

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session V

October 10, 2010

The Indispensable Elements Of Dispensational Theology – The “Sine Qua Non”

Riverwood Bible Church believes that the Word of God is “inspired” by God Himself. The process of giving and guarding God’s “revelation” was performed by the Holy Spirit and has provided an “infallible” record of His eternal truth.

“Inspiration” is “Verbal Plenary” →

It extends to the actual words (verbal) in every part of the whole Bible (plenary)!

“Inerrancy” is the Result →

We have an infallible text upon which to build our faith!

Because we have confidence in the written record (“revelation”) God has given, we are careful to allow each word in the text of Scripture to mean what it says. Our method of interpretation is “literal”. We allow the statements of God’s Word to have their “plain” or “normal” meaning.

Our Method of Interpretation (“Hermeneutic”) is
the “Grammatical/Historical” →

This allows human language to function in the communication
of thoughts and ideas by the “normal” use of words!

The Place and Importance of “Progressive Revelation”:

*“Progressive revelation is the recognition that God’s message to man was not given in one single act but was ‘unfolded’ in a series of **successive acts** and through the minds and hands of many men of varying backgrounds. . . . The pages of the Bible present ‘not the exposition of a revelation completed, but the records of a revelation in progress. Its parts and features are seen not as arranged after their development, but as arranging themselves in the course of their development, and growing, through **stages** that can be marked, and by **accessions** (additions) which can be measured, into the **perfect form** which they attain at last.’ ”*

--Charles Ryrie

*“God’s truth was obviously not given at one time, and the varying ‘stages’ of revelation show that He has worked in different ways at different times. **The Bible interpreter must observe carefully this ‘progressiveness’ of revelation**, and dispensationalism helps promote ‘accuracy’ in this regard. In this matter of the correct observation and interpretation of the ‘progress’ of revelation, we see the close connection between dispensationalism and ‘hermeneutics’ (principles of interpretation) . . . ‘With each new series of generations some new promise is given, or some great purpose of God is brought to light.’ It is the **marking off of these stages** in the revelation of the purpose of God that is the **basis** for the ‘**dispensational**’ approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures.”*

--Charles Ryrie

*“**Progressive revelation** views the Bible not as a textbook on theology but as the continually ‘unfolding’ revelation of God given by various means throughout the successive ages. In this unfolding there are ‘**distinguishable stages**’ of revelation when God introduces ‘**new things**’ for which man becomes responsible. These stages are the ‘economies’, ‘stewardships’ or ‘dispensations’ in the unfolding of His purpose.”*

--Charles Ryrie

I. What Does The Bible Say?

--Are there “distinguishable stages” in God’s revelation of Himself and in His dealing with mankind?

--If so, these distinguishable stages would mark or define the “different economies” or “arrangements” of His sovereign government over mankind.

--These would be the “household stewardships” or “**dispensations**” revealed by the Greek word “oikonomia”.

--Do we see these “**dispensations**” in Scripture?

--We believe the Word of God presents “**Seven Distinguishable ‘Economies’**” or “**Dispensations**” in the outworking of God’s purpose.

The “Dispensations”

1. “Innocence”:

--Genesis 1:28-3:6

- a. Responsibility: *“Keep Garden; Do not eat” → Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil.*
- b. Failure: *“They ate”*
- c. Judgment: *“Curse and Death (Spiritual and Physical)”*
- d. Grace: *“Promise of Redeemer” → Gen. 3:15*

2. “Conscience”:

--Genesis 4:1-8:14

- a. Responsibility: *“Do what is right (Human Conscience); Offer blood sacrifice”*
- b. Failure: *“Wickedness” (Murder, unnatural affection; violence; corruption, evil)*
- c. Judgment: *“Universal Flood”*
- d. Grace: *“Noah and family saved” → Gen. 6:8*

3. “Human Government”:

--Genesis 8:15-11:9

- a. Responsibility: *“Scatter and Multiply; Civil responsibility (capital punishment)”*
- b. Failure: *“Did not scatter; Failure to govern”*
- c. Judgment: *“Dispersion and Confusion of human languages → Tower of Babel”*
- d. Grace: *“No destruction of nations; future dealing with one new nation (Abraham)”*

4. “Promise”:

--Genesis 11:10 – Exodus 18:27

- a. Responsibility: *“Dwell in Canaan (Promised Land); Believe and obey God”*
- b. Failure: *“To dwell in Promised Land; Dwelt in Egypt”*
- c. Judgment: *“Egyptian Bondage”*
- d. Grace: *“Calling of Abraham to ‘father’ a Nation → from which ‘Messiah’ would come”*

5. “Law”:

--Exodus 19:1 – Acts 1:26

- a. Responsibility: *“Obey the Law”*
- b. Failure: *“Broke Law; Rejected Christ (Messiah)”*
- c. Judgments: *“Assyrian Captivity; Babylonian Captivity; Worldwide dispersion of Jews”*
- d. Grace: *“Fulfillment of Messianic promises in Christ”*

