

Covenant Theology vs. Dispensationalism

K. D. Ward

In discussing *Covenant Theology* and the "covenant relationship," we are **not** dealing with *the initial step of salvation* (as deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin). Through the goodness and grace of God, salvation from hell is *offered to all men* - solely by grace, through faith; it is a gift from God. **However, not all saved people are in a relationship of covenant-fellowship with God.** Covenant relationship is a privilege belonging only to those saved individuals who have devoted themselves to the Lord's service, **in the way He has appointed.** In this age such requires a faithful, functioning relationship in a scriptural, New Testament church.

Compare corresponding paragraph no's for both sides, e.g., compare both #1's , both #2's, etc.

1. Covenant Theology is a model for interpreting the Bible as **a whole unit** and as having **a singular objective**. This model emphasizes the *unity of the Scriptures*.
 2. Covenant Theology is a model for interpreting the Bible as **a whole unit** and as having **a singular objective**. This model emphasizes the *unity of the Scriptures*.
 3. Under the model of Covenant Theology, one may see God's overall purpose as outlined in the Bible -- **the establishment of His everlasting Kingdom**.
 4. God's kingdom purpose, as set forth in the covenantal model, finds its roots in the call of Abraham, and in the promises God made to him and to his Seed.
 5. The Abrahamic covenant and its promises were renewed in Isaac and Jacob (Israel). This covenant was to be **"AN EVERLASTING COVENANT."**
"I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant" Genesis 17:7
 6. This covenant and its enjoining promises assured Abraham of a kingly line, which includes the kings that will reign with Christ in His kingdom.
"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you," (Genesis 17:8)
"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Revelation 1:6)
1. Dispensationalism fails to recognize that God has maintained a *singular, unchanging purpose throughout the Scriptures*. Thus the Dispensational model cannot be trusted to set forth a united and consistent interpretation.
 2. Dispensationalism views God as having a totally *different purpose, different promises, and a different destiny* for faithful New Testament saints than He does for faithful Old Testament saints.
 3. Under the Dispensational model one is required to posture a **fragmented** purpose; under it Old Testament saints, however faithful, cannot qualify for the concept of *"bridal relationship"* as set forth in the New Testament.
 4. The Dispensationalist model finds its roots in the teachings of J. N. Darby, of the Plymouth Brethren, in the 1830's. Others who followed Darby's doctrine, and developed it even further were: C.I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and Charles Ryrie. Clarence Larkin, in the very early 1900's, helped spread dispensational teachings through his book, *Dispensational Truth*, in which he had drawn several charts depicting his dispensational approach to biblical interpretation.

Today, most everything that is written on ecclesiology and eschatology is written from the viewpoint of Darby's Dispensational interpretation. These *Protestant* views have even found their way into the Missionary Baptist camp so that today, most all Missionary Baptist writings have been rooted in the Protestant-based Dispensationalism of Darby, Scofield, Chafer, Ryrie, and Larkin; the only major difference is that they have been re-packaged around the *"local church"* concept.
 5. Dispensationalists deny that the Abrahamic covenant was to be an **everlasting covenant** in that they do not recognize its scope as extending even to the faithful saints in the New Covenant era.
 6. This model has no provision for the extension of a kingly line, through the Abrahamic covenant, clear on down to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

