



Dispensationalism: Church Age Not Prophesied in OT; Rapture & 2d Advent Are Different; Apocalyptic Writing Defined; Daniel's 70 Weeks; Dan 9:24-26; Neh 2:7-8

Some theologians integrate Scripture in an unsatisfactory manner. They assume that God's unconditional covenants with the Jews have transferred to the Church and that Israel has become a *spiritual* entity with no national future. They sincerely but incorrectly believe that Israel and the Church are one people, that true "spiritual Israel" is now the church. But the Old and New Testaments clearly declare that true Israel, the recipient of God's promises, is not only spiritually regenerate but ethnically Jewish.

Those who think that Israel was merely a foreshadowing of Christ and the Church, or conversely that the Church is a fulfillment of divine covenants with Israel, overemphasize continuity in the plan of God. Now that the Church exists, these believers wish to dissolve the ethnic definition of Israel and release God from His sworn obligation to honor His promises to His chosen nation. (p. 80)

This is not a dry, academic argument. The idea that the Church is "spiritual Israel," for example, has harmful implications. It questions God's intention to keep His covenant promises to Israel and, further, casts doubt on the Old Testament believer's ability to understand God's promises. (p. 81)

The assertion that the Church is "Israel" also can generate a potentially disastrous political activism as believers work to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Only Jesus Christ, not fallible Christians (nor Satan), can bring about the Millennium. (p. 82)

3. The failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church is the hermeneutical failure of the non-dispensationalists. But adding to the problem is the confusion of those who do subscribe to dispensationalism. This confusion has enabled the non-dispensationalists to revamp an old idea and sell it to the confused flock of Protestant mainline denominations including the Baptists.
4. Briefly, there are six dispensations. Theologians vary in their divisions of these periods of history and their number. But they all agree on the idea of separating Israel and the Church. I teach six dispensations in three categories. They are in synopsis:
 - I. **Theocentric Dispensations:** from the creation of Adam to the Virgin Birth of Christ:
 - (1) Age of the Gentiles: from the creation of Adam to the Exodus (Genesis 1—Exodus 11).
 - (2) Age of Israel: from the Exodus to the Virgin Birth of Christ (Exodus 12—Malachi).
 - II. **Christocentric Dispensations:** from the birth of Christ to the Rapture of the Church:
 - (1) Age of the Incarnation: from the Virgin Birth of Christ to the ascension of Christ (Matthew 1—Acts 1).
 - (2) Age of the Church: from Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church (Acts 2—Revelation 4).
 - III. **Eschatological Dispensations:** from the Rapture of the Church to end of human history:



- (1) Age of the Tribulation: follows the Rapture of the Church and begins specifically when the Beast-Dictator of the Revived Roman Empire enters into a treaty with the False prophet of Israel (Daniel 9:27) and ends at the Second Advent of Christ (Revelation 19:11-21).
 - (2) Age of the Millennium: follows the Second Advent beginning specifically with the resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulational saints (Revelation 20:4-6) and ends with the conclusion of human history and the destruction of the universe (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 20:11).
5. One of the common mistakes made by some dispensationalists is confusing the Rapture with the Second Advent. The Rapture concludes the Church Age while the Second Advent concludes the Tribulation.
 6. There is no prophecy in the Old Testament about the Church Age therefore it is referred to by Paul as a “mystery” unrevealed until after the resurrection of Christ. (Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:7-8; Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:1-11; and Colossians 1:24-27.)
 7. There is abundant prophecy in the Old Testament about the dispensations of Israel, the Tribulation, and the Millennium, as well as the Second Advent.
 8. Pretribulationists believe the rapture takes place before the Tribulation; midtribulationists think it happens three and one-half years into the Tribulation, and posttribulationists contend it occurs simultaneously with the Second Advent. We are pretribulationists.



9. The book of Daniel presents quite a bit of detailed information about the Tribulation and Second Advent as does the New Testament’s book of Revelation. Both are considered to be apocalyptic which means “to unveil” or “to disclose.”
10. Daniel is both apocalyptic and prophetic in character. We find a precise definition of “apocalyptic literature” in:

Walvoord, John F. *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 13:

The book of Daniel is rightly classified as an apocalyptic writing, because of its series of supernatural visions which by their character fulfilled what is intimated by the Greek word **ἀποκάλυψις, apokalupsis**, which means unveiling of truth which would otherwise be concealed. Although apocalyptic works abound outside the Bible, relatively few are found in Scripture. In the New Testament only the book of Revelation can be classified as apocalyptic; but in the Old Testament, Ezekiel, and Zechariah may be so classified in addition to Daniel.

Ralph Alexander has provided an accurate and comprehensive definition of apocalyptic literature as follows: “Apocalyptic literature is symbolic visionary prophetic literature, composed during oppressive conditions, consisting of visions whose events are recorded exactly as they were seen by the author and explained through a divine interpreter, and whose theological content is primarily eschatological.”



