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The overall outline for the course is based on the chapter and section structure of Charles Ryrie’s book *Dispensationalism*. No permission is given or implied in relation to content from that book.



DISPENSATIONALISM

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?



DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

INTRODUCTION

- “Never heard of it”
- “I’m not a dispensationalist”
- “I am a dispensationalist”

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

INTRODUCTION

- Dispensationalism: 1830s – present (systematized)
- “Classic Dispensationalism”



Darby



Kelly



Scofield



Chafer

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

INTRODUCTION

- Dispensationalism: 1830s – present (systematized)
- “Normative / Traditional Dispensationalism”



Walvoord



Pentecost



Ryrie

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

INTRODUCTION

- Dispensationalism: 1830s – present (systematized)
- “Progressive Dispensationalism”



Bock



Blaising



Saucy

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

OPPOSITION TO DISPENSATIONALISM

- Liberal theologians
- Amillennialists

[dispensationalists impose] “their crudities and vagaries, and make their poor dupes believe a wonderful discovery had been made in the ‘rightly dividing of the word of truth’”

A.W. Pink

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

OPPOSITION TO DISPENSATIONALISM

- Liberal theologians
- Amillennialists
- Ultradispensationalists
- Historic Premillennialists

Indeed, the time is fully ripe for a thorough examination and frank exposure of this new and subtle form of modernism that has been spreading itself among those who have adopted the name “fundamentalists”

Philip Mauro

(former dispensationalist)

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

OPPOSITION TO DISPENSATIONALISM

- Liberal theologians
- Amillennialists
- Ultradispensationalists
- Historic Premillennialists

“[the Scofield Bible] represents perhaps the most dangerous heresy currently to be found within Christian circles.”

John Bowman

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

OPPOSITION TO DISPENSATIONALISM

- Liberal theologians
- Amillennialists
- Ultradispensationalists
- Historic Premillennialists
- Reconstructionists / Dominionists

“an unorthodox teaching, generally espoused by heretical sects on the fringes of the Christian Church.”

David Chilton

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

OPPOSITION TO DISPENSATIONALISM

- **Radical comparisons** (Nazism, Catholicism, various cults)
- **Ad hominem attacks** (against Darby, Scofield, etc.)
- **Schismatic charges attack**
- **Anti-intellectual attack**
- **Historical attack** (new and novel, lack of being creedal)
- **Doctrinal ridicule attack** (misunderstanding / misrepresentation)

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

HELPS GIVEN BY DISPENSATIONALISM

- Answers the need of biblical distinctions
- Answers the need for a philosophy of history
 - Recognizes historical progression of events and revelation
 - Provides a unifying principle of history
 - Suggests an ultimate goal of history

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

HELPS GIVEN BY DISPENSATIONALISM

- Answers the need of biblical distinctions
- Answers the need for a philosophy of history
 - Recognizes historical progression of events and revelation
 - Provides a unifying principle of history
 - Suggests an ultimate goal of history
- Provides a **consistent** hermeneutic

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

SUMMARY

- Does Disp. respect the integrity of the text?
- Does Disp. allow the text to speak for itself?
- Does Disp. consistently handle the text & context?
- Does Disp. comprehensively handle the text & context?

DISPENSATIONALISM: HELP OR HERESY?

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?



WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE READING, STUDY & EXPOSITION

STEWARDS OF THE WORD OF GOD FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

(Nehemiah ch. 8)



DISPENSATIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

- A lack of clarity / understanding
- Scofield Ref. Bible

“A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. Seven such dispensations are distinguished in Scripture.”

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

INTRODUCTION

- A lack of clarity
- Scofield Ref. Bible
- New Scofield Ref. Bible

Additionally...

1. Deposit of divine revelation
2. Man's stewardship of that revelation
3. Time frame of operation
4. Not different ways of salvation

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

INTRODUCTION

- A lack of clarity
- Scofield Ref. Bible
- New Scofield Ref. Bible
- Charges by critics

“The word translated ‘dispensation’ in the Greek Bible ... never means nor does it ever have any reference to a period of time as such, as Scofield’s definition demands.”

John Wick Bowman

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

ETYMOLOGY

- **Oxford English Dict.**

1. The action of dealing out or distributing
2. the action of administering, ordering, or managing; the system by which things are administered
3. the action of dispensing with some requirement.
4. a stage in a progressive revelation, expressly adapted to the needs of a particular nation or period of time.... Also, the age or period during which a system has prevailed.

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

ETYMOLOGY

- Oxford English Dict.
- Greek: *oikonomia*

1. Verb: Manage, regulate, administer, plan
2. Noun: One who manages, administers, plans
3. Noun: The administration, the plan

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE

- Ephesians 1:10: οἰκονομία
- “dispensation” (KJV, NKJV)
- “administration” (NAS)

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE

- Luke 16:1-2
- Verb: οἰκονομέω
 - (1x - [Luke 16:2](#))
- Noun: οἰκονόμος
 - (10x - Luke 12:42; [Luke 16:1](#), 16: 3, 16:8; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2; Gal.4:2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10)
- Noun: οἰκονομία
 - (9x - Luke 16:2, [Luke 16:3](#), 16:4, 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; 3:9; Col. 1:25)

