

May 2nd, 2021

Excursion: Covenant Theology or Dispensationalism?

Origins of Dispensationalism

Depending on who you talk to will largely determine *when* dispensationalism developed. Some dispensationalists claim that dispensationalism can be traced back to the early church fathers. Paul Enns in his book *The Moody Handbook of Theology* claims Justin Martyr (a.d. 110-165), Irenaeus (130-200), Clement of Alexandria (150-220), and Augustine (354-430) as early church fathers who held to **forms** of dispensationalism.¹ He claims this because these men saw different time periods in redemptive history. Ok. However that doesn't make you a dispensationalist. I'm not sure about Irenaeus or Clement of Alexandria, but Justin Martyr and Augustine both believed that the church—made up of Jews and Gentiles—was the Israel of God. A view that is practically heresy to dispensationalists.

C.I. Scofield (1843-1921) is the man who popularized the system; but it is John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) who is almost universally recognized as the father of dispensationalism.² Darby was an Irishman who was part of a movement called the Plymouth Brethren.³ During the latter part of the 19th century he developed dispensationalism, as system of looking at Scripture that was novel when seen in light of Church history. Scofield, an American, took the ideas of Darby and other dispensationalists and crystalized them in his 1909 publication *The Scofield Reference Bible*. This study bible spread like wild fire in

¹ Paul Enns pg. 513-514 *The Moody Handbook of Theology* Moody Press Chicago 1989

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nelson_Darby

³ Somewhat fitting that Darby came from this movement which was ultra-reactionary and sectarian (although it boasts a world-wide movement). Even Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) who was a contemporary of Darby and the Brethren movement spoke against it. In his magazine *The Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon writes an expose entitled *Mr. Grant on "The Darby Brethren"*

the United States and Scofield released his second edition in 1917 where it remained untouched until modern dispensationalists revised it in 1967. Having said that, there are different strains of dispensationalism, but most of the key ingredients remain inherent in both.

Disclaimer

Now Michael J. Glodo provides us with a helpful disclaimer as we begin “Dispensational theologians have been quiet active during the past few decades in refining their system of biblical analysis. Certainly it would not be fair to treat the dispensationalist today as though his modes of expression were identical to those which characterize the “old” Scofield Bible as it first appeared in 1909. *Yet at the same time*, these early foundations cannot be ignored altogether. For the earlier dispensational theology continues to provide the basic motive for dispensationalism today.”⁴

Popular Dispensationalism

Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*

The *Left Behind* book series - Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins

Dallas Theological Seminary

John MacArthur

Charles Ryrie

Chuck Swindoll

J. Vernon McGee

I. The Definition of Dispensationalism

II. The Distinctions of Dispensationalism

III. The Deficiencies of Dispensationalism

⁴ *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological and Historical Perspectives*, Ed. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, & John R. Muether, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2020), pg. 539

I. The Definition of Dispensationalism

Dispensation + *ism*

Dispensationalism is a system, or framework, for understanding how God works out the progress of redemptive history. The word dispensation is found in Scripture. It comes from the Greek word οἰκονομία (oi-ko-no-mē'-ä) and in its Biblical usage, it means stewardship or administration. **Ephesians 1:10** in the KJV says “That in the *dispensation* of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; [even] in him:” (cf. Luke 16:2-4, 1 Cor. 9:17, Eph. 3:2, Col. 1:25)

The Scofield Reference Bible says “*a dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the will of God.*”⁵ In Dispensationalism the whole of Bible is seen to be split up into different time periods in which humanity faces a particular test. Paul Enns expands this idea

“Dispensationalism views the world as a household run by God. In this divine household God gives man certain responsibilities as administrator. If man obeys God within that economy (dispensation), God promises blessing; if man disobeys God, He promises judgment. Thus there are three basic aspects normally seen in a dispensation: (1) testing; (2) failure; (3) judgment. In each dispensation God has put man under a test, man fails and there is judgment.”⁶

II. The Distinctions of Dispensationalism

1st Distinction: The different time periods of testing

There are seven such dispensations:

