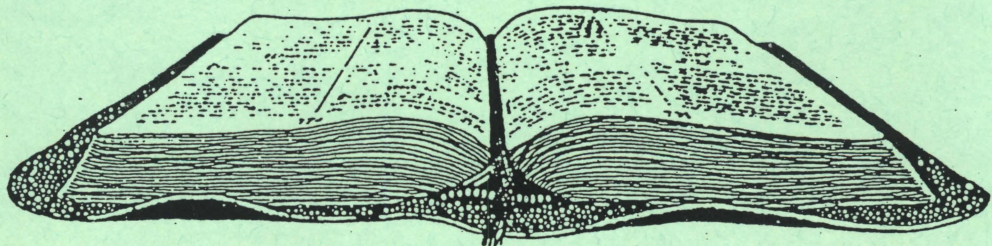


DISPENSATIONALISM

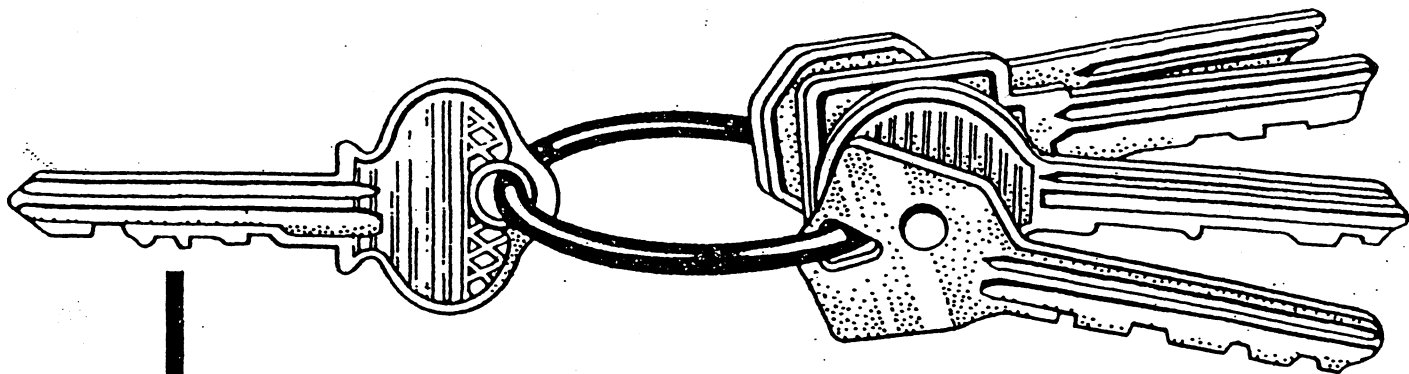
Key

to the

Scriptures



Manfred C. Kober, Th. D.

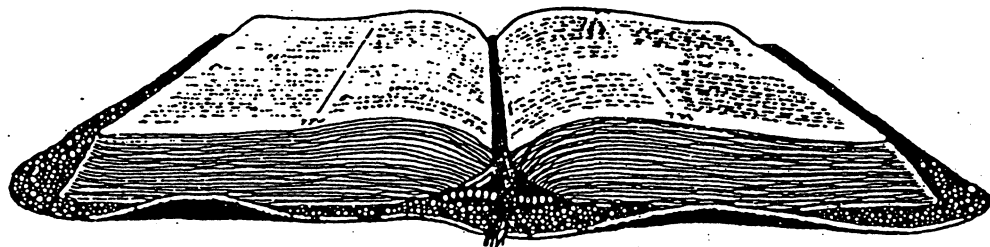


DISPENSATIONALISM

Key

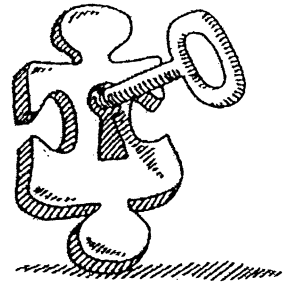
to the

Scriptures



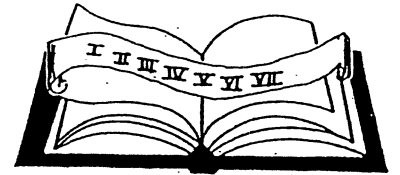
Manfred E. Kober, Th. D.

Dispensationalism: Key to the Scriptures



1. Tues., Feb. 16 **Why Do They Love to Hate Dispensationalists?**
What lies behind the vicious attacks against dispensationalists?

2. Tues., Feb. 23 **Dispensationalism Defined**
What is dispensationalism and is it biblical?

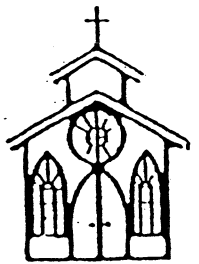


3. Tues., March 1 **The Benefits of Dispensationalism**
How does dispensationalism help clear up Bible difficulties?

4. Tues., March 8 **The Hermeneutics (Method of Interpretation) of Dispensationalism**
Why is literal interpretation absolutely necessary?

5. Tues., March 15 **The Dispensation of Innocence and Conscience**
What was the human responsibility before and after the fall?

6. Tues, March 22 **The Dispensation of Human Government and Promise**
How important are the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants?

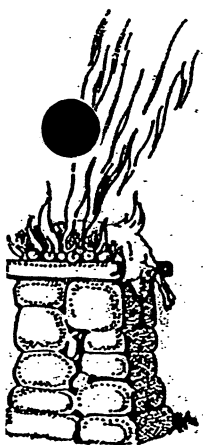


7. Tues., March 29 **The Dispensation of Law**
Why is the Mosaic Law so misunderstood?

8. Tues, April 5 **The Dispensation of Grace and the Kingdom**
What unique aspects of stewardship features characterize Grace and the Millennium?

9. Tues., April 19 **Deplorable Distortions of Dispensationalism**
Where did Ultra-Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology go wrong?

10. Tues., May 3 **Disappointing Departures from Dispensationalism**
What are some disappointing trends within Dispensationalism?



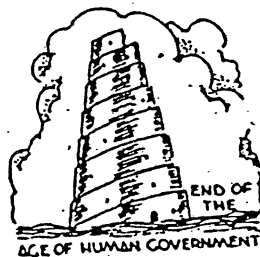
Innocence



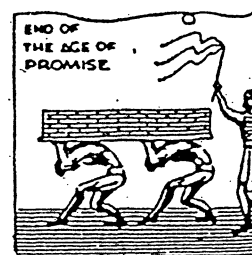
Conscience



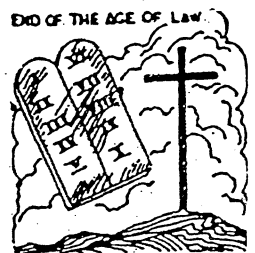
Human Govt.



Promise



Law



Dispensationalism: Key to the Scriptures

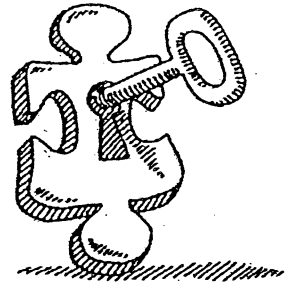
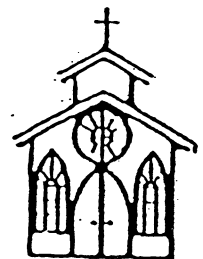
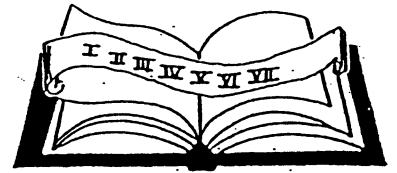
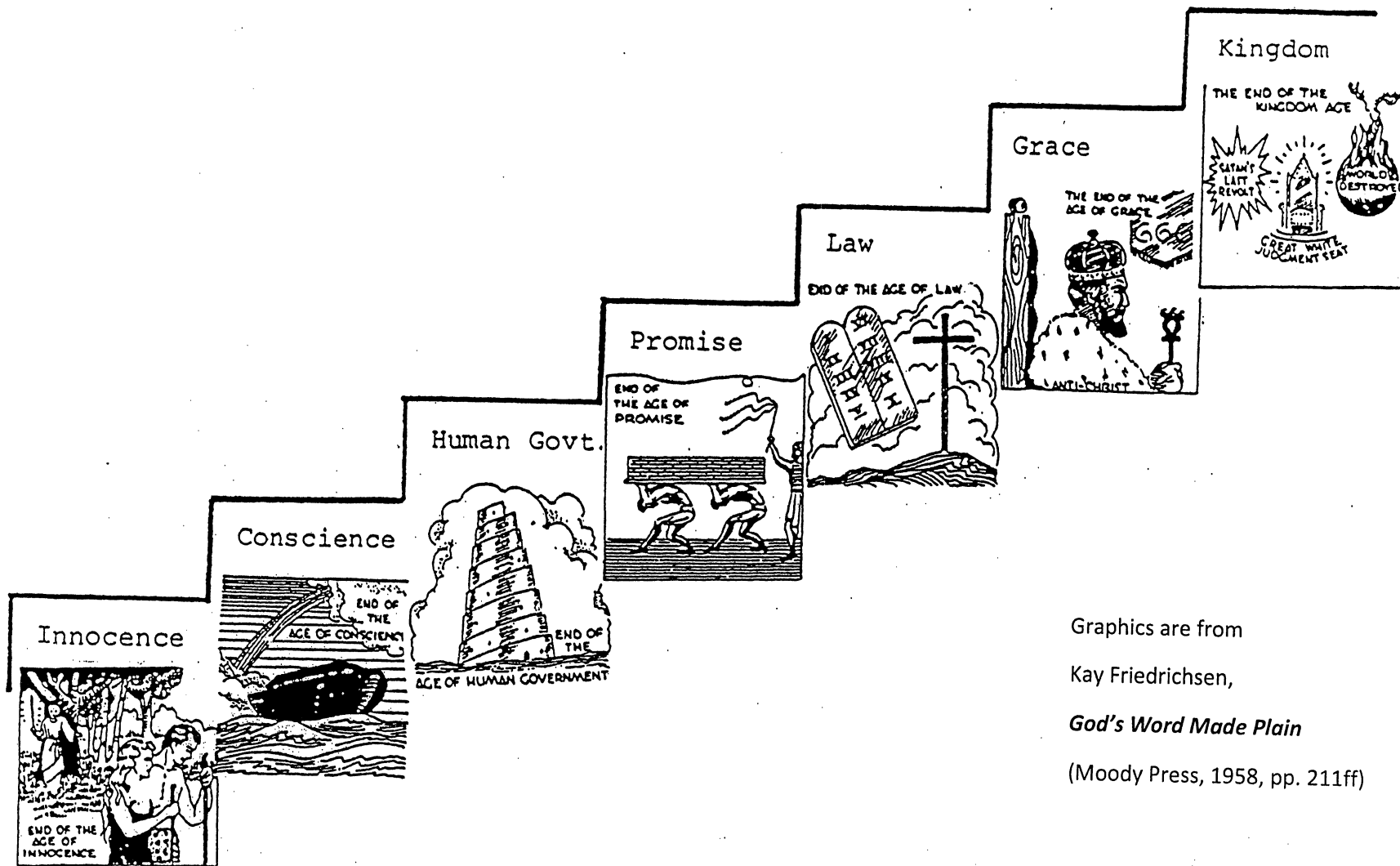


Table of Contents

	Page
Why Do They Love to Hate Dispensationalists?	1
Dispensationalism Defined	15
The Benefits of Dispensationalism	19
Diagrams of the Dispensations	27
The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism	35
The Dispensation of Innocence	59
The Dispensation of Conscience	63
The Dispensation of Human Government	67
The Dispensation of Promise	71
The Dispensation of Law	76
The Dispensation of Grace	85
The Dispensation of the Kingdom	100
Ultra-Dispensationalism	105
Progressive Dispensationalism	110
Covenant Theology	106 + 115
"How to Obscure Dispensationalism," by Charles C. Ryrie	119



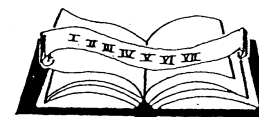
THE DISPENSATIONS



Graphics are from
Kay Friedrichsen,
God's Word Made Plain
(Moody Press, 1958, pp. 211ff)

DISPENSATIONALISTS UNDER ATTACK: Why They Love to Hate Us

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE BY Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.



1A. OPPOSITION TO DISPENSATIONALISM:

It would be impossible to estimate the number of objections that have been launched against a system which, more than anything else, has actually opened the eyes of lay people to the meaning of the Scriptures. Dispensationalism, more than any other method of interpretation, has enabled believer to understand prophecy. It occasioned the rapid growth of prophecy conferences and multiplication of volumes on prophecy especially in the last century. Despite its benefits to believers, dispensationalism has faced formidable foes. Below are listed a few of the major objections.

1b. Dispensationalism is recent:

Since the study of dispensationalism was popularized only within the last 100 years, it cannot possibly be true. In fact, Covenant Theology is more recent than dispensationalism because it is a Post-Reformation development and in its present form emerged later than a dispensational understanding of the Scriptures.

If dispensationalism can be attacked simply because it is new, then Covenant Theology is equally flawed. As Ryrie points out:



After all, nearly every antidispensational writer attempts to make something of the relative recency of systematized dispensationalism. Those who are of the Reformed tradition always attempt to imply that dispensationalism is a mere infant compared to the ancient and wise man of covenant theology. . .If lack of antiquity is detrimental and refinement is disallowed for dispensationalism, then by the same two criteria covenant theology is discredited. And if these matters are basically nonessential for covenant theology, then they are likewise irrelevant in the critique of dispensationalism.

(Dispensationalism Today [1965], 179, 183)

2b. Dispensationalism is heretical:

Many times dispensationalism is discussed in books on cults and isms and is couched between Seventh Day Adventism and Mormonism. Daniel B. Fuller, the son of Charles E. Fuller, reached the conclusion that dispensationalism is "internally inconsistent and unable to harmonize itself with the Biblical data. . ."

(*The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*, unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, 1957, 386.)

3b. Dispensationalism is man-made:

Men like John Nelson Darby, the "pope of the Plymouth Brethren" movement, is said to have invented it. Since the system is a human innovation, it must be wrong. It is easy to discern the falsehood of such an observation because if something is scriptural, no matter when believers discovered it in the written Word, it is true whether the position was held by the early church or not until after the Reformation.

4b. Dispensationalism is dangerous:

Dispensationalism sees the future establishment of a literal kingdom, a suggestion that is branded as a devilish doctrine. One California group is very outspoken in its hatred for those who subscribe to the dispensation of the kingdom:

Those human devils who are teaching that Christ will set up an earthly utopia or Communistic heaven on earth are promoting Communism under the masquerade of the Christian faith. When they are confronted with this issue they only maintain a surly silence and keep right on with their subversion and subterfuge. They desecrate the faith and the American flag with their premillennial Communism. They who hold the faith in unrighteousness are gravediggers (*Christians Awake*, Summer 1972, 2).

According to the folks in California who sent me the above letter, we are human devils. In the conservative Lutheran publication, *Christian News* (June 14, 1971), pastor Vernon Harley wrote a column on the millennium and the danger which a belief in Christ's reign on earth poses:

Among many fantasies with which some Christians delude themselves and even endanger their salvation is the idea of a millennium, that is, a literal 1000 years in which Christ is to reign here on earth. There are many ways in which this idea varies, some thinking of the millennium as occurring before the Second Coming of Christ; others have it after the Second Advent. Some think of this as being a period of general peace and good will here on earth preceding the Day of Judgment; others seem to expect a visible appearance of Christ here on earth at which time He is to bring about a general conversion of the Jews and rule with His church over the nations. As a result, the eyes of many are directed toward Israeli

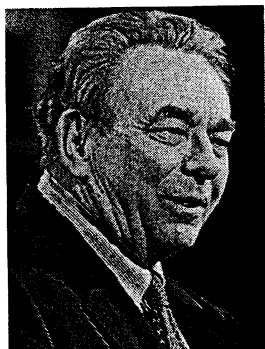
in our time, now that the Israelites again have returned to Palestine as rulers of the Promised Land.

Our Lutheran Confessions reject every type of Millennialism, or Chiliasm, as it is also called. So does our **Brief Statement**, and primarily because such ideas, contrary to Scripture, direct men's faith and hopes to a future glory here on earth, and often even to a second chance for repentance and salvation, rather than to point them to the return of Christ for judgment and the end of the world.

How preposterous! What student of the Bible would ever suggest that this or that belief about the end-times could endanger a believer's salvation? Is salvation dependent on the identity of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11 or the location of commercial Babylon in Revelation 18? The statement ignores the biblical basis of salvation. Over 200 times in the New Testament salvation is said to be based on belief in the atoning death of Christ.

Furthermore, no true believer will ever lose his salvation (Rom. 8:1; 1. Pet. 1:5). The suggestion that a belief in Christ's millennial reign might involve a second chance for salvation of the unsaved is ludicrous, indicating that Rev. Harley, like most of his amillennial consorts, lacks even a basic understanding of the biblical premillennial position.

5b. Dispensationalists are antinomian:



R. C. Sproul

R. C. Sproul, the president of Ligonier Ministries, seems to be the spokesman for Covenant Theology. In the forward of a book by John Gerstner (*Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, 1991), he writes the following, "The dispensational system of theology is inherently and inescapably antinomian. . .Dispensationalism should be discarded as being a serious deviation from Biblical Christianity."

In a taped sermon delivered by R. C. Sproul at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Orlando, Florida, in June 1994 entitled "Only One Gospel," he likewise accuses dispensationalists of antinomianism: "I believe that [Charles] Ryrie teaches unvarnished antinomianism and another gospel, and is under the anathema of God."

It would be difficult to think of a single theologian in the dispensational camp who is that harsh in his critique of Covenant Theology. Can anybody cite a statement from Lewis Sperry Chafer, John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Alva J. McClain or John Whitcomb that labels Covenant Theology as a heretical system under the curse of God, endangering men's salvation?

6b. Dispensationalism is erroneous:

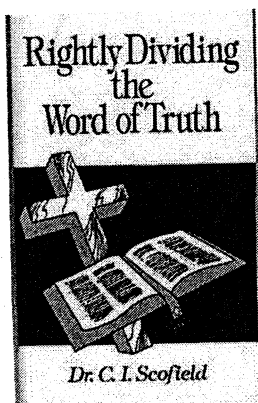
- 1c. Dispensationalism is accused of teaching two ways of salvation. The Old Testament saints are said to be saved by offering sacrifices; New Testament saints are saved by trusting in Christ. In fact Dr. Charles C. Ryrie in his classic book *Dispensationalism* (105-108) refutes this false charge though it is constantly repeated.
- 2c. Dispensationalism is accused of totally disregarding the Sermon on the Mount, relegating it to the Kingdom Age. John MacArthur thinks that “traditionally, dispensationalism says, ‘The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) has nothing to do with us, so we don’t need to worry about it’”(teaching tape GC 70-16, “Bible Questions and Answers”).



Has he not read the section in Ryrie’s book on “Dispensationalism and the Sermon on the Mount”? or J. Dwight Pentecost? or John F. Walvoord’s treatment of it in their studies in Matthew?

What is especially disconcerting to dispensationalists is that MacArthur claims to be a dispensationalist, saying “dispensationalism is a fundamentally correct system of understanding God’s program through the ages.” And yet he has some very critical things to say about dispensationalism:

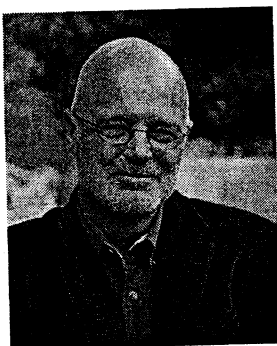
There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they can make unbiblical distinctions. An almost obsessive desire to categorize everything neatly has led various dispensationalist interpreters to draw hard lines not only between the church and Israel, but also between salvation and discipleship, the church and the kingdom, Christ’s preaching and the apostolic messages, faith and repentance and the age of law and grace (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, 25).



One wonders: How can MacArthur call himself a dispensationalist and yet question the basic differences between these concepts? Has he ever read Scofield’s classic booklet, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*?

7b. Dispensationalism is deadly:

In an April 2009 article in *Sojourner's* magazine by emerging church leader, Brian McLaren, McLaren targets fundamentalists in a most vicious manner. The title of his article is, "Four Points Toward Peace in the Middle East." Below are listed the first two points. And it should be noticed that there might be peace in the Middle East if it were not for the dispensationalists:



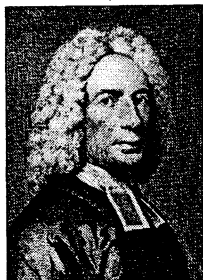
1. The equal rights of both Jewish and Palestinian people to security, equity, and prosperity, and the equal responsibilities of both groups to seek, not just good for "their own," but the common good of all.

2. The need to confront the **terrible, deadly, distorted**, yet popular theologies associated with Christian Zionism and **deterministic dispensationalism**. These systems of belief—so common among my fellow evangelical Christians—too often lead people to act as if Jewish people have God-given rights but Palestinians do not. They use a **discredited hermeneutic** (way of interpreting the Bible) to imply that God shows favoritism—that God is concerned for justice for one group of people and not for others. They create bigotry and prejudice against Muslims in general ... and in particular against Palestinians, many of whom are Muslim but many of whom are Christian too. These doctrinal formulations often use a **bogus end-of-the-world scenario** to create a kind of death-wish for World War III, which—unless it is confronted more robustly by the rest of us—could too easily create a self-fulfilling prophecy (emphasis added).

If you hold to a deterministic-dispensationalist or Zionist theology, I sincerely hope you will rethink your view. I grew up with these views as well, and have become thoroughly convinced that they are not only biblically unfaithful but also, in too many cases, morally and ethically harmful. I know that rethinking these things can make your life more difficult—friends, church members, and even family members may reject you, for example. But think back to the 1950s and 1960s: Wasn't it necessary for many Christians to have the courage to differ when racism was acceptable and even justified in most American churches? Wouldn't you want to have the same moral courage today you would have wanted to have back then? -- (Note part of the original article appended to this outline).

2A. THE ORIGIN OF DISPENSATIONALISM:

Although throughout church history there were individuals who held to certain dispensational distinctions, the study of a dispensational system is a post-Reformation development.



- 1b. Pierre Poiret (1647-1719)
The roots of dispensationalism can be found in *The Divine Economy*, a 6-volume work originally written in 1687 and then published again in 1713.
- 2b. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), famed hymn writer and theologian. Subscribed to seven dispensations, very similar to those held by C. I. Scofield.
- 3b. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), who did much to recover the New Testament truth of the church and God's program for the church and Israel.
- 4b. C. I. Scofield and the *Scofield Reference Bible*.
It is very interesting to note a number of the main opponents of dispensationalism give testimony to the fact that they were nourished spiritually by the Scofield Bible and came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through the witness of a dispensationalist. John Gerstner pays tribute to the spiritual help given to him by dispensationalists and so does Brian McLaren.

3A. CONCLUSION:

- 1b. The source of the attacks:

So why do they love to hate us? Why loathe a sound biblical system of interpretation? Dispensationalism is a system derived from the Scriptures which employ the word *dispensation* exactly like we do. The word is found in Eph. 1:10 (Millennium), Eph. 3:2 (Grace) and Col. 1:25-26 (Law implied).

Undoubtedly, there are several reasons for this antipathy. Paul said that "there must be heresies among you, that the approved may be made manifest" (1. Cor. 11:19). Truth stands out ever more clearly and convincingly when confronted by error. Dan Mitchell has put the matter well, "It is significant that God in His sovereign purpose uses dissension and disorder in the assembly to put His people to the test" (*First Corinthians*, 2004, 166).

Furthermore, opponents of biblical truth, whether as believers or unbelievers, are doing the work of the Evil One.

The nefarious nature of the opposition which refers to teachers of a future Messianic Kingdom as "human devils" (*Christians Awake*) and a dispensational

approach to the Scriptures “terrible, deadly and distorted” (MacLaren) certainly does demonstrate that these outburst have their source not in the Holy Spirit but in another spirit. True believers need to heed the admonition of the Apostle John to discern between “the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1. John 4:6).

2b. The stand of the believer:

Those who attack dispensationalism and spiritualize prophecy are very vocal about their rejection of the any-moment return of the Lord in the Rapture. Dispensationalists who view the rapture as a blessed hope for the church (Tit. 2:13) should heed Paul’s inspired admonition how to relate to those who reject the dispensationalism understanding of the end-times, including the pretribulational rapture.

How important is the belief in the any-moment return of Christ? Should the pretribulational return of Jesus Christ ever be made a test of fellowship? The Bible is clearer on this point than even most pre-tribulationists would admit.

Should pre-tribulationism be made a test of fellowship? Two significant passages in 1 Thess. 3 have a bearing on this question:

v. 6: Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

v. 14: And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.



Most forcefully Paul commands separation from those who do not follow the doctrines that he taught them in person and by this epistle. What were the main problems that perplexed the believers at Thessalonica? What is the main doctrinal content of 1 and 2 Thessalonians? It is obvious that the main thrust of both of the Thessalonian Epistles is the return of the Lord in its twofold aspect: the rapture at which Christ returns for His saints, and the revelation at which He appears with His saints. Each chapter in 1 and 2 Thessalonians mentions the return of the Lord.

It is described as:

- **a summoning by the Savior – 1. Thess. 1:10
- **a reunion of all believers – 1. Thess. 2:19
- **an incentive to holiness – 1. Thess. 3:13
- **a rapture of the saints – 1. Thess. 4:17
- **a deliverance from wrath – 1. Thess. 5:9
- **a return in judgment – 2. Thess. 1:9-10
- **an encouragement for steadfastness – 2. Thess. 2:1
- **an enjoinder for patience – 2. Thess. 3:5



Christian News



June 14, 1971

The Millennium

By Vernon Harley



Among the many fantasies with which some Christians delude themselves and even endanger their salvation is the idea of a millennium, that is, a literal 1000 years in which Christ is to reign here on earth. There are many ways in which this idea varies, some thinking of the millennium as occurring before the Second Coming of Christ; others have it after the Second Advent. Some think of this as being a period of general peace and good will here on earth preceding the Day of Judgment; others seem to expect a visible appearance of Christ here on earth at which time He is to bring about a general conversion of the Jews and rule with His church over the nations. As a result, the eyes of many are directed toward Israeli in our time, now that the Israelites again have returned to Palestine as rulers of the promised land.

Our Lutheran Confessions reject every type of Millennialism, or Chiliasm, as it is also called. So does our **Brief Statement**, and primarily because such ideas, contrary to Scripture, direct men's faith and hopes to a future glory here on earth, and often even to a second chance for repentance and salvation, rather than to point them to the return of Christ for Judgment and the end of the world.



Of the Millennium

(St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, N.D.)

[Adopted 1932]

42. With the Augsburg Confession (Art. XVII) we reject every type of millennialism, or Chiliasm, the opinions that Christ will return visibly to this earth a thousand years before the end of the world and establish a dominion of the Church over the world; or that before the end of the world the Church is to enjoy a season of special prosperity; or that before a general resurrection on Judgment Day a number of departed Christians or martyrs are to be raised again to reign in glory in this world; or that before the end of the world a universal conversion of the Jewish nation (of Israel according to the flesh) will take place.

Over against this, Scripture clearly teaches, and we teach accordingly, that the kingdom of Christ on earth will remain under the cross until the end of the world, Act 14:22; John 16:33; 18:36; Luke 9:23; 14:27; 17:20-37; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 12:28; Luke 18:8; that the second visible coming of the Lord will be His final advent, His coming to judge the quick and the dead, Matt. 24:29, 30; 25:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:8; Heb. 9:26-28; that there will be but one resurrection of the dead, John 5:28; 6:39, 40; that the time of the Last Day is, and will remain, unknown, Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:32, 37; Acts 1:7, which would not be the case if the Last Day were to come a thousand years after the beginning of a millennium; and that there will be no general conversion, a conversion en masse, of the Jewish nation, Rom. 11:7; 2 Cor. 3:14; Rom. 11:25; 1 Thess. 2:16.

According to these clear passages of Scripture we reject the whole of Millennialism, since it not only contradicts Scripture, but also engenders a false conception of the kingdom of Christ, turns the hope of Christians upon earthly goals, 1 Cor. 15:19; Col. 3:2, and leads them to look upon the Bible as an obscure book.

Printed from: www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=578

Printed on: 12/13/2008 11:54:13 PM CDT

Four Points Toward Peace in the Middle East

by [Brian McLaren](#) [1] 04-16-2009 | 2:30pm



photo by Ryan Rodrick Beiler

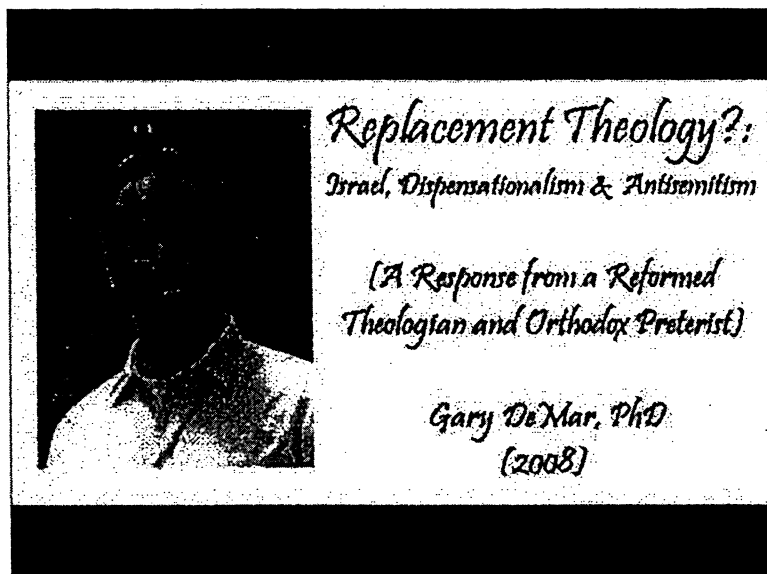
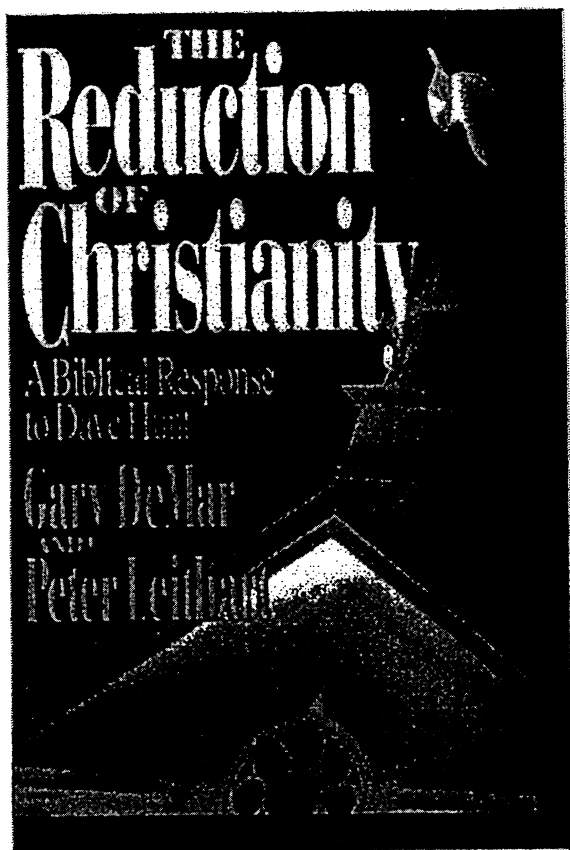
[6]I've written [a lot on Palestine and Gaza](#) [7] in recent years. Any of us who travel (or read) know that peace in the world can't be separated from peace in Israel -- peace for Jews, and peace for Muslim and Christian Palestinians. There is probably no single issue more important to helping Muslims and Christians and Jews live in peace world-wide than resolving the crisis of peace in Israel.

In the coming months, I hope that more and more of us -- especially those of us from evangelical backgrounds -- will start speaking out on this subject, addressing four key issues with courage, passion, and persistence:

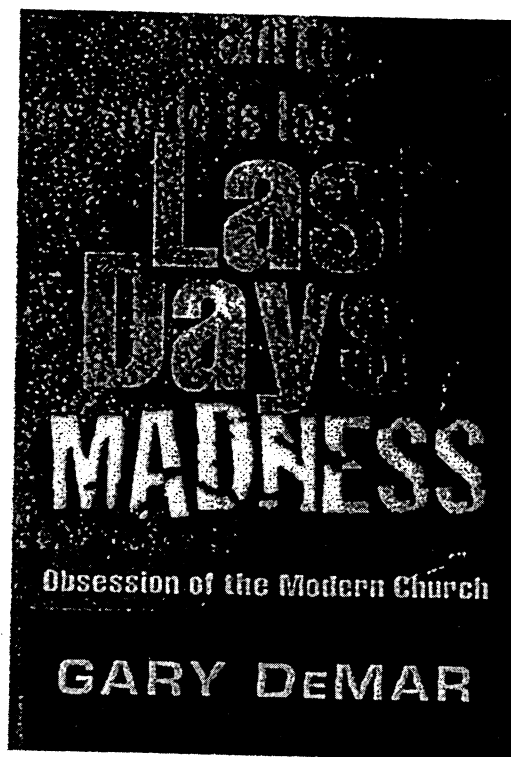
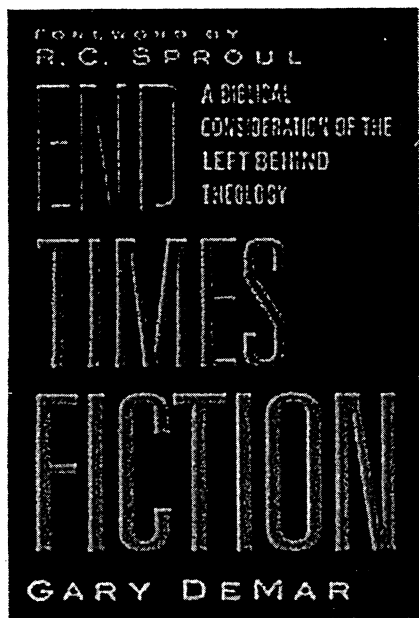
1. The equal rights of both Jewish and Palestinian people to security, equity, and prosperity, and the equal responsibilities of both groups to seek, not just good for "their own," but the common good of all.
2. The need to confront the terrible, deadly, distorted, yet popular theologies associated with Christian Zionism and deterministic dispensationalism. These systems of belief -- so common among my fellow evangelical Christians -- too often lead people to act as if Jewish people have God-given rights but Palestinians do not. They use a discredited hermeneutic (way of interpreting the Bible) to imply that God shows favoritism -- that God is concerned for justice for one group of people and not for others. They create bigotry and prejudice against Muslims in general ... and in particular against Palestinians, many of whom are Muslim but many of whom are Christian too. These doctrinal formulations often use a bogus end-of-the-world scenario to create a kind of death-wish for World War III, which -- unless it is confronted more robustly by the rest of us -- could too easily create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If you hold to a deterministic-dispensationalist or Zionist theology, I sincerely hope you will rethink your view. I grew up with these views as well, and have become thoroughly convinced that they are not only biblically unfaithful but also, in too many cases, morally and ethically harmful. I know that rethinking these things can make your life more difficult -- friends, church members, and even family members may reject you, for example. But think back to the 1950s and 1960s: Wasn't it necessary for many Christians to have the courage to differ when racism was acceptable and even justified in most American churches? Wouldn't you want to have the same moral courage today you would have wanted to have back then?

If you are unwilling to reconsider your commitment to deterministic-dispensationalist or Zionist theology, I hope you will at least try to avoid extremist tendencies by your colleagues who share these beliefs, so you can be faithful to the scriptures that tell us [God is not a respecter of persons](#) [8], that God shows no partiality (try James 2, for example), that God cares about "the least of these," and that love never rejoices in evil. If you are open and willing to rethink your views, here are three books I'd encourage you to read:



Gary DeMar is known for his unkind attacks on dispensational pretribulationists! One would be unable to find a similar attack by dispensationalists against covenant theologians!



Are We Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth?

Fri, May 01, 1992

by Manfred Kober

[Print this page](#)

Series: Faith Pulpit

Faith Pulpit
Faith Baptist Theological Seminary
Ankeny, Iowa
May 1992

Are We Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth?

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

John Gerstner's *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991) is the latest of a number of books in recent years claiming to be the ultimate refutation of dispensationalism.

1. The design of the book:

The subtitle states the purpose of the book. As one reviewer notes, the word "critique" "is putting it mildly—the book is more like a butchering" (*The Baptist Bulletin*, March 1992, p. 38).

The jacket of the book informs the reader that this is "the most extensive and systematic study of Dispensational theology ever published." J. I. Packer opines that dispensationalism is "seriously astray."

How does Gerstner view dispensationalism? He describes it as not true premillennialism (p. 68) and identifies it as Arminianism (p. 107), Gnosticism (p. 208), pantheism (p. 136, 143), Pelagianism (p. 243), and, preeminently, as antinomianism. More seriously, dispensationalism is "a cult and not a branch of the Christian church" (p. 150). Dispensationalists are heretics and false teachers (p. 262) who have twisted the gospel (p. 252), are void of the gospel (p. 150), and deny the gospel (p. 169).

In his diatribe against dispensationalism Gerstner is liberal in the use of pejorative terms such as "travesty" (p. 141), "blasphemy" (p. 145), "absurdity" (p. 154) and "scandal" (p. 152). The tone of the book is angry, sarcastic, bitter and derogatory, in stark contrast to such irenic critiques of dispensationalism as Oswald T. Allis' *Prophecy and the Church* (1964).

2. The development of the book:

Gerstner's book is divided into three major parts. Part I comprises a historical sketch of dispensationalism, relating the movement to Church history, with special emphasis on its development in America and its relationship to the Reformed churches.

Mistakenly, Gerstner insists that J. N. Darby is the primary source of American dispensationalism. Interestingly, he considers dispensationalism to be "an accident of history," (p. 252) a remarkable position for one who is a strong defender of the Reformed position with its emphasis on providence and the sovereignty of God in history and salvation. Part II covers the areas of philosophy and apologetics, including a discussion of dispensational

hermeneutics. Gerstner insists that "it is impossible to interpret Scripture in a consistently literal fashion" (p. 100) and ridicules dispensationalism for "spoof-texting" (p. 83, 99, 100).

In part III Gerstner attempts to show that dispensationalism is spurious Calvinism, not subscribing to any of its five points (ch. 7), that it denies the gospel (ch. 8), undermines the gospel in its emphasis on a literal kingdom (ch. 9), denies the gospel with its distinction between Israel and the church (ch. 10). Dispensationalism is antinomian (ch. 11–12). The concluding chapter argues for Lordship salvation, paying high tribute to John MacArthur's book and position.

3. The discussions of the book:

Gerstner's book has been reviewed to date in the following periodicals: *Dispensational Distinctives* (Sept.—Oct. 1991), pp. 1–2; *The Baptist Bulletin* (March 1992), pp. 38–39; *Reformation Today*, (Jan.—Feb. 1992), pp. 24–32. In the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, (Autumn 1991), pp. 59–70, Zane C. Hodges reacts to Gerstner's Reformed dogmatism with a review entitled, "Calvinism ex Cathedra." Dr. John A. Witmer, archivist at Dallas Theological Seminary, rises to Gerstner's challenge, ("show me the fundamental error in what I teach," p. 263) by writing an incisive two-part analysis of Gerstner's book. In *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April.—June 1992), Witmer deals with Gerstner's inaccuracies in fact and theology. In the July.—Sept. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, he interacts with the theological issues raised by Gerstner, such as hermeneutics, the offer of the kingdom, the way of salvation, the design of the atonement and the relationship of premillennialism to dispensationalism.

