

Session 7 - History of Biblical Dispensationalism

Jim McGowan, Th.D.

Biblical Dispensationalism

Jim McGowan, MTS, Th.D.

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Biblical Dispensationalism

Session 6

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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V. The Reformers' Incomplete Reforms

- A. Selective literalism
- B. "Irresponsibly" dealt with eschatology
- C. Retained and Perpetuated Augustinian Amillennialism
- D. Perpetuated Roman Catholicism's Errors
 - Wanted to 'reform' not leave the Church
 - Infant baptism
 - Consubstantiation
 - Church = the earthly kingdom
 - Anti-Semitism

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The Reformers' Report Card

1. **'A+'** – because they laid the groundwork for future generations by providing the right method whereby future generations could continue to reform the church through a **consistent application** of the Reformers' interpretive approach.
2. **'F'** – because they did not make a clean break with the Roman Catholic Church and forced a **'selective' literal approach** to Scripture upon the Protestant Church.



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- VI. CONTEMPORARY REFORMATION THEOLOGY
- VII. Dispensationalism's Contribution

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VI. Contemporary Reformation Theology

- A. Erroneously assumes no further theological progress to be made.
- B. Has Frozen theological progress into creeds and confessions: Creeds and confessions = authority rather than Scripture.
- C. Augustinian Amillennialism fossilized into RT.
- D. Allegorizing of biblical Eschatological texts is common.
 - Zech. 14:4; Rev. 21-22; Ezek. 40-48
- E. Inconsistent literal hermeneutic.



Contemporary Reformation Theology
The new book, published by The Heritage Foundation, is a landmark work in the history of the Reformation. It is the first book to be published in the series.

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The Contemporary Reformation's Report Card

1. **'F'** – because they, *like the early reformers*, have not made a clean break with the Roman Catholic Church and they continue to force a 'selective' literal approach to Scripture upon the Protestant Church.

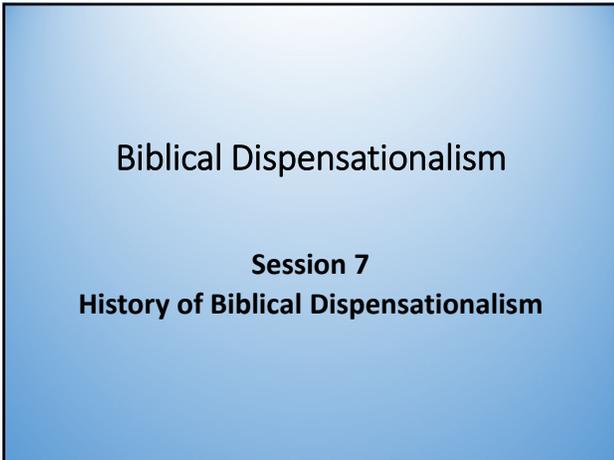


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VII. Dispensationalism's Contribution

A. Dispensational movement

- Dispensational Systematized in 19th century
- Key Dispensational Leaders
- Reformers' hermeneutic applied to the whole bible
- Retrieved key doctrines: Chiliasm, Israel-church distinction, Pretribulationism

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Dispensational Theology is a System of Theology

Traditional-normative dispensational theology is a system that embodies three essential, fundamental concepts called the **sine qua non** (lit. "without which is not"):

1. The **consistent** use of a plain, normal, literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation;
2. Which reveals that the **Church is distinct from Israel**;
3. God's overall purpose is to bring **glory to Himself** (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

Dr. Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, pp. 38-41

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VII. Dispensationalism's Contribution

- **Key Dispensational Leaders**
 - John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) 
 - Sir Robert Anderson (1841–1918)
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John Nelson Darby (1800–1882)

- While Darby did not originate the system, he was an important figure in systematizing dispensationalism. Darby graduated from Trinity College in Dublin at age eighteen and was admitted to the bar at twenty-two. After his conversion he left his law practice and was ordained in the Church of England but eventually left the Church of England, settling in Plymouth, England. By 1840 eight hundred people were attending services together there and these believers came to be referred to, as "Plymouth Brethren."
- Darby wrote forty, 600 page volumes which demonstrated his expertise in the biblical languages, philosophy, and church history.