⁵ C.I. Scofield note on Genesis 1:28 *The Scofield Reference Bible* 1917

⁶ Paul Enns pg. 519 *The Moody Handbook of Theology* Moody Press Chicago 1989

- 1) The Dispensation of Innocence (The creation of man to the fall) Gen.1:1-3:6
- 2) The Dispensation of Conscience (Man to the flood) Gen. 4:1-8:14
- 3) The Dispensation of Government (Noah to Babel) Gen. 8:15-11:9
- 4) The Dispensation of Promise (Abraham to the Exodus) Gen. 11:10-Ex.18:27
- 5) The Dispensation of Law (Mt. Sinai to Pentecost) Exodus 19:1-Acts 1:26
- 6) The Dispensation of Grace (Pentecost to the Rapture) Acts 2:1-Rev. 19:21⁷
- 7) The Dispensation of the Millennium (The 1,000 kingdom) Rev. 20:4-6⁸

Now according to the original Scofield Study Bible mankind was saved differently in each dispensation. We'll see in a moment that Scofield goes so far as to say that under the dispensation of law, humanity was saved by obedience to the law. It's only now in this dispensation that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. Dispensationalists since then have changed their view. Some holding that "the OT saints were saved by faith alone, on the basis of the Calvary-work of Christ alone; however the object of their faith was not Christ, but rather the revelation peculiar to their dispensation."⁹ Others say 'No Christ has always been the object of saving faith in every dispensation.'¹⁰

2nd Distinction: The two different peoples in Scripture.

Paul Enns, a dispensationalist says this:

⁷ This dispensation ends when the church is secretly raptured, or taken away from the earth. A seven year period called the tribulation follows the rapture which marks the time where God again deals with the nation of Israel. The tribulation sees the rise of the Antichrist, the mark of the beast, and all hell breaks loose on earth.

⁸ This time is marked by Jesus Christ coming and sitting on his throne in Jerusalem. Israel now inherits all the promises made to Abraham. They are the head nation and all the rest of the nations are the tail. During this time there is a mixture of immortals and mortals on earth. At the end of the this thousand year kingdom, Satan who was bound prior to it, is now released where he deceives the nations once again and starts a rebellion against Christ. That is immediately put down in the battle of Armageddon. He and his followers are immediately cast into hell and then eternity begins

⁹ Nathan Pitchford, *What the Bible Says About the People of God: A Categorized Scripture List*, (Portland, OR.: Monergism Books), pg. 4

¹⁰ But I would just ask my Dispensational brothers how different is Dispensationalism different from Covenant Theology on this point. This is what we claim.

“Dispensationalism is nowhere more distinctive than in its doctrine of the church. Dispensationalists hold that the church is *entirely distinct* from Israel as an entity...Israel always denotes the physical posterity of Jacob and is never to be confused with the church...God has a distinct program for Israel and a distinct program for the church.”¹¹

On the website plymouthbrethren.org Henry Ironside calls the church a parenthesis in God’s plan.¹² In other words, God’s dealings with ethnic Israel is the main story of the Bible, and the church is a insertion which interrupts that story. Scofield in his intro to the N.T. says this regarding the church and Israel

“...in approaching the study of the Gospels the mind should be freed, so far as possible, from mere theological concepts and presuppositions. Especially it is necessary to exclude the notion-a legacy in Protestant thought from post-apostolic and Roman Catholic theology-that the church is the true Israel, and that the Old Testament foreview of the kingdom is fulfilled in the Church.”¹³

So the church is not Israel, and Israel is not the church. Two different peoples, two different programs, two different plans.

