

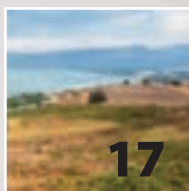
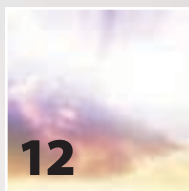
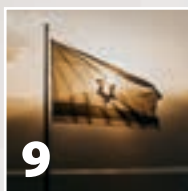
November/December 2021 • \$3.95

# FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

# Dispensationalism

# Dispensationalism



## FEATURES

### 6 Why Biblical Predictions Must Be Fulfilled Literally

*Roy Beacham*

Historic dispensationalism believes that a written text can mean only what the original author intended it to mean.

### 9 Peoples of God: Has the Church Replaced Israel?

*Ryan J. Martin*

Dispensationalists insist that a proper perspective accounts for and gives biblical priority to the ways in which God gets glory from His dealings with peoples.

### 12 What Is God's Ultimate Purpose? The Glory of God and the Definition of Dispensationalism

*Mark A. Snoeberger*

Did Charles Ryrie blunder when he listed the glory of God as a distinctive unique to the dispensational system?

### 14 Why Pray "Thy Kingdom Come"?

*Jeff Brown*

Jesus said that we should pray, "Thy kingdom come"; do we really know what that means?

### 17 What Do We Do with the Sermon on the Mount?

*Greg Stiekes*

Through the centuries the Sermon on the Mount has been interpreted in various ways, some of them controversial.

### 22 Dispensationalism and Fundamentalism

*Michael P. Riley*

It is virtually impossible for a dispensationalist to be a theological liberal.

### 36 Should Dispensationalism Be in Your Church's Doctrinal Statement?

*Brett Williams*

A church's statement of faith confirms what that church holds in common with the apostles, historic Christianity, and other churches.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 5 Mail Bag & News from All Over

### 20 On the Home Front

### 26 Regional Reports

### 28 Mentors Wanted: Perfection Not Required

*Julie Wilson Smith*

### 32 At a Glance

"The Fulness of . . . Time": Providences in the Coming of Christ

*Layton Talbert*

### 34 With the Word to the World

Let Them Know

*Jim Tillotson*

### 38 God Has a Plan

*Glenn Booth*

### 39 God Uses Both Rugged and Refined Men

*Jerry Sivnksty*

# Welcome to Dispensationalism!

**"D**ispensationalism" is a big word, and people struggle to understand its meaning. Some people assume that if you believe in dispensations, then you must be a dispensationalist. But all Christians recognize that God has administered His plan in different ways at different times and for different persons. These differences in administration are what we call "dispensations." If you don't sacrifice bulls and goats to God, and if you feel free to eat shrimp and ham, then you believe in dispensations. Simply recognizing the existence of dispensations is not what makes you a dispensationalist.

Other people tie dispensationalism to theories about the end times. They assume that to be premillennial or even pretribulationist is to be a dispensationalist. As a matter of fact, most premillennialists and even more pretribulationists are also dispensationalists: there is a connection. Nevertheless, other theologies have produced premillennialists, and one does encounter pretribulationists who reject certain dispensationalist tenets.

Writing during the 1960s, Charles Ryrie offered a three-part definition of dispensationalism. Each of the first three essays in this magazine deals with one aspect of Ryrie's definition. Roy Beacham writes on the literal interpretation of Scripture. Ryan Martin deals with the difference between Israel and the Church as distinct peoples of God. Mark Snoeberger argues that the glory of God is the unifying theme of biblical history. These three essays together will tell you what a dispensationalist is and why dispensationalism matters.

The next two essays address particular questions that dispensationalists have to answer. Jeff Brown explains how dispensationalists view the

kingdom of God. Greg Stiekes focuses on the Sermon on the Mount to explain how dispensationalists read and appropriate the four gospels. These are two of the most critical questions that dispensationalists must address.

The final two essays deal with more practical concerns. Michael Riley argues for a real connection between dispensationalism and theological conservatism, and he bases it on their common commitment to biblical authority. Brett Williams addresses the question of whether dispensationalism should be included in a local church's statement of faith. In a time when a strictly reformed (as opposed to dispensational) theology is gaining traction, these are useful questions to consider.

We have included no essays dealing specifically with the end times. While that topic is certainly related to dispensationalism, we believe that it deserves separate consideration and fuller discussion. Our goal in this magazine is simply to introduce you to dispensationalism so that you can understand what it is and how it works. We do not assume that you arrive at these pages with any previous understanding, and we have tried to write simply enough that you can follow us without knowing any technical vocabulary. All the terms you need to know will be defined along the way.

One more thing. As you read, please keep your Bible in hand. Look up the passages that our authors cite. Study what God says in His Word and seek to discover for yourself whether dispensationalism is truly biblical.

— **Kevin T. Bauder**

Kevin T. Bauder, PhD, is research professor of Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis.





# say yes

## TO DEVELOPING YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS FOR HIS GLORY

- ✓ MA / MDIV / DMIN
- ✓ BIBLE
- ✓ BIBLICAL COUNSELING
- ✓ BIBLICAL STUDIES
- ✓ INTERCULTURAL STUDIES—URBAN OR GLOBAL



**MARANATHA**  
BAPTIST SEMINARY

*Any class. Anywhere. On your time.*

VISIT **MBU.EDU/MDIV**



I left a review on Amazon's website this evening. [For the Faith by Larry Oats] . . . was a great book, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Thank you so much for all your work with FBFI. We value the organization and its stand for the Faith.

Jim Moyer  
Fishers, IN

This printed testimony ["God Is My Refuge and Strength" by Claudia Barba] of Jeannette Joyner is exactly what a new widow of my church, Faith Baptist of Pensacola, needed. I . . . sent it to Becky.

Her in-heaven husband Jim was one of our deacons. He was one of my few close friends. He was only sixty-five years old. In his earlier years . . . he had served the Lord as a youth pastor. In this last year he and I had prayed about his desire to serve the Lord in another but unknown capacity; now we know.

I believe Jeanette's testimony will be of a great encouragement to Becky.

Glenn Booth  
Pensacola, FL

Thank you for the kind article about our new ministry [in the News from All Over section]. I received my FrontLine magazine yesterday and for the first time in three-plus years I was able to read it with just my reading glasses. I have been reading it online for a while. My cataract surgery in June has been a great blessing. I have had glasses full-time since 1960[, but] now I only have to use them for reading and computer. God is good!!!

Earl Barnett  
Donna, TX

**Dr. David Stertzbach** retired from the senior pastorate of Bethel Baptist Church in Tucson after forty-eight years in pastoral ministry. He served three years in Mississippi, fourteen years at Shannon Baptist Church in Shannon, Illinois, eighteen years at Trinity Baptist Church in Williston, Vermont, and fourteen years at Bethel Baptist Church in Tucson, Arizona. He enjoyed almost every minute of his pastoral labors. He now resides in Tucson with his wife of fifty-one years, Diane.



## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Subscription prices for **FrontLine** Magazine are \$26.95 for one year.

Call us at **864-268-0777**, visit [www.fbf.org](http://www.fbf.org), or use the subscription card on page 20.

Visa and MasterCard are accepted.



# COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS

## Recruiting Godly Chaplains to Serve:

- U.S. Military  
(Active Duty & Reserve Units)
- National Guard
- Civil Air Patrol
- Police Department
- Sheriff Department
- Fire Department
- Hospital



Contact the FBFI Home Office  
for more information:

**800-376-6856**

or [info@fbfi.org](mailto:info@fbfi.org)

# Why Biblical Predictions Must Be Fulfilled Literally

According to Charles Ryrie, the “consistently literal, or plain, interpretation” of Scripture constitutes one of the irreducible tenets of dispensationalism (*Dispensationalism*, 40). By “literal” or “plain” interpretation, Ryrie meant that the words of Scripture should be interpreted by the intended meaning of the original author within the historic context of his writing. In the modern legal debate surrounding the interpretation of the United States Constitution, this literalistic approach that focuses on authorial intent is called “foundationalism” or “originalism.” In this view, the judicial analyst of the Constitution seeks to discover the meaning of the framers, given the historical, literary, and political context of the document’s original writing. This strict judicial reading of the Constitution stands in contrast to judicial activism, which asserts that the framers’ words can mean something other than what the initial authors intended. Historic dispensationalism, like constitutional foundationalism, believes that a written text can mean *only* what the original author(s) intended it to mean. By using the term “literal” Ryrie espoused an originalistic reading of the Scriptures.

