

REVISITING THE DOCTRINE OF DISPENSATIONALISM

Part I: A Biblical Apologetic For Historic Dispensationalism

I. Introduction

- A. The Protestant Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church hold to "amillennialism," claiming (1) there is **no literal** post-Armageddon thousand-year reign of Christ as Revelation 19:17-20:6 **literally** teaches, but that His Kingdom is the era between His first and second advents when the Church produces a golden era climaxed by Christ's return. (John F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation, 1976, p. 11-15) Amillennialism also asserts (2) the Church replaces Israel in God's plan so that Israel will **NOT** have a **literal** worldwide Messianic Kingdom, a view that often leads to negative attitudes and actions toward the nation Israel.
- B. Opposite this view, our Church holds to "historic dispensationalism," teaching the Church does **NOT replace** Israel in God's plan, but that there is a **literal** future, worldwide, thousand-year reign of Christ over Israel. We thus believe that the Church is **NOT** to try to set up a worldwide Christian golden era by ministering in **social renewal**, but to look for the pretribulation rapture of the Church and thus disciple people for Christ's return.
- C. We thus need to discern what **Scripture** teaches on the issue of dispensationalism to hold to the correct view:

II. A Biblical Apologetic For Historic Dispensationalism

- A. The KJV uses the word "dispensation" four times: 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2 and Col. 1:25 (Strong's Ex. Con. of the Bib., p. 168). Ephesians 1:10 mentions the future dispensation of "the fulness of times" where the other passages refer to the Church. Since the Church began in Acts 2, there must be a dispensation before it, so Scripture **logically** presents **at least three** dispensations (C. C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 1970, p. 50).
- B. The degrees to which theologians have held to a **consistently literal** interpretation of Scripture has determined whether they have held to dispensationalism or to other theological positions (as follows):
 1. Augustine (4th - 5th cent. A. D.) used the literal, historical and grammatical method to interpret **non-prophetic** Scriptures, but he used the **nonliteral, figurative** method for **prophecy**, Ibid., Walvoord, p. 12.
 2. The Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Reformers followed Augustine's method of interpretation, and this led to viewing the Church as replacing Israel in God's plan, the amillennial view, Ibid., p. 12-13.
 3. However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, conservative Christians in the prophetic conference movement (Ibid., p. 13), in adopting the **consistently literal** approach to **ALL** of Scripture, **including prophecy**, inevitably arrived at the "historic dispensational" view of the Bible, Ibid., Ryrie, p. 86-109.
- C. Notably, **Jesus** exemplified that we interpret **all** Scripture **literally**, what leads to historic dispensationalism:
 1. Christ interpreted **all** of Scripture by use of the literal, grammatical, historical method (as follows):
 - a. In Matthew 5:18 KJV, He said **not** "one jot or one tittle" will pass from the Law until all is fulfilled.
 - b. A "jot" is "the smallest Hebrew letter, *yodh*," and a "tittle" a "small extension or protrusion" on a Hebrew letter that distinguishes it from a similar one, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Matthew 5:18.
 - c. Now, the identity of such a letter logically affects the **literal meaning** of the word of which it is a part.
 - d. Since Jesus in Matthew 5:18 focused on the literal meaning of Scripture's words, **including Scripture's prophecies that yet remained to be fulfilled**, He practiced the **consistently literal** method of interpreting **ALL** of Scripture, **including Bible prophecy**, which method leads to **historic dispensationalism!**
 2. In Revelation 3:14-22, Christ's prophetic message for **our** era clearly supports historic dispensationalism: at Rev. 3:14, **Christ** calls **Himself** "the Amen," alluding in part to 2 Cor. 1:20 where the godly say "the Amen" at the teaching of Christ's literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the historic dispensational viewpoint of Scripture. (J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, 1972, p. 59-94; Ibid., Ryrie, p. 86-109)
 3. Significantly, the newly formed belief of "progressive dispensationalism" asserts that the Church **currently partly** fulfills the Davidic Covenant as it presumes Christ Who is enthroned in heaven now partly fulfills the Davidic Covenant there, requiring the Church to get involved in Marxist **social redemption!** This belief is formed by blurring the lines between Israel and the Church and thus not staying strictly literal in handling prophecy. However, in Revelation 3:21, Christ **CONTRASTED** His **earthly Davidic** throne with His **Father's heavenly** throne **where He now rules** (Hebrews 1:3), treating His **earthly Davidic reign** in an **EXCLUSIVELY literal** way **OPPOSITE** what **progressive dispensationalism** does! Christ thus calls us in **our** era to **stay** to the **strictly literal** handling of **all Scripture**, holding to **historic dispensationalism!**

Lesson and Application: Jesus taught the consistently, strictly literal method of interpreting all Scripture and He upheld historic dispensationalism. May we then handle all Scripture this way and hold to historic dispensationalism that leads us to making disciples, not to being involved in worldwide social redemption.