

Christocentric Theology Series
IV

THEO-LOGY



James A. Fowler

Christocentric Theology Series

THEO-LOGY

Covenant Theology,
Dispensational Theology,
or Christocentric Theology

James A. Fowler

C.I.Y. PUBLISHING
P.O BOX 1822
FALLBROOK, CA 92088-1822
[HTTP://WWW.CHRISTINYOU.NET](http://www.christinyou.net)

THEO-LOGY
Covenant Theology,
Dispensational Theology,
or Christocentric Theology

Christocentric Theology Series

© 2008 by James A. Fowler

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (including photocopying, recording, electronic transmission) without the prior written permission of the author, except for brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews. For information, contact author at C.I.Y. Publishing.

Published by C.I.Y. PUBLISHING
P.O. BOX 1822
FALLBROOK, CALIFORNIA 92088-1822

ISBN 978-1-929541-18-8

Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Covenant Theology	5
Dispensational Theology	19
Christocentric Theology	39
Conclusion	61
Endnotes	65
Addenda	67

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the faithful participants of the Neighborhood Church of Fallbrook, California. For over twenty-five years (1981–2007) it was my privilege to serve this congregation of mature, discerning Christians. They were the first to hear and discuss the studies included in this volume. Thank you for the privilege of ministering along with you.

James A. Fowler

2008

Introduction

Everyone engages in theology. Everyone has a theology. The word "theology" is derived from two Greek words, *theos* meaning "God," and *logos* meaning "word" with extended meanings of "reasoning" or "logic." Theology refers to "reasoning about God." Everyone has some "reasoning about God," including the atheist who rejects the "god" he has reasoned about.

Christians should not be afraid of theology or have an aversion towards theology. Theology is not necessarily overly intellectual or "unspiritual." Granted, there has been much theology that has been nothing more than academic exercises in

"God-talk," but this does not negate the legitimacy of genuine theological consideration that seeks Biblical documentation and spiritual understanding.

In analyzing the theological systems that predominate today, it is important that we remain as objective as possible. We do not want to misrepresent what others believe. We do not want to set up "straw men," which any wind-bag could blow down. We do not want to engage in ballistic brick-throwing and unloving polemics against Christian peoples who hold differing theological opinions.

Genuine and sincere Bible-believing Christians subscribe to varying theological systems. Never do we want to "write someone off" and deny that they are our Christian brother or sister because they organize their "belief-system" differently than we

do, provided they profess that Jesus is the Christ and have received Him by faith. Christian unity is not uniformity of thought or ideology. We seek a unity of love despite diversity of opinion, understanding, interpretation or theological explanation. Our unity is in Christ, not in theological constructions.

In this study we will be considering the two predominant theological systems in evangelical Christian theology today (Covenant theology and Dispensational theology), and then proposing another theological interpretation (Christocentric theology), that avoids some of the problems presented by the other two. This will necessarily involve some critique of the predominant theological systems and their presuppositions. Questions will be asked about their premises, some of which beg for an answer. We seek not to destroy these theological systems, but to honestly inquire,

question and confront. In that these theological systems have innumerable variations among their proponents, with subtle nuances of differing interpretation, we must attempt to analyze the overall system and simplify the issues involved without being so simplistic as to misrepresent. Not an easy task!

Covenant Theology

Covenant theology is also referred to as "Reformed theology" and occasionally as "Federal theology." Reformed theology is not equivalent to Reformation theology. In their protestation against the theology of Roman Catholicism, Martin Luther and John Calvin, among others, developed distinctive theological interpretations, so that Lutheran theology and Calvinistic theology both existed prior to Reformed or Covenant theology.

It was not until the seventeenth century that a systematized theology based upon the idea of "covenant" developed. Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) from Scotland, and Johannes Cocceius (1603-

1669) of Holland, were both instrumental in the establishment of Covenant theology. It became firmly entrenched in Reformed Protestant theology after the Church of Scotland accepted the Westminster Confession in 1647, which incorporated the idea of federal or covenant theology into a creedal statement for the first time.

The socio-political climate in which these ideas germinated is important.¹ In the seventeenth century, the European societies were breaking free from the old feudalistic system of governance. There was strong emphasis on national sovereignty and on social contracts or "covenants" to defend national freedom. Societal and moral law was emphasized to maintain the new social structures. These sociological and cultural factors lent themselves to the development of a corresponding political theology that emphasized law and covenant and sovereignty. Covenant theology has been

conducive to political enmeshment throughout its history, as is evidenced by the contemporary resurgence of "theonomy" and "reconstructionism."

Theologians and authors identified with Covenant theology include Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), Charles Hodge (1797-1878), Philip Mauro, Albertus Pieters, Oswald Allis, William Cox, Anthony Hoekema, Herman Ridderbos and John Murray, as well as many others. Covenant theology is closely connected with "five-point" Calvinistic theology, though not to be equated with such. Some of the prominent features of Covenant theology include (1) the idea of a common "covenant of grace," (2) emphasis on the singular collective "people of God," and (3) unity and uniformity of God's people and the Bible.

A single, over-all, everlasting "covenant of grace" is postulated by covenant theology. The

mention of an "everlasting covenant" in Genesis 17:7,13,19 serves as the basis for this single, unified covenant, within which a series of subordinate covenants are said to build upon one another so as to culminate in the "new covenant." Even so, the old and new covenants are not viewed as two separate covenants, but only as two forms of the one "covenant of grace." The progressive sequence of subordinate covenants includes (1) the covenant of works (Gen. 1,2) in the garden of Eden with the promise of perfect environment, (2) the Adamic covenant (Gen. 3) with the first promise of a Savior, (3) the Noahic covenant (Gen. 6-9) with the promise never to destroy the earth by flood again, (4) the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12-35) with the promise of multitudinous "seed," (5) the Mosaic covenant (Exodus 19-24) with the promise of grace, (6) the Davidic covenant (II Sam. 7:1-16) with the promised throne of David, and (7) the New

covenant (Heb. 8:8) which fulfills the promise of Jeremiah 31:31 and God's ultimate purpose for an "elect people" in covenant relationship with Himself.

Does the emphasis on "covenant" serve to cast God's dealings with man into a legal, judicial, contractual framework? Is God the ultimate "legal contractor" who keeps adding clauses to the contract? Does the whole framework of legality diminish the dynamic and ontological essence of God's function? Does the covenantal and legal framework lend itself to external behavioral legalism? These are legitimate questions to be asked in an evaluation of Covenant theology.

A second prominent feature of Covenant theology is the focus upon the "people of God." God, the Father, chose a "people" for Himself; the Son agreed to pay the penalty for their sin; the Holy

Spirit agreed to apply the benefits of the Son's work to the "people of God." Does this not divide the Godhead into work assignments? Does God need a "people" so necessarily as to become contingent on man for such? Does the sociological collectivism of an identified "people" overshadow the individual response to God in faith? Does the application of "benefits" adequately explain the life and work of Jesus Christ?

