

Reformed Perspective Contra Dispensationalism: Chapters, 27 pgs
inspired by a sermon by Glen Riexinger

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INTRODUCTION

The search for TRUTH necessitates getting past appearances, moving through surface impressions and images to the underlying **realities** and the **substance** beneath. **If truth is worth searching and striving for, then it is worth pursuing in the right spirit and proper way** [see War...Reading and Discussing Scripture <http://pop.eradman.com/>]. The chief priests and Pharisees were quite content in

their prejudices; smug in their knowledge that no prophet could arise out of Galilee (**Jn.7:52**). They didn't bother to inquire further into the background of Jesus, though His birth in Bethlehem was a matter of public record (**Lk.2:1-7**) and His lineage as a descendant of David (**Lk.3:23-37; Mt.1:1-16**) could have been discovered. Had they inquired, they could have discovered that Joseph's family had moved to Nazareth when Jesus was a young boy (**Mt.2:13-23**). They could not entertain the prospect that the scriptures testify of Jesus (**Jn.5:39**). In other words, their hearts were hardened. **They were blocked from seeing the truth by the wickedness of their own hearts.** Therefore they acted out of smugness instead of humility, self-righteousness rather than faith. *The disingenuous heart seeks not the truth.*

1. THE BIBLE EXPRESSES CENTRAL REALITIES IN EVERY DAY LANGUAGE

God speaks to the core of what really matters. Jesus addresses the crowd's confusion about His earthly origin (**Jn.7:27**), not by correcting their misconceptions, but by speaking of His divine origin and mission (**v.28-29**). Some recognized His divine authority because of the signs He performed (**v.31**) and the words He spoke (**v.40-41a**). By not clearing up the wrong impressions over His earthly lineage and origin (**v.41b-43**), **Jesus maintained the deception and assumed the stigma associated with being a Galilean** (**v.52**) and a Nazarene (an insignificant village in Galilee nowhere mentioned in the OT synonymous with despised - **Mt.2:23; Jn.1:46**).

The Bible uses common every day language to cut to the chase, reveal the unseen nature of reality, and speak to the heart. For instance, John the Baptist heralds Messiahs coming by addressing the subject of an appropriate reception for Him (**Lk.3:4-6**). John uses the figurative language of road construction to call people to repentance. In **Jn.2:18-21** Jesus was referring to the temple of His body, not Herod's temple as the Jews thought; in **Jn.3:3-8** to *be born again* didn't mean physically climbing back into the womb, but that spiritual rebirth is required to change one's actual status and destiny from that of his natural life; In **Jn.4:10-15**, the water Jesus would give couldn't be drawn with a bucket; and what food Jesus was referring to in **Jn.4:31-34**? **Even the clearest and most detailed pictures** (**Rev.21:10-27**, description of the New Jerusalem) **are not themselves the realities**, but are meant to convey understanding of those realities: God dwelling with His people, the entire church (**21:3**). The whole Bible is like this [see RPCD **apdx.C**].

Apocalyptic writings are known to have definite characteristics, such as figurative language, imagery, numerology, hyperbole, and the like. Such symbols are used much in the same way a producer uses stage props and scenery. The important thing in watching a drama is not the props, but the message they help to portray. Metaphorical and parabolic language are not meant to be ends within themselves, but rather they are used as means to teach spiritual lessons and reveal truth to God's people.¹

The Bible is very much like **Magic Eyes** <http://www.magiceye.com/> which is a printed computer generated repeating-design pattern that deceives our sense of perspective. The pattern hidden within cannot be seen by focusing on the surface of the page. *The trick is to focus your vision at a focal point beyond, behind, beneath the surface of the picture until the hidden picture emerges before your eyes...The Magic Eye phenomenon provides a parable for Christian thinking about the*

world. *To see the pattern that counts, you have to focus beyond the surface, to see the deep realities not accessible to the casual observer.*²

¹. [Revelation Twenty - Introduction - William E. Cox], <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/full.asp?ID=167>. *An axiom of Bible study is that most sections demand literal interpretation unless the context or other known Scripture passages demand figurative or spiritual interpretation. In apocalyptic literature the very opposite is true*; here one must interpret figuratively, unless literal interpretation is absolutely demanded. The nature of such books as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation makes understanding impossible apart from an appreciation of the tools of the artist who painted the picture. [Cox; see *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, 1993, Patrick Fairbairn, **point 4, p.53-57**] Dispensationalism focuses on the picture as if it were the reality [see **apdx.F; p.147 Fairbairn**]. **Two fundamental rules for interpreting natural symbols in prophecy exemplify Cox's statements.**

A. The image must be contemplated in its broader and commoner aspects. [**p.143 Fairbairn**] Particulars and details define categories that encompass the point of those descriptions, and the spiritual realities are hidden within the statement of the categories [see **footnote a, apdx G**].

B. Prophetic symbols must be applied in a consistent and uniform manner ... *not shifting from the symbolical to the literal without apparent textual or reasonable cause.* [**p.145 Fairbairn**] See also booklet by **Harold Camping** [considered by many to be sound principles from which Camping himself departed] entitled First Principles of Bible Study, copyright 1986. **Chapter 3** elaborates on the principle that *the Bible ordinarily has more than one level of meaning ... the historical setting, the moral or spiritual teaching, the salvation account* (**p.39**). **The Gospel of grace and moral truths are woven through the fabric of factual historical accounts.**

². See p.49-50, *Triumph of the Lamb* by Dennis E. Johnson; see **apdx. F**

2. OLD TESTAMENT SHADOWS WERE MYSTERIES INTENDED TO FORESHADOW REALITIES CLEARLY PICTURED IN OUR DAY

God has spoken and dealt with mankind in such a way as to both hide and reveal unseen realities.³ *Why do you speak to them in parables?... Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given ... All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in **parables** ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.* (excerpts from **Mt.13**)

That God spoke with special clarity to Moses was an exception (**Num.12:8**) to the way He usually communicated with the prophets (**Num.12:6**). The prophets themselves had a difficult time grasping even the most basic things (**1 Pt.1:10-11**). What does the NT do with OT history, characters, structures, practices, events, and prophecies? **Hebrews 1** begins ... *but in these last days [our day]* God sent a messenger not like other prophets, **v.2**, but one who radiates His glory and exactly represents His reality (**v.3**). *He is the very image [icon, an exact picture as opposed to a sketch*

showing similarity] of **THE INVISIBLE GOD (Col.1:15)**. And, the person who sees Jesus, is looking at the Father (**Jn.14:7-11**).

Hebrews presses several arguments as to the superiority of Christ, His position and accomplishments over other bearers of Gods word (angels, Moses, etc.) in order to contrast the many OC forms, figures, shadows, and representative copies with the actual reality.⁴ Christ is seated with God in the heavens ... ministering in the true sanctuary of the actual tabernacle (**Heb.8:1-2**); Priests *serve a shadow and copy of the heavenly things* (**8:5**); Christ has entered into heaven itself - the true place, not the copy (**9:24**); *the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form [icon, picture, image] of these realities* (**10:1**). (see *No Little People*, by Francis Schaeffer, p.107-122) The physical structure of the earthly sanctuary and the furnishings, ordinances and services of the first (Old) Covenant (**Heb.9:1-7**) were temporary and symbolic (**v.9**) *until the time of reformation* (**v.10**). **The true way into Gods presence was not made known (v.8) until the NC was established (v.15)**. OT sacrifices were a pattern or illustration of what Christ was to do IN FACT (**Heb.9:23-24; 10:1**).

The OT hid spiritual realities in the shadow form of its language, both in terminology and in mixing them with immediate and distant circumstantial realities. Those OC institutions as a whole were meant to establish lines of continuity between the OC mysteries and NC revelations [*unveilings of those mysteries*].⁵ **The Bible reveals both the existence and the details of unseen realities in types and images** of various sorts.⁶ In other words, the institutions, commands, laws, and practices in the OT were clear and detailed in themselves, but were only shadowy precursors of the realities they represented. For example, **Israel** was a significant outline of what it meant to be the people of God, but not the reality. The **tabernacle** and **temple** were significant glimpses of the presence and worship of God, but they weren't heaven or a clear picture of the reality. **The true worship of the Father is a spiritual matter and occurs in the realm of truth** (**Jn.4:23**). The law, sacrifices, priesthood, deliverance from enemies, conquest of and prosperity in the land, judgments of God, etc., were all sketchy portrayals of realities later to be fully disclosed (**Col.2:16-17**) [see **apdx.F & I**]. The apostles used *the notices of patriarchal and Israelitish history as a kind of preparatory exhibition of the truths and revelations of the Gospel* (**Rom.4:4, 17; 1 Cor.10:1-11; Rev.4:1-6**, etc.).⁷

Believers under the OC had a sense of the realities underlying the knowledge they received. Abraham set his hope on dwelling with God (**Heb.11:10**), not the land he was wandering around in or a particular city. He comprehended more in Gods promises than Israel's borders described in the OT. In fact Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah all sought such a homeland (**Heb.11:13-16**). **They understood the ultimate reality to be that God was taking them to be His people forever** [see **apdx.J**]. This is much clearer now that Christ has come and we have a better covenant based on better promises (**Heb.8:6**). The realities to which the old institutions pointed are apparent today. What does the NT say? We Christians are living stones constructing a holy temple, a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices, a chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's special possession, and members of the household of God (**1 Pt.2:5, 9-10; Eph.2:19-22**). Restoration of the nation of Israel to the arid land of Canaan, rebuilding of the stone temple, reappointment of earthly priests and offering of animal sacrifices do not belong under the superior NC.

