

Christ in our Hermeneutics: The Christological Grid

The interpretive war began with those ill fated words “*Hath God said?*” and has raged down to this present hour. Hermeneutics is the discipline which addresses that war directly. Every theological system is the result of its hermeneutic. Therefore, the rules we adopt when interpreting our Bibles are critical to everything else we hold true.

For fundamentalists in general and Dispensationalists in particular, these rules are elemental. Every faithful pastor models them in his teaching and, hopefully, instructs his congregation in their use. Believers should be taught these vital principles early on. Among those rules, for example, would be statements which would include our commitment to the literal interpretation of scriptures, our insistence that there is only one interpretation for a passage, (though there may be many contextual applications.) We teach our folks the rules of progressive revelation and the rules of context. Because these rules are abstracted right from the Bible itself, we often apply them without even noticing that we are doing so. Nonetheless, if you have not had instructions in these basics, you would do well to ask your pastor to set up a study on how to study your Bible using sound principles of interpretation or request information from www.biblicaldispensationalism.com.

There is one all important, pervasive rule to which we give lip service, but rarely apply consistently. That is, **The Rule of Centrality**, or what I like to call, **The Messianic Mindset**. Notice Luke 24:44-48:

Luk 24:44-48 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. (45) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And ye are witnesses of these things.

In this passage, the resurrected Christ was declaring His *centrality* to the scriptures. When the Lord Jesus said, “*In the volume of the book, it is written of me,*” He wasn’t barking at the moon. He was making one of the strongest points anyone needs to understand. Christ is central to the Word of God.

Now Samuel Clemens is credited with noting that “*Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it.*” I bear a similar challenge. Everyone talks about the centrality of Christ in Bible interpretation, but very few folks fully know and what it means to interpret the scriptures using Jesus Christ as their *Interpretive Key*. We all *think* we do, but far fewer believers really interpret the Scriptures with a Messianic paradigm understanding the role and ministry of Christ. In other words, we may be *passively* Christocentric, but we do not impose a Christological mindset into our interpretive process. We do not impose a Christological grid.

Let’s begin at the beginning. Let’s discuss what a grid is and why we need one. Then let show you how the apostles reasoned from a grid. Finally, we’ll impose a Christological grid.

1. What is a grid?

A grid is a mental framework or filter through which we view facts and decide their *relative importance*. Your mother and father served as a grid through which you interpreted the whole world. Though some of your values may have since changed, they served as your first filter. For example, to this day, I cannot play cards or poker, because my parents prejudiced my weighting process.

So, a grid is a context through which we view facts or reality. A more germane question follows:

2. Why do we need a grid?

a. To begin, understand that God has made us to function this way, even in the natural world. We would all go insane without filters. There is simply too much data coming at us from all directions for our brains to process all at once. We need some way to place value and importance on what we are processing. For example, you are experiencing many sensations even as you sit there. Even as you sit listening to a speaker, your filters are turned on.

b. In the logical realm grids or filters help us fix a proper bias. In a word, you are biased. I am biased. The Reformed Christian is biased. The Charismatic Christian is biased. The Dispensationalist is biased. It is in our natures to approach the scriptures with our preconceived notions.

1) The need outside Dispensationalism. Concerning the discussion at hand, we show our biases especially when there is an apparent conflict in interpretation. This is the great watershed between Reformed and Dispensational scholars. Dispensational scholars insist on taking the normal meaning of a word in the Bible at its face value. That is our bias. The allegorical interpreter feels that there are deeper, more spiritual, meanings beneath the literal word and that, sometimes, these deeper meanings can actually reverse the literal meanings! We dispensationalists will have no truck with such nonsense and are quick to point out to our Reformed brethren that this mindset is the cause of the wide field of disagreements within their own circles. Who is to say what the real meaning of a word is? Who is biased, and by what? Who isn't? The end result is that the mix of allegorical and literal interpretive methods have produced some strange bed children. We have Postmillennialists, Amillennialists, Partial Preterists, Consistent Preterists, and even Recapitulating Preterists. We have Limited Atonement folks and we have Universalists, where allegorism is imported into dispensational thought we have Mid-Trib Rapturists, Post Trib Rapturists, and even "Three Quarter Trib" Rapturists!

