

The Theology of Covenants

As we saw during our study of Abraham, the Lord made a covenant with him on several different occasions. The very first time was when the Lord commanded Abraham to leave his home:

Genesis 12:1: “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:
2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

This is what God promised:

- To make Abraham a great nation
- To bless Abraham
- To make Abraham's name great
- To make Abraham a blessing
- To bless those who blessed Abraham
- To curse those who cursed Abraham
- That in Abraham all the families of the Earth would be blessed

Later on, God made another covenant with Abraham. It was quite similar to the one in chapter 12 but it contained some additional promises:

Genesis 17:1: “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.
2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.
3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.
6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.
8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their

God.”

As we can see, there is a lot of information there. (It should be noted that these promises do not cancel out the earlier ones; rather, this *adds to* what God had said before.) This is what God promised:

- To make a covenant with Abraham
- To give Abraham many descendents
- To make Abraham the father of many nations
- To make an everlasting covenant between Himself and Abraham, *and* between Himself and Abraham's descendents
- To be a God to both Abraham and Abraham's descendents
- To give to both Abraham and his descendents all the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession

Those are the promises that God made to Abraham in what theologians call the “Abrahamic Covenant”. On the surface this looks pretty straightforward; there isn't a lot of complexity here. Despite the simple nature of the passage, however, there are two entirely different schools of thought that have arisen to interpret these promises. One method of interpretation is called **Covenant Theology**, and the other is called **Dispensationalism**. These two approaches are entirely different, and they are as opposed to each other as they can possibly be.

It is vital that we understand both systems because they impact the way the rest of the Bible is interpreted. The system that you follow will determine how you view Israel and how you view the study of end-times. It is an important area of study that is all-too-often neglected.

The names of these two systems are very misleading. Covenant Theology does *not* mean that you are interpreting the Bible as a series of covenants, and Dispensationalism does *not* mean that you are interpreting the Bible as a series of dispensations. Everyone agrees that there are covenants in the Bible; the Abrahamic covenant is one of many. (The word “covenant” appears in the King James Bible an astonishing 280 times!) Likewise, everyone agrees that the Bible speaks of something called “dispensations”. For example:

Ephesians 1:9: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:
10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:”

The dictionary defines a dispensation as a “divinely appointed order or age”. For example, there was one order of doing things before the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and one afterward; there was one way of doing things before the Flood, and one afterward; there was one way of doing things before Christ died and rose again (in other words, before the Church Age), and one afterward. Those are examples of dispensations.

So, then, the dispute is *not* about whether Bible has covenants and dispensations, because the Bible clearly has both. Instead the issue comes down to this: what is the correct method for interpreting these covenants?

The cornerstone of **Covenant Theology** (which is a system I utterly *reject*) is the idea that the Church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. (This is why Covenant Theology is often called Replacement Theology.) It teaches that when Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God rejected Israel

and replaced them with the Church. The only people who are special to God are those in the Church, because the Jews have lost their special position. God no longer has a plan for them and they are no more special to Him than any other nation or people.

This has a lot of implications. First of all, covenant theologians teach that Israel has no right to any land in the Middle East. When the Jews rejected Jesus they lost whatever rights they might have had. This is why churches that believe in covenant theology are hostile toward Israel and often side with the Palestinians: they believe that Israel is an enemy of God and that Israel ought to be defeated and her land taken away and given to the Arabs. It is not at all uncommon to see such churches boycott Israel or speak up on behalf of those who are attacking her.

Because they believe that the Church has replaced Israel, they believe that God's promises to Israel have been transferred to the Church. The many covenants in the Bible (like the Abrahamic Covenant) are re-interpreted in spiritual and symbolic ways. Instead of blessing the Jews, God now blesses the Church. All Scripture in the Old Testament that spoke of Israel is reinterpreted as speaking to the Church.

Since they believe that God has rejected Israel, they also believe that Israel will never reign over the entire world during a literal millennium. Instead they interpret Revelation as speaking of the Church Age and interpret the millennium symbolically. Covenant theologians always become amillennial because the millennium deals with Israel and they believe God has rejected Israel. No covenant theologian could ever accept an interpretation of Revelation that included a literal Israel ruling over the entire world.