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: FEATURES

- Two parties: One with authority, other with responsibility
- Specific responsibilities
- Accountability
- Arrangement can change depending on faithfulness

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: FEATURES

- Man is responsible to God ([Titus 1:7](#))
- Faithfulness is required ([1 Cor. 4:1-2](#))
- Stewardship may be ended at an appointed time ([Gal. 4:2](#))
- Dispensations connected to revelation ([Eph. 3:2](#))
- Dispensation and “age” connected, but not synonymous ([Eph.3:9](#))
- At least 3 dispensations mentioned by Paul ([Eph 1:10](#), [3:2](#); [Col 1:25-26](#))

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: FEATURES

- Even critics see dispensations

“Actually, of all seven dispensations accepted by Scofield and his colleagues, there are but two (Grace and the Fullness of Time) in connection with which the word ‘dispensation’ is ever used at all.”

Bowman

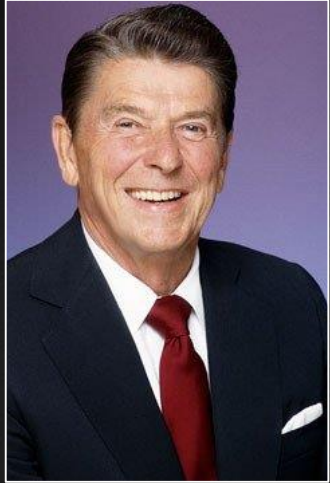
WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: FEATURES

- Even critics see dispensations
- Scripture does use “dispensation” as the dispensationalist
- Non-biblical words can be used theologically (i.e., *atonement*)

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: DEFINITIONS



U.S. Administrations 1980 - Present

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: DEFINITIONS

Dispensation

“A system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible’s philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by several dispensations of God’s rule.”

Renald Showers

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: DEFINITIONS

Dispensation

A dispensation is a divinely revealed system of morals, values, promises, and rules that God imposes on a particular generation.

John Walvoord

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: DEFINITIONS

Dispensation

A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose.

Charles Ryrie

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

SCRIPTURAL USE: DEFINITIONS

Dispensation

The way God runs things.

Dave James

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

RELATION TO PROGRESS OF REVELATION

- The principle: Acts 17:30; Heb. 1:1-2; John 1:17
- The connection between new revelation and new dispensations
- Criticisms of destroying the unity of the Scriptures

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISPENSATION

- **Primary characteristics**
 - Differing governing relationship from God's side
 - Differing responsibilities to this from man's side
 - Necessary revelation to institute the change

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISPENSATION

- **Secondary characteristics**
 - Various specific tests, but ultimately the same (reveal the heart)
 - Consistent failure because of man's sinfulness
 - Subsequent judgment because of God's justice
 - A new beginning because of God's grace

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

OBJECTIONS

- Compartmentalization of history
- Confusion by labels (i.e., Conscience, Law, Grace)
- The unchangeable nature of God
- Test, failure, judgment cycles reflect pagan philosophy
- Dispensationalism is pessimistic

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

THE *SINE QUA NON* OF DISPENSATIONALISM

- The distinction between Israel and the Church
- A consistently literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic
- God's glory as the underlying purpose of history

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

A FINAL NOTE

SHOULD WE USE THE TERM
“Dispensational hermeneutics”?

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

THE NUMBER OF DISPENSATIONS

- Importance of the question
 - Everyone has at least two
 - Critics don't want more than two
 - Critics are inconsistent and can't agree
 - Critics consistently divide at least the first one

WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

THE NUMBER OF DISPENSATIONS

- Some answers to the question



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

SOME ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- Noahic Economy
 - Fear of man
 - Eating of meat
 - Capital punishment
 - God's promise



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

SOME ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- The Eternal State
 - “Fullness of times (Eph 1:10)
 - Tests are completed
 - Sin is finally judged
 - God’s kingdom established



