The Third Temple Theory: A Scriptural Analysis From a Covenantal Perspective

Introduction

This is a case study that challenges the futurist, dispensationalist view regarding a third temple, the rapture, a seven-year tribulation, and a literal millennial reign of Christ on earth. Promotional concerns aligning with this theory are viewed with the lens of a covenantal perspective that sees the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. as a definitive, purposeful act of God to end the old covenant system and usher in the new covenant where the church becomes the temple of God. The points provide a comprehensive breakdown:

1. The Purpose of the Temple and Its Destruction

- In Matthew 24:1-2, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple, which occurred in 70 A.D. under Titus.
- The temple represented the old covenant system of sacrifices, which Christ fulfilled with His death (Hebrews 10:1-14).
- Paul affirms that believers are now the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19), and the corporate church is described as a spiritual temple (Ephesians 2:20-22).
- If God intended to end the temple’s role with Christ’s sacrifice, the notion of a future third temple contradicts the theological purpose of its destruction.

2. The Futurist/Dispensationalist View

- Dispensationalists believe that a third temple will be built during a future seven-year tribulation, where the Antichrist will desecrate it, fulfilling Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4.
- They often link this with Revelation 13 and the beast's activities.
- Their interpretation hinges on a literalist reading of apocalyptic texts and a belief that God's dealings with ethnic Israel will resume after the 'church age.'

3. Daniel 9:27 – Misunderstanding the Covenant

- Dispensationalists claim the "he" who confirms the covenant for one week refers to a future Antichrist.
- A covenantal view sees this as Christ confirming the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:6-13).
- The "midst of the week" refers to Christ's crucifixion, which ended the sacrificial system by making it obsolete.

4. 2 Thessalonians 2 – The Man of Sin

- The passage says the "man of sin" will sit in the temple of God, which dispensationalists claim is a future rebuilt temple.
- A covenantal perspective sees "temple of God" as the church, not a physical structure.
- Historically, many identify the "man of sin" with first-century apostasy or later religious systems that usurp Christ's authority.

5. Revelation 13 and the Beast

- Dispensationalists link Revelation 13’s beast to a future Antichrist.
- The word “antichrist” does not appear in Revelation.
- John’s epistles describe “antichrist” as anyone who denies Christ’s incarnation (1 John 2:18, 4:3).
- Antichrist is a spirit of deception, present in John’s time.

6. The New Covenant Temple

- Hebrews 9:11-15 makes clear that Christ is the high priest of a greater, spiritual temple.
- Revelation 21:22 states that the New Jerusalem has no temple, for God and the Lamb are its temple.

7. The Rapture and Millennium

- Dispensationalists base a pre-tribulation rapture on texts like 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.
- Covenant theology sees this event as part of Christ’s final return, not a secret event seven years earlier.
- Revelation 20’s “thousand years” is often viewed symbolically, describing Christ’s current reign through the church.

Conclusion

The idea of a third temple contradicts the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice and God’s intentional destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. The church, as the spiritual temple, fulfills God’s redemptive plan. Dispensationalist interpretations often hinge on assumptions about unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies and

misunderstand the nature of the new covenant.

Next is a more detailed exegesis of Daniel 9 or the Thessalonians passage?

Exegesis of Daniel 9:27, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Related Passages

1. Daniel 9:27 – The Covenant Confirmed

KJV Text: *"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, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."*

Dispensationalist View:

- The "he" is interpreted as a future Antichrist.
- The "covenant" is seen as a peace treaty with Israel.
- The "week" (seven years) is pushed into the future as a tribulation period.

Covenantal View:

- The "he" refers to Christ, who confirmed the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:6-13).
- The "one week" (7 years) represents Christ's earthly ministry and the immediate aftermath.
- The "midst of the week" refers to His crucifixion after approximately 3.5 years, ending the sacrificial system

(Hebrews 10:1-18).
- The “abomination of desolation” is fulfilled in the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24:15, Luke 21:20).

Historical Context:

- Daniel 9 focuses on God’s dealings with Israel concerning the coming of the Messiah, culminating in His atoning sacrifice.
- The destruction of Jerusalem was a divine judgment for rejecting the Messiah (Matthew 23:37-38).

2. 2 Thessalonians 2 – The Man of Sin

KJV Text (2 Thess. 2:3-4): *“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.”*

Dispensationalist View:

- The “man of sin” is a future Antichrist.
- The “temple of God” is a rebuilt physical temple in Jerusalem.

Covenantal View:

- The “man of sin” represents false teachers or religious figures who usurp God’s authority.
- The “temple of God” is the church (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).
- Historically, this has been applied to the corruption of

religious institutions and individuals who elevate themselves above Christ.

Historical Context:

- The “falling away” (Greek: apostasia) refers to early heresies or apostate movements within the church.
- Paul warns believers not to be deceived by predictions of an immediate return of Christ, as significant events, including internal corruption, must occur first.

3. Revelation 13 – The Beast and the Temple

KJV Text (Rev. 13:5-6): *“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”*

Dispensationalist View:

- The beast is a future world leader (Antichrist) who desecrates a third temple.

Covenantal View:

- The beast represents oppressive powers, historically seen as the Roman Empire or later religious and political systems.
- The “tabernacle” represents God’s dwelling with believers, not a physical temple.
- The 42 months correspond to the period of intense persecution in the first century.

Historical Context:

- Revelation was written to first-century believers facing Roman persecution.
- The imagery is largely symbolic, reflecting God's judgment on oppressive, anti-Christian forces.

4. The New Covenant Temple

KJV Text (Ephesians 2:21-22): *"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

Key Points:

- Under the new covenant, the temple is spiritual.
- The Holy Spirit indwells believers individually and corporately.

Conclusion:

- The dispensationalist expectation of a third temple contradicts the new covenant's teaching.
- The destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. was God's judgment and a decisive end to the sacrificial system.
- The "man of sin," the beast, and the antichrist spirit are spiritual or historical realities, not future singular figures.
- God's temple today is the body of believers, fulfilling the prophetic significance of Christ's work on the cross.

Understanding these passages through a covenantal lens aligns with the overarching narrative of Scripture and avoids the

speculative nature of futurist interpretations.