

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Principles Unit 1
Foundations of Spiritual Growth
Week 7: Eschatology 1 - Covenantalism & Dispensationalism

Introduction

Eschatology:

"Covenantalism" and "Dispensationalism" refer to two different ways of interpreting the biblical record of salvation history.

Covenantal Theology

Covenant Theology: A system of theology focusing on God's covenants as governing categories for the understanding of the entire Bible. Covenantal theology tends to emphasize the *unity* of God's working with mankind.



- 1. The Covenant of Redemption (before creation):**
The Son's obligation: Promises the Father to render perfect obedience (unto death) for our sins.

The Father's obligation: Promises the Son to...
 - meet all of the Son's needs
 - give the Holy Spirit to the church
 - offer salvation all believers
 - exalt and glorify the Son
- 2. The Covenant of Works (from creation until the fall):**
Man's obligation: Adam must obey God's commands.

4. Promise (Genesis 12 -- Millennial Kingdom)

- God promises to bless Abraham and his descendants, and all nations through them.
- Jacob's sons apostatize and God brings them into slavery in Egypt.

5. Law (Exodus 20 -- Millennial Kingdom)

- God promises to grant Israel the promises he made to Moses conditional to their obedience to his Law.
- Israel apostatizes, undergoes exile and dispersion, and is finally purified through the Great Tribulation.

6. Grace or The Church Age (Pentecost -- Rapture)

- God temporarily suspends working through Israel as his chosen nation and offers to work through all believers in Jesus.
- The church apostasizes and is judged in the Great Tribulation after true believers are rescued through the Rapture.

7. Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20)

- God fulfills all of his promises to national Israel after the Second Coming of Jesus.
- Satan ignites a rebellion against Jesus, which God terminates and then judges all men at the Great White Throne.

Comments

- **Strengths:**

- **Weaknesses:**

Summary: At Xenos we do not agree with Classic (Scofieldian) Dispensationalism. We identify ourselves more with the progressive dispensationalist (Darell Bock. Christianity Today. September 12, 1994. p. 26-29.) We acknowledge the unity of God's working through history and through Israel, but we see a clear distinction between the Old and New Covenants that lead to the following key theological distinctions.

Key Theological Distinctions

1. How does the Covenantal-Dispensational view affect *Ecclesiology*?

Covenantal:

Dispensational:

2. How does the Covenantal-Dispensational view affect *Soteriology*?

Covenantal:

Dispensational:

3. How does the Covenantal-Dispensational view affect *Pneumatology*?

Covenantal:

Dispensational:

4. How does the Covenantal-Dispensational view affect *Eschatology*?

Covenantal:

Dispensational:

Key Millennial Kingdom Passages

Millennial Kingdom: a future period of human history in which God substantially reconciles the world to himself and reigns over the world through the Messiah and his people Israel.

(**Psa. 2:6,8,9**) I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. (8) Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. (9) You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.

(**Isa. 65:17-25**) "Behold, I will create **new heavens and a new earth**. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. (19) I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. (20) Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. (21) They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. (23) They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. (24) Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. (25) The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

(Zeph. 3:11-13) On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. (12) But I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the LORD. (13) The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid."

(Zech. 14:16-19) Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. (17) If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. (18) If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. (19) This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

(Rev. 20:1-10) And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for **a thousand years**, (3) and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. (4) I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**. (5) (The rest of the dead did not come to life **until the thousand years were ended**.) This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for **a thousand years**. (7) **When the thousand years are over**, Satan will be released from his prison (8) and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. (9) They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. (10) And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Old Testament unfulfilled promises to Israel . . .

Dispensationalism			
Covenantalism			

Millennial Views

AMILLENNIALISM (COVENANTAL)



Definition: There is no literal Millennial Kingdom. These predictions are fulfilled figuratively, either in the church or the eternal state. Evil will increase prior to Christ's Second Coming.

Role of Israel:

View of the Church (Romans 2:28,29; Philippians 3:3; Galatians 6:16):

Interpretation of "Kingdom" passages:

History:

POST-MILLENNIALISM (COVENANTAL)



Definition: The Church will progressively "Christianize" the world, ushering in a period of peace and prosperity before Christ's return. This is the so-called millennial kingdom, but it is not 1000 years and does not literally fulfill the Old Testament passages.

Role of Israel and the Church:

History:

CRITIQUE OF POST- & AMILLENNIALISM

1. Post- and amillennialism interpret the Old Testament prophecies of the first Advent *literally*, but they interpret the Old Testament prophecies of the second Advent *figuratively*.

