CONTEMPORARY DISPENSATIONAL TEACHINGS

Most of what today’s Bible students and Believers are taught is from what is called a Dispensational Theology. This theology is new, the newest of all the types of Bible study. It was introduced in the 1800’s. This form of interpretation was not used by the apostles or first century church.

Our desire here is to show the student the Dispensational doctrine compared to what was taught prior to that doctrine. We believe the doctrine has serious faults.

DISPENSATIONALIST DEFINED

From the days of Darby, Scofield, Irving, and the beginning days of the Plymouth Brethren (1850’s), a unique form of interpretation has permeated the planet. The term used to distinguish this form of interpretation is now referred to as “dispensationalist.” Many churches today adopt, at least in part, the doctrine of “Dispensationalism.”

The characteristic of the dispensationalist is one who interprets the Scriptures through an order of worldly affairs by using a specific system or code. The dispensationalists separate the Scriptures into “ages” or “times,” then interpret the Scriptures according to that specific age or specific time.

The “pure” dispensationalist cannot interpret from a “spiritual” or “allegorical” viewpoint. For example, the locusts of Revelation 9 must be locusts. Any other interpretation is not correct interpretation to the “pure” dispensationalist. However, the literal interpretation seems to submit to the “ages” or “times.” For example, the seven churches of Revelation 1-3 are not literally seven churches. According to the dispensationalist, they are “ages” or “times.” The interpretation rules seem to change if needed to make the doctrine work. Defending the doctrine seems to take precedent over the true meaning of the scriptures.

The Dispensational doctrine will change according to the age or time in which the interpreter lives. Thus the book of Revelation becomes whatever the times demand. For example, today the book of Revelation concerns atomic bombs and nuclear warheads. That interpretation would not have worked in the early 1900’s. The way the two witnesses of Revelation 11 are seen lying dead in the street by the entire planet at one time is via satellite television transmission. The current age or time in which the interpreter lives overrides the necessity for a literal interpretation. The literal interpretation overrides the “spiritual” or “allegorical” interpretation. The results are constant changes in the dispensational doctrine.

We also find that there are different blends of the dispensationalists. For example, the majority of the Pentecostal churches are dispensational in their doctrine and believe in tongues. The “pure” dispensationalist believes that tongues were only for the first century church age. The doctrine becomes a mixture confused by necessities to make it the doctrine work.

THE ONE COMMON THREAD

The beliefs of the dispensationalists are as varied as the number of denominations and non-denominations that support the various forms of dispensational teachings. Even within one denomination, the beliefs can vary so vastly that a denomination will have two churches across the street from one another, yet these two local assemblies believe differently. There is one common thread that will always be found in every dispensational church. That one thread is the “great tribulation.” The dispensational doctrine must have a tribulation. Its entire structure and existence depends upon the great tribulation.

SEPARATION OF JEW AND GENTILE

This doctrine separates the Jew and Gentile. It believes that the Hebrew people (Jews) have a unique and superior purpose and place in God’s program than any other people. The doctrine teaches this by separating four covenants in the Scriptures from all other covenants. These four covenants are said to be “unconditional”, and all other covenants are called “conditional.” The four special covenants are (1) The Abrahamic Covenant; (2) The Palestinian Covenant; (3) The Davidic Covenant; (4) The New Covenant.

Appendix 1
These four covenants, according to dispensational theologians, have aspects that have not been fulfilled. These aspects are compiled into an eschatological (end times) system of doctrinal beliefs and teachings.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant

The Lord God’s covenant with Abraham is found in the book of Genesis. The covenant is developed in Genesis chapters 12 and 13. Then we find the term covenant actually used in Genesis chapter 15.

Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

The covenant concerned (1) Abraham’s seed and (2) the land. The covenant was reiterated in Genesis 17, where the name Abram was changed to Abraham and the name Sarai was changed to Sarah. Also, a covenantal marking of the people was explained and required by the Lord God. This covenantal mark of circumcision would separate that nation from every other nation (Gen 17:10).

The three primary points of the Abrahamic covenant were the seed, the land, and the circumcision. The dispensational reasoning now follows:

“When it has been determined that the Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant made with Israel, and therefore cannot be either abrogated or fulfilled by people other than the nation Israel, it is seen that Israel has promises regarding a land and a seed, which determine the future program of God.”

This is a vital point in the dispensational doctrine. If people who relate to this form of teaching miss this point, then they miss a key in what their doctrine includes.

The necessity of the Hebrew people being reinstated as the special people of God is large in this doctrine. The doctrine does not acknowledge that God said there is no difference between the Jew (circumcised) and the Gentile (Rom 10:12; Gal 3:26-29; 6:15 Col 3:11).

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

According to the dispensational doctrine the Gentile people are a “second place” people (many quotes from dispensational theologians will follow showing this). This is the reason people today feel a higher faithfulness to Israel than to other nations.

The apostle Paul said there is no difference (Rom 10:12). The early church writers, though Jews, expressed disdain for the nation of Israel. Its leaders rejected and crucified the Lord. They saw and taught Jerusalem as a harlot. Jesus prophesied the nation’s destruction, because it rejected Him and killed the servants of God. Read the words of Jesus as He addressed the national leaders of Israel.

Mat 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Because of Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ, the kingdom was taken from them. They no longer hold any special position. The kingdom was given to a nation that would bring forth the fruits desired of God.

The dispensational doctrine teaches that the seed of Abraham is the natural seed, and the covenant must be fulfilled through that nation. It also says that the land boundaries given to Abraham were never obtained by Israel. They project that the boundaries never reached north and east to the Euphrates, or south to Egypt. That does not seem accurate.

During the reign of David the Bible says:

2Sa 8:3 David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

David recovered the boundaries of natural Israel. He brought peace to the land by conquering the lands and handed over the kingdom to Solomon. From the Euphrates on the north to Egypt on the south were the borders.

1Ki 4:21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Do the above verses say that the boundaries went from the Euphrates to Egypt? Pentecost writes:

“Since it was unconditional and eternal, and has never yet been fulfilled, it must await a future fulfillment, Israel must be preserved as a nation, must inherit her land, and be blessed with spiritual blessing to make this inheritance possible.”

Today’s contemporary teaching is that natural Israel must be restored to accomplish all that God promised in His covenant with Abraham. That doctrine requires Gentiles to assume “second place” in God’s family. In contrast, the Apostle

1 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 84

2 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 93
Paul said that in Christ there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. Plus, the Scriptures show that the land promised to the natural seed of Israel was given to the exact borders the Lord said He would give it.

A necessary point to make here is that neither Jesus nor any New Testament writer made an issue of the land boundaries. Paul said nothing about the land boundaries. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, nor Jude said anything about land boundaries. This concept entered with the dispensational doctrine in the late 1800’s.

The dispensationalists hold that God must give the seed of Abraham (natural Israel--those of the natural circumcision) the land from Euphrates to Egypt.

2. The Palestinian Covenant

This covenant is a part of the Mosaic covenant. However, under dispensational terminology, this part of the Mosaic covenant is separated from the entire covenant and called by the name Palestinian Covenant. Please realize that “Palestinian Covenant” is not a Biblical term. The Scriptures referred to by the dispensationalists are part of the Old Covenant made at Sinai through Moses (Deu 30:1-10).

As one can see, it is part of the covenant given by the Lord through Moses, thus a part of the Mosaic covenant. Yet, the dispensationalists teach and use it as separate from the Mosaic covenant. Pentecost says:

“...it will be quite obvious that eschatological studies are not concerned with the minor covenants made by man with man, nor with the Mosaic covenant made by God with man, inasmuch as all these are temporary and non-determinative in respect to future things, but only with the four eternal covenants given by God, by which He has obligated Himself in relation to the prophetic program.”

There is no such covenant as “Palestinian Covenant” in the Bible. Yet, the dispensational teaching is that this covenant has not been fulfilled. First of all, it seems erroneous to pull this particular section of the covenant out and separate it from the remainder of the covenant given by the Lord God through Moses. This would be like pulling out a portion of the New Testament and saying it is separate from the remainder of the covenant. A reason this is attempted (very successfully) is to avoid the statements of Jesus, and of the apostles that Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic covenant. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law of Moses and also fulfilled what the prophets said during the times of Moses’ law (Mat 5:17; Luk 21:22; Rom 10:4; Gal 3:24-25).

The Lord said that covenant was fulfilled. Paul said that law came to an end. Secondly, what is reported not to have happened has happened. The doctrine of the dispensationalist says that God must restore Israel to the land promised them. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple (587 or 586 BC..); all royalty and noble people were either killed or deported to Babylonia. All skilled craftsmen were deported (Babylonian Captivity).

Loss of state and Temple did not lead to the disappearance of the nation. Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylonia in 536 B.C. *He permitted the exiles to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple*. Nehemiah and Ezra led the reconstruction. The people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and rebuilt their spiritual life. A public ceremony of allegiance to the Law of Moses was taken. Also, stringent rules against mixed marriage were accepted. In the following centuries, mainly priests, who claimed descent from Moses’ brother Aaron, provided leadership.

We again see the insistence by the contemporary dispensationalists for a superior, natural Israel and an inferior, Gentile race. This is not supported by Scriptural teachings. In fact, it is refuted and rebuked (Rom 10:12; Gal 3:26-29; 6:15; Col 3:11). The dispensationalists hold to the doctrine that God must gather natural Israel from all nations and bring them back to the land with the boundaries promised. This is called the Palestinian Covenant by this doctrine.

3. The Davidic Covenant

This covenant is found in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and is referred to over and over throughout Scriptures (Psa 89:3-4, 34-36; Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6; 30:8,9; 33:14-17, 20, 21; Eze 37:24-25; Daniel 7:13-14; Hos 3:4-5; Amos 9:11; Zec 14:4, 9).

The essence of the covenant is obvious. David would die, but through David’s seed, the Lord would establish His kingdom. This seed would build a house in the name of the Lord, and the Lord would establish the throne of His kingdom...
forever. The Lord would be His Father, and the
King would be His Son. The kingdom would never
be taken away. An immediate fulfillment came
forth through Solomon. However, everyone knows
that was not the final fulfillment of the covenant.
Jesus Christ was the final fulfillment of this
covenant as the seed of David.

The position of the contemporary
dispensationalists is that this covenant must be
fulfilled literally. Jesus Christ must come back and
literally rebuild (establish) the literal temple
(house of David). At this temple, animal sacrifice
will be re-instituted and offered to God. Jesus
Christ must be accepted as the Jewish Messiah
(king) – the seed of David – and, from natural
Jerusalem, rule the planet upon and from the
throne of David. As discussed previously, the
natural nation of Israel will be exalted as the elect
and chosen. All the land and borders will be
established according to the Abrahamic and
Palestinian covenants fulfilling all the Old
Testament. This will be the state of affairs during
the millennium.

On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter stated
this event had taken place (Act 2:29-33). Peter said
that the fulfillment of the covenant with David
was, in fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter
said that Christ Jesus was exalted and sitting at the
right hand of God. Peter said the proof of this was
the shedding forth of the Holy Spirit.

