

# Biblical Dispensationalism

Jim McGowan, MTS, Th.D.

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# Biblical Dispensationalism

## Session 4

### History of Biblical Dispensationalism

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## Overview

- I. The Early Church
- II. The Alexandrian Abdication
- III. The Dark Ages
- IV. Positive Contributions of the Reformers
- V. The Reformers' Incomplete Reforms
- VI. Contemporary Reformation Theology
- VII. Dispensationalism's Contribution

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**Justin Martyr**  
(A.D. 110–165)

- Justin in his Dialogue with Trypho recognizes several differing economies in the Old Testament. Justin acknowledges that prior to circumcision and the law, one can please God without being circumcised and without keeping the Sabbath. After God’s revelation to Abraham, circumcision was necessary to please Him; after the giving of the law to Moses, it was necessary to keep the Sabbath and observe the sacrificial system.
- Justin Martyr held the essence of dispensationalism in his recognition of differing economies in the Old Testament.

Enns, P. P. (1989). The Moody Handbook of Theology (p. 513). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

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**Irenaeus**  
(A.D. 110–165)

- Irenaeus refers in his writings to four principal covenants given to the human race, particularly drawing a distinction between three covenants of the Old Testament and the gospel. This distinction is typical of dispensationalism.

**Clement of Alexandria**  
(A.D. 150–220)

- Clement identified four dispensations: Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic.

Enns, P. P. (1989). The Moody Handbook of Theology (p. 513-514). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

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**Augustine**  
(A.D. 354–430)

- Augustine distinguishes between the “former dispensation” when sacrifices were offered and the present age when it is unsuitable to offer sacrifices. Augustine writes that while God Himself is unchanging, He enjoys one kind of offerings in the former period and a different kind of offering in the latter period. Augustine calls this “the changes of successive epochs.” Augustine recognizes that worshipers approach God in a different manner in different ages.

Enns, P. P. (1989). The Moody Handbook of Theology (p. 514). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

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**Charles C. Ryrie**  
Ryrie, C. C. (1995). *Dispensationalism* (Rev. and expanded., p. 74). Chicago: Moody Publishers.

- Ryrie concludes, "It is not suggested nor should it be inferred that these early Church Fathers were dispensationalists in the modern sense of the word. But it is true that some of them enunciated principles which later developed into dispensationalism, and it may be rightly said that they held to primitive or early dispensational concepts."

Enns, P. P. (1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 514). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

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**Allegorization**

- Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or a secret meaning underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text. In other words the literal reading is a sort of code, which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning. **In this approach the literal is superficial; the allegorical is the true meaning.**

Zuck, Roy B. *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (p. 29). Edited by Craig Bubeck Sr. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1991.

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**Alexander's Four Generals**  
Daniel 7:6; 8:8,22

Cassander Macedonia	<b>Ptolemy</b> <b>Egypt</b>
Lysimachus Thrace & Asia Minor	Seleucus Syria (including Israel)

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**Alexandrian and Antiochene Fathers**

- Two schools of thought developed about 200 years or so after Christ, schools of hermeneutical views that had a strong impact on the church for centuries to come.



Zuck, Roy B. *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (p. 35). Edited by Craig Bubeck Sr. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1991.

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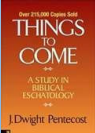
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**Dangers of Allegorization**



- Text is not being interpreted
- Authority is transferred from text to interpreter
- There is no way to test the interpreter
- No mechanism for controlling the interpreter's imagination



Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pps. 4-5

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### 5 Causes for the Shift to Allegorism

1. Need for immediate relevance
2. Incorporation of human philosophy into interpretation
3. Gnostic dualism (Gen. 1:31; 1 John 2:22; 4:2-3; Acts 17:32; 1 Cor. 15:12)
4. Decline of the church's Jewish population
5. Constantine's Edict of Milan (A.D. 313)



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### Results of the Shift to Allegorism

- **315:** Constantine published the **Edict of Milan** which extended religious tolerance to Christians. **Jews lost many rights with this edict. They were no longer permitted to live in Jerusalem, or to proselytize.**
- **325:** The Council of Nicea decided to separate the celebration of Easter from the Jewish Passover. They stated: **"For it is unbecoming beyond measure that on this holiest of festivals we should follow the customs of the Jews. Henceforth let us have nothing in common with this odious people...We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews...our worship follows a...more convenient course...we desire dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews...How, then, could we follow these Jews, who are almost certainly blinded."**

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### Results of the Shift to Allegorism

- **337:** Christian Emperor Constantius created a law which made the **marriage of a Jewish man to a Christian punishable by death.**
- **339:** **Converting to Judaism became a criminal offense.**
- **343-381:** The Laodicean Synod approved Cannon XXXVIII: **"It is not lawful [for Christians] to receive unleavened bread from the Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety."**
- **367-376:** St. Hilary of Poitiers referred to Jews as **a perverse people who God has cursed forever.** St. Ephroem refers to synagogues as **brothels.**
- **379-395:** Emperor Theodosius the Great **permitted the destruction of synagogues if it served a religious purpose.** Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire at this time.