(**Zech. 14:1-7**) Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. (2) For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. (3) Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. (4) And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem

on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. (5) And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! (6) And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. (7) For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

Dispensationalists: Interpret this as a literal Battle between God and earthly kingdoms when Christ returns (his second advent).

Allegorical Amillennial: This interpretation is represented by Matthew Henry's commentary on Zech. 14:1-7

(**Commentary, verse 2, 4, 5**) "Many of the Jews shall receive the gospel, and so shall prevent their being cut off from the city of God, his church upon earth... (4, 5) the Gentiles (will be) made one with the Jews by the breaking down of this middle wall of partition (Eph. 2:14). A great mountain of the ceremonial law was in the way of the Jews' conversion, yet before Christ and his gospel it was made plain... The mountain being divided, one-half towards the north and the other half towards the south, there shall be a very great valley (means) a broad way of communication between Jerusalem and the Gentile world, by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel... The valley of the mountains is the gospel-church, to which are added of the Jews daily such as should be saved..." (Matthew Henry, *1-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961], p. 1191).

2. Both the Old and New Testaments explicitly state that God will fulfill all of his promises to Israel.

Old Testament:

(**Jer. 31:31-37****) "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (32) It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. (33) "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (34) No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. (35) This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD Almighty is his name: (36) **"Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me."** (37) This is what the LORD says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD.

(**Isa. 54:9-17**) "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. (10) **Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not**

be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (11) "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. (12) I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. (13) All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children's peace. (14) In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. (15) If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you. (16) See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc; (17) no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.

See also Ezekiel 36:22-38; 37:1-14; 39:28,29; Joel 2:28-3:21.

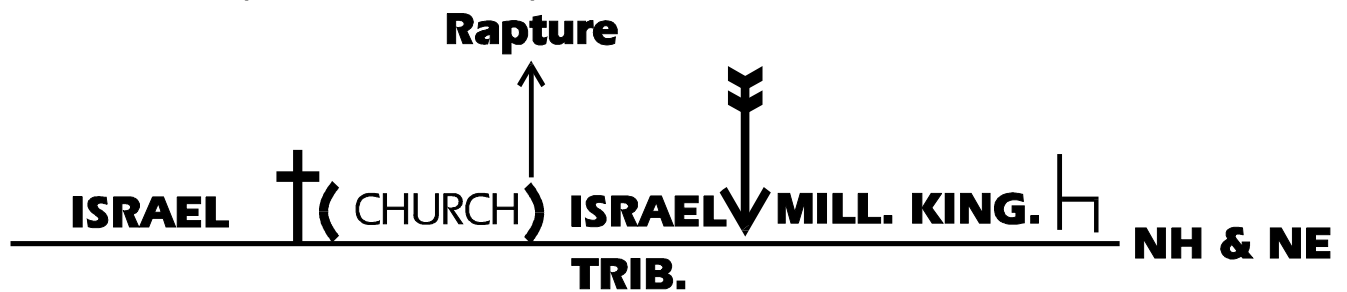
New Testament:

(Matt. 19:27,28) Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" (28) Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

(Rom. 9:3-5) For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. (4) Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. (5) Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!

(Romans 11:25-29*) I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, **for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.**

See also Matthew 24:20ff.; Luke 21:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:4ff; Revelation 7:3-8; 11:2.

PRE-MILLENNIAL (DISPENSATIONAL)

Definition: The predictions of the Millennial Kingdom will be literally fulfilled after Christ's Second Coming.

Role of Israel and the Church:

Interpretation of "Kingdom" passages:

History:

CRITIQUE OF PRE-MILLENNIAL (DISPENSATIONAL)

1. There are clear instances in which the New Testament authors say that the Church has received a spiritual fulfillment of promises originally intended for the nation of Israel. (Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:16ff.; Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Hebrews 10:16,17)

2. Premillennialists have difficulty presenting a consistent interpretation of all predictive prophecies.

3. Amillennialists hold that the millennium cannot be literal, since it involves animal sacrifice (see Ezekiel 40-48), which allegedly contradicts the argument of Hebrews.

Memory Verses

Jer. 31:31-37** - God's promise of the New Covenant for Israel (not just for the Church) will be fulfilled

Rom. 11:29* - God's promises to national Israel are irrevocable

Assignment

Read Dan. 2,7,8 and answer the following questions. How many kingdoms does Daniel predict?

What are the historical names of these kingdoms, according to the text? How do the visions in chapter 7 & 8 correlate to the vision in chapter 2? Read Dan. 9,11,12 (no written assignment for these chapters).

Finish reading the historical background material for Daniel.

Recommended Reading

Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958.

Walvoord, John F. *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*. Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1971.

Clouse, Robert G. (Ed.) *The Meaning of the Millennium*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977.