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John Nelson Darby (1800–1882)

- Darby advanced the scheme of dispensationalism by noting that each dispensation places man under some condition; man has some responsibility before God. Darby also noted that each dispensation culminates in failure.

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Sir Robert Anderson (1841–1918)

- Sir Robert Anderson was an intelligence officer, theologian and writer. He was also an investigator with Scotland Yard, who turned his investigative skills to the book of Daniel.
- His book, *The Coming Prince* - examines the 9th chapter of Daniel, especially the 70 weeks, and the coming of the Antichrist and is one of the most exhaustive works ever written these subjects.
- Anderson taught alongside of some of the greatest biblical teachers of his day, including James Martin Gray, Cyrus Scofield, and John Nelson Darby, with whom he preached in the West of Ireland.

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Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921)

- Scofield was a trained lawyer and biblical scholar who, after his conversion, became associated with evangelists D. L. Moody and Robert A. Torrey.
- Scofield later pastored the First Congregational Church of Dallas, Texas (*now Scofield Memorial Church*), founded the Central American Mission in 1890 (*now Camino Global*), and prepared correspondence Bible study courses which became the basis for his Scofield Reference Bible which was first published in 1909 and took the country by storm.
- He also author of the pamphlet "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" in 1888 which along with his Scofield Reference Bible encouraged the Bible and Prophecy Conference Movements of the early 1900s.

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Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921)

- Among those impacted by Scofield were James H. Brookes, a Presbyterian pastor and popular conference speaker, and James M. Gray who became president of Moody Bible Institute.
- Some pioneering features of the Scofield Bible include:
 - Commentary notes alongside the biblical text
 - A cross-referencing system (i.e., "chain references") that enabled the reader to trace biblical themes throughout the entire bible.
 - Chronological information regarding events in the Bible such as the date of Creation.
 - By the end of World War II, sales of the Scofield Reference Bible exceeded two million copies.

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Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921)

- The impact of the Scofield Reference Bible cannot be ignored. No other written work has done as much to introduce and promote dispensation theology and a fuller knowledge of the Scriptures.
- As a result of its influence, the Bible Church movement of the early 1900s was birthed which led in turn to the establishment of numerous dispensational schools, including:
 - Dallas Theological Seminary
 - Grace Theological Seminary
 - Talbot Theological Seminary
 - Western Conservative Baptist Seminary
 - Multnomah School of the Bible
 - Moody Bible Institute
 - Philadelphia College of the Bible, and many others.

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William Eugene Blackstone (1841–1935)

- William Eugene Blackstone was an American evangelist and Christian Zionist best know for authoring [the Blackstone Memorial of 1891](#), a petition which called upon America to actively return the Holy Land to the Jewish people. In part it read:
"Why shall not the powers which under the treaty of Berlin, in 1878, gave Bulgaria to the Bulgarians and Serbia to the Servians now give Palestine back to the Jews?...These provinces, as well as Romania, Montenegro, and Greece, were wrested from the Turks and given to their natural owners. Does not Israel as rightfully belong to the Jews?"
- In 1878, Blackstone wrote, [Jesus is Coming](#), which became the veritable reference source of American dispensationalist thought. Over the next 50 years, his book sold multi-millions of copies worldwide and was translated into 48 languages.
- Blackstone was influenced by Dwight Lyman Moody, James H. Brookes, and John Nelson Darby.

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William Eugene Blackstone (1841–1935)

- A revised version of the Blackstone Memorial of 1891 was providentially used by God to influence President Wilson to accept and endorse American Zionism and the later [British Balfour Declaration of 1917](#), which set the course for the establishment of the State of Israel.
- Without Blackstone's lifelong efforts to build American political support and American prophetic understanding of dispensationalism and restorationism, American support for Zionism and the State of Israel might have been very different.

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Henry Allen Ironside (1876–1951)

- As a member of the Plymouth Brethren, Harry" Ironside was an avid dispensationalist and premillennialist who, over the course of 50 years, was one of the most prolific Bible teachers of the past century publishing over 100 books and pamphlets.
- He was dedicated to the literal interpretation of prophecy and the resultant belief and hope in the pretribulational premillennial coming of Jesus Christ.
- Ironside had *no formal theological training having only completed the 8th grade*, but his tremendous mental capacity, photographic memory and zeal for truth led DTS in 1926, to invite him to a full-time faculty position. He turned it down, but remained a regular, visiting lecturer there from 1925 to 1943.
- In 1930, Wheaton College conferred upon him an honorary Doctorate degree, and in 1942 Bob Jones University did the same.