The irony is so observable when our Reformed brethren call over the backyard fence and suggest that we Dispensationalists are the ones who fragment the scriptures, and do so from one of their many camps! From the very moment the serpent first queried "Hath God said? the definition wars began, and the greatest tool in the definition war has always been allegorical interpretation. The upshot of it all is, whenever anyone mixes allegorical interpretation with literal interpretation it always results in a deadly mix of truth and error.

As an historical aside, from whence did this love affair with allegorism arise? This whole concept of introducing allegorical interpretation into the church was the result of early

church fathers who could not make up their minds about the literal statements of the Word of God. They saw an apparent contradiction between the words of Christ and the teachings of Paul. Their solution? Origin and Augustine began importing the worldly allegorical mindset (a Jewish practice imported from Greek philosophy through Philo) into Christianity. At first, Augustine limited allegorism to eschatology and ecclesiology. But ultimately it permeated all theology.

But what about those apparent contradictions between the gospels and Paul? Were they really contradictions at all? The answer is, absolutely not. These fathers had simply failed to impose biblical *interpretive grid* on the scriptures.

2.) The need within Dispensationalism. But what about you and me? What about those of us who *are* literal interpreters? Solid, dyed-in the wool Dispensationalists? Why do we need a grid? Why can't we just build our theology from the ground up, simply using literal statements?

In reality, this is what we have done, *for the most part*. Because we are so literalistic in our Bible interpretation, the end result is that we have absorbed a strong Christ-centered mentality in our interpretation. We have been told from our spiritual childhoods to "look for Christ," everywhere in scripture. In a real sense we have absorbed a Christological grid somewhat by osmosis. That is exactly why we are dispensationalists.

But here is the problem. While we may rightfully look across that backyard fence and smile at our pesky allegorical neighbors and their kaleidoscopic range of theological aberrations, our own skirts are not entirely clean. Be they ever so miniscule in contrast with our neighbors', our problems are nonetheless present, and they are worsening. We have among us classical dispensationalists, typical dispensationalists, revised dispensationalists, and now, a very serious threat – the progressive dispensationalists.

Please note that, in this pastor's mind the progressives should not be called dispensationalists because they do not share the core values of the other dispensationalists and, more importantly, because they have, again, opened the door to allegorical interpretation in their system.

The question is why? Why do we see this fragmentation in dispensational circles? If an absolute commitment to literal interpretation is the key to sound Bible interpretation, why are there problems among the literalists themselves. And, wherein lay our dispensational dilemmas? We have not presented a holistic, unified presentation of what a dispensation is, much less what Dispensationalism is. The time has come to clean up our own definitions. We recognize dispensations as periods of time during which God has tested men with respect to certain aspects of His will. We even talk much about stewardship. These are all things which have resulted from our literal system of interpretation. But what we have failed to do is to make Jesus Christ central to our system and our presentation. The end result is that, not even dispensationalists themselves can be absolutely sure what a dispensationalist is, though we seemingly have settled on a sine qua non of sorts.

Returning to the question, why? Why this fragmentation in dispensational circles? If an absolute commitment to literal interpretation is the key to sound Bible interpretation, why are

there problems among the literalists themselves? The problem is that literal interpretation in and of itself is insufficient. To begin, literal interpretation does not address the issue of weighting. Two literal statements may both be absolutely true. One of those statements may, however, may need to be considered ahead of the other statement. Context alone may not provide the answer. Secondly, even though there is only one interpretation of scripture, our biases (what Progressives sometimes call our “preunderstandings,”) may cause me to take a verse one way and cause someone else to take that same literal verse another way. This is why we need a grid, an interpretive grid. It removes much of the element of our personal biases. Of course, there can only be one biblically correct interpretive grid.

