

# OpenTheo

## The Millennium as the Fulfillment of Israel's Hope



### When Shall These Things Be? - Steve Gregg

In this talk by Steve Gregg, he discusses the notion of the Millennium as the fulfillment of Israel's hope. He examines various Old Testament kingdom passages and Christian Bible scholars' identification of Revelation 20 as the thousand-year reign of Christ. He also explores the idea of the remnant as God's chosen people and argues that the true meaning of the Old Testament can only be understood through Christ. Overall, Gregg emphasizes the importance of interpreting the Bible in its proper context and avoiding contradictory revelations.

### Transcript

At this point in our series in eschatology, I've had to make some decisions as to what I want to take next. I've given you a packet of handouts in which the notes are in a certain order. I may change the order a little bit, not too significantly.

I want to begin at this point talking about the subject of the Millennium. Now, the Millennium is not as interesting a subject, I think, to most Christians as something like the Rapture or the Tribulation or the Antichrist. Which seem to be a lot more exciting.

Maybe not. Maybe some people like the Millennium better. But I know that when I was a dispensationalist and really into studying the end times, I particularly liked those passages that seemed to describe the day in which we live or perhaps days that are upon us soon to appear.

And the Millennium didn't seem very nearby. It seemed like at least before the Millennium, you've got to have the Tribulation, you've got to have things like the Rapture. And it seemed like after the Rapture, everything's sort of an anticlimax.

And so the Millennium was sort of like, well, that's just something that happens later anyway. But actually, the subject of the Millennium is a much more definitive subject in determining your whole outlook on biblical prophecy, both the Old and the New Testament, both with reference to your view of end times and your view of these times and of former times. Because the Millennium question is essentially the question of how are or will be the promises of God to Israel be realized? How is it that the Bible tells us to

expect a fulfillment of the promises God made to Israel? Now, we're not going to talk at length about Israel in this class.

As you know, we have a lengthy series on the subject of Israel that is separate from this. But we cannot ignore the subject altogether. In approaching the subject of the Millennium, we have to understand at least a little background.

And that is that in Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 3, certain promises were made to Abraham. And God said that through Abraham, and not only in that passage, but in subsequent passages where God spoke to Abraham and confirmed and added to and enlarged upon the promises he made to him, he said that Abraham was chosen to be the progenitor of a great nation, or many nations really, and that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. Abraham himself would be blessed by God and would be a blessing to others.

But principally, the most significant promise would be that his seed, or through his seed, all the nations of the world would be blessed. As we read further on through the Old Testament, we find that Abraham had a son named Isaac, who had sons named Jacob and Esau. Jacob was selected over Esau to be the one through whom these promises would be fulfilled.

Jacob had 12 sons. These sons had families that became clans eventually and tribes. Eventually, the 12 sons' offspring became 12 tribes, usually called the 12 tribes of the children of Israel, because Jacob's name had been changed to Israel.

And therefore, his sons were children of Israel. And the 12 tribes that came from his 12 sons were the 12 tribes of the children of Israel, or simply the 12 tribes of Israel, or simply Israel. These are all different ways of speaking about the ethnic family and nation that grew out of this man Jacob, who was the grandson of Abraham.

Now, it's clear from Scripture that the promises of God to Abraham began to be fulfilled through Isaac and Jacob and these clans or tribes that came from them and which became the nation of Israel. And God sent prophets and he sent, in some cases, godly kings to these people. And before all that, he sent judges to them.

And there were people that God sent to be leaders and spokesmen for him. And many of these spokesmen spoke of the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes in Israel. And these purposes were sometimes expressed in tremendously glowing, glorious terms.

In the Psalms and in many of the prophets, you read passages which have come to be called, in retrospect by theologians, the great kingdom passages. These are passages that predict a glorious kingdom, which would be headed up by a glorious king. And that king came to be understood to be called the Messiah.

He's not actually called the Messiah in most of Scripture. That is, in the Old Testament,

the term Messiah does appear in the book of Daniel. But apart from that, the prophets spoke of the Messiah without using that term.

The Jews, however, did come to think of this king as the Messiah. And what the prophets did say was that when the Messiah comes, he will establish a kingdom, a universal kingdom worldwide, that would be based upon righteousness, that would have, as its result, peace among all nations, that there would be justice, there would be no more war, there would be a restoration of God's purposes and God's people, and all of these would be realized through the Messiah. Now, in these prophecies of the Old Testament, Israel played a significant role.

There were references in these passages to a restoration of the Jewish people back to their land. You see, most of these prophecies were given before or during the Babylonian exile. And the same prophets who predicted these things predicted that the Jews would be carried into Babylon for 70 years, which they were, and that they would return.

And in prophecies about the Jews returning, by the grace of God, returning to their land, there were prophecies also about God restoring their worship, God restoring the temple and the sacrifices, God establishing their king, the Messiah, over all the kings of the world, and how all the kings of the world would bow down to him. A characteristic of these passages would be the four kingdom psalms, as they're called. Of the 150 psalms in our Bible, there are four of them in particular that are called the great kingdom psalms.

They are Psalm 2, which you have already studied in your morning devotions, a wonderful psalm about the kings of the earth seeking to rebel against the Messiah, but God nonetheless exalts the Messiah upon his holy hill of Zion and commands the kings to submit to him for their own sake and for their own good. Psalm 2. The next great kingdom psalm is Psalm 45, which appears to be a wedding psalm for a king. And it talks about the great glorious king and his kingdom, and that is one of the great kingdom psalms.

Another of them is Psalm 72, which speaks of the dominion of the Jewish king being from sea to sea and from one end of the earth to the other. And it talks about all the kings of the Gentiles coming and bringing gifts to him and bowing down to him and so forth. And Psalm 72.

And then Psalm 110 is the other great kingdom psalm, and it talks about the Father saying to the Messiah, sit at my right hand until I make your footstool. And it goes on to talk briefly about the messianic glory of the Messiah. Now, those four psalms are simply a few of the passages in the Old Testament that speak of this glorious kingdom age under the Messiah.

And Isaiah, particularly, has a great number of passages that describe this age. Actually,

all of the prophets do. There's only very few prophets, like Jonah, for example, that may not have anything in them about the kingdom age.

But in the vast majority of the prophets, virtually all of them in the Old Testament, the high point of each of these prophets' visions was that they foresaw a time under the Messiah when Israel would be vindicated and saved from her enemies and their worship would be restored and they would be the chief among the nations and that their king would be worshipped and honored by all the nations and he would be the Messiah. This great vision was put before the Jewish people throughout the Old Testament, and its fulfillment is what we are talking about when we talk about the millennium. Now, as I told you before, there are different views of the millennium.

The word millennium, which means 1,000 years in Latin, is really a term that is taken not from any of these Old Testament passages because none of these Old Testament passages ever speak of a period of 1,000 years. They speak about a kingdom age. They speak about a messianic, glorious age.

But they do not ever mention that it is 1,000 years in duration. In fact, on the contrary, they almost always mention that it is forever, that the kingdom of the Messiah will be forever. The reason this is sometimes associated with the millennium is because in Revelation 20, we have a picture of the saints reigning with Christ for 1,000 years.

And that is where the 1,000-year number comes from, Revelation 20, where that figure is used six times in the passage, speaking of the reign of the saints of God with the Messiah. Now, because Christian Bible scholars have virtually always identified Revelation 20 and the 1,000 years there with these many kingdom passages in the Old Testament, it is therefore taken that the 1,000-year number from Revelation 20 is to be implied in these passages in the Old Testament, since these Old Testament passages do not speak of it being 1,000 years, but Revelation 20, speaking about the same age, uses that term. Therefore, these Old Testament passages are also applied by many to the millennium.

And I think, to tell you the truth, I think properly so. This is true both of the amillennialists and of the premillennialists. And as far as I know, the postmillennialists also apply all these passages to the same thing.

So we are going to go ahead and assume, when we think of these kingdom passages in the Old Testament, that we are really talking about the same thing as John described as the 1,000-year reign in Revelation 20. Now, as I said, there are two principal poles opposite from one another in interpretation of the fulfillment of this millennial vision and of this kingdom vision. On the one hand, there are the premillennialists.

