

# New Covenant Theology



# For Next Time...

- It turns out that the book (“In Defense of the Decalogue” by Richard Barcellos) that I encouraged you to purchase for this week is no longer in print!
- So I now encourage you to **download** a copy of the book from my website and by next week read
  - Preface
  - Introduction
  - Chapter 1
- You will find a PDF of the book here on my website:
  - [http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/BiblicalCovnts/BibCov\\_CVBC\\_NewCov%20Class%202017.htm](http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/BiblicalCovnts/BibCov_CVBC_NewCov%20Class%202017.htm)

# Questions Raised by New Covenant Theology



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What are the competing theological systems to New Covenant Theology?

What questions do these competing views raise that we need to evaluate and consider?

# Competing Systems to New Covenant Theology

- This week we will be doing a *side by side comparison*\* of the two major competing theological systems to New Covenant Theology:
  - Dispensationalism
  - Covenant Theology
- After each comparison, we will discuss the position that we would take in holding New Covenant Theology

# Calvinism Versus Arminianism

- **Dispensationalism:**

- Most Dispensationalists are Arminian, though there are exceptions.
- There is nothing inherent within Dispensationalism that requires a Dispensationalist to be an Arminian. For example, John MacArthur and the seminary affiliated with him (Master's Seminary) is a Progressive Dispensationalists and a five-point Calvinist.

- **Covenant Theology:**

- Everyone who holds to Covenant Theology is a five-point Calvinist. This is probably due to the fact that most of those in this group will adhere to either the Westminster Confession or the London Baptist Confession of 1689 and both of those confessions articulate a very clear five-point Calvinist theology.

- **New Covenant Theology:**

- Everyone who I know who holds to New Covenant Theology is a five-point Calvinist. I suspect this is due to the fact that all of the major leaders of NCT are five-point Calvinists.

# Literal Versus Figurative Interpretation of the Bible

- **Dispensationalism:**

- Stresses a *literal* interpretation of the Bible:
  - Especially of the dramatic end-time prophecies (found in the book of Revelation and OT books like Ezekiel)
  - *Especially* of OT prophecies that seem to promise physical future blessings to the physical nation of Israel
- Even if a NT writer gives a spiritual (rather than literal) interpretation of an OT prophecy relating to the future of Israel, they will view this as a secondary fulfillment and expect that God still intends to bring about the physical fulfillment in the future.

- **Covenant Theology:**

- Can accept a literal or figurative interpretation of a passage, depending on the context
- Believes that if an OT passage *seems* to promise a future physical fulfillment for the physical nation of Israel, but the NT tells us that the prophecy has *already* been fulfilled *spiritually*, we have no reason to expect a further physical fulfillment in the future.

- **New Covenant Theology:**

- Same as Covenant Theology on this point

# The Use of the Term “Israel” in Scripture

- **Dispensationalism:**

- Believes that the term “Israel” used in scripture always refers to the literal, physical descendants of Jacob.

- **Covenant Theology:**

- Believes that the term “Israel” used in scripture may mean either the physical descendants of Jacob, or spiritual Israel, depending on context.

- **New Covenant Theology:**

- Same as Covenant Theology on this point

# The “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16

*For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the **Israel of God**.* (Gal 6:15-16 RSV)

- **Dispensationalism:**

- Believes that the term “Israel of God” in Gal. 6:16 means **physical** Israel alone.

- **Covenant Theology:**

- Believes that the term “Israel of God” in Gal. 6:16 means **spiritual** Israel, parallel to what is said in other passages such as:

- *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.* (Gal 3:29)
- *For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.* (Rom 2:28)
- *For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel* (Rom 9:6b)
- *For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.* (Phi 3:3 RSV)

- **New Covenant Theology:**

- Same as Covenant Theology on this point

# Israel and the Church

- **Dispensationalism:**

- Believes that God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly).

- **Covenant Theology:**

- Believes that God always had only one people, the Church, which gradually developed through the ages, in accordance with the Covenant of Redemption worked out in eternity past between the “Three Persons of the Godhead.”

- **New Covenant Theology:**

- This is a complex question to which I will give a tentative opinion.
- The NT refers to OT believers as “the elect” of Israel (Rom. 11:7), who received God’s approval “by faith” in Christ, just as we do (Heb. 11:2, cf. Rom 3:21ff) – but not as “the church”.
- In Matt 16:18, Jesus said that He *will* build (future tense) His Church – which would seem to indicate that the Church was not built until sometime after Christ’s statement. Therefore, while I would see the OT believers as part of the people of God, I would not see them as part of “the church”.

# Other Questions?

