

The Summit Statement on Dispensational Hermeneutics

September 2008

The affirmations and denials cited below are issued by the first meeting of the Council on Dispensational Hermeneutics. They are intended as preliminary statements for further exploration and not necessarily as the final word. The name of the statement is derived from the location of the Council at Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. The individual statements below are limited to the topics chosen for discussion at this particular meeting.

Affirmations and denials in two areas that were discussed (the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament and the New Covenant) were tabled until later meetings. The next meeting may be dedicated strictly to the topic of the New Covenant.

Hyperbole and Poetry in Prophecy

Article 1

We affirm that hyperbole is a legitimate figure of speech that uses exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis or impact.

We deny that the presence of hyperbole or other literary devices removes referential meaning from the text.

Article 2

We affirm that the presence of hyperbole or other literary devices does not hinder the clarity of the author's intended meaning for the original audience.

We deny that modern linguistic theory governs our understanding of meaning in prophetic and poetic literature.

Extended Metaphors

The statements below assume the following definitions:

A metaphor is a verbal representation of one thing (the "subject") as another (the "image") where strict identity is impossible.

An extended metaphor is the use of a series of metaphors or a metaphor with multiple facets of comparison developed in a sequence of related statements.

Article 3

We affirm that an extended metaphor is a legitimate figure of speech (used in multiple genres) when it can be determined contextually that the author intended it to be understood as such.

We deny that texts should be treated as extended metaphor apart from the presence of a series of metaphors or a metaphor with multiple facets of comparison.

Article 4

We affirm that all metaphors (including extended metaphors) must point to specific, textually-identified referents.

We deny that extended metaphors may be used to explain texts on the basis of non-textual subjects.

Implicitly Conditional Prophecy

Article 5

We affirm that implicitly conditional prophecy exists in Scripture only where contextual markers indicate conditionality as the intent of the author.

We deny that most prophecy is implicitly conditional. Implicitly conditional prophecy is the exception to usual prophetic utterance.

Article 6

We affirm that the prophets often intended to elicit a response in the hearer or reader, but we further affirm that God directed the human authors to prophesy that which He has determined will come to pass.

Article 7

We affirm that the literal fulfillment of prophecy throughout the Old Testament and in the life of the Savior guarantees the same pattern of literal fulfillment in the prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

Speech Act Theory

Article 8

We affirm that speech act theory imposes a philosophical-linguistic system on the Bible that seems to be incompatible with traditional grammatical-historical principles of interpretation.

We deny any use of the category of illocution that locates the basis of meaning in the reader and not the author. We further deny any appeal to the use of illocution as a means of de-historicizing the text.

We deny that the categories of speech act theory are an improvement over traditional categories of grammatical-historical interpretation.