The first-century church was not taught by the
apostles that the temple would be the place where
the throne would be established. The disciples
were taught by Jesus and, in turn, taught the
church that the temple would be destroyed and that
house of Moses and the sacrificial system would
be made desolate (Mat 23:37-38; 24:1-2).

It would be foolish for the apostles to teach the
rebuilding of what God intentionally destroyed.
The teachings of the apostles were that the people
were the true temple and household of God. They
were built upon the foundation of the apostles and
prophets with Jesus Himself being the cornerstone
(Eph 2:19-22).

Paul, writing to the Gentiles and Jews at
Ephesus, said they were not strangers, but now of
the household of God. They are now a part of the
family of God. Access to the one true God is no
longer for the Jews through animal sacrifice.

Those Gentile Ephesians were built upon the
foundation of the apostles and prophets, which
align with the cornerstone who is Jesus Christ.
They, the people, were a holy temple and the
habitation of God THROUGH THE SPIRIT!

Very likely, the popular contemporary doctrine
of today would be identified by the Apostle Peter
and Apostle Paul as a false doctrine. Those
proclaiming it could be marked as heretics. Sadly,
it is the opposite. Others are marked as heretics,
and the lie has become the truth. Can one imagine
mentioning to Peter or to John the re-instituting of
animal sacrifices after they witnessed the horrible,
bloody death and sacrifice of Jesus?

The author of Hebrews becomes irate because
the Jews were returning to animal sacrifices. He
tells the Hebrews (Jews) they had crucified again
the Son of God and “put Him to open shame.” He
writes that it is impossible for these to be renewed
unto repentance if they observe again the
sacrificial system (Heb 6:4-6). How can it be then
that system would be re-instituted in any capacity?
It seems to be a direct contradiction of the word of
God?

The Davidic covenant has been fulfilled. Peter
said it was. Why rebuild the temple if we are that
temple and habitation of God?

Concerning the Davidic Covenant, the
dispensationalist’s doctrine holds to the teaching
that a natural temple and a natural throne must be
constructed in Jerusalem. Upon this throne and
within this temple Jesus Christ must sit.

4. The New Covenant
It will be good to insert here the writing of a
popular contemporary who, as did Scofield and
Dake, places his doctrinal notes in his Bible.
Charles C. Ryrie, publisher of the Ryrie Bible
writes:
“By way of summary, it may be said that as far as the Old
Testament teaching on the new covenant is concerned, the
covenant was made with the Jewish people. Its period of
fulfillment is yet future beginning when the Deliverer shall
come and continuing throughout all eternity. Its provisions
for the nation Israel are glorious, and they all rest and depend
on the very Word of God.”

Do not miss that the covenant was made with the
Jewish people and “shall come and continuing

4 Charles C. Ryrie, The Basis of the Premillennial Faith,
page 114
throughout all eternity.” Even after the tribulation, superior Israel continues. Even after the millennium it continues as superior.

Again, we see the “step-child,” second-class, Gentile, Christian teaching. Everything is thrust into the future and evolves around natural Israel. Pentecost writes concerning the New Covenant! He says,

“This covenant, then, has to do with the regeneration, forgiveness, and justification of Israel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with His subsequent ministries, Israel’s regathering and restoration to the place of blessing, all founded on the blood of Jesus Christ.”

This is Darbyism and comes from the Plymouth Brethren doctrine that has so influenced today’s theology. Darby says of the New Covenant:

“This covenant of the letter is made with Israel, not with us; but we get the benefit of it... Israel not accepting the blessing, God brought out the church, and the Mediator of the covenant went on high. We are associated with the Mediator. It will be made good to Israel by-and-by.”

“It is, then, the annexed circumstances of the covenant with which we have to do, not the formal blessings which in terms have taken place of the conditions of the old, through some of them many, in a sense, be accomplished in us.”

Darby says it is “the annexed circumstances of the covenant with which we have to do.” The Gentiles only participate in the “annexed circumstances” of the New Covenant. This doctrine shows distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles. It projects one as superior, and one as inferior. This is absolutely contrary to Biblical interpretation (Rom 10:12; Gal 3:26-29; 6:15; Col 3:11; Eph 3:6).

Eph 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

There are no “annexed circumstances of the covenant.” In the teaching of the New Covenant, there “is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Does Paul write in Romans 10:12, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek”? The Gentiles are fellowheirs (Eph 3:6) and equal partakers of His (God) promise. How then can there be “annexed circumstances” for the Gentile?

This “annexed circumstance,” doctrinal position is taken from the Old Testament (Jer 31:31-34). Amazingly, the verse used from the Old Testament by dispensationalists to prove the superiority of the Jews is quoted by the author of Hebrews as a direct rebuke to the mentality that this dispensational “annexed circumstance” doctrine assumes. The Hebrews (Jews - house of Israel, and house of Judah) do not believe they should be joined with the Gentiles. These Hebrews are returning to their separation and superior mentality. It is this the writer of Hebrews addressed (Heb 8:8-13).

Its context is the more excellent ministry of Jesus Christ. He came to replace the old, worldly sanctuary. At the time which the writer of Hebrews penned this epistle (A.D. 64), the Old Covenant was ready (prepared) to vanish away. It did in A.D. 70 as the temple was destroyed. That sacrificial temple worship was laid desolate. There is no longer a covenant only for the Jews. In Hebrews 8:1, the Holy Spirit said, “...for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”

It is interesting to see how Jeremiah 31 was interpreted prior to Darbyism and the Plymouth Brethren of the 1850’s. We can see by studying the writings of Matthew Henry, who worked and wrote at the turn of the eighteenth century. Matthew Henry said,

“Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made - with the house of Israel and Judah, with the gospel church, the Israel of God on which peace shall be (Gal 6:16), with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favors God bestowed upon them; so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel church and covenant.”

The teaching of the Apostle Paul is clearly that there is no difference between the Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles are joint heirs of the promise. This was the teaching through the days of Matthew Henry. It changed in the 1850’s as the Plymouth Brethren polluted this doctrine by making the natural, Hebrew believer a superior child in God’s kingdom.

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5 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 118


7 J.N. Darby quoted from Things To Come by Pentecost, Things To Come, page 122

8 Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry’s commentary On The Whole Bible, Volume 4, page 479
The interpretation of the contemporary dispensational doctrine then follows the course of a special natural Israel and a secondary Gentile group who only attach by the “annexed circumstances.” One must be reminded that this was not the interpretation of the apostles nor the first century church. This was not taught until the 1850’s. Like wildfire, this doctrine spread through the theological seminaries.

From such comes one’s mode of Christology and Eschatology. One views the Christ as destroying natural Israel and interprets Scripture and eschatological passages accordingly. The other views Jesus reestablishing natural Israel and interprets Scripture and eschatological passages accordingly. One views the kingdom as a reality. The other view is that there can be no kingdom until natural Israel is established again as the apple of God’s eye.

The dispensationalist’s doctrine states that the New Covenant was actually made with natural Israel.

THE CHURCH IS AN "INTERRUPTION"

Now that one understands that the contemporary, dispensational, doctrine views the natural, Hebrew believer as the true, covenantal person, one can easily see how this doctrine views the church as an “interruption.” Dwight Pentecost writes

“The Old Testament age, in which the purpose of God for Israel is stated in the covenants into which God entered and by which He is bound, closes with those purposes unrealized. After the death of Christ, God instituted a new divine program, not to replace the program for Israel, but to interrupt that divinely covenanted program.”

Please do not miss the word “interrupt.” One must understand that Darbyism and Scofieldism and Dakeism and Ryrieism – dispensational doctrine – is founded upon the belief that natural Israel is what God is truly concerned about. The Gentile is only “annexed” into the program of God. God ‘interrupted’ His divine program with the church. That is the belief upon which this dispensational doctrine is founded, and this is what many contemporary church denominations believe and teach.

Pentecost goes on to say,

“The existence of an entirely new age, which only interrupts temporarily God’s program for Israel, is one of our strongest arguments for the premillennial position. It is necessary for one who rejects that interpretation to prove that the church itself is the consummation of God’s program. To do so, he must prove that there is no new revealed program of God in this present age.”

Let us do this then. Let us show that the church is not an interruption, but rather the law is the interruption. Let us show that the church is the consummation of God’s program. First, let us note that this “temporary interruption” has been for 2,000 years. Two thousand years is not “temporary” to anyone. In fact, the Bible said the Lord will present the church to Himself as a spotless and holy bride (Eph 5:26, 27). The church is and will be the eternal companion of the Son. The only place the church is and continues to go is to the throne. The church is eternal, not temporary. The church is the eternal purpose of God, and it was for the church that Christ died (Eph 5:25). As the bride of Christ, the church and the Son become one flesh and one body (1Co 12:27).

The church is raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6) and is viewed by the Father in the same capacity as the Son. The same as a husband and a wife are viewed by God. She rules with Christ from His throne.

The church is the eternal purpose of God from the beginning of the world and is now the vessel that will reveal the manifold wisdom of God.

Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (emphasis added)

The eternal purpose is the church. The nation of Israel would bring the Messiah, the Son. That was that nation’s purpose (Rev 12). Israel would not rule except by becoming a part of the church (Rev 22 gates). This is exactly what the Bible says.

Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

It was the law that was added, not the church. The church was and is the eternal purpose of God. Pentecost said that to dispute his statement that we would need to prove some other “revealed

9 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 133

10 Ibid. page 136
program of God in this present age.” Does the above verses not do this? Is the church purposed in Christ by God eternal purpose to reveal the wisdom of God of God (Eph 3:11)?

“The human race was created in the image and likeness of God for one purpose: to provide an eternal companion for the Son. After the fall and promise of redemption through the coming Messiah, the Messianic race (Israel) was born and nurtured in order to bring the Messiah. And the Messiah came for one intent and only one: to give birth to His Church, thus to obtain His Bride. The Church, the called-out body of redeemed mankind, turns out to be the central object, the goal, not only of mundane history but of all that God has been doing in all realms, from all eternity.”

The nation of Israel is not the eternal purpose of God as the dispensational doctrine proclaims. The church is the eternal purpose. Israel’s purpose, Biblically, was to be the flesh through which Christ, the son of David, would come (Rom 9:5).

Thus the nation of Israel was to bring forth the Messiah through the flesh. Once accomplished, the Son would prepare His bride and set her into His throne for eternity. This is exactly what the book of Revelation shows concerning the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9-10).

The book of Revelation ends showing the Lamb’s wife as the church (Eph 5:25). Many people are taught that the city is ‘heaven’ where we go when we die. No, this city is the church, the Lamb’s wife, the present mother of us all (Gal 4:26). She is present in eternity after the resurrection, after the great white throne, after the books are opened, after the dragon is cast into the lake of fire, after everything is revealed that will ever happen; the wife is present, eternal and glorious! Where, one might ask, is Israel?

In attempting to obtain only an overview of the dispensational doctrine, much is being “skipped” over. One would do well to obtain some of John Darby’s writings. Also, the book referred to often here, Things To Come, by J. Dwight Pentecost, contains many quotes from those who propagate that doctrine. The cover of this book boasts that over 175,000 copies are in print. It has become the “reference manual” for the dispensationalist. It is used and referred to in nearly all denominational seminaries. It will be found in many pastors’ studies.