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

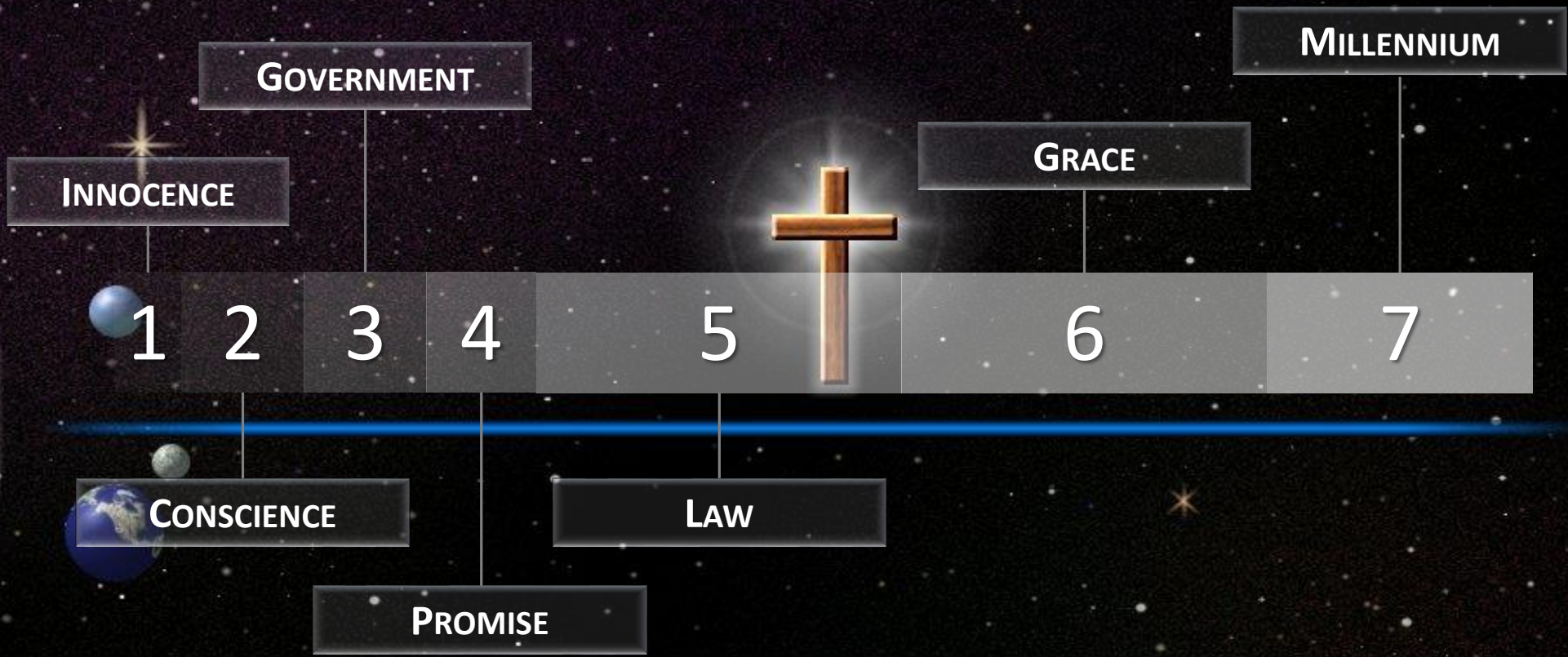
SOME ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- The Tribulation

1. Revival of OT (Dan. 70th wk)?
2. A separate dispensation?
3. The end of Disp. of Grace?



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?



NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: INNOCENCE

- Genesis 1:28 - 3:6
- Before 4000 B.C.
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: CONSCIENCE

- Genesis 3:7 – 8:14
- Before 4000 B.C.
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: GOVERNMENT

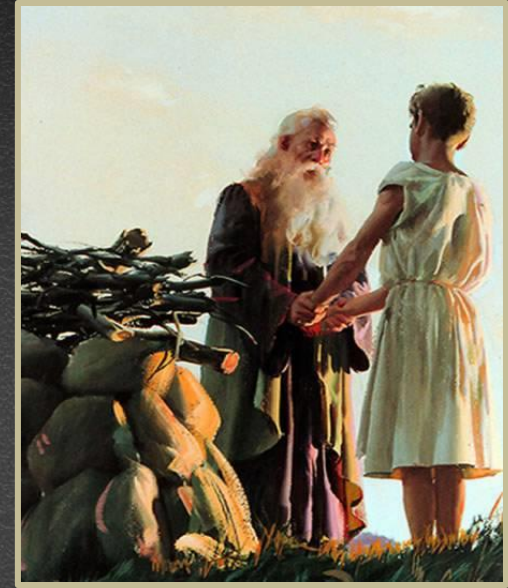
- Genesis 8:15 – 11:32
- Before 2300 B.C.
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: PATRIARCHS

- Genesis 12 – Exodus 18
- 2200 – 1445 B.C.
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: LAW OF MOSES

- Exodus 19 – Acts 1
- 1445 B.C. – A.D. 30 (33)
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: GRACE

- Acts 2 – Rev 19
- A.D. 30 (33) – today + 7 yrs
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

NAMES & CHARACTERISTICS: THE MILLENNIUM

- Rev 20
- (Today + 7 yrs) – (+1000 yrs)
- Spiritual condition
- Relationships
- Responsibilities
- Warnings / Judgment



WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

THE MATTER OF “CARRYOVERS”

1. Some promises aren't fulfilled (Abrahamic Covenant)
2. Some things continue across dispensations (Eating of meat)
3. Some things may be expanded (Capital punishment)
4. Some things may be repeated (9 of 10 commandments)
5. Some things are completely ended (Circumcision)

WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

THE MATTER OF TRANSITIONS (NOT IN NOTES)

1. Dispensations generally have transition periods
2. Some transition periods are fairly clear (Innocency - Conscience)
3. Some transition periods are less clear (Government – Patriarchs)
4. Transitions periods may have characteristics of both dispensations

WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM



THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

- The common charge
- Prejudiced implications
 - Recent = wrong
 - Separatist = wrong

“Dispensationalism was formulated by one of the nineteenth-century separatist movements, the Plymouth Brethren.”

E.J. Carnell

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- The straw men
 - “The early church taught dispensational system”
 - Doctrines not developed by apostles / early church are wrong

Concerning Reformation Doctrine:

“That it has lain long unknown and buried is the fault of man’s impiety. Now when it is restored to us by God’s goodness, its claims to antiquity ought to be admitted at least by right of recovery.”