3. P.148 Fairbairn.

4. One aspect of the concept of the true involves the real, actual or genuine article as opposed to the type or designated symbol or representative that never lived up to its calling. Jesus is the true vine, true branch, true bread, true shepherd, true servant, true son, etc ... the truth.

5. ... *the antecedent history of redemption was the prelude of redemption itself.* p.33 Fairbairn

6. See further the **first chapter** of *The Israel of God* by O. Palmer Robertson

7. **P.32** Fairbairn

3. THE PROPHETS SPOKE OF OUR DAY

OT passages on the restoration/revival of Israel are coupled with statements about salvation coming to the Gentiles and are quoted in the NT as applying to this present age. **Isa.49:1-3** begins with a cry for all people to listen, followed by a description of Gods true servant, called here *Israel*.⁸ In **v.4** the servant speaks with discontent of his life's accomplishment and places his reward in God's hands. **V.5** reveals that the servants mission was to restore the people of Israel to God. God answers in **v.6** that restoring the tribes [*the few wandering descendants*] of Jacob is not enough. God gives his servant for salvation of all people. The servants identity becomes clear as God continues speaking, piling on the paradoxical images of Christ: redeemer and holy one of Israel; despised by all; servant and king of kings; worshiped; light to the Gentiles; God's salvation to the ends of the earth. In **v.8**, God is speaking to the nations of an acceptable time, **a day of salvation in which Christ is to be given as a covenant to the people to restore the earth**, not just the land of Canaan. **V.9-13** describe this new day as for all people, *come from afar*, and as comfort to God's people, having mercy on His afflicted.

In other words, **the restoration of Israel is connected to the coming of salvation to the Gentiles**. They are not treated as separate events or issues. This passage is applied to Paul's ministry of reconciliation in **2 Cor.5:17-19**. The apostles are ambassadors for Christ crying out to the world to receive the grace of God because **now** is that *acceptable time*⁹ - the *day of salvation* spoken of in **Isa.49**. Paul says **now** the servant of Jehovah is made the light of the nations, which means the spread of Christianity to all people is the restoration of the true Israel of God (**Gal.6: 16**). *For not all who are descended from Israel [the nation] belong to [Gods] Israel ... but the children of the promise [believers] are counted as offspring [heirs] (Rom.9:6-8). Only those [see apdx.C] who are of faith are sons of Abraham (Gal.3:7).*

Isa.54:1-3 occurs in the midst of a discussion about the restoration of Israel and follows **Isa.53**, which details the suffering of the servant of Jehovah. **V.1** brings good news of many children to the *desolate woman*. **V.2-3** speak of tremendous expansion, a multiplication of descendants. Without further comment, it would be easy to apply these verses strictly to the restoration of Israel as a nation. In **Gal.4:27** Paul quotes **Isa.54:1**, applying its fulfillment to the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The joy of *the barren one, the Jerusalem above, mother of us all* (**Gal.4:26**)

refer to the success of the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike, all of whom are **children of Abraham and heirs of the promises** by faith (4:28).

There are many examples of OT prophecies that are used to explain conditions in our day. In Acts 15, the counsel in Jerusalem was considering making it mandatory for all male Gentile Christian converts to be circumcised. The controversy was resolved by recounting the experiences of Peter at Cornelius house, and of Paul and Barnabas first missionary journey. James addressed the assembly and summarized the counsels opinion by quoting Amos 9:11-12 where God promised to use Israel as a witness, to raise up the Davidic Kingdom, to rebuild and restore Israel to the land. James used Amos 9 as a proof text for the inclusion of Gentiles in the church without requiring them to observe the ceremonial law.

Peter's perspective on the prophets after Pentecost and the conversion of thousands is that he is preaching what the prophets said (Acts 3:18) and that *all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days (3:24)*. Peter describes the period from Pentecost on as *the times of refreshing (3:19)*, the outpouring of God's Spirit (2:33). Of all these things the prophets spoke (Joel 2:28). Peter discusses Gods mercy in terms of an inheritance of salvation (1 Pt.1:3-5) that the prophets carefully looked into - to whom it was revealed that they were ministering, not to themselves, but to us the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven(1 Pt.1: 10-12).

When Paul teaches that Christians ought not to wed non-Christians (2 Cor.6:14), he argues that believers are set apart as the temple of the living God (v.16). He supports this by combining several OT passages *I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore Come out from among them and be separate ... Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters ... (16-17)*. What is Paul's conclusion - that these promises (prophecies) belonged to the Jews? No! They are ours. *Therefore, having these promises, beloved ... (7:1)*. This is the reason we can claim Gods promises to Israel for ourselves [see apdx.I].

⁸. Jesus is the true vine (Jn.15:1) meaning He is Gods planting (Ps.80; Isa.5), the Israel that is true and faithful.

⁹. The time had not yet arrived for the giving of the Gospel to the Gentiles when the Canaanite woman came to Jesus (Mt.15:21-28).

4. THE MOSAIC COVENANT, THE LAW, AND THE NATION OF ISRAEL UNDER THE LAW WAS A PARENTHESIS IN THE FLOW OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

Gods Covenant with the nation of Israel was intended to be temporary for the limited purpose of preparing people for the coming of Messiah through the demonstration of the righteousness of God in contrast to the extreme sinfulness of man. The following heavily edited excerpts make the point.

Works in the Mosaic Covenant: A Survey of Major Covenant Theologians by Lee Irons

Historic Reformed positions hold that there is a works aspect in the Mosaic administration, focused primarily on the Laws function as a pedagogue to lead Israel to Christ (**Gal.3:10-25**). The works principle in the Mosaic Covenant was not given so that the Israelites might achieve eternal life by it - the path to life via works being forever closed off to sinners after the fall - but **that God's people might despair of achieving eternal life by their own works**, and thus be shut up to faith in Christ as the only way of attaining justification and eternal life. As Paul teaches, the Law came 430 years after the Abrahamic Promise, and it was added in order to bring about covenant transgressions, thus functioning as a disciplinarian to lead Gods people to Christ. **The Law is there-fore a parenthesis in the plan of God** that is not at odds with the gracious purposes of the Promise, **for the Law was subservient to the Promise.**

WHERE WE PLACE THE PARENTHESIS

http://www.presenttruth.net/alcc/hidden_manna/where-we-place-parentheses.htm

Many conservative evangelicals in America still look to the nation of Israel for the future fulfillment of Bible prophecy. This thinking greatly affects our Middle East policy, where much of our national attention is currently directed. It also greatly affects how we read the Bible, pray, and view the future.

The theological foundation for looking to national Israel for future fulfillment of prophecy is found in **Dan.9:24-27**. Though most conservative Christians have not studied this passage, they build their thinking about Bible prophecy from presuppositions that come from it. **The key presupposition is this: There is a gap between the 69th and 70th week of Daniels prophecy** [see **apdx.K**]. The gap is known and taught as the church age that people have lived in since the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

According to the gap theory, Jesus came and offered the kingdom of God to the Jews, who rejected it. Therefore, at His resurrection, He instituted a parenthetical gap known as the church age. The church age will end with the rapture of the saints, and then the nation of Israel will receive the kingdom that Jesus originally offered. Thus, Bible prophecy will be fulfilled through the nation of Israel.

This line of thinking goes directly against the teachings of the NT apostles. The apostle Paul did teach a parenthetical gap, but that gap is not the church age. It is the age of the law of Moses. Paul explains,

*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to your Seed, who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise ... But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law ... Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, **that we might be***

justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor (the law) (Gal.3:16-18; 23-25).

Paul places the parentheses in time around the law of Moses, which was given to help God's covenant people develop a conscience that defines sin. The law *was added because of transgressions, till the Seed, Jesus, should come ... (Gal.3:19)*. Now that Christ has come, we are no longer under the tutelage of the law. The closing parenthesis was placed on that age with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. **It was finalized** with the fall of Jerusalem and final destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

Today, believers are no longer under the *guardians and stewards* of the law. All disciples of Jesus have received the full **adoption** as God's sons: *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father. (Gal.4:1-7)* The parenthetical gap of the law is closed. **With that parenthesis closed, national Israel no longer has any bearing on Bible prophecy.** There is no biblical difference between the nation of Israel and China, Russia, Germany, Iraq, the US, Syria, etc. All need to come into Christ.

