Dispensationalist Theologies and the Book of Revelation

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Dispensationalist theologies that use the Book of Revelation as their primary source of evidence are exegetically and hermeneutically problematic. The dispensationalist doctrine utilizes scripture in consistently literal interpretations. Followers of these various theologies are often jarred when told to switch hermeneutical gears to better understand unfulfilled prophecies. The primary belief fueling these theologies concerns dispensations, or separated periods of time thought to reveal God's different purposes for human history and in particular the destinies of Israel and the Church. My paper will seek to demonstrate how these theological views fail to assess John's use of symbolic language throughout Revelation and consequently raise questions as to the validity of end time prophecy."
Dispensationalist Theologies and the Book of Revelation

Dispensationalist theologies that use the *Book of Revelation* as their primary source of evidence are exegetically and hermeneutically problematic. The dispensationalist doctrine utilizes scripture in consistently literal interpretations. Followers of these various theologies are often jarred when told to switch hermeneutical gears to better understand unfulfilled prophecies. The primary belief fueling these theologies concerns dispensations, or separated periods of time thought to reveal God’s different purposes for human history and in particular the destinies of Israel and the Church. My paper will seek to demonstrate how these theological views fail to assess John’s use of symbolic language throughout *Revelation* and consequently raise questions as to the validity of end time prophecy.

Political and cultural dangers arise, moreover, when the biblical text of *Revelation* is thus taken literally. For example, with Israel becoming a nation state in 1948, dispensational evangelicals have stepped upon the road to a final conflagration, or Armageddon. In support of such views the following text from Ezekiel is cited: “I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms” (37:21-22). Dispensationalist understandings of such texts
have, among other things, led to an uncritical evaluation of military engagements on the part of the State of Israel since its beginning.

I am motivated in this study by my interest in apocalyptic and prophetic texts, especially the Book of Revelation. Its uniqueness in presenting a wrathful God could elicit alarm though it inspires me to ask how one could, or better, should understand this text. The unspecified time for the fulfillment of purported prophecies has set me on a pursuit of a personal understanding of Revelation that I hope others will find beneficial in their own spiritual journey.

In my work, I will discuss the various types of dispensationalist theology pertaining to their differences, similarities, and world views. I will also seek to uncover an alternative hermeneutical lens faithful to the text yet freed from its misuse as a way of reading contemporary events or speculating about the future. The full article will be available by the end of April. If you wish to receive the full work covering Dispensationalist Theologies, how they utilize Revelation, as well as a scholarly critique, contact me at my Fisher email address at your convenience.