John Calvin

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- Early dispensational concepts

“....Enoch, Noah with his sons, and all others in similar circumstances, who neither were circumcised nor kept the Sabbath, pleased God. . . those who lived between the times of Abraham and of Moses [would] be justified by circumcision and the other ordinances...”

Justin Martyr (110-165)

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- Early dispensational concepts

“...four principal covenants given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man, and sums up all things in itself by means of the Gospel...”

Ireneus (130-200)

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- Early dispensational concepts

“The divine institution of sacrifice was suitable in the former dispensation, but is not suitable now. For the change suitable to the present age has been enjoined by God, who knows infinitely better than man what is fitting for every age, and who is, whether He give or add, abolish or curtail, increase or diminish, the unchangeable Creator of mutable things, ordering all events in His providence...”

Augustine (354-430)

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- **Developing Dispensationalism (before Darby)**

- I. Infancy—to the Deluge
- II. Childhood—to Moses
- III. Adolescence—to the prophets
- IV. Youth—to the coming of Christ
- V. Manhood—“some time after that”
- VI. Old Age—“the time of man’s decay”
- VII. Renovation of all things—the Millennium

Pierre Poiret (1646-1719)

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- **Developing Dispensationalism (before Darby)**

- I. Innocency and Felicity, or Adam created upright
- II. Sin and Misery, Adam fallen
- III. Reconciliation, or Adam recovered, from Adam's redemption to the end of the world
 - A. Patriarchal economy
 - B. Mosaical
 - C. Gentile (concurrent with A and B)
 - D. Christian or Evangelical

John Edwards (1637-1716)

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- **Systematized Dispensationalism (Darby – 1980s)**
 - **John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)**
 - Graduated Trinity College, Dublin at 18
 - Became a lawyer at 22
 - Saved, then ordained in Church of England at 23
 - 600-800 Catholics / week were converting to Protestantism
 - Settled in Plymouth in 1831, began Bible study groups (800 by 1840)
 - Eventually left Anglicanism
 - Wrote 40 books of 600 pages each

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- **Systematized Dispensationalism (Darby – 1980s)**
 - John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

- I. Paradisaical state to the Flood
- II. Noah
- III. Abraham
- IV. Israel
- V. Gentiles
- VI. The Spirit
- VII. The Millennium

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF REGENCY

- Systematized Dispensationalism (Darby – 1980s)
 - C.I. Scofield (1843-1921)

- I. The Dispensation of Innocency, or the Religion of Adam at first
- II. The Adamical Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, or the Religion of Adam after his Fall
- III. The Noahical Dispensation, or the Religion of Noah
- IV. The Abrahamical Dispensation, or the Religion of Abraham
- V. The Mosaical Dispensation, or the Jewish Religion
- VI. The Christian Dispensation

Note: this is from *Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF RECENCY

- Recent Neodispensationalism (1980s – present)
 1. The kingdom of God is the unifying theme of biblical history
 2. Christ is reigning in heaven on the throne of David
 3. Not two purposes and two peoples of God
 4. The church is not a separate group of redeemed people, nor was it unrevealed in the Old Testament (just unrealized);
 5. One divine plan of holistic redemption for all people and all areas of life

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF RECENCY

- The Progress of Dogma
 - Development of doctrine generally followed systematic theology
 - Eschatology largely systematized after the Reformation
 - Both Covenant and Dispensational theology came late

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF DIVISIVENESS

- Darby was separatist
- Plymouth Brethren were separatist

However:

- The Reformation was separatists
- “The Fundamentals” were separatist
- Bible institutes, independent seminaries were separatists
- Biblicists must be separatists

THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE OF DIVISIVENESS

“It is doubtful if there has been any other circle of men who have done more by their influence in preaching, teaching and writing to promote a love for Bible study, a hunger for the deeper Christian life, a passion for evangelism and zeal for missions in the history of American Christianity.”

George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982)
(Historic Premillennialist)



THE ORIGINS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM



THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

“Hermeneutics is the science that furnishes the principles of interpretation. These principles guide and govern anybody’s system of theology.”

Charles Ryrie



THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

1. Linguistic studies
2. Focus on literary genres
3. Pre-understanding

The
Hermeneutical
Spiral



THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Literal hermeneutics
 - i.e., Literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics
 - i.e., “Normal” interpretation

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Reasons for a “normal” hermeneutic (literal, grammatical, historical)
 - The philosophical reason: *the purpose of language*
 - The biblical reason: *fulfilled prophecies*
 - The logical reason: *objective truth*

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

Dave,

Ken called - he's between a rock and a hard place and needs another one of those things you took yesterday ASAP. Better hurry - I think he's losing the battle. K.

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Normal hermeneutics: *The matter of consistency*

“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. That was the kind of Messianic kingdom that the Jews of the time of Christ were looking for, on the basis of a literal kingdom interpretation of the Old Testament.”

Floyd Hamilton

(amillennialist)

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Normal hermeneutics: *The matter of consistency*

“I claim that there is sound, solid, grammatical-historical ground for interpreting eschatological fulfillments of prophecy on a different basis than preeschatological fulfillments.... It is therefore a move away from grammatical-historical interpretation to insist that (say) the “house of Israel” and the “house of Judah” of Jeremiah 31:31 must with dogmatic certainty be interpreted in the most prosaic biological sense...”

