

95 THESES Disputation of NiceneCouncil.com On  
The Power and Efficacy of Dispensationalism  
-or-  
The Ninety-Five Theses Against Dispensationalism

## Preface

What follows should not be interpreted to mean that NiceneCouncil.com nor the historic Bible believing church would place every dispensationalist outside of the Christian faith. We acknowledge that most are dedicated to the foundational orthodox doctrines of Christianity. Unlike the sixteenth century dispute over the doctrine of justification, this is an in-house discussion, a debate among evangelical Christians. We recognize and treasure all born again believers who operate within a dispensational framework as brothers and sisters in Christ.

However, we must remember that Paul loved his fellow apostle Peter and esteemed him the senior and more honored of the two of them. Nevertheless, when it came to a point of theology that had profound implications for the purity and health of the Church, Paul was constrained by his love for Christ and the Truth publicly to withstand Peter to his face. (Galatians 2:11)

Therefore, because we believe that dispensationalism has at least crippled the Church in her duty of proclaiming the gospel and discipling the nations, and out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed in a series of videos written and produced by NiceneCouncil.com under the title The Late Great Planet Church. And as iron sharpens iron we request that every Christian, congregation, and denomination discuss and debate these issues. By the grace of our great Sovereign let us engage in this debate with an open mind and an open Bible. Like the Bereans nearly two thousand years ago, let us “search the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things are so.”

## 95 THESES AGAINST DISPENSATIONALISM

1. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ claim that their system is the result of a “plain interpretation” (Charles Ryrie) of Scripture, it is a relatively new innovation in Church history, having emerged only around 1830, and was wholly unknown to Christian scholars for the first eighteen hundred years of the Christian era.
2. Contrary to the dispensationalist theologians’ frequent claim that “premillennialism is the historic faith of the Church” (Charles Ryrie), the early premillennialist Justin Martyr states that “many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.” Premillennialist Irenaeus agreed. A primitive form of each of today’s three main eschatological views existed from the Second Century onward. (See premillennialist admissions by D. H. Kromminga, Millennium in the Church and Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology).
3. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ attempt to link its history to that of early premillennial Church Fathers, those ancient premillennialists held positions that are fundamentally out of accord with the very foundational principles of dispensationalism, foundations which Ryrie calls “the linchpin of

dispensationalism”, such as (1) a distinction between the Church and Israel (i.e., the Church is true Israel, “the true Israelitic race” (Justin Martyr) and (2) that “Judaism ... has now come to an end” (Justin Martyr).

4. Despite dispensationalism’s claim of antiquity through its association with historic premillennialism, it radically breaks with historic premillennialism by promoting a millennium that is fundamentally Judaic rather than Christian.

5. Contrary to many dispensationalists’ assertion that modern-day Jews are faithful to the Old Testament and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Hagee), the New Testament teaches that there is no such thing as “orthodox Judaism.” Any modern-day Jew who claims to believe the Old Testament and yet rejects Christ Jesus as Lord and God rejects the Old Testament also.

6. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ assertion that the early Church was premillennial in its eschatology, “none of the major creeds of the church include premillennialism in their statements” (R.P. Lightner), even though the millennium is supposedly God’s plan for Israel and the very goal of history, which we should expect would make its way into our creeds.

7. Despite the dispensationalists’ general orthodoxy, the historic ecumenical creeds of the Christian Church affirm eschatological events that are contrary to fundamental tenets of premillennialism, such as: (1) only one return of Christ, rather than dispensationalism’s two returns, separating the “rapture” and “second coming” by seven years; (2) a single, general resurrection of all the dead, both saved and lost; and (3) a general judgment of all men rather than two distinct judgments separated by one thousand years.

8. Despite the dispensationalists’ general unconcern regarding the ecumenical Church creeds, we must understand that God gave the Bible to the Church, not to individuals, because “the church of the living God” is “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).

9. Despite the dispensationalists’ proclamation that they have a high view of God’s Word in their “coherent and consistent interpretation” (John Walvoord), in fact they have fragmented the Bible into numerous dispensational parts with two redemptive programs—one for Israel and one for the Church—and have doubled new covenants, returns of Christ, physical resurrections, and final judgments, thereby destroying the unity and coherence of Scripture.

10. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ commitment to compartmentalizing each of the self-contained, distinct dispensations, the Bible presents an organic unfolding of history as the Bible traces out the flow of redemptive history, so that the New Testament speaks of “the covenants [plural] of the [singular] promise” (Eph 2:12) and uses metaphors that require the unity of redemptive history; accordingly, the New Testament people of God are one olive tree rooted in the Old Testament (Rom 11:17-24).

11. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ structuring of redemptive history into several dispensations, the Bible establishes the basic divisions of redemptive history into the old covenant, and the new

covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8; 9:15), even declaring that the “new covenant ... has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete is ready to disappear” (Heb 8:13).

12. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ frequent citation of the King James Version translation of 2 Tim 2:15, “rightly dividing” the truth, as evidence for the need to divide the biblical record into discrete dispensations, all modern versions of Scripture and non-dispensational commentators translate this verse without any allusion to “dividing” Scripture into discrete historical divisions at all, but rather show that it means to “handle accurately” (NASB) or “correctly handle” (NIV) the word of God.

13. Because the dispensational structuring of history was unknown to the Church prior to 1830, the dispensationalists’ claim to be “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” by structuring history that way implies that no one until then had “rightly divided” God’s word.

14. Dispensationalism’s argument that “the understanding of God’s differing economies is essential to a proper interpretation of His revelation within those various economies” (Charles Ryrie) is an example of the circular fallacy in logic: for it requires understanding the distinctive character of a dispensation before one can understand the revelation in that dispensation, though one cannot know what that dispensation is without first understanding the unique nature of the revelation that gives that dispensation its distinctive character.

15. Despite the dispensationalists’ popular presentation of seven distinct dispensations as necessary for properly understanding Scripture, scholars within dispensationalism admit that “one could have four, five, seven, or eight dispensations and be a consistent dispensationalist” (Charles Ryrie) so that the proper structuring of the dispensations is inconsequential.

16. Despite the dispensationalists’ commitment to compartmentalizing history into distinct dispensations, wherein each “dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose” and includes a “distinctive revelation, testing, failure, and judgment” (Charles Ryrie), recent dispensational scholars, such as Darrell Bock and Craig Blaising, admit that the features of the dispensations merge from one dispensation into the next, so that the earlier dispensation carries the seeds of the following dispensation.

17. Despite the dispensationalists’ affirmation of God’s grace in the Church Age, early forms of dispensationalism (and many populist forms even today) deny that grace characterized the Mosaic dispensation of law, as when C. I. Scofield stated that with the coming of Christ “the point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation” (cf. John 1:17), even though the Ten Commandments themselves open with a statement of God’s grace to Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exo 20:1).

18. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ structuring of law and grace as “antithetical concepts” (Charles Ryrie) with the result that “the doctrines of grace are to be sought in the Epistles, not in the Gospels” (Scofield Reference Bible – SRB, p. 989), the Gospels do declare the doctrines of grace, as we read in John 1:17, “For the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,”

and in the Bible's most famous verse: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

19. Contrary to the dispensationalists' historic position that the Sermon on the Mount was designed for Israel alone, to define kingdom living, and "is law, not grace" (SRB, p. 989), historic evangelical orthodoxy sees this great Sermon as applicable to the Church in the present era, applying the Beatitudes (Matt 5:2-12), calling us to be the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13), urging us to build our house on a rock (Matt 7:21-27), directing us to pray the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13), and more.

20. Despite the dispensationalists' vigorous assertion that their system never has taught two ways of salvation (Couch), one by law-keeping and one by grace alone, the original Scofield Reference Bible, for instance, declared that the Abrahamic and new covenants differed from the Mosaic covenant regarding "salvation" in that "they impose but one condition, faith" (SRB, see note at Ex. 19:6).

21. Contrary to the dispensationalists' central affirmation of the "plain interpretation" of Scripture (Charles Ryrie) employing (alleged) literalism, the depth of Scripture is such that it can perplex angels (1 Pet 1:12), the Apostle Peter (2 Pet 3:15-16), and potential converts (Acts 8:30-35); requires growth in grace to understand (Heb 5:11-14) and special teachers to explain (2 Tim 2:2); and is susceptible to false teachers distorting it (1 Tim 1:7).

22. Despite the dispensationalists' claim to be following "the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation" (Charles Ryrie), they have redefined the method in a way that is rejected by the majority of non-dispensational evangelicals (and even "progressive dispensationalists") who see that the Bible, while true in all its parts, often speaks in figures and types—e.g., most evangelicals interpret the prophecy in Isaiah and Micah of "the mountain of the house of the Lord being established as the chief of the mountains" (Isa 2:2b, Mic. 4:1b) to refer to the exaltation of God's people; whereas dispensationalism claims this text is referring to actual geological, tectonic, and volcanic mountain-building whereby "the Temple mount would be lifted up and exalted over all the other mountains" (John Sailhammer) during the millennium.

