

The Church – Part 4

Dispensationalism

- Began in England in the 19th century
- System of theology that views history in terms of seven dispensations
- Essentials
 - Israel and the Church are distinct
 - Consistently literal or plain interpretation of Scripture
- Ecclesiology
 - God has two distinct programs for Israel and for the church
 - The church does not fulfill any of Israel's promises or purposes
 - The church age is a mystery, so no Old Testament prophecies foresaw it
 - The present church age is a “parenthesis” during which God has temporarily suspended his primary purpose with Israel
 - The church age is from Pentecost to the pretribulational rapture of the church
 - The church consists only of those saved between Pentecost and the rapture
 - The church does not include Old Testament believers

Church is the Israel of God (Gal 6:16)

- Old Testament designations of Israel are applied to the church
1 Peter 2:9-10; Deut 7:6-8; Ex 19:6; Rev 1:4-6; Rev 5:9-10
Heb 12:22-24; Gal 4:21-17; Is 54:1-3; Rev 21:9-10
- New Testament believers are children of Abraham
Rom 4:11-12; Gal 3:7-9; Heb 11:8-16, 39-40
- Church is described in Jewish terms
Rom 8:28-29; Deut 10:16; Deut 30:6; Jer 4:3-4; Acts 7:51; Phil 3:2-3; Col 2:11-14
- Ephesians 2:11 – 3:6
- Old Testament prophecies of Israel are applied to the church
Acts 3:17-26
Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:14-21
Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:6-13
Amos 9:11-15; Acts 15:13-18
- Jesus spoke of one people of God
John 10:14-16; Luke 24:25-27; John 15:1; Ps 80:8; Jer 2:21
- Literal Interpretation
Ez 45:13-17; Heb 10:1-18
- Conclusion – Rom 10:1-4; Eph 3:20-21

What is Dispensationalism?

According to Charles C. Ryrie

1. A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the Church distinct. Chafer summarized it as follows:

The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes, one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity.... Over against this, the partial dispensationalist, though dimly observing a few obvious distinctions, bases his interpretation on the supposition that God is doing but one thing, namely, the general separation of the good from the bad, and... contends that the earthly people merge in the heavenly people; that the earthly program must be given a spiritual interpretation or disregarded altogether.

2. This distinction between Israel and the Church is born out of a system of hermeneutics, which is usually called literal interpretation.... The word literal is perhaps not so good as either the word normal or plain, but in any case it is interpretation that does not spiritualize or allegorize as nondispensational interpretation does. The spiritualizing may be practiced to a lesser or greater degree, but its presence in a system of interpretation is indicative of a nondispensational approach. Consistently literal or plain interpretation is indicative of a dispensational approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures. And it is this very consistency – the strength of dispensational interpretation – that irks the nondispensationalist and becomes the object of his ridicule.

The Seven Dispensations

1. The Dispensation of Innocency and Freedom – creation of Adam to Adam's fall, Gen 1:28 – 3:6
2. The Dispensation of Conscience or Self-Determination – Adam's fall to flood, Gen 4:1 – 8:14
3. The Dispensation of Civil Government – flood to tower of Babel, Gen 8:15 – 11:9
4. The Dispensation of Promise or Patriarchal Rule – Abraham to Sinai, Gen 11:10 – Ex 18:27
5. The Dispensation of the Mosaic Law – Sinai to Pentecost, Ex 19:1 – Acts 1:26
6. The Dispensation of Grace – Pentecost to Second Coming, Acts 2:1 to Rev 19:21
7. The Dispensation of the Millennium – Second Coming to Judgment, Rev 20 - 22

Reformed View

1. There are two overarching covenants that run through the whole Bible, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.