Vern Poythress
(*Covenant theologian*)

THE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Normal hermeneutics: *The matter of consistency*

““In Covenant Theology there is the tendency to impute to passages a meaning which would not be gained merely from their historical and grammatical associations. This phase of interpretation is called the ‘theological’ interpretation.””

Daniel Fuller

(Premillennial Covenant theologian)

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE NON-DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Interpretation of prophecy: *A “spiritual hermeneutic”*

“The theory [of premillennialism] is based on a literal interpretation of Israel and of the Kingdom of God, which is entirely untenable.”

“[the NT] does contain abundant indications of the spiritual fulfillment of the promises given to Israel.”

Louis Berkhoff

(Amillennial Covenant theologian)

THE NON-DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Interpretation of prophecy: *A “spiritual hermeneutic”*

“Note the many symbols in verse 1 [of Rev. 20]: ‘key,’ ‘abyss,’ ‘chain,’ and then in verse 2 ‘dragon,’ the only interpreted symbol. If ‘key,’ ‘chain,’ ‘dragon,’ ‘abyss,’ etc. are symbolic, why should the number 1000 be literal, especially when numbers are notoriously symbolic in apocalyptic literature?”

Bruce Waltke

(Former Dispensational theologian)

THE NON-DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- The use of the OT in the NT

“It is remarkable that the New Testament, which is the fulfillment of the Old, contains no indication whatsoever of the reestablishment of the Old Testament theocracy by Jesus ... while it does contain abundant indication of the spiritual fulfillment of the promises given to Israel.”

Louis Berkhoff

THE NON-DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Presupposition of the “Covenant of Grace”

“The organic unity of God’s people throughout the ages is a distinctive emphasis of covenant theology. This emphasis in turn has profound implications for our understanding of ecclesiology (including questions of church government, baptism, etc.), of the Christian’s use of the Old Testament, and much more.”

Moises Silva

THE PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Discontinuity with Normative Dispensationalism

“The final issue on the table is hermeneutical. The issue is not a distinct hermeneutic but debate about how to apply the hermeneutic that we share.”

Darrell Bock & Craig Blaising

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONAL POSITION

- Complementary hermeneutics

“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.”

Darrell Bock & Craig Blaising

THE RESULTS OF LITERAL INTERPRETATION

- Non-premillennialist: *nonliteral interpretation*
- Covenant / historic premillennialist: *inconsistently literal interpretation*
- Progressive dispensationalist: *redefined literal interpretation*
- Traditional dispensationalist: *consistently literal interpretation*

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF THE BIBLE

Typical criticism

“...despite all their differences, higher criticism and dispensationalism are in this one respect strikingly similar. Higher criticism divides the Scriptures up into documents which differ from or contradict one another. Dispensationalists divide the Bible up into dispensations which differ from and even contradict one another.”

O.T. Allis

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE UNIFYING PRINCIPLE OF THE BIBLE

- Unity and distinctions are not contradictory
- The Bible is a unified collection (40+ authors, 1500 yrs)
- History is headed somewhere under God's sovereign guidance
- Salvation always by grace through faith
- Ultimate unifying principle / theme:



God's kingdom and glory

THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATT 5-7)

- “It is a message of salvation”
- “It is for the church”
- “It is related to the Kingdom”
 - “Relates only to the millennial kingdom”
 - “Relates to any kingdom offer”
 - “Relates to both offer and function of the kingdom”
 - Illustration: Abrahamic covenant



THE HERMENEUTICS OF DISPENSATIONALISM

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM



SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE AGAINST DISPENSATIONALISM

- Statement of the charge

“If any man is saved in any dispensation other than those of Promise and Grace, he is saved by works and not by faith! [The dispensationalist] is clearly left with two methods of salvation on his hands—works for the majority of dispensations, faith for the rest—and we have ... to deal with a fickle God who deals with man in various ways at various times.”

John Wick Bowman

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE AGAINST DISPENSATIONALISM

- Statement of the charge

“...the presupposition of the difference between law and grace, between Israel and the Church, between the different relations of God to men in the different dispensations, when carried to its logical conclusion, will inevitably result in a multiple form of salvation—that men are not saved the same way in all ages.”

Clarence Bass

(Former Dispensational theologian)

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE AGAINST DISPENSATIONALISM

- Statement of the charge
- Reasons for the charge
 - Misunderstanding of dispensational labels
 - Misunderstanding of “relationship with God” vs. “relating to God”
 - Some statements by early dispensationalists

“The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ.”

C.I. Scofield

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHARGE AGAINST DISPENSATIONALISM

- Statement of the charge
- Reasons for the charge
 - Misunderstanding of dispensational labels
 - Misunderstanding of “relationship with God” vs. “relating to God”
 - Some statements by early dispensationalists
 - HOWEVER...

“Grace offers escape from the law only as a condition of salvation...”

Louis Berkhoff

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

REPLY TO THE CHARGE

“Are there two ways by which one may be saved? In reply to this question it may be stated that salvation of whatever specific character is always the work of God in behalf of man and never a work of man in behalf of God.

This is to assert that God never saved any one person or group of persons on any other ground than that righteous freedom to do so which the Cross of Christ secured.

There is, therefore, but one way to be saved and that is by the power of God made possible through the sacrifice of Christ.”