23. Despite the dispensationalists' conviction that their "plain interpretation" necessarily "gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage" (Charles Ryrie) and is the only proper and defensible method for interpreting Scripture, by adopting this method they are denying the practice of Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament, as when the Lord points to John the Baptist as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah's return (Matt 10:13-14) and the Apostles apply the prophecy of the rebuilding of "the tabernacle of David" to the spiritual building of the Church (Acts 15:14-17), and many other such passages.

24. Despite the dispensationalists' partial defense of their so-called literalism in pointing out that "the prevailing method of interpretation among the Jews at the time of Christ was certainly this same method" (J. D. Pentecost), they overlook the problem that this led those Jews to misunderstand Christ and to reject him as their Messiah because he did not come as the king which their method of interpretation predicted.

25. Despite the dispensationalists' partial defense of their so-called literalism by appealing to the method of interpretation of the first century Jews, such "literalism" led those Jews to misunderstand Christ's basic teaching by believing that he would rebuild the destroyed temple in three days (John 2:20-21); that converts must enter a second time into his mother's womb (John 3:4); and that one must receive liquid water from Jesus rather than spiritual water (John 4:10-11), and must actually eat his flesh (John 6:51-52, 66).

26. Despite the dispensationalists' interpretive methodology arguing that we must interpret the Old Testament on its own merit without reference to the New Testament, so that we must "interpret 'the New Testament in the light of the Old'" (Elliot Johnson), the unified, organic nature of Scripture and its typological, unfolding character require that we consult the New Testament as the divinely-ordained interpreter of the Old Testament, noting that all the prophecies are "yea and amen in Christ" (2 Cor 1:20); that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10); and, in fact, that many Old Testament passages were written "for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11) and were a "mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past" (Col. 1:26; Rev 10:7).

27. Contrary to the dispensationalists' claim that "prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ ... were all fulfilled 'literally'" (Charles Ryrie), many such prophecies were not fulfilled in a "plain" (Ryrie) literal fashion, such as the famous Psalm 22 prophecy that speaks of bulls and dogs surrounding Christ at his crucifixion (Psa 22:12, 16), and the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy regarding the virgin, that "she will call His name Immanuel" (cp. Luke 2:21), and others.

28. Despite the dispensationalists' argument that "prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ ... were all fulfilled 'literally'" (Charles Ryrie), they can defend their argument only by special pleading and circular reasoning in that they (1) put off to the Second Advent all those prophecies of his coming as a king, though most non-dispensational evangelicals apply these to Christ's first coming in that He declared his kingdom "near" (Mark 1:15); and they (2) overlook the fact that his followers preached him as a king (Acts 17:7) and declared him to be the "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5) in the first century.

29. Despite the dispensationalists' central affirmation of the "plain interpretation" of Scripture (Charles Ryrie) by which their so-called literalism provides "a coherent and consistent interpretation" (John Walvoord), it ends up with one of the most ornate and complex systems in all of evangelical theology, with differing peoples, principles, plans, programs, and destinies because interpreting Scripture is not so "plain" (despite Charles Ryrie).

30. Despite the dispensationalists' argument for the "literal" fulfillment of prophecy, when confronted with obvious New Testament, non-literal fulfillments, they will either (1) declare that the original prophecy had "figures of speech" in them (Scofield), or (2) call these "applications" of the Old Testament rather than fulfillments (Paul Tan)—which means that they try to make it impossible to bring any contrary evidence against their system by re-interpreting any such evidence in one of these two directions.

31. Despite the dispensationalists' strong commitment to the "plain interpretation" of Scripture (Charles Ryrie) and its dependence on Daniel's Seventy Weeks as "of major importance to premillennialism" (John Walvoord), they have to insert into the otherwise chronological progress of the singular period of "Seventy Weeks" (Dan 9:24) a gap in order to make their system work; and that gap is already four times longer than the whole Seventy Weeks (490 year) period.

32. Despite the dispensationalists' commitment to the non-contradictory integrity of Scripture, their holding to both a convoluted form of literalism and separate and distinct dispensations produces a dialectical tension between the "last trumpet" of 1 Cor. 15:51-53, which is held to be the signal for the Rapture at the end of the Church Age, and the trumpet in Matt. 24:31, which gathers elect Jews out of the Tribulation at the Second Coming (Walvoord). Dispensationalists, who allegedly are 'literalists,' posit that this latter trumpet is seven years after the "last" trumpet.