4. The defects of the book:

Errors in fact abound in the book, as Witmer demonstrates. Gerstner, praised by R. C. Sproul as "a world-class historian" (p. ix), says, for example, that Wheaton College was established around the turn of the century (p. 52). In fact, it was founded in 1860. William Pettingill is called a Plymouth Brethren dispensationalist (p. 71). He actually was a Baptist pastor.

Gerstner misquotes *The Ryrie Study Bible's* definition of election as a "free temporal," rather than a "pre-temporal" choice (p. 114). Gerstner then criticizes Ryrie for his faulty terminology and theology, saying the mistake "defies comprehension" (p. 115). What really defies comprehension is how Gerstner, to whom Sproul ascribes "careful and painstaking research" (p. ix) could publish such mistakes, misquotations and misrepresentations. As Witmer observes, faulty research like this reflects "at least an indifference to accuracy... these errors place Gerstner's treatment of dispensationalism and his charges against it under a cloud" (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, April—June, 1992, p. 136).

5. The distortions of the book:

While crediting his salvation to the witness of a dispensationalist (p. 1), Gerstner attacks the system mercilessly. He builds several straw men. His charge of antinomianism permeates the book, from the foreword (p. x) to the last paragraph (p. 272). Antinomianism is the view that "the Christian, justified by faith, has no obligation toward the moral law" (*Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, p. 27). Because dispensationalists insist that the believer is free from the Mosaic law, including the ten commandments (2 Cor. 3:7,11), they do not thereby reject God's moral requirements. As Ryrie notes "although the believer has been set free from the law of Moses, he is nevertheless under the law—the law of Christ" (*The Grace of God*, p. 105).

Gerstner's charge that dispensational preaching is characterized by "a conspicuous absence of moral stress" (p. 250) is untrue. We are saved by **grace** through **faith** unto **good works**. Gerstner's accusation that dispensationalism teaches two ways of salvation grows out of his premise as a Covenant theologian that "the faith of Old Testament believers . . . can be meaningfully described as faith in **Jesus Christ**" (p. 164, Gerstner's emphasis). Gerstner

recognizes that dispensationalists claim to be teaching only one way of salvation (p. 155), but he insists that "their system of doctrine relentlessly militates against this" (p. 151).

The dispensationalist maintains that salvation in every age is based on the death of Christ, that it is appropriated by faith but "the **content** of faith changes in the various dispensations." (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 123, emphasis in the original). Adam and Eve did not understand as fully as we do God's provision for salvation through Christ's sacrifice. But they, along with the other Old Testament saints, trusted in God's promise and were saved (Gen. 15:6). One of the more annoying features of the book is that Gerstner recognizes what men like Ironside, Chafer, Walvoord, and Ryrie are teaching but then he charges them with subscribing to a totally different position than the one they clearly state because, as he sees it, their theology or cold logic forces them to that position, whether they know it or not.

6. The demonstration of the book:

Gerstner maintains that the "dispensational defection from the gospel has come to a head in the Lordship controversy" (p. 252). One of the beneficial byproducts of the book is that it demonstrates the integral connection between Reformed theology and Lordship salvation. Reformed theology teaches that regeneration precedes salvation. The regenerated individual is thus enabled to yield to the Lordship of Christ in order to be saved.

Discussing Gerstner's view that "good works may be said to be a condition for obtaining salvation in that they inevitably accompany genuine faith" (p. 210), Hodges concludes that "in Reformed thought good works **are** a **condition** for salvation" (p. 68, emphasis is his). Dedication is not just possible before salvation but a prerequisite for salvation. This is why John MacArthur can say, "Forsaking one's self for Christ's sake is not an optional step of discipleship subsequent to conversion: it is the sine qua non of saving faith" (*The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 135). MacArthur shows the influence of Covenant theology at this point. The normal dispensational understanding is that the Holy Spirit moves on or quickens the individual, enabling him to believe (Acts 16:14), At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit regenerates the individual, creating in him a new nature which prompts submission to the Lordship of Christ and produces good works (Phil. 2:13).

7. The disappointment of the book:

Gerstner has blessed many with his earlier writings, such as *A Bible Inerrancy Primer*, *A Predestination Primer*, *Theology for Everyman* and *The Theology of the Major Sects*. Now, in his mid-seventies, the author has written his *magnum opus* (which the publisher has mercifully trimmed from the original 1,008 pages to 275 pages). For thirty years Dr. Gerstner taught at the liberal Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (1950–80). Instead of leveling his theological guns at the liberals who are the real enemies of the gospel, as Gerstner knows from long personal experience, he attacks his dispensational brethren as heretics and false teachers. Gerstner accuses the dispensationalists of having departed from the gospel, yet it is they, who, more than any other group of people in America, have rightly divided the Word of truth. Through their ministry they have brought millions to an understanding of the Word of God. Through their witness they have shown them the way of salvation through faith in Christ. One of these individuals is John Gerstner.

GOD'S GLORIOUS PLAN FOR THE AGES

1A. THE DEFINITION OF DISPENSATIONALISM

1b. The definition of "dispensation":

It would be difficult to improve on Ryrie's definition, "A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose" (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 29).

2b. The etymology of the word:

1c. *Dispensatio*, the Latin term

"To weigh or dispense"

2c. *Oikonomia*, the Greek term

Oikos = house; *Nomos* = law

The Greek term, *oikonomia*, thus means "the managing of a household"

3b. The usage of Scripture:

1c. The general usage:

1d. The usage of the word dispensation:

The various forms of the word *dispensation* are used in the New Testament twenty times. The verb *oiknomeo* is used once in Luke 16:2 where it is translated "to be a steward." The noun *oikonomos* is used ten times (Luke 12:42; 16:1, 3 8; Rom. 16:23; I Cor. 4:1, 2; Gal. 4:2; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 4:10), and in all instances it is translated "steward" except "chamberlain" in Romans 16:23. The noun *oikonomia* is used nine times (Luke 16:2, 3, 4). In these instances it is translated variously ("stewardship," "dispensation," "edifying"). The Authorized Version of Ephesians 3:9 has "fellowship" (*koinonia*) whereas the American Standard Version has "dispensation" (Ryrie, 25).

2d. The Lucan passage Luke 16:1ff

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a **steward**; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

²And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy **stewardship**; for thou mayest be no longer **steward**.

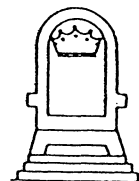
³ Then the **steward** said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the **stewardship**: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

- 3d. The inference from the usage:
- 1e. A stewardship involves two parties.
 - 2e. A stewardship involves an obligation of one party to the other.
 - 3e. A stewardship involves accountability.

- 2c. The specific usage of the word dispensation:

Interestingly, the Bible uses the term dispensation exactly as we would use it in reference to three distinct dispensations.

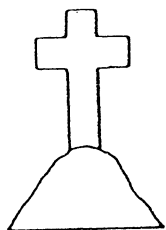
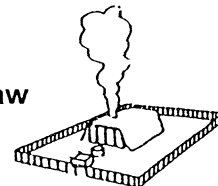
- 1d. Ephesians 1:10—“**Dispensation of the fullness of time**”
That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:



- 2d. Ephesians 3:2—“**Dispensation of the grace of God**”
If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

- 3d. Colossians 1:25-26—“I am . . . a minister, according to the dispensation of God”
Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
²⁶ Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:


Paul implies a prior dispensation, i.e., **the dispensation of law**



2A. THE DISTINCTIVES OF A DISPENSATION:

- 1b. The characteristics of a dispensation:
- 1c. Primary characteristics:
- 1d. God’s change in governmental relationship:
God initiates a new stewardship on earth.
 - 2d. A new responsibility for man:
Man receives new obligations as a steward.
 - 3d. God’s revelation to that end:
Before God can expect man to function under his new responsibility, added revelation is necessary.

2c. Secondary characteristics:

- 
- 1d. Divine test:
Each dispensation is a test to see whether man under whatever circumstances can please God.
 - 2d. Human failure:
Invariably man falls short of God's expectations.
 - 3d. Eventual judgment:
Each dispensation concludes with a divine judgment.
 - 4d. Divine Grace:
God's justice is tempered by His love and despite miserable human failure and inevitable judgment, God manifests His grace.

2b. The *sine qua non* of a dispensationalist:

1c. Negatively: A dispensationalist is not one who

- 1d. Uses the word "dispensation."
- 2d. Subscribes to a certain number of dispensations.
- 3d. Believes in a premillennial return of Christ.

2c. Positively: A dispensationalist is one who

1d. Consistently distinguishes Israel and the Church.

A dispensationalist sees two eternal purposes of God, expressed in His dealings with Israel and the Church. Israel is always Israel; the Church is the Church, not spiritual Israel.

2d. Uses literal hermeneutics:

Dispensationalism practices consistent literal interpretation of the Bible.

3d. Sees the underlying purpose of God as His glory.

God's overall purpose in the universe is to manifest His glory through salvation and other means. (This is Ryrie's *sine qua non*, opposed by the "progressive dispensationalists.")

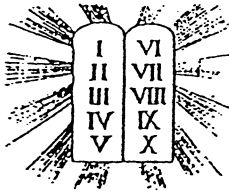
3b. The number of dispensations:

1c. The importance of the number:

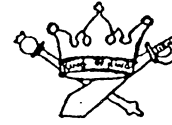
The number and names of dispensations are of relatively minor importance. It is possible to have between 3 to 8 dispensations. Covenant theologians only see the Old and the New dispensation.

2c. The inference from Scripture:

1d. The New Testament refers to three dispensations:



- 1e. The millennium: Eph. 1:10
- 2e. Grace: Eph. 3:2
- 3e. Law: Col. 1:25-26



These three dispensations, Law, Grace and Kingdom are the subject of extensive Scripture.

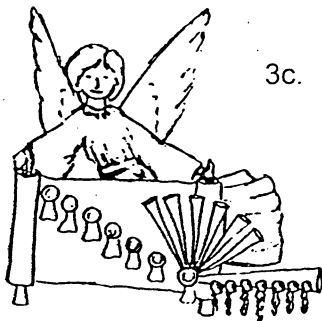
2d. The Old Testament implies five dispensations:

- 1e. A dispensation before the fall: Man's life under innocence.
- 2e. A dispensation after the fall: Man's life under conscience, offering sacrifices.
- 3e. A dispensation after the Flood:

In Gen. 9 four new features are found for man's stewardship:

- 1f. The fear of man upon animals, v. 2.
- 2f. The eating of meat, v. 3.
- 3f. Capital punishment, v. 6
- 4f. A promise of never causing another flood, vv. 8-17.
- 4e. A dispensation beginning with Abraham, involving a covenant of promise.
- 5e. A dispensation commencing at Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Mosaic Law.

3c. The inconclusiveness of some periods:



1d. Should the tribulation be a separate dispensation?

The tribulation is probably not a separate dispensation, but the climactic judgment concluding grace. The 70 weeks of Daniel began about 1,000 years after the law was given and are completed during the tribulation, but are not necessarily the same as the dispensation of the Law.

2d. Should the eternal state be a separate dispensation?

It seems that when temporal history ends, so do God's stewardship arrangements with men.

3A. THE BENEFITS OF DISPENSATIONALISM:

1b. It answers the need for biblical distinction:

Everyone faces problems in practicing some kind of consistent interpretation. Every expositor needs to account for the differences between the Old Testament economy and this dispensation in areas such as:

1. The inheritance of the land.
2. The keeping of the Passover and Sabbath.
3. Animal sacrifices.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said that one is a dispensationalist, whether he realizes it or not, if one does not claim or practice the above.

2b. It answers the need for a philosophy of history:

- 1c. Dispensationalism recognizes progressive revelation.
- 2c. Dispensationalism provides a unifying factor to history. Whatever God does is for His glory, that is, it serves a doxological purpose.
- 3c. Dispensationalism provides for a goal of human history, the millennium.

3b. It provides a consistent procedure in hermeneutics:

- 1c. The two Great Commissions: Matthew 10; Matthew 28

In Matthew 10, Christ demands the disciples not to preach to the Gentiles or Samaritans. In Matthew 28, He commands the same disciples to go and disciple all nations. Only a dispensational distinction will help solved the apparent discrepancy.

- 2c. The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7

Certain commandments in this passage cannot possibly be practiced literally in the Church Age, such as turning the other cheek and giving to anyone who asks of us. Seeing that part of the Sermon on the Mount applies to the Kingdom Age relieves apparent hermeneutical tensions.



4A. THE DETAILING OF THE DISPENSATIONS:

1b. The listing of the dispensations:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1c. | <i>Innocence:</i> | Creation to Fall |
| 2c. | <i>Conscience:</i> | Fall to Flood |
| 3c. | <i>Human Government:</i> | Flood to the call of Abraham |
| 4c. | <i>Promise:</i> | Call of Abraham to Mount Sinai |
| 5c. | <i>Law:</i> | Mount Sinai to the Cross |
| 6c. | <i>Grace:</i> | Pentecost to Rapture |
| 7c. | <i>Kingdom:</i> | Second Advent to Great White Throne |

2b. The features of each dispensation:

- 1c. The beginning:
- 2c. Related Scriptures:
- 3c. The state of man:
- 4c. Human responsibility:
- 5c. Human failure:
- 6c. Divine judgment:
- 7c. Divine grace:
- 8c. Divine covenant:

3b. Concluding general observations:

- 1c. Innocence has devoted only 37 verses to it.
- 2c. Law and grace have the most Scripture relating to them.
- 3c. It is best to see seven dispensations.
- 4c. Our GARBC fellowship is the largest dispensational group in the USA.

XVIII. Israel

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people, that she is now dispersed because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ, and that she will be regathered in the Holy Land and, after the completion of the Church, will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ. (Gen. 13:14-17; Rom. 11:1-32; Ezek. 37.

(General Association of Regular Baptist Churches 1988 Church Directory, p. 16, pages 13-16 "Articles of Faith")

XIX. Rapture and Subsequent Events

We believe in the premillennial return of Christ, an event which can occur at any moment, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the seven years of the Tribulation. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-54; Phil. 3:20, 21; Rev. 3:10.

We believe that the Tribulation, which follows the Rapture of the Church, will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom. Dan. 9:25-27; Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 1:30-33; Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1-9; Acts 2:29, 30; Rev. 20:1-4, 6.

This writer recalls Dr. John F. Walvoord repeatedly observing in his classes that when he went held meetings in churches and his ministry was in a Regular Baptist church, he could always be sure he was among dispensational friends. He observed that the GARBC is the only fellowship of churches where the churches are consistently dispensational.

FBBC's statement of faith:**Dispensations**

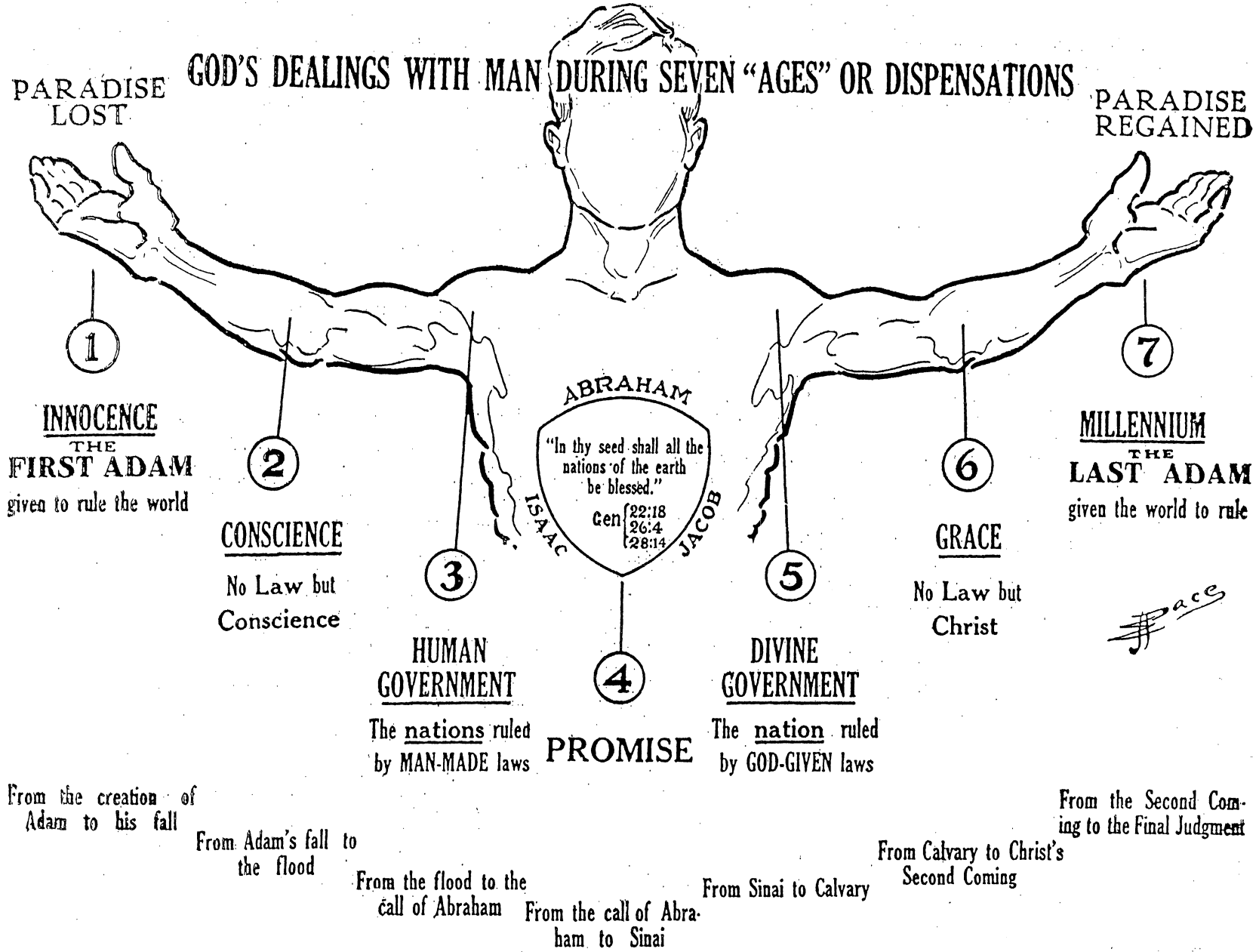
We believe that the dispensations are not ways of salvation, which has always been by grace through faith, but are stewardships by which God administers His purpose on earth through humanity under varying responsibilities; that changes in dispensational dealings depend upon changed situations in which humanity is found in relation to God due to human failures and God's judgments; that, though several dispensations cover the entirety of human history, only three of these are the subject of extended revelation in Scripture; that these three (Mosaic Law, Grace, and millennial Kingdom) are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused.

<http://www.faith.edu/about-faith/position-statements/doctrinal-statement-2015>

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MAN DURING SEVEN "AGES" OR DISPENSATIONS

PARADISE LOST

PARADISE REGAINED



Face

DISPENSATIONALISM

Since the positions and conclusions in Endtimes.org are in line with the Dispensational System of Theology, or point of view, the terms need to be explained. There is no need to fear these terms. They describe some simple concepts related to our understanding of the Old Testament Covenants and how God will develop His kingdom program. Even if you have negative feelings about the term *Dispensationalism*, please go through the following brief explanation of what it is. It could be that it has never been clearly explained. Dispensationalism has influenced the doctrinal beliefs of many churches, including the Baptist church, the Bible churches, the Pentecostal churches, and many other non-denominational Evangelical churches. You may even be Dispensational in your thinking although not be calling yourself a Dispensationalist. Christian is always a better term, but terms like *Dispensationalist* helps to define where we are coming from when it comes to our views on Endtimes and the present and future Kingdom of God.

Definition

- A Dispensation - The system by which anything is administered. In Christian terms, looking back, it refers to a period in history whereby God dealt with man in a specific way. (Conscience, Law, Grace)
- Dispensationalism - A system of theology that sees God working with man in different ways during different dispensations. While 'Dispensations' are not ages, but stewardships, or administrations, we tend to see them now as ages since we look back on specific time periods when they were in force.
- Dispensationalism is distinguished by three key principles.
 - 1 - **A clear distinction between God's program for Israel and God's program for the Church.**
 - 2 - **A consistent and regular use of a literal principle of interpretation**
 - 3 - **The understanding of the purpose of God as His own glory rather than the salvation of mankind.**

Ok, what does this mean in layman's terms. Read on.

What about the Dispensations?

The key to Dispensationalism is not in the definition or recognition of a specific number of dispensations. This is a misunderstanding of the opponents of Dispensationalism. Almost all theologians will recognize that God worked differently through the Law than He did through Grace. That is not to say that salvation was attained in a different manner, but that the responsibilities given to man by God were different during the period of the giving of the Law up to the cross, just as they were different for Adam and Eve. The Jews were to show their true faith by doing what God had commanded, even though they couldn't keep the moral Law. That's what the sacrifices were for. When the apostle Paul said that as to the Law he was blameless, he didn't mean that he never sinned,

but that he obeyed God by following the guidelines of the Law when he did sin, and animal sacrifices were offered for his sins by the priests in the temple. Salvation came not by keeping the law, but by seeing it's true purpose in exposing sin, and turning to God for salvation. The Jews weren't saved based on how well they kept the law, (as many of them thought) as that would be salvation by works. They were saved through faith in God, and the work of Christ on the cross was counted for them, even though it hadn't happened yet.

Dispensationalists will define three key dispensations, (1) The Mosaic Law, (2) The present age of Grace, and (3) the future Millennial Kingdom. Most will agree about the first two, and Covenant theology will disagree about the third, seeing this as the 'eternal state'. (Since they don't see a literal Millennial Kingdom - the future literal fulfillment of the Davidic Kingdom.)

A greater breakdown of specific dispensations is possible, giving most traditional Dispensationalists seven recognizable dispensations.

1. Innocence - Adam
2. Conscience - After man sinned, up to the flood
3. Government - After the flood, man allowed to eat meat, death penalty instituted
4. Promise - Abraham up to Moses and the giving of the Law
5. Law - Moses to the cross
6. Grace - The cross to the Millennial Kingdom
7. Millennial Kingdom - A 1000 year reign of Christ on earth centered in Jerusalem

While not everyone needs to agree on this breakdown, the point from the Dispensationalists view is that God is working with man in a progressive way. At each stage man has failed to be obedient to the responsibilities set forth by God. The method of salvation, justification by faith alone, never changes through the dispensations. The responsibilities God gives to man does change however. The Jews were to be obedient to the Law if they wished God's blessing of Land. If they were disobedient, they would be scattered. However, God promises to always bring them back to the land promised to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant. After the cross, believers no longer need the Law, which pointed to Christ as the one that would take away sin through his perfect sacrifice. (*Heb 10*) We are under a new Law, the Law of Grace. We have more revelation about God, and are no longer required to keep ceremonial laws given to the Jews. The moral law is always in effect as a guide, but we are no longer condemned by it, since we have a savior that has overcome for us.

Remember that making a distinction between these time periods is not what makes someone Dispensational. Recognizing the progressive nature, and seeing the church as part of Plan A and not Plan B is what makes someone Dispensational. Dispensationalists see a clear distinction between God's program for Israel and God's program for the church. God is not finished with Israel. The church didn't take Israel's place. They have been set aside temporarily, but in the Endtimes will be brought back to the promised land, cleansed, and given a new heart. (Gen 12, Deut 30, 2 Sam 7, Jer 31)

Just to clarify what I mean by Plan A and Plan B, I can see how some would say that the church is God's Plan B. However, God knew that the Jews would reject their Messiah. Daniel 9 tells us that the Messiah would be cut off, or killed, and Isaiah 53 speaks of the suffering servant. To call the church Plan B sounds too much like it was his second best plan, as if his efforts were thwarted. God has one redemptive plan for all mankind that was foretold in Genesis 3. The Messiah would come and defeat Satan and death. Now, this doesn't mean that his plan for Israel, and the promises/covenants made with the forefathers are null and void. They are not.

So what is the key to Dispensationalism?

The literal method of interpretation is the key. Using the literal method of interpreting the biblical covenants and prophecy leads to a specific set of core beliefs about God's kingdom program, and what the future will hold for ethnic Israel and for the Church. We therefore recognize a distinction between Israel and the Church, and a promised future earthly reign of Christ on the throne of David. (The Davidic Kingdom.) This leads a person to some very specific conclusions about the Endtimes.

- Israel must be re-gathered to their land as promised by God.
- Daniel's seventieth week prophecy specifically refers to the purging of the nation Israel, and not the Church. These were the clear words spoken to Daniel. The church doesn't need purging from sin. It is already clean.
- Some of the warnings in Matthew 24 are directed at the Jews, and not the Church (since God will be finishing His plan with national Israel)
- A Pretribulation rapture - Israel is seen in Daniel as the key player during the tribulation, not the Church. God removes the elect when he brings judgment on the world. i.e. Noah, John 14, 1 Thess 4:16.
- Premillennialism - A literal 1000 year Millennial Kingdom, where Christ returns before the Millennium starts. Revelation 20 doesn't give us a reason to interpret the 1000 years as symbolic. Also, Dispensationalists see the promised literal reign of Christ in the OT. Note the chronological order of events between Revelation 19-21.

Charles Ryrie in his book 'Dispensationalism' points out that some Christians have actually called Dispensationalism heretical. Actually it is people that use words like 'heretical' for non essential doctrinal beliefs that are the ones that cause division in the Church. Whether a person believes in a literal future Millennial Kingdom is not essential Christian doctrine. It doesn't rank up there with the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, the Atonement, etc. A house divided against itself will not stand. When we get to heaven, or the Millennial Kingdom, whichever will come first, we will understand the truth of all the word of God, but until then there are essential doctrines of the faith that are worth going to battle over. Others are not, since we don't want to be found going to battle with each other, and therefore, with Jesus Christ Himself.

The History of Dispensationalism

While the opponents of Dispensationalism will point out that as a system of theology it is relatively new, it is notable that there is evidence from the early church writers that there was clearly an understanding that God dealt with His people differently in progressive dispensations, and that Israel wasn't seen as replaced by the Church. A small reference to some of these writings is found in 'The Moody Handbook of Theology' by Paul Ennis. He mentions the following Christians as being in the history of the development of Dispensationalism.

- Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165)
- Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200)
- Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-220)
- Augustine (A.D. 354-430)

Of the above Ryrie says "It is not suggested nor should it be inferred that these early Church Fathers were dispensationalists in the modern sense of the word. But it is true that some of them enunciated principles which later developed into Dispensationalism, and it may be rightly said that they held primitive or early dispensational concepts." With this understanding, the following have written in support of some or all dispensational principles.

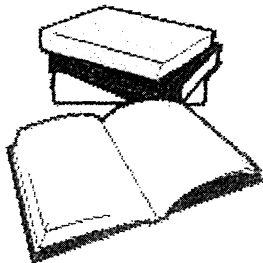
Some Dispensational writers

- Pierre Poiret (1646-1719)
- John Edwards (1637-1716)
- Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
- John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)
- C.I. Scofield (1843-1921)
- Lewis Sperry Chafer
- Charles Ryrie
- Dwight Pentecost
- John Walvoord

Dispensational schools *(Email us if we've missed any)*

- Baptist Bible College
- Chafer Theological Seminary
- Dallas Theological Seminary
- Grace Theological Seminary
- Masters Seminary
- Moody Bible Institute
- Multnomah School of the Bible
- Philadelphia College of the Bible
- Talbot Theological Seminary
- Western Conservative Baptist Seminary

Suggested Reading and Bibliography



- **Dispensationalism - Charles Ryrie (Moody)**
- **Things to Come - J. Dwight Pentecost (Zondervan)**
- **Understanding End Times Prophecy - Paul N. Benware (Moody)**

Died: Charles C. Ryrie, Theologian Whose Study Bible Shaped Dispensationalism

The 90-year-old scholar leaves behind a legacy beyond Dallas Seminary.

Kate Shellnutt | POSTED 2/16/2016 02:34PM |

5074

tweet

share

email

print

Charles Caldwell Ryrie, the dispensationalist scholar and Christian educator best known for the popular study Bible that bears his name, died Tuesday at age 90.

Ryrie was the author of more than 50 books and editor of the Ryrie Study Bible, which includes more than 10,000 footnotes by him.

In the preface to the original 1978 edition, he wrote, "The Bible is the greatest of all books; to study it is the noblest of all pursuits; to understand it, the highest of all goals." The Ryrie Study Bible has gone on to sell more than 2.6 million copies.

Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) paid tribute today to Ryrie, who taught systematic theology and served as a dean.

"Dr. Ryrie was a master at biblical and theological synthesis. He had the unusually rare gift of being able to state complex theological ideas in succinct statements," said DTS president Mark Bailey. "All of us are indebted to his efforts to articulate and defend dispensational premillennialism."

After DTS announced the news of his death, Christian leaders and seminarians shared tributes to the late scholar.

O. S. Hawkins, Ryrie's former pastor at First Baptist Church of Dallas, tweeted, "A giant of the faith went home last (night). Charles Ryrie. Honored to have been his pastor, friend and prayer partner."

Known as an "irenic dispensationalist," Ryrie is remembered for his work to stabilize the field of dispensationalist theology, his prescient reflections on the Middle East, and the impact of his scholarship.

"I think his greatest gift was making abstract ideas understandable. Anyone can



Ryrie's Obituary by the Dallas Morning News.

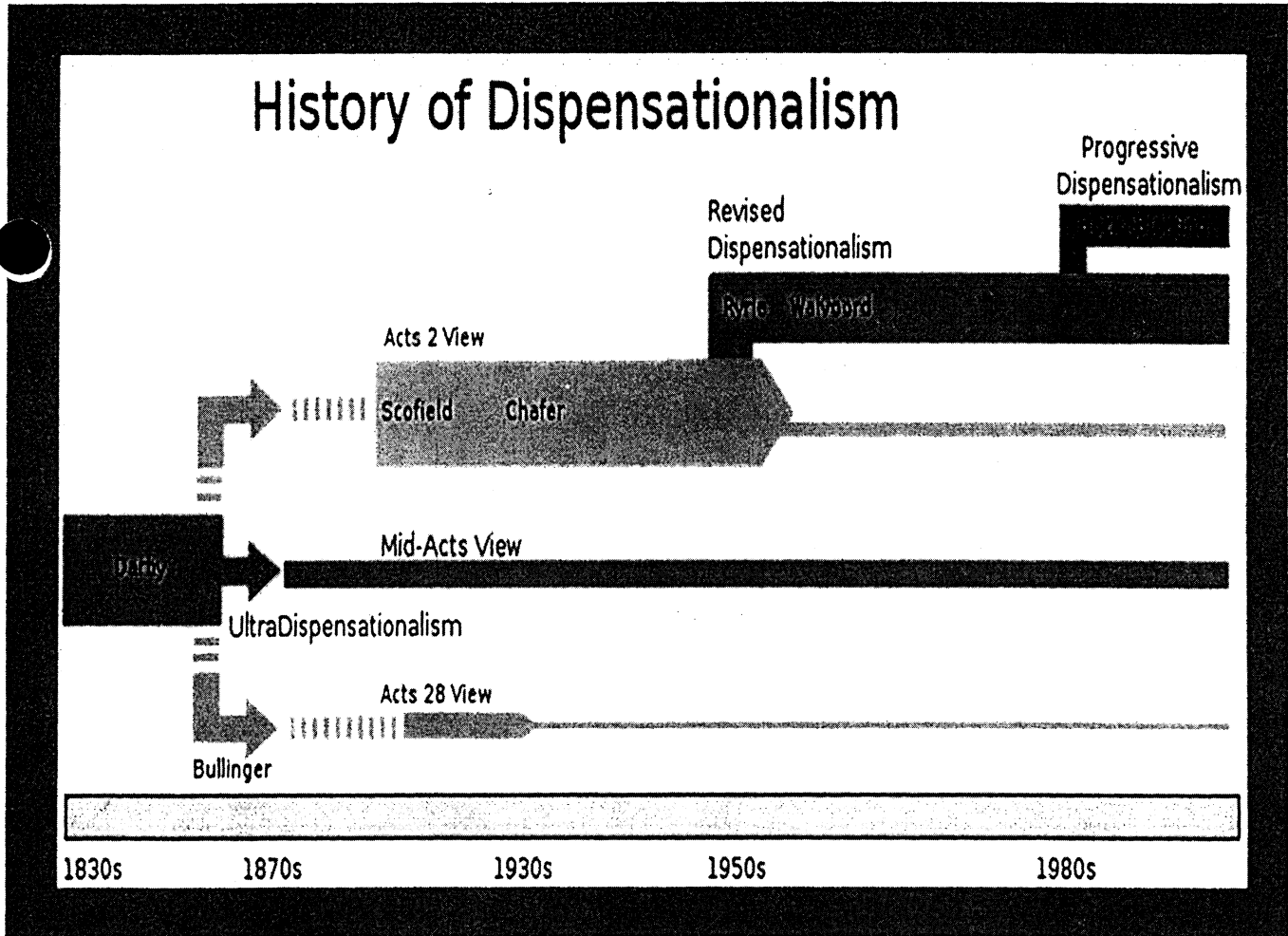
<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dallasmorningnews/obituary-print.aspx?n=charles>

Charles Caldwell Ryrie(1925 - 2016)



RYRIE, Charles Caldwell Charles Caldwell Ryrie was born on March 2, 1925 in St. Louis, Missouri and died on February 16, 2016 in Dallas, Texas surrounded by his family and loved ones. He received Christ as his Savior at age 5 at his home in Alton, Illinois through the instrumentality of his father. He dedicated his life to serving the LORD on April 23, 1943 as a junior at Pennsylvania's Haverford College under the direction of Lewis Sperry Chafer. He graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary with a Th.D. in 1949 and from the University of Edinburgh with a Ph.D. in 1954. He taught Bible, Greek, and Theology at Westmont College in California, Philadelphia Biblical University, and Dallas Theological Seminary. He also taught and ministered in many foreign countries. He served on numerous different religious and business boards. He authored over 50 books including the Ryrie Study Bible, "Basic Theology," and "So Great Salvation." He loved his LORD, the Bible, his church, his family, as well as Blue Bell ice cream and Magnum bars. He is survived by his children Elizabeth Ryrie Anthony, son-in-law John, Bruce Caldwell Ryrie, Carolyn Ryrie Howard, and son-in-law Rick all of Dallas, grandchildren Steven Charles Anthony of Des Moines, Iowa, Matthew Anthony of Lugano, Switzerland, and Claire Howard of Dallas, Brian Howard and Whitney Howard of Dallas, sister-in-law Virginia Ryrie of Alton, Illinois, numerous nieces and nephews, as well as innumerable friends and former students. A service will be held Wednesday, February 24 at 1 p.m. in the sanctuary at First Baptist Church-Dallas. Memorials to be used for student scholarships may be sent to The Ryrie Foundation, c/o 3310 Fairmount St, Dallas, TX, 75201 or Word of Life Bible Institute, 4200 Glendale Rd, Pottersville, NY 12860-2300

Soon it was taken over by the Protestant Theologians like John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) of Plymouth Brethren, Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921) of the Scofield Bible, Charles C. Ryrie (1800-1880) of The Ryrie Study Bible, and many later ministries.



Futurist interpretations generally predict a resurrection of the dead and a rapture of the living, wherein all true believers are gathered to Christ at the time God's kingdom comes on earth. They also believe a tribulation will occur - a seven year period of time when believers will experience worldwide persecution and martyrdom. But there are difference in when will the rapture occur.

GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES

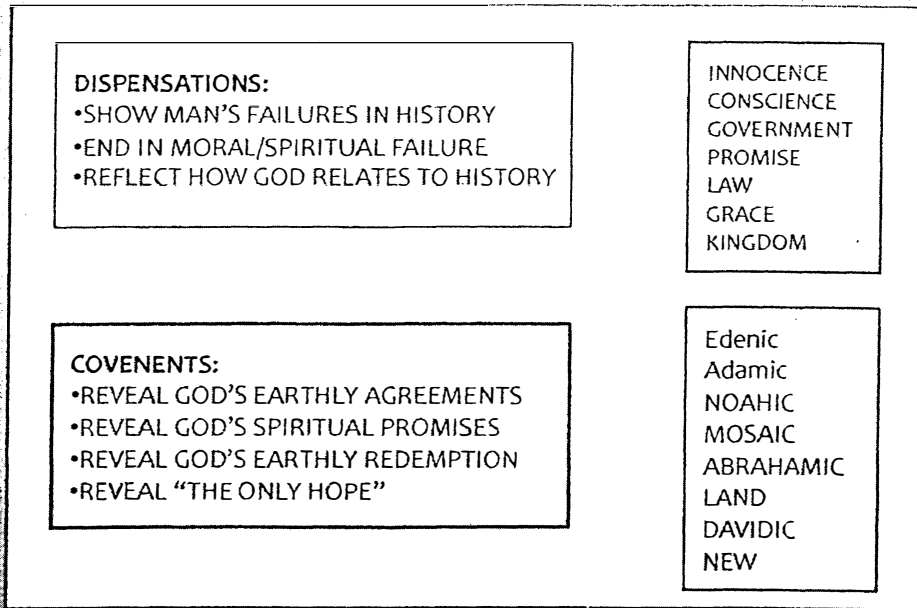
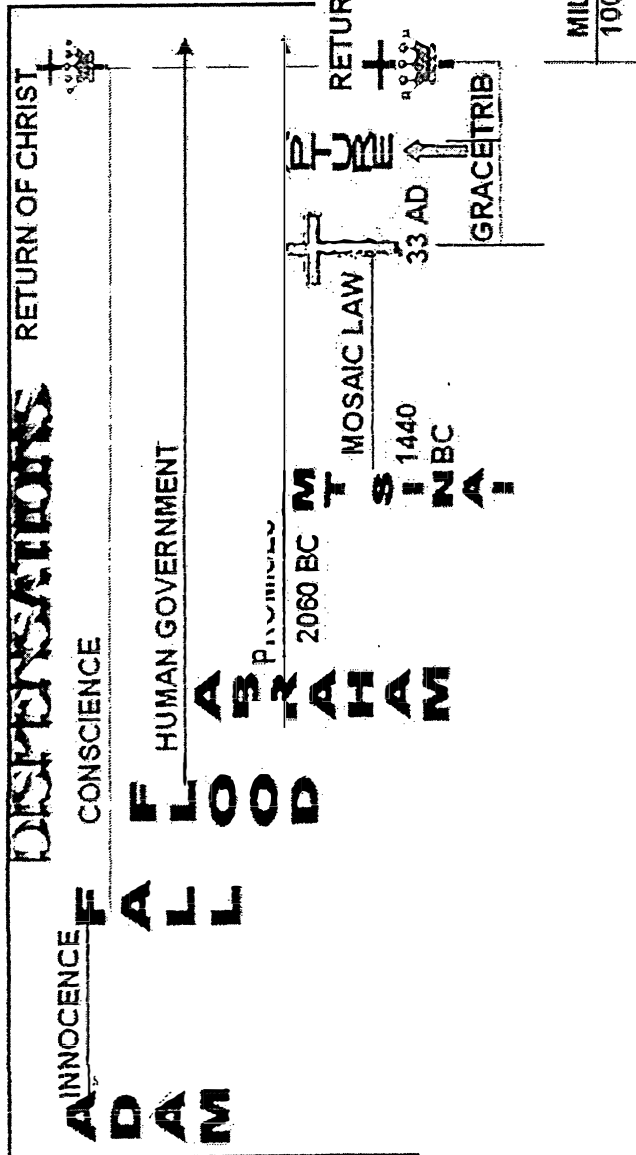


Chart by Cathy Bateson

Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 1995, p.44

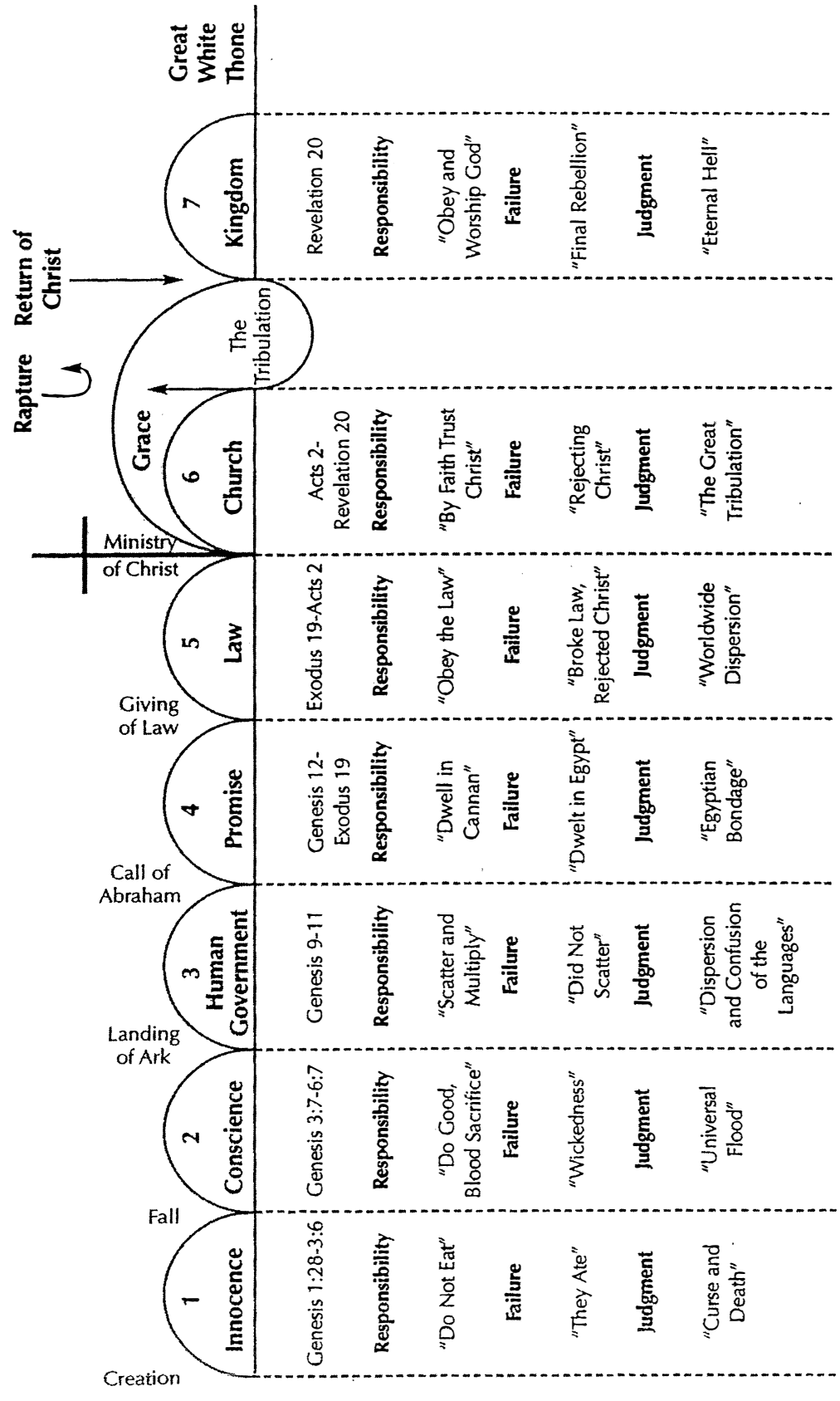
THE DISPENSATIONS

Name	Scripture	Responsibilities	Judgment(s)
Innocency	Genesis 1:3-3:6	Keep Garden Do not eat one fruit Fill, subdue earth Fellowship with God	Curses, and physical and spiritual death
Conscience	Genesis 3:7-8:14	Do good	Flood
Civil Government	Genesis 8:15-11:9	Fill earth Capital punishment	Forced scattering by confusion of languages
Patriarchal Rule	Genesis 11:10-Exodus 18:27	Stay in Promised Land Believe and obey God	Egyptian bondage and wilderness wanderings
Mosaic Law	Exodus 19:1-John 14:30	Keep the law Walk with God	Captivities
Grace	Acts 2:1-Revelation 19:21	Believe on Christ Walk with Christ	Death Loss of rewards
Millennium	Revelation 20:1-15	Believe and obey Christ and His government	Death Great White Throne Judgment



(The Dispensations)

"A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in God's master plan whereby God tests mankind."



Thomas Ice, *Bible Prophecy* Chertis (Arlington, TX: The Pre-Trib Research Center, n.d.). Used by permission.

GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES OR

THE DISTINGUISHABLE ECONOMIES IN THE OUTWORKING OF GOD'S PURPOSE

1. THE ETERNAL GOD
Deut. 33:27
2. THE ETERNAL SON
John 1:1-2
3. THE ETERNAL SPIRIT
Heb. 13:14
4. THE ETERNAL PURPOSE
Eph. 4:11

ETERNITY

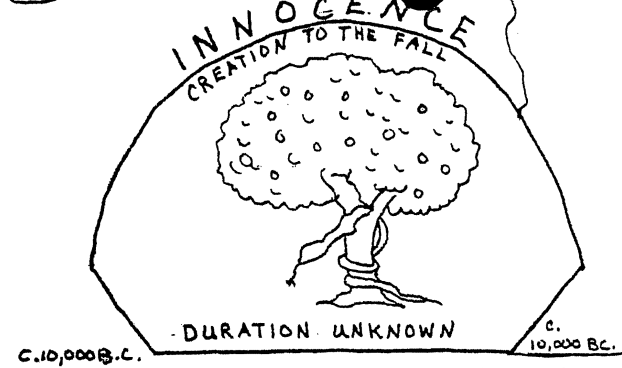


THE ORIGINAL EARTH
John 1:3
Col. 1:16-17
Heb. 11:3
DATELESS

THE CHAOTIC EARTH
Is. 14:9-14
Is. 45:18
Eze. 28:12-15

THE RESTORED EARTH
Gen. 1:1-2:25

THE PRESENT EARTH



Judgment.....

Scripture.....

Persons.....

Responsibility....

Failure.....

Grace.....

GEN. 1:26-3:6

Adam and Eve

Populate and subdue the earth
Dress and keep the Garden
Desist from eating of the Tree
of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

They doubted God's word,
goodness, judgment, and motive,
and ate of the forbidden tree.

Promised Redeemer, Coats
of skin, Long life, Supply of
needs, Separation from Tree of Life.

EDENIC COVENANT
GEN. 1:28-30; 2:15-17



CONSCIENCE
ADAM TO THE FLOOD

Duration 5,000 years

HUMAN GOVERNMENT
NOAH TO ABRAHAM

Duration 3000 years

PROMISE
ABRAHAM TO MOSES

Duration 560 years

LAW
MOSES TO PENTECOST

Duration 1,471 years

A.D. 32

CROSS

FLOOD

CONFUSION OF TONGUES

BONDAGE IN EGYPT

GEN. 3:7-8:19

Adam, Eve, Seth, Noah, and Enoch

Life under a curse.
Conscience as a rule of life.
Blood Sacrifices

Failure to live up to conscience.
Universal wickedness

Salvation of some
Preservation of Noah
Longsuffering before judgment

ADAMIC COVENANT
GEN. 3:14-19

GEN. 8:20-11:9

Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth

Renewed command to multiply and have dominion.
Essence of government established involving organization and legislation.

Noah's drunkenness, Ham's irreverence
Failure of human government to curb sin.

The seed of the woman
Preservation of a godly remnant

NOAHIC COVENANT
Gen. 8:20-9:17

GEN. 11:10-EX.19:9

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

Faith in the material, spiritual, and social promises of God

Abraham's delay, doubt, and descent into Egypt. Isaac's doubt. Jacob's deceit. Israel's murmurings.

A deliverer was promised.
Victory over enemies was given.
Unconditional promises renewed.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT
Gen. 12:1-3

EX.19:9 - JOHN 21:25

Moses, Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Prophets

Israel is to obey a detailed system of works comprised of 613 commandments.

The entire Old Testament is a record of failure, culminating in the crucifixion.

Sacrifices provided a way of restoration. God raised up deliverers. The nation is preserved. Millennium promise.

MOSAIC COVENANT
EX. 19:5-31:18

JERUSALEM DESTROYED
A.D. 70



GRACE

PENTECOST TO SECOND COMING



DURATION 1,900+ YEARS

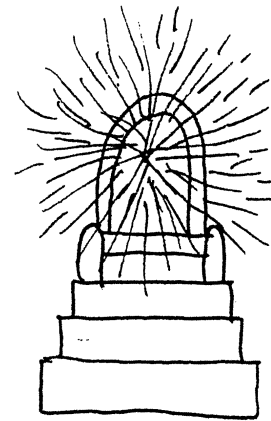
666

KINGDOM

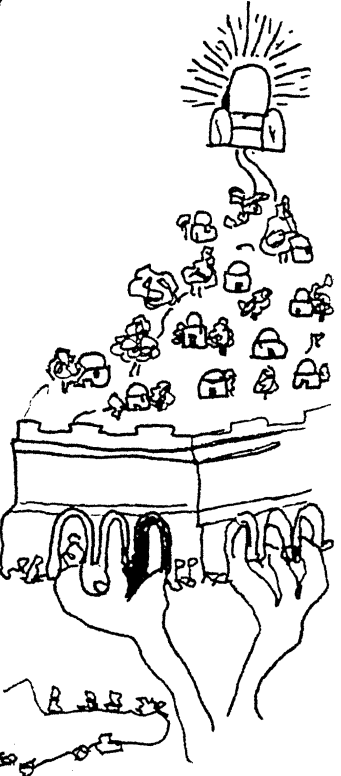
SECOND COMING TO GREAT WHITE THRONE



DURATION 1000 YEARS



GREAT WHITE THRONE



TRIBULATION

9 Acts 1:1 - Rev. 3:22

Apostles, Church Fathers, and Christians

Church's responsibility includes Salvation by faith, Sanctification through the Spirit, and World Evangelism

Grace has not produced a world-wide acceptance of Christ or a triumphant church and ends with great apostasy.

The appearance of Christ. The standing before God. The rule of life. Deliverance from judgment.

NEW COVENANT

Mat. 26:26-29; I Cor. 11:25



9 Rev. 20:1-15; 21:9-22:5

Tribulation saints who endured and people born in the millennium

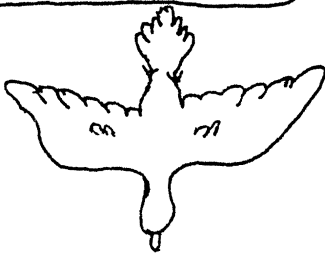
To obey the King

Outward sin
A climactic rebellion

Fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants - Establishment of the New Covenant.
Fruition of nature.

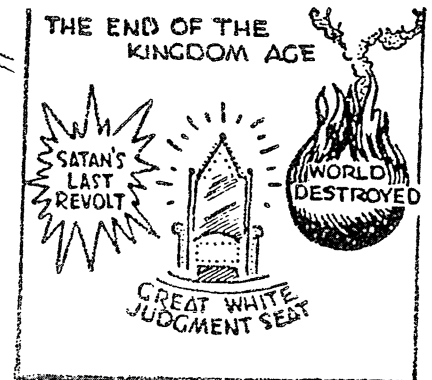
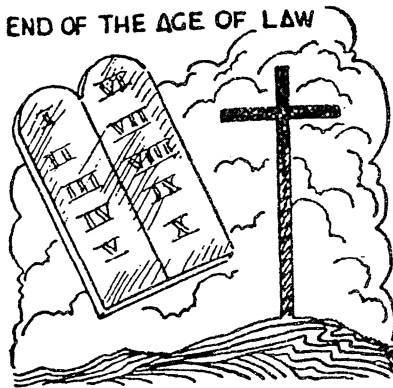
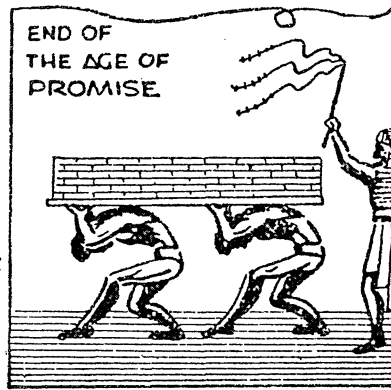
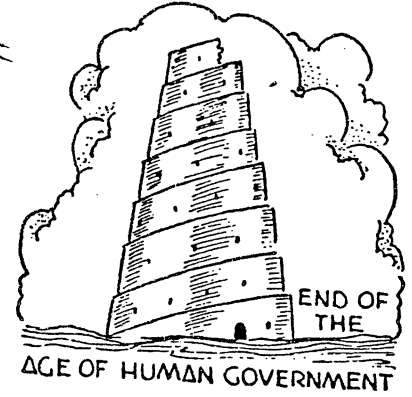
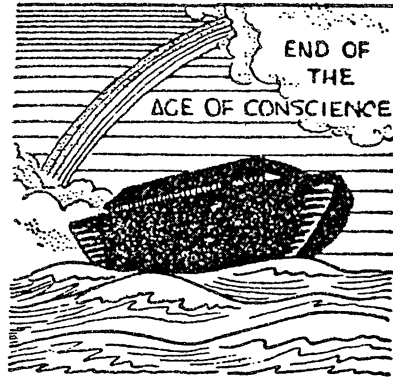
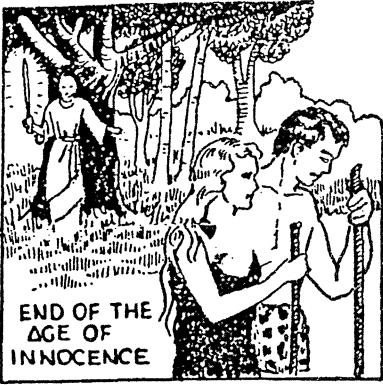
NEW COVENANT

Jer. 31:31-40



DISPENSATIONAL CHART

DISPENSATION	DURATION	RESPONSIBILITY	FAILURE	JUDGMENT
1. Innocence (Genesis 1 - 3)	About 33 Years	Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.	Man ate from the forbidden tree.	Banished from Eden, Entropy and death instituted.
2. Conscience (Gen. 3:6 - 7:33)	1,623 Years	Do good; blood animal sacrifice.	Man did wickedness, and violence.	Worldwide Flood.
3. Civil Government (Gen. 8:20-11:9)	429 Years	Disperse and multiply.	Man settled in the plain of Shinar to build a tower.	Dispersed by confounding Man's one language.
4. Promise (Gen. 11:9 - Ex. 19)	430 Years	Dwell in Canaan (This Dispensation zeros in on the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).	Moved to Egypt.	Egyptian bondage.
5. Law (Ex. 20 - Lk. 16:16)	1,524 Years	Keep and do the Law of Moses.	Israel broke the Law.	Christ crucified; Worldwide dispersion of Israel.
6. Grace (Jn. 3:29-31; Rev. 4:1)	About 2,000 Years	Preach salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ; keep the Bible and doctrine pure. (Church responsible)	False doctrine and apostasy abounds.	Seven years of God's wrath.
7. Kingdom (Revelation 20).	1,000 Years	Trust and obey King Jesus.	Satan leads the last rebellion against God.	Satan and all the lost of all Ages cast into the Lake of Fire for ever.



INSPIRED INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERPRETATION

THE INFIDELS

... Deploy Deceitfully

II Corinthians 4:2

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

THE IGNORANT

... Distort Destructively

II Peter 3:16

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.

THE INSTRUCTED

... Divide Discerningly

II Timothy 2:15

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

THE INITIATED

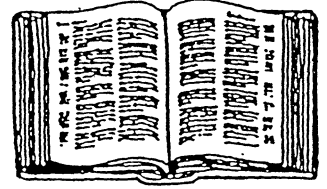
... Discriminate Dispensationally

Ephesians 3: 3-5

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

The Certainty of Scriptural Statements



ALL SCRIPTURE IS TRUE BUT NOT ALL SCRIPTURE
IS CLEAR OR PLAIN

2. PET. 3:15-16

The Meaning is

Indicated dogmatic

Inferred definite

Implied debatable

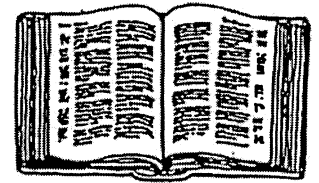
Indefinite doubtful

Invented dreadful

15 And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The Certainty of Scriptural Statements



ALL SCRIPTURE IS TRUE BUT NOT ALL SCRIPTURE
IS CLEAR OR PLAIN

2. PET. 3:15-16

The Meaning is

Indicated dogmatic

At death the believer is immediately in the presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23)

Inferred definite

At death the believer is carried by an angel into the presence of God (Lk. 16:22)

Implied debatable

Angels protect the bodies of dead believers, as they did with the body of Moses (Jude 9)

Indefinite doubtful

Dead individuals return to life and tell of out-of-body experiences or visits to heaven (cf. Paul, 2 Cor. 12:2-4)

Invented dreadful

The idea of purgatory: The dead must be purged of their sins before entering heaven or paradise. The **truth**: The Savior is our purgatory, seeing that on the cross "He had by himself purged our sins" (Heb. 1:3b)

15 And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH, 740 – 680 B.C.

PREDICTION

Is. 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.



FULFILLMENT

Mt. 1:22-23

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Is. 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; and the opening of the prison to [them that are] bound;

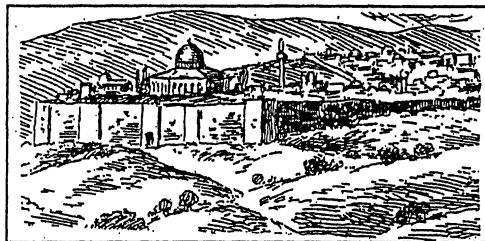


Lk. 4:18, 21

The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,... And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Is. 2:3

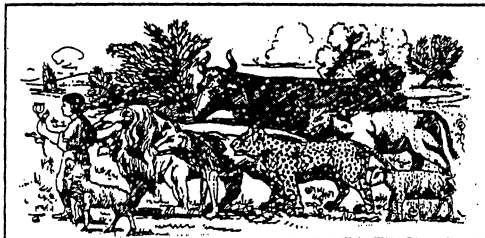
And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.



Many of Isaiah's hundreds of prophecies have been fulfilled, and that, literally.

Is. 11:6

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.



It is reasonable to suppose that the unfulfilled prophecies will also see an exact, literal fulfillment.

JEREMIAH'S FULFILLED AND UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES

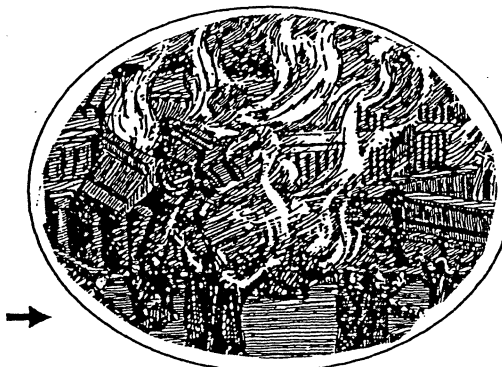
PREDICTION

FULFILLMENT

JER. 50:13

Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON



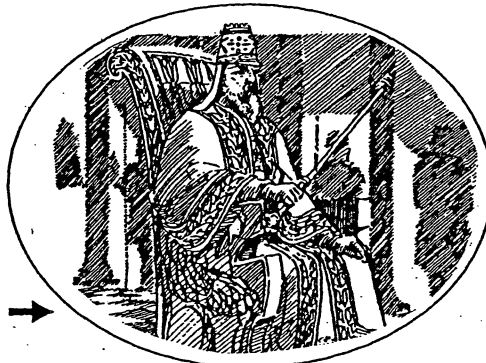
DAN. 5:30-31

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

JER. 29: 10

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

RETURN OF ISRAEL TO THE LAND



EZRA 1:1

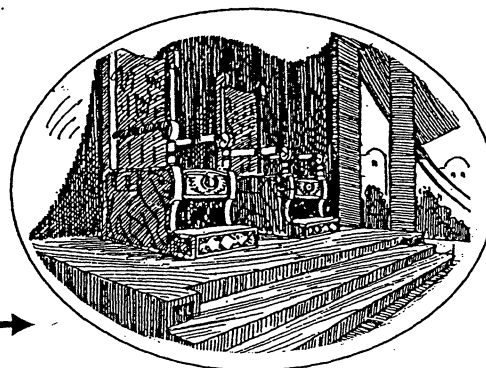
Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing...

(2:1)

JER. 33:21

Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

CHRIST IS ON THE THRONE



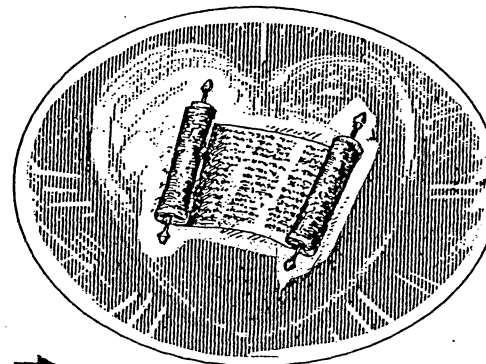
REV. 3:21

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

JER. 31:33

But this shall be the covenant that I will make . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

GOD'S LAW IN THE HEART



HEB. 8:10

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

HOW TO INTERPRET PROPHECY

PREDICTION

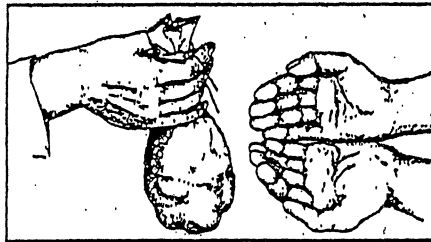
ZECH. 9: 9

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.



ZECH. 11: 12

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price: and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver.



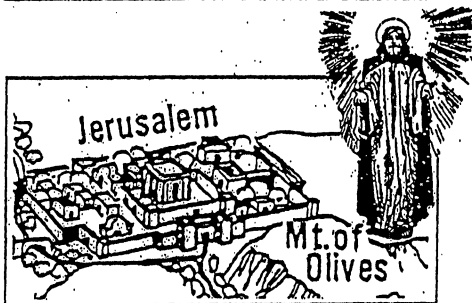
ZECH. 12: 10

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son. . .



ZECH. 14: 4

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west. . .



FULFILLMENT

MT. 21: 5

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

MT. 26: 14-15

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they conventioned with him for thirty pieces of silver.

One-fourth of the Bible was predictive at the time of its writing.

About one half of the biblical prophecies have been fulfilled, and that literally.

As a result, to be consistent, one should anticipate a literal fulfillment of unfulfilled prophecies.

Consistent Literal Interpretation

A Study Showing the Inconsistencies
of Non-Dispensationalists

This article was originally presented orally by George Zeller at the New England Bible Conference, September 17, 2007.

The message is available in [Audio Format](#).

[PDF Format](#)

What is Literal Interpretation?

Literal interpretation seeks to understand the Bible in its plain, natural, normal sense. It looks for the clear and obvious meaning of a text. God does not want to hide His truth from the believer; He wants to communicate His truth to His own in a very clear way. The believer's responsibility is to simply take God at His Word. God means what He says and says what He means.

The literal interpreter does not look for hidden meanings in the Bible. Rather, he looks for the obvious sense of the text. The literal interpreter does not seek to read in between the lines, but rather he reads the sacred text in order to determine its plain and simple meaning, in light of the normal meaning of the words, the context and the commonly accepted rules of grammar.

The Allegorical Method

In sharp contrast to literal interpretation is the allegorical method of interpretation. The father of allegorical interpretation was Origen who lived in the third century. Many today still follow his allegorical method of interpretation. Allegorical interpretation involves looking for hidden spiritual meaning which transcends the literal sense of the sacred text.

As an illustration of the allegorical method, consider 1 Samuel 17:40--"And he (David) took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had." What is the meaning of these five smooth stones? Imagine one preacher saying, "These five smooth stones symbolize **faith, hope, love, joy, peace.**" This could make a nice five point sermon outline. Somewhere else in the world another preacher gets up in front of his congregation and says, "These five smooth stones represent: **courage, strength, perseverance, power, patience.**" According to the allegorical method, it is the pure imagination of the interpreter that determines the meaning of the text. A person can make it mean whatever he or she wants it to mean.

Ask a dispensationalist what the five smooth stones signify and he would say something like this: "The five smooth stones were just what the text says they were. They were five smooth stones, only one of which was used by David in his sling!"

Note: In emphasizing the literal meaning of a text, we are not denying that a text may have many applications. There is one meaning, but there are many applications. The careful Bible teacher needs to make sure that whatever applications he makes are based on the plain, normal, literal sense of the text.

Normal Interpretation

Literal interpretation is the normal way in which we interpret any piece of literature. It seeks to discover the obvious and plain sense of the text. Consider the following newspaper article:

Woman Found Alive After 2 Weeks In Mountains

Associated Press

BAKER CITY, Ore. — A 76-year-old woman was found alive in the mountains Thursday, nearly two weeks after she disappeared while on a hunting trip with her husband, authorities said.

How should we understand this? We understand it literally, according to the normal meaning of words. It means just what it says. The woman was 76 years old, not 34. She was found alive, not dead. She was found in the mountains, not in a desert. She was found nearly two weeks, not two years, after she disappeared. She was on a hunting trip, not a fishing trip. Her husband was with her on this trip, not her brother. The words of this article are understood in their normal and natural sense.

Whether or not this article is true and accurate is an entirely different issue. Many newspaper articles are later found to be inaccurate. We do not have this problem with Biblical interpretation. When it comes to the Bible, we know that whatever we read is true and accurate because God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), and our Lord Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). God means what He says and He always says the truth.

We can trust Him and take Him at His Word.

A Helpful Rule

Dr. David L. Cooper, the founder of *The Biblical Research Society*, is known for his "Golden Rule of Interpretation":

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.

A shortened form of the above rule goes like this:

If the plain sense makes good sense seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense.

The opponents of dispensationalism depart from the above rule at times, and although they may not want to admit it, they seem to follow this rule:

If the plain sense does not fit my theological system, then I will seek some other sense, lest I should end up agreeing with the dispensationalists!

This is illustrated by an amillennialist, named Hamilton, who made this remarkable admission:

"Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures" [Cited by Charles Ryrle, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1981), 35].

In other words, if a person really interprets the Bible prophecies literally, he will of necessity be a premillennialist, according to Hamilton, who himself was not a premillennialist!

Consistent Literal Interpretation

Dispensationalism is known for its consistent literal interpretation. The word "consistent" is the key. Non-dispensationalists also interpret the Bible literally in many places, but they do not do it consistently. We shall illustrate this in the following examples.

Example #1--The First and Second Comings of Christ

Think of all the prophecies that were literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14); He would be silent before His executioners (Isa. 53:7); men would gamble for His robe (Psalm 22:18); His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16), and so many more. Both dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists take these passages at face value and believe they were literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming.

Consider the following two verses which speak of our Lord's two comings:

Zechariah 9:9 was literally fulfilled at the triumphant entry. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." He literally rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The prophecy was fulfilled, as confirmed by Matthew 21:4-5. Dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists alike all agree that this prophecy was literally fulfilled at our Lord's first coming, at the time of the triumphal entry.

Zechariah 9:10 speaks of a future time of worldwide peace: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from river even to the ends of the earth." These words, taken at face value, teach us that a day is coming when the instruments of war will be cut off. It will be a time of total disarmament. The Prince of Peace will speak peace. He will have dominion from sea to shining sea!

The problem is that most non-dispensationalists deny that Zechariah 9:10 will ever be fulfilled on this earth. They do not believe in a kingdom age as minutely described by all the prophets. They deny that the Messiah will ever rule this earth in a prolonged era of worldwide peace. Many are amillennial in their theology, believing that there will be no future kingdom on earth. They deny that the Messiah will rule from Jerusalem even though this is the clear teaching of the prophets (Isa. 2:1-5; Jer. 23:5-8).

Why do they interpret Zechariah 9:9 literally and Zechariah 9:10 symbolically? Why is it that non-dispensationalists interpret passages relating to the first coming of Christ in a literal manner, and yet totally abandon the literal approach when it comes to the many passages relating to the second coming of Christ and His kingdom reign? *This is inconsistent.*

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) was a famous English preacher. Spurgeon considered him the best man in the Church of England. He is highly esteemed among Reformed men, and rightly so. He wrote more than one hundred tracts and pamphlets on doctrinal and practical subjects. He published a number of books of sermons and devotional literature, much of which is still widely read today.

For a compilation of quotations from Ryle on prophecy and in particular his position the future of the nation Israel, see the excellent book, *Future Israel--Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*, by Barry E. Horner, Appendix B, "J. C. Ryle and the Future of Israel" (pages 339-348).

Here are some of J. C. Ryle's comments on the importance of interpreting prophecy literally, according to the normal and natural sense of language:

I believe that the literal sense of the Old Testament prophecies has been far too much neglected by the Churches, and is far too much neglected at the present day, and that under the mistaken system of spiritualizing and accommodating Bible language, Christians have too often completely missed its meaning. [J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready For The End Of Time?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 9; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties.*]

I believe we have cherished an arbitrary, reckless habit of interpreting first advent texts *literally*, and second advent texts *spiritually*. I believe we have not rightly understood "all that the prophets have spoken" about the second personal advent of Christ, any more than the Jews did about the first. [J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready For The End Of Time?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 46; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties.*]

Ryle then envisions a situation where a Christian is witnessing to a Jew. The Christian tells his Jewish friend how the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (such as Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Micah 5:2, etc.)

were literally fulfilled by Christ. He then continues:

But suppose the Jew asks you if you take *all* the prophecies of the Old Testament in their simple literal meaning. Suppose he asks you if you believe in a literal personal advent of Messiah to reign over the earth in glory, a literal restoration of Judah and Israel to Palestine, a literal rebuilding and restoration of Zion and Jerusalem. Suppose the unconverted Jew puts these questions to you, what answer are you prepared to make? Will you dare to tell him that Old Testament prophecies of this kind are not to be taken in their plain literal sense? Will you dare to tell him that the words Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim, Israel, do not mean what they seem to mean, but mean the *Church of Christ*? Will you dare to tell him that the glorious kingdom and future blessedness of Zion, so often dwelt upon in prophecy, mean nothing more than the gradual Christianizing of the world by missionaries and gospel preaching? Will you dare to tell him that you think it "carnal" to expect a literal rebuilding of Jerusalem, "carnal" to expect a literal coming of Messiah to reign? Oh, reader, if you are a man of this mind, take care what you are doing! I say again, take care. [J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready For The End Of Time?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 47; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties*.]

Ryle continues to plead for a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies:

It is high time for Christians to interpret unfulfilled prophecy by the light of prophecies already fulfilled. The curses of the Jews were brought to pass literally; so also will be the blessings. The scattering was literal; so also will be the gathering. The pulling down of Zion was literal; so also will be the building up. The rejection of Israel was literal; so also will be the restoration. [J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready For The End Of Time?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 49; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties*.]

What I protest against is, the habit of allegorizing plain sayings of the Word of God concerning the future history of the *nation* of Israel, and explaining away the fullness of the contents in order to accommodate them to the Gentile Church. I believe the habit to be unwarranted by anything in Scripture, and to draw after it a long train of evil consequences. [J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready For The End Of Time?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 107-108; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties*.]

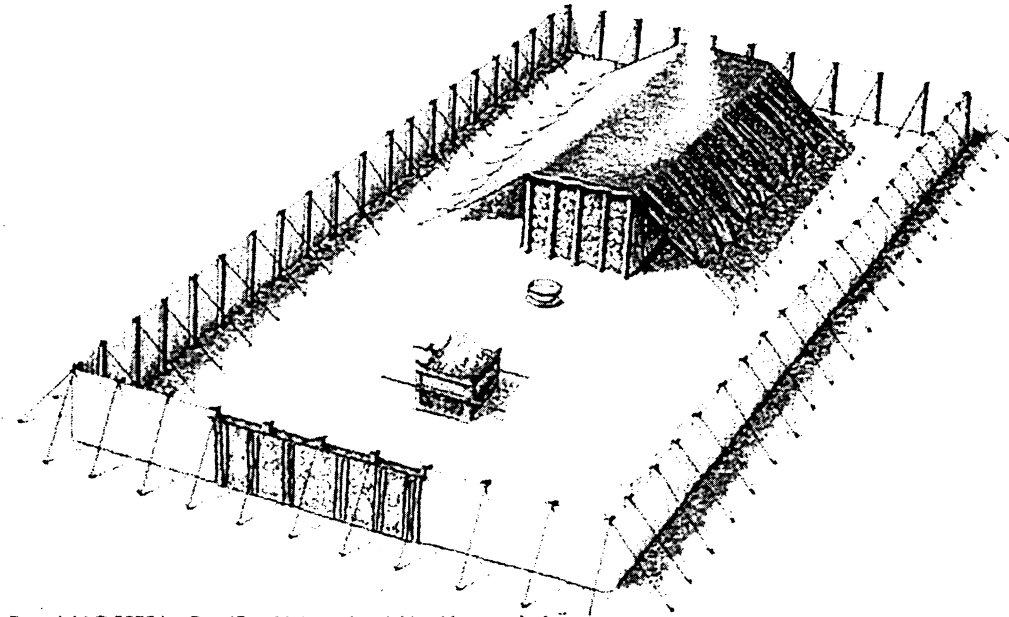
J. C. Ryle had some concluding words about the importance of literal interpretation:

Cultivate the habit of reading prophecy with a single eye to the literal meaning of its proper names. Cast aside the old traditional idea that Jacob, and Israel, and Judah, and Jerusalem, and Zion must always mean the Gentile Church, and that predictions about the second Advent are to be taken spiritually, and first Advent predictions literally. Be just, and honest, and fair. If you expect the Jews to take the 53rd of Isaiah literally, be sure you take the 54th and 60th and 62nd literally also. The Protestant Reformers were not perfect. On no point, I venture to say, were they so much in the wrong as in the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. [J. C. Ryle, *Are You Ready For The End Of Time?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) p. 157-159; reprint of *Coming Events and Present Duties*.]

Example #2--The Tabernacle and the Temple

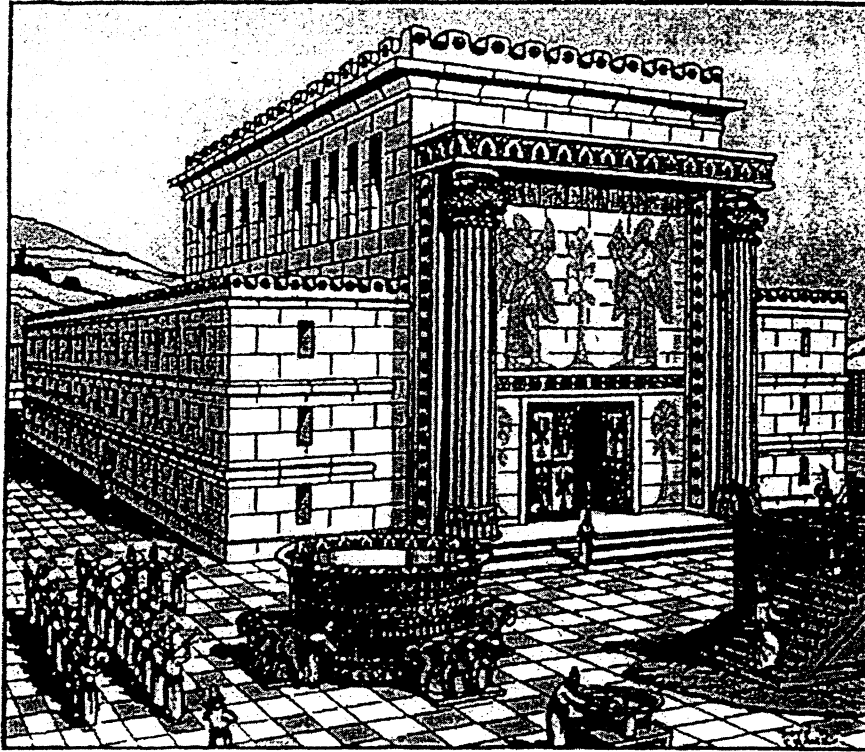
The Tabernacle: In Exodus 25 and following, an amazing tent is described in great detail including its pieces of furniture, the curtains, the pillars, the loops, the staves, the boards, the sockets, the bars, etc.

Exact measurements are given. God had a very precise blueprint for this tabernacle. No Bible-believer would dispute the fact that this tabernacle was erected exactly as described.



Copyright © 2000 by GoodSeed International. Used by permission.

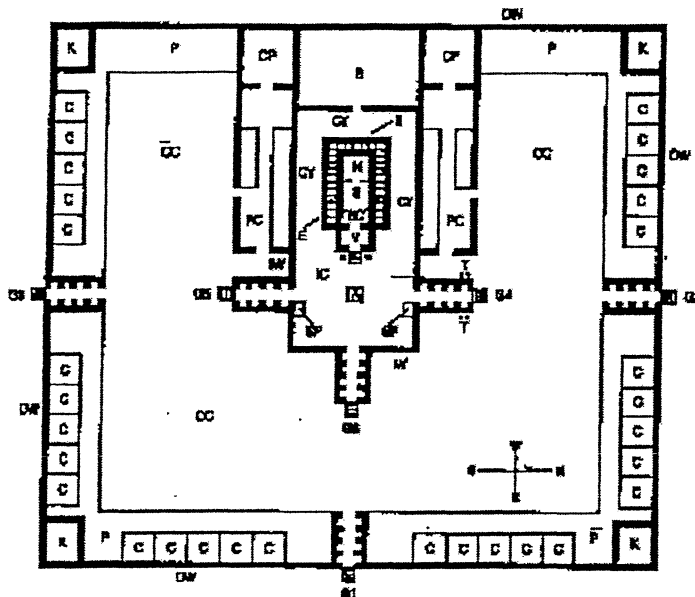
Solomon's Temple: In 1 Kings chapter 6 we learn that God also had a blueprint for the temple. It is carefully described as to its measurements, its building materials, its porch, its chambers, its inner sanctuary, etc. Solomon's temple was a literal building located in Jerusalem and no one would dispute this. No Bible-believer would deny that Solomon's temple was a glorious building that once stood in Jerusalem.



Ezekiel's Temple--In Ezekiel chapters 40-48 another temple is described with amazing detail. Not even Solomon's temple was described with such detail! Chapter after chapter are full of detailed descriptions about this amazing temple and its design. Detailed measurements are given. The chambers, roofs, porches, gates, and courts are described. The holy place and most holy place are detailed. The temple sacrifices are described. The Levitical priests, even the sons of Zadok, are described as serving in the temple. An amazing river flowing out of the sanctuary is described. The descriptions of this temple are so detailed that the *Reformation Study Bible* (formerly called the *New Geneva Study Bible*, edited by R.C. Sproul and other reformed men) has a detailed diagram of Ezekiel's temple:

Ezekiel's Temple (40:5)

Ezekiel's restored temple is not a blueprint, but a vision that stresses the purity and spiritual vitality of the ideal place of worship and those who will worship there. It is not intended for an earthly, physical fulfillment, but expresses the truth found in the name of the new city: THE LORD IS THERE (Ezek. 48:35). God will dwell in the new temple and among His people.



