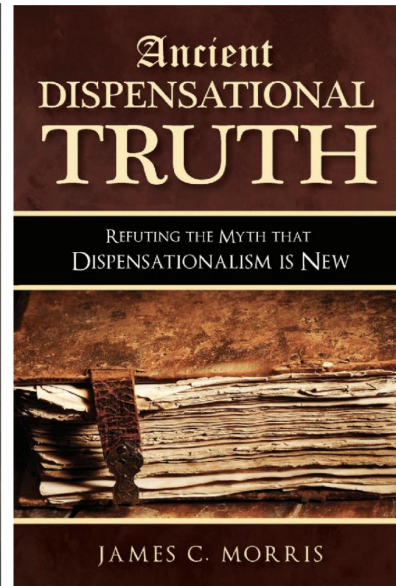
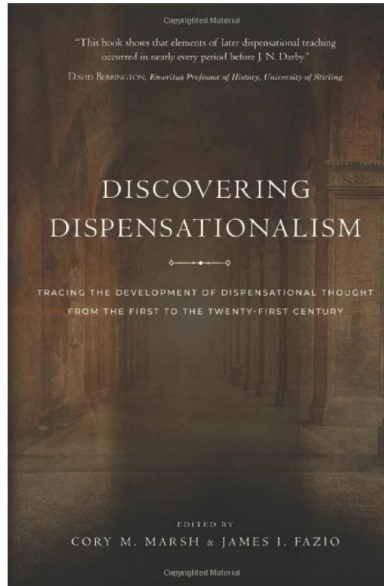
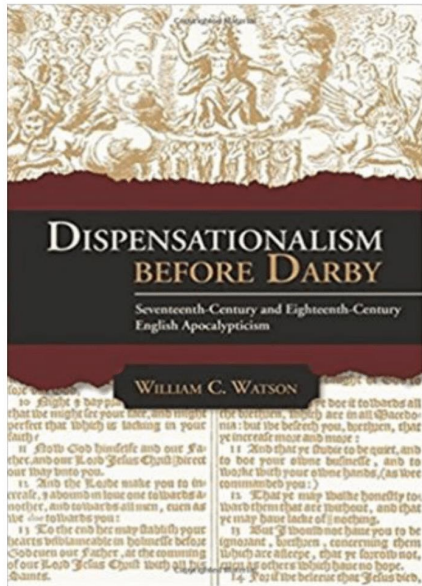


## DISPENSATIONALISM BEFORE DARBY DEBUNKED

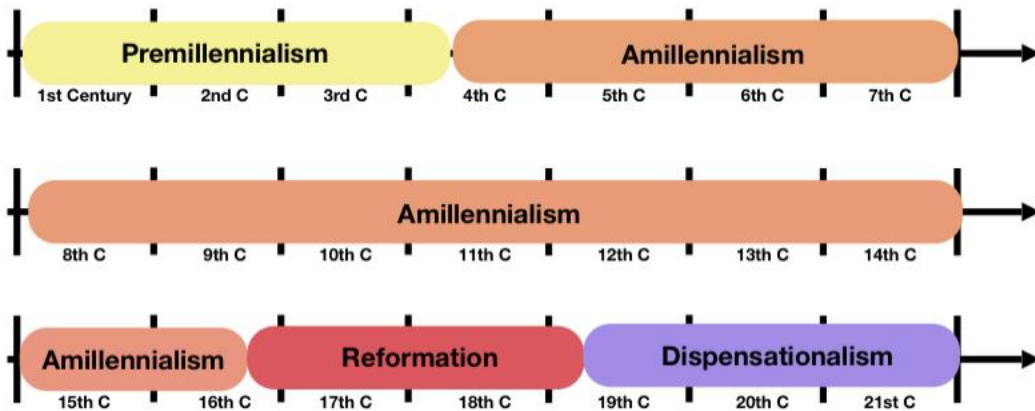


### I. WHAT IS DISPENSATIONALISM?

Dispensationalism	Historic Premillennialism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A More Literal Historical Grammatical Hermeneutic</li> <li>• Emphasis on the biblical covenants</li> <li>• Begins with the Old Testament</li> <li>• History may be viewed through various periods</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees an overly rigid distinction between Israel and the Church</li> <li>• Divides the NT into portions “for Israel” and “for the Church.”</li> <li>• Pretribulational Rapture</li> </ul>



