

## The Folly to which Dispensationalism Leads

The seriousness of an error is manifested by the folly to which it leads. When we consider where some dispensationalists are today, we see more clearly how serious the errors are that underlie the movement. Therefore, before going through the dispensational system one aspect at a time, I thought it would be good to have one more overview article—this one looking specifically at the folly into which dispensationalists have been plunged by their erroneous views on the interpretation of Scripture.

### The Folly of Unholy Alliances

Especially after the Six-Day War in 1967, dispensationalists and Israelis began working together to promote tourism to the country of Israel. In this way both groups could make big money, while building support for the idea that God has willed the land of Palestine to the Israelis.

The biggest tourist event of the year is the week-long Feast of Tabernacles Celebration held in Jerusalem. This event is viewed to be so important that the Israeli prime minister himself has appeared virtually every year to thank the pilgrims and send them back to promote the Israeli cause. In 1998, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a typical speech:

I came here to thank you for your support in our great endeavor... The state of Israel is stronger because of your support and it needs this strength to resist undue pressure and threats. You know, and we know, that this is a support for a just and good cause. I said we have come back to our ancient homeland. Our claim to this land is based on the greatest and most incontrovertible document in creation—the Holy Bible. It's the Bible that has given us the deed to this land. It is on the basis of the Bible that the Christian world and so much of the international community have recognized our right to it.1

A number of organizations have arisen that channel funds from various churches to the Israelis. One such organization, known as Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, pairs congregations with Israeli settlements, with each church being responsible to support its own Israeli settlement financially and politically. On their website ([www.cfoic.com](http://www.cfoic.com)), one finds the following mission statement:

The focus of Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC Heartland) is to link settlements in Israel with Christian churches and individuals throughout the world. These communities are located in Judea and Samaria.

Fellowship between the churches and the Israelis is encouraged, with pen pals and email exchanges being established.2

Cornerstone Church, a huge independent congregation in San Antonio, Texas, is a well-known supporter of the Israeli cause. Dispensationalist John Hagee, the founder and senior pastor of this enormous congregation, is also the president and CEO of Global Evangelism Television, which broadcasts his church services to over 120 television and 110 radio stations worldwide.3 The magnitude of his influence is illustrated by the fact that he is scheduled to appear with Senator Joseph Lieberman at the Third Annual Washington-Israel Summit in Washington, an event scheduled to take place this summer under the auspices of an organization known as Christians United for Israel. The following quote taken from their website ([www.cufi.org](http://www.cufi.org)) shows their agenda.

We're going back to Washington for Christians United for Israel's third annual DC Summit on July 21 to July 24. You need to be there with us!

We're bringing together some of the most influential leaders and thinkers in Washington to update you on recent developments in the Middle East and in Washington. We're holding a Night to Honor Israel down the street from the Capitol with Senator Joseph Lieberman and Pastor John Hagee. And we're going to Congress so that each of you can share your support for Israel directly with your elected officials. You won't want to miss our largest and most important Summit yet!

Israel's critics are speaking out and making gains. Our intelligence community is ignoring the threat of a nuclear Iran. More voices in Congress are calling for an end to aid to Israel. And the Administration may soon pressure Israel to divide Jerusalem. With all of these threats emerging, it is more important than ever that pro-Israel Christians make their voices heard! CUFIT's Washington Summit is your chance to make a difference. Join us in Washington!

Many are the examples that could be cited to show how large numbers of professing Christians have fallen into the sin of promoting the cause of unbelieving Israelis, rather than the cause of Christ.

And there is more evidence that this is indeed the nonsense into which the dispensational movement has fallen. It should be obvious that there is an inherent contradiction between supporting the Israelis as God's people and trying to convert them to Christ. As a general rule, unbelieving Jews do not cooperate with those who are striving to persuade them to abandon Judaism for Christianity. This being the case, it is not surprising that some dispensational organizations (not all of them) have made a point of not attempting to convert Jews. Christian Friends of Israeli Communities, for example, states this explicitly on their website:

CFOIC is not an evangelizing ministry, but rather aims to build bridges of love and mutual respect between Christians and Jews. CFOIC brings unconditional support to the Jewish communities and partners with the dedicated pioneers of Biblical Israel to fulfill Biblical prophecy.