Covenant Theology vs. Dispensationalism

7. This model teaches that various other covenants were included **within the framework of the Abrahamic**; such as the Davidic which paved the way for a kingly line and the Levitical covenant which provided for a priestly order.
 8. The New Covenant is also within the framework of the Abrahamic covenant. Therefore, the writer to the Hebrews spoke of the New Covenant (chap 8) as being made with the **"House of Israel and with the House of Judah."** (compare Romans 9:3, 4)
 9. However, the New covenant which was made with the **"House of Israel,"** was made with the apostles who were the elect remnant of Israel; the bulk of the nation having been cut off due to their unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved [preserved]" Romans 9:27
 10. In Romans 11, the covenant is set forth under the figure of an olive tree. The root of this tree represents the Abrahamic covenant; the fatness (riches) symbolizes the blessings; the branches represent individuals who are connected to the covenant.
 11. Some of the branches (unbelieving Jews) were *broken off*, while the remnant of believing Jews were spared and **retained their existing covenant relationship**; these Jews which were spared, along with the root and tree, became the **ekklesia**. Wild olive branches (believing Gentiles) are being grafted into this same olive tree *which assures the inclusion of a New covenant people [the Lord's church] in the promises and blessings of Abraham* (Rom 11:17). It is through a functioning identification with a New Testament church that Gentiles may
 - a.) become **"children [uioi] of Abraham"** (his spiritual seed)...
 - b.) be **"blessed with faithful Abraham"** (Gal 3:9)...
 - c.) and become **"heirs with him"** according to the promise (Gal 3:29).
 12. The Abrahamic covenant was not disannulled by the institution of the Mosaic. Thus, when the Mosaic was eventually made obsolete, **the Abrahamic was still in force** with all of the other covenants clearly associated with it. Our Lord Himself said that many would come from the East, West, North, and South and shall **"sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom."** He was speaking of Gentiles in covenant which is why Gentiles in New Testament churches are regarded as *"children"* and *"heirs"* of Abraham.
 13. The New covenant, made with the apostles (who represented the remnant of Israel and nucleus of the New Testament ekklesia), is the Abrahamic covenant **renewed and confirmed** in Christ (Rom 15:8-11).
7. Under the Dispensational model *no continuity* is recognized between the (everlasting) Abrahamic covenant and the Davidic, Levitical, and New covenants.
 8. Dispensationalism sees, in the New Testament, *no connection between any pre-existing Old Testament purpose, people, or destiny*; rather, they view it as being totally divorced from God's eternal purpose as set forth in the Abrahamic covenant.
 9. Dispensationalism holds that the New covenant **was not**, in any sense, **made with the house of Israel** -- believing that there is no remnant of the nation left with which to continue God's covenant purpose as established with Abraham.
 10. Dispensationalists have problems with Romans 11. They are not willing to accept the *"olive tree"* analogy as representing Gentiles being grafted into an **already existing covenant made with Israel**.
 11. They fail to see how Gentiles are *"grafted in among them,"* and *"partake with them"* of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Nor do they appear to understand how these are *"supported by the root"* (Rom 11:18-22). Failing to recognize, or denying, this they are greatly confused by Paul's teaching [Ephesians 2 & 3] that Gentiles coming into the New Testament *"ekklesia"* **originally established with a faithful remnant of Israel** are made *"fellow citizens with the [Jewish] saints and of the household of God,"* and made *"fellow heirs...of the same body"* (Eph 3:6).
 12. Under the Dispensational model, there is **no continuity** from the Abrahamic covenant to the New Testament *"ekklesia"* established by Jesus. Those adopting Dispensationalism as their model for biblical interpretation, view the whole Old Testament (including the Davidic, Levitical, and Abrahamic covenants) as being *done away* rather than seeing that **only the Mosaic** [Old covenant] **was of such a temporary nature**.
 13. Dispensationalism rejects *any definite continuity* between the Old Testament and the [Jewish] apostles, who formed both the nucleus and foundation of the New Testament church.

Covenant Theology vs. Dispensationalism

14. Now, under the *renewed Abrahamic covenant*, the church has *better* promises than Israel had while yet under the Mosaic covenant. These better promises include:

- **A BETTER SACRIFICE** (Heb 9:14)
- **A BETTER MEDIATOR [HIGH PRIEST]** (Heb 9:15)
- **A BETTER APPROACH TO GOD** (Heb 4:14-16)
- **A BETTER ADMINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT** (2 Cor 3:7, 8)

15. Thus, the Covenant Model sets forth the position that the faithful of the Old Testament era, already in covenant fellowship with God, will be joined by the engrafted "**ekklesia**" [spiritual seed of Abraham] into the "**everlasting covenant**" made with the "*Father*" of the faithful.

Together they will be granted an **abundant** [bridal] **entrance** into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord (2 [Peter 1:11](#)). The saved, but unfaithful, will dwell as "*subjects*" outside the City in the future kingdom ages ([Rev 21:24](#)). □

14. Once again, Dispensationalism **denies** that the "*better promises*," given to the Lord's church for this age, have any connection with the everlasting covenant made in Genesis 17:6, 7.

15. Mainline Dispensationalists envision a *universal church and bride* living in heaven for all eternity; while the saved of the Old Testament era will dwell on the earth. They have accepted a "**lordship salvation**" approach believing that one is "saved by grace," but "kept by works."

Many Missionary Baptists, while accepting the basic tenets of Darby's dispensational approach, are merely *modified* Dispensationalists; they agree with Darby that the Old Testament saints will not be in the Bride, but see a loss of reward rather than a loss of personal salvation.

Dispensationalism is a model that cannot harmonize Scripture thus portraying God's unified eternal purpose which was set forth from the beginning. □