



The Relationship Between the Testaments

Outline

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Overview

The Main Difference

According to Feinberg, the difference between dispensational and non-dispensational hermeneutics is found in 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 implications of typology. In sum, the main difference rests in how dispensationalist and non-dispensationalists view the relationship between the testaments.

Michael Vlach, *Dispensationalism*, 16-7.

How to Interpret?

- **Question:** How should we interpret the NT use of the OT when the NT uses the OT in a way that appears to compromise grammatical-historical hermeneutics?
- **Answer:** The New Testament provides the inspired interpretation and presentation of the real meaning behind the typified or pictured meaning found in the Old Testament and as such does not violate grammatical-historical hermeneutics.



Testament Priority

Schools of Thought

As Herbert Bateman puts it, the central issue is “testament priority.” Testament priority is “a presuppositional preference of one testament over the other that determines a person’s literal historical-grammatical hermeneutical starting point.” An interpreter’s testament priority assumptions are especially significant when interpreting how New Testament authors use the Old Testament. Dispensationalists usually want to keep a reference point in the Old Testament while nondispensationalists emphasize the New Testament as their reference point. Feinberg explains the difference: Nondispensationalists begin with 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. Michael Vlach

http://www.theologicalstudies.org/core_dispensationalism.html

Old Testament Priority

- Why do some claim that we should take the OT on its own terms?
 1. The Old Testament is perspicuous
 2. If the intended meaning of the text was not fully understood until the NT, then it would have had no significance for the original audience
 3. Not doing so would be a violation of grammatical-historical hermeneutics
- These are presuppositions through which some filter the Bible, but are they valid? We need to allow the Bible to speak for itself.

Old Testament Priority

1. Is the Old Testament is perspicuous?

- The word perspicuous is defined as *"plain to the understanding especially because of clarity and precision of presentation."* <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perspicuity>

(accessed Jan. 26, 2011).

- *"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all..."* (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:7; 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith 1:7)
- Thus, the OT is perspicuous in many places, but it also contains shadows/types that look ahead to New Covenant fulfillment. By nature these lack full clarity (e.g. Genesis 3:15).

Old Testament Priority

2. If the intended meaning of the text was not *fully* understood until the NT, then it would have had *no* significance for the original audience
 - This statement is too extreme. It is possible to understand in part and still have significance (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13:9-12).
 - Was the relationship between the sacrificial system and Christ *fully* understood prior to Christ?
 - Did people fully understand everything about Christ's first and second advent prior to NT times? If so, then why did Christ have to explain these things (Luke 24:27, 44-45)?

Old Testament Priority

3. Not doing so would be a violation of grammatical-historical hermeneutics
 - Typology is not a violation of grammatical-historical hermeneutics
 - Progressive revelation implies that the NT is more clear and complete than the OT
 - The fact that we now have fullness of knowledge regarding Genesis 3:15 does no damage to the application of grammatical-historical hermeneutics
 - If it does, then perhaps we need to redefine our hermeneutical principles to be more in line with Scripture

Validity of Interpreting OT on it's Own Terms

- **Analogy of Antecedent Scripture:** Meaning of a passage is consistent with preceding revelation
- **Analogy of Subsequent Scripture:** Meaning of a passage is consistent with subsequent revelation (which is progressively more complete and clear)
- Some accept the first but deny the second as a legitimate component of exegesis. This is problematic due to: (1) typology, (2) progressive revelation, (3) the unity of Scripture and *Analogy of Faith*, and (4) the Holy Spirit as the infallible interpreter and expounder of His own writings.

Validity of Interpreting OT on it's Own Terms

The...“Analogy of Faith”...denotes that general harmony of the fundamental doctrine which pervades the entire Scriptures. It assumes that the Bible is a self-interpreting book, and what is obscure in one passage may be illuminated by another...The obscure texts must be interpreted in light of those which are plain and positive...And in so far as we must decide between one passage and another, those passages should always be allowed greatest weight in fixing the general principles of faith...

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 449.

