

Last Things: The Church's Hope and God's Final Victory

Amillennialism

- The view that Christ reigns now in heaven over his Kingdom on earth. The church age is the millennial kingdom. We are in the millennium right now.

Hermeneutics

- For amillennialists, the key to rightly interpreting Old Testament passages is to interpret them in light of the New Testament. In other words, we must ask: How does the New Testament teach us to interpret such passages?
- Keep in mind: the Old Testament prophets spoke of the coming age to come (the messianic age) in terms of language, imagery, types, and realities that were familiar to old covenant saints.
- Jesus understood the Old Testament in light of himself. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). The Old Testament was not primarily about Israel, the land, or the temple; it was about Jesus.
- A **type** is a person, place, thing, or institution that foreshadows another. But when the reality appears, the shadow passes away because Christ has fulfilled it (Col. 2:16-17).

1. The True Israel

- The Israel in the Old Testament pointed to the true Israel to come. Jesus is the true Israel, whose life recapitulates the history of Israel (see Matt. 2:15 and Hosea 11:1). His sojourn in Egypt, his baptism, and temptation in the wilderness resembles the story of Israel.
- Jesus is the true offspring of Abraham. And since Jesus is the true seed of Abraham, we who are in Christ by faith are "Abraham's offspring and heirs according to the promise." That is, the church is the true Israel of God (Gal. 3:7-9, 16, 26-27, 29; 6:16).
- Christians are the Israel of God only because by faith we are united to him who is alone the true Israel. We inherit the blessings and the promises not because we have replaced Israel, but because by God's grace we are in *him* who is the true Israel.
- The New Covenant language in Jer. 31:31-34 is applied to the Church in Heb. 8:8.

2. The Land of Promise

- Genesis 15:18 describes territory far larger than Israel permanently possessed. God promised to Abraham the land as an everlasting possession (Gen. 17:8). Taken literally, this would include all of modern-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Sinai (Egypt), northern Saudi Arabia.
- However, how did Paul interpret the land promise? In Romans 4:13, "For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be the *heir of the world (kosmos)* did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith?" Where in the Old Testament do you find the promise? If you interpret it literally, nowhere. But Paul is giving us inspired interpretation of the Old Testament.

- Abraham understood Canaan as pointing beyond itself to a permanent inheritance. “He was looking forward to the city that has foundations.” “They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.”
- The land of Canaan is a type that ultimately points to the whole renewed creation fulfilled in Christ.
- Redemptive-historical movement: Eden → Canaan → Kingdom of God (right now) → New Creation

3. The City of Jerusalem

- The city of Jerusalem was historical, covenantal, and typological.
- Old Testament Jerusalem pointed beyond itself to the heavenly Jerusalem. “You have come to Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).
- In Galatians 4:24-25, Paul contrasts the present Jerusalem (slavery) and the Jerusalem above (free). The heavenly Jerusalem is the true Jerusalem.
- Jesus directs the woman at the well not to Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem but to himself (John 4:23-26).
- Redemptive-historical movement: Eden → Jerusalem → Christ → Church → New creation

4. The Kingdom of David

- In 2 Samuel 7:12-16, God promises David: (1) A royal son (2) A eternal throne (3) An everlasting kingdom. The promise unfolds in Solomon and continues in the Davidic dynasty, but the Davidic monarchy falls in B.C. 586. *That raises the question: how are the promises fulfilled?*
- The royal son is fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 1:30-33). The eternal throne (David’s throne) is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:30-31), in his enthronement in heaven (Eph. 1:20-22), in his reigning over the church, and in the extension of his kingdom through the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20).
- In Amos 9:11-12, Amos predicts God will raise up the booth that is fallen, restore it, and all nations will come to worship. In Acts 15:16-17, James interprets that passage as being fulfilled in the church age with the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom.

5. The Temple of God

- In the prophets, God promises to restore his people to the land, which includes a rebuilt future temple, where sacrifices will take place (Ezek. 40-48).
- The key to understand this promise is the coming of Christ. Jesus said, “One greater than the temple is here” (Matt. 12:6). Jesus spoke of raising up the temple after three days (John 2:19-20). Jesus is the true temple of God.
- “All that the temple means, then, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ: the dwelling of God’s glory in the sanctuary; the provision of atoning sacrifice at the gate; the meeting of fellowship where the praises and prayers of Israel ascend from the holy feast; the flowing of water of life that comes from the threshold of the house – all are realities in Christ” (Clowney, “The Final Temple,” 105).
- Redemptive-historical movement: Eden → Tabernacle → Temple → Christ → Church → Cosmic Temple.
- “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.”