And as we saw, the premillennialists believe the Messiah, Jesus, will return before the millennium. That is why they are called premillennialists. They believe that before the

millennium can happen, Jesus must come.

Their view is that man's sinful nature is so sinful and so debauched and so incorrigible that it is unrealistic to hope that such a messianic bliss or a millennial bliss could ever be achieved, where all nations beat their swords into plowshares and their spears to pruning hooks, that any of this could be expected to happen before Jesus comes back to forcibly impose such a thing. Because mankind is so incorrigibly wicked, no one could ever hope to see this kind of righteousness and peace as a worldwide phenomenon until the Messiah himself comes to impose it by force. And so the premillennialists believe Jesus will come forcibly, rule with a rod of iron.

According to many premillennialists, not even everyone will be a Christian during that time. But when Jesus comes back, he will impose a forcible rule over all nations of the world. And of course the Christians and the Jews, according to the dispensationalists, the Jews are involved in this too, will be glorified during that time and will be enjoying a great marvelous time with Jesus here on the earth for the thousand years.

But other nations and people who have not been converted will still be there. They will simply be forced to serve and obey Jesus Christ. Until the end of that time, when in Revelation 20 we read that Satan will be loosed for a little while, and after he's loosed he goes out and persuades the nations to gather as the sand of the seashore against the beloved city.

And you may recall, we read this before, or maybe we haven't read it together here, but in Revelation 20 and verse 9, fire comes down from heaven and consumes these rebels against God. And then you read of the new heavens and new earth, this is all the Revelation material. As I say, the premillennialist believes in a fairly literal one thousand year reign of the Messiah on earth in Israel.

Because it is seen that these passages about the millennium or about the kingdom age are the fulfillment of God's purposes and promises to Israel. That the Messiah will reign from Jerusalem in the millennium. And that people will make their pilgrimages, like the Jews used to do, from all over the Mediterranean world on the holy days, they would make their pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

Well, in the millennium, all people of all nations will make pilgrimages to Jerusalem on regular holy days. The Feast of Tabernacles being one of them, it is alleged. So this is the vision of the premillennialists.

And you'll recall from what I said yesterday that dispensationalists are a brand of premillennialists. There are premillennialists who are not dispensationalists. If you forgot what the distinctives are of the dispensationalists, you can look back at your notes of our first lecture where I went through those.

But essentially, it should be understood that when we talk about premillennialism, we may be talking about dispensationalists or we might at times be talking about non-dispensationalists who are premillennial. But the majority today, the vast majority of premillennialists are dispensationalists. And it will be largely the dispensationalists that I will be thinking of in my comments about premillennialists.

I hope those terms are not confusing you. Now, at the opposite pole is the amillennialists. The amillennialists, remember, does not believe in a literal 1,000 years as the intended fulfillment of Revelation 20.

The amillennialists believes that the 1,000 years is symbolic, a symbolic number that simply represents a period of undefined duration. A thousand years simply meaning a very long time, but not at all being specific as to how long that time will be. And that that time actually represents the time from the first coming of Christ 2,000 years ago now to the second coming of Christ.

So that the binding of Satan at the beginning of the 1,000 years is symbolic of Christ's victory over Satan at the cross. And the coming down of fire from heaven to consume the enemies in Revelation 20 in verse 9 represents the second coming of Christ. Between the first coming and the second coming of Christ, you have the whole 1,000 years plus the little while at the end that Satan is loose.

In other words, the millennium to the amillennialists is basically coextensive with what we would call the age of the church. From the time Jesus died and rose again until Jesus comes back. That is the time that is symbolically indicated by Revelation 20 as the 1,000 years.

That, at least, is the amillennial viewpoint. Now, because the amillennialist believes that, the amillennialist also believes that the Old Testament kingdom passages, like those four psalms I mentioned and similar passages in the prophets, that those also apply to the church age, to the whole church age. Now, in order to believe such things, an amillennialist has to take a lot of these passages in a non-literal sense.

For example, a very good example of one of these kingdom passages would be seen, and a well-known one, in Isaiah chapter 2. Let me just read a few verses for you, and I think you'll recognize that we have here a reasonably well-known representative of these passages. In Isaiah 2, verses 2 through 4, it says, Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. Many people shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways, and we shall walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations,

and shall rebuke many people.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Now that's an example of the millennial vision of the kingdom age of the Messiah.

Now there's no mention specifically of the Messiah in this passage, but so many features of the passage resemble other similar passages, some of which do mention the Messiah as present, that it is implied, I think correctly by all, that the Messiah is the founder of this order that we have read about, and its ruler. Now, the pre-millennialist takes this, they would say more literally, they'd say there is a time coming when Jerusalem, which is here referred to as Zion and Jerusalem in verse 3, those terms are basically interchangeable. Zion is the mountain upon which the city of Jerusalem was built, and so the terms Zion and Jerusalem are used essentially interchangeably in the Bible.

This actual city of Jerusalem will in the days after Jesus comes back be exalted, and will be the principal city of the world, and it says all nations, at the end of verse 2, will flow into it, and people from many nations will come to Jerusalem and be instructed in the ways of God. And they will put an end to war, as verse 4 talks about, and there will be no more wars between nations, and this will be a wonderful time of universal peace. Now, the amillennialist thinks that this passage, like all kingdom passages in the Old Testament, refers to the age of the church, in other words, the age we now live in.

Now, in order to do that, of course the amillennialist can't take everything literally. We don't see, for example, and for the last 2,000 years it has not been, that all the Gentiles make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. I've never made such a pilgrimage, and I don't know that I ever will, and probably you haven't.

So obviously, we have not gone to Jerusalem, not the city of Jerusalem that is established on Mount Zion. We have not learned the law of God from instruction that we received as a result of going to there. Actually, the mountain of the Lord's house, Mount Zion, is not higher than all the hills.

It's not the highest mountain even in the region, and yet it says it will be established above all the hills here. And therefore, and we certainly don't see an end of all war nationwide or worldwide, and therefore, someone could say, how in the world could you possibly apply this to the church age? The amillennialists would say, well, there are recognized symbols here, that Zion and Jerusalem are frequently used by New Testament writers as references to the church, which is a spiritual city. Jesus said to his disciples, the early church, you are the light of the world, a city set on the hill, cannot be hid.

Paul said that the heavenly Jerusalem, the church, is the mother of us all. God is our father, and the church is the womb through which he brings forth his children. And the

church, the heavenly Jerusalem, is our mother.

He said that in Galatians 4. In Hebrews chapter 12, the writer said that we have come to Mount Zion. We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels and so forth, and it says, and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn. The heavenly Jerusalem and Mount Zion to which we have come is the general assembly and church of Christ, the firstborn.

And therefore, the New Testament writers are not shy about applying the term Jerusalem or Zion to the church, that is, they spiritualize it. And it is the contention of the amillennialists that there are many passages, especially those kingdom passages in the Old Testament, where Zion and Jerusalem and even Israel, those words actually apply to the spiritual Israel, the spiritual Jerusalem, the spiritual Zion, which is the church. As far as all the nations coming in, the amillennialists would say, well, people from all nations have been coming into the church ever since Jesus came.

And are they learning God's ways? Well, that is what they are. Some have been. The church is said to teach them to observe all things Christ commanded.

And so we see Gentiles flowing from all nations into the body of Christ, into the spiritual Zion and learning what God said to do. As far as the mountain of the Lord's house being established above all the hills, the amillennialist says that is an obvious symbol that is frequently used in the Old Testament. Mountains represent governments or nations in many passages of the Old Testament.

This is indisputable in some passages. It is perhaps not indisputable in this passage. But in other passages, it is indisputable that mountains represent nations or governments or authorities.

And to say that the mountain of the Lord's house will be established above all other mountains or hills simply means that the authority of God's kingdom will be greater than the authority of all other kingdoms. To refer to the Lord's house, which in the Old Testament thinking would be the temple, to the Christian is the church. The church is the house of God.