2. God instituted the Covenant of Works with Adam (Gen 2:17). God demanded perfect obedience of Adam, who would either obey the terms of the covenant and receive God's blessing – eternal life in a glorified Eden – or fail to keep the covenant and bring its sanctions down upon himself and all humanity. Hos 6:7; Matt 5:48; 1 Pet 1:16; Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21, 45; Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21
3. Covenant of Grace was instituted after the fall (Gen 3:15). All other covenants fall under the Covenant of Grace. The individual covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David foreshadowed as part of a larger covenantal structure the new covenant ratified by Christ's blood. Rom 1:17; Rom 3:21-26

Early Dispensationalists

J. N. Darby
Dr. James H. Brooks
C. I. Scofield
D. L. Moody
Lewis Sperry Chafer

Dispensationalists Today

Chuck Swindoll – current President of Dallas Theological Seminary
John MacArthur
Billy Graham
Hal Lindsey
Tim LaHaye
Jerry Falwell (Liberty University)
David Jeremiah
John Hagee
Benny Hinn

Israel and the Church

Reformation Christian Fellowship

Possible Relationships

- Israel and the Church are two different people of God with two different destinies
- Israel and the Church are two different people of God and the Church has replaced Israel
- God has always had only one people formerly found in Israel but now found in the Church. The Church is the fulfillment of Israel

Dispensationalism Defined

- System of Theology
- See biblical history in terms of seven dispensations (administrations or economies)
 - Innocency and Freedom – creation of Adam to Adam’s fall, Gen 1:28 – 3:6
 - Conscience or Self-Determination – Adam’s fall to flood, Gen 4:1 – 8:14
 - Civil Government – flood to tower of Babel, Gen 8:15 – 11:9
 - Promise or Patriarchal Rule – Abraham to Sinai, Gen 11:10 – Ex 18:27
 - Mosaic Law – Sinai to Pentecost, Ex 19:1 – Acts 1:26
 - Grace – Pentecost to Second Coming, Acts 2:1 to Rev 19:21
 - Millennium – Second Coming to Judgment, Rev 20 - 22

Dispensationalism Essentials

- Israel and the Church are distinct
 - Israel is God's earthly people fulfilling God's earthly purpose and objectives
 - Christianity is God's heavenly people fulfilling God's heavenly purpose and objectives
- Consistently literal or plain interpretation of Scripture
 - Reject the analogy of faith (Scripture interprets Scripture)
 - No spiritualizing or allegorizing

History of Dispensationalism

- Emerged from the Plymouth Brethren in England in the early 1800's
 - Where two or three are gathered in Christ's name you have a church
 - No ordained minister is necessary
- John Nelson Darby
 - Became a Christian during college
 - In 1826 ordained a priest in the Church of Ireland
 - In October 1827 seriously injured in a fall from a horse
 - Kingdom referred to in Isaiah is not the Church
 - In 1831 began publishing prophetic literature
 - Included the new "secret Rapture" doctrine

Spread of Dispensationalism

- Darby travelled to the United States 1862 – 1877
- Presbyterian minister Dr. James H. Brookes
 - Bible study with students
 - Published books, pamphlets, and a magazine
 - Niagara Bible Conferences
- C. I. Scofield
 - Studied under Brookes
 - Pastor of Congregational Church in Dallas 1882 – 1895
 - Published *Scofield Reference Bible* in 1909
 - Pastor of Moody Church in Northfield, MA

Spread of Dispensationalism (Cont)

- D. L. Moody
 - Founded Northfield Conferences in 1880. Dominated by dispensationalists
 - Moody Bible Institute in Chicago
- Lewis Sperry Chafer
 - Presbyterian minister in Northfield, MA
 - Started Dallas Theological Seminary in 1924
 - 30 Years
 - First full dispensational systematic theology
- Charles Ryrie
 - Ryrie Study Bible

Prominent Dispensationalists

- Chuck Swindoll
- John MacArthur
- Billy Graham
- David Jeremiah
- Hal Lindsey
- Tim LaHaye
- Jerry Falwell (Liberty University)
- John Hagee
- Benny Hinn

Dispensational Ecclesiology

- God has two distinct programs for Israel and for the church
- The church does not fulfill any of Israel's promises or purposes
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