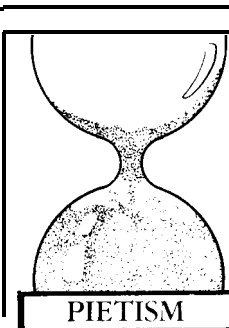


Dispensationalism in Transition

Challenging Traditional Dispensationalism's "Code of Silence"



Vol. III, No. 3

©ICE, 1990

March, 1990

DISPENSATIONAL DISTORTIONS (PART THREE)

Contemporary History Distortions

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This month we come to our third and final survey of basic dispensational theological distortions. In regard to the outworking of contemporary history, dispensationalism is plagued with error and distortion. Its historical system is both confused and distracting to a full-orbed Christian witness.

Multiple Advents of Christ

First, we witness confusion regarding the coming of Christ. The blessed hope of the Christian is the singular, literal, bodily, glorious Second Coming of Christ. But dispensationalism teaches multiple literal comings of Christ from heaven to earth.

Of two future comings of Christ (the rapture and the advent) Pentecost writes: "There are a number of contrasts to be drawn between the rapture and the second advent which will show that they are not viewed as synonymous in Scripture. [T]hese are two separate programs and can not be unified into one event."¹

Ryrie writes: "This passage cannot refer to the Second Coming of Christ because that even was not a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament. The reference is to something distinct, that is, the rapture of the Church before the tribulation."²

Thus there are in the dispensational view *two* more future, literal comings of Christ – a *second* coming and a *third* coming. But the Bible speaks only of a "second" coming. Hebrews 9:28 says: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the *second* time without sin unto salvation." The Bible speaks of His coming again (Acts 1:11), not of His "comings" or His "coming again and again" or of a "third coming."

Closely related to this is the idea of the resurrection. The Bible speaks of there being but *one* resurrection, on the last day: John 6:39-40: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." He does not say, "I will raise him up 1000 years before the last day." John 6:44,54; 11:24; and 12:48 agree.

Dispensationalism is driven by a "system requiring two programs – one for the Jew and one for the Gentile. It is not driven by Scriptural warrant. Consequently, its view of

a second and third coming of Christ is wrong. And being wrong it misdirects the Christian's blessed hope.

Mingling the Mortal and Immortal

Second, we witness certain absurdities in dispensationalism's millennial view. One particularly strange one is that in the Messianic kingdom there will be 1000 years of a mingling between resurrected, glorified believers and non-resurrected, mortal men.

Ryrie: "The kingdom will be established on the earth. The center of government in the millennium will be Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the city to which Christ returns. It seems clear that there will be unsaved people in the millennium. [T]here is no evidence that those who enter the kingdom as a result of this judgment will have redeemed bodies so that children may be born during the millennial period." ³

Ryrie: "The reason that God can bring these believers with Him at His Second Coming into the kingdom is because *before* that time God will have raised them, and Paul then goes on to speak of that resurrection and translation which must occur before His Second Coming." ⁴

Pentecost: "[A]mong those unregenerated in that day will come the multitude known as 'God and Magog,' who come up against the 'camp of the saints,' which must be Palestine, and 'the beloved city,' which must be Jerusalem."⁵

Thus, we see that the kingdom will involve resurrected believers and the glorified Christ ruling over unresurrected mortals. The place of Christ's throne will be in literal Jerusalem on earth.⁶ In other words, for 1000 years these glorified people live without sickness, weakness, or death among (or above) unresurrected men and women who, though they live longer life spans, still get sick and die. And, incredibly, these unresurrected mortals attempt to attack these 1000 year old, glorified people!

And no reference to the fact that Christ dwelled in His resurrected body upon the earth can relieve the absurdity of this feature of dispensationalism. For Christ was only one person, was in His resurrected body for a short period upon the earth (Acts 1:3), and was only seen by a selected few brethren (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Neither may a reference to the blind stubbornness of sin account for the attack upon this glorious people and city. Even sinners be-

3. *Ibid.*, p. 147, 149, 150.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

5. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 550.

6. Pentecost attempts to escape this dilemma (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 577), by having Jerusalem floating and shining brilliantly above the earth! But the popular perception and the demands of literalism forbid it.

1 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 206-207.

2. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1953), p. 133.

lieve in self-preservation and restraint against overwhelming and well-documented odds.

Historical Pessimism

Third, we witness distraction from a hope-filled, holistic mission in dispensationalism's inherent historical pessimism. The dispensationalist urges believers to accept the view, as House and Ice note, that "the church age will end in apostasy, not revival," because it was destined so by God.⁷

Further, they teach believers today that: "This current world is headed toward judgment. After that judgment, Christ will take over control of the world and rule it. But until that happens, the message and activities for believers should be, 'Flee the wrath to come by finding safety in Jesus Christ.'"⁸ Walvoord dogmatically teaches: "Christians have no immediate solution to the problems of our day."⁹

In fact, House and Ice discourage Christian efforts to effect change: "to attempt to establish a long-term change of institutions before Christ returns will only result in the leaven of humanism permeating orthodox Christianity."¹⁰ They even castigate Christians for trying: "Tragically, this will contribute to the further unfaithfulness of the church in these last days before the return of Messiah."¹¹

But the Bible expects ultimate success and victory in the world. The Great Commission promises that Christ, Who has all authority in heaven and on earth, will be with us to the end (Matt. 28:18,20). For what purpose? To see that we disciple and baptize all nations (Matt. 28:19).

Jesus has promised, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). Indeed, we learn that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Paul instructs us that Christ must continue to reign [He is presently reigning] until all of His enemies are put down

7. House and "Ice, *Dominion Theology*, pp. 390, 378.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

9. John F. Walvoord, in Charles Lee Feinberg, *Prophecy and the Seventies* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1971], p. 212. Walvoord continues: "A solution to this unrest and turmoil is provided in the Bible, and there is no other. That solution is that Jesus Christ Himself is coming back to bring peace and rest to the world" (*Ibid.*, p. 210).

10. House and Ice, *Dominion Theology*, p. 340.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

(1 Cor. 15:21-25). He believed that God was in Christ reconciling "the world" to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

Conclusion

Despite the attraction of millions of evangelical Christians to dispensationalism, the system is fraught with distortion, error, and even absurdity. The errors are not insignificant. They involve major matters: Christ, redemption, and history.

In that "ideas have consequences," the ultimate outcome of dispensationalism is to discourage Christians from advancing the cause of Christ in the world. Both its grave distortions as well as its misguided concerns make dispensationalism a system fraught with much potential harm.

Recommended Reading

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