And many New Testament statements affirm this. We don't have time to look at them all. You could look if you wished at 1 Peter 2.5 or at 1 Timothy 3, I think verse 15, where Paul says that you must know how to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church.

Which he doesn't mean the church building. He means the church, the body of Christ. Let me get that reference, because that could be second Timothy.

I just need to make sure I give you the right reference. 1 Timothy 3.15, yeah. But if I'm delayed, I write, so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house



of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The house of God, to the New Testament writers, is the church, the body of Christ, made of spiritual living stones. And so the mountain of the Lord's house that is exalted is the kingdom of God, the church, has been exalted as the principal entity in the world ever since Jesus came. And all nations have been coming into it through evangelism and through discipleship.

They're being taught to walk in his ways. But what about that business about beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hoes? Well, the Amillennialist does not believe that this is talking about a time of worldwide global peace. When it says, they shall not learn war anymore, these nations, he's talking about the nations that come into the Lord's house.

That believers put away their weapons. People who were formerly hostile toward one another on a racial or national basis, suddenly the middle wall of partition is broken down between them in Christ. And they put away their hostilities, and they put away their fighting, and they get rid of their swords and their spears, and they develop agricultural pursuits, sowing the seeds of the gospel, and sowing the seeds of peace, that they are cultivating now, not fighting.

Why? This is a result of them having come into the Lord's house and learned his ways. This is not talking about a global geopolitical situation. It's talking about the effect of learning God's ways when the people of the nations learn them.

They stop killing each other, and they stop being hostile toward each other. And this is true in the body of Christ. Now, you might say, well, hey, the last 2,000 years there's been a lot of fighting done by the church, not by the body of Christ.

Not by those who follow Jesus' ways. We've got to remember the church is not to be confused with the institutional man-made organization that calls itself the church. Those who have, in fact, walked according to Jesus' teachings, those who are his true disciples and continue in his words, have not killed each other.

Anyone can call themselves a Christian, even those who kill each other, even those who ran the Crusades, even those who ran the Inquisition, can call themselves Christians if they like, but they're not. A Christian is one who is a follower of Christ, and those who have followed the teachings of Christ have essentially not been going out and killing each other. They learn a different way of life.

They gain a new spirit. And this is what the amillennialist thinks this passage is about. And the premillennialist says, oh, that is so subjective, that is so far-fetched, I mean, it's so clear that it's literal.

Well, I don't know that it's so clear that it's literal. If it is literal, you've got some

interesting things you've got to suggest. One is that Mount Zion, the literal Mount Zion, is going to have to get bigger.

Bigger than all the mountains in the world. In fact, if anything, if we're going to be literal, it has to be put on top of the other mountains. That's why it's bigger, that it's established on top of the other mountains.

Furthermore, we have to understand that at some future time, nations that have been making war are going to take their weapons and melt them down and beat them into farming implements. Interestingly enough, they're not going to take modern weapons and make them into modern farming implements. They're going to take ancient weapons, swords and spears, and they're going to melt them down into plowshares and pruning hooks.

It seems to me like in a future time, the weapons that they would use would be of a more sophisticated nature, and likewise the farming implements. But you see, in order to take this literally, one has to actually suggest things that almost no one really suggests. Even the premillennialists have to say, well, usually, I don't know that they have to say this, but they usually say, well, spears, swords, that represents weapons in general.

Of course, the actual weapons that that will be realized with will be of a more modern sort. Well, then you're not being literal. The question is, how literal are you supposed to be with a passage like this? And the answer that the dispensationalists would give is as literal as possible.

And the amillennialist says, okay, fair enough, as literal as possible under what circumstances? You know, you could, since God can do anything, you could believe that God will take Mount Zion and put it on top of another mountain somewhere. I mean, that's entirely possible with God. You know, you can even say to Him, I'll be removed, and it'll be done.

Nothing's impossible with God. But is that really what God wants us to envisage here? Or is there light given to us in the New Testament as to the actual realization of these phenomena? Now, that's where the amillennialists and the premillennialists generally part company. And it is, as we saw in our last lecture about interpretation of Scripture, it is a crux of interpretation.

And while it is not, as some claim, the case that dispensationalists take everything literally and amillennialists take everything spiritually, it is nonetheless the case that in passages like this, the dispensationalists do hold out for a more literal fulfillment of the actual wording, in a more literal sense, than the amillennialists. The amillennialists tends to expect a spiritual fulfillment. And the reason the amillennialist does so is not because he doesn't like the idea of an actual fulfillment.

This is something that dispensationalists need to take into account. An amillennialist, generally speaking, does not hold his view because he dislikes premillennial ideas. I mean, why would anyone dislike them? What is there to dislike about the idea that Jesus will come and set up a worldwide kingdom of peace? I mean, what's to dislike about that? I can't imagine that a person would choose to be an amillennialist on the basis of preference merely.

The only reason that an amillennialist that I've ever, any amillennialist I've ever met, or myself who has to be labeled that way too because of my views on things, would choose it is because he's compelled to by what the New Testament writers said on the same subject. Now, we will look at what the New Testament writers said on the same subject shortly, but let me just focus on the real crux here. And I brought this up briefly at the end of our last session, but we ran out of time.

I would have said more. You might even want to turn to that last page of your notes from the last session here. Because, remember, this whole millennial question is the question of how does God intend to fulfill his promises to Israel.

And the premillennialist believes that they will be fulfilled in the future millennium when the Messiah comes back. The amillennialist believes that they have been fulfilled when the Messiah came the first time. And he established the promised kingdom.

But it was spiritual in nature rather than material and political. You see, if you're going to be very literal about these Old Testament passages, if we look at some of them we'll see quite clearly that the literal interpretation would require that a political nation of Israel govern the political nations of the world during the millennium. The kingdom of the Messiah will be, according to premillennialism, a political kingdom on the earth with a ruler, the Messiah, who will be a political ruler like David was.

All the nations will pay tribute to him like all of them paid tribute to David. In fact, the Jews' idea of the Messiah is very much modeled upon David because David in the Old Testament is a model of the Messiah. But David was a political ruler and a militaristic ruler.

And therefore, the Jews expected, and by the way, the dispensationalists believe what they do because they go along with what the Jews think on this. The Jews and the dispensationalists expect that the Messiah must be a political and military ruler in order to fulfill these promises literally. The amillennialist says, no, all this talk about the Messiah being a king is really, although it's framed in language which to the Jewish mind would suggest a political kingdom, yet Jesus taught that his kingdom is spiritual in nature.

Yes, he's a king. And yes, people of all nations come and submit to his kingship in the church. But it is a spiritual kingship.

He doesn't come down here and take a real scepter of iron and pound people over the head if they don't submit to him. He rules in the hearts of his people as a spiritual entity. And this is how the amillennialist views these things different than the premillennialists.

But the problem here is, the dispensationalist in particular is jealous over the promises made to Israel as a nation. And it is believed that the amillennialist sells Israel short. There is, after all, the nation of Israel to consider.

The people of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve sons of Jacob and their descendants, these are the ethnic Israel. And it is argued by the dispensationalist that, hey, these promises in the Old Testament were made to Israel, not to the church, not to the Gentiles. They were made to Israel.

It is Israel's Messiah. It is Israel's land. It is Israel's capital city.

It is Israel whose temple will be rebuilt and Israel where the sacrifice will be offered. Israel will be the hub and center of the world. And the Jew will be the one to whom ten men of all nations will come and take hold of him and say, we have perceived that God is with you.

Let us go with you and worship your God. All of these Old Testament images talk about Israel and the Jew and so forth. And the dispensationalist says, if you take all those passages and apply them to the church age, it is clear that you must spiritualize Israel.

You make Israel out to be the church. And in so doing, you are stealing from the nation Israel its promises and giving them to the Gentile church. And this is something that is repugnant to the Jew, of course, and to the dispensational Christian.

And the dispensational Christian essentially says, listen, we've got to understand these promises the way the Jews understood them. If God said Israel, he meant Israel. He didn't mean the church, because the Jews would never have understood him as meaning the church.