By including the term “*consistently* literal” Ryrie focused on the predictive prophecies (by predictive prophecy we mean the prophecies of Scripture that speak of future events) of the Bible. Unlike many Bible interpreters, dispensationalists believe that *all* of God’s foretelling will find fulfillment *only* in exact accord with the words and the intent of the original prophecy. Just as Messiah’s foretold birth took place precisely in Bethlehem and not somewhere else (Micah 5:2), so *all* of God’s fulfilled foretelling produces consistent, literal outcomes. In this view, the meaning of any divine prophecy can never morph into some form of nonliteral, alternative fulfillment.

Much like the interpretation of the Constitution, this strict reading of all biblical prophecy stands in contrast to a much-less-structured theory of prophetic interpretation. Covenant Theology, for example, claims that many of the predictive prophecies of Scripture should be read in a nonliteralistic, more open-ended manner. In this view, the meaning of God’s forecast may go beyond that of the original words in such a way that the prophecy finds a much different outcome



than originally stated. Once fulfilled, God's forecast no longer means precisely what it did when announced.

In fact, Covenant Theology as a system *cannot work* without some form of nonliteralistic interpretation of the prophets. The same holds true with the more recent New Covenant Theology, which is related to Progressive Covenantalism. Likewise, Progressive Dispensationalism, another late-twentieth-century movement, necessarily relies upon methods that abandon consistent literalism in predictive prophecy. Theologically, each one of these systems claims that some prophecies regarding the future of national Israel *must* find fulfillment not literally but spiritually or typologically in the Church.

Against this spiritualistic and typological view, the Scriptures raise issues that support the historic dispensationalist's belief in the consistent, literal interpretation of predictive prophecy. These reasons are grounded upon clear claims made in the Bible. They are not merely assumed theological ideas that force dispensationalists to interpret all prophecy literally. God Himself makes several statements about predictive prophecy that tell the reader of Scripture exactly how and why His foretelling must always and only be interpreted literally. These unambiguous descriptions of prophetic revelation can be grouped into five categories. God describes (1) the *purpose*, (2) the *ground*, (3) the *nature*, (4) the *function*, and (5) the *test* of predictive prophecy. All of these descriptions demand consistent, literal interpretation.

### The Purpose of His Predictive Prophecy

God chose to use predictive prophecy as a way to prove His exclusive claim to deity. He challenges the false gods:

Produce your cause . . . bring forth your strong reasons. . . . Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen . . . Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods (Isa. 41:21–23).

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another. . . . Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them (Isa. 42:8–9).

I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. . . . I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them (Isa. 48:3–5; see also Isa. 44:6–8; 45:18–21).

Clearly, God purposed to use prophetic foretelling as unimpeachable evidence that He alone is God. It appears given, then, that the purpose of divine foretelling finds validation only if *everything* that God foretold actually comes to pass *precisely* as stated. Apart from consistent literal fulfillment, God's argument collapses. Any theological

**God, in His primary description of prophetic foretelling (Deut. 18:15–22), defines true predictive prophecy as consisting of His words and His words alone.**

system that weds itself to any form of nonliteral fulfillment contradicts God's declared purpose for predictive prophecy.

### The Ground of Edictal Prophecy

God's foretelling finds its basis in God's unchangeable person and effective speech. By divine oath, God links the integrity of His being and the efficiency of His words with the absolute accomplishment of His pre-announced plans. "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return [be reversed]" (Isa. 45:23). "I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the

end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. . . . Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9–11; see also Isa. 55:1–11). If God speaks His prophetic word "truly," "in righteousness," and without reversal ("return[ing]"), and if God has "sworn" by His own name that His prophecies "shall stand" precisely as "purposed," then there is no reason to believe that *any* of those prophecies will come to pass in some "typological" way (to use the buzzword) that produces outcomes different from those originally announced. Most particularly, God swore His promises to national Israel on the basis of His own name and divine integrity, and those prophecies especially *must* come to pass exactly as stated (Ezek. 36:22–36; Jer. 31:35–37). In fact, the fulfillment of *every one* of God's forecasts must correspond precisely with the original prophecy, or His essential holiness, unchangeable character, and the power of His speech stand indicted.

### The Nature of Predictive Prophecy

God's foretelling had only one meaning: the meaning that God alone intended.

It seems unimaginable, but countless Bible interpreters assert that in some Old Testament prophecies, the prophet (the human author) could mean *one* thing by his words, while God (the divine author) could mean a *different* thing altogether. The error in this view is evident. God, in His primary description of prophetic foretelling (Deut. 18:15–22), defines true predictive prophecy as consisting of His words and His words alone. "I will raise them up a Prophet . . . and will put *my words* in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that *I shall command him*. . . . [These are] *my words* which he shall speak *in my name*" (Deut. 18:18–19, emphasis added). The words of God's forecasts through the mouths of His prophets were God's words alone. Any adulteration by the prophet's own words constituted a capital offence (Deut. 18:20). No wonder, then, that the formula "Thus says the Lord" echoes more than 2,700 times in the writings of the prophets. Like Nebuchadnezzar's herald (Dan. 3:4–6), God's prophets announced *only* the words of their master. Therefore, since all true predictive prophecy consisted of *God's* words and *God's* words alone, then all true predictive prophecy



conveyed *God's* meaning, and God's meaning alone. Any view that advocates nonliteral fulfillment requires God to change His *own* meaning, not that of the prophets.

### The Function of Predictive Prophecy

Deuteronomy 18:15–22 explains the *function* of predictive prophecy. Those who heard (or read) the original words of God through the prophet were expected to understand and to live by faith in what God said about the future. “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he [the prophet] shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:19). If God foretold His long-range plans for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their offspring (national Israel), then God expected these men and women to believe in those sworn forecasts and to live by faith in their ultimate fulfillment (Deut. 18:18; cf. Heb. 11). Just as we in the Church must believe in and live by God's foretelling with regard to *our* future, so God required national Israel to believe in and live by His forecasts with regard to *their* future. To imagine that God ever intended to reinterpret His pre-announced blessings to Israel and to fulfill them typologically in the Church is to rob Old Testament saints of the basis of their faith in God's Word. If God never intended to fulfill all His Old Testament forecasts literally for Israel, why should we imagine that He plans to fulfill all His New Testament forecasts literally for us? Nonliteralism dissolves the basis of faith.

### The Test of Predictive Prophecy

Deuteronomy 18:15–22 includes God's *test* of predictive prophecy. How might Israel distinguish true prophets from false prophets? “And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?” (Deut. 18:21). God's answer bears significantly on His intent for the fulfillment of prophecy. “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken” (Deut. 18:22; see also Jer. 28:7–9 and Ezek. 33:30–33). In other words, the test of true predictive prophecy consisted of precise correspondence between the spoken forecast and the fulfillment of its details. Any outcome that diverged from that which was foretold not only marked the prophet as presumptuous (Deut. 18:22), but also placed him under sentence of death (Deut. 18:20). According to God's designated test, true predictive prophecy finds consistent literal fulfillment. Any system that weds itself to nonliteral fulfillment contradicts this absolute standard.

Each of the above biblical descriptions of predictive prophecy demands consistent, literal interpretation. God does not prove His deity by pre-announcing one thing and fulfilling it by a different thing. Nor does God display His sacred oath, His efficacious words, and His faithful character by forecasting distant outcomes to one people group, then fulfilling them with an alternate people group.

God does not speak His own words through His prophets, and by those same words mean something different than He said. Nor does God expect the recipients of His revelation to believe in and to live by prophecies that were never meant to come to pass precisely as revealed. And God does not condone prophets whose forecasts result in alternate outcomes. There is no reason to imagine that God's prophetic words, both Old Testament and New Testament, should *ever* be interpreted in any other way than with consistent literalism. And there is no New Testament citation of any Old Testament prophecy that cannot be explained by this biblical methodology. Ryrie correctly linked historic dispensationalism with the “consistently literal, or plain, interpretation” of Scripture. God explicitly prescribed this method.

Roy Beacham, Th.D., is Senior Professor of Old Testament at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. He also coordinates the chaplains' ministries for the Plymouth, Minnesota, police department.



## ESCAPE INSIGNIFICANCE. IMPACT ETERNITY.



COME. LEARN. ENGAGE. GROW.



INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST  
COLLEGE AND SEMINARY



1-800-IBC-4858



info@ibcs.edu



ibcs.edu

# Peoples of God

## Has the Church Replaced Israel?

**T**o rightly understand God's sovereign purposes and dealings with the human race, we must first understand that God's program deals with peoples (or, as we would now say, "people groups"). Dispensationalists do not dispute that God's plan includes the salvation of individuals and the making of covenants. They do insist, however, that a proper perspective accounts for and gives biblical priority to the ways in which God gets glory from His dealings with peoples.\*

The biblical definition of a people is related to the biblical idea of a nation. Sometimes the Scriptures contrast "the peoples" with "the nations." An example is Exodus 33:13, where God tells Israel that He has made Israel His people out of the nations. In many other passages, however, the Bible can use the terms "peoples" and "nations" interchangeably (Gen. 12:2; 17:16; 25:23; Ps. 67).

### **"In the Beginning . . ."**

The beginning of the nations can be found in the book of beginnings, Genesis. The genealogies of Noah's sons in

Genesis 10 provide the origins of all nations (Gen. 10:32; cf. 10:5, 20, 31). In Genesis 11, while the tragedy at Babel becomes the birth of the nations. God says of the tower builders: "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6). When God confuses their languages and scatters the peoples, the different nations come into being: "The LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9b).

These early chapters of Genesis provide the germ ideas of what constitutes a people or nation. Distinct peoples or nations first and foremost come from a common ancestor (Gen. 10). They also possess their own language (Gen. 11:9) and a common geographical area (Gen. 10:19, 32; 11:9). Moreover, each of these nations embraced their own false gods, whether Baal, Asherah, or Dagon. In fact, in two Old Testament passages, Scripture calls the Moabites the "people of Chemosh" (Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:46). Even if individuals



## "A Kingdom of Priests"

God called Israel to be His people as a way to reach the nations. God redeemed Israel out of Egypt to be His people so that the whole world would see His grace, glory, and power (Exod. 9:16; Josh. 4:20–24; 2 Sam. 7:23). Israel was to be a kingdom of priests, bringing all nations to God through their devotion to Him and His Law (Exod. 19:5–6; Deut. 4:5–8; 1 Kings 8:41–43; Ps. 9:11; 105:1). God gave Israel His Law so that they might be “a light of the people” (Isa. 51:4, better translated a “light to the peoples,” ESV; cf. Ps. 67:1–3; 147:20).

God’s purpose to have all peoples and nations worship Him is partly why God made Israel His people. God had a plan for all the nations, not just Israel. Several passages in the Psalms command the nations to worship Yahweh (Pss. 67, 117). Sometimes, the way the Scriptures describe the worship of the nations is extraordinary, given the restriction of temple worship to Israel (Pss. 96:8; 100:1–2). Throughout the prophets, the last days are presented as a time where the nations worship Yahweh in truth and holiness (Isa. 2:1–4; 56:6–7; Micah 4:1–5; Zech. 8:20–23). According to Isaiah 19:24–25, in the last days the whole nation of Egypt will worship Yahweh, and Yahweh will call Egypt His people.

Ultimately, Israel as a nation failed to keep God’s Law and covenant. Because of their sin and idolatry, God rejected Israel as His people, as the Lord said through Hosea: “Call His name Lo-ammi [“Not My People”]: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hosea 1:9). Israel’s sin against God culminated in the crucifixion of their own Messiah and King, Jesus of Nazareth.

Because of Israel’s rejection of Christ, God is presently judging Israel with hardening (Rom. 11:15, 25). From the perspective of the prophet Hosea, the Nation of Israel cannot be called the people of God right now. Yet from the perspective of God’s faithful (and still unfulfilled) promises to Israel, they can still be called God’s people (Rom. 11:1–2).

within the nations were regenerate believers in Yahweh, each nation was still corporately given over to idolatry (Deut. 29:18; Josh. 23:7); “For all the gods of the people are idols” (1 Chron. 16:26; Pss. 96:5; 97:7). In Scripture a nation or people possesses a common ancestry, geographical area, language, and religion.

If a people is defined by its common ancestry, geography, language, and religion, then what constitutes a “people of God”? The phrase “people of God” occurs only four times in Scripture (Judges 20:2; 2 Sam. 14:13; Heb. 4:9; 11:25), yet the idea is found right on the heels of the separation of the nations in Genesis 9–11.

In Genesis 12 God graciously calls Abram. According to Genesis 12:2–3, one of God’s purposes is to make of Abram “a great nation,” so that in him “shall all families of the earth be blessed.” This covenant is like a bud that later blossoms when God delivers Abraham’s descendants from Egypt. God’s words to Moses before the Exodus (Exod. 6:6–9) provide a clear and important definition for a “people of God.” God speaks seven “I will” assertions concerning His plan for the people of Israel. In the center of these assertions, God says, “And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exod. 6:7), Yahweh will be Israel’s God, and they will be His people and know Him. God would reveal Himself to them, and they would give Him glory and obedience. That is what it means to be a people of God. As both the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants show, elements such as the land, common ancestry, and exclusive devotion to Yahweh are integral to God’s plan for Israel as His people.

### **“A Peculiar People”**

The New Testament also presents the Church as God’s people. The Church is a people of God unlike any other. In 1 Peter 2:9 Peter calls the Church “a peculiar people.” He continues in verse 10, echoing Hosea 1:9: “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

The Church is a unique people, lacking a common ancestor, geography, or language. Instead of a biological ancestor, the Church is united in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:22–23; 2:13–17; Col. 3:11). What binds her together is her union in the body of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12–13). God has made all present-day believers—whether Jew or Gentile—to be a new humanity (a new people) in Christ (Eph. 2:11–22). To be sure, the Church enjoys some continuity with Israel, especially salvation by grace through faith and an analogous relationship as one of God’s peoples. Yet the Church is also a new people. When individuals today believe in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, they lose their ethnic identity in God’s reckoning. Now they are Christians.

As the New Testament people of God, the Church is similar and parallel to Israel as a people of God. Both have a spiritual purpose. Both are called out of the world to be devoted to the true and living God in Jesus Christ. Returning to 1 Peter 2:9, Peter says that the Church is “a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (emphasis



mine). As Israel was called to be a people to proclaim and display the glory of God, so has God called the Church to Himself in Christ. Both Israel before Christ and the Church after Christ have a privileged position no other people will be able to boast—God has called them out for Himself to display His glory.

### “Hath God Cast Away His People?”

Some theologians conclude that, since the New Testament calls the Church the people of God, the Church must have replaced or fulfilled Israel in God’s program. Yet the New Testament does not finally dispense with Israel as a people of God. Moreover, Paul insists that God has a future for Israel in His sovereign plan for world history. In Romans 11:1 Paul asks his readers concerning Israel, “I say then, Hath God cast away his people?” His answer could not be more emphatic: “God forbid.” In the very next verse he states the matter emphatically again: “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Surely the way Paul refers to Israel in these verses is significant: Israel remains “*His people*.” Paul also maintains a distinction between the grafted-in wild olive shoots and the natural branches, between Israel and Gentiles (Rom. 11:11–24). Though God is dealing primarily with Gentiles now through the Church, God’s plan for Israel remains; His promises to Israel will still be fulfilled. “All Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26).

God will ultimately do all that He has promised in saving both Israel and the nations. The prophetic vision for

Israel will come to pass. The same is true concerning the saving vision for the nations. The apostle John’s vision in Revelation confirms this fulfillment with glorious indications of the manifold glory of many peoples and nations worshipping the Triune God. John prophesies that indeed Israel will be saved (Rev. 7:4; cf. 14:1–3). He also foretells that in the new heavens and new earth, the “nations” walk by the light of God and the Lamb (Rev. 21:24; cf. 21:3, 26). Likewise, the tree of life serves “for the healing of the nations” (22:2).

The Scriptures show God’s concern throughout human history with the salvation of individual souls through Christ. Yet God’s plan cannot be flattened and minimized simply to His concern for individual sinners, as important as that is. The Bible consistently and repeatedly reveals that God’s plan includes multiple peoples. He works with different peoples at different times and in different ways, and God yet desires that all peoples or nations give Him the glory due His name. From cover to cover, the Scriptures show that God is concerned with saving the nations.

Ryan Martin, PhD, is pastor of Columbiaville Baptist Church in Columbiaville, Michigan. He is the author of *Understanding Affections in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, published by T&T Clark.