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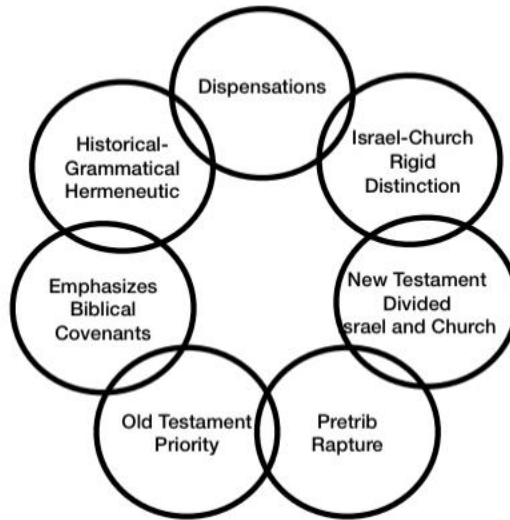


## II. THE GREAT EMBARRASSMENT

The fact that Pretribulational Dispensationalism is unknown throughout Church history is very embarrassing to Pretribbers. Thus, in recent years, many Pretrib Dispensationalists have begun claiming that Darby simply recovered something that had always existed. This has led to the publication of at least three books in recent years.

- A. The first book we will address is *Ancient Dispensational Truth: Refuting the Myth that Dispensationalism is New* by James C. Morris. Morris' book is far less academic than the others.
- 1) dispensationalism is a theological system created by John Nelson Darby in the 1930s
    - a) it is not merely a few unrelated doctrines, rather it is a theological system with several interconnected doctrines
  - 2) the presence of individual doctrines does not prove the presence of the system as a whole
  - 3) any effort to say that Dispensationalism is older than Darby is simply not true
    - a) Watchtower (Jehovah's Witnesses) theology does not predate its founder, Charles Taze Russell, nor does Islam predate Muhammad
  - 4) one can find aspects of dispensational thought throughout history, but you will not find dispensationalism

Dispensationalism Defined:



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1. Belief in dispensations
2. Literal hermeneutic
3. Against Replacement Theology
4. End Time Restoration of Israel
5. Daniel's Seventieth Week Future
6. Pretrib Rapture

- B. In chapter six, Morris attempts to show that the early Christians believed in a Pretribulation Rapture.
- 1) he only attempts to claim that Irenaeus and Victorinus were Pretribulationists (in two previous sessions, I demonstrated such claims to be beyond ridiculous)
    - a) "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but shall receive power



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*as if kings one hour with the beast”...And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the Church to flight. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord.”*

*(Irenaeus Against Heresies, V, 26, 1)*

- i. Irenaeus believed the church would be on the earth facing the persecution of the antichrist
- ii. “When taken within the context of all of Irenaeus’ writings, it appears that he was not teaching pretribulationism.” - Dr. Tommy Ice, Director of the Pretrib Research Center

b) *“The little season signifies three years and six months, in which with all his power the devil will avenge himself under Antichrist against the church.”* (Victorinus Commentary on the Apocalypse, 20)

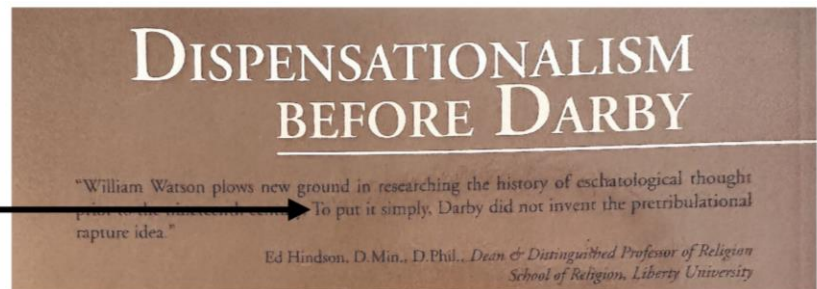
C. The next book we will review is *Dispensationalism Before Darby* by William C. Watson.