The Temple Complex

- OW Wall of outer court (40:5)
- G1 Eastern outer gateway (40:8-16)
- OC Outer court (40:17)
- C Chambers in outer court (40:17)
- P Pavement (40:17, 18)
- G2 Northern outer gateway (40:20-22)
- G4 Northern inner gateway (40:23, 35-37)
- G3 Southern outer gateway (40:24-26)
- G5 Southern inner gateway (40:27-31)
- IC Inner court (40:32)
- G8 Eastern inner gateway (40:32-34)
- T Tables for killing sacrifices (40:38-43)
- SP Chambers for singers and priests (40:44-4)
- A Altar (40:47; 43:13-27)
- V Vestibule of temple (40:48, 49)
- S Sanctuary or holy place (41:1, 2)
- H Most Holy Place (41:3, 4)
- SC Side chambers (41:5-7)
- E Elevation around temple (41:8)
- CY Separating courtyard (41:10)
- B Building at west end (41:12)
- PC Priest's chambers (42:1-14)
- IW Wall of inner court (42:10)
- CP Priest's cooking places (46:18, 20)
- K Kitchens (46:21-24)

[The above diagram is found in the *New Geneva Study Bible*, R.C. Sproul, General Editor, page 1315.]

The study note above this diagram says this: "Ezekiel's restored temple is not a blueprint, but a vision that stresses the purity and spiritual vitality of the ideal place of worship and those who will worship there. It [Ezekiel's temple] is not intended for an earthly, physical fulfillment [emphasis mine]." In other words, according to this Study Bible, Ezekiel's prophetic vision of this great temple will never be literally fulfilled. Even though this Study Bible gives a detailed diagram of this temple, those responsible for this Bible do not believe that any such temple will ever be erected on this earth! Why do they understand the tabernacle to be a literal tent and they understand Solomon's temple to be an actual temple, and yet they consider Ezekiel's temple to be a mere vision which will never be fulfilled? This approach is totally inconsistent.

In Haggai chapter 2, the prophet asks the question, "Who is left among you that saw this house (temple) in her (its) first glory? And how do ye see it now?" (verse 3). At the time of the rebuilding of the temple, there were still some very old Jews who remembered the glory of Solomon's temple. They knew that the temple that was now being built (by a small remnant of Jews who had returned to the land following the Babylonian captivity) was as nothing compared to Solomon's magnificent temple: "Is it not in your eyes in comparison of (with) it as nothing?" (Haggai 2:3). But God promised them, through His prophet, that there would be a future temple that would even surpass the glory of Solomon's temple: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts; and in this place (Jerusalem) will I give peace" (Haggai 2:9). The glory of the future temple, according to this prophecy, would be greater than the glory of Solomon's temple which was truly one of the wonders of the ancient world. Notice also that the future temple is connected with Jerusalem, and that the fulfillment of this promise will come at a time when there is peace in Jerusalem.

Dispensationalists have no problem with the Haggai prophecy. They understand that the future millennial temple (Ezekiel's temple) will surpass the glory of Solomon's temple. But this is a serious problem for non-dispensationalists. Notice this non-dispensational interpretation in the ESV Study Bible:

The ultimate fulfillment of this passage demands a still wider view of redemptive history...The NT "mystery" is a new spiritual temple composed of people from all nations (1 Cor. 3:9; 16-17), a new community that is the focal point of God's saving work in the world (Eph. 3:8-10). Ultimately, the temple as a sign of God's presence with his people is eclipsed by the presence of the Lord of hosts and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22-26). [Note under Haggai 2:9]

Thus the non-dispensationalists are forced to compare Solomon's temple with a non-literal temple: either the Church (1 Cor. 3:16) or the presence of the Lord in the eternal state. The Church does not fit Haggai's prophecy because it is not a physical temple (see the emphasis of Haggai 2:8 on silver and gold) and because there has been no lasting peace in Jerusalem during the Church age (as required by Haggai 2:9). The eternal state does not fit Haggai's prophecy because there will be no temple in the eternal state (see Rev. 21:22). The non-dispensational approach is found lacking.

Dispensationalists are consistent. They believe that there will be a future temple in Jerusalem which will be exactly as Ezekiel describes. It will be the temple that is on earth during the kingdom reign of the Messiah. For further study: [The Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40-48 by Dr. John Whitcomb \(An Exercise in Literal Interpretation\)](#).

Example #3--The Plagues

Bible believers, whether they are dispensational or non-dispensational, are all in agreement that the plagues that fell upon the land of Egypt happened exactly as described in the Bible.

One of the plagues was that of frogs and is described in Exodus chapter 8:

1: And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

2: And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs:

3: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs:

4: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

5: And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.



[Illustration from *Bible Visuals*, Exodus Part 2.]

Those of a dispensational, covenant or reformed persuasion are all in agreement. These Egyptians were plagued by frogs in enormous numbers, to the point where these amphibians were found in their bedrooms, in their ovens, etc. Why do we all believe this? Because the text of the Bible says so! The text of Scripture is very clear and we take these statements literally.

The book of Exodus is not the only place in God's Word where divine judgments are graphically described. In the book of Revelation we find three series of plagues which will affect, not just Egypt, but the entire world. These are the seal plagues, the trumpet plagues and the vial or bowl plagues. These end-time plagues are described in much the same way that the Egyptians plagues were described in Exodus.

For example, the second trumpet plague is described in Revelation chapter 8:

8: And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;
9: And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

Dispensationalists believe that one-third of the sea will become blood, one-third of the sea-creatures will die and one-third of the ships will be destroyed. We believe this because the text says so. A normal reading of

this text leads to this conclusion.

Another plague, the fourth bowl plague, is described in Revelation 16:

8: And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.
9: And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

Here we have a horrifying description of global warming. This worldwide warming will not be caused by man, and will not be caused by carbon emissions. This plague will come from the hand of God. [We can be thankful to know that Al Gore is not in control of the end of the world.] Dispensationalists believe that this plague will take place exactly as described, because we take the text of Scripture at face value. We take God at His Word.

Non-dispensationalists do not believe that the plagues described in the book of Revelation will be literally fulfilled. For example, preterists believe and teach that these plagues have already been fulfilled in or around 70 A.D. They believe that the great tribulation has already taken place! Of course, we know that these plagues were not literally fulfilled in 70 A.D. or at any other time in past history. We know that there has never been a time when one-third of the sea became blood, one third of the sea creatures died and one third of the ships were destroyed. Since this has never happened, and since God cannot lie, then this means that there must be a future fulfillment. Dispensationalists believe that these judgments will take place in the coming tribulation period, a time Jesus described as the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known (Matt. 24:21).

Why is it that non-dispensationalists understand the plagues of Egypt literally, as having happened exactly as described, and yet they deny that the plagues described in Revelation will ever be fulfilled literally? It is totally inconsistent.

"These seven bowl-judgments are *literal!* There is no other reasonable interpretation possible. Shall we believe that the ten plagues upon Egypt were actually as described in Exodus, and dare to turn away these "seven last plagues" of The Revelation from their evident open significance? Four of the ten Egyptian plagues are here repeated: boils, blood, darkness, and hail. What kind of interpretation is it that believes the one and denies the other! There the visitation was in a single land: here, in all the earth. Is it the extent of the horror that appalls the heart? Have we not read, through all the prophecies, of the day when God will return judgment to righteousness: amidst earth-wide visitations?" [*Revelation--A Complete Commentary* by William Newell, p. 245]

Example #4--The Change in the Nature of Animals

Bible believers are generally unanimous in teaching that there was a change in the nature of animals at the beginning of history. This is based on Genesis 1:30: "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of

the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, **I have given every green herb for meat:** and it was so" (Genesis 1:30). Animals originally were plant eaters or vegetarians. Why do dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists teach this? Because the text clearly states this and we take the Bible at face value. We know there was a change in the nature of animals, because today the animal world is very different. Many animals today are carnivorous. Some animals are omnivores, eating both plants and meat (such as bears, skunks and raccoons). This change in the nature of animals took place either at the time of the fall or after the flood.

The non-dispensational *New Geneva Study Bible (Reformation Study Bible)*, edited by R. C. Sproul and others, has this note under Genesis 1:29--"**The human and animal (v.30) diets were originally vegetarian**, a situation altered after the flood." Here is an example of non-dispensationalists taking the Bible literally because that is exactly what the text says!

In Mark's gospel we learn of a time when the nature of animals was changed temporarily. The temptation account as given by Mark is only two verses in length, but Mark tells us something that the other gospel writers do not mention: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; **and was with the wild beasts**; and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1:12-13). If someone else had been in the desert with the wild beasts, he probably would have been devoured! But when the Lord Jesus was there, the wild animals did Him no harm. When Christ is present on earth in His kingdom, a similar situation will be true worldwide. We learn about this in Isaiah 11:

6: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7: And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8: And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9: They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

What is the plain and normal sense of this passage? Just as Genesis 1:30 teaches that animals were once vegetarian, so Isaiah 11:7 teaches that animals shall once again be vegetarians in the kingdom. Animals that now are meat eaters will be plant eaters during the kingdom. This is the plain sense of the text. Non-dispensationalists depart from the plain, literal interpretation of the text, simply because their theology does not allow them to do so. They do not believe in a future, earthly kingdom.

The *New Geneva Study Bible* (later called the *Reformation Study Bible*), edited by R. C. Sproul and others, has this note under Isaiah 11:6-9--"Carnivorous animals, now remade with natures that protect what they formerly devoured, effectively portray the wonderful peace on earth in the new age ruled by the Messiah. The vision corresponds to reconciling love in the church." Let us analyze this note. They do not believe that Isaiah 11:6-9 should be taken literally. Instead it is merely a "vision" which portrays something. And when they speak of "the new age ruled by the Messiah," they are not referring to an actual future kingdom age, because to them the kingdom is here and now. In their view, Isaiah's prophecy merely portrays the wonderful peace and reconciling love found in this present church age. They deny that this prophecy has anything to do with the actual nature of animals.

To insist that Isaiah's prophecy corresponds to "reconciling love in the church" is preposterous. What Isaiah describes is certainly not taking place today. If you go to any zoo, you will not find any lions eating straw. Today no loving mother would allow her child to play with a deadly poisonous snake. We are reminded of a Russian zookeeper who made this boast, "In our zoo here in Moscow, the wolf dwells with the lamb in the same cage, something which you Americans do not have." But he failed to mention that a new lamb had to be put in the cage every day!

Once again we find inconsistency in the way non-dispensationalists handle the sacred text. Why does the plain sense make good sense in Genesis 1 but not in Isaiah 11, especially when both passages are speaking of the diet of animals? Isaiah 11, understood literally, does not agree with their theological system which says that the kingdom is here and now, whereas the teaching of Genesis 1:29-30 does not threaten their theology. This illustrates the point that theologians are often inconsistent when it comes to their use of the literal hermeneutic, and they often tend to abandon the natural and normal meaning of words when the words describe future kingdom conditions. Dispensationalists are known for their *consistent use* of the literal hermeneutic. If the text of the Bible contradicts my theological system, should I abandon the literal sense of the text, and force it to mean something else? If the sacred text contradicts my theological system, would it not be better to abandon my theological system?

Example #5--Fishing

Consider Matthew 4:18--"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers." This verse teaches us, among other things, that these disciples were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. How could anyone read this text and deny that these men were fishing on the Sea of Galilee? The Bible says it and we believe it. No one would dispute this. Dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists alike would agree with the plain, obvious sense of this passage. These men were fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

Consider another passage in Ezekiel 47: "Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert [the Arabah, the waterless region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea], and go into the sea [the Dead Sea]: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many" (Ezekiel 47:8-10). This passage is also about fishing. This passage is teaching that there will come a day when men will be fishing on the Dead Sea! Today no one fishes on the Dead Sea for the simple reason that no fish can survive in that body of water. But this passage says that the waters of the Dead Sea will be healed and men will spread forth their nets and catch a large variety of fish!

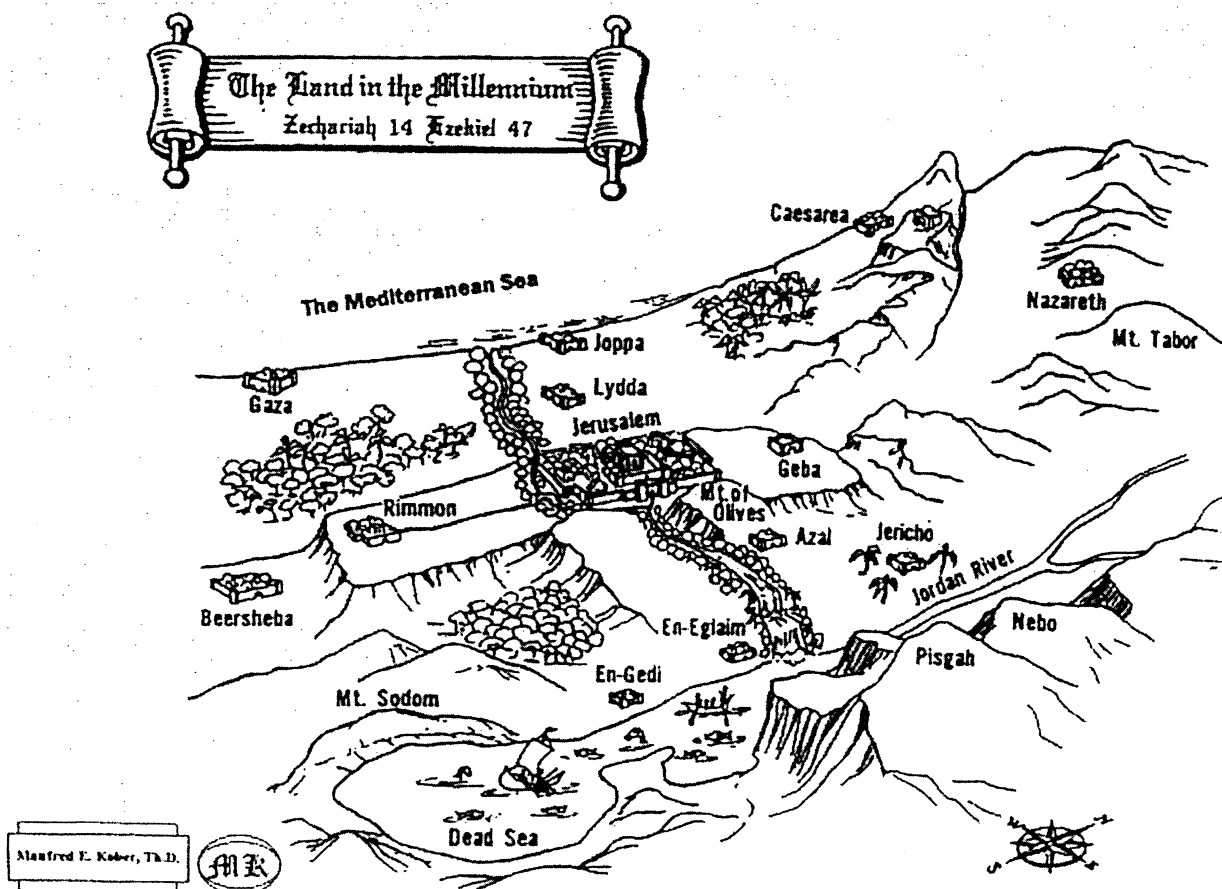
No one would deny that the disciples were fishing in the Sea of Galilee according to Matthew 4:18, because the Bible says so. But there is hardly a non-dispensationalist in this world who believes that in the future men will be catching fish on the waters of what is now known as the Dead Sea. Why don't they believe this? The Bible clearly teaches this in Ezekiel 47, but they refuse to take it literally because it conflicts with their theological system. If they deny a literal kingdom, then they must also deny any fishing activity that takes place in that kingdom. Again we see their total inconsistency. They understand Matthew 4:18 literally and believe that men were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They refuse to believe Ezekiel 47:8-10

literally and they deny that men will ever be fishing on the Dead Sea.

Ezekiel 47 also describes an amazing river which will originate from the house of the LORD (compare Joel 3:18) as a very shallow stream. Gradually the stream will get deeper and fuller until it is over a man's head. It eventually travels east until it empties into the Dead Sea which, as we have just learned, will be turned into fresh water teeming with fish (see Ezekiel 47:1-10). The Dead Sea will be miraculously transformed into a living sea!

In Zechariah 14:8 we learn that half of this river will empty into the Dead Sea and half of the river will empty into the Mediterranean Sea.

Manfred Kober has provided the following illustration of the future topography of the Holy Land showing this amazing river of life flowing into the two great seas:



The descriptions of this river are as literal as literal can be. There are clear geographical references made in connection with this river (Ezek. 47:8-10). There are exact distances and depths measured out (Ezek. 47:3-5). The details concerning this river are very descriptive and specific. This river flows into the sea (the Dead Sea) and the waters, which once were the saltiest on earth, become fresh. There will be many varieties of fish in this same body of water where fish formerly could never live. Fishermen will stand beside it and there will be the spreading of nets. Are we to reject this whole description and spiritualize it and give it some strange meaning according to our own fancy, or should we take it at face value and give the words their literal and normal and obvious sense?

When people depart from a literal interpretation they deny the plain sense and they give the text some other sense according to their own lively imagination. It is almost humorous to read the commentaries and see

how people spiritualize this river and make it mean whatever they want it to mean.

I wrote to Gary DeMar, a well known preterist author and a leading critic of dispensationalism. [One of his attacks on dispensationalism is called *Last Days Madness--Obsession of the Modern Church* (Atlanta: American Vision, 1999).] The question I asked him was simply this:

Ezekiel 47 and other passages teach that there will be a river flowing from the temple, emptying into the Dead Sea, with the result that the waters of the Dead Sea will be healed so that fish will live there and fishermen will fish there (verses 1-10). When was this fulfilled?

His answer was lengthy, but the essence of it was that this passage in Ezekiel 47 has already been fulfilled by Jesus Christ who is our River of Life. [This is the typical answer of a preterist: "It is **fulfilled**, not **future!**"] Now we would certainly agree that Jesus Christ is our River of Life, and we would still be dead in sins apart from Him who is our Life, but does this mean that the clear statements about the river in Ezekiel 47 (and how the waters of the Dead Sea will be healed) will never find literal fulfillment? The key question really is this: Is God going to do what He said He would do in Ezekiel 47, or not? To simply say that all of the details and specific statements of this prophecy were fulfilled by Jesus Christ does not do justice to the clear statements of Scripture. It does not honor Christ to deny the plain and obvious and natural sense of His Word. The waters of the Dead Sea were never healed at Christ's first coming and during the last 2000 years no fishermen have been spreading their nets there. Ezekiel's prophecy has never been fulfilled, but those who take God at His Word know that it will be.

Gary DeMar is here using an allegorical approach. Allegorical interpretation involves looking for hidden spiritual meaning which transcends the literal sense of the sacred text. DeMar has abandoned the literal sense of the passage.

Example #6--Longevity

In Genesis chapter 5 we read about men living before the flood, most of whom lived more than 900 years. Verse 27 gives the total years of Methuselah as being 969 years. Those who take God at His Word believe that Methuselah lived this many years because that is exactly what the text says. Bible believing reformed men and Bible believing covenant men would agree with dispensationalists that these men living prior to the flood had extremely long life spans.

In Isaiah 65 we learn about a future period of time when a "child shall die an hundred years old" (verse 20). Today if a person were a hundred years old, we would never refer to him as a child. But if a normal lifespan were a thousand years, then it would make sense to refer to someone who dies at the early age of one hundred as a child. In this same chapter we read this: "They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: **for as the days of a tree are the days of my people**, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:22). Trees commonly live to be hundreds of years old. It is said that olive trees can sometimes live two millennia. Some think that a very young olive tree on the Mount of Olives at the time of Christ could still be alive today. Whether this is true or not, no one doubts the longevity of trees. There is coming a time on this earth when men will live very long, with their years being compared to the years of a tree.

Non-dispensationalists deny that there will ever be a future time on this earth when men will live so long, in spite of these clear statements found in Isaiah 65. Again it is a question of consistency. Why do they believe the clear statements of Genesis chapter 5 and yet deny the clear statements of Isaiah 65? Why do they believe what God said has already happened in history but deny what God says will someday happen

in prophecy?

Dispensationalists believe that longevity will be the norm in Christ's thousand-year kingdom.

Example #7--"Days" and "Years"

“For *in six days* the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:11).

God says that His work of creation happened in six days. Does He really mean what He says? Does He mean “six days” or does He mean something else? Can we take Him at His Word?

For a more detailed analysis of how the “days” of Genesis 1 should be understood, see our paper, [The Six Days of Creation](#).

Before the dawn of uniformitarian evolutionism, there was general unanimity among students of the Bible that the days of creation were six literal 24-hour days. The pressures of unsubstantiated scientific theory should not force Bible believers to abandon the natural sense of language.

Dr. Gary North has been one of the leaders of the postmillennial reconstructionist movement (the “theonomy” movement). [Since the mid 1970's theonomy has been most often used in Protestant circles to specifically label the ethical perspective of Christian Reconstructionism, a perspective that claims to be a faithful revival of the historic Protestant view of the Old Testament law as espoused by many European Reformers and Puritans.] In 1987 Gary North sent out a newsletter in which he scolded dispensationalists for their failure to teach creationism, especially regarding the six literal days of the creation week. [Gary North, *Christian Reconstruction*, “Christianity and Progress” (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, May/June, 1987, Vol. XI, No. 3), 3-4.] He attacked C. I. Scofield for holding to the gap theory, a position commonly held among many of the earlier dispensationalists, but rejected by many if not most dispensationalists today. North made the false accusation that no dispensational seminary takes a position on a recent creation and that no dispensational seminary takes a position that the days of Genesis 1 were literal 24 hour days. This accusation was false, evidenced by the fact that Grace Theological Seminary had published a written positional statement on this issue, entitled *Biblical Creationism*, which was adopted by its faculty on July 6, 1979. Many other dispensational schools also took a solid position on the six literal creation days as revealed by a publication of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America entitled, *IFCA Schools Questionnaire Composite* which was published in 1986. This questionnaire was sent to 263 Bible Institutes, Bible Colleges and Seminaries. Ninety-four schools responded to the questionnaire and one hundred and seventy schools did not respond. But of the schools who responded, fifty-five took a position in support of the days in Genesis 1 as literal 24 hour days; one school did not teach this and 30 schools did not take an official position on this issue.

Dr. North is to be commended for his literal approach to the first chapter of Genesis and his insistence that the six days of the creation week were literal 24-hour days. He takes Genesis 1 very literally and understands the six days in their normal and natural and obvious sense. “Days” mean “days.” “Morning and evening” means “morning and evening.” “Fifth day” means “fifth day.” If Dr. North were to follow the same literal approach that he uses in Genesis 1 and apply that to Revelation chapter 20, then he would be a premillennial dispensationalist and he would be forced to abandon his postmillennialism. But instead he abandons his literal hermeneutic. For him, the thousand years in Revelation 20 are very symbolic. The term

"thousand years" (mentioned six times in Revelation 20) does not really mean a thousand years, according to North.

Dr. North has highly recommended David Chilton's book, *The Days of Vengeance--An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, as the key work on prophecy and North himself wrote the preface. He states that no one has and no one can write a better commentary on Revelation, so it is not unreasonable to assume that Gary North would be in agreement with Chilton's position on Revelation 20. Here is Chilton's non-literal understanding of the thousand years: These thousand years represent "a vast, undefined period of time....It has already lasted almost 2,000 years, and will probably go on for many more. The thousand years is to be understood as a symbolical number, denoting a long period...It may require a million years." [David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance--An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), 507. Dr. North's preface is found on pages xv-xxxiii.]

Dr. North is totally opposed to the evolutionary theory, and yet he handles Revelation 20 in a way very similar to how the evolutionists handle Genesis 1. The evolutionists say:

Evolution is really impossible, but if you give us enough time, all things are possible. We don't need God; we just need time. Even though we cannot see evolution taking place today, if you give us enough time then anything can happen. [This is beautifully illustrated by a statement made by evolutionist Rick Gore, in an article entitled, "The Awesome Worlds Within a Cell," which appeared in *National Geographic* in September 1976. In discussing how the first living cell originated, Gore said, "The odds against the right molecules being in the right place at the right time are staggering. Yet, as science measures it, so is the time scale on which nature works. Indeed, what seems an impossible occurrence at any one moment would, given untold eons, become a certainty" (390). Likewise, evolutionist George Wald wrote this: "Time is in fact the hero of the plot. The time with which we have to deal is of the order of two billion years. What we regard as impossible on the basis of human experience is meaningless here. Given so much time, the "impossible" becomes possible, the possible probable, and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs the miracles. (*Scientific American* "The Origin of Life," August 1954, p.48) In other words, evolutionists teach that "With time, all things are possible!"] Thus we cannot take the days of Genesis 1 literally because we need much more time than six days. We need millions and millions of years. Without that much time our evolutionary theory is in great trouble!

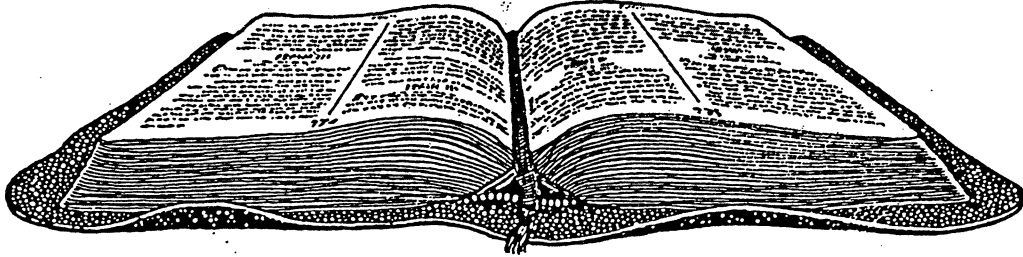
Reconstructionists echo the thinking of the evolutionists in their approach to Revelation chapter 20:

Reconstructing society according to Biblical law seems impossible, but if we have enough time it can be done. We certainly don't see it taking place today. In fact, it seems as though society is becoming more and more lawless. But with enough time these changes for the better will come. We don't need Christ's personal coming to this earth to change society. We can do it but we need time. If you give us enough time anything can happen. Thus we cannot take the thousand years of Revelation 20 literally because we need much more time than that. We need thousands and thousands of years, perhaps EVEN A MILLION YEARS for us to overcome and have dominion over the earth. But be patient. It will happen! But without that much time our reconstruction/postmillennial theory is in great trouble!

We can be thankful for a great Creator God who was able to make the heavens and the earth in six literal days! And we can be thankful for a great coming King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who can suddenly and mightily transform society by bringing in His promised kingdom (Daniel 2:44). He is not dependent upon man's feeble efforts at improving society. All man can do is make society more and more corrupt, even as it was in the days of Noah!

Again we have the problem of inconsistency. Gary North understands the days in Genesis 1 literally, in their normal sense. He understands the years in Revelation 20 in a non-literal way, in a symbolic way. It fits his theology to make the days of Genesis 1 to be literal days; it contradicts his theology to understand the millennium of Revelation 20 as a literal millennium of 1000 years. Should not the text of the Bible determine our theology instead of letting our theology govern how we understand the text?

Reasons for Literal Interpretation:



1. The Philosophical Reason:

The purpose of language

2. The Biblical Reason:

Fulfilled prophecy

3. The Logical Reason:

Objective truth

4. The Cultural Reason:

Literal interpretation



4A. THE DISPENSATION OF PROMISE: ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

- 1b. The beginning: The call of Abraham, Gen. 11:10
- 2b. The Scripture: Gen. 11:10 through Ex. 19:2, the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (approximately 600 yrs.).
- 3b. The state of man:
 - 1c. A chosen portion of the race became recipients of wonderful and gracious promises.
 - 2c. God turned from the world to one man and his seed.
- 4b. The human responsibility:
 - 1c. Faith in the material, spiritual and social promises of God.
 God's promises were restated to Isaac: Gen. 26:1-4
 - 2c. The content of that faith is expressed in the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - 1d. The promises are national: Gen. 12:2 "a great nation"
 - 1e. A land: Gen. 12:1; 13:14, 15, 17; 15:7; 17:8; 18:21
 - 2e. Great numbers: Gen. 13:16; 15:5
 - 3e. Riches: Gen. 15:4; Ex. 12:25-36
 - 2d. The promises are personal, to Abraham:
 - 1e. He would be blessed: Gen. 12:2
 - 2e. He would have a great name: Gen. 12:2
 Abraham is honored by Jews, Christians and Mohammedans.
 - 3e. He would be a blessing: Gen. 12:3
 - 4e. He would be very fruitful: Gen. 13:16; 17:6
 - 3d. The promises are universal:
 - 1e. God would bless them that bless Abraham: Gen. 12:3
 - 2e. God would curse them that curse Abraham: Gen. 12:3
 - 3e. In Abraham would all the families of the earth be blessed: Gen. 12:3



- 4d. The promises are unconditional:
- 1e. They were given in pure grace: Gen. 12:1 (at age 75)
 - 2e. They were confirmed by a sacrifice: Gen. 15:17 (at age 95)
 - 3e. They were sealed with God's oath: Gen. 22:16-18; (at age 145)
 - 4e. They were declared to be everlasting: Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; Neh. 9:5-12; I Chron. 16:16-17; Ps. 105:3-15
- 5d. The promises are accompanied by a sign, circumcision: Gen. 17:13-14, 17, 19. Ps. 105:10

5b. Human failure:

1c. Abraham's failure:

- 1d. Delay of going to the promised land: Gen. 11:31
- 2d. Abraham becomes the father of Ishmael: Gen. 16:1-16
- 3d. Abraham goes down into Egypt: Gen. 12:10-13:1
- 4d. Abraham does not return to Egypt but gets in trouble when he comes close to Egypt: Gen. 20:1-18-- the deception concerning Sarah
- 5d. Abraham was nevertheless grateful and worshipful. He had a human responsibility:
 - 1e. He built altars at: Moreh: Gen. 12:6,7
Bethel: Gen. 12:8 cf. 13:3-4
Mamre: Gen. 13:8
Moriah: Gen. 22:9
 - 2e. His life was characterized by deep piety:



- 1f. Gen. 13:8 "I pray thee. . . let there be no strife"
 - 2f. Gen. 14:22-23 "I will not take a thread nor a shoelatchet"
 - 3f. Gen. 17:3 "Abraham fell on his face"
 - 4f. Gen. 18:2-5 "Bowed himself to the ground"
 - 5f. Gen. 18:17-19 "He commanded his children" (In Hebrews 11:8-12 four verses are devoted to Abraham and Sarah, as many as to Moses in Heb. 11:23-27)
- 2c. Isaac's failure: like his father he becomes a dweller near the Egyptian border. He is forbidden to go to Egypt, yet he lives as near as he can at Gerar (Gen. 26: 6-16 cf. 20:1-18)
- 3c. Jacob's failure:
- 1d. Unbelief in the promise made to his mother at his birth: Gen. 25:23; 28:13-15, 20).

- 2d. Jacob is guilty of lying, deceit, bargaining:
Gen. 27:1-29.
- 3d. Unbelief as to God's care and provision leads to bargaining with God in the face of the promises:
Gen. 28:13-15; 28:20-21
- 4d. The whole family moved, under the leadership of Jacob, into Egypt, despite the specific warning to Isaac against such a move.



Gen. 26: 1-5 the directive will of God--Isaac not to go to Egypt
Gen. 46:1-4 the permissive will of God--Jacob told to go
Gen. 15:12-14 the over-ruling will of God--God predicted Israel to be in Egypt 400 yrs.

4c. Israel's failure:

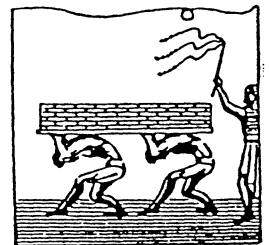
- 1d. In Egypt: her complaining, lack of faith (Ex. 2:23; 4:1,10; 5:21; 14:10-12; 15:24; etc.)
- 2d. Failure of Israel in their journeys: desire to go back to Egypt (Ex. 14:11-12)
- 3d. Israel's constant murmurings: Ex. 15:24; 16:2; Nu. 14:2; 16:11; 16:41; Josh. 9:18
- 4d. Failure at the time of the giving of the Law (Ex. 19)

Although Israel was right in pledging obedience to the Law (cf. Deut. 5:27-28) they foolishly assumed that they had the power to fulfill their pledge.

- 5d. Failure to trust the promises at Kadesh-Barnea:
Nu. 14

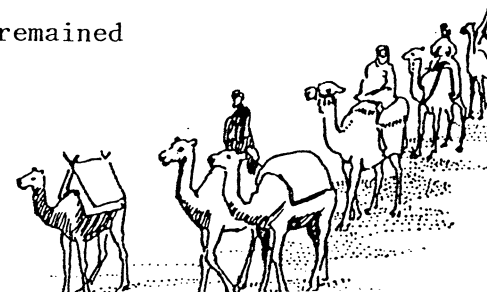
6b. Divine judgment: Bondage in Egypt

The descent into Egypt was a judgment and a punishment as well as a failure. Through it God worked out His sublime will and purpose. Sorrow and slavery and threatened extinction resulted. The experience was exceeding bitter: Ex. 1:14 ("they made their lives bitter")



7b. Divine grace:

- 1c. Though the blessings were lost, the promises remained sure.
- 2c. Israel was preserved in the furnace.
- 3c. Moses, a deliverer, was provided: Ex. 3:6-10



4c. The Passover protection was provided for the guilty:
Ex. 12

5c. God's care from Egypt to Canaan:

Egypt's bounty: Ex. 12:35-36
The Red Sea: Ex. 14
Marah: Ex. 15
Manna: Ex. 16
Amalek: Ex. 17
Borne on eagles' wing: Ex. 19:4



6c. God's power wrought deliverance to Israel (Ex. 14:15)
and death to the oppressor: (Ex. 14:28)

8b. The end of the dispensation:

1c. In one sense the dispensation of promise ends at the giving of the Law (Ex. 19), but only as testing and responsibility.

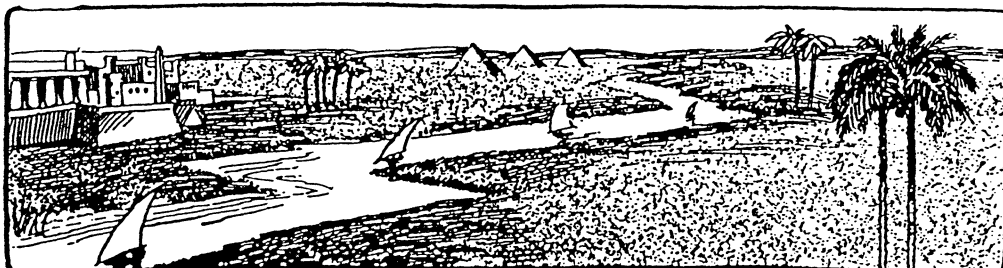
2c. In another sense the dispensation of promise continues to the end of history: its promises are still in force as an object of faith and hope. Abraham and his descendants have never possessed the land promised to them (Gen. 15:18).



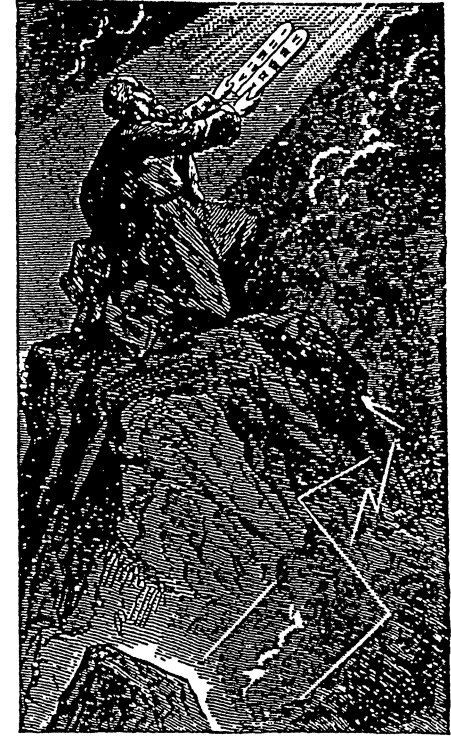
ISRAELITES GATHERING THE
BREAD FROM HEAVEN, MANNA

SUMMARY:

1. The dispensation of promise established clearly the principle of divine sovereignty.
2. It provided a channel of special divine revelation through the nation of Israel.
3. It continues to provide the line of redemption and channel of blessing.
4. It revealed the grace of God and provided a witness to the world.
5. Like the other dispensations, the dispensation of promise ended in failure and the Law had to be introduced as a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ (Gal. 3:24).



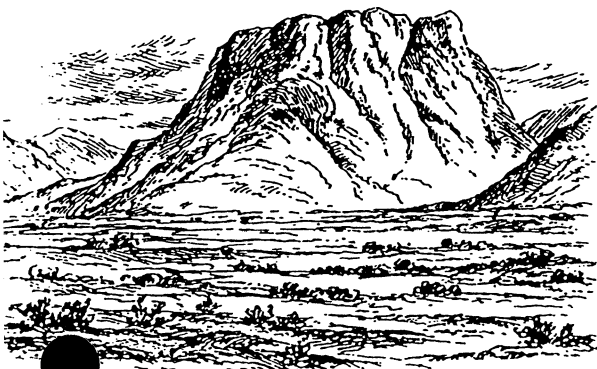
THE DISPENSATION OF PROMISE



1. THE BEGINNING:
2. RELATED SCRIPTURE:
3. STATE OF MAN:
4. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY:
5. HUMAN FAILURE:
6. DIVINE JUDGMENT:
7. DIVINE GRACE:

5A. THE DISPENSATION OF THE LAW:

- 1b. The beginning of the dispensation: Exodus 19:9
- 2b. Scripture: Exodus 19:9 to the end of the gospel of John; or Sinai to Calvary.



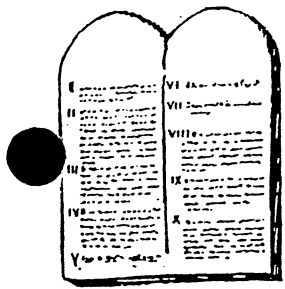
MOSES SPEAKS TO ALL THE PEOPLE.

3b. The state of man:

- 1c. Law limits man to himself and requires complete obedience.
- 2c. "Not of faith," only "doing" its commands will be of value to man: Gal. 3:12
- 3c. Law could not give life: Gal. 3:21
- 4c. There were certain definite rewards: Luke 10:27-28
- 5c. The curse was no less definite: Gal. 3:10

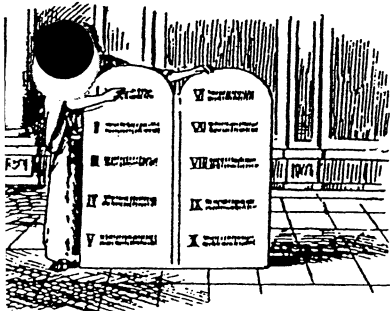
4b. Human responsibility:

- 1c. The Law is directed to Israel alone. The heathen nations are never judged by it. In Exodus 19 only Israel was represented at the foot of Mt. Sinai.
- 2c. The Law is the Mosaic Covenant and contains a detailed system of works, encompassing a total of 613 commandments, of which 365 are negative and 248 are positive.