\*For more on the peoples of God, see the articles by Kevin Bauder in *In the Nick of Time* between August 2012 and January 2013, to which I am greatly indebted.

# VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLES

Interactive discussions  
about thought-provoking  
missions topics by  
missionary panelists  
from around the world



Moderated  
by Jon Crocker

*“The stories helped make learning  
more about missions applicable.”*

— PROSPECTIVE INTERN/SHORT-TERMER

*“It encouraged my heart to continue praying and  
seeking God’s direction for missions in my own life.”*

— PROSPECTIVE INTERN/SHORT-TERMER

*“Concepts I hadn’t considered before.”*

— MISSIONARY SERVING IN HONG KONG

FOR A LIST OF DATES AND TO SUBSCRIBE, GO TO  
**GFAMISSIONS.ORG/ROUNDTABLES**



# What Is God's Ultimate

## The Glory of God and the Definition of Dispensationalism

In 1965 Charles Ryrie offered a threefold definition for dispensationalism, including (1) a distinction between Israel and the Church, (2) a literal hermeneutic, and (3) an underlying purpose for the universe that exceeds redemption and focuses more broadly on God's glory (*Dispensationalism Today*, 44–47). The first of these elements has been accepted by all dispensationalists. The second element has been accepted by most, but with a stream of qualifications. The third? Well, the third has been tucked away and made the stuff of apology. Ryrie (it is supposed) blundered when he listed the glory of God as a distinctive unique to the dispensational system.

### Seeing the Glory of God

One objection is that Reformed folk of every stripe (amillennial, postmillennial, historical premillennial, progressive covenantal, etc.) are deeply concerned with the glory of God. One need look no further than the very first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism to prove this:

Q: What is the chief end of man?

A: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

There it is. Reformed theologians see doxology as one of their first principles. End of discussion.

Only it's not, because Ryrie never said that only dispensationalists cared about the glory of God. He said that dispensationalists see the glory of God as bigger and more far-reaching than the plan of salvation (people being saved and enjoying God forever). For dispensationalism, the glory of God flows from many different sources, and not only individual salvation. Many of these sources center on civil concerns of God's kingdom that are more complex than the plan of salvation can account for. "The soteriological or saving program of God is not the only program," Ryrie argued, "but *one of the means* God is using in the total program of glorifying himself" (46, emphasis added).

### Three Observations

One might object that civil concerns and kingdom language have been prominent within Covenant Theology throughout its history. Dispensationalists grant this point. They also offer three observations.

First, Covenant Theology centers on a supposed "Covenant of Redemption," the effect of which is to organize biblical

history as the history of salvation. Biblical history becomes the story of God's *saving* acts. Consequently, redemption or salvation becomes the main way in which God receives glory. The problem with this approach is that only saved people (who enjoy God forever) achieve their appointed purpose. This system evidently excludes most human beings! According to the Bible, however, God receives glory from all people, both saved and lost. Lost people glorify God when they grudgingly acknowledge His lordship and submit to the curses brought upon them by His sovereign hand (Phil. 2:9–11). They glorify God as "vessels of wrath," not as enjoyers of God (Rom. 9:22–23).

God makes all people responsible to enjoy Him forever. To the degree that this responsibility is what the Westminster Shorter Catechism is talking about, then it speaks truth. Still, God will be no less glorified by those who hate Him than He is by those who enjoy Him forever.

Second, making the Covenant of Redemption the organizing motif of Scripture (as Reformed theology does) seems a bit provincial—or, to use Ryrie's term, "man-centered" (46). This kind of organization limits the scope of things that God can use to bring glory to Himself. It excludes not only the unsaved but also things and persons who cannot be saved. Yet things such as angels, animals, and even the material realm exist to bring glory to God. Events that occurred before the Fall brought God glory, as will events yet to occur after the consummation of God's plan.

Granted, the gospel is of great importance in Scripture, but it is not the only way in which God brings glory to Himself. There was a time when the gospel was not yet necessary. There will be a time when the gospel will have achieved its successes. To become a truly unifying center for biblical history, a theme must take account of these pre-Fall and post-consummation states.

Third, obviously the Reformed are concerned with what they think of as "kingdom work," but their concern can be a bit deceptive. In most Reformed thought, the kingdom motif assumes that the Church *is* the kingdom. In this view, kingdom work is accomplished only as the Church succeeds in its redemptive efforts, thus providing a platform for sociopolitical reform. This approach is definitely not what dispensationalists have in mind when they propose that the theme of kingdom is a unifying center for biblical history and theology.

# Purpose?

What do they have in mind? When dispensationalists argue that God's kingdom is the unifying center of all God's activity, they are thinking of two definitions, both of which are biblically derived.

## **Biblical Uses of the Word "Kingdom"**

One biblical use of "kingdom" refers to what we might call God's *universal* kingdom. This kingdom is manifested in God's eternal rule over all He has made (Pss. 103:19–22; 145:9–17; etc.). By virtue of humanity's creation as divine image-bearers, God appointed them as vice-regents of this realm from the very moment of their creation (Gen. 1:26, 28; Ps. 8:6). From this lofty platform humanity has, ever since, glorified God by carrying out the dominion mandate. This role for humans was formalized and rendered perpetual after the Flood, when God covenanted with all persons everywhere and in every generation to carry out this task. This general coregency does not depend upon the spiritual standing of the individual (Gen. 9:1–17). It is represented in the civil realm, ruled first through families, then clans, and later nations. It began before the gospel was necessary and will persist after the gospel is no longer necessary, continuing after the establishment of a new heaven and new earth, where humans will forever carry out their coregency with increasing skill and grandeur to the eternal glory of their Creator-God.

A distinct but still biblical use of the term "kingdom" focuses upon God's *mediatorial* kingdom. In this kingdom, God selected a people for His name. He ruled them historically as Old Testament Israel. He will rule them in a future millennium. At all times this kingdom has been ruled through specific rulers of God's choosing, and it culminates in the glorious one-thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth from His throne in Jerusalem. This kingdom, which has a distinctly Jewish flavor, is not peopled entirely by believers (in either its historical or eschatological expressions). As such, this mediatorial kingdom should not be confused with the Church, which is a strictly redeemed community that is ethnically diverse. Still, the mediatorial kingdom is one that is rich with redemptive triumphs. Indeed, the Church's evangelistic efforts are necessary to populate the kingdom. But the future, mediatorial kingdom will not be merely spiritual; instead, God will shower on His people comprehensive covenant blessings that are spiritual, civil,

and material. It is this kingdom for which we yearn when we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Dispensationalists understand that God receives glory from these two kingdoms in concert. Dispensationalists are not the only ones who have thought so. This twofold emphasis on the kingdom has a rich provenance in the history of the Church. Boniface spoke of the "two swords." Luther saw "two kingdoms," and Calvin argued for "two governments of God." Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper spoke of "sphere sovereignty." Alva McClain distinguished the universal and mediatorial kingdoms. Westminster Seminary California is presently articulating a version of this distinction. All these sources, dispensational and otherwise, distinguish God's manifold "governments," or (if I may) dispensations of the rule of God. This theory militates against the "one kingdom" or "gospel-centered" perspective that dominates contemporary evangelical thought. Dispensationalism is another form of this enduring recognition that God can be glorified even in times and places where the gospel seems to be in remission.

The distinction between the universal kingdom and the mediatorial kingdom has practical consequences. The Bible is full of instruction for *both* spheres. The dispensations are not principally (as many Reformed theologians imagine) separate ways of administering *the saving grace of God*, but administrations of *His civic or common grace*. They do not involve multiple "ways of salvation" but instead communicate administrative developments within the sovereign ordering of God's *kingdom program*. This fact, then, establishes and clarifies the other two elements of the definition of dispensationalism, as follows.

One element is the distinction between Israel and the Church. These two are to be distinguished, not as two *redeemed* communities, but as communities with distinct functions in the administrative ordering of God's world. On the one hand, Old Testament Israel offered a hopeful but sin-encumbered prototype for a world order in which both kingdoms are consumed under a single head, an arrangement successfully realized in the Millennium. On the other hand, the Church functions as a regenerate community in which "Caesar" has no place (Matt. 22:21). It is a community that has been tasked most importantly with cultivating a constituency for Christ's coming kingdom.

