



Truth Matters... The truth will make you free (Jn 8:32)

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Abstract

This pamphlet examines the veracity of Biblical teaching based on a woodenly literal interpretation and spoof-texting. Spoof-texting is a teaching method that employs a word-search-approach to present a great number of scriptures without time for thought. It is concluded that this approach to Biblical interpretation, including spoof-texting, leads directly to dispensationalism, a system of theological interpretation in wide spread use today.

Pastor John MacArthur asks for Biblical proof (GC 70-16 tape) that Old Testament Israel is the church. This booklet seeks to provide this proof and attempts to show that:

- (1) the Bible teaches a continuity between spiritual (individual believing) Israel and the church,
- (2) the mystery in the New Testament is not that there is a church, but rather that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of God's promise in Christ,
- (3) believing Gentiles historically joined Israel in the Old Testament,
- (4) the "new man" in the New Testament (Ephesians 2:14-22) is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles,
- (5) those who believe in Christ (that Christ is the Messiah, died for our sins, and was resurrected to eternal life) are children of Abraham and all believers are part of the "olive tree" nourished by Christ,
- (6) the Old Testament prediction of the New Covenant "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "**I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**" (Jer 31:33) is synonymous with the New Covenant announced by Christ at His last supper, and
- (7) salvation in Christ is the same in both the Old and New Testaments because no one comes to the Father except through Christ.

Introduction

This pamphlet compares the assumptions of Dispensationalism, a woodenly literal system, with Reformed Theology. Scriptural references are cited. Of course Reformed Theology and/or Dispensationalism may both be wrong. Dispensationalism rejects the continuation of the Old Testament believers into the New Testament church and instead assumes that Israel “temporarily” forfeited the privilege of being “the people of God”.

We are instructed by scripture to oppose incorrect teaching (Gal 2:11-14), and to search the scripture daily to test its true interpretation (Acts 17:11). We need to be in the Word daily to discern the truth with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Teachers have a special burden to teach the truth (Ja 3:1). All believers are to submit to human institutions (1 Pt 2:13) including church organizations governed by constitutions, and government institutions. Teachers who do not believe in a historic confession of faith teach that the Bible is the truth and generally grasp literal hermeneutics as a means to understand the scriptural truth, verse-by-verse. While literal hermeneutics is appropriate, literalism or literalistic hermeneutics will lead one to some extremely fanciful interpretations. Consequently, there are many versions of the “truth” as discussed below.

Prominent teacher John F. MacArthur, Jr., president of The Master’s Seminary, states “That the Bible taught a unique place for Israel and that the Church could not fulfill God’s promises to Israel, therefore, there is still a future and a kingdom involving the salvation and the restoration and the reign of the nation Israel (historical Jews)”. MacArthur further states that this literal system became more and more compounded in time as distinctions arose between: a) Israel and the church, b) the new covenant for the Church and the new covenant for Israel, c) the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, d) the teaching of Jesus between what he said for the church and the millennial age, e) some books in the New Testament are for Jews and some for the church, etc. MacArthur doesn’t believe in distinctions c) – e). He asks for Biblical proof that the Israel is the church. (Source: Grace Church 7016 tape, reported by Middletown Bible church.org.)

Several assumptions of the different system are presented and discussed. These assumptions come about from a literalistic interpretation of the scriptures and not from an a-priori theological overview.

These assumptions are:

- Assumption 1. There is a strong dichotomy between spiritual Israel and the church.
- Assumption 2. The church age was an absolute mystery in the Old Testament.
- Assumption 3. Because physical Israel, physical gentiles, and the church are kept separate in scripture they cannot be the same.
- Assumption 4. The new covenant of Je 31 is for Israel in a Jewish millennium, not for the New Testament church in the church age.

- Assumption 5. None of God's people who died before Pentecost can be in the church universal.
- Assumption 6. There is a "parenthesis" or significant time gap in the Jewish kingdom program prophesied in the Old Testament.

So what

Dispensationalism leads to a discontinuity in the Old and New Testament rather than a continuation of God's plan for man. The different system confuses the meaning of the New Testament by claiming that some verses and possibly even some books are only for Israel and not for the church. They claim that the Old and New Testaments have to be understood in context of who is speaking to whom. Jews who speak to Jews have nothing to say to Christians. This weakens the fabric of the Bible and divides it. Teachers of dispensationalism, without labeling it as such, may confuse believers about the truth. Literalistic and spoof-texting teachers are likely to teach this different system.