A third feature of Covenant theology is the "unity" of all God's people spiritually throughout the covenantal development. This is also identified and applied as the "unity of the Bible." Does not the unity thesis become a "uniformity grid" which imposes a singularity of divine function, which effectively puts God into a straitjacket? When all subsequent covenantal actions of God must incorporate all precedent actions, so that there is an equivalency among all the "people of God" in every

age, is God really free to do something "new" and unique and novel? Is God unable to change His *modus operandi*?

When Covenant theology explains the connections of old covenant and new covenant, it is heavily weighted toward a correspondence of theological content throughout all of the history of God's dealings with mankind. Both law and grace are said to be co-existent within each era or covenantal period. Despite the almost antithetical contrast that Paul draws between law and grace,² Covenant theology often attempts to balance these concepts or amalgamate them in such non-biblical phrases as "the grace of the law," or "the law of grace." Does God talk out of both sides of His mouth at the same time with different emphases?

Covenant theology asserts that the gospel has been preached in every covenantal period. Grace

has been available to all men with a singular plan of salvation offered to all in every age. God's divine declaration of righteousness, the activities of the Holy Spirit, and the personal regeneration unto spiritual life are attributed to believers both in the new covenant and in prior times. All of the so-called "divine benefits" are regarded as having an "eternality" of existence based on God's eternality. Does this not deify God's actions apart from His Being?

Emphasizing the eternality of God's activities in the continuity of historical continuum, covenant theology seems to stereotype God into a commonality of continuous content and action that disallows God from every doing anything different or new. If all subsequent actions are consistent with precedent actions, God is trapped in the box of precedency.

To sidestep some of these logical contingencies of the covenant theological system, explanation is sometimes given that attempts to show some discorrespondence of theological content and discontinuity of historical continuum between old and new covenants. It is explained that law took precedence over grace during the Mosaic covenant, but that grace predominates over law in the new covenant, even though law still has its function. The on-going function of the law is explained in the arbitrary categories of moral law, ceremonial law and judicial law. One segment of covenant theology has advocated the contemporary application of God's law in theonomy and reconstructionism,³ which involves the application of their understanding of God's law as the "law of the land" in the United States.

A sense of discorrespondence and discontinuity is also suggested by covenant theology

when they are forced to admit that new covenant Christians experience "superior" spiritual "benefits," or that these "benefits" take on "deeper meaning" in the new covenant. Within their emphasis on the "people of God," there is also a discorrespondence and discontinuity in the explanation that the physical application of this designation predominated in the previous covenant periods, but a spiritual application of the "people of God" predominates in the new covenant period.

Over-all, the presuppositional insistence on a singular and common "covenant of grace" in Covenant theology leads to an emphasis on a concordance and correlation of covenant peoples, a solidarity and unity of divine activity, which verges on complete identification and equivalence. The "people of God" are one collective and corporate unity, albeit with multiple manifestation in old and new covenants, having one common heavenly

destiny in the presence of God. Israel and the Church are in essence the same entity, the "elect people" of God. The Church, the ecclesia, the "called out people of God," existed all the way back to Adam. The events on Pentecost (Acts 2) comprised but the empowering of the Body of Christ in the new covenant. The kingdom of God, defined by His "right to rule," has existed from the beginning of God's dealings with man.

What, then, was the purpose of Christ's coming to earth in His redemptive mission? Covenant theology seems to explain that Jesus came to make the final addition to the covenantal progression in order to establish the new covenant manifestation of Israel, the church, the kingdom, wherein the "people of God" might have right relationship with God.

What are the expectations, the hope of covenant theology? When God's "people" evidence commitment and obedience within the legal and contractual framework of the covenant relationship, then the situation will progress toward the perfection of God's intent for the new covenant community. Things will get better and better. Most who accept the covenant theological premises arrive at eschatological conclusions that are amillennial or postmillennial. There are premillennial covenant theologians, though, so eschatological persuasions alone are not the basis for determining whether one subscribes to Covenant or Reformed theology. Likewise, there are those who have amillennial or postmillennial eschatological beliefs, but have an Arminian theology, and could never be identified with Covenant theology that is strongly connected with Calvinistic theology.

The prominent feature by which Covenant theology is identified is the distinctive idea of a common "covenant of grace," and this colors their interpretation of all the Scriptures. The covenant idea was, to some degree, sociologically, politically and culturally derived from the sixteenth and seventeenth century transition from feudalism. Covenant theology is closely allied with the closed-system theology of Calvinistic determinism that emphasizes the "sovereignty" of God in the implementation of His covenants. If one accepts the ideological premise of a "predetermined, unified covenant people," then Covenant theology can be a consistent theological system.

Dispensational Theology

Dispensational theology is probably the most popular theological understanding in America at this time, even though it has a more recent origin than Covenant theology. The development of Dispensational theology dates back to the nineteenth century in Britain. J.N. Darby (1800-1882), an Irish lawyer, sought to explain the uniqueness of the Christians' spiritual condition "in Christ." To explain the radical difference in Christian "benefits" from that afforded to peoples in all prior times, Mr. Darby employed the division of time into distinct "dispensations." Harry Ironside, a later proponent of Dispensational

theology, noted that "until Mr. J.N. Darby...it (the dispensational idea of a postponed kingdom) is scarcely to be found in a single book or sermon through a period of sixteen hundred years."⁴

Darby's novel idea of distinguishing "dispensations" of time became the basis of a new theological system known as "Dispensationalism."

As with Covenant theology, it is equally important to explore the socio-political climate in which Dispensational theology emerged. In nineteenth century Britain there existed an abundance of oppressive and depressing sociological conditions, out of which grew an anti-establishment movement of thought against both governmental and ecclesiastical authority. Historical analyst, George Marsden, has noted that two individuals who were contemporaries of one another both became the catalysts of popular systems of thought.⁵ J.N. Darby (1800-1882) and

Karl Marx (1818-1883), both reacted to the existing conditions in nineteenth century Britain. Whereas Karl Marx sought to instill a hope of liberation from the sociological conditions in an idealistic socio-communalism, J.N. Darby tended to see the condition of the world as hopeless and advocated a heavenly escapism. This observation of the common sociological breeding ground of Marxism and Dispensationalism does not imply that they share a common ideology, for the systems of thought are contrasted in almost every way.

J.N. Darby became an instrumental leader in the movement that became known as the "Plymouth Brethren." This independent religious group was outside of the mainline institutional churches of that day, and they charged the external organized churches as being equivalent to "the world system" of Satan, caricaturing them as "Christendom." Other British Dispensationalists

include C.H. Mackintosh, William Kelly and E.W. Bullinger. Darby made at least eight visits to America to promulgate his new interpretations, and they were espoused by such American leaders as Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) and J.H. Brookes (1830-1897). Other prominent names associated with Dispensational theology in the twentieth century include W.E. Blackstone, L.S. Chafer who founded Dallas Theological Seminary, and C.I. Scofield who popularized Dispensational theology with his explanatory notes in *The Scofield Bible*. Dispensational theology became entrenched in the "Fundamentalist" movement of the 1920s and 1930s. More recent Dispensational writers include John E. Walvoord, Hal Lindsey who authored the popular *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and Charles Ryrie who like Scofield has added explanatory notes in his *Ryrie Study Bible*.