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**Results of the Shift to Allegorism**

- **380:** The bishop of Milan was responsible for the burning of a synagogue; he referred to it as "an act pleasing to God."
- **415:** The Bishop of Alexandria, St. Cyril, expelled the Jews from that Egyptian city.
- **415:** St. Augustine wrote "The true image of the Hebrew is Judas Iscariot, who sells the Lord for silver. The Jew can never understand the Scriptures and forever will bear the guilt for the death of Jesus."
- **418:** St. Jerome, who created the Vulgate translation of the Bible wrote of a synagogue: "If you call it a brothel, a den of vice, the Devil's refuge, Satan's fortress, a place to deprave the soul, an abyss of every conceivable disaster or whatever you will, you are still saying less than it deserves."

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**Results of the Shift to Allegorism**

- **489-519:** Christian mobs destroyed the synagogues in Antioch, Daphne (near Antioch) and Ravenna.
- **528:** Emperor Justinian (527-564) passed the Justinian Code. It prohibited Jews from building synagogues, reading the Bible in Hebrew, assemble in public, celebrate Passover before Easter, and testify against Christians in court.
- **535:** The "Synod of Claremont decreed that Jews could not hold public office or have authority over Christians."

**References**

"A Calendar of Jewish Persecution" <http://www.hearnow.org/caljp.html>  
Randy Felton, "Anti-Semitism and the Church" <http://www.haydid.org/antsemr.htm>  
Fritz B. Voll, "A Short Review of a Troubled History" <https://is.gd/uAAjtk>

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**Biblical Dispensationalism**

**Session 5**  
**History of Biblical Dispensationalism**

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**Overview**

- I. The Early Church
- II. The Alexandrian Abdication
- III. **THE DARK AGES**
- IV. Positive Contributions of the Reformers
- V. The Reformers' Incomplete Reforms
- VI. Contemporary Reformation Theology
- VII. Dispensationalism's Contribution

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**III. The Dark Ages (or the Middle Ages)**

- A. Lasted from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries
- B. Obsolescence of prophetic studies
- C. Domination of Augustinian Amillennialism
- D. Only one church: Roman Catholicism
- E. The Bible is removed from the people
  - Allegorization
  - Illiteracy
  - Mass read in Latin
- F. Church in need of rescue



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**Ronald E. Diprose**

Israel in the Development of Christian Thought (Rome: IBEI, 2000), 86-87.

“Origen (185-254 A.D.) was also influenced by the example of Philo, a first-century Alexandrian Jew who had interpreted the Old Testament Scriptures allegorically in order to make them harmonize with his Platonism. Allegorism played an important part in Origen's theory of interpretation and, as **he was the first biblical scholar to work out ‘a complete hermeneutical theory’**, his work was destined to exert great influence on the Christian approach to the Hebrew Scriptures, for centuries to come...**Origen is remembered for his philosophical speculation as the allegorist par excellence among Biblical interpreters.**”

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**Renald Showers**  
John Ankerberg and Renald Showers, *The Most Asked Prophecy Questions* (Chattanooga, TN: ATRI, 2000), 327-28.

**“Augustine's allegorical amillennialism became the official doctrine of the church, and Premillennialism went underground.** Some aspects of Premillennialism were even branded as heretical. The Roman Catholic Church strongly advocated and maintained Augustine's Amillennial view throughout the Middle Ages. During that span of time occasionally pre-millennial groups formed to challenge the doctrine and political power of the major part of organized Christendom, but they were not able to restore Premillennialism to its original position as the accepted, orthodox view of the Church.”

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**Augustine**  
**354-430 A.D.**  
*The City of God*, trans., Marcus Dods (NY: Random House, 1950), Book XX, chap. 9, p. 725-26.