THIS PRESENT AGE

With the position that the program of God is centered around natural Israel, and the church is “annexed” into God’s program as only an “interruption,” the dispensationalist theology moves into its course for this present age. The contemporary, dispensational doctrine does acknowledge that the Greek word aion, usually translated as “world” in the King James Version, actually means “age.” The word “world” is found in the King James version 241 times and is translated from three base words. These three are kosmos, oikoumene, and aion. All agree that kosmos refers to the system of things. When oikoumene is used, it is a reference to the planet or inhabited earth. The use of aion means an “age” or a period of time.

The dispensational doctrine teaches that this present “age” began when Israel rejected the Messiah and will end either at the rapture or end at the end of the tribulation. The dispensational doctrine does place much emphasis upon the word aion and points out that the Bible refers to “this present age” and a “coming age.” The present age refers to the time of the writer. The coming age refers to the age to follow.

A problem occurs when a particular use of “age” is taken and thrust into the future when clearly it is a reference to the present (Mat 24:4). At the time of this usage, the Lord Jesus had walked out of the temple. He had been involved in a very heated and lengthy confrontation with the entire religious Jewish system. In this confrontation, He told them their entire religious system was going to be left desolate. His disciples were obviously amazed. Baffled, they pointed to the temple showing the Lord the absurdity of His statement about the temple’s destruction. Jesus told them it would happen with such devastation that not one stone would remain upon another. The disciples understood that Jesus was speaking about the termination of the present age (aion). They clearly understood that Jesus had been speaking about the present age (aion) to the Pharisees. We know they understood with clarity that this was the present age (aion) of the Jews. They did not ask Him about the end of the planet as the word “world” (oikoumene) insinuates and as we are most often taught. They questioned the Lord about this present age (aion).

11 Paul E. Billheimer, Destined For The Throne, page 22
Thus the entire chapter of Matthew 24 is concerning the end of Moses and that religious age. It does not refer to the coming age. The major point one must grasp is this chapter, Matthew 24, is where the term “great tribulation” is found (Mat 24:21). The “great tribulation” according to Jesus in Matthew 24:21, would end the age (aion) of Moses. The great tribulation has nothing to do with the next age, or the age that followed the age of Moses, other than the great tribulation took the kingdom from Israel giving it to another nation and ushered in our age today – church age.

The dispensationalist must have this great tribulation to make their doctrine work. They cannot allow it to have past. To prove their dispensational doctrine and how time will come to the future tribulation, two basic, doctrinal teachings are given. The first is the kingdom parables of Matthew 13. The second is the seven churches in Asia of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. In the Kingdom parables, the dispensational doctrine says that the seven kingdom parables in Matthew 13 are for natural Israel and not for the church. The seven letters to the seven churches in Asia are for the church and not for natural Israel.

Before going on, please note that the dispensational doctrine dangerously insinuates that the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ was for the Jews. He came, they say, to the “house of Israel,” and they can back that up with Scripture (Mat 10:5-6; 15:24).

It is pointed out by those who advance this doctrine that this was necessary for natural Israel’s rejection to manifest. The dangerous ingredient of this doctrine is that it tends to suggest that some of the teachings of Christ, such as Matthew 13, are not for Gentile believers, but are only for natural Israel and Jews. They say,

“The Gospel of Matthew is the Gospel which presents the Lord Jesus Christ as Jehovah’s King and Israel’s Messiah. It unfolds the presentation of the Messiah to Israel.”

We must reiterate that our attempt here is to reveal a doctrinal overview of the dispensationalists. Most people have never sat under a pure, dispensationalist instructor, meaning a teacher who believes and understands the entirety of this doctrine. Few have ever heard the kingdom parables taught as only a reference to natural Israel, although this is how the dispensational doctrine interprets them. What is basically taught in church settings is that the world will get so bad, because of the antichrist, that the Lord will rapture the church. We perceive that this is so the church will not experience the tribulation. This is not actually the route or thrust of the dispensationalist. Their purpose of the rapture is to remove the church, so the Lord God can force Israel to love Him. God will make things so bad on earth that they will turn again to Him. Their belief is based in natural Israel.

1. The Kingdom Parables

In these parables, the same pursuit is followed. That is that natural Israel is the elect, and the Gentiles and church are second-class stepchildren “annexed in” and only an “interruption.”

The first parable is the Sower and the Soils. The doctrinal position is mostly formed with the ending statement of Jesus as He teaches this parable. This statement is “...and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (Mat 13:8). The dispensationalists say this is proof that there is a depreciation in this age, until the only soil found in natural Israel is pathway. Of course, no mention is made of the way Jesus taught the parable. He began with pathway, and then moved to good soil. Also in that statement, the Lord’s point is all this soil (100, 60, 30) is productive soil. This is not bad soil. It has actually appreciated from pathway soil.

Nonetheless, this is the doctrinal position. Remember the doctrine is proving the need for a rapture and a tribulation. God (Jehovah) is obligated through unfulfilled, unconditional covenants to give Israel back all its land and to establish the throne of David in Jerusalem. This will happen during the tribulation week of Daniel, they say. However, for now, the nation becomes harder and harder, until the only alternative is a great tribulation combined with the evangelical prowess of 144,000 Jews.

The second parable is the Wheat and the Tares.

“There will be a judgment at the end of the age to separate the good from the evil. The good will be received into the millennial kingdom and the evil excluded... (1) the term children of the kingdom is used in Matthew to refer to Israel (Matt. 8:11, 12); (2) the judgment outlined relates to the time when God will again be dealing with Israel as a nation, that is, at the end of the age; and (3) the wheat and tares grow...
together until the judgment, but the church will be raptured before the tribulation begins; (4) the judgment that falls upon the wicked comes through the angels before this judgment; (5) the dispensational doctrine makes a huge issue of the fact that the statement “children of the kingdom” is a referral to Israel. Even a reference is made to Matthew 8:11,12.

Obviously, the verse was not read before giving it as a reference. It clearly says these children (Jews) shall be cast into outer darkness. Also, note Matthew 21:43 what Jesus spoke to those special children (Jews) of the kingdom.

The teaching of Jesus does not affirm that natural Israel will be exalted or preserved in the end. On the contrary, He expresses their expulsion from His kingdom.

In contrast to the kingdom already in existence, Pentecost said (prior) “…the millennial kingdom is set up immediately after this judgment.” The Lord clearly states that the offensive and those which do iniquity are “gathered out of His kingdom.” The kingdom is in existence when this happens. The kingdom does not begin after this happens. It has already begun.

The dispensational doctrine teaches this as the time in which “the church will be raptured, before the tribulation begins.” However, note it is not the righteous who are taken (raptured) out. It is the tares that are taken out! Plus, the kingdom is already established! The kingdom does not need to be established by a rapture. The kingdom is not awaiting a rapture. The tares are taken out of the kingdom that is already in existence.

The word aion is used in this parable (13:40). The Lord specifically said “this aion” (age). The word “this” would then be the end of the age of Moses. It would actually be Israel taken out and burned, and this happened in A.D. 70. The kingdom had been taken from them and given to another who would bring fruit.

The third parable is the Mustard Seed. The doctrine projects that from Israel’s small beginning, a great kingdom will grow. The entire world will benefit from this tiny seed.

The fourth parable is the Leaven Hidden in the Meal. Enough good leaven has been given (144,000) that its effect will leaven the entire nation.

The fifth parable is the Hidden Treasure. Again, natural Israel is projected as the hidden treasure set aside until the age is completed.

“The parable is showing that Christ has laid the foundation for Israel’s acceptance in this age, even though the age ends without His having appropriated His treasure. The treasure will be unearthed when He comes to establish His kingdom. Israel is now in blindness, but possessed.”

The problem here is the parable projects the purchase of the field for the immediate possession of the treasure. As already stated, the Lord’s treasure is the church, which is His wife (Rev 21:9, 10; Eph 5:25, 32). This, when realized, would project the Lord to be somewhat unfaithful if, in fact, the two (Israel and the church) are separate.

The treasure is not Israel. The treasure is clearly the kingdom.

The sixth parable is the Pearl. The doctrine projects the pearl as the church that is born through injury, but can only be His adornment by being lifted from the place it was formed. This would be the rapture as the church is removed prior to the tribulation. Let’s look at the passage.

Mat 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

Mat 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

The passage is a direct connection to the prior parable which is the Treasure Hidden. The Lord Jesus even said, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto…” Thus, it has the same answer and meaning as the previous parable. It is not Israel in one, and the church in the next.

The seventh parable is the Dragnet depicted by the dispensational doctrine as the nations (excluding Israel) who are the Wheat and the Tares. The unsaved are thrown away as the saved are taken into the kingdom. One important point the dispensationalist do not relate here is the righteous and the wicked are separated at one sitting. This is important in numbering the returns

13 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 146, 147
14 Ibid. page 149
of the Lord. The dispensationalist say there are at least two.

The Lord depicts one advent and one resurrection. The dispensationalists must have two advents and two resurrections. One resurrection at the rapture. Then another coming after the tribulation and the resurrection of the unjust. Jesus taught only one resurrection (John 5:28-29; 11:11; 11:24). Paul also taught one resurrection (Acts 24:15).

The dispensational doctrine projects a time moving toward the end of the age where the Jews (natural Israel) and Gentiles (church) are dealt with separately. An attempt is made to prove this in the kingdom parables of Matthew from the thought of αἰων. If this αἰων (age) is the same αἰων (age) of Matthew 24:3, then what Jesus is actually teaching is the end of the αἰορ (age) of Moses and the termination of the Jewish temple worship system.

2. The Seven Churches in Asia

According to the popular dispensational doctrine, the chapters of Revelation 1-3 are giving an overview of church life from the first century till the rapture of the church. Again, the program of God is in two parts – one for natural Israel and one for the church. Natural Israel works its way toward the end of time according to Matthew 13. The church works its way toward the end of time according to Revelation chapters 1-3.

This form of interpretation of the seven churches is taken from Revelation 1:19 where John is being instructed by the Son of man to write the Revelation.

Revelation 1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter

Here is the dispensational doctrinal position as given by Walter Scott.

“‘What thou hast seen’ refers to the vision of Christ just beheld (verses 12-16). ‘The things that are’ refer to the several successive, broadly-defined features of the professing Church and of Christ’s relation thereto, till its final rejection, not yet accomplished (chaps. 2 and 3). ‘The things that are about to be after these things.’ In this third division, the world and the Jews, and, we may add, the corrupt and apostate Church, i.e., that which is to be ‘spewed out,’ are embraced in this strictly prophetic part of the Apocalypse (4-22:5).”

15 Walter Scott, Exposition of the Revelation, page 50

Naturally, to project the doctrine, no reference is made to Revelation 1:1, and the many other Scriptures like it, which state that John was shown “things which must shortly come to pass.” (All these will be looked at many times in our study.)

The doctrine teaches that each church represents a specific time frame as we all march toward the tribulation. This march begins with the church at Ephesus and terminates with the church at Laodicea.