- 1d. The commandments--the expressed will of God: Exodus 20:1-26; Deut:5
- 2d. The judgments--social and civic life of Israel: Exodus 21:1-24:11.
- 3d. The ordinances--religious life of Israel: Exodus 24:12-31;18
- 3c. The government was basically a theocracy, governed by God who worked through prophets, priests and later kings.
- 4c. It was an ad interim covenant:
 - 1d. It was a temporary covenant: until Christ should come (Gal. 3:24-25)
 - 2d. Most of the promises of this covenant are dependent upon obedience and works--"if ye will obey my voice indeed" (Ex. 19:5)
- 5c. For the first time in history, a complete and detailed religious system is revealed: (Chafer, Systematic Theology, IV, 14-26).

- 1d. An acceptable standing before God.
- 2d. A manner of life--rule of moral life.
- 3d. A system of service for God to be recognized by reward.
- 4d. A righteous ground for forgiveness.
- 5d. A provision for cleansing and forgiveness, conditioned on meeting requirements.
- 6d. A program of worship and prayer.
- 7d. A future hope.



- 6c. The test: "Whether man, limited to his own efforts; with detailed regulations governing his conduct in relation to God and his fellowman, covering his moral, social and religious activities, is able to satisfy God's righteousness and to lead a holy life." (H.C. Thiessen)

5b. Human failure:

- 1c. The entire O.T. is a record of failure to keep the Law.
 - 1d. The period of the judges--the worst in Israel's history. (Judges 21:25)
 - 2d. The period leading up to the captivities: David, Sol., kings of Israel, and the kings of Judah.
 - 3d. The captivities and post-captivity period: Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

- 2c. The N.T. continues the record of failure culminating in the crucifixion of Christ who perfectly kept the Law: Acts 2:22-23.

6b. Divine judgment:

- 1c. Judgments during the dispensation of Law: Deut. 28:1-30:20.



- 1d. Judgments during the period of the Book of Judges.
 2d. Judgments during the divided kingdom.
 3d. The Assyrian Captivity: 2 Kings 17-18. 10 tribes
 4d. The Babylonian Captivity: 2 Kings 25:1-11. 2 tribes
 5d. The persecution of the Syrians during the period of Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. Dan. 11:21-35)
 6d. The Roman domination and dispersion.

- 2c. Judgments on Israel after the close of the dispensation:



- 1d. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 2d. The world-wide dispersion of Israel: Mt. 23:37-39.
 1e. They took responsibility for Christ's death: Mt. 27:25
 2e. Christ prophesied of Gentile dominion: Lk. 21:24
 3d. The future time of Jacob's trouble: Jer. 30:1-11:
 The Great Tribulation: Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24

7b. Divine grace:

- 1c. The sacrificial system: provision of a way of restoration for sinning Israel.

- 2c. The longsuffering of God in raising up deliverers:

- 1d. Joshua pleaded for Israel.
 2d. The judges were raised up to rescue Israel.
 3d. The kings were helped in battle by God.
 4d. The prophets warned again and again of impending judgment.

- 3c. The preservation of the nation: (especially seen in the Book of Esther).

- 4c. The acceptance of genuine repentance: Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:30-35), Daniel's intercession (Dan.9)

- 5c. The writing of the O.T. with its specific revelation of God.

- 6c. The coming of Christ as the Messiah of Israel.

- 7c. The giving of many promises of ultimate deliverance in the millennium.



8b. The end of the dispensation:

1c. The dispensation ended at the cross:

1d. Rom. 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

2d. Gal. 3:19: "Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."

3d. Gal. 3:25: "But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

4d. II Cor. 3:11-14: "That which is done away--that which is abolished"--and this includes the ten commandments as well, for v. 7 says that it was written and engraven in stone, namely the Ten Commandments or the Moral Law.

5d. Heb. 7:11-12: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." v. 12

2c. Five propositions of the Mosaic Law.

1d. It was given as a union and not divided as commandments, ordinances, judgments.

1e. All parts are equally important: Ex. 20; 21; 25

2e. Breaking the law in one point means the breaking of all: James 2:10

3e. Penalties are equally severe:

1f. Commandments: breaking the Sabbath: death: Nu. 15:32.

2f. Ordinances: Nadab and Abihu offering strange fires: death: Lev. 10:1-7.

3f. Judgments: Ex. 21-24; death: Jer. 25:11

The land rest was not kept for 490 years, therefore, God gave the land rest during the Babylonian captivity with ensuing death for many.

2d. It was given to Israel, not to Gentiles.

1e. O.T. proof: Lev. 26:43 between God and the children of Israel.

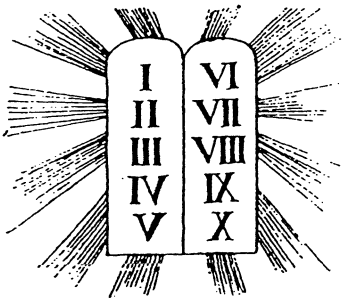
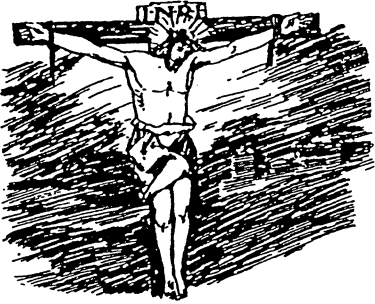
2e. N.T. proof: Rom. 2:14 Gentiles which have not the Law.
Rom. 9:4 to Israel is the giving of the Law
Eph. 2:12 the Gentiles are strangers to the Law

3d. All of the Law is done away: All 613 commandments.

1e. The Ten Commandments are especially mentioned: 2 Cor. 3:6, 7-11.

2e. A different priesthood necessitates a different law: Heb. 7:11-12.

4d. In spite of this, the Law has a right use: to show a standard from God, to demonstrate His righteous demands.



- 1e. The Law is useful for the unsaved: I Tim. 1:9.
The Law was made for the unrighteous; it was to point the ungodly to Christ, Gal. 3:19-25.
- 2e. The Law is useful for the saved: to show what God thinks about things. As all Scripture is profitable, so is the Law.

5d. The Law has a real abuse:

- 1e. When it is used as a means of salvation:
- 1f. Rom. 3:20 by deeds of law no flesh will be justified.
2f. Acts 13:39 man could not be justified by the Law of Moses.
- 2e. When used as a means of sanctification:

The Law stired up Paul, did not lead to a sanctified life: Rom. 7.

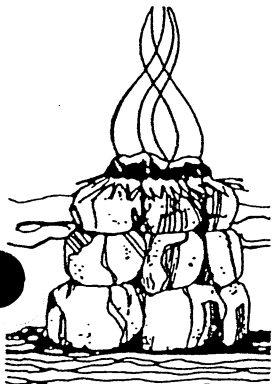
We still have laws, but they are not the same as the Mosaic Law. Some of God's standards are repeated in the N.T., but they are a part of a new code of law. We are under a new priesthood, therefore have a new code. The old law, including the Ten Commandments has been abrogated and is not for the church age believer.

- 3e. It would be sinful to obey some of the laws today, such as the putting to death of anyone who did not observe the Sabbath day.



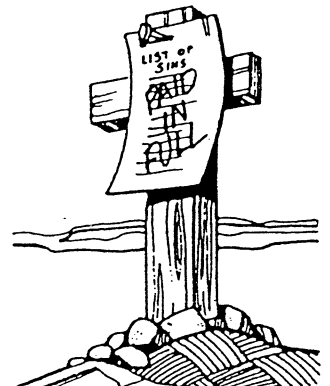
SUMMARY:

1. The purpose of the dispensation of the Law was to provide a righteous rule of life and to bring sin into condemnation--it demonstrated that moral, civil and religious law cannot save or sanctify.
2. The Law was not intended for man's salvation under the dispensation of the Law or later.
3. The weakness of the Law:
 - a. The Law could not justify: Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16
 - b. The Law could not sanctify or perfect: Heb. 7:18-19

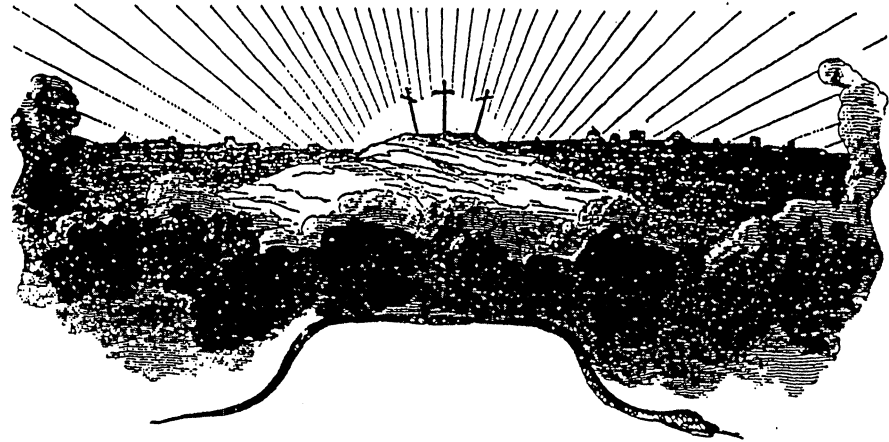


Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With all thy Heart
and With all thy Soul
and With all thy Mind
and With all thy Strength.

this is the first
commandment.



THE DISPENSATION OF THE LAW



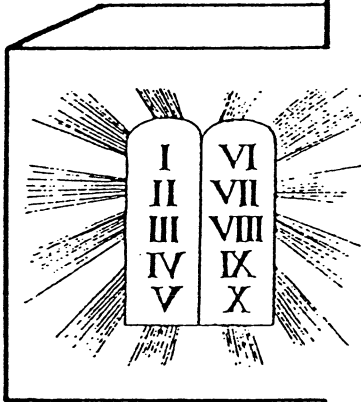
1. THE BEGINNING:
2. RELATED SCRIPTURE:
3. STATE OF MAN:
4. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY:
5. HUMAN FAILURE:
6. DIVINE JUDGMENT:
7. DIVINE GRACE:

Dispensational Distinctions

LAW

Jn. 1:17

GRACE



1500 YEARS

ISRAEL

THEOCRATIC NATION

WIFE OF JEHOVAH

LAW OF MOSES

LEGALISM

OBEDIENCE FOR BLESSING

EX. 19 - JN. 21

MT. SINAI

HOLY LAND

EARTHLY

Duration
 Companies
 Organism
 Relationship
 Code of Law
 Character
 Spirit
 Content
 Focus
 Destiny
 Rewards

1900+ YEARS

CHURCH

ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

BRIDE OF CHRIST

LAW OF CHRIST

LIBERTY

OBEDIENCE BECAUSE OF BLESSING

ACTS 1 - REV. 22

MT. CALVARY

HEAVENLY CITY

HEAVENLY

MK

LEVITICAL SACRIFICES:

Atonement or Abomination?

Leviticus 1:4

"...AND IT SHALL BE ACCEPTED FOR HIM TO MAKE ATONEMENT FOR HIM."



Hebrews 10:4

"FOR IT IS NOT POSSIBLE THAT THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND GOATS SHOULD TAKE AWAY SINS."

Sovereign

GOD

Savior

State

Salvation



*Israel as
A Theocracy*



Transgressions
Against
Government



Transgression
Against
God

The Israelite in a theocracy was responsible to God in His function as both ruler and Redeemer. Sacrifices did not take care of sins but helped make an atonement for legal infractions.

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

MK

613 COMMANDMENTS

365 Negative 248 Positive

Judgments

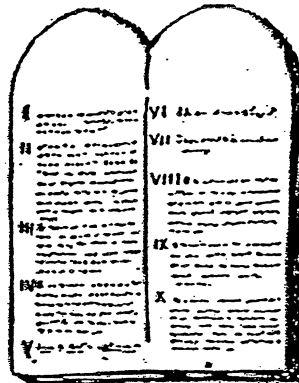
Commandments

Ordinances

Moral Law

Ex. 20

Deut. 5



DECALOGUE

LOVE
FOR GOD

LOVE
FOR MAN

Matthew 22:37-40

"Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES GRACE BESTOWS

“What doth the Lord
REQUIRE
of thee, but to

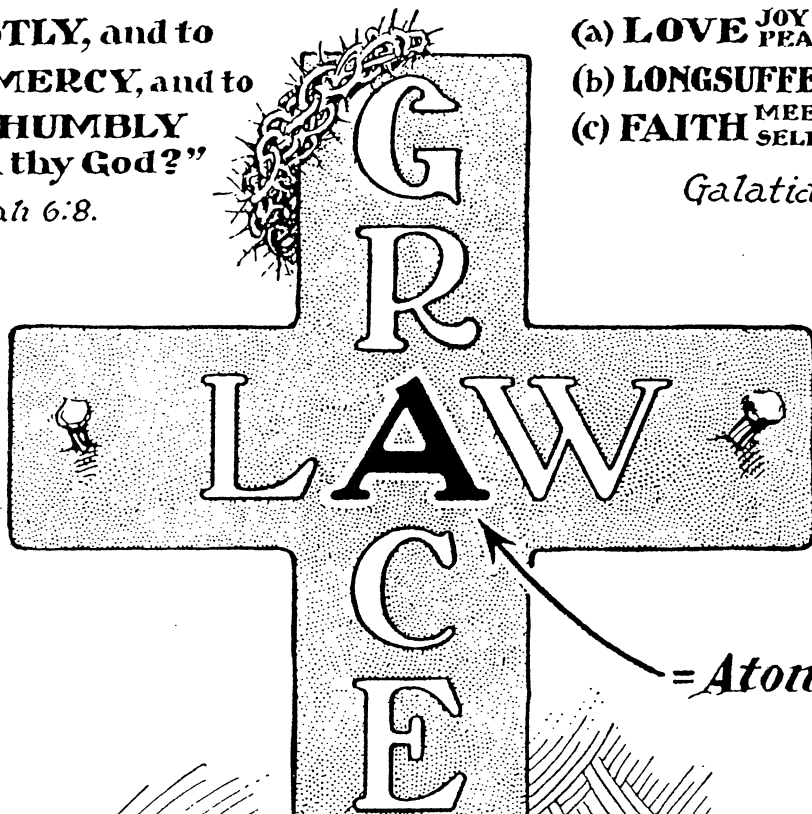
- (a) **DO JUSTLY**, and to
- (b) **LOVE MERCY**, and to
- (c) **WALK HUMBLY**
with thy God?”

Micah 6:8.

What doth the Lord
BESTOW
upon thee?

- (a) **LOVE** ^{JOY} _{PEACE}
- (b) **LONGSUFFERING** ^{GENTLENESS} _{GOODNESS}
- (c) **FAITH** ^{MEEKNESS} _{SELF-CONTROL}

Galatians 5:22,23.



= *Atonement*

WHERE LAW AND GRACE BLEND

"YE ARE NOT UNDER LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE?" ROM. 6:14

THE DIVINE PURPOSE

THE BOOK OF THE DISPENSATIONS

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

<p>THE DISPENSATION OF SINAI</p> <p>LAW</p> <p>Dealing with ISRAEL, God's earthly people.</p> <p>The Seventh day of the week, or the Sabbath, commemorating a <i>finished creation</i> was made the seal of Israel's separation from all nations. <small>Ex. 31:13-17</small></p> <p>A day of absolute bodily rest.</p> <p>A day of legal restrictions.</p> <p>Physical labor punished by death.</p> <p>Prescribed the principle of one day's rest in seven.</p> <p>Established in a covenant of works.</p> <p>"He taketh away the first,</p>	<p>THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE</p> <p>Sion</p> <p>Dealing with the CHURCH, God's heavenly people.</p> <p>The First day of the week, or the Lord's Day, celebrating a <i>finished redemption</i>, became the symbol of the church's heavenly privileges.</p> <p>A day of spiritual activity.</p> <p>A day of voluntary worship.</p> <p>Spiritual labor a proof of life.</p> <p>Perpetuates the principle of one day's rest in seven.</p> <p>Grew up in a covenant of grace.</p> <p>that He may establish the second"</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><small>Heb. 10:9.</small></p>
---	---

Note: It is passing strange, if the Spirit of God intended to make the Jewish Sabbath binding upon Gentile Christians, that no mention is made of it in that epochal 15th chapter of Acts, where the status of believers from among the Gentiles was finally settled.

"LET NO MAN THEREFORE JUDGE YOU--IN RESPECT OF THE SABBATH" Col. 2:16



6A. THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE:

1b. The beginning: Day of Pentecost:

Some teachings concerning the dispensation of grace are introduced earlier in the Gospels, such as Christ's discourse (John 13-17). In some respects, John is the bridge between Law and Grace.

2b. Scripture: Acts 1 through Rev. 3.
(The Church is nowhere found after Rev. 3)

3b. The state of man:

1c. This age has no specific covenant for man.

1d. Proof that there are no covenants for us:

1e. The Gentiles are strangers from the covenants of promise:
Eph. 2:12

2e. The covenants pertain to Israel: Rom. 9:4

2d. Two covenants have specific, indirect relation to this age:

1e. The Abrahamic Covenant:



1f. It promises a blessing to all the families of the earth through the gospel which is based upon the seed, Christ: Gen. 12:4; Gal. 3:13-16.

2f. It was of grace, unconditional: Rom. 4:1-5.

3f. The imputation of righteousness is effected in all who believe in Jesus Christ: Rom. 4:24-25; Gal. 3:6-9; 22, 2 Cor. 5:21.

4f. The unconditional covenant becomes a pattern for today. Abraham simply believed, so this saving grace is given to us: Rom. 4:23-24; Gal. 3:13-19, cf. Gen. 15:6

5f. Today is to be declared the period of the gospel of His grace: Tit. 2:11

2e. The New Covenant:



1f. It is promised to the nation Israel: Jer. 31:31-40

2f. This covenant announced in the 7th century B.C., is still in the future as far as Israel is concerned: Rom. 11:25-33.

3f. This is an unconditional, gracious covenant.

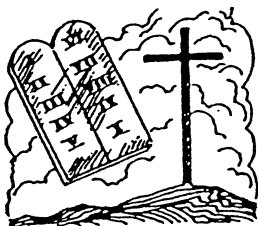
4f. The basis of the New Covenant is the sacrifice of our Savior and the Church participates in the blessings of this new covenant: Matt. 26:26-30 "My blood of the new covenant."

2c. This age sees the ultimate display of God's grace:

1d. This is not to say there was no grace in the O.T. under Law. The principal ways in which His grace was revealed are the following:

- 1e. He revealed Himself as the faithful and sufficient God, as the object of faith unto salvation. Any revelation of God is pure grace.
- 2e. He initiated fellowship between Himself and man by means of covenants.
- 3e. He made provision for man's eternal salvation.
- 4e. He bestowed temporal favors on men.

2d. Christ brought a new period of grace: John 1:17



17 For the law was given by Moses, but ^agrace and ^btruth came by Jesus Christ.



- 1e. Grace came in Christ's person.
- 2e. Our standing is in grace:
Rom. 5:2 "wherein we stand"
I Peter 5:12 "this is the true grace of God "
- 3e. Ours is called the "dispensation of the grace of God"
Eph. 3:2

3c. This age has three groups of people in view: 1 Cor. 10:32

32 ^dGive none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the ^eGentiles, nor to ^fthe church of God:

1d. The Jews (nationally):

- 1e. They are not cast away: Rom. 11:1
- 2e. Blindness in part till the fulness of the Gentiles has come: Rom. 11:23-27
- 3e. The Jews do not believe now but will obtain mercy: Rom. 11:28-31

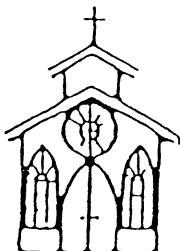
2d. The Gentiles: Eph. 2:11-13

- 1e. Without Christ
- 2e. Aliens from Israel
- 3e. Strangers from the covenants
- 4e. Have no hope
- 5e. Are without God

II Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called ^athe Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
12 ^bThat at that time ye were without Christ, ^cbeing aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from ^dthe covenants of promise, ^ehaving no hope, ^fand without God in the world:

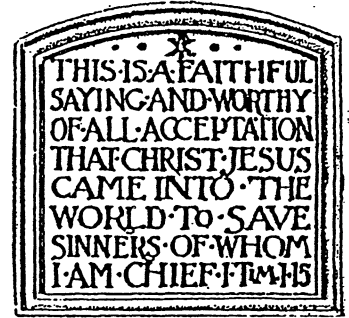
13 ^hBut now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were ⁱfar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

3d. The Church:

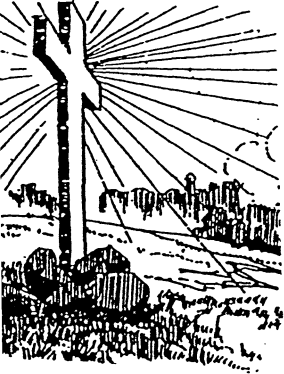


- 1e. The Jews and Gentiles are on the same terms:
Rom. 10:12--"neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, circumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian"--
Gal. 3:28:
Col. 3:11:
- 2e. In contrast to the condition of the Gentiles, the believer sustains a special relationship: Eph. 2:13-22

is made nigh by the blood, v. 13
 is one new man, v. 15
 is in one body, v. 16
 has access by the Spirit, v. 18
 is a fellow citizen, v. 19
 belongs to the household of God, v. 19
 and is God's building, v. 21



4c. This age goes far beyond the requirements of the Law:

- 
- 1d. II Cor. 10:5 "casting down imaginations"
 - 2d. I Pet. 2:9 "show forth the virtues"
 - 3d. Eph. 5:20 "giving thanks always for all things"
 - 4d. I John 1:7 "walk in light"
 - 5d. Eph. 4:1-2 "walk worthy"
 - 6d. Eph. 5:2 "walk in love"
 - 7d. Gal. 5:16, 23 "walk in the Spirit"
 - 8d. Eph. 4:17-32 "grieve not the Spirit"
 - 9d. I Thess. 5:19 "quench not the Spirit"
 - 10d. Col. 3:1-17
 - 11d. Phil. 2:5 "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"

5c. This age has laws but not the Law:

1d. The names of this system of laws:

- 1e. "the perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25)
- 2e. "the royal law" (Jas. 2:8)
- 3e. "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2)
- 4e. "the law of the spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2)

2d. The nature of these laws:

The Law of Christ is a definite code containing hundreds of specific commandments. Freedom from the Mosaic Law is not lawlessness or license. The Apostle Paul wrote, "being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21).

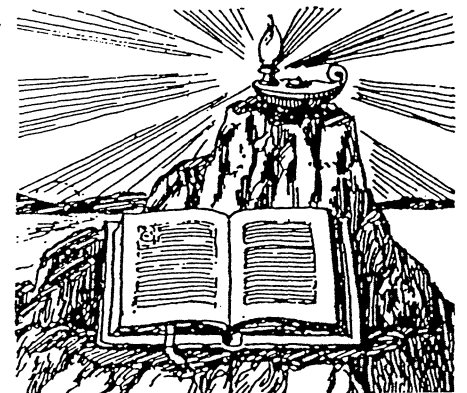
1e. Its precepts:

1f. Positive commandments: (I Thess. 5:16-18).

- 16 ^kRejoice evermore.
- 17 ^lPray without ceasing.
- 18 ^mIn everything give thanks: for this is ⁿthe will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

2f. Negative commands: (Rom. 12:2).

² And ^abe not conformed ^vto this world: but be ye transformed by ^vthe renewing of your mind, that ye may ^wprove what ^xis that good, and acceptable, and perfect, ^ywill of God.



3f. Principles:

- 1g. Is it a weight? Heb. 12:1 "lay aside every weight"
 - 2g. Is it a habit? I Cor. 6:12 "not be brought under the power of any"
 - 3g. Is it a stumbling stone? I Cor. 8, esp. v. 13
 - 4g. Is it winsome? Col. 4:5 "walk in wisdom toward them that are without"
- Give no offense to unsaved I Cor. 10:32

4f. Rules:

In some areas there are neither principles nor precepts given. In this area it is necessary to have special rulings. God has made provision for this by giving leaders to His church who rule in these matters (Eph. 4:11-12, I Tim. 3:5). These leaders are given authority to rule in spiritual matters (Heb. 13:7,17). If there are rulers, it is obvious that there are those ruled who must obey these rules. (Heb. 13:17). Examples of this type of leadership would be the local church, a Christian camp, rules at school, such as dress, dating, conduct.

2e. Its power:

- 1f. The Spirit indwells permanently: John 14:17
- 2f. The Spirit indwells every believer: Rom. 8:9
1 Cor. 6:19--does not depend on spiritual maturity.
His presence is proof of salvation.

3e. Its purpose: Sanctification.

- 1f. A holy person resembles his heavenly Father: I Pet. 1:16
- 2f. We know what God is like through Christ: John 1:18

The person of Christ is our example for godly life; the law of Christ is our exhortation to godly life.

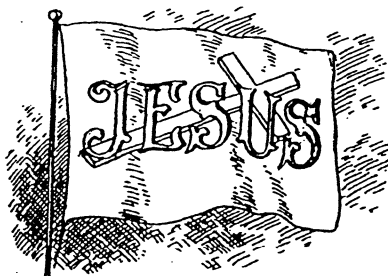
- 3f. We are to bring glory to God: I Cor. 10:31.

4b. The human responsibility:

- 1c. It is directed to the Church alone.
- 2c. It is revealed especially in Acts, the Epistles, and Rev. 1-3.
- 3c. It includes the following:
 - 1d. Salvation by faith. More clearly than ever salvation is revealed to be by faith alone: Rom. 1:16; 3:22, 26; 4:16, 5:15-19
 - 2d. Santification through following the example of Christ and obedience to the law of Christ: Rom. 12:1-2
 - 3d. Evangelization of the world: Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8

5b. Human failure:

- 1c. Grace has not produced a world-wide acceptance of Christ.
- 2c. Grace has not produced a triumphant Church.



3c. Grace ends with almost universal apostasy:

1 Tim. 4:1-3
 2 Tim. 3:1-13
 2 Pet. 2-3
 Jude
 Rev.

6b. Divine judgment:

The tribulation: for the professing but unbelieving church
 for a Christ-rejecting world
 for unbelieving Israel

The Church will not be present as Noah was not in his dispensational judgment. Each dispensation thus far has ended with a climatic judgment.. The tribulation is that judgment for the Church age: Rev. 4-19; II Thess. 2:3-12. While the Church will be in heaven at the judgment seat and the marriage of the Lamb, unprecedented tribulation will come to this earth.

7b. Divine grace:

1c. Grace came as a result of the appearance of Christ: John 1:17.

2c. Grace is seen in our salvation and standing before God: Rom. 3:24; 5:1-2; 15-21; Gal. 1:1-2:21; Eph. 2:4-10.

3c. Grace is evidenced as our rule of life: Gal. 3:1-5:26; Eph. 1:1-7
 (In contrast, Uzzah was killed for touching the ark, 2 Sam. 6:6)

4c. Grace is shown by removing the Church from the experience of judgment:
 Rev. 3:10

5c. The preservation of the race:

8b. The end of the dispensation:

1c. The rapture of the Church:

2c. The judgment upon the professing church, Rev. 17:16:
 The false church is destroyed by the world system.

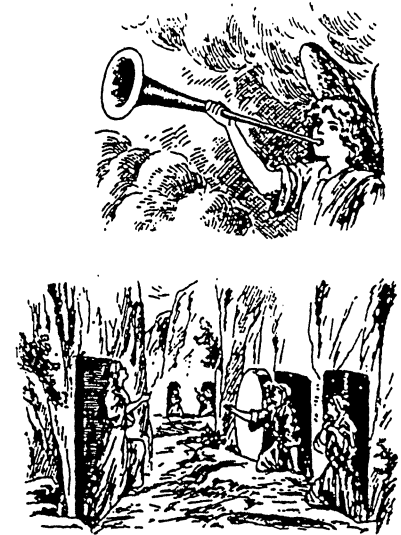
SUMMARY:

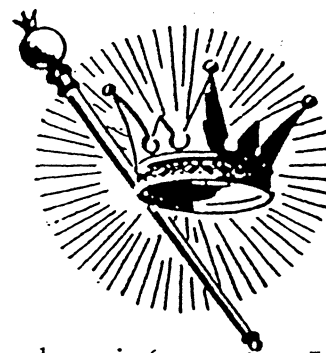
1. The law dealt with Israel; grace deals with Jews and Gentiles equally.
2. Under grace the motivating principle is different. The Law said "do this" (Deut. 28-29); grace says, "I did this for you."
3. Conscience and human government continue: Rom. 2:15; 13:1 ff.
4. Grace is a by-product of the dispensation of promise.
5. Only law is cancelled completely.
6. Grace is preeminently manifested in the fulness of salvation and rule of life.

THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE



1. THE BEGINNING:
2. RELATED SCRIPTURE:
3. STATE OF MAN:
4. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY:
5. HUMAN FAILURE:
6. DIVINE JUDGMENT:
7. DIVINE GRACE:





7A. THE DISPENSATION OF THE KINGDOM, OR MILLENNIUM

The name is derived from the Latin mille (thousand) and anni (years). In Rev. 20: 1-5, the expression 1000 yrs, is used six times. The Greek term for 1000 is chilia, therefore a belief in the millennium has been called chiliasm.

1b. The beginning: the Second Coming (Matt. 24; Rev. 19)

2b. The Scripture:

All passages on the future kingdom in the O.T. and N.T. Major Scriptures include: Ps. 72; Isa. 2:1-5; 9:6-7; 11; Jer. 33:14-17; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:9-14; 8:27-28; Hos. 3:4-5; Zech. 14:9; Lk 1:31-33; Rev. 19-20.

3b. The state of man:

1c. Universal salvation:

1d. All those who enter the kingdom will be saved people:

1e. The Jews: 1/3 of the nation shall be saved, Zech. 13:8ff

2e. The Gentiles: The goat Gentiles will be removed, the sheep Gentiles will remain on earth to enter the kingdom, Matt. 25:31-46.

2d. The Spirit of the Lord will be poured upon all flesh; Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 66:19-23.

3d. The majority of the earth's teeming multitudes shall know the Lord during these 1000 yrs.; Isa. 11:9; Ps. 98:2,3; Zeph. 3:9

2c. Unquestioning obedience to the King: Ps. 66:3

**3 Say unto God, How ^dterrible
art thou in thy works! through
the greatness of thy power shall
thine enemies ^ssubmit them-
selves unto thee.**



3c. Unprecedented justice and righteousness:

1d. Impartial: Ps. 72; Isa. 11:4; Isa. 32:1, 14-20

2d. Immediate: Mt. 13:41 the angels are sent out to gather the evil-doers

Isa:65:24 "it shall come to pass before they call and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"

4c. Unusual longevity: Is. 65:20 "the child shall die 100 yrs. old"

4b. The human responsibility: To obey the King.

1c. An absolute rulership, with rod of Iron: Isa 11:3-5; Rev. 19:15; Ps. 2:9

- 2c. A theocratic rulership: rule of God.
- 3c. A worshipful rulership: sacrificial system and priesthood; Is. 66:21-23; Ez. 40-48.
- 4c. An unopposed rulership: Satan will be bound: Rev. 20:3,7.
- 5b. Human failure:

- 1c. Outward sin: Isa. 65:20; Zech. 14:14-16; Matt. 13:41
- 2c. A climactic rebellion at the close of the kingdom. Man follows Satan when he is released: Rev. 20:7-9.



6b. Divine judgment:

- 1c. The rebels are destroyed by fire: Rev. 20:9
- 2c. The earth and the heavens are also destroyed by fire: Rev. 20:11; 21:1; II Pet. 3:6,12

7b. Divine grace:

- 1c. The fulfillment of the covenant.

Premillennarians are the only ones who allow time for the fulfillment of the covenants.

- 1d. The Palestinian covenant: Deut. 28-30

The enjoyment of the land has yet to be fulfilled.

- 2d. The Davidic covenant: 2 Sam. 7:4-17

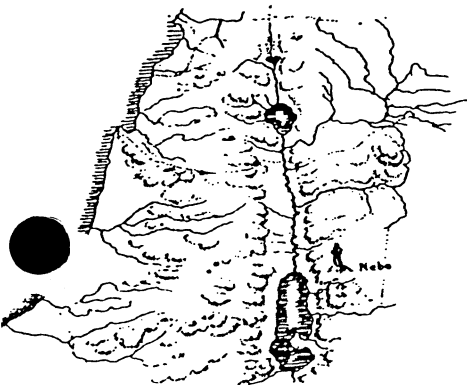
- 1e. To David was promised the following:

- 1f. A house and family forever: vv. 11, 16
- 2f. A throne forever, v. 13
- 3f. A kingdom forever, v. 16



- 2e. It produces significant changes:

- 1f. Judah and Ephraim will be reunited and be made the head of the nations: Ez. 37; Rom. 11:26; Deut. 38:13.
- 2f. Commemorative sacrifices and feasts will be observed: Ez. 44-46.
- 3f. Universal peace will reign: Zech 14; Mic. 4:3; Is. 2:4; Hos. 2:18; Ps. 46:9
- 4f. Idolatry will be uprooted: Is. 2:18; Zech. 14:9, Mal. 1:11
- 5f. The twelve tribes will inherit the land from Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18), divided into parallel sections (Ez. 48).
- 6f. Christ will reign: Jer. 23:5; Rev. 11:15; 19:6
- 7f. The center of government in the Millennium will be the earthly Jerusalem, nine square miles, 36 miles in circumference: Ez. 45:6



8f. Israel will be regathered: Is. 11:11-12; Jer. 30:1-11; Ez. 39: 25-29

3d. The New Covenant: Jer. 31:31 ff.

- 1e. Abundance of salvation: Is. 12
- 2e. Abundance of revelation: Jer. 31:33 ff.
- 3e. Forgiveness of sin: Jer. 31:34

2c. Fruition of nature:

1d. The curse is lifted: Is. 35:1, 6, 7; cf. 41:17-20

- 1e. From nature: Is. 55:12-13; Rom. 8:22 ff.
- 2e. From animals: Is. 65:25 (except for the serpent)

2d. Physical changes:

- 1e. Jerusalem exalted: Jer. 14:10
- 2e. A cleavage of the Mt. of Olives: Zech. 14:4
- 3e. A River of living water: Zech. 14:8; Ez. 47:1 ff; Joel 3:18; Ps. 65:9-10; Ps. 46:4

This is where the song "Joy to the World" fits in:

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King. . .

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns,
Let men their songs employ. . .

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove. . ."



8b. The end of the dispensation:

1c. The destruction of the earth and the heavens by fire: Rev. 20:11; 21:1

2c. The beginning of the eternal state:

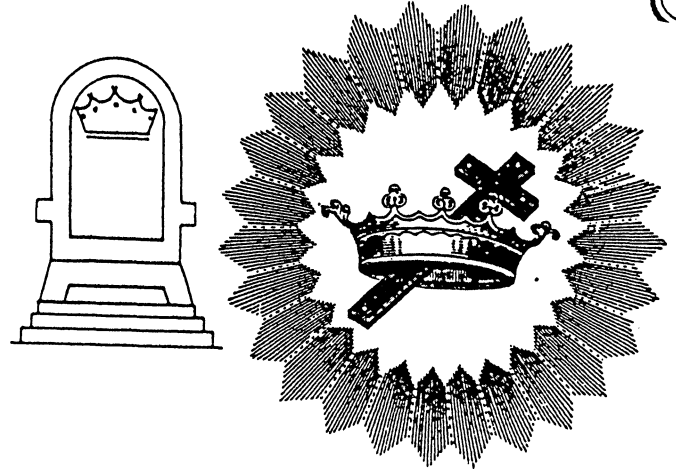
SUMMARY:

1. The dispensation of the Kingdom is different from preceding dispensations in that it is the final form of moral testing.
2. The advantages of this dispensation:
 - a) Perfect government.
 - b) Presence of Christ.
 - c) Universal knowledge of God and terms of salvation.
 - d) Satan bound.

3. The dispensation of the Kingdom is climactic in many respects, revealing grace, law, kingdom and government.
4. The Kingdom dispensation brings to consummation every possible test of man. In each dispensation man failed most miserably, yet God manifested His grace abundantly.



THE DISPENSATION OF THE KINGDOM



1. THE BEGINNING:
2. RELATED SCRIPTURE:
3. STATE OF MAN:
4. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY:
5. HUMAN FAILURE:
6. DIVINE JUDGMENT:
7. DIVINE GRACE:

THE LAW OF CHRIST

The Jews in the former dispensation lived under the law of Moses, comprised of 613 commandments. This law was adhered to by Christ in His life (Gal. 4:4, Mt. 5:17), but abrogated in His death (Col. 2:14).

The Christian in this dispensation lives under a new code, called the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). The law of Christ contains 4 elements:

1. *Positive commandments: "thou shalt"*
2. *Negative commandments: "thou shalt not"*
3. *Principles: e.g. "redeem the time," "walk in wisdom..."*
4. *Rules: laid down by spiritually-minded rulers*

V.7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation.

V.17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.

The believer's obligation:

1. **Remember: backward look**
2. **Follow: forward step**
3. **Obey: outward act**
4. **Submit: inward attitude**

M. Kober, Th.D.

of China's crisis?
still sit in darknes'
zation of China
to call upon Hi
conquering na..

God's people humbly

Our help is in the Name of the

prayer of a righteous man availeth na..

THE WINGS OF GOD

BY EVA GRAY

Even now we hear the plaintive
Voice of Him, our Saviour; He
Who said, "O, how oft beneath My
Wings would I have gathered thee."

Then the Psalmist, even David,
Spoke of His, our Father's, wings;
As beneath them refuge we may
Take within His coverings.

And to those who fear His name, He,
E'en the Sun of Righteousness,
Shall arise with healing in His
Wings, and comfort, soothe and bless.

'Neath the Father's wings we're sheltered,
And 'tis there He holds us fast;
Safely shielded from the tempests,
Till the storms are overpast.

There we nest in God, our Father,
There in Christ, the Holy One;
Doubly there secured we're resting
In the Father and the Son.

Then as like unto the eagle
He, our God, does outward bear
Us upon His wings abroad, and
Hovers o'er us, ever near.

Then sometimes He gives unto us
Wings that mount up Oh, so high!
There unto His glorious presence,
Far beyond the arching sky.

And for succor 'tis the covert
Of His wondrous, mighty wings;
There we're strengthened, there rejoicing,
There our heart within us sings.

Then with wings of mercy covereth
He, as did the cherubim;
There we're safe from wrath, confiding,
Trusting even all to Him.

millions is at stake. Men
death. The evangeli-
waits for us
own

The article by Dr. Unger is one of the finest statements
anywhere on the contrast between law and grace.

Law and Grace—A Bible Contrast

BY MERRILL F. UNGER*

In the study of the Holy Scriptures, as indeed in any other study, it is of paramount importance "to distinguish carefully between things that differ." Unless this is done, untold darkness and confusion will result, where otherwise there would be perfect light and clarity. And untold darkness and confusion have arisen over the subjects of law and grace, because God has set forth these two principles in obvious and striking contrast, and men have attempted to join together in confused and unholy wedlock that which God has determined shall be forever put asunder. The profane and unsanctified offspring, moreover, of this unblessed and man-made union have plagued the Christian Church, and played havoc with her peace and unity. What God hath separated, let not man join together!

