

# "Overcoming the Myth that Dispensationalists Do Not Believe the Old Testament Applies to Modern Contexts"

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As a Bible College professor, students often approach me with the misconception that a particular Old Testament passage does not apply to them. They share with me that they learned in a particular class that passages like Jeremiah 29:11, 31:31-40, or 2 Chronicles 7:14 only apply to Israel and not the church. While I strongly advocate the traditional dispensational distinctives like the separation of the church and Israel, some dispensationalists overstate their case when they insinuate that passages such as Jeremiah 29:11, 31:31-40 or 2 Chronicles 7:14 have no application to believers in the church age.<sup>1</sup> The very commonly known passage 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB) seems to suggest otherwise, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." While we often appeal to this passage to argue for the inspiration of all Scripture (πᾶσα γραφή), this same passage affirms the profitability (ὠφέλιμος) of all scripture for not only teaching saints good doctrine but also for reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ) in order for them to be equipped (ἐξηρτισμένος) for every good work.<sup>2</sup> As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 indicates, the question is not whether an Old Testament text applies to a Christian but how.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I will propose a model based on a theocentric approach to understanding the Old Testament and an analysis of the use of the Old Testament by New Testament authors in order to overcome the myth that dispensationalists do not believe the Old Testament applies to modern contexts.

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, Ronald M. Johnson says, "*A natural reading of Scripture* [emphasis his] requires that a distinction be made between the ethnic nation Israel and the Church. When Scripture speaks of Israel, the word Israel is understood in its natural, customary meaning, namely, the ethnic, Jewish nation. Likewise, when the Bible refers to the Church, it means just that, the Church. God has different purposes for Israel and the Church. He has made promises to Israel that do not apply to the Church and promises to the Church that do not apply to Israel." See Ronald M. Johnson, "Systematic Theology is the Hermeneutic," *Conservative Theological Journal* 1, no. 3 (1997): 231. While I certainly understand the sentiment, perhaps a qualifying phrase like "directly apply" or "apply in the fullest extent" might be helpful to avoid confusion.

<sup>2</sup>Some commentators argue that the emphasis of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is more on the profitability of Scripture than the inspiration of scripture. For instance Lea writes, "Paul's observation about the effect of Scripture in Timothy's life led him to make an assertion about the inspiration and usefulness of Scripture. We must not view Paul as attempting to inform Timothy of the inspiration of Scripture. Timothy had heard this truth since childhood. Paul was reminding Timothy that Scripture was profitable and 'that the basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.'" Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, 37 vols. The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 234-35.

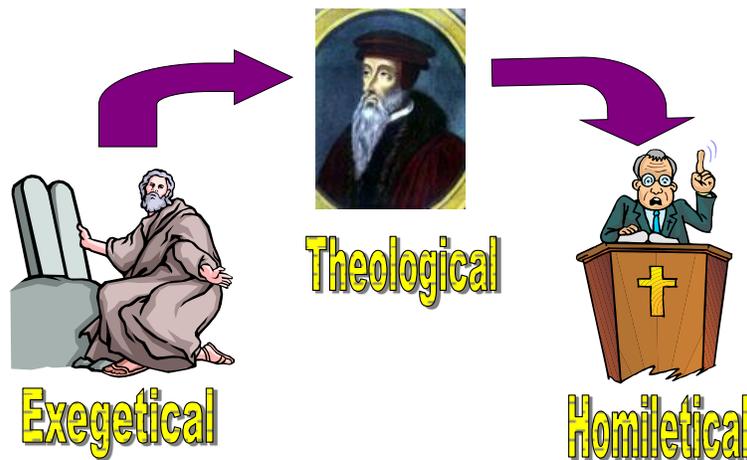
<sup>3</sup>2 Timothy 3:16 is not the only passage that indicates this. See also Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11, etc.

