

**One Pilgrimage**

**From**

**Dispensationalism**

**To Covenant Faith**

Robert L. Brady, D.Min.

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## PREFACE

My pilgrimage from Dispensationalism to a Covenant faith took place slowly over a span of forty years. I owe my understanding of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture to dispensational teachers. Billy Graham was one of my early heroes in the faith. His decision to trust that the Bible was “God breathed” and sufficient “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” became my conviction as well. However, slowly I began to question key doctrines taught by dispensational teachers that did not seem to be supported by Scripture. I questioned doctrines such as two “second comings” of Christ, a future Jewish millennium, and a central focus on an ethnic nation of Israel as the key to interpreting end times prophecy. For years I dismissed these concerns, telling myself that these doctrines were simply related to one of several eschatological schemes, none of which affected other essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Therefore, like many I saw Dispensationalism as solely an eschatological interpretation that could be believed or not believed without serious damage to one’s theology as a whole. I no longer believe this.

This paper is my attempt to document my investigation of dispensational theology in the last three years. The attached Bibliography records most of the sources I consulted. I am indebted to the scholarly work of those who made this same pilgrimage and recorded their research, such as John H. Gerstner, Keith A. Mathison, Robert L. Reymond, George E. Ladd, Bruce Waltke, Michael Horton and others. Their testimonies strengthened my growing conviction that Dispensationalism, although orthodox in many ways, is a serious aberration of truth.

This discourse is written in two parts: The first part, *Dispensational Meltdown* addresses the questioning of the basic tenets of dispensational teachings by leading professors in dispensational seminaries. The second part, *The Dispensational Myth* is a refutation of dispensationalism as unsound biblical doctrine. Both parts end with a comparison of Dispensationalism and Covenant theology.

I owe a debt of gratitude for assisting with this paper to Pamela Peterson for her expertise in writing. Also, I am grateful to my son Bruce Brady for his proof reading and in the construction of the manuscript.



## **PART ONE**

# **DISPENSATIONAL MELTDOWN**



## INTRODUCTION

An increasing defection from traditional Dispensational theology in the last decade indicates a possible meltdown of the Dispensational systematic theology of the past century. The debate in the past has primarily been between traditional Dispensational theologians and Covenant theologians. Now the controversy is between Dispensational professors in the same seminaries. Some traditional advocates are even declaring the revisionists as no longer legitimately within the Dispensational camp, and, therefore should not call themselves Dispensationalists because they have abandoned the *sine qua non* of the traditional Dispensational position.<sup>1</sup>

Those called revisionists by traditional Dispensationalists, refer to themselves as Progressive Dispensationalists. The progressives argue that they are still fundamentally Dispensational but defend a position between Covenant theology and traditional Dispensational theology that retains the important distinctions of Dispensationalism. They share a belief in the restoration of Israel as a national entity and as having a future role as a nation in God's plan.<sup>2</sup>

Why is this happening after over a century of a Dispensational interpretation that has influenced most if not all the conservative evangelical Bible colleges and seminaries? Some would argue that Dispensational theology has within it biblically untenable elements that are causing this meltdown. These unstable elements cannot stand up to the scrutiny of sound orthodox hermeneutical and exegetical examination. Evangelical Bible scholars have revealed this repeatedly, but these theologians were outside the Dispensational community.<sup>3</sup> Now the same scrutiny is being expressed from within Dispensational institutions. Men with offices across the hall from each other in Dispensational schools are in major disagreement on the very basics of Dispensational teachings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1995), 162.

<sup>2</sup>Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1995); John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing The Word of Truth* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, 1991); George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1956); Gary Demar, *End Times Fiction* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God*, (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2000); Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Herbert W. Bateman, *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), 9-12.

This debate has largely been confined to academia. Those who carry Scofield and Ryrie study Bibles are for the most part unaware that this theological meltdown is taking place. If history teaches us anything, a major division in conservative evangelical Christian congregations is on the horizon. Some consider this to be a reformation taking shape within Dispensationalism that will formulate a more defensible theological system of biblical doctrine, i.e. "...structures that are more accurate biblically."<sup>5</sup> This could result in uniting Dispensational theologians with other evangelicals who share a common belief in the inerrancy and sufficiency of scripture, in justification by faith alone, and in an evangelical purpose for the church.

This paper will sketch the basics of both traditional and progressive Dispensationalism to identify their commonalities and the source of their differences. It will also compare both schools of Dispensationalism with Covenant theology. The outcome this hopes to achieve is clarity in understanding the issues involved and an appreciation for the biblical doctrines all share with each other and with evangelical Christianity as a whole.

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<sup>5</sup> Craig A. Blasing, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blasing and Darrel L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 15.

## DISPENSATIONAL MELTDOWN

### Traditional Dispensationalism

One of the foremost defenders of the traditional (he prefers “normative”) Dispensational position is Charles Ryrie, Professor Emeritus of systematic theology at Dallas Seminary. He has defined as the *sine qua non* of “normative” Dispensational Bible interpretation as (1) a clear distinction between Israel and the church, and (2) a literal/ historical/ grammatical system of hermeneutics, (3) and a belief that scripture reveals several purposes that are ways of glorifying God, the redemption of mankind being only one of these purposes.<sup>6</sup> These ways of glorifying God are defined as dispensations. According to Ryrie, “A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.”<sup>7</sup>

L.S. Chafer, the founder of Dallas Seminary, distinguishes God’s purpose for Israel and for the Church in two different dispensations as “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.”<sup>8</sup> According to Chafer and adherents to traditional Dispensationalism, these two peoples are separate for eternity as are the covenants with separate promises to each. Therefore, the covenant promises must be fulfilled within each dispensation and understood (i.e. properly interpreted using this scheme as a hermeneutic principle) within each dispensation insulated by a firewall from each other.

The uniqueness of this way of interpreting scripture, especially the alleged prophetic promises to an ethnic national Israel, is the discontinuity between dispensations.<sup>9</sup> In church history prior to Dispensationalism the continuity of dispensations were emphasized. However, an even more basic presupposition shapes the Dispensationalist’s hermeneutics, and that is the dualistic thinking of its founder John Nelson Darby. Darby’s “dualistic outlook conditioned his entire theology. ...The

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<sup>6</sup> Ryrie, 39-41

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 28

<sup>8</sup> L.S. Chafer, *Dispensationalism* (Dallas: Seminary Press, 1936), 107.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald M. Henzel, *Darby, Dualism and the Decline of Dispensationalism* (Tucson: Fenestra Books, 2003), 1-11.

heavenly nature of the believer's union with Christ became the key that unlocked the door to Darby's spiritual enlightenment." <sup>10</sup> Thus, he saw Israel as a people under an earthly covenant and the Church as a people under a heavenly covenant. This led to a definition of "literal" interpretation of prophetic promises to Israel, as a Jew under the earthly covenant would understand their fulfillment. Since these prophetic promises have not yet been fulfilled to a "literal" ethnic nation of Israel in Palestine with a "literal" king David sitting on a "literal" throne in a "literal" rebuilt temple, the fulfillment awaits a "literal" future Jewish millennium.

According to traditional dispensationalism, in the Church dispensation, or the "age of grace," so-called "spiritual" promises to a heavenly people are being fulfilled. Because of the discontinuity between dispensations, "spiritual" promises to the Church are not to be superimposed upon ethnic national Israel. For instance, to interpret Jeremiah 31:31 as fulfilled in the Church is to "spiritualize" a prophecy to earthly Israel that will be fulfilled "literally" in the millennium. "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." The new covenant in this verse cannot be applied to the Church according to Dispensational hermeneutics. In like manner, James in Acts 15:13-17 is interpreted by dispensationalists to be using a prophecy that will be fulfilled "literally" to Israel in the millennium merely as an example rather than a fulfillment in the Church. This is because the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" is a promise to ethnic national Israel and, therefore, must be fulfilled "literally" and not "spiritualized" as a fulfillment in the Church.

And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.'

Thus, the clear teaching of this text as a fulfillment through the church is denied and eisegetically dispensational distinctives are inserted.

