

The objective of this class is: to give a basic understanding of both Dispensationalism and Covenantal theology and, for many of you, expose you to a new perspective on how the bible should be read and interpreted so that it will radically change and shape the way you personally read and understand the whole of Scripture, including many of its key doctrines.

Introduction: There are 2 major and distinct ways of Reading and Understanding the Bible Story: Dispensationalism and Covenantalism. The hermeneutic one embraces will affect a number of important doctrines including the rapture, the church, baptism and eschatology, as well as how one understands current events and Christian responsibility. We will spend three weeks talking about an issue over which Good & Godly men differ. Is the formation of the NT church the new shape of God's one people of faith, or is it a second and separate people of God? Is Ethnic Israel (National Israel) in any sense still "the People of God" and separate from Church? This can be an Emotional Issue for many, so we need to be patient and gracious. Disagreement & Critique is not Disrespect

Nature of Biblical Prophecy

- 1) Difference between these positions is a question of Relationship between OT & NT
- 2) Hermeneutics → Do you interpret the NT thru lens of the OT, or do you interpret the OT through the revelation of the NT?
- 3) Dispensationalists interpret the NT thru the lens of the OT → Literal Understanding of Prophecy
 - a) Scofield—*"Historical Scriptures have an allegorical or spiritual significance...[in prophetic Scriptures] we reach the ground of absolute literalness."* → This presupposition creates system
- 4) Covenantalists interpret the OT thru the lens of NT → Biblical Interpretation is Christ-Centered
 - a) What is in the New revealed is in the Old concealed → How Do Jesus & NT Writers Interpret
 - b) LaRondelle—*"The Christian understanding of the OT is determined by the christocentric focus by which the NT writers interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore it is essential for a Christian to discover the principles and procedures according to which Christ and His apostles understood and expounded the writings of Moses, the Psalms, and the Hebrew prophets."*
 - c) Lewis Johnson—*"The use of the Old Testament in the New is the key to the solution of the problem of hermeneutics...if the apostles are reliable teachers of biblical doctrine, then they are reliable instructors in the science of hermeneutics."*
 - d) 2 Cor 1:20—*"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him."* → XP is the Key to every promise
 - e) NT is the goal and fulfillment of the OT, and the NT teaches that the Abrahamic Promise is fulfilled in Jesus and His Church
 - f) LaRondelle—*"For the apostle Paul the central truth of the Hebrew Bible was not about Israel and its national future, but rather about Messiah Jesus, the Lord of Israel, the Redeemer of the world."*

Dispensational Theology

- 1) Developed in the Nineteenth Century—Darby & Scofield, Chafer → Then Ryrie, Pentecost, Walvoord
- 2) Basic premise
 - a) Ryrie—*“The basic premise of dispensationalism is two purposes of God expressed in the formation of two peoples who maintain their distinction throughout eternity”*
 - b) Chafer—*“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.”*
- 3) Three Essential Elements (Ryrie)
 - a) **Divides God’s administration of Covenants into separate dispensations.**
 - i) Darby's interpretation of 2 Tim 2:15, "...rightly dividing the word of truth"
 - ii) Dispensation == Change in God’s Governmental relationship with man
 - iii) Resulting in a change of man’s responsibility → Marked by a test, failure and judgment
 - iv) 7 Dispensations of Test, failure & judgment (Church dispensation ends with tribulation)
 - v) Innocency (Adam to fall), Conscience (Adam to Noah), Civil Gov’t (Noah to Abe), Promise (Abe to Moses), Law (Moses to Christ), Grace (1st to 2nd Comings), Millennium (After 2nd)
 - b) **Literal principle of Biblical interpretation**
 - i) Literal Interpretation of OT Promises & Prophecies about Israel
 - ii) Does not “spiritualize” or allegorize any OT prophecies concerning Israel
 - iii) Darby—*“Prophecy applies itself properly to the earth; its object is not heaven.”*
 - iv) Prophecy predicts—Restoration of David’s throne and kingdom (Is. 11:1-13, 12:1-6,
 - v) “If they are to be fulfilled in the future, then the only time left for that fulfillment is the Mill.”
 - c) **Distinction between Israel & the Church as two separate people of God—out or literal Interp.**
 - i) Ryrie—*“The essence of Dispensationalism...is the distinction between Israel & the Church”* (47)
 - ii) Ryrie—*“D. insists that the people of God who have been baptized into the Body of Christ and who thus form the Church are distinct from saints of other days or even of a future time.”*
 - iii) OT saints belong to a separate people of God—there is a national hope for the Jews in the Millennial Kingdom—they will be a separate people for all eternity
 - iv) The Church age is a “mystery” and thus no OT prophecies foresaw it. Therefore, the present church is a “parenthesis” in which God has suspended His primary purpose with Israel
 - v) Walvoord—*“Dispensational ecclesiology defines the Church as a distinct body of saints in the present age having its own divine purpose and destiny and differing from the saints of the past or future ages.”*
 - vi) Pentecost—*“The church is manifestly an interruption of God’s program for Israel.”*

d) Also, Earthly Millennial Kingdom (Eschatology)

- i) Ryrie—“*The doctrine of the millennial Kingdom is for the dispensationalist an integral part of his entire scheme and interpretation of many Biblical passages.*”
- ii) Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church → Comes back after
- iii) The Church rules with Christ on the earth as his “ruling aristocracy, the official administrative staff”—The King’s cabinet—raptured, raised, translated, glorified saints, ruling earthly kingdom
- iv) Separate & distinct blessings—Israel live Eternally on new heaven & earth (Examin. 38-41)

Chafer—“Protestant theology has very generally taught that all the kingdom promises, and even the great Davidic covenant itself, are to be fulfilled in and through the Church.”

Walvoord—“Reformed eschatology has been predominantly Amillennial. Most if not all the leaders of the Protestant Reformation were Amillennial in their eschatology, following the teachings of Augustine.” **Saucy**—“Throughout much of church history, the dominant Christian interpretation has viewed the church as the NT replacement of historic Israel in God’s plan of salvation history.”