## A Theocentric Model for Application

One benefit of a dispensational approach to interpretation and application is that it addresses the common error of teachers who ask questions like "What does this Bible verse mean to you?" Traditional dispensationalists rightly agree with E.D. Hirsch in *Validity in Interpretation* that that a text can only have one meaning which is "what the author meant by a particular sign sequence."<sup>4</sup> However, a text may have multiple applications (i.e. significance) to the reader. For Hirsch, significance "names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable."<sup>5</sup> The historical grammatical approach to interpretation also links the meaning of the text to its context. One great benefit of a dispensationalist approach is the rediscovery of the Jewish context of the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup>

A dispensational approach effectively contributes to accurate expository preaching because dispensationalists rightly recognize the process of beginning with the exegesis of the text, moving to the identification of the timeless theological truth, and then identifying the homiletical application to the contemporary audience (see Figure 1 below).<sup>7</sup>

### Sermon Preparation Process



**Figure One: Expository Preaching Lesson Preparation Process**

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<sup>4</sup>E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven,: Yale University Press, 1967), 8.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>For more elaboration on this critical dispensational distinctive, please consult Mike Stallard, "The Rediscovery of the Jewish Perspective of the Bible," in *The Gathering Storm: Understanding Prophecy in Future Times*, ed. Mal Couch, (Fort Worth, TX: 21st Century Press, 2005), 57-71.

<sup>7</sup>This process is described in Timothy S. Warren, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 623: 336–356.

The pastor who has not been adequately trained in this system might be tempted to go straight to homiletical application without much consideration for what the text meant to the original author. An individual who believes that the church replaces Israel in God's plan might not even consider the necessity of identifying a timeless truth since in his system the church automatically receives the spiritual benefits of any promises made to Israel. The dispensationalist that espouses a literal hermeneutic and the distinction between the church and Israel recognizes a need for an intermediate theological step that is intended to "bridge the gap between the world of the ancient text (through the exegetical process) and the world of the immediate listeners (through the homiletical process) with a universally applicable statement of truth."<sup>8</sup>

One beneficial aspect of this approach is that the identification of the theological truth should require the preacher to evaluate what the text says about the triune God. The exegetical process focuses on what God said to the original audience and the homiletical process attempts to identify what principles apply to the current audience. In contrast to the homiletical and exegetical processes which focus on human recipients of the text, the theological process should be theocentric in nature (especially since theology begins with a study of God). In the grand history of the Bible, the triune God is the main character. As Kuritz observed, "In His story, God is the main character, and our belief that we are the main characters, is the problem."<sup>9</sup> Humanity, while playing an important role in the Bible, plays a secondary role.<sup>10</sup> If the key message of the narrative is often communicated through the main character(s), then evaluating what the text says about God is essential to the process of developing a sermon. If the preacher is not careful, he may be so focused on his audience that he fails to express the truths about God in the passage. A sermon on David and Goliath can focus too much on the faith of David (or the mighty obstacle that Goliath was) and not enough on the faithful God who delivered David from Goliath.

This theological process of identifying the timeless truth also facilitates the application of every Bible verse to contemporary audiences. Not only is every verse of the Bible inspired by God but every verse of the Bible contributes to an understanding of God. The contemporary pastor may be tempted to focus his sermons on New Testament epistles or the Proverbs because of the ease of the application to contemporary audiences. However, 2 Timothy 3:16 argues that all Scripture is necessary for the complete equipping of the man of God for ministry. Ironically, at the time 2 Timothy 3:16 was written, the audience probably had access to more of the Old Testament than the New Testament. How then can a pastor effectively preach a series on Leviticus? The book of Leviticus extols the holiness of Yahweh and demonstrates how an

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 337.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Kuritz, *The Fiery Serpent: A Christian Theory of Film and Theater* (Enumclaw, WA, Pleasant Word, 2007), 40.

<sup>10</sup>This summary statement is regarding the entire Bible. This is not to say that humans do not play important roles in many of the books of the Bible. It simply intends to correct the common error that people make in first looking at what the Bible says about humanity first.

