

What is Dispensationalism? Conference

DISPENSATIONALISM & SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

- I. The 10 areas of systematic theology
 - A. Bibliology: The doctrine of the Bible
 - B. Theology proper: The doctrine of God
 - C. Christology: The doctrine of Christ
 - D. Pneumatology: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 - E. Angelology: The doctrine of angels
 - F. Anthropology: The doctrine of man
 - G. Hamartiology: The doctrine of sin
 - H. Soteriology: The doctrine of salvation
 - I. Ecclesiology: The doctrine of the church
 - J. Eschatology: The doctrine of last things

- II. Bibliology: The doctrine of the Bible
 - A. Bibliology is foundational because it deals with everything we know about God and His program.

 - B. Bibliology provides the doctrines of the inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

 - C. A biblical method of interpretation rests upon these doctrines, and dispensational theology is the result.

 - D. Most dispensationalists believe that God's revelation to man ceased at least by the end of the apostolic era.

- III. Theology proper: The doctrine of God
 - A. Dispensationalism holds that the primary purpose of God in history is to bring glory to himself.

 - B. The overarching theme of the Bible is "God Establishing His Kingdom of Righteousness" and it is through this that God brings glory to Himself.

- C. Other theological systems tend to focus on redemption as the primary theme of Scripture.
- D. God's covenant-faithfulness is foundational to establishing His kingdom as He fulfills the promises He made to Israel and the church.

IV. Christology: The doctrine of Christ

- A. Pre-incarnate appearances of the eternal Son of God often were connected to a specific dispensation or to events related to a change of dispensations.
- B. These dispensational changes were marked by the Lord's direct intervention in history through wrath and judgment executed through signs and wonders.
- C. The incarnation of the Son of God set into motion the next dispensational change, when He and His kingdom message were rejected by His own.
- D. This pattern continues in the final dispensation of The Day of the Lord, which involves wrath and judgment followed by restoration and blessing through the work of Christ.

V. Pneumatology: The doctrine of the Holy Spirit

- A. Properly understanding dispensationalism is crucial to developing a biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- B. God works in different ways in different phases of His program in history, which includes the work of the Holy Spirit.
- C. The Spirit is involved in carrying out God's program from the Creation to the Consummation, including salvation and sanctification.
- D. God's working in history has been characterized by long periods of relative quiet, punctuated by brief periods of signs and wonders.

VI. Angelology: The doctrine of angels

- A. Angels were involved in various ways in different dispensations as God's plan played out in history.

- B. The highest angel, who rebelled against God became known as Satan, and he determined to establish his own kingdom.
- C. Gabriel and Michael both had significant roles in moving God's plan forward in the past, and will continue to have important roles in the future.
- D. Other angels have important responsibilities, and are seen especially as agents of God's wrath and judgment during Daniel's 70th week.

VII. Anthropology: The doctrine of man

- A. Dispensationalism recognizes three strands of the human family, Gentiles, Jews and Christians, which is critical to understanding God's program.
- B. Gentiles are first mentioned in Genesis 10:5, and are simply those who are not descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- C. After the judgment at the Tower of Babel, God raised up a new nation through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom he made specific promises concerning land, descendants and blessing.
- D. On Pentecost, Gentile and Jewish believers were baptized into the Body of Christ to become "one new man," making up the church, whose function will be as the Queen in the kingdom.

VIII. Hamartiology: The doctrine of sin

- A. Most conservative evangelicals generally agree concerning the doctrine of sin, so this area is probably the least impacted by dispensational theology.
- B. The first change of dispensations was due to sin which brought the Dispensation of Innocence to an end, and this pattern tends to mark dispensational changes.
- C. The Mosaic Law defined many specific sins for God's chosen people for the purpose of being pointing to the need for a permanent solution for sin on the basis of faith alone.
- D. For Gentiles who were not born under the law were held accountable for sin based upon an intuitive knowledge of God's law through the conscience.

IX. Soteriology: The doctrine of salvation

- A. In the past, some dispensationalists have seemed to suggest two ways of salvation—one for Jews (obedience) and another for Christians (by grace through faith).
- B. Most dispensationalists are now more careful to make it clear that salvation has always been by grace through faith.
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X. Ecclesiology: The doctrine of the church

- A. An essential component of Normative Dispensationalism is a clear distinction between Israel and the church – the church does not replace Israel nor receive promises made to Israel.
- B. Most dispensationalists agree that the church began on Pentecost and that one of the unique ministries of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation is the baptism of believers into the Body of Christ.
- C. Most dispensationalists believe that the church will be caught up in the Rapture to be with Christ prior to the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, and will not experience the judgments of Daniel's 70th week.
- D. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will return to the earth with the church who will function reign alongside Christ in the millennial kingdom.

XI. Israelology: The doctrine of Israel

- A. God raised up the new nation of Israel through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the aftermath of the Tower of Babel judgment.
- B. God made four unilateral, unconditional eternal covenants with Israel – the Abrahamic (Gen 12), Land (Deu 28), Davidic (2Sam 7), and New covenants (Jer 31).
- C. During the present dispensation, God is not dealing with Israel specifically, but will return to doing so during Daniel's 70th week.

- D. During the millennial kingdom, God will fulfill all the promises He made to Israel as they fulfill their role as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” with Christ ruling from the throne of David.

XII. Eschatology: The doctrine of last things

- A. The connection between eschatology and dispensational theology depends upon consistently applying a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic.
- B. The next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church, meaning that no specific signs or the fulfillment of any prophecy is required for the rapture to occur.
- C. Pretribulational, Premillennial Dispensationalism holds to the following sequence of future events: the Rapture, Daniel’s 70th, return of Christ, millennial kingdom, Great White Throne Judgment, eternity future.
- D. The distinction between Israel and the church continues throughout the millennial kingdom and throughout all eternity.