Lewis Sperry Chafer

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

REPLY TO THE CHARGE

“Law neither justifies a sinner nor sanctifies a believer,”

“It is exceedingly important to observe ... that the law is not proposed as a means of life.”

C.I. Scofield

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

- The relation of law and grace
 - How were people saved prior to Mt. Sinai?
 - The Abrahamic Covenant demonstrated God's plan
 - The Law was added alongside the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:13-18)
- The display of grace under the Law
 - God's election of Israel
 - God's repeated restoration of his people
 - The Davidic Covenant
 - The New Covenant

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

- The Covenant Position

At first glance...

“There is but one, unified testament, God’s sole plan of salvation, through which Christ offers a redemption that is equally effective for the saints of both dispensations.”

J. Barton Payne

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

- The Covenant Position

HOWEVER...

“That, to satisfy God, God must die, that men might inherit God, to be with God, was incomprehensible under the Old Testament seminal knowledge of the Trinity, the incarnation, and the crucifixion followed by the resurrection”

J. Barton Payne

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

- **The Covenant Position**

- Difficulty of explaining Pentecost and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- Failure to distinguish “gospel of the Kingdom” with “gospel of Christ”
- Confusion of tests of faithfulness with ways of salvation
- Insufficient accounting for progress of revelation
- God’s love and Christ’s death only for the elect

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

- The Dispensational Position

CONSISTENCY AND UNITY

“The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the requirement for salvation in every age is faith; the object of faith in every age is God; the content of faith changes in the various dispensations.

Charles Ryrie

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

- The Dispensational Position: *Purpose of the sacrifices*
 - View #1: Fully efficacious for remission of sin
 - View #2: Only dealt with temporal penalties in the theocracy
 - View #3: Fully efficacious within the theocracy, related to salvation as expression of faith (ALL national Israel)

SALVATION IN DISPENSATIONALISM

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM



THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

- **Distinctive doctrines of dispensationalism**
 - ✓ **Eschatology** (Study of Last Things)
 - ✓ **Ecclesiology** (Study of the Church)

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

- **Distinct in character** (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18; 1 Cor 12:27)
 - The new relationship between believers and Christ
 - The new relationship between believers in Christ
- **Distinct in time** (Acts 2 – Rev 3)
 - The mystery character of the church
 - The beginning of the church
 - The departure of the church
- **Distinct from Israel** (Romans 9-11)

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH IN COVENANT THEOLOGY

- No distinction in this age

Covenant Amillennialist

“The Church existed in the old dispensation as well as in the new, and was essentially the same in both, in spite of acknowledged institutional and administrative differences.”

Louis Berkhof

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH IN COVENANT THEOLOGY

- No distinction in this age

Covenant Premillennialist

“There is therefore but one people of God. This is not to say that the Old Testament saints belonged to the Church and that we must speak of the Church in the Old Testament. Acts 7:38 does indeed speak of the “church in the wilderness”; but the word here does not bear its New Testament connotation but designates only the “congregation” in the wilderness. The Church properly speaking had its birthday on the day of Pentecost...”

George Ladd

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH IN PROGRESSIVE DISP.

- **Significantly compromised / diminished / blurred**

“Although we thus agree with the nondispensationalist that Paul’s teaching concerning the mystery of the composition of the Church in the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ is a fulfillment of the OT predictions...

...we must hasten to add that such fulfillments do not require us to understand all of the prophecies related to the Messianic salvation and kingdom as thereby fulfilled.”

Robert Saucy

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHURCH

- Relation of the church to the kingdom
 - Citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20)
 - The future King's betrothed (Rev 19)
 - The coming King's bride (Rev 19)
- Relation of the church to saints of other ages
- Relation of the church to the seed of Abraham
- Relation of the church to apostasy

THE CHURCH IN DISPENSATIONALISM

DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY



DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

- Reason Darby left the Church of England
- Focus of early prophecy conferences
 - Postmillennialism
 - Annihilationism
 - Perfectionism
- Inevitable result of the conferences
- Dispensationalism \neq Eschatology (but does affect all systematic theology)

DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

FEATURES OF DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

- The hermeneutical principle consistently applied
- Fulfillment of all OT prophecies (cf. Davidic and New Covenants)
- Clear, consistent distinction between Israel and the church
- The Pre-tribulational Rapture (1 Thess 4, 1 Cor 15, Rev 4)
- The Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20 not the primary issue)

DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

IS THE CROSS MINIMIZED?

- The charge
- The reply

When we press the vital question, what, in case the offer had been accepted, would have become of the Cross of Calvary and the atonement for the sins of the world, the best answer we get is that in that event, “atonement would have been made some other way.” Think of it! “Some other way” than by the cross.

Philip Mauro

DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

IS THE CROSS MINIMIZED?

- The charge
- The reply
 - The offer to Israel was real
 - The “What if?” is irrelevant
 - The church was unseen, Messiah’s death was not (Is 53:8, Dan 9:26)
 - The ultimate blood sacrifice was required (Heb 10:4)



DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

IS THE KINGDOM DESPIRITUALIZED?