Israelite was to sanctify himself through public and private worship in order to appropriately relate to a holy God. While the means of sanctifying oneself through public and private worship to appropriately relate to a holy God may be different for a New Testament saint, the holiness of God has not changed. In fact, a starting point for identifying the timeless truth is to begin with the main character of the Bible, the holy triune God. One essential question the dispensational expositor should ask when trying to identify the timeless truth is, "What does the text reveal about God?" This approach should empower pastors to preach books of the Bible that are not preached very often in the church (e.g. Nahum, Obadiah, Leviticus, Numbers, etc.).

A potential mistake a dispensationalist might make while identifying a timeless theological truth is to begin by focusing on whether the text is primarily directed to the church or to Israel. While that is an important question to ask in this process, it is equally, dare I say more important, to first identify what the text says about God.<sup>11</sup> I can remember an occasion when I was mentoring a young man who was struggling to develop a sermon on a passage in 1 Chronicles. He asked me to help him identify the application of the text to his youth group. The first question I asked him was, "What does this text say about God?" After a few minutes of silence he replied, "I've never thought of that before. I thought my job in preparing a sermon was to find two or three points to apply this text to my audience." After asking him to identify what the text said about God, this young preacher was able to identify appropriate application for how his youth should relate to God in light of the principles taught in this passage.

The theological timeless truth is not just limited to theology proper. One can identify timeless truths in every branch of theology. Chafer's definition encourages the theologian to incorporate "all the truth about God and His universe from any and every source" in the process of identifying the timeless truth via systematic theology.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, while a dispensationalist may rightly argue that the church does not currently fulfill all aspects of the New Covenant,<sup>13</sup> all dispensationalists should agree that there are principles about God contained in the biblical passages about the New Covenant that can be applied in a sermon to a church in the present time. The same is true of passages like Jeremiah 29:11 and 2 Chronicles 7:14.

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<sup>11</sup>This statement does not intend to imply that the relationship of the church to Israel is irrelevant to the application. The beauty of the dispensational model to expository preaching is that it begins with the exegetical analysis of what the original text meant to the original audience. In the case of the Old Testament, this will typically involve Israel. The results of the exegetical analysis are then taken through the theological process of defining the timeless truth. However, if the focus of the theological process does not begin with identifying the timeless truths about God, some of the relevance for the audience might be missed.

<sup>12</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 5.

<sup>13</sup>The topic of the New Covenant was already thoroughly addressed in a previous meeting of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics. It is out of the scope of this paper to address it here. For more information on previous papers presented on this topic, one can consult <http://www.bbc.edu/council/archive2009.html>.

## The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Authors

As if the topic of application in dispensational preaching were not controversial enough, attempting to introduce a discussion of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament adds additional opportunities for controversy into this paper. This clearly is an area of debate among dispensational scholars<sup>14</sup> and covenant theologians.<sup>15</sup> Covenant theologians appeal to the use of the New Testament in the Old Testament to argue against a consistent literal hermeneutical approach (especially to prophecy).<sup>16</sup>

I wonder if some of the controversy exists because of our desire to connect the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament with hermeneutical principles for contemporary application. Most, if not all citations, of the Old Testament in the New Testament were intended to support the author's argument and not necessarily as an example of how to use the Old Testament in contemporary contexts. While the discussion often focuses on the relationship of the original intended meaning of the Old Testament author in relationship to the interpretation and application of the Old Testament text in the New Testament context, I wonder if there might be more significance in how the Old Testament was used in the New Testament.

In other words, every time I teach the Bible as a preacher, professor, father and/or husband, I apply the text differently depending on my purpose and audience. When I am preaching a passage, my audience does not always see the diligent exegetical work that went into analyzing the context, purpose, language and historical background of the specific text my sermon is based on. I might not provide my audience with every word study that I completed in the preparation of my sermon. As a professor, the approach to the text may depend on what class I am teaching. I might go into far more detail about the Greek word studies and nature of Greek conditional statements in a lecture on Hebrews 6:4-6 in a masters level seminary elective class on the book of Hebrews than I would in a freshman level General Epistles and Revelation class. If I am teaching a theology course on soteriology, the topic of eternal security may only be a

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<sup>14</sup>This issue was already addressed by Dr. John Master in the first Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics in 2008 in his paper entitled, "How long will New Testament use of the Old Testament govern the conversation?"

