

Project Proposal

Start Date: April 13, 2004

End Date: July 23, 2004

Objective:

Determine, by way of data collection and critical analysis, how the New Testament authors and/or speakers interpreted what they viewed as the Holy Scriptures of their day. By determining the approach(s) in which the New Testament authors and/or speakers interpreted the Old Testament writings, I can with more certainty ascertain how we today should interpret both the Old and New Testaments without the influence of humanistic rationale or secular agenda.

Motivation:

I started this project after my wife and I dropped out of a Bible Basics class at a local church. As a new believer, my wife found the information being presented way over complicated and rather incomprehensible. Likewise, through my experience, I have found that most approaches to Scripture today are quite dependent on human intellect, psychology and literary mechanics rather than on the approaches of those we believe were divinely inspired.

This project has been fueled mostly by an insatiable desire to return to Scripture to determine how we might today interpret Scripture. It says we should be "diligent..rightly dividing the word of truth..", yet so often all we do is confound and confuse ourselves. Higher criticism of the bible, utilizing its human wisdom as the final source of authority, has left us void of any real spiritual understanding. Its time we read the bible as it is written, listen to what it plainly says, and apply what it teaches. Does it not say, "...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know, because they are spiritually discerned.." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Process:

I began this project by collecting the data. I cataloged every time the Old Testament was used by a New Testament author or speaker. In my collection I included the NT reference, OT source, Interpreter, type of interpretation, reference summary, source summary and text type used (if known). The type of interpretation initially had 4 distinct definitions and all quotes were assigned one of these approaches (literal, midrashic, pesher, allegoric).

Once my initial phase of data collection was finished, I reviewed the data and removed any quote that could not be verified. The bulk of the removals were mostly indirect references made by NT authors to something in the OT. Though references, they did not hold any real significant interpretive style or specific OT source.

After this review was completed and my first conclusions were drawn I realized that the approaches used were limited and did not uncover the detail I was hoping for. I was left with many questions concerning why some scriptures were interpreted a certain way and others were not. With this dilemma in mind, I undertook a second review of all remaining quotes and reassigned approaches by a more expansive and descriptive set of rules. These rules consisted of 10 questions that focus on a specific type of interpretive approach.

There are four general approaches (Literal, Figurative, Prophetic and Topological), yet these are broken down into distinctives that were derived from the quotes themselves. As I worked through the Scriptures, questions were added to the list when a new interpretive approach was discovered.

The approaches are summarized below:

- Does the interpreter apply the original meaning to the new situation contextually? (Literal 1)
- Does the interpreter make a logical, rational, straight-forward statement? (Literal 2)
- Does the interpreter use an earlier event or statement as an example? (Literal 3)
- Does the interpreter make conclusions, unable to stand on original meaning? (Interpretive 1)
- Does the interpreter use specific speech to express an abstract idea? (Figurative)
- Does the interpreter claim a prophetic statement has or will be fulfilled contextually? (Prophetic 1)
- Does the interpreter use an earlier prophetic statement as an example? (Prophetic 2)
- Does the interpreter claim prophetic fulfillment without original context? (Prophetic 3)
- Does the interpreter indirectly make prophetic using an earlier prophetic statement? (Prophetic 4)
- Does the interpreter claim the earlier circumstance is a type of a later circumstance? (Typological)

These questions allowed for a more distinct and descriptive assignment of each OT quote made by NT authors. More importantly, the questions were derived from the quotes themselves and carry with them a closer validity to the text than if the questions had been devised beforehand. My updated findings have been posted to the website.