People who make up the church, who have come to Christ and experienced spiritual rebirth by the person of the Holy Spirit, are the Israel of God today (1 Pet.2:9). As Paul exhorts, *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham (Gal.3:7)*. There are no parentheses around the church age ... *To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Eph.3:21).*

Will the Real Parenthesis Please Stand Up?

[http://thekingdomcome.com/will_the_real_parenthesis_please_stand_up?](http://thekingdomcome.com/will_the_real_parenthesis_please_stand_up?PHPSESSID=34b3008be891652f6813cd140820958e)
[PHPSESSID=34b3008be891652f6813cd140820958e](http://thekingdomcome.com/will_the_real_parenthesis_please_stand_up?PHPSESSID=34b3008be891652f6813cd140820958e)

One of the distinctives of dispensational theology is the teaching that the church age is a parenthesis in the design of God. That is to say, dispensationalists teach that God never revealed the Church age to his prophets and this Church age merely postponed his program with national Israel - **the earthly people of God** - until God decides to resume it and rapture his Church - **the spiritual people of God**. But does this so-called parenthesis have any basis in biblical texts? Yes, but not in the way that dispensational doctrine demands.

Most Dispensationalists today **do not say** that the Church age was unforeseen by God, nor do they say that God was caught unawares and had to scramble to come up with a temporary solution; instead Dispensationalists insist that the church age was a parenthesis, and a mystery which God planed, but kept hidden until the time of the apostles. The so-called parenthesis or gap theory method of interpreting the prophecy of **Dan.9** was promoted by dispensationalists such as **C. H. Mackintosh** [*The Lords Coming*] and **H. A. Ironside** [*The Great Parenthesis*].

The gap theory is built upon a foundational dispensationalist teaching which holds a radical discontinuity between the prophecies, promises and fulfillments made to national Israel and the Church. The **premise** is that the promises made to national Israel can only be fulfilled in national Israel. Promises made to the Church are to the Church alone, the justification being that there are two distinct people of God, there is national Israel to whom solely belong earthly promises, and the

Church, to whom solely belong the spiritual promises. There are, according to dispensational theology, two separate purposes which are carried out by these two distinct people groups.

In *Dispensationalism Today*, **Charles Ryrie** stated:

... basic promise of Dispensationalism is two purposes of God expressed in the formation of two peoples who maintain their distinction throughout eternity. **This teaching is the cornerstone of the parenthetical model erected by dispensationalism**. Because Jesus' Kingdom offer was rejected by the Jews, the Church was implemented as a temporary measure until the prophetic clock restarts. At which time God will remove the Church and resume his work with and among the Jewish people. The earthly promises never belonged to the Church, and conversely the spiritual promises never belonged to national Israel. The prophets never revealed, nor did they foresee the Church age for it is a parenthesis. What constitutes a parenthesis in this view is that it was never prophesied, and that it exists in between, and divides Gods original revealed plan.

Other scholars also recognized a parenthesis in scripture from a more exegetical method, and consequently came to different conclusions about what the parenthesis actually was. Non-dispensational [reformed] scholars recognized an unforeseen parenthesis in the NT at **Rom.5:20. (KJV)** *Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; (ISV) Now the law crept in so that the offense would increase. But where sin increased, grace increased even more ...* The word translated *entered* or *crept in* is the Greek word *παρεισέρχομαι* (*pareiserchomai*), to come in along side, that is, supervene additionally or stealthily: - come in privily, enter. (***Strong's Exhaustive Concordance***)

THAYER'S GREEK LEXICON renders it:

1) to come in secretly or by stealth, or creep or steal in. 2) to enter in addition, come in besides

Fausset's Bible Dictionary at the definition of covenant includes this observation on **Rom.5:20**: The legal covenant of Sinai came in as a parenthesis (*pareiselthee*; **Rom.5:20**) between the promise to Abraham and its fulfillment in his promised seed, Christ. It was added because of the transgressions (**Gal.3:19**), i.e. to bring them, and so man's great need, into clearer view (**Rom.3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-9**). To **Fausset**, the Sinai covenant with its promises and blessings, its law and curses, its priesthood and sacrifices, devices, and methods was itself a parenthesis. That is to say that the Mosaic covenant intervened in between the promises given to Abraham and the completion of those promises in Christ.

In *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, **Jamison, Fausset, and Brown**, commenting on this same word remark: *The law, however. The Jew might say, If the whole purposes of God towards men center in Adam and Christ, where does the law come in, and what was the use of it? Answer: It entered - But the word expresses an important idea besides entering. It signifies, entered incidentally, or parenthetically. (In Gal.2:4 the same word is rendered came in privily.) The meaning is, that the promulgation of the law at Sinai was no primary or essential feature of the divine plan, but it was added (Gal.3:19) for a subordinate purpose - the more fully to reveal the evil occasioned by Adam, and the need and glory of the remedy by Christ.*

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible commenting on παρεισηλθεν in the same passage observes: *By entering in, παρεισηλθεν, or, rather, coming in privily, see Gal.2:4, (only other occurrence), I understand the temporary or limited use of that law, which was, as far as its rites and ceremonies are considered, confined to the Jewish people, and to them only till the Messiah should come; but considered as the moral law, or rule of conscience and life, it has in its spirit and power been slipped in -* Dispensational brethren cannot, however, accept this biblical parenthesis because it flatly **denies their separation theology** of two separate and distinct people of God with two separate and distinct purposes. Unless and until this false dichotomy is abandoned the true biblical parenthesis of Rom.5:20 will continue to be overlooked, ignored, or explained away.

Evaluating Premillennialism: Part III – Israel and the Church by Cornelis P. Venema
<http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/articles/full.asp?id=9%7C21%7C640>

One of the principal tenets of Dispensational Premillennialism is the strict separation between Gods earthly people, Israel, and his heavenly people, the church. It could even be argued that this separation between Israel and the church is the root principle of **classical** - as distinguished from **progressive** Dispensationalism. From this separation of an earthly and a spiritual people stems another basic feature of Dispensationalism: its insistence on a **literalistic reading of the Bible**. This actually stems from the insistence of classical Dispensationalism that the promises of the Lord to his earthly people, Israel, must be interpreted in a strictly literal rather than a figurative or spiritual way. Furthermore, among the seven distinct dispensations, the most important from the point of view of the future are those that reflect this separation between Israel and the church.

I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

The following notes from **Gen.15:18** in the original ***Scofield Reference Bible*** [*famous for articulating & popularizing Dispensationalism*] articulate the basic features of this separation: *I will make of thee a great nation.* Fulfilled in a three-fold way: (a) In a natural posterity - *as the dust of the earth (Gen.13:16; Jn.8:37)*, viz., the Hebrew people. (b) In a spiritual posterity - *look now toward heaven...so shall thy seed be (Jn.8:39, Rom.4:16-17; 9:7-8; Gal.3:6-7, 29)*, viz, all men of faith, whether Jew or Gentile. (c) Fulfilled also through Ishmael (**Gen. 17:18-20**) The Christian is of the heavenly seed of Abraham (**Gen.15:5-6; Gal.3:29**), and partakes of the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (**Gen.15:18**, note); but Israel as a nation always has its own place, and is yet to have its greatest exaltation as the earthly people of God. (**SRB** note on **Rom.11:1**)

As these notes indicate, classical Dispensationalism regards Gods purposes in history as twofold, corresponding to these **two distinct peoples**, the one earthly, the other heavenly. God's dispensational dealings with these two peoples have **two quite distinct ends** in view: the salvation of an earthly people that is consummated in an eternal kingdom upon the new earth, and the salvation of a heavenly people that is consummated in an eternal kingdom in the new heavens. Thus, just as God has two distinct peoples and programs of salvation in history, so he has in mind **two quite distinct eternal destinies.** The line of separation that keeps Israel and the church apart in history will continue into the final state in which the earthly and heavenly natures of these peoples will correspond to salvation blessings that are distinctively earthly and heavenly.

This separation between Israel and the church corresponds to Dispensationalism's emphasis upon a literalistic interpretation of OT prophecies on the one hand, and the contrast between the present age of the church and the coming age of the kingdom or the millennium on the other. The prophecies of the OT, insofar as they are directed to the earthly people of God, Israel, must be understood in their literal or earthly sense. A promise of the possession of the land, for example, must mean the earthly property of Canaan. A promise of a restored temple must refer to the stone temple in Jerusalem.

The present age of the church, because it represents God's dealings with his heavenly people, must also be regarded as a parenthesis period of history, a period between God's former dealings and his soon-to-be-resumed dealings with Israel in the millennial age to come. During the present age of God's dealings with the church, his dealings with Israel have been temporarily suspended, but when the time of fulfillment comes (preceded by the rapture) the prophetic promises will be fulfilled. Because these were directed to Israel, they are silent for the most part respecting God's dealings with the church, dealings comprised by the mystery which God had kept hidden until the Gospel age.