<sup>15</sup>Different approaches to this issue can be found in Darrell L. Bock, "Part 1: Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142, no. 567: 209–220.

<sup>16</sup>For example, Beale uses this argument to argue against a literal interpretation of Revelation in his commentary, "It is likely that John is offering new understandings of OT texts and fulfillments of them that may have been surprising to an OT audience? These "new" interpretations are the result of John's new presuppositional lenses through which he is now looking at the OT, among the most significant of which are: (1) Christ corporately represents true Israel of the Old and New Testaments; (2) history is unified by a wise and sovereign plan, so that the earlier parts of canonical history are designed to correspond typologically to and point to latter parts of inscriptured history; (3) the age of end-time fulfillment has been inaugurated with Christ's first coming; (4) in the light of 2 and 3, the later parts of biblical history interpret earlier parts (a trend already begun by later OT tradition with respect to earlier OT books), so that Christ as the center of history is the key to interpreting the earlier portions of the Old Testament." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 98.

small part of that class and I may not be able to go into nearly as much detail about Hebrews 6:4-6 as I would in a seminary elective class on Hebrews. In fact, I might discuss how Hebrews 6:4-6 relates to other texts commonly used to affirm or question the doctrine of eternal security. When I am teaching my three and four year old children, I might teach a narrative passage differently than I would in a seminary class on the gospels. What should be true of each of these instances is that my teaching should be the product of good exegetical work but I may not reveal all details of my exegetical work in each of these instances.

Some of the uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament fit with the traditional exegetical and expositional models that one might find in a preaching or Bible exposition class in one of our institutions. There is no doubt, for example, that the New Testament authors provided exegetical analysis of a text and presented it to their audience. For example, Matthew describes Jesus's citation of Psalm 110:1 as part of His defense of His deity. On other instances, the New Testament author quoted a sermon based on an exegesis of a passage. For instance, in Acts 3:22, Peter correctly exposit Deuteronomy 18:15 when he identifies Jesus as the future prophet whom Moses predicted.

On some occasions, the New Testament author provides a direct application of an Old Testament text to his audience but does not give all the contextual and expositional evidence from the Old Testament when making the link. One popular example of this is 1 Timothy 5:18 (NASB), "For the Scripture says, 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'" Some argue that this passage was applied by Paul apart from its original context and is evidence that a traditional literal historical grammatical interpretation is not consistent with the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament.<sup>17</sup> However, this argument ignores both the overall flow of this section of Deuteronomy which Merrill describes as "Laws of Interpersonal Relationships (23:19–25:19)." According to Merrill, this section describes: (1) Respect for the Possessions of Another (23:19–24:7) (2) Respect for the Dignity of Another (24:8–25:4) and (3) Respect for the Sanctity of Another (25:5–16).<sup>18</sup> These laws of interpersonal relationships apply to Israelite worship. Immediately following this discussion of these relationships, Moses describes how this care for others should be rooted in the historical deliverance of Yahweh of the Israelites to the land. Consequently, they should give the first fruits offering as described in Deuteronomy 26:10-12 (NASB), "Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O LORD have given me. And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship

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<sup>17</sup>Different approaches to a related passage including allegory and *sensus plenior* can be found in Jan L. Verbruggen, "Of Muzzles And Oxen: Deuteronomy 25:4 And 1 Corinthians 9:9," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 4 (2006): 707–710.

<sup>18</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, 37 vols. The New American Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 39.

before the LORD your God; and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household. When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied." Support for one's spiritual leaders was not a foreign principle to Moses's authorial intent but was actually embedded in the context itself. Therefore, we can agree with Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 (NASB) that God's primary concern in Deuteronomy 25:4 is not the ox, "God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops."

