

Dispensationalism is fundamentally flawed. Strong language? I don't think so. Let me make it clear I love my dispensationalist brothers and stand side by side with them in promoting the gospel. Let me affirm there are many fine Christians who hold to a dispensational position, many are better men than I am.

I am a former dispensationalist, my self. I even taught it in Bible studies. After intensely studying the scriptures, praying, and examining all the various points of view, I rejected the dispensational position as incorrect and unbiblical. I've come to see the dangerous outworking of dispensational theology. Worst of all, dispensationalism insults Messiah and diminishes His work on the cross, albeit unintentionally.

I love my dispensational brothers and see them as victims rather than enemies --even those who propagate the system, even those who speak evil accusations of Covenant Theology. Why do I think the dispensational system is so terrible? Let me explain.

Jesus is the center and ultimate goal of all of creation and redemption. He is the second Adam, the head of a New Creation (1 Cor. 15:45). All the promises of God find their "Yes" in Him (2 Cor. 1:20). The salvation He has brought to the world is what the ancient prophets longed to look into and proclaimed (1Pet. 1:10-11, Acts 26:22). To put it another way, God has had one purpose from the beginning: to redeem a people for His glory through Jesus our Messiah. The glorious redemption through Jesus is what redemptive history is all about. This has always been the plan of God. The "fullness of the ages" has come upon us (1 Cor. 10:11).

Dispensationalism teaches otherwise. According to this error there are two distinct people of God, National/Physical Israel and the Church. The

Church and Israel are two separate peoples of God with two separate purposes, they say. They are not to be confused, they say. According to classic dispensational teaching, the Church was not spoken of in the Old Testament, rather it is part of the "Great Parenthesis," the period of time between the first and second comings of which the ancient prophets knew nothing.

"Plan A" is national and physical Israel. (Hereafter I will use the word "Ethnic" Israel—ethnic coming from the Greek word "ethnos" which encompasses the ideas of nation and people.) Classic dispensationalism says that if ethnic Israel had accepted Jesus as Messiah, the Davidic kingdom would have been established on the spot. Since Jesus was rejected and crucified, the kingdom was postponed and salvation has come to the Gentiles. Accordingly, the Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, is not to be confused with "Israel." This is substantially the teaching within Messianic Judaism, except some there teach that Jewish believers are not part of the "church", they are not even "Christians" (and this is not just a matter of semantics), but are the spiritual remnant of Israel. Someday God will reinstate "Plan A" and again focus on an earthly Davidic Kingdom centered in national Israel. Gentile Christians have no right to the name "Israel", and according to some extremists, Gentile Christians do not even have a covenant with God, since the New Covenant is with Israel and Judah!

Worse still, many dispensationalists believe the Temple will be set up again and the sacrifices will be reinstated after Jesus returns. But Hebrews says the old system is obsolete (Heb. 8:13). Jesus fulfilled it all.

But what about Jesus and His atonement? Do you see the evil of essentially designating the redemption He has brought as "Plan B?" He is our Savior. He is the true Israel. He is the vine. He is

the Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). He is the Anointed King of the Jews. Who can deny He has the ultimate right to the name "Israel?" To miss the point that the salvation we have in Jesus is what God has planned all along and that this glorious work of mercy and grace is the one true hope for both Jews and Gentiles is a tragic mistake. Oh, I know dispensationalists love the gospel. I know they trust Jesus alone for salvation. I'm sure they would be scandalized I have put it in these terms, but isn't this the ultimate implication of the idea that God has another plan in mind in addition to and alongside of salvation in Jesus Christ?

God says Jesus is a "covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). It is Messiah who will expand the Kingdom of God by bringing in the Gentiles. Israel is the Holy Nation, Israel is God's Kingdom. The throne of David is the Throne of God (1 Chronicles 29:23). Jesus commanded His Apostles to make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19). He said the gospel would go to all the world (Mt. 24:14), the Kingdom (which was already among them) was like yeast which leavens the whole loaf and a mustard seed which becomes the largest tree in the garden (Mt. 13:31-33). Paul quotes Isaiah 54 as referring to the Church, the Jerusalem that is above, which will have an abundance of children (Galatians 4:21-28). Paul tells us that the "barren woman" of Isaiah 54 is the Church, who Isaiah says will "expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants inherit the nations."

Jesus has already restored the Temple and has already rebuilt Jerusalem! We are the Temple, of which Jesus is the cornerstone (Mark 14:58, Eph. 2:20-21). The Church is the Holy City of God, Jerusalem. God sees the Church as something glorious.

Hebrews 12:22-24 states:

“You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

Read it again. The Church is Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. The salvation that Jesus brings has always been central. Jesus has always been the center of everything God has done, will do, and is doing. Ethnic Israel existed for the purpose of the Messianic Redemption, restoration of all of creation. Israel was created for the purpose of giving birth to Messiah Jesus and bringing the news of redemption to the world. How ironic that, though dispensationalism makes ethnic Israel central and it rejoices that Jewish people are back in the land, it also teaches that one day millions of Jews will be destroyed there!

Do you see why dispensationalism is so flawed? It tends to diminish the glorious work of Jesus in our behalf. It tends to rob the Church of its God-given glory. I pity our dear dispensational brothers who have been deceived and robbed by Satan. I am against the system because I love Jesus and I love God's people. I am against dispensationalism because I love the finished work of the cross. I am against it because it lessens the redemption Jesus has won by making it only a plan, not the plan. I oppose it because it deceives our dispensational brothers for whom Jesus died. This is not just a matter of how one understands the millennium or interprets prophecy. It is has to do with the central issue of God's purpose in

redemption. It is no small thing. There is not “Plan A” and “Plan B.” There is only one plan, Jesus and His kingdom.

One point remains. Is God finished with the Jewish people? No! Is there still a purpose for ethnic Israel? Yes! Jewish people are not being returned to the land to have most be destroyed. They are being called to faith in Jesus so that they might be saved today, the day of salvation. God calls the Jewish people to join now in being a witness to the Messianic Redemption. God loves the Jewish people because of the Patriarchs and will restore them to again to faith in our Lord Jesus. Ethnic Israel has a gift and calling that is irrevocable (Romans 11:22-29). Ethnic Israel is not, and for that matter never was, the center of God's plan, but God does still call ethnic Israel to be a part of the redeemed people, the church.

Ethnic Israel (the Jewish people) is called to join Spiritual Israel (the Church). In the church Jews and Gentiles together proclaim the great salvation Messiah Jesus has accomplished. Only when the Jewish people come back into the fold of Spiritual Israel can they find their reason for being, their true identity as Abraham's children. Until they return the Church will, in some sense, be incomplete, as the natural branches are estranged. We long, pray and work toward the day when the Jewish people return to King Jesus and join the church in proclaiming the Good News!

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A Fundamentally Flawed System

**By Rev. Fred Klett
PCA Evangelist to the Jewish People**