33. Despite the dispensationalists' desire to promote the historical-grammatical method of interpretation, their habit of calling it the "plain interpretation" (Charles Ryrie) leads the average reader not to look at ancient biblical texts in terms of their original setting, but in terms of their contemporary, Western setting and what they have been taught by others — since it is so "plain."

34. Despite the dispensationalists' confidence that they have a strong Bible-affirming hermeneutic in "plain interpretation" (Charles Ryrie), their so-called literalism is inconsistently employed, and their more scholarly writings lead lay dispensationalists and populist proponents simplistically to write off other evangelical interpretations of Scripture with a naive call for "literalism!"

35. Despite the dispensationalists' attempts to defend their definition of literalism by claiming that it fits into "the received laws of language" (Ryrie), However, subsequent to Ludwig Wittgenstein's studies in linguistic analysis, there is no general agreement among philosophers regarding the "laws" of language or the proper philosophy of language (Crenshaw)."

36. Despite the dispensationalists' claim to interpret all of the Bible "literally", Dr. O.T. Allis correctly observed, "While Dispensationalists are extreme literalists, they are very inconsistent ones. They are literalists in interpreting prophecy. But in the interpreting of history, they carry the principle of typical interpretation to an extreme which has rarely been exceeded even by the most ardent of allegorizers."

37. Despite the dispensationalists' claim regarding "the unconditional character of the [Abrahamic] covenant" (J. Dwight Pentecost), which claim is essential for maintaining separate programs for Israel and the Church, the Bible in Deuteronomy 30 and other passages presents it as conditional; consequently not all of Abraham's descendants possess the land and the covenantal blessings but only those who, by having the same faith as Abraham, become heirs through Christ.

38. Despite the dispensationalists' necessary claim that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional, they inconsistently teach that Esau is not included in the inheritance of Canaan and Abraham's blessings, even though he was as much the son of Isaac (Abraham's son) as was Jacob, his twin (Gen 25:21-25), because he sold his birthright and thus was excluded from the allegedly "unconditional" term of the inheritance.

39. Despite the dispensationalists' claim that the Abrahamic covenant involved an unconditional land promise, which serves as one of the bases for the future hope of a millennium, the Bible teaches that Abraham "was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:10), and that the city, the "new Jerusalem," will "descend from God, out of Heaven" (Rev. 21:2).

40. Despite the dispensationalists' commitment to the "holy land" as a "perpetual title to the land of promise" for Israel (J. D. Pentecost), the New Testament expands the promises of the land to include the whole world, involving the expanded people of God, for Paul speaks of "the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world" (Rom 4:13a).

41. Despite the dispensationalists' claim that the descendants of the patriarchs never inhabited all the land promised to them in the Abrahamic covenant and therefore, since God cannot lie, the possession of the land by the Jews is still in the future; on the contrary, Joshua wrote, "So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it... Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:43,45).

42. Despite the dispensationalists' so-called literalism demanding that Jerusalem and Mt. Zion must once again become central to God's work in history, in that "Jerusalem will be the center of the millennial government" (Walvoord), the new covenant sees these places as typological pointers to spiritual realities that come to pass in the new covenant Church, beginning in the first century, as when we read that "you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb 12:22; cp. Gal 4:22-31).

43. Despite the dispensationalists' fundamental theological commitment to the radical distinction between "Israel and the Church" (Ryrie), the New Testament sees two "Israels" (Rom. 9:6-8)—one of the flesh, and one of the spirit—with the only true Israel being the spiritual one, which has come to mature fulfillment in the Church. (The Christian Church has not replaced Israel; rather, it is the New Testament expansion.) This is why the New Testament calls members of the Church "Abraham's seed" (Gal 3:26-29) and the Church itself "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16).

44. Despite the dispensationalists' claim that Jews are to be eternally distinct from Gentiles in the plan of God, because "throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes" with "one related to the earth" while "the other is related to heaven" (Chafer and Ryrie), the New Testament speaks of the permanent union of Jew and Gentile into one body "by abolishing in His flesh the enmity" that "in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace" (Eph 2:15), Accordingly, with the finished work of Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek" in the eyes of God (Gal 3:28).

45. Contrary to dispensationalism's implication of race-based salvation for Jewish people (salvation by race instead of salvation by grace), Christ and the New Testament writers warn against assuming that genealogy or race insures salvation, saying to the Jews: "Do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to

raise up children to Abraham” (Matt 3:9) because “children of God” are “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12b-13; 3:3).

