

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY AND FUTURISTIC PREMILLENNIALISM

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New Covenant Theology (NCT) advocates have correctly abandoned the non-biblical covenants of Covenant Theology (CT). However, with few exceptions, they have inconsistently maintained CT's eschatologies, which usually reject a future premillennial kingdom on earth, ruled over by Christ for 1,000 years in fulfillment of OT unconditional promises made to Abraham and David. After surveying the current theological landscape among prominent NCT writers, seven compelling reasons for embracing Futuristic Premillennialism (FP) are discussed: (1) Hermeneutics Is a Presupposition, Not a Theology, (2) Careful Exegesis Is Required, Not a Presupposed Theology, (3) Unconfused and Separate Identities for Israel and the Church, (4) Preservation of the Jewish Race and Israel, (5) Unconditional Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, (6) Proper Order of Christ's Return and Christ's Reign, and (7) Promises of an Irreversible Restoration for the Nation. Because of these seven determinative, biblical facts, the only eschatology which would be consistent with NCT's denial of the non-existent covenants espoused by CT would be FP.

This essay builds upon the four previous articles in this issue of *TMSJ*, dealing with *New Covenant Theology (NCT): A Critique*. If you have not yet read Dr. Barrick on how NCT relates to OT covenants and Dr. Vlach on how NCT relates to Covenant Theology (CT), please do so before proceeding here.

NCT is to be commended for having recognized the absolute lack of biblical evidence for the three covenantal mainstays of CT, i.e., Covenant of Grace, Covenant of Redemption, and Covenant of Works. NCT has advanced the theological discussion by limiting their studies to covenants that are clearly and repeatedly taught in Scripture, e.g., the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants.

We interact here with NCT in that they limit God's promises for Israel in the

future and miss the futuristic aspects of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. In this, they unnecessarily and erroneously rejoin their CT brothers in proposing that the NT church has replaced OT Israel and thus inherited God's land, ruler, and kingdom promises from the supposedly disobedient and disinherited Jews. As a result, the eschatological options for NCT are essentially no different from those of CT.

Bed-Rock Hermeneutics

Why would NCT rejoin CT at the point of eschatology? Dr. Barrick's assertion that their presupposed eschatology drives their hermeneutic rather than the other way around needs to be reasserted. By putting the theological cart before the hermeneutical horse, NCT slips back into the CT error that they avoided in their soteriology where the hermeneutical horse is rightly ahead of the theological cart. Most NCT adherents have not completely abandoned CT as they rightfully should.

A somewhat surprising explanation of hermeneutics made by a well-known theologian illustrates this point.

What is covenant theology? The straightforward, if provocative answer to that question is that it is what is nowadays called a hermeneutic—that is, a way of reading the whole Bible that is itself part of the overall interpretation of the Bible that it undergirds. A successful hermeneutic is a consistent interpretative procedure yielding a consistent understanding of Scripture that in turn confirms the propriety of the procedure itself. Covenant theology is a case in point. It is a hermeneutic that forces itself upon every thoughtful Bible-reader who gets to the place, *first*, of reading, hearing, and digesting Holy Scripture as didactic instruction given through human agents by God himself, in person; *second*, of recognizing that what the God who speaks the Scriptures tells us about in their pages is his own sustained sovereign action in creation, providence, and grace; *third*, of discerning that in our salvation by grace God stands revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, executing in tripersonal unity of single cooperative enterprise of raising sinners from the gutter of spiritual destitution to share Christ's glory for ever; and *fourth*, of seeing that God-centered thought and life, spring responsively from a God-wrought change of heart that expresses itself spontaneously in grateful praise, is the essence of true knowledge of God. Once Christians have got this far, the covenant theology of the Scriptures is something that they can hardly miss.¹

According to the highly respected Dr. Packer, "Covenant Theology ... is a hermeneutic...." Amazing! If one's hermeneutic is one's theology, then one's theology determines one's hermeneutic; that is what logicians call "circular reasoning"—a catastrophic logical fallacy. Traditionally, one's hermeneutic has applied to the entirety of the OT and NT, text by text, which then resulted in one's

¹J. I. Packer, "Introduction: On Covenant Theology," in Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, vol. 1 (1677; reprint, Escondido, Calif.: The den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1990) 12-13.

theology, not the reverse as stated by Packer.