Additional distinctions: There are more distinctions than these two. The two main distinctions being 1) Dispensationalists claims they hold to a “literal” hermeneutic interpretative method. They insist that they interpret the Bible according to it’s literal or plain meaning. 2) Dispensationalists almost

¹¹ Paul Enns pg. 521-522 *The Moody Handbook of Theology* Moody Press Chicago 1989

¹² <http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/article/10425>

¹³ C.I. Scofield note on The Four Gospels pg. 989 *The Scofield Reference Bible 1917*

1) First of all observe that Scofield has in his mind that since the post-apostolic church fathers, the legacy of the church included the idea that the church is true Israel. He disagrees with that. 2) What’s his instruction to us? He’s telling us to be free from mere theological concepts and presuppositions. What is that statement? A mere theological concept and presupposition. 3) We need to ask ourselves, what is the presupposition that is governing the idea that the church and ethnic Israel are two distinct entities with two distinct programs? The dispensationalist will say that a literal hermeneutic is what governs their presupposition. Go to Section 2 Part B for a fuller treatment of this.

universally hold to a pre-tribulation rapture, followed by a 7 year tribulation, and a 1000 year reign of Christ upon the Earth, followed then by the consummation of all things. Now unfortunately we won't have time to go into these or other distinctives of Dispensationalism.¹⁴ My scope here is to compare Dispensationalism to Covenant Theology and test it against the Scripture.

III. The Deficiencies of Dispensationalism

Distinction #1: 7 Dispensations

According to the Scofield Bible,

"... each of these seven distinct periods of time has "a character exclusively its own," being "wholly complete and sufficient in itself," that it "is in no wise exchangeable for the others, and cannot be commingled."¹⁵

At the very onset we must recognize that dispensationalism and covenant theology are at odds with one another. They cannot be synthesized. One of them is wrong. Covenant theology sees God lighting a candle to illuminate a room. The candle represents a covenant that gives revelation to our eyes as to what God is like. As God lights another candle, He doesn't blow the first one out, nor does He change rooms. He brings more light into the room by

¹⁴ Additionally, Dispensationalists hold two redemptive plans (which include 2 new covenants, 2 returns of Christ, 2 physical resurrections, and 2 final judgments). Dispensationalists don't believe the parts of the gospels are for Christians, i.e. the sermon on the mount is not 'for' the church. During the dispensation of grace the church is doomed to failure. Some Dispensationalists practice and call others to practice an "unconditional support" for Israel. "Easy believism" found its genesis in dispensationalism, which separates Jesus' office of Savior from Lord to the effect of creating what they call "carnal Christians." Some dispensationalists hold a re-institution of animal sacrifices during the millennium. Scofield also laid the foundation for the egalitarian argument in his commentary on Genesis 3:14 "The entrance of sin, which is disorder, makes necessary a headship, and it is vested in man." This is the argument for egalitarian apologists. They say that after Christ makes things right in redemption, the curse is made right by the cross, and there is no headship anymore. Ironic that Scofield quotes 1 Tim. 2:11-14 which is the very place that refutes his view.

¹⁵ Philip Mauro *The Gospel of the Kingdom* 1927 Response to Dispensationalism <http://www.preteristsite.com/docs/maurogospel.html#11>

revealing more of God's single plan in redemptive history. Set against that is dispensationalism, which can't even be said to have multiple rooms, because they "...cannot be commingled," Ryrie says that dispensations "...are not stages in the revelation of the covenant of grace but are distinguishably different"¹⁶ from one another.

Entering into the Dispensation of the Law

Scofield when describing the Israelites moving from the Abrahamic to the Mosaic covenant says this "The Dispensation of Promise ended when **Israel rashly accepted the law (Ex. 19:8)...at Sinai they exchanged grace for law.**"¹⁷ So what's wrong with this? 1) Scofield said that "**Israel rashly accepted the law...at Sinai they exchanged grace for law.**" This is misunderstanding of the Exodus. The Israelites were graciously brought out of Egypt. They were wicked just like their captors and like those who they were about to displace out of the promised land (cf. **Deut. 9:4-8**) The Israelites didn't choose the Lord, He sovereignly imposed His covenant upon them without reference to what they wanted. 2) Scofield makes the law sound bad. If the law is a reflection of God's perfect righteousness, what does that say about God? Scofield, intentionally or not, is misrepresenting the intent of the law and then condemning that straw man. The law leads us to Christ (**Gal. 3:24**). It's the Psalmist's delight (**Psalms 1:1-2**). It's said to be perfect (**Psalms 19:7**). It's said to be holy (**Romans 7:12**).