In this part of its doctrine, it touches on “eternal security.” Astonishingly, nearly all “eternal security” doctrinal churches are also dispensational. They teach a “once saved, always saved,” eternal-security message, but also they teach that the Laodicean church does not have eternal security. They really are not saved though they prayed a prayer of salvation, etc. Though the Laodicean church has done exactly what was necessary to be “once saved,” it is not really saved. This is because the doctrine here jumps back and selects Philadelphia as the real bride (More on this shortly.).

We do need to keep in mind that the doctrine pursues each church as a specific historic time. That is, until it reaches the Laodicean church. Here it will combine the Laodicean and the Philadelphian church.

Following is a list of the allocated times given in this doctrine. Remember that since the conception of this doctrine in the 1850’s, every generation claims to be the Laodicean generation. Today’s generation is no exception. You will hear something like, “The Lord could come at any minute.” Also in our list, placed in parenthesis will be the times of natural Israel according to Matthew 13 and an A.D. date.

Ephesus - Close of Apostolic Period (Sower and Soils; Pentecost to 100 A.D.)

Smyrna - Martyr-period through the last persecution under Diocletian (Wheat and Tares; Nero to 300 A.D.)

Pergamos - Time of Emperor Constantine through the seventh century (Mustard Seed; 300 to 800 A.D.)

Thyatira - Papal Church (Roman Catholic) and middle ages (Leaven; 800 to 1517 A.D.)

Appendix 10
Sardis - Protestantism and Reformation (Hidden Treasure; 1517 to last days)

Philadelphia - “Another Reformation, equally the work of God characterized the beginning of last century (Pearl; the last days)

Laodicea - The present general state of the professing Church which is one of lukewarmness is the most hateful and nauseous of any yet described. We may well term the last phase of church-history on the eve of judgment, the christless period.”

The dispensational doctrine argues the point that there is a clear differentiation between the ending of the age for Israel and the ending of the age for the church. This is absolutely correct. The only problem is that they are two separate ages which the dispensationalists refuse to see. The age for Israel ended as Jesus said it would. This transpired historically in A.D. 70. That was the desolation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple and associated worship.

No one will argue that the Day of the Lord for natural Israel is different from the last days of the church. The argument is that one has already happened, and that the other has not yet happened. How do we know that is true? Because the church is still going on. The temple of the Jews was destroyed in A.D. 70 and has never been rebuilt (and never will).

The student of the Word must contextually determine to which age (Moses or Messiah) the numerous passages of Scripture are referring. The writers of the New Testament epistles lived in the transitional generation which witnessed the literal termination of Moses and the beginning of the church. All the writings in our cannon of Scripture were done prior to A.D. 70. Thus the writers could as easily be speaking of the end of Israel, as they could be speaking of the time of the church. For example, James writes of the “last days,” clearly speaking of the last days of Israel. He refers to the rich who have condemned and killed the just. James speaks of the Lord’s coming as “soon” as he says, “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (Jam 5:8). Contextually, the quick or soon coming refers to the Lord’s coming upon Israel, who were killing the just. (Also see 2 Peter 2:1-22 as some return to Judaism as a dog returns to vomit. See also 3 Peter 3:3-6. Also Jude 1:1-25.)

Jam 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Must have a 70 A.D. End Time and Coming of the Lord

The trap is when a person does not have in one’s theology a coming of the Lord upon that first-century generation prior to the death of the apostles. Without this knowledge, every “end time” or “coming” passage is placed at the end of history, and not given the opportunity of possibly already being fulfilled. Thus we await a tribulation, when it has already taken place and fulfilled all that Jesus said it would.

Mat 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Mat 16:28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Mar 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The mark of the end of the Church time is the rejection of correct doctrine and the desire for teachers who will “scratch the itch” of their listeners. Never is the latter times of the church shown to end by tribulation.

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

2Ti 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

The dispensationalists project two separate programs for this present age. One is for natural Israel, and the other is for the church. One is projected from Matthew 13, attempting to show that natural Israel is heading for the great tribulation. The other is attempting to project from Revelation 2 and 3 that the church is heading for the rapture. This is the way the present and popular, contemporary, dispensational doctrine terminates this age.

F. THE RAPTURE

With the age completed by the arrival of the Laodiccan time, the dispensationalists see the rapture of the church. According to the pure dispensationalist, this event takes place prior to the

16 Walter Scott, At Hand, page 55-56
seventieth week of Daniel (see Daniel’s Seventy Weeks). Other dispensationalists see the rapture three and a half years into the tribulation. While others do not see it until after the seven years are complete.

This popular, dispensational, rapture doctrine was never heard of until the mid 1800’s. John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren began to propagate it, and this escape doctrine was accepted and it spread like wildfire in a dry forest. This doctrine was placed into Scofield’s Bible in the early 1900’s and was received as though it was the apostolic teachings from the first century. Though never taught by the apostles nor taught prior to 1850, church folk today declare that those who do not teach it are heretics.

There is one quote that dispensationalists attempt to use to say the “rapture” doctrine was present prior to the 1800’s. Gary DeMar writes,

“Hoping to seek historical validation for the pre-tribulation rapture, dispensationalists have turned to an obscure and questionable source, Pseudo-Ephraem (probably a seventh-century composition). While the sermon *On the Last Time, the Antichrist, and the Ed of the World* claims to be authored by Ephraem of Nisibis (306-73), no one really knows who wrote it or when it was written. Even so, pre-tribulationists believe that it contains ‘two protorapture statements.’ A appeal to Pseudo-Ephraem is an act of desperation by those in need of historical support for their position.”

Quoting from *Things To Come* by Dwight Pentecost, who was very familiar with this problem, we read the remarks of two scholars very opposed to the dispensational, rapture doctrine.

“About 1830... a new school arose within the fold of Premillennialism that sought to overthrow what, since the Apostolic Age, have been considered by all premillennialist as established results, and to institute in their place a series of doctrines that had never been heard of before. The school I refer to is that of ‘The Brethren’ or ‘Plymouth Brethren,’ founded by J. N. Darby.”

“Now, be it remembered, that prior to that date, no hint of any approach to such belief can be found in any Christian literature from Polycarp down... Surely, a doctrine that finds no exponent or advocate in the whole history and literature of Christendom, for eighteen hundred years after the founding of the Church - a doctrine that was never taught by a Father or Doctor of the Church in the past - that has no

17 Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 212-213


standard Commentator or Professor of the Greek language in any Theological School until the middle of the Nineteenth century, to give it approval, and that is without a friend, even to mention its name amongst the orthodox teachers or the heretical sects of Christendom - such a fatherless and motherless doctrine, when it rises to the front, demanding universal acceptance, ought to undergo careful scrutiny before it is admitted and tabulated as part of ‘the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.’”

Interestingly, Darby, nor Scofield, take credit for starting the doctrine. They simply began preaching it as though it had always been a part of apostolic doctrine. From where did it come? The attempt will be made to give a quick answer. Three books that everyone needs to have and read concerning this are: (1) *Whose Right It Is* by Kelly Varner published by Destiny Image; (2) *Seventy Weeks: The Historical Alternative* by Robert Caringola; and (3) *The Incredible Cover-Up* by Dave MacPherson. These books are well documented and show exactly where and how this doctrine began.

By reading these books, one will learn that this doctrine actually began in Scotland with a vision of a 15-year-old girl. The girl’s name was Margaret Macdonald. Margaret was not a member of any local church. She and her brothers visited around some and held some house meetings, but they were not faithful to any local assembly.

Kelly Varner writes,

“...it has been documented that Margaret was not baptized with the Spirit at the time of her ‘revelation.’ The pretribulation rapture teaching did not originate with an utterance of tongues. It is doubtful that the Macdonalds ever visited the charismatic revival taking place in Irving’s London congregation; however, Margaret privately sent handwritten copies of her Scripture-riddled ‘revelation’ to some leading clergymen, including Irving... Margaret’s eschatological views, the central theme of her spiritual manifestations, were well-known to those who visited her home, among them John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren. Copies of her vision were circulated, as men began to preach this rapture idea as gospel. Her ‘two-stage’ vision of the Lord’s coming was parroted in a prophecy by Mrs. J. D. Cardale (whose husband was leader of the Albury delegation to Scotland) on April 30, 1831, in a house meeting. The Cardales soon after joined Edward Irving’s church. Irving himself began to teach these ‘revelations’ at Powerscourt house in prophetic meetings. These sessions were attended

19 Robert Cameron, *Scriptural Truth About The Lord’s Return*, page 72-73, quoted from J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, page 165, 166
by some of the Plymouth Brethren, including John Darby and C. H. Mackintosh."

Thus, the beginning of the pretribulation rapture teaching. This was followed by the Scofield Bible, charts of the dispensations by Clarence Larkin, the Dake Anointed Bible, and the Ryrie Bible. It entered America in the early 1900's and was immediately accepted into the Pentecostal revival taking place. Amazingly, many of those who hold to this doctrine so tightly do not believe in visions nor prophecy by which this doctrine was birthed. Equally amazing, many Pentecostals who hold to teachings of Larkin and Scofield seem to not care that these men scorned, ridiculed, and taught against tongues and spiritual gifts. This doctrine found its acceptance in nearly every main-line denomination and is now erroneously viewed as “the gospel.”

To argue the point that this doctrine was never taught prior to the 1850’s, the dispensationalist will say something to the effect that because it was not taught does not mean it was not in the Scriptures. They build their belief upon the constant referrals of the New Testament to the soon return of the Lord. They say that the Pretribulation rapture teaching is the only position consistent with the doctrine of Imminence [any moment return]. After commenting on the above, Dwight Pentecost says,

“It was not until the last century that the field of Eschatology became a matter to which the mind of the church was turned.”

He then admits it was not a first-century doctrine. He makes this statement even though, in the same paragraph, he has spoken of the consistent doctrine of imminence the first-century church taught.

1. Doctrine of Imminence

As only briefly mentioned earlier, the coming of the Lord and the Advent of the Lord are two entirely separate issues. The dispensationalists do not separate these except to have a coming for the rapture and then an Advent at the end of the tribulation. The coming and Advent are only separated by them to prove their doctrine. (In actuality, their doctrine requires two Adavnts, for they teach two resurrections. Biblically, the resurrection only happens at the Advent.)

A few quotations will help us understand the position of the dispensationalists. Then we will give an argument. Thiessen says,

“...they held not only the premillennial view of Christ’s coming, but also regarded that coming as imminent. The Lord had taught them to expect His return at any moment, and so they looked for Him to come in their day. Not only so, but they also taught His personal return as being immediately... We may say, therefore, that the early Church lived in the constant expectation of their Lord, and hence was not interested in the possibility of a Tribulation period in the future.”

Martin Luther wrote,

“I believe that all the signs which are to precede the last days have already appeared. Let us not think that the Coming of Christ is far off; let us look up with heads lifted up; let us expect our Redeemer’s coming with longing and cheerful mind.”

Though Luther did look for the coming, he did not anticipate nor teach a pretribulation rapture. Martin Luther lived from 1483-1546. All Luther’s remarks prove is that Luther was wrong if he interpreted Scriptures to say the Lord’s return was imminent in 1500. Nearly 500 years have passed, and no Advent has transpired. (We absolutely do not want to sound arrogant toward a church father such as Martin Luther or any saint. The point is Luther’s failure to separate between the coming and the Advent.)

