

Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology

Introduction

- This morning, we are addressing the topic of Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology.
 - Since ya'll are bonified Covenant Theologians, we are hardly going to dwell on Covenant Theology, instead spending our time looking at Dispensationalism.
- Dispensationalism and covenant theology are theological views that differ in their interpretation of scripture and their views on the relationship between Israel and the church.
- Definitions:
 - Covenant Theology – Covenant theology is a hermeneutical framework that seeks to understand the Bible according to its covenantal structure.
 - Covenant theology is very much associated with Reformed theology.
 - Dr. R.C. Sproul said that “Reformed theology is covenant theology.”¹
 - Dispensationalism – a hermeneutical framework that seeks to understand the Bible in seven different dispensations of grace.
 - A dispensationalist believes that God has dealt with humanity in different ways at different times
 - Dispensationalists say that God set up one way for us to be saved. Then, at a different time, He changed the method of salvation. Then at another time, He changed it again. And so on.
 - These different periods of time and methods of salvation are known as dispensations.
- History of Dispensationalism –
 - Dispensationalism began with a nineteenth century Anglican Bible teacher John Nelson Darby.
 - In the 1830s and 40s, Darby was the leader of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

¹ <https://learn.ligonier.org/guides/covenant-theology>

- The Plymouth Brethren movement was a low-church response to the High-Church liturgy of Anglicanism and the Church of Ireland.
- In 1867, Darby published his own literal translation of the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek. It was not intended to be read aloud. Rather, it was intended for personal study only.
 - In the intro, he wrote, "the purpose (of this translation) is not to offer to the man of letters a learned work, but rather to provide the simple and unlearned reader with as exact a translation as possible."
 - Darby's Bible had an impact on two areas of theology:
 - Creation - many members of the Plymouth Brethren movement adopted an old-earth creation, as opposed to young-earth creation.
 - Eschatology – Darby introduced the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture, which is the belief that Christ will suddenly remove the Church from Earth to Heaven before the tribulation.
- C.I. Scofield published the Scofield Reference Bible was published in 1909.
 - is a King James Version Bible with author notes alongside the text.
 - The Scofield Reference Bible popularized dispensationalism at the beginning of the 20th century.
 - However, dispensationalism was already a growing movement before Scofield.
 - His Bible simply made it more popular.
 - Scofield was highly regarded in dispensational circles and his influence remains to this day.
 - His work has done more to spread dispensationalism throughout the English-speaking world than anything else.

The Seven Dispensations in Scripture

- This theological viewpoint holds that there are seven dispensations, in which there is six-fold pattern of how God worked with those who lived in that dispensation. God gave requirements for

salvation to man, man fails to meet God's requirements, their failure is judged, and God extends grace and hope for the future.

- The seven dispensations include:

- Innocence:

- Scripture: Genesis 1:28-3:19
- Period: From the creation of man to his temptation and fall
- Stewards: Adam and Eve
- Requirement for Salvation: Obedience to God
 - Replenish the earth with children
 - Subdue the earth
 - Have dominion over the animals
 - Care for the garden, and
 - Abstain from eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.²
- Failure: Disobedience³
- Judgment: Curse and death⁴
- Grace: A new chance and the promise of a Redeemer⁵

- Conscience:

- Scripture: Genesis 3:8–8:22
- Period: Adam and Eve's eviction from the Garden of Eden and the flood
- Stewards: Cain, Seth, and their families
- Requirement for Salvation: To obey God and offer blood sacrifices⁶

² Genesis 2:15-17, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

³ Genesis 3:1-6, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. "

⁴ Genesis 3:7-19

⁵ Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

⁶ Genesis 4:4, "Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering."

- Failure: Wickedness⁷
- Judgment: The worldwide flood⁸
- Grace: Noah and his family are saved⁹
- Human Government:
 - Scripture: Genesis 8:20 to 11:9
 - Period: From the Flood to the confusion of tongues at Babel
 - Stewards: Noah and his descendants
 - Requirement for Salvation: To scatter and multiply¹⁰
 - Failure: Refusing to scatter and the building of the tower of Babel¹¹
 - Judgment: Confusion of languages¹²
 - Grace: Abraham is chosen to start the Jewish race¹³
- Promise:
 - Scripture: Genesis 11:10 to Exodus 19:4
 - Period: From the call of Abraham to Israel at Mt. Sinai
 - Stewards: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - Requirement for Salvation: Dwell in Canaan¹⁴
 - Failure: Dwelt in Egypt¹⁵

⁷ Genesis 6:5-6, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."

