

**B.O.S.S. Study Guide**  
**“The Coming Ages”**  
Week of Feb. 15, 2010

Last week we looked briefly at the subject of Dispensational Theology.

As we saw the core distinctive of this theology is a clear and consistent distinction between Israel and The Church.

In contrast to Dispensationalism is Covenant or Reformed Theology - the subject of our study this week.

**Covenant Theology / Reformed Theology**

Some trace the tenants of covenant theology back to Origen, (185-254bc), a leading first century theologian.

It was developed and widely distributed by men like Martin Luther, who believed himself to be in the midst of the Tribulation during his life time.

John Calvin taught that Israel and the church were the same and looked for the Second Coming, not as a time of Christ’s kingdom on earth, but a time of general resurrection, judgment and then the eternal state. He taught that the millennium was “fiction”.

**The main tenants of the theology are:**

- The covenants of the Old Testament have either been fulfilled or have been violated by Israel and are invalid.
- The promised everlasting blessings of the covenants are being spiritually fulfilled in The Church.
- As a result The Church has replaced Israel as God’s covenant people.
- The promised “New Covenant” is now operational in and through The Church.

**Results:**

Though there are varying views of the rapture, (most being post-tribulationist) almost without exception, covenant theologians are Amillennialists (no millennium).

The kingdom is on earth now and being advanced by The Church.

Very early in Catholicism - the theology resulted in The Church attempting to replace Israel and the Jewish faith with Christianity.

- ◆ Old Testament priesthood - replaced by Catholic priesthood
- ◆ Old Testament sacrifices - replaced by Catholic sacraments
  - Circumcision replaced by infant baptism
  - Animal sacrifices replaced by Eucharist

Even the attempt to take and hold “The Holy City”, Jerusalem, was committed to. It wasn’t the Jews holy city it was ours.

The only way this is possible biblically, is to take or interpret most of Old Testament prophecy and much of the book of Revelation figuratively. (Not really 7 years of tribulation - probably the entirety of the persecution of the church on earth - no 1,000 year reign of Jesus on earth - probably an indefinite period of time needed to fulfill God’s plan on earth through The Church). “Floyd Hamilton, an amillennialist, acknowledges that ‘literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist picture.’ The amillennialist, of course, does not accept that picture of the future because he employs a different hermeneutic (biblical interpretation) in the area of prophecy.” Ryrie, “Basic Theology” pg. 517.

Because most of prophecy is taken figuratively, by those holding to this theology, the reader decides what is and what is not figurative, therefore, no common understanding of prophecy is

held by covenant theologians. For example: the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant as understood by Covenant theologians.

**Covenant/ Amillennial views of the Abrahamic Covenant:**

- The promise was conditional and the conditions were never met and are void.
- The land promised was fulfilled in the time of Joshua.
- It was fulfilled by David
- It was fulfilled during the reign of King Solomon
- It is being fulfilled now by the church on earth
- It is being fulfilled now by the church in heaven
- It will be fulfilled by all the redeemed on the future new eternal earth.

Premillennial view “if the yet unfulfilled part of the covenant is to be fulfilled literally (the promise of the land of Palestine), this will have to occur in a future Millennium, since there has been no place in past or present history for a literal fulfillment.” Ryrie, “Basic Theology” pg. 519.

Augustine taught that the 1000 year reign was literally being fulfilled on earth and expected Jesus to return within the first thousand years after His ascent. When He did not, the concept of the millennium was “spiritualized” to mean an indefinite period of time or the whole period between the first and second coming of Christ.

This hermeneutic caused other problems as well, most notably in The Gospels. **Matthew 24:14-30** - if Jesus’ teachings here are to be applied during The Church Age, (for there is no kingdom to come) then those believers who are not faithful servants of their masters talents will be sent to Hell. (**Read the story Matthew 25:28-30**) We have a hard time trying to apply all the beatitudes - for they are not kingdom teachings, there is no kingdom, so they must be for The Church. We like to be salt and light, but can’t imagine plucking out our eye or if you say “you fool” then you are sent to Hell. (**see 5:22;29**) Could it be there is a difference between the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom on Earth; and that Jesus is teaching Kingdom principles? The reason for the difficulty is that covenant theologians apply all prophetic scripture to the church, current believers, however, in order to do so, great efforts have to be made to reconcile difficult passages throughout The Bible, taking away their literal meaning and replacing it with a figurative or spiritual meaning instead. **For example:** Jesus will not literally set up a kingdom on earth, the church is spiritually establishing His kingdom on earth right now.

This is the main reason we include in MLC’s doctrinal statement that we believe in the pre-millennial return of Jesus. *“We believe in the personal and pre-millennial and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this “Blessed Hope” motivates the believer to redeem the time in service for Christ and admonishes the believer to purity and holiness of life.”*

**Why would we do that?**

If these are differences between different theological views, discussing or arguing about them really won’t matter. **Why would we include it in our doctrinal statement?**

**Why would it or should it matter to you?**