NCT advocate Donald Hochner similarly writes, “There are three main systems of interpreting Scripture.... [T]he author of this comparative analysis wishes to state his preference for New Covenant Theology, as being a more balanced system for interpreting Scripture....”² Gary D. Long likewise notes, “If the *non-premillennialism* aspect of prophecy is on the right track then it must be part of a better hermeneutic. I believe New Covenant theology presents a better biblical hermeneutic.”³

If a consistent hermeneutic that leads to one’s theology is the proper way to approach Scripture, then some of Futuristic Premillennialism’s (FP’s) staunchest critics recognize the consistent nature of and outcome when the historical-grammatical approach is taken to interpret all Scripture, including prophetic portions. For example,

O.T. Allis—“...the Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been yet fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age.”⁴

Floyd E. Hamilton—“Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures.”⁵

Loraine Boettner—“It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over the other nations.”⁶

However, each one asserts that consistency does not necessarily yield the eschatological truth of Scripture, because the fruit thereof does not agree with his hermeneutic of CT.

Perhaps the great writer Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) summed it up best.

I cannot understand how you theologians and preachers can apply to the Church—or the

²Donald Hochner, “A Comparison of Three Systems: Dispensationalism, Covenant Theology, and New Covenant Theology” (online at www.angelfire.com/ca/DeafPreterist/compare.html, accessed 9/2/07).

³Gary D. Long, “New Covenant Non-Premillennialism—Part 2” (online at www.soundofgrace.com/v7/n.9/glp2.htm, accessed 9/2/07).

⁴O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (1945; reprint, Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977) 238.

⁵Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of the Millennial Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942) 38.

⁶Loraine Boettner, “Postmillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1977) 95.

multiplicity of churches—Scripture promises which, in their plain meaning, must apply to God's chosen people Israel, and to Palestine; and which, consequently, must still be future. You call yourselves the "Israel of God" or the "Spiritual Israel." As an example of this misinterpretation, he gave me Isaiah LXII. "But," said he, "that does not stand alone. The prophetic books are full of teachings which, if they are interpreted literally, would be inspiring, and a magnificent assurance of a great and glorious future; but which, as they are spiritualized, become farcical—as applied to the Church, they are a comedy."⁷

Representative NCT Eschatological Approaches

Steve Lehrer offers five key conclusions that lead him away from premillennialism.⁸

1. "NCT ... views the Old Testament through the lens of the New. That is our driving theological presupposition."⁹
2. "This means that if the New Covenant fulfillment of an Old Covenant promise changes the nature of the original promise, then we *have no biblical reason to expect the Old Covenant promise will be fulfilled as the promise stood in its Old Covenant context.*"¹⁰
3. "Then there is the view of NCT, which understands Israel to be an unbelieving type or picture of the true people of God, the church. According to NCT, Israel never was a believing people as a whole. Israel always had a tiny remnant of true believers in her midst. Israel was not the church in the Old Testament, but they did function as a type or picture of the church—the true people of God."¹¹
4. "I don't believe that Romans 11 teaches there is a promise for a national salvation for all of ethnic Israel."¹²
5. "In summary, NCT is not replacement theology if by that you mean that God has replaced the first true people of God with people of God number two. But NCT is replacement theology if by that you mean the focus of God's attention is no longer on a particular nation (Israel), but rather God's preoccupation with the nation has been "replaced" or fulfilled by God showering His love on the true people of God, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles."¹³

⁷As quoted from personal conversation by S. J. Whitmee, "'Tusitala,' R. L. S.—A New Phase," *The Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923):348.