46. Contrary to dispensationalism’s claim that “the Church is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament” (J. D. Pentecost), the New Testament writers look to the Old Testament for its divine purpose and role in the history of redemption and declare only that the mystery was not known “to the sons of men” at large, and was not known to the same degree “as” it is now revealed to all men in the New Testament (Eph 3:4-6), even noting that it fulfills Old Testament prophecy (Hos 1:10 / Rom 9:22-26), including even the beginning of the new covenant phase of the Church (Joel 2:28-32 / Acts 2:16-19).

47. Despite dispensationalism’s presentation of the Church as a “parenthesis” (J. F. Walvoord) in the major plan of God in history (which focuses on racial Israel), the New Testament teaches that the Church is the God-ordained result of God’s Old Testament plan, so that the Church is not simply a temporary aside in God’s plan but is the institution over which Christ is the head so that He may “put all things in subjection under His feet” (Eph 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

48. Contrary to dispensationalism’s teaching that Jeremiah’s “New Covenant was expressly for the house of Israel ... and the house of Judah” (Bible Knowledge Commentary)—a teaching that is due to its man-made view of literalism as documented by former dispensationalist (Curtis Crenshaw) and the centrality of Israel in its theological system—the New Testament shows that the new covenant includes Gentiles and actually establishes the new covenant Church as the continuation of Israel (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6).

49. Contrary to dispensationalism’s claim that Christ sincerely offered “the covenanted kingdom to Israel” as a political reality in literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (J. D. Pentecost), the Gospels tell us that when his Jewish followers were “intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king” that he “withdrew” from them (John 6:15), and that he stated that “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm” (John 18:36).

50. Despite the dispensationalists’ belief that Christ sincerely offered a political kingdom to Israel while he was on earth (J. D. Pentecost), Israel could not have accepted the offer, since God sent Christ to die for sin (John 12:27); and His death was prophesied so clearly that those who missed the point are called “foolish” (Luke 24:25-27). Christ frequently informed His hearers that He came to die, as when He said that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28;) and Scripture clearly teaches that His death was by the decree of God (Acts 2:23) before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Thus, dispensationalism’s claim about this offer implicitly involves God in duplicity and Christ in deception.

51. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ belief that Christ “withdrew the offer of the kingdom” and postponed it until He returns (J. D. Pentecost), Christ tells Israel, “I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it” (Matt 21:43) and “I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 8:11-12).

52. Despite dispensationalism’s commitment to Christ’s atoning sacrifice, their doctrine legally justifies the crucifixion by declaring that he really did offer a political kingdom that would compete with Rome and made him guilty of revolting against Rome, even though Christ specifically informed Pilate that his type of kingship simply was “to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37), leading this Roman-appointed procurator to declare “I find no guilt in Him” (John 18:38).

53. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ urging Christians to live their lives expecting Christ’s return at any moment, “like people who don’t expect to be around much longer” (Hal Lindsey), Christ characterizes those who expect his soon return as “foolish” (Matt 25:1-9), telling us to “occupy until He comes,” (Luke 19:13 ) and even discouraging his disciples’ hope in Israel’s conversion “now” by noting that they will have to experience “times or epochs” of waiting which “the Father has fixed by His own authority” (Acts 1:6-7).

54. Contrary to dispensationalism’s doctrine that Christ’s return always has been “imminent” and could occur “at any moment” (J. D. Pentecost) since his ascension in the first century, the New Testament speaks of his coming as being after a period of “delaying” (Matt 25:5) and after a “long” time (Matt 24:48; 25:19; 2 Pet. 3:1-15).

55. Contrary to dispensationalists’ tendency to date-setting and excited predictions of the Rapture, as found in their books with titles like 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon and Planet Earth 2000: Will Mankind Survive, Scripture teaches that “the son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will” (Matt 24:44), “at an hour which you do not know” (Matt 24:50).

56. Despite the dispensationalists’ frequent warning of the signs of the times indicating the near coming of Christ (Lindsey), their doctrine of imminency holds that no intervening prophecies remain to be fulfilled. Consequently, there can be no possibility of signs (John Walvoord); and as “there was nothing that needed to take place during Paul’s life before the Rapture, so it is today for us” (Tim LaHaye). Christ himself warned us that “of that day and hour no one knows” (Matt 24:36a).

57. Despite the dispensationalists’ claim that Christ could return at any minute because “there is no teaching of any intervening event” (John Walvoord), many of their leading spokesmen hold that the seven churches in Rev 2-3 “outline the present age in reference to the program in the church,” including “the Reformation” and our own age (J. D. Pentecost).