Augustine wrote, “the saints reign with Christ during the same thousand years, understood in the same way, that is, of the time of His first coming” and **“Therefore the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, even now His saints reign with Him.”**

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**III. The Dark Ages (or the Middle Ages)**

F. Church in need of rescue



**October 31, 1517**

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**October 31, 1517**



THE 500<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
REFORMATION

**October 31, 2017**

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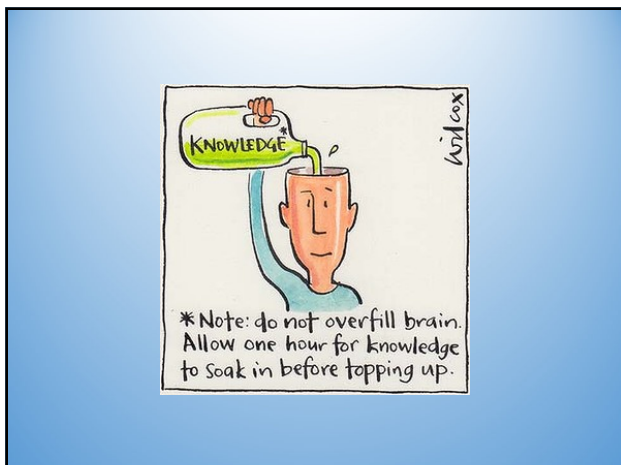
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**Overview**

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- IV. POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE REFORMERS**
- V. The Reformers' Incomplete Reforms
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**IV. Positive Contributions of the Reformers**

- A. Emphasis on literal interpretation
- B. Denunciation of allegorization
- C. Rejection of church tradition as a guide
- D. Priesthood of all believers
  - Bible translations
  - Literacy
- E. Five *solas*
- F. Rejection of celibacy of the priesthood

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#### William Tyndale

(1494 – 1536 A.D.)



*“The Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense.”*

William Tyndale, "Obedience of a Christian Man," in *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), 304.

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#### Martin Luther

(1483 – 1546 A.D.)

Quoted by Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1991), 45.



[The Scriptures] “are to be retained in their simplest meaning ever possible, and to be understood in their **grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids**”.

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**John Calvin**  
(1509- 1564 A.D.)

Quoted by Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1991), 47.



Calvin wrote in the preface of his commentary on Romans "it is the first business of an interpreter to let the author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say."

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**Martin Luther**  
(1483 – 1546 A.D.)

Quoted in Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961; reprint, 1886), 328.



Luther denounced the allegorical approach to Scripture in strong words. He said: "Allegories are empty speculations and as it were the scum of Holy Scripture." "Origen's allegories are not worth so much dirt." "To allegorize is to juggle the Scripture." "Allegorizing may degenerate into a mere monkey game." "Allegories are awkward, absurd, inventive, obsolete, loose rags."

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**John Calvin**  
(1509- 1564 A.D.)  
Quoted by Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1991), 47.



Calvin similarly rejected allegorical interpretations. He called them **“frivolous games”** and accused Origen and other allegorists of **“torturing scripture, in every possible sense, from the true sense.”**

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**Mark 7:13**

**“thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”**



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**Revelation 1:6**

“and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”



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**Martin Luther**  
 (1483 – 1546 A.D.)

Luther's Works: The Christian in Society, ed. James Atkinson,  
 vol. 44 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1966), 207.



"I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engraving them in the heart of the youth...I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

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**IV. Positive Contributions of the Reformers**

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  - Bible translations
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- E. **Five solas**
- F. Rejection of celibacy of the priesthood

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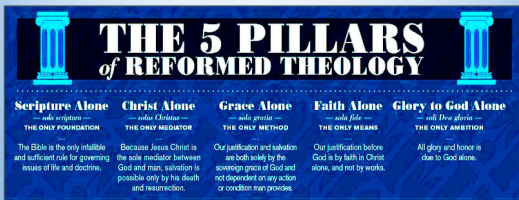
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**IV. Positive Contributions of the Reformers**



Number	Latin	Meaning
1.	<i>Sola Scriptura</i>	Scripture Alone
2.	<i>Solus Christus</i>	Christ Alone
3.	<i>Sola Fide</i>	Faith Alone
4.	<i>Sola Graetia</i>	Grace Alone
5.	<i>Soli Deo Gloria</i>	To the Glory of God Alone

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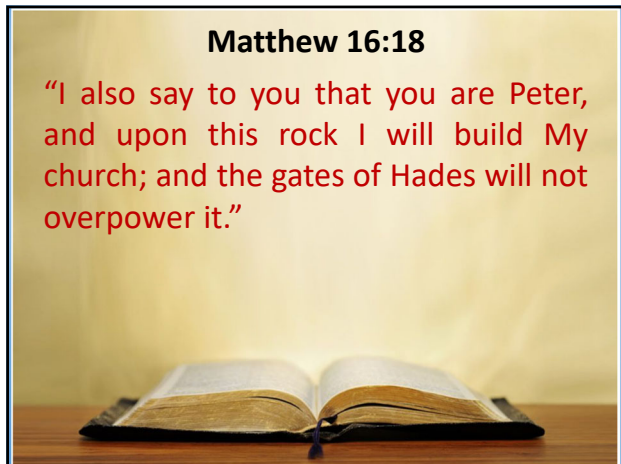
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**Matthew 16:18**