According to Professor Ryrie, the distinction between Israel and the church grows out of his literal grammatical/ historical hermeneutic and reflects the understanding of separate economies in which God is glorified. Ryrie states that "Consistently literal, or plain interpretation indicates a Dispensational

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 69 & 79.

approach to the interpretation of Scripture.”<sup>11</sup> This is understood to mean that a correct interpretation of the promises to Israel in the Old Testament must be understood as an Old Testament Jew would understand them without benefit of New Testament revelation. To apply to Israel a “spiritualized” interpretation of Old Testament scriptures, as revealed by New Testament revelation (alleged to be intended only for the Church), is to mix dispensations thus confusing the two separate economies God has for Israel and the Church and to abandon the literal/historical/grammatical method.

Dispensationalists teach that Jesus Christ did not fulfill Old Testament covenant promises to Israel. Rather, the fulfillment has been postponed until the millennium. The postponement theory of unfulfilled promises to Israel is based upon the teaching that Israel rejected her Messiah at His first advent. Therefore, God instituted the Church, which was allegedly never prophesied in the Old Testament. The Church is a “mystery” revealed after Israel’s rejection of her Messiah.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the fulfillment of all the promises to Israel, which must occur “literally” as a Jew in the Old Testament would have understood them (in their dispensation), are postponed. Moreover, after the “Church age” (in the Jewish millennium), the temple will be rebuilt, and a resurrected David will sit on a literal throne of David ruling as a Prince under Jesus Christ ruling all nations from Jerusalem. This fulfills literally the Davidic Covenant according to traditional Dispensationalists.

The rebuilding of a Jewish temple, as an Old Testament Jew would have understood it, leads to the problem of animal sacrifices reinstated in a future millennium with a crucified and resurrected Christ present. John Walvoord, a traditional Dispensationalist, recognizes this problem and answers it by saying, “If such sacrifices were fitting in the mind of God to be the shadows of the cross of Christ, what more fitting memorial could be chosen....”<sup>13</sup> The reader must consider this in light of the epistle to the Hebrews, which clearly states that all such “shadows” are obsolete.<sup>14</sup>

The Dispensationalist’s focus on an ethnic political national Israel is believed to be the key to unlocking prophecies of the “end times.” Tim LaHaye, the popular author of the *Left Behind* series, agrees with Hal Lindsey who states, “The most important sign in Matthew has to be the restoration of the Jews to the land in the rebirth of Israel. Even the figure of speech “fig tree” has been a historical

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<sup>11</sup> Ryrie, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 240.

<sup>13</sup> John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 315.

<sup>14</sup> Heb. 8:13.

symbol of national Israel. When the Jewish people, after nearly 2000 years of exile, under relentless persecution, became a nation again on May 14, 1948 the “fig tree” put forth its leaves.”<sup>15</sup> Purportedly then, a restored ethnic nation of Israel on the world scene beginning to “put forth its leaves” presumes to start the countdown that culminates in a pretribulational rapture of the Church and, after seven years, a third coming of Christ to fulfill remaining “unfulfilled promises” to a literal earthly ethnic nation of Israel to be used by God to bless all other nations in a future Jewish millennium.

### **Progressive Dispensationalism**

In the last decade of the twentieth century, challenges to traditional Dispensationalism as taught above have been made. Some Dispensationalists have been searching for “structures that are more accurate biblically.”<sup>16</sup> This search has led to candid dialogue with non-Dispensational Covenant theologians, and to the examination of the *sine qua non* of traditional Dispensational presuppositions. These theologians found these presuppositions biblically untenable. This, in turn, has led to “progressive” Dispensationalism.<sup>17</sup> This group of theologians have sought “structures that are more accurate biblically” and have found them. This development is encouraging and reveals a genuine respect for Scripture and for other biblical scholars.

However, according to former Dallas Seminary professor Ryrie, the mistake progressive Dispensationalists make is that they teach, contrary to “normative” Dispensationalism, that Christ instituted the Kingdom promised to Israel at His first advent. Furthermore, they teach that Christ is seated on David’s throne now and that the promised Kingdom has come with the King – Jesus Christ. Moreover, the promise to Abraham that his seed would become a great nation and be the means that God would use to bless all nations has been fulfilled partially now. Instead of teaching that two peoples of God, one Jewish (an earthly people) and one mostly Gentile (a heavenly people) the church, the progressive Dispensationalist teaches that all are one people of God in Christ now and will be together on earth in the millennium and for eternity in the new heavens and new earth. Progressive dispensationalists do not refute these criticisms by Dr. Ryrie.

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<sup>15</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 53-54.

<sup>16</sup> Craig A. Blasing, “Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blasing and Darrel L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 15.

<sup>17</sup> To name a few Progressive Dispensationalists: Craig A. Blasing; Darrell Bock; Robert L. Saucy; J.L. Burns;

Progressive Dispensationalists, while not denying Dr. Ryrie's depiction, would affirm that a distinction still exists between a literal ethnic Israel and Gentiles in the millennium. These theologians teach that the allegedly unfulfilled Old Testament promises to Israel will be fulfilled in a future millennium. But, during the present age, progressive Dispensationalists teach that the Davidic Kingdom promise, the Abrahamic covenant and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31), have been fulfilled at Christ's first advent but only in a "partial" or "first stage" fulfillment. However, they believe that this in no way replaces or eliminates the fulfillment of promises to a literal ethnic political nation of Israel in a future Jewish millennium. To Professor Ryrie, this is a defection from "normative" Dispensational teaching.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, to the casual observer, the progressive Dispensational position seems to be moving away from a traditional Dispensational theological position except for the eschatology. However, as long as a clear distinction between an ethnic national Israel and the Church is maintained, more is involved than a variant eschatology.

Progressive Dispensationalism is moving in the direction of Covenant theology with its hermeneutics. Its hermeneutic is closer to covenant theology because it uses New Testament revelation to "complement" and to "expand" the understanding of Old Testament scriptures regarding promises to Israel. This is referred to as a "complementary approach" to the literal/historical/grammatical hermeneutic.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a first stage fulfillment is posited. These theologians teach that Christ has fulfilled Old Testament promises to Israel in the "Church age" (the Kingdom has come with the King), but this does not replace or preclude a "literal" fulfillment of promises made to Israel in a future Jewish millennium. The basic presupposition that defines the traditional Dispensational "literal historical/grammatical" hermeneutics is the discontinuity of dispensations. This has been abandoned by Progressive Dispensationalists. "Progressive" means a continuity of dispensations; thus, the revelation of the New Testament is used to interpret the Old Testament prophecies to Israel. An "already not yet" perspective very close to George E. Ladd's concept is used to interpret present and future fulfillment of the Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> In this way, Progressive Dispensationalists maintain a future for ethnic national Israel in God's redemptive plan. That Progressive Dispensationalists are seeking a

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<sup>18</sup> Ryrie, 162.

<sup>19</sup> Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 102-103. Also, see Bateman, 90.

<sup>20</sup> George Elton Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 75.

more biblical systematic theology is commendable. Whether this will lead to a position closer to Covenant theology than to a traditional Dispensational position remains to be seen.

### **Covenant Theology Compared With Dispensationalism**

In Covenant theology, the coming of the Kingdom with the King has fulfilled the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New Covenant. Jesus Christ has fulfilled all of the covenants and the promises to the seed of Abraham, the “true Israel” of God.<sup>21</sup> Jesus is Israel. He is true Israel by genealogy, by covenant fulfillment, by promise, by being everything Israel was supposed to be. Accordingly, in *Jesus & Israel One Covenant or Two?*, David E. Holwerda asserts, “Jesus, then, is true Israel, the one who does everything that Israel was supposed to do and who is everything that Israel is supposed to be.”<sup>22</sup> Christ is All in All. Those who are in Christ are those who compose the true “Israel of God” now and forever.

