

DISPENSATIONALISM

By Nick Bibile.
(Un-edited)

According to dispensationalism theology; a dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. God has divided the history into seven dispensations.

1. Dispensation of innocence. (Before the fall of man)
2. Dispensation of conscience. (From the fall to Noah)
3. Dispensation of human government. (Noah to Abraham)
4. Dispensation of promise. (Abraham to Moses)
5. Dispensation of law. (Moses to Jesus)
6. Dispensation of grace. (The present church age)
7. Dispensation of the kingdom. (1000 year millennium period)

The above definition of the dispensations are the work of C. I. Scofield. Scofield adopted the above dispensational periods from one verse from the Bible, and that is 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Now to the dispensationalist rightly dividing here is history and time. Scofield has put his opinion into the text, as the text never says that, on the other hand the text says we need to divide the truth and not history and time. The Greek meaning is cutting straight the word of truth. The word of God is a sword and it will cut and divide the truth from error.

Today majority of the evangelicals are dispensationalists and the common average Christian do not even know that he or she is a dispensationalist. The dispensationalists also believe in the following.

- 1.) God have two plans and two programs.
 - a.) Israel. b.) Church.
- 2.) The old testament prophecies of Israel are for Israel and not for the church.
- 3.) The church is a parenthesis in God' s plan and will end in apostasy, God has temporarily postponed his purpose for Israel.
- 4.) The church began at the pentecost and will end at the rapture.

HISTORY

There was a great spiritual vacuum in the 1800's as the pulpits were filled with liberal theology and as a result the lay people were spiritually starving. These

conditions gave birth to Brethren Movement in 1830, this was the beginning of dispensationalism. Also in this time in 1830 Joseph Smith began Mormonism, William Miller in 1831 began the Adventist movement and in 1881 Charles Taze Russel began the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The father of the dispensationalism is John Nelson Darby, born in Ireland became a lawyer and later joined the Brethren Movement in 1827. Darby and the Brethren Movement departed from early historic Christianity of the reformers and claimed that they have re-discovered the truth.

Then C. I. Scofield who was converted to Christianity in 1879, later on became a minister and came to know Darby. Scofield was heavily influenced by Darby, and both wrote volumes of expository works. In 1909 Scofield wrote the Scofield Reference Bible.

During this period the Bible was attacked by the liberal theologians and the higher critics. Scofield's study Bible became very popular in the church as it defended the critics and encouraged the believers for Bible studies. Scofield's system of theology was outlined in the Bible and dispensationalism began to grow rapidly.

Lewis Sperry Chaffer was born in 1871, converted to Christ in 1877 ordained in 1900 then joined the staff of Scofield School of the Bible in 1911. He became the president of the Evangelical Theological College and later changed its name to Dallas Theological Seminary. He published systematic theology in 1947-1948 and dispensationalism became the dominant theology in American evangelism and has a great influence in foreign countries as well. All Pentecostal churches, Calvary Chapels, some Baptist churches and majority of the non denomination and inter denomination churches teach dispensationalism.

Although dispensationalism has a great effect on eschatology, many are not aware that dispensationalism can also affect on soteriology.

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