For the purposes of this paper, the point is that Paul did not show all of his exegetical background work to arrive at this application. He simply made the application directly to his audience. This is not too dissimilar to my efforts in this paper to take a principle from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and apply it to a theological analysis of how to overcome the myth that dispensationalists do not believe the Old Testament applies to New Testament contexts. Clearly 2 Timothy 3:16-17 was not written to prove that point but there are principles within the passage that apply to this concern.

What is somewhat ironic about the argument for a non-literal interpretation of the Old Testament based on the use in the New Testament is how does an advocate of that position address Paul's use of Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:18? The original context of Luke 10:7 is a statement to the disciples on how they should respond when offered hospitality while sharing the message of the King to the nation of Israel. There is no mention of elders or payment for teaching ministry. However, the same principle that applied to disciples for receiving hospitality was applied to elders who receive payment for their teaching ministry. If the use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Timothy 5:18 justifies a non-literal hermeneutic applied to the Old Testament, should advocates of this position also argue for a non-literal interpretation of the New Testament? It seems as though Paul is using the same method for applying Luke 10:7 as he did with Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Timothy 5:18.

A potential area for interesting study is on the use of the New Testament in the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> As previously mentioned, the use of the New Testament in the New Testament can expose some of the weaknesses of the hermeneutical assumptions that flow from the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament by covenant theologians and critical scholars. One interesting case is found in Acts 10. Acts 10:3-6 (NASB) records, "About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had *just* come in and said to him, 'Cornelius!' And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, 'What is it, Lord?' And he said to

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<sup>19</sup>At the institution where I work we do not have a Ph.D. program, but if we did have one I would highly encourage a New Testament Ph.D. candidate (or a Bible Exposition Ph.D. candidate) to write a dissertation (or a Th.M. thesis) on this topic.

him, 'Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea.'" Interesting differences in wording can be found when one compares Cornelius' own recording of this situation by the same author (Luke) in the same chapter in Acts 10:30-32 (NASB), "Cornelius said, 'Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 'Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon *the* tanner by the sea.'" A side by side comparison of the dialogue in the same chapter indicates some interesting differences between the two accounts:

<p>Acts 10:4, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God."</p> <p>αἱ προσευχαὶ σου καὶ αἱ ἐλεημοσύναι σου ἀνέβησαν εἰς μνημόσυνον ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ.</p>	<p>Acts 10:31 (NASB), "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God."</p> <p>Κορνήλιε, εἰσηκούσθη σου ἡ προσευχὴ καὶ αἱ ἐλεημοσύναι σου ἐμνήσθησαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.</p>
<p>Acts 10:5-6 (NASB), "Now dispatch <i>some</i> men to Joppa and send for a man <i>named</i> Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a tanner <i>named</i> Simon, whose house is by the sea."</p> <p>καὶ νῦν πέμψον ἄνδρας εἰς Ἰόππην καὶ μετάπεμψαι Σίμωνά τινα ὃς ἐπικαλεῖται Πέτρος· οὗτος ξενίζεται παρά τινι Σίμωνι βυρσεῖ, ὃ ἐστὶν οἰκία παρά θάλασσαν.</p>	<p>Acts 10:32 (NASB), "Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon <i>the</i> tanner by the sea."</p> <p>πέμψον οὖν εἰς Ἰόππην καὶ μετακάλεσαι Σίμονα ὃς ἐπικαλεῖται Πέτρος, οὗτος ξενίζεται ἐν οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος βυρσέως παρά θάλασσαν.</p>

Time and space does not permit an exhaustive analysis of all the differences between these two passages but even a cursory reading of the passages in the Greek or English reveals significant differences. For instance, Acts 10:4 indicates that Cornelius's prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God (ἀνέβησαν εἰς μνημόσυνον ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ) while Acts 10:31 says that the prayers and alms have been remembered before God (ἐμνήσθησαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ). If this quotation were not within the same chapter, a critical scholar might argue that there were two authors of Luke 10. If these two different quotations occurred in two different Synoptic Gospels a redaction critic might undertake a long discourse on how one's oral tradition saw prayers and alms as a Jewish memorial offering (**μνημόσυνον** in BDAG is defined as "an offering that presents a worshiper to God, a memorial offering"<sup>20</sup>) while another non-Jewish oral tradition favored the simple theological position that God remembers the prayer and alms before God. Since these quotations both occur in the same chapter of the New Testament, should advocates of a non-literal hermeneutic for the Old Testament argue the same for the New Testament?

