

Session Six Supplement

A Christianly Response to Dispensationalism (NOTE: Not intended to be an exhaustive list).

First: Remember and keep on repeating this time-tested phrase: In essentials, unity; In nonessentials, liberty; and in everything, charity (1 Cor 16:14).

Be kind and gentle and full of grace and humble to your fellow believers (Proverbs 15:1; Titus 3:2).

In Christian love, don't allow someone to label end times things as essential. In Christian love, don't allow someone to label you as antisemitic or anti-Israel for looking deeply into what Scripture says about these things. And in Christian love, don't allow someone to label the historic, covenantal view on these matters as "Replacement Theology." (Proverbs 11:9). It is not, you are not, and that term is pejorative. Nothing is being replaced; Everything is fulfilled in Christ.

In Christian love, do not succumb to the idea that Dispensationalism is the same thing as normative, orthodox, historic Christianity. The vast majority of it is not (1 Tim 3:15).

Instead, listen respectfully and speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

Listen to the advice of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:23: "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. [Do not] be quarrelsome but...be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful."

If you yourself believe in a Dispensational doctrines, you must be mature enough to acknowledge that most of them have not been believed by the historic Church before you. Have the wisdom to do the hard work of independent study on your own and justify your positions (Eph 4:13).

Be wary of things that come close to touching on the heretical. Councils are what determine heresy, yet in some ways we have a large, historic council sitting in discernment on Dispensationalism: the historic church. In my view, some of the things Dispensationalism touches on are not orthodox and may be heretical (1 Cor 16:13; 1 Tim 3:13).

Do not get distracted. Dispensationalism diverges from historic Christianity, it can divide the people of God, it can divert Christians' attention away from the person and work of Jesus (and the work He has called us to do), it can consume a staggering amount of time, energy, and resources, and it can undermine important truths of the Bible (Phil 3:12-14).

Keep your eyes on Jesus. Dispensationalists sometimes say we must keep our eyes on Israel and current events to understand what's happening, and what will happen, in the future. We must lovingly and gently but firmly remind them that Christians are called to keep our eyes on Jesus, hold to biblical truths, and stay focused on the essential tenets of the faith (Heb 2:2).

A Christianly Response to the Modern-Day Nation State of Israel (Not an exhaustive list).

Do you know what Ben Westlund, our Israeli Christian friend, told me about what he thinks does the most spiritual damage in his country? American Christians coming over to Israel and doing big prophecy conferences. We must be sensitive and gracious, especially when traveling abroad.

We must first do no harm. We must exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. Be loving, kind and humble (Gal 5:22-23).

One Christian commentator has said of current events, "In a moment as traumatic as this, it is incumbent upon all [believers] to be 'slow to speak and quick to listen'" (James 1:19-20).

Don't assume that American evangelicals know what's best for the Nation of Israel, politically-speaking, because of our religious views (Rom 12:3-8).

Recognize that Christians have done enormous damage and caused terrible harm to Jewish people throughout history. Empathize and sympathize with Israel. The Bible calls Christians to be the people of lament as we, along with the whole of creation, groan in expectation of God's future glory to be revealed (Rom 8:19-23).

Have an attitude of thankfulness: It is from the Jewish people that God raised up Messiah. And be grateful: They are tremendous caretakers of the Land of the Bible. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. (1 Thess 5:16-18).

Make thoughtful distinctions between political support and biblical support. Christians in our country get into the most trouble when we combine theology and politics (Rom 12:2).

Praise that which is good; and condemn that which is evil. "Israel right or wrong" is not Christianly (Heb 5:13-14).

We should care for, love, and support our Christian brothers and sisters who live in and outside of Israel, especially those right now in Gaza. There are over 3 times more Palestinian Christians than Israeli Christians. We should be mindful of them. 7% of Palestinians are Christians. 2% of Israelis are Christians. 18% of Israelis are Muslim (Eph 6:18).

Remember that there's always a faithful remnant in Israel. Pray for them. Pray that their numbers will increase. Think of their pain and anguish over their own people. Paul said in Romans 9: "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel." (Phil 1:3-6).

Pray that the veil Paul talked about would be lowered from Jewish minds. Care passionately for the salvation of the Jewish people and be gentle in how you take action (2 Cor 4:3-4).

Remember and hold firm to what Paul, perhaps the most righteous and learned Jew ever, said about Jesus and the Church. Also, get to know the Book of Hebrews by heart (1 Peter 5:9).

Love and care for innocent lives, wherever they may be, who are in harm's way (1 John 4:7).

Love your neighbors as yourselves. Our highest calling is to imitate Christ (Mark 12:30-31).