

- 8) NEW COVENANT with ISRAEL – Jer. 31:31-33;
with the CHURCH – Matt. 26:26-27; Heb. 8:8-13 (Unconditional)

2. God's Dispensations

- a. A Covenant declares what God will do concerning certain individuals or nations.
- b. A Dispensation is *"a time during which mankind is put to the test concerning his obedience to specific revelation of God's will."* [Scofield] The emphasis is placed on man's responsibility – what he is supposed to do.

"The New Testament word 'dispensation' basically means 'a house rule' [Gk. oikonomia]. In its usage the word may mean 'management' of a household [Lk. 16:2-4], 'administration' or 'stewardship' (I Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25... I define a dispensation to be a stewardship that God assigns to certain people or to mankind for a period of time." [Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology*, pp. 66-67]

- c. We believe that the Scriptures distinguish SEVEN dispensations (epochs, ages, or stewardships):
 - 1) INNOCENCE (Gen. 1:26 – 3:24)
 - 2) CONSCIENCE (Gen 3:7 – 8:14)
 - 3) HUMAN GOVERNMENT (Gen. 8:15 – 11:32)
 - 4) PROMISE (Gen. 12:1 – Ex. 18:27)
 - 5) LAW (Ex. 19:1; Acts 1:26)
 - 6) GRACE (Church) – (Acts 2:1 – Rev. 3:22)
 - 7) KINGDOM (Millennial Rule) – (Rev. 19:11 – 20:15)
- d. The responsibilities of mankind differ in each dispensation, but salvation is always on the basis of God's grace through faith in what God has revealed.

C. Redemption

A dispensational view of the Scriptures sees a focus on the glory of God in God's plan of redemption.⁴ Redemption, in this view, concerns more than the salvation of individual men, but the fulfilment of God promises to national Israel, to the Church, to the nations (judgment), and even to all of creation:

1. Deliverance of the Church (Rapture) 1 Thess. 4:13-18
2. Restoration of Israel as a nation (Amos 9; Rom. 11)
3. Judgment of the unbelieving nations (Isa. 2; Matt. 25)
4. Redemption of Creation (Rom. 8:19-22; Rev. 21)

⁴ Note that the focus in Covenant Theology is on *individual redemption* by grace in both Old and New Testaments, with special emphasis placed on the Church (N.T.), while promises to national Israel are ignored or interpreted allegorically (with reference to N.T. promises to the Church).

The purpose of redemption is to bring glory to God. The various aspects of God's overall plan of redemption listed above include the salvation of individual men throughout human history by the same means: salvation by grace through faith—some, in anticipation of Christ's atonement on the cross, some, as a result of that historical fact.

D. PARENTHETICAL: Comparison of COVENANT THEOLOGY and (Classic) DISPENSATIONALISM

1. *CHARLES RYRIE'S SINE QUA NON* [Absolute Prerequisite] OF DISPENSATIONALISM:
 - Consistent Literal Interpretation
 - A Distinction Between Israel and the Church
 - A Doxological Purpose for Biblical History
2. **Covenant Theology:**
 - Emphasizes *Discontinuity* in Biblical History (the dispensations of O.T. / N.T.)
 - One people of God (soteriologically); God's plan is a single track
3. **Dispensationalism:**
 - Emphasizes *Continuity* in Biblical History (Dispensations of O.T. / N.T.)
 - One people of God soteriologically, but two peoples of God (or programs of God) historically and teleologically (God's purposes); God's plan is multi-faceted which better gives glory to Him

Traditional Covenantal Interpretation: Oswald T. Allis (Amillennialist)

Literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism; in Dispensationalism it has been carried to an extreme. We have seen that this literalism found its most thoroughgoing expression in the claim that Israel must mean Israel, and that the Church was a mystery, unknown to the prophets and first made known to the apostle Paul.

Now if the principle of interpretation is adopted that Israel always means Israel, that it does not mean the Church, then it follows of necessity that practically all of our information regarding the millennium will concern a Jewish or Israelitish age.

Some problematic passages for Covenant Theology (Amillennialism)

- Deuteronomy 30:3-5
- 2 Samuel 7:16
- Psalm 72:8-11
- Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-10
- Zechariah 14:9, 16-17
- Luke 1:32
- Romans 11:26-27