



# School of Prophets

## Dispensationalism BIB587

Professor: David James

### Course Purpose

This course is designed to give the student a working knowledge of dispensational theology as it flows from a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic for interpreting the Scriptures.

### Scope of the Course

In 10 class-hours, the student will learn the principles of dispensational theology, its biblical and theological foundations, its history of development as a theological system, the general characteristics of a dispensation, the generally accepted dispensations in God’s program, the distinctives of dispensationalism as compared to other theological systems, the significance of dispensationalism in relation to properly understanding the prophetic aspects of the Scriptures, as well as an overview of Covenant Theology, Progressive Dispensationalism and Ultradispensationalism.

### Course Components

**Reading (two books, 5% of course grade each) . . . . . 10%**

*Dispensationalism*, Charles C. Ryrie  
*There Really is a Difference*, Renald Showers

**Paper (18-24 pages) . . . . . 80%**

The required paper for this course will consist of answering each of the following ten questions with a 1.5 - 2.5 page response for each question. This is primarily a research paper that requires the use of primary source material as much as possible. Much of your material will come from class notes, as well as the two required reading books. However, on occasion, you will need to do outside research from writers of opposing views (primary sources).

**Note concerning sources:** *Primary source material is that which is first said, generally by a proponent of a position, while secondary sources are quotes of the primary source by other proponents, opponents or neutral reporters or commentators. Primary sources can include books, articles (print or internet), blogs and comments. When a secondary source refers to a primary source, good practice is to confirm the quote is accurate and cite the primary source. This is not always possible, so in this case, the format would be “[primary source] as quoted by [secondary source] in ...”*

**General citations and endnotes (not footnotes):** Because this is a research paper, except for those ideas, concepts, conclusions, etc., that are completely the student’s, any statements, ideas, concepts based on the researched material that would probably not be common knowledge by the general public needs to be appropriately cited (with end notes). Due to the relative brevity of the paper, total quotations from any sources should not make up more than 10% of the paper.

**Biblical citations:** As a research paper, an accepted academically credible version of the Bible should be used consistently throughout. These versions would include the KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV. The NIV (original version) is acceptable, but not preferred. The paper should not contain long block quotations from Scripture as it is assumed the reader of the paper will have access to the text. The quotation of one or two verses in-line to make a particularly strong point is acceptable. Otherwise, summarize the main point of a longer passage and just refer to the passage.

Formatting guidelines are located after the questions.