In light of this brief sketch of the classical dispensationalist separation between Israel and the church, consideration of the questions, Who, according to the teaching of the Bible, is the Israel of God? Does the Bible actually draw this line of separation between these two peoples of God, Israel and the church? To answer these questions, consider several features of the Bible's teaching about the Israel of God.

II. THE CHURCH IS NO PARENTHESIS

In the NT, the church is commonly understood to be in direct continuity with the people of God in the OT; the images used in the OT to describe the people of the Lord are used in the NT to describe the church. The NT word for the church, ekklesia, is the equivalent of the common OT word, qahal (Septuagint), meaning the assembly or gathering of the people of Israel. The NT church is also called the temple of God (1 Cor.3:16-17; Eph.2:21-22), evoking the imagery and symbolism of the OT, in which the temple was regarded to be the special place of the Lord's dwelling in the midst of his people. Just as the temple was the place where fellowship between the Lord and his people was provided for (through the sacrificial rites and ordinances) and experienced, so the church is the place of the Lord's dwelling by his Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the church can also be identified with Jerusalem, the city of God, which is above and which comprises believers from every tribe and tongue and nation.

But you [Christians] have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect. Heb. 12:22-23

Rather than being regarded as an interruption in God's dealings with his people, Israel, the church of the new covenant is regarded as the fulfillment of the Lord's promises to the people of God of the old covenant. The great covenant promise made to Abraham was that in his seed all the families and

peoples would be blessed (**Gen.12:3; 22:18**). Throughout the OT, the Lords dealings with Israel are never isolated from his promises of redemption for all the nations and peoples of the earth. This **theme of the salvation of the nations** is interwoven throughout the fabric of the OT in the provisions in the law for the inclusion in the community of Israel of strangers and aliens. The genealogy of Jesus Christ includes names of Gentiles whose incorporation into the family of David (and of God) serves as a reminder that Gods saving purpose never fixed exclusively upon Israel as a racial or national entity (**Mt.1:1-17**).

The same theme is also in the explicit language of the **Psalter**, the song book of Israels worship, and in the prophets. The Psalms contain references throughout to the Lords purpose to gather the nations into the fellowship of his people. **Psalm 2** includes a record of the Lords vow to grant the nations to his beloved Son. **Psalm 22** speaks of how all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before Thee (**v.27**). **Psalm 67** calls all the nations to join Israel in singing Gods praises. These are not isolated notes; they echo and re-echo throughout the Psalms. Furthermore, in the prophets, many promises speak of the day when the Gentile nations will be joined with the people of Israel in the service and praise of the Lord (for example, **Isa.45:22; 49:6; Mal.1:1**).

The simplest understanding of the Old and the NT people of the Lord recognizes the church to be his new covenant people in direct communion with Israel. Though salvation may historically be to the Jew first and, secondly, also to the Gentile (**Rom.1:16**), **the Lord is gathering to himself in history only one people, comprising Jew and Gentile alike**.

DISPENSATIONALISM: Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth

<http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/dispens.html>

Dispensationalism sees the church as a parenthesis, a temporary situation lying between God's two dealings with Israel. **The Bible sees the church as the culmination of all Gods people, the very body of Christ and the fullness of God**. Paul speaks of the message given to him **to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (Eph.3:9-10)**. Far from being a parenthesis, the church is the culmination of something begun in OT times. Paul goes on to point out that **this was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, Eph. 3:11**

PROPHECY AND THE CHURCH Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

http://www.the-highway.com/millennium3_Hughes.html

Is this church period a parenthesis, a stop-gap made necessary by the contingency of the rejection by the Jews of the kingdom at Christ's first coming? Would that kingdom have been set up on earth there and then if their response had been positive? Was God's position one of doubt and uncertainty so that he had to wait and see what the answer of the Jews would be? And when it turned out to be a negative answer was he forced to resort to an emergency measure until such time as he could put his original plan into effect?

The apostles do not regard the **era of the church** as a parenthesis outside the scope of the prophetic vision. On the Day of Pentecost, for example, Peter assures his large Jewish audience that the sending forth of the Holy Spirit is what was spoken by the prophet Joel, through whom God declared that in the last days he would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, with the consequence that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (**Joel 2:28-32**); that Jesus of Nazareth was delivered up to be crucified according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, and was raised to life again in fulfillment of what David says concerning him in **Psalms 16**; and that his ascension to God's right hand has brought to pass the prophetic words of David in **Psalms 110**. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, he concludes, that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified (**Acts 2:14-36**). Neither here nor elsewhere is there any mention of a postponement of the kingdom or a change of plan on God's part. Quite the contrary for all that they are witnessing is in accordance with the predetermined purpose of God and the prophetic utterances of the OT writers. On that historic day some three thousand Jews welcomed the message proclaimed by Peter and were baptized (**Acts 2:41**).

Shortly afterward, in an apostolic prayer meeting, recognition is expressed of the fact that fierce opposition to the Gospel (in this church age!) was foretold by David in **Psalms 2** and that all the hostile forces that had gathered together to destroy Jesus succeeded in doing only *whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place* (**Acts 4:23-28**). Similarly, Paul, formerly the proud Pharisee and persecutor of the church, preaches the fulfillment of the OT scriptures in the blessings of this present church age, including the holy and sure blessings of David, which must be kingdom blessings:

We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee. And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he spoke in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. Therefore he says also in another psalm, Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption (Acts 13:32-35).

Paul goes on to warn his Jewish audience (in Antioch) that rejection of the message of the Gospel will bring upon them the disaster foretold by the prophets of old: *Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets: Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you (Acts 13:40f; Hab. 1:5).*

At the first council of the Christian church, commonly known as the Council of Jerusalem, which is described by Luke in **Acts 15**, called for the purpose of resolving certain questions concerning the position of Gentile believers and the relevance of Judaism to Christian faith and practice, James, the brother of Jesus, addressed the assembly as its president, pointing out that God's calling of a people for his name from among the Gentiles was in accord with the prophetic scriptures: *With this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, After this I will return and will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old (Acts 15:15-18; see Amos 9:11f; Is. 55:5; 45:21).*

Here is another remarkable instance of a kingdom passage, relating to the dwelling of David, being interpreted in the most authoritative manner as finding its fulfillment in the events of this church age. Plainly, this synod of apostles and elders (**Acts 15:6**), whose judgment was expressed by **James**, **understood the rebuilding of Davids house to be accomplished in Gods building of his church** — a structure which Peter would describe in a manner entirely consonant with the interpretation of the Council of Jerusalem as composed of the living stones of believers, *built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pt.2:5)*.

The good news preached by the deacon Philip in Samaria was *about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12)*. Paul spent three months in Ephesus *arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God in the synagogue there (Acts 19:8; cf.20:25)*. This is Paul's theme again when, during his first captivity in Rome, he called together the local leaders of the Jews and explained to them that it was **because of the hope of Israel** that he was in bonds, and subsequently expounded the Gospel to them *from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets (Acts 28:17-20, 23; cf.24:14)*. It was precisely *for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day*, that the apostle, as he told King Agrippa, had been brought to trial by his fellow Jews (**Acts 26:6f**). In the light of such evidence, **the apostolic doctrine and preaching could not possibly have regarded the church as a parenthesis hidden from the perspective of the writers of the OT.**

God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology

by Michael Horton, A review by Gregory Edward Reynolds

[http://www.opc.org/os.html?](http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=20&pfriendly=Y&ret=L29zLmh0bWw%2FYXJ0aWNsZV9pZD0yMA%3D%3D)

[article_id=20&pfriendly=Y&ret=L29zLmh0bWw%2FYXJ0aWNsZV9pZD0yMA%3D%3D](http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=20&pfriendly=Y&ret=L29zLmh0bWw%2FYXJ0aWNsZV9pZD0yMA%3D%3D)

Horton rightly understands Israel as a nation to be the true parenthesis in Scripture (rather than the church, as in the dispensational construct) providing a provisional revelation of what the obedient Mediator would achieve for his people, but of which Adam's children are entirely incapable. **Israel's probation** pointed to Christ in two ways: by reiterating the inability of humanity to fulfill the law because of sin; and by establishing ceremonies, sacrifices, a temple, a kingship, and a priesthood as shadows of the coming One, the true and faithful Adam-Israel.

