

Dispensationalism Revisited

By Scott Huckaby

9/21/2025

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

For Discussion: What Is Behind The Intense Disdain For Dispensational Theology?

(Dean Dwyer; harbingersdaily.com; August 4, 2025)

<https://harbingersdaily.com/what-is-behind-the-intense-disdain-for-dispensational-theology/>

Also: How The False Teaching Of Replacement Theology Sunk Its Claws Into The Church

(David Bowen; harbingersdaily.com; July 25, 2025)

<https://harbingersdaily.com/how-the-false-teaching-of-replacement-theology-sunk-its-claws-into-the-church/>

What did Adrian Rogers mean when he said, “It is getting gloriously dark”?

When bad things happen in this world it only serves to remind us how sorely this world needs Jesus Christ to return.

Luke 21:28 – Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.

The worse things get as birth pangs of the Tribulation, the closer we are getting to the rapture of the church.

- Dispensationalists grow excited when tragedy strikes the world because it means our “escape” is growing ever closer.

Does our getting excited over seeing birth pangs mean that we celebrate catastrophe?

No, we still feel sorry for our world and the people caught up in catastrophe but at the same time we look ever more forward to our blessed hope...

Titus 2:12-13 – we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

If you asked Google AI what cats have to do with catastrophe, what do we learn?

While not scientifically proven, some people believe cats can sense changes in barometric pressure or other environmental factors that precede natural disasters.

- Indeed, we have a cat that can detect a thunderstorm in the next county.
- Is cat sensitivity to calamities the reason why they are called catastrophes?

This begs the question, what do cats have to do with something being catawampus?

- All right, back to our regularly scheduled deep dive

Why are so many Christians so opposed to a dispensational view of Scripture?

There are three principles of Dispensational theology that give some Christians heartburn...

1. Interpretation
2. Doxology
3. Israel/Church Distinction

What is a doxology?

A doxology is a short hymn or statement of praise, typically addressed to God, often used in Christian worship. It's a way of expressing gratitude and adoration for God's glory and blessings.

- The term "doxology" comes from the Greek words "doxa" (glory) and "logia" (speech or words).

What is an example of a doxology?

One of the most popular ones is:

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

How does Dispensationalism cause Christians to divide over biblical interpretation?

Dispensational theology is simply a system of theology employing a literal, grammatical and historical approach to the Word of God.

- Or, more accurately, Dispensationalism is the product of a consistent, literal approach to Scripture.
- Dispensationalism merely represents a system of theology based on how we believe God has worked in the affairs of mankind throughout the ages
- When compared to other interpretative approaches, Dispensationalists take the text more literally.

Is the teaching that God deals differently with mankind due to the dispensation a biblical concept?

Ephesians 3:2 – if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you

The word translated “*dispensation*” is “*oikonomia*” which is a combination of two words, “*oikos*,” which means “house,” and “*nomos*,” which means “to dispense, manage or hold sway.”

- the word literally means “house administration” or as Pastor Andy Woods often says, “house rules”
- Who gets to set the rules in a household? The owner!

The Bible is very clear that the earth is the Lord’s...

Psalm 24:1 – *The earth is the LORD’S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.*

A dispensation is a particular way of God administering His rule over the world as He progressively works out His purpose for world history.

What about claims that artificial divisions about how people are saved are introduced by dispensationalism?

During each of the dispensations as mankind is tested, fails, and suffers judgment, the unifying and principal factor is that God is glorified as He demonstrates grace despite mankind’s repeated failure.

- People are saved the same in each dispensation: by the grace of God through faith in His provision.

How do critics of dispensationalism miss the importance of doxology (bringing glory to God)?

Many view the Bible through a soteriological lens, completely overlooking the fact that we are drawn to a greater focus – the glory of God.

- While salvation of mankind is of extreme importance, it is accomplished within the broader purpose of the glorification of God, which is demonstrated through the various administrations of dispensational arrangements of history.
- To the dispensationalist the saving program of God is not the only program but one 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.”

Why are critics of dispensationalism likely to also be proponents of replacement theology?

Dispensationalism sees God’s purposes with Israel and the church as distinct plans in history designed to bring Him glory as each purpose is fulfilled.

- If one does not distinguish between passages in which God is distinctly dealing with either Israel or the church, then the results will be an improper merging of the two programs.

What is Replacement Theology?

Replacement Theology, also known as Supersessionism, holds that the Church has replaced Israel in God’s redemptive plan. In this view:

- The Church becomes the “new Israel”
- The Jewish people are no longer God’s chosen people
- God no longer has specific future plans for the nation of Israel

In sharp contrast, Dispensational theology teaches that after the Rapture of the Church, God will once again turn His primary focus to Israel.

- According to this framework, the seven-year Tribulation period (Revelation 6–19) serves two purposes: to judge the world for its rejection of Christ and to prepare Israel to receive her Messiah.
- At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will return, and the surviving remnant of Israel will be saved.
- The Lord will then establish His earthly Kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital, fulfilling numerous Old Testament prophecies.