⁸ Genesis 6:13, "And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

⁹ Genesis 8:1, "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided."

¹⁰ Genesis 9

¹¹ Genesis 11:1-4, "Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

¹² Genesis 11:5-9, "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth."

¹³ Genesis 12:1-3, "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

¹⁴ Genesis 12::1-7

¹⁵ Genesis 12:10, "Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land." Genesis 46:6, "They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him."

- Judgment: Egyptian bondage¹⁶
- Grace: Moses the deliverer is sent¹⁷
- Additionally, God promised Abraham a homeland for his descendants¹⁸ and a son for him and Sarah.¹⁹ But they grew tired of waiting and produced a son on their own, who they named Ishmael.²⁰ When God's promised son Isaac was born, Ishmael was sent away²¹ causing enmity between the Jews (descendants of Isaac) and Arabs (descendants of Ishmael).
- Law: From Moses to Jesus
 - Scripture: Exodus 19:5 to John 19:30
 - Period: From Mt. Sinai until Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law with His death
 - Stewards: Moses and the children of Israel as a nation at Mt. Sinai
 - Requirement for Salvation: Keep the whole Law²²
 - Failure: The Law was broken²³
 - Judgment: Worldwide dispersion²⁴
 - Grace: The promised Savior is sent²⁵
 - God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and promised the Jews a life of peace and plenty in a Kingdom of their own if they obeyed.²⁶ After repeated periods of disobedience which included rejecting Jesus Christ, God withdrew His offer of the Kingdom and expelled them from their land.²⁷
- Grace:

¹⁶ Exodus 1:8-14

¹⁷ Exodus 3:6-10

¹⁸ Genesis 17:8, "And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

¹⁹ Genesis 17:15-16, "And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah! shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

²⁰ Genesis 16:1-15.

²¹ Genesis 21:8-13.

²² Exodus 19:3-8

²³ 2 Kings 17:7-20

²⁴ Deuteronomy 28:63-66, Luke 21:20-24

²⁵ Isaiah 9:6-7, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

²⁶ Exodus 20.

²⁷ Matthew 21:43, "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits."

- Scripture: John 19:31 to Revelation 3:22
- Period: From the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture—the Church Age
- Stewards: The church
- Requirement for Salvation: To be perfected by sanctification; to love one another; to exhibit ever-increasing godliness²⁸
- Failure: A lack of maturity; worldliness; many churches falling into apostasy²⁹
- Judgment: Apostasy and False Doctrine³⁰
- Grace: Forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus³¹
- No longer requiring righteousness through works, God granted a righteousness by grace through faith in the completed work of Christ to all who accept, whether Jew or Gentile.³²
 - It is important to realize that *Grace didn't replace Law*, it just interrupted it.
- This is all cool until the rapture. Then things get funky.
 - According to Dispensational Theology:
 - The Rapture will occur.
 - Then the Law becomes the only means of salvation for another 7 years.
 - This is called Daniel's 70th Week.³³

²⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^[a] that you abstain from sexual immorality." 2 John 1:5, "And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another."

²⁹ Galatians 5:4, "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^[a] by the law; you have fallen away from grace." 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

³⁰ 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." 2 Timothy 4:3, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions."

³¹ 1 John 1:3-7, "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. ⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." John 14:20, "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."

³² Romans 3:21-24, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

³³ Daniel 9:24-27.

