

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session XIV
January 16, 2011

The Second Facet Of Dispensationalism: “IDENTIFICATION” With Jesus Christ In His Death and In His Life!

When most people think of “Dispensationalism” they think of a chart or a diagram of human history which describes the unfolding of God’s eternal purpose. They especially think of one of many diagrams which describe Biblical eschatology or “things to come.”

The Dispensational Chart we use at Riverwood is summarized in the following diagram:

1. **“Innocence” →**
(“Creation” to “Fall”)
2. **“Conscience” →**
(“Fall” to “Flood”)
3. **“Human Government”→**
(“Flood” to call of “Abraham”)
4. **“Promise”→**
(“Abraham” to “Sinai”)
5. **“Law”→**
(“Sinai” to “Pentecost”)
6. **“Grace”→**
(“Pentecost” to Christ’s
“Second Coming”)
7. **“Kingdom”**
(“Second Coming”
to the “Great
White Throne”)

These “**Dispensations**” define mankind’s responsibility and relationship to God during each stage of God’s progressive revelation of His “**plan of the ages.**”

--These Dispensations are the first facet of Dispensationalism.

--The majority of Evangelical Christians **do not** accept this interpretation!

“IDENTIFICATION TRUTH”: **The N.T. Believer’s “Union” With Jesus Christ!**

Over the next five weeks, our study will be **“the second facet of Dispensationalism.”**

--Like a cut and polished diamond that sparkles with light, God desires that we see the beauty of His eternal truth! The Holy Spirit enables this process of “beholding” truth!

--Like the help that comes from understanding the “first facet” of Dispensationalism – God’s “plan of the ages” – this “second facet” is basic and essential to spiritual growth!

A. An Overview:

The second facet of Dispensationalism is **“Identification Truth”** or **“Union with Christ”**. (To be “identified” with something means to “become part” of it – to “participate” in it)

--Stated as a question, it asks, **“How do you live the Christian life?”**

--Answered in summary, it is learning the secret of **“Not I, but Christ!”**

1. To be identified with Christ in **His death** – our “old man” abiding in the death of the Cross → rendered powerless;

2. To be identified with Christ in **His life** – our “new man” abiding in the risen life of Christ → which is divinely powerful.

Jesus Christ is the Believer’s “Life”;
The Believer lives in “Union” with the Son of God!

B. The Background:

A **problem** exists in understanding this “second facet” of Dispensationalism. The problem is very similar to the problem we as human beings have with the “first facet” of Dispensationalism → **many Evangelical Christians do not understand what God’s Word teaches in these vital areas!**

--The basic **cause** is that the Word of God is not interpreted **“Literally”**. Human thought and conjecture are substituted for allowing God’s Word to “mean what it says”!

--The **result** is failure to “rightly divide” the Word of truth which results in **confusion, lack of assurance, lack of spiritual growth, and spiritual defeat!**

C. An Observation:

If a Dispensational approach (“literal”) is rejected in the attempt to interpret God’s “plan of the ages” (which defines who and where we are as His children), then it becomes impossible to properly define how God intends the Christian to live in this present dispensation (the “Church” age)!

--The “first facet” determines the “second facet”!

D. An Area of Vital Understanding:

- The “first facet” of Dispensationalism is **missing** in Covenant/Reformed Theology;
- This is vitally important because it’s absence makes the “second facet” of Dispensationalism **impossible!**

A Brief Contrast of “Dispensational” Theology With “Covenant” Theology

A. Covenant theologians understand God’s eternal plan to be the redemption of mankind based upon Two “Covenants”:

1. The Covenant of “_____”:

- This Covenant was made by God with mankind (Adam) after _____ and before the “_____”.
- This Covenant granted life to mankind based upon “_____”.
--It required “perfect obedience” and promised “death” for failure.
- Adam and Eve _____ and failed the requirement of perfect obedience!

2. The Covenant of “_____”:

- After the “fall” of mankind and the penalty of spiritual death (“total depravity”) was placed upon mankind, God make a new Covenant – the Covenant of “_____”.
- This Covenant granted eternal life to mankind based upon the redeeming work of _____.
 - 1) “Anticipated” in the Old Testament → The “Person” of Christ understood;
 - 2) “Realized” in the New Testament → His “Work” only for the “Elect”.

--**Note:** In Covenant Theology these two Covenants cover _____ of the Bible!

