

Basics of Dispensational Premillennial View (Scofield Bible)

Dispensation is defined by Scofield as “a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.” In the NT, the word is never used in reference to time. Instead, in the KJV translation, the word only appears to describe the administration of duty by giving proper service, and can be found in the following passages, *1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; and Col. 1:25.*

The seven dispensations according to Scofield are:

1. Innocence (The Garden of Eden, Gen. 1 and 2)
2. Conscience (Sin enters with the Fall, Gen. 3:23)
3. Human Government (Gen. 8:21)
4. Promise (Abraham, Gen. 12:1)
5. Law (Moses and Sinai, Ex. 19:8)
6. Grace (Jesus, John 1:17)
7. Kingdom (Millennial Rule, Eph. 1:10)

To These he also added eight covenants:

1. Edenic
2. Adamic
3. Noahic
4. Abrahamic
5. Mosaic
6. Palestinian
7. David
8. New Covenant

The following are some of the more prominent implications of the Dispensational outlook:

1. The teaching of Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) and the Lord's prayer within it are said to proclaim a righteousness based on legal grounds. The Sermon on the Mount is thought to be part of the fifth dispensation of the Law and not a doctrine of Grace from the sixth dispensation or the eighth covenant, the New Covenant. The Sermon on the Mount does not apply to the church age according to Scofield. As such, they do not apply to the modern Christian. Since we often recite the Lord's Prayer in worship and my constant referring to the truths of Jesus' greatest message in my sermons, it is no surprise to the reader that I find that position ridiculously wrong. Updated versions of Dispensational teaching by others have rejected this idea.
2. Scofield taught that the church age in which we currently live in a “historical parenthesis” not seen or predicted by any prophecy. Of course, that is also wrong. The notion is based on a flawed reading of Daniel chapter 9, the famous 70 weeks passage. The 70 weeks are described as meaning 490 years of time. 483 years of the period or 69 weeks were said to be the exact time period between the rebuilding of the second temple in Jerusalem after the exile until the time of Jesus' ministry on Earth. Then in a

bizarre twist of time and calendar, Scofield said the 70th week did not immediately follow the 69th. This gap, now of about 2,000 years and counting, leaves room for the fulfillment of other Bible prophecies, such as the reestablishment of the Modern State of Israel to transpire. The 70th week in this prediction represents the seven years of tribulation before the establishment of the millennial kingdom by the returning Jesus. This long gap between the 69th and 70th weeks is required in order to provide for the restoration of the Jewish nation of Israel.

3. According to Scofield, the living saints at the onset of the 70th week or the seven years of tribulation would be rescued by a secret rapture and would be taken by Jesus out of this world to meet Christ in the air.
4. During the tribulation period of seven years or 70th week, there will appear an apostate church seduced with the emerging of a political leader, known as the Beast, who is said to unite ten nations that have grown out of the old Roman Empire.
5. Jews will all return to Israel (Palestine in Scofield notes) and many will be converted and begin preaching for Christ. This is to occur in the first 3 ½ year period. At the end of the second 3 ½ year half period of the tribulation Christ will return again with his saints who will then defeat all the armies of the Gentiles at Armageddon.
6. With that final victory, the millennial kingdom of Christ will be reestablished.

These are the basic ideas of Scofield's famous teaching. They form the core of dispensational teaching on the end times. There have been many additions and complications to his teachings by those who have come after him.

For me there is much here with which I disagree. I do not accept the idea of dispensation as referring to ages because the Bible does not explicitly do so itself. Nowhere in Scripture do we find evidence of those seven times periods. It is a system forced upon the Bible. The long gap between the 69th and 70th weeks is a very confusing mishandling of logic and time. The Bible teaches these are essentially only two basic covenants, the old and the new or the time of law and the time of grace. Calling the church age, "historical parenthesis", is an embarrassment to the work of Jesus. He established his church and the gates of hell itself will not defeat it (Matt. 16:18). The church is the bride of Christ, the body of Christ and his beloved people. This is Scofield's most egregious error. Sadly, he demoted the church in order to elevate Israel. This was not necessary because the Jewish nation will be saved under the same Savior and same New Covenant as all other people. As believers, we are all now the children of Abraham, grafted into the tree of faith by Jesus himself. Practically all those who have set false dates for the return of Christ have misused the Dispensational method. While I think the rapture is biblical, Christians will not be taken out of tribulation as suggested by Scofield. That point was stressed in last week's presentation. Historical Premillennialism is far less complicated and much closer to the teachings of Jesus. The study of end times theology should begin and end with the teachings of Jesus himself. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).