

I. PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM

A. "Premillennial Dispensationalism" is a very influential movement ("Left Behind," books etc.)

1. Premillennial Dispensationalism is one of the three main eschatological schools

- a. "Pre" means "before"—Christ's Coming will be *before* Christ's literal 1,000 year reign on earth.
- b. "Millennialism" refers to a teaching of a more or less literal 1,000 year future kingdom on earth.
- c. Dispensationalism is the teaching of "dispensations." A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the will of God" (C.I. Scofield).
- d. According to Dispensationalism there are seven dispensations: innocence, conscience, civil government, promise, law, grace and the [future] millennium. In each of these periods God deals differently with mankind and offers him salvation on different terms.

2. We are more interested in the eschatology of Dispensationalism but we should notice several key principles of Dispensationalism belief.

- a. There is an absolute separation between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church. Israel is God's "Kingdom people." Israel has different promises than the Church, and these promises will be fulfilled in a future earthly kingdom during the Millennium.
- b. The Kingdom of God was postponed because, although it was offered to Israel, it was rejected. Therefore, in the interim period (the age of grace) God saves the church, but will return to Israel.
- c. All Old Testament prophecy must be taken literally. Thus, the promises to Abraham about the land, the rebuilding of the temple, the restoration of David's kingdom, etc., must all be fulfilled.

B. A "timeline" of Dispensationalism (there are various forms but this is the most popular version)

1. The Second Coming of Christ is "imminent" and will not be preceded by signs [secret rapture]

- a. The signs of the times in Matthew 24, etc., are not signs for Christians but for Israel in the future.
- b. Therefore, Christ could come any moment and will come without any warning in the *rapture*.
- c. This Coming of Christ will be invisible and silent: Christ will come to take away His saints, and no-one will hear or see Him, and all Christians on earth will disappear (I Thess. 4:17).
- d. All Christians who have died will be *resurrected* and all living Christians will be glorified. Also at this point there will be the first *judgment* [The first resurrection and judgment of saints].

2. After the "rapture" history will continue for those "left behind" [Tribulation]

- a. This period is known as the "Tribulation" and lasts seven years (and can be divided into the Tribulation and the "Great Tribulation" (each lasting 3 ½ years).
- b. During this time (perhaps even before it) Israel will be restored, the temple will be rebuilt and there will be a [short] period of peace for Israel before Antichrist rises up against Israel. Antichrist will pretend to be Israel's ally, will sign a peace treaty with her but will then break it.
- c. During the Tribulation, Israel will suffer terribly, because the Antichrist will persecute Israel and the "tribulation saints" (those who are converted during this 7 year period). Antichrist will sit in the temple proclaiming to be God, and will destroy the temple. But, notice that *the church will not suffer, because the church will not be on earth*.

3. At the end of the seven years of Tribulation Christ will return (this time He will do so visibly).

- a. When Christ returns, the whole nation of Israel will see Him, accept Him, and be converted.
- b. At the Second Coming [the third coming] there will be the resurrection and judgment of OT believers [second resurrection and second judgment]. The OT saints will enter heaven.
- c. Believers who died during the Tribulation (the "tribulation saints") and the surviving Israelites and the "tribulation saints" will be judged [and resurrected].
- d. Those accounted worthy will enter the Millennial Kingdom of Christ; but the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be cast into the lake of fire.

4. The Millennium will be a literal 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

- a. This Millennium is necessary because many of the promises to Israel in the OT have not yet been [literally] fulfilled. Therefore, the Millennium is the time when these promises *must* be fulfilled.

