# Interpreting the Bible and Eschatology

# Intro

Be Humble - Hold views, but have grace

History: 70AD

* Pax Romana - Legendary time of peace under Roman Rule which began before Christ's coming.
* 50's & 60's - Tension was fueled by religious and nationalistic fervor, economic hardship, and the desire to end Roman oppression.  Many leaders and false messiahs arose and fell in this time.
* In 66 AD, Jewish Zealots and other factions launched a full-scale revolt against Roman rule.
* In 68 AD, Nero, a notorious Christian persecutor over his 14 year rule committed suicide and the Roman Empire went into upheaval for a year. Four emperors spanned that year of civil war before Vespasian finally took control in 69AD.
* In 70AD Vespasian's son Titus held a brutal months long siege of Jerusalem before the city’s historic destruction. Most of the city was completely razed and the temple was completely and utterly dismantled.

Many Christians interpret this event as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and a divine response to Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

### Key Points:

* Prophecy Fulfillment: Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple as a form of divine judgment. Matthew 24:1-2 and Luke 19:41-44 are seen by many as prophetic warnings that came to pass with the Temple’s destruction.
* Judgment for Rejection: Israel, by rejecting Christ, lost its special covenantal status, which was then extended to all who believe in Christ, including Gentiles.
* Transition of Covenants: The destruction is sometimes seen as symbolizing the end of the old covenant, centered on the Temple and sacrifices and the establishment of the new covenant through Jesus Christ.

**Biblical Interpretation: Dispensational vs. Covenantal**

Gen 17:1-8 God gives an unconditional promise Abraham to be the father of many nations and to have Canaan as a possession. How do we interpret that now?

Option 1: God is dealing specifically with OT Israel. God made an unconditional promise to give them Canaan so at some point, Jews will inherit the physical land of Canaan. Promises in the OT like this are generally unrelated to any NT promises or discussion about the New Covenant or the church. They mean what they say in a literal way.

Option 2: God has an unfolding plan for redemption for his chosen people. This is the first step of that plan and should be interpreted in light of Jesus and the New Covenant. It led to Jesus as Abraham's seed extending the plan through the Great Commission to the whole earth (Matt 28:19, Rom 4:13)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Dispensational*** | ***Covenantal*** |
| ***Organizing Principle of Scripture*** | Dispensations: Garden, up to Noah, up to Abraham, up to Moses, up to Jesus, until 2nd coming, after 2nd coming | God's unfolding Covenant of Grace revealed in stages: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus |
| ***Understanding of 'Israel'*** | Sees OT Israel and the NT Church as two distinct peoples, with separate destinies. Generally they consider Covenantal beliefs as 'replacement theology'. | Views the OT Israel and the NT Church as one people of God. Gentile believers were grafted into the olive tree and the branches of unbelieving jews were broken off. |
| ***OT Promises to Israel*** | God made specific promises to Israel that remain unfulfilled from the OT, which God will fulfill to them as a people and a nation generally regarding the land and the temple. | The church is the remnant of a faithful Israel and as such it inherits the OT promises of God. |
| ***When did the church begin?*** | Pentecost | Genesis |
| ***Covenants*** | Recognizes God’s covenants, but sees each dispensation as a distinct era with its own laws, promises, and expectations so the covenants are not organizational. | Emphasizes Adam and Christ as the two “covenant heads” between God and man. Adam led us into the fallen state and Christ redeemed us. |
| ***Relationship of OT to NT*** | The church is a new NT creation with little carry-over from the OT, therefore a strong emphasis is placed on NT in preaching and a de-emphasis of the law, dominion mandate, etc.. | The NT is seen as the final revelation of Jesus to interpret the OT. There is a strong emphasis on the continuity of scripture and the unchanging nature of God's plan. |
| ***The Law*** | Christ abolished the Mosaic law, and thus it does not apply to the Christian. Only laws Christ established and those OT laws specifically referenced in the NT apply. | God's law is unchanging. Christ wrote His laws on our heart in the New Covenant and therefore the ceremonial laws of the OT are no longer needed, but the moral laws of the OT still apply today. |
| ***Interpretation strategy*** | Distinguishes between different dispensations, with a focus on literal interpretation, particularly prophecy (inc. Revelation). The OT interprets the OT. | Seeks to understand Scripture as a unified, cohesive narrative, with a focus on the unity of God’s redemptive plan. The NT interprets the OT. |
| ***End Times*** | Pre-millennial Dispensationalism: Includes the 7 year tribulation, the rapture of believers before the 2nd coming, and God's 1,000 year reign before releasing Satan for the final battle. God's land and temple promises to the physical nation of Israel are fulfilled. | A-millennial or Post-millennial: Envisions a single, ultimate destiny for God’s people when Jesus returns to judge/redeem all people at His second coming. |
| ***Adherents*** | Current: John MacArthur, Left Behind, David Jeremiah, Jonathan Cahn, Chuck Swindoll. Formed in late 1800's by Darby and popularized in the Schofield Study Bible. | Current: John Piper, RC Sproul, Sinclair Ferguson, Doug Wilson. Formed in 1600's and is the general Reformed position. |