From the Covenant theologian’s perspective, the presupposition of discontinuity of dispensations held by Dispensationalists perverts the literal/ historical hermeneutic used by Covenant theologians who interpret Old Testament prophecies as understood partially by the human author and more fully by the New Testament writers inspired revelation. This is clearly seen in two statements by Covenant theologians: “The main guide to the interpretation of the Old Testament is certainly to be found in the New.”<sup>23</sup> And, “...there is only one place to find a hermeneutic: in the New Testament.”<sup>24</sup> Traditional Dispensationalist Charles Ryrie criticizes this saying; “...there is everything wrong about imposing the New Testament on the Old. And that is exactly what the covenant theologian does under the guise of a basic hermeneutical principle that tries to make Christ all in all but in reality is guilty of superimposing Him arbitrarily on the Old Testament.”<sup>25</sup>

This charge of superimposing the New Testament onto the Old Testament is answered by Vern Poythress: “...one must compare later Scripture to earlier Scripture to understand everything. Such comparison, though it should not undermine or contradict grammatical-historical interpretation, goes

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<sup>21</sup> Rom. 9: 6-8.

<sup>22</sup>David E. Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 33.

<sup>23</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1950), 160.

<sup>24</sup> George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 138.

<sup>25</sup> Ryrie, 191.

beyond its bounds.”<sup>26</sup> Rather than “imposing the New Testament on the Old,” as Professor Ryrie charges, sound scholarship uses all of scripture to correctly interpret a particular passage. Moreover, it uses the revelation “in these last days spoken to us by His Son” to properly interpret all previous revelation.<sup>27</sup> Thus, states Poythress, the best way to understand the Old Testament is by a careful exegesis of the book of Hebrews.

By using George Ladd’s concept of the “presence of the future,” “progressive” Dispensationalists have given the impression that their theology is comparable to non-Dispensational evangelical Christianity that embraces a conservative theology. However, from the view of Covenant theology, as long as Christ is portrayed by any form of Dispensationalism as having not fulfilled all previous Covenant promises to true Israel at His first advent thereby glorifying Christ in the highest, the portrayal of the Christ Jesus in any dispensation is not accurate. The glory of what Christ has done at the apex of God’s redemptive plan is diminished to the degree that a postponement scheme shifts the focus from Christ to a literal ethnic nation of Israel now and in the future. The Bride of Christ is the Church, the true spiritual descendants of Abraham. From a Covenant theological position, only one Bride, one chosen people, and one holy nation of God exist forever. Unbelieving ethnic Jews will be grafted into true Israel if they do not continue in their unbelief.<sup>28</sup> The belief in an ethnic national Israel with unfulfilled promises existing as a state in the Middle East today is a Jewish myth.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Christians helping this apostate Judaism raise money to rebuild their temple in anticipation of the coming of their Messiah is an abomination.

The central organizing principle of all scripture as taught by Covenant theology is the covenant of redemption, i.e. Christ and Him crucified, raised on the third day and presently sitting on David’s throne now ruling the nations with all authority in heaven and earth.<sup>30</sup> The Kingdom has come with the King, Savior, High Priest, and Lord now and forever. Nothing remains to be fulfilled to an ethnic national Israel in a future millennium. Ethnic Israel was a foreshadowing of the real, which has been realized in Christ. “When He said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is

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<sup>26</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1987), 116.

<sup>27</sup> Heb. 1:1

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 11:23

<sup>29</sup> Titus 1:13-14.

<sup>30</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1980), 206.

becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, from a Covenant theological perspective we wait only for the consummation of his Kingdom. God’s plan is that all peoples be reconciled and unified in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:9-10). This plan is the “mystery” of His now revealed will for all peoples both Jew and Gentile.

## Conclusion

The primary reason for the tenacity in maintaining Dispensational theology, in the opinion of this author, is that Dispensationalists sincerely believe that they are defending a biblical doctrine that “rightly divides the Word of truth.” These are men who take the authority of scripture seriously.

What Dispensationalism has contributed to evangelical Christianity is a tenacious insistence on the inerrancy and sufficiency of scripture and a belief that scripture is God-breathed and is, therefore, the final authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. This is what Dispensationalism has in common with non-dispensational evangelical Christianity.

Unfortunately, instead of defending a sound biblical doctrine of the Church, the system is driven by an alluring promise to provide the key to interpreting prophesy concerning the “end times.” This promise has caused a shift in focus in their interpretation of all scripture away from God’s purpose in Christ and Him crucified to a political ethnic nation of Israel. Instead of “rightly dividing the Word of truth,” these theologians have been captivated by an “end times fiction” as the central organizing principle of their systematic theology. A national ethnic Israel with a separate purpose from the Church having exclusive unfulfilled promises becomes the key to interpreting end times prophecy.

Jesus rebuked his disciples for desiring to know when He would restore the Kingdom to Israel. He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."<sup>32</sup> Jesus corrected their thinking by pointing them to the central purpose of the Kingdom, i.e. to take the gospel of the Kingdom to all peoples. Thus, Jesus answered the disciple’s question by restating the “Great Commission” to make disciples of *panta ta ethne* (i.e. all peoples not political nations) and in this way to spread the reign of Christ and to transfer those who are His from the

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<sup>31</sup> Heb. 8:13.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 1:7-8

kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Christ. In this way, the true Israel is fulfilling the Covenant promise to Abraham to be a blessing to *panta ta ethne*.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in this way the Kingdom promises to true Israel are fulfilled.

The blessing to all peoples is fulfilled not by an ethnic Jewish nation state ruling other political nation states but, rather, by a people called by God and filled by the Holy Spirit to make disciples of *panta ta ethne* (i.e. all *cultures* not political nations) as they have been doing since the Lord of heaven and earth commissioned them and established His reign over those called according to His purposes.<sup>34</sup> He was telling them that the Kingdom has come with the King who now is ruling the nations (*panta ta ethne*) from David's throne at the right hand of the Father. This constitutes a far better fulfillment of a blessing to all peoples than a temporal political rule by a political ethnic Israel in a future Jewish millennium. That is why Jesus Christ left this earth to rule from his Davidic heavenly throne and the reason the Holy Spirit was given to empower the Church to make disciples of all peoples. This preoccupation with promises to Israel being fulfilled as a Jew would understand it in the Old Testament, without the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ, is blinding traditional Dispensationalists to the presence of the Kingdom. Surely, their aberrant hermeneutics is the cause of the Dispensationalist's departure from orthodox Christian doctrine. Two thousand years of church history and doctrine handed down under the supervision of God's Spirit has been replaced by a dualistic schizophrenic view of Scripture that wrongly divides the word of truth.

Therefore, the paradigm shift required for these theologians to abandon their presuppositions must follow the course taken by "progressive" Dispensationalists. They must believe that the Bible demands it. They must be convinced that their hermeneutics and exegetical approach is mistaken and that New Testament revelation has expanded God's intended meaning of Old Testament promises and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. They must see the truth revealed in the book of Hebrews especially the prologue to the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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<sup>33</sup> Gen. 12:1-4

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 28:18-20.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.<sup>35</sup>

Where does this leave traditional Dispensational systematic theology? If the traditional school insists on maintaining a clear distinction between Israel and the Church as two separate peoples fulfilling two separate economies by God, continues to maintain a flawed hermeneutics that interprets Old Testament promises to Israel without benefit of New Testament revelation, maintains a strict separation of “dispensations” treating each as a “distinguishable economy” in which God is glorified (i.e. rather than “rightly dividing the Word of truth” as the progressive revealing of Christ Jesus and Him crucified for the redemption of mankind as the central purpose of scripture and means by which God is glorified from Genesis to the end of Revelation), then a continuing meltdown of traditional Dispensational theology is predicted. These three elements, considered to be the *sine qua non* of traditional Dispensational systematic theology, are based upon untenable presuppositions and spurious hermeneutics. As long as these philosophical abiblical presuppositions are strictly adhered to, traditional Dispensationalism remains foreign to orthodox Christian doctrine and a correct “dividing of the Word of truth.”