- This seven years fills the time between the Rapture and the Christ's second coming.
- During this time all the nations to which Israel has been scattered will be completely destroyed and Israel will be disciplined in preparation for receiving the Kingdom.³⁴
- The Millennial Kingdom:
 - Scripture: Revelation 20:1-10
 - Period: The 1000-year reign of Christ beginning with the second coming
 - Stewards: The resurrected Old Testament saints, the glorified Church, and survivors of the Tribulation and their descendants
 - Requirement for Salvation: To be obedient, remain undefiled, and worship the Lord Jesus³⁵
 - Failure: After Satan is loosed from the Abyss, sinful man rebels one more time³⁶
 - Judgment: Fire from God; the Final Judgment³⁷
 - Grace: Jesus Christ restores creation and rules righteously in Israel, with all saints assisting³⁸
 - During the 1000-year reign of Christ, Israel will accept the Kingdom offer.³⁹ Satan will be bound.⁴⁰ All unbelievers will be expelled from the planet.⁴¹ God will once again dwell in the midst of His people.⁴² Despite all this, with the exception of

³⁴ Jeremiah 30:4-11.

³⁵ Isaiah 11:3-5, "And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins." Zechariah 14:9, "And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one."

³⁶ Revelation 20:7-9, "And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them."

³⁷ Revelation 20:9-15

³⁸ Isaiah 11:1-5, Matthew 25:31-46, Revelation 20.

³⁹ Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn." Zechariah 14:8-9, "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea^[e] and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter." And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one."

⁴⁰ Revelation 20:2, "And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."

⁴¹ Matthew 25:41-46.

⁴² Ezekiel 43:6-7, "While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, ⁷ and he said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And the

Israel, the world will rebel against God and His people. God will send fire to consume them all.⁴³

Interpreting Scripture

- Dispensationalism interprets the Biblical text “literally,” based on the idea that history is divided into seven ages, which are called dispensations. Each dispensation has a different requirement for the salvation of man.
- Literal interpretation
 - Dispensationalists believe that the Bible is one progressive story that goes through different ages. Covenant theologians believe that the history of the world is more of a progression of a singular covenant, the covenant of grace.
 - Dispensationalists believe that the Bible should be interpreted literally, considering its grammatical, historical, and genre contexts.
 - Dispensationalists are adamant that they read the Scripture literally. And so, if there were literal promises about the land to Israel in the Old Testament, those have to be fulfilled in the millennium or God is a liar.
 - However, while they claim to read Scripture literally, they really don’t.
 - Let’s take Revelation 9:1-6 as an example: “And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. ²He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. ³Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. ⁴They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any

house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places.”

⁴³ Rev 20:7-10, “And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ¹⁰and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. ⁶And in those days, people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.”

- Remember: Dispensationalists claim to take the Bible literally. This is one of their main tenants.
 - Let’s look at just verse 3: “Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.”
 - What are the locusts that have the power of scorpions?
 - In 1973, Hal Lindsey, a prominent dispensationalist, stated that the locusts described in this chapter are, in fact, Apache helicopters, claiming the various details of the locusts corresponded to the different parts of the helicopter.
 - You think I’m being ridiculous. But there are many dispensationalists that believe that to be true, including John Hagee, Jim Bakker, Tim LaHaye, and Jerry Jenkins.
 - I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but they are not taking verse 3 literally.
 - And there are plenty of other verses that they do not take literally.
- What the Dispensationalists believe is different than what they preach. This is problematic, to say the least.

Israel and the church

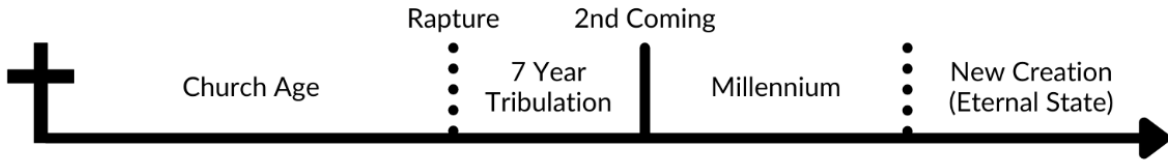
- Dispensationalists read Scripture in a way that divides what applies to Israel and what applies to the church. This is problematic.
 - According to covenant theology, the law and the gospel apply to both Israel and the church today.
- Dispensationalists believe that the church is distinct from Israel and has a spiritual destiny, while Israel has an earthly destiny.
 - Based on Romans 11:25-27, covenant theologians believe that the church is the new Israel.

- Romans 11:25-27, “Lest you be wise in your own sight, 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. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; ²⁷ “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”
- Dispensationalists believe that God has two peoples, Israel and the church, and that each has a different destiny.
 - Covenant theologians believe that God has one people, called Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament.
 - The key concept of dispensationalism is that the church, through grace, is saved in a different way than Old Testament Israel was to be saved.
 - There are two basic dispensations of God's work with His people.
 - The church is saved by grace.
 - Israel is saved by the law.