<sup>20</sup>William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 656.

Perhaps the error is a result of incorrect assumptions of how texts are quoted. The tendency is to focus on the minor differences instead of the similarities. The most logical explanation of the differences between Acts 10:4-6 and Acts 10:31-32 is the distinction between *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox*. Unlike our society in which the media records an exact quote and the expectation is to get every oral word exactly correct in a written account (*ipsissima verba*), the 1st century AD society was mainly concerned with accurately quoting the *ipsissima vox* or the voice (the intent and meaning) precisely.<sup>21</sup> Distinctions in quotation may not necessarily indicate a new hermeneutic in the New Testament, the influence of oral tradition or the work of multiple authors/redactors. These distinctions may show less emphasis on quoting the exact words correctly (*ipsissima verba*) but conveying the intent or meaning (*ipsissima vox*).

This brief excursus sets up the analysis of the next use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: allusion or analogical use. I recognize that this category may be debated by some traditional dispensational scholars. However, on some occasions, the New Testament writer appears to "borrow terminology" from Old Testament texts or draw analogical comparisons to Old Testament texts. In some instances, the allusion may be due to a variant reading of the Old Testament text as in the use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8. Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:15-21 may be labeled as an analogical use of the Old Testament text.<sup>22</sup> In this passage, Peter seems to compare the events at Pentecost with the future events that will occur when Joel 2:28-32 is fulfilled. Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:14-21 likely also falls in this category.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, on occasion the Old Testament text is used by a New Testament author to illustrate a concept.<sup>24</sup> The most common example of illustration of an Old Testament text in the New Testament is the appeal to the accounts of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:22-31. Paul uses Hagar as an illustration of the present Jerusalem of unbelieving Jews and Sarah represents faithful Jewish believers in the church. Paul then clarifies that he is speaking allegorically in Galatians 4:24 (ἄτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα). One strong argument for literal interpretation is that the New Testament authors needed to clarify when they were using an Old Testament illustration in a non-literal way. A similar statement occurs in Revelation 11:8 (NASB) when John says, "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." When comparing Jerusalem in the tribulation to

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<sup>21</sup>This is not only true of the New Testament quotations of the New but Old Testament quotations of the Old (e.g. Genesis 28:13-15 and Genesis 32:9).

<sup>22</sup>Some might question whether an analogical category is really necessary but if one accepts the traditional dispensational premise that the church was a mystery not revealed in the Old Testament, would not any appeal to the Old Testament to the church require an analogy?

<sup>23</sup>A helpful discussion of this passage can be found in Rod Decker, "A Response to W. Edward Glenny, Gentiles and the People of God" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Washington, D.C., 15–17 November 2006), 1–16.

<sup>24</sup>I would include typology in this category.

Sodom and Egypt, John feels compelled to make sure his audience understands that he is providing a symbolic or spiritual (πνευματικῶς) interpretation. If the entire book of Revelation were intended to be interpreted allegorically, one must wonder why the clarification is necessary.

### **So What?**

At this point, some of my readers may be wondering what this long discussion on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament has to do with overcoming the myth that dispensationalists do not believe that the Old Testament applies to modern contexts. As a point of review, I briefly argued for the following five uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament:

1. Exegetical
2. Expository
3. Application
4. Allusion/Analogy
5. Illustration

In light of these categories, the question must arise whether a dispensationalist should employ the same methods in his preaching today. If one for the sake of argument accepts the general premise in the categories above,<sup>25</sup> the question then becomes whether the employment of these categories should be restricted to the authors of the Bible.