Continued on page 24



# Why Pray "Thy Kingdom Come"?

**I**n 1957 reformed theologian Loraine Boettner published a book on the Millennium with an entire chapter titled, "The World Is Growing Better." The chapter listed many reasons Boettner thought that that was true. Probably in 1957 most people in America believed the world was getting better. That is not the story today.

Boettner's book does illustrate one point: people have offered many interpretations of what God's kingdom is, and they have expressed many beliefs about when it will (or has) come. If we understand what God says about His kingdom, then we will be better equipped to choose among these views. After all, Jesus said that we should pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10; cf. Luke 11:2).

## **God Has Always Reigned**

The first thing to notice about God's kingdom is that, in one sense, it has been present since the Creation. The psalmists repeatedly say things such as, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19). There

never has been a time when God did not reign over the earth, including the affairs of human beings. After Nebuchadnezzar was humiliated for seven years, he confessed that the most High "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35). Since God has always ruled in this sense, this universal kingdom of God could not have been what Jesus taught us to pray for by saying, "Thy kingdom come."

What, then, did Jesus mean? At His trial He told Pilate that He was a king (John 18:37). Before Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He read Isaiah 61:1–2 in the synagogue. The passage is about the Messiah, and Jesus claimed that He fulfilled its prophecy. Even before that moment, His disciple Nathanael had proclaimed, "Thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). So in Jesus, the king had arrived, but His kingdom had not (except in the sense that the king Himself was present). Even though He was the king, Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for the coming of God's kingdom. This prayer request has roots that stretch far back into Scripture.

When the first two human beings were created, God authorized them to rule over the created order (Gen. 1:26–28). When they sinned, however, they put themselves under the tyranny of Satan (Gen. 3:1–7). God promised a redeemer (Gen. 3:15), and He did not revoke His authorization that humans should rule the earth. He later instructed the first son of Adam, Cain, to rule over himself and his own passions, which is where any kind of dominion begins. Cain, like so many others after him, failed. That is why we have always needed a Messiah-king.

## The Necessity of a Mediator

From the beginning God wanted to mediate His earthly rule through human beings. This mediatorial kingdom requires God to dwell with humans, who have been created in His image. God first took up residence with humans when Israel and Moses assembled at Mount Sinai. God offered to make Israel the kingdom through which He would rule in the world, and Israel accepted His offer (Exod. 19). Shortly thereafter, the Lord instructed Moses how to build the tabernacle. Israel was given the tabernacle partly so that she could worship God in the right way, but also because God wanted to dwell with her (Exod. 25:8). When the tabernacle was finished, the glory of the Lord filled it. God dwelt with Israel, and Israel was His kingdom.

God appointed Moses as mediator so that Israel might approach Him. God is holy, and sinful people can approach Him only through a mediator. After Moses, the priests (especially the High Priest) took up the mediatorial role. The Old and New Testaments show that the relationship between a holy God and sinful humans continues to require a mediator.

## The Rule of Law

God gave His Law to Israel through Moses so that Israelites might know how they ought to live in God's kingdom. The Law's commands and instructions touched every area of life because God's kingdom touched every area of life. The Law of Moses also looked ahead to an earthly king for Israel (Deut. 17:14–20). This king was supposed to rule according to the Law, and he was never to be the monarch of a world empire. (He was not to multiply horses, limiting the extent of his rule.)

Israel's second official king, David, was its finest. Before his death, David revealed his philosophy of good government: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3). After David, all the kings of Israel and Judah were measured by his life as the acceptable standard (e.g., 1 Kings 11:38; 2 Kings 14:3). God also promised David a lineage that would be perpetually preserved and that would bring forth the Messiah (2 Sam. 7).

During the reign of David's son Solomon, Israel attained its greatest territory, wealth, and fame. Solomon built a temple for the Lord. As with the tabernacle, the glory of God filled Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10–11). God continued to dwell in Israel, and Israel was His kingdom. But Solomon also sowed the seeds of Israel's downfall. He multiplied wives, and with them he multiplied altars to other gods. In response, God divided the nation into Israel in the north and Judah in the south (1 Kings 12). Though Judah enjoyed several good kings, idolatry persisted and became embedded in its

society. The Northern Kingdom was eventually removed by Assyria. The Southern Kingdom was led captive into Babylonia. Before Judah fell, the glory of the Lord departed the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 8–11). The kingdom of God on earth came to an end.

During the captivity in Babylon, God revealed through Daniel that Israel would be dominated by four successive world empires: Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Dan. 2, 7, 9). The kingdom of heaven, ruled by the Son of Man, would crush the final kingdom. Both before, during, and after the Babylonian captivity, the prophets of God foretold the coming kingdom and its Messiah. After the people of God returned from exile to Judah, they anticipated the return of the kingdom and the Messiah. As time wore on, however, only a small minority of the nation was ready for the coming kingdom (Luke 2:25).

## "The Kingdom . . . Is at Hand"

Jesus, though a descendant of King David, was born into a poor family (Matt. 1; Luke 3). His forerunner, John the Baptist, shook the nation, preaching that God's people needed to repent and be baptized. These were the requirements to be ready for God's kingdom (Luke 3:1–3). Jesus was also baptized by John, and as He was baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon Him. This descent of the Spirit was heaven's confirmation of Jesus' messiahship (Matt. 3:13–17). As He returned to His native Galilee, He returned "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14).

Gathering disciples about Him, Jesus preached the same message that John had preached: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Some believe that the word translated "at hand" (*engidzo*) means that Jesus was establishing His kingdom at that point.<sup>1</sup> Greek lexicons, however, consistently define *engidzo* to mean "approach" or "come near." The point of John's preaching, and of that

## Matthew 6:9–13

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.



of Jesus, was that people needed to repent now, before the kingdom began. Once the kingdom arrived, the time for repentance would be past.

In fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus healed the sick. He delivered the possessed from demonic oppression (Luke 8:26–39). He fed the hungry (Matt. 14:15–21). He offered redemption to sinners. He even gave His twelve disciples the power to do the same (Matt. 10). He also taught the people, and they recognized an unprecedented authority in His teaching (Mark 1:22). Two thousand years later, His words continue to ring with authority.

Finally, Jesus offered Himself as king to the nation of Israel, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9. The nation, however, rejected Him and demanded that their Roman overlords crucify Him (Matt. 27:15–26). God used the crucifixion of Jesus and His subsequent resurrection to redeem lost humanity (Rom. 4:25). Consequently, He became the mediator to God that humans need so much (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15). Only redeemed people can enter His kingdom (John 3:3–6), and Jesus is the one who redeems them.

After His resurrection, Jesus commissioned His apostles to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20). Before His departure into heaven, the apostles asked Jesus whether the time had come for Him to restore the kingdom to Israel. His answer was not, “You still don’t understand what the kingdom is”; instead He said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons” (Acts 1:6–7). Jesus promised them power from the Holy Spirit so that they could preach the gospel in all the world. And so, beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the gospel has been preached worldwide, and Christ has built His church.

Everywhere the gospel has been preached, lives have been changed. Relief from oppression, care of the sick, the abolition of slavery, the rise of modern science, much technology, and even modern democracies all rest upon Christian beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, we would be mistaken to think we are build-

ing God’s kingdom. The world is still full of disease, natural catastrophes, crime, oppression, injustice, adultery, abuse, idolatry, and false teaching. The world is not growing better. Instead, all of creation is groaning (Rom. 8:22). Christians are citizens of the kingdom (Phil. 3:20). We serve and preach the kingdom of God and the gospel of His kingdom. He has even made us kings (Rev. 5:10). Despite these good things, we cannot build the kingdom.

A time of tribulation is coming. It will try those who dwell upon the earth (Rev. 3:10), and it will prepare Israel for the Messiah (Jer. 30:4–9). As Daniel 2 and Revelation 19 describe it, the kingdom comes to earth swiftly and powerfully. All of God’s enemies are put down and judged. Then Jesus, the God-man, will rule for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1–6). He will establish His capital at Jerusalem, and Israel will be regathered to the land (Micah 4:1–2; Zech. 14:16). At that time, Christ will fulfill the commission that God gave to the first two human beings: He will exercise dominion over the created order. The prophesied kingdom will arrive in all its glory, bounty, wholeness, justice, and holiness. The earth will rejoice (Rom. 8:18–22). The kingdom will finally come, because the Messiah, the mediator between God and man, will come to rule.

This is the kingdom that Jesus anticipated in the Sermon on the Mount. It is for this kingdom that we pray when we say, “Thy kingdom come!” We who know the Lord should pray this prayer, believing that it will be answered.