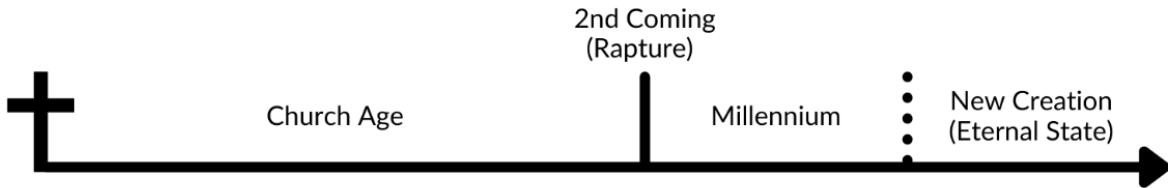
Eschatology – Pre-Millennialism

- The millennium is the period of time described in Revelation when Christ will reign with His saints.
- Pre-Millennialists believe that Christ will return before the millennium.
- There are three main positions on how the world will end: premillennial, amillennial and postmillennial.
 - The three positions differ on when Jesus will return.
 - Premillennialists believe Jesus will return before the millennium.
 - The purpose of the millennium for premillennialists is to allow the Jews to fulfill the law that they never properly fulfilled in the old covenant.
 - Amillennialists don't believe there will be a literal earthly millennium before Jesus returns.
 - Postmillennialists think Jesus will return after the millennium, after the world has been successfully evangelized.

Dispensational Premillennialism



Historic Premillennialism



Postmillennialism



Amillennialism

Realized Millennialism



Distinctions between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism⁴⁴

(Please refer to handouts which compare Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism)

1. Arminianism versus Calvinism:

- Dispensationalists may be an Arminian or four-point Calvinists, but they are almost never five-point Calvinists.
 - The point that they drop out, of course, is Limited Atonement.
- Covenant Theologians are five-point Calvinists.
 - Covenant Theology enforces the Calvinistic doctrine of Limited Atonement.

2. Interpretation of Scripture:

- Dispensationalists speak in terms of a literal interpretation of the Bible.
 - Dispensationalists want to interpret the Old Testament and then go to the New Testament and attempt to harmonize the particular teaching of the New Testament with their previous interpretation of that Old Testament passage, rather than allowing the New Testament fundamental hermeneutical control.
- Covenant Theologians interpret the Bible literally, but also believe that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament.
 - Covenant Theology maintains that the New Testament is the hermeneutical manual for the Old Testament.
 - The Covenant Theologian believes the New Testament has the final word as the meaning of that passage.

3. Analogy of Faith (Scripture interprets Scripture):

- Dispensationalists do not accept the Protestant idea of the analogy of faith., that “Scripture interprets Scripture.”
 - Dispensationalists maintain that “Scripture interpreting Scripture” eliminates the literal nature of their interpretation of the text.
- Covenant Theology practices the analogy of faith. Scripture interprets Scripture.
 - And for the Covenant Theologian, the New Covenant always has the final word as to the meaning of the Old Covenant passage.

⁴⁴ <https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/classes-training-devotionals/dispensationalism/>

4. The Definition of Israel:

- For the Classic Dispensationalist, Israel always means the literal physical descendants of Jacob.
- For the Covenant Theologian, Israel may mean the literal physical descendants of Jacob, or it may mean *spiritual* Israel which could refer to both literal Israel and Gentiles as well. And that, because of their “literal” interpretation of Scripture, is precisely the point that Dispensationalists must argue against.

5. Israel of God:

- Dispensationalists say that Galatians 6:16, where Paul uses the phrase “Israel of God” actually means *physical* Israel alone.
- Covenant Theologians argue that Israel of God in Galatians 6:16 is a reference to *spiritual* Israel, paralleling it with Paul’s other statements, for instance, in Galatians 3:29, Romans 2:20-28, Romans 9:6 and Philippians 3:3.