For example, if a text is spoken to Jews and no Gentiles are present, then some teach that this is only for physical Jews. Examples include: going into the world and preaching the gospel to every creature (Mk 16: 15-18), the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) was directed to Jews and does not apply to the Church. This literalistic process, of the Church not being the same as believing Israel (people of God), divides the Bible. In other words, the "People of God" are Old Testament Israel believers and not Christians. But Hebrews and 1st Peter discredit many dispensationalism assumptions. These books are summarized briefly below.

Hebrews Teaching

Some dispensationalists believe that the Jews will once again rebuild their temple and practice animal sacrifices, and restore the Jewish Mosaic legal system.

However, Hebrews teaches that all mankind needed a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice found only in Christ. Many Jews continued temple worship and animal sacrifice in the temple even after Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Hebrews teaches that Christ completed the old Levitical system and the old system is over. Christ, who is the perfect high priest, enables many better provisions of the New Covenant. The better includes: hope, testament, promise, sacrifice, substance, kingdom, and resurrection. New Covenant believers dwell in a completely new and heavenly kingdom, and have direct access to God through the covering of Christ's blood. He provided his perfect sacrifice once for all. Everything is new and better than the old covenant. (Source: The MacArthur study Bible.)

To assert that God would look with favor upon a reinstatement of the Old Covenant sacrificial system, even if only as a memorial, is to degrade the once-for-all-time sacrifice of Christ. The very reason God brought judgment upon Israel in A.D. 70 is because they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfillment of that system of sacrifices that pointed to Christ. The purpose of the entire Epistle to the Hebrews is to warn them against going back to Old Covenant Judaism.

1st Peter Teaching

Dispensationalists believe that Christians temporarily replaced Israel for a time as the people of God, until Israel believes in Christ.

However, 1st Peter teaches that Christians are the “elect” according to the foreknowledge of God... (1P 1:2). Christians are a holy priesthood, a chosen generation, a holy nation, and can offer up spiritual sacrifices through Christ (1P 2:5-9). Christians once were not a people, but now are the people of God (1P 2:10). (Source: The MacArthur study Bible.)

The Bible teaches that Christians are: a chosen race, a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:9,10, compare Ex 19:6), a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people (being Gentiles), but now you are The People of God (Jews and Gentiles, see Rom 9:23-26); you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (Hos 1:6-10, 2:23, Rom 9:23-26), (Ps 145:9, Lam 3:22).

Theologies and the different system

There are three main theologies in the history of the church. The first is called Augustinian, Calvinistic, or Reformed; the main branches are Presbyterian, Reformed and Anglican. The second is called semiPelagian, Arminian, or evangelical with main branches being Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran and Methodist. The third is called Pelagian, Socinian, or liberal with the main branch being Unitarian.

The different system described below is not a stand-alone theology but exists within denominations including Baptist, Independent, Plymouth Brethren, etc. and is closest to Arminian in generally rejecting the doctrine of limited atonement. Besides theologies, there are many beliefs and practices that cause division among Christians. These are not primary to this pamphlet.

Reformed theology teaches that there is unity and continuity in God’s program, the people of God in all ages are in union with Christ and are united in the universal church also known as the Bride and Body of Christ. This theology teaches that the New Testament church is a continuation of the Old Testament program and is rooted in the Old Testament covenants, essentially that the believing gentiles are grafted into true Israel. Writers and proponents of reformed theology include: S. Hodge, R. Dabney, B. B. Warfield, O. S. Allis, J.H. Gerstner, R. C. Sproul, and R. L. Reymond.

A different literalistic system, driven by a woodenly literalistic interpretation of the scriptures, teaches differently that: (1) the church is not Israel, (2) only those saved between Pentecost (Ac 2) and the end time rapture are in the universal church, (3) the New Testament church is a “parenthesis” in the Old Testament program, (4) a future Jewish millennium will reappear in a Davidic national kingdom with Old Testament ceremonial laws and animal sacrifices, and (5) no Old Testament prophesy can refer directly to the New Testament church.