⁸Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (self-published, 2006).

⁹*Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 224.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 66.

¹²*Ibid.*, 104. In stark contrast, CT advocate John Murray concludes that if *Israel* means anything but ethnic, national Israel, it does exegetical violence to the text (*The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968] 97).

¹³*Ibid.*, 205.

John Reisinger, in spite of his excellent critique of CT,¹⁴ shies away from premillennialism because

1. "Israel has no separate purpose or future independent of the Body of Christ."¹⁵
2. "The *physical* nation of Israel was cast off and the special national covenant relationship was totally ended when Christ came (Matt. 21:43).¹⁶

Tom Wells reasons from Romans 11. He concludes, "From the standpoint of eternity future, looking back, the church will prove to have been God's elect individuals from every era."¹⁷

While each of these men has approached the theme of eschatology differently, they have one common characteristic. Having rejected CT's unbiblical covenants in favor of the New Covenant, they then embrace CT's eschatological conclusions which had their origins and basis in the abandoned, non-biblical covenants. They have returned to the source of the error which supposedly they already recognized and from which they fled.

But is this return to CT eschatologies an essential, necessary plank in the NCT agenda?

NCT Is Compatible Only With FP

Fred Zaspel, who co-authored *New Covenant Theology* with Tom Wells, is unquestionably a futuristic premillennialist and finds FP in absolute harmony with NCT, especially in its rejection of the unbiblical covenants of CT. In personal correspondence (10/22/06), he writes, "NCT generally is more a movement than a settled position as of yet. This is particularly the case in terms of eschatology.... [M]ost of the *published* 'spokesmen' (self-appointed or otherwise) for NCT are amillennial. And of these, some are particularly outspoken in their disregard for premillennialism."

Zaspel, though a minority voice in NCT, eschatologically speaking, is a determined FP. He believes in a distinct future for ethnic Israel.¹⁸ He reasons thusly from Romans 11:

¹⁴John G. Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds* (Frederick, Md.: New Covenant Media, 1998). See Appendix 3, "Covenant Theology's 'Two Administrations of One Covenant'" 129-39.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁷Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology* (Frederick, Md.: New Covenant Media, 2002) 63.

¹⁸Fred G. Zaspel, *Jews, Gentiles, and the Goal of Redemptive History* (Hatfield, Pa.: IBRI, 1995) 24.

It should be noted further that the ground on which Paul bases his hope of the future conversion of “all Israel” is nothing other than Israel’s ancient covenants. In 11:29 Paul says this directly, and in 11:26–27 he cites by way of support and explanation a composite of passages from the Old Testament (Psa. 14:7; Gen. 17:4; Isa. 59:20–21; 27:9; Jer. 31:33ff). The language is reminiscent of more passages, particularly from the prophets, in which the Davidic, Abrahamic, and new covenants are held in view for the people. Significantly, these same passages speak to a time when Israel, in her own land, will again enjoy her prominence among the nations.¹⁹

Amusingly, one British CT adherent accuses both Zaspel and his amillennial co-author of being FPs. George M. Ella writes in a review of *New Covenant Theology*, “They offer us dyed-in-the-wool Dispensationalism of the most extreme kind under the guise of a New Speak which is almost amusing in its ingenuity....”²⁰ Actually, Ella proves to be the extremist by labeling amillennialist Wells as a dispensationalist and accusing Zaspel of being extreme when, in fact, he is quite moderate.

Just released, in late summer 2007, is the most significant NCT futuristic premillennial book, *Future Israel*, by Barry Horner.²¹ He contributes a formidable work that clearly marks out FP as the most compatible eschatology for NCT. In so doing, he dramatically demonstrates that non-FPs in NCT have not fully removed their roots from the soil of CT.

