

I. A CRITIQUE OF PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM (continued)

A. Introduction and review

- 1. Premillennial Dispensationalism teaches an absolute separation between Israel and the church.**
 - a. God makes many promises to Israel which have not been [literally] fulfilled: they will be fulfilled in a future earthly Millennium.
 - b. The church are a spiritual people with heavenly promises; Israel is an earthly people with the promise of an earthly kingdom.
 - c. The church will be taken out of the way at the secret rapture.
- 2. Premillennial Dispensationalism is characterized by multiple comings, resurrections and judgments.**
 - a. There will be two future comings of Christ: the rapture [secret] and the revelation [visible].
 - b. There will be [at least] two future resurrections: of the righteous and of the wicked.
 - c. There will be [at least] two future judgments: of the righteous and of the wicked.

B. Premillennial Dispensationalism has a distinctive interpretation of Revelation 20.

- 1. Where possible everything is taken literally**
 - a. At the end of chapter 19, the Beast and false prophet [Antichrist] will be cast into hell (v. 20). Revelation 20 follows chronologically after Revelation 19. “And I saw” (20:1) means “then.”
 - b. Satan will literally be bound for 1,000 years, during which time he will have no influence on the earth at all. This interpretation overlooks the explanation of Satan’s binding in 20:3, 8.
 - c. With Satan absent, Christ will rule *on the earth* with the tribulation saints. This overlooks the fact that “souls” reigned on thrones, and thrones are not said to be on earth (20:4).
- 2. The other details of the Millennium are taken from OT prophecy, not the NT**
 - a. Rev. 20 does not say that the saints lived and reigned with Christ 1,000 years in Jerusalem.
 - b. Rev. 20 certainly does not teach that the temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt *and used for sacrifice*.
 - c. Revelation does not describe the living and reigning with Christ in terms of long life, earthly prosperity, worldwide peace, etc.

II. VARIOUS OTHER PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

A. The Rapture

- 1. The “classic passage” on the secret rapture is I Thessalonians 4:13-18**
 - a. I Thess. 4 answers the question: what will happen to those who died before Jesus returns?
 - b. The answer is that when Christ returns He will raise His people from the dead and at the same time transform the living saints so that they all meet Him together when Christ comes.
 - c. There is nothing silent in the Coming of Christ here (“shout,” “voice” and “trump”). And there is nothing here to suggest that Jesus will come halfway and turn back, and return seven years later.
 - d. In fact, verse 17 says, “And so shall we be ever with the Lord.” But the rapture teaching is that after seven years, Christ will leave heaven to rule on the earth [without the church].
- 2. Another passage is Matthew 24:40 (“The one shall be taken and the other left”).**
 - a. There is nothing here about a secret rapture; and this separation of believer and unbeliever happens after the tribulation (vv. 21, 29).
 - b. And, in fact, the one taken shall be taken in judgment; the one left shall be saved (that fits with the context of Noah’s Flood, v. 39, which “took away” the wicked and “left” Noah).
- 3. A third group of passages (such as Matt. 24:43) likens Christ to a thief in the night.**
 - a. The idea is that Christ will come secretly and snatch away the Christians as a thief steals at night.
 - b. But, again, the context does not fit a secret rapture. This happens after the tribulation (vv. 21, 29)
 - c. Compare other passages which describe Christ’s Coming as a thief: it is not silent or secret (I Thess. 5:2-5; II Peter 3:10 [“the heavens shall pass away with a great noise”]). The idea is not of secrecy, but of *sudden loss* which comes upon the wicked when Christ comes in judgment.
- 4. A fourth group of passages promises deliverance of the church from wrath.**

- a. I Thess. 1:10 and 5:9 teach that Christians are not appointed to wrath. The Dispensationalists expect, therefore, that no Christians will be on earth when God pours out His wrath during the great tribulation. One emotional argument: "Christ will not beat up on His bride!"
- b. But, these passages do not promise Christians an escape from tribulation, persecution and other suffering. Why did God not rapture believers in the Roman Empire, Reformation, etc? In fact, the Bible warns that tribulation will be the lot of God's people (Acts 14:22; II Tim. 3:12).
- c. Revelation 3:10 does not promise to remove the church from the earth. It promises preservation *in* persecution not exemption *from* it (John 17:15).
- d. We must not expect to avoid suffering for Christ's sake. Instead, we must expect tribulation, be ready for tribulation, rejoice in tribulation and be assured that tribulation will not separate us from Christ (Rom. 5:3-5, 8:35-39).