Dispensational theology is not as closely connected with Calvinistic theology as is Covenant theology. This explains in part why it so quickly and easily found favor across denominational and theological lines in America, for there were many American Christians who did not appreciate the rigid dogmatism of five-point Calvinism and desired more freedom for diversity, in typical American pluralistic fashion. One could wish that Dispensationalists could have maintained such tolerance for diversity without becoming so dogmatic and exclusivistic about their own theological and eschatological opinions, which led eventually to the "Evangelical" movement breaking free from the "Fundamentalist" movement in the 1940s. Dispensational distancing from strict Calvinism allows Pentecostal and Holiness theologies, which are quite Arminian, to be Dispensational in theology as well. Covenant

theologians are quick to fault Dispensational theology for not adhering to pure Calvinism, but sometimes unfairly charge all Dispensationalists with being Arminian in their theology.

Some of the prominent features of Dispensational theology include (1) distinct dispensations of time, (2) the dichotomy of Israel and the Church, (3) the unconditional covenant of God with Abraham, to be fulfilled physically and literally for the Jewish people in the future Davidic/millennial kingdom. Upon these basic presuppositions the system of Dispensational theology is constructed.

The Dispensationalist divides time into distinct "dispensations." The consistent distinguishing of these periods of time is referred to as "rightly dividing the word of truth" (a misuse of II Tim. 2:5 as translated in the KJV). The concept of

"dispensations" is taken from the Greek word *oikonomia*, from which we get the English word "economy." The Greek word meant "stewardship, management, administration or arrangement." Based on the less than accurate KJV translation of *oikonomia* as "dispensation" in I Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25, the early formulators of Dispensational theology defined a "dispensation" as "a period of time with a test that ends in failure," and began to divide all history accordingly. A more complete Dispensational definition of a "dispensation" might be "a period of time wherein (1) a distinctive idea of revelation is given by God, (2) a specific test of obedience is given based on that revelation, (3) man fails the test of obedience, (4) God judges man for his disobedience, and then establishes another dispensation." These dispensations do not build upon one another, but

are regarded as totally distinct and separate from one another.

Dispensationalists are not agreed as to the number of dispensations of time wherein God deals with men in different ways. At least three dispensations are required for the theological system to provide the contrasts necessary; these are the dispensation of law, the dispensation of grace, and the dispensation of the millennial kingdom. The most popular calculation of dispensational time periods is seven. They are usually identified as

(1) The dispensation of innocence (Gen. 1-3), wherein the test was the eating from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and the failure was the fall of man into sin.

(2) The dispensation of conscience (Gen. 4-8:14), wherein the test was proper sacrifice and

the failure was the continual evil of men's hearts judged by the flood.

(3) The dispensation of human government (Gen. 8:15-11), wherein the test was governance and compliance with government and the failure was evidenced at the tower of Babel.

(4) The dispensation of promise (Gen 12-Exod. 18), wherein the test came when God offered the Law to the Israelites, and the failure is alleged to be their abandonment of a prior grace/faith relationship with God by their rash and foolish acceptance of the Law.

(5) The dispensation of Law (Exodus 19-Acts 1), the test of which came when Jesus came to earth and offered the Jews the Davidic kingdom which they refused, so God postponed the fulfillment of the kingdom promise.

(6) The dispensation of grace (Acts 2-Rev. 19), wherein the test is for Christians to live obediently in grace, but the failure is predicted to be the apostasy of the institutional church.

(7) The dispensation of the kingdom (Rev. 20), a thousand year period which will end in final rebellion leading to the judgment of God upon the earth and the inauguration of a "new heaven and new earth."

Though the Dispensationalist argues for a "face-value" interpretation of Scripture, one must inquire whether the Greek word *oikonomia* is legitimately understood as a "dispensation of time." Are these dispensational divisions but an arbitrary compartmentalizing of history and Scripture? Is God an "economist" who has tried six different theories of dealing with man, and has yet to

implement one that works? Why does God have to try again and again with Plan A, B, C, D, Etc.?

The system of evaluating each dispensation with a test and a failure seems contrived, and the imposition of such is questionable. For example, when God is said to have offered the Israelites the Law, and they are said to have rashly and foolishly abandoned grace to accept the Law, does this make God guilty of entrapment? Deuteronomy 5:27,28 indicates that God heard the words of the Israelite's acceptance of the Law, and He said, "They have done well in all that they have spoken."

A second prominent feature of Dispensational theology is the radical dichotomy and disjuncture of Israel and the Church. In an apparent attempt to keep law and grace distinctly separated, Dispensational theology has divided the nation of Israel from any connection with the Church of Jesus

Christ, the Body of Christ. They are alleged to be so mutually exclusive as two separate peoples that "never the twain shall meet." J.N. Darby indicated that "the Jewish nation is never to enter into the Church."⁶ The physical race of Jewish people is regarded as God's "earthly people" while Christians are regarded as God's "heavenly people."

Dispensational theology indicates that separate promises are given to Jews and to Christians, and differing destinies await them. Why does God have a dual-purpose, dual-plan for His created human beings? Is God a segregationist? Does God engage in racial supremacy, nationalistic favoritism or religious exclusivity? Law and grace can surely be differentiated and separated without reverting to such a radical and permanent disjunction between Israel and the church, between Jews and Christians. Such separationism forces Dispensationalists to misinterpret such verses as "he is a Jew who is one

inwardly" (Rom. 2:29); "they are not all Israel who are from Israel" (Rom. 9:16); and "He...made both groups one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Eph. 2:14).

A third basic presupposition of Dispensational theology is the alleged unconditional covenant with Abraham, to be fulfilled physically and literally for the Jewish people in the future Davidic/millennial kingdom. Beginning with the promises of God to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15 and 17, the Dispensationalist argues for a literal fulfillment of these promises for the physical race and nation of the Jews. Such fulfillment is alleged to be the epitome of God's intent and the primary message of the Bible. Charles Ryrie states that "the goal of history is the earthly millennium...(which is) the climax of history and the great goal of God's program for the ages."⁷ John E. Walvoord further explains that "the Abrahamic covenant furnishes the key to the entire

Old Testament...(and) sets the mold for the entire body of Scripture truth."⁸ Does this not appear to be the application of a particular "grid" over the interpretation of all the Scriptures? Though the Dispensationalist argues for a literalistic hermeneutic for Biblical interpretation, the primary meaning of "literal" has to do with accordance to the intent of the author and to the literary genre employed, rather than "face-value" subjectivism that creates a "mold" for consistent understanding. Dispensationalism often charges those who recognize figurative and metaphorical language in the Scriptures with "spiritualizing" the interpretation of the text rather than accepting their literal interpretation. On the other hand, are Dispensationalists "secularizing" the interpretation of the Scripture texts by demanding physical, racial, national and religious preference for Israel? On what "literal" basis can it be claimed that God made

an "unconditional" covenant with Abraham? The majority of Dispensationalists are wary of the Calvinistic doctrine of a predeterministic "unconditional election," so why are they so willing to accept the predeterministic "unconditional covenant" with Abraham, with no "literal" expression of such in Scripture?

