

REMINDER

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The Late
Dr. Ron Dunn

How To Interpret The Bible, Part 4

by the late Evangelist Ron Dunn

*T*here are six rules of Bible interpretation. Thusfar, we've looked at the first two:

RULE #1 - The Bible as the Word of God is our sole guide and authority for faith and practice.

RULE #2 - The Primary Theme of Revelation Is Redemption.

Now - here's the next one:

RULE #3 - The Revelation of God Is a Progressive Revelation.

Now, the two words that provide the key to understanding what we call progressive revelation are accommodation and apprehension...in other words, the accommodation of God to the apprehension of man. Now, by this we mean when God revealed Himself He spoke in language you and I can understand. You don't talk to a three year old the same way you talk to a thirty year old. And when we speak to a child we have to accommodate ourselves to that child's ability to understand what we're saying.

Bernard Ramm said, "*The Bible represents a movement of God with the initiative coming from God, and not man, in which God brings man up from the infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity of the New Testament.*" Progressive revelation is man's growing apprehension of the redemptive purpose of God which culminated in the coming of Christ. It means that God revealed to us only that which we were able to comprehend. And in the infancy of the human race, He has led man slowly and carefully, step by step.

I believe this is what Jesus was referring to when He said in *Matthew 5:17*, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*" He did not come to annul the law, Jesus is saying, but to bring it to blossom. The Law was right and good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough or high enough or deep enough. Remember in Galatians 4, Paul talks about the fullness of time. And you might picture it like this...the time before Christ was the kindergarten of the human race and with Christ came the higher education. In the Old Testament God was teaching the "A, B, C's" and in the New Testament He is teaching the "X, Y, Z's."

You remember what the letter of Hebrews says in chapter 1 and in the first two verses... "*God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*". And that Son is the full, final, complete revelation of the Lord God. And with Him, with Christ, all that we will ever need to know about God, at least in this world, was revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Now, there's something important to remember when we talk about progressive revelation: ***Progressive revelation does not mean extra-Biblical revelations.*** It doesn't mean revelations additional and outside the Scripture. Nor does it mean that God evolved with His creatures or that He grew less violent and more merciful in the New Testament period. God did not grow less violent or more merciful. God did not change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. ***The revelation of God progressed!***

It's not that what God revealed in the Old Testament was wrong or less good or less right. It was that He revealed Himself as much as He could to man at that point in the education of the human race. But God has been the same from the beginning. He is the first and the last. He's the same as He always has been and forever more will be. What has changed is His revelation of Himself...His manifestation of Himself and our understanding and comprehension of that revelation.

(continued inside)

Progressive revelation doesn't mean that the Old Testament is incorrect or invalid or less inspired than the New Testament. Progressive revelation simply says that the final revelation is in the New Testament. The Old Testament, therefore, must be read and interpreted in the light of the New Testament. Some speak of this as the actualization of the Old Testament in the New Testament, saying that the Old Testament could only be read as a book of ever increasing anticipation. And it is a book in which expectation mounts with every turning of the page.

The Old Testament, you might say, leans toward the New Testament. So progressive revelation simply means that God progressively revealed more and more of Himself as the human race was able to comprehend it. So, at the beginning of the revelation God is the same. At the end of the revelation, God is the same. What has changed is not God, but the extent that He has revealed Himself.

Now, this is **extremely important** because you have to realize that the Old Testament is *not* the final revelation - the New Testament is. ***The final, full, complete revelation came with Jesus Christ.*** This means that everything in the Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. Now, this is extremely important because I would be willing to say that the vast majority of all the error and all the heresy and false teaching is the result of interpreting the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament...of forcing the Old Testament above the New Testament. The Old Testament must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament.

Now, that leaves us, I acknowledge, with a problem. And the problem is how should you and I behave toward the Old Testament? What should be our attitude toward it? Does the Old Testament speak with authority to the New Testament Christian? If the Old Testament is not the final and complete revelation...if it deals in shadows and symbols and pictures and previews...if it is not the last word, then what part applies to us today? I mean, I pick up this Bible and I open to the Old Testament where it speaks about the codes and ceremonial that were binding on the people of Israel and I ask myself, "Are the commands and the codes and the ceremonial laws that were binding on Israel...are they binding on the church today?"

Well, I think we can be fairly certain that God doesn't expect us to offer animal sacrifices today, nor stone adulterers, nor cut off the hands of thieves. And so we immediately acknowledge that there are certain portions of the Old Testament that do not apply to us today, and yet at the same time there is much in the Old Testament that is ethically, morally, spiritually, theologically relevant, so how do we know which part is for the child and which part is for the adult?

What part of the Old Testament is binding on me today...upon you today? And I said a moment ago these questions are important for their own sake, but especially so because so much of the "health and wealth" theology that we're hearing is based on Old Testament passages and it has a strong Old Testament flavor to it.

First of all let's make it clear and understand that the Old Testament is relevant for twenty-first century Christians. It does speak with authority to the church. Now there have always been attempts to get rid of the Old Testament if not as a fact and as a force in the church but the New Testament, you see, is rooted in the Old and actually the truth is, neither can exist without the other. You cannot have the New Testament without the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament. The Old Testament is incomplete as it is without the New and the New in a sense is incomplete without the Old, because the Old is the foundation upon which the New is built and based.

So, we cannot understand one without the other. They are both essential to the existence of each other. The question is "What way, then, is the Old Testament relevant?" The Old Testament's relevancy does not lie in its ancient forms and institutions...not in its legal codes and ceremonial rites...those belong to an ancient culture of an ancient world. They're not binding upon us today. The Old Testament's forms of belief and practice are not our forms...or they're not the model for our forms, you see. As a matter of fact, as you read the Old Testament in many of its texts it seems in its plain meaning to have little to say to us as Christians. But if we examine the Old Testament and those ancient forms and texts and if we lay hold of the theological truths and concerns that are relevant to us today, we see what they are in the light of the New Testament. That's how we come to this authoritative word.

Now, let me run back over that again. The relevance of the Old Testament is not found in the time-bound forms of that ancient day...but it's in the theology of those forms. For example, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament is out of date, but not its message. The message is that man has sinned and atonement must be made. The theology is still relevant, the message is still relevant, but the forms and the methods are not. We do not offer the sacrifices but we understand a sacrifice is required and in Jesus Christ that sacrifice has been made.

New Testament faith didn't break with the Old Testament or deny its validity, you see. What the New Testament does is to bring the Old Testament to its fulfillment, and when that happens it takes over all the theological truths of the Old Testament faith, reinterprets them and gives them a new depth of meaning in Jesus Christ.

So, here is a rule...in interpreting the Old Testament....

Only those words of the Old Testament, the moral, ethical and religious teachings that are reiterated in the New Testament are relevant and authoritative for us today. I want to repeat that. Only those words of the Old Testament, the moral, ethical and religious teachings that are reiterated, repeated, redefined in the New Testament are relevant and authoritative for the church. Our guide must be the New Testament. You might say that the New Testament is the Christianized of the Old, so in determining the relevancy of any Old Testament word or passage, we must ask, "*Does this reappear in the New Testament? Is this part of the*

revelation of God that Christ brought with Him into the New Testament? Or is it a part of that which He left behind because it had served its purpose and was no longer needed?"

And if a particular word or teaching from an Old Testament passage does not appear in the New Testament, then it does not have relevance to us today.

(continued next week)



HYMNS WE LOVE

"Jesus Paid It All"

***"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord;
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!"***

- Isaiah 1:18

Mrs. Elvina Mable Hall, author of the text of this hymn, was born on June 4, 1820, in Alexandria, Virginia. She and her first husband were faithful members of the Monument Street Methodist Church there for more than forty years.

John T. Grape, Composer of the tune, was a successful coal merchant in Baltimore, who, as he once said, "dabbled in music for my own amusement." For many years, he was an active lay-worker in the Monument Street Church, working in the Sunday school as well as serving as the organist-choir director.

Again we marvel at the workings of God on our behalf. An obscure woman scribbles a poem on the flyleaf of her hymnal, an unknown pastor provides encouragement and another hymn is born that has since found an important place in our church hymnals and in turn has ministered spiritual challenge and blessing to countless numbers of people for more than a century.

This hymn, often used for our communion services, speaks pointedly about the truth of the certainty of our personal relationship with God.

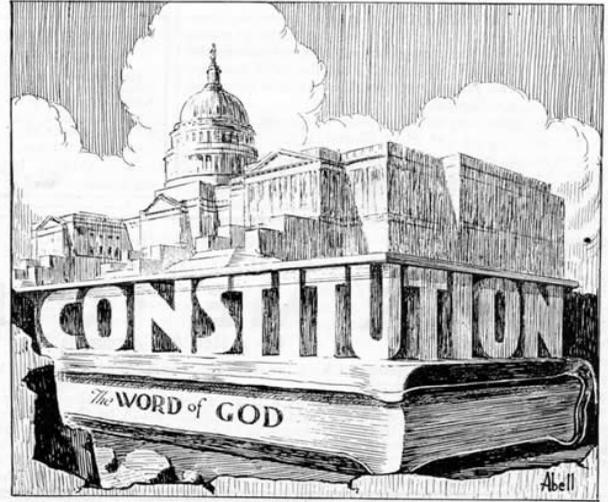
The text was written by a lay woman named Elvina Hall. She wrote these words one Sunday morning, in 1865, while seated in the choir loft of the church, supposedly listening to the sermon by her pastor.

***I hear the Saviour say,
"Thy strength indeed is small,
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in Me thine all in all."***

***Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.***

- from 101 More Hymn Stories

LET'S STICK TO SOLID FOUNDATIONS



If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?—Psalm 11:3

***Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea,
A great high Priest whose Name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart,
No tongue can bid me thence depart.***

***When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free,
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me,
To look on Him and pardon me.
Behold Him there, the risen Lamb,
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace.
One with Himself, I cannot die,
My soul is purchased by His blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Saviour and my God!
One with Himself, I cannot die,
My soul is purchased by His blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Saviour and my God!***

- Charitie L. Bancroft, 1863

NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK

2:00 p.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Rebekah White
 Cradle Roll 2: Shirley White
 Wed. Eve. Service ----- Volunteers Needed

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of March 14, 2010

Sunday School ----- 30
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 35
 Evening Service ----- 30
 Wed. Eve. Service, 03/17/10 ----- 23

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

Week of March 7, 2009

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 1,198.50
 Insurance Fund ----- \$ 88.50
Total Received for Week of 03/14/10: \$ 1,287.00

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*

Please Remember To Be Faithful to Give!



As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go **up**. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithe (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start **today - OK?** Thank you.

TITHING



Church Directory

Todd W. White ----- Pastor
 Mickie Shatwell ----- Pianist
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian
 Larry Mathews, Caryn Quinnelly, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford, Dwayne English ----- Outreach
 Flowers ----- Hannah and Shirley White

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