Similarly, Hugh Latimer is referred to by dispensationalists. Latimer was a church reformer who was born in 1485 and who died in 1555 as a martyr. Latimer said,

“All these excellent and learned men whom, without doubt, God has sent into the world in these latter days to give the world warning, do gather out of the Scriptures that the last days cannot be far off. Preadventure it may come in my day, old as I am, or in my children’s days.”

Again, all this actually proves is that not only was Latimer in error concerning the imminent return, but also “all these excellent and learned men” to which Latimer refers were in error. Nearly half a millennium has passed with no Advent nor rapture. (Latimer did not advocate the rapture. He taught the Advent.)

There is an obvious problem. The problem comes in separating the coming from the Advent. The

20 Kelly Varner, Whose Right It Is, page 148, 149

21 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 166

22 Henry C. Thiessen, Will The Church Pass Through The Tribulation? page 15
Scriptural separation is easily seen once the reader has the understanding that the coming dealt with the desolation of natural Israel, and the Advent deals with the resurrection. Only a few Scriptures will be necessary to establish this vital truth. Without this truth, one will fall into the delusion of the dispensationalists and make the same errors as they have.

Jesus speaks of His “coming” in Matthew 16:27 and in Mark 8:38. He is coming in clouds of glory as the Son of man. Contemporary dispensational doctrine will push this to the end of time, i.e. the end of the seventieth week of Daniel and to the Advent. However, both of these verses are followed by a statement from Jesus showing that He is absolutely not talking about the Advent which is at the end of time. Jesus said that some of His disciples that were standing there with Him at that moment would be alive when He came in this “coming.”

Mat 16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
Mat 16:28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.
Mar 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.
Mar 9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (emphasis added)

Because of the dispensational teachings, such verses are interpreted to mean the end of time when they have actually already been fulfilled. They must have been fulfilled. If not the Lord was confused, and all know that He was not! This “coming” was upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Some of the disciples were alive! They saw it.

Jesus told the High Priest that the the High Priest personally would see the Son of man coming in the clouds.

Mat 26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

The entire chapter of Matthew 24 is about this coming which was upon natural Israel. This coming was the sign for which the disciples were told to look (Mat 24:3; 24:30) that would indicate that the age of Moses had ended and the kingdom of Christ had begun. When the scriptures speak of a soon coming, the writers are referring to the coming upon Jerusalem that ended Moses and instituted the Christ.

The New Testament was written by a transitional generation who wrote prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. They wrote of the coming and the Advent. The coming was imminent (any moment). The Advent was seen as “latter times” and “last day.” The Advent was taught as the resurrection when the dead would rise at the last trump and the last day (1Co 15:51-55; 1Th 4:15-17; Joh 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48).

The doctrine of Imminence must include the coming of the Lord referred to in the context of soon or quickly. This Imminence always refers to the coming upon natural Israel. The Advent is the return of Christ and the resurrection of the just and the unjust who must respond to His voice (Joh 5:28-29; Act 24:15).

This interpretation will allow one to interpret the Scriptures in the same manner the writers of the Scriptures intended. One will not need the seventy weeks (to which the New Testament writers never referred). One will not need to wait for the Laodicean church (which the New Testament writers did not tell us to do. If the Laodicean church was necessary, then the first century would have experienced the rapture. They literally had this church.). One will not need a tribulation (which the New Testament writers did not tell us we would have. The tribulation was for the coming and not for the Advent.). The reader of the Scriptures needs to investigate contextually and determine if the writer is referring to the coming upon natural Israel or to the Advent.

A very interesting aspect of the dispensational doctrine is its recognition of “impending persecution of the church” for the first century. They even site passages (John 15:18-25; 16:1-4; 1 Peter 2:19-25; 4:12; James 1:2-4; 5:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10; 2 Timothy 3:10-14; 4:5), but then ignore the absolute destruction of Israel as an aspect of the coming of Jesus. The seventy weeks of Daniel is not mentioned by the New Testament writers. They did not believe in a pretribulation rapture and seven years in the air.

Even Pentecost writes,
“Evidently the writers of the epistles had no knowledge that the church would endure the seventieth week, for they certainly would have given help and guidance to meet the most severe persecution men will ever have known, since they were concerned with giving help for the persecutions of a past day.”

Please do not miss what Pentecost is saying. He is acknowledged as a leader of the dispensational doctrine today. His book is its textbook. He says here that “Evidently the writers of the epistles had no knowledge that the church would endure the seventieth week...” The seventieth week is that doctrine’s seven years of tribulation. Pentecost says that Paul, Peter, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, James, the author of Hebrews, and Jude did not know about the seven-year tribulation! They did not know about the seven-year tribulation? They did not know about the event that would end the age according to the dispensational doctrine? Come on now.

The dispensational teacher does not (or will not) see that the destruction of Jerusalem and all of the nation of Israel as a termination of that house and covenant. If they did, they would be admitting that the entire doctrine is false. They must reestablish God’s relation with Israel, and they must have a tribulation to do it. The church must be removed, for it is not mentioned in the Abrahamic, Palistenian, or Davidic covenant as such.

With the two thoughts projected--the origin of the pretribulation rapture theory and the doctrine of Imminence--we should now be open to investigate the different rapture theories.

2. Pretribulation Rapture

This is by far the most popular of all the contemporary teachings of our day. It is contemporary for it was not heard of until the 1830’s. Its name shows that it demands a tribulation. Without a tribulation, there is no need for this rapture. It is based upon the seventieth week of Daniel. It teaches that the Lord comes. The resurrection of saints happens. The resurrected saints and the church are removed from the planet into some place in the air and clouds for the seven years. During these seven years, the great tribulation is poured out by God upon natural Israel and all the wicked. It finds the seven years from the seventieth week of the book of Daniel 9 (not from the Revelation). It finds it’s rapture from Daniel’s seventieth week, but there is no rapture there. No rapture is mentioned in Daniel 9. It finds its rapture from 1 Thessalonians 4 (not from the Revelation). Of course, no tribulation is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4. It finds its judgments of tribulation from the Revelation. Of course, no rapture is mentioned, nor is seven years mentioned in the Revelation. (This usually surprises people to discover that of all the sevens of Revelation, there is no seven years). Let me say again that the dispensational doctrine finds its tribulation in Daniel 9. However Daniel does not mention a rapture. The doctrine finds its rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4. However there is not tribulation there.

This dispensational doctrine makes the point that the entire body of Christ is raptured, but then contradicts itself by saying those in the Laodicean church cannot participate. Although they have “prayed the sinners prayer” and “confessed” and done what others did to be saved, they are not raptured for they actually are not a part of the true body who really accepted Jesus.

Discussing the dilemma of the Laodicean church and its sickness effects on the Lord, Pentecost says

“The only alternative is to see that the true church terminates with the Philadelphia church, which is removed from the earth according to the promise of Revelation 3:10 before the tribulation begins, the false professing church from which the true has been separated by rapture, is left behind, rejected by the Lord, and vomited out into the seventieth week to reveal the true nature of her profession so that such may be rejected justly by the Lord.”

So much for the dispensational doctrine of eternal security and once saved, always saved. Earlier in his book Things To Come, Pentecost accused the “Partial Rapture” people of not understanding the “value of the death of Christ as it frees the sinner from condemnation and renders him acceptable to God.” Now, to make the doctrine work, all that changes.

3. The Two Purposes Of the Rapture

1. The rapture will allow the seventieth week of Daniel to begin. This will be followed by the ministry of Elijah (Mal 4:5-6).
The doctrine recognizes that John the Baptist came to prepare the people for the king whom they rejected. Luke 1:17 and Mark 9:12-13 is referenced, but only in an attempt to show that this was not to prepare the people for the great and terrible day of the Lord. Elijah must literally come before their tribulation. This will be fulfilled in Revelation 11. Repeating this once again to make positive this was communicated, the dispensational doctrine says that John the Baptist was not the fulfillment of Elijah. John the Baptist was rejected by Israel. So dispensationalists say he could not be the Elijah of Malachi because the Elijah of Malachi will not be rejected (I not agree). John was rejected by apostate religion, but loved and accepted as a prophet by the people (Mat 21:26). The doctrine says John prepared the way for Christ, but not for the great and terrible day of the Lord, i.e. the great tribulation.

The problem with that is that Jesus clearly said that John the Baptist was Elijah that was to come.

Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Mat 17:11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Mat 17:12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

Jesus never mentioned another Elijah coming. Amazingly, in Revelation 11, they will again reject Elijah and kill him (if Revelation 11 is speaking about Elijah). He will lay in the streets three days, but this time the Lord will go through with His program. Consequently, the first of the two purposes of the Rapture is so the 70 weeks of Daniel can begin by the sending of Elijah.

The second purpose of the rapture is to remove the “true church” from the hour of temptation. Revelation 3:10 is used as a reference by the dispensationalist.

Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Revelation 3:10 is part of the letter written to the church at Philadelphia. As already seen, this doctrine uses each church to show a specific time frame. That is, until it reaches the Philadelphia and the Laodicean churches. Then the doctrine groups these together to show the state of the church at the “rapture” coming. Concerning the rapture, Laodicea will not be raptured, and Philadelphia will be raptured.

The doctrine interprets “them that dwell upon the earth” as those separate from the church. The hour will come upon those who are earthly and not heavenly. Scofield attempts to prove the church is removed by showing there are no Scriptures concerning the tribulation written to the church. Scofield writes,

“One would think that the interpretation of Scofield’s above point would be to prove that tribulation was not to be a part of the program for the church--beginning, during, or termination. However, that is not the way he projects it. His projection is that if not mentioned, then the church would be raptured prior to it.

The argument, again, is the fact that this doctrine must have its tribulation. The great tribulation it anticipates has already happened. Rather than it restoring Israel as the dispensational doctrine says, the tribulation laid Israel desolate as Jesus said.

In looking at this “hour of temptation,” the word “temptation” is peirasmos (Greek) and means “a putting to proof.” It does not mean tribulation. The dispensational doctrine never makes the statement that the church is too weak to go through the hour. Many preachers preach it as such, but that is not in the fabric of the doctrine. In the fabric of the doctrine, the church is removed from the earth so Israel can be reestablished covenantally. This is for the purpose of God eventually fulfilling all the unfulfilled aspects of His covenant that He did not fulfill previously.

Pentecost, as he writes his doctrine on the pretribulation rapture, again makes his statement that the church is an interruption.

“The church is manifestly an interruption of God’s program for Israel, which was not brought into being until Israel’s rejection of the offer of the Kingdom. It must logically follow that this mystery program must itself be brought to a conclusion before God can resume His dealing with the nation Israel as has been shown previously He will

26 C. I. Scofield, Will the Church Pass Through the Great Tribulation?, page 11
do. The mystery program which was so distinct in its inception, will certainly be separate at its conclusion. This program must be concluded before God resumes and culminates His program for Israel. This mystery concept of the church makes a pretribulation rapture a necessity."

The centrality of the dispensational doctrine is the necessity of the Lord God to reestablish His relationship and covenant with natural Israel. The church is an “interruption.” The church, according to Pentecost, is “annexed in” and must be terminated so that God can finish His covenantal promises with Israel. These promises basically include the land allotment and the throne of David. A tribulation is necessary to provide a place in time for these fulfillments to happen.