3. Consider how the apostles reasoned from grids or filters in general.

a. There are numerous *logical* grids throughout the Word of God. Logical grids have been under our noses all along. We have used them consistently in scripture. For example, Paul argues from the character of God the father when discussing our conduct in daily affairs. The Corinthians had apparently accused Paul of using carelessness or lightness in making a shallow commitment to come to them. See 2 Corinthians 1:17-24. Paul jumped on that quickly, reminding the Corinthians that as surely as the promises of God are “yes” and “no” so too, the word of the servant of God should reflect that transparency. Paul reasoned from the character of God.

Other illustrations of imposing a *Theological* grid would include broad portions of the pastoral epistles. Each time Paul calls for order in dress, in social relationships, and in ministry it is based on the orderliness which is found in God. We are to “adorn” – or order our lives in a way which reflects the Person whom we serve. 2 Timothy two makes these connections repeatedly. The instructions of verses 1-4 reflect the one God referenced in verse 5. The women who profess godliness (God-like-ness) will dress and behave appropriately. In all cases, behavior in the house or household of God is to reflect the Head of that house, (3:15.)

Paul uses a *Pneumatological* grid to establish a logical point in 1 Corinthians 12, a fact that some expositors miss. When Paul introduces the subject of spiritual gifts he begins by painting with the broad brush of spirit manifestations in general. Pneumatikos is a far broader word than many teachers acknowledge. It *can* be so generic as to refer to any spirit manifestation of any kind, as is the case in verse 1. When it is a Holy Spirit manifestation, however, we label it a spiritual gift. Paul argues concerning spirit manifestations that the Corinthians were originally led captive to dumb idols. The logical process then flows from that point. In contrast to those idols there is *one* Spirit. There may be many gifts, many administrations, and many energizings, but *all* of the gifts result from that *one* and selfsame Spirit. What are we to conclude? The gifts of the Spirit may be distinguished from the influences of false spirits because they all become that same Spirit. (That certainly is not observable in certain charismatic circles today!)

Paul uses a similar argument Ephesians 4 where we actually see Paul arguing logically from each of the separate persons of the Triunity. Why is it so vitally important for believers to walk in lowliness and meekness with all long-suffering, forbearing one another in love? The goal is to preserve the *unity* of the Spirit. There is one body, one Spirit, one calling, one Lord, one faith, etc. Our unity in behavior is a testimony to the *one God* we serve. Unity *becomes* the God we serve.

Scores of other instances of this logical process are probably coming to mind throughout the whole scope of apostolic teaching. However, it is necessary to extend our thinking an additional step.

b. There is only one *interpretive* grid. Notice that we are now expanding our discussion to understanding the whole program and plan of God. As it is progressively revealed in the Word of God we discover that Jesus Christ is not merely a logical starting point from which we may begin our reasoning, He is the divinely designated *interpretive* grid.

4. Consider how the scriptures make Christ the key interpretive grid.

a.) Christ is the starting point for all Bible interpretation.

The Person and program of Christ represent more than a logical starting point from which we deduce behavior and doctrine. He is the One through whom we *interpret* the whole plan and program of God. To establish this we must establish some non negotiable facts. Jesus Christ is absolutely central to God's plan and program on earth. He is the starting point of our theological disciplines, be they soteriology, eschatology, or any other "ology." When we begin correctly, we end correctly.

We do not *start* with dispensations and we do not *start* with covenants in developing our theology. We start with Christ. We start with a plan in the determinate counsel of God which purposed that Jesus Christ would be central to all. He would be the name under heaven whereby all must be saved, and all the events of history would consummate in Him. (Acts 2:22-23, 4:28).

This centrality extends far beyond His provision of Himself as a sacrifice at Calvary. One well known Baptist theology actually treats Christology as a subset of Soteriology! Of course, Christ is the centerpiece of the doctrine of salvation. Neither Reformed theology, heretical Catholic Theology, nor Charismatic theology would rob Christ of that. But, we speak concerning far more. We are talking about an all pervasive preeminence in our thinking and teaching which extends far beyond the cross. Rome would leave Christ at the cross at worst, or at the beck and call of His mother at best. Many allegorical thinkers are also guilty of robbing Christ of what is rightfully his, as we shall soon see. Jesus Christ is not merely the one through whom we go to the Father for salvation. He is the one through whom we go to the Father, period.

b. This point is not universally accepted.