Lord Jesus, Thy kingdom come!

Jeff Brown, ThD, is a retired church planter with Baptist Mid-Missions. He has planted churches in Nuremburg and Erlangen, Germany.



<sup>1</sup> For instance, C. H. Dodd in his book *The Parables of the Kingdom*.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Vishnal Manglawadi, *The Book That Made Your World*.

# GLOBAL EVANGELISM

## *through the local church*

*Missionaries in India, Kenya, Southeast Asia, Romania, Poland, Uruguay, Puerto Rico and Mexico*

- *Training national pastors*
- *Planting local churches*
- *Involving your congregation*
- *Reaching the world for Christ!*



## INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST MISSIONS

IBMMISSIONS.ORG • 2211 W Germann Rd, Chandler, AZ 85286 • 480-245-7905 • larry.ball@ibmmissions.org





# What Do We Do with the Sermon on the Mount?

From its earliest days the Church has cherished Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). In the *Didache*, which may be the earliest Christian document ever discovered outside of the New Testament, one-third of the biblical citations and allusions come from the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9–13 is quoted nearly word for word (*Did.* 8.2). Also, Augustine begins his extensive commentary on the Sermon by claiming that if anyone will approach it "piously and soberly" he will find in it "a perfect standard of the Christian life" (*Serm. Mt.* 1.1.1).

Yet through the centuries the Sermon on the Mount has been interpreted in various ways. Perhaps no interpretation is so controversial as the view held by some early dispensationalists, who said that the primary application of the Sermon is strictly for Jews who will live in the millennial kingdom. Lewis Sperry Chafer claimed that, just as the Mosaic Law sets forth "rules for human conduct" for OT saints, and the Gospel of John, Acts, and the NT Epistles set forth rules for the Church, so conduct required in Christ's coming kingdom is "crystallized in the Sermon on the Mount" (*Sys. Th.* 5:98). When the kingdom finally arrives, this is how its subjects are to behave. This interpretation, which was popularized through the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1917, 999–1000), is a justifiable attempt to explain Jesus' teaching in the context of His genuine announcement of the long-awaited kingdom for the Jews (Matt. 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21), a dispensation that is separate from God's dealing with the Church. But it also leaves Chafer struggling to explain why under Jesus' righteous reign the subjects of the kingdom would still experience mourning (5:4), suffer extreme persecution (5:10–12), deal with being slapped and sued (5:39–40), and endure the presence of enemies (5:43), "pigs" and "dogs" (7:6), and false prophets (7:15–20) (*Sys. Th.* 4:216).



Many dispensationalists since the mid-1900s have grown less rigid in their separation of Israel and the Church, some “progressive” dispensationalists remarkably so. This theological shift has led many to insist that the Sermon on the Mount is just as much for the Church as it was for the Jews on the mountainside listening to Jesus. For example, Craig Blomberg, following Kümmel and Ladd, views the kingdom as already inaugurated by Jesus in this dispensation, so that what he teaches to the Jews He is also teaching to the Church (*Jesus and the Gospels*, 246–47). If, however, we endeavor to interpret the words of Jesus with a consistently grammatical-historical hermeneutic, we must realize that the Sermon on the Mount is thoroughly Jewish. Besides His multiple announcements that the Jewish kingdom is near, Jesus says He has come to fulfill the Mosaic Law and the Jewish prophets (Matt. 5:17). He charges His hearers to earnestly keep the Law (5:19). He warns them about the danger of facing the Jewish Sanhedrin (5:22), and He teaches the proper way to bring one’s sacrificial gift to the temple altar (5:23–24).

These exegetical tensions faced by both classical and progressive dispensationalists alike may be resolved, however, with a traditional (or revised) dispensational approach to the Sermon that allows us to read it within the context of the Mosaic Covenant while appreciating its real-world application for the Church. This is because the traditional dispensational approach is consistent with the rest of the Scriptures in both its *exegesis* and its *application*.

These exegetical tensions faced by both classical and progressive dispensationalists alike may be resolved, however, with a traditional (or revised) dispensational approach to the Sermon that allows us to read it within the context of the Mosaic Covenant while appreciating its real-world application for the Church. This is because the traditional dispensational approach is consistent with the rest of the Scriptures in both its *exegesis* and its *application*.

### Exegetical Consistency

There are at least three questions we should endeavor seriously to answer when beginning to interpret any text in its context. *Who is the speaker? To whom is the speaker speaking?* And, in the words of N. T. Wright, *What time is it?* (Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 1996: 467–71). Only when we answer these questions carefully can we begin to rightly understand the significance of the Sermon, both for the original audience and for the Church. The Sermon on the Mount is preached by Jesus, the Messiah, the anointed King of the Jews, to His people, who are still in exile, waiting for their kingdom to be restored to them by God. But question three is where interpreters are most likely to stumble. Jesus is preaching to His people at a time when the mystery of the Church has not yet been revealed, before He has died for them and risen again, and before He has poured out the promised Holy Spirit upon those who believe (the Spirit is absent in the Sermon). It is a common hermeneutical misstep to treat the Bible as if everything in the OT is written to the Jews while every word of the NT is directly for the Church; for, when we finish reading Malachi and turn to Matthew’s Gospel, we are just as much in an “OT” time period as we were before. The Jews, including Jesus, are still functioning under the covenant of Moses, endeavoring to obey the Law, observing the temple and tabernacle rituals, keeping the feasts. Jesus preaches this

## It is this New-Covenant reality that brings the Sermon on the Mount in a direct way into the life of a Christian.

sermon as one “born under the law” (Gal. 4:4) to a people who are also born under the Law.

When we subject the Sermon on the Mount to these three hermeneutical questions, the purpose of the Sermon is made plain. Jesus is not laying down new rules for life in the kingdom. He is calling His people to accept His offer of the kingdom through repentance from sin and true obedience to the Law that they had already been given. Jesus calls

His subjects to live a righteous life according to the Law under the dispensation of the Mosaic covenant. We see this in the main thesis of the Sermon in 5:17–20. Jesus insists that He has not come to abolish the Law or the prophets but to fulfill them. Therefore, those who are prepared to enter the kingdom are those who endeavor to follow His example, keeping the Law to perfection, a perfection that goes even beyond that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who observe the letter but not the spirit of the Law (Matt. 5:20).

The rest of the Sermon can be divided into two major parts: a call to righteously fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:21–7:12), and a warning to heed the words of Jesus and enter the kingdom or else face eschatological judgment (7:13–27; cf. Deut. 28:1–68). In the first part, Jesus shows what perfect obedience to the Law and Prophets looks like in multiple ways (Matt. 5:21–7:12). In 5:21–48 Jesus recalibrates the Jewish concept of following God’s Law, using the formula, “You have heard . . . but I say unto you. . . .” He is not reinterpreting or undermining the Law but demonstrating how it was originally intended to be fulfilled. In 6:1–18 Jesus corrects three pillars of righteous works—prayer, almsgiving, and fasting—that arose during the Second Temple period. These were intended as devotion to God but had since deteriorated into a stage for self-righteous spiritual performance. In 6:19–34 Jesus encourages the spiritual discipline of seeking “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” as opposed to the pursuit of worldly wealth or necessities. Finally, in 7:1–12 Jesus teaches mainly how to righteously treat others, climaxing with the Golden Rule: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (7:12). Notice that the repetition of obeying “the Law and the Prophets” bookends this entire section and ties it back to Jesus’s main thesis in 5:17–20. This Sermon is a call for God’s chosen people, Israel, to rightly fulfill the Law that God had originally given to them, thus demonstrating their repentance and readiness to enter the kingdom.

### Applicational Consistency

The traditional dispensational approach is also consistent in its application of the Sermon on the Mount because it takes into account at least *two significant changes* between the time when Jesus preached the Sermon and time of the Church. These include, first, the abolishing of life under the Law and, second, the pouring out of the Spirit (e.g., Gal. 5:18; Rom. 7:6).

First, if we as believers during the Church Age are no longer under the Law, i.e., living by divine legal code, then



# Here or there. We've got you covered.

---

ALL PROGRAMS NOW AVAILABLE RESIDENTIALLY  
OR VIA DISTANCE EDUCATION



CENTRAL SEMINARY

For the church. For the gospel.

---

Visit [centralseminary.edu](https://centralseminary.edu) to learn more.



