

## Difficulties with Dispensational Premillennialism

Remember that the purpose of this study is to provide a general knowledge and overview of the main eschatological views.

The dispensational system is the most complex of any eschatological systems

1. Discussing the difficulties
  - a. Hinges upon being “a literal interpretation” of the Bible
  - b. Proponents will label differing views as “spiritualizing” the Bible and claim that only they have the proper interpretation because they interpret “literally”
  - c. The literalist is often guilty of breaking their own interpretive method (hermeneutic)
2. Example – Revelation
  - a. Many will lay claims that the 7 churches in the book of Revelation are symbolic of a period in church history
  - b. Chapters 4-13 – Events that take place on earth called the “tribulation”
    - i. Claims that the church has been raptured
    - ii. Rev 4:1-2
      1. Most all dispensational writers state that this passage is symbolic of the rapture (John is a symbol of the church being caught up into heaven)
      2. *“This call seems clearly to indicate the fulfilment of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. The word “church” does not again occur in the Revelation till all is fulfilled” ~ C.I. Scofield Notes on Rev 4:1*

Is this a literal or symbolic interpretation? The reality is that all four systems combine literal and symbolic methods. However, they do not agree where and when certain texts are literal or symbolic.

3. John MacArthur on Revelation 4:1-2
  - a. This is not about the rapture of the church but rather it is John being temporarily transported to heaven in the Spirit to be given revelation for the church
  - b. This shows that the dispensationalists do not agree among themselves and this type of disagreement is common amongst dispensational writers
4. The Dispensational System requires a rigid separation of Israel from the church
  - a. Two purposes
  - b. Two separate peoples
  - c. Two separate destinies
    - i. Church – Heaven
    - ii. Israel – Earth
  - d. The OT prophets didn’t see (understand) the church age
    - i. The result is that if the church age was not foreseen by the OT prophets then the NT writers cannot quote from the OT and make application to the NT church

How is this possible if the apostles do this very thing?

- Peter – Acts 2:16-21
- Jerusalem council in Acts 15 – They quote from Amos as to whether Gentiles could be included in the church
  - Acts 15:15-17

Are the apostles misusing the OT or are they bringing clarity to what the OT prophets said?

5. Acts 28:20 – Consider Paul’s words concerning the hope of Israel. Is the hope of Israel not Christ? Acts 28:23-28
  - a. Consider that Paul’s stoning’s, imprisonments, and ultimate death – what was it all for? Was it not his interpretations of the OT and how Christ was the fulfillment?
  - b. Were the unbelieving Jews correct or was Paul correct?
6. The Dispensational System Holds that Worship in the Temple will Again Take Place
  - a. Temple will be rebuilt
  - b. Animal sacrifices will resume
  - c. Priests will have a purpose again

While stating that the Temple institutions will one day resume, dispensationalists will also agree that these were types and shadows of the coming Messiah and that these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Yet the dispensationalist will argue that these still must be re-instituted.

Critical Question: Will the OT rituals/ordinances replace the NT ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism? Or do the Jews not have to adhere to the New Covenant that Christ established in His blood?

7. Dispensational Problems with the Resurrection
  - a. The Amill and Postmill views hold to a general resurrection at the second coming of Christ
  - b. The Dispensational view of the resurrection happens as a program of separate resurrections at different periods of time
8. Dwight Pentecost on the resurrection program (The Last Things pg. 411)
  - a. The order of events in the resurrection program would be

- i. The resurrection of Christ as the beginning of the program (1 Cor 15:23)
    - ii. The resurrection of the church age saints at the rapture (1 Thess 4:16)
    - iii. The resurrection of the tribulation period saints (Rev 20:3-5)
    - iv. The resurrection of the OT saints (Dan 12:2, Is 26:19) at the second advent of Christ to the earth
    - v. The final resurrection of the unsaved dead (Rev 20:5, 11-14) at the end of the Millennial age
  - b. The first four stages are all included in the first resurrection (resurrection to life)
9. Compare the system with Scripture
  - a. Christ’s resurrection – Christ ascended to His throne – Acts 2:30-36 – Note verse 31 reveals that “he” (that is David) foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ
    - i. Rev 3:21 – The Son is on the throne – Note Scofield’s comments: *“This passage, in harmony with Luke 1:32 Luke 1:33 ; Matthew 19:28 ; Acts 2:30 Acts 2:34 Acts 2:35 ; Acts 15:14-16 is conclusive that Christ is not now seated upon His own throne. The Davidic Covenant, and the promises of God through the prophets and Angle Gabriel concerning the Messianic kingdom await fulfillment.”*
  - b. The church age
    - i. Takes place in a pre-tribulation rapture
      1. If all the dead saints are resurrected and all the living saints are raptured and all the wicked remain – who will evangelize the people who will

supposedly be saved in the tribulation?

2. Dispensational writers state that this will take place because of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses in Rev 7 and 14. They state that God will sovereignly save these at the beginning of the tribulation period.
3. So when all the Christians disappear and there is no Christians left – God will convert 144,00 Jews –

How does this appeal to the Arminian view of freewill? Yet most dispensationalists are found in the Arminian camp.

If this rapture is not the same as the second coming then shouldn't people cease using language that makes it sound that way. (1 Thess 4:15) – The dispensationalists says that this is not the “coming” of the Lord it is only one of many stages before His coming. But is this what the text says? Aren't they taking the Bible literally?

- c. Stages 3 and 4 – The resurrection of the saints who have died during the tribulation along with the OT saints at the start of the Millennium (7 yrs later)
  - i. Where is the text that shows the saints living at the time of the second coming will go into the Millennium in their immortal bodies?
  - ii. John MacArthur sees the necessity for separating the rapture at the start of the tribulation from the resurrection at the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium

1 Thess 4:16-17 John MacArthur Commentary: “If God raptures all believers just prior to the inauguration of the Millennial kingdom (as a posttribulation rapture demands), no one would be left to populate and propagate the earthly kingdom of Christ promised to Israel. It is not within the Lord's plan and purpose to use glorified individuals to propagate the earth during the Millennium. Therefore, the rapture needs to occur earlier so that after God has raptured all believers, He can save more souls – including Israel's remnant – during the seven-year tribulation. Those people can then enter the millennial kingdom in earthly form. The most reasonable possibility for this scenario is the pretribulation rapture.”

The historic premil has no way of getting people into the Millennial period so this is Dr. MacArthur's answer to the problem.

The problem still exists – there is no text that proves that this is so. It is only a “reasonable possibility” – there is no appeal to a text in Scripture.

- d. Stage five - The final stage that involves the resurrection of the wicked dead at the conclusion of the 1000 years
  - i. Even if this is limited to the unsaved – what happens to the saved that remained in the millennium?
    1. Will there not be mortal saints that died during this 1000 years?
    2. Are we to conclude that those left during the Millennium will stand before Christ at the “Second Coming” in a mortal body? When and where do these get resurrected?