Most dispensationalists would agree that the first two categories (exegetical and expository) should certainly be employed by traditional dispensational preachers. The third category (application) falls in line with the dispensational model for developing a sermon presented earlier in this paper (provided that the application to the current audience is related to the timeless truth that was generated by the initial exegetical analysis). We also recognize that the singular meaning of the text can carry some modern day significance that would have been foreign to the original audience. It would seem appropriate for a preacher to apply the principles of Matthew 5:28 while admonishing a men's group on the dangers of internet pornography. Clearly Matthew had no idea what the internet was when he authored that verse.

The fourth category (allusion/analogy), while debatable, can and should be employed by a dispensationalist who wishes to apply the Old Testament to a modern context. If I were to say to my class, "The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone," the reality is that there is no singular text that says exactly that. Some of the terminology may be borrowed from Ephesians 2:8-9 but my original statement is summarizing biblical concepts expressed in multiple passages. I might say that the gospel consists of 1) Sin - man must recognize he is a sinner and he cannot save himself 2) Substitutionary atonement - Christ

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<sup>25</sup>I realize there is likely going to be much debate about whether to accept these categories and even if one did, we might not all categorize the same uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament in the same categories as I did.

died and rose again in the sinner's place and 3) Faith - Eternal life is received as a gift by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and His victory over death through the resurrection. However, I may not find this formula in the New Testament precisely outlined in the instances of the proclamation of the gospel message (1 Corinthians 15:3-5 may be the closest case) but it is based on an allusion to multiple passages and terms in the New Testament.

Beyond that, if Dr. Stallard were to ask me to write a book on the use of the New Testament in the New Testament, I might reply by saying, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." In making this statement, I might be employing biblical terminology from Matthew 26:41 to say that I would love to but I do not have the physical energy. In no way would I be implying that I am like one of Jesus's disciples at the Garden of Gethsemane. Even one of the members of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics presented a paper entitled "Is It Better to Bury or to Burn? A Biblical Perspective on Cremation and Christianity in Western Culture." In this paper, Dr. Decker states that he is adapting Paul's phraseology in 1 Corinthians 7:9 and then says in a note, "I am certainly not suggesting that 1 Corinthians 7:9 has anything to do with cremation or it is a hermeneutical use of the text. Though I would like to think this note is unnecessary, I have discovered that not everyone appreciates or understands what I only intend as a 'clever' title."<sup>26</sup>

The fifth category, illustration, may be much more common than we are ready to admit. In fact, I think it is commonly employed in some ministry skills courses. While we may cringe at another sermon series on the leadership principles found in Nehemiah, the principles found in the book of Nehemiah can be helpful for a Bible college class on leadership. In our biblical counseling classes at the College of Biblical Studies, we ask our students to write papers evaluating the mental state of Nebuchadnezzar and Saul. Our students even identify some characteristics of schizophrenia in Nebuchadnezzar. Clearly, Daniel did not write about Nebuchadnezzar in order to give biblical counseling students information about schizophrenia but Nebuchadnezzar does illustrate some of the symptoms.

Even in theology the use of illustration is common. Ryrie makes an argument by using Hebrews 7:9–10 to illustrate a theological truth, "Hebrews 7:9–10 furnishes another example of the seminal or germinal concept in the human race. The writer plainly stated that Levi, though not born until almost two hundred years later, actually paid tithes in his great-grandfather Abraham. The ancestor, Abraham, contained his descendant, Levi. Similarly, our ancestor, Adam, contained all of us, his descendants. Therefore, just as Levi did something in paying the tithe, so we did something in sinning in Adam."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Rod Decker, "Is It Better to Bury or to Burn? A Biblical Perspective on Cremation and Christianity in Western Culture" (paper presented at the William R. Rice Lecture Series at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI, 15 March 2006), 1–45.

<sup>27</sup>Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 258.

