

The objective of this class is: to give a basic understanding of both Dispensationalism and Covenantal theology and, for many of you, expose you to a new perspective on how the bible should be read and interpreted so that it will radically change and shape the way you personally read and understand the whole of Scripture, including many of its key doctrines.

Introduction: There are 2 distinct ways of Reading and Understanding the Bible Story: Dispensationalism and Covenantalism. The hermeneutic one embraces will affect a number of important doctrines including the rapture, the church, baptism and eschatology, as well as how one understands current events and Christian responsibility. This is an issue over which Good & Godly men differ. Is the formation of the NT church the new shape of God's one people of faith, or is it a second and separate people of God? Is Ethnic Israel (National Israel) in any sense still "the People of God" and separate from Church, either now or in the future? This can be an Emotional Issue for many, so we need to be patient and gracious. Disagreement & Critique is not Disrespect

Nature of Biblical Prophecy

- 1) Difference between these positions is a question of Relationship between OT & NT
- 2) Hermeneutics (Science or method of Interpretation) → Do you interpret the NT thru lens of the OT, or do you interpret the OT through the revelation of the NT?
- 3) Dispensationalists interpret the NT thru the lens of the OT → Literal Understanding of OT Prophecy
 - a) Scofield—*"Historical Scriptures have an allegorical or spiritual significance...[in prophetic Scriptures] we reach the ground of absolute literalness."* → This presupposition creates system
- 4) Covenantalists interpret the OT thru the lens of NT → Biblical Interpretation is Christ-Centered
 - a) What is in the New revealed is in the Old concealed → How Do Jesus & NT Writers Interpret

Chafer—“Protestant theology has very generally taught that all the kingdom promises, and even the great Davidic covenant itself, are to be fulfilled in and through the Church.”

Walvoord—“Reformed eschatology has been predominantly Amillennial. Most if not all the leaders of the Protestant Reformation were Amillennial in their eschatology, following the teachings of Augustine.”

Saucy—“Throughout much of church history, the dominant Christian interpretation has viewed the church as the NT replacement of historic Israel in God's plan of salvation history.”

Review Dispensational View

Covenantal Theology

- 1) Since the fall of Adam in Gen. 3, the Scriptures record the progressive unfolding of the one Covenant of Grace. Scarlet Thread of Redemptive History. This covenant incorporates all of God's people in all ages and all of its administrations (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic) and is fulfilled in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.
- 2) Kingdom Promises are comprehensively fulfilled in the church, not in restored Israel
- 3) LaRondelle—*“For the apostle Paul the central truth of the Hebrew Bible was not about Israel and its national future, but rather about Messiah Jesus, the Lord of Israel, the Redeemer of the world.”*
- 4) “The Christian understanding of the OT is determined by the christocentric focus by which the NT writers interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore it is essential for a Christian to discover the principles and procedures according to which Christ and His apostles understood and expounded the writings of” the OT

Literal principle of Biblical interpretation (Normal, Plain)

- 1) All Agree that OT Prophecies concerning every major Israelite Institution were Incomplete
 - a) Prophecy of Son of David on Throne forever failed → So we know it was a Type—Shadow
 - b) Aaronic Priesthood became corrupt and failed
 - c) Prophecy of Land (Kingdom) forever failed → Israel ceased to be a Kingdom in 586 BC
 - d) Israel as Nation ceased to Exist for last 2500 Years → Prophecy not just Incomplete, but failed
 - e) In 70 AD → OT Religion was Destroyed with Destruction of Temple → Still not renewed
 - f) The question is this: Were they completed / fulfilled in Christ & Church?
 - g) Or will there be a future time (millennium) when all the OT institutions will be renewed
- 2) The NT points to their fulfillment and does not promise another literal fulfillment at future date
- 3) 3 Examples: David's Son, the Temple, all promises of Israel
 - a) Acts 2:30-31—*“Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.”*
 - b) The Temple
 - i) 1 Cor 3:16—*“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”*
 - ii) 1 Pet 2:4-5—*“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a*

spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

- iii) Jesus Predicted This → And Not as a bad thing...
- iv) John 4:21-23—*"Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." →*
- v) No More Jerusalem → No More Temple == Religion is Changing
- vi) Why? → Temple Was Where Sacrifices Took Place and God Dwelled With His People
- vii) Now, No More Sacrifice, and God Has fulfilled Joel 2 & Poured Out His Spirit Dwells w/ Us
- c) All Promises → 2 Cor 1:20—*"All the promises of God find their Yes in him."*
 - i) Luke 24:27—*"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (See also John 8:39,*
 - ii) Rom 9:6—*"it is not as though the word of God has failed" == Answer, Spiritual Israel & Election*
 - iii) Rom 11:1—*"I ask, then, has God rejected his people?" == Answer, Remnant Saved by Faith*
 - iv) This Is The NT Place → Has God's Word Failed == No Restored In Future Kingdom!
- 4) With Coming of Christ All of These provisional—types and shadows → Fulfilled & Pass Away
 - a) All Pointing toward a once for all Global Messiah → All Moving Toward a Gathering of World-Wide People == Gathering of Nations into New Humanity—True Israel—People of God, of Faith
- 5) Christ Arises as the Messiah → Out of Cocoon of Israel To Become the 2nd Adam for Humanity
 - a) In Covenantal Reading, Church is fulfillment of prophecy—in Disp. Church interrupts fulfillment
 - b) Woudstra—*"The various institutions of Israel, the tabernacle, the sacrifices for atonement, the social and ethical laws God gave it were meant to be a provisional embodiment of God's Kingdom on earth."*

Distinction between Israel & the Church as two separate people of God—out or literal Interp.

- 1) There is but one people of God—The Church includes the saved people of God in all ages
 - a) Rom. 11:17-21—The olive tree is Israel—The one people of God → Jews Broken Off
 - b) Natural branches broken off = Unbelieving Jews—Wild grafted in = Believing Gentiles.

- 2) The Church is the fulfillment of Israel's purposes and promises
- 3) NT makes no distinction between believing Israel & the Church—but between unbelieving Israel and the Church—and actually includes the Church in believing Israel
 - a) True Israel—OT & NT has always been a spiritual Israel that included Gentiles
 - b) Gal. 3: 6-7—*“Those who believe are children of Abraham”*
 - c) Gal. 3:29—*“If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”*
 - d) Gal. 6:15-16—*“For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”*
 - e) Eph. 2:12-13—*“Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*
 - f) Phil. 3:3—*“we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus”*
 - g) Col. 2:11—*“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ”*
 - h) James 1:1—*“ To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion*
 - i) 1 Pet 2:9-10—*“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*
 - i) Rom. 2:28-29