The progressive Dispensationalists must continue their search for consistent biblical interpretation, as must all theologians. What is at stake? The truth! Truth matters. Fiction is not truth. Misrepresenting the Way and the Truth and the Life has consequences for the Church. Far from glorifying God with this “end times fictional scheme,” the truth of what God has done in Christ is relegated to a “parenthesis” in God’s plan by traditional Dispensationalists, and by progressive Dispensationalists to a “first stage” “inaugural” fulfillment in the Church, which awaits complete fulfillment in a future Jewish millennium. Those who teach this unsound doctrine teach a Jewish myth about a fictional Israel.<sup>36</sup>

To be in agreement with the “gospel of the Kingdom” preached by Jesus, both forms of Dispensationalism must teach that the Kingdom came and was rejected, not by true Israel, but by apostate Jews. Nothing was postponed. True Israel accepted their Messiah. God’s plan of redemption

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<sup>35</sup> Heb. 1:1-4.

<sup>36</sup> Titus 1:13-14.

is exactly fulfilled as God ordained. The gospel that Jesus preached and that He commissioned the true Israel, the Bride of Christ the Church, to preach is the “gospel of the Kingdom,” the gospel to bless all peoples in this age not in a Jewish millennium sometime in the future. Now is the day of salvation. We await only our “blessed hope.”

This paper provided an overview of the two forms of Dispensationalism as taught today. The following paper presents the biblical basis for refuting Dispensationalism as a Jewish Myth. Like many end times schemes it contradicts sound doctrine and a “...rightly dividing the word of truth.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> II Tim. 2:15 KJV



## **PART TWO**

# **The Dispensational Myth:**

## **A Refutation of Dispensationalism**



## Introduction

This paper is a sequel to an earlier paper entitled *Dispensational Meltdown*. The focus of that paper was the transition that is taking place from “classical” to “progressive” Dispensationalism, as some teachers in dispensational schools are moving in the direction of Covenant theology.<sup>38</sup> This new form of Dispensationalism is attempting to correct many of the deviations from sound doctrine addressed in this paper.

Advocates of what is called Progressive Dispensationalism are Dallas Theological Seminary professors Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock, as well as Professor Robert Saucy at Talbot Theological Seminary. Progressive Dispensationalism was the second major revision of Dispensationalism that occurred in the last century. The first revision was the New Scofield Reference Bible in 1967 by professors from the leading Dispensational schools. This revision presented a change in perspective that was minor compared with the changes being introduced by Progressive Dispensationalism. To what degree Progressive Dispensationalism will be accepted by traditional dispensationalists is still undetermined. This new movement was first in print barely a decade ago. Little has filtered down into the pews as yet. It remains mostly a theological debate within the seminary community. However, the future pastors and teachers who are being taught in the major dispensational schools today are being taught Progressive Dispensationalism. This is forcing them to “search the Scriptures” to see if these things be true. Many are defecting from what Charles Ryrie calls “normative Dispensationalism.” Ryrie argues that “...the differences advanced by progressive dispensationalists do form a new and revised system that some (both dispensationalists and nondispensationalists) believe is not Dispensationalism anymore.”<sup>39</sup>

Advocates of Progressive Dispensationalism have taken issue with the rigid separation between dispensations and the “literal” interpretation of the classical school. Acknowledging the importance of NT revelation in properly interpreting OT passages, Craig Blaising sees the NT as “complementary” in understanding an OT passage. However, he sees that within the “Mosaic dispensation,” “The

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<sup>38</sup> Keith A Mathison, *Dispensationalism: Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1995), 137. “For now, “progressive dispensationalism” is a generic form of pre-millennial, modified Arminianism. Its proponents are moving in the right direction... but honesty calls for us to recognize that while they are not yet Reformed, neither can they any longer be rightly called “dispensational.” “My hope and prayer is that they continue their journey toward Reformed theology.”

<sup>39</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1995), 162.

expansion of promise need not mean the cancellation of earlier commitments God has made.”<sup>40</sup> He still approaches Scripture with a clear distinction between Israel and the Church as having separate promises during distinct dispensations. And, Robert Saucy, while also keeping a distinction between Israel and the Church argues that one “...must use all the Bible with the recognition that the principle of progressive revelation obviously gives the New Testament writers the last word.”<sup>41</sup>

This author hopes to see continued progress within Dispensational theology toward Covenant Theology distinctives. Robert Saucy reports that,

“...the changes in Dispensationalism have been largely in the direction of greater continuity within God’s program of historical salvation. Instead of a strict parenthesis that has no relation with the messianic kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament, many dispensationalists now acknowledge the present age of the church as the first stage partial fulfillment of these prophecies. Israel and the church are no longer viewed as representing two different purposes and plans of God, as some earlier dispensationalists thought; they are now seen as sharing in the same messianic kingdom of salvation history.”<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the teaching of L. S. Chafer that the Church is “wholly unrelated to any divine purpose which precedes it or which follows it” is no longer taught by Progressive Dispensationalists. Moreover, one of the tragic implications Robert Reymond points out is seemingly corrected that,

Classic dispensationalists insist that when Christ came the first time to Israel he offered to establish the literal, earthly, material thousand-year-long Davidic kingdom. If this were actually true, then dispensationalists virtually stand with those (false) witnesses at the time of his trial who accused him of opposing political Rome (Luke 23:1-2). And Christ would have been justly executed under Roman law as an insurrectionist and a revolutionary!<sup>43</sup>

These are major changes from the classical Dispensationalist doctrine. These changes are encouraging for the future sharing of sound doctrine with those who hold to an inerrant view of Scripture and a common love for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Body the Church. May we all be subject to the admonition of Scripture: “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to

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<sup>40</sup> Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 103.

<sup>41</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 33.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Saucy, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Systematic A New Theology Of The Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 542.

teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth..." (II Tim. 2:25-25).

The author prays that this paper will be used by God to open the eyes of those held captive by the teachings of all forms of Dispensationalism, and that they will embrace the truth as revealed in Scripture about the only true "Israel of God," Christ Jesus and those who are in Him. The first section presents the essentials of a sound hermeneutic. The second section describes how Dispensationalism has accepted a flawed hermeneutic, which in turn leads to a flawed interpretation of Scripture. Next is a section on recognizing unsound doctrine followed by how the unsound doctrine of Dispensationalism diminishes the glory of Christ Jesus. The last section presents this author's understanding of sound doctrine from a Covenant perspective.



# THE DISPENSATIONAL MYTH

## A Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth

### A Sound Hermeneutic

To interpret Scripture correctly, one must start with a sound hermeneutic (using time tested rules that guide interpretation as well as careful examination of one's presuppositions). The capstone of Scriptural revelation is Christ Jesus the Son. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Heb. 1:1-2).

The primary rule of a sound hermeneutic is the following: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mk. 9:7). Moreover, "He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45; Acts 7:37; Is. 53; Ps. 22).

Many misinterpretations of Scripture can be traced to the violation of this primary rule in a sound hermeneutic. The New Testament interprets the Old Testament according to the teaching of the "better" prophet Christ Jesus who said, "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44). To build doctrine on an interpretation of an OT passage without taking into account the NT revelation is a serious error. It is attempting to interpret Scripture without first letting Christ Jesus open one's mind to understand.

In addition, a sound hermeneutic begins with the premise that only one who is regenerated can correctly interpret Scripture. That is, one who has the Holy Spirit indwelling him has the "mind of Christ". "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ... But we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:13-16). Thus, again central to a

sound hermeneutic is an interpretation that begins with the revelation of Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, exegesis is prior to any system of theology. The meaning must be drawn from the text not brought to the text (eisegesis). Doctrines must be based upon sound exegesis and not go beyond Scriptural evidence. Moreover, there is primarily one meaning to a passage of Scripture not a plurality of meanings. However, there may be many applications of the one meaning. Keeping these two separate is crucial. Unclear texts must be interpreted using clearly understood texts; and Scripture is its own best commentary on Scripture. For example: A particular passage of scripture is understood within the context of the surrounding verses, chapters, book, and also within the context of the entire Bible. This is known as the “Analogy of Faith” and is considered a primary rule of a sound hermeneutic.<sup>44</sup> And, keeping in mind that the purpose of Scripture is to reveal the gospel and how we are to live in fellowship with a holy God is primary. This is the primary theme of Scripture.