1) Watson shows that some elements of Dispensationalism were taught before the 19th Century

a) again, Dispensationalism is a system, not individual doctrines

b) Watson desperately tries but fails to show any evidence of a Pretribulation Rapture. This is the primary purpose behind the book

- i. *“William Watson plows new ground in researching the history of eschatological thought prior to the nineteenth century. To put it simply, Darby did not invent the pretribulation rapture idea.”* - Ed Hindson D. Min. D Phil.



- ii. a review from Amazon: *“As mentioned in the first paragraph, a common argument against Dispensationalism (and the pretribulation rapture) is that it was invented by John Nelson Darby*

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*around 1830. Watson proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that this popular belief is absolutely false and those who promote it grossly mischaracterize church history..."*

- D. Watson has very poor understanding of various theological systems (Amillennialism, Premillennialism, and Postmillennialism).
- 1) His book is filled with misunderstanding the positions of others, often placing them in categories they do not belong in
- E. Watson consistently uses very faulty logic in his argumentation.
- 1) for example, he begins by making a big deal of the fact that the word "rapture" was used by some earlier writers- as if the term only refers to a Pretrib Rapture
    - a) post-tribbers or Pre-Wrathers, and even most Amillennialists believe in a rapture. This is the kind of horrible logic and sleight of hand that permeates the book
- F. In Chapters 7 and 10: "Concepts of a Pretribulational Rapture and Tribulation in Seventeenth Century England" and "The Pretribulational Rapture and Tribulation in Eighteenth Century England", Watson fails to show a single example of a Pretribulational rapture was ever believed during this period.
- 1) he cites over twenty different writers, and bizarrely he even acknowledges that most of them were not Pretrib! He only claims that six were pretrib: Ephraim Huit (1643), John Browne (1654), John Birchensha (1660), Samuel Hutchinson (1667), Joshua Sprigg (1676), and Sayer Rudd (1734)
    - a) Ephraim Huit (1643): "Deliverance from outward trials is expressed by the Lord coming in the clouds...Our Lord in Matthew 24:30 and his beloved disciple John in Revelation 1:10, do couple this coming of the Son of Man in the clouds with the wailing of the Jews"- Ephraim Huit
      - i. Huit placed our "deliverance from outward trials" as occurring when Jesus returns in the clouds in Matthew 24:10, after the tribulation
  - 2) John Browne (1654): bizarrely, on page 152, Watson says, "Brown believed in a premillennial, mid-tribulational rapture"
    - a) which was it?
  - 3) John Birchensha (1660): "John Birchensha (ca. 1605-1681) believed that the 1260 day/years of Daniel ended in 1641, marking the beginning of the great battle of Armageddon (which he understood to be the English Civil War), when the



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*saints began to fight back against the forces of the Antichrist. He believed in many comings of Christ...* - William Watson

- a) Birchensha was clearly very confused. Why would Watson claim such an individual to support his view?
  - 4) Samuel Hutchinson (1667): *“His [Hutchinson’s] order of events was: First the tribulation, then the rapture, then Armageddon...”*  
- William Watson p.159
    - a) Hutchinson did not put the rapture before the tribulation
    - b) *“When we see the people of God in such distress (tribulation) as was never known in the Word, then we may look for Christ’s appearance for the deliverance of them.”* - Samuel Hutchinson
    - c) *“In 2 Thessalonians 2:1, the Saints shall be gathered together unto him, according to that in Matthew 24:31”*  
- Samuel Hutchinson
      - i. Mathew 24:31 specifically takes place “after the tribulation”
    - d) Hutchinson was 100% post-trib!!
  - 5) Joshua Sprigg (1676): Watson says Joshua Sprigg hinted at a secret coming of Christ before “his glorious appearance”
    - a) Watson says that a hint is all Birchensha offers, yet still list him as “clearly pre-trib”
  - 6) Sayer Rudd (1734): *“Baptist pastor and physician taught that Christ will descend several times.”* - William Watson Again
    - a) why would Watson claim someone with such convoluted view of the end times as supporting his view?
- G. *“Is pretribulationism as theologically bankrupt as its critics profess, or are there answers to these charges? If there are reasonable answers, then the burden of proof and historical argumentation shifts back to the critics. Rapture critics must acknowledge and interact with the historical and theological evidence.”* - Tommy Ice and Timothy Deny