Dispensational theology varies from Covenant theology particularly in its emphasis on the discorrespondence of theological content and discontinuity of historical continuum in the explanation of connectivity between old and new covenants. Every dispensational time-period is disconnected and distinct from all others. The complete separation of Israel and the church, of Jews and Christians, necessitates this discorrespondence and discontinuity, particularly between the "dispensation of Law" and the "dispensation of grace."

According to Dispensational theology, Israel constitutes God's "earthly people" and Christians are God's "heavenly people." The "earthly people" of Israel received a literal promise from God in the unconditional covenant to Abraham. God only makes covenants with the Jews, and He had promised the Jews that He would establish the Davidic Kingdom on earth. Jesus came to earth for just that purpose, to establish the earthly Davidic Kingdom for the Jews, but they rejected Him.

God therefore postponed the reimplementation of the Kingdom until Jesus comes again to set up the millennial kingdom, which will be the fulfillment of the "new covenant" promised to the Jews. The period of the postponed kingdom, the "dispensation of grace," is a parenthetical time period wherein God's primary purpose is interrupted and held in abeyance. The Church is not to be identified with God's kingdom and was

unforeseen by all of the Old Testament prophets whose prophecies never refer to the Church age. The Church, which is primarily for Gentiles, began on Pentecost, and there are many "mysteries" concerning God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ so as to "call out" a "heavenly people" whose destiny is to be seated with Christ on the throne in the New Jerusalem of heaven. Meanwhile the primary futuristic focus is on the return of Jesus Christ to re-establish the realm of the earthly Davidic Kingdom in Palestine during the 1000-year millennial period that fulfills the promised "new covenant," the "dispensation of the kingdom." (Some Dispensationalists will allow that the "new covenant" may have a double application: a spiritual application for the church and a physical application for Israel.) The return of Christ is "imminent," expected at "any moment." It will be preceded by the "rapture" in order to remove the

Church and keep Israel and the Church separated. Dispensational theology is necessarily premillennial, but that does not mean that all premillennialists subscribe to Dispensational theology. There are covenant theologians who believe in a premillennial return of Christ.

The definitive disparity between Israel and the Church is foundational to the theological discordance and historical discontinuity of Dispensational theology. Their affinity for espousing divine privileges for Israel has earned for them the tag of "Christian Zionism." Is God a race-specific "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34-KJV) who engages in partiality? Does the so-called Jewish Kingdom promise refer to a "realm" of rule in Palestine, or does it refer to the "reign" of Christ as King in the lives of Christian peoples? How can it be said that the purpose of Christ's coming was to establish the earthly Davidic kingdom for the Jews,

which they then rejected, when Jesus clearly indicates that He "came to give His life a ransom for many" (Jew and Gentile) in Matthew 20:28, and that we "might have life" (John 10:10)? Can the death of Jesus Christ and the spiritual indwelling of His life in Christians legitimately be understood within an unforeseen "parenthesis theory," a secondary "Plan B," until God can get on with His foremost objective for the Jews? Paul wrote the Colossians indicating that Christians have been "transferred to the kingdom" (Col. 1:13) of Jesus Christ, so why is the kingdom forestalled until the alleged future millennium in Dispensational theology? The writer of Hebrews certainly does not seem to postpone the "new covenant" to a future millennium (Heb. 8:8,13; 10:16; 12:24). The "imminent" return of Christ has been the speculation of many Christians through the centuries, but the words of Scripture seem to imply

only an "impending" return, the time of which "no man knows."

The diverse time-dispensations of Dispensational theology allow for the theological discorrespondence and historical discontinuity between those dispensations. The acceptance of the basic presuppositions of the Dispensational time distinctions and the dichotomy of Israel and the Church creates a framework to consistently "divide the word of truth" into the theological subdivisions of this particular system of thinking. One should always seriously explore the presuppositions of a theological system to determine whether they provide a suitable and accurate foundation on which to build all further analysis and interpretation.

Christocentric Theology

Christocentric theology is not a well-defined system of theological thought as are Covenant theology and Dispensational theology. It is the label being recommended in this study for a theological understanding that differs from the two previously mentioned.

Covenant Theology and Dispensational theology are often viewed as the only two valid theological alternatives. If one does not agree with the premises of Covenant theology he is often accused of being a "Dispensationalist." And *vice versa*, if one does not agree with the premises of Dispensational theology, he is often accused of

being an adherent of Covenant theology. I have been accused of both at one time or another.

Covenant theology and Dispensational theology often view themselves as opponents at opposite extremes of the theological spectrum, shooting arrows across a great theological chasm. There is indeed a great diversity of opinion, as we have tried to delineate, but from another perspective they are both camped in the same ditch. That ditch is the epistemological ditch where man-made ideological and theological systems are debated and developed. The "idea" of common covenant and the "idea" of diverse dispensations are both thrust forth as the honed "sword" of the Lord. Perhaps they have both missed the central emphasis of the gospel.

Both Covenant theology and Dispensational theology have well-documented socio-political and

cultural backgrounds which may have provided the milieu for "natural" ideological formation. These historical breeding grounds must be taken into account when evaluating the formulation of these respective theological systems.

Both of these theological systems tend to commence from a theological starting-point that emphasizes the will of God, His decrees and His plan, rather than the personal character of God. The emphasis on a divine "plan" lends itself to an attempted systematization of understanding the "plan," which soon becomes an ideological "grid" that is imposed upon all ensuing interpretation of Scripture and theology. The covenant "idea" and the dispensation "idea" are both applied in this manner, and thus appear to be quite logically consistent if one has accepted their initial ideological pre-suppositions and premises.

Dispensational theology begins its application of presuppositions in Genesis 12-17 with the expectation of a literal and physical fulfillment of an unconditional covenant with Abraham. Covenant theology also focuses the application of its presuppositions on the "everlasting covenant" of God with Abraham in Genesis 17. Isn't it interesting that both theologies seem to commence with epistemological premises about the fulfillment of promises to Abraham? Should not our theology commence with divine activity prior to Abraham?

The static, traditional theological terminology employed by both of these theological systems creates a situation wherein they both engage in meaningless semantic sparring. Theologians from both camps keep referring to the "benefits" derived from the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and how various theological categories are "applied" to Christians. The detachment of grace, salvation,

righteousness, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the gospel, etc. from the dynamic life and ontic "Being" of the risen and living Lord Jesus, leaves but a dead and static theological system to be argued as an ideology and revered in idolatry.

Herein is the major difference in the Christocentric understanding that is being proposed: Theological "benefits" are not to be our focus, but the very "Being" of Jesus Christ. It would probably be quite presumptuous to assert that the historical background for this theological interpretation goes all the way back to the first century, for all theologies would want to assert that theirs was the original interpretation. Still, I assert that the center-point of all history and the focus of all the scriptures is Jesus Christ. Likewise, it will not serve any purpose to claim that we are proposing a Biblical theology, as every variety of Christian

theology claims that their system is in accord with the Bible, as they interpret it.