- b. During the Millennium Jesus Christ will rule from a literal throne in a literal Jerusalem, and the Jews and “tribulation saints” will rule with Him on earth.
- c. During the Millennium there will be peace, prosperity, long life, a restored temple with animal sacrifices, the keeping of OT feasts, and the subjugation of the Gentiles who remain on earth. This peace and prosperity are possible because Satan is loosed and Jesus Christ rules.
- d. At the end of the Millennium Satan shall be loosed, and he shall launch one final attack on Christ and His Kingdom. He shall gather a huge army at Armageddon which Jesus shall destroy.
- e. At the end of the Millennium there shall be the resurrection and judgment of the wicked and the final damnation of the wicked and of Satan himself.

II. A Critique of Premillennial Dispensationalism [Part 1]

A. Dispensationalism errs when it separates Israel from the church and makes them “two peoples.”

1. The Bible is very clear that God only has one people throughout history.

- a. Galatians 3-4 teach that OT Israel was the same people as the NT people of God, except that OT Israel was under the law as a schoolmaster (3:24-4:7).
- b. Romans 11 teaches that Israel and the NT church are part of one olive tree (vv. 17-24)
- c. Many passages in the NT teach that NT Gentiles are children of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ, and that therefore Abraham (and all OT believers) trusted in Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7-9, 16, 29; 4:28, 31; Heb. 11:26).
- d. The Bible gives the NT Church the names of OT Israel: Ex. 19:5-6 (cf. I Peter 2:9) and the NT teaches the union in one body [the church] of Jews and Gentiles (John 10:16; Eph. 2:19-20, 3:6).

2. OT prophecy must be interpreted in light of the NT: the NT makes clear that the OT promises to Israel are fulfilled in a spiritual manner to the church (of Jews and Gentiles).

- a. This does not mean that Israel is replaced by the church but that Israel matures into the church.
- b. OT Israel was a child, living under types and shadows. The OT can be compared to a picture book for children. Spiritual realities were explained to OT saints in terms of physical things, e.g. the land of Canaan, the temple, sacrifices, earthly peace and prosperity *are fulfilled spiritually*.
- c. How would an OT believer living under types and shadows understand the concept of God dwelling with His people? The temple! How would he understand the concept of Jews and Gentiles becoming one? The Gentiles keeping the OT feasts and coming to the temple in Jerusalem! How would an OT believer understand the riches of spiritual blessings? In terms of earthly peace, long life, abundant harvests, etc.
- d. This is exactly how the NT interprets the OT: Amos 9:11-15 is fulfilled [spiritually, not literally] in Acts 15:13-18. Hosea 1:10-11 is fulfilled in Romans 9:23-26 and I Peter 2:10. These are keys.
- e. Dispensationalism says that the church was utterly unknown (a mystery) in the OT: but that is not true. The church as a body of Jews and Gentiles was *only partially revealed* (Eph. 3:1-6)

B. Dispensationalism completely misunderstands the nature of God’s promise and kingdom.

1. Dispensationalism bases its scheme on God’s promise to give the land to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:7, 13:14-17, 15:18, 17:8, 24:7, 28:4, 13)

- a. Notice, first, that the promise was to Abraham but he did not personally receive it (Acts 7:5).
- b. Notice, second, that the promise was to the Seed of Abraham which is Christ (Gal. 3:16).
- c. Notice, third, that the NT interprets the land promise as Abraham inheriting the world (Rom. 4:13), that the hope of the OT saints was for a heavenly land (Heb. 11:9, 13-16), and that the Jerusalem we seek is heavenly, not earthly (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2, 9, 10-14).

2. Dispensationalism makes a huge mistake when it teaches the postponement of the kingdom.

- a. The kingdom of God or of heaven is not an earthly kingdom for the Jews: the disciples and many Jews misunderstood the nature of the kingdom: it is a spiritual kingdom with spiritual blessings (John 18:36; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 15:50; Col. 1:13, 4:11; I Thess. 2:11; II Tim. 4:18).
- b. Jesus did not *offer* the kingdom to the Jews; the opposite is true (John 6:15)
- c. And most serious: *if* Jesus had offered the kingdom to the Jews, and they had accepted it, how would He have been crucified? *Next time, further critique of Dispensationalism.*