B. The "lost week" of Daniel's "Seventy Weeks."

1. Daniel 9:24-26 are key to Premillennial Dispensationalism. Here is their interpretation

- a. First, the 70 weeks (lit. "seventy sevens" [see Deut. 16:9]) are 70 weeks of years 490 years. In this time period of 490 years all the things mentioned in v. 24 will happen.
- b. Second, the period of 70 weeks (490 years) is divided into 7 weeks and 62 weeks (69 weeks). That will be measured from the restoration of Jerusalem [ruined in Daniel's day] "unto Messiah the prince." But where is the 70th week: that week is key to the whole scheme!
- c. Third, the 70th week does not occur immediately after the 69th week. There will be 7 weeks (rebuilding of Jerusalem), 62 weeks (until the coming of Christ). That makes 483 years but the last week has been postponed.
- d. Fourth, because the Jews rejected Jesus Christ the "prophetic clock" of Daniel 9 has stopped ticking, and God will restart prophetic history after the rapture. Into the "gap" between the 69th and 70th week there is the church age which was unknown to Daniel.
- e. Fifth, the 70th week will be a 7 year period in the future in which Antichrist will rise up, make a peace treaty with Israel, defile [a future rebuilt] temple and end the sacrifices in that temple.

2. Our understanding of Daniel 9 is very different

- a. First, we do not take the passage literally, because it is a vision. Visions contain symbolic numbers (7, 10, 70x7, etc). But, remember that the Dispensationalists do not take this literally. Seventy sevens is *not literally* 490 years but 490 *days*.
- b. Second, since we do not take the passage literally, we do not try to use the numbers to calculate the years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to Christ's Coming. *That is not the point of Daniel 9!* The point of Daniel 9 is assure Daniel that God's covenant will be fulfilled: 7x7x10 refers to the complete period of time acc. to God's eternal decree to establish God's covenant.
- c. Third, there is nothing to suggest a gap of 2,000 years between the 69th and 70th weeks. We take the vision to mean that within the 70 weeks salvation will be completely accomplished (v. 24).
- d. Fourth, "*he* shall confirm the covenant" (v. 27) does not refer to some future Antichrist who will make a peace treaty with Israel and then break it after 3 ½ years and destroy some future temple in Jerusalem [future to Zerubbabel's temple and Herod's temple] but to Jesus Christ Himself. By His death and resurrection He "will cause the sacrifice to cease" (which is the teaching of the entire book of Hebrews) and by His death He shall "confirm the [existing] covenant" of God.

C. A Premillennial Dispensational view of Revelation [literalism] does not fit the purpose of the book.

1. **The book of Rev. is *not to be read literally*: it is a book of symbols (1:1):** symbolic figures (the dragon, beast, lamb, woman, harlot, etc), symbolic places (Babylon, Armageddon, Jerusalem, etc), symbolic events (opening seals, blowing trumpets, etc) and symbolic numbers, (144,000, 1,000, etc).
2. **The events in the book of Rev. are *not to be taken in order of history*.** The events are cyclical and progressive: Repeatedly, we come to the end of history, and we go over the same history again from a different perspective and with increasing intensity (seals, trumpets, vials etc, 6:8, 8:7, 16:3)
3. **The point is not to give us detailed advanced history**, but to show us and the church of all ages that Christ's Kingdom shall prevail against the Kingdom of the devil. *Next, precursory signs (DV).*