Important features of Christocentric theology will include the premises that (1) Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Messianic promises in the Old Testament, (2) All of God's redemptive and salvific actions are centered in and expressive of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and (3) God continues to act in grace as the dynamic life of the risen Lord Jesus is lived out in Christians.

The Bible does not commence with Abrahamic promises. The Bible does not begin at Genesis 12 or 17. Neither should our theological explanation. Immediately after the fall of man into sin, recorded in Genesis 3:1-7, God began to make "promises" of the Messiah He would send to remedy the death consequences of man's sin and restore the spiritual presence of God in man. The first Messianic

promise is found in Genesis 3:15 when God promised that "the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent." Messianic promises precede and supersede Abrahamic promises! Messianic promises are universal in their application and spiritual in their fulfillment, rather than racially, nationally or religiously exclusive in physical, militaristic and geographic fulfillment. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Messianic promises of the Old Testament, including those given to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15 and 17. The Old Testament believers, including Abraham, "died in faith, without receiving the promises" (Heb. 11:13,39), but for new covenant Christians "as many as may be the promises of God, in Jesus Christ they are Yes," affirmed and fulfilled (II Cor. 1:20). Jesus Christ is the central "key" to understanding all of God's promises, all of God's dealing with man, and all of the Biblical record.

The division of the Scriptures between Old Testament and New Testament, meaning old covenant and new covenant, with the dividing point being the incarnation and redemptive mission of the Messiah, evidences the centrality of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The calculation of history in the calendar of the Western world that separates the era of B.C. and the era of A.D. (or B.C.E. and C.E. as has recently been utilized) is based on the center-point of history in Jesus Christ. What further dividing of time or the Book needs to be made? None! Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promises, the prophecies, and the types of the Old Testament. He is the Messiah. He is the Savior. He is God! All of the creative, redemptive and salvific activities of God center in and are expressive of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christological and soteriological considerations should be major theological concerns rather than

covenantal contracts or dispensational division.
Our theology should be Christocentric.

Christianity is not just a study of the historical foundation or the theological formulations of a particular religious phenomenon. God in Christ continues to function in grace as the dynamic life of the risen Lord Jesus is lived out in Christians who have received Jesus Christ to live in them by faith. Christianity is not a belief-system of epistemological categories. Christianity is not a morality-system of ethical conformity to behavioral regulations or ecclesiastical recommendations.

Christianity is not a book-religion for educational acquisition of divine knowledge. Christianity is life - the ontological reality of the life and Being of Jesus Christ in the Christian. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27); "Christ is our life" (Col. 3:4); "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20); "For

me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). God has not offered us some salvific "benefits" because of Christ's sacrifice, or some spiritual "commodities" which we can acquire, possess and "apply," and which will suffice to assure us of our heavenly destiny. God has made Himself available to us in Jesus Christ so that by Christ in the Christian, deity might once again indwell humanity to be the basis of our spiritual identity and the activation of our behavioral expression by His grace in order to exhibit His character unto His glory, the purpose of our creation in the first place (Isaiah 43:7). Christianity is the dynamic of the life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ - His Being in action. Nothing must be allowed to dominate our theological considerations that would detract from the centrality of Jesus Christ!

If the major difference between Covenant theology and Dispensational theology is their

theological correspondence or discorrespondence and historical continuity or discontinuity (as has been the format of our comparison), how then do we evaluate these differences and apply those categories within a Christocentric interpretation?

Christocentric evaluation concludes that the continuity/correspondence premises of Covenant theology do not have adequate documentation in Scripture. Where is the mention of the common "covenant of grace" that is to be maintained throughout all of history and the Biblical record? On what basis are we to posit a singular "people of God," to be equated with the kingdom of God and the Church in all ages? How can the unity and uniformity of these "elect covenant people" be regarded as the "unity of the Bible"? This author is not convinced of the validity of the continuity/correspondence presuppositions of Covenant

theology, and the subsequent usage of such as the central interpretive feature of their theology.

Christocentric evaluation also concludes that the discontinuity/discorrespondence premises of Dispensational theology do not have adequate documentation in Scripture. Does the Greek word *oikonomia* properly imply distinct dispensations of time into which all the history of God's dealings with mankind can be divided? Is there a legitimate "literal" basis for understanding that God gave an "unconditional" covenant to Abraham, which is yet to be fulfilled? Does the fulfillment of such a promise demand such a dichotomy between Israel and the Church that the separation and segregation of the two constitutes "rightly dividing the word of truth"? This author is not convinced of the validity of the discontinuity/discorrespondence presuppositions of Dispensational theology, and the

subsequent usage of such as the central interpretive feature of their theology.

Instead, the central interpretive feature of Christian theology should be the centrality of Jesus Christ, who God foreknew "before the foundation of the world" would be the Messiah, the Savior of man's sin, the restoration of the spiritual life of the Lord to the spirits of mankind in order that they might function as God intended. There is no need for a covenant "grid" or a dispensation "grid" in order to understand the history and intent of God's dealings with mankind. The Person and work of Jesus Christ provides sufficient perspective and explanation for all interpretation of the Scriptures and subsequent development of Christian theology.

The Christocentric emphasis recognizes both historical continuity and discontinuity, as well as theological correspondence and discorrespondence.

There is an obvious historical continuity from God's dealing with the physical nation of Israel to the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ, "born under the Law (Gal. 4:4), as a Jew (John 4:9), identified with Abraham (Matt. 1:1) Jesus was well aware, though, even during His redemptive mission on earth, that the connection with the physical people of the Jews was to be expanded to include peoples of all races in "the world" of mankind. God's choosing of the Israelite people in the Old Testament was to serve as a preliminary and pictorial pre-figuring of the universal "people of God" in the new covenant. The race-specific nation of Israel was to be a pointer toward the spiritual "new Israel" of new covenant Christianity, wherein racial generation would no longer be a criterion (Rom. 2:29; 9:6; 11:26; Gal. 6:16). Christians in the Church of Jesus Christ would become the "people of God" (Titus 2:14; I Peter 2:9), citizens of God's

spiritual kingdom (Eph. 2:19; Col. 1:13). The historical foundation of God's dealing with the Israelites in the Old Testament is essential for Christian understanding. Otherwise Christianity is suspended in mythical and mystical subjectivism. We must not repudiate the historical continuity between the Old and New Testament.

Likewise, we must maintain an awareness of theological correspondence. The one God who is the Creator of all things, who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is the God who "so loved the world that He gave His son" (John 3:16) and was incarnated in Jesus (John 1:1,14) in order to become our Savior and our life. A singular divine objective is evident throughout God's dealings with man. God desires to see His character manifested by His grace in human behavior unto His glory, and this can only be accomplished by the personal, expressive Word (John 1:1,14) of Jesus Christ

making God's image (Gen. 1:26,27; II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) visible through man. In His pre-awareness of man's fall into sin, God knew that He would remedy the death consequences of sin for man on the cross by the vicarious death of His Son as Savior, and restore His life to man by the resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Prior to the historical enactment of such, God in His infinite wisdom saw fit to reveal to mankind the seriousness of the death consequences of sin and the inability of man to function as intended without the indwelling of God in the man. So the Old Testament period became a temporary and preliminary time wherein God allowed Israel to be a physical pattern and example (I Cor. 10:6,10) of the spiritual reality that He would provide in His Son, Jesus Christ, "in the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4). Historical continuity and theological correspondence cannot be denied.