58. Despite the dispensationalists’ widespread belief that we have been living in the “last days” only since the founding of Israel as a nation in 1948, the New Testament clearly and repeatedly teach that the “last days” began in the first century and cover the whole period of the Christian Church (Acts 2:16-17; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 1:1-2; 9:26)

59. Despite the dispensationalists’ claim that the expectation of the imminent Rapture and other eschatological matters are important tools for godly living, dispensationalism’s founders were often at odds with each other and divisive regarding other believers, so that, for instance, of the Plymouth

Brethren it could be said that “never has one body of Christians split so often, in such a short period of time, over such minute points” (John Gerstner) and that “this was but the first of several ruptures arising from [Darby’s] teachings” (Dictionary of Evangelical Biography).

60. Contrary to the dispensationalists’ creation of a unique double coming of Christ—the Rapture being separated from the Second Advent—which are so different that it makes “any harmony of these two events an impossibility” (Walvoord), the Bible mentions only one future coming of Christ, the parousia, or epiphany, or revelation (Matt. 24:3; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8; Jas. 5:7; 2 Pet. 3:4; 1 Jn. 2:28), and states that He “shall appear a second time” (Heb 9:28a), not that He shall appear “again and again” or for a third time.

61. Despite the dispensationalists’ teaching that “Jesus will come in the air secretly to rapture His Church” (Tim LaHaye), their key proof-text for this “secret” coming, 1 Thess 4:16, makes the event as publicly verifiable as can be, declaring that he will come “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God.”

62. Contrary to dispensationalism’s doctrine of two resurrections, the first one being of believers at the Rapture and the second one of unbelievers at the end of the millennium 1007 years after the Rapture, the Bible presents the resurrection of believers as occurring on “the last day” (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24), not centuries before the last day.

63. Contrary to dispensationalism’s doctrine of two resurrections, the first one being of believers at the Rapture and the second one of unbelievers at the end of the millennium 1007 years after the Rapture, the Bible speaks of the resurrection of unbelievers as occurring before that of believers (though as a part of the same complex of events), when the angels “first gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up” at the end of the age (Matt 13:30b).

64. Despite dispensationalism’s commitment to the secret Rapture of the Church by which Christians are removed from the world to leave only non-Christians in the world, Jesus teaches that the wheat and the tares are to remain in the world to the end (Matt 13:), and he even prays that the Father not take his people out of the world (John 17:15).

65. Despite the dispensationalists’ emphasis on the “plain interpretation” of Scripture (Charles Ryrie) and the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24, admitting that Christ was pointing to the stones of the first century temple when He declared that “not one will be left upon another” (Matt 23:37-24:2), they also admit inconsistently that when the disciples asked “when shall these things be?” (Matt 24:3), Matthew records Christ’s answer in such a way that He presents matters that are totally unrelated to that event and that occur thousands of years after it (Bible Knowledge Commentary).

66. Despite the dispensationalists’ commitment to so-called literalism in prophecy and their strong emphasis on the Great Tribulation passage in Matthew 24, they perform a sleight of hand by claiming that when Jesus stated that “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt 24:34), He did so in a way inconsistent with every other usage of “this generation” in Matthew’s Gospel (e.g., Matt 11:16; 12:41, 42) and even in the immediate context (Matt 23:36), so

that “this generation” can somehow point thousands of years into the future “instead of referring this to the time in which Christ lived” (Walvoord).

67. Dispensationalism’s teaching of the rapid “national regeneration of Israel” during the latter part of the seven-year Tribulation period (Fruchtenbaum) is incomprehensible and unbiblical because the alleged regeneration occurs only after the Church and the Holy Spirit have been removed from the earth, even though they were the only agents who could cause that regeneration: the institution of evangelism on the one hand and the agent of conversion on the other.

68. Contrary to dispensationalists’ view of the mark of the beast, most of them seeing in the beast’s number a series of three sixes, the Bible presents it not as three numbers (6-6-6) but one singular number (666) with the total numerical value of “six hundred and sixty-six” (Rev 13:18b).

69. Contrary to many dispensationalists’ expectation that the mark of the beast is to be some sort of “microchip implant” (Timothy Demy), Revelation 13 states that it is a mark, not an instrument of some kind.

70. Contrary to dispensationalists’ belief in a still-future geo-political kingdom which shall be catastrophically imposed on the world by war at the Battle of Armageddon, the Scriptures teach that Christ’s kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that does not come with signs, and was already present in the first century, as when Jesus stated, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:20-21).