1.) There is an ongoing historical record of those who object to such a pragmatic or experimental assertion of Christ's centrality. There is both a spoken and unspoken fear in certain Reformed circles that we have become too *Christocentric!*

Note: It is this person's opinion that the beginning of this tendency to relegate Christ to a more utilitarian role began with Augustine, and is systemic to both Reformed and Romish thought alike, as both claim him as their progenitor.

2.) Some of the hesitancy to seat Christ properly at the center of our theological thought is the result of a natural fear of robbing the other members of the Triunity of what is rightfully theirs. A while ago I was approached by a woman who had just learned this truth about the centrality of Christ from another teacher. Though she was from a sound evangelical background, she had never heard this truth expounded. She told me that the instant she heard it she knew it to be true and she embraced it. She had concerns, however, that she would somehow dishonor the Father by holding such a view. I first explained to her that the members of the Triunity were not only co-equal and co-substantial, but that they each saw their work as conjunctive. All of God does all that God does. Each member of the Triunity claims credit for what the other members do. Each member, for example, participated in Creation. There can be no competition between the members of the Godhood as all are perfect, equal, and one.

Jesus Christ, Himself, relieved us of this concern with some very pointed statements in John 14. Verses 10 through 18 are especially clear. To know any member is to know all. To know the Son is to fully know the Father. The “other” Paraclete whom Jesus will send, the Holy Spirit, is another of *exactly the same kind* (Greek *allos*) as Himself.

A number of years ago a young man approached Dr. Harry Ironside confessing the fear that he might be sinning by loving his wife too much. Ironside queried, “Do you love her as much as Christ loved the church?” He answered no. Ironside then told him he had nothing to fear until he had at least reached that point! Similarly, one cannot love Christ too much or make Him too central. To make Christ central in our thinking and in our living is the most God honoring thing we can do.

Returning to our line of thought:

5. Consider what happens when we make Christ central to our interpretive thought.

The scriptures not only assert the centrality of Christ, they impose that centrality as an interpretive grid. Question: What happens when we impose a Christological grid on our *thinking* and interpretation? Answer: The facts of scripture begin organizing and prioritizing themselves. The need for human creativity is removed and our tendency toward bias is diminished.

Time precludes our ability to offer more than just a few grand principles which will help us *calibrate* our new Christological grid. Consider these four grand concepts, noting how these kingpins anchor us in Christ, and how each impacts how we look at the Bible and interpret it. Consider the purpose of God, the promises of God, the power of God, and the people of God.

a. Christ’s centrality to God’s purpose. Be assured that a theocentric theologian will be pleased to camp on the eternal, determinate counsel with its decrees in eternity past (Acts 2:22-23, 4:28), and we would not forbid him that privilege, though we may not build a lapsarian scheme from our deliberations. The Christological theologian, however will not simply camp on the purpose of God in general, he will make it indelibly clear that this purpose is manifest *only* in and through Christ. Notice the perfect balance of Ephesians 1:8-11:

Eph 1:8-11 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which

he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

The mystery of God's will and purpose (purposed in His own triune Godhood was to gather together in one all things in Christ, and by all things we mean *all* things. In Christ alone we are inheritors of this divine purposing.

Of course, we are only sampling verses here, but if we are to take anything at all from this we must understand that the purpose of God can only be seen in the Person and plan and program of Christ. Therefore, we must always, always, always, begin with the Person, plan and program of Christ in determining our world view. He is not an add-on. He is central to the plan. Do not give lip service to this concept. Use the centrality of Christ as your compass!

b. Christ's centrality to God's promises. In an effort to help my students formulate and broaden their world view I systematically repeat what we humorously call, the "Steeline Mantra" (This is not an eastern chant, but a catechetical expression of a core world view). Each phrase in this mantra is a whole theme in itself. We are using it only for illustrative purposes here. The mantra goes this way:

God exists as a Triunity. He is unique, holy, and entirely separate from His creation. He is unchanging. He has chosen to create men and to communicate with us. Because He is holy and unchanging we may rightfully believe that His communication with us will be both understandable and unchanging. In these things, God is separate from all the imagined gods of men. God has further chosen to communicate His purpose to us through His word and His promises. No man has ever approached God except through a promise. The promises of God are made in general to men and their seed or their households. The great foundational promises of God are called covenants. Because these covenants are made to men and their seed or households over time, they often require administrations or stewardships. Ultimately, all of the promises of God consummate in one Man, Jesus Christ

Scripture is nothing more than a grand network of promises, promises made to and for and by Jesus Christ. Though it goes far beyond the scope of this endeavor, the listener would be well advised to understand that there is a framework behind those seed promises. We are not talking about the kind of seeds Oral Roberts and his gang sow. Those are wild oats. We are talking about a far more profound concept.

This is far more *foundational*. The seed promises of Genesis become gargantuan as they are expanded through Abraham all the way to the One Seed, Jesus Christ. As an aside I would like to suggest that you look closely at the Greek word *foundation*. When we consider all those things which have been determined from the foundation of the world there is a word picture behind it. It is as to do with the seeding of God's plan and program; the "casting down" as in reproductive seed. This program of God is rich and profound and its backbone is in the promises of God made to and through seed.

Most importantly, all of the promises of God consummate in Christ. I am here to remind you that if you are saved today it is because you are resting on the promises of God. I am here today to tell you that if you are victorious in your Christian walk, it is because you have appropriated the promises of God, not because you have raised yourself to some level of performance. I am here to tell you, unbeliever, that your damnation will rest, just as Israel's did, you failed to appropriate the promise of God.

Furthermore, I am here to remind us every one, that the ministry of Christ, is far better than any other ministry because it is based on better promises, (Hebrews 8:6).

Now, how does this relate to Christological interpretive grid? Let me provide one small illustration. The sine qua non of Dispensationalism is not the separation of the church and Israel. I repeat, the sine qua non of Dispensationalism is NOT the separation of the church and Israel. As important as that fact is, it is merely the product, the by-product of the true sine qua non. What makes Dispensationalism tick are the promises of God made to and through Jesus Christ. For example, when you join Augustine and his buddies and reject the millennium you are robbing Jesus Christ of the promises made by God directly to Him! You have not simply disenfranchised Israel, you have stolen from Christ what was promised to Him.

At the risk of being misunderstood, I am not nearly as concerned about the promises which God made to Israel, (as important as they are) as I am concerned about the promises God made to His Messiah Son. To which of the angels said He at any time "Sit here until I make your enemies your footstool!""?? According to my Bible, Jesus Christ is sitting right now at the right hand of the Father, *waiting* until His enemies are made His footstool! (Heb. 10:13.).

Jesus Christ is the reason you are a Dispensationalist! Don't let these pipe smoking, beard stroking professors with their horn rimmed glasses lead you down some theological labyrinth! Stand up and speak up for what rightfully belongs to your Savior and Lord! That can *only* happen in Dispensationalism, because only in Dispensationalism is the Person of Jesus Christ the key to interpreting the Bible.

c. Christ's centrality to God's power. The *authority* war is the ultimate war. The late Dr. Henry Morris treats this well in The Long War Against God. Renald Showers has also done some skillful work in bringing the reality of this war down to show leather. Jesus Christ is the focal point in this *authority* war. You already know that Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. If you have used your concordance you already know that Jesus Christ asserts both kinds of power represented by the Greek *dunamis* and *exousia*. That is, He clearly has both the ability and the authority given to Him by the Father. In fact all ability and authority is given unto Him. But, frankly, to end our discussion here would leave us with a very myopic perception of Christ's power.

There is more to this discussion of power than what first meets the eye. I suggest that you scan those passages of scripture (such as Matt. 24:30; 26:61, Mark 9:1 and a plethora of other passages) which deal with the return of Christ to set up His kingdom. And while you are reading these verses, notice the dominant word used time and again. Our Messiah is going to return with power and glory. And such power that will be!