On the other hand, we must observe an historical discontinuity also. Time has progressed through many centuries of human history. The space/time context of human understanding allows us to observe that God acted in ages past in ways that were preliminary to His actions in future ages. This does not impinge upon the immutability of God, for though He is unchangeable in His character, "the same yesterday, today and forever," His subsequent actions are not contingent upon His precedent actions. God can change His *modus operandi*, in the midst of which His actions will always be consistent with His character. Discontinuity is evident in the time terms employed to contrast an old covenant with a new covenant, particularly by the writer of Hebrews. That the terms and conditions of the old covenant have been superseded by the new covenant (Heb. 8:13), implies discontinuity.

Theological discorrespondence is also evident in such discontinuity. Though God's covenantal dealings with man are always "conditional" since God created man with a freedom of choice to respond to God in personal relationship, rather than mechanical manipulation, the theological realities referred to in those differing covenants are not always equivalent. God must not be stereotyped into exact and identical activity. The character of god's graciousness and favor is expressed in the Old Testament by the Hebrew word *hen*, but "grace was realized in Jesus Christ" (John 1:17) in the new covenant. Old Testament believers believed and trusted in God, but they "died in faith, not receiving the promises" (Heb. 11:13,39), whereas Christians "receive" Christ (John 1:12), the Spirit (Gal. 3:2) by receptive faith. The continuity and correspondence is also explained since we become "Abraham's offspring" by such faith (Rom. 4:12-17;

Gal. 3:8). The Jewish peoples were "saved" from circumstances in physical deliverance (I Peter 3:20), while Christians are "made safe" from satanic misuse of humanity in order to function as God intended by the indwelling presence of God in Christ. Abraham and other Old Testament persons were "reckoned as righteous" (Rom. 4:3,9,22; Gal. 3:6) by their right responses to God, but Christians "become the righteousness of God in Christ" (II Cor. 5:21) as "Christ is our righteousness" (I Cor. 1:30). There is an undeniable theological discorrespondence from Old Testament to New Testament.

It might be noted that some of the Christocentric interpretations that are being proposed appear to be similar to positions advocated by Covenant theology and Dispensational theology. The discontinuity and discorrespondence between Judaism and Christianity, for example, has some

similarities with Dispensational theology, but the conclusions are arrived at apart from the presuppositions of Dispensationalism. On the other hand, recognizing that Christians are the "people of God," the "new Israel," has similarities to the tenets of Covenant theology, but the Christocentric emphasis does not incorporate the continuity/correspondence presuppositions of Covenant theology.

The one central phenomenon that sorts out all of the continuity and discontinuity of the history of God and man, and the correspondence and discordance of theological content, is the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christocentric theology refocuses all interpretation on the action of God in Jesus Christ. The focus of Christian theology is not to be on legal covenants, sociological peoples, historical dispensations or racial nations, but on Jesus Christ, and that not only as an

historical figure or as a theological formulation, but on the personal indwelling of His life and Being in Christians. The primary objective of God in dealing with fallen mankind is not to develop an "elect people" or to develop a "kingdom for Israel," but to restore the divine presence in man by the indwelling of Christ in the Christian, and that in order to allow God to be glorified by the expression of His all-glorious character within the behavior of man.

Conclusion

The natural tendency of man is to attempt to "slant" explanations and interpretations to his own way of thinking, to promote the presuppositions he has espoused and the preferences that serve his own purposes. The self-orientation of man creeps into his theological considerations. Christians today need to be discerning so they can recognize the man-made "grids" of interpretation that color and taint and bias so much of Christian instruction today. Surely we do not want to be blind followers who have failed to develop our own "reasoning about God" in accord with inspired Scripture? Paul prayed for the Philippians Christians that their "love might abound more and more in real

knowledge and all discernment, so that they might approve the things that are excellent..." (Phil. 2:9,10). Such would be my prayer for Christians today.

It is not the intent of this study to propose another theological system in competition with any others. The world of sinful mankind does not need another system; they need the Savior, Jesus Christ. The solution to the problems of fallen mankind are not in the compilation of logical truths, but in the receiving of the One who is the Living Truth (John 14:6) - Jesus Christ. Thus it is proposed that our "reasoning about God," our theology, should be Christocentric.

As Christian peoples in different places and at different times have different "reasonings," it is important to reiterate again that theological understanding and concurrence should not be a

"test of fellowship" among Christian peoples. We must not revere theological systems. The systematization of ideologies into well-defined theologies produces additional "-isms" which capture men's imaginations and cause them to interpret Scripture and their relationship with God through a colored lens, an imperfect "grid." Ideological reasonings must not become idolatrous objects of reverence. Theological constructions must not become deified as "gods" to be worshipped and defended with vitriolic vehemency. Those who have received the risen and living Lord Jesus Christ by faith can and must remain one in the "unity of love" despite different theological reasoning. This can be accomplished by allowing Jesus Christ to be the center of our thinking, our theology and our lives.

Endnotes

1 Torrance, J.B., *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 34, pgs 225- 243, Article entitled "The Covenant Concept in Scottish Theology and Politics and its Legacy."

2 Cf. Romans 4:4-16; 5:20,21; 6:14,15; 11:6; Gal. 2:21; 5:4.

3 Authors advocating this application of law include Greg Bahnsen, Kenneth Gentry, Gary North and R.J. Rushdoony.

4 Ironside, Harry, *The Mysteries of God*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers. 1908. pgs. 50,51.

5 Marsden, George M., *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. New York: Oxford. 1982. pg. 64.

6 Darby, J.N., *The Hopes of the Church of God*. London. p. 109.

7 Ryrie, Charles, *Dispensationalism Today*. Chicago: 1965. pgs. 18, 104

8 Walvoord, John F., *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 1951. Article entitled, "The Abrahamic Covenant and Premillennialism." pg. 414.

Additional books worthy of study on this subject:

Belcher, Richard P., *A Comparison of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology*. Southbridge, Mass.: Crowne Publications. 1986.

Fuller, Daniel P., *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. 1980.

Addenda

Addendum A

Comparison of Theological Systems

Addendum B

Covenant Dialectics

Addendum C

God's Covenants with Mankind

Addendum A

Comparison of

Covenant Theology

Primary objective of God: To develop an "elect People."

Covenant of Works	Adamic Covenant	Noahic Covenant	Abrahamic Covenant	Mosaic Covenant
Fall				

Dispensational Theology

Primary objective of God: To develop a Kingdom for Israel.

Dispensation of Innocence	Dispensation of Conscience	Dispensation of Human Government	Dispensation of Promise	Dispensation of Law
Fall				

Christocentric Theology

Primary objective of God: To restore His divine presence in man.