6. “Grace” / “Church”:

--Acts 2:1 – Revelation 19:21

- a. Responsibility: *“Trust Christ by Faith”*
- b. Failure: *“Rejection of Christ”*
- c. Judgment: *“The Great Tribulation → judgment of those who rejected Christ”*
- d. Grace: *“Redemption of all Believers; Rapture of Church (Bride of Christ)”*

7. “Kingdom”:

--Revelation 20

- a. Responsibility: *“Obey and Worship God”*
- b. Failure: *“Final Rebellion of Mankind”*
- c. Judgment: *“Eternal Hell”*

The “Sine Qua Non” Of Dispensationalism (The Indispensable Part)

What “marks” a person as a dispensationalist? What is the sine qua non (“without which not”)? What is the absolutely indispensable or essential thing?

1. A Dispensationalist keeps “Israel” and the “Church” Distinct.

*“The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing **two distinct purposes**: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is **Judaism**; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity. . . . Over and against this the partial dispensationalist . . . bases his interpretation on the supposition that God is doing but **one** thing, namely, the general separation of the good from the bad, and, in spite of all the confusion this limited theory creates, contends that the earthly people merge into the heavenly people; that the earthly (Jewish) program must be given a spiritual interpretation or disregarded altogether.”* --Lewis S. Chafer

*“The basic premise of dispensationalism is **two purposes** God expressed in the formation of **two peoples** who maintain their distinction throughout eternity.”*

--Daniel Fuller

*“The dispensationalist studies the words (‘Israel’/‘Church’) in the New Testament, finds that **they are kept distinct always**, and therefore concludes that when the ‘Church’ was introduced God did not abrogate His promises to ‘Israel’ or enmesh them into the ‘Church’. That is why the dispensationalist recognizes **two purposes** of God and insists on maintaining a **distinction** between ‘Israel’ and the ‘Church’. And all of this is built on an inductive study of the use of two words (‘Israel’/‘Church’), not a scheme superimposed on the Bible. In other words, it is built on a consistent use of the literal, normal, or plain method of interpretation without the addition of any other principle that will attempt to give respectability to some preconceived conclusions.”* --Charles Ryrie

--Note:

*“This is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. The one who fails to distinguish Israel and the Church **consistently** will inevitably **not** hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does will.”* --Charles Ryrie

2. A Dispensationalist uses the Hermeneutic “Literal Interpretation”.

“Therefore, the second aspect of the sine qua non of dispensationalism is the matter of historical-grammatical hermeneutics. . . . it is interpretation that does not spiritualize or allegorize Consistently literal, or plain interpretation indicates a dispensational approach to the interpretation of Scripture. And it is this very consistency – the strength of dispensational interpretation – that seems to irk the non-dispensationalist and becomes the object of his ridicule. To be sure, literal, historical, grammatical interpretation is not the sole possession or practice of dispensationalist, but the consistent use of it in all areas of Biblical interpretation is. This does not preclude or exclude correct understanding of types, illustrations, apocalypses, and genres within the basic framework of literal interpretation.”

--Charles Ryrie

3. A Dispensationalist understands the “Glory” of God to be the “Purpose” of Human History!

“To the normative dispensationalist, the soteriological, or saving, program of God is not the only program, but one of the means God is using in the total program of glorifying Himself. Scripture is not man-centered as though salvation were the main theme, but it is God-centered because HIS GLORY is the center. The Bible itself clearly teaches that salvation, important and wonderful as it is, is not an end in itself, but is rather a means to the end of glorifying God (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).”

--Charles Ryrie

“The larger purpose of God is the manifestation of His own glory. To this end each dispensation, each successive revelation of God’s plan for the ages . . . combine to manifest divine glory.”

--John F. Walvoord

Summary:

“The essence of dispensationalism, then, is the distinction between Israel and the Church. This grows out of the dispensationalist’s consistent employment of normal or plain or historical-grammatical interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.”

--Charles Ryrie

II. Why Is This Important To Us?

A. The distinction Scripture makes between “Israel” and the “Church” means that the “_____” made to Israel _____ apply to the Church!

--A vital question in proper interpretation is, “To _____ is this verse or promise _____?”

--Many “promises” of Scripture have a “_____” meaning based on the _____ of God, but the “_____” meaning **must** be applied as intended by Scripture!

B. “Spiritualizing” and “Allegorizing” _____ the intended _____ of God’s revealed truth.

--The practice of looking for “_____” meaning in the words of Scripture allows for any _____ one might desire!

--Only “_____” interpretation allows Scripture to _____ the _____ meaning!

C. Natural man/woman is in “_____” with _____!

--After our salvation, in our spiritual _____ we can continue in personal “_____ - _____” and assume that God’s primary purpose is _____ me!

--This is the common practice of “_____” O.T. promises for _____ “blessing” and “success”!