A Brief Case for Futuristic Premillennialism²²

NCTs who find a CT-based eschatology incompatible with their total break from CT in favor of NCT, will be encouraged by the seminal works of Zaspel and Horner. Also, they will take heart in the following discussion of seven primary reasons for FP.²³

¹⁹Ibid., 25.

²⁰George M. Ella, “New Covenant Theology: A Review,” *New Focus* 11/3 (Oct/Nov 2006) (online at www.go-newfocus.co.uk/pages.php?section=25&subsection=7&artID=177, accessed 9/3/07). Australian CT devotee Kevin Hartley understands Zaspel to be “a dispensationalist at heart” (See “New Covenant Theology and its Fundamental Presupposition” [online at www.pressiechurch.org/Theol_1/Defining%20NCT.htm, accessed 9/2/07]).

²¹Barry Horner, *Future Israel* (Nashville: B&H, 2007). He has been significantly influenced by the 19th-century Scottish Presbyterian and hymn writer of note (1808-1889), Horatius Bonar, *Prophetical Landmarks Containing Data for Helping to Determine the Question of Christ's Pre-Millennial Advent* (London: James Nisbet, 1847).

²²See David Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles, and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1995) for an excellent treatment of Futuristic Premillennialism.

²³These materials have been adapted from Richard Mayhue, *1, 2 Thessalonians* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1999) 203–11.

1. **Hermeneutics Is a Presupposition, Not a Theology**

Advocates of FP use a consistent grammatical-historical approach to both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, by which the Bible is interpreted normally throughout, regardless of whether it is non-eschatological or eschatological. Therefore, God's promises to Abraham and David are viewed in a futuristic sense as anticipating a restored nation of Israel. In this pattern, the rapture comes first (it can be pre-tribulational, mid-tribulational, or post-tribulational), followed by Christ's second coming at the end of the seven-year tribulation period, biblically spoken of as Daniel's seventieth week. After judging the earth and its inhabitants, Christ rules over the earth for one thousand years (the millennium) from His Davidic throne in Jerusalem. At the end of the millennium, Satan rebels for one final time but is instantly defeated. Then comes the resurrection and judgment of all unbelievers at the Great White Throne judgment, which is followed by the New Jerusalem and the eternal state.

FP does not require new special rules of interpretation when it comes to prophetic texts. The biblical text is taken at normal face-value, in its context, recognizing symbolic language and speech figures, plus the reality that they represent. It allows the interpreter to take the same general approach to the unvarnished history of Joshua, or the highly figurative images of Solomon's Song, or the prophetic books.

Normal interpretation produces the correct understanding of OT prophecies that have already been fulfilled in history. For example, Gen 17:6 predicts that from Abraham would come real kings, and they did. Daniel prophesied of coming Persian, Greek, and Roman nations, and they came to be.

Most convincing to this writer is the manner in which Christ's first advent prophecies are correctly interpreted, i.e., by consistently using the normal or grammatical-historical approach. Christ was born in the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10); He was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); He died by crucifixion (Ps 22) and rose from the grave (cf. Ps 2:7 with Acts 13:33; 16:10; Isa 55:3).

Therefore, unless some clear, uncontested mandate from Scripture changes how one interprets second-coming prophecies (and there is none), then prophetic Scripture should be interpreted consistently throughout the Bible. Only FP does so.

2. **Careful Exegesis Is Required, Not a Presupposed Theology**

Revelation 20:1-10 might well be considered the *summum bonum* of millennial studies, for in this text one encounters a unique historical period which is designated as "one thousand years" (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7). This serves as an example of careful exegesis.

Several preliminary inquiries logically precede determining a correct eschatological understanding of Revelation 20. First, the question needs to be asked whether this period of time is yet future or has it already been fulfilled?

Next, is this period actually one thousand years in length or does the term represent another length of time, e.g., 5,000 years? Finally, how has the 'one thousand' of Revelation 20:1-10 normally been interpreted in the past?