So, then, Covenant Theology teaches:

- That the Church has replaced Israel
- That God has taken His promises away from Israel and has given them to the Church
- That Israel is not special in God's sight
- That the modern nation of Israel has no right to exist and is not any more special to God than any other nation
- That Revelation should be interpreted symbolically
- That the millennium is purely symbolic, and not literal
- That prophecies and covenants should be understood spiritually, symbolically, and allegorically, *not* literally

For the record, this definition of Covenant Theology is exactly what any of the major covenant theologians will tell you. If you read men such as Charles Hodge in *Systematic Theology* or R. J. Rushdoony in *Thy Kingdom Come*, this is what you will see. If you attend a church that believes Covenant Theology (as I did for a number of years) you will hear all of these things said with great boldness and pride. This is where they stand.

The points of Covenant Theology are not arbitrary; they all logically follow from the idea that the Church has replaced Israel. Its entire system of interpretation comes from that point. For example:

- God made Israel certain promises – promises that have not been fulfilled. If the Church has replaced Israel and Israel is no longer special to God, then those promises *must* be transferred to the Church. Otherwise God would have broken His word.
- Many of the promises in the Old Testament are very specific, and there is simply no way they could be transferred to the Church. (For example, no one believes that the Church has a right to the land of Canaan.) Therefore, the only way to make the system work is to interpret the

prophecies “spiritually”, or allegorically. If you interpret them literally then you end up with Dispensationalism, which Covenant Theology despises. Covenant Theology forces you to interpret the Old Testament in a very non-literal way, because any other method of interpretation would disprove Covenant Theology.

- If God has rejected Israel and God's promises to Israel no longer apply to Israel, then Israel has lost its right to the land of Canaan. Therefore, the Jews are occupying land that does not belong to them – and on top of that, they are enemies of the gospel since they have rejected Christ. Therefore, churches who believe in Covenant Theology are hostile toward Israel, often boycotting Israel, speaking against them, and so forth. They do this because their theology demands it.
- If you interpret Old Testament prophecies and the book of Revelation literally, they will tell you that God has set aside 7 years for chastising Israel, after which Israel will be saved, Jesus will return as Israel's king, and Israel (with Jesus as King) will rule over the whole world for 1000 years. However, if you believe that God has rejected Israel, then God can't possibly have set aside a time that is specifically aimed at Israel; therefore they interpret prophecy symbolically, since a literal interpretation will yield a result that they do not like.

The point I am making is that Covenant Theology will lead people to reject Israel, to interpret the Bible in a very non-literal manner, and to become amillennial. That is where the system invariably leads. The more you study it the more you will be drawn to those ends. It is simply inescapable.

Covenant Theology also teaches that people in the Old Testament were saved by believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is despite the fact that the Bible did not reveal *any* of those things until the time of Isaiah, and no one actually understood what Isaiah was talking about until after Christ died and rose again. They insist that people have always been saved in exactly the same manner, by believing in exactly the same thing.

Frankly, this idea is ridiculous. While Adam and Eve did know that a Messiah was coming, mankind was not told that the Messiah would die and rise again until *thousands of years later*. How could they possibly have believed something that they were not told? How could Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob believe in a gospel that had not yet been revealed to mankind? It simply doesn't make sense.

Dispensationalists agree that mankind has always been saved by grace through faith alone; the difference is that they teach that the *content* of that faith has changed from one dispensation to the next. The Bible tells us that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. God did not tell Abraham everything that He has told us; however, Abraham believed what he *had* been told and God accepted that. People in the Old Testament were saved by *believing what God had revealed* – not by believing something they could not possibly have known.

As I said earlier, I reject the system of Covenant Theology; the evidence against it is simply too great. I believe that Dispensationalism is a much better system.

Has the Church replaced Israel?