Lastly, the rule labeled the grammatical-historical method is important. By God’s choice, the Bible was given to us in a written medium. God used human authors to record His revelation. A literal reading of the Bible means to take the plain meaning of the language as commonly understood by its audience. The language and the historical context of the human authors influenced what God has recorded. Language has its own rules that govern its structure. The Bible the early church used was written in *Koine* Greek, the language of the masses, rather than classical Greek or literary Greek.<sup>45</sup> This common or universal Greek was understood throughout the civilized world at that time. It was a world trade language (*lingua franca*) much as English is today. However, unlike our English this written language was in many ways more precise. For instance, accurately discerning which verb goes with which noun is sometimes difficult in English, but this problem does not occur in the Septuagint or Greek version of the Bible used by the early church. Also, language has a cultural context that affects the meaning of words and expressions. Therefore, the historical context of both language and culture impacts our correct understanding of Scripture.

Grammatical-historical exegesis is an important check on divergent interpretations of Scripture. However, as important as a grammatical-historical interpretation is, it must be subordinate to the “mind of Christ” as it is revealed in the NT. If God is the author of the entire Bible, then earlier

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<sup>44</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 63-99.

<sup>45</sup> H. E. Dana, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillian Company, 1955), 10.

revelation will be interpreted by later revelation not the reverse. Jesus interpreted earlier revelation as it pointed to Him. However, going beyond grammatical-historical exegesis can be dangerous, because our own ideas can be read into the text (eisegesis).

Going beyond grammatical-historical exegesis safely involves four tasks. First, we must sort out how the biblical texts transcend their original historical setting. Second, we must identify the ways in which earlier events and institutions point to the later and fuller fulfillment (i.e. the “typological” correspondences). Third, we must observe the context of the canon as a whole, applying the so-called analogy of faith. Finally, we need to identify how changes in the redemptive-historical situation have affected the texts’ applicability to the present situation.<sup>46</sup>

Keeping in mind that the purpose of Scripture influences its meaning is also important. The purpose of Scripture is to reveal the gospel and how we are to know and live in fellowship with a holy God. Scripture is God’s special revelation of Himself and His glorious plan of redemption by grace through faith in Christ Jesus from Genesis to the end of Revelation. Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of God’s revelation in the entire canon. The ultimate purpose is to glorify God by all things being united in Christ (Eph. 1:1-12).

## **Flawed Hermeneutic**

An example of how a seriously flawed hermeneutic can result in aberrant doctrine is the theological system known as Dispensationalism. Its errors in interpretation begin with a presupposition that the Bible consists of separate “dispensations,” each one requiring a unique interpretation of Scripture, as understood within each dispensation, without benefit of later revelation. Using this hermeneutic the dispensationalist interprets the OT to include a “Mosaic dispensation.” This “dispensation” allegedly includes exclusive promises and prophecies to an ethnic political nation of Israel, and is allegedly a separate administration of God sealed off from the rest of His revelation.<sup>47</sup> This definition is a

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<sup>46</sup> Dan McCartney, *Let the Reader Understand*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2002), 160.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Ryrie, 28. The Scofield Reference Bible defines a dispensation as: “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.” Charles Ryrie has redefined the Scofield definition: “A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.” By “economy” he means difference in kind with features “distinguishable” that mark them off from other dispensations. Thus, each must be interpreted without imposing the distinctives of another dispensation. The result is Scripture cannot interpret Scripture except within each separated dispensation. This justifies a “literal” interpretation as a Jew in the “Mosaic dispensation” would understand it and disallows “imposing” NT revelation on OT dispensations. Thus, Christ Jesus cannot be understood to interpret OT Scriptures as fulfilled by Him, because whatever He taught the Church in the “Church dispensation” is for that dispensation not the “Mosaic dispensation.”

divergence from the meaning of the word dispensation as presented in Scripture. Scripture uses the word dispensation to mean manager, steward, or “the administration of God’s saving purpose” as in Eph. 3:2.<sup>48</sup>

In like manner, Dispensationalism teaches that the “Church age” is a “dispensation” with promises to a people separate from national ethnic Israel. In fact, a basic teaching of Dispensationalism is the idea that the Church was an interruption of Israel’s salvation history. Ryrie quotes L. S. Chafer as stating that, “but for the Church intercalation – which was wholly unforeseen and is wholly unrelated to any divine purpose which precedes it or follows it – Israel would be expected to pass directly from the crucifixion to her kingdom...”<sup>49</sup> The Church dispensation was, therefore, not only “unforeseen,” but “wholly unrelated” to any divine purpose in the rest of Scripture. This teaching that the Church, the Body of Christ, is wholly unrelated to God’s revelation before or after its “unforeseen” dispensation is one basic tenet in the Dispensationalist’s hermeneutic. Thus, “dispensations,” as defined by Dispensationalism, are independent administrations of God, each with promises and fulfillments that must not be confused with or imposed upon other “dispensations.”<sup>50</sup>

Traditional Dispensationalist Charles Ryrie defends this flawed hermeneutic saying; “...there is everything wrong about imposing the New Testament on the Old. And that is exactly what the covenant theologian does under the guise of a basic hermeneutical principle that tries to make Christ all in all but in reality is guilty of superimposing Him arbitrarily on the Old Testament.”<sup>51</sup> This error of not using NT revelation to interpret OT promises leads Ryrie to define Israel incorrectly in light of NT revelation. Ryrie defines Israel as an OT Jew would understand Scripture. Promises to this Israel are allegedly unconditional physical promises to an ethnic political nation of Israel in a supposed future time period (another Jewish dispensation). This future Jewish “dispensation” is after the second coming of Christ Jesus. In this way, Dispensationalists go beyond Scriptural evidence by postulating a future Jewish millennium in human history after the return of Christ Jesus. During this fictional Jewish millennium there is a second chance to enter the Kingdom of Christ, especially for ethnic Jews, who

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<sup>48</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), 1031.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Ryrie. 150.

<sup>50</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1938), 291. Berkhof in commenting on Scofield’s definition of dispensations writes; “This theory is also divisive in tendency, dismembering the organism of Scripture with disastrous results. Those parts of Scripture that belong to any one of the dispensations are addressed to, and have normative significance for, the people of that dispensation, and for no one else.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Ryrie. 191.

rejected Christ Jesus during this present age - the “day of salvation.” However, no biblical support exists for this doctrine. It is based solely on the presuppositions of Dispensationalism incorporated into its flawed hermeneutic.<sup>52</sup>

Dispensationalists have modified the literal grammatical-historical rule of hermeneutic used by most evangelical Bible scholars. Literal interpretation within the hermeneutic of Dispensationalism is qualified by their definition of a “dispensation.” Thus, “literal” means a literal reading of the text using primarily the Scriptures related to the particular “dispensation” in which the passage is found without benefit of the rest of Scripture. To use Scriptures from another “dispensation,” especially the NT when interpreting the OT, amounts to “imposing the New Testament on the Old” according to Ryrie, or a “spiritualizing” of Scripture thus departing from a “literal” interpretation. Thus, as a hermeneutic principle, the OT must be understood as a Jew in the OT would interpret it, without benefit of later revelation. John MacArthur, a self-proclaimed Dispensationalist likewise defends this flawed hermeneutic, “Take the New Testament out of the picture, take a believing Jew ... like Zechariah, what do you think he thought the promises to Old Testament Israel were?”<sup>53</sup>

Traditionally, literal interpretation meant a plain reading of the text, understanding it as one would understand any literature while being mindful of its literary genre. In addition, the total context of Scripture combined with the grammatical-historical method determined the final meaning. By limiting the meaning of literal to Scriptures within a “dispensation,” the hermeneutic principle of “Scripture interprets Scripture” is violated. Also eliminated is the principle that revelation is progressive, that the NT interprets the OT, not the other way around. Dispensationalists defend this solely on the basis of their definition of a dispensation. The principle of literal interpretation is restricted to the Mosaic dispensation, as a Jew would understand prophecy to Israel, without the revelation of the New Testament.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Ryrie, 147. According to Dispensational teacher Charles Ryrie: “If the yet unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament made in the Abrahamic, Davidic and new covenants are to be literally fulfilled, there must be a future period, the Millennium, in which they can be fulfilled, for the church is not now fulfilling them.” Thus, the Dispensational doctrine of a future Jewish dispensation in which unfulfilled promises to an ethnic political nation of Israel will be fulfilled; rests not on sound biblical exegesis, but rather on the extrapolation of Dispensational theological distinctives

<sup>53</sup> John MacArthur, speaking at the 2005 Shepherd’s Conference in Los Angeles, General Session #10.