The Time of Fulfillment

Several peculiar events occur during this special segment of time. An angel binds Satan with a great chain (20:1-2). Satan is then incarcerated in the abyss which is shut and sealed (20:3). Thus, Satan no longer deceives the nations until the one thousand years transpire. The Tribulation martyrs are resurrected to reign with Christ (20:4, 6). When the one thousand years end, Satan is released for a short time to deceive the nations once again (20:3, 7-8).

Has this already been fulfilled? Most who hold to a form of Covenant Theology respond affirmatively and point to Christ's victory over Satan at the cross as the starting point. Such texts as Matt 12:22-29 are employed to bolster the position that Satan is *now* bound in fulfillment of Revelation 20.

Though Christ did win the victory at Calvary and Satan's doom was eternally settled, Satan has not been incapacitated in the manner demanded by this text. Satan still entices men to lie (Acts 5:3). He is blinding the minds of unbelievers to the gospel of the glory of Christ in God (2 Cor 4:4). Satan currently disguises himself as an angel of light to deceive the church (2 Cor 11:2-3, 13-15). The devil hinders ministers of God (1 Thess 2:18) and roams about the earth to devour its population (1 Pet 5:8). Revelation 20 could never refer to the present time in light of these abundant testimonies of Satan's present, frenetic pace (cf. 2 Cor 2:11; Eph 6:11-12). Therefore, the conclusion must be that Revelation 20 looks to some future time of special magnitude. Since it is yet ahead, the next question is, "How long will this time last?"

The Period of Time

The bottom line in this discussion asks, "Does *chilia etē* in Revelation 20 really mean a literal one-thousand years?" The discussion begins by looking at biblical numbers in general and then narrowing the focus to Revelation and "one thousand" in particular.

It is commonly understood as a basic rule of hermeneutics that numbers should be accepted at face value, i.e., conveying a mathematical quantity, unless substantial evidence warrants otherwise. This dictum for interpreting biblical numbers is generally accepted by all as the proper starting point.

This rule holds true throughout the Bible, including Revelation. A survey of numbers in the Apocalypse supports this. For instance, seven churches and seven angels in Revelation 1 refer to seven literal churches and their messengers. Twelve tribes and twelve apostles refer to actual, historical numbers (21:12, 14).

Seven lampstands (1:12), five months (9:5), two witnesses (11:3), twelve hundred and sixty days (11:3), twelve stars (12:1), ten horns (13:1), sixteen hundred stadia (14:20), three demons (16:13), and five fallen kings (17:9–10) all use numbers in their normal sense. Out of the scores of numbers in Revelation, only two (seven spirits in 1:4 and 666 in 13:18) are conclusively used in a symbolic fashion. Though this line of reasoning does not prove that “one thousand” in Revelation 20 should be taken normally, it does put the burden of proof on those who disagree with accepting “one thousand” as one thousand to prove otherwise.

Not only are numbers in general to be taken normally in Revelation but, more specifically, this is also true with numbers referring to time. In Revelation 4–20 at least twenty-five references to measurements of time occur. Only two of these demand to be understood in something other than a literal sense and, with these instances, numbers are not employed. The “day of His wrath” (6:17) would likely exceed twenty-four hours and ‘the hour of His judgment’ (14:7) seemingly extends beyond sixty minutes. Nothing, however, in the phrase “one thousand years” suggests a symbolic interpretation.

This next point is very important. Never in the Bible is “year” used with a numerical adjective when it does not refer to the actual period of time that it mathematically represents. Unless evidence to the contrary can be provided, Revelation 20 is not the one exception in the entire Scripture.

Also, the number “one thousand” is not used elsewhere in the Bible with a symbolic sense. Job 9:3; 33:23; Pss 50:10; 90:4; Eccl 6:6; 7:28; and 2 Pet 3:8 have been used in support of the idea that “one thousand” in this text is used symbolically. However, these attempts fail because in each of these texts “one thousand” is used in its normal sense to make a vivid point.