--**Note:** Neither of these “covenants” are _____ in Scripture!

--They are the _____ of mankind!

B. Covenant theologians understand that salvation is based on “Faith Alone In Christ Alone!”

1. Most teach that saving “faith” comes as a result of being “regenerated” by the Holy Spirit because of the “election” of God’s grace;

2. Most teach “Lordship Salvation” → Acceptance of Jesus as “Lord” at the same time as believing in Him as “Savior”;

3. Most teach that “failure” to live with Christ as Lord (“carnality”) indicates that true “saving faith” has not occurred;

4. Most teach that “perseverance” in good works is required for salvation thus removing the possibility of “assurance” of salvation!

C. Covenant theologians understand that the Christian is “redeemed” by faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, but then “lives” as a Child of God by “keeping the Moral Law” (Ten Commandments) in the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Most Covenant leaders teach that the “old man” or “sin nature” has been eradicated → the Believer now has only “one nature”!

--Common Experience: “_____”/ “_____”!
“Why do I continue to _____?”

--Common Suggestion: “The Christian must be more _____!”
(A logical conclusion if Believer bears responsibility!)

2. The Holy Spirit is understood to “empower” or “enable” the Christian to live a holy life (keep the “Moral Law” of God), as opposed to making the Believer “ONE” with Jesus Christ, enabling Godly living!

--Common Experience: “_____”/ “_____”!
“Why can’t I _____ by the _____?”

--Common Suggestion: “The Christian must be more _____!”
(A logical conclusion if the Believer has the ability!)

D. Covenant theologians understand that the “_____” began in the O.T. and that all believers in Christ, O.T. and N.T., form “_____” people of God – a continuing “Covenant Community” – all the redeemed of human history.

1. The N.T. “Church” (Body of Christ) is not seen to be distinct or different from the “redeemed” of the O.T. (Israel) → all the redeemed are the SAME and are part of the SAME group – the “Church” – covering O.T. and N.T.;

2. The N.T. “Indwelling” of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) is not something new or different from His ministry to the redeemed in the O.T.;

--Note: There is no “UNION” with Christ.

--Contrast with Dispensational teaching)

a. John 17:20-26 → The Believer is “_____” with Christ;

b. I Cor. 12:13 → “Spirit _____”!

c. Col. 3:1-4 → The Believer’s life is “_____”!

3. There is no “Bride” of Christ to be “caught up” at the Rapture, to be “married” to Christ in Heaven, or to “reign” with Him in the Millennium.
→ there is no “uniqueness” to the Christian – no particular “specialness” in our N.T. relationship with Him as the Son of God!

Note: This is **not** to suggest that those who are Covenant in their theology do not give the greatest level of value to the fact they are Children of God -- the Christian is the Child/Son of God!

--However, the nature of the relationship is radically different!

E. Covenant theologians understand that the “Church” is now fulfilling all the Covenant promises made to the nation “Israel” concerning an earthly “Kingdom” with Jesus Christ “reigning” on the throne of David.

1. Therefore, God is “finished” with the nation of Israel;

2. Jesus Christ is now “reigning” in Heaven on the Throne of David;

--If this is true, the Christian must relate to Jesus Christ as “servants” to a “King”;

--If this is true, being the servant to King Jesus would indeed be a great honor;

--However, if Jesus’ words are true, “*I no longer call you servants . . . but I have called you friends . . .* (John 15:15), the nature of the Believer’s relationship with Christ is fundamentally different! (I Jn. 4:17-19 “*. . . perfect love casts out fear.*”)

3. There will be no literal “Kingdom reign” by Christ on the earth.

Conclusion:

Covenant theology “destroys” the _____ of:

1. The “Jew” → No future fulfillment of the O.T. Covenant promises;

--The “first facet” of Dispensationalism is _____!

--The Jewish Nation _____ the honor of the Millennial Kingdom!

2. The “Church” → No _____ of the “Believer” with Lord Jesus Christ!

--The “second facet” of Dispensationalism is _____!

--The individual Christian _____ the privilege of present intimacy with the Son of God and the _____ of our “position” in Him!

3. The “indwelling” of the Holy Spirit → No “_____” with Christ!

--His ministry to the Believer is changed → no _____ baptism (I Cor. 12:13)

→ no _____ of Christ;

--His ministry to the Believer is changed → He becomes a “_____” to live a holy rather than the “_____” Who maintains the _____ of Christ in the Believer!