The contrasting principles of law and grace are so diverse that they characterize the two most important dispensations, the Jewish and the Christian. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). This does not mean that there was no law before Moses, any more than that there was no grace and truth before Jesus Christ, but it *does* mean that the law was given from Sinai, and dominates and characterizes the time from then to Calvary, just as Christ brought grace into operation, and it dominates and characterizes the period from Calvary to the out-taking of the Church. It is, moreover, very necessary to remember that the Word of God never, in any dispensation, mingles these two principles. Invariably law is presented as having a place and work distinct from grace, and is set forth as wholly diverse from it in every respect.

Let us consider, then, first

I The Contrast Between Law and Grace

1. *They Present an Independent and Different Rule of Life for the Specific Period They Represent.*

Law is connected with Moses and works; grace with

*Dr. Unger is Professor of Old Testament and Semitics at the Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

Christ and faith (John 1:17; Rom. 10:4-10). Law demands righteousness from man; grace bestows righteousness upon man (Rom. 3:22, 31; 8:4; Phil. 3:9). Law blesses the good; grace saved the bad (Exod. 19:5; Ephes. 2:1-9). Law requires merit; grace is without human merit. Law demands its blessings be earned; grace is a free gift (Deut. 28:1-6; Ephes. 2:8; Rom. 4:4, 5). Law is negative, grace is positive. Law is prohibiting and demanding; grace is beseeching and bestowing. Law ministers condemnation; grace provides forgiveness. Law curses; grace blesses. Law kills; grace makes alive. Law shuts every mouth before God; grace opens every mouth to praise God. Law makes guilty man tremble; grace makes him rejoice. Law puts a great and guilty distance between man and His Maker; grace brings guilty man near to his Maker. Law says, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"; grace says, "If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst, give him drink." Law utterly condemns the best; grace freely saves the worst (Luke 23:43; Rom. 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:15). The Law was addressed to Israel only from Sinai to the Cross, and accomplished a peculiar purpose in condemning and leading to Christ. Grace is addressed to all kindreds and tribes, to "whosoever will," and is designed to save the worst and the most helpless, whom the Law condemns.

2. *They Present a Reversal in the Order of Divine Blessing and Human Obligation.*

The varying order is simply stated thus: Law says, "Do and live," where the divine obligation is given first, and the divine blessing is made to depend on the faithful discharge of that obligation. Grace, in contrast, says: "Live and do," where the divine blessing is poured out *first*, and the human obligation follows. The law said: "If you do good, I will bless you," but grace says: "I have blessed you, now do good!" Law is thus seen to be on a conditional covenant of *human* works, while grace rests upon an unconditional covenant of *divine* works.

3. *They Present Different Degrees of Difficulty in the Divine Requirement, and Different Degrees of Divine Enablement in Its Accomplishment.*

The Mosaic Law was addressed to even the natural man,

and its requirements evidently exceeded man's limitations, for there was universal failure on man's part, except in Christ's case, to keep the requirements, because of the weakness of the flesh. The divine enablement seemed nil; and man was left to his own unaided flesh, which thus became a universal demonstration of man's inability to keep the law, and to be saved by human merit. In contrast, grace has incomparably higher requirements, and its teachings are addressed only to the born-again man, who has, as the divine enablement, nothing less than the infinite power of God's indwelling Spirit.

Next, observe very briefly

II. The Errors Arising from Failure to Observe the Salient Contrast Between Law and Grace

1. *Antinomianism.*

This fails to see the right relationship between the two systems. It denies all rule over the lives of believers, and goes to the extreme in affirming that, because saved by God's free grace, wholly without merit, men are not required to live holy lives (Titus 1:16; Jude 1, 4).

2. *Ceremonialism.*

Its incipient form (Acts 15:1) insisted that believers keep the Levitical system, but its present form is manifest in attaching saving virtue to ordinances, making them essential to salvation.

3. *Galatianism.*

This is the heresy that mingles law and grace, making justification partly by law and partly by grace, or insists that grace is given to enable an otherwise helpless sinner to keep the law (Gal. 1:6-8; 3:2, 3).

In conclusion, observe

III. The Purpose of Law and Grace

1. *The Purpose of Law is:*

First, to bring to guilty man the knowledge of his sin, and then second, fully to demonstrate his utter helplessness in view of God's just requirements. It was a stern schoolmaster to drive helpless humanity in its *helplessness to Christ*, to be saved by grace (Gal. 3:16, 19; Rom. 3:19, 20; 2 Cor. 3:7-9).

2. *The Purpose of Grace is:*

First, to demonstrate the great loving heart of God, in the infinite depths of His lovingkindness, and to give opportunity for the expression of God's essential nature as *love*: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). The gracious display of this unfathomable love upon utterly helpless sinners, by virtue of the finished redemptive work of the spotless Lamb (John 1:29), brings glory to God. Therefore, grace is bestowed that God Himself might find infinite delight in this work of rescue, and that His own great name might be glorified.

So, if the first reason is *God's glory*, the second is *man's welfare*. Grace meets man, where law leaves him, utterly condemned, cursed, helpless, dying, like the man who fell among thieves. Grace plays the part of the Good Samaritan, and does all for him who can do nothing for himself and who, moreover, is worthy of nothing.

IN SHADOWED PLACES

BY CONSTANCE CALENBERG

"After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect" (1 Peter 5:10)

In shadowed places, Lord,
My soul must learn
The lessons born of trial,
And there to turn
From every cherished idol of my heart;
O God, in shadowed places
I must part
With things held dear;
For in the depths of sorrow,
Human fear
Must cling to Thee for mercy
And for aid,
And in the shadowed places
Earth doth fade from view,
As once again I prove
That Thou art true.
In shadowed places, Lord,
My heart knows pain;
For, as upon the altar all is lain,
My soul, through testings sore,
Is purged from sin,
And I am conscious of
Thy strength within.
O God! I thank Thee
For the tear-stained days,
And for the shadowed places give Thee praise.

OUR HOPE

A testimony for our Lord
Jesus Christ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Editorials and Notes.....	377
Calvary Road—A Poem. By Corwin Knapp Linson.....	388
Setting the Stage for the Last Act of the Great World Drama. By H. A. Ironside.....	389
One Wish—A Poem. By Edna F. Sorrell.....	398
The Land of Sinim—Today's Crisis and Challenge. By Herbert M. Griffin.....	399
The Wings of God—A Poem. By Eva Gray.....	604
Law and Grace—A Bible Contrast. By Merrill F. Unger.....	605
In Shadowed Places—A Poem. By Constance Calenberg.....	608
Can We Believe It?—The Resurrection of Christ. By E. W. Goodrick.....	609
Current Events in the Light of the Bible. By the Editor.....	622
Question Box.....	627
Daily Bible Treasury. By Herbert Lockyer.....	629
Book Reviews. By Arthur Forest Wells.....	636
Letters.....	638

APRIL

1949

Arno C. Gaebelein

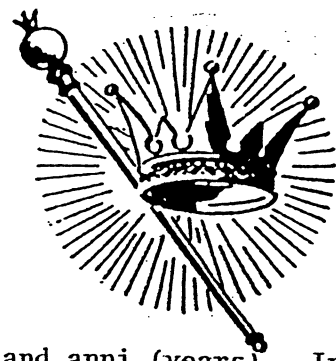
Editor and Publisher, 1924-1948

Frank E. Gaebelein

Publisher

E. Schuyler English

Editor



7A. THE DISPENSATION OF THE KINGDOM, OR MILLENNIUM

The name is derived from the Latin mille (thousand) and anni (years). In Rev. 20: 1-5, the expression 1000 yrs, is used six times. The Greek term for 1000 is chilia, therefore a belief in the millennium has been called chiliasm.

1b. The beginning: the Second Coming (Matt. 24; Rev. 19)

2b. The Scripture:

All passages on the future kingdom in the O.T. and N.T. Major Scriptures include: Ps. 72; Isa. 2:1-5; 9:6-7; 11; Jer. 33:14-17; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:9-14; 8:27-28; Hos. 3:4-5; Zech. 14:9; Lk 1:31-33; Rev. 19-20.

3b. The state of man:

1c. Universal salvation:

1d. All those who enter the kingdom will be saved people:

1e. The Jews: 1/3 of the nation shall be saved, Zech. 13:8ff

2e. The Gentiles: The goat Gentiles will be removed, the sheep Gentiles will remain on earth to enter the kingdom, Matt. 25:31-46.

2d. The Spirit of the Lord will be poured upon all flesh; Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 66:19-23.

3d. The majority of the earth's teeming multitudes shall know the Lord during these 1000 yrs.; Isa. 11:9; Ps. 98:2,3; Zeph. 3:9

2c. Unquestioning obedience to the King: Ps. 66:3

3 Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

3c. Unprecedented justice and righteousness:

1d. Impartial: Ps. 72; Isa. 11:4; Isa. 32:1, 14-20

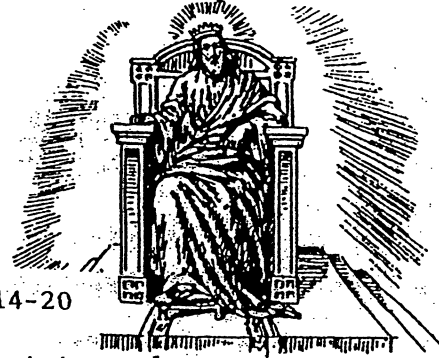
2d. Immediate: Mt. 13:41 the angels are sent out to gather the evil-doers

Isa:65:24 "it shall come to pass before they call and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"

4c. Unusual longevity: Is. 65:20 "the child shall die 100 yrs. old"

4b. The human responsibility: To obey the King.

1c. An absolute rulership, with rod of Iron: Isa 11:3-5; Rev. 19:15; Ps. 2:9



- 2c. A theocratic rulership: rule of God.
- 3c. A worshipful rulership: sacrificial system and priesthood; Is. 66:21-23; Ez. 40-48.
- 4c. An unopposed rulership: Satan will be bound: Rev. 20:3,7.

5b. Human failure:

- 1c. Outward sin: Isa. 65:20; Zech. 14:14-16; Matt. 13:41
- 2c. A climactic rebellion at the close of the kingdom. Man follows Satan when he is released: Rev. 20:7-9.



6b. Divine judgment:

- 1c. The rebels are destroyed by fire: Rev. 20:9
- 2c. The earth and the heavens are also destroyed by fire: Rev. 20:11; 21:1; II Pet. 3:6,12

7b. Divine grace:

- 1c. The fulfillment of the covenant.

Premillennarians are the only ones who allow time for the fulfillment of the covenants.

- 1d. The Palestinian covenant: Deut. 28-30

The enjoyment of the land has yet to be fulfilled.

- 2d. The Davidic covenant: 2 Sam. 7:4-17

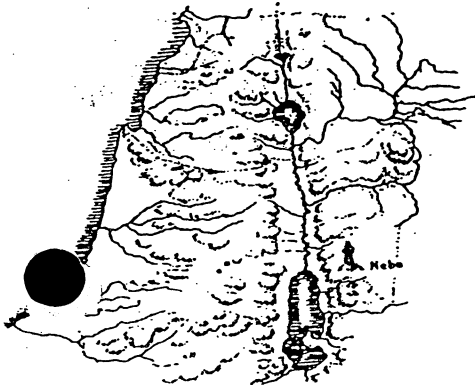
- 1e. To David was promised the following:

- 1f. A house and family forever: vv. 11, 16
- 2f. A throne forever, v. 13
- 3f. A kingdom forever, v. 16



- 2e. It produces significant changes:

- 1f. Judah and Ephraim will be reunited and be made the head of the nations: Ez. 37; Rom. 11:26; Deut. 38:13.
- 2f. Commemorative sacrifices and feasts will be observed: Ez. 44-46.
- 3f. Universal peace will reign: Zech 14; Mic. 4:3; Is. 2:4; Hos. 2:18; Ps. 46:9
- 4f. Idolatry will be uprooted: Is. 2:18; Zech. 14:9, Mal. 1:11
- 5f. The twelve tribes will inherit the land from Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18), divided into parallel sections (Ez. 48).
- 6f. Christ will reign: Jer. 23:5; Rev. 11:15; 19:6
- 7f. The center of government in the Millennium will be the earthly Jerusalem, nine square miles, 36 miles in circumference: Ez. 45:6



8f. Israel will be regathered: Is. 11:11-12; Jer. 30:1-11; Ez. 39: 25-29

3d. The New Covenant: Jer. 31:31 ff.

- 1e. Abundance of salvation: Is. 12
- 2e. Abundance of revelation: Jer. 31:33 ff.
- 3e. Forgiveness of sin: Jer. 31:34

2c. Fruition of nature:

1d. The curse is lifted: Is. 35:1, 6, 7; cf. 41:17-20

- 1e. From nature: Is. 55:12-13; Rom. 8:22 ff.
- 2e. From animals: Is. 65:25 (except for the serpent)

2d. Physical changes:

- 1e. Jerusalem exalted: Jer. 14:10
- 2e. A cleavage of the Mt. of Olives: Zech. 14:4
- 3e. A River of living water: Zech. 14:8; Ez. 47:1 ff; Joel 3:18; Ps. 65:9-10; Ps. 46:4

This is where the song "Joy to the World" fits in:

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King. . .

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns,
Let men their songs employ. . .

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove. . ."



8b. The end of the dispensation:

- 1c. The destruction of the earth and the heavens by fire: Rev. 20:11; 21:1
- 2c. The beginning of the eternal state:

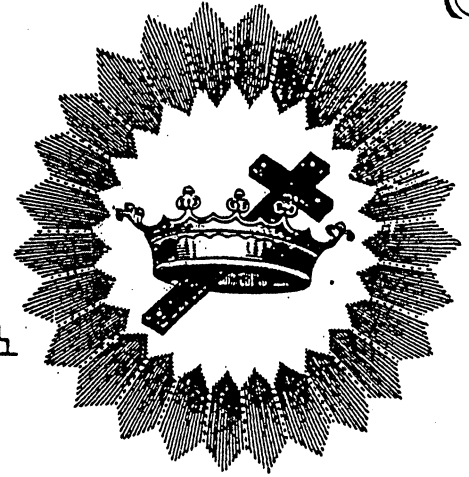
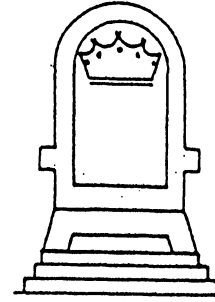
SUMMARY:

1. The dispensation of the Kingdom is different from preceding dispensations in that it is the final form of moral testing.
2. The advantages of this dispensation:
 - a) Perfect government.
 - b) Presence of Christ.
 - c) Universal knowledge of of God and terms of salvation.
 - d) Satan bound.

3. The dispensation of the Kingdom is climactic in many respects, revealing grace, law, kingdom and government.
4. The Kingdom dispensation brings to consummation every possible test of man. In each dispensation man failed most miserably, yet God manifested His grace abundantly.



THE DISPENSATION OF THE KINGDOM



1. THE BEGINNING:
2. RELATED SCRIPTURE:
3. STATE OF MAN:
4. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY:
5. HUMAN FAILURE:
6. DIVINE JUDGMENT:
7. DIVINE GRACE:

THE DISTORTIONS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

1A. ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM:

1b. Definition:

It places more than one dispensation between Pentecost and the Rapture.

2b. Development:

Ethelbert Bullinger (1837-1913)

3b. Divisions:

1c. Extreme ultra-dispensationalism:

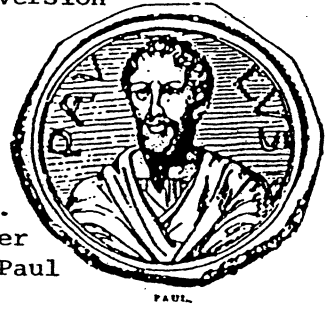
The church began late in Paul's ministry (Bullingerites)

2c. Moderate ultra-dispensationalism:

The Christian church began with Paul's conversion (O'Hare)

3c. Their agreements:

- 1d. Water Baptism is not for this age.
- 2d. The Great Commission is Jewish.
- 3d. The church did not start at Pentecost.
- 4d. Israel is the Bride--started with Peter
The church is the body--started with Paul



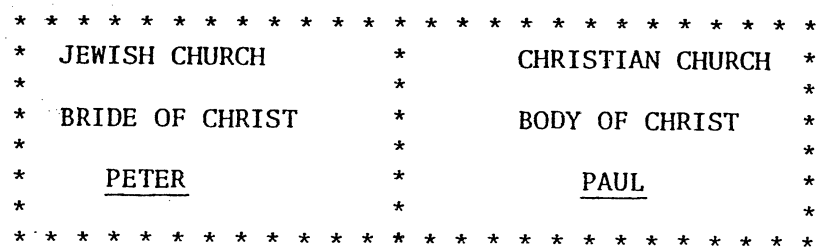
4c. Their disagreements:

- 1d. Extreme Ultra-Dispensationalism also deletes the Lord's Supper.
- 2d. Extreme Ultra-Dispensationalism cannot agree when in Paul's life the church started:

Moderate: Between Acts 9-13
 Extreme: After Acts 28

PENTECOST

RAPTURE



4b. Defects of Ultra-Dispensationalism:

- 1c. There is no discernible difference between the church before and after Acts 9.
- 2c. Ultra-dispensationalism fails to understand the nature of a dispensation. It is "a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose."
- 3c. Ultra-dispensationalism fails to be obedient in evangelism and the church ordinances.

2A. COVENANT THEOLOGY:

1b. The definition of Covenant Theology:

"A system of Biblical interpretation expressed in terms of two or three covenants, of which dispensations are merely sub-categories."

2b. The distinctives of Covenant Theology:

1c. The biblical covenants:

1d. The Covenant of Redemption:

A bargain or agreement entered into by the persons of the Godhead before creation and existence of man, including for Christ a body for the incarnation, support during His life and the reward by exaltation and the giving of the elect to him.

2d. The Covenant of Works:

This covenant is made with Adam by God while Adam was innocent. It involved the offer of eternal life for the victorious test and threatened him with death if he failed the trial.

3d. The Covenant of Grace:

This covenant was made by God after the fall of man with Christ as the representative of the elect or with the elect. By it God "freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising them the Holy Spirit."

2c. The basic condition for Covenant Theology:

1d. Covenant Theology sees a single people of God, the elect.

2d. The Covenant of Grace is all encompassing, all inclusive, involving every scriptural dispensation.

3b. The development of Covenant of Theology:

- 1c. Covenant Theology is mentioned neither by the early church nor by the primary leaders of the reformation. It is first mentioned in a church confession in 1647, the Westminster Confession.
- 2c. Covenant Theology started as a protest to Reformed Theology: Coccius, 1648
Witsius, 1685

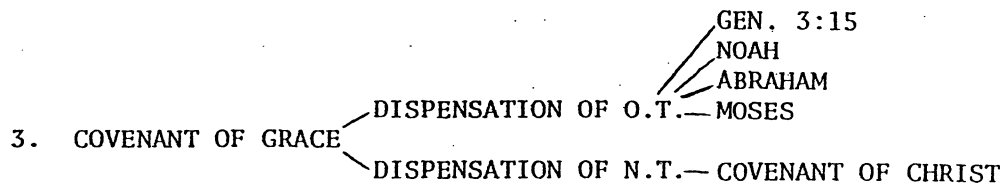
4b. The defects of Covenant Theology:

- 1c. It sees covenants where they are not clearly expressed.
- 2c. It makes the dispensations subservient to the covenant of grace.
- 3c. It confuses the term "covenant" and "dispensation."
- 4c. It is guilty of a reductive error: the attempt to make one aspect of God's purpose (salvation) the sole principle. God's over-all purpose is GLORY, all other purposes are subservient to that.
- 5c. It has not led to a clear understanding of the Bible. Bible institutes were founded primarily by dispensationalists.
- 6c. It reads the New Testament back into the Old Testament, spiritualizing, for instance, Abraham's promised land by making it equivalent to heaven.

COVENANT THEOLOGY

1. COVENANT OF REDEMPTION

2. COVENANT OF WORKS



1 COVENANT

2 DISPENSATIONS

5 COVENANTS

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Contrasts between the dispensational and the standard anti-dispensational view.

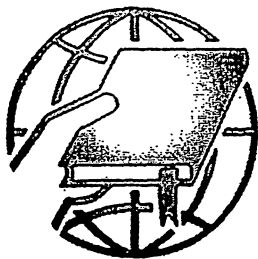
Dispensational

1. Holds to various tests of man or settings-forth of special responsibilities. However, these tests were not the effective cause of salvation, they ended in failure by man, evincing his utter sinfulness, and each terminated in judgement.
2. Holds to various phases of the "eternal purpose," i.e., the choosing of an elect nation, personal redemption, the calling out of the church, His earthly reign, etc.
3. Holds that, in accordance with declarations of Scripture, the "eternal purpose" as related to this age "was kept secret," "was hid in God," and "not known" in "ages and generations past," and is NOW in "The dispensation of the grace of God" made known to us.
4. Holds that Israel is a chosen nation, especially and eternally.
5. Holds that salvation is always by grace, though tests to prove man utterly depraved and hopeless have changed as the will of God has from time to time determined.
6. Holds to a literal and personal reign of Christ to be set up on this earth at His second coming.
7. Holds with Scripture that "law" and "grace" are contrasting and incompatible principles.
8. Holds that a dispensation is a distinctive responsibility for man in a given period of time ranging from man's creation onward, and that all the dispensations end in man's failure and a judgement from God.

Anti-dispensational

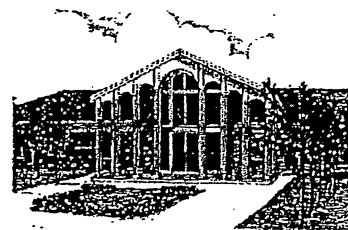
1. Holds to a single responsibility embodied in the Covenant of Grace which they say presents: "always the same promise, the same Redeemer, the same faith, and the same life" as truths fully understood by man before as well as after Christ's coming and death. (A.A.Hodge, p. 395: "faith was the condition of salvation before the advent of Christ in the same sense that it is now.")
2. Apparently interests itself almost wholly in the single purpose of personal redemption.
3. Holds that the so-called "eternal covenant" made as they say between the Persons of the Godhead was extended into time as "the Covenant of Grace," from the fall and ever afterwards, in fullness of purpose and without limitation or intermission.
4. Generally has held and now does hold that Israel has no abiding and distinctive national hope.
5. Slyly, and without foundation or reason, accuses the dispensationalist of teaching more than one way of salvation.
6. Usually and originally denied a millennial reign on this earth and holds only to a spiritual kingdom now in existence and progress.
7. Holds that "law" and "grace" are auxiliary principles and that they always co-exist as principles of approach to God.
8. Holds that a dispensation is merely "a mode of administering" (whatever that meaningless phrase signifies) the Covenant of Grace in different epochs. It appears that nowhere in Scripture are men said to be administrators of a covenant.

9. Holds that there are a number of major covenants, each with a distinct purpose, and that they all refer to the nation Israel.
10. Holds that the terms: Israel, Palestine, Jerusalem, Zion throne of David, the kingdom on earth, etc., are literal and conclusive, and are limited in reference to the chosen nation Israel.
11. Holds that the literal coming of Christ to the earth is for the purpose of setting up a reign of righteousness for 1,000 years on this earth.
12. This view harmonizes with Biblical, apostolic, and age-long teaching of sane and devout Christian leaders and teachers.
13. Emphasizes a full prophetic program as it affects the nation Israel, the Church, the Gentile nations, Satan and his hosts, and is cataclysmic in fulfillment.
14. Holds that the purpose of this age and the ministry of the Spirit through the believer is "to call out an elect people by the preaching of the Gospel."
9. Holds that there is only one covenant operative since man's fall, that it is not specially related or limited to the nation Israel, and that the covenant idea is "a constitutive (essential) principle of theology."
10. Holds that these terms are to be spiritualized, that they are synonymous with the church, and that they are typical or symbolic of heavenly conditions.
11. Holds that the coming of Christ is centered upon a coming general judgement and ushers in eternal situations without an earthly reign.
12. Holds that the dispensational and premillennial interpretation is a perpetuation of "a crass Jewish view."
13. Holds to no prophetic program with Israel as a nation in an earthly kingdom and the Church associated with Christ in that kingdom.
14. It increasingly leans: (a) to a social gospel for the uplift of man in this life, or (b) to the building of a kingdom with the Lord now in heaven, as they say, on "David's throne."



Faith Pulpit

Faith Baptist Theological Seminary 1900 NW Fourth Street, Ankeny, IA 50021



Richard W. Houg, President

George G. Houghton, Th.D., Academic VP.

Robert G. Delnay, Th.D., Seminary Dean

The Problematic Development of Progressive Dispensationalism

by Manfred Kober, Th.D.

(Part 1 of 2)

March 1997

In recent years major changes have occurred within dispensationalism. A new system, known as progressive dispensationalism, has caused major concern among traditional dispensationalists.

I. THE PERIODS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

Several periods of development within dispensationalism have been suggested.

1. The foundational period: 1885 -1920 (John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882).
2. The classical period : 1920-1950 (C.I. Scofield, 1843-1921, Lewis Sperry Chafer, 1871-1952).
3. The defining period: 1950-1990 (Alva J. McClain, John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles C. Ryrie).
4. The progressive period: 1990 and on (Darrell L. Bock, Craig A. Blaising, Robert L. Saucy).

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF DISPENSATIONALISM

Dispensationalists see God's dealing with mankind in distinguishable stewardships to accomplish His sovereign purpose.

The *sine qua non*, as succinctly delineated by Ryrie, is the following:

1. A clear distinction between Israel and the Church.
2. The consistent use of literal interpretation.
3. A concerted emphasis on the glory of God as the underlying purpose for His actions. (*Dispensationalism Today* [1965], 43-44).

Traditional dispensationalists have always clearly and consistently distinguished Israel and the Church and God's program for each. An explanation of traditional dispensationalism may be found in my colleague's article, "Progressive Dispensationalism: A Traditional Dispensational Critique" (Myron J. Houghton, *Faith Pulpit*, January 1995, 1).

III. THE PROPONENTS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

1. Craig A. Blaising, until recently at Dallas Theological Seminary (Systematic Theology), presently at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY.
2. Darrell Bock, at Dallas Theological Seminary, (New Testament).
3. Robert L. Saucy, Talbot Theological Seminary (Systematic Theology).

IV. THE PUBLICATIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

Besides the publication of numerous periodical articles, progressive dispensationalists have stated their views to date in three major works:

1. *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 1992 (edited by Bock and Blaising)
2. *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 1993 (written by Bock and Blaising).
3. *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 1993 (written by Saucy).

V. THE PURPOSE OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM:

The movement arose out of the Dispensational Study Group which first met on November 20, 1986, in connection with the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta, Georgia. Five years later, at the 1991 meeting, the actual label "progressive dispensationalism" was introduced. The purpose of the study group appears to be to clarify dispensational issues in order to bridge the gap between dispensationalism and covenant theology. Related to this effort of the rapprochement with a totally different theological approach was a rejection of the *sine qua non* of traditional dispensationalism, thus permitting a conscious movement toward covenant theology.

The new dispensationalists appear to desire the following:

1. To develop further the system of dispensationalism.

- A remaking of dispensationalism according to their theological presuppositions, in part adopted from European theologians.
2. To discover similarities between dispensationalism and covenant theology.
A rapprochement with a totally dissimilar system.
 3. To delineate the progressive fulfillment of God's plan in history.
A rejection of God's distinctive purposes for Israel and the church.

It is a sad commentary on the present situation that whereas premillennialism (out of which dispensationalism gradually emerged) arose in America primarily through early Bible conferences held in opposition to the postmillennialism and liberalism of the day, progressive dispensationalism, in following the ecumenical spirit of the times, is seeking common ground with amillennialism.

VI. THE PROPOSITIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM:

Ryrie notes that in contrast to his listed *sine qua non* of dispensationalism, "progressive dispensationalism (1) teaches that Christ is already reigning on the throne of David in heaven, thus merging the church with a present phase of the already inaugurated Davidic covenant and kingdom; (2) this is based upon a complementary hermeneutic which allows the New Testament to introduce changes and additions to Old Testament revelation; and (3) the overall purpose of God is Christological; holistic redemption being the focus and goal of history" (*Dispensationalism*, 164).

Interestingly, to date the progressive dispensationalists have neither been successful in their attempt to define dispensationalism nor to state what its essential principles are. By highlighting the basic tenets of progressive dispensationalism, Ryrie shows how far this system, which he rightly labels, "revisionist dispensationalism," has departed from traditional or authentic dispensationalism:

- (1) The kingdom of God is the unifying theme of biblical history.
- (2) Within biblical history there are four dispensational eras.
- (3) Christ has already inaugurated the Davidic reign in heaven at the right hand of the Father which equals the throne of David, though not yet reigning as Davidic king on earth during the millennium.
- (4) Likewise the new covenant has already been inaugurated, though its blessings are not yet fully realized until the millennium.
- (5) The concept of the church as completely distinct from Israel and as a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament needs revising, making the idea of two purposes and two peoples of God invalid.
- (6) A complementary hermeneutic must be used alongside a literal hermeneutic. This means that the New Testament makes complementary changes to Old Testament promises without jettisoning those original promises.

The one divine plan of holistic redemption encompasses all people and all areas of human life, personal, societal, cultural, and political (Ryrie, *ibid.*, 164 [emphasis in the original]).

VII. THE PROBLEMS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

1. Hermeneutical Problems.

Progressive dispensationalism denies that consistent literal interpretation is a defining essential of dispensationalism. Craig Blasing maintains "that consistent literal exegesis is inadequate to describe the essential distinctive of dispensationalism" ("Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145, No. 579 [July-September, 1988], 272). Progressive dispensationalism further introduces a new method of interpretation, called "complementary hermeneutics," by reading into Old Testament promises much more than they contain. Progressive dispensationalists teach that "the New Testament does introduce change and advance; it does not merely repeat Old Testament revelation. In making complementary additions, however, it does not jettison old promises. The enhancement is not at the expense of the original promise." (*Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 392-93.) The Old Testament promises concerning Christ's rule relate to a future millennial kingdom when He would rule on the throne of David. Complementary hermeneutics insists that the New Testament revelation complements the Old Testament promise by revealing Christ presently ruling on the Davidic throne in heaven. The problem of this new method of interpretation is that its limits are not clearly spelled out. Furthermore, who determines how much New Testament truth should be read back into literal Old Testament promises? Does not this destroy the concept of literal interpretation? The apparent reason why the revisionists would like to see the kingdom established now is out of a desire to show their appreciation for this aspect of covenant theology; while at the same time they want to maintain a future fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in the Millennial Kingdom.

Robert L. Thomas, in his incisive study, "A Critique of Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutics," deplors the departure of progressive dispensationalism from traditional historical-grammatical interpretation. He notes that progressive dispensationalism practices "a selective use of passages seemingly in support of their system--avoiding others that do not." He cites ample illustrations of this method and concludes that "thorough-going grammatical-historical interpretation does not condone this kind of superficial treatment of text, particularly when they are critical to support a doctrine being propounded" (Ice and Demi, eds., *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 423-424).

A remaking of dispensationalism according to their theological presuppositions, in part adopted from European theologians.

2. To discover similarities between dispensationalism and covenant theology.
A rapprochement with a totally dissimilar system.
3. To delineate the progressive fulfillment of God's plan in history.
A rejection of God's distinctive purposes for Israel and the church.

It is a sad commentary on the present situation that whereas premillennialism (out of which dispensationalism gradually emerged) arose in America primarily through early Bible conferences held in opposition to the postmillennialism and liberalism of the day, progressive dispensationalism, in following the ecumenical spirit of the times, is seeking common ground with amillennialism.

VI. THE PROPOSITIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM:

Ryrie notes that in contrast to his listed *sine qua non* of dispensationalism, "progressive dispensationalism (1) teaches that Christ is already reigning on the throne of David in heaven, thus merging the church with a present phase of the already inaugurated Davidic covenant and kingdom; (2) this is based upon a complementary hermeneutic which allows the New Testament to introduce changes and additions to Old Testament revelation; and (3) the overall purpose of God is Christological; holistic redemption being the focus and goal of history" (*Dispensationalism*, 164).

Interestingly, to date the progressive dispensationalists have neither been successful in their attempt to define dispensationalism nor to state what its essential principles are. By highlighting the basic tenets of progressive dispensationalism, Ryrie shows how far this system, which he rightly labels, "revisionist dispensationalism," has departed from traditional or authentic dispensationalism:

- (1) The kingdom of God is the unifying theme of biblical history.
- (2) Within biblical history there are four dispensational eras.
- (3) Christ has already inaugurated the Davidic reign in heaven at the right hand of the Father which equals the throne of David, though not yet reigning as Davidic king on earth during the millennium.
- (4) Likewise the new covenant has already been inaugurated, though its blessings are not yet fully realized until the millennium.
- (5) The concept of the church as completely distinct from Israel and as a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament needs revising, making the idea of two purposes and two peoples of God invalid.
- (6) A complementary hermeneutic must be used alongside a literal hermeneutic. This means that the New Testament makes complementary changes to Old Testament promises without jettisoning those original promises.

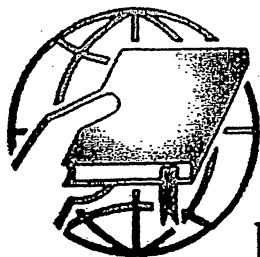
The one divine plan of holistic redemption encompasses all people and all areas of human life, personal, societal, cultural, and political (Ryrie, *ibid.*, 164 [emphasis in the original]).

VII. THE PROBLEMS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

1. Hermeneutical Problems.

Progressive dispensationalism denies that consistent literal interpretation is a defining essential of dispensationalism. Craig Blaising maintains "that consistent literal exegesis is inadequate to describe the essential distinctive of dispensationalism" ("Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145, No. 579 [July-September, 1988], 272). Progressive dispensationalism further introduces a new method of interpretation, called "complementary hermeneutics," by reading into Old Testament promises much more than they contain. Progressive dispensationalists teach that "the New Testament does introduce change and advance; it does not merely repeat Old Testament revelation. In making complementary additions, however, it does not jettison old promises. The enhancement is not at the expense of the original promise." (*Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 392-93.) The Old Testament promises concerning Christ's rule relate to a future millennial kingdom when He would rule on the throne of David. Complementary hermeneutics insists that the New Testament revelation complements the Old Testament promise by revealing Christ presently ruling on the Davidic throne in heaven. The problem of this new method of interpretation is that its limits are not clearly spelled out. Furthermore, who determines how much New Testament truth should be read back into literal Old Testament promises? Does not this destroy the concept of literal interpretation? The apparent reason why the revisionists would like to see the kingdom established now is out of a desire to show their appreciation for this aspect of covenant theology; while at the same time they want to maintain a future fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in the Millennial Kingdom.

Robert L. Thomas, in his incisive study, "A Critique of Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutics," deplores the departure of progressive dispensationalism from traditional historical-grammatical interpretation. He notes that progressive dispensationalism practices "a selective use of passages seemingly in support of their system--avoiding others that do not." He cites ample illustrations of this method and concludes that "thorough-going grammatical-historical interpretation does not condone this kind of superficial treatment of text, particularly when they are critical to support a doctrine being propounded" (Ice and Demi, eds., *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 423-424).



Faith Pulpit

Faith Baptist Theological Seminary — 1900 NW Fourth Street, Ankeny, IA 50021



Richard W. Houg, President

George G. Houghton, Th.D., Academic VP.

Robert G. Delnay, Th.D., Seminary Dean

The Problematic Development of Progressive Dispensationalism

by Manfred Kober, Th.D.

(Part 2 of 2)

April 1997

2. Messianic Problems

Traditional dispensationalists have always understood that the Davidic rule of Christ would be in Jerusalem on the literal throne where his ancestor David ruled. Progressive dispensationalism believes this but also teaches that the Lord already rules on the throne of David in heaven, a rule which began at His ascension. This view ignores the clear scriptural distinction between Christ's present rule on the Father's throne in heaven (Hebrews 12:2) and His future rule on His throne on earth (Revelation 3:21). Traditional dispensationalists reject the notion that Christ's present rule in heaven constitutes an inaugural fulfillment of the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7:14. No wonder John F. Walvoord concludes with other classic dispensationalists "that progressive dispensationalism, as it is called, is built upon a foundation of sand and is lacking specific scriptural proof" (Willis and Masters, eds., *Issues in Dispensationalism*, 90). Progressive dispensationalists have manufactured out of thin air an artificial view that Christ's rule is present and yet future at the same time. This "already/not yet" dialectic is borrowed from George E. Ladd whose slippery slope of subjective hermeneutics led him from a premillennial to a modified covenant theology position. His form of realized eschatology, in turn, was borrowed from European theologians like C.H. Dodd.

3. Ecclesiastical Problems

By magnifying the continuity of various dispensations, revisionists are minimizing the distinctiveness of the church. Their mystery concept of the church is not that it was unrevealed in the Old Testament but it was unrealized. As a corollary, God has no separate program for the church. The church is simply a sub-category of the Kingdom. It is called a "sneak preview" of the Kingdom and a "functional outpost of God's Kingdom" (*Progressive Dispensationalism*, 257). The church is the Kingdom today. In fact, David Turner calls the church "the 'new Israel'" (Blaising and Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 288). It is not surprising, therefore, that Bruce Waltke observes that Turner's "position is closer to covenant theology than to dispensationalism" (*Ibid.*, 334). With their theological neutering of the church, the revisionists are clearly de-emphasizing the pretribulational rapture, God's distinct event involving the church.

4. Definitional Problems

Progressive dispensationalists are neither able to give a clear definition of a dispensation nor make a convincing case for their number of dispensations. They subscribe to four primary dispensations. The first is the patriarchal, beginning with creation and continuing to Sinai. It is strange that the revisionists do not see the pre-fall stewardship that God sustained with Adam and Eve as a separate dispensation. Ryrie correctly notes, "To lump pre-fall conditions, post-fall conditions and the Abrahamic covenant under common stewardship arrangement or dispensation is artificial, to say the least" (*Dispensationalism*, 166). The second dispensation is labeled the Mosaic (from Sinai to Christ's ascension). The third is called the Ecclesial (from the ascension to Christ's second coming). The fourth dispensation is the Zionitic which is divided into (1) the millennial kingdom and (2) the eternal state. The practical fusion of the millennium and the eternal state evidences a disregard for the uniqueness of the kingdom age, an emphasis which had always been an integral part of premillennial dispensationalism and which is now an area in which the revisionist dispensationalists have given ground in order to appeal to covenant theologians.

VIII. The Prospects for Progressive Dispensationalism

1. The infiltration of seminaries.

Several seminaries, which once stood forthrightly for traditional dispensational distinctions, have a certain number of faculty espousing the progressive position. Ernest Pickering rightly warns that the dissemination of deviant dispensational doctrines is "not compatible with historic dispensationalism. They move toward covenant theology which identifies the Church with Israel. It would not be surprising to see more and more former dispensationalists embracing the covenant system as some already have" (*Dispensations*, 15).