Dispensationalists held to Judaizer interpretations of the law

Dispensationalism held the same misunderstanding that the Judaizers had of the law. When Scofield comments on **John 1:17** he says this "[the dispensation of grace] begins with the death, and resurrection of Christ. **The point of testing is not longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but**

¹⁶ Charles Ryrie pg. 16 *Dispensationalism Today* Chicago: Moody Press, 1965

¹⁷ C.I. Scofield note on Genesis 12:1 *The Scofield Reference Bible* 1917

acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation.”¹⁸ In other words, people are saved differently now that Christ has come. No longer is one required to pass a *test of legal obedience* in order to be saved. Scofield’s understanding of the Mosaic law was that it could save people! That understanding of the Mosaic Law is exactly the understanding the Paul sought to destroy in Galatians. The law was not designed to save anybody. Furthermore, what does this reveal about Mr. Scofield’s understanding of man? That man was able to keep the law! Before Christ, people were saved by obedience to the law. If it’s denied that man could keep the law, **then** he would have to concede that none could be saved! If he were to respond by saying: ‘that’s why they had the sacrifices, in order to atone for their sins,’ the response would be to point to Hebrews 10:4 “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” In other words “legal obedience as the condition of salvation,” is never what God intended. If a dispensationalist at this point were to say “exactly,” then that destroys Scofield’s claim in **John 1:17**.¹⁹

Is there epochs or time periods in Scripture? Yes of course there is. No Biblical student would deny this. However, there is only unified plan of God’s throughout all the different epochs, which is what Jesus demonstrated so clearly in **Luke 24:26-27** when he was speaking to his two disciples on the road to Emmaus “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

¹⁸ C.I. Scofield note on John 1:17 *The Scofield Reference Bible* 1917 (ALSO cf. note on Exodus 19:5)

¹⁹ Paul Enns, a modern dispensationalist, claims that they do not teach different ways of salvations in different dispensations. Maybe he doesn’t. Praise God. But there is a level of cognitive dissonance happening here that cannot be ignored. He quotes Ryrie: “The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ; the requirement for salvation in every age is faith; the object of faith in every age is God; the content of faith changes in the various dispensations.(pg. 522 in earlier cited work)” Everybody will agree that the object of faith in every age is God. The last part is where they distinguish themselves from every body else: “the content of faith changes in the various dispensations.” What does that mean: the content of faith changes? What is content? Think of the contents of a book. Those contents are the components that make up the whole, or the ingredients. Ryrie here is contradicting himself. On one hand he’s saying that the sole object our faith in every age is God; but on the other he’s saying that the content, or ingredients, or objects of our faith changes in various dispensations. Cognitive dissonance or not, this is an inconsistent gospel, that looks very much like the Judaizer’s understanding in Galatians.

Distinction #2: The Church and Israel: two distinct peoples, two distinct programs, and two distinct peoples. ²⁰

O. Palmer Robertson here says that this distinction is a

“metaphysical rather than a hermeneutical presupposition. [Dispensationalists argue] that one purpose of God has to do with an earthy people and earthly objectives, while the other purpose is related to heaven involving heavenly objectives...this distinction [produces] a metaphysical or philosophical dichotomy between the material and spiritual realms...[In] Covenant theology...no dichotomy exists between redemption in the spiritual realm and redemption in the physical realm...Dispensationalism, however, emphasizes God’s activity of setting apart a people for himself physically as it relates to Israel and spiritually as it relates to the New Testament people of God.”²¹

In other words, in separating physical redemption from spiritual redemption a type of gnosticism is adopted. Separating the physical from the spiritual is how the gnostics justified their theology. God did not intend on redeeming only one aspect, either the physical or the spiritual part of man. So hold on to that idea.