Writers and proponents of this literal system include: J. N. Darby who invented it, C. I. Scofield widely publicized it, C. C. Ryrie, D. Pentecost, J. F. Walvoord, L. S. Chafer who systemized it, M. F. Unger, E.W. Bullinger, J. O’Hair, C. Larkin, H. Lindsey, A. G. Fruchtenbaum, Z. C. Hodges, J. Witmer, R. L. Mayhue (previous dean of The Master’s Seminary), etc. Proponents Darby and Scofield were trained as lawyers. This system is taught in Dallas Theological Seminary, Grace Theological Seminary, Capital Bible Seminary, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, The Master’s Seminary, Talbot School of Theology, etc.

This literalistic system, known as dispensationalism, is incompatible with reformed theology. Gerstner (2009) thinks this system penetrates 80 to 90% of “Bible-believing” Christians.

Literalistic scriptural interpretation or hermeneutics leads directly to this different system. In some cases this system is taught and not identified as such, and it is left up to the congregation to discern systems taught without label. A literalistic scripture interpretation, that may include spoof-texting, may be an incomplete method of teaching.

In spoof-texting (see J.H. Gerstner) massive amounts of scriptures are presented regarding a similar Greek/Hebrew word. With different context and times, little consideration may be given to overall Bible meaning. Essentially spoof-texting is man’s word study rather than Biblical teaching.

Man’s literalistic interpretation is incomplete because: (1) Christ taught that scriptures are sometimes veiled to hide the truth from nonbelievers (2 Co 4:3), (2) comprehensive theological backgrounds and God’s help are needed to understand/teach the scriptures (1 Co 1:20-21), and (3) the literalistic system may prevent inductive study and seeing the unity in the Scriptures.

Obvious difficulties in a literalistic interpretation of scripture include these examples: a) Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (Ez 37: 1-14), b) “this is my body” (Lu 22:19), and c) “I am the vine” (Jn 15:1).

Assumptions from the literal interpretation system

Scofield (1843 - 1921) and Darby (1800 - 1882) are chief proponents of dispensationalism. Darby is credited with being the founder of dispensationalism, and credited with the pretribulation rapture theory. Scofield is remembered for his 1909 dispensational premillennialism and his reference Bible (1909, 1917).

Assumption 1 of dispensationalism. There is a strong dichotomy between spiritual Israel and the church.

God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly). The church is an interruption in God's program for Israel and a temporary cessation in the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. This idea was initially developed by J.N. Darby (1800-1882).

However, the Bible teaches continuity between spiritual Israel and the church. Ep 2 teaches that Gentile believers became members of the church of Messianic fullness, the new man (Ep 2:15). The church is built on the foundation of the New Testament apostles and prophets (Ep 2:20). Before Christ, Gentiles were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Now believers in Christ are fellow citizens of the household of God (Ep 2:12-21). Unbelieving Jews were broken off the olive tree of Israel (Ro 11:17), and believing Gentiles were grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Ro 11:17). The church is the new Israel (Gal 6:16). Old Testament Israel was called God's house. "Moses was faithful in all His house" and the New Testament church is called God's house. "Christ [was faithful] over His own house" (He 3:5-6). God's house encompasses both Old and New Testament believers (Nu 12:7), (Ex 16:31, 2 Sm 1:12, Jer. 31:31, Mt 10:6, 15:24. Acts 2:36). Thus the church is a progression between believing Israel and believing Gentiles.

God's kingdom shall be taken from Israel and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. (Mt 21:43). The Good Shepherd dispossess the bad shepherd leaders of Israel (Ez 34:7-31), Christ gave the kingdom to his disciples, the poor and lost of the flock (Luke 6:20, Mt 15:24), the true sheep in Israel. Nonbelieving Jews were not true sheep (Jn 10:26). Christ had Gentile sheep outside his one flock (Israel). The new covenant people of God are one flock with no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Jn 10:16). Both old covenant Israel and new covenant church are God's flock because Christ is the good shepherd and the door (Jn 10: 68). God's true sheep are the saints of all ages. This teaching of one flock corresponds to the teaching of one olive tree (Ro 11: 16-24). The Israel of God is the whole church (Ga 6:16). In Galatians 3:29 Paul teaches that the elect are one in Christ Jesus, are Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise. There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

The church is called many of the same names given to Israel including:

- A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession (1 Pt 2:9-10, Rev 1:6, Ti 2:14, cf. Ex 19:6, De 7:6)
- Jews who are Jews inwardly (Ro 2:28-29)

- The circumcision (“*the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh*” (Phil 3:3), cf Co 2:11, Ro 2:29)
- Citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem (Ga 4:26)
- Children of the promise like Isaac (Ga 4:28)
- Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise of Abraham (Ga 3:29)
- Bride of Christ (Rev 21:2).