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

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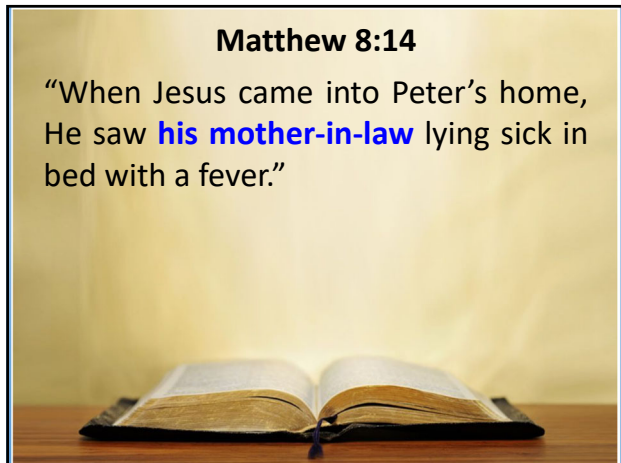
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**Matthew 8:14**

“When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw **his mother-in-law** lying sick in bed with a fever.”

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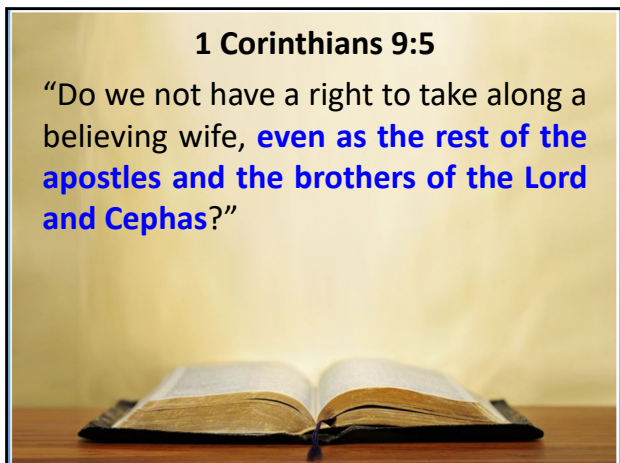
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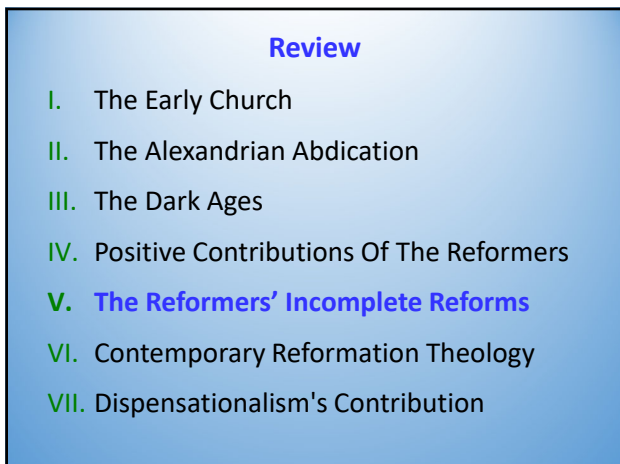
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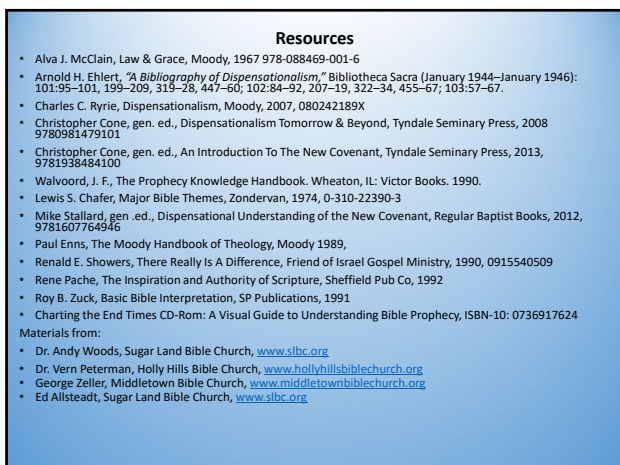
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