Obviously, this is not what most contemporary Christians “think” they believe. Nor do they “think” this is what their pastor or instructor believes. However, this is what they believe if they believe in this rapture. Even if they are not specifically taught this, it is still what they are embracing. This is what their instructor believes especially if he or she attended a contemporary dispensational Bible school. The instructor believes this even if they do not speak this. The reason they believe this is because this is the grounds for the rapture which they believe will happen.

4. The Holy Spirit Removed, but Not Exactly!

This dispensational doctrine believes and teaches that the Holy Spirit must be removed, but not totally. It sites 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 as its reference (only reference).

The doctrine interprets “what withholdeth” of verse 6 and the “he be taken out of the way” in verse 7 as the Holy Spirit. No one has given the reason yet why Paul simply did not say Holy Spirit if that was what Paul meant. The doctrine says that the Holy Spirit must be “taken out of the way” so “that Wicked be revealed” (v. 8). Then all the things recorded in the Revelation 4-18 can take place. The dispensationalists say that the Holy Spirit is preventing the purpose of Satan from coming to culmination. The Holy Spirit must be removed.

However, the doctrine faces a huge problem. People on the earth will be saved during the seven years of tribulation without the Holy Spirit’s presence. That would be feasible if only a prayer is necessary for salvation. But the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit must seal the believer and dwell within the believer making the believer the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co 3:16, 19; Eph 2:21, 22; Joh 7:39; 14:26).

The problem of the Holy Spirit being removed from the earth during the tribulation and people being “saved” is adjusted by those who teach this doctrine. Here is what they teach.

“It should be noted that the Holy Spirit does not cease His ministries with the removal of the church, nor does He cease to be omnipresent, with her removal, but the restraining ministry does cease.”

The doctrine is adjusted. Now, the Holy Spirit is not actually “taken out of the way.” He just doesn’t restrain any longer.

One must ask why Paul said the restrainer would then “be taken out” if that was not actually what Paul meant? Also, where did Paul, or anyone else, give instructions that the Holy Spirit restrained the revealing of “the man of sin.” The Lord, giving the disciples the ministry of the Holy Spirit said, “he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). The word “reprove” means “admonish; to convey disapproval gently but earnestly.” It does not mean restrain any person from being revealed.

To address this doctrine, we must ask ourselves and those who propagate it, “How do people get ‘saved’ during the tribulation?” Also, note that this doctrine views the 144,000 Jews being saved and then converting the entire nation. It also views the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7:9) being ‘saved’ during this tribulation as well. How does this happen?

The answer--are we ready? Animal sacrifices. That is correct. Faith through animal sacrifices and not only during the tribulation, but also during the millennium. There is another way into heaven after all. Even though Jesus said that He is the door and the way, this doctrine has found another way.

Before we take a look at the reinstitution of the animal sacrifices and the temple, it must be inserted that the removal of the Holy Spirit and salvation through any other way is absolutely contrary to Biblical teachings. Peter said on the

27 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 201

28 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 205
day of Pentecost that in the last days the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon ALL flesh. The Lord is not about to remove Him (Act 2:16-21).

Until the very last moment of the very last day, the Holy Spirit will be present. God does not have two programs going on, that is, one for Israel and one for the church. The church is not “annexed in” as an “interruption of God’s program for Israel.” There are not two programs going on. The middle wall of partition is broken down by the work of Jesus Christ making the Jew and the Gentile one (Eph 2:14).

This doctrine simply shows the lack of respect for the church which Jesus died for (Eph 5:25). It shows the lack of respect for the blood of Jesus by reinstating animal sacrifices, and it definitely shows the lack of respect for the Holy Spirit by the doctrinal teaching to remove the Holy Spirit or His power to operate within the believer. The Biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit’s coming is to empower the believer to be a witness in the earth (Act 1:8).

There is no power to witness for Jesus without the Holy Spirit being received. It must be remembered that most who defend this doctrine do not believe the Holy Spirit fills and empowers today as He did in the first century. The dispensational doctrine does not need the Holy Spirit for the empowerment that those need who proclaim the same Holy Spirit of the first century. To those who believe in a total walk in the Holy Spirit, existing without Him is impossible, as is this doctrine.

5. The Temple

With the removal of the church, which is the temple of God, another temple must be established. Before the tribulation, according to the dispensational doctrine, a temple is built where animal sacrifices are reinstated. We will attempt to wade through this aspect of this doctrine as quickly as possible.

With the church and the Holy Spirit removed, God can now focus on His relationship with the nation of Israel. Walvoord writes of the dispensational theory of the time during the tribulation,

“...seems to revert back to Old Testament conditions in several ways; and in the Old Testament period, saints were never permanently indwelt except in isolated instances... Taking all the factor into consideration, there is no evidence for the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in believers in the tribulation.”

Thus the dispensational doctrine reverts back to Old Testament conditions. God will go back to the use of animal sacrifices to work salvation for the individual and for the nation.

The doctrine attempts to point out that it is not faith in the blood of the animal, but rather faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Supposedly as a person sacrificed an animal, they were thinking upon Jesus. Another quote may help.

“By the presentation of a sacrifice and by the placing of the hand upon the head of the victim, the offender acknowledged his sin before God and entered intelligently into an arrangement in which a substitute died in the sinner’s place. Though, as stated in Hebrews 10:4 - ‘it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins’ - God did, nevertheless, provide a release for the offender, but with the expectation on His own part that a righteous ground for such release would eventually be secured by the one sacrificial death of His Son, which death the animal-slaying typified”

Thus animal sacrifices are reinstated which work salvation not only for the Jews, but, as the dispensational doctrine teaches, for the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7:9).

One would ask, “Why could it not be simply by faith in the blood of Jesus, rather than the need to reinstitute the sacrificial Old Testament system?” The answer is because the Lord God is reestablishing His covenant(s) with Israel. These covenants, according to the dispensationalists, have not been yet fulfilled, i.e. land, seed, and king. For God to fulfill His part, natural Israel must continue in its part which was the sacrificial system.

This is not as amazing (at least to me) as the following teaching: during the millennium, with Jesus sitting upon the throne in His temple, the animal sacrifices continue. Amazing, is it not? This doctrine is formulated from Ezekiel chapters 40-46.

“We have here a prediction of the temple that shall be built in the millennial age. This appears a fitting and intelligent sequel to the preceding prophecies.”


30 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV, 372
Matthew 24 is considered a “prediction” by Jesus of what shall happen to Jerusalem at the end of the tribulation. The temple used during the tribulation will be destroyed. Gaebelein says,

“The Olivet discourse of our Lord is a prediction of how the Jewish age will end.”

At the Advent, a new temple will be built upon a very high mountain in the middle of the square.

“The temple itself would be located in the middle of this square [the holy oblation] (and not in the city of Jerusalem), upon a very high mountain, which will be miraculously made ready for that purpose when the temple is to be erected. This shall be ‘the mountain of Jehovah’s house,’ established upon the ‘top of the mountain’ and ‘exalted above the hills,’ into which all nations shall flow (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:1-4; Eze 37:26). Ezekiel gives the picture in chapter 37, verse 27; ‘My tabernacle also shall be with them.’”

The argument of the dispensationalists is that this specific temple described by Ezekiel was never constructed. It must be constructed because the dispensational interpretation must be literal. Within this temple structure will be the altar for animal sacrifices. Remember, the dispensationalists are teaching of the millennial kingdom.

“This inner court area is reached by eight steps (40:37), so that it is elevated above the outer court. Adjacent to the north gate in this area, there were eight tables for preparing sacrifices (40:40-43)... The center of this area is occupied by an altar (40:47; 43:13-17) where sacrifices are offered.”

Is it not interesting that those today who teach the rapture and the millennium never teach this part of the doctrine? Some may say, “I believe in the rapture and in the millennium kingdom, but I don’t believe this sacrifice of animal part.” Though they may say they do not embrace it, they must. In fact, the rapture happens not to remove the church from the tribulation, but to force natural Israel into belief. Israel’s covenant must be reestablished. They may not know their doctrine is based and founded upon this belief, but it is.

This temple system in Ezekiel will reinstitute all that Moses taught. In the middle of all the description of the temple and sacrifice and priest ministry, we find the throne (Eze 43:7).

The dispensational doctrine has the Lord upon the throne inside the temple and animal sacrifices going on outside the temple. This is justified by statements such as this:

“It is not sacrifice, of course, rendered with a view of obtaining salvation, but sacrifice commemorative of an accomplished salvation maintained in the presence of the revealed glory of Jehovah.”

The doctrine attempts to say that the sacrifices are not for sin. Yet the very passages they use to prove the reconstruction of the temple condemn them. The Bible clearly says these sacrifices are for sin offerings and burnt offerings (Eze 40:38, 39, 42; 42:13; 43:19, 21, 22, 24, 25; 44:11, 27, 29; 45:15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25; 46:2, 4, 12, 13, 15, 20). Below are a few of these Scriptures:

Eze 42:13 ...there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place is holy.

Eze 43:19 And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering.

Eze 43:21 Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary.

Eze 43:25 Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish.

Not only is the sacrificial system reestablished, but also we see the reestablishing of the Levitical Priesthood (43:19). Thus, the dispensational doctrine also does away with the Melchisedec priesthood of Heb 7:11 and 6:20.

The pretribulation-rapture theory projects and builds itself on such doctrine. The Holy Spirit is removed. The church is removed. The entire Jewish nation is evangelized along with the multitude of Gentiles from all the nations. All this is accomplished through the reestablishing of animal sacrifices. What a fantastic doctrine!

6. Midtribulation Rapture

The midtribulation rapture theory is similar to the pretribulation theory. This theory is not as popular as the pretribulation theory. The primary

31 James M. Gray, *Christian Worker’s Commentary*, page 266


34 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, page 515

difference is that the church is not raptured for the entire seven years of tribulation. The church must go through the first three-and-one-half years. Its doctrinal basis is the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15. This is interpreted to be in agreement with the “last trump” spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The seventh trumpet of Revelation, according to this doctrine, aligns with the last trumpet.

Harrison says,

“This should moreover save us from the common mistake of speaking of the Tribulation as a seven-year period. The Bible never so refers to it; rather, it begins in the middle of the seven. It is the latter three and a half years. All that leads up to it Jesus refers to as merely ‘the beginning of sorrows.’”

Even dispensationalists know that no scripture in our Bible says a tribulation will last seven years. Someone needs to tell Norman Harrison that there is not one that says any future tribulation will last 3 1/2 years either.

Concerning the trumpet, Harrison says,

“St. Paul, by inspiration of the Spirit, definitely places the Resurrection and the Rapture of the saints through the coming of Christ ‘at the last trumpet’ (1 Cor. 15:5, 52). This is a specific locating of the event. Unquestionably the Holy Spirit revealed the fact and inspired the recording of it. How dare any one locate it otherwise.”

Harrison is correct in that the Bible never refers to the tribulation as a seven-year period. If one is going to go with a tribulation, then the “last trumpet” or “seventh trumpet” should be considered.