The True Israel of God

Having said that, the dispensationalist will say that, nowhere in Scripture does the church equal Israel. They will say that those who do not hold this distinction are replacement theologians, because we allegedly believe that the church is replacing Israel. That is a straw man. The church is not replacing Israel. No covenant theologian believes that a believing Jew will fail to inherit the promises made to Abraham. True Israel is all of God’s people. If you have

²⁰ “Charles Ryrie in his book *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago, 1965) explained that the "basic premise of Dispensationalism is two purposes of God expressed in the formation of two peoples who maintain their distinction throughout eternity." (pp. 44-45).” <http://www.bible-researcher.com/gal6-16.html>

²¹ O. Palmer Robertson pg. 213-214 *The Christ of the Covenants* Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1980

been brought into Christ, you are part of God's people. God has always had one people. What we see the N.T. authors doing is explaining and interpreting the O.T. to show just this. Please turn to **Galatians 6:15-16**²² says "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon **the Israel of God.**" So who does the Apostle have in mind here being the "Israel of God?" Dispensationalists will say the Israel of God are Jewish Christians. Covenant theologians and the majority of church history prior to twentieth century America, says that this is speaking of the church. Even Scofield himself admits that the legacy of Christian thought from the time of the post-apostolic fathers was that the church was true Israel. So which interpretation flows with the context of the rest of the letter to Galatians?

In **Galatians 2:11-14**, Paul "condemned" Peter's separation from the Gentiles as "hypocrisy," and said that "...their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel." **Translation:** treating the Gentiles as lower class Christians was anti-gospel.

In **Galatians 3:7** Paul says: "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." **Translation:** Those of faith, irrespective of race, are Abraham's descendants.

In **Galatians 3:9** Paul says "So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." **Translation:** The binding tie that brings blessing, are those who have faith like Abraham.

In **Galatians 3:28-29** Paul says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." **Translation:** There are not two bodies in Christ, but just one. Jew and Greek are one in Christ. Being included in Christ validates you as an authentic offspring of Abraham, and an heir of the promises made to him.

²² For the Greek apologetic, see the ESV Study Bible or this [article](#)

In **Galatians 4:21-31** Paul equates earthly Jerusalem with the legalistic Judaizers and **sets them against** heavenly Jerusalem which was representative of all the children of promise (Jew and Greek). Now wouldn't it be strange of Paul to be arguing in this whole book against dividing the Church into Jews and Gentiles, only to turn around at the end and put the Jews in a special place?

What is Jewishness?

Outside of Galatians, we find the same evidence of who this true Israel is. **Romans 2:29** "But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter." **Translation:** Inward "Jewishness" is what counts. **Romans 4:11-12** says that Abraham was the "father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well" and that he was "the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith..." **Translation:** He was the true father of all who would believe. He was the father of the Israel of God. **Romans 9:6-8** says "...not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring." **Translation:** The heirs of the promise are true Israel, not those who are merely Israel according to the flesh.²³ **Philippians 3:3** says "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh." **Translation:** True circumcision (an identifying mark for the Israelite) is worshiping by the Holy Spirit and glorying in Jesus Christ. No confidence can be put in one's own resources or genetics.

A separate class of Christians?

If the "Israel of God" in **Galatians 6:16** means Jewish Christians like the dispensationalist say, then there is a separate class of Christians. But this is done

²³ 1 Cor. 10:18 Literal Hebrew is "according to the flesh"

away with in every other part of the N.T. In previous weeks we already discussed **Romans 1:16** which says “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first** and also to the Greek.” This is dealing with order not equality. Just like when it comes to man and woman. Man is the head of wife, but she is his equal. God has established an order with the Jews. The gospel went to them first.²⁴ Likewise this order includes punishment as well. In **Romans 2:9** He promises to first punish the Jew and then the Gentile. These verses speak to order, not equality, these verses illustrate two separate peoples of God.²⁵

Israel was a type of the Church

Israel in the O.T. was a type or a shadow of the body of Christ. Israel was God’s set apart people. In the N.T., God reveals His eternal plan to include the Gentiles into God’s set apart people, and then uniting them to make one body: the Church. Turn to **Ephesians 2:11-16** says “Therefore remember that **at one time** you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—**remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise**, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, **who has made us both one** and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, **that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God **in one body** through the cross, thereby killing the

²⁴ cf. Acts 3:26

²⁵ What about **Romans 11:26** which has 3 possible interpretations. **Romans 11:25-26** says “...I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved...” The most popular today is that of a salvation of an end time generation for Israel. If that’s the case. Praise God. God always saves who he wants to save. The will be for his glory. But this interpretation doesn’t exclude what **Galatians 6:16** says. It just says that God will save whom he will. See ESV study note. Calvin goes with the first, which is my position. http://www.biblestudyguide.org/comment/calvin/comm_vol38/htm/xv.vi.htm

hostility. [v.19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,**"

That's the work of the Gospel. That's the work of Christ who was slain for His people, His one people before the foundation of the world.