Assumption 2 of dispensationalism. Since the church age was an absolute mystery in the Old Testament then no Old Testament prophecy could refer to the church age and all Old Testament prophesy about a coming age had to refer to the Jewish millennium, not the church age.

However the Bible teaches the mystery of the church is not that there is a church, but rather that believing Gentiles are part of the believing church, fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ (Ep 3:3-6), e.g. “*to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,*”(Ep 3:6). The church in Christ’s time was: old in that God had called out people in the Old Testament with ceremonial shadows and a nationally confined kingdom, and new in that God’s people were in maturity of spiritual realities and a universalized kingdom; “my kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18:36).

The word “church” in the New Testament can refer to: broadly to the elect of all ages (Ep 5:25), narrowly to the assembly or congregation of Old Testament Israel (Ac 7:38), to the covenant community in the New Testament manifestation of the two into one new man (Ep 2:15-19), or to a local New Testament congregation. Ep 2:12-19 stresses the continuity of the New Testament church with Old Testament Israel and Old Testament covenants. Some characteristics of the church are a mystery (Ep 3:4-6) and some were predicted in the Old Testament (Ro 15: 7-13; 2 Sam 22:50, Ps 18:49, Deut 32:43, Is 11: 1,10). Prophetic passages with New Testament fulfillment are: (Hos 1:10 cf Ro 9:22-26), (Hos 2:23 cf 1 Pet 2:9-10), (Amos 9:11,12 cf Acts 15:16). There are examples in the Old testament that refer to Israel, that, in the New Testament relate to the church; see (Ex 19:5-6 cf 1 Pet 2:9), (Je 24:7 cf 2 Cor 6:16), (Jer 31:31-34 cf Lk 22:20), (Lev 19:2 cf 1 Pet 1:15). Thus the mystery is relative not absolute.

Assumption 3 of dispensationalism. Because physical Israel, physical gentiles, and the church are kept separate in scripture they cannot be the same and are subsets of the saved.

However the Bible teaches Israel, physical descendants of Abraham, was the name of the Old Testament covenant community that observed their ceremonial laws. Gentiles joined Israel through proselyte laws, e.g. Tamar the Canaanite (Gen 38:6-30), Rahab the harlot from Jericho (Josh 6:25), Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:13). The necessity of being true inward Jews was stressed by John the Baptist (Mt 3:9), Jesus (Jn 8:37,39), and Paul (Ro 2:28-29; 9:6). To be a true son of Abraham the physical Jew must believe in Christ (Lk 19:9). Believing branches from the wild olive tree of Gentiles were grafted into God’s covenant people (Ro 11:17) with the same source of life as true Israel (Ro 11:18). The “new man” of the New Covenant church consists of both believing Jew and Gentile, and is heir of the Old Testament covenant promises (Ep 2:11-

22). In the New Testament one can be a physical and not a spiritual Jew (Rev 2:9; 3:9), or one can be a physical Gentile and be a spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29). Spiritual Israel of God is the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). Christianity is the seed according to promise (Gal 4:21-31) and true Israel of God (Ro 11:1-7). Those who believe in Christ are children of Abraham (Gal 3:7, Gal 3:29). They are of the same olive tree as the Gentiles of the church grafted into the tree that was Israel (Ro 11:17-21). Christ is the true vine (Jn 15:1). Peter uses the same language (chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people for God's possession) for both the New Testament church as was used for the people of God in the Old Testament (1Pet 2:9, cf Ex 19:6, Deu 7:6; 10:15, Isa 61:6).

Assumption 4 of dispensationalism. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is for Israel in a Jewish millennium, not for the New Testament church in the church age. There are three views in the literal system: 1) that there may be two new covenants one for Israel and one for the church, 2) that the Christian is only related to the blood of the new covenant, or 3) that the new covenant is primarily for Israel in a Jewish millennium.

However, the Bible teaches that Christ is “the mediator of a better covenant” (He 8:6-13), and animal sacrifices are discontinued (He 10:14-18). Several Old Testament concepts are related to Christians (He 12: 22-24). Paul and Timothy are “ministers of the New Testament”, Christ announced the new covenant (Lu 22:20). Thus the new Covenant announced by Christ (the blood is His sacrifice on Calvary) is for his church in the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Christ told Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, that he should know of being born again (Jn 3: 3). The new Covenant, circumcision of heart, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are taught in the Old Testament (Deu 10:16; 30:6; Jer 31:31-33; Eze 11:19-21; 36: 25-27; Ps 32:1-6). Thus, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Ac 2: 1-3) of believing Jews who initially comprised the church - the church on that day, was prophesied in the Old Testament.