7. Post-tribulation Rapture

This theory says that the church will go through the tribulation. Naturally, it does not have a very large following. It sites such Scripture references as “He that overcometh shall...” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). Also the “shall be saved” passages are a favorite with an emphasis on enduring to the end (Mat 10:22; 24:13). This doctrine believes the Lord will come only in the Advent which will be at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel. At that time, the rapture will take place, and the church will meet the Lord in the air.

8. The Partial Rapture

This rapture is not concerned with the seventieth week. It is dependent upon the level of maturity to which people have reached. This doctrine holds that only those who have arrived at a level of spiritual growth will experience the rapture. Those who have prepared spiritually will experience the rapture. Those who have not prepared will suffer the tribulation.

The Scriptures used to back this doctrine are those like Matthew 24:37-42. Two are doing the same objective, but one has obtained to a superior level and is taken either by the rapture or taken to the tribulation.

As easily observed, all the raptures depend upon a tribulation. The tribulation provides the location for the seventieth week of Daniel which will drive the nation of Israel back to the Lord God. The true Church and Holy Spirit are removed. During the seven years, those of the church are judged for their works and given their rewards. The marriage of the Lamb and the bride takes place. The marriage supper will not happen until the Advent when the guest (nation of Israel) can come. The millennium will establish the nation of Israel to its correct place over all the nations as Christ sits upon the throne of David. The temple of Ezekiel’s vision will become the location within the nation of Israel to which all nations will flow in worship of the King and Lord.

How will people worship and adore the Lord and Father? By animal sacrifice. How will your grandchildren’s sins be forgiven? By animal sacrifice. This is the doctrine of the millennium which the dispensationalists teach.

“It is not sacrifice, of course, rendered with a view of obtaining salvation, but sacrifice commemorative of an accomplished salvation maintained in the presence of the revealed glory of Jehovah.”

G. METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

According to the dispensationalists, the primary problem causing the different views of Scripture lies in the area of interpretation. This is far greater than only the difference in the rapture views. This, they say, is the reason they find a tribulation, and a millennium to come and the amillennialist do not.

The form of interpretation to which they hold and in which they take pride is a literal form. The

36 Norman B. Harrison, The End, page 229

37 Ibid. page 75

38 Merrill F. Unger, The Temple Vision of Ezekiel, Bibliotheca Sacra, 106:63
theological title is the “grammatical historical” method. The method of interpretation they accuse all others of using is a spiritual method. The theological title for this method is the “allegorical” method.

We will first attempt to define the two. Then a short discussion will follow with an attempt to give some examples of each.

The Literal Method (grammatical historical)
This method of interpreting Scriptures attempts to interpret every word in an exact meaning. This is a verbatim definition that strictly and factually gives a word-for-word interpretation. Any use of metaphors or allegories is rejected.

The Allegorical Method (spiritual)
“A literary, dramatic, or pictorial device in which characters and events stand for abstract ideas, principles, or forces, so that the literal sense has or suggests a parallel, deeper symbolic sense.”

The dispensationalists define it this way.
“Allegorism is the method of interpreting a literary text that regard the literal sense as the vehicle for a secondary, more spiritual and more profound sense.”

The fear of the dispensationalists is that Scriptures become perverted by the allegorical method.
“It would seem that the purpose of the allegorical method is not to interpret Scripture, but to pervert the true meaning of Scripture, albeit under the guise of seeking a deeper or more spiritual meaning.”

The dispensationalists claim that the allegorical method ignores the literal and historical sense of Scriptures to maintain a religious view or doctrine.
Those who defend the allegorical method fear that the literalists do not extract the true meaning of a passage by refusing to observe figurative language.
Both methods of interpretation have been in existence from the beginning. Both methods were used by both Old and New Testament writers. To disqualify either would be erroneous. Speakers and writers will over extend a word, a verse, a passage, or a book in accordance with their personal views. This is true for both the literalists and the allegorists. This should not be difficult for any to agree with.

With this acknowledged, the weight, then, is not upon the speaker or the writer. The weight is upon the listener and reader. It is the listener and reader who must discern if truth is being spoken or written.

Jesus was asked once how a person could inherit eternal life. The Lord answered with a question and said, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (Luk 10:26) [NIV]. The major problem is not methods of interpretation. The major problem is people do not read the Word of God for themselves. Interestingly, the Lord Himself shifted the responsibility of interpretation back to the person. “What is written. How do you read it?”

1. Examples
We must interpret literally, and we must interpret allegorically. It is imperative to search out word meanings from Hebrew and Greek. It is imperative to grasp the historical meaning of a passage. It is imperative to avoid, at all cost, any religious view that could pervert a Scripture. At the same time, it is imperative not to place everything in the past or in the future. This is the danger for the literalists. Literalism has a tendency to make the Word of God of no effect. According to this view only a very small portion is for today’s believer.

According to the literalism of the dispensationalist, the Old Testament is for past generations except for reinstating the temple and sacrifices. All the New Testament is for past generations, including the gifts of the Spirit except the very last few verses of Revelation 3 and chapters 4-22. We live in a time of the Laodicean church—waiting, just waiting. We cannot do much except attempt to stop sinning and try to get people to pray the sinner’s prayer. Other than that, we just wait. Everything else is for the future or the past. Finally, one day in the future, the rapture will happen and the tribulation will begin.

There must be an allowance to make the Scriptures alive for today. What good are they if a person cannot apply them today? I find the Apostle Paul making all the Scriptures applicable, even allegorical. Read the following Scripture, please.

Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. (emphasis added)
Paul, teaching covenants, uses Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac as an allegory, and even calls it such. The dispensationalists say the apostles only used the allegory this once. Because it only happened once we, according to the literalist, are not given permission to interpret this way. Others may see it the opposite way. Because it was done, then we do have permission to interpret this way.

The dispensationalists are correct in that the word “allegory” is found only once. But Paul used this form of interpretation again and again. In 1 Corinthians he said that all the things which happened to Israel are for our examples and written in the Old Scriptures for our admonition (1Co 10:11).

When Paul said this, he had just allegorized Israel’s exodus from Egypt and their rebellion in the wilderness, making all of that applicable for the Corinthians. It was not simply some historic fact that could not be used for a deeper, spiritual teaching. It was an example in allegorical form.

Jesus taught in parables. A parable is slightly different from an allegory. An allegory uses a factual incident and makes it mean a deeper, applicable lesson. A parable is not necessarily factual, though it could be, and is intended to teach a deeper applicable lesson. In parables, the Lord would use an allusion quotation to make an applicable teaching. For example, the parable of the Tenants is an allusion to Isaiah 5. Isaiah’s parable concerned the doom of Israel in the upcoming captivity. The Lord’s parable concerned the doom of Israel to the upcoming desolation by Rome. He took an Old Testament historic fact and made it applicable for those to which He spoke by using allegory. The Lord constantly did this. The Prodigal Son, the Vine and the Branches, etc. are taken from historic allusions made applicable.

With strict literalism Scriptures become absurd and brainless. For example, John the Baptist referred to Jesus as “the Lamb of God” (Joh 1:36). In the strict literalist view of this verse, Jesus has become a barnyard animal. If their laws of interpretation are followed, then this cannot be spiritualized or made into an allegory which will make this lamb applicable. Of course, it is not translated this way by even literalists. Everyone knows the Lamb of God is Jesus Christ.

When one studies the accusations of the literalists toward the allegorists, it seems the “pot is calling the kettle black”. The literalists seem to be the ones adapting their interpretation to their religious views. This brings us to the point we need to see.

Especially in the study of the Revelation, the literalist interpretations are absurd. Falling stars must be falling stars. Mountains on fire and cast into the sea must be mountains on fire and cast into the sea. The locust of Revelation 9 are locusts. They can be a new breed of locusts or demon possessed locusts, but nonetheless locusts. They have teeth like a lion, and hair like a woman, and the face of a man, and the tail of a scorpion, and armor like a war horse, but they are locusts. That is, unless the literalist decide John is attempting to describe warfare 2000 years later. Then the locusts become helicopters or soldiers wearing gas masks. The person who can utilize allegory will see the same passage and connect it with the plague of locust sent from God which came upon Egypt. A fact that happened but that has deeper meaning. Locusts are connected with the armies spoken of in Joel sent to attack Israel. Locusts are a part of the curse of the covenant that was supposed to come upon Israel if it rebelled.

To the literalists, the 144,000 Jews are just that. They cannot be numbered 139,999, nor 144,001. These Jews will appear upon top of a huge mountain (Zion literal) that will miraculously appear in Israel. They will have the seal of God on their heads and will evangelize the world without the help of the Holy Spirit. They will convince people all over the earth to do animal sacrifices to a God who is killing people and burning up the world with falling stars and burning hail. To the person who can allegorize, the 144,000 represent the perfect Israel--all tribes and people, men and women, equal. They are the Jews who receive Jesus Christ, who alone can make them perfect. The scattering winds of Roman slavery and destruction are held back until they can be sealed by the Holy Ghost and water baptism. Nothing could happen to Jerusalem until the gospel of the kingdom was preached first to Israel. Once marked and that gospel preached, they are removed from Jerusalem and from Israel as the Roman armies come in (like locusts) to destroy the apostate,
religious system. They are moved to Mount Zion, the church, (Heb 12:22) where they are with the Lamb.

This is sufficient for this time. Simply remember that the reason the Revelation has become space ships, and atomic warfare is because the literalist refuse to interpret allegorically (unless they want to). The only reason the whole world is not filled with their leaven is because some refuse to buy into that stupidity.

H. THE CHURCH DURING THE RAPTURE

Though referred to earlier, it is necessary to discuss what the dispensational doctrine teaches concerning the church during the seven-year or 3 1/2 year rapture. After the temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem, the rapture of the church will happen. Then tribulation will begin as the seals are opened, the trumpets sound, the vials are poured out, and the church goes through several experiences.

1. The Place

The location of all that is to happen during the seven years (or 3 1/2) is “the air.” It is well known that people think the 7 year time of the rapture will be spent on streets of gold beside the crystal river, but that is not what the dispensationalists actually teach. They teach this 7 year period will happen in the “air.” This place in the air is referred to as “heaven,” but they honestly do not teach that the New Jerusalem is heaven (see quote below). In the air, the church will meet the Lord. In the air, the judgment seat of Christ will take place. In the air, the rewards will be given. In the air, the marriage will transpire. According to their doctrine, these things do not happen in the “golden city.”

“It is said in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that ‘we shall be caught up... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.’ Since the bema [judgment seat] follows this translation, the ‘air’ must be the scene of it. This is further supported by 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, where Paul is describing events that take place when the believer is ‘absent from the body, and... present with the Lord.’ Thus, this event must take place in the Lord’s presence in the sphere of the ‘heavenlies.’”

It is noted that this is not where people sitting under this doctrine think they are going, either in the rapture or when they die. Despite that, this is the doctrine. This is the seminary teaching and what the proclaimers of this doctrine are taught. It is the literal interpretation and is backed up with Scripture. Actually and honestly, it is far better as far as Scriptural accuracy is concerned than the streets of gold and mansion thinking.

