

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Rev. William Macleod

STUDY GUIDE

Module 7:

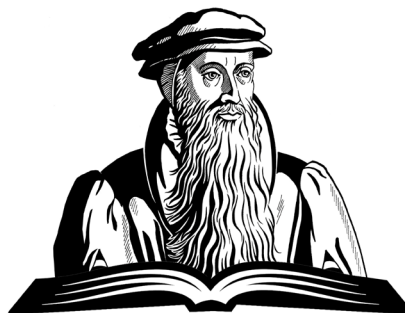
ESCHATOLOGY—

THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

Lecture 6:

DISPENSATIONAL

PREMILLENNARIANISM



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module 7

Eschatology—the Doctrine of Last Things

1. Introduction to Eschatology
2. The Doctrine of Death
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7. The Second Coming and the Resurrection
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Module 7:

Eschatology—The Doctrine of Last Things

Lecture 6:

Dispensational Premillenarianism

Introduction

It is important to consider *Dispensational Premillenarianism*, as it has been the generally-held viewpoint of most evangelical churches for the past hundred-and-fifty years. It has been widely promoted by radio and TV ministries, by the *Scofield Reference Bible*, by Bible institutes and colleges, and by popular books like Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. There are signs that Dispensationalism is beginning to lose its grip on the evangelical church, with the criticism coming from Reformed theology, which has weakened the general attachment to Dispensationalism. Great teaching centers for promoting Dispensationalism, such as the large Dallas Seminary, are starting to modify and water down their Dispensational theology, though the traditional views are still widely held by many Christians.

Theme: *Dispensational Premillenarianism.*

I. Historic Premillennialism

1. Common in the early church—called Chiliasm.
 - a. Held by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.
 - b. Rejected by Augustine.
2. At the Reformation, was revived by Anabaptists.
 - a. Rejected by Luther, Calvin, many others.
3. Revived again in 19th century by Edward Irving.
 - 1) Accepted by Horatius Bonar, Andrew Bonar, Robert Murray M'Cheyne,
 2. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was also Premillenarianist.
4. Christ could return any day.
 - a. First, a period of falling away and persecution.

- b. Then Christ will raise Christians from the dead—the first resurrection.
 - 1) They will reign with Christ for the thousand years.
 - 2) A period of peace, prosperity, and gospel blessing.
- c. After the thousand years, there will be a second resurrection.
 - 1) The wicked would be raised from the dead and judged.
 - 2) Ends with Satan’s rebellion, put down by Christ.
- d. Then the judgment, and the final state.

Questions:

1. Briefly explain the beginnings of Historic Premillennialism. When was it revived? Who were its proponents? Who rejected it?

2. What are the main teachings of Historic Premillennialism?

II. The Development of Dispensational Premillennialism

- 1. Much more elaborate than Historic Premillennialism.
 - b. Not compatible with Reformed theology or sound biblical exegesis.
 - c. Fanatically espoused as a fundamental point of orthodoxy.
- 2. Dispensationalism was developed by J. N. Darby (1800–1892).
 - a. The prophetic kingdom is distinct from the church.
 - b. Christ came to rule as King of the Jews in Jerusalem, but was rejected, so he turned to the Gentiles.
 - c. The church among the Gentiles was just an afterthought.
 - d. Rejects Reformed theology, and rejects the sovereignty of God.
 - e. Rejects that God ordained whatsoever comes to pass.
 - f. Man has free will, and God has no clear plan—Arminian soteriology.

- g. All history is divided into dispensations, with distinctive covenants.
 - h. Soteriology changes according to the dispensation.
3. Reformed theology holds to only two dispensations:
- a. Old Testament, and New Testament.
 - b. And only one covenant of grace.
4. Dispensationalism has seven dispensations of world history:
- a. Innocence, before the fall.
 - b. Conscience, from the fall to Noah.
 - c. Human government, from Noah to Abraham.
 - d. Promise, from Abraham to Moses.
 - e. Law, from Moses to Christ.
 - f. Grace, the church age.
 - g. The millennium. Then, the eternal state.

Questions

1. What are the main teachings of Dispensational Premillenarianism?

2. How does Dispensational Premillenarianism differ from Historic Premillennialism?

3. What is the Reformed view of the relationship between the church of Old Testament and the church of the New Testament? How many dispensations does the Reformed view teach?

4. What are the seven dispensations of world history, according to Dispensationalist teachings?

III. The Errors of Dispensationalism

1. Distinguishes between Israel and the church.
2. Old Testament Israelites were saved by keeping the law.
3. Distinguishes between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God.
 - a. Kingdom of heaven belongs to the church; kingdom of God belongs to the Jews.
4. Sees the church as a temporary interlude in Israel's history.
5. Interprets Bible prophecy literally.
6. Teaches a literal rapture where people will disappear.
7. Believes in multiple resurrections and multiple judgment days.
8. Teaches that Christ will return more than once.
9. Teaches there are three eternal states: Heaven, Earth, and Hell.

Questions:

1. According to Dispensationalism, what was the pathway to salvation in the Old Testament?

2. How does Dispensationalism view the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven as two different kingdoms? What is the correct biblical teaching about this?

3. How does Dispensationalism teach that the New Testament church of the Gentiles is just a parenthesis or temporary interlude in Israel's history? How is this proven wrong in the Scripture?

4. How does Dispensationalism interpret Bible prophecy? What does it say about the resurrection?

5. What is “the rapture,” as taught by Dispensationalism? What does the Bible teach us about this?

6. What does Dispensationalism teach about the millennium?

7. Why do we oppose the Dispensationalist exposition of Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48?

8. What does Dispensationalism believe about the three eternal states?

IV. Dispensationalism's Problem: Christ is Already on the Throne

1. Christ is already ascended to heaven, and is seated on heaven's throne, and he currently reigns over all of creation, angels and men.
 - a. Acts 2:33–36, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted...The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.”
2. Christ's coronation immediately follows his ascension.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:24–26, “Then cometh the end...He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”
 - b. Philippians 2:8–11, “God also hath highly exalted him.”
3. Christ's humiliation is finished; his sufferings are over; his exaltation has begun.
4. Christ has already destroyed Satan on the cross.
 - a. Hebrews 2:14, “Through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.”
5. The correct understanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”
 - a. They overlook the end of the verse: “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”
6. There's no biblical support for multiple physical resurrections or multiple judgment days.
 - a. Matthew 13:47–50, There's one reckoning for both the good and the bad fish.
 - b. Matthew 13:29–30, There's one judgment day, for the wheat and the tares.
 - c. Matthew 13:32, Christ returns to judge, between the sheep and the goats.

Questions:

1. What are the biblical teachings for Christ's rule and reign in heaven? What is the significance of Christ sitting on the throne in heaven after his ascension?

2. What is the correct way to understand the text in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 about being “caught up..to meet the Lord in the air”? Is there really such a thing as what Dispensationalism calls “the rapture”?

3. What Scriptures show us that there is no biblical foundation for the ideas of multiple physical resurrections or multiple judgment days?

4. What conclusions would you come to regarding Dispensationalism and its eschatology of Premillenarianism?

V. Self-Reflection

Has this lecture helped you to see the importance of using good hermeneutics when studying eschatology? Can you see the difference now between the doctrines of Dispensationalism and the Reformed doctrines of the end times? We would recommend to you another video course that is provided on the John Knox Institute website:

Hermeneutics, Principles of Scripture Interpretation, by Rev. Robert McCurley.

<https://www.johnknoxinstitute.org/modules/hermeneutics>