Assumption 5 of dispensationalism. None of God's people who died before Pentecost can be in the church universal. Baptism of the Holy Spirit puts one into the Body of Christ, the church universal (1 Cor 12: 12-13). Because there was no baptism of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost (Mt 3:11; Acts 1:5, 2:1-3, 11:15-16) none of God's people who died before Pentecost can be in the church universal. Mary is in the church but Joseph is not because Mary died after Pentecost and Joseph died before Pentecost. Thus there is an absolute difference between Old Testament Israel and the church.

However, the Bible teaches that no one's Old or New Testament salvation is complete in life, and occurs at glorification at the return of Christ (Rev 20: 11-13). The Old Testament saints will be made perfect together with the New Testament saints (Heb 11:39-40). Before Pentecost the saving work of the Spirit was based on the sacrificial work of the Christ who was to come, and after was based on the sacrificial work of Christ who had come. (Jn 7:39). Union with Christ in the Old Testament must have been possible or else there would be no salvation. Christ said no one comes to the Father except through me (Jn: 14:6). Salvation in Christ for post-cross believers is to participate in the Old Testament covenants of promise (Eph 2:12-13). Old Testament saints will be included in the Bride of Christ, the church universal (Rev 21:2).

The Holy Spirit's present ministry is superior to His old covenant ministry because the promise of Christ to come has been fulfilled (Jn 7:39).

Assumption 6 of dispensationalism. There is a "parenthesis" in the Jewish kingdom program prophesied in the Old Testament.

The New Testament church started at Pentecost is a new entity and a mystery in the Old Testament. All the Jewish kingdom prophesies refer to a Jewish millennial kingdom because of the Jewish rejection of Jesus. Only those saved between Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-3) and the end time rapture are in the universal church.

However, the Bible teaches the church is spiritual Israel and is the fulfillment of many prophecies made concerning Israel in the Old Testament, is a continuation of the Old Testament program and is rooted in Old Testament covenants. At Pentecost, Peter (Ac 2:16-17) quotes Joel 2:28. The Pentecost outpouring is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 10:44-48, 11:15-18), where the divine work puts the believer into the Body of Christ, the church universal (1 Cor 12:13).

The mystery in Ro 11:25 is not that the church is born but is rather that Gentiles are included in the church (Ro 11:28-32). Christ finished the Old Testament system of: animal sacrifices, temple worship, death through the law, and the priestly system, when he died on the cross and said, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). Christ is our substitute sacrifice for sinner believers who are born again and die to self.

Old Testament prophecy spoke about including Gentiles in the covenantal program. James (Ac 15:15-17) paraphrased Old Testament prophesies that God would rebuild and restore the Davidic kingdom so that "all the Gentiles upon whom (God's) name is called "might seek after the Lord" (Amos 9:11-12). This can't be about a millennium where the ceremonial law separates Jew from Gentile's who do not submit to the Jewish ceremonial laws because the prophecy speaks about the inclusion of Gentiles as Gentiles in the covenantal program. Thus, the prophecy of Israel and the Jewish Davidic covenant is fulfilled in and through the Christian church.

A direct comparison, of 30 issues, of dispensational and reformed teaching is presented in the Table, adapted from FPC Jackson. As presented in the Table, one dividing issue between dispensationalism and reformed theology is that the former does not accept the "Analogy of Faith" - the general harmony of fundamental doctrine that pervades the entire scripture. Beliefs concerning Calvinism is also compared; Calvinism is sometimes a lens or filter to examine Christianity.

Other dividing issues including ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology. Perhaps the single most dividing issue is over eschatology or end times from Daniel and Revelation. The dispensational interpretation leads one to the Israel/church separation, the secret rapture of believers, and the great tribulation. In stark contrast, Reformed theory teaches that employing the analogy of faith and Old Testament symbology leads one to a very different interpretation of the eschatology.

Conclusions

This pamphlet examines the veracity of Bible teaching based on a woodenly literal interpretation and spoof-texting. This man-centric process leads directly to the dispensational system discussed herein.