Louis Berkhof states the time tested hermeneutic principle that “The main guide to interpretation of the Old Testament is certainly to be found in the New.”<sup>54</sup> There is only one great system of truth taught in the Bible, and it begins with the revelation of Christ Jesus. Everything is about Him and achieves its fulfillment in Him. Christ Jesus is the only true key to “...rightly dividing the word of truth,” not a fictional nation of Israel (fictional in imagining promises that remain unfulfilled to national Israel as it exists today in the Middle East). The idea that the Bible is to be understood “rightly” by dividing it into theologically sealed dispensations is incorrect. Then each dispensation is interpreted as separate economies “in the outworking of God’s purpose,” in which each is to glorify God in seven “distinguishable” ways. This scheme has no basis in Scripture and reflects a flawed hermeneutic. The Church for 2000 years has taught that Scripture interprets Scripture using all of Scripture.

### **Recognizing Unsound Doctrine**

Whenever the glory of Christ Jesus as revealed in Scripture is diminished, a false teaching is being presented. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). Christ Jesus is the Word of God – “the way the truth and the life.” The Bible is His God breathed Word. Anyone who adds or takes away from the Word of God is diminishing the glory of Christ Jesus.

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18-19).

True teachers are true to God’s Word. They neither add nor take away from its teaching. Doctrines are based upon careful exegesis using a sound hermeneutic. They do not abuse the Word by imposing a mythical system of interpretation upon it, thus adding to and reading into the Scripture, their own meaning (eisegesis). They do not take away from the Word by teaching that only some portions are relevant to God’s people (the Body of Christ) today. For instance, Dispensationalism teaches that most of Scripture pertains to an ethnic political nation of Israel which is supposedly derived from

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<sup>54</sup> Louis Berkhof writes, “The main guide to interpretation of the Old Testament is certainly to be found in the New.” Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 160. And, George Ladd concurs “...there is only one place to find a hermeneutic: in the New Testament.” George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 138.

“rightly dividing the Word of truth” into distinct dispensations while being careful to not “impose” Scripture meant for one dispensation onto another. As a result of taking away major portions of the Scripture (as meant for Jewish dispensations not the “Church dispensation”) the dispensationalist, based upon abiblical philosophical presuppositions (Jewish myth), adds to the Scriptures a future period of time during which purported promises to a fictionalized nation of Israel will be fulfilled.<sup>55</sup> Dispensationalism shares more in common with Judaism than Christianity in its interpretation of the Old Testament. This should clearly reveal the flaw in their hermeneutic.

Moreover, Christ is the head of the Church, which is His Body. The Body of Christ cannot be divided into two peoples with different promises and maintain biblical integrity. There is one Bride of Christ Jesus. To teach a divided Body of Christ diminishes the glory of God in the Church, thus diminishing the glory of Christ Jesus.

The one common characteristic of unsound doctrine is that it shifts attention away from the central focus of Scripture - Christ Jesus. The diversion is usually presented as based on a special revelation or *gnosis* known only to the initiated that is the key to rightly understanding the Scriptures. Therefore, let the reader be warned, when a doctrine varies greatly from “the faith once and for all delivered to the saints,”<sup>56</sup> which was passed down through the centuries having stood the test of time, and guided and protected by the Holy Spirit – beware. Dispensationalism is a recent aberration in Church history and doctrine. No one before John Darby taught that the separation of an ethnic national Israel from the Church was the key to “rightly dividing the word of truth.”<sup>57</sup>

Dispensationalism was first conceived after John Darby fell off his horse in 1828.<sup>58</sup> He imagined God had given him a new insight into “rightly dividing the word of truth.” Thus was hatched the flawed hermeneutic tenet that a strict separation between the Church and an ethnic political nation of Israel must be maintained in order to rightly understand the Scriptures. This led to a redefining of the biblical word dispensation to legitimize interpreting the OT promises to Israel as physical promises that have not been fulfilled by the Church.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Ryrie, 147. See footnote # 8.

<sup>56</sup> Jude 1:3. NJKB.

<sup>57</sup>“Darby became the first person in church history to declare that avoiding confusion between “the Jewish and Gentile dispensations” was the “hinge upon which the subject and the understanding of Scripture turns.” Ronald M. Henzel, *Darby, Dualism and the Decline of Dispensationalism* (Tucson: Fenestra Books, 2003), 23.

He then taught that the Church was a parenthesis in God's fulfillment of promises to ethnic Israel. This became the hallmark of dispensational theology. Dispensationalists still teach that the Church age was not foreseen in the OT. "The New Scofield Reference Bible comments: "The church, corporately, is not in the vision of the Old Testament prophecies (Ephesians 3:1-6)." <sup>59</sup> The Church was an unexpected dispensation; a "parenthesis" in God's salvation plan after the ethnic nation of Israel allegedly rejected their Christ. This rejection brought an end to the first Jewish dispensation. Thus, God's fulfillment of promises to Israel was postponed until yet another Jewish "dispensation" after Christ's return.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, a future period of time during which these promises will be fulfilled was envisioned. Darby married his dualistic view of Israel and the Church with premillennialism.<sup>61</sup> He then incorporated a pre-tribulation rapture he borrowed from Margaret Macdonald who allegedly "prophesied" about it.<sup>62</sup> This led to another fiction not supported by Scripture, that Christ returns in two phases, first to rapture His Church before the "great tribulation" of God's wrath, and then to establish a thousand years of rule from a "literal" Jerusalem, in a "literal" rebuilt temple, sitting on a "literal" throne of David, with "literal" animal sacrifices to rule over "literal" Gentile nations. This Jewish myth has captured the minds of much of evangelical Christianity for over 100 years. Thus, 2000 years of Church history and sound doctrine was replaced by an end time fiction imposing upon the whole of Scriptures a myth about a future ethnic Israel. This myth is not just another eschatology; it wrongly reinterprets the whole of Scripture.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing The Word of Truth* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, 1991), 25.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Gerstner, 198.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Ryrie, 150. Ryrie states, "The postponement of the Kingdom is related primarily to the question of God's program in this age through the Church and not to the necessity of the crucifixion." Then he quotes L. S. Chafer: "But for the Church intercalation – which was wholly unforeseen and is wholly unrelated to any divine purpose which precedes it or which follows it, ..."

<sup>61</sup> William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Philipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2003), 863-864. "Premillenarianism was the revival of the pseudo-Jewish doctrine of the messianic kingdom, as this had been formed in the later periods of Jewish history by a materializing exegesis of the Old Testament." "Revelation 20:4-6 is the chief and nearly sole support of the doctrine of two corporeal resurrections. In explaining it, reference must be had to other passages of Scripture, especially Matt. 25. Christ himself here gives an account of his own final advent, and he speaks of only one corporeal resurrection." "The "living and reigning" is the "resurrection." Had St. John intended a literal resurrection, he would have said, "I saw the bodies of those who were beheaded." "In John 5:25-29 our Lord speaks of two resurrections, the first of which is spiritual, and the second is corporeal."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Gerstner, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Myth is defined as "a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon" (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The term "Jewish myths" as used in Titus 1:14 refers to "the fancies and devices of men" or fables about obsolete matters concerning Judaism (Matthew Henry's commentary, Volume six, page 692). This is the sense in which this author is using this term. Dispensationalism is about a mythical Israel not the biblical Israel.