If the Church has replaced Israel and is now the “true Israel” then you would expect that fact to be mentioned somewhere in the Bible. However, that is not the case. There are no verses that say the Church has replaced Israel as God's special people. Moreover, the Bible never refers to the Church as “Israel” (or vice versa). In every single case, the word “Israel” refers to Israel and the word “Church” refers to the Church. The two words are used separately and distinctly and are never used in place of

each other.

What the Bible actually says about this matter is quite different from what Covenant Theology teaches. The Church has not replaced Israel; instead, we have been grafted in:

Romans 11:17: “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;”

The Bible says that some of the original branches of the tree – meaning Israel – were broken off, while we Gentiles were grafted in. That, however, does *not* mean that we have replaced Israel, as the chapter takes great pains to point out:

Romans 11:11: “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?”

Israel has fallen but they have *not* been replaced. Through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles. However, God has not forsaken Israel. Our salvation is intended to provoke them to jealousy. One day they will be saved and will be grafted back in:

Romans 11:23: “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

Notice that last verse – the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. What that means is that when God makes a promise He will not go back on it. God made a covenant to take away Israel's sins and that is exactly what He will do. God chose Israel as His own and they will forever remain exactly that. For a time Israel has been blinded and hardened, but that is not because God has rejected Israel; it is so that we Gentiles might be saved. After God has finished obtaining a people among the Gentiles He will take away that blindness and all Israel shall be saved.

God cannot and *will never* cast away His people. Not only does Romans 11 make this clear, but the Old Testament does as well:

Jeremiah 31:35: “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:

36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”

There is simply nothing that Israel can do to forfeit the promises that God made to them. He will never cast them off. The apostle Paul said that all Israel shall be saved, and they will be. The Old Testament speaks of a time when their hearts will change:

Hosea 3:4: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”

Hosea tells us that “in the latter days” the Israelites will return and fear the Lord. Zechariah tells us the same thing:

Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Before Jesus was crucified He said that Israel would not see Him again until they accepted Him as their Messiah. Zechariah looked forward to the day when that would happen – when Israel would look upon their Messiah, whom they have pierced, and would mourn for Him and repent of what they had done. The day is coming when Israel will repent and be saved, just as the Old Testament prophets foretold. That, in fact, is what the Tribulation is all about – it is a time God has set aside not just to punish the world for its wickedness, but to finish the trials of Israel and finally bring them to salvation. At the end of the Tribulation the Israelites will repent and be saved, and Jesus will return and rescue them – but that is a topic for another time.

The point is that God has *not* abandoned Israel and has *not* cast her off forever. Israel has been blinded for a time so that we Gentiles might be saved, but that blindness is only temporary. As both the Old and New Testaments tell us, one day Israel will be saved.

People who are dispensational believe that God has not *replaced* Israel with the Church, but instead *both* are His people. Israel and the Church are two separate things. (There are some Jews who are saved and are a part of the Church, but Israel and the Church are still different – just as France and the Church are different. There may be Frenchmen who are in the Church, but that doesn't turn the Church into France.) They believe that God still loves Israel and has a plan to save them.

Has God Taken His Promises Away From Israel?

Of course not! As Romans 11:23 said *when talking about this very subject*, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. There are no Scriptures anywhere that say that God has taken away His promises and given them to the Church instead. It simply doesn't say anything like that.

Besides, if you look at the promises that God made to Israel it becomes very apparent that they can never apply to the Church. For example, take a look at the promises that God made to Abraham:

Genesis 17:8: “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Here God promised Abraham, unconditionally, to give him and his descendents all of the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. Notice the phrase *everlasting*. That means that, no matter what, for the rest of time, the land of Canaan would always be theirs. God may remove Israel from the land for a time due to their obedience, but *the land would always be theirs*.

Covenant Theology teaches that, due to Israel's disobedience, they have forfeited this promise and no longer have a right to the land. But look at what the verse says! The land was given to them as an everlasting possession. If they lost the land then it wouldn't be an everlasting possession anymore, would it? It would mean that God had broken His promise.

Covenant Theology also teaches that all of God's promises to Israel have been transferred to the Church. Does that mean that the Church now has a right to the entire land of Canaan? Nobody actually believes that, so covenant theologians have “spiritualized” this verse to talk about some vague spiritual blessings. Does the Bible ever interpret this verse in that manner? No, it doesn't. Nowhere in the Old or New Testament is this verse interpreted in any way other than literally.