Of course, they would naturally understand that when God said Jerusalem, he meant what they meant when they said Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem, that when God said Israel, he must mean what they thought it means, Israel themselves. And to say that it means something else suggests that maybe God deceived them. And we can't allow for this.

I have a quote here. In fact, I closed the last session with this quote from Charles Ryrie, a dispensationalist, in his book *Dispensationalism Today* on pages 95 and 96. Ryrie says, quote, the dispensationalist studies the words church and Israel in the New Testament, finds that they are kept distinct, and therefore concludes that when the church was introduced, God did not abrogate his promises to Israel, nor enmesh them into the church.

All of this is built on an inductive study of the use of the two words, not a scheme superimposed on the Bible. In other words, it is built on a consistent use of the literal, normal, plain method of interpretation without the addition of any other principle that will attempt to give respectability to some preconceived conclusions. Now, I want to just suggest that the amillennialist also derives his view from an inductive approach to the scripture, and from what he considers to be something built on the consistent use of normal method of interpretation and so forth.

You know, to say that the dispensationalist reads the words church and Israel in the New Testament and finds them not mixed up, they're kept separate, the amillennialist scratches his head and says, wonder which New Testament that is you're reading. Because in the New Testament, the amillennialist finds these terms mixed up very much. As a matter of fact, the word Israel becomes spiritualized in the New Testament and is applied to the church.

For example, there are two things to consider in the New Testament. The New Testament often says that a Jew, who is an ethnic Jew, might not be a Jew in God's reckoning. Now remember, when God gave prophecies about Jews and Israel, we have to consider that it is the Jews and Israel as God reckons them, not necessarily as a man would, but as God would, because God uses and defines his own terms.

When is a Jew not a Jew? Well, in Matthew 3.9, John the Baptist said to the Jews, Do not think to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father, for God is able from these stones to raise up children of Abraham. That is to say, as far as being a child of Abraham is concerned, one doesn't even need to have ethnic origins from Abraham. A stone certainly could never be made to have ethnic origins to Abraham.

God could, if he wished, make a stone into a human and call it a child of Abraham, but he could not change the fact that that stone doesn't have the history of going back to Abraham and having come out of his loins. But this suggests that God could, from a stone, or from a Gentile for that matter, who does not descend from Abraham at all, make that person or that thing into what God would consider a descendant of Abraham. Whereas, the Jews who actually were physically descended from Abraham, God can say, hey, don't put any stock in that.

And John the Baptist said that to them. Don't say, we have Abraham for our father. Don't even say it.

As far as being a child of Abraham is concerned, God can make a rock into more of a child of Abraham than you deserve to be called. And Jesus said the same thing in John chapter 8, verses 39 and 40. In John chapter 8 and 39 and 40, they said to him, Abraham is our father.

Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

Now, what he said is, if you were Abraham's children, as they claim, and he's implying you are not, and he makes it clear they're not, he says you would do the works of Abraham. Now, he is not denying their physical descent from Abraham. That's very clear.

He knows they were physically descended. In fact, he says so in verse 37. I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill me.

He says in verse 40 and 39, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. He's saying that to be called Abraham's child, in any sense that really matters, you have to not only be descended as these people were from Abraham, you have to do the works of Abraham, you have to have the faith of Abraham, you have to have some spiritual qualification to be a child of Abraham. Jesus said, so John the Baptist said that a rock that has no physical descent from Abraham can become, if God wished, spiritually qualified as a child of Abraham.

And Jesus said that a Jew who is descended from Abraham can be spiritually disqualified from being a child of Abraham. In other words, what makes someone a child of Abraham, as far as God is concerned, is not physical descent from Abraham, but spiritual likeness to Abraham. If you look at Romans chapter 2, verses 28 and 29, Paul said, For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, that means physically descended from Abraham, a physical Jew, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly.

It's a spiritual designation. To be a Jew, you have to have the inward qualifications, and to have the outward merely is not to make one a Jew at all, as far as Paul is concerned, or as an inspired writer, he represents God's opinion on that. In Romans 9, in the first five verses, Paul raises the conundrum.

Why is it that God has made these promises to Israel, but they don't seem to have been fulfilled? And he answers it in verse 6. He said, It's not that the word of God has taken no effect, that is, it's not that God's promises have fallen to the ground, unfulfilled, but rather he says, For they are not all Israel who are of Israel. Now, how is Paul using the word Israel here? Not all who are of Israel are in fact Israel. Now, what he's referring to is the fact that the word of God, the Old Testament, made promises to Israel.

These promises do not appear to have been fulfilled to the nation as a whole. But he says, Don't worry, it's not that God's promises haven't come true. You have to realize that when God says Israel, not everyone that he is calling Israel is from Israel.

Not all who are of Israel, meaning of the nation of Israel, are this Israel to whom the promises are made. And he spends three chapters pointing out that even within the

nation of Israel, only the believers are the elect. Only they receive the promises.

So, being a Jew itself does not satisfy the conditions for being Israel. In Revelation chapter 2 and verse 9, Jesus is consoling a persecuted church, the church of Smyrna. And he says to them, I know your works, tribulation and poverty, but you are rich.

And I know the blasphemy of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Likewise, in Revelation 3 and verse 9, he says to the church of Philadelphia, in Revelation 3 and 9, Indeed, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but lie. Indeed, I will make them come and worship before your feet.

Who are these people who say they are Jews and are not, and are a synagogue of Satan? Obviously, Jesus here in Revelation is referring back to the same idea that Jesus referred to in John chapter 8. They are of their father, the devil. They say they are Jews, but they are really not as far as God is concerned. What's wrong? They got a bad pedigree? No, their pedigree is fine.

It's just that being a Jew has nothing to do with genealogy. It has nothing to do with pedigree. It has nothing to do with who your ancestors are.

It has to do with whether you are of the synagogue of Satan or of the synagogue of God. It depends if you have the works of Abraham, not the genealogy of Abraham. You don't need the genetics of Abraham.

You need his faith to be a Jew, to be a child of Abraham, to be of the Israel of God. And not all who are of Israel are Israel. Now, where in the New Testament do we find this keeping separate? The Jews are the Jews and the church is the church.

Sounds to me like he's saying, if you've got the faith of Abraham, you're a child of Abraham. That sounds like a Jewish terminology, a child of Abraham, and yet it's applied to the church. Likewise, not only is a Jew sometimes not a Jew, according to the New Testament, sometimes a Gentile is a Jew.

In John 10, 16, Jesus said, And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, and all commentators agree he means Gentiles. The disciples did not know about the Gentiles yet, coming in. The fold, this fold, is referenced to Israel.

And the other sheep are not of Israel, they're Gentiles. Them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Not two, by the way, he's going to take his sheep that are of that fold, that would include the disciples, the Jewish believers, and he's going to bring in sheep that are not of Jewish fold, they're Gentiles, he's going to bring them in.

And what is there going to be then? There's going to be one fold, not two. There's not

going to be God's chosen people, the Jews, and God's chosen people, the church, two separate chosen peoples. They're all put together.

His sheep are his sheep. If they're Jewish by blood, fine. If they're Gentile by blood, equally fine.

There's no distinction, no Jew or Gentile in Christ. In Romans 9, which we looked at a moment ago, in that discussion about Israel, not all are Israel who are of Israel, he makes it clear also in verses 23-26 that there are Gentiles who really belong to what is called Israel. In Romans 9, 23-26, Paul said, And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom he called not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, And as he said in Hosea, And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, You are not my people, there they will be called the sons of the living God.

Isaiah also cried, well we won't read on, but the point here is he's talking about people who were not called God's people. The Gentiles were not formerly called God's people. He says, Then they will be called my people.

Well, who did God call my people? Israel. The Gentiles who did not formerly have that title will now have that title. And it certainly is the case in the New Testament that they do.

If you look at Romans, well we don't need to look at all these verses I have in your notes, there's too many for us to look at all of them, but we see in 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10, that the Gentiles, or I should say the church, not the Gentiles, but the church is spoken of in these terms. He says, You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. Now all these terms are used in the Old Testament of Israel.