It is sad to observe what has occurred at Dallas Theological Seminary, the stronghold of dispensationalism, where many of the instructors here at FBBC&TS have studied. While a number of traditional dispensationalists still teach at DTS, their system has not just been modified but totally changed by Bock, Blaising and their followers. And yet, Donald Campbell, in a letter of May 28, 1992, to the alumni, tries to assure the graduates of DTS that all the faculty "are dispensationalists as defined by our Doctrinal Statement." But the progressives do not agree, it seems, with this aspect of the doctrinal statement, which they have signed: "The church which is the body and bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost...is completely distinct from Israel." (CATALOG 1995-1996, 140, italics added). Sadly, there is no sounding of an alarm over a method of biblical interpretation which, according to a former faculty member there, "shakes the very foundation of dispensational hermeneutics, which includes a consistent literalistic interpretation of the Old Testament" (Waltke in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*, 348). The new president of Dallas Theological Seminary, Chuck Swindoll, has not helped matters at all. In an interview in *Christianity Today* prior to his stepping into the presidency, he announced that he would no longer emphasize dispensationalism. "I think

dispensations is a scare word. I'm not sure we're going to make dispensationalism a part of our marquis as we talk about our school." When asked whether he thought the term dispensationalism would disappear, Swindoll replied, "It may and perhaps it should." (Oct. 25, 1993, 14, italics in the original). The very distinctive that has made Dallas Theological Seminary such a unique school is now de-emphasized. Who would have thought that Dallas Theological Seminary would ever downplay the system of theology that has made it distinct while at the same time giving encouragement to a group of scholars who take the school toward covenant theology?

Primarily through men trained at Dallas Theological Seminary other schools have adopted this radical departure from traditional dispensationalism. At these institutions whole generations of pastors will be moved away from literal interpretation toward confusing complementary hermeneutics. The students will be exposed to de-emphasis of church age truth and an unclear eschatological framework. Dispensational distinctions are giving way to an unwarranted and unnecessary accommodation with amillennialism.

As an example, in these schools where progressive dispensationalism has taken root, classic dispensationalists like Walvoord are charged with using "a 'hyperliteral' approach to apocalyptic imagery" (Turner, *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*, 227). Walvoord's description of a literal New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 is countered by Turner with the observation that the gates of the city could not possibly be made from one pearl, neither could the streets be made of gold. "The absence of oysters large enough to produce such pearls and the absence of sufficient gold to pave such a city (viewed as literally 1380 miles square and high) is viewed as sufficient reason not to take these images fully literal!" (Ibid.).

2. The ignoring by laymen.

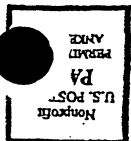
It must be said to the credit of traditional dispensationalism that in its simplicity it is understood by lay people and unlocks the Scriptures for them. Who knows how many millions of American believers have been blessed by the helpful notes of the Scofield Bible. In contrast to Ryrie's clear and concise writings, the progressive dispensationalists write in such a scholarly and technical style that their books are difficult to read and thus will only reach a limited group of scholars. One can appreciate Thomas Ice's frustration when he says that *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* is "difficult [to] read because of its erudite technical style. . . It is sometimes hard to get a grip on what is precisely being said, even after reading a passage several times" ("A Critical Examination of 'Progressive Dispensationalism,'" *Biblical Perspectives*, Vol. V, No. 6, November-December, 1992, 1).

3. The surrender to covenant theology.

One wonders whether the revisionists really espouse a modified dispensationalism or whether they are not closer to a modified form of covenant theology. Thomas Ice's warning is well-placed that "these. . . men are in the process of destroying dispensationalism" (Ibid, 1). Eventually much of eschatology will give way to a vague anticipation of the future. According to Bock, progressive dispensationalism is "less land-centered and less future-centered" (*Christianity Today*, March 9, 1992, 50). The future blessings that are predicted for Israel in the millennial kingdom are suddenly reinterpreted. According to Carl Hoch, the privileges of ethnic Israel "were restricted to Israel before the death of Christ and the creation of the Church" (Blaising and Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, etc.*, 125). It is difficult to see why there is a need for a Millennium. Revisionist dispensationalism, with its de-emphasis on the distinctiveness of the church and the uniqueness of the Millennium has not simply made slight corrections in dispensational theology but significant changes, so significant that it is doubtful whether they can be considered dispensationalists at all as they are more and more warmly embraced by their covenant friends. No wonder Walter E. Elwell concludes, "The newer dispensationalism looks so much like nondispensationalist premillennialism that one struggles to see any real difference" ("Dispensationalism of the Third Kind," *Christianity Today*, September 12, 1994, 28). Ron Clutter reports on the general sentiment of the 1987 meeting of the Dispensational Study Group, chaired by Craig Blaising. There was common agreement that moderate dispensationalists and moderate covenant theologians are closer to each other than either to classic dispensationalists or classic covenant theologians. "It seems both are moving toward each other in rapprochement" ("Dispensational Study Group discussion," *Grace Theological Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 2, Fall 1989, 161).

It is true that each generation of theologians needs to apply biblical truth to the people of the day. However, in so doing they dare not surrender major areas of doctrine which the progressive dispensationalists are in danger of doing. The biblical injunction to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) is important in the area of dispensational theology and especially in light of progressive dispensationalism which appears to be rapidly moving toward covenant theology. May God grant us His discernment in these difficult and challenging times.

The Faith Pulpit is published ten times per year by Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, 1900 NW Fourth Street, Ankeny, IA 50021 (515) 964-0601. Permission is hereby given to make copies of articles in full for non-commercial individual or church use. Any other use is prohibited without the express permission of the publisher. ©1997 FBBC&TS



1900 NW Fourth Street, Ankeny, IA 50021
 and Theological Seminary
 Baptist Bible College
 Faith

The Dangerous Delusions of Covenant Theology

Manfred E. Haber, Th.D.



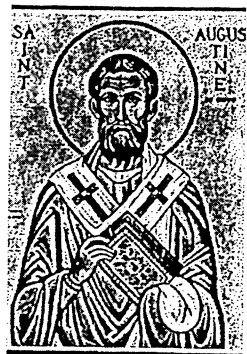
Covenant Theology grew out of the Reformation and as system was developed by second generation reformers, such as Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) who followed Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531), the Reformer of Zürich, Switzerland. As a theological system, Covenant Theology (CT) views the history of God's dealings with mankind under the framework of two or three overarching theological covenants, not specifically mentioned in Scripture, the covenant of works, the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption. God initially made covenant of works with Adam, promising eternal life for obedience and death for disobedience. Adam failed miserably, dooming the entire human race, but God intervened, entering into a covenant of grace through which the problem of sin and death would be overcome. Those subscribing to a covenant of redemption teach that in eternity past God the Father made a covenant with the Son as Head and Redeemer of the elect, voluntarily taking their place as the substitutionary sacrifice.



In contrast, dispensationalists view God's dealing with mankind in terms of several clearly distinguishable economies or dispensations. The term *dispensation* (Greek, *oikonomia* = economy, stewardship, dispensation) is used repeatedly in the New Testament (Eph. 1:10; 3:2, Col. 1:20), exactly the way dispensationalists use the term. As Charles C. Ryrie notes, "Dispensationalism views the world as a household run by God. In His household-world God is dispensing or administering its affairs according to His own will and in various stages of revelation in the passage of time" (*Dispensationalism* [1995], 29). They subscribe to the covenants mentioned in the Bible. There are at least eight: the Edenic covenant (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15-17), the Adamic covenant (Gen. 3:14-19), the Noahic covenant (Gen. 8:20-9:17), the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 20-23), the Davidic covenant (2. Sam. 7:4-17), the Palestinian covenant (Deut. 30:12-10) and the New covenant (Jer. 31-37).

Covenant theologians espouse many important biblical doctrines, such as biblical inerrancy, the total depravity of man, the sovereignty of God and eternal security, but on the contemporary scene, their profuse publications, especially in the area of prophecy, challenge the literal, dispensational understanding of end-time events.

1. Covenant Theology (CT) tries to rob believers of the foremost hope Christ left to the Church (Tit. 2:13), the any-moment return for His Bride, to deliver believers from the wrath to come (Rom 5:9; 1. Thess. 1:10; 5:9). Many of their theologians teach that Christ has actually returned already in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 or the believer must endure the time of the tribulation. The belief in the imminent return of the Savior for the saints is ridiculed as a false doctrine of recent origin.
2. CT is influenced by ecclesiastical tradition rather than being based on sound biblical exegesis. CT with its Reformation roots follows St. Augustine (d. 430) who denied a literal Millennium, therefore any Scriptures relating to the earthly rule of Christ are summarily rejected by CT.



3. CT substitutes a theological system for a biblical theology. The opinions of Augustine and the Reformers, who failed to separate from the Roman Catholic amillennial position, count more than the declaration of the Apostles. The reformers followed the end-time view of the Roman Catholic Church. While they saw clearly the issue of salvation by faith alone, they failed to reform the spiritualizing of biblical prophecy. What Calvin (1509-1564), the Swiss Reformer, and Cocceius (1603-1669), founder of CT, espoused concerning the future is heeded more than what Christ taught.



4. CT engages in a system of interpretation that began in pagan Greece, where the philosophers allegorized Greek immoral religious tales to make them acceptable to the cultural mind. The Greek poet Homer wrote fantastic tales of the gods cavorting on Mt. Olympus. The philosophers allegorized "many lines in Homer which seemed to them unworthy, undignified, morally reprehensible, and even positively blasphemous" (Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 1886, 136). The Greek gods, by blatant spiritualizing, suddenly became symbols of vices and virtues.



5. CT introduces, like Roman Catholicism and St. Augustine before, an illegitimate set of interpretive principles that distorts the plain sense of Scripture. This is primarily so in the area of prophecy. With their "dual hermeneutic" (*hermeneutics* = "the science and art of biblical interpretation") their theologians interpret fulfilled prophecy literally but spiritualize unfulfilled prophecy. CT would defend the literal fulfillment of Zech. 9:9 that Christ entered Jerusalem on a donkey but completely spiritualize the prediction of Zech. 14:4 that He would return physically to the Mount of Olives. Starting with the presupposition that there cannot be a millennium, any passage that remotely refers to a literal future reign of Christ on earth is reinterpreted.

6. CT refuses to see any fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (e.g. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18) in a future nation of Israel. The Reformed Knox Theological Seminary in Florida, published "An Open Letter to Evangelicals and Other Interested Parties: The People of God, the Land of Israel, and the Impartiality of the Gospel" in which the authors assert that "the entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to . . . the 'Holy Land' cannot be supported by Scripture. In fact, the land promises specific to Israel . . . were fulfilled under Joshua" (IX). Why the blindness to clear land promises to Israel? Why the denial of specific, literal prophecies that Israel would possess the land "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18). The "land of Canaan [would be Israel's] for an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:8). Sadly, to date, over 300 theologians and pastors added their signature to the open letter which constitutes a clear denial of God's future program for His people.

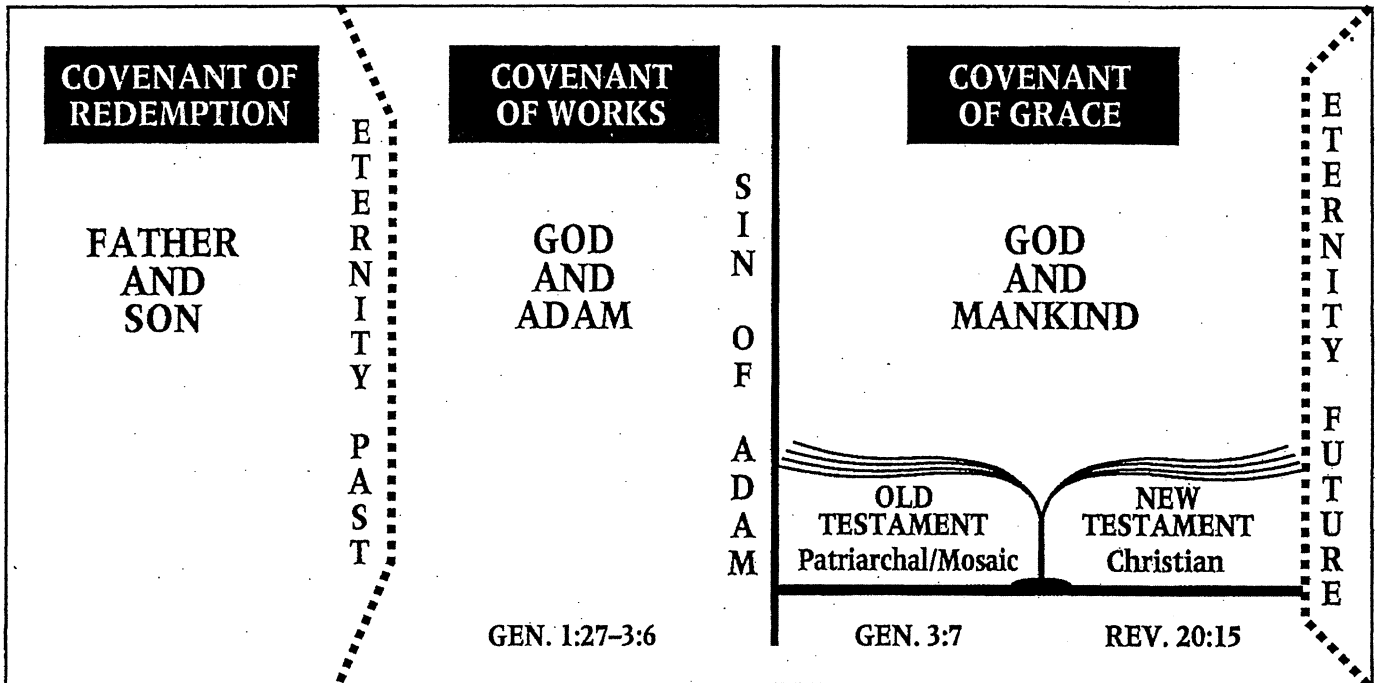
7. CT has fostered a movement that is inimical to biblical truth and polemical in its publications. The biblical dispensational position, clearly espoused in the "Thief in the Night" films series and the "Left Behind" volumes, is constantly under attack by such books as Gary DeMar's *Last Day Madness* and *End-Time Delusions*. It is virtually impossible to find a similar no-holds-barred dispensational attack on the CT position. Theologian R. C. Sproul, in his foreword to the latter volume, says that "in my years of study and ministry I have yet to discover a single text of sacred Scripture that teaches a pretribulation Rapture." The notion is "pure fiction" (ix). One wonders whether his version of the N.T. contains verses such as 1. Thess. 4:17 and Rev. 3:10!



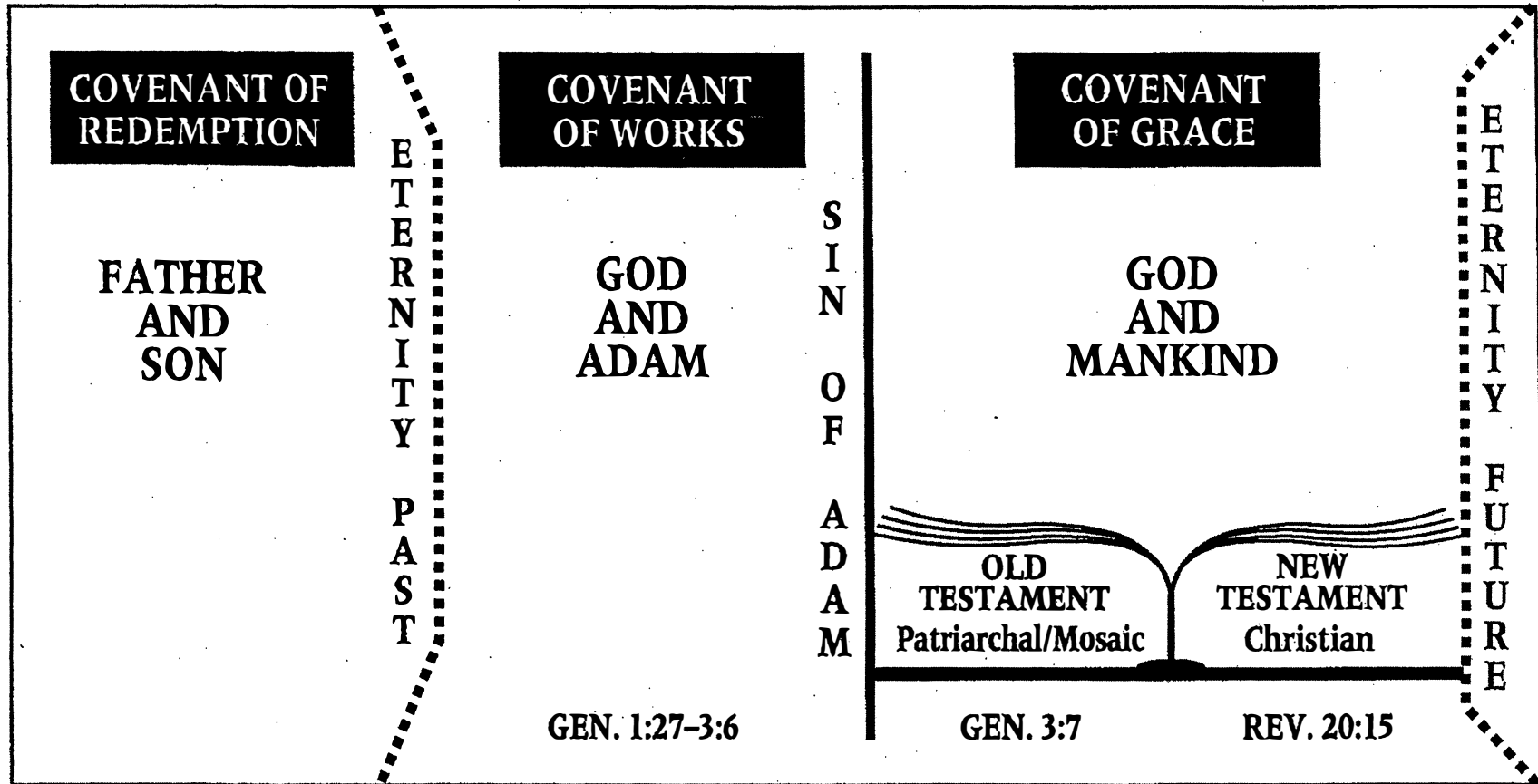
8. CT denies a literal rule of Christ on the throne of David, contradicting the angelic promise to Mary (Luke 1:32-33) and detracting from the future exaltation of Christ. That someday the Savior will graciously rule the world from Jerusalem - a frequent prophetic prediction (Is. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-3) - is strongly rejected by CT.
9. CT undermines any hope for a world yearning for righteousness and peace. For them human history ends in tragedy and ruin rather than triumph and redemption. The prophets clearly speak of a future time when Jerusalem will be the world's capital. Christ will judge righteously the whole world from the holy city. The nations will gather there for worship. All wars will cease. Redeemed Israel will bask in the light of their Messiah (Is. 2:4; Mic.4:2; Hab. 2:14). CT might believe in a return of Christ after the tribulation but sees that event as the end of human history.
10. CT leaves the saving work of Christ incomplete as it fails to see the redemption of nature from the curse of sin (Is. 11:6-8; Rom. 8:21-23). God predicts the future deliverance of this planet from the curse occasioned by the Adamic transgression (Rom. 5:12). CT does not allow any time for the glorious transformation of our planet to occur. All of creation groans for deliverance and that will surely come. A denial of clear literal prophecies will not deter their ultimate fulfillment.
11. CT distorts and denies not simply isolated passages but major portions of the prophetic Word, such as Ezekiel 40-48, Zechariah 14 and Revelation 4-22. Many in the CT camp, insist most of the predictions in the Revelation were fulfilled in the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70! Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, they insist that John penned the Revelation in the mid 60's and predicts that God would divorce national Israel for rejecting the Messiah, would judge her and replace her permanently with the universal church.
12. CT expands its energy and finances against fellow-Christians rather than rightly dividing the Word of truth (2. Tim. 2:15). Failure to do that, says the Apostle Paul, brings shame to those who fail to make biblical distinctions. Israel is not the Church. Law is not Grace. The throne of David will never be found in heaven.
13. CT makes the Holy Spirit a liar who expressly revealed **6 times in Revelation 20** that Christ's reign would last **1000 years**. With exegetical sleight of hand, CT tries to explain the number away. CT insists despite clear grammatical rules that the number 1000 is symbolic. In fact, when in the Greek (or Hebrew) language the word day or year is preceded by a numerical adjective, the reference is to a literal time period. What is true for the days of Genesis 1 is equally true for the years of Christ's reign. The earthly kingdom so clearly revealed and promised to believers (Lk. 12:32; 1. Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21) cannot be so cavalierly dismissed.
14. Theologians in the CT camp are unable to agree among themselves on a clear outline of future events. Some see the tribulation period in the past (Gary DeMar, R.C. Sproul), some in the present (Billy Graham) and still others future (Bill Bright). They are agreed on what they do not believe, but are unable to come to an agreement on what they do hold about the future. Departure from literal interpretation is detrimental to an understanding of the divine design for the future. The literal fulfillment of Bible prophecy is a striking demonstration to the world of the power and wisdom of God. The fact is that God does have a future

plan, "Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Is. 46:11). Furthermore, to know that the blood-bought believer has such a prominent place in God's plan for the future gives the individual an ardent desire to live for Christ, a hope that he will perhaps soon be summoned by Christ and an anticipation of the future eons of basking in the presence of Christ.

THE THEOLOGICAL COVENANTS



THE THEOLOGICAL COVENANTS



DISPENSATIONALISM

HOW TO OBSCURE DISPENSATIONALISM Pt. 1

by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie

Based on the definition of “obscure,” obscuring dispensationalism means making dispensationalism relatively unknown. And there are many different ways this is happening. Sometimes the worst thing someone can do to curse at conservatives is to call them dispensationalists. That’s about as low as you can get on some people’s ladder. But people can obscure dispensationalism more subtly, as is being done today.

1. Either Use or Create a Different Hermeneutic

One way that people are obscuring dispensationalism is by either using or creating a different hermeneutic. Different from what most people would call literal speech, I would prefer to call it plain or normal. God gave us speech. Man didn’t create it. From plain, normal hermeneutics, God created speech. I think there are at least three reasons for why He did this: so He can speak to us; so we can speak to Him; and so we can speak to each other. This third purpose seems pretty self-evident, but the importance of it is *how* we speak to each other. We speak plainly and normally, without creating fanciful interpretations. How do we speak to God? Even though some prayers may be a little too flowery, they communicate something clearly because we want God to hear our praise and petitions clearly. So how would we expect God to speak to us? The same way—clearly. But the new, fanciful hermeneutics are out to change that, and by changing it, they change the plain, clear, normal understanding of the text itself.

Here is an example of a wildly nonliteral hermeneutic on the basis of what I like to call a “deliteralized hermeneutic.” I don’t find this term in the textbooks, but I think it clearly applies. The hermeneutic is not literal anymore; all the literalness has been taken out. I don’t like to name names particularly, but the following example is from someone who is definitely a conservative and has written a number

of books. It refers to Isaiah 11 about the wolf and the lamb dwelling together. He says:

Sinners here are likened to the beasts of the field. It is unmistakably clear that the language by Isaiah is meant to be understood spiritually and not literally—spiritually, not literally as the dispensationalists vainly dream. How wondrous is the grace that brings the wolfish rebel into the mildness and meekness of the lamb. The lion passes from a carnivorous animal to a grass-eating animal. Take that literally, and it amounts to little. Understand it spiritually, and it means a great deal: when born again, we can no longer find satisfaction in creature things but long for heavenly food.

There is a very down-to-earth effect of normal hermeneutics. Rather than turn people off, it encourages them to study the Bible, understand it, and believe it just the way God said it.

He says “sinners” because there are other beasts mentioned in this chapter. The phrase “spiritual interpretation” is used because it has an aura of spirituality about it. But it isn’t spiritual interpretation, except that it means “deliteralized.” And the spiritual interpretation here is simply ridiculous. Besides, if meat were earthly, carnal food and grass were spiritual, heavenly food as this person implies, then believers should not eat meat.

The above deliteralized hermeneutic leads to an unbelievable interpretation.

Another example of a deliteralized hermeneutic comes from a different writer who is a well-known Old Testament scholar but is now deceased. He gives seven or eight principles of hermeneutics to be followed. One of these states: “Whether you should interpret a passage figuratively or spiritually depends solely on what gives the true meaning.”

Today of course, progressive dispensationalists have created a new hermeneutic called a complementary hermeneutic. This means that something quite literal and specific in the Old Testament can have a New Testament complement that adds to the Old Testament promise without changing it. For

example, consider the Old Testament reference to the throne of David. With the complementary hermeneutic, the throne of David suddenly becomes the right hand of the Father. That doesn't mean or deny that there will be a future throne of David on earth. But this new idea that Christ is now reigning on the throne of David is based on what has been called a complementary hermeneutic. So if people want to defame or demean dispensationalism, then they go to something other than what gives plain, normal meaning, and then to be scholarly, they have to either use or create a new kind of hermeneutic to uphold the kind of interpretation they want.

I am concerned about a very practical ramification of using or creating a different hermeneutic. I think it turns people off and many ordinary people are going to be defeated and disinclined to study the Bible because the scholars don't take it literally. Therefore I can't follow the earlier spiritual interpretation. I would never see the wolfish sinner in Isaiah 11. People might wonder why they should worry about other more important things in the Bible and about taking them plainly. If people are not turned off and they insist on a more plain, normal hermeneutic and thus a more plain, normal interpretation, then they are going to have to be dispensational.

As people start studying the Bible in a plain, normal way, they read: "pray that your flight not be in the winter or on the Sabbath day" (Matt. 24:20). How many of us have ever prayed that? Probably none, but if we did, we were wasting God's time or our own. The same could be said for praying "that the flood would not overtake you," which seems pretty plain. Or they might read that they shouldn't eat certain foods, which leads to the thought that maybe God has run the world in different ways at different times, which He has. Why shouldn't He? That's His privilege, and He has revealed those different ways at different times, which is what dispensationalism is all about. It recognizes that God has *dispensed* dispensationalism. He has dispensed His laws, principles, and guidance for the world in different ways at different times. If we study the Bible just ordinarily, plainly, or normally (I'm trying to avoid "literally," but it's okay to use it), just as we use God-given speech with each other and with Him, we realize there have been some changes. And recognizing

those changes is what the dispensational interpretation of the Scriptures is about. There is a very down-to-earth effect of normal hermeneutics. Rather than turn people off, it encourages them to study the Bible, understand it, and believe it just the way God said it.

2. Blunt or Blur the Consistent and Complete Distinction between Israel and the Church

What is now being done to blunt or blur the consistent and complete distinction between Israel and the church (this is not theoretical) is redefining the word "mystery." Paul uses the word "mystery" about things not made known in other ages (Col. 1:26-27) and about something revealed through the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:3-5). But now progressive dispensationalists are defining it as something revealed in the Old Testament but unrealized until the church began. The mystery was unrealized,

meaning it was not fulfilled but it was revealed. That is a new theological use of the word "mystery" that is different from what has been the case in normal dispensational teaching.

A study of the words "church" and "Israel" in the New Testament shows that even in the New Testament these terms are completely and consistently distinguished. However, a result of progressive dispensationalism is to not give much importance to certain key Scripture passages,

such as Daniel 9:24-27, which details the seventy "sevens" or seventy seven-year periods for Israel. To give importance to this passage would lead to the very sharp distinction that the seventieth week (period of seven years) deals with Daniel's "city" and his "people" Israel (9:24) rather than the church. But progressive dispensationalists don't deal with this passage very often. Just look in the subject index of some of their books and see if there are pages where Daniel 9 is discussed in any great detail.

Perhaps even more significantly, 1 Corinthians 12:13 is another passage that is played down in progressive dispensationalism. This verse states, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks." In Acts 1:5, Spirit baptism is said to be in the future. According to Acts 11:15, it is said to have happened "at the begin-

The "body" isn't before these church epistles because it didn't exist prior to the church age. The "body" of Christ's church is not in the Old Testament.

ning.” 1 Corinthians 12:13 explains that it put us “into one body”—the body of Christ. The word “body” doesn’t appear again in Scripture (other than references to the physical body of Christ) until Paul’s letters to the Romans and Corinthians. The “body” isn’t before these church epistles because it didn’t exist prior to the church age. The “body” of Christ’s church is not in the Old Testament. If it were, it would be a body not baptized by the Spirit because the Spirit didn’t begin to baptize people into the body until the Day of Pentecost.

Progressive dispensationalists blur this and make the baptism of the Spirit to be a ministry of the Spirit, almost like any other ministry of the Holy Spirit that therefore could have occurred in the Old Testament. In the view of one conservative theologian who has embraced this new progressive idea of dispensationalism, there is not a consistent and complete distinction between Israel and the church. He says, “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is therefore not some unique ministry only for the people in the present Church age.” He goes on to say, “It’s the same as the gift of the Spirit,” and “the Spirit was given in the Old Testament times.” But no one was put into the body of Christ in Old Testament times or even in the days of our Lord because it didn’t happen until the Day of Pentecost.

3. Put Some Scarecrows in the Field of Dispensationalism to Scare People Away

If people want to obscure dispensationalism, or make it relatively unknown, here’s one scarecrow they use: “Dispensationalists rip out one part of the Bible.” “They don’t believe it enough to follow the old food laws.” No, I don’t follow the old food laws! I’m very thankful God has given us meat to enjoy even though it’s a “carnal, earthly food.” If we supposedly “rip out those parts of the Bible,” then so do Reformed people since they don’t follow the food laws either. Like most of us, I know I’m guilty of breaking the law with what I’m wearing. My shirt is made of mixed material, and that’s against the law (Lev. 19:19)! You probably have some mixed material on you, you law breakers!

Now there are two ways to alleviate your rebellion:

one is to buy all-cotton shirts, and the other is to be a dispensationalist. The latter is also a lot cheaper!

All Scripture is profitable, but all of it does not concern the rule of life under which I live. And nobody would say we put ourselves under all these rules of life. I don’t know anyone who wants to go back to the rule of life that governed Adam and Eve before they fell. If we do, we all ought to have a tree in our gardens, the fruit of which we don’t eat because that is what God said to do. That was His rule of life; that was what He was dispensing in those days. But when it comes to things closer to home, then the accusation, or the scarecrow, is: “If you become a dispensationalist, you are going to ignore or tear out parts of the Bible.” This is not true.

The fact that something is new or old is interesting and sometimes important. The important thing is not where a certain doctrine falls in the development of church history, but is it biblical?

Here is another scarecrow that is used: “You dispensationalists, you teach multiple ways of salvation.” Now if God wanted to arrange multiple ways of salvation so people could get saved in different ways, I’d thank Him. Wouldn’t you? But the problem with this scarecrow is the word “way.” When people accuse a dispensationalist of having multiple ways of salvation, what do they mean by the word “way”? If they mean the *basis*, there is one basis: the death of Christ. If they mean the *requirement*, there is one requirement: faith. If they mean the *object* of faith, there is one object: the living and true God. If the *content* of faith is in question, that is much harder to delineate. I know what it is now today—Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But I don’t know what it was in certain previous eras. We cite Abraham and some of the prophets, but I still can’t write out a twenty-word sentence of what “Joe” or “Sarah” Israel, the ordinary Israelite, had to believe. It’s hard to specify what the content was. It certainly was not “Jesus of Nazareth.” So when people say “way,” what do they mean? A lot of people cannot explain the content and don’t specifically and clearly use the word “way” when they charge dispensationalists of teaching more than one “way” of salvation.

“It’s too new to be true” is another scarecrow. One old doctrine taught since the first centuries of church history is baptismal regeneration. Though that doctrine is old, much more ancient than dispen-

sationalism, I don't believe it. The fact that something is new or old is interesting and sometimes important. The important thing is not where a certain doctrine falls in the development of church history, but is it biblical?

Still another scarecrow is: "Dispensationalism divides Christians, and anything that divides is suspicious, if not wrong, because divisions are wrong." The people who say this cite the early chapters of 1 Corinthians as biblical support to make their case that we shouldn't be dispensational because we don't want to divide the body of Christ. But it isn't dispensationalism which divided. In our more recent history when dispensationalism became more systematized, what really started to divide Christians was plain, ordinary Bible study. After the great Bible conferences in this country, people went home from them and said, "My pastor is not preaching the Bible." Sometimes that led to divisions, which isn't necessarily wrong. Besides, the apostle

Paul said later in 1 Corinthians 11:19, "There must also be divisions among you that those who are approved may stand out." I don't think any of the ecumenists read that verse. The same apostle in the same letter to the same group said "don't be divided" and "there must be divisions," and you have to put the two statements together. So with no clear hermeneutic and no clear distinctions between Israel and the church, we have scarecrows in the patch. ■

This article is a transcription of Dr. Ryrie's message by the same title given at the 2006 Pre-Trib Rapture conference in Dallas, TX, with slight revisions by Dr. Ryrie.

Dr. Charles C. Ryrie is one of the most well-known and highly respected evangelical theologians in America today and is considered a leading authority on premillennial dispensationalism. He served for many years as professor of systematic theology at Dallas Theological Seminary and has authored numerous books, including the best-selling *Ryrie Study Bible*.

BIBLE STUDY SERIES OF INTEREST

We want you to be aware that there are many studies on books of the Bible and doctrinal subjects for your spiritual edification and equipping available on our website at duluthbible.org or at Sermonaudio.com to be downloaded for FREE or to be purchased (in CD or DVD format) by contacting us directly. These audio/video messages can be used in your personal study of God's Word or utilized in home Bible studies, Sunday School classes, men's or women's studies, along with a fill-in-the-blank handout that accompanies each study. A sampling of these studies are:

1. The 2013 "Becoming a Man of God" Conference (8 studies) – highly recommended!
2. How to Know and Do the Will of God (11 studies) – very practical!
3. The 2013 Ladies Bible Conference (6 studies / 2 testimonies, audio only) – very edifying for women!
4. The Gospel of Luke – Jesus Christ: What a Savior! (presently being taught)
5. The Greatness of God's Grace (12 studies) – this will encourage and help establish you in grace!
6. The Book of James (18 studies) – verse by verse practical studies of applied Christianity.
7. Distinct Features of Sanctification under Grace (1 study) – a unique study worth hearing!
8. Romans 1-5 (18 studies) – clarifying the Gospel, justification by grace, eternal security, etc.
9. Romans 6-8 (17 studies) – your identity in Christ, sanctification by grace & future glorification

(There are hundreds of other messages available at our website & Sermonaudio.com. Check it out!)

DISCLAIMER

Though we seek to have articles by a variety of authors that are biblically accurate, informative, and encouraging in the *Grace Family Journal*, this does not mean that we fully endorse every interpretation, doctrinal position, or association of our contributors.

DISPENSATIONALISM

HOW TO OBSCURE DISPENSATIONALISM Pt. 2

by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie

Based on the definition of “obscure,” obscuring dispensationalism means making dispensationalism relatively unknown. And there are many different ways this is happening.

1. **Either Use or Create a Different Hermeneutic**
2. **Blunt or Blur the Consistent and Complete Distinction between Israel and the Church**
3. **Put Some Scarecrows in the Field of Dispensationalism to Scare People Away**
4. **Devise a New, Different Theology**

There are some new theologies available today that will clearly lead believers away from dispensationalism. Preterism, which has different forms, means “past,” so preterists deal with eschatology passages as fulfilled. They take all of the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation to have been fulfilled by the year A.D. 70 when Rome overran Palestine. To do this, of course, the book of Revelation must have been written before the year 70, which is hard to prove. But preterists have a different theology without a millennium, so they certainly don’t need to be dispensationalists.

Another theology being substituted for dispensational theology is replacement theology, which says that the church now replaces Israel. Or in very small type, it says, “The church inherits Israel’s promises but not her curses.” So it’s not replacement theology; it’s replacement of the good things but not of the total package that was given to Israel. And that has an economic ramification. A bumper sticker for replacement theologians could say “boycott Israel,” which is what some groups have done. In the Presbyterians’ general assembly in September 2004, they voted to boycott Israel by not buying products from those who deal with Israel. The Episcopal Church did the same thing in November 2004, and the Methodists did likewise in July 2005. So this has been a normal, logical out-

growth of replacement theology in the economic realm.

Another new, different theology is, of course, Reformed theology. Reformed theologians are obviously not dispensational. Don’t let anyone tell you that Berkhof had dispensations in his scheme. He did, but he was not a dispensationalist. He just used the word to label the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament and between the pre-Mosaic and Mosaic eras in the Old Testament. That didn’t make him a dispensationalist though. He was a pure, unadulterated Reformed theologian and a good church historian.



But I think people forget that Reformed theology is a package, or a whole group of things, including infant baptism. It includes teaching such as, “The church began with Abraham.” And I don’t think I’ve ever read what a Reformed person does with pre-Abrahamic saints such as Adam, Abel, or Enoch. They didn’t belong to the church because the church didn’t begin, supposedly, until Abraham. Reformed theologians would just say the pre-Abrahamic saints are part of the great umbrella of the people of God. Not only do they believe the church began with Abraham, they also believe

in limited atonement (Christ died only for the elect), and they are almost always amillennial. There are variations of course, just as there are variations with Calvinists and Arminians, but normally the Reformed package is infant baptism, the church beginning with Abraham, limited atonement, amillennialism, and of course, not dispensationalism.

And friends, make no mistake about it, Reformed theology is now aggressive in this country. It is led by some very well-known and popular Bible teachers. But it is not only non-dispensational, it is anti-dispensational.

Besides the Reformed, Replacement, and Preterist theologies, another one that is popular today and may be gaining ascendancy is Kingdom theology. This view says, "Kingdom is the unifying principle of biblical revelation. The Kingdom of God is the main idea in all of the Bible." When it's defined and used this way, people promoting this theology are not going to give much place to any kind of dispensational distinctions. Kingdom is used in a lot of ways in the Bible. The Old Testament has very local kingdoms, and the overall rule is of God because He is God. And another kind of kingdom is of God ruling over His angels. But we don't belong to that one—you're all nice people, but you're not angels. There's also the kingdom of the future where God will rule in some way. This is the millennial kingdom if you're a dispensationalist and premillennialist, but if you aren't, you can still be a kingdom theologian.

A conservative, amillennialist theologian wrote this about Kingdom theology not long ago:

God's kingdom now transcends the geospatial boundaries of national Israel. The people are no longer primarily Abraham's physical descendants but the nations themselves. The theme of the land [so clearly part of the Abrahamic Covenant, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates] has been Christified. The King's throne is no longer in earthly but in heavenly Mount Zion. In the New Testament, the land theme undergoes a paradigm shift, which downplays the physical aspect of land in favor of its spiritual significance. Neither Christ nor His disciples ever teach that dispersed, ethnic Israel will ever return to Canaan. Canaan functions as a type of the Christian life in Christ.

He is promoting Kingdom theology without a millennium, from the viewpoint of an amillennialist. This shows that Kingdom theology doesn't have to be within the realm or limited to premillennialists or even progressive dispensationalists. And I think Kingdom theology is being promoted in other circles as well.

Because kingdom theology makes room for signs and wonders, one circle is promoting it for that movement and that emphasis. Signs and wonders are an emphasis of Kingdom theology because they will accompany the coming of the kingdom. One thing that I think embarrasses progressive dispensationalists is that we don't have enough signs and wonders now. We view them as occurring later on, or else say they were just in the first generation, and that's all.

"But if the kingdom is now, why should God withdraw signs and wonders in any century or generation?" asks a thoroughly conservative man associated with the Vineyard movement, which has been promoting signs and wonders. He makes a distinction that has become part and parcel of Kingdom theology: the "already, not yet" or the "already now, not yet future" distinction.

And friends, make no mistake about it, Reformed theology is now aggressive in this country. . . . it is not only non-dispensational, it is anti-dispensational.