One thousand and its varied combinations are used frequently in both Testaments. No one questions the response to five thousand believers (Acts 4:4), twenty-three thousand men killed (1 Cor 10:8), or seven thousand killed (Rev 11:13). Likewise, no exegetical reason exists to question the normality of one-thousand years in Revelation 20.

The Testimony of History

From the earliest post-apostolic era, the church understood the “millennium” of Revelation 20 as a literal, one thousand years. Papias, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian all evidenced this fact in their writings. The church taught nothing else until the fourth century.

When ancient theologians began to go beyond what the Bible taught about the millennium, when they began to make it a period of time that would be more for the enjoyment of men than for the glory of God, some reacted to correct this excess by interpreting this time as something less than an actual historical period.

Augustine (c.354-430) popularized the approach, which reasoned that the

church inherited the blessings promised to Israel and that they are spiritual, not earthly. He taught that Revelation 20 referred to this time.

However, even Augustine understood from Revelation 20 that this period lasted one thousand literal years. So Augustine, called by many the father of amillennialism, took the one thousand years normally. Even to this day some non-premillennialists interpret Revelation 20 to be actually one thousand years in length. To do differently does injustice to the text.

Conclusions

The one thousand years of Revelation 20 look to the future for fulfillment since an honest appraisal of the text and history determines that they have not yet occurred. Further, a survey of numbers in the Bible and Revelation pointedly demands that the “one thousand” years be understood in a normal sense. This position received further substantiation through a brief review of how the church has historically interpreted this text.

Although to prove Futuristic Premillennialism from Revelation 20 alone is beyond the scope of this discussion, certainly the next sequentially logical question would be, “Is there an unmistakable bridge that links the OT promises of a restored earthly kingdom to Israel with the distinctive statements of Revelation 20?” In closing, the suggestion is that there is—the rule and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne of David in the city of God. Consider 2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 2:1-12; Isa 2:2-4; 9:7; Jer 33:14-18; Ezek 34:23-24; Dan 2:44-45; Hos 3:5; Joel 3:9-21; Zeph 3:14-20; and Zech 14:1-11 with Revelation 20:4, 6. Only FP takes this approach and arrives at this conclusion.

3. Unconfused and Separate Identities for Israel and the Church

The book of Acts speaks frequently of the “church” (nineteen times) and “Israel” (twenty times). However, ‘church’ refers to those believing at Pentecost and beyond; while “Israel” refers to the nation—historically and ethnically. The terms are never used synonymously or interchangeably. The church is never called “spiritual Israel” or “new Israel” in the NT; furthermore, Israel is never called “the church” in the OT.

Only three texts might even remotely be considered to equate Israel with the church. However, upon closer inspection, they yield the following proper interpretations.

1. Romans 9:6 distinguishes between physical birth and the new birth.
2. Romans 11:26 promises that all elect Jews will be saved.
3. Galatians 6:16 refers to the believing Jews in the Galatian congregations.

“Church” is mentioned at least eighteen times in Revelation 1–3. It is not

later confused with “Israel” in Revelation 6–19. Between Rev 4:1 and Rev 22:15, the church is not mentioned. The last occurrence of “church” refers back to the original recipients/readers in the late first-century church. Only FP accounts for this clear biblical distinction.

4. Preservation of the Jewish Race and Israel

The Jewish race is the most persecuted ethnic group in world history. The ten northern tribes of Israel have been extremely obscure since the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. The nation of Israel never regained any degree of its former sovereign rule after the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. until the nation was restored in A.D. 1948. Yet, today the Jewish race and the nation of Israel are a recognized people residing in the ancient land of their ancestors, who trace their roots back to Abraham in Genesis 12 (c.2165–1990 B.C.).