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Henry Allen Ironside (1876–1951)

- Ironside pastored for eighteen years (1930-1948) at the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago.
- Along with others such as Cyrus Scofield, Ironside was influential in popularizing dispensationalism among Protestants in North America.

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Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952)

- Chafer was raised in a Christian home. His father was a pastor, educated at Auburn Theological Seminary.
- He attended Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music from 1889 to 1892 and was ordained into the gospel ministry in 1900.
- From 1897-1924, Chafer along with his wife, formed a traveling evangelistic music ministry in which he sang and preached and she played the organ.
- Chafer moved to East Northfield, Massachusetts, where he met Dr. C. I. Scofield who was pastor of the Congregational Church of Northfield, which had been organized by D. L. Moody. The two men became close friends and Scofield mentored Chafer until Dr. Scofield's death in 1921.

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Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952)

- In 1922, Chafer moved to Dallas, Texas, and in 1924 the Evangelical Theological College was founded (changed to DTS in 1936). Chafer served as President of the Seminary from its beginning until the time of his death in 1952.
- He authored many pamphlets, magazine articles, and books, including:
 - *True Evangelism*, 1911
 - *The Kingdom in History and Prophecy*, 1915.
 - *Salvation: A Clear Doctrinal Analysis*, 1917. Reprint, 1955.
 - *Seven Biblical Signs of the Times*, 1919
 - *He That is Spiritual*, 1918. Reprint, 1967.
 - *True Evangelism: Winning Souls by Prayer*, 1919. Reprint, 1978.
 - *Satan: His Motive and Methods*, 1919. Reprint, 1964.

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Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871–1952)

- *Must We Dismiss the Millennium?* 1921
- *Grace: The Glorious Theme*, 1922. Reprint, 1950.
- *Major Bible Themes*, 1926. Reprint, 1974.
- *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 1935. Reprint, 1991.
- *Systematic Theology*, 1947 (after 10 yrs. of work). Reprint, 1993.
- Dr. Chafer is quoted as saying, "the very fact that I did not study a prescribed course in theology made it possible for me to approach the subject [of Systematic Theology] with an unprejudiced mind and to be concerned only with what the Bible actually teaches."
- Dr. Chafer was a premillennial, pretribulational dispensationalist. His overall theology was based on the inductive study of the entire Bible.

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"A literal hermeneutic attaches to every word the same meaning that it would have in **normal usage**, whether employed in speaking, writing, or thinking."

Bernard, Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1956), 89-92.

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Charles Ryrie

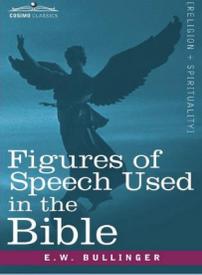
Dispensationalism (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 86.

Literal interpretation "...might also be called plain interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out **figures of speech**."

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E.W. Bullinger (1837–1913)




Bullinger clarifies 217 distinct figures of speech used in the Bible and cites nearly 8000 Bible passages, where the figures of speech are used.

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VII. Dispensationalism's Contribution

Literal Interpretation

One Meaning

Plain Literal **Figurative Literal**

The literal interpretation is the explicit assertion of the words—DENOTATIVE The literal interpretation is the specific intention of the figure—CONNOTATIVE

Chart by Earl Radmacher

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Galatians 4:24



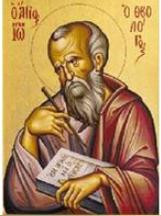
“This is **allegorically speaking**, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.”



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Revelation 11:8



“And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which **mystically is called** Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”



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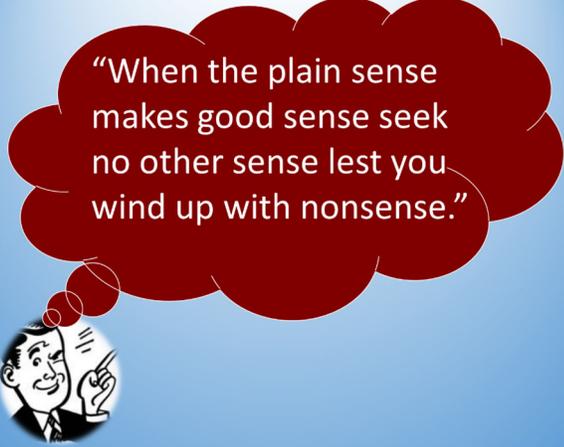
David L. Cooper
The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated
 (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1970), 11.