In 1 Peter, they're used of the church. In fact, even the word church in the New Testament, ekklesia is the Greek word for it, was used in the Old Testament of Israel. The congregation of Israel in the Greek Old Testament, which is the Septuagint, was called the ekklesia, the called out ones.

It was the regular word in the Old Testament for the congregation of Israel. The New Testament believers called themselves the ekklesia. They're the new congregation of God's people.

They are the new Israel. They take the terminology that once belonged to Israel and apply it to the church in the New Testament. Look at Galatians 3, this we've seen before in other settings, but it just settles the matter so decisively it seems to me.

In Galatians 3, in verse 16, Paul said, Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. Abraham and his seed. Most people think that's the Jews, his seed, but it goes on and says, He does not say to seeds, plural, as if it meant, say, the Jews, all the offspring



of Abraham.

He does not say unto seeds, as of many, but as of one. And to your seed, who is Christ. Now what Paul has said here is the promises made to Abraham and to the singular seed, Christ.

That's all. Not to seeds, plural, but to one seed, Christ. Now unless Paul is not inspired by the Holy Spirit, unless Paul is wrong in his theology, we have to assume that what Paul is saying is when God made promises to Abraham, those promises were intended to be for two people, Abraham and his seed, singular, Christ.

And not to seeds, many. And then at the end of this same chapter, Galatians 3, he says to the believers who are mostly Gentiles in Galatia, it's a Galatian region, mainly Gentile church, verse 29, and if you are Christ's, that is if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and the heirs according to the promise. If you belong to Christ, since he is the seed, you are in Christ, and you are then counted to be the seed, you then are the heirs of the promise.

What promise? The promise made to Abraham. What else? He mentions it in verse 16, the promises were made to Abraham and his seed, the seed is Christ, if you belong to Christ, you're in him, you are the seed, you are the heirs of the promise. The Abrahamic promises are for the church.

Now, the dispensationalists and the Jew chafe miserably under such statements. Unfortunately for them, they are biblical statements, and they are biblical statements that do not allow any other interpretation without violence being done to them. Paul very clearly, along with Jesus and John the Baptist, affirmed that being a Jew by genealogy counts for nothing in itself.

As far as God is concerned, God never did save people on the basis of their ethnicity or who their parents were. God has always saved people on the basis of faith. Read Hebrews 11, if you wonder about that, it goes through the whole Old Testament.

It says, by faith, by faith, by faith, all these Old Testament characters were saved. And God has always saved people on the basis of faith, never on the basis of who their grandparents or great-grandparents were. And therefore, being a Jew doesn't count for anything unless one has faith.

But if one does have faith, that makes them a Christian. Because as soon as you have faith in Jesus, you're a Christian. There's no Jew or Gentile in Christ.

Being a Jew or a Gentile ceases to be relevant when one is a Christian. And if one is not a Christian, a Jew has no advantage either because he doesn't have faith. If Abraham is not a Jew, as far as God is concerned.

Where do you find, in the New Testament, this keeping distinct of the idea of Jew or Gentile, or Jew or Christian, I should say. You know, Ryrie says what many dispensationalists say. He says that the dispensationalist finds that Israel and the church are kept distinct.

And therefore concludes that when the church was introduced, God did not abrogate His promises to Israel, nor enmeshed them into the church. Interesting observation. The dispensationalist, he says, reads the New Testament and sees that God did not abrogate His promises to Israel, nor did He enmesh them in the church.

Is that right? Well, then I wonder what God meant when He said that the promises were made to Abraham in his seed, and if you belong to Christ, you are the heirs of the promises. Doesn't that say that He enmeshed them in the church? You see, here's the point. The dispensationalist calls the theology of the Amillennialist, calls it a replacement theology.

According to the dispensationalist, a person like me is engaged in what they call replacement theology, that the church replaced Israel. God made promises to Israel, but Israel was disobedient, so God took Israel out of the picture and put the church in there. That is, in a sense, true.

Jesus said that, of course, in Matthew chapter 21. He said to the Jews, The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it, meaning the spiritual nation, the church. So, Jesus told the Jews that the kingdom was taken from them and given to some other nation, the church.

Spiritual nation, a holy nation of peculiar people. Therefore, we could say we believe in a replacement theology. But that's not the whole story.

Because replacement theology isn't just a total replacement. It's not as if God took something away from the Jews as an ethnic group and gave it to the Gentiles as an ethnic group. See, the dispensationalist sometimes uses the misnomer of the term the Gentile church.

The dispensationalist sometimes makes this distinction. Well, there's Israel and there's the Gentile church. Wait a minute, where in the Bible do you read of the Gentile church? The church is neither Jew nor Gentile.

It's not that God took something away from the Jews and gave it to the Gentiles. You see, if you will read the Old Testament, you'll find that throughout the Old Testament, even among the Jewish ethnic people, only a few were ever saved. Paul makes that point in Romans 9. He says Abraham had lots of children.

They were all ethnically children of Abraham, but only one was chosen. That one, Isaac, had two children. Both were children of Abraham and of Isaac, but only one was chosen,

Jacob.

Which means that in every generation, there were some people descended from Abraham and Isaac and Jacob eventually, who were not chosen. They had the ethnic qualifications, but they were not the chosen people. You see, in the Old Testament, God made it clear as well in the Old as in the New, that there was always a remnant within Israel who were his true people, who really had faith, who were really saved.

And then there was that great host of Jews who had the same ethnic background, but they did not have the spiritual qualifications to be God's people. So that Elijah, in his day, thought that he was the only one who was faithful to God. And God said, no, I've yet reserved 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but only that many.

In a nation that had hundreds of thousands, only 7,000 had not bowed the knee to Baal. They were the true remnant. They were God's people.

What about all those other Jews who worshipped Baal? They went to hell, except the ones who repented, perhaps. But a person never has been saved by being a Jew. That person has always been ultimately God's person because of faith and faithfulness to God.

Jews have not had a record of being more faithful to God than other people necessarily. They just had more advantages. They just had more chances than other people.

They didn't have a better track record of being obedient. In fact, if you read the Old Testament, which was, by the way, written by Jews. It's not an anti-Semitic document written by Gentile haters.

The neo-Nazis didn't write the Old Testament. The Jews wrote the Old Testament. And it is there that you have the documentation that the Jews as a race were disobedient to God and under the judgment of God the majority of their history.

It should never be thought that God saved people ever, Old or New Testament, simply on the basis that they were Jewish by blood. It always was the case that a remnant were faithful. And that remnant were always saved.

Look at an Old Testament passage that makes this very clear. In Psalm 50. I hate to go so long in this matter, but I cannot ignore it.

It's an essential foundation of our whole consideration of eschatological subjects. In Psalm 50 and verse 5, God says, Gather my saints, that means holy ones, together to me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Okay, there are some holy ones that God is gathering to himself who are in covenant relationship with him and apparently faithful to that covenant.

But if you look further down, verse 16, in the same psalm, verse 16, but to the wicked, God says, What right have you to declare my statutes or to take my covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast my words behind you? Now, who is he talking to here? Gentiles? No, he's talking to the wicked. Are these wicked Gentiles or wicked Jews? Well, who takes God's covenant on their lips? Who declares God's statutes? Gentiles? No. In Old Testament times, there were no Gentiles declaring God's statutes or taking God's covenant on their lips.

These are Jewish people who claim to be in covenant relationship with God. But they're wicked. They're not righteous.

They are not followers of God. He says, What right do you have to name my covenant on your lips? He's implying you have no right to do so. There are, in Israel, in verse 5, that remnant, the holy ones, who have made a covenant with God and kept that covenant by sacrifice.

But in the same nation, in the same ethnic people, in verse 16, there are the wicked. And God says, Hey, I do not count you as being a member of my covenantal community. What right do you have even to mention my covenant on your lips? You hate instruction.

You hate what I have to say. And God makes it very clear here, as in many places in the Old Testament, that there was in Israel always a remnant who were in reality what the whole nation was supposed to be in theory. In theory, the whole nation was supposed to be a holy nation, but they never really were.

There was always that remnant who were in reality what the whole nation of Israel was in theory only. And that remnant were the only ones who were ever really God's people, even though many more besides were descended from Abraham and were even Jewish. Now, what about when Jesus came? Was there a remnant then? Of course there was.

