


God's Plan for the Ages Series

Lesson #036

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GOD'S PLAN
FOR THE **AGES**
DISPENSATIONS

PROGRESSIVE
DISPENSATIONALISM

The term “progressive” emphasizes their idea that the Old Testament covenants were “inaugurated” either at the cross or at Pentecost and are in some sense fulfilled today and moving progressively toward complete fulfillment in the future.

This progressive development is applied to the Abrahamic Covenant and primarily both the Blessing and Seed aspects (New Covenant and Davidic Covenant), yet fail completely to address how, in any sense this applies to the Land Covenant.

Dispensational Developments

1830

1900

1950

2015

Classic Dispensationalism

Normative Disp.

JN Darby
1800–1882

Progressive
Disp.

CI Scofield
1843–1921

LS Chafer
1871–1952

J F Walvoord
1910–2002

CC Ryrie's Essentials of Dispensationalism

sine qua non

- 1. A literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic.**
- 2. The distinction between Israel and the Church.**
- 3. The unifying principle of history is the glory of God.**

Progressive Dispensationalism Characteristics

- **It teaches that Christ is already reigning in heaven on the throne of David, thus merging the church with a present phase of the already inaugurated Davidic Covenant and Kingdom.**
- **This is based on a complementary hermeneutic that allows the New Testament to introduce changes and additions to Old Testament revelation.**
- **The overall purpose of God is Christological, holistic redemption being the focus and goal of history.**

“Bock agrees with covenant theology that the eschatological kingdom was inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus.”

~Willem VanGemeren (a covenant theologian)

“... position is closer to covenant theology than to dispensationalism.”

~Bruce Waltke, in appraising David Turner's essay

Progressive Dispensationalism

“... is inherently unstable. I do not think that they will find it possible in the long run to create a safe haven theologically between classic dispensationalism and covenantal premillennialism. The forces that their own observations have set in motion will most likely lead to covenantal premillennialism after the pattern of George E. Ladd.”

~Vern Poythress

I. Complementary hermeneutics

Progressive Dispensationalism replaces the literal, historical, grammatical, single meaning of the text hermeneutic with...

The literal, historical, grammatical, literary, theological method.

Complementary Hermeneutics

“The New Testament does introduce change and advance; it does not merely repeat Old Testament revelation. In making complementary additions, however, it does not jettison old promises.”

~Darrell Bock

“It has replaced grammatical-historical interpretation with a system of hermeneutics called historical-grammatical-literary-theological. Several comparisons that illustrate the differences between the two hermeneutical systems relate to the function of the interpreter, the historical dimension, the ‘single-meaning’ principle, the issue of *sensus plenior*, and the importance of thoroughness. The bottom line is that a choice between Dispensationalism and Progressive Dispensationalism amounts to a choice of which system of hermeneutics an interpreter chooses to follow.”

~Robert Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics*

“The complementary approach put forth by Blaising and Bock is claimed to be a synthesis combining the answer of older dispensationalism, which demonstrates a greater sensitivity to ‘the historical interpretation of the Old Testament,’ while adopting covenant theology’s view that includes the ‘adding of new revelation.’ Bock has suggested, in the process of interpreting Peter’s use of Joel in Acts 2 that the ‘eschaton has begun; the movement toward the culmination of the eschaton has started, as have the benefits associated with the coming of the Day of the Lord.’ ”

~Tommy Ice

“Hermeneutics has become much more complex today than when Charles Ryrie affirmed literal interpretation as the ‘clear, plain, normal’ method of interpretation... Literary interpretation has developed so that some things which earlier interpreters thought they ‘clearly’ saw in Scripture, are not ‘clearly’ seen today at all.”

~Craig Blaising

In the 1950s and '60s, other evangelicals were also shying away from “spiritual hermeneutics” [“typology”] in favor of grammatical-historical interpretation. However, evangelical grammatical-historical interpretation was also broadening in the mid-twentieth century to include the developing field of biblical theology. Grammatical analysis expanded to include developments in literary study, particularly in the study of genre, or literary form, and rhetorical structure. Historical interpretation came to include a reference to the historical and cultural context of individual literary pieces for their overall interpretation. And by the late 1980s, evangelicals became more aware of the problem of the interpreter's historical context and traditional preunderstanding of the text being interpreted. These developments are now shared by evangelical biblical scholars of different traditions, including many dispensationalists. They have opened up new vistas for discussion which were not considered by earlier interpreters, including classical and many revised dispensationalists. These are the developments which have led to what is now called “progressive dispensationalism.”

~Bock and Blaising

“It [postmodern thinking] is said by some to be the logical development of modernism toward ever *greater relativity, not only in the perception of truth but also of reality itself.* On this view postmodernism would be the logical outcome of Enlightenment thinking, the final step of recognizing that *meaning is created in part, at least, by my personal perceptions...* The role of the interpreter, the knowing subject, is being redefined not merely for how meaning is to be understood and communicated but actually for how the interpreter participates in the creation of meaning and even, for some, the creation of whatever reality there is.”

~McQuilkin and Mullen (emphasis added)

As a result of this hermeneutic, Jesus is currently reigning from David's throne in heaven which adds to the Old Testament prediction of an earthly reign and kingdom.

The Progressive Dispensational View of Dispensations

Patriarchal	Mosaic	Ecclesial	Zionic
Creation to Sinai	Sinai to Christ's Ascension	Ascension to Second Coming	Two parts: Millennium Eternity