“When the **plain sense** of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, **ordinary, usual, literal** meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”

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“When the plain sense makes good sense seek no other sense lest you wind up with nonsense.”



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Chiliasm (Millennialism)

Chiliasm (from Greek for "a thousand years"), is the biblical doctrine that teaches Christ's literal, physical, return to earth to reign for 1000 years (The Millennium) in Israel, on the throne of David.

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Dispensational Theology is a System of Theology

Traditional-normative dispensational theology is a system that embodies three essential, fundamental concepts called the **sine qua non** (lit. "without which is not"):

1. The consistent use of a plain, normal, literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation;
2. Which reveals that the Church is distinct from Israel;
3. **God's overall purpose is to bring glory to Himself** (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

Dr. Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, pp. 38-41

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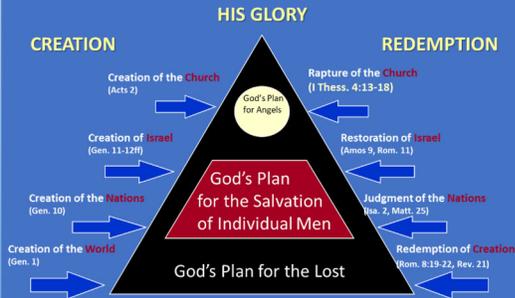
Doxological Purpose

- A. God's ultimate purpose for the ages is to **glorify** Himself. Scripture is not human-centered, as though salvation were the principle point, but God-centered, because **His glory is at the center**.
- B. **The glory of God is the primary principle that unifies all dispensations**, the program of salvation being just one of the means by which God glorifies Himself. Each successive revelation of God's plan for the ages, as well as His dealing with the elect, non-elect, angels, and nations all manifest His glory.

Dictionary of Premillennial Theology, Charles Ryrie, p. 94

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THE FOCUS ON THE GLORY OF GOD IN DISPENSATIONALISM



Dr. Mike Stallard, Baptist Bible Seminary

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Israel-Church distinctions

Biblical Covenants will be fulfilled

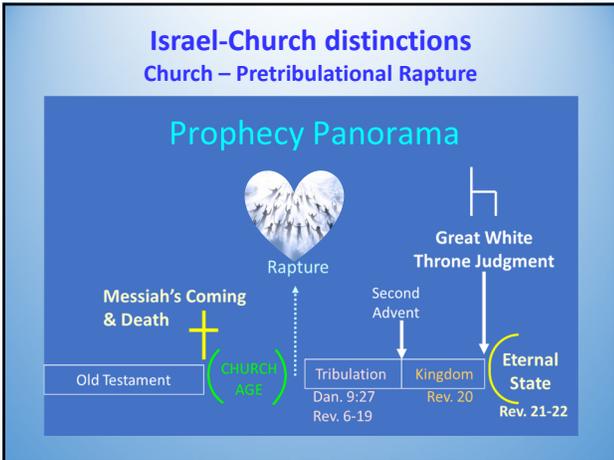
Abrahamic Covenant		
Genesis 15		
PROVISIONS		
LAND	SEED	BLESSING
AMPLIFICATION		
Land Covenant	Davidic Covenant	New Covenant
Deuteronomy 29-30	2 Samuel 7:12-26	Jeremiah 31:31-34
Unconditional covenant with a conditional blessing (Deut. 28; Lev. 26)		

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Biblical Dispensationalism

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False Charges Against Dispensationalism

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Resources

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- Charting the End Times CD-Rom: A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy, ISBN-10: 0736917624

Materials from:

- Dr. Andy Woods, Sugar Land Bible Church, www.slbcc.org
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- George Zeller, Middletown Bible Church, www.middletownbiblechurch.org
- Ed Allsteadt, Sugar Land Bible Church, www.slbcc.org

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