Validity of Interpreting OT on it's Own Terms

Taking the OT solely on its own terms:

1. Assumes that grammatical-historical hermeneutics, apart from the analogy of subsequent Scripture, can *always* yield the fullest meaning of every passage, which it cannot (e.g. sacrificial system, Levitical priesthood, New Covenant, Genesis 3:15, Psalms 16, 22, 110, Isaiah 61, etc.)
2. Prevents the proper understanding of types and shadows, since they can only be fully and properly understood in the presence of the antitype
3. Ignores progressive revelation (i.e. the NT is more complete and clear than the OT) and the unity of Scripture
4. Places more faith in grammatical-historical hermeneutics than the infallible interpretation of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of both the Old and New Testaments

New Testament Priority

- Why should we accept the NT explanation as the inspired interpretation of the Old Testament passage (i.e. NT Priority)?
 1. Grammatical historical hermeneutics, apart from the analogy of subsequent Scripture, does not always yield the *full* meaning of every passage (e.g. the sacrificial system and atonement)
 2. The Old Testament presents some of the promises of God in types and shadows
 3. Progressive revelation (i.e. the NT is more complete and clear than the OT) and the unity of Scripture
 4. The Holy Spirit is the best interpreter of Scripture

New Testament Priority

- The application of basic, foundational principles lead to New Testament priority
 1. Didactic passages have higher priority than narrative passages
 2. Explicit teachings have higher priority than implicit inference
 3. Clear passages have higher priority than obscure ones
 4. More complete passages have higher priority than more partial ones
 5. The near context of a passage has higher priority than the far context
 6. Later passages reflect fuller revelation than earlier passages

New Testament Priority

It is of first importance to observe that, from a Christian point of view, the Old Testament cannot be fully apprehended without the help of the New. The mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known unto men, was revealed unto the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Eph. iii.5), and that revelation sheds a flood of light upon numerous portions of the Hebrew Scriptures...The Old Testament...abounds in testimony of the Christ...the illustration and fulfillment of which can be seen only in light of the Christian revelation...The Old Testament types are susceptible of complete interpretation only by the light of the Gospel.

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 18.



Biblical Typology

Typological Interpretation

“Typological interpretation is specifically the interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two Testaments whereby something in the Old shadows, prefigures, adumbrates something in the New. Hence, what is interpreted in the Old is not foreign or peculiar or hidden, but rises naturally out of the text due to the relationship of the two Testaments.”

Bernard Ramm

<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/the-hermeneutics-of-eschatology-part-i/>

Schools of Thought

- **Broad View (Johannes Cocceius):** Every OT person or event that bears a slight resemblance to NT history is a type
- **Narrow View (Bishop Herbert Marsh):** All legitimate types are explicitly identified as such by the NT
- **Moderate View (Patrick Fairbairn):** Types are either explicitly identified as such by the NT or can be inferred via the analogy of faith

Moderate View

It remains for us to inquire into the validity of the principle maintained by many writers, that only those persons and things are to be regarded as typical which are expressly declared to be such in the New Testament...This principle, however, is altogether too restrictive for an adequate exposition of the Old Testament types. We should look into the Scriptures themselves for general principles and guidance, but not with the expectation that every type, designed to prefigure Gospel truths, must be formally announced as such. We might with equal reason demand that every parable and every prophecy of Scripture must have an authoritative exposition...The persons and events which are expressly declared by the sacred writers to be typical are rather to be taken as specimens and examples for the interpretation of all types. [John MacArthur considers Joseph as a type of Christ]

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 255-6.

Moderate View

The principles of Special Hermeneutics must be gathered from a faithful study of the Bible itself. We must observe the methods which the sacred writers followed. Naked propositions or formulated rules will be of little value unless supported and illustrated by self-verifying examples. It is worthy of note that the Scriptures furnish numerous instances of the interpretation of dreams, visions, types, symbols, and parables. In such examples we are to find our principles and laws of exposition... Taken as a whole, and allowed to speak for itself, the Bible will be found to be its own best interpreter.

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 143.

