

# Dispensational Theology

A Christ-Centered Study of Dispensational Truth



Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

--2 Timothy 2:15

Therefore remember that **formerly** you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—that you **were** **at that time** separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **But now** in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

--Ephesians 2:11-13

“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”

--Revelation 1:19

# οἰκονομία

(ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ)

οἶκος

(House or Household)

νόμος

(Law or Distribution  
of Goods)

= “Economy” or “Dispensation”

# Introduction

- FBC embraces a dispensational framework for understanding and interpreting the Bible.
- Within the evangelical community, however, many believers don't know what dispensationalism is, and some even oppose dispensational theology.
- As we advance in our understanding of our faith, we must come "to rightly divide" the Word. Otherwise, we will be vulnerable to false teaching and fall short of appreciating our glorious purpose and destiny.
- The goal of this class is to understand what dispensationalism is, what are the major arguments and issues surrounding it, and how it can aid in your spiritual growth.

# Course Outline

- 6 March--Introduction
- 13 March--History of Dispensationalism
- 20 March--Hermeneutics
- 27--EASTER
- 3 April--Israel and the Church
- 10 April--Innocence, Conscience, and Government
- 17 April--Promise (Israel)
- 24 April—Incarnation
- 1 May—Church
- 8 May—Tribulation and Kingdom
- 15 May—The Dispensational Believer
- 22 May—Issues in Dispensationalism
- 29 May--Conclusion

# What is dispensations all about?

- A “dispensation” is a period of time in which God “dispenses” His grace in a certain way.
- They are God’s distinctive and different administrations of world affairs throughout time.
- Different dispensations feature different methods that God uses.
- But every dispensation is about the Person and Work of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

# How are the various dispensations alike, and how are they different?

## How they are alike...

- Salvation is by grace
- Salvation is through faith
- The basis of salvation is the atoning work of Christ on the Cross

## How they are different...

- The *content* of faith
- The method and agency of God's revelation
- God's organization of humanity
- God's testing of corporate humanity

# Are you a dispensationalist?

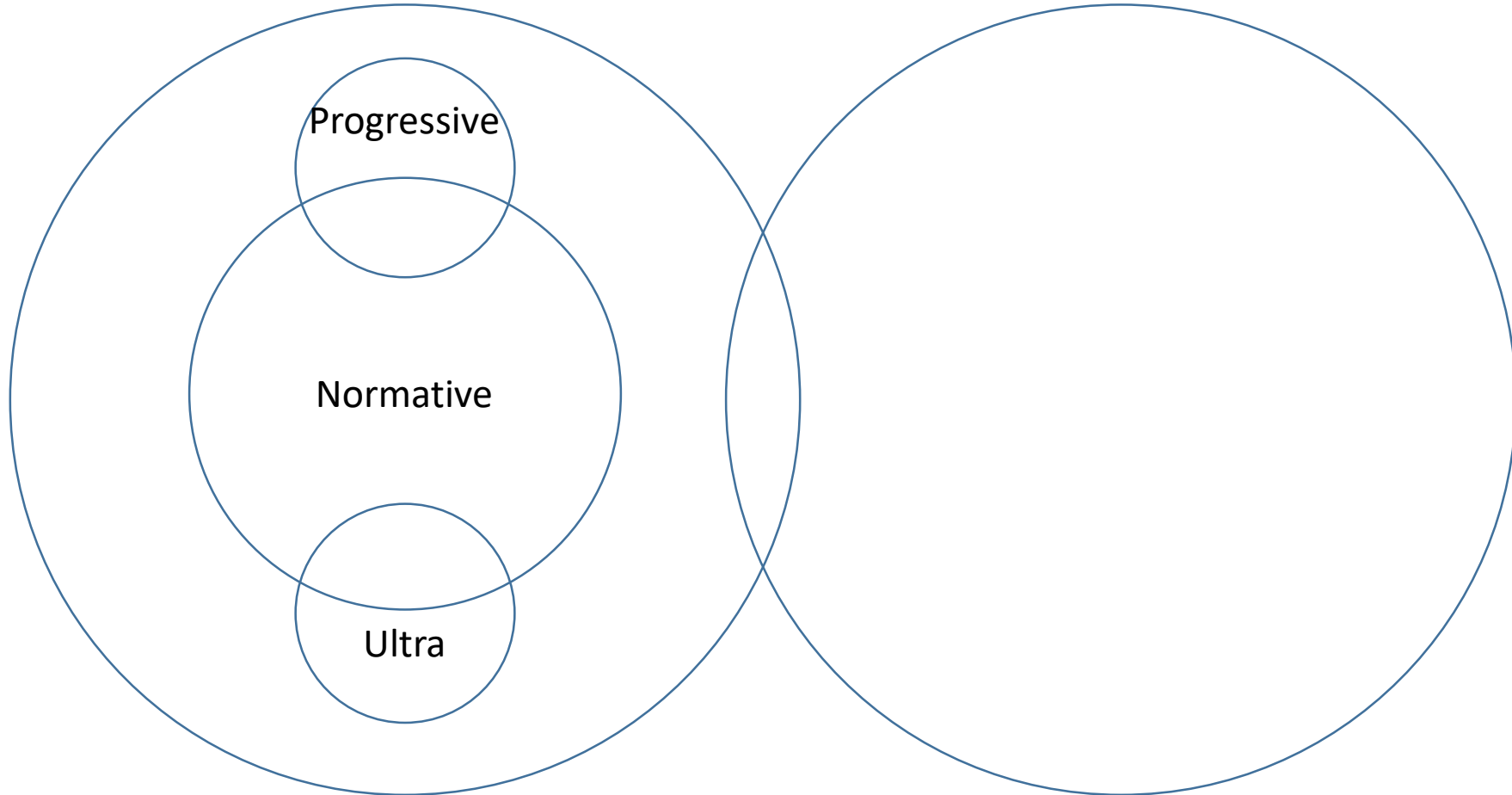
- Do you sacrifice animals at the Temple in Jerusalem?
- Do you recognize the nation (not state!) of Israel as God's special people?
- Do you believe in spiritual gifts for the church?
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ will return to this world and rule it?