11. In chapter 9, Daniel gives prophetic details about certain events that will occur during the Tribulation. Misinterpretation of Daniel can lead to misunderstandings of other prophetic passages of Scripture and result in the development of heretical doctrine and theology.
12. Dr. Walvoord writes in *Daniel* that the “book of Daniel is essential to the structure of prophecy and is the key to the entire Old Testament prophetic revelation. A study of this book is, therefore, ... an indispensable preliminary investigation to any complete eschatological system.” (Ibid. 7.)
13. It is not our purpose exegete Daniel 9 but simply to highlight a certain passage whose gross misinterpretation has become a key “proof passage” for the heretical concepts surrounding the Preterist movement.
14. In this passage, the archangel Gabriel presents a timetable for the First Advent of Messiah and events following His crucifixion. Gabriel begins his prophecy to Daniel by identifying the historical event that sets this prophetic clock into motion:

Daniel 9:24 - “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city.

Daniel 9:25 - “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the prince; there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.”

15. The “command” refers to a decree issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus to Nehemiah in Nehemiah 2:8. The date has been established by archaeological evidence to be Nisan 5 (March or April) 444 b.c.

Nehemiah 2:7 -Furthermore, I (Nehemiah) said to the king (Artaxerxes), “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River (Euphrates), that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah,

v. 8 - and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.” And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

16. This last sentence of Nehemiah 2:8 is referenced by Gabriel in Daniel 9:25 by the phrase, “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.”
17. A chronology of events is now outlined by Gabriel. He divides these events into three segments which begin with the decree of Artaxerxes on Nisan 5, 444 b.c. The first segment describes the time it takes Nehemiah and Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem as “7 weeks”; and the time from the city’s completion up to the day Jesus of Nazareth proclaims himself to be Messiah in Matthew 21:1-11, as “62 weeks.”
18. The English word “weeks” is a source of constant confusion for some theologians. The Hebrew word is the plural noun:

שבועות *shavua'* - “groups of seven”



The best English word to translate this term is “heptads” which also means “groups of seven.” The question is what is the grouping? Is it days, literal weeks, or years? The context instructs us and we get help from:

Harris, R. Laird (ed.). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:899:

This term always indicates a period of seven. In Daniel 9:24-27 it denotes a period of seven years in each of its appearances in these four verses. This is proven by the context wherein Daniel recognizes that the seventy-year period of captivity is almost over.

19. Gabriel thus indicates in verse 24 that the people of Israel have a period of “seventy weeks” remaining in their dispensation. Since “weeks” refers to a group of seven years then the time remaining is 490 years. A summary is provided by:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *Anti-Semitism*. 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1991), 87:

In 444 B.C., dating from the decree by Artaxerxes Longimanus (Nehemiah 2:1-8) to restore and build Jerusalem, the Jews were promised 490 more years to evangelize other nations (Daniel 9:24-26). The term “seventy weeks” used by Daniel refers to a literal period of 490 years. However, seven years short of the time allotted to them for this particular operation, the cross occurred—Messiah was “cut off” as prophesied in Daniel 9:26—and the Jewish Age was halted. But God still owes Israel seven more years, and He will keep that promise during the Tribulation, ... or that “seventieth week” of Daniel 9.

20. In Gabriel’s disclosure he mentions a period of “seven weeks,” or 49 years that will transpire from the decree of Artaxerxes until the reconstruction of Jerusalem is completed followed by a period of “62 weeks,” or 434 years until the public appearance of Messiah. When we add 49 and 434 we don’t get 490 but 483 instead. Consequently, there is yet “one week” or 7 years left to be disclosed.
21. In Daniel 9:26 we learn of the crucifixion followed immediately by an historical event that destroyed the city of Jerusalem:

Daniel 9:26a - “And after sixty-two weeks (the 434 year period between the completion of Jerusalem and the public appearance of Messiah), Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.”

22. This is a prophecy of the crucifixion. It is at this point Gabriel’s prophetic clock stops prematurely. He was not permitted to reveal the mystery dispensation of the Church, therefore the seventieth week remains in escrow:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *Armageddon*. 2d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2002), 6:

The crucifixion of Christ was the beginning of the interruption of the prophecy of 490 years leaving one remaining week (seven years) to be fulfilled. Intercalated between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of Daniel is the present Church Age during which Israel is *temporarily* set aside as a client nation. Daniel 9:26 demonstrates the silence of the Old Testament prophets with regard to the “mystery” or the Church Age (Ephesians 3:3). When any Old Testament prophecy deals with events chronologically, the Church Age is omitted and information concerning the Tribulation, Millennium, or eternal future follow sequentially.