## 2022

### February 1, 2022

Rocky Mount Regional Fellowship  
Westside Baptist Church  
6260 West 4th Street  
Greeley, CO 80634

### March 14-17, 2022

South Regional Fellowship  
The Wilds Christian Camp  
1000 Wilds Ridge Road  
Brevard, NC 28712-7273

### March 21-23, 2022

Northwest Regional Fellowship  
Galilee Baptist Church  
11517 SE 208th Street  
Kent, WA 98031  
Pastor Steve Hicks

### April 25-26, 2022

Wyoming Regional Fellowship  
Sinclair Baptist Church  
400 Lincoln Avenue  
Sinclair, WY 82334

### April 25-27, 2022

Alaska Regional Fellowship  
Soldotna Baptist Church  
223 E. Redoubt Ave.  
Soldotna, AK 99669  
907.262.4618  
Pastor Jon Craven

### June 13-15, 2022

FBFI Annual Fellowship  
Mount Calvary Baptist Church  
115 Cedar Lane Road  
Greenville, SC 29601  
864.233.1684

### September 13, 2022

NYC Regional Fellowship  
Bethel Baptist Church  
2304 Voorhies Avenue  
Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, NY  
718.615.1002

## 2023

### March 6-8, 2023

South Regional Fellowship  
Keystone Baptist Church  
15 Keystone Lane  
Berryville, VA 22611

### April 23-24, 2023

Northwest Regional Fellowship  
Monroe Baptist Church  
1405 West Main Street  
Monroe, WA 98272



### MOVING?

Please let the  
*FrontLine* office  
know your new  
address so we can update  
our records.

**Call (864) 268-0777**

**Sign up for your FBFI Membership and/or  
*FrontLine* Subscription Online at [www.fbfi.org](http://www.fbfi.org)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ FBFI Membership—\$44.95 (Includes subscription to *FrontLine*)  
☐ *FrontLine* Sub only— \$26.95 (One Year)

### Gift subscription for:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ One Year (\$26.95)

### Check all that apply:

- ☐ FBFI Membership  
☐ New sub for me  
☐ Gift sub  
☐ Sub renewal

### Payment:

- ☐ Check enclosed  
☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

### Mail to: FBFI

2801 Wade Hampton Blvd.  
Suite 115-165  
Taylors, SC 29687

\*International subscriptions add \$8 per year. Please make checks payable to FBFI.

**Recipients of gift subscriptions will receive  
a letter announcing your gift of *FrontLine*.**

Or call our toll-free  
order and info line:

**1-800-376-6856**

# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### A Whetstone on Romans 12:1–2

*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend (Prov. 27:17).*

*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name (Mal. 3:16).*

A growing number of ministers persisting in unvarnished scriptural ministry are increasingly conscious of standing alone. Many feel confused, if not shaken, about their philosophy of church work. Some persevere doggedly despite deep discouragement—even paralyzing depression. Others nervously number their fading months until retirement.

A divinely designed antidote to the isolation and discouragement is *fellowship*. Almost too good to be true are the wondrous words, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* (1 John 1:3). And there can be, of course, no human substitute which could begin to satisfy for such sacred fellowship.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever (Ps. 73:25–26).

But the Lord Himself insists that our spiritual health requires also the fellowship of one another. In the disappointing decades of decline following the return of the Jewish exiles and the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls

and temple, *They that feared the LORD* (who were likeminded in this critical respect) *spake often to one another* (Mal. 3:16). Collectively they created a kind of fellowship oasis within their culture—a commune of warm, spiritually minded friends.

Theirs was a different kind of talk. We read of a similar phenomenon in the days of the seventeenth-century Puritan ministers. After their ejection from the Church of England, both they and many of their people risked a great deal to be able to spend time with one another to talk about their times and to fortify one another's resolves. They wrote in their journals of "chance" meetings that stirred their hearts and enflamed their love. Theirs was glowing fellowship in dark days.

Isn't it one of God's most precious gifts when we finally discover likeminded people with whom to fellowship?

Today it is more possible and convenient to do this than at any time in world history. And there has also been no age when it has been more possible and convenient to fellowship with the generations who have preceded us. Their biographies, journals, sermons, and practical and theological writings are being beautifully reset and republished for purchase or digitized for free access at a dizzying rate. When some of us started out in ministry years ago it was nearly impossible to obtain many hundreds of the titles whose publication today may be taken nearly for granted. Or if not yet republished, they are often obtainable through one of the large, online used-book search engines. At the very least, they may be accessible on Google Books or some other digitized bank of out-of-print titles. What is reading these things but a kind of *fellowship* with brothers and sisters about the precious things which we hold in common through the ages?

We, more than any previous generation, are disciples of the kingdom of heaven with the happy capability of bringing out of our *treasure things new and old* (Matt.

*"The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6)*

### Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study . . . . .	5
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study . . . . .	6
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations . . . . .	7

13:52). Ought we not more frequently shut the doors, settle down in our libraries, sample their shelves, and fellowship? Can we plead, *I alone am left*, when actually we are *compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses* with whom we can commune without ever stirring from our homes?

Let's sit down today, then, for some fellowship over what now seems to be one of the most neglected texts in all the Bible: Romans 12:1–2. If you feel increasingly alone in your grief over the contemporary, casual dismissal of its admonitions, let these seven kindred spirits from the past *sharpen your countenance*.

---

***Isn't it one of God's most precious gifts when we finally discover likeminded people with whom to fellowship?***

***Today it is more possible and convenient to do this than at any time in world history. And there has also been no age when it has been more possible and convenient to fellowship with the generations who have preceded us. Their biographies, journals, sermons, and practical and theological writings are being beautifully reset and republished for purchase or digitized for free access at a dizzying rate. When some of us started out in ministry years ago it was nearly impossible to obtain many hundreds of the titles whose publication today may be taken nearly for granted.***

### **F. B. Meyer**

We are called on to present **our bodies** as instruments of righteousness because all true regimen of the inner life immediately affects the body in all its members. And conversely, the consecration of the body reacts upon and affects the temper of the soul. It would be well for you to take Miss Havergal's hymn ["Take My Life, and Let It Be"], with its enumeration of the various parts of the body, and offer and present yourself to be from this day and forward wholly for God.<sup>1</sup>

### **Andrew Murray**

In a letter to one of his children, Murray wrote, Let me give you a birthday text for this year, Romans

12:1–2, "Yield yourself a sacrifice to God, and then be renewed day by day to know God's perfect and acceptable will."

Many young Christians and old ones too think that if they have said to God that they do indeed give themselves entirely to Him, that this is all He desires of them, and that [if] they earnestly desire now to do what is right they will be pleasing and acceptable in His sight. And yet this is not the case. With all this desire to please God, we may be trying to do it **in our own way** and not in His way, and so not at all succeed in pleasing Him, though we have honestly and heartily said, "we want to seek only His glory and His work."

I think this is one of your dangers, my dear child, and, therefore, I want you to take this most blessed teaching of the second verse. If you want to be a living sacrifice, remember that you know, as yet, but little of God's will—that reading of the Bible will not teach it you, that trying to do right will not secure it you, but that you must be taught it by the Holy Spirit and that He will teach it you by transforming you and renewing your mind, your character, so that you can spiritually find out and know what God's will is. God's will for us individually is something spiritual that the Father will teach us. It is for this He has given us the Holy Spirit as our Tutor to take our training into His hands, and if we but in a childlike spirit give ourselves daily to Him and say that we do not want to serve God in our way and in our will, but to know what His will is, we can be sure He will teach it to us. And His teaching not only tells us what we have to do, but makes us willing to do it.<sup>2</sup>

### **John Newton**

It would do honour to the pen of an able casuist, and might be of considerable service in the present day, clearly to explain the force of the Apostle's precept, "Be not conformed to this world"; and to state the just boundary between a sinful compliance with the world, and that scrupulous singularity which springs from a self-righteous principle, and a contracted view of the spirit and liberty of the Gospel. To treat this point accurately would require a treatise rather than a letter: I only undertake to offer you a few hints.

[We are not] required to refuse a moderate use of the comforts and conveniences of life, suitable to the station which God has appointed us in the world. . . . And many persons, who are in the main sincere, are grievously burdened with scruples respecting the use of lawful things. It is true, there is need of a constant watch, lest what is lawful in itself become hurtful to us by its abuse. But these outward strictnesses may be carried to great lengths, without a spark of true grace, and even without the knowledge of the true God. . . . There is a strictness



which arises rather from ignorance than knowledge, is wholly conversant about externals, and gratifies the spirit of self as much in one way as it seems to retrench in another.

