

the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader. . . .

"There are many reasons given by dispensationalists to support this hermeneutical principle of literal, normal, or plain interpretation. At least three are worthy of mention at this point.

Philosophically, the propose of language itself seems to require literal interpretation If God be the originator of language and if the chief purpose of originating it is to convey His message to man, then it must follow that . . . He would use language and expect man to use it in its literal, normal, and plain sense.

A second reason why dispensationalists believe in the literal principle is a Biblical one. It is simply this: the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ -- his birth, His rearing, His ministry, His death, His resurrection -- were all fulfilled literally This argues strongly for the literal method.

A third reason is a logical one. If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation, all objectivity is lost. . .

Of course, literal interpretation is not the exclusive property of dispensationalists. Most conservatives would agree with what has just been said. What, then, is the difference between the dispensationalists' use of this hermeneutical principle and the nondispensationalists'? The difference lies in the fact that the dispensationalist claims to use the normal principle of interpretation consistently in all his study of the Bible. He further claims that the nondispensationalist does not use the principle everywhere. He admits that the nondispensationalist is a literalist in much of his interpretation of the Scripture, but charges him with allegorizing or spiritualizing when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy. The dispensationalist claims to be consistent in his use of this principle, and he accuses the nondispensationalist of being inconsistent in his use of it.

Of course there are nondispensational premillennialists. But these men, like the amillennialist, do not apply the literal principle consistently. They apply it more extensively than the amillennialist but not so extensively as the dispensationalist. . . .

. . . consistent literalism is the basis for dispensationalism, and since consistent literalism is the logical and obvious principle of interpretation, dispensationalism is more than justified. it is only the adjusting or adding to the principle of literal interpretation that dispensationalism is avoided."

-- Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 56-59, 91, 97.

4. Oswald T. Allis

"One of the most marked features of Premillennialism in all its forms is the emphasis which it places on the literal interpretation of Scripture

There are at least three reasons why a thoroughly literal interpretation of Scripture is impossible:

- (1) The language of the Bible often contains figures of speech. . . .
- (2) The great theme of the Bible is, God and His redemptive dealings with mankind. God is a Spirit; the most precious teachings of the Bible