A NC Critique of Dispensationalism by Ragan Ewing

http://72.14.209.104/search?q=cache:ikRONAP49JMJ:www.firstbaptistparker.org/documents/PDisp1.pdf+church+parenthesis+law+OR+sinai+OR+mosaic&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=28&lr=lang_en

The covenant which is being replaced is specifically identified as the covenant related to the Israelite's redemption from Egypt that was broken. The covenant that has disappeared is not the Abrahamic, but rather the **Mosaic**. Many people err by confusing the heirs of the promises to Abraham with the national people of the **Mosaic Law**. When the NT speaks of **the old or first covenant**, this does not mean God's unconditional promise to Abraham and his seed. The reference **is specifically to the nation of Israel under the Sinaiatic Law.**

Citizens of the NC

What is the status of Gentiles in the NT church? The NT declares that *There is neither Jew nor Greek ... in Christ Jesus (Gal.3:28) ... it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham (v.7) ... if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise (v.29) ... it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants (Rom.9:8) ... from ... stones God can raise up children to Abraham (Mt.3:9), and, Christ redeemed us ... in order that in [Him] the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles (Gal.3:13,14).* The clear unifying pattern in all of these verses: Gentiles are becoming heirs to the Abrahamic covenant. The Dispensationalist would have us believe this only refers to the spiritual blessing associated with this covenant, but this is totally unwarranted by the texts ... no matter how many promises God has made, they are [affirmed] in Christ (2 Cor.2:20).

Paul's whole argument in **Galatians 3** is that the promises were made to Abraham and his Seed, Christ, and therefore we who are in Christ are automatically considered children. How much of the inheritance is due Christ? And to what extent are we sons in Him? As far as God is concerned, we ARE Abraham's descendants (Gal.3:29). **Progressive Dispensationalists** do a better job of recognizing these truths, but then keep a future pseudo-Jewish Palestinian kingdom in their future.

Eph.2 makes this point strikingly. Before Christ, we were ... *Uncircumcision ... separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise (v.11-12). But now that He has ... made both groups into one ... by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law ... (v.14-15), we are ... no longer strangers and aliens, but ... fellow citizens with the saints, and are of Gods household (v.19).* To give Jews a special ranking (even in regards to a future kingdom or land) is to do injustice to Paul and to deny unconditional promises to some of the children.

Peter plainly declares that as Christ's NT church *we are ... a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [and] a people for Gods own possession (1 Pt.2:9).* Peter is directly referring anyone familiar with the OT to the words of God when He established the Mosaic covenant. The one thing he changes is the conditionality. The nation of Israel was given the opportunity to be the recipients of Gods blessings as His special people if they kept the covenant. The rest of the OT is the story of their failure to do so, just as God had predicted to the very man he had used as mediator (Dt.31:16). In contrast, the NT people of God, believers, currently possess these very blessings. The **direct correlation** is that what the Law was incapable of accomplishing, specifically the establishing of a holy nation that would receive the promised inheritance, Christ has fully accomplished by the blood of the NC. To ever return to the old system would be, as Galatians and Hebrews proclaim, absurd. Granted, Dispensationalism claims that the covenant in effect in the kingdom will be the New, not the Mosaic, but as we have seen in **Heb.8**, the NC is not like the Old. Their NC, with reinstituted sacrifices, temple, and law seems strikingly familiar, does it not?

Israels Rejection of the Messiah: The Gap Theory

In handling the current situation of the nation of Israel, Dispensationalism, refusing to deny the nation of Israel a future, but bound by Daniels prophetic timeline of seventy weeks (sets of seven years) in **chapter 9**, acknowledges the flawless fulfillment of the first sixty-nine up to the arrival of

Christ, and then proceed to insert a multi-millennial gap into the countdown. There is no biblical encouragement to do this. The problem with this theory is that **the point of the whole passage appears to be a time limit**. Adding years in between, or stopping the prophetic clock destroys what seems to be the very reason for marking out boundaries--to countdown to the end of God's working with the Mosaic nation. The idea behind the Dispensational view is that Christ came at his first advent to offer Israel an earthly kingdom but they refused, and it was postponed, creating the church as a parenthesis in history.

Ironically, in **Jn.6:15**, we find the Jews trying to make Him king by force, but Jesus refuses! In contrast, Christ said, *My kingdom is not of this world (Jn.18:36)*. They didn't reject Christ's earthly kingdom offer, He rejected theirs! They rejected His spiritual kingdom. The attempt at a proof text for this mystery parenthesis idea of the church usually results in resorting to **Eph.3**. Paul claims God gave Him a special role in revealing ... *the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit (v.4-5)*. The Dispensationalist will claim this mystery is the surprise church which interrupts God's plan with Israel. However, Paul directly identifies this mystery. He says the mystery is ... *to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (v.3:6)*. Heirs to what? What promise? The promise of salvation in Christ to Abraham, which is the sum and substance of the Abrahamic covenant (**Gal.3:8**) The mystery is not that there would be a covenant nation (the church), but that the Gentiles would be considered heirs.

Israel's Future

Dispensationalists, loyal to a concrete version of a literal hermeneutic, find themselves naturalizing what the NT authors consistently spiritualize. It is often claimed that the covenant promises yet to be fulfilled lie primarily in Israel's session and rule of the land of Palestine. Though the land promise is a continuous theme on seemingly every page of the OT, it virtually vanishes in the New. In fact, except for a couple of brief historical references, it is only even mentioned in one book. Hebrews, directly deals with the promise, and spiritualizes it. In **Chap.3** and **4**, the writer teaches that a promise remains for some to enter God's rest because of the unbelief of the Israelites, and that Joshua's conquest did not fulfill the promise, but rather left remaining a ... *Sabbath rest for the people of God (4:9)*. Is this the millennial kingdom? Not in this context. The rest of the chapter, indeed the entire book, is about salvation in Jesus Christ. The writer expresses in Chapter eleven that the faithful saints of the OT *did not receive the promises in their lifetime, but rather were strangers and exiles on the earth ... seeking a country of their own ... a better country, that is, a heavenly one (11:13-16)*. This is the only place in the NT where the land is discussed, and it is taught to be fulfilled in the rest we have from our works in Christ.

Two texts should be noted that should, in a Dispensational framework, be screaming Palestinian kingdom. Granted these are arguments from silence, but an argument from silence's strength or weakness is weighed by the degree to which one would expect to find mention of a subject, and this would clearly be a case of high expectancy. **Rom.11** is a favorite of Dispensational proof-text because Paul directly deals with the future of Israel. Once again, a text that Dispensationalism tries

to adopt as its own actually serves to harm its case. **The remarkable thing about 11:23-31 is what Paul does not say.** He encourages the reader with hints of future mercy for the people of Israel, but in what form? This would certainly be the ideal moment for promise of a kingdom, but what does Paul predict? Salvation! No mention here of a special separate covenant tree; instead, he claims they can look forward to being grafted back into the very tree of salvation of which the Gentiles are currently partaking.

Dispensationalism is notorious for its preoccupation with the end times. Popular writers such as **Tim LaHaye, John Hagee, and Hal Lindsey** have pushed Dispensational eschatology into the forefront of the lay Evangelical mind claiming a system so tightly interwoven with recognizing Israel as a central figure in the last days. Revelation, which is claimed to graphically expound upon Israel's future has a remarkably low number of references to Israel; precisely, two. One reference reveals 144,000 Jews who will be saved. The other simply tells us the names of the twelve tribes will be represented on New Jerusalem's (the bride of Christ) gates (a discussion of the symbolic nature of this passage should be a given). The old city of Jerusalem is mentioned briefly, and it is referred to as Sodom and Egypt (**Rev.11:8**). Even the most concrete reading of the supposedly pivotal **Chap.20** can do nothing more than support saints being surrounded in the beloved city in **v.9**. Still, the careful student will search this book in vain for even a passing reference to the supposedly crucial land inheritance or Israel's anticipated homecoming.

Dispensationalist Beliefs - The Church (Part I) by William E. Cox

<http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/articles/full.asp?id=9|21|179>

Dispensationalists teach that: none of the OT and in fact very little of the New deals with the church; Israel and the church are two distinct bodies; each has its separate plan in God's program; each has a different destination. Israel is said to be an earthly covenant people while the church is said to be a heavenly body. After the one thousand years earthly reign (millennium) the church will be returned to heaven (from whence she will have come in order to reign in the millennium, in a lesser position than that held by Israel) while Israel will remain eternally on the earth.

How do dispensationalists maintain this distinction between Israel and the Christian church? They maintain it, to their own satisfaction, by holding to many **premises never held by historic Christianity**. Dispensationalists teach that the present church age was not revealed to the OT writers. Therefore, **the prophets saw the two advents** of Christ, but saw nothing intervening between these two comings. These two advents appeared to the prophets as mountain peaks. What they were not permitted to see, however, was that God had a valley (the present dispensation) planned in between these two peaks. Because this was so, say the dispensationalists, the prophets saw the two comings of our Lord blended together as though they were one. They go on to say that all prophecies which may appear to be referring to the first advent are in reality referring to the second coming. This was one of **Darby's** rediscovered truths which had remained hidden from the Reformers and all the great writers of Bible commentaries.

People were offered salvation through the establishment of a millennial kingdom. Had this kingdom been established, the Jewish remnant would have carried out the Great Commission and

most of the world's population would have been converted through obedience to the law. The cross then would not have been necessary, according to this teaching. However, the kingdom was not accepted, and so, teach the dispensationalists, it was postponed until the millennium can be set up at the second coming. That postponement has already lasted nearly two thousand years!