The problem is that when this verse is interpreted literally it contradicts Covenant Theology – so covenant theologians have invented new ways to interpret these very straightforward verses (ways that have no Scriptural backing whatsoever). They are not interpreting the Bible with the Bible or reading it in a normal, straightforward fashion; instead they are imposing their own interpretation on these verses *in spite* of what the verses actually have to say.

If you interpret the Bible in a normal, straightforward manner then you will arrive at Dispensationalism. People who are dispensational believe that God has not rejected Israel, and they believe this because the Bible says that God has not rejected Israel. They believe that Israel has an everlasting right to the land of Canaan because that is what God promised Abraham. It is not complicated; they simply take God at His Word and do not invent symbolic, allegorical interpretations that have no Scriptural basis.

Has God Taken Canaan Away From Israel?

This is something that I have talked about extensively in an earlier lesson, so I will not dwell on it here. The Old Testament makes it quite clear that God would evict Israel from the land for their disobedience, but that He would also gather them back again. Covenant Theologians like to claim that the modern nation of Israel has no Biblical significance whatsoever, but they are wrong. As I explained in a previous lesson, the Bible foretold the Jews' long absence from the land, the rebirth of Israel in 1948, the rebirth of the nation in a single day, and a great deal more. Modern Israel is actually fulfilling Bible prophecy. If Israel has lost their right to the land in the Middle East then why did God promise to

give it back to them? Why did He promise to regather them to their land? Why did He promise to give them Jerusalem again? Why did He make so many promises to them regarding giving them the land “in the latter days”? It simply makes no sense.

The reason Dispensationalists believe that modern Israel is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy is because they can point to a long list of specific Bible prophecies that modern Israel has fulfilled. Since we have talked about this earlier I will not repeat it here. The point is that despite what Covenant Theology teaches, modern Israel *is* a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The reason they once again live in the land of Canaan is because God regathered them to the land and has protected them, exactly as He promised. Israel really does have a right to the land that God gave them as an “everlasting possession”, and covenant theologians are treading on very dangerous ground when they try to take that land away from them.

Is The Millennium Purely Symbolic?

Covenant Theology teaches that Israel is not special to God and that Israel has no right to any land in the Middle East. Because of this they reject the idea that Israel will one day rule over the world during the Millennium. Since they cannot accept a straightforward, literal interpretation of those verses, they instead teach that those verses should be interpreted symbolically. Covenant theologians argue that the Millennium is symbolic of the Church Age – the age we are living in now. They teach that at this very moment, Satan is bound and the Church is reigning triumphant over the world through the gospel. This interpretation is known as amillennialism.

There are two big problems with amillennialism. First, it is obvious to everyone that Satan is *not* bound, and second, it is equally obvious that the Church is *not* reigning triumphant. Revelation makes it clear that when Satan is bound he is unable to cause any more harm:

Revelation 20:1: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Notice the great pains the passage takes to make sure we understand that Satan has been utterly removed from the scene. He can no longer deceive anyone, cause any harm, or oppose the Church. In fact, Satan can't even go anywhere anymore; he has been cast into the bottomless pit and imprisoned. His days of causing harm are over for an entire millennium.

Does this accurately describe the Church age? No, it certainly does not. The New Testament warns us repeatedly that Satan is actively attacking the Church and that we must be on our guard:

1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

Notice how the passage says not only that Satan is “seeking whom he may devour”, but that he is walking around! Someone who is locked in the bottomless pit can't possibly be *walking around the*

Earth. If Satan was truly bound then he would be unable to seek and devour. After all, if he can still kill and destroy while being bound then then being bound loses all meaning. It should be emphasized that this verse was written during the Church Age – the very age in which covenant theologians teach that Satan has been rendered utterly harmless. The Bible contradicts them and warns us to put on the armor of God, for we are in a very real battle against the forces of darkness:

Ephesians 6:11: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Who does Paul want us to stand against? *The devil.* If Satan was bound and could no longer cause any harm then the devil wouldn't be a problem, would he? But both Peter and Paul believed that Satan was *not* bound. They believed that he was still roaming around and was capable of causing great harm. The Bible simply does *not* support the idea that Satan is currently bound; instead it teaches exactly the opposite.