According to Kingdom theology two important aspects of the kingdom are the "kingdom already" (which means Christ is now ruling on the Davidic throne) and "kingdom not yet" (which if you're a premillennialist means Christ will rule on the Davidic throne on earth). For an amillennialist, there is no rule of Christ on earth except now through the church. This man says the "already" aspect of the kingdom, which means now, is the

community of Jesus and is about the business of expressing Jesus' rule in our own lives and then in the world around us. This man teaches that, individually, we live the ethic of the kingdom, and that ethic is the Sermon on the Mount, the long version which is recorded in Matthew 5-7. Communally and individually, we are supposed to obey the Sermon on the Mount.

This man goes on to say, "In lifestyle, we should live by Acts 2:42 and the 'apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread,' and in those aspects of power, miracles, signs, and wonders. Though now in power, the kingdom will come later in even more power." That is the way he focuses power in signs and wonders relatively now. But I think he means "now" not in just the first or second generation of church history but in the "not yet" aspect of the kingdom in greater power. He also states, "The data of Acts suggests that the one constant in the expansion of the kingdom is the proclamation of

Jesus as King.” However, you can put whatever importance you want on kingdom, but the importance now in the New Testament is on the *body* of Christ. And the importance and emphasis is always on the members of the body taking directions from the “Head,” not as subjects taking directions from the “King.” The members of the body are supposed to follow the lead of the Head of the body.

There is another way in which Kingdom theology is being promoted. In 2002, the Southern Baptist Convention (which I name because it’s very public) started a program called, “Empowering Kingdom Growth.” The theme of the national convention was “Kingdom First” in 2003 and “Kingdom Forever” in 2004. This is a very large movement comprised mostly of conservatives who are into this “kingdom” emphasis, which isn’t necessarily wrong, but it isn’t the focus of Scripture for the present church age. I think one of the serious ramifications of this misfocus is that “kingdom ethics” are substituted for “church ethics” or “body ethics.”

These kingdom theologians try to impose upon people the Sermon on the Mount as commands to be followed now without any disobedience. No dispensationalist says that the Sermon on the Mount is to be torn out of the Bible, and the older dispensationalists very plainly said that it has significance and relevance as with all Scripture, but to press every word of the Sermon on the Mount as being directly applicable to the church today is going to get you into a heap of trouble. Even contemporary dispensationalists clearly make it plain that we take what we can of guidance from the Sermon on the Mount. And certainly if any of the commands in the Sermon on the Mount are repeated elsewhere in the New Testament, then they are absolute commands which we are to obey plainly, clearly, and unequivocally.

Kingdom ethics deal with conditions in the Kingdom when the King is here, but are they required for the church today? I have a little trouble with that, not because they’re necessarily wrong, which they aren’t, but because they play down the hundreds of references in the New Testament that are clearly for the body of Christ. In describing some of the teachings of his book called, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective*, one au-

thor says that “the priorities of the King must become the priorities of the Kingdom colony, the Church.” I’m not part of a colony; I’m part of a body. And that’s where I ought to be. I’m not sure where a colony is. This is similar to the progressive dispensationalist who talks about the church being an “outpost of God’s Kingdom,” and says that “the priorities of the King are now my priorities as members of the kingdom colony.”

Talking about his book, *The Kingdom of Christ*, the previous author continues to say, “The priorities of the eschatological kingdom must transform the priorities of our churches, including the ways we think of culture and politics.” However, there isn’t going to be much open change admitted or permitted in the millennium politically because we will be in a theocracy then. The author continues to say, “If the kingdom is ruled by believers of every tribe and nation (Revelation 5), who are these?

These are those who came out of the great tribulation and made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.” The author is interpreting future tribulation saints to be saints “now”—of the present church age. He continues by asking, “If the kingdom is ruled by believers of every tribe and nation, then how can Christians stand by while some of the cosmos’s future rulers are denied justice”? He is clearly attempting to make the ethics of the millennium, the “not yet kingdom,”

the ethics of the “already kingdom,” that is of our lives today in the body of Christ. And not all of it is wrong; but it’s the wrong emphasis, which bothers me considerably.

I’ve also read things such as, “Dallas and Westminster are getting together,” which means, “Dispensationalists and Reformed people are getting together.” One of the Reformed people said, “Prophecies of the future should be understood as descriptions, in figurative language to be sure, of the new earth, which will last not for 1,000 years, but forever.” This is a different step because he believes that some of these prophecies will be fulfilled in the new earth, so he doesn’t need a millennium. One dispensationalist wrote recently, “Modified dispensationalism and modified covenantalists (Reformed people) have come to a substantial agreement on a present initial stage of fulfillment of the eschatological promises (already, not yet) and a unified spir-

However, you can put whatever importance you want on kingdom, but the importance now in the New Testament is on the body of Christ.

itual people of God.” In response I would say that I don’t deny there is a unified people of God—of course there is. It’s like having a family, and you have pre-Abrahamic saints, church saints, and tribulation saints, and in that sense we are unified. But just as in the family, there are differences, and a big difference goes back to the baptizing work of the Spirit. Christian saints now are members of the body of Christ, which didn’t exist in Old Testament times. With dispensationalists and Reformed people getting together, I think that dispensationalists are making more compromises than Reformed people are, and that isn’t good.

5. Focus on Present Responsibilities and Activities and Downplay the Future

Obscuring dispensationalism by focusing on present responsibilities and activities and downplaying the future is an elaboration of something I introduced earlier. Proponents of this say we must focus on the “already kingdom”; and if there are differences of opinion on the “not yet kingdom” (whether it’s millennial, or new earth, or nonexistent), then so be it. They say the important thing is to focus on the “already” form of the kingdom. So “emphasize the present, play down the future, promote kingdom living here and now, and so on and so on.” They say, “The Sermon on the Mount is the best means of evangelism.” While the Sermon on the Mount has wonderful content, I don’t see Acts 16:31 in it! I don’t see John 3:16 there either.

And if the future is downgraded, of course there is no reason to talk about, think about, or read the newspaper about modern-day Israel, the nation itself, and what’s happening in that part of the world and in other prophetic blocks of power that will come to full fruition in the Tribulation period. You can say, as progressive dispensationalists have said, that this viewpoint is “less land centered,” or as the amillennialist says, “the land centered is not geospatial anymore.” They also do not make the Pre-tribulation Rapture too prominent or even necessary because they’ve de-emphasized Daniel 9. But if something is in the Bible, it’s important, whether I understand or not how it might be used by God. One progressive dispensationalist has said:

With dispensationalists and Reformed people getting together, I think that dispensationalists are making more compromises than Reformed people are, and that isn’t good.

1 Thessalonians 5 would appear to be Pre-tribulation . . . while most dispensationalists probably hold to a Pre-tribulation Rapture of the church as being in certain respects more harmonious with dispensationalism in general, many would not desire to make this a determining feature of dispensationalism today.

But by saying it’s not “a determining feature,” he’s saying that he’s playing it down. What about the “Blessed Hope”? It becomes the “Neutered Hope.” And a very down-to-earth practical effect is that we can forget about Bible prophecy conferences. I’m old enough to remember that every year or every other year, people had prophecy conferences and several Bible conferences on prophetic subjects. I went to a Bible conference not long ago, and it was compressed into one day. It did have four meetings,

and it probably got more people to attend than if it had Sunday-through-Wednesday meetings, but it was just four meetings once a year. Fortunately that pastor was an expositor, so the people were getting Bible teaching every Sunday as well. But some say, “Let’s have a marriage conference, a parenting seminar, a men’s conference, a women’s conference, a financial seminar.” These all have their place, but what’s happening is that people are pushing aside the Bible, often the prophetic portions of the Bible, which is not good at all.

6. Modify, Neuter, or Don’t Enforce a Doctrinal Statement or Position

Modifying, neutering, or not enforcing a doctrinal statement or position applies to churches, organizations, missions, and schools. Not all have doctrinal statements, but if they do and want to play down dispensationalism, that or at least the eschatological part is often what goes or is changed. Or if the statement is not changed, it won’t be enforced, and this won’t produce anything except the new stance that organization has accepted. Two different groups, both historically Pre-tribulation and Pre-millennial, recently debated about changing their doctrinal statement. Guess what they made broader and more inclusive? It’s the eschatological portion, the Rapture and in one case even the Millennium. I was able to ask someone connected to one of the

organizations why they were doing it. The person said, "We want to make it easier for people to understand." I think you ought to be clear when you speak and write, but it's not other people or groups who need to understand but the board, faculty, missionaries, and administration themselves who need to understand. If their statement becomes more inclusive, weaker, and less clear, then they're targeting the wrong audience. It ought to be made clear to the group who has the power to state it, teach it, live it, and make the organization stand for it.

But if they can't or don't change the statement, then what they will often do is simply broaden the meaning of the existing statement so they can claim they are still "agreeing" with their original doctrinal position. I got trapped once because I thought I was saying that a group should have "essential" agreement with the doctrinal statement, and someone made the word essential mean "pretty much." And the people in question had that kind of "essential" agreement. But the dictionary says that essential means "indispensable; of primary importance." So if you make essential agreement essential, then it is primary, actual agreement. The word "actual" comes from the word "active," so an organization should not have passive agreement with its doctrinal position. However, in practice this often means: "Well, I don't teach or speak against a certain thing in your doctrinal position, but to be honest I won't promote it either." And that's the beginning of the end.

These ways of neutering a doctrinal statement or position, demeaning it, or playing it down are becoming quite acceptable. This is happening not just today, but I've lived long enough to see it happen in years and decades past. People say, "We'll have a committee, and the committee will examine the missionary, the faculty member, or the student who is supposed to agree, and we will see if they agree." But if they have to have a committee to find out, then they probably don't agree, so save the time.

Recently I met two young men who are graduates from one of our fine schools in this country. They had told the school they were not pre-tribulation rapturists, but the school had that position. So the school appointed a committee to examine them and found out that they should be encouraged to agree and sign something they needed to sign to graduate.

This bothered the two students, which translates to the two students having more integrity than the school. A year after graduating, they still didn't believe in the Pre-tribulation Rapture, but they had received their diplomas.

If people change a position, whatever the position is, they're acting with integrity only if they promote or enforce it. I think people don't enforce a changed position because they're enamored with numbers and can reach more people. But if they want to reach the most people, they would have to give up a number of doctrines. They wouldn't press matters about the Holy Spirit because they'll reach more people. They wouldn't believe in verbal inerrancy so they can reach more people. And never mind the Trinity. Let's look at one of our national TV stars

who is a modalist. He's reaching a lot of people, but does that excuse his modalism? Not in my book. They think if we are too specific, we are going to be dividing the church and so on.

In a sense though, the strength of American Christianity is due to the fact that we *can* divide and start our own school, our own mission, or our own Pre-tribulation Rapture group and promote what we

think is right. If you don't believe this has, in one sense, been the strength of American Christianity, then go live in a Protestant country where the church is a state church. If you want to start a school there, you've got to be 400 years old before you're recognized in a state-church system. So these are some of the ways and effects of obscuring dispensationalism by modifying, neutering, or not enforcing doctrinal statements or positions. ■

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

2 Timothy 4:3-4

This article is a transcription of Dr. Ryrie's message by the same title given at the 2006 Pre-Trib Rapture conference in Dallas, TX, with slight revisions by Dr. Ryrie.

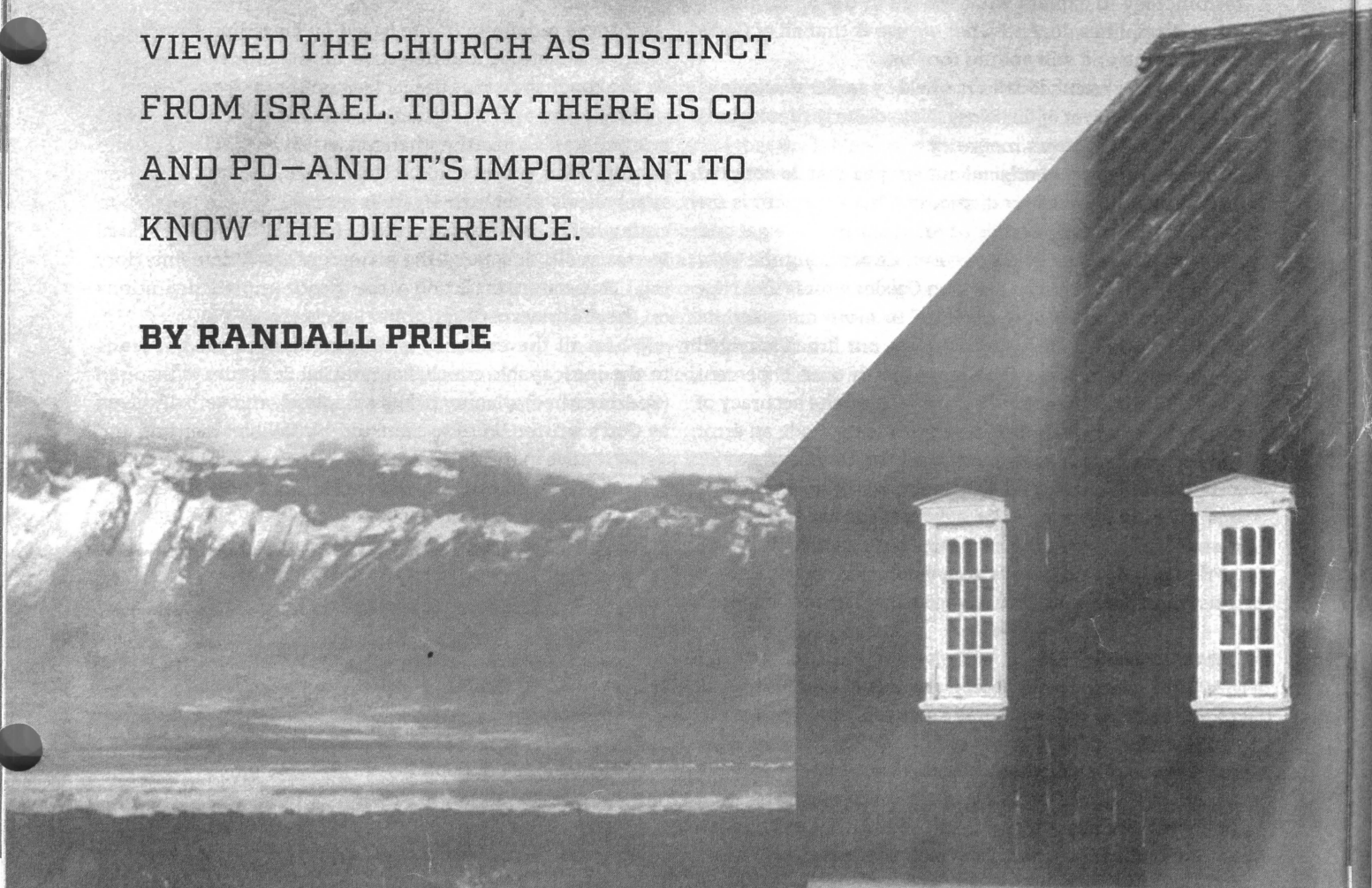
Dr. Charles C. Ryrie is one of the most well-known and highly respected evangelical theologians in America today and is considered a leading authority on premillennial dispensationalism. He served for many years as professor of systematic theology at Dallas Theological Seminary and has authored numerous books, including the best-selling *Ryrie Study Bible*.

These ways of neutering a doctrinal statement or position, demeaning it, or playing it down are becoming quite acceptable.

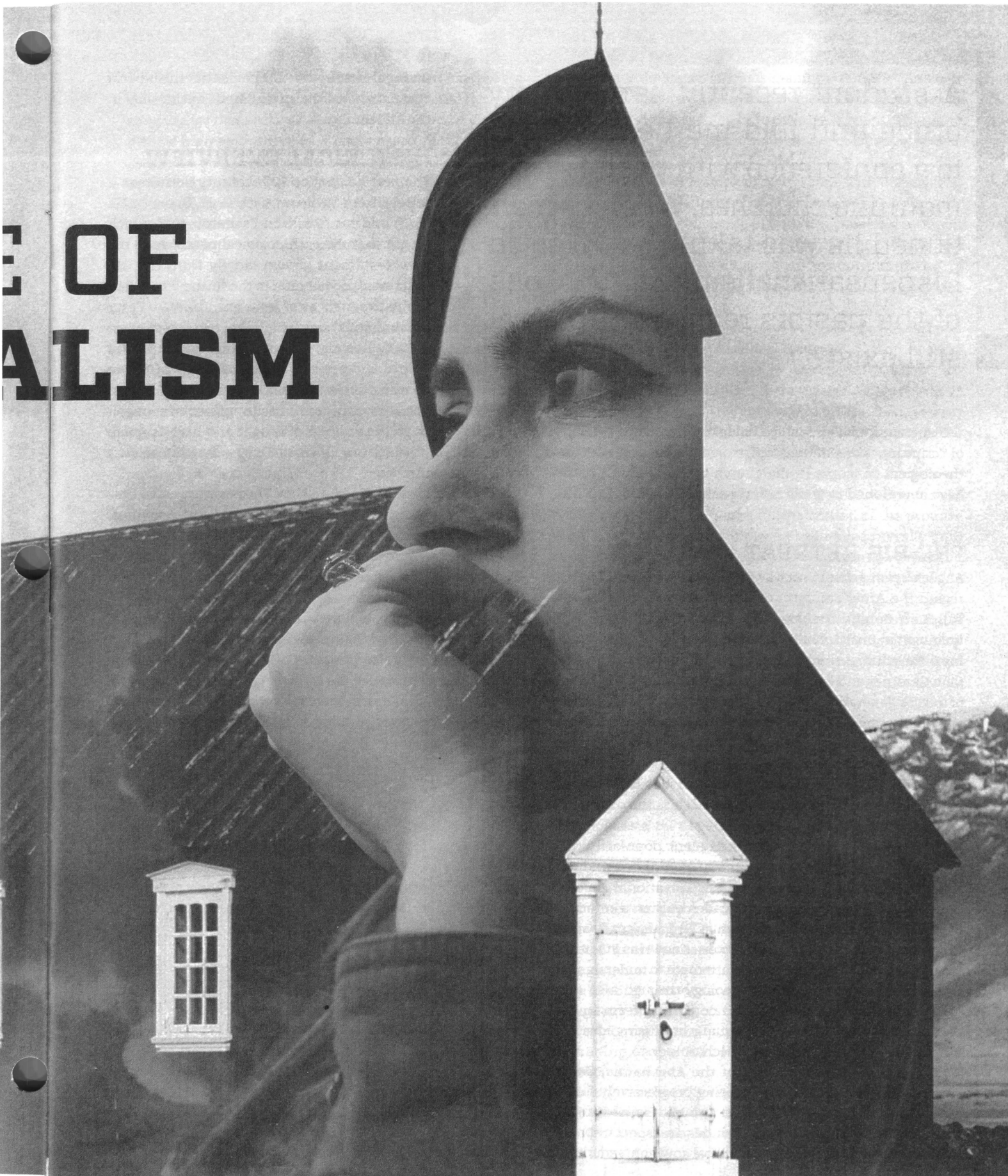
THE CHANGING FACE DISPENSATIONAL

YEARS AGO, A DISPENSATIONALIST WAS SOMEONE WHO CONSISTENTLY VIEWED THE CHURCH AS DISTINCT FROM ISRAEL. TODAY THERE IS CD AND PD—AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

BY RANDALL PRICE



E OF ALISM





A student recently came to my office and told me he had been to a conference with pastors from mainline churches. When he mentioned he was taking a course on Dispensationalism from me, one of the pastors replied, “Does that still exist?”

Dispensationalism,* which holds to a literal interpretation of Scripture, is one of the most maligned and misunderstood theological concepts in the church today. Many Christians have abandoned it, while others seek to redefine it.

THE BIG RETREAT

Anglican evangelicals, such as popular theologian N. T. Wright, regard the American form of Dispensationalism (what they call “Left Behind theology”) as “bizarre” and contend it is unknown in British circles. However, long before Wright made his observation, American Reformed* theologians—such as John Gerstner and R. C. Sproul, who have shaped the thinking of today’s generation—had labeled Dispensationalism heresy.¹

The Emergent Church* has discarded Dispensationalism altogether as an obstacle to inclusiveness. And the modern church, appealing to millennials who largely steer clear of eschatology* (the study of future things), has little room for the broader teaching of futurism, much less the distinctions of Dispensationalism.

These trends, coupled with the recent popularity of Reformed teaching, have caused many seminaries and Bible colleges to retreat from defending Dispensational Theology.

In addition, more than two decades earlier, a reformulation of Classical Dispensationalism* (CD) had already spread throughout dispensational institutions. Known as Progressive Dispensationalism* (PD), this view attempts to understand the core tenets of Dispensational Theology through a so-called complementary interpretation,† a confusing term in itself because it seeks to explain the equally confusing idea of an “already/not yet” and “both/and” eschatology.

PD’s central tenet teaches that the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants are already being progressively fulfilled today and will also be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. Thus PD’s concept of futurism includes an aspect of present fulfillment in the church for the biblical covenants made with

national Israel, while CD holds that the biblical covenants find their fulfillment exclusively in the Millennium.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The first half of the 20th century witnessed a retreat from futurism with C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) and his “Realized Eschatology,”* which taught that the eschatological passages in the New Testament (drawn largely from the Old Testament) do not refer to the future but, rather, to the experiences of Jesus and the New Testament church.²

Many liberals, who preferred the principles of love and peace to the expectation of future apocalyptic destruction, embraced Dodd’s position. His view continues to influence evangeli-

cals today through the writings of Wright and his “Kingdom Now” theology,* which largely characterizes the 21st-century “millennial” churches.

A different form of Kingdom Now Theology that also sees some or all Bible prophecies as fulfilled in historic events of the past is Preterism.* Once the provenance of liberal scholars, Preterism is now advanced by the teachings of conservative Christians such as radio “Bible Answer Man” Hank Hanegraaff and the late R. C. Sproul.³

Another evangelical, historic premillennialist,* Gordon E. Ladd, promoted Oscar Cullman’s “Inaugurated Eschatology,”* a view that taught the promises of the Kingdom Age were initially being realized in the Church Age.⁴ Many well-known, evangelical, premillennial scholars, such as D. A. Carson, have promoted this view, which forms the substance of Progressive Dispensationalism. It retains the CD distinctive concerning the future Kingdom, but also embraces a spiritual fulfillment of those promises within the Church Age.

PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

Progressive Dispensationalism debuted in the 1990s as developed and defended in the works of evangelical scholars Craig A. Blaising (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), Darrell L. Bock (Dallas Theological Seminary), and the late Robert L. Saucy (Talbot Seminary).

These authors claim their view simply revises the core tenets of Dispensationalism. But PD’s inclusion of tenets from opposing systems of interpretation obscures CD’s distinctives and makes possible a progression toward the next inevitable position: Amillennialism* or Postmillennialism.*

Evangelical theologian Walter A. Elwell observed, “The newer dispensationalism looks so much like non-dispensational pre-millennialism that one struggles to see any real difference.”⁵

Postmillennialist Keith Mathison stated,



A student recently came to my office and told me he had been to a conference with pastors from mainline churches. When he mentioned he was taking a course on Dispensationalism from me, one of the pastors replied, “Does that still exist?”

Dispensationalism,* which holds to a literal interpretation of Scripture, is one of the most maligned and misunderstood theological concepts in the church today. Many Christians have abandoned it, while others seek to redefine it.

THE BIG RETREAT

Anglican evangelicals, such as popular theologian N. T. Wright, regard the American form of Dispensationalism (what they call “Left Behind theology”) as “bizarre” and contend it is unknown in British circles. However, long before Wright made his observation, American Reformed* theologians—such as John Gerstner and R. C. Sproul, who have shaped the thinking of today’s generation—had labeled Dispensationalism heresy.¹

The Emergent Church* has discarded Dispensationalism altogether as an obstacle to inclusiveness. And the modern church, appealing to millennials who largely steer clear of eschatology* (the study of future things), has little room for the broader teaching of futurism, much less the distinctions of Dispensationalism.

These trends, coupled with the recent popularity of Reformed teaching, have caused many seminaries and Bible colleges to retreat from defending Dispensational Theology.

In addition, more than two decades earlier, a reformulation of Classical Dispensationalism* (CD) had already spread throughout dispensational institutions. Known as Progressive Dispensationalism* (PD), this view attempts to understand the core tenets of Dispensational Theology through a so-called complementary interpretation; a confusing term in itself because it seeks to explain the equally confusing idea of an “already/not yet” and “both/and” eschatology.

PD’s central tenet teaches that the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants are already being progressively fulfilled today and will also be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. Thus PD’s concept of futurism includes an aspect of present fulfillment in the church for the biblical covenants made with

national Israel, while CD holds that the biblical covenants find their fulfillment exclusively in the Millennium.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The first half of the 20th century witnessed a retreat from futurism with C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) and his “Realized Eschatology,”* which taught that the eschatological passages in the New Testament (drawn largely from the Old Testament) do not refer to the future but, rather, to the experiences of Jesus and the New Testament church.²

Many liberals, who preferred the principles of love and peace to the expectation of future apocalyptic destruction, embraced Dodd’s position. His view continues to influence evangeli-

icals today through the writings of Wright and his “Kingdom Now” theology,* which largely characterizes the 21st-century “millennial” churches.

A different form of Kingdom Now Theology that also sees some or all Bible prophecies as fulfilled in historic events of the past is Preterism.* Once the provenance of liberal scholars, Preterism is now advanced by the teachings of conservative Christians such as radio “Bible Answer Man” Hank Hanegraaff and the late R.C. Sproul.³

Another evangelical, historic premillennialist,* Gordon E. Ladd, promoted Oscar Cullman’s “Inaugurated Eschatology,”* a view that taught the promises of the Kingdom Age were initially being realized in the Church Age.⁴ Many well-known, evangelical, premillennial scholars, such as D. A. Carson, have promoted this view, which forms the substance of Progressive Dispensationalism. It retains the CD distinctive concerning the future Kingdom, but also embraces a spiritual fulfillment of those promises within the Church Age.

PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

Progressive Dispensationalism debuted in the 1990s as developed and defended in the works of evangelical scholars Craig A. Blaising (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), Darrell L. Bock (Dallas Theological Seminary), and the late Robert L. Saucy (Talbot Seminary).

These authors claim their view simply revises the core tenets of Dispensationalism. But PD’s inclusion of tenets from opposing systems of interpretation obscures CD’s distinctives and makes possible a progression toward the next inevitable position: Amillennialism* or Postmillennialism.*

Evangelical theologian Walter A. Elwell observed, “The newer dispensationalism looks so much like non-dispensational pre-millennialism that one struggles to see any real difference.”⁵

Postmillennialist Keith Mathison stated,

In my opinion . . . progressive dispensationalists have moved closer to Reformed theology on a number of doctrines. They now acknowledge that the kingdom has been inaugurated and that there is a present as well as a future aspect of the kingdom. They have also recognized the two-peoples-of-God theory* to be unbiblical, which, ironically, brings us to the negative side of progressive dispensationalism. If the defining doctrine of dispensationalism is the two-peoples-of-God theory, then to reject that theory is to reject dispensationalism itself.⁶

CD VS. PD

Classical Dispensationalism has three essential distinctives:

1. It makes a clear distinction between Israel and the church in God's purposes.
2. It employs a consistent, literal hermeneutic* (method of interpretation), especially when it comes to the prophetic Scripture.
3. It maintains a doxological focus that sees the ultimate purpose of God as bringing glory to Himself.⁷

Let's look at these three distinctives in greater detail.

1. Israel and the Church.

The one who fails to distinguish Israel and the church consistently will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does will. Progressive dispensationalists seem to be blurring this distinction by saying that the concept is not in the same class as what is conveyed by the concepts of Gentiles, Israel, and Jews.⁸

Progressive dispensationalists maintain that the "one new man" of Ephesians 2:11–22 refers to the church as a continuation of believing Israelites in the Old Testament. Therefore, believing Jews and Gentiles constitute the "one people of God."

This concept may be true on a redemptive level, but Gentiles and Jews are distinct historic people groups with distinct callings and promises within the biblical covenants. PD correctly sees the church as consisting of both the believing remnant of national Israel and the believing remnant of Gentiles, but it incorrectly views this unity as an "initial fulfillment" of the New Covenant, which God specifically made with Israel:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . . I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. . . . For they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jer. 31:31, 33–34).

The church's participation in the New Covenant is a present, partial guarantee of the future, full realization of the promise in the Millennial Kingdom. It cannot be fulfilled literally until the Lord forgives the sins of the entire remnant of Israel and Judah, "from the least of them to the greatest of them" (a universal expression).

The apostle Paul said the present believing remnant of Jewish people exemplifies the future, full inclusion of national Israel. The Gentile nations are included through the spiritual promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3):

At this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Now if [Israel's] fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, . . . that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:5, 12, 25–26).

This text reveals the New Covenant cannot find initial fulfillment until the Second Advent of Messiah since Israel now remains blinded during the Church Age.

2. Literal Hermeneutic. Dispensationalism uses a consistent, literal method of interpreting Scripture. It takes the biblical text at face value, without imposing on it a theological interpretation foreign to the text. However, PD's "complementary hermeneutic" redefines the understanding of the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament.

It argues that Christ currently occupies King David's throne in heaven. But the normal reading of the Old Testament understands David's throne to be an earthly one promised to the Davidic dynasty in national Israel, even

3 ESSENTIAL DISTINCTIVES OF CLASSICAL DISPENSATIONALISM

1

It makes a clear distinction between Israel and the church in God's purposes.

2

It employs a consistent, literal hermeneutic, especially when it comes to the prophetic Scripture.

3

It maintains a doxological focus that sees the ultimate purpose of God as bringing glory to Himself.

under the New Covenant (Jer. 33:17–22). It also views Christ as David’s descendant reigning in Israel as a Messianic promise to be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom (1 Chr. 17:14; cf. Ezek. 37:25).

Classical dispensationalists argue that the Bible never says David’s throne is in heaven during the Church Age. Instead, it specifies Christ will rule over “the house of Jacob”: “He [Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Lk. 1:32–33). While PD still views Christ’s reign as a future reality (both/and), it changes the text’s plain meaning to accommodate its theology that the Kingdom’s initial fulfillment has already begun.

PD contradicts the fact the apostle Peter tied the Messiah’s return to set up His earthly Kingdom to Israel’s national repentance (Acts 3:19–21). How could the Kingdom be inaugurated in the Church Age if national Israel remains under divine discipline and its national repentance will take place only at the end of the Tribulation? (See Matthew 24:29–30 and Luke 21:28.) Likewise, if Messiah’s reign on David’s earthly throne depends on Israel’s repentance, then Messiah cannot be sitting now on the throne of David.

PD confuses this distinction. One of PD’s formulators conceded the fact in a theological debate with an amillennial theologian. He said the term *Israel* is symbolic. Later, I asked him what he meant by that statement. He simply replied, without explanation, “It is both/and.”

In other words, PD teaches Israel both symbolizes the church and literally refers to national Israel as distinct from the church. PD’s “complementary” hermeneutic permits its adherents to call their view Dispensationalism, while embracing views from an opposing theological system whose core tenets spiritualize Israel.

3. Glory to God. Dispensationalism focuses on God’s glory as the ultimate purpose for His divine plan. Progressive Dispensationalism’s rejection of this doxological purpose reveals the extent to which its system functions more like Reformed Theology than Dispensationalism.

PD, like Reformed (Covenant) Theology, sees humanity’s redemption as the goal of “salvation history.” CD sees humanity’s salvation as a means to an end—God’s glory—not the end itself. As Ryrie stated, “Scripture is not man-centered as though salvation were the main theme, but it is God-centered because His glory is the center. . . . The Bible is not centered in salvation history . . . but in God Himself.”⁹

Classical Dispensationalism sees God’s purposes with Israel and the church as distinct plans in history designed to bring Him glory only when each purpose is fulfilled (Rom. 11:30–33).

PD’s “complementary” hermeneutic permits its adherents to call their view Dispensationalism, while embracing views from an opposing theological system whose core tenets spiritualize Israel.



My concern is for the next generation of progressive dispensationalists who may move beyond the theology of the founders. In his treatise *Theology Adrift: The Early Church Fathers and Their Views of Eschatology*, D. Matthew Allen explains that the eschatological shift in the ancient church from Premillennialism to Amillennialism began when the church lost its understanding of Israel as a uniquely chosen people of God with specific promises from God yet to be fulfilled.¹⁰

Hopefully, recognizing how redefinition has occurred may aid this generation of Bible students against further redefining terms and encourage them to rethink how perceived progress may in fact be a retreat from established truths. ★

CAUTIONARY NOTE

I want to caution those who hold to Classical Dispensationalism against overstatement in their critique of progressive dispensationalists, who may represent the dominant view of evangelical churches and seminaries today. Most advocates of PD hold to a pretribulational Rapture and believe in Messiah’s Second Coming to establish His Millennial Kingdom for Israel and the nations. They are also among the leading defenders of the evangelical faith and strong supporters of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

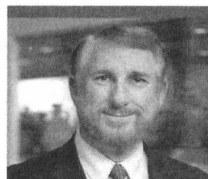
My concern is for the next generation of

progressive dispensationalists who may move beyond the theology of the founders. In his treatise *Theology Adrift: The Early Church Fathers and Their Views of Eschatology*, D. Matthew Allen explains that the eschatological shift in the ancient church from Premillennialism to Amillennialism began when the church lost its understanding of Israel as a uniquely chosen people of God with specific promises from God yet to be fulfilled.¹⁰

Hopefully, recognizing how redefinition has occurred may aid this generation of Bible students against further redefining terms and encourage them to rethink how perceived progress may in fact be a retreat from established truths. ★

ENDNOTES

- * See Glossary on page 19.
- 1 John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 68.
- 2 C. H. Dodd, “The Kingdom of God Has Come,” *Expository Times* 48, no. 3 (1936) and H. G. Wood, *The Kingdom of God and History* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1938).
- 3 R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus: When Did Jesus Say He Would Return?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998). Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code: Find Out What the Bible Really Says About the End Times and Why It Matters Today* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007).
- 4 Ladd taught the “already/not yet” view in his essential writings on eschatology: *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (1952); *Jesus and the Kingdom* (1964); *A Theology of the New Testament* (1974); *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (1977); *The Last Things* (1978); *The Blessed Hope* (1990); *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (1990); and his most influential book, *The Presence of the Future* (1996).
- 5 Walter A. Elwell, “Sidebar: Dispensationalisms of the Third Kind,” *Christianity Today*, September 12, 1994, 28.
- 6 Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (n.p.: P&R Publishing, 2012), Appendix A, 135.
- 7 These are the three *sine qua nons* given by Charles C. Ryrie. See Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 39–40. I also am indebted to H. Wayne House for many of the contrasts between CD and PD found in his paper “Danger of Progressive Dispensationalism to Pre-Millennial Theology: Reflections of a Pre-Progressive Dispensationalist,” Pre-Trib Research Center, December 2003 <tinyurl.com/yau2l2nn>.
- 8 Ryrie, 39.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 10 D. Matthew Allen, *Theology Adrift: The Early Church Fathers and Their Views of Eschatology*, Bible.org, May 25, 2004 <tinyurl.com/yatr7tbu>.



Randall Price

is a university professor, author and coauthor of 30 books, and world-renowned archaeologist. He is also the founder and president of World of the Bible Ministries (worldofthebible.com) and has taken more than 100 trips to Israel.

GLOSSARY

Amillennialism (No Millennium) rejects Christ's literal 1,000-year reign on Earth; spiritualizes Revelation 20 to mean His reign in heaven with Christians; and claims Christ's Second Coming is accompanied by a general resurrection and judgment of all people, followed by the eternal state.

Covenant Theology views God's relationship with mankind through a Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace. (Some add a Covenant of Redemption.) Most Reformed theologians hold this position. Old Testament prophecies are interpreted figuratively, not literally, and prophecies concerning Israel's future are seen as fulfilled in the church. Thus the church replaces Israel as the people of God.

Dispensationalism (Classical Dispensationalism) uses a literal-grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture; distinguishes between Israel and the church; and places the Rapture before the seven-year Tribulation, which is followed by Christ's return to establish the Millennial Kingdom, which merges into the eternal state at the end of 1,000 years. The Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants are fulfilled in the Millennium. This is the position of The Friends of Israel.

Emergent Church is a postmodern, subjective, relative, and feeling-oriented movement that is continually changing to meet modern spiritual needs. It possesses no unified theological position and denies the existence of absolute biblical truth. Its hallmarks include mysticism, ecumenical inclusion, and relativism.

Eschatology is the study of last things (Bible prophecy) and reveals the outworking of God's sovereign plan and purposes in history.

Hermeneutics is the science and art of Bible interpretation. It refers to the principles, rules, and methods used in studying Scripture.

Historic Premillennialism maintains Christ will return to establish His Millennial Kingdom on Earth after the Tribulation, and that is when He will rapture His church. Thus it is posttributational Premillennialism. It makes no distinction between Israel and the church.

Inaugurated Eschatology employs the "already/not yet" philosophy, claiming God's Kingdom began at Christ's First Coming but will be fully consummated at His Second Coming. The church today supposedly has access to the Kingdom promises. This view blurs the distinction between Israel and the church and leads into Progressive Dispensationalism.

Kingdom Now Theology believes the church must reestablish God's rule on Earth before Christ's return; denies the Rapture; and spiritualizes future promises to Israel, seeing them fulfilled in the church. Kingdom Now Theology is filled with unbiblical, false teachings.

Millennial Kingdom is Christ's literal reign on Earth for 1,000 years after His Second Coming (Rev. 20:1-7).

Postmillennialism is a 19th-century teaching that claims preaching the gospel will Christianize the world and that Christ will return after a time of peace called the Millennium.

Postmodernism is a 20th-century, Western-society movement that radically reappraises assumptions about culture, personal identity, history, and religion. It emphasizes diversity in worldviews and the inability to know absolute truth.

Premillennialism (Dispensational Premillennialism) maintains Christ will return to establish His Millennial Kingdom on Earth after the Tribulation. It holds to a Pretribulation Rapture and clearly distinguishes between Israel and the church. This is the position of The Friends of Israel.

Preterism claims the book of Revelation communicated how God would deliver Christians from the Roman Empire and predicted Jerusalem's fall in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the city. It sees no future for national Israel.

Progressive Dispensationalism embraces the "already/not yet" view that Jesus is ruling spiritually in heaven on David's throne but that He will reign in a future 1,000-year Kingdom on Earth at His Second Coming.

Rapture is Christ's imminent return for His church prior to the seven-year Tribulation.

Realized Eschatology claims all New Testament prophecy was fulfilled during Christ's ministry on Earth; and when Jesus said, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17), He meant His Kingdom was present and not future.

Reformed Theology originated with the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century and holds strongly to the sovereignty of God and salvation by grace. Its beliefs are stated in the Westminster Confession. Most Reformed theologians interpret the Old Testament prophecies figuratively, not literally, and see prophecies concerning Israel's future as fulfilled in the church; so the church replaces Israel as the people of God.

Replacement Theology (Supersessionism) teaches that the church has replaced Israel and prophecies made to Israel are being fulfilled in the church today. Prophecies made specifically to Israel in the Old Testament are spiritualized or allegorized and referred to as blessings to Christ's church. This is not the position of The Friends of Israel.

Tribulation/Great Tribulation is a future seven-year period called "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). It begins when the Antichrist confirms a covenant with many in Israel (Dan. 9:27) and God pours out His judgment on the entire ungodly world and brings Israel to national repentance and reconciliation (Rev. 6-19).

Two-peoples-of-God Theory is a defining aspect of Dispensationalism that views Israel and the church as separate entities with distinct promises.