OT Types Revealed Christ

Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, being the same yesterday, and today and for ever. (LBCF 8:6)

OT Types Provided Sufficient Knowledge of What They Typified

- [The] covenant [of grace] was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation... (WCF 7:5)
- **1 Peter 1:10-12** As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries,¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.

Full Clarity is Only Found in the NT Antitype

- This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality... (LBCF 7:3)
- **Romans 16:25-26** Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading to obedience of faith;*

Full Clarity is Only Found in the NT Antitype

It has too often been hastily assumed that the ancient prophets and holy men were possessed of a full knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, and vividly apprehended the profound significance of all sacred types and symbols. That they at times had some idea that certain acts and institutions foreshadowed better things to come may be admitted, but according to Heb. ix, 7-12, the meaning of the holiest mysteries of the ancient worship was not manifest while the outward tabernacle was yet standing...any interpreter who assumes that the ancients apprehended clearly what the Gospel reveals in the Old Testament types, will be likely to run into extravagance, and involve himself in untenable conclusions.

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 254.

The Earthly Can Typify the Heavenly

“Types” may be either horizontal or vertical. The horizontal types are more frequent (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Pt. 3:18-21). The vertical types are such that the “earthly” is the [type] of a heavenly, more spiritual reality (cf. Heb. 8:5; 9:24).

<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/the-hermeneutics-of-eschatology-part-i/>

The Earthly Can Typify the Heavenly

There is in the “antitype” an intensification, an escalation of the “type.” The relation between the two is not simply one of mere repetition, nor even of comparative increase. Rather, in the “antitype” there is eschatological completion and consummation. The nature of this “intensification or escalation or consummation” which we see in the “antitype” is often such that involves a movement from the external and earthly to the internal and spiritual. For example, consider John 3:14-15.

<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/the-hermeneutics-of-eschatology-part-i/>

Typology and Prophecy

The type must prefigure something in the future...Hence it is that sacred typology constitutes a specific form of prophetic revelation. The Old Testament dispensations were preparatory for the New, and contained many things in germ which could fully blossom only in the light of the Gospel of Jesus...Old Testament characters, offices, institutions, and events were prophetic adumbrations of corresponding realities in the Church and kingdom of Christ...The Old Testament theocracy itself was a type and shadow of the more glorious New Testament kingdom of God.

Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 248-9.



Biblical Examples

Future Sacrifices

- **Q:** Should believers look forward to and expect a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem with a revived priesthood and animal sacrifices in the future?
- **A:** No.
 - Believers are the temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5), and Christ is the temple (John 2:19-22)
 - The temple of the Lord is in heaven (Acts 17:24; Revelation 7:15, 11:19, 14:17, 15:5)
 - There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem, because God and Christ are its temple (Revelation 21:22)
 - Christ is the final high priest and has made the final sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 7-10)
 - Ezekiel 40-48 is symbolic and typical, not literal
 - Therefore, a rebuilt temple in the plan of God would be a reversal from the antitype back to the type

New Covenant

- **Q:** What is the nature of the New Covenant?
- **A:** The complete fulfillment of the New Covenant is found in the Church.
 - Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant with the Church in the upper room (Luke 22:20)
 - Members of the Church are ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6)
 - The New Covenant has been completely fulfilled in the Church (Hebrews 8:7-13, 10:16-17, 12:22-24, 13:20-21)
 - The New Covenant replaced the Old (8:7)
 - The author of Hebrews presents Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant (9:15) for the people of God (i.e. the Church)
 - Thus, there is only one New Covenant and no further fulfillment remains

Israel and the Church

- **Q:** What is the relationship between national/ethnic Israel and the Church?
- **A:** The True believers within national/ethnic Israel (i.e. the remnant) have always been the church. The Church of Jesus Christ is the spiritual Israel and is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, there is one people of God, and God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Church.
 - Abraham is the spiritual father of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles (Romans 4:11-12; Galatians 3:7)
 - Thus the Abrahamic Covenant applies to the Church (Romans 4:13-16; Galatians 3:8-18, 26-29, 4:24-31)
 - The New Covenant, which fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant, has been completely fulfilled in the Church (see previous slide)

Israel and the Church (cont.)