6. Number of Peoples of God:

- Dispensationalists believe that God has two peoples with two separate destinies: Israel with an earthly destiny, and the Church with a heavenly destiny.
- Covenant Theology states that God has always had only one people. Covenant Theology defines the Church as simply the people of God in all ages.

7. Beginning of the Church:

- Dispensationalists maintain that the Church began at Pentecost, not before.
 - The people of God in the Old Testament were Israel, while the people of God in the New Testament are the church.
- Covenant Theology says that the church began with Adam and reaches its fulfillment and culmination in the New Testament.

8. Prophecy concerning the Church:

- According to classic Dispensationalism, the Church was not prophesied about in the Old Testament. There is no mention of the church in the Old Testament.

- For Covenant Theologians, there are many Old Testament prophecies that speak of the Church.⁴⁵

9. Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel:

- Dispensationalists believe that they are for the literal Israel, not for the Church.
 - All Old Testament prophecies are for Israel, for physical Israel or for literal Israel, but not for the church.
- Covenant Theology says that some Old Testament prophecies pertain to literal Israel, and some pertain to a spiritual Israel.

10. God's main purpose:

- Dispensationalists state that God's main purpose in history is literal Israel.
- Covenant Theologians maintain that God's purpose is Christ and then the Church.

11. The Church:

- For Dispensationalists, the Church is a temporary thing in the flow of history.
 - They have a time called "the Great Parenthesis," which is based on when the Messiah came and was rejected by the Jews.
 - This actually thwarted God's plan, because the original plan was for Messiah to come and set up a kingdom in Israel, but the Jews rejected Him.
 - At that point the prophetic clock stopped and we entered into the period of the Gentiles, the Great Parenthesis.
 - That is a period about which there was no prophecy in the Old Testament.
 - At the end of the period of the Great Parenthesis, the end of the time of the Gentiles, according to Romans 11, the Church is removed. That is the rapture.
 - Then the prophetic clock starts ticking again, and God's dealings with Israel resume.
 - This is why a pre tribulation rapture is so important for consistent classical Dispensationalism.
- For Covenant Theologians, the Church is the culmination of God's saving purposes for the ages.

⁴⁵ Genesis 12:1-3, "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." For more on this topic, visit <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/the-church-and-israel-in-the-old-testament?>

- The Church is God's great masterpiece.
- It is the bride of Christ, the body of Christ.

12. The heir to Abraham's covenant:

- For Dispensationalism, the main heir to Abraham's covenant was Isaac and literal Israel.
- The Covenant Theologian understands the main heir to Abraham's covenant was Christ and spiritual Israel; and spiritual Israel is all who have faith in Him.

13. Covenant of Redemption:

- For Dispensationalism, of course, there is no covenant of redemption within the Trinity. There is no inter-Trinitarian covenant.
- For Covenant Theology, however, there is an inter-Trinitarian covenant which effects election.

14. Covenant of Works:

- For Dispensationalists, there was no Covenant of Works with Adam in the Garden.
- Covenant Theology believes that God made a conditional covenant of works with Adam as representative for all his posterity.

15. Covenant of Grace:

- Dispensationalism state that there is no Covenant of Grace with Adam.
- According to Covenant Theology, God made a Covenant of Grace with His people including Adam.

16. Covenant at Mt. Sinai:

- Dispensationalists maintain that Israel was rash to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.
 - According to Scofield, "That was a big mistake. The children of Israel should have said, 'We don't want law, we want grace.'"
- For Covenant Theology, Israel didn't have a choice as to whether to accept the covenant arrangement at Sinai. It wasn't an option.

17. The New Covenant:

- Dispensationalists maintain that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is for literal Israel.
 - The New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 was for literal Israel and is not fulfilled in Luke 22:20.

- For the Covenant Theologian, the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is the same as the New Covenant spoken of by the Lord Jesus in Luke 22. Both are for spiritual Israel.

18. How God works out his will:

- For Dispensationalists, God works out salvation through separate dispensations.
 - This results in discontinuity in redemptive history.
- For Covenant Theologians, God works out His will through progressive covenants.
 - This results in discontinuity in redemptive history.

19. Salvation by Works in the Old Testament:

- Dispensationalists argue that salvation was by works in the Old Testament.
- Covenant Theology argues that no man has been saved by works since the fall. Salvation is by grace alone.