- The charge: *Dispensational view is too materialistic*
- The reply
 - Material \neq Carnal, Spiritual \neq Immaterial (this is Gnosticism)
 - The millennial kingdom is ruled by Jesus Christ
 - A material kingdom of spiritual people was always in view
 - God will create a new heaven *AND NEW EARTH*

DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY

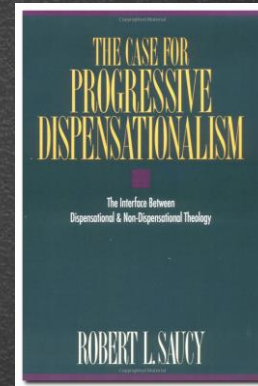
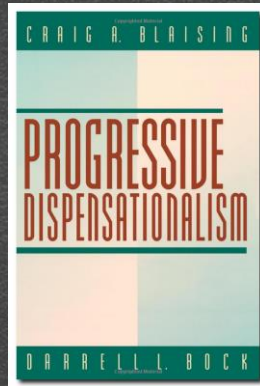
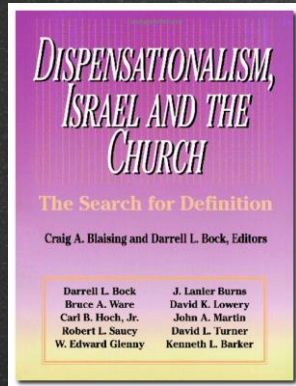
PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM



PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT

- Publicly as a system: 11/20/86, Atlanta, Disp. Study Group at ETS
- Labelled “Progressive dispensationalism” in 1991
- Leaders: Darrell Bock, Craig Blaising, Robert Saucy



PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

DEFINITIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DISP.

1. “Progressive dispensationalism advocates a holistic and unified view of eternal salvation.”
2. “The church is not ‘an anthropological category’ in the same class as terms such as Israel and Gentiles, nor is it a competing nation”
3. The “blessings [promised in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants] are given [today] in a partial and inaugurated form.”

Bock, Blaising

PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

BASIC TENETS OF PROGRESSIVE DISP.

1. The “kingdom of God” is the unifying theme of biblical history.
2. There are four dispensational eras.
3. Christ
4. The n
5. The c
6. Both
7. One c

THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM				
PATRIARCHAL	MOSAIC	ECCLESIAL	ZIONIC	
Adam to Sinai	Sinai to Ascension of Messiah	Ascension to Second Coming	Part 1: Millennium	Part 2: Eternal State

PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

SIGNIFICANT OMITTED / SLIGHTED MATTERS

- The 70 weeks of Daniel
- The absence of signs and wonders
- Lack of focus on the pretribulation Rapture
- The distinction between the Millennial Kingdom and eternal state

“...the newer dispensationalism looks so much like nondispensationalist premillennialism that one struggles to see any real difference.”