The Bible is misused when it is used to “tickle our ears” with end times fiction and myths, or to increase our knowledge (*gnosis*) for the sake of “spiritual enlightenment,” instead of knowing God (Titus 1:13-14; Acts 1:7). The ancient heresy known as Gnosticism enticed its followers with a “special knowledge” known only to these Gnostic teachers who purported to correctly reveal God. In like manner Dispensationalism promises a special knowledge, a key to “rightly dividing the word of truth,” which is a Jewish myth about an ethnic political nation of Israel and its promises that must be fulfilled “literally” in a future “dispensation.”<sup>64</sup> Again, we hear the echo of the tempter, “your eyes will be opened.”<sup>65</sup>

The Dispensationalist’s focus on an ethnic political national Israel is believed to be the key to unlocking prophesies of the “end times.” Tim LaHaye, the popular author of the *Left Behind* series, agrees with Hal Lindsey who states, “The most important sign in Matthew has to be the restoration of the Jews to the land in the rebirth of Israel. Even the figure of speech “fig tree” has been a historical symbol of national Israel. When the Jewish people, after nearly 2000 years of exile, under relentless persecution, became a nation again on May 14, 1948, the “fig tree” put forth its leaves.”<sup>66</sup> A restored ethnic nation of Israel on the world scene, which began to “put forth its leaves,” presumes to start the countdown that culminates in a pretribulational rapture of the Church. Then, after seven years a third coming of Christ is taught to fulfill supposed remaining “unfulfilled promises” to a literal earthly ethnic nation of Israel in a future Jewish millennium.

This teaching reveals that what drives Dispensationalism is its adventist focus on end times prophecy and having the key to interpret events leading to Christ’s return. They see themselves as the penultimate generation spoken of by the prophet Daniel. “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.” “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up

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<sup>64</sup> Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 61-65. Dr. Brown sees that Dispensationalism has much in common with one of the oldest heresies known as Gnosticism. Brown compares Dispensationalism with the Gnostic heretic Marcion. “Marcion’s idea that the church really is not part of world history appears again, centuries later in a more orthodox form, in the view of J. N. Darby (1800-1882). Darby and the dispensationalists who follow him consider the church to be in a kind of parenthesis that really is not part of world history. Furthermore, like Marcion, the Dispensationalist’s inherent dualism separates the OT and its Law from the church “...by limiting it to an older dispensation intended only for the nation of Israel, and seeing Christians as living in a completely different age and under a completely different dispensation, that of grace.” Another commonality Dispensationalism shares with Gnosticism is taking away large portions of Scripture as not for the church. Although Dispensationalism does not go as far as Marcion, they relegate much of Scripture as not for the Church dispensation. This is similar to “...Marcion in purging the Bible of everything except Paul and a portion of Luke.”

<sup>65</sup> Gen. 3:5. NKJB.

<sup>66</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 53-54.

until the end time.” (Daniel 8-12). Dispensationalism suffers from the delusion, common to all Adventist movements, that God has revealed to them the key to understanding Daniel’s vision of the end times. They believe the key is ethnic Israel, that history revolves around an ethnic political state of Israel in the Middle East, rather than the Body of Christ his chosen people and his only “holy nation.”<sup>67</sup> This they maintain in spite of clear NT revelation to the contrary. Thus, they deny that true Israel, as defined in the NT,<sup>68</sup> has received its promises fulfilled by its Messiah Jesus at His first coming. This denial diminishes the glory of Christ Jesus, His Body the Church, and perverts a true understanding of Scripture.

### **Christ’s Glory Diminished**

Why does this fictional scheme matter? What harm does it do to divide the Scriptures into separate “dispensations” that fulfill their own purposes each supposedly “glorifying” God in their own way? Dispensationalism diminishes the glory of Christ. It does this by adding to Scripture and by replacing the Body of Christ (The Church) with a Jewish myth (The existence of an ethnic political nation now occupying “the promised land” having unfulfilled promises that must be fulfilled in a future “Jewish dispensation”).

Scripture reveals God’s plan of salvation from Genesis through Revelation as centered in Christ Jesus; and Jesus interprets all the “Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.” His interpretation includes not one word about a future in which unfulfilled promises to ethnic Israel will be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit recorded what He received from Christ Jesus in the NT. Jesus said, “...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-14). Does it make sense that Jesus would withhold, in telling “you things to come,” a future Jewish millennium for the purpose of fulfilling promises to a separate ethnic Jewish nation apart from His Body the Church? Moreover, would the Apostle Paul in his detailed explanation of the future of ethnic Israel in Romans 9-11 neglect to reveal a central focus on ethnic Israel in a future millennium? The silence is deafening, and revealing. This author is not offering an argument from silence, rather from the fact that Scripture provides no

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<sup>67</sup> I Peter 2:9. NKJB.

<sup>68</sup> Rom. 9:6-8. NKJB.

support for this Jewish myth. Unless one accepts John Darby as a prophet sent by God to reveal this plan for ethnic Israel, one must accept the clear teaching of Jesus Christ concerning “things to come.” Therefore, Dispensational doctrine adds to the Scriptures a Jewish myth. Scripture, as Christ Jesus has interpreted it, and as He inspired the writers of the New Testament is thus not sufficient. Dispensationalism must add to the Revelation of Jesus Christ a future Jewish millennium conceived in the mind of John Darby. Thus, the Church is replaced by a reconstituted ethnic Jewish nation through which God will complete the Great Commission. This replacement theory conflicts with the clear teaching of Scripture and diminishes the glory of Jesus Christ and His Body the Church, the Bride of Christ.

Dispensationalism shifts the focus of Scripture away from a redemptive history focused in Christ Jesus and His Body (the Church), to a fictional Israel, in a fictional future “dispensation,” where supposedly unfulfilled promises will be completed. Bruce Waltke states that “...the sine qua non of the Dispensational hermeneutic is a distinct view of history. ...God’s program for Israel (“the silver age”) is the focus of redemptive history, and the place of the Church is relegated to the “bronze age.”<sup>69</sup> This makes the descendants of Abraham, “children after the flesh,” the central focus of redemptive history instead of the “children of the promise,” as clearly taught in Scripture (Rom. 9:8). The Church, God’s true “Holy Nation” is sidelined as a “parenthesis” or “intercalation” in God’s salvation history. The Church, as defined by Dispensationalism above, is wholly unrelated to God’s purposes in Scripture that precedes it or follows it.<sup>70</sup> This is a deviation from truth that diminishes the glory of the Body of Christ, thus, Christ Jesus Himself.

Moreover, “In removing the Bride of Christ from the reference of meaning in the Old Testament Scriptures, Dispensationalists spiritually repudiate Christ Himself in their studies of the Old Testament.”<sup>71</sup> The Body of Christ, the Church, is the “fullness of Christ” the one and only “Bride of Christ.” It is His “holy nation, His own special people,” past, present and forever. It will not share its glory with a fictional Israel. All that remains to be fulfilled in God’s salvation history is the final judgment and glorification of God’s elect in the “new heaven and new earth.” Then, comes “the holy

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<sup>69</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “A Response” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 346.

<sup>70</sup> W. Robert Godfrey, *An Unexpected Journey* (Philipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2004), 113. “Many Christians have accepted a teaching that insists that Israel and the Church are two entirely separate and distinct peoples of God and that God deals quite differently with each of these peoples.” “Are the psalms the spiritual songs of the church or only the songs of Israel?”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Henzel, p-148.

city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:1-3 & I Pe. 3:10-13). Scripture knows no other.

Christ Jesus cannot be divided. There is only one Bride, one chosen elect people, one Spirit indwelling all and uniting all in God’s Son. To teach that Christ Jesus did not fulfill God’s salvation plan for His elect as the NT clearly reveals, is to take from His glory. He is the fulfillment of all promises to Abraham and his “seed.” The “copies and shadows” are obsolete replaced by the heavenly realities in Christ Jesus. He is the mediator of a better covenant, thus the former is obsolete. “He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. ...In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete.” (Heb. 8:6-13).