	Old Covenant
Fall	

Theological Systems

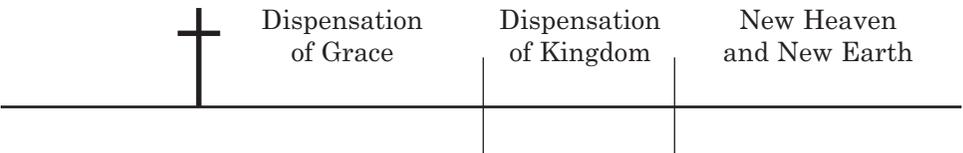
Important features:

1. Common "covenant of grace."
2. Singular "People of God."
3. Unity and Uniformity of God's People and Bible.



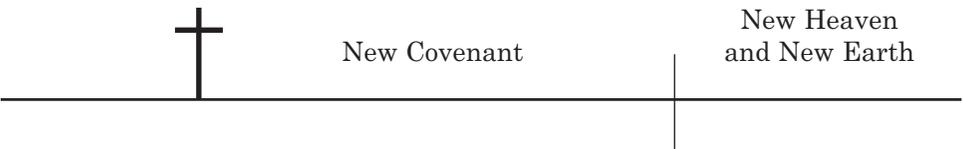
Important features:

1. Distinct dispensations of time.
2. Dichotomy of Israel and Church.
3. Unconditional covenant of God with Israel.



Important features:

1. Messianic promises fulfilled in Christ.
2. All God's activity centers in Christ.
3. God continues to act in grace by the dynamic life of the risen Lord Jesus.



Addendum B

Covenant Understanding the

← Dynamic

Neglect, diminishment, denial
of covenantal discontinuity.



Covenant theology

Attempts to force the discontinuity of old Law covenant and new covenant of grace into a continuity.

Continued efficacy of Law.
“The Law of Grace.”
“The Grace of Law.”

Discontinuity is eschewed. The Law, the kingdom, the church are viewed in a continuum of re-formation.

Fear that discontinuity of old and new covenants might impinge on God’s immutability, and as a consequence fixate God in mechanistic proceduralism.

Often espouses preterist eschatology with amillennial or postmillennial interpretation.

Continued efficacy of Law has led to reconstructionist concepts of theonomy, and the quest to restore God’s Law as the “law of the land.”

Inadequate understanding of the radical newness of the new covenant of Grace in Jesus Christ.

Continuity

Promise – Fulfillment

Covenant promises to Abraham

Descendants - Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:5; 17:7
Nation - Gen. 12:2; 17:4,5; 18:18
Land - Gen. 12:7; 13:14; 15:7,18; 17:8
Blessing - Gen. 12:2,3; 18:28

Physical fulfillment in Israel

Descendants - Deut. 1:10; I Kgs 4:20
Nation - Deut. 4:6,7; I Chron. 17:21
Land - Josh. 2:9; 21:43; Neh. 9:8,23,24
Blessing - Gen. 24:34,35; Isa. 51:2

ALL promises fulfilled physically

Josh. 21:45; 23:14; I Kgs 8:56; Heb. 6:15

Spiritual fulfillment in Jesus Christ

Descendants - Rom. 4:16; 9:8; Gal. 3:7,29
Nation - I Pt. 2:9; Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19
Land - Heb. 4:1,9; 11:10,13-16; 12:22
Blessing - Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:8,9,14

ALL promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Lk. 22:44-49; Rom. 15:8; II Cor. 1:20
Jesus is “hope of Israel” - Acts 26:6; 28:20

Christians receive promises to Abraham

Gal. 3:18,29; Heb. 8:6; 9:15

God’s people - I Pt. 2:9; Tit. 2:14

Spiritual Israel - Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16

God’s “rest” - Matt. 11:28,29; Heb. 4:1-11

The continuity of promise/fulfillment and the discontinuity of law in grace together allow for the “Finished work” (Jn. 19:30) of Christ,

Dialectic

Biblical Covenants

Balance →

Neglect, diminishment, denial
of covenantal continuity.

Discontinuity

Contrast: Old/New; Law/Grace

Old covenant of Mosaic Law
First covenant - Mk. 2:21,22; II Cor. 3:14
Physical Israel only-Exod. 34:27; Deut. 5:3
Preliminary - Heb. 8:5
Shadow, type - Heb. 8:5; 9:9; 10:1
No life - Gal. 3:21
No forgiveness - Heb. 10:4,11
No righteousness - Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16,21
No freedom - Acts 13:29
No perfection - Heb. 7:11,19; 9:9; 10:1
New covenant promised - Jere. 31:31
Old covenant abrogated - Heb. 7:18; 8:13;
10:9; Rom. 10:4; II Cor. 3:11,13

New covenant of Grace in Jesus Christ
Jere. 31:31; II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:10,13;
9:15; 10:16,12,24
Second covenant - Heb. 8:7; 10:9
Better covenant - Heb. 7:22; 8:6
Eternal covenant - Heb. 9:15; 13:20
Covenant of life - II Cor. 3:6
Covenant of righteousness - II Cor. 3:19
End of law - Rom. 10:4
Law written in hearts - Heb. 8:10; 10:16
Christians not under law - Rom. 6:14,15;
I Cor. 9:20; Gal. 3:25; 5:18

Dispensationalism

Attempts to force the continuity of
Abrahamic promise/fulfillment into
a discontinuity with projected
future continuity.

Contend that Church Age never
promised by God. God's "Plan B."
Parenthetical interim.

Continuity put on "hold." To be
resumed in future at second coming
of Jesus, to complete physical
fulfillment to Israel.

Fear that continuity of spiritual
fulfillment of Abrahamic promises
would impinge on God's faithful-
ness to Israel, and thereby fixate
God in physical, racial and national
preoccupation.

Futurist eschatology that expects
premillennial return of Christ.
New Covenant and kingdom often
projected into future millenium.