What are some of the consequences of Dispensationalism?

1. We are essentially cut off from the OT, it doesn't concern us
2. Classic dispensationalism changes anthropology and the doctrine of salvation
3. It shifts the focus off the Messiah
4. It puts the emphasis on physical Israel rather than the whole Church of God
5. ...

Appendix: The Distinction of Emphasis

In this distinction, because of time restraints, I'm *only* going to be speaking about the dispensationalist's **emphasis**. The **emphasis** that dispensationalists put on the rapture of the church and the literal 1,000 year kingdom preceding the new heavens and the new earth. 1) Regarding the rapture of the church. Remember the **BIG IDEA**: *the emphasis in the gospel we preach is the gospel we preach*. In other words whatever we obsess about in our theology is the gospel that we communicate to people. There are certain things that some dispensationalists see as precursors to the rapture. Dispensationalist Randall Price says that there "*...many are excited about the very real potential for the rebuilding of Israel's Temple in Jerusalem.*"²⁶ 'Exited Christians' give money to see this temple rebuilt, in order to 'speed up' the rapture. However the activities that would take place in this temple would dishonor Jesus Christ. Judaism that does not embrace Jesus Christ is a false and antichrist religion. And yet rapture-fever as opposed to love for Christ has 'Christians' sending money for this sacrilegious temple. Others wrap their hopes up in the regathering of Israel as a nation, **and yet their interpretation** of Zechariah 13:8 has 2/3 of the nation of Israel perishing. Fever

²⁶ <http://againstdispensationalism.com/95-theses/> #78

over the rapture has turned into just that. Instead of focusing on the glory of God, and the real prize of the Gospel, being Christ, the emphasis has turned into escapism.²⁷ In the parable Jesus gave in Luke 19:13, He says that we are too *'Engage in business until I come.'* That is, we are to engage in the culture, press the Kingdom of God into every area of our life. We are to do all for God's great glory, whether suffer for it or not. The emphasis that many has put on rapture theology has people hiding out in their basements, escaping culture until they can escape this world. This emphasis is that of a man-centered religion, not a God-centered religion. 2) Regarding the literal 1,000 year Kingdom preceding the new heavens and the new earth. Dispensationalists see Rev. 20:4-6 as the fulfillment of this. For the sake of discussion, let's say ok. But what about the 2 1/2 chapters that follow this. The new heavens and the new earth, where God himself will be among us and we will be his people, and there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain? What about eternity which is what everything is violently driving towards? Dispensationalism has no dispensation of when all things are made right in eternity. Robertson says here *"Rather than having history climax in eternity, [Dispensationalist' Charles] Ryrie indicates that God's entire program culminates not in eternity but in the millennial kingdom. This millennial culmination "is the climax of history and the great goal of God's program for the ages."*²⁸ The climax of history? The great goal of God's program for the ages? That emphasis is anti-biblical. Even if pre-millennialism is true, those weighty statements and viewpoint is wrong. Can you imagine being in the new heavens and the earth, and looking back at that 1,000 year kingdom and saying *"Man, I wish we were back there again?"* That's insane. *"Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God,"* 1 Peter 3:18 The climax of this universe for us is the eternal state where we will experience ever increasing joy and pleasure for all eternity. And God is doing this all for his own name sake, and for his own glory. Isaiah 48:11 says *"For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not*

²⁷ See Matt Marino's sermon on Mark 13:1-13 <http://www.thewellboise.com/sermon/the-end-of-the-age/>

²⁸ O. Palmer Robertson pg. 225 *The Christ of the Covenants* Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1980

give to another.” That is the emphasis of Scripture, if any ‘system’ doesn’t line up with that, it’s wrong.