The OT promised that Israel would again be restored by God to international prominence in spite of their ancient exiles, Ezek 37:15–28 being the most prominent text. Both Jer 31:35–37 and 33:19–26 guarantee that this promise is as sure as the laws of nature. Many OT texts promise that once Israel is fully restored, she will never be overthrown or shamed again (Jer 31:40; Ezek 37:25; Joel 2:26–27; Amos 9:15; Zeph 3:20). Only with FP is this expected.

5. Unconditional Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants

Both the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants were intended to be unconditional in their ultimate effect. Nowhere does Scripture suggest that Israel forsook God’s blessings forever and that these blessings have now allegedly been made spiritual and inherited by the church. To say otherwise, in effect, is to make God a liar.

The Abrahamic Covenant is called an everlasting covenant in which God gave Abraham and his descendents the land of Israel as an everlasting possession (Gen 17:7–8). God’s promise to Abraham is corroborated in 1 Chron 16:15–17 and Ps 105:8–15. By this covenant, a people and a land are promised for Israel.

The Davidic Covenant of 2 Sam 7:8–16 is called an everlasting covenant in 2 Sam 23:5, 2 Chron 21:7, and Ps 89:3–4, 19–29, 36. By this covenant, a throne is promised for Israel. Only FP fully takes these features into consideration.

6. Proper Order of Christ’s Return and Christ’s Reign

In prophetic Scripture, Christ is portrayed as first returning to earth for His kingdom and then reigning over it. He returns in Daniel 2:34–35 and then reigns in Dan 2:44–45. He first returns in Zech 14:5 and then reigns in 14:9. Christ’s coming first appears in Matt 24:27, 30, 37, 42, 44, followed by His reign in Matt 25:31. In Rev 19:11, He returns to reign as described in Rev 20:4. Only FP holds to this repeated pattern. In the other unbiblical prophetic profiles, Christ reigns first before later coming to earth.

7. Promises of an Irreversible Restoration for the Nation²⁴

The OT has scores of passages that support this thesis. For the sake of brevity, listed below are ten of the most indisputable.

- Jeremiah 24:6—“I will plant them and not pluck them up.”
- Jeremiah 31:12—“They shall never languish again.”
- Jeremiah 31:40—“It shall not be plucked up, or overthrown any more forever.”
- Ezekiel 34:28–29—“They will no longer be prey to the nations” (v. 28).
“They will not endure the insults of the nations anymore” (v. 29).
- Ezekiel 37:25—“They shall live in the land ... forever.”
- Joel 2:26–27—“Then, My people will never be put to shame” (vv. 26, 27).
- Joel 3:18–21—“Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem for all generations” (v. 20).
- Amos 9:11–15—“They will not again be rooted out from their land” (v. 15).
- Zeph 3:14–20—“You will fear disaster no more” (v. 15).
- Zech 14:11—“There will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.”

Only FP takes these promises seriously.

A Final Word

The purpose of this article has been twofold. First, to show the lamentable inconsistency that most NCT adherents display by rejecting the non-biblical covenants of CT, while at the same time embracing CT eschatologies. This illogical and unnecessary approach has been avoided by NCT spokesmen Fred Zaspel and Barry Horner. Each of these NCT advocates reject both CT non-biblical covenants and CT eschatologies in favor of a thoroughgoing, biblically based, grammatical-historical hermeneutic, which results in FP.

Second, a representative and suggestive case for FP has been offered. Though this is not intended to be an unabridged discussion, it certainly forms a primary foundation upon which particular details can be added to construct a convincing FP eschatology which is not in need of CT's unbiblical covenantal influence.

²⁴The extreme to which CT and/or NCT people go to deny a future for ethnic and national Israel is illustrated in “An Open Letter,” in which it is written, “[A] day should not be anticipated in which Christ’s kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in ‘the land,’ by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices” (online at www.knoxseminary.org/prospective/faculty/wittenbergdoor, accessed 8/31/07) . Signatories include well-known men such as Richard Gaffin, Michael Horton, Joseph Pipa, Robert Reymond, O. Palmer Robertson, R. C. Sproul, and Bruce Waltke.