This pamphlet teaches that: 1) there is a continuation between spiritual Israel and the believing church, 2) the mystery in the New Testament is not that there is a church, but rather that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ, 3) believing Gentiles joined Israel in the Old Testament, 4) the “new man” in the New Testament is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles, 5) those who believe are children of Abraham and all believers are part of the “olive tree” nourished by Christ, 6) the Old Testament prediction of the New Covenant in Je 31:33 is synonymous with and announced by Christ at His last supper (Lu 22:20), and 7) salvation in Christ is the same in both the Old and New Testaments because no one comes to the Father except through Christ.

We affirm the following 6 principles consistent with the Second London Baptist and Westminster Confessions of Faith of 1689 and 1647, respectively.

- 1) The one family of God, God’s People, is the Church and, is comprised of Old and New Testament Jewish and Gentile elected believers in Christ. Gal. 3:29; Heb. 12:23
- 2) God made and fulfilled His Covenant of Grace with Christ on the cross and His People including Adam. Isaiah 42:1; 1 Peter 1:19-20
- 3) The Old Testament Priest-animal-sacrificial-system was fulfilled by Christ and forever abolished at the cross. Heb. 10:1-2; Col. 2:17
- 4) Spiritual regeneration is solely through God’s grace and Christ’s sin-bearing work on the cross. Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 2:8-10
- 5) Christ fulfilled the Covenant to Abraham to his spiritually elect children. Romans 4:13ff; Gal. 3:29
- 6) The Church is the institution ordained by God as that institution that moves forward the Kingdom of God until Christ comes back to the earth. Matthew 28:18-20

Dispensational “Bible-believing Christians”, are estimated to be 80 to 90% of Protestant church members, and generally do not affirm or teach the above 6) Biblical truths. Their beginning dates back to the mid-1800s. The above 6) truths are then a simple means to identify dispensational/literalistic churches. It is often difficult to identify these churches, since many do not openly describe themselves as such. In our opinion, these teachers dramatically reduce true Bible knowledge and understanding, and weaken the true Body of Christ (the Church). Another general characteristic of dispensationalism is eliminating creeds and confessions of faith from worship, and expecting Christ’s second coming to be coincident with the heretical re-institution of the Old Testament animal sacrificial system of the Jews.

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Table. Comparison of Dispensationalism system and Reformed theology. This listing is general and not specific to all dispensationalists who may have different views than listed. Adapted with a few changes from source: FPC Jackson.

Dispensationalism	Reformed/Covenant Theology
<p>1. May be Arminian or modified Calvinist. Almost never 5-point Calvinist. “Totally depraved” man is somehow able to believe (faith precedes regeneration). View God as foreseeing that a sinner will repent (1 Pt 1:2). Since man is <i>not totally depraved</i> and is <i>conditionally</i> elected, Christ died to save all men (<i>unlimited</i> atonement).</p> <p>2. Stresses a woodenly “literal” interpretation of the Bible.</p> <p>3. Usually does not accept the idea of the “Analogy of Faith” – that general harmony of fundamental doctrine pervades the entire scriptures.</p> <p>4. “Israel” always means only the literal, physical descendants of Jacob.</p> <p>5. “Israel of God” in Gal. 6:16 means physical Israel alone.</p> <p>6. God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly).</p> <p>7. The Church was born at Pentecost.</p> <p>8. The Church was not prophesied as such in the O.T. but was a hidden mystery until the N.T.</p> <p>9. All O.T. prophecies for Israel, are for literal Israel, not the Church.</p> <p>10. God’s main purpose in history is literal Israel.</p> <p>11. The Church is a parenthesis in God’s program for the ages.</p> <p>12. The main heir to Abraham’s covenant was Isaac and literal Israel.</p> <p>13. There was no eternal Covenant of Redemption within the Trinity.</p> <p>14. There was no Covenant of Works with Adam in the Garden of Eden.</p> <p>15. There was no Covenant of Grace concerning Adam.</p> <p>16. Israel was rash to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.</p>	<p>1. Always Calvinist. Usually 5 point (TULIP; (1) <i>Totally depraved</i>, (2) Unconditional election, (3) <i>Limited</i> Atonement, (4) Irresistible grace, (5) Perseverance of the Saints). “<i>Unconditional</i> election” is unconditional in that God elects the sinner without their “foreseen faith”.</p> <p>2. Accepts figurative language as a valid aspect of literal interpretation of the Bible.</p> <p>3. Always accepts the idea of the “Analogy of Faith.”</p> <p>4. 'Israel' may mean either literal, physical descendants of Jacob or the figurative, spiritual Israel, depending on context.</p> <p>5. 'Israel of God' in Gal. 6:16 means spiritual Israel, parallel to Gal. 3:29, Rom. 2:28-29, 9:6- 8, Phil. 3:3.</p> <p>6. God has always had only 1 people, the Church gradually developed.</p> <p>7. The Church began in the O.T. (Acts 7:38) and reached fulfillment in the N.T.</p> <p>8. There are many O.T. prophecies of the N.T. Church.</p> <p>9. Some O.T. prophecies are for literal Israel, others are for spiritual Israel.</p> <p>10. God’s main purpose in history is Christ and secondarily the Church.</p> <p>11. The Church is the culmination of God’s saying purpose for the ages.</p> <p>12. The main heir to Abraham’s covenant was Christ and spiritual Israel.</p> <p>13. The eternal Covenant of Redemption was within the Trinity to effect election.</p> <p>14. God made a conditional Covenant of Works with Adam as representative for all his posterity.</p> <p>15. God made a Covenant of Grace with Christ and His people, including Adam.</p> <p>16. Israel was right to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.</p>