The Bible also does *not* teach that the Church is reigning triumphant in this age. In fact, it says quite the opposite. The Bible teaches that the world hates the Church and persecutes it. We are not reigning over the world; instead we are beaten down, hated, despised, and rejected. All over the world Christians are hunted, imprisoned, and executed. Paul went so far as to say this:

I Corinthians 15:19: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

What Paul was saying is that if Christianity was only good for this life and had no value or reward in the next, then we are the most miserable of all men. Why? Because in this life Christians are faced with terrible persecution. Jesus told us this would happen:

John 15:18: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.
19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.
20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

John 16:33: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Did Jesus say that the Church would reign triumphant over the world during this age? Absolutely not! Instead He said that we would be hated, despised, hunted down, and executed – and that is exactly what happened. It is utterly ridiculous to think that we are now reigning with Christ.

But there is another problem. Take a look at what else the disputed passage in Revelation actually says:

Revelation 20:4: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his

image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”

Who lives and reigns with Christ? *The martyrs*. The passage clearly says that the martyrs are *resurrected* and live and reign with Christ. They were dead, but they lived again.

Has this already happened? Have the martyrs been resurrected from the dead and do they now reign over the Earth? Of course not! That is utterly ridiculous. Satan has not been bound, the Church does not reign, and the martyrs have not been raised from the dead. These things simply have not happened. Therefore, the idea that the Millennium is symbolic of the Church Age is entirely, conclusively wrong. Amillennialism is a false doctrine.

Revelation 20 should be interpreted in a normal, straightforward way, which is exactly how dispensationalists interpret it. They teach that one day in the future Satan will be bound and will be unable to deceive the nations any longer. The dead martyrs will be raised back to life and they will live and reign with Christ for a literal thousand years. It is not complicated, and it will play out exactly as the Bible foretold.

Should Prophecy Be Interpreted Symbolically?

Covenant Theology teaches that prophecy should be interpreted symbolically. It claims that the Millennium is symbolic of the age we live in now, and teaches that Revelation is just a symbolic look at the struggle between good and evil. It does not interpret prophecy literally.

There are many problems with this approach to interpreting the Bible. First of all, while it is true that the Bible contains symbolism, the proper way to interpret the Bible's symbolism is *to use the Bible itself*. The Bible always interprets its own symbols. If you want to know what a symbol means, all you have to do is look it up in the Bible and see how the Bible defines it.

For example, take this verse from Revelation:

Revelation 1:12: “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;”

How should the seven golden candlesticks be interpreted? The answer is *not* to decide for ourselves what we think they mean; that is a very great error. No prophecy is of any private interpretation; we do not have the right to assign our own meanings to prophecies. Instead we must believe the interpretation that the Bible provides, which can be found a few verses later:

Revelation 1:20: “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

What are the seven candlesticks? They are the seven churches. We know this because that is what the Bible tells us. *This is how you interpret the symbolism in the Bible*. This is the only way it can be done.

Covenant Theology, however, does not take this approach. Instead, covenant theologians decide

for themselves what they think a passage might mean, based on nothing more than their own ideas. They do not use the Bible to interpret prophecy because *the Bible does not support their system of interpretation*. There simply are no Bible passages that offer a symbolic interpretation of prophecies. Therefore, they invent their own.

It is very telling that Covenant Theology's system of interpretation has proven to be a dismal failure. The Bible has a great many prophecies about the *first* coming of Christ. Do you know how many of them were fulfilled literally? *All of them*. Do you know how many the Bible interprets symbolically? *None of them*. Every single fulfilled prophecy in the entire Bible – and there are hundreds of them – *has been fulfilled literally*. Not a single one has ever been fulfilled symbolically.