Do we know who they were? Well, when Jesus was born, he was born in a remnant family. Mary and Joseph were faithful. John the Baptist's parents were faithful, blameless followers of God.

They were certainly part of the remnant. When Jesus was born, old Simeon in the temple and Anna, who were looking for the redemption of Israel, they were certainly part of the remnant. When Jesus grew up and began to preach, there was a remnant of Israel who had come to John and had become disciples of John, and some of them then became disciples of Jesus.

In fact, the entire remnant of Israel became disciples of Jesus. We know this because it would be impossible for someone to be part of the faithful remnant and reject Jesus, because that very rejection would make them by definition not part of the faithful remnant, to reject the Messiah. So we can say that when Jesus came to his people, his

own received him not, but to as many as did receive him.

To them he gave the power to become the sons of God. We're quoting John chapter 1, verse 11 and 12. Now what this means is that the remnant of Israel, the faithful remnant, became the disciples of Jesus.

They were Jewish, and they were the faithful. Those who didn't follow Jesus were not faithful to God. They were the lost Jews.

They were the seed of Satan. They were the ones that Jesus declared doom upon, and they were destroyed largely in 70 A.D. by the judgment of God, but not before the remnant had been rescued. Who? The remnant of Israel.

And who were they? The ones who followed Jesus. What do we call people who follow Jesus? We call them the church. You see, you have to understand that this so-called replacement isn't really a replacement at all.

At any time in Old Testament history, only the faithful remnant of Israel were ever God's people, really. And when Jesus came, those who in that generation belonged to that remnant became the followers of Jesus. We later just call them Christians.

It's just another name for the people who follow Jesus. It turns out that later on, certain Gentiles came in and became followers of Jesus, too. What did that make them? That made them part of the remnant of Israel.

That made them part of the same body, grafted to the same tree. The middle wall of partition broken down so that those Gentiles who were formerly aliens from the commonwealth of Israel have now been brought near and made one with the commonwealth of Israel, according to Paul in Ephesians 2. We don't have time to look up all these verses. I'm hoping you know some of them.

But the fact is that in the Old Testament, if you would say, Who are the chosen? Who are the saved at any given time? The answer would be those who have faith. In the Old Testament, those who had faith were normally remnant of the Jews, although there were some Gentiles. There was Ruth, a Moabitess, who converted to the God of Israel.

There was Rahab, who did the same. She was a Gentile also. And throughout the Old Testament, you find a trickle of Gentiles coming in into that faithful remnant.

So that the remnant of Israel in the Old Testament was made up of mostly Jews, though not most Jews. Most Jews were not in it. But in it, the composition of the remnant was mostly Jewish people and some few Gentiles.

In the New Testament, it was mostly Jews, and then some Gentiles began to trickle in. And then the trickle became more, and then more, and then it became a flood.

Eventually, the Gentiles outnumbered the Jews, but they were still the same entity.

They were still the remnant of Israel, just like in the Old Testament they were. The Ruths and the Rahabs of the Old Testament were the exceptional Gentile in the movement. In the New Testament, as the prophets predicted, the Gentiles will flow into it and will become part of it.

And we sit here today not as a replacement for Israel. We are the fulfillment of the promises to Israel. Abraham has become the father of many nations.

Your ethnic background, mine, the ethnic background of everyone on the earth who is a Christian, is there of many nations, but Abraham is their father because he is the father of the faithful. According to Galatians 3, I would like to show you a verse that makes that evident. Galatians 3, verses 7-9.

Paul says, Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Boy, that makes it very clear. Sons of Abraham, is that an ethnic or spiritual designation? Only those who are of faith are the sons of Abraham.

Faith is a spiritual thing, not ethnic. Therefore, Paul again and again and again and again and again makes it clear that to be an Israelite means to have faith. And it doesn't have anything to do with who your parents or grandparents were or ancestors.

It has to do with who is your spiritual parent. Abraham. It says, And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations, that's the Gentiles, by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed.

So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. Man, how could that be clear? He quotes from the Abrahamic promises. God said to Abraham, In you all the nations shall be blessed.

The dispensations think that's going to be fulfilled in the millennium. Paul said, No, that's just preaching the gospel to Abraham that the Gentiles would become justified by faith. Do we have to wait for the millennium for that? Obviously not.

Paul is indicating that's already happening in his own day and it's still happening in ours. This is the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. Gentiles coming in.

Sure, the Old Testament language, if taken literally, would lead us maybe to make different conclusions. But fortunately, we're not left with the Old Testament language alone. We have the New Testament inspired writers who interpreted the Old Testament for us.

Jesus, for example. And Paul. Now, there's another quote here I want to give you.

This is a quote from Ryrie also. Ryrie in his book *Dispensationalism Today*, pages 94 and

95. He said, New revelation cannot mean contradictory revelation.

Later revelation on a subject does not make the earlier revelation mean something different. It may add to it or even supersede it, but it does not contradict it. If this were so, then the Bible would be full of contradictions and God would have to be conceived as deceiving the Old Testament prophets when he revealed to them a nationalistic kingdom.

Since he would have known all the time that he would completely reverse the concept in later revelation. The true concept of progressive revelation is like a building. And certainly the superstructure does not replace the foundation.

Now, what he's saying is that the Amillennialists cannot be right in allowing the New Testament revelation to interpret the old. He says, No, if the Old Testament says God can do this to Israel and the New Testament says it's going to happen to the church, then we've got God contradicting himself. He says he says that later revelation does not make it make the earlier revelation something different.

Well, it well might in the sense that it might change one's conception of what was meant in the earlier. Certainly God knew all along what he was going to do, and he never deceived anybody. You know, when I was a child, I asked my father what heaven was going to be like.

And to my childish mind, it was hard for him to explain. And so he just said, Well, in heaven, everything you want, you'll have. Now, that is a true statement.

What he didn't tell me, and maybe I wouldn't have been able to process it, is that the reason I'll have everything I want is because what I want will change. I pictured at that time, Wow, man, I'll get my own my own jet airplane. I'll get my own, you know, army tank and fast car.

And I'll be able to just eat candy and ice cream all the time. Because in heaven, anything you want, you got. Now, see, as an older person, I was able to appreciate the fact that probably when I go to heaven, my desires will be somewhat different than they are in my carnal state right now.

And therefore, while it is true that everything I want, I will have, it'll be because there'll be a constitutional change in me that will change what I want to be more in line with what I will have. Now, was my father lying when he gave me that childish answer? No, he gave me an answer that as a child, I could understand. Not an untrue answer.

But certainly later on, my more spiritual maturity and sophistication made it possible for me to understand what that meant in a little different way. In fact, very different. I no longer expect to have my own army tanks and jet airplanes and ice cream and candy all I want in heaven.

That's not the way I envisage heaven anymore. That was certainly the vision of heaven I got when my father spoke to me. But that was my mistake, not his.

And also, if God, in speaking of this glorious kingdom and justice and righteousness and peace, actually, the fulfillment is a spiritual one. That there is, for the believer in Christ, who's under the dominion of the kingdom of God, there is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, which is what Paul said the kingdom of God is. In Romans 14, 17, Paul said the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

It's a spiritual kingdom. It's a spiritual righteousness. It's not a political righteousness worldwide.

It's not a political peace. It's a spiritual peace. It's peace in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14, 17 is that verse. So, I mean, if God described the kingdom to the Jews in terms they could understand without their... You see, the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. They're spiritually discerned, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2, 14.

So the Jews, without the Holy Spirit, couldn't perceive the spiritual. And so God told it to them in terms they could understand. There's a kingdom, a king, righteousness, peace, joy.

It's going to be a wonderful thing. But when the Holy Spirit came, the natural man who could not receive the things of the Spirit became a spiritual man and was able to understand it in the spiritual. So that whereas the Jews thought Elijah would come because Malachi said, God will send Elijah, Jesus said to his disciples who were becoming spiritual men, he said, if you can receive it, John the Baptist is Elijah who is to come.