Do you think dispensationalists can build "bridges of love" between themselves and those who despise and reject Christ, even to the point of providing them "unconditional support," and not be affected by such an unholy alliance? Do you think they can bring God's name into this absurdity, claiming they are forming this union in an effort "to fulfill Biblical prophecy," and that the God who inspired Scripture will do nothing? The wise God is on His throne, and our righteous Lord is always executing His judgment, taking those who delight in folly and giving them over to even greater folly.

### The Folly of Rebuilding the Temple

Dispensationalists not only predict future events, but also strive to bring them about. "Be a part of the fulfillment of prophecy" is an oft-repeated slogan used by many dispensationalists to encourage support for their cause. One is said to be helping the fulfillment of biblical prophecy by helping the Israelis expand their borders and take complete control of Jerusalem, or by providing poor Jewish families (especially those from the former Soviet Union) the financial support they need to move to Palestine. This slogan has been found to be very effective at stirring up people to action, and has become quite common in recent years.

Another event that dispensationalists not only predict but also strive to bring about is the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. In their mind, this is something that is going to take place "because God wills it." They claim to find proof for this in passages that speak of the Antichrist desecrating the temple and putting an end to sacrificial worship.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (*II Thessalonians 2:3,4*)

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease... (*Daniel 9:27a*)

Dispensationalists argue that the temple in Jerusalem must be reconstructed, and that sacrificial worship must resume, before these prophecies can be fulfilled.

They encounter one large problem, however, when they set out to rebuild the temple on the hill in Jerusalem where it once stood. The Mosque of Omar, considered by the Moslems to be one of their most sacred sites, has been sitting on the Temple Mount since the seventh century. Now it is true that there is some doubt as to which hill in Jerusalem is the precise location where Solomon's temple once stood. But it is commonly agreed that the hill upon which this mosque presently sits is indeed the most likely location.

One can well imagine what would happen if the Jews destroyed this mosque and built a temple in its place. Many are those who fear that such an act would trigger a third world war. Yet this has not deterred dispensationalists who argue that it must take place "because God wills it." In fact, lives have already been lost over this issue:

The intense emotions surrounding this issue boiled over in October 1990 when the Temple Mount Faithful (a group devoted to rebuilding the temple — jal) announced plans to lay a cornerstone for the Temple, on Temple Mount, during the Jewish holiday week of Succoth (a name for the Feast of Tabernacles — jal). On the appointed day, crowds of Palestinian Arabs gathered protectively around Haram al-Sharif (the Moslem name for this mount — jal). Some pitched rocks at Jews praying at the Western Wall (the only remaining sections of the earlier Temple, and Judaism's most sacred spot). Israeli police, at first driven back, returned some time later (when the rock throwing had stopped) and raked the crowd with automatic weapons fire, leaving 125 wounded and 21 dead...4

The fact that the ones who put an end to this were the Israeli police serves to point out that not all Israelis desire the temple to be rebuilt. In fact, the majority of Israelis reportedly do not. Phrases such as "bunch of nuts" and "dangerous lunatics" have been frequently used by the Israeli press to describe radical right-wing groups such as the Temple Mount Faithful.5

There are, however, those who fear that dispensationalists may spark a conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors—a conflict that would lead to a world war centered in that vital region. And one considers the very large number of people who speak of Israel as God's people and the land of Palestine as the holy land given by God to the Israelis, and the fact that many of these dispensationalists see little point in trying to promote peace in the Middle East, it is not surprising that some are beginning to view the dispensationalists as a threat to human civilization. This explains why someone like Grace Halsell, a woman who served as President Lyndon Johnson's speech writer for three years, would write a book that would become very popular entitled, *Forcing God's Hand: Why Millions Pray for a Quick Rapture—And Destruction of Planet Earth*. Many are taking note of this movement, and a growing number of people are quite concerned about its agenda.