71. Despite the dispensationalists’ claim that their so-called literalistic premillennialism is superior to the other evangelical millennial views because Revelation 20:1-6 is one text that clearly sets forth their system, this view imposes the literalistic system unjustifiably and inconsistently on the most symbolic book in all the Bible, a book containing references to scorpions with faces like men and teeth like lions (Rev 9:7), fire-breathing prophets (Rev 11:5), a seven-headed beast (Rev 13:1), and more.

72. Dispensationalism’s claim that Revelation 20:1-6 is a clear text that establishes literalistic premillennialism has an inconsistency that is overlooked: it also precludes Christians who live in the dispensation of the Church from taking part in the millennium, since Revelation 20:4 limits the millennium to those who are beheaded and who resist the Beast, which are actions that occur (on their view) during the Great Tribulation, after the Church is raptured out of the world.

73. Despite the dispensationalists’ view of the glory of the millennium for Christ and his people, they teach, contrary to Scripture, that regenerated Gentile believers will be subservient to the Jews, as we see, for instance, in Herman Hoyt’s statement that “the redeemed living nation of Israel, regenerated and regathered to the land, will be head over all the nations of the earth.... So he exalts them above the Gentile nations.... On the lowest level there are the saved, living, Gentile nations.”

74. Despite dispensationalism’s claim that the Jews will be dominant over all peoples in the eschatological future, the Scripture teaches that “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to

Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.'" (Isa. 19:23-25).

75. Despite dispensationalism's "plain and simple" method that undergirds its millennial views, it leads to the bizarre teaching that for 1000 years the earth will be inhabited by a mixed population of resurrected saints who return from heaven with Jesus living side-by-side with non-resurrected people, who will consist of unbelievers who allegedly but unaccountably survive the Second Coming as well as those who enter the millennium from the Great Tribulation as "a new generation of believers" (Walvoord).

76. Despite dispensationalists' claim to reasonableness for their views, they hold the bizarre teaching that after 1000 years of dwelling side-by-side with resurrected saints who never get ill or die, a vast multitude of unresurrected sinners whose number is "like the sand of the seashore," will dare to revolt against the glorified Christ and His millions of glorified saints (Rev 20:7-9).

77. Despite the dispensationalists' fundamental principle of God's glory, they teach a second humiliation of Christ, wherein He returns to earth to set up His millennial kingdom, ruling it personally for 1000 years, only to have a multitude "like the sand of the seashore" revolt against His personal, beneficent rule toward the end (Rev 20:7-9).

78. Despite the dispensationalists' production of many adherents who "are excited about the very real potential for the rebuilding of Israel's Temple in Jerusalem" (Randall Price) and who give funds for it, they do not understand that the whole idea of the temple system was associated with the old covenant which was "growing old" and was "ready to disappear" in the first century (Heb 8:13).

79. Contrary to dispensationalists' expectation of a future physical temple in the millennium, wherein will be offered literal animal blood sacrifices, the New Testament teaches that Christ fulfilled the Passover and the Old Testament sacrificial system, so that Christ's sacrifice was final, being "once for all" (Heb 10:10b), and that the new covenant causes the old covenant with its sacrifices to be "obsolete" (Heb 8:13).

80. Contrary to dispensationalism's teaching that a physical temple will be rebuilt, the New Testament speaks of the building of the temple as the building of the Church in Christ, so that "the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:21); the only temple seen in the book of Revelation is in Heaven, which is the real and eternal temple of which the earthly temporary temple was, according to the book of Hebrews, only a "shadow" or "copy" (Heb 8:5; 9:24).

81. Despite the dispensationalists' attempt to re-interpret Ezekiel's prophecies of a future sacrificial system by declaring that they are only "memorial" in character, and are therefore like the Lord's Supper, the prophecies of that temple which they see as being physically "rebuilt" speak of sacrifices that effect "atonement" (Ezek. 43:20; 45:15, 17, 20); whereas the Lord's Supper is a non-bloody memorial that recognizes Christ as the final blood-letting sacrifice.

82. Despite the dispensationalists' commitment to the Jews as important for the fulfillment of prophecy and their charge of "anti-Semitism" against evangelicals who do not see an exalted future for Israel (Hal Lindsey), they are presently urging Jews to return to Israel even though their understanding of the prophecy of Zech 13:8 teaches that "two-thirds of the children of Israel will perish" (Walvoord) once their return is completed.