Notwithstanding . . . the precept is very extensive and important. "Be not conformed to the world." As believers, we are strangers and foreigners upon earth. Heaven is our country, and the Lord is our King. We are to be known and noticed as his subjects; and therefore it is his pleasure, that we do not speak the language, or adopt the customs of the land in which we sojourn. . . . Though we have received the principles of grace, and have tasted of the goodness of the Lord, the admonition is still needful; for we are renewed but in part, and are liable to be drawn aside to our hurt by the prevalence of evil examples and customs around us.

The leading desires of every person under the influence of Gospel principles, will be, to maintain an habitual communion with God in his own soul, and to manifest the power of his grace in the sight of men. So far as a Christian is infected by a conformity to the spirit, maxims, and sinful customs of the world, these desires will be disappointed. Fire and water are not more opposite, than that peace of God which passeth all understanding and that poor precarious pleasure which is sought in compliance with the world; a pleasure which grieves the Spirit of God and stupefies the heart. Whoever, after having tasted that the Lord is gracious, has been prevailed on to make the experiment and to mingle with the world's vanities, has certainly thereby brought a damp upon his experience, and indisposed himself for the exercise of prayer and the contemplation of Divine truths. And if any are not sensible of a difference in this respect it is because the poison has taken a still deeper effect, so as to benumb their spiritual senses. Conformity to the world is the bane of many professors in this day. They have found a way, as they think, to serve both God and Mammon. But because they are double-minded, they are unstable. They make no progress. And notwithstanding their frequent attendance upon ordinances, they are lean from day to day. A form of godliness, a scheme of orthodox notions they may attain to. But they will remain destitute of the life, power and comfort of religion so long as they cleave to those things which are incompatible with it.<sup>3</sup>

## John Bunyan

Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the Wilderness, they presently saw a Town before them, and the name of that Town is **Vanity**, and at the Town there is a Fair kept, called **Vanity-Fair**. It is kept all the year long; it beareth the name of **Vanity-Fair**, because the Town where it is kept is **lighter than Vanity**, and also, because all that is

there sold, or that cometh thither, is **Vanity**. . . . This fair is no new erected business, but a thing of ancient standing. . . . The way to the Celestial City lies just through this Town, where this lusty Fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this Town, must needs go out of the World. The Prince of Princes himself, when here, went through this Town to his own Country.

Now these Pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this Fair. Well, so they did; but behold, even as they entered into the Fair, all the people in the Fair were moved, and the Town itself, as it were, in a hubbub about them; and that for several reasons: For,

First, the Pilgrims were clothed with such kind of Raiment as was diverse from the Raiment of any that traded in that Fair. The people, therefore, of the Fair made a great Gazing upon them: Some said they were fools; some they were bedlams; and some they were outlandish men.

Secondly, and as they wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said; they naturally spoke the language of **Canaan**; but they that kept the Fair were the men of this World, So that from one end of the Fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other.

Thirdly, but that which did a little amuse the merchandizers, was that these Pilgrims set very light by all their wares; they cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, **Turn away mine eyes from beholding Vanity**; and look upwards, signifying, that their trade and traffick was in Heaven.<sup>4</sup>

## A. W. Tozer

The church's mightiest influence is felt when she is different from the world in which she lives. Her power lies in her being different, rises with the degree in which she differs and sinks as the difference diminishes. This is so fully and clearly taught in the Scriptures and so well illustrated in Church history that it is hard to see how we can miss it. But miss it we do, for we hear constantly that the Church must try to be as much like the world as possible, excepting, of course, where the world is too, too sinful. . . . Men are impressed with the message of the Church just as far and as long as she is different from themselves. When she seeks to be like them they no longer respect her. They believe (and rightly) that she is playing false to herself and to them. The moral jar that results when a son of Adam meets a son of heaven is one of the most wholesome things that can happen to both of them. . . . All conformity to the world is a negation of our Christian character and a surrender of our heavenly position. Let us plant ourselves on the hill of Zion

and invite the world to come over to us, but never under any circumstances will we go over to them. The cross is the symbol of Christianity, and the cross speaks of death and separation, never of compromise. No one ever compromised with a cross. The cross separated between the dead and the living. The timid and the fearful will cry, "Extreme!" and they will be right. The cross is the essence of all that is extreme and final.<sup>5</sup>

## Charles Bridges

In his masterpiece of pastoral theology, *The Christian Ministry*, Charles Bridges devotes an entire chapter (over nine pages) to the subject of the powerlessness of both the pulpit and pastoring because of ministerial conformity to the World.


It is allowed indeed, that our Divine Master occasionally associated with men decidedly adverse to his doctrine. But he could breathe a polluted atmosphere with perfect security, and therefore might venture where common prudence would forbid those to follow whose constitutions are predisposed to contagion. Besides, his intercourse with the world was uniformly that of an Instructor, not of a Conformist; and he accomplished his important designs, not by accommodating his conversational subjects to their taste (except indeed when illustrating his instructions from topics and circumstances of the day) but by chaining down their wondering attention to the "gracious words which proceeded from his mouth." But is our intercourse with the world thus conformed to our Master's pattern? Are we ready to do "the hard and rough work of bringing God into his own world?"

Upon the full consideration of the subject, the Writer is constrained to express his decided conviction that a very large proportion of our inefficiency may be traced to the source of worldly conformity. This needs no proof in the too frequent cases of decided love of pleasure and dissipation. . . . But is not also the lax, indulgent approximation to the spirit of the world—either in general habit and appearance—or in our intercourse with the world—a leading, though not always a tangible cause of failure? . . . A connexion with the world beyond the point of clear duty (or even within these narrow bounds, without a heavenly temper) must bring us into a worldly atmosphere which deadens the vigorous actings of a spiritual life. . . . What is the effect of such connexions upon the spiritual frame? Has there not been in this atmosphere a closer communion with the world than with God? Has not the spirit of prayer been well nigh extinguished, and delight in the

more spiritual exercises of our work fearfully lost? And does not our Ministry thus become (perhaps unconsciously to ourselves) weak, general, and indefinite upon the main point of separation from the world? . . . Accurate and earnest statements of truth, combined with social conformity to the world, will give no offence and bring no conviction. Cowper's line—"If parsons fiddle, why may'nt laymen dance?"—has at least as much truth as wit in it. If we go one step into the world our flock will take the sanction to go two; the third will be still more easy, and the atmosphere enticing, till at last it proves, "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." The Minister, therefore, who would not have his people give in to worldly conformity such as he disapproves, must keep at a considerable distance himself. If he walks near the brink, others will fall down the precipice.

## C. H. Spurgeon

The Church went forth conquering and to conquer, and her main weapon was her **non-conformity** to the world, her coming out from among men. Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and it will find a little marginal note reading thus, "In this age men could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended."<sup>6</sup>

There is one fear which sometimes haunts me, and I must confess it; and were it not for faith in God, it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man, his life was pure before God, and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious lustre; but when grey hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God's heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end, lest haply, in some evil hour, some temptation should come upon me, and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind—"He that thinketh he standeth may yet fall?"<sup>7</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> *Our Daily Homily: Matthew to Revelation*, 129.

<sup>2</sup> W. M. Douglas, *Andrew Murray and His Message* (Oliphants, 1928), 212–13.

<sup>3</sup> "Letter XX: On Conformity to the World," *Works*, I, 275, 277–78, 280–281.

<sup>4</sup> *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

<sup>5</sup> *The Set of the Sail*, compiled by Harry Verploegh, 35–36.

<sup>6</sup> "Separating the Precious from the Vile," *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. VI, 154.

<sup>7</sup> "Holiness Demanded," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 50, 462–63.

# Bring . . . the Books

John Owen, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*

John Owen is perhaps English Puritanism's most prominent theologian. He published eight million words. In 1681, just two years shy of his death, Owen published *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*. The once acclaimed vice-chancellor of Oxford was shepherding a modest congregation near London during a time of political and religious unrest. In this context, he wrote "to direct and provoke men unto that which is the only remedy of all these evils, which alone is the means of giving them a view into and a foretaste of eternal glory, especially unto such who are in my own condition—namely, in a very near approach unto a departure out of this world" (265).\*

*The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded* originated as Owen's personal study, