



Truth Matters... The truth will make you free (Jn 8:32)

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Abstract

This pamphlet examines the veracity of Bible teaching based on literal interpretation and spoof-texting. Spoof-texting is a teaching method that employs a word-search-approach to present lots of scriptures without time for thought. It is concluded that man-centric literal interpretation, including spoof-texting, leads directly to the different literal system discussed herein. This literal system is dispensationalism and is in wide spread use today.

MacArthur asks for Biblical proof (in GC 70-16 tape) that the Old Testament Israel is the church. This booklet is partly about illustrating this proof and attempts to show: (1) the Bible teaches that there is a continuation between spiritual (individual believing) Israel and the church, (2) the mystery in the New Testament is not that there is a church, but rather that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ, (3) believing Gentiles historically joined Israel in the Old Testament, (4) the “new man” in the New Testament is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles, (5) those who believe in Christ (that Christ is the Messiah, died for our sins, and was resurrected to eternal life) are children of Abraham and all believers are part of the “olive tree” nourished by Christ, (6) the Old Testament prediction of the New Covenant “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, **“I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”** (Jer 31:33) is synonymous with the New Covenant announced by Christ at His last supper, and (7) salvation in Christ is the same in both the Old and New Testaments because no one comes to the Father except through Christ.

Introduction

This pamphlet compares the assumptions of a literalistic system with reformed theology and scriptural references are cited. Of course reformed theology and or the different literal system may both be wrong. The literal system rejects the continuation of the Old Testament believers into the New Testament church and instead assumes that Israel “temporarily” forfeited the privilege of being “the people of God”.

We are instructed by scripture to oppose incorrect teaching (Gal 2:11-14), and to search the scripture daily to test its true interpretation (Acts 17:11). We need to be in the Word daily to discern the truth with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Teachers have a special burden to teach the truth (Ja 3:1). And all believers are to submit to human institutions (1 Pt 2:13) including church organizations governed by constitutions, and government institutions. Teachers who do not believe in a historical confession of faith teach that the Bible is the truth and generally grasp literal hermeneutics as a means to understand the scriptural truth, verse-by-verse. Yet there are many versions of the “truth” as discussed below.

Prominent teacher John F. MacArthur, Jr., president of The Master’s Seminary, is quoted “That the Bible taught a unique place for Israel and that the Church could not fulfill God’s promises to Israel, therefore, there is still a future and a kingdom involving the salvation and the restoration and the reign of the nation Israel (historical Jews)”. MacArthur further states that this literal system got more and more compounded in time as distinctions arose between: a) Israel and the church, b) the new covenant for the Church and the new covenant for Israel, c) the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, d) the teaching of Jesus between what he said for the church and the millennial age, e) some books in the New Testament are for Jews and some for the church, etc. MacArthur doesn’t believe in distinctions c) – e). He asks for Biblical proof that the Israel is the church. (Source: Grace Church 70-16 tape, reported by Middletown Bible church.org.)

Several assumptions of the different system are presented and discussed. These assumptions come about from a literalistic interpretation of the scriptures and not from an a-priori theological overview. These assumptions are:

- Assumption 1. There is a strong dichotomy between spiritual Israel and the church.
- Assumption 2. The church age was an absolute mystery in the Old Testament.
- Assumption 3. Because physical Israel, physical gentiles, and the church are kept separate in scripture they cannot be the same.
- Assumption 4. The new covenant of Je 31 is for Israel in a Jewish millennium, not for the New Testament church in the church age.
- Assumption 5. None of Gods people who died before Pentecost can be in the church universal.
- Assumption 6. There is a ”parenthesis” or significant time gap in the Jewish kingdom program prophesied in the Old Testament.

So what

The different system leads to a discontinuity in the Old and New Testament rather than a continuation of God’s plan for man. The different system confuses the meaning of the New Testament by claiming that some verses and possibly even some books are only for Israel and not for the church. They claim that the Old and New Testaments have to be understood in context of who is speaking to whom. Jews

who speak to Jews have nothing to say to Christians. This weakens the fabric of the Bible and divides it. Teachers of the different system, without labeling it as such, may confuse believers about the truth. Literal and spoof-texting teachers are likely to teach the different system.

For example, if a text is spoken to Jews and no Gentiles are present, then some teach that this is only for physical Jews. Examples include: going into the world and preaching the gospel to every creature (Mk 16: 15-18), the unpardonable sin was directed to people no longer living and doesn't apply to Christians (Mt. 12:31), the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) was directed to Jews and does not apply to the Church. This literal process, of the Church not being the same as believing Israel (people of God), divides the Bible. In other words, the "People of God" are Old Testament Israel believers and not Christians.

But Hebrews and 1st Peter discredit many dispensationalism assumptions. These books are summarized briefly below.

Hebrews Teaching

Some literalists believe that the Jews will once again rebuild their temple and practice animal sacrifices, and restore the Jewish Mosaic legal system.

However, Hebrews illustrates that all mankind needed a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice found only in Christ. Many Jews continued temple worship and animal sacrifice in the temple even after Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Hebrews teaches that Christ completed the old Levitical system and the old system is over. Christ, who is the perfect high priest, enables many better provisions of the New Covenant. The better includes: hope, testament, promise, sacrifice, substance, kingdom, and resurrection. New Covenant believers dwell in a completely new and heavenly kingdom, and have direct access to God through the covering of Christ's blood. He provided his perfect sacrifice once for all. Everything is new and better than the old covenant of the law. (Source: The MacArthur study Bible.)

1st Peter Teaching

Some literalists believe that Christians temporarily replaced Israel for a time as the people of God, until Israel believes in Christ.

However, 1st Peter teaches that Christians are the "elect" according to the foreknowledge of God... (1P 1:2). Christians are a holy priesthood, a chosen generation, a holy nation, and can offer up spiritual sacrifices through Christ (1P 2:5-9). Christians once were not a people, but now are the people of God (1P 2:10). (Source: The MacArthur study Bible.)

Theologies and the different system

There are three main theologies in the history of the church. The first is called Augustinian, Calvinistic, or Reformed; the main branches are Presbyterian, Reformed and Anglican. The second is called semi-Pelagian, Arminian, or evangelical with main branches being Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran and Methodist. The third is called Pelagian, Socinian, or liberal with the main branch being Unitarian.

The different system described below is not a stand-alone theology but exists within denominations including Baptist, Independent, Plymouth Brethren, etc. and is closest to Arminian in generally rejecting the doctrine of limited atonement. Besides theologies, there are many beliefs and practices

that cause division among Christians. These are not primary to this pamphlet and are included for completeness in the Appendix.

But the Bible teaches that Christians are: a chosen race, a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:9,10, compare Ex 19:6), a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people (being Gentiles), but now you are The People of God (Jews and Gentiles, see Rom 9:23-26); you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (Hos 1:6-10, 2:23, Rom 9:23-26), (Ps 145:9, Lam 3:22).

Reformed theology teaches that there is unity and continuity in God's program, the people of God in all ages are in union with Christ and are united in the universal church also known as the Bride and Body of Christ. This theology teaches that the New Testament church is a continuation of the Old Testament program and is rooted in the Old Testament covenants, essentially that the believing gentiles are grafted into true Israel. Writers and proponents of reformed theology include: S. Hodge, R. Dabney, B. B. Warfield, O. S. Allis, J.H. Gerstner, R. C. Sproul, and R. L. Reymond.

A different literalistic system, driven by literalistic legalistic interpretation of the scriptures, teaches differently that: (1) the church is not Israel, (2) only those saved between Pentecost (Ac 2) and the end time rapture are in the universal church, (3) the New Testament church is a "parenthesis" in the Old Testament program, (4) a future Jewish millennium will reappear in a Davidic national kingdom with Old Testament ceremonial laws and animal sacrifices, and (5) no Old Testament prophecy can refer directly to the New Testament church.

Writers and proponents of this literal system include: J. N. Darby who invented it, C. I. Scofield widely publicized it, C. C. Ryrie, D. Pentecost, J. F. Walvoord, L. S. Chafer who systemized it, M. F. Unger, E.W. Bullinger, J. O'Hair, C. Larkin, H. Lindsey, A. G. Fruchtenbaum, Z. C. Hodges, J. Witmer, R. L. Mayhue (previous dean of The Master's Seminary), etc. Proponents Darby and Scofield were trained as lawyers. This system is taught in Dallas Theological Seminary, Grace Theological Seminary, Capital Bible Seminary, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, The Master's Seminary, Talbot School of Theology, etc.

This literal system is incompatible with reformed theology. Gerstner (2009) thinks this system penetrates 80 to 90% of "Bible-believing" Christians.

Literal scriptural interpretation or hermeneutics leads directly to this different system. In some cases this system is taught and not identified as such, and it is left up to the congregation to discern systems taught without label. A literal scripture interpretation, that may include spoof-texting, may be an incomplete method of teaching.

In spoof-texting (see J.H. Gerstner) massive amounts of scriptures are presented regarding a similar Greek/Hebrew word. With different context and times, little consideration may be given to overall Bible meaning. Essentially spoof-texting is man's word study rather than a Bible teaching.

Man's literal legalistic interpretation is incomplete because: (1) Christ taught that scriptures are sometimes veiled to hide the truth from nonbelievers (2 Co 4:3), (2) comprehensive theological backgrounds and God's help are needed to understand/teach the scriptures (1 Co 1:20-21), and (3) the literalistic system may prevent inductive study and seeing the unity in the Scriptures.

Obvious difficulties in literal interpretation of scripture include these examples: a) Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ez 37: 1-14), b) "this is my body" (Lu 22:19), and c) "I am the vine" (Jn 15:1).

Assumptions from the literal interpretation system

Scofield (1843 - 1921) and Darby (1800 - 1882) are chief proponents of this literal system. Darby is credited with being the founder of dispensationalism, and credited with pretribulation rapture theory. Scofield is remembered for his 1909 dispensational premillennialism and his reference Bible (1909, 1917)

Assumption 1 of the different literal system. There is a strong dichotomy between spiritual Israel and the church. God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly). The church is an interruption in God's program for Israel and a temporary cessation in the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. This idea was initially developed by J.N. Darby (1800-1882).

But the Bible teaches there is a continuation between spiritual Israel and the church. Ep 2 teaches that Gentile believers became members of the church of Messianic fullness, the new man (Ep 2:15). The church is built on the foundation of the New Testament apostles and prophets (Ep 2:20). Before Christ, Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Now believers in Christ are fellow citizens of the household of God (Ep 2:12-21). Unbelieving Jews were broken off the olive tree of Israel (Ro 11:17), and believing Gentiles were grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Ro 11:17). The church is the new Israel. If there are two different types of God's people, i.e. subsets, how can they have the same salvation?

God's house is called the Old Testament Israel "Moses ...all His house" and the New Testament church "Christ .. over His own house" (He 3:5-6). God's house is Israel (Nu 12:7), (Ex 16:31, 2 Sm 1:12, Jer. 31:31, Mt 10:6, 15:24. Acts 2:36). Thus the church is a progression between believing Israel and believing Gentiles.

God's kingdom shall be taken from Israel and given to a nation (Mt 21:43). The Good Shepherd dispossess the bad shepherd leaders of Israel (Ez 34:7-31), Christ gave the kingdom to his disciples, the poor and lost of the flock (Luke 6:20, Mt 15:24), the true sheep in Israel. Nonbelieving Jews were not true sheep (Jn 10:26). Christ had Gentile sheep outside his one flock (Israel). The new covenant people of God are one flock with no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Jn 10:16). Both old covenant Israel and new covenant church are God's flock because Christ is the good shepherd and the door (Jn 10: 6-8). God's true sheep are the saints of all ages. This teaching of one flock is similar to the teaching of one olive tree (Ro 11: 16-24). The Israel of God is the whole church (Ga 6:16). In Galatians (3:29) Paul teaches that the elect are one in Christ Jesus, neither Jews nor Greek, are Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise.

The church is called many of the same names given to Israel including:

- Diaspora, a term for Jews in Gentile nations (1Pt 1:1, Ja 1:1)
- Twelve tribes (Lk 22:30, Ja 1:1, Rev 7:4)
- A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession (1 Pt 2:9-10, Rev 1:6, Ti 2:14, cf. Ex 19:6, De 7:6)
- Jews who are Jews inwardly (Ro 2:28-29)
- The circumcision ("***the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh***" (Phil 3:3), cf Co 2:11, Ro 2:29)
- Comers unto Mount Zion (He 11:22)
- Citizens to the heavenly Jerusalem (Ga 4:26)

- Children of the promise like Isaac (Ga 4:28)
- Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise of Abraham (Ga 3:29)
- A synagogue or assembly (Jam 2:2)
- Bride of Christ (Rev 21:2)

Assumption 2 of the different literal system. Church age was an absolute mystery in the Old Testament then no Old Testament prophecy could refer to the church age and all Old Testament prophesy about a coming age had to refer to the Jewish millennium, not the church age.

But the Bible teaches the mystery of the church is not that there is a church, but rather that believing Gentiles are part of the believing church, fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ (Ep 3:3-6), e.g. ***“to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,”(Ep 3:6).*** The church in Christ's time was: old in that God had called out people in the Old Testament with ceremonial shadows and a nationally confined kingdom, and new in that God's people were in maturity of spiritual realities and a universalized kingdom; “my kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36).

The word “church” in the New Testament can refer to: broadly to the elect of all ages (Ep 5:25), narrowly to the assembly or congregation of Old Testament Israel (Ac 7:38), to the covenant community in the New Testament manifestation of the two into one new man (Ep 2:15-19), or to a local New Testament congregation. Ep 2:12-19 stresses the continuity of the New Testament church with Old Testament Israel and Old Testament covenants. Some characteristics of the church are a mystery (Ep 3:4-6) and some were predicted in the Old Testament (Ro 15: 7-13; 2 Sam 22:50, Ps 18:49, Deut 32:43, Is 11: 1,10). Prophetic passages with New Testament fulfillment are: (Hos 1:10 cf Ro 9:22-26), (Hos 2:23 cf 1 Pet 2:9-10), (Amos 9:11,12 cf Acts 15:16). There are examples in the Old testament that refer to Israel, that, in the New Testament relate to the church; see (Ex 19:5-6 cf 1 Pet 2:9), (Je 24:7 cf 2 Cor 6:16), (Jer 31:31-34 cf Lk 22:20), (Lev 19:2 cf 1 Pet 1:15). Thus the mystery is relative not absolute.

Assumption 3 of the different literal system. Because physical Israel, physical gentiles, and the church are kept separate in scripture they cannot be the same and are subsets of the saved.

But the Bible teaches physical Israel, physical descendants of Abraham, was the name of the Old Testament covenant community that observed their ceremonial laws. Gentiles joined Israel through proselyte laws, e.g. Tamar the Canaanite (Gen 38:6-30), Rahab the harlot from Jericho (Josh 6:25), Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:13). True inward Jews was stressed by John the Baptist (Mt 3:9), Jesus (Jn 8:37,39), and Paul (Ro 2:28-29; 9:6). To be a true son of Abraham the physical Jew must believe in Christ (Lk 19:9). Believing branches from the wild olive tree of Gentiles were grafted into God's covenant people (Ro 11:17) with the same source of life as true Israel (Ro 11:18). The “new man” of the New Covenant church consists of both believing Jew and Gentile, and is heir of the Old Testament covenant promises (Ep 2:11-22). In the New Testament one can be a physical and not a spiritual Jew (Rev 2:9; 3:9), or one can be a physical Gentile and be a spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29). Spiritual Israel of God is the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). Christianity is the seed according to promise (Gal 4:21-31) and true Israel of God (Ro 11:1-7). Those who believe in Christ are children of Abraham (Gal 3:7, Gal 3:29). They are of the same olive tree as the Gentiles of the church grafted into the tree that was Israel (Ro 11:17-21). Christ is the true vine (Jn 15:1).

Peter uses the same language (chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people for God's possession) for both the New Testament church as was used for the people of God in the Old Testament

(1Pet 2:9, cf Ex 19:6, Deu 7:6; 10:15, Isa 61:6).

Assumption 4 of the different literal system. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is for Israel in a Jewish millennium, not for the New Testament church in the church age. There are three views in the literal system: 1) that there may be two new covenants one for Israel and one for the church, 2) that the Christian is only related to the blood of the new covenant, or 3) that the new covenant is primarily for Israel in a Jewish millennium.

But the Bible teaches that Christ is “the mediator of a better covenant” (He 8:6-13), animal sacrifices are discontinued (He 10:14-18), several Old Testament concepts are related to Christians (He 12: 22-24), Paul and Timothy are “ministers of the New Testament”, writing on human hearts are evident (2 Cor 3:2) (Je 31:33), and Christ announced the new testament (Lu 22:20). Thus the new Covenant announced by Christ (the blood is His sacrifice on Calvary) for his church is the Old Testament New Covenant for Israel and Judah.

Christ told Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, that he should know of being born again (Jn 3: 3). The new Covenant, circumcision of heart, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are taught in the Old Testament (Deu 10:16; 30:6; Jer 31:31-33; Eze 11:19-21; 36: 25-27; Ps 32:1-6). Thus, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Ac 2: 1-3) to believing Jews who initially comprised the church - the church on that day, was prophesized in the Old Testament.

Assumption 5 of the different literal system. None of Gods people who died before Pentecost can be in the church universal. Baptism of the Holy Spirit puts one into the Body of Christ, the church universal (1 Cor 12: 12-13). Because there was no baptism of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost Acts 2: 1-3 (Mt 3:11, Act 1:5, 11:15-16) none of God’s people who died before Pentecost can be in the church universal. Mary is in the church but Joseph is not because Mary died after Pentecost and Joseph died before Pentecost. Thus, there is an absolute difference between Old Testament Israel and the church.

But the Bible teaches that no one’s Old or New Testament salvation is complete in life, and occurs at glorification at the return of Christ (Rev 20: 11-13). The Old Testament saints will be made perfect together with the New Testament saints (Heb 11:39-40). Before Pentecost the saving work of the Spirit was based on Messianic promises, and after was based on Christ’s death on the cross (Jn 7:39). Union with Christ in the Old Testament must have been possible or else there would be no salvation. Christ said no one comes to the Father except through me (Jn: 14:6). Salvation in Christ for post cross believers is to participate in the Old Testament covents of promise (Eph 2:12-13). Old Testament saints will be included in the Bride of Christ, the church universal (Rev 21:2).

The Holy Spirit’s present ministry is superior to His old covenant ministry because the promise of Christ to come has been fulfilled (Jn 7:39). There is a close relationship between spiritual baptism and spiritual circumcision (Col 2:11-12).

Assumption 6 of the different literal system. There is a ” parenthesis” in the Jewish kingdom program prophesied in the Old Testament. The New Testament church started at Pentecost is a new entity and a mystery in the Old Testament. All the Jewish kingdom prophesies refer to a Jewish millennial kingdom because of the Jewish rejection of Jesus. Only those saved between Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-3) and the end time rapture are in the universal church.

But the Bible teaches the church is spiritual Israel and is the fulfillment of many prophecies made concerning Israel in the Old Testament, is a continuation of the Old Testament program and is rooted in

Old Testament covenants. At Pentecost, Peter (Ac 2:16-17) quotes Joel 2:28. The Pentecost outpouring is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 10:44-48, 11:15-18), where the divine work puts the believer into the Body of Christ, the church universal (1 Cor 12:13).

The mystery in Ro 11:25 is not that the church is born but is rather that Gentiles are included in the saved (Ro 11:28-32). Christ finished the Old Testament system of: animal sacrifices, temple worship, death through the law, and the priestly system, when he died on the cross and said, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). Christ is our substitute sacrifice for sinner believers who are born again and die to self.

Old Testament prophecy spoke about including Gentiles in the covenantal program. James (Ac 15:15-17) paraphrased Old Testament prophecies that God would rebuild and restore the Davidic kingdom so that "all the Gentiles upon whom (God's) name is called "might seek after the Lord" (Amos 9:11-12). This can't be about a millennium where the ceremonial law separates Jew from Gentile's who do not submit to the Jewish ceremonial laws because the prophecy speaks about the inclusion of Gentiles as Gentiles in the covenantal program. Thus, the prophecy of Israel and the Jewish Davidic covenant is fulfilled in and through the Christ(ian) church.

A direct comparison, of 30 issues, of dispensational and reformed teaching is presented in the Table, adapted from FPC Jackson. As presented in the Table, one dividing issue between dispensationalism and reformed theology is that the former does not accept the "Analogy of Faith" - the general harmony of fundamental doctrine that pervades the entire scripture. Beliefs concerning Calvinism is also compared; Calvinism is sometimes a lense or filter to examine Christianity. Other dividing issues including ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology are briefly discussed in Appendix for completeness.

Conclusions

This pamphlet examines the veracity of Bible teaching based on literal interpretation and spoof-texting. This man-centric process leads directly to the different literal system discussed herein.

This pamphlet teaches that: 1) the Bible teaches that there is a continuation between spiritual Israel and the believing church, 2) the mystery in the New Testament is not that there is a church, but rather that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ, 3) believing Gentiles joined Israel in the Old Testament, 4) the “new man” in the New Testament is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles, 5) those who believe are children of Abraham and all believers are part of the “olive tree” nourished by Christ, 6) the Old Testament prediction of the New Covenant in Je 31:33 is synonymous with and announced by Christ at His last supper (Lu 22:20), and 7) salvation in Christ is the same in both the Old and New Testaments because no one comes to the Father except through Christ.

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