Although people of the world may agree with us that rebuilding the temple is a foolish endeavor, they will not be able to see the heart of the matter. The central error is the rejection of Christ's words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The real temple, the body of Christ, has already been raised. And God's people, the church, constitute the real temple of God with us, as our Lord has told us in *I Corinthians 6:16*,

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Great is the wickedness of rejecting the resurrection of our Lord and the true temple of the living God. And great is the evil of joining with those who build a temple to idols, and then claiming that such an activity amounts to zealously performing the work of the Lord. Can one be engaged in building both the temple of the living God and the temple of the unbelieving Jews? Undoubtedly one must abandon the former to engage in the latter. Such is the folly into which dispensationalists have fallen. How much farther can they fall? What further folly could they come up with?

### The Folly of Seeking a Completely Red Heifer

One way some dispensationalists have tried to be "a part of the fulfillment of prophecy" is by helping to bring forth a heifer that is completely and perfectly red. According to some Orthodox rabbis, the sacrifice of such a red heifer is necessary before the third temple can be built. It is said that before temple activities can begin, the ashes of a red heifer have to be mixed with water and sprinkled by the priests on the defiled, so that they can resume the temple activities of the past.

The ceremony of the red heifer is mentioned in the following verses from Numbers 19:

2 This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke:

13 Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

Some Jews and dispensationalists take this to mean that a perfectly red heifer must be found and sacrificed, to cleanse the people involved in the work of the temple.6

This presents a problem, however, because a blemish-free, perfectly-red heifer is extremely rare. Moses Maimonides, a famous rabbi of the twelfth century, once declared that only nine such heifers had been born during the entire history of Israel. The tenth heifer, said Maimonides, would be found shortly before the coming of the Messiah and the building of the third temple.7

In recent years a number of Jews and dispensationalists have been zealously attempting to use genetic engineering to produce an all-red heifer. So far a few such heifers have been born, but before the heifers reached the required age of three years, so that they could be sacrificed, they were disqualified for one reason or another. Although most would find such efforts rather amusing, there are those who fear that if such a heifer is found and sacrificed, it may spark a small movement that gradually gains in strength, with supporters arguing that such a rare event is irrefutable proof that God is making known that the time has come to clear the Temple Mount and start constructing the third temple.8

### The Folly of Trusting in Folly

Frequently quoted by dispensationalists is God's promise to Abraham that He would bless those that blessed Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham (*Gen. 12:3*). With great effect they misuse this promise to persuade people that God will certainly bless all those who give their financial and political support to Jews who desire to move to Palestine or to the Israelis who are busy fighting "terrorism."

They misuse not only the promise, but also the curse. Leading dispensationalists attempt to strike fear into all who oppose them by threatening them with the curse of God that comes upon all those who curse Abraham and his seed. Their message is clear—to support the Israelis is to be blessed, and to oppose them is to be cursed. It is that simple. They apply this not only to individuals but also to countries. The United States, they say, will be blessed by God only if they support the Israelis. Should we as a nation take any stand that displeases the Israelis, and especially if we should support the idea of a Palestinian state, then God's curse will come upon our country. With such an argument they justify their political lobbying designed to persuade our political leaders to side with Israel.

Twisting the promise of God in this way, they then proceed to tell people that helping the Israelis is one of the clearest proofs that one is a child of God who is going to go to heaven. Thus they teach people to rest the assurance of their salvation on an act of consummate folly.

Oh the folly of trusting in folly. And yet such marks the end to which the road of dispensationalism leads. Seeing this, let us warn people against it, pointing people away from the Jerusalem that is below to the Jerusalem that is above, from the Jerusalem that is in bondage, to the Jerusalem that by God's grace is forever free.

1. Quoted in Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 217.

2. Weber, 225-226

3. *Ibid.*, 227.

4. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 199.

5. *Ibid.*

6. There is an ancient argument that the phrase in Numbers 19:2 translated in the KJV as "a red heifer without spot" means "a heifer completely red." But the phrase is similar to the phrase "a male without blemish" found in Lev. 22:18, which certainly does not mean "completely a male." The term means "sound" or "healthy" and is further defined by the phrase that follows it, which could be translated, "without a defect." The thought that God would require the sacrifice of an animal that is completely and perfectly red, an animal that supposedly appears only every few hundred years, is obviously ludicrous.

7. Weber, 262.

8. *Ibid.*, 263-266.