- Gentile believers in Christ are grafted into the "*covenants of promise*" (Ephesians 2:12-13) while unbelieving Jews were broken off (Romans 11)
- Although there is a sense in which unbelieving Israel were under the external administration of the covenant, they were never true Jews and true covenant children of God (Romans 2:28-29, 9:6-8)
- However, when Christ came and they rejected Him, they were even externally cut off from the covenant (Romans 11:16-20)
- Thus, national unbelieving Israel has no claim, internal or external, to the Abrahamic covenant or any other covenant of God for that matter (John 8:37ff; Matthew 3:9)
- Israel was the Church (Acts 7:38) and the Church is the "*Israel of God*" (Galatians 6:16) and "*true circumcision*" (Philippians 3:3) and the "*House of Israel and the House of Judah*" (Hebrews 8:8). Moses and Christ were faithful over the same house, God's people (Hebrews 3:5-6).

Israel and the Church (cont.)

"The true Israel of this eschatological age is no longer the nation of the old covenant, but the Christian community, inaugurated by a new covenant through a mediator greater than the Israelite priesthood; for Jesus not only repeats the work of prophet, priest and king, but in him it is perfected. In this new community the hopes of the Old Testament Israel are fulfilled."

<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/the-hermeneutics-of-eschatology-part-i/>

The Throne of David

- **Q:** Will the reign of Jesus on the Davidic throne be limited to a literal earthly rule?
- **A:** No, Jesus is currently reigning on the throne of David from heaven.
 - **Acts 2:30-36** "And so, because [David] was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ...Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God... ³⁴ "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, ³⁵ UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET." ³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."
 - See also Acts 13:33-38 and Psalms 2 and 110

The Kingdom of God

- **Q:** Will the Kingdom of God be limited to a literal earthly kingdom?
- **A:** No, the Kingdom of God is present now.
 - Some believe that the warning "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:7) is a reference to a physical, earthly kingdom and constitutes an offer to the Jews that was rejected, and so the kingdom was postponed. This view is problematic. The kingdom offered was spiritual, not earthly.
 - It is strange that the millennial kingdom, which is an earthly kingdom, would be designated "*kingdom of heaven.*" (cf. John 18:36)
 - The phrase "*kingdom of heaven*" occurs 32 times in Matthew's gospel and refers to heaven (7:21) and the present kingdom of God (11:12; 13:24-47; 16:19; 18:1-4; 19:14, 23; 23:13). See also: Matthew 12:28, 19:24; Luke 17:21; Acts 15:13-19; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 5:10.
 - Since Jesus is on the throne of David, the spiritual Kingdom of God is here now. His dominion is the whole world (Psalms 2, 72, etc.)

The Land Promises

- **Q:** Will national Israel will return to their land?
- **A:** No, the land promises were typical. The church will inhabit the New Jerusalem in the future.
 - **Hebrews 11:9-10, 13** By faith [Abraham] lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God... ¹³ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them [which is described in 12:22 and 13:14].
 - “The land of promise was an earthly sign pointing beyond itself to a heavenly reality...” Philip E. Hughes, *Interpreting Prophecy*, 43-4.
 - The church is now God’s “*chosen race*” and “*holy nation*” (1 Peter 2:9), and this nation inherits the earth (Matthew 5:5; Genesis 12:3) as the seed of Abraham, who was “*heir of the world*” (Romans 4:13).



Conclusion

Conclusion: The Relationship Between the Testaments

1. The proper relationship between the Old and New Testaments can only be embraced when one correctly understands Testament Priority and Typology
2. New Testament Priority must be embraced due to progressive revelation, the unity of Scripture, and the presence of OT types
3. NT antitypes provide full clarity of OT types, and the earthly sometimes typifies the heavenly
4. Thus, the New Testament provides the inspired interpretation and presentation of the real meaning behind the typified or pictured meaning found in the Old Testament and as such does not violate grammatical-historical hermeneutics
5. This understanding leads to the proper interpretation of future sacrifices, the New Covenant, Israel and the Church, the throne of David, the Kingdom of God, the land promises, etc., and as a result, to Covenant Theology