...then you are a dispensationalist!



Dispensational Theology

Covenant Theology



# Basic principles

- Verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Literal, historical, grammatical interpretation of the Scriptures
- The Church is distinct from Israel
- Premillennialism
- Pretribulation rapture
- (God's purpose)

# Opposition to dispensationalism

- Liberal theology condemns it as conservative, which it is.
- Amillennialists and postmillennialists (including theologians) reject premillennialism, including dispensationalism, which is premillennial.
- It is called 'false teaching', 'unbiblical', and 'heretical' by some.
- It is opposed by premillennialists who embrace a post-tribulation (mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, or partial) rapture position, because dispensationalism teaches pre-tribulation rapture.
- It is called 'modernistic' and accused of being no older than the 1830s.
- Ad hominem attacks on John Nelson Darby, C. I. Scofield, Louis S. Chafer, and on adherents who are presumed to be poorly educated.
- Claims that it teaches two ways of salvation.
- Claims that it discounts the Old Testament, the Gospels, and even The Acts.

# How dispensationalism helps the believer

- All forms of Christian theology recognize that there are distinctive periods in God's revelation and plan. Dispensationalism simply codifies these in accordance with Scripture.
- It gives us a 'philosophy of history': a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward ultimate meaning.
  - The goal of God's dispensational plan is the establishment of the millennial kingdom.
- It provides consistent hermeneutics. (Literal, historical, grammatical)
  - Covenant theology must resort to allegorical interpretation in order to sustain its amillennialism or postmillennialism.
  - If one is consistent in literal interpretation, it will lead him/her to dispensationalism.
- It draws us closer to Jesus Christ, because it teaches us His "world view".

# The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

# CHAPTER TWO—WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

# Definitions

- “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.” (Scofield Reference Bible)
  - A deposit of divine revelation
  - Man’s stewardship responsibility in relation to that revelation
  - The time period during which a dispensation is operative
  - Throughout the dispensations, there is one way of salvation: faith alone in Christ alone
- This definition is attacked because it is too closely aligned with ‘age’ and does not develop the other parts of what dispensationalism is (i.e., an ‘economy’).
- Cf. Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9.

# Etymology of “Dispensation”

- *Oikonomia* (Greek) → “to manage, regulate, administer, and plan”; “to divide, apportion, regulate, and manage the affairs of an inhabited house”.
- *Dispensatio* (Latin) → “to weigh out or dispense”.
- *Dispensation* (English) → “the action of dealing out or distributing”; “the action of administering, ordering, or managing; the system by which things are administered”; “the action of dispensing with some requirement”.



# Chapter 3—What are the Dispensations?