Why is it important to have a correct view of the role of Israel in God’s prophetic plan?

This question lies at the heart of one of the most debated theological issues in Christian eschatology: Replacement Theology versus Dispensationalism.

- The implications of this debate go far beyond academic curiosity—they shape how believers understand God’s promises, the end times, and even the nature of God Himself.

How did Replacement Theology begin?

As the early Church expanded into the Gentile world, it distanced itself from both paganism and Judaism, leading to a theological divergence on the role of Israel. Some of the earliest known writings of church leaders reveal Replacement Theology themes...

- The Epistle of Barnabas (~100 A.D.): “The covenant is both theirs and ours... but they thus finally lost it.”
- Irenaeus (~180 A.D.): “They who boast themselves as being the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, are disinherited from the grace of God.”
- Origen (~250 A.D.): Allegorized Scripture to redefine “Israel” as the Church. He taught that when Jesus spoke of the “lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24), He was actually referring to Christians, not Jews.

How did allegorical interpretation support a spiritualized understanding of Israel’s promises?

- Romans 2:28-29 emphasized internal faith over external Jewish ritual.
- Galatians 3:28-29 was interpreted to mean that the Abrahamic covenant extended to all believers equally.
- Matthew 21:33–45, the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, was seen as Jesus declaring Israel’s forfeiture of the Kingdom to the Church.

What role did the Reformation have in Replacement Theology?

Martin Luther, initially sympathetic to the Jews, later turned hostile when his expectations were unmet. His harsh writings contributed to long-standing Christian prejudice against the Jewish people.

- At the same time, some began to revisit the promises made to Israel and question whether these had truly been transferred to the Church.
- This shift laid the groundwork for Christian Zionism—the belief that the reestablishment of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

How did the institutional church regard replacement theology?

Mostly, it continued to view itself as “spiritual Israel.”

- The Church of England included prayers in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer that supported this view.
- Lutheran theology, while recognizing continuity with Israel, often failed to affirm a future for Israel.
- Reformed (Presbyterian) theology, as seen in Calvin’s writings, generally held that the Church inherits Israel’s promises, though Calvin did not fully develop a systematic replacement doctrine.

How have the existence of Messianic Jews present a challenge to Replacement Theology?

Messianic Jews, those who believe Jesus (Yeshua) is the Jewish Messiah maintain their Jewish identity, practice traditions and Torah observance, yet affirm the New Testament and Jesus as Lord.

- Mainstream Judaism often views them as heretical, while many Christians are uncomfortable with their continued observance of Jewish law.
- Yet Messianic Jews stand as a living testimony to the idea that God’s covenant with Israel is not null and void, but very much alive and unfolding.

What are the consequences of Replacement Theology?

Adopting Replacement Theology affects far more than one’s view of Israel. It reshapes:

- The character of God: Does He keep His promises?
- The doctrine of salvation: Is there a future for ethnic Israel in God’s redemptive plan?
- Eschatology: How do we interpret the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments?

To believe that Israel’s disobedience revoked God’s promises raises a theological dilemma: If God can revoke His promises to Israel, what assurance does the Church have that He won’t do the same to us?

Romans 3:23 – *All have sinned*

That includes both Jews and Gentiles, Israel and the Church.

- Why would a just and faithful God revoke His covenant with one group of sinners only to bestow it on another group of sinners?

What promises has God made to Israel?

God’s promises to Israel are not conditional on their perfection but on His faithfulness.

- Genesis 17:8 – God promises the land to Abraham and his descendants forever.
- Genesis 26:2–5 – The covenant is reaffirmed to Isaac.
- Genesis 28:13–14 – The same promise is passed to Jacob (Israel).

Scripture mentions 170 times that the land belongs to Israel.

- To deny this is not simply to take issue with a nation—it is to challenge God’s Word!
- Romans 11:1 puts it plainly: “Has God rejected His people? By no means!”

Does supporting Israel mean that we should endorse all their actions?

No at all... not even God didn’t do that. He frequently rebuked Israel for her sins. Yet, He never revoked His promises.

Is understanding the distinction between Israel and the Church a minor issue, a non-essential?

No, it is foundational to rightly dividing the Word of God and understanding Bible prophecy.

2 Timothy 2:15 – *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

God’s redemptive plan includes both the Church and Israel, each with distinct roles.

- The idea that the Church has replaced Israel does not align with the full counsel of Scripture.
- As we approach the end of the Age, it is more important than ever to understand that God’s covenant with Israel remains intact.
- The God who chose Israel is the same God who keeps His promises—to them, and to us.

What applications do we see from our discussion?

- Dispensationalism is the correct, biblical approach to interpreting Scripture, do not be deceived!
- Not being a dispensationalist means missing the important principles of interpretation, doxology, and Israel/Church distinctions.
- Not having a dispensational view of Scripture has contributed to the scoffing and apostasy of the Age.