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## QUESTIONS / TOPICS

1. It has often been charged that dispensationalism is simply a new innovation with ideas that were never taught throughout most of church history prior to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore it is a theological aberration with teachings that should at least be suspect and in some cases bordering on the heretical. Provide a thorough biblical, philosophical and historical response that defends dispensationalism as a legitimate theological system.
2. Define dispensationalism as a system of theology, defending it conceptually and historically from the Scriptures. Discuss the distinctive characteristics of dispensations in general (i.e., revelation, responsibilities, etc.) and using these criteria, develop a biblical dispensational system having four to eight dispensations. You should give biblical and theological reasons why you have marked off each era as a distinct dispensation. You also need to discuss matters of continuity and discontinuity (carryovers, transitions, etc.) between the dispensations.
3. Covenant Theology cannot escape the fact that there are some sort of dispensational divisions in God's program. On the other hand, Dispensationalism recognizes covenants as forming the backbone of God's program. Discuss and evaluate each of the major covenants in both Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism, by explaining, contrasting and comparing the nature, function and relationship between the covenants within each system. Discuss the biblical and theological support for the covenants in each system and demonstrate how the covenants within Dispensationalism most consistently handle the biblical information and rightly lead to Dispensational theology rather than Covenant theology.
4. Dispensationalism is sometimes referred to as being based on using a "dispensational hermeneutic." This can lead to unnecessary confusion in trying to biblically defend dispensationalism. Discuss what we mean by "hermeneutic" and discuss the type of hermeneutic that should be consistently used when interpreting the Bible. Furthermore, demonstrate / explain how the consistent application of this biblical hermeneutic directly produces "dispensational theology" as a result. Conversely, explain how Covenant Theology is sometimes guilty of using a "theological hermeneutic" and thereby produces questionable results.
5. Dispensational theology is often accused of teaching multiple ways of salvation for different people in different eras. Discuss the potential reasons why some might come to that conclusion. In response, develop a clear statement concerning the gospel, what it is, and what must be believed to be saved - making sure to frame it in way that acknowledges dispensational issues related to the gospel. Also, discuss the problems related to salvation within Covenant theology and how Covenant / Dispensational distinctives contribute to the discussion, particularly in relation to the nature of the church.
6. Dispensational theology makes a clear distinction between Israel and the Church as being two distinct peoples of God with distinct identities and distinct futures. Define, discuss and biblically defend the dispensational position. This would also include a discussion of the relationship between Israel and the Church as it works out in various dispensations. In addition, the student needs to deal with objections to the dispensational view as presented by the opponents represented by covenant, progressive dispensational, and ultra-dispensational theologians.
7. Dispensational theology is frequently accused of being a complicated and disjointed system of theology that radically disrupts the unity of the Scriptures and God's plan through history. Develop an argument that demonstrates that better than any competing system, dispensationalism maintains the integrity and unity of the Scriptures by presenting a unified theme for God's ultimate purposes in history and eternity. This would include interacting with the conclusions of the competing views and showing their deficiency.
8. A major issue in the dispensational / covenant debate is the nature of the promises and covenants given by God. Specifically, these would be related to the Abrahamic, Land (sometimes called, "Palestinian"), Davidic and New Covenants. Discuss the provisions of these covenants and how they were established to determine whether they were conditional or unconditional. If it is determined that they are unconditional, what are the implications concerning the

future of national Israel in God's program and how does this relate to the future of the church in His program?

9. Demonstrate how dispensational theology as a model best explains the end times and harmonizes related passages found in Dan. 9, Joel 2, Zech 14, Matt 24 & 25, 1 Cor 15, 1 Thess 4 & 5, 2 Thess. 2, and Rev. 1-3, 4-19, 20, 21 and 22.
10. The Kingdom and the Church represent key questions with significant disagreement between various theological groups - whether they be Amillennial, Historic / Covenant Premillennial, Traditional Dispensational, Progressive Dispensational or Ultradispensational. Discuss the relationship of the Kingdom to the Church in each group and demonstrate which view is supported most clearly from Scripture. For example, Is the Kingdom now in existence in any form during this age? Is it the Church's responsibility to establish God's Kingdom? Has the Church replaced Israel in God's program because of Israel's failure. Are we in an "already / not yet" period of history? Etc.

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## Paper Guidelines

In general you should follow the *MLA Handbook* guidelines.

**Paper size/type:** 8 ½ x 11

**Font:** 12 point Times Roman or Arial (or the equivalent of these)

**Margins:** .75" for all margins

**Spacing:** Double-spacing

**Length:** At least 12 pages and no more than 18 full pages (papers which are shorter will receive 1 full letter grade reduction for each page or portion of a page less than 12; longer papers will not receive higher grades or extra-credit.)

**Spelling and grammar:** Correct spelling and grammar are important and mistakes could affect your grade on the paper. Use your spell-checker, and when in doubt, look up the word.

**Citations - Use endnotes (not footnotes) and a bibliography:** If you use sources for your material, they must be referenced. Endnotes should be used, rather than footnotes - and do not count toward the length of the paper. If you use word-for-word what someone else has written, it must be quoted. If it is longer than two sentences, it should be a block quote. The total of all quotes should not be more than 10% of the paper. You may use abbreviated endnotes for the first citation in the following format:

Abbreviated endnotes: Author's full name, *Title of the book*, pages.

Biblical references: 3-4 -letter book abbreviations - chapter:verse(s)

An abbreviated bibliography in alphabetical order should be included at the end in the following format:

Author's last name, first name. *Book title*. Most recent publish date.

NOTE: Endnotes and bibliography do not count toward the required pages.

**A cover page should be used according to MLA guidelines with your name, date, and course title and number**

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