<p>17. The 'New Covenant' of Jer. 31:31- 34 is only for literal Israel and is not the New Covenant of Lk. 22:20</p> <p>18. God's program in history is mainly through separate dispensations.</p> <p>19. Some Dispensationalists have said that O.T. sinners were saved by works.</p> <p>20. Most Dispensationalists teach that men in the O.T. were saved by faith in a revelation peculiar to their Dispensation, but this did not include faith in the Messiah as their sin-bearer. 21. The O.T. sacrifices were not recognized as the Gospel or types of the Messiah as sinbearer, but only seen as such in retrospect.</p> <p>22. The Holy Spirit indwells only believers in the Dispensation of Grace, not O.T. and not after the Rapture.</p> <p>23. Jesus made an offer of the literal Kingdom to Israel; since Israel rejected it, it is postponed.</p> <p>24. O.T. believers were not 'in Christ,' nor part of the Body or Bride of Christ. 25. The Law has been abolished.</p> <p>26. O.T. laws are no longer in effect unless repeated in the N.T.</p> <p>27. The Millennium is the Kingdom of God. Dispensationalists are always Pre-Millennial and usually Pre-Tribulation.</p> <p>28. The O.T. animal sacrifices will be restored in the Millennium.</p> <p>29. The Millennium will fulfill the Covenant to Abraham. Israel has a future.</p> <p>30. David will sit on the Millennial throne in Jerusalem.</p>	<p>17. The 'New Covenant' of Jer. 31 is the same as in Lk. 22:20; both are for spiritual Israel according to Heb. 8 (write them on their hearts-born again).</p> <p>18. God's program in history is mainly through related covenants.</p> <p>19. No man has ever been saved by works, but only by grace.</p> <p>20. All men who have ever been saved have been saved by faith in Christ as their sinbearer, which has been progressively revealed in every age.</p> <p>21. O.T. believers believed in the Gospel of Messiah as sin-bearer mainly by the sacrifices as types and prophecies.</p> <p>22. The Holy Spirit has indwelt believers in all ages, especially in the present N.T. era, and will not be withdrawn.</p> <p>23. Jesus made only an offer of the spiritual Kingdom, which was rejected by literal Israel but has been accepted by spiritual Israel.</p> <p>24. Believers in all ages are all 'in Christ' and part of the Body and Bride of Christ.</p> <p>25. The Law has 3 uses: to restrain sin in society, to lead to Christ, and to instruct Christians in godliness. The ceremonial laws have been abolished; the civil laws have been abolished except for their general equity; the moral laws continue.</p> <p>26. O.T. laws are still in effect unless abrogated in the N.T.</p> <p>27. The Church is the Kingdom of God. Covenanters are usually Amillennial, sometimes Pre-Millennial or Post-Millennial, rarely Pre-Tribulational.</p> <p>28. The O.T. sacrifices were fulfilled and forever abolished in Christ.</p> <p>29. Christ fulfilled the Covenant to Abraham. Some Covenanters believe in a future for literal Israel, most don't.</p> <p>30. Christ alone sits on the throne. Saints rule under Him.</p>
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