

ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM ANOTHER FAULTY APPROACH TO PROPHECY

A significant part of the Dispensationalist approach is correct, inasmuch as it is Pre-millennialist and Futurist and so explains the 70th ‘seven’ of the 70 ‘sevens’ prophecy of Daniel 9 as yet future along with a clear explanation of the final antichrist as the world’s last evil ruler. Furthermore, the Scriptures clearly demonstrate that there have been different dispensations inasmuch as God has dealt with His people differently at different times as His purpose moves forward. However, the ultra-dispensationalist scheme is disruptive to the biblical pattern because it is based on a number of wrong conclusions—primarily that there will be a pre-tribulation secret rapture.

BACKGROUND

As a result of the visions in 1830 of a lady in Scotland called **Margaret MacDonald** the theory of *a pre-tribulation rapture at any moment* came into existence. **Edward Irving** developed this concept into Ultra-Dispensationalism which treats “*the gospel of the Kingdom*” and “*the gospel of grace*” as separate gospels. This was supposedly because the Jews, in the main, had rejected the “Kingdom” gospel and so it was replaced by “the gospel of grace” for the Church until the final 7 years when the ‘Kingdom’ gospel will once again be preached to the Jews. So in Ultra-Dispensationalism God has *two distinct redemptive plans*—one for national Israel and a different one for the Church during the so-called “church age.” Furthermore, in this scheme *Jesus returns twice*. The first is *a secret return* at his *parousia (coming)*, and then *7 years later*, at his *apocalipsis (revelation)* just before the Millennium, a 2nd stage return. On the first occasion—the *parousia*—the first resurrection and the rapture take place with the Christians being taken away to heaven for 7 years (The pre-tribulation rapture). By this means the persecution of *the “Great Tribulation” is avoided*. The second return of Jesus is a literal and physical one to bring about judgment on the world.

Ultra-Dispensationalism was popularized by **J.N Darby** the founder of the Plymouth Brethren and became systematized in the **Scofield** Reference Bible of 1909 and more recently in the **Ryrie** Study Bible. Today’s main proponents are: **John Valvoord**, Charles Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, Thomas Ice and Dallas Theological College.

REASONS WHY ULTRA-DISPENSATIONALISM IS A FAULTY SCHEME

1. The basis of Ultra-Dispensationalism of a pre-tribulation rapture is completely out of balance with the many Scripture statements which demonstrate that the first resurrection/rapture must come after the Great Tribulation.
2. The teachings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount, do not belong to a dispensation different to that of Paul’s and the other NT writers because such a separation would mean, quite wrongly, that all that Jesus taught was not for Christians and only his death and resurrection count. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones showed that Ultra-Dispensationalism is a faulty scheme because: There is no teaching to be found in the Sermon on the Mount which is not also found in the various New Testament Epistles *Studies on the Sermon on the Mount* p. 10.
3. Some forms of Dispensationalism propose that God intended the Mosaic Law Covenant with Israel to be permanent. However, God never intended it to be permanent and according to Galatians 3 and 4, it was simply a codicil to the Abrahamic Covenant. Not only doesn’t the Mosaic Law Covenant replace the existing document i.e. the Abrahamic Covenant, but is only temporary, whereas Dispensationalism tends to reverse things, making the Abrahamic Covenant a codicil to the Mosaic

Law and therefore makes Jesus a worker in Moses' house (Heb. 3:5,6). The 'Mosaic Dispensation' i.e. "the Prophets and the Law" came to an end with John the Baptist (Matt.11:13). The new dispensation began when "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

4. Jesus is not speaking only to Jews in the Olivet discourse, but to Jews who are Christians. So the statements concerning the Great Tribulation are not just for Jews.
5. There is no biblical distinction between "*the gospel of the Kingdom*" and "*the gospel of grace*" So there are not **two redemptive plans**—one for national Israel and one for the Church during the "church age" and then a return to the preaching of "the gospel of the Kingdom" in the final 7 years, as wrongly promoted by Ultra-Dispensationalists.

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOSPEL TO BE PREACHED BEFORE JESUS' RETURN

That "the gospel of the Kingdom" and "the gospel of grace" are one and the same gospel is proved by number of statements in the book of Acts and in the Revelation to John:

- ❖ "But I [*Paul*] do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to **the gospel of the grace of God**. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about **proclaiming the kingdom** will see my face again" (*Acts 20:24, 25*).

F.F. Bruce states:

"It is evident from a comparison of Acts 20:24 with the next verse that the *preaching of the Gospel of grace is identical with the proclamation of the Kingdom*" (*Commentary on Acts*, Tyndale, 1952).

PAUL PREACHED THE KINGDOM TO THE END OF HIS LIFE

- ❖ "From morning till evening he [*Paul*] expounded to them, testifying **to the kingdom of God** and trying to **convince them about Jesus** both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets" (*Acts 28:23*).
- ❖ *Paul was*: "...proclaiming **the kingdom of God** and teaching about **the Lord Jesus Christ**" (*Acts 28:31*).

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS WAS 'THE KINGDOM GOSPEL' AFTER PAUL'S TIME

- ❖ "...you and your brothers who hold to **the testimony of Jesus**" (*Rev. 19:10*).
- ❖ *The testimony of Jesus was, throughout his life-time concerning "the Kingdom of God"*:
- ❖ "And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom** and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (*Matt. 4:23*).
- ❖ "But seek first **the kingdom of God** and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (*Matt. 6:33*).
- ❖ "...but he said to them, "I must **preach the good news of the kingdom of God** to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose"" (*Luke 4:43*).
- ❖ "...And he sent them out to proclaim **the kingdom of God** and to heal" (*Luke 9:2*).
- ❖ "So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that **the kingdom of God is near**" (*Luke 21:31*).

Because "*the testimony of Jesus*" concerned "the Kingdom of God" and Christians were to hold this testimony of Jesus in 96 A.D., when the book of Revelation was written, it is evident that this is the teaching to be held by Christians today.

So from the above Scriptures it is clear that there was no move away from preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is the same message as the commission Jesus gave that:

❖ “this **gospel of the kingdom** will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and **then the end will come**” (*Matt. 24:14*).

So there is no sound reason:

- To break the period of time of ‘the Great commission preaching’ into different dispensations.
- To separate Jesus’ teaching on the gospel from that of Paul’s.
- To posit two separate redemptive plans for national Israel and the Church.

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