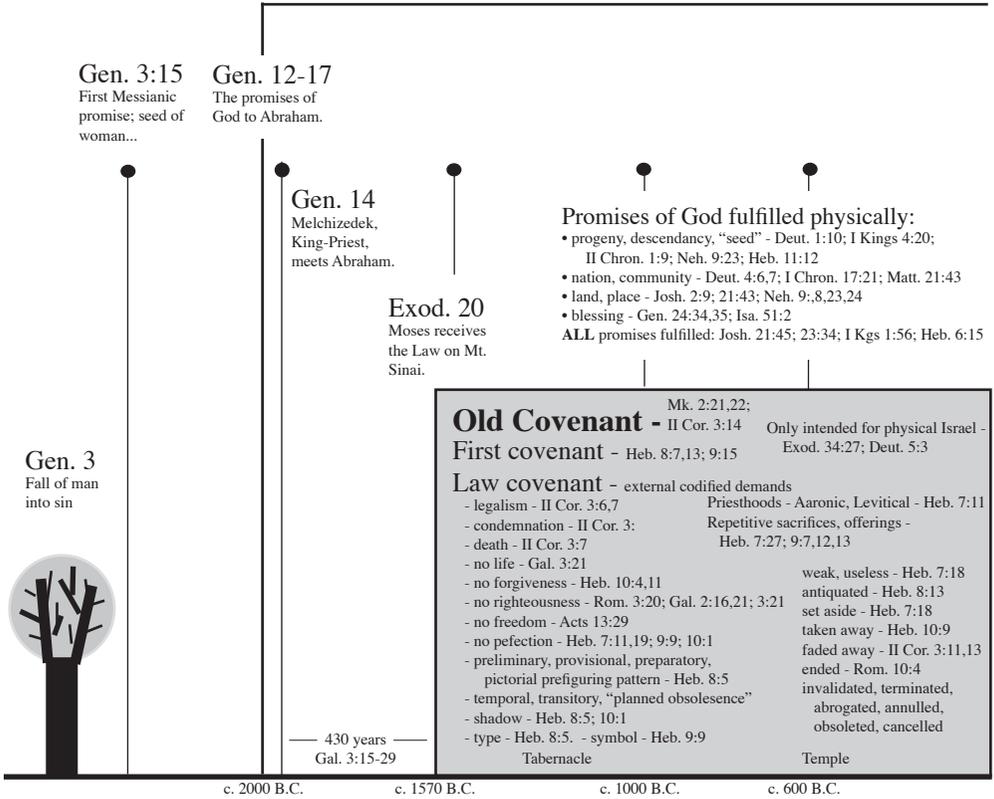
Inadequate understanding of the
complete fulfillment of God's
promises in Jesus Christ.

whereby Christians are "complete in Christ"
(Col. 2:10) having "everything" God intends
in Him (I Cor. 3:21-23; Eph. 1:3; II Pet. 1:3).

©2006, 2008 by James A. Fowler

Addendum C

God's Covenants with Mankind



New Testament references to "covenant"

Luke 1:72
Acts 3:24
Acts 7:8
Gal. 3:17

Rom. 9:4
Eph. 2:12

II Cor. 3:14
Gal. 4:24
Heb. 8:9
Heb. 9:15,20

Dispensational Theology

Recognizes the discontinuity of the Mosaic covenant of Law. Also creates discontinuity in the Abrahamic covenant of promise by insisting on yet unfulfilled physical fulfillment, positing interrupted and postponed fulfillment to be realized in future at second coming. Fears that continuity in spiritual fulfillment of Abrahamic promises would impinge on God's faithfulness, thus fixing God in physical preoccupation. This has led to regarding the Church as a parenthetical interim afterthought in God's plan, letting the Gentiles partake of the benefits of Christ until the time that Christ returns to restore physical Israel. Eschatologically expressed in premillennial pessimism.

Continuity

Promises to Abraham fulfilled in Christ.

Promises of God to Abraham fulfilled spiritually:

- progeny, descendency, "seed" - Rom. 4:16; 9:8; Gal. 3:7,29; 4:28; Rev. 7:9
- nation, community - I Pet. 2:9; Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19
- land, place - Heb. 4:1,9; 11:10,13-16; 12:22; Jn. 14:2,3; Gal. 4:26; Eph. 2:6; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 3:12; 21:1,2
- blessing - Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:8,9,14

ALL promises fulfilled in Christ: Lk. 22:44-49; Rom. 15:8; II Cor. 1:20

JESUS is the "hope of Israel" - Acts 26:6; 28:20

Christians are: God's people - Titus 2:14; I Pet. 2:9
Spiritual Israel - Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16
Spiritual Jews - Rom. 2:28,29
Recipients of promises to Abraham - Gal. 3:18; Heb. 9:15

Better promises - Heb. 8:6

Partake of God's rest - Matt. 11:28,29; Heb. 4:1-11

New Covenant -

Jere. 31:31; II Cor. 3:6;
Heb. 8:10,13; 9:15;
10:16;12:24

Second covenant - Heb. 8:7; 10:9

Better covenant - Heb. 7:22; 8:6

Eternal covenant - Heb. 9:15;13:20

Covenant of life - II Cor. 3:6

Covenant of righteousness - Rom. 5:19; II Cor. 3:19; 5:21

Change in law - Heb. 7:12

Christ is the end of the Law - Rom. 10:4

Christians not under the law - Rom. 6:14,15;

I Cor. 9:20; Gal. 3:25; 5:18

"law written in hearts" - Heb. 8:10; 10:16

- law of Christ - I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2

- law of faith - Rom. 6:14

- law of Spirit - Rom. 8:2

- law of liberty - James 1:25; 2:12

- perfect law - James 1:25

- royal law - James 2:8

law fulfilled in Christian - Rom. 8:4

- love of neighbor - Rom. 13:8,10; Gal. 5:4

- bearing another's burdens - Gal. 6:2

one sacrifice - Heb. 10:10-14
once and for all - Heb. 7:27;
9:12,26; 10:10,12,14
"finished work" - Jn. 19:30

- disappearing - Heb. 8:13

Grace of God in Christ

Dynamic of grace - Jn. 1:17; Rom. 5:2;

II Cor. 9:8; 12:9; II Tim. 2:1; I Pet. 5:10

Christ in Christian - Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20;

II Cor. 13:5

Partaker of divine nature - II Pet. 1:4

New creature - II Cor. 5:17

To live is Christ - Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:4

Saved by His life - Rom. 5:10

Power of His resurrection - Phil. 3:10

Adequacy of God - II Cor. 3:5

Freedom in Christ - Jn. 8:32,36; Acts 13:39;

II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1,13; I Pet. 2:16

No condemnation - Rom. 8:1

Fruit of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22,23

Change of priesthood - Heb. 7:12

Jesus: priest according to order of Melchizedek -

Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1,10,11,15,17

Eternal, priestly ministry of Jesus - Ps. 110:4;

Heb. 7:21,24; 8:1,2,6

Intercessory ministry in heavens - Heb. 7:26;

8:1,2,5; Eph. 1:20; 2:6

- intercessory prayer - Rom. 8:26,27

- intercessory worship - Jn. 4:23,24

- intercessory witness - Acts 1:8

- intercessory life - Gal. 2:20

- intercessory laying down of life - I Jn. 3:16

- intercessory ministry - Rom. 15:18

Temple not made with hands - Acts 17:24

28 A.D. 70 A.D.

Discontinuity

Old cov. - New cov.

Law - Grace

Matt. 26:28

Mk. 14:24

Lk. 22:20

I Cor. 11:25

Heb. 10:29

II Cor. 3:6

Gal. 4:24

Heb. 7:22; 8:6,10;

9:15; 10:27;

12:24; 13:20

Covenant Theology

Recognizes the continuity of Abrahamic covenant of promise in spiritual fulfillment of Christ and Christians. Also posits partial continuity of Mosaic covenant of Law, denying ceremonial, civil, and sacrificial laws, but advocating renewed continuation of moral, behavioral obligations of law. Fear that discontinuity of old and new covenants might impinge on God's immutability, thus fixing God in mechanistic proceduralism. This view of continued Law has led to reconstructionist concepts of theonomy, and the quest to restore God's Law as the "law of the land." Covenant theology is usually eschatologically expressed in postmillennial optimism.