A careful reading of the epistle to the Hebrews, without eisegesis that imposes Dispensational distinctives, provides “a safe and sure starting point and guide into the complexities of interpreting the Old Testament.”<sup>72</sup> To add to the Scriptures, sideline the Body of Christ, and to teach that Christ Jesus has not completed and replaced the Old Covenant with a better covenant - is to diminish His glory.

## **Sound Doctrine**

When the recorded Word of Christ Jesus is the final authority for “rightly dividing the Word of truth” OT prophecies regarding God’s elect people are seen as clearly fulfilled by Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus fulfills the promises to Abraham as his “seed.” Christ Jesus at His first advent fulfilled the promises made to true Israel (a remnant according to election by grace). Moreover, throughout history not only the physical descendants of Abraham, but Gentiles also who have faith in Christ, are included in the “Israel of God” the “children of the promise”(Gal. 6:16 & Rom. 9:8). And, those who are the elect of the Jews and the Gentiles, by grace through faith, will continue to be grafted into true Israel until Christ Jesus’ Second Advent (Rom. 11:23). Then the end will come, the dead will be raised, the wicked to judgment and condemnation and the elect to life in the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells. Consider carefully the following Scripture passages:

Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. ... Now to

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<sup>72</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1987), 70.

Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:7-9; 16; 29).

For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ... Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. (Rom. 9:3-8; 27).

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Rom. 11:1-5).

Has God rejected His physical descendants from Abraham and forsaken His promises? The Apostle Paul says emphatically no. He offers himself as an example. With the prophets Isaiah and Elijah, Paul confirms that the elect remnant ("children of promise" not the "children of the flesh") will be saved and that the true chosen people of God have had their eyes opened by God's grace to receive the Messiah Jesus. This remnant church, the heirs of Abraham, continued as prophesied and was the heir of the New Covenant in the blood of Christ Jesus. No interruption of God's plan of redemption has occurred. The Church did not begin at Pentecost as a separate people of God as Dispensationalists maintain; it simply received its Christ and the fulfillment of the promise of a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Joel 2:28). After the elect remnant of Israel received their Christ by faith, elect Gentiles were grafted into Christ Jesus, who is the true Israel,<sup>73</sup> who fulfilled all the conditions of the Old Covenant as the "seed" of Abraham through whom all peoples are blessed with the gospel of the

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<sup>73</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2000), 115.

Kingdom (Rom. 11:1-26). Those who are in Christ Jesus both Jew and Gentile are “A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9 NASB). There was, there is, and there will be only one Holy Nation, a people chosen for God's own possession forever. Those who by God's grace are in Christ Jesus are the true Israel of God. It was upon this remnant of the “children of promise” that Christ Jesus built his church, who by God's grace they were able to confess, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16-18).

Adding to the Scripture is as serious as taking away from the scripture. The Bible teaches no extended period beyond the end of this age after Christ's return during which supposed promises to an ethnic political nation of Jews will be fulfilled.<sup>74</sup> The “copies and shadows” represented in the OT are obsolete having been fulfilled in Christ Jesus (Heb. 8:5ff). Christ Jesus has fulfilled literally the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenant promises. The Kingdom has come with the King, Prophet and Priest - the Messiah Jesus. The true literal fulfillment of all OT promises has been accomplished as clearly revealed by Christ Jesus to whom we are commanded to listen. The OT “copies and shadows” have been replaced by the spiritual realities in the heavenly; “Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;” (Heb. 9:23-24).

Dispensationalists would have us believe that the “copies and shadows” are more literal than the reality Christ Jesus has achieved. That is, to teach a return to these “copies and shadows” in a future period, in which there allegedly will be a rebuilt temple made with hands with reinstated animal sacrifices, is to add to the Scriptures a myth about a Jewish millennium. Moreover, this myth detracts from the glory of Christ who has fulfilled all. “This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Waltke, 353-355. Bruce Waltke argues that “Revelation 20: 1-10 cannot be linked textually with Israel's covenants and promises; that no New Testament passage clearly teaches a future Jewish millennium; and that the New Testament interprets the imagery of the Old Testament with reference to the present, spiritual reign of Christ from his heavenly throne.” “At issue is whether or not God has two “true peoples” (true Israel and the church) and whether true Israel has a future role in redemptive history different from the church.” “Our Lord clearly taught that when the Jews rejected him, God set aside national Israel as the distinctive, favored expression of his kingdom (Matt. 8: 1-12).” Waltke further argues “. . . that prophecies finding fulfillment up to the ascension of Christ, such as his birth in Bethlehem, will have an earthly, visible fulfillment, and those pertaining to the church formed with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost from Christ's heavenly Davidic throne will have an invisible, spiritual fulfillment.”

severely that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.” (Titus 1:13-14).

The Scriptures teach us to look “for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:13-15). The Scripture teaches “...one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph.4:4-6). Throughout history, just one elect people of God who constitute the “children of the promise” has existed. We have heard the voice of our Messiah and “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises...” (II Peter 1:3-4).

Jesus said, "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.... My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (Jn. 10:5; 27). Unsound doctrine mixes truth with error, myths with biblical teaching. They are hard to detect unless one listens closely to Christ Jesus as primary in “rightly dividing the word of truth.” Therefore, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed” (II Tim. 2:15). Be careful if God has not called and gifted you to be a teacher, for “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (Ja. 3:1). But, if God has called and gifted you to be a teacher in the church seek the wisdom from above and flee the “wisdom” of man. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (Ja. 3:17). God has given His Church teachers, “...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ” (Eph. 4:15-16). Teachers share in maintaining the spiritual health of the Body of Christ by being “able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict ...that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths...” (Titus 1:9-14. NASB).



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### **Robert L. Brady, D. Min.**

Robert served as a member of the Los Angeles City Fire Department from 1961-1986. As an officer he learned valuable hands-on management skills. He also served as a Fire Department Chaplain to approximately 3000 members and their families performing funeral services, weddings, hospital visitations and counseling. He was privileged to help start Bible studies in fire stations that resulted in hundreds of firefighters becoming Christians. He saw God produce a "people movement" that spread to other Fire Departments and become a worldwide fellowship known as *International Firefighters For Christ*.

Robert completed two years of professional consultant training through the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, and completed a *Doctor of Ministry in Theology* at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. He was mentored in church consulting by Carl F. George, Director of the Charles Fuller Institute, and served as a Field Consultant with the Fuller Institute for twelve years. In 1995 he started Lyle Associates, a church ministry serving the building up of the church until all reach the maturity of Christ.

Robert specializes in assisting churches with a ministry assessment, strategic planning, leadership training, and volunteer mobilization. He has served hundreds of churches throughout the U.S. and Canada for over twenty years. Robert believes the purpose of his ministry is helping congregations to worship biblically, to mobilize every member's spiritual gift for the edification of the Body and to complete the evangelization of "all peoples." He believes in the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture and holds an evangelical reformed theological position. Robert resides in Bakersfield, California with his wife of 47 years. They have two sons and two grandsons who live in the Bakersfield area.

### **Published and Unpublished Writings**

Among his writings are the following: *Where Paradigms Clash: Understanding Change*, The Pastor's Update, June 1992; *Mistakes to Avoid When a Pastor Falls*, Ministry Advantage, Mar./Apr. 1993; *A Radical Approach to World Evangelism*, Ministry Advantage, Sept./Oct. 1994; *A Consultant's Perspective*, Ministry Advantage, July/Aug. 1996; *The Treasurer Who Wants to Control*, Leadership: A Practical Journal for Church Leaders, Winter 1998; *Kingdom Interventionists, Volume One: Helping to Put in Order a Church's Ministry*, Lyle Associates, 1998; *Kingdom Interventionists, Volume Two: Conducting a Ministry Audit*, Lyle Associates, 2000; *Kingdom Interventionists, Volume Three: Mobilizing for a Kingdom Harvest*, Lyle Associates, 2002; *Dispensational Meltdown*, Lyle Associates, 2005; *The Dispensational Myth: A Refutation of Dispensationalism*, Lyle Associates, 2005; *Confessions of a Church Growth Consultant*, Lyle Associates, 2007.

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