Another facet of dispensational teaching concerning the church is that it is parenthetical. Rather, they say, the church was established by God in order to fill in the parenthesis between the time the kingdom was rejected and the time when it will be reinstituted. After the parenthetical church age is finished, then God will return to his **first love**, the Jewish program. **W.R. Newell**, (Romans Verse By Verse) gives the dispensational view on this point: *When we reflect that, after He has caught up in the clouds His Church saints, our Lord is coming back to this earthly people Israel, and will establish them in their land, with a glorious millennial temple and order of worship, to which the Gentile nations must and will submit: then we see that **the present time is altogether anomalous! It is a parenthesis**, in which God is making a visit to the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name; after which, James tells us, our Lord will Himself return, and build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen (**Acts 15:16**), on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, where David lived. **Newell** offers no scriptural references for the major portion of this statement; also check the one verse he does use (**Acts 15:16**) and see that whereas **Newell** makes it future, James actually said that the scripture had already been fulfilled by the incident at the home of Cornelius!*

Dispensationalists consistently quote the words after this as being future from James. A more careful reading of the passage, however, will show that James was quoting **Amos 9:11** and that the words after this are not James words at all. Rather they are the words which James quotes from Amos. It was Amos, not James, who actually said that after Amos' time God would rebuild the tabernacle. James ruled that the account given by Peter (**Acts 15:7-11**) proved that Amos' prophecy on the rebuilding of the tabernacle had been fulfilled in Peter's presence (**Acts 15:14-15**). This is typical of dispensationalists at this point; rather than producing scriptural proof of their alleged parenthesis, they merely assume it in such a matter-of-fact manner that many people never think of questioning it. **Chafer** offers another example of this sort of reasoning. He begins a long paragraph with the words: An extensive body of Scripture declares directly or indirectly that the present age is unforeseen and intercalary in its character and in it a new humanity appears on the earth with an incomparable new headship in the resurrected Christ, which company is being formed by the regenerating power of the Spirit. While **Chafer** refers to an extensive body of Scripture, he lists not a single verse. Throughout the long paragraph, however, he mentions scriptures on other subjects being dealt with.

Dispensationalist Beliefs - The Church (Part II) by William E. Cox
<http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/articles/full.asp?id=9%7C21%7C180>

1. Dispensational Teaching: The church is a parenthesis, i.e., a temporary thing lying between God's two dealings with national Israel.

Paul's Ephesian Epistle Teaches: The church is the very body of Christ, and is therefore the fullness of God ... *the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all, Eph.1: 22-23*

2. DT: The church is not even mentioned in the OT.

Eph: The church was mentioned in the OT. Paul quotes the passage from **Gen.2:24**, and then says that this verse was spoken concerning Christ and the church. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church (5:31-32).*

3. DT: Israel and the church are separate bodies and are to remain so.

Eph: God took two men (Israel's believing remnant and Christian Gentiles) and made the two of them into one man. Now, therefore, there are no longer two bodies, but one. *For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; **that he might create in himself of the two one new man**, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (2:14-16).*

4. DT: National Israel: will carry out God's main purpose during a future millennial period.

Eph: The church is God's main instrument for carrying out his plans. This - the plan that the church would be the fullness of God (**1:23**) - was according to the eternal purpose of God, and has been realized in Christ Jesus. *To the intent that **now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church** unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (3:10-11).*

Both **Darby** and **Scofield** taught that Israel was a type of the church. However they went on to teach that the church was not prophesied in the OT, and that the type was never meant to have a fulfillment. This is indeed difficult to reconcile, a type without an antitype. In fact it is the only such type in their entire system. All other types, they say, were fulfilled through Christ. To say that the church is parenthetic while national Israel is the eternal chosen people of God is to violate a rule of hermeneutics. This is to make the type more important than its antitype. A shadow cannot cast a shadow. **Israel was the shadow cast by the church, the substance.** Abraham is the father of all the righteous; yet it is not through Abraham that one becomes righteous, but rather it is through Abraham's Seed which is Christ (**Gal.3:16**).

So instead of the church being a temporary thing in the plan of God while national Israel is the main piece on the chessboard, actually the opposite is true. National Israel was chosen as a channel for a limited time. In other words, national Israel was the parenthesis which dispensationalists class the church as being. Many scriptures, in the OT as well as in the New, plainly state that Israel's was a temporary role lasting only until the first coming of Christ. Indications that Messiah was to take over the scepter of Israel are given as early as the book of Genesis: *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the rulers staff from between his feet, **Until Shiloh come**; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be (Gen.49:10).* The coming of Shiloh (Messiah) was longingly looked for

by all the patriarchs and prophets of the OT period. In **Jn.8:56** our Lord reminded the unbelieving Jews that Abraham had prophesied the first advent: *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.* To apply this verse to the second coming of Christ is to completely ignore the context in which it was spoken.

National Israel was characterized by three things - nationality, law, and circumcision. Again these were for a limited time only. These were shadows or types of our Lords earthly ministry and the church. A statement by **Phillip Mauro** (The Gospel of the Kingdom) sheds light on this fact. One of the glaring errors of dispensational teaching is the **failure to recognize what the NT plainly reveals**, namely that names which God temporarily gave to the shadowy and typical things of the OC, belong properly and eternally to the corresponding realities of the NC. Thus we are given the proper meaning of Jew (**Rom.2:28-29**); Israel (**Rom.9:6; Gal.6:16**); Jerusalem (**Gal.4:26**); Seed of Abraham (**Gal.3:29**); Sion (**1 Pet.2:6; Heb.12:22; Rom.9:33**). Likewise it is made known that according to the NC meaning, the tribes of Jacob are those who are Jews inwardly, that is to say, the entire household of faith (**Jas.1:1; Acts 26:7**).

Shiloh came nearly two thousand years ago, took over the scepter from national Israel, and began his reign in the hearts of his people. At that time the types faded in the pure light of the Substance to which they had pointed. Although the unbelieving part of Israel still held on to the shadows of nationality, law, and circumcision, the Israel of God (**Gal.6:16**) condemned their continuance (**Rom.6:14; 7:4; 10:4; Gal.3:23-26; 4:9-11; 5:6**). Having become the great Antitype of national Israel, the law, circumcision (**Rom.2:28-29; Phil.3:3; Col.2:11**), and the prophets, our Lord formed the believing part of Israel (**Rom.11:5**) into the Christian church. Nor was this an impulsive innovation; it was fulfillment of that which had been in the eternal plan of God (Cp **Gen.12:3; 22:18; Gal.3:7-9, 14, 16, 27-29; Eph.3:4-6**).

Some of these OT promises were eternal, yet ceased to be in effect. Since the Bible is its own interpreter, we arrive at the meaning of any passage by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture. Looking at **the OT use of the word eternal** one finds that it **must be interpreted according to the radius of time being dealt with**. An eternal priestly promise was in effect just as long as the priesthood existed; a legal eternal promise was in effect only so long as the law was in effect; an eternal promise to national Israel was in effect just as long as God dealt with Israel as a nation; an eternal promise with reference to the temple was binding upon God until the very second the temple ceased to exist; an eternal promise given under the OC was in effect during the entire life of the OC. Theological pandemonium has grown out of the attempt to make promises made under the law binding upon God long after the law has served its purpose in Gods program. So it is with most eternal promises of the OT. With the close of the OT, Gods program moved into an entirely different era. OT promises were eternal or everlasting for the duration of time God decreed to use a given method of dealing with his people. The duration usually was known to God alone. Israel's national promises were given during the period of the law and were eternal so long as the law was in effect. **With the coming of Christ into the world, the period covered by the promises came to an end**, and, therefore, the promises are no longer binding upon God. Paul speaks in 2 Cor.3:13-18 of the non-eternality of the law, and says in v.14 that it is done away in Christ.

In **2 Chron.7:16** it is recorded that God promised to live in Solomon's house forever; yet that house was destroyed and does not exist today. Did God break his promise? No, forever meant for as long as the house stood. The same is true with reference to the priesthood as instituted during the OT era. In many passages - of which **Ex.40:15** and **Num.25:13** are examples - we are told that the house of Aaron constituted an everlasting priesthood. **All Protestant Christians are agreed that the old priesthood came to an end and was replaced by Jesus**, who became our High Priest. The book of Hebrews makes this fact quite clear. So the priesthood of law was everlasting only as long as the law was in effect.

In dealing with **Gen.13:15**, *For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever*, **Adam Clarke** (Clarke's Commentary) says ... and this was always the design of God, not that Abram himself should possess it, but that his posterity would, *till the manifestation of Christ in the flesh*. And this is chiefly what is to be understood by the words forever, *ad olam*, to the end of the present dispensation, and the commencement of the new. Olam means either eternity, which implies the termination of celestial luminaries; or a *hidden, unknown, period, such as includes a completion or final termination, of a particular era, dispensation, etc.*; therefore, the first is its proper meaning, the latter its accommodated meaning.