20. Salvation by Faith:

- Dispensationalists teach that the nature of Old Testament faith is different from the nature of New Testament faith. Old Testament faith is based on the particular dispensation.
- Covenant Theologians argue that all those who have ever been saved, have been saved by faith in Christ as their sin bearer, though that has been progressively revealed with greater fullness as God unfolded His plan of redemption.

21. Old Testament sacrifices:

- Classic Dispensationalists will argue that the Old Testament sacrifices were not recognized as pointing forward to Christ's sacrifice.
- Covenant Theologians argue that the Old Testament believers believed in the Gospel of the Messiah as sin bearer through the sacrifices their types and prophecies.

22. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

- Dispensationalists argue that the Holy Spirit only indwells New Testament believers. He did not indwell Old Testament believers. And He will not indwell believers after the rapture.
- The Covenant Theologian argues that there is no such thing as a believer who is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

23. Literal versus Spiritual Kingdom:

- Dispensationalists teach that Jesus made an offer of the kingdom to literal Israel, but Israel rejected it and so the kingdom was postponed.

- Covenant Theologians teach that Jesus of course proclaimed the kingdom of heaven, which from the outset was a spiritual kingdom, and although it was rejected by many Jews, it was also accepted by many Jews and Gentiles alike.

24. In Christ:

- Dispensationalists teach that Old Testament believers are not in Christ. They are not part of the body or bride of Christ.
- On the Covenant Theology side, believers in all ages are in Christ.

25. Abolishment of the law:

- Dispensationalists teach that the law has been abolished for believers in the church age.
- In contrast, the Covenant Theology teaches that the law continues to have three uses in the New Covenant: to restrain sin, to lead to Christ, and to instruct Christians in godliness.

26. Are Old Testament laws in effect?

- Dispensationalists teach that Old Testament laws are not in effect unless they are repeated in the New Testament.
- Covenant Theologians teach that the Old Testament moral law remains in effect in the New Covenant, though the civil and ceremonial laws have been abrogated.

27. Kingdom of God:

- Dispensationalists believe that the millennium is the kingdom of God.
- Covenant Theologians believe that the kingdom of God is much broader than merely the millennium. The church is its institutional form, and Covenant Theologians are usually amillennial or post millennial.

28. Old Testament animal sacrifices:

- Dispensationalists believe that Old Testament animal sacrifices will be required in the millennium.
- Covenant Theologians believe that the Old Testament sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ and have been abolished forever.

29. Abrahamic Covenant:

- God's promises to Abraham regarding descendants will be fulfilled during the millennium.
- Christ fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant.

30. Who will sit on the throne?

- Classic Dispensationalists teach that David will reign on the millennial throne in Jerusalem in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.
- Covenant Theologians teach that Christ is reigning on the throne and His saints will rule under Him and the new earth.

	Classic Dispensationalism	Covenant Theology
1	May be Arminian or modified Calvinist. Almost never 5-point Calvinist.	Always Calvinist. Usually 5 point.
2	Stresses 'literal' interpretation of the Bible.	Accepts both literal and figurative interpretation of the Bible.
3	Usually does not accept the idea of the 'Analogy of Faith.'	Almost always accepts the idea of the 'Analogy of Faith.'
4	'Israel' always means only the literal, physical descendants of Jacob.	'Israel' may mean either literal, physical descendants of Jacob or the figurative, spiritual Israel, depending on context.
5	'Israel of God' in Gal. 6:16 means physical Israel alone.	'Israel of God' in Gal. 6:16 means spiritual Israel, parallel to Gal. 3:29, Rom. 2:28-29, 9:6, Phil. 3:3.
6	God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly).	God has always had only 1 people, the Church gradually developed.
7	The Church was born at Pentecost.	The Church began in the O.T. (Acts 7:38) and reached fulfillment in the N.T.
8	The Church was not prophesied as such in the O.T. but was a hidden mystery until the N.T.	There are many O.T. prophecies of the N.T. Church.
9	All O.T. prophecies for' Israel , are for literal Israel, not the Church.	Some O.T. prophecies are for literal Israel, others are for spiritual Israel.
10	God's main purpose in history is literal Israel.	God's main purpose in history is Christ and secondarily the Church.
11	The Church is a parenthesis in God's program for the ages.	The Church is the culmination of God's saying purpose for the ages.
12	The main heir to Abraham's covenant was Isaac and literal Israel.	The main heir to Abraham's covenant was Christ and spiritual Israel
13	There was no eternal Covenant of Redemption within the Trinity.	The eternal Covenant of Redemption was within the Trinity to effect election.
14	There was no Covenant of Works with Adam in the Garden of Eden.	God made a conditional Covenant of Works with Adam as representative for all his posterity.
15	There was no Covenant of Grace concerning Adam.	God made a Covenant of Grace with Christ and His people, including Adam
16	Israel was rash to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.	Israel was right to accept the Covenant at Mt. Sinai.
17	The 'New Covenant' of Jer. 31:31- 34 is only for literal Israel and is not the New Covenant of Lk. 22:20	The 'New Covenant' of Jer. 31 is the same as in Lk. 22; both are for spiritual Israel according to Heb. 8.