2. The Judgment Seat of Christ

The first event that transpires after the rapture is not a walk down the street of gold. Neither is the first event a little talk with Jesus. The first event is standing before the judgment seat of Christ. This is the bema in heaven. The Greek word bema is the word translated “seat” found in both Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Rom 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

This seat will be in the air. Thayer describes it as “a raised place mounted by steps; a platform, tribune; used of the official seat of a judge.”

To this seat, believers are brought. Those present are only the sincere saints. Another resurrection is required for the evil. Actually, the saints of the Laodiceans will not be raptured, for they were not sincere (lukewarm). It will the Philadelphian church involved here.

This “judgment seat” is not actually concerned with judgment (they say). It is concerned with works. It will be here, first thing, at the bema that the works will be tried (1Co 3:12-15).

One would suppose that in a literal translation all that was done while in this body is somehow thrown into a literal fire. Wood, hay, and stubble will be burned away, and the gold, silver, and precious stones remain as rewards for the crown(s) now given.

According to the dispensationalist, the “all” in the “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” is only concerning believers. This really means all believers will stand...” they say. This is because Paul is speaking only to the saints and believers at the Corinth church.

The dispensational doctrine demands two Advents and two resurrections and two judgment seats. The Lord and Paul taught only one of each. All in the graves will come forth. The good unto

42 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 221

the resurrection of life. The evil unto the resurrection of damnation (Joh 5:28-29; Act 24:15).

The Nicene Creed of A.D. 325 states,
“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father... He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead...”

One Advent and one resurrection one judgment seat. In the book of Revelation, we find only one judgment seat. That is the great white throne.

3. Rewards and Crowns Given
This will happen during the judgment seat of Christ (above).

4. The Marriage of the Lamb
Time of Marriage: The time of the marriage will be after the bema or judgment seat of Christ, but prior to the last Advent.
Place: The place of the marriage, as previously discussed, will be “the air.”

5. Participants in the Marriage
This event will involve only Christ and the church. There will be no guests at the marriage.

...according to Daniel 12:1-3 and Isaiah 26:19-21, that the resurrection of Israel and the Old Testament saints will not take place until the second Advent of Christ. Revelation 20:4-6 makes it equally clear that tribulation saints will not be resurrected until that time also. While it would be impossible to eliminate these groups from the place of observers, they can not be in the position of participants in the event itself.”

The dispensationalists distinguish between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper. The marriage takes place in the air. The marriage supper involves Israel and takes place on the earth. Israel has been invited to the supper during the tribulation period. The marriage supper cannot take place until the Advent at the end of the tribulation.

1. THE MILLENNIUM
In the book of Revelation chapter 20, we run into a passage that has been of interest and debate since the very day it was penned. It has no previous references. No other author of Scripture ever referred to it in this manner. The Lord Himself never referenced it this way. Yet, it has ruled the hearts of many. It speaks of the “thousand years.” (Rev 20:1-7).

The Greek word chilioi translated here “thousand” means exactly that. It means one thousand. It is referred to as the “millennium” which is a Latin word meaning one thousand.

The majority of dispensationalists are premillennialists. “Pre” means “before.” What this word “premillennialist” then means is the Lord will come in Advent “before” (pre) the millennial (1,000 years). The Lord will come back and then establish His throne and reign for 1,000 years.

We must here insert the other millennial schools. There is also those of the “postmillennialist” belief. “Post” means “after.” What this word “postmillennialist” means is the Lord will come in Advent after (post) the millennium. The Lord will come back in Advent after He has reigned 1,000 years.

We also have the “amillennialists.” “A” means “without.” What this group believes is there is not a literal 1,000 years.

We must realize that none of the above terms were present in the first-century church. There was no premillennialists’ group, postmillennialists’ group, or amillennialists’ group. Neither were there pretribulation, midtribulation, or post-tribulation groups. The apostles were not divided in their eschatology. What we need to do then is conform to what they taught and believed rather than conforming the Scriptures to our doctrine.

All these man-made terms come about because of division. Every person defends his or her position which causes division. Our purpose here is not to establish a position. It is to show what dispensational theology believes, and then to project some help toward questionable teachings.

The dispensational doctrine does not actually teach the belief that Jesus is “King of kings, and Lord of Lords” yet. To the premillennialists, this dimension of Kingship cannot take place until the millennium begins.

“In the millennial age Jesus Christ will be ‘King of kings, and Lord of Lords’ (Rev. 19:16). As such He is sovereign over a number of subordinate rulers. Under David the land of Palestine will be ruled through these individuals.”

Jesus “will be” King, they say. However, were they asked when did (or will) Christ become King? Usually they will say at His resurrection and Ascension. It becomes confusing because, if He

44 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 227
45 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 501
became King at the Ascension, then He is a King without a kingdom. Or He is King, but not yet. Within this dilemma lies the problem. Premillennialists say not yet. Postmillennialists say He is, but we need a tribulation and restoration of Israel so He can come back. Amillennialists say He is King of kings and Lord of Lords now. Nothing is needed to make Him King. He is King and Lord today!

The student of the Word must now ask, “What do I believe.” The amillennialists sound right, but what about Satan being bound for the 1,000 years? It does not appear the dragon is bound. We will look more into this question in our Revelation study. Today we need to look into the dispensational belief.

1. The Millennium Is Israel's Time

As hopefully we have seen, from beginning to ending, the dispensational doctrine centers around the nation of Israel. Often it seems to center around Israel even more than it centers around Christ. Concerning the millennium, Israel is once again the emphasis.

Pentecost writes,

“Much has been said previously to show that this age will see the complete fulfillment of all the covenants that God made with Israel. It is sufficient here to show that the Scriptures that the kingdom on earth is viewed as the complete fulfillment of those covenants, and that the millennial age is instituted out of necessity in order to fulfill the covenants.”

According to the dispensational doctrine, the millennium is not so the church will rule and reign with Christ. According to that doctrine, the “millennial age is instituted out of necessity in order to fulfill the covenants” which God made with Israel.

It is difficult to believe that many Christians today know this is the reason for a millennium. People will say they do not believe the Israel stuff and the animal sacrifice stuff. In reality, they do, for this is why we must have a literal millennium.

According to the doctrine, all four of the covenants are fulfilled during the millennium. The land and seed promise in the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled. The kingdom and throne promise in the Davidic covenant is fulfilled. The land boundaries promised in the Palestinian covenant are fulfilled. The promise of the new heart and forgiveness of sin is fulfilled in the New covenant.

“It will thus be observed that the millennial age finds the complete fulfillment of all that God promised to the nation of Israel.”

2. The dispensationalists and the Holy Ghost

The dispensationalists do not believe the Holy Spirit came and remained on the day of Pentecost. This was only a taste of the promise of the millennium. According to dispensational doctrine, the prophecy of Joel will not be fulfilled until the millennium. The verse used is a very familiar verse, especially to Pentecostals and Charismatics (Joe 2:28-29).

The argument would be what is it that Peter was referring to in Acts 2 when He quoted this exact passage and said, “This is that...” (Act 2:14-21)? “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Act 2:16) Peter said. Peter did not quote only a few lines of the Joel passage to give a taste. He quoted all the way through to the part terminating the age. This is shown by prophetic language saying “wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come.” This is prophetic language showing the termination of a society. Peter saw the age of Moses rapidly coming to its end. All covenants were fulfilled in Jesus Christ concerning Israel. Peter’s warning is “This is that...” This is It! This “untoward generation” would experience “lights out.”

By reading his message in this context, the conclusion will make much more sense as Peter gives his altar call by saying, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” This society termination would happen to this generation. “Save yourselves!”

Peter and the apostles believed the Holy Spirit had come in fullness. The dispensationalists say it will not come until the millennium, which cannot begin until after the tribulation (this is the most popular, contemporary belief). We will give a few more quotes from dispensationalists to show this is the doctrine.

Walvoord writes,

46 Ibid. page 476

47 Ibid. page 477

Appendix 25
“The fact of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is revealed as part of the glorious restoration of Israel depicted in Ezekiel 36:24... The filling of the Holy Spirit will be common in the millennium, in contrast to the infrequency of it in other ages, and it will be manifested in worship and praise of the Lord and in transformation... In contrast to present-day spiritual apathy, coldness, and worldliness, there will be spiritual fervor, love of God, holy joy, universal understanding of spiritual truth, and a wonderful fellowship of the saints.”

The only remark here would be a question. Is this not the way it is or should be today? Another quote,

“The remarkable, astounding outpouring of the Holy Spirit as presented in the Millennial descriptions... so powerful in its transforming, glorifying, and imparting miraculous gifts to the saints; so pervading in and over the Jewish nation that all shall be righteous from the least to the greatest; so widespread over the Gentiles that they shall rejoice in the light bestowed.”

3. The Millennium and Peace

Dispensationalist teach that the 1,000 year kingdom will be a time of peace.

“Peace, The cessation of war through the unification of the kingdoms of the world under the reign of Christ, together with the resultant economic prosperity, since nations need not devote vast proportions of their expenditure on munitions [arms], is a major theme of the prophets. National and individual peace is the fruit of Messiah’s reign.”

Herein lies one major misunderstanding about the kingdom and millennium. The individual within the kingdom should have peace according to Romans 14:17.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The Believer with the indwelling Holy Spirit is an Overcomer and dwells in peace. However, this is absolutely not true for the time of the kingdom (1Co 15:24-28).

The apostle Paul gives a summation of the “end.” The end is the time when Christ gives the kingdom to God. This occurs at the end of the millennium. During the millennium, Christ has warred and “put down all rule and all authority and power.” He has warred with every enemy during the millennium until the last enemy is defeated. It is not a

millennium of peace. It is a millennium of war with every single individual enemy in the universe, even death! Paul makes sure we understand that Christ has already put all things under His feet (He is already King), but one by one, during the millennium, all kingdoms will manifest.

The millennium is not a time of peace. It is a time of tremendous war. The dragon is in the bottomless pit. How can this be? The dragon is in the pit and bound from doing only one thing for 1,000 years.

Rev 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
Rev 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

The one thing that Satan cannot do in the pit, which he does as soon as he is unchained, is bring about the last war. It is referred to as Gog and Magog. This is what the dragon does immediately when released. We must note that even during the millennium, there is rebellion in the hearts of man. It takes very little effort from the dragon to bring about the last war, once he is released to do so.

We will look at this in detail in the Revelation study. For now, note that there is no promise of peace during the millennium. Peace will come after Gog and Magog. Peace will not come until the millennium ends when “He hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (Rom 15:25, 26).

At the end of the millennium, after the dragon and all wickedness is cast into the lake of fire, everlasting peace will come. Peace comes after the judgment and rebuke of the nations. After the millennium, peace can come. It is then the lamb and the leopard shall lie down together (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3; Isa 11:6-8; 65:25).

The dispensationalists see the millennium as a time for Israel to shine. God will renew His covenant with the nation. The unfulfilled promises of God given to the nation of Israel through Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus will be finally fulfilled. Its seed, its land, its King, and the forgiveness of its sin are the reasons for the millennium. The Holy Ghost will finally fill people. Peace will fill the land. This is the doctrine of the dispensationalists.

48 John F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit, pages 233-234, quoted from Things To Come

49 G.N.H. Peters, Theocratic Kingdom, Iii, 465, quoted from Things To Come

50 J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, page 487, 488