In dealing with **Gen.17:8**, *I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God*, **Clarke** has this comment: *Here olam appears to be used in its accommodated meaning, and signifies the completion of the Divine counsel in reference to a particular period or dispensation. And it is literally true that the Israelites possessed the land of Canaan till the Mosaic dispensation was terminated in the complete introduction of that Gospel*.

There is a sense in which every eternal or everlasting promise never comes to an end.

This is in fact the true sense in which these words are used throughout the Bible. If this proper sense were understood, many of our differences would immediately clear up. We refer to the fact that most if not all promises, covenants, ordinances, etc., of the Bible have different forms through which they pass. The all-wise God who gave them knew of these forms at the time he inspired his writers to use the words eternal, everlasting, forever. While every **form** has its end, the **actuality**, of which the form is only one phase, never ends. Illustrations of everlasting things instituted by God which have passed through different forms, each form having its definite end: law, Sabbath, circumcision, kingdom, priesthood, the Israel of God. Each illustration was definitely instituted and pronounced by God himself to be eternal. Each illustration listed has gone through developments (forms); and, while the realities themselves remain, in new form, the developments have long since ceased to exist. The forms through which these everlasting things develop are essentially three in number: (1) from their inception until the first advent of Christ; (2) from that advent (at which time each one developed into a much higher form) until the second coming of Christ to earth; (3) from that second coming (which is yet future) they will be developed into the Eternal State which will have no end.

Viewing the entire Bible - while keeping in mind Paul's warning that the letter kills, while the spirit gives life - **three definite points** may be arrived at.

1. God made a two fold covenant with Abraham, the main references to this covenant being recorded in **Gen.12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-15; 22:1-19**. This is called a two fold covenant because most of it involves believers from all nations, (cp. **Gen.12:3; 22:18** with **Gal.3:7-9, 14, 16, 27-29**). While a part of it was fulfilled in national Israel, the main parts of this covenant were spiritual and were ordained to include believers from every nation, including national Israel. Israel was not even born at the time the Abrahamic covenant was first made.

2. To implement his plans, God chose Israel to be his peculiar people only until the first advent of Christ (Gen.49:10). The Abrahamic covenant was renewed with Israel at Sinai. This was **not a separate covenant of works**, but was the same covenant which had been given to Abraham, renewed with Isaac, Jacob, and now with Moses at Sinai. At Sinai Israel was also given conditional promises which applied to her alone and were to be in effect only until the coming of the church. **By the time the church was established at Pentecost, all these national promises had been either literally fulfilled or invalidated** through unbelief and disobedience.

3. Our Lord at his first advent (particularly through the death, burial, and resurrection) fulfilled the promises to national Israel and became their Deliverer (**Lk.1:30-33, 76-77; 2:25, 30**). He was pointed to as the One through whom the Abrahamic covenant was to have its main fulfillment (**Gal.3:16**). He came as a Deliverer out of Zion (Rom.11:26) and all believing Jews (the remnant spoken of in Rom.11:5) were given power to become the sons of God. As many as received this opportunity, and indeed all who shall receive it during this present age, were formed into the Christian church which is the apex of all Jesus suffering (Eph.1:20-23). Believers from every nation, including Israel, are being saved and brought into the church in fulfillment of **Gen.12:3; 22:18**, and other such passages. This gathering will continue until our Lord returns to claim his vineyard which he has entrusted to disciples.

The **Reformers** would say that the church for which our Lord bled and died was the very apex (as the body of Christ) of all God's planning. They would say, with **Darby** and **Scofield**, that national Israel was a type of the Christian church; then they would go on to the only logical conclusion, i.e., that all types have their antitype or fulfillment, and that the church, as the body of Christ, is the embodiment of all that national Israel typified.

5. REVELATION OF THE NC IS PACKAGED IN TERMS OF THE OLD

How should prophetic and apocalyptic literature be interpreted?¹⁰ The NC is pictured as the restoration of the nation of Israel to the land, its worship, and prosperity in language embedded in the warp and woof of Israel's history. The distinctive of the Israel of God is that they would be a people whom God created (raised up) who revere Him as God and with whom He would dwell forever. **Jeremiah 31:27-34** is the statement of the NC, not according to the covenant I made with their [Israel and Judah's] families in the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. **Jer.31** picks up the theme of **Dt.30:1-10**, where God promises to gather them from the remotest parts of the earth where they will be exiled for disobedience to God. Their scattering, exile, and deliverance was predicted just like captivity in Egypt was in **Genesis 15:13-14**. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your

God ... (v.6). The promise of the NC is followed by the recognized formula oath by the covenant maker (Jer.31:35-37). Jeremiah 32:37-41 reaffirms the NC, *they shall be My people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way ... I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of Me in their hearts, that they may not turn from Me.* Ezekiel 36-37 describe the same thing with different images.¹¹ The NC is couched in terms of blessing and renewal of Israel (36:6-27). The NT authors and Jesus Himself apply the NC in His blood (Lk.22:20) to us without qualification other than faith in Christ.

Romans 9:22-23 categorizes two groups of people as vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy. Paul then identifies the church composed of a mixed multitude as the vessels of mercy (v.24). He quotes Hosea 1:10 *In the place where it was said to them, You are not My people, there they shall be called sons of the living God. Before that statement in Hosea, God said to Israel I am not I Am to you [lit.] and I will not be your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured or numbered (v.9-10).* Verse 11 continues, *Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land for great will be the day of Jezreel! Say to your brethren, My people, and to your sisters, Mercy is shown (1:11-2:1).* Jezreel means God's sowing or God's planting. Hosea 2:2-13 describes Gods anger with His unfaithful people. In Hosea 2:14-23, the prophet describes the return of God to His people and of His people to Him in terms of a new planting, *They shall answer, Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, You are My people! And they shall say, You are my God! (2:22-23).* This whole discussion is about the church as the true Israel of God, united [Judah and Israel, Hos.1:11] under Davids son in complete reconciliation. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king (3:5; Jer.30:9; see also Ez.37:15-27). Amos 9:11-15 is about the same thing, the raising up of the booth [figure of a deposed dynasty] of David, the return of Gods people who are pictured as captives. Notice how the apostles understood this as verses 11-12 are quoted in the Jerusalem counsel (Acts 15:14-18). It is the same story Jesus told in the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants (Mt.21:33-43).

Zechariah 8:7-8 speaks of Gods saving His people, *I will bring them back and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness [reality].* Verses 20-22 speak of inhabitants of many cities, many peoples and strong nations will seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem. *In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, Let us go with you for we have heard that God is with you (v.23).* The passage is emphasizing large numbers of Gentiles journeying to the place where God has set His name in search of the true God, the God of Israel. Isaiah 60:1-18 expresses the same thing in terms of the wealth of the Gentiles coming to Israel, bowing to her (v.14); Isaiah 45:14-25 is the same picture: Israel taking the nations captive (v.14). Israel is encompassing and including all the nations. *Look to Me and be saved all you ends of the earth for I am God ... I have sworn by Myself ... to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath ... In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified and shall glory (v.22-25, see also Rom.15:8-12).*

The promises of Israel's restoration are fulfilled in the NC church. *He made you [Gentiles] alive, you who were once dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world (Eph.2:1-2). You who were called uncircumcised, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise ... without God ... afar off have been brought near (v.11-13). But then, **we all [Jews and Gentiles] were dead (v.5)** and conducted ourselves that way (v.3). **God loved us all (v.4)** and **made us all alive ... raised us all up together ... (v.5-6)**. He has **made both one**, a single new man from the two of us (v.14-17). He **preached peace** to you who were far off [Gentiles] and to those who were near [Jews] (v.17) **to give us both the same access to the Father by His Spirit (v.18)**.*

¹⁰. P.161-163 Fairbairn

¹¹. The Bible is extremely repetitive, but in a very creative way. It makes the point by teaching directly and indirectly; painting pictures and telling stories filled with figures, parallels, illustrations, and examples.