Ah, one may say, "That's all well and good. I too am looking forward to that great day when Christ returns in power." But what about right now? What is Jesus Christ doing at this very moment? Listen as Paul speaks concerning this dispensation, this stewardship during which we minister: I am reading from Ephesians 3: beginning in verse 2:

Eph 3:2-11 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: (3) How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (5) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; (6) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: (7) Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. (8) Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (9) And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (11) According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

This program and plan of Jesus Christ is far greater than any one of us, or any one group of Christians. There is a grand display going on and *you* are invited to the fray! Jesus Christ is the focal point of this power struggle and we are engaged with Him.

Again, how does this relate to our Christological grid? How does making Jesus Christ central in this power struggle affect our theology in any way? How does it change our mindsets?

One example is the book of Revelation. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is a Revelation first, of Himself. Secondly, it is a peek inside the power struggle. It is a record of how this great contest will consummate. This little book is pregnant with facts and figures and mega descriptions beyond the comprehension of our greatest thinkers. But the book contains more than that. From the moment our Kinsman Redeemer reaches out to take that scroll from the hand of the Father, heaven comes alive, and history moves into fast forward as our Kinsman Redeemer executes the closing of escrow. This book is about Christ and Christ alone!

And then an army of novelists come along and popularize the events of this book around a romance! Another sensationalist focuses all our attention on biological implants which supposedly will result in the Mark of the Beast. There are no threads! There is no continuity! There is only a montage of human creativity imposed on one of the most engaging presentations of Jesus Christ in the entire Bible. These men behave at times like trifling children trying to tune a sequentially injected engine.

And what is the upshot? Only in Dispensationalism is Jesus Christ given His rightful place in prophecy. Non dispensationalists may well sing the doxologies of Revelation with great worshipful intensity, but foolish prognostications have stripped him of all the backdrop behind those marvelous songs of worship.

Jesus Christ alone is the *key* to unlocking the secrets of Revelation! It is a sad experience to walk the isles of a Christian college's library and to see how few books there are which begin and end with Jesus Christ! Or worse, let me ask you, when was the last time you heard a red hot sermon on the return of Christ? I speak as an old man, but my heart longs for the days when our pulpits breathed the kind of fire and passion which is bred only in the hearts of men who embrace the program of Christ! I promise you, you will not hear those kinds of messages among the seeker crowd because they serve an emasculated, feminized, utilitarian Messiah.

d. Christ's centrality to God's people. We will defer the complex question of whether there are one or two peoples of God until a later point. It is worthy of far more than closing remarks. We must end, however, with at least one passage torn literally out of Colossians 1, beginning with verse 15:

Col 1:15-18 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (16) For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (17) And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (18) And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

This One who is before all things has done the most remarkable of all things. This great Victor redeemed you by His blood, made you a new creation – a showcase of grace to flaunt in front of the demon world, but that is just the beginning. In the process of administering His New Covenant, He has chosen to administer its first phase *through you personally!* In the absence of Christ physically, He has chosen to work through *you!* Look at verses 26 and 27:

Col 1:26-27 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: (27) To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Christ in you, the hope of glory! You are not some mere pawn playing out a short bit in a great performance. Life is not some "short and fevered rehearsal for a concert we cannot stay to give," as Tozer announces (in an entirely different context). Though life is certainly short and fevered, it is no rehearsal. You are integral to far more than a concert and it is already going on. And you are a key player because Christ is working in and through you.

Only in Dispensationalism does the immensity of what Christ is doing descend upon us. We are His body, His hands, His feet, His mouth. No Old Testament saint could boast of such a thing. And, no Millennial saint will boast of such a thing. I did not say we are better than either group, I do say we have the gravest and most electrifying of all responsibilities. We are not simply the Army! We are the body of the living Christ!

In conclusion. Jesus Christ is the missing element in our hermeneutics and systematic theologies, not because He is not mentioned in those disciplines, but because He is not truly central to them. Making Jesus Christ central to one's interpretive paradigm is a lifelong process which produces lifelong rewards! In Christ alone, we can avoid the pitfalls of theological extremism, and find our place and role in the march of time. He is worth the pursuit.