18	God's program in history is mainly through separate dispensations.	God's program in history is mainly through related covenants.
19	Some Dispensationalists have said that O.T. sinners were saved by works.	No man has ever been saved by works, but only by grace.
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.	All men who have ever been saved have been saved by faith in Christ as their sin-bearer, which has been progressively revealed in every age.
21	The O.T. sacrifices were not recognized as the Gospel or types of the Messiah as sin-bearer, but only seen as such in retrospect.	O.T. believers believed in the Gospel of Messiah as sin-bearer mainly by the sacrifices as types and prophecies.
22	The Holy Spirit indwells only believers in the Dispensation of Grace, not O.T. and not after the Rapture.	The Holy Spirit has indwelt believers in all ages, especially in the present N.T. era, and will not be withdrawn.
23	Jesus made an offer of the literal Kingdom to Israel; since Israel rejected it, it is postponed.	Jesus made only an offer of the spiritual Kingdom, which was rejected by literal Israel but has gradually been accepted by spiritual Israel.
24	O.T. believers were not 'in Christ,' nor part of the Body or Bride of Christ.	Believers in all ages are all 'in Christ' and part of the Body and Bride of Christ.
25	The Law has been abolished.	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.
26	O.T. laws are no longer in effect unless repeated in the N.T.	O.T. laws are still in effect unless abrogated in the N.T.
27	The Millennium is the Kingdom of God Dispensationalists are always Pre-Millennial and usually Pre-Tribulational.	The Church is the Kingdom of God. Covenanters are usually Amillennial, sometimes Pre-Millennial or Post-Millennial, rarely Pre-Tribulational.
28	The O.T. animal sacrifices will be restored in the Millennium.	The O.T. sacrifices were fulfilled and forever abolished in Christ.
29	The Millennium will fulfill the Covenant to Abraham. Israel has a future.	Christ fulfilled the Covenant to Abraham. Some Covenanters believe in a future for literal Israel, most don't.
30	David will sit on the Millennial throne in Jerusalem.	Christ alone sits on the throne. Saints rule under Him.

Tim's Nine Theological Issues with Dispensationalism

1. God has only ever had one people, comprised of Old and New Testament saints as well as the church.
2. God has always had one plan in all the ages since Adam — which is to call out His people into one body in both the Old and the New Testament ages.
3. God has one plan of salvation for His people since the time of Adam. The plan is one of grace, being an outworking of the eternal covenant of grace (Genesis 17:7) and comes through faith in Jesus Christ.
4. God has one people, one plan, and one plan of salvation.
5. The church existed prior to the New Testament era, including all the redeemed since Adam. Pentecost was the beginning of the New Testament church, and the empowering of the New Testament manifestation of God's people.
6. Christ came to die for our sins and to establish the New Israel. This continuation of God's plan placed the church under a new and better covenant, which was a new manifestation of the same covenant of grace God established with Abraham et al. The kingdom that Jesus offered was the present, spiritual, and invisible kingdom rather than a physical kingdom.
7. The promises of the New Covenant mentioned in Jeremiah 31:3ff are fulfilled in the New Testament.
8. All of God's dealings with Israel will be in connection with the church, with Israel ultimately to be made part of the church.
9. Christ's coming will be to bring final judgment and the eternal state.