Clearly, the closer a preacher is to the original meaning of the text, the more authority of the sermon is derived from the text. This paper does not intend to imply that each of these methods carry the same level of authority and validity. The exegetical and expositional approach should be employed the most by the preacher. Even the application described is closely associated with the original text (even though the expositor might not indicate all of the exegetical work done to make the application). The illustration and allusion should be used very carefully and always with careful qualification for the listener.

So how does the model I espouse differ from an allegorical model? I would propose two major distinctions. First, exegetical principles should only be derived from exegetical texts. Contrary to the covenant theologians who appeal to illustrative texts to argue for a non-literal exegesis, the model I am proposing solely derives its exegetical principles from exegetical texts. On the flipside, this prevents the hermeneutical gymnastics some might employ in order to prove that every use of the Old Testament in the New Testament relied on the precise exegetical principles employed in modern hermeneutical studies. Secondly, identifying the terms employed in the categories for the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament clarifies for the audience how someone may utilize the text.

One major concern I have is that the audience of the preacher not only learns the content/information from the sermon but they also learn the methodology from the preacher. This makes expository preaching so critical for the church. This was plainly illustrated in my life. While attending Dallas Theological Seminary, I was licensed for the ministry at my local Baptist church. It was very important to me to share the gospel for unbelievers who came to this ceremony. As a result, I decided to preach the sermon in Appendix One of this paper. It was a sermon called "The Price is Right" based on Abraham finding a burial place for Sarah in Genesis 23. When I took my first preaching class at Dallas Theological Seminary, I can remember learning the exegetical → theological → homiletical model described earlier in this paper. As I reflected on the sermon in Appendix One, a foreboding feeling came over me as I anticipated a stricter judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ when this sermon will be evaluated. Hoping that I had not completely missed the boat, I asked my preaching professor to review the outline and he promptly tore it apart. I had extracted principles from the passage but my sermon was pure allegory. As I reflected on how I came to this point, I realized that I had learned my method from my pastor's sermons.

I would encourage dispensationalist preachers to define how we are using the text when not directly exegeting it as the apostles did in Galatians 4:24 and Revelation 11:8. When discussing the kenosis theory in relation to Philippians 2, we need to make sure our audience is able to distinguish the theological exploration of the relationship of Christ's divine and human nature from the actual process of exegeting the text (or an application of the concepts in the passage to leadership). When I give my counseling students the assignment to evaluate Nebuchadnezzar's mental state, I clearly indicate that I am using Nebuchadnezzar as an illustration of principles taught in our counseling classes as opposed to directly exegeting the text.

## Conclusion

This paper attempted to utilize a theocentric model of dispensational expository preaching and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament to dispute the myth that dispensationalists do not believe the Old Testament applies to modern contexts. 2 Timothy 3:16 was used as a foundational verse to prove that all of the Bible should be applied to contemporary contexts. The theocentric model provided a basis for how to apply the timeless truths that emanate from the exegetical analysis of the biblical text to the original audience to the contemporary audience. The evaluation of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament attempted to argue for five possible uses of the Old Testament that could apply to a modern contexts:

1. Exegetical
2. Expositional
3. Application
4. Allusion/Analogy
5. Illustration

Examples of how each of these categories were given in order to provide evidence of ways the Old Testament could apply to the modern context in a traditional dispensational framework (with the qualification that if one is using the latter three categories he or she should clearly qualify how he or she is using the text).

**Appendix One: Bad Example of a Sermon Taught by Joseph Parle Before He Took a  
Preaching Class at Dallas Theological Seminary**

**“THE PRICE IS RIGHT” NOTES from Genesis 23**

1. Royal foreigner who bought a place of rest for the dead (23:3,6)

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live for Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God through Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

2. This place was to be bought for a price (v.9)

“For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth as propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness.” Romans 3:22

- propitiation means to satisfy--only God determines what satisfies Him

- The Sons of Heth did not intend to give it away for free (11)

3. The price was far more than the item was worth (v. 15).

“For when we were still without strength Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man would someone even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6

4. He paid it anyway (v. 16)

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16