That is, if you're spiritual, you can receive spiritual things. Elijah comes spiritually in a different person than the man Elijah. Not the literal Elijah coming back.

And so Jesus and Paul and the apostles in general spiritualized much of the prophecies and they understood that since the Holy Spirit has come, we can understand them different. This is not a contradiction. It is simply the case that the Jews misunderstood the meaning of what God said.

Everything God said is true in the sense that he meant it. That the Jews did not grasp it is not God's fault, but theirs. Let me read you a few scriptures of importance here.

Because what the dispensationalist typically says, and the first debate I ever had with a dispensationalist was a couple of college professors actually and I at an assembly of God college in Santa Cruz, I had a bit of a debate with them on this matter. And the dispensationalist kept saying, well, if the language of the prophets gave the Jews the impression that God was going to give them a nationalistic, political, militaristic kingdom



under the Messiah, then we have to understand it the way they understood it or else God was deceiving them. Well, that suggests that the Jews understood correctly what God said.

But Paul and the New Testament writers say the Jews did not understand correctly what Paul said and still don't unless they're converted. In 2 Corinthians 3, verses 14 through 16, Paul said, For their minds, he means the Jews, were hardened. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament because the veil is taken away in Christ.

That is, the Jew who is not in Christ, he reads the Old Testament, but his eyes are veiled. He can't understand its real meaning. Now, by the way, if you just take everything literally, that's easy enough.

You don't need a veil removed to understand things literally. What he's saying is there's a spiritual meaning that they can't see because they're not in Christ. The veil is taken away only when a person becomes a Christian.

Only in Christ is it taken away. But even to this day, he says, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

What Paul is saying is that he, as a Jew, prior to turning to the Lord, could not understand correctly the Old Testament law or the Old Testament writings. But when his heart turned to the Lord, Jesus, the veil was taken away, and he saw what he could never see before. Now, this being the case, how can we trust what the Jewish rabbis who don't believe in Jesus concluded about the meaning of their Old Testament? Yes, it's true.

The rabbis read those kingdom passages and said, oh, looks like we're going to have a political kingdom here with a militaristic Messiah, etc., etc. But Jesus came and said, no, my kingdom is not of this world. If it was, my servants would have fought that I should not be delivered over the Jews, but now my kingdom is not from here.

It's a spiritual thing. He told Nicodemus, unless you're born of the Spirit, you can't even see the kingdom of God. Why? Because it's spiritual.

And Jesus said many things like that. Jesus said in Luke 17, the kingdom of God does not come with observation. Men shall not say, lo, here it is, or lo, there it is, but the kingdom of God is in your midst.

In Luke 17, I think 20 or 21. Now, the kingdom is different than the Jews thought, but that shouldn't stumble us. The Jews were reading the scriptures with a veil over their heart and still do.

Only when they turn to Christ, like Paul did, can they see what the true meaning of the material in the Old Testament meant. As I said in 1 Corinthians 2.14, Paul said, the

natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. They are spiritually discerned.

Obviously, if you're not born again, you can't perceive the meaning of God's Word, which is spiritual. In 1 Peter, chapter 1, This is very important for understanding how we are to approach the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament scriptures. In 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 10 through 12.

Now, this is a long sentence. There's more than one long sentence here, and long sentences are typically hard to follow the thought. But you can follow it if you pay close attention.

If you don't, I'll take it apart for you to help you understand it. It says, of this salvation, meaning ours, the Christian salvation, the prophets have inquired, meaning the Old Testament prophets, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you. So the Old Testament prophets spoke of the grace that would come to the believers in Christ.

Searching what, this is what the prophets were doing in the Old Testament, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. That is, the Old Testament prophets predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glorious kingdom that would follow. They predicted this, but they didn't understand it.

They searched diligently to gain more understanding than what they had. But did they get it? Verse 12, to them it was revealed that not to themselves, but to us, they were ministering the things which have now been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Things which angels desire to look into.

Now, what does this mean? It means that the prophets were speaking about things that we are experiencing. And they didn't quite understand it. They inquired diligently to get more information about it.

But God said, no, it's not for you to know. Your words are not for the benefit of your generation. It's not to them, but to us, the Christians who have had the gospel preached to us by the apostles.

It's for our generation they were ministering. They were ministering about our experience as Christians. Now, what this is clearly saying is that the Old Testament prophets predicted what we are experiencing, the church, salvation in Christ.

They didn't understand it. And even when they asked God for more information, he said, none of your business. It's not your problem.

It's not for you to know. It's for a later generation. And Peter says, we're that generation.

We are those people that it was for. What does this mean? It means that even the Old Testament prophets, to say nothing of their listeners, even the inspired prophets didn't understand the nature of their prophecies. And when they asked, they were denied further information.

Now, if the prophets didn't understand correctly their prophecies, are we going to give credit to the uninspired rabbis and teachers and Pharisees and say, well, they understood it correctly. And by the way, what passages in the Old Testament does Peter have in mind when he talks about them prophesying about the grace that would come to us and of our salvation? What passages does he have in mind? The only passages in the Old Testament about salvation are these kingdom passages. Does this not mean that Peter understood that the kingdom passages and the salvation that's described there is about us and about now, about our experience of what has happened since Christ suffered and the glories that follow is what's happening now? This is the glorious kingdom of the Messiah.

It may not look glorious from the outside, but it's an internal kingdom. It's a kingdom of spirit. It is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

That's what the kingdom is. And they prophesied of these things. They didn't understand it.

Why? Because it wasn't literal. If it was literal, no one has any trouble understanding literal things. If you hear an idiom that's a figure of speech, it's not necessarily hard to understand the literal meaning.

It's just obvious sometimes that the literal meaning isn't what is intended, but it's not clear what the figurative meaning is. What is it talking about? Well, the prophets didn't know and they weren't told. Look at another passage.

This is over in Acts chapter 3. In Acts chapter 3 and verse 24, Peter is winding down his second recorded sermon in Jerusalem to the Jews. In Acts 3.24, Peter says, Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow after, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. What days? The days that Peter and his contemporaries were living in.

You mean all those prophetic utterances in the Old Testament were about these days, the days of the church? Not about some days 2,000 years later than Peter's time? They're not talking about some future millennium far off? They're talking about these days? Peter said so. All the prophets, their writings were about these days. Now, by the way, you might say, Well, couldn't it be possible that the prophets spoke about a future millennium and in other places spoke about these days, the church? You won't find it.

There are no passages in the Old Testament that could be applied to the church except

those that are the kingdom passages. You'll find if you study those out. In fact, I have a chart which is, it may not be the next page in your notes because I've rearranged them in my notes.

It's a chart. It says Old Testament descriptions of the Messianic era, the kingdom age fulfilled in the New Testament. I just want to tell you how to use this chart.

We can't cover the material. We can't look up the verses in the next, well, we have 13 minutes and a half or something before this class is over. But I do want you to see the chart and see how it's laid out and what it's saying.

I did this. I came up with this on my own. I'm very proud of it.

It was a lot of work. As you can see, of course, it's a chart made up of vertical and horizontal columns. If you look at the far left-hand vertical column, the top square says Old Testament passage, and as you read down that column, you'll simply see, until you get down to the last two rows of it, you'll see just Scripture references.

Psalms 72, Isaiah 2, verses 2-4, Isaiah 9, verses 1-7, Isaiah 11, verses 1-16, Isaiah 35, verses 1-10, Jeremiah chapters 30-33, Ezekiel 34-37, those are the chapters 34-37, Joel 2, verses 28-3, verse 21, Amos 9, 11 and following, Zechariah 14. These are a pretty good sampling of Old Testament kingdom passages. There are more, but these are a good sampling.

The features that are found in these passages are simply repeated in many other passages, which are very clearly about the same things as these passages are about. The question is, are these passages about a future millennium, or are they about the Church? That's the question. That's where the pre-millennialist disagrees with the amillennialist.

The pre-millennialist says these passages must find their fulfillment in a future millennium, after Jesus comes back. The amillennialist says, no, they were fulfilled when Jesus came the first time. All agree that these things could not come about without the coming of Jesus.