The same can be said for all of the prophecies that have been fulfilled since the time of Christ. The prophecy that Israel would become a nation again in a single day was widely mocked by covenant theologians – right up until 1948 when it was *literally fulfilled*. The prophecy that the Jews would regain Jerusalem was also widely mocked, until it actually happened. All of the prophecies that covenant theologians have tried to interpret allegorically *are being fulfilled literally*. That tells me that there is something badly wrong with their system of interpretation: their predictions have failed over and over again, while the predictions of dispensationalists have been proven right time and time again.

Prophecy has *always* been fulfilled literally, and there is no reason to believe that will ever change. For example, let's take a look at the 70 weeks of Daniel:

Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

As you can see in verse 24, the angel Gabriel told Daniel that seventy “weeks” had been set aside. This is one of those times where our translations of the Bible are in error. The word in verse 24 is not the Hebrew word for week, which is *shavuot*. The verse instead uses the word *shavuiim*, which simply means “sevens”. It does not refer to seven *days*, but seven of *something*. It is like the English word “dozen”. When someone says “a dozen” it tells you that they are speaking of twelve of something, but without more information that is all you know. A better translation of verse 24 would be *70 sevens*. In this context the item being counted is years. 70 sevens therefore refers to 70 periods of seven years, or 490 years.

Notice that these 490 years have been set aside *for Israel and for Jerusalem*. Notice also that this time period is being set aside *to make an end of sins*. This is God's 490-year plan to save Israel and end their rebellion. At the end of these 490 years Israel will repent and believe in Jesus as their Messiah. This goes along with what Paul said in Romans – one day all Israel shall be saved. The 70 weeks is God's plan to make that happen.

The Bible goes on to give more detail about those weeks:

Daniel 9:25: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

This verse says that the Messiah will appear 483 years (that's 69 periods of 7 years each) after the decree goes out to rebuild Jerusalem. This period of time broken into two parts: there is a period of

49 years and a period of 434 years. It should be noted that after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem was issued, it took 49 years to rebuild that city. Then, 434 years after Jerusalem was rebuilt, the Messiah was crucified. There were exactly 483 years from the time the decree was issued to rebuild Jerusalem until the death of Christ on the cross. In other words, *the first 69 weeks were fulfilled literally*.

When Christ died the Jews had two options. One option was to accept Him as their Messiah. If they had done that then Christ would still have died, but history would have taken a very different course. The Tribulation would have started immediately after His crucifixion, and 7 years later the Millennial Kingdom would have begun. There would never have been a Church Age at all.

However, the Jews instead rejected Him. Because of their disobedience the last 7 years were put on hold and the Church Age came into being. As long as the Church is here the end will not come. At some point, however, the Rapture will occur and take the Church out of the world. After the Church is gone the antichrist will rise to power and the last 7 years will begin, and the final of the 70 weeks will be fulfilled.

It is simply not reasonable to think that the first 69 weeks are literal and that the last week is symbolic. Prophecy is *always* fulfilled literally. Since the first 69 weeks were fulfilled literally, it only makes sense to believe that the last week will be fulfilled literally as well. Dispensationalism looks forward to a literal fulfillment of prophecy.

My point in all of this is simple: Covenant Theology (also known as Replacement Theology) is wrong. It is a failed system. God has not cast off Israel, Satan has not been bound, and prophecy should not be interpreted allegorically. The Jews really *have* been given the entire land of Canaan as an everlasting possession, and their temporary rejection of their Messiah has not caused them to forfeit the land. God really will bless those who bless Israel and will curse those who curse Israel – and will bring great woe upon those who try to take land away from His people.

That last point is, perhaps, the greatest danger with Covenant Theology. Many churches that believe in Covenant Theology are actively trying to cause Israel harm – by preaching against them, boycotting them, and even aiding Israel's enemies. As we saw earlier in the course, *this is a terrible error*. God has promised to judge those who try to cause Israel harm, and that is exactly what He has done throughout history. If you set yourself up as the enemy of Israel then God will judge you for it, just as He promised time and time again. Those who fight Israel are actually fighting God, and they will come to discover that God cannot be defeated. Those who insist on taking that road will be judged for it.