actually keep His covenant promises, or has He changed their meaning unilaterally into something not foreseen by any of the prophets?

Charlie's emphasis on the parties to the covenant is absolutely critical to tracking faithfulness and fulfillment.^{xxviii} A covenant can only be fulfilled to the parties to whom

the covenant was originally made. In defiance of this principle recognized absolutely universally among men (Gal. 3:15-16), non-dispensationalists make the church party to the covenant. This occurs under the theological covenant structure that creates the one people of God so that the church is viewed by Covenant Theologians as merely the "fruition" or "enlargement" of Israel^{xxix} and in the case of Christian Reconstructionism the "replacement."^{xxx} Israel evidently forfeited their covenant blessings by crucifying their Messiah. Either way, a theological structure is controlling the text rather than the text controlling the theological structure. Such claims impinge upon God's integrity.

If a student of the framework simply follows the way God uses language in early Genesis and continues to follow that approach in later Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament and Bible, he finds himself necessarily a dispensationalist whether or not he's ever heard the word. This is invaluable when the word dispensational carries such a negative connotation.

The Distinction of the Church Established by its Nature as a Mystery

In the wake of the death and resurrection of the King, Charlie highlights the magnitude of the ascension and exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the Father. From this position far above His enemies (Heb. 4:14; Eph. 4:10) the Father and the Son would send the Spirit (Jn. 15:26) to begin a new work of Spirit baptizing people into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). This 'surprise' feature in the plan of God awakens us to the fact that God has plans beyond Israel to bless

Gentiles (Rom. 11:30ff). Though a 'surprise' to us, it was not a 'surprise' to Him but a "mystery" heretofore unrevealed (Eph. 3:5-6).

The transitional nature of the book of Acts is quite natural in the wake of Israel's rejection of their Messiah. Jews (Acts 2), Samaritans (Acts 8), Gentiles (Acts 10), and disciples of John the Baptizer (Acts 19) are each Spirit baptized into the body of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Within the body there is spiritual equality as we are all sons of God through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28). As such Gentiles in the church do not take-over the plan of God for Israel, but become partakers of the spiritual blessings that come through Israel's Messiah (Rom. 11:11-25), for salvation is of the Jews (Jn. 4:22).

The Spirit's work is highlighted in the Framework, though He shines the spotlight on Christ. He is building His body from heaven (Mt. 16:18) through His Spirit sent to earth (Jn. 14:16-18). The Spirit regenerates to create an inner sanctum for the Spirit to indwell as a basis for the filling to produce the sinless life of Christ as we abide in Him (1 Jn. 3:1-2, 9). The obstacles we face in the Christian life cannot be overcome in the flesh, but as we walk by the Spirit we see the life of Christ manifested through us (Gal. 2:20; 5:16, 22-23; Rom. 8:1-4) in preparation for us reigning as servant kings.

This unique period of history where Gentile salvation is the primary feature without excluding Jews who believe was unannounced by the Old Testament prophets who merely saw a coming Jewish kingdom (Eph. 2:11-22; 3:1-10). Yet, Progressive Dispensationalists claim it was the subject of Old Testament prophecy and merely "not

actualized^{xxx} in the successive course of God's unfolding plan. Covenant Theologians insist the church was "unrecognized"^{xxxii} in the Old Testament, but in hindsight Israel was the church all along. Only dispensationalism gives full credence to a "mystery" as something kept secret in God only now revealed (Col. 1:26-27; Eph. 3:5-6). As a result, the church cannot be Israel or the new Israel, but rather as Paul said, "one new man" (Eph. 2:15).

The church's destiny of being raptured with Christ (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-53), quite distinct from God's future destiny for Israel after the day of the Lord's judgment at the second coming (1 Thess. 1) becomes plain only for someone who has been following the storyline unhindered by all-controlling theological substructures like the theological covenants or attempts to find a mediating ground. Again, the Framework removes all these obstacles to understanding the plan of God by laying them out plainly as they are revealed in chronological order. Christ is building His church (Mt. 16:18). He was not doing this before Acts 2 (Acts 1:5). He had to die, resurrect, and ascend before the Spirit could be sent to begin the project. He is doing this now. When He finishes the building project He will rapture us so that where He is there we will be also (Jn. 14:1-3).

The Glory of God Manifested in a Kingdom Established Inside History

At Creation, Charlie introduces the dominion mandate and divine institution of responsible labor. Man is uniquely crafted in God's image for a particular purpose (Gen.

1:26-28). Function follows form. The mandate to rule creation is a kingdom mandate that sets the stage for the *telos* of God's purpose for man (Ps. 8). This purpose does not vanish or change at the Fall. Instead the abnormality of a sin nature and personal sin are introduced as obstacles that must be resolved within history to the Father's satisfaction. Where Adam failed in history Christ succeeded in history (Rom. 5:12-21). The end goal of a kingdom must also be within history. History is unfinished if this kingdom mandate occurs on ethereal grounds as Covenant Amillennialist's assert. Importantly, an unfinished history does not bring glory to God no matter how often it is proclaimed to be "the chief end of man."^{xxxiii}

The seed promise sets the direction for resolution and ultimate kingdom glory (Gen. 3:15). God will restore history from within history by One who comes from outside of history. The categories of God and man established in early Genesis prepare the reader who reads forward to expectantly await a God-man to come and rule. The developing sonship concept, enthronement Psalms (Psalms 47, 93, 95-99), and Davidic covenant promises (2 Chron. 17:10b-14. Ps. 89, 132) highlight both aspects of this One person. Isaiah says a son will be given, a child will be born, and the government will rest upon His shoulders (Isa. 9:6). The Framework shows the pattern for this future Davidic kingdom glorification with the God-man Messiah ruling from sea to sea (Zech. 9:10).

The glorified humanity of Jesus Christ as the first part of the new heavens and earth establishes what is to be expected; first fruits are the guarantee of more to follow

(1 Cor. 15:20-24). This glorification model includes all the redeemed of Israel inheriting the land (Ezek. 47:13-48:29) and the church in the Messianic kingdom ruling the nations (Lk. 19:11-27). Yet glorification involves more than man and extends to nature. Nature too was put under the curse and will be redeemed (Rom. 8:18-25). A whole new spiritual and physical world awaits in the renovated earthly Messianic kingdom. The full picture is expectantly seen when one is immersed within the Framework methodology of teaching and the true climax is rightly the second coming rather than the anti-climactic first coming.

Conclusion

Where we go from here is critically challenging non-dispensationalists to give an answer for their corruption of human language and radical crassness with regard to the character of our God. Apologetically, dispensationalism is a fortress unparalleled. It rests on the consistent application of progressive revelation which teaches us to read forward and give each passage priority. Our hermeneutic is found within the text itself as we observe how New Testament authors quoted the Old Testament and duplicate their method. The tools for interpretation are found within the text itself and are not to be brought to the text. The distinctiveness of Israel is founded on contractual language that is not mere redemptive shadows or symbols. The distinctiveness of the church is founded on new mystery truths so it is not a mere extension, fruition, or replacement of Israel. The end goal is the glory of God manifested in a restored kingdom established by

the One who came from outside of history into history and already lived as an immortal among mortals.

Such a climax to history within history out-shines theologies that view the climax as Christ's first coming. Dispensationalism is the only way to play fair with the text, the only way to preserve all of God's purposes, promises, covenants and prophecies made to Israel and the church, the only way to protect God's integrity. It is indeed the only way forward, and the Framework does everything that is needed to establish these essential features making it an ever-relevant tool in training the saints.

ⁱ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 31.

ⁱⁱ Michael Vlach, *Dispensational Hermeneutics*, (Theological Studies Press, 2023,) 35-39, 50-52.

ⁱⁱⁱ G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment*, (SCM Press, 1957).

^{iv} Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants, 2nd edition*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 109.

^v *Ibid.*, 127.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 145.

^{vii} Benjamin L. Merkle, *Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 114-117, Logos.

^{viii} Michael J. Vlach, *Dispensational Hermeneutics: Interpretation Principles that Guide Dispensationalism's Understanding of the Bible's Storyline* (Theological Studies Press, 2023), 35-39.

^{ix} George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of our Lord Jesus, the Christ as Covenanted in the Old Testament, Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids; Kregel, 1988), 51.

^x Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 80.

^{xi} Henry Morris.

^{xii} Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation; A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1991), 146-148.

^{xiii} Thomas Ice, "The Pre-Trib Rapture Doctrine While Standing On One Foot" (<https://www.according2prophecy.org/pretribr.html>). Also Bill Mounce...

^{xiv} Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists, Second Edition*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 82-93.

^{xv} Poythress, *Understanding*, 84.

^{xvi} Poythress, *Understanding*, 99-107.

^{xvii} Robert Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 241.

^{xviii} Thomas, *Evangelical*, 241.

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- ^{xix} Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Relationship of the Old Testament and the New Testament," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 88.
- ^{xx} Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "Rabbinic Quotations of the Old Testament and How it Relates to Joel 2 and Acts 2", (Tustin, CA; Ariel Ministries).
- ^{xxi} Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 95-111.
- ^{xxii} D. A. Carson, "Matthew." in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Vol. 8, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 92.
- ^{xxiii} Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Authors: Learning To Interpret Scripture From The Prophets And Apostles*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2018), 40.
- ^{xxiv} Charles Clough, *Bible Framework Course Notes Part II*, 104.
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