Walter Elwell

PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

COVENANT THEOLOGY



COVENANT THEOLOGY

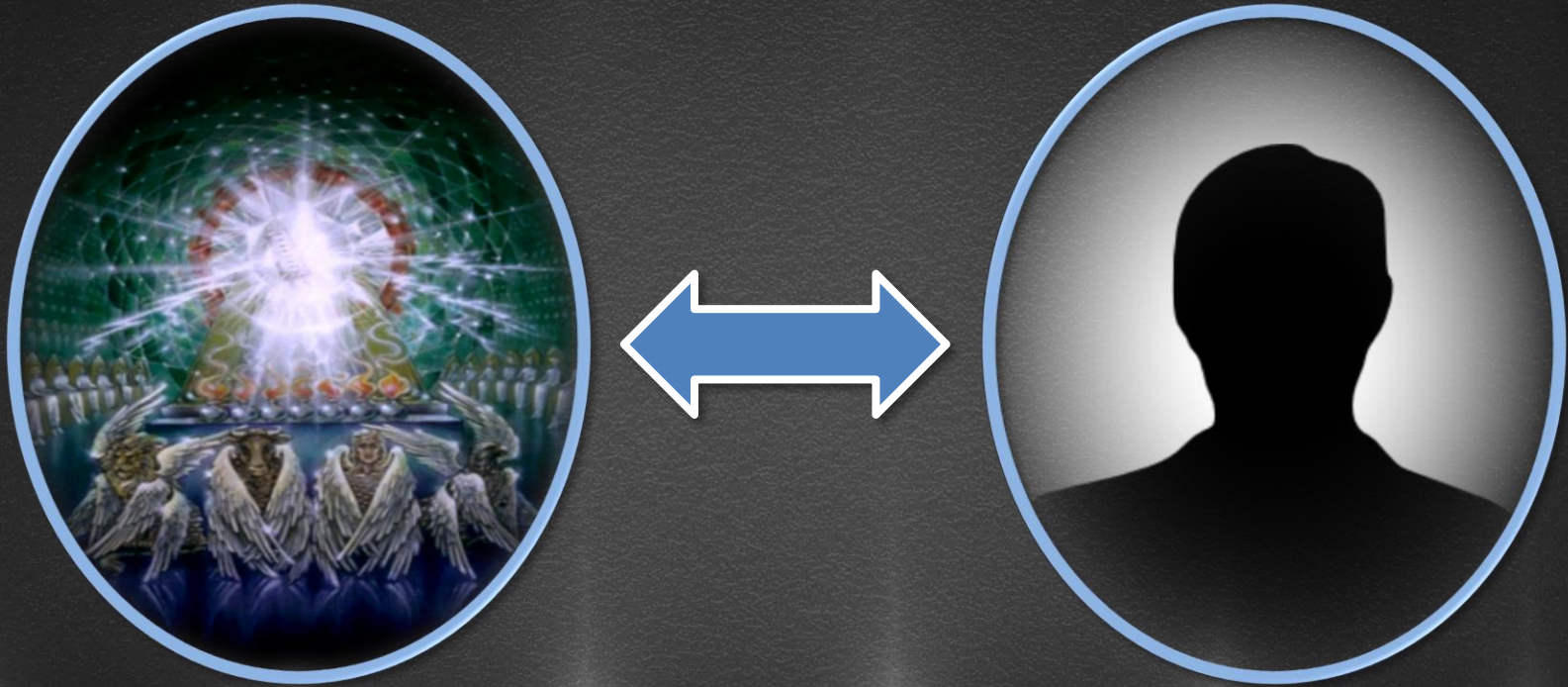
INTRODUCTION

- Covenant, Reformed, Presbyterian, Calvinist
- The 5 “Doctrines of Grace” – TULIP
- The “6th point” – Regeneration PRECEDES Faith

COVENANT THEOLOGY

DEFINITION — THE THREE COVENANTS (THEOLOGICAL)

Covenant of Works



COVENANT THEOLOGY

DEFINITION – THE THREE COVENANTS

Covenant of Grace



COVENANT THEOLOGY

DEFINITION – THE THREE COVENANTS

Covenant of Redemption



COVENANT THEOLOGY

HISTORY OF COVENANT THEOLOGY

- **Systematized Covenant Theology**
 - Not found in the early church
 - Not found in the Middle Ages
 - Not found in writings of the Reformers (Luther, Zwingli OR Calvin)
 - Not mentioned in any great confessions until 1647 (Westminster)
 - Hints found in 16th & 17th century, but initially systematized by Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)
- **Covenant theologians often guilty of their own charge**

COVENANT THEOLOGY

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR COVENANT THEOLOGY

- Concepts within the theological covenants
 - Not necessarily unscriptural
 - But never presented as covenants
- Therefore, these covenants are theological deductions
- Deductive versus Inductive Bible study illustrated
 - Calvinist versus Arminian view of God's sovereignty and man's will
 - Biblicist view of these

COVENANT THEOLOGY

HERMENEUTICS OF COVENANT THEOLOGY

“The main guide to the interpretation of the Old Testament is certainly to be found in the New.”

Louis Berkhof

“the present writer is ready to agree with the amillennialist that there is only one place to find a hermeneutic: in the New Testament.”

George Ladd

COVENANT THEOLOGY

HERMENEUTICS OF COVENANT THEOLOGY

A TALE OF TWO MEN

Two men were walking down the road
with a storm fast approaching...

COVENANT THEOLOGY

TWO WAYS OF SALVATION?

“From the law ... both as a means of obtaining eternal life and as a condemning power believers are set free in Christ.”

Louis Berkhof

“The law is a declaration of the will of God for man’s salvation.”

O.T. Allis

COVENANT THEOLOGY

THE LORDSHIP SALVATION PROBLEM (NOT IN NOTES)

“The gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience, not just a plea to make a decision or pray a prayer. . .

It was an offer of eternal life and forgiveness for repentant sinners, but at the same time it was a rebuke to outwardly religious people whose lives were devoid of true righteousness.

It put sinners on notice that they must turn from sin and embrace God's righteousness. It was in every sense good news, yet it was anything but easy-believism“

John MacArthur

(The Gospel According to Jesus)

COVENANT THEOLOGY

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM



ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

- Primary difference: *When did the church begin?*
 - Dispensationalism: *Pentecost*
 - Ultradispensationalism: *Under Paul's ministry*
- Does it matter?
 - The ordinances of the church
 - The relevance of the epistles
 - The interpretation of the Gospels

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

ORIGINS OF ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

- **Ethelbert Bullinger (1837-1913)**
 - Graduate of King's College, London
 - Ordained Anglican clergyman
 - Believed in extinction of the soul between death and resurrection
 - Dispensation of Law continued until Acts 28:28
 - Only Prison Epistles relevant to Church Age
 - Water baptism not for the Church Age

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

TYPES OF ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

- **Extreme ultra-dispensationalism**
 - Fairly limited groups / influence
 - Multiple dispensations between Christ and Paul's prison ministry
 - Church began in Acts 28
 - Neither baptism nor the Lord's supper for this age
 - Israel is the Bride of Christ

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

TYPES OF ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

- **Moderate ultra-dispensationalism**
 - Grace Mission, Grace Gospel Fellowship, Berean Bible Society
 - Magazines: “Berean Searchlight,” “Truth”
 - Church began before Acts 28, but not on Pentecost
 - Israel is the Bride of Christ
 - Baptism not for Church Age, but Lord’s Supper is
 - All of Paul’s writings for the Church Age

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

ERRORS OF ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM

- Erroneous understanding of dispensation (as applied to Acts)
- Erroneous exegesis of key passages
 - “Church” prior to Paul was Jewish church, not the Body Church
 - Only Paul revealed the mystery of the church (Eph 3:1-12)
 - Baptism “with” (Acts 1:5) versus “by” the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13)

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM



DISPENSATIONALISM