The difference is, did the first coming establish these things, or will it be the second coming that establishes them? That's really the question between the amillennial and the dispensational framework. Well, we've got these passages lined down vertically. Then across the top, horizontally, what I've listed there, essentially are different aspects of the Messianic kingdom as laid out in passages like these.

The first vertical column going across is references to a Davidic kingdom. That is a kingdom of God that's expressed in terms of being like David's kingdom. It ruled over someone like David, meaning the Messiah.

The second column are the subduing of the Gentiles. A lot of these passages talk about the Gentiles being subdued and being brought into compliance and into obedience to the Messiah and his kingdom. The next category is the concept of the exiles returning, the highway to Zion, a second exodus.

These are a common theme in the Old Testament passages. Peace and prosperity is another feature of these passages, and there's a column there. The restoration of temple worship, Jewish temple worship, is another category.

Salvation restoration is another thing that recurs in these passages. And the everlasting duration of these phenomena is also mentioned in many of the passages. Now, what I've done is I've conjoined these two things, the list of passages with the list of qualities of the kingdom age.

Not every passage mentions all of these qualities. But as you can see, looking across, for instance, look at Psalm 72 and look across the page. You've got the Davidic kingdom.

You've got the Gentiles subdued. You've got the exiles returning. You've got peace and prosperity.

There's no mention of temple worship in that passage, but the salvation restoration motif is there, and the fact that it's of everlasting duration is in that passage. Take the next one, Isaiah 2. Well, no mention of the Davidic kingdom, but there is mention of the Gentiles being subdued. No mention of exiles returning, but there is mention of peace and prosperity and also temple worship.

And the other features are absent from that one. Isaiah 9. Well, there's mention of the Davidic kingdom and of peace and prosperity and also of salvation and restoration and of the everlasting duration. That particular passage doesn't mention the subduing of the Gentiles or the exiles returning or the temple worship and so forth.

You can see now how this chart works. You can go through each of these passages, and I mention which verses mention which features. But as you can see, for example, in Jeremiah 30 through 33, there's an extended kingdom passage covering four chapters.

All of these features are in that section. Every one of these characteristics is found in the Jeremiah passage. Every one of the features is also found in Ezekiel 34 and Ezekiel 37.

So there are some passages that contain all of these things, and other passages contain a various sampling of them. But the point I'm making is that all of these passages are about the same period of time. They're all about the so-called messianic era or the kingdom age.

Now, in the bottom horizontal column, there's a column called fulfilled. And you can see there are New Testament references in every category going along the bottom. That

means that I give you references from the New Testament that say that the Davidic kingdom has been fulfilled in the New Testament.

That the Gentiles being subdued to the Messiah have been fulfilled in the New Testament. That the exiles returning have been fulfilled in the New Testament. And the scriptures I give you are usually actual quotations in the New Testament of the Old Testament material.

They're not always exact quotations. Likewise, if you look at the far right vertical column, it says New Testament references and allusions. Now, what these refer to are times when these actual passages that are considered in this chart are quoted in the New Testament or alluded to.

For example, Isaiah 9 is quoted in Matthew 4. Isaiah 11, one of the passages on the chart, is quoted in Romans 15. Isaiah 35 is quoted in Hebrews and in Matthew and so forth. Can you see what we do with this chart? Now, what this means is you can look at not all of them.

Of the passages on the chart, only two of them are not quoted in the New Testament. But the others are. And if you look up the quotations in the New Testament, you will find that the person in the New Testament quoting the passage says this was fulfilled in Jesus' ministry or in the church ministry.

That is to say, the fulfillment of these passages is said to apply to the age of the church. It is quoted. These actual passages are quoted in the New Testament and applied to the church.

There's no doubting it. There's no disputing it. We're not talking about general concepts.

We're talking about the actual passages under consideration are quoted. So that's what we have over there in the vertical column on the far right. These are actual New Testament cases of the quotation of the Old Testament passages here under consideration.

You will find consistently that it is said by the New Testament writers that these passages, so-called millennial passages, are applied to now the church. They are spiritually applied invariably. The New Testament writers spiritualized them because the veil was taken off in Christ.

As Jews or as prior to being Christians, these people would understand them the millennial way. That is the premillennial way because the Jews did. They'd take them literally.

The New Testament writers, you know, the Bible says in Luke 24 and verse 45, Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples. It says, then he opened their understanding that

they might understand the scriptures. What scriptures? The Old Testament scriptures.

Jesus opened his disciples' understanding so that they could understand in the scriptures what could not be understood without that special insight given to them at this time. That implies you could not understand them literally. Anyone could do that without anyone opening their understanding.

Anyone can understand literal words. The disciples had their understanding enlightened specially by Christ so they could correctly understand the Old Testament and when they end up quoting from it, they always spiritualize it. I shouldn't say they always do.

The majority of the time. Luke 24, 45, that's where it says he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. I think it's verse 45.

It might be 44, but I'm working from not perfect memory. It is in fact 45, as I said. You have in the far right column the actual quotations in the New Testament of the actual passages treated in the chart.

Along the bottom row where it says fulfilled, you have not so much the quotations of these passages, but the New Testament's affirmation that these concepts, the Davidic kingdom, the Gentiles being subdued, the peace and prosperity, the temple, all that stuff, that those things have now been fulfilled in Christ. So you have in the New Testament two kinds of information to help us decide this question. On one hand, the actual quotes of such passages of these.

On the other hand, you have affirmation that these particular characteristics of the Messianic kingdom have now come into reality in the New Testament era. A person who wishes to look at this chart and look up these verses will find I'm not playing fast and loose in any way with these passages. It's just straightforward stuff.

I considered these things myself without a chart for many years before I sorted it all and said, hey, wait a minute. I'm getting the picture rather slowly. The New Testament writers took the Old Testament kingdom passages, what we would call the millennial passages, and said they are spiritually fulfilled now.

And they gave no indication that they would be additionally fulfilled literally. They quoted these verses and said this is fulfilled in this. But the fulfillment was always taken spiritually.

That's why I just don't understand where these people come off saying what some of these people say. Yesterday I read to you what Ryrie said when he said the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ, his birth, his rearing, his ministry, his death, his resurrection were all fulfilled literally. And then he says there is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament.

That is simply not the case. There is non-literal. In fact, most of the prophecies quoted in the New Testament and interpreted for us by the New Testament writers are interpreted non-literally.

We saw that even in the prophecies of the first coming of Christ, only about 35% of the prophecies treated in the New Testament concerning the first coming of Christ were actually taken literally by the New Testament writers. The other more than 60% of the prophecies were not literal. So we can say, yes, there are times when some prophecies, because they're wording, there's no objection to be raised from taking them literally.

But at the same time, there are certain concepts and motifs and imagery in the Old Testament prophets that recurs frequently, which the New Testament writers have decoded for us. And when we encounter those concepts and those motifs, we have the advantage of the disciples of Jesus decoding them in the New Testament, so that when we read them in the New Testament, we say, oh, I know what this is about. Paul, Peter, Jesus commented on these things.

And so this is how dispensationalists frequently become amillennialists, by comparing scripture with scripture, by particularly allowing the New Testament writers to interpret through their inspired understanding given by Christ and by the Holy Spirit, to interpret what the Old Testament prophets meant. Since Peter says the Old Testament prophets themselves didn't even know what they meant, and there's a veil over their eyes, Paul said, until they turned to Christ, it should not be surprising that the Jews did misunderstand what God meant when they rejected Christ and before they knew Christ. But we would not expect Christians to take the same view that the uninspired Jews took.

We expect Christians to follow the understanding of the apostles who were inspired and enlightened by Christ. Therefore, most of the church throughout history has taken these passages as being about the church. And when Israel is mentioned, it was spiritualized to mean the spiritual Israel, the church.

We have to stop right here, but we're going to continue talking about the millennium. Next time we're going to talk actually about Revelation 20, which is the principal passage that we need to consider. And you can look up from this chart the various passages in the Old Testament on your own and see whether I'm telling the truth about these things.

I know you'll find what I found because everybody who looks there sees it. It's there. We'll stop there and we'll go into Revelation 20 next time.