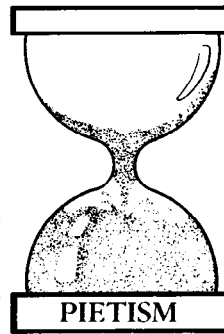


# Dispensationalism in Transition

Challenging Traditional Dispensationalism's "Code of Silence"



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## DISPENSATIONAL DISTORTIONS (PART TWO)

### Redemptive History Distortions

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In Part II of our survey of dispensational theological distortions, we will consider the distinctive errors of dispensationalism relative to redemptive history. The message of Scripture is the divinely revealed story of redemptive history. It involves the progress of God's saving acts from the fall of Adam to Christ's Return. Unfortunately, several peculiar doctrines of dispensationalism distort redemptive history.

#### The Church in Prophecy

First, in dispensationalism the Church is deemed a *new* and *unpromised* aside to God's major plan for the Jews. Walvoord writes of the Church: "It becomes apparent that a *new* thing has been formed—the body of Christ. It did not exist before Pentecost, as there was no work of the baptism of the Spirit to form it. The concept of the body is *foreign* to the Old Testament and to Israel's promises. Something *new* had begun. . . . There is good evidence that the age itself is a *parenthesis in the divine program* of God as it was revealed in the Old Testament. . . . [T]he present age [is] an *unexpected and unpredicted parenthesis* as far as Old Testament prophecy is concerned."<sup>1</sup>

In this statement it is clear that God had a special, Jewish program in operation in the Old Testament. It is obvious, also, that on the dispensational view the present Church age of Jew and Gentile union in one body was unknown in the Old Testament. And that the Church age is but an interruption of that program.

Most evangelical scholars, however, see the New Testament phase of the Church as *continuous with* and a *culmination or fruition* of God's history-long redemptive labor. Indeed, when we look into the New Testament, we discover references to the Old Testament prophets' knowledge of the "Church age."

Ephesians 3:3-6 reads: "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery. . . which in other ages was not made known unto the *sons of men*, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ."

In Romans 16:25-26 Paul points out that the "mystery" of Gentile salvation was hidden only from the *Gentiles* (which in Eph. 3 Paul calls "the sons of men"), *not from the Old Testament prophets*, for he defends his doctrine of the mystery from "the scriptures of the prophets." He speaks of "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and *by the scriptures of the prophets*, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations* for the obedience

of faith." Paul says that the "mystery" is "now made manifest" to "*all nations*," not just to Israel.

In Luke 24:44-47 the Lord taught that it was necessary for Him to die in order to fulfill Scripture in bringing salvation to the Gentiles. "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among *all nations*."

The distinction between Jew and Gentile has *forever* been done away with. Paul points out this fact in Ephesians 2:11-16: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh. . . , at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who *hath made both one*, and *hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us*; Having *abolished* in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to *make in himself of twain one new man*, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, *having slain the enmity thereby*."

Thus, "there is neither Jew nor Greek. . . for ye are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28) and "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision" (Col. 3:11). Dispensationalists see this as but a temporary parenthesis in God's plan!

#### The Gospel and the Jews

Second, in dispensationalism the Gospel's Church age labor among the Jews becomes a relative failure. During the future Tribulation, the Gospel will be dramatically successful, among the Jews, only *after all Christians and the Holy Spirit are removed from the world!*

Ryrie speaks of the removal of the Holy Spirit and the Church from the earth prior to the Tribulation: "If the restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is to be removed before the tribulation. . . then the Church also must be taken out of the world."<sup>2</sup> Pentecost mentions the conversion of "all Israel" during the Tribulation: "God uses many different means to bring 'all Israel' to salvation during the seventieth week."<sup>3</sup>

1. John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), pp. 23, 24. Emphases mine.

2. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1953), p. 144.

3. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 263.

Yet the Scriptures teach that one of the glorious advances of the New Testament era is the magnified presence of the Holy Spirit, Who will bring great blessing, not be a stumbling block to Jewish conversion. "Thus it is written. . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among *all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem. . . . But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with *power from on high*" (Luke 24:46-49).

In Acts 1:8 He said: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." They were prepared for this in Acts 2:17: "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh. . . . And it shall come to pass, that *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In fact, the Great Commission teaches that until the end of the age Christ will be with us to see that we "make disciples of" and "baptize" "*all nations*" (Matt. 28:19).

### The Sacrificial System

*Third*, according to dispensationalism the Temple and sacrificial system will be reinstituted in the future millennial kingdom (though they see these as only memorial). Ryrie writes: "The temple is yet to be built and the sacrificial system reestablished during the millennium."<sup>4</sup> This is based on their literalistic understanding of Ezekiel 40ff.

But the New Testament teaches the temple is *spiritual*. Thus, dispensationalism involves a serious retrogression.

1 Corinthians 3:16 reads: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" 1 Corinthians 6:19 asks: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" 2 Corinthians 6:16 concurs: "Ye are the temple of the living God."

The age-long building of this temple is mentioned in Ephesians 2:21-22: It "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" for we "are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Each of us is a living stone, for 1 Peter 2:5 says: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

### Dispensational Zionism

*Fourth*, the dispensational kingdom involves a racial prejudice in favoring the Jews above even *saved* Gentiles during the millennium. As such it re-introduces the distinction between Jew and Gentile and replaces *faith* with *race* as a basis for divine favor. Let us show this from several dispensationalists.

*Ryrie*: "Three groups of people will be related to the millennial government. Israel, regathered and turned to the

Lord in salvation, *will be exalted, blessed, and favored* throughout the period."<sup>5</sup>

*Pentecost*: "The *Gentiles will be Israel's servants* during that age. . . . The Gentiles that are in the millennium will have experienced *conversion* prior to admission."<sup>6</sup>

*Walvoord* speaks of: "Israel's restoration and *exaltation* in the millennial kingdom. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

*Hoyt*: "The redeemed living nation of Israel, regenerated and regathered to the land, will be *head over all the nations* of earth. . . . So he exalts them above the Gentile nations. . . . On the *lowest level* there are the *saved*, living, Gentile nations."<sup>8</sup>

*Dave Hunt*: "The Messiah ruling the world from the throne of David and with national Israel restored to its place of *supremacy* over the nations."<sup>9</sup>

But with the establishment of the New Testament phase of the Church, the distinction between Jew and Gentile has been abolished. This was the whole point of Peter's vision of the sheet filled with unclean animals in Acts 10: What God has called clean, let no man call unclean. Thus, there is no separate Jewish program exalting them over saved Gentiles.

The Church, which includes Jew and Gentile in one body, is the fruition and culmination of God's promises to the Jews. Christians are called by distinctively Jewish names in the New Testament. "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:29). Christians are called "the circumcision" (Phil. 3:3), "the children" and "the seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7, 29), the "Jerusalem which is above" and the "children of the promise" (Gal. 4:24-29). In fact, Christians compose "the Israel of God" for we are a "new creature" regarding which "circumcision availeth nothing" (Gal. 6:16).

### Conclusion

The second class of dispensational distortions, which we have surveyed here, evidences a clear retrogression and error in the dispensational view of redemptive history. And since dispensationalism is thought to be a tool for historical analysis, this is a most serious deficiency.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

6. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 508.

7. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, p. 65.

8. Herman Hoyt, "Dispensational Premillennialism" in Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 81.

9. Dave Hunt, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1988), p. 246.

4. Ryrie, *Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p. 151.