6. CHRIST REIGNS AS KING TODAY

The good news is that the Kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus Christ. God promised David that He would establish his Kingdom and that his heir would rule forever. Christ was that heir (Lk.1:31-38 announces the Kingdom in the terms of Isa.9:1-7). The message of the Gospels is that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand (ie, very close to beginning) because the king is here (Mt.4:17; Mk.1:14-15). Matthew especially (and to some extent Luke) goes to great lengths to connect everything Jesus does to prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, and others. There are numerous OT passages describing the coming of Messiah. **The preaching and healing of Jesus climaxes after approximately three years with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt.21)**. Some Pharisees objected to the proclamation of Jesus status as king by His disciples, to which Jesus replies, *if these [disciples] were silent, the very stones would cry out (Lk.19:37-40)*. The prestigious religious people did not generally accept Him, but the poor, prostitutes, thieves, and people with every appearance of ungodliness (sinners), many of whom weren't even allowed in the synagogue, accepted Him. Jesus comments on this via the parable of the two sons (Mt.21:28-32). **What response is an appropriate welcome for this king? Change your minds and believe Him (v.32).**

Jesus follows the parable of the two sons with the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants (Mt.21:33-44), in which He makes the point that the Kingdom over which He is king will be taken from Israel and given to a people producing its fruits (v.43). The Jews don't stop the Kingdom from coming; it is still at hand. Later, when **Pilot** asks Jesus if he is King of the Jews, He replies *you have said so (Mt.27:11)*. In **Jn.18:33-37** there is a more complete record of this exchange, where Pilot asks Jesus how He can be King of the Jews since his own nation has rejected Him. Jesus replies that the nature of His Kingdom is not political (*not of this world*), but spiritual. He was born to be king and came into the world to bear witness to the truth (reality), and everyone who is of the truth (born into His Kingdom) listens to Him (acknowledges His authority as that very king). **The promise that**

David's seed would sit on his throne is not suspended. **Jesus is King of the Jews even though national Israel rejected Him.**

Peter's message at Pentecost was that the Jews did not stop the plan and purpose of God by crucifying the Messiah (**Acts 2:29-36**). In fact God's purpose was carried out through that very act (**v.23**). Peter says David understood that because the Kingdom was to be everlasting, Messiah would have to be raised from the dead (**v.25-31**). **The Davidic Kingdom is couched in terms much too broad to involve merely the sitting of a human being on an earthly throne during the days of his life on earth** (**v.34-36**). It is precisely because God has seated Christ on David's throne that the Holy Spirit has been poured forth [His first act as king] (**v.32-33**). The church recognized that God had done exactly what He determined and said He would. Indeed, **God used the very enmity of the people, both Jews and Gentiles, to accomplish His purposes and seated Christ on His throne** (**4:24-28**; cf. **Ps.2 & 2 Sam.7:12-16**).

Christ received His Kingdom at His Ascension and He is now seated on His throne ... *according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.* (**Eph 1:15-21**) Salvation comes through embracing the Son who is both Savior and Lord. **God is transferring people from the domain [dominion] of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love** (**Col.1:13**) because this is the acceptable time, the day of salvation. This day of grace will continue until the wedding hall is filled (**Mt.22**) and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (**Rom. 11:25**), at which time the door will finally be closed to the Kingdom of heaven [see **apdx.E**].

7. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE ONE

Old and NT saints constitute a single united body of the redeemed. The Gospel and salvation are not confined to the Jews, *Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring ... there will be one flock and one shepherd* (**Jn.10:16**). **Caiaphas the high priest prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation [Israel], and ... that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad [Gentiles]** (**Jn.11:51-52**). **He Himself is the propitiation** [propitiatory, place of satisfaction] for our sins and not for ours only but [He is] also [the place of satisfaction] for [the sins of] the whole world (**1 Jn.2:2**). **There is one household** (**Heb.3:2-6**), one shepherd and king over God's people, David [referring to Christ the son of David] (**Ez.34; 37:15-28**).

The coming of Christ and teaching concerning the church is not something different from what the OT taught. Paul understood the church to include all who had faith like that of Abraham, ie, to have its roots in the Abrahamic Covenant (**Rom.4**). He told king Agrippa that his proclamation of light to both Jews and Gentiles did not go beyond (was not foreign to or out of character with) the promises of Moses and the prophets (**Acts 26:22-23**).¹² **The NC establishes a new unified kind of race, spiritual in nature** (**1 Cor.15:45; Rom.5:14; 9:6-13**).

The mystery = Jews and Gentiles (all people on an equal basis) as fellow heirs to the promises of God in Christ, united in one body (**Gal.3:6-9, 11-14, 26-29; 5:5-6, 6:15; Eph.3:3-6; 4:4**). In Christ the rift between peoples is repaired as symbolized by His reconciling both Jews and non-Jews into the

same body. This new peace, a graft contrary to nature¹³ (**Rom.11:11-14**), is a display of God's wisdom to heavenly rulers and authorities (**Eph.3:10; Col.1:15-20**), marking the reconciling of heaven and earth. To again distinguish between people by separating God's people into Jews and Gentiles is to break the union God has forged in Christ (**Gal.2:18**). The union of Jews and Gentiles as one people of God in the church was not a mystery in the absolute sense. It was anticipated and alluded to by the prophets, ie, *Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance* (**Isa.19:25**). In other words, the OT prophecies of Israel's future acceptance and blessing include all the redeemed from every nation and time. There is no reason to think that the church is anything other than the totality of the true people of God, the community of the faithful essentially related to Him through believing Him [see **apdx.D, E, and G**].

¹² See *The Hope of Israel: What Is It?* (1922) by Philip Mauro, Chap.3, How the O.T. Prophecies Concerning Israel Are Interpreted by Paul http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1922_mauro_hope/mh-03.html excerpts from *Hope of Israel*, chap 3 at <http://pop.eradman.com/> Bear in mind that Mauro was addressing the Dispensationalism of his day, not ours.

¹³ God intervenes and changes things contrary to nature (the usual, expected, and accepted flow of events). The very existence of the universe and the nation Israel are such things. God placed David as king of Israel instead of Jonathan, King Saul's son. He transferred the blessing of the firstborn from Esau to Jacob and from Manasseh to Ephraim. He redeemed a lost world. This contrary to nature concept and the related contrary to hope (**Rom.4:18**) are rich studies in themselves.

8. THE RETURN OF THE KING IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE AGE AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW AGE

The return of Christ is spoken of in the NT as an event in power, glory and victory to be seen by all the earth. It is nowhere represented as a secretive, stealthy event. There is no justification to separate the resurrection of the just and the rest of the world, or resurrection and judgment, or the resurrection of OT and NT saints. With the exception of one passage (**Rev.20:1-10**), all NT passages speak of the resurrection of Christ's people and judgment of the rest of the world in a single breath. The Gospels and epistles routinely present the return of Christ (revealing of Christ; appearing of Christ; day of the Lord) as a single event and an integral part of the Gospel. **It is the end of the age** marked by final judgment and destruction of the universe. **It is the beginning of a new age**, marked by the beginning of a new creation. It is highly irregular to use apocalyptic literature (portions of Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, or Revelation), characterized by visual imagery and symbolic elements, to interpret didactic portions of Scripture.

The Bible does not describe events that allow anyone to determine the time of the Lord's return or set a timetable of events signaling the unraveling of an end of the age sequence. **1 Thes.5** discusses the coming of the day of the Lord as a thief, not as an encouragement to discover when the Lord will return, but **as a warning** not to be caught unprepared, unaware, or surprised. There is no excuse for not being ready at all times. The Lord's Supper is the *Passover* we celebrate in anticipation of the final judgment that will break us free from the land of our slavery [sin] forever. Let us eat

the Passover lamb in haste, fully clothed and prepare for departure (**Ex.12:11**). Nevertheless, in the consideration of the events closing this age and beginning the new age [see [Correlating The Ages](#)], we are all very much in a place of ignorance, inquiry, and anticipation similar to where OT prophets stood with respect to the first coming of Christ and the Gospel (**1 Pt.1:10-12**).

CONCLUSION

The OT is, as John Calvin understood it, **an exhibition of the Gospel under the veil of figures and shadows**. The message of the Bible and glory of its content are enhanced and complimented by the method of revelation and the beauty of the language by which it tells the story. It is a wonderful tapestry, full of literary, structural, and thematic devices that serve to both paint and mask the truth. Recognition of the continuity of NT themes throughout the OT unlocks the richness of the Scriptures.

RECOMMENDED READING

The NIV Study Bible (New International Version), 1985, The Zondervan Corp. [*great cross references with concordance and maps; notes are often very helpful but sometimes naturalistic, ie, Exodus plagues*]

Abraham's Four Seeds, John G. Reisinger, 1998, 144 pages, a biblical examination of the presuppositions of Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism

Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History, Francis A. Shaeffer, 1975

Gospel and Kingdom, 1981; **The Gospel in Revelation**, 1984 (both also in **Trilogy**); **According to Plan**, 1991 by Graeme Goldsworthy

The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption, Dennis E. Johnson, 1997

The Israel of God (yesterday, today, and tomorrow), O. Palmer Robertson, 2000

3 Critical Questions About the Last Days, Daniel J. Lewis, 1998

The Interpretation of Prophecy, Patrick Fairbairn, 1856, revised 1865, reprinted 1993 by Banner of Truth

A Case for Amillennialism (Understanding the End Times), Kim Riddlebarger, 2003

Whose Promised Land, chapters 3-6, Colin Chapman, 1983

The Gospel Millennium and Obedience to Scripture (pamphlet), Robert Whitelaw, 1974

NT Theology (Magnifying God in Christ), 2008 & **Magnifying God in Christ** (A Summary of NT Theology), 2010, Thomas R Schreiner