83. Contrary to dispensationalism's populist argument for "unconditional support" for Israel, the Bible views it as a form of Judeaolatry in that only God can demand our unconditional obligation; for "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29); and God even expressly warns Israel of her destruction "if you do not obey the Lord your God" (Deut 28:15, 63).

84. Contrary to dispensationalism's structuring of history based on a negative principle wherein each dispensation involves "the ideas of distinctive revelation, testing, failure, and judgment" (Charles Ryrie), so that each dispensation ends in failure and judgment, the Bible establishes a positive purpose in redemptive history, wherein "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:17) and "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." (2 Cor 5:19a).

85. Despite dispensationalism's pessimism regarding the future, which expects that "the present age will end in apostasy and divine judgment" (Walvoord) and that "almost unbelievably hard times lie ahead" (Charles Ryrie), Christ declares that He has "all authority in heaven and on earth" and on that basis calls us actually to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:18-20).

86. Despite the tendency of some dispensationalist scholars to interpret the Kingdom Parables negatively, so that they view the movement from hundredfold to sixty to thirty in Matt 13:8 as marking "the course of the age," and in Matt 13:31-33 "the mustard seed refers to the perversion of God's purpose in this age, while the leaven refers to the corruption of the divine agency" (J. D. Pentecost), Christ presents these parables as signifying "the kingdom of heaven" which He came to establish and which in other parables he presents as a treasure.

87. Despite dispensationalism's historic argument for cultural withdrawal by claiming that we should not "polish brass on a sinking ship" (J. V. McGee) and that "God sent us to be fishers of men, not to clean up the fish bowl" (Hal Lindsey), the New Testament calls Christians to full cultural engagement in "exposing the works of darkness" (Eph 5:11) and bringing "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:4-5).

88. Despite dispensationalism's practical attempts to oppose social and moral evils, by its very nature it cannot develop a long-term view of social engagement nor articulate a coherent worldview because it removes God's law from consideration which speaks to political and cultural issues.

89. Despite the dispensationalists' charge that every non-dispensational system "lends itself to liberalism with only minor adjustments" (John Walvoord), it is dispensationalism itself which was considered modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

90. Despite the dispensationalists' affirmation of the gospel as the means of salvation, their evangelistic method and their foundational theology, both, encourage a presumptive faith (which is no faith at all) that can lead people into a false assurance of salvation when they are not truly converted, not recognizing that Christ did not so quickly accept professions of faith (e.g., when even though "many believed in His name," Jesus, on His part, "was not entrusting Himself to them."— John 2:23b-24a).

91. Despite the dispensationalists' declaration that "genuine and wholesome spirituality is the goal of all Christian living" (Charles Ryrie), their theology actually encourages unrighteous living by teaching that Christians can simply declare Christ as Savior and then live any way they desire. Similarly, dispensationalism teaches that "God's love can embrace sinful people unconditionally, with no binding requirements attached at all" (Zane Hodges), even though the Gospel teaches that Jesus "was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine'" (John 8:31) and that he declared "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

92. Despite the early versions of dispensationalism and the more popular contemporary variety of dispensationalism today teaching that "it is clear that the New Testament does not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a condition of salvation" (L. S. Chafer and Zane Hodges), the Apostle Paul "solemnly testifies to both Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

93. Contrary to dispensationalism's tendency to distinguish receiving Christ as Savior and receiving him as Lord as two separate actions, so that saving faith involves "no spiritual commitment whatsoever" (Zane Hodges), the Bible presents both realities as aspects of the one act of saving faith; for the New Testament calls men to "the obedience of faith" (Rom 16:26; James 2:14-20).

94. "Despite dispensationalism's affirmation of "genuine and wholesome spirituality" (Charles Ryrie), it actually encourages antinomianism by denying the role of God's law as the God-ordained standard of righteousness, deeming God's law (including the Ten Commandments) to be only for the Jews in another dispensation. Dispensationalists reject the Ten Commandments because "the law was never given to Gentiles and is expressly done away for the Christian" (Charles Ryrie)—even though the New Testament teaches that all men "are under the Law" so "that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God" (Rom 3:19)."

95. Despite dispensationalism's teaching regarding two kinds of Christians, one spiritual and one fleshly (resulting in a "great mass of carnal Christians," Charles Ryrie), the Scripture makes no such class distinction, noting that Christians "are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you," so that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom 8:9).

"Dispensationalism has thrown down the gauntlet: and it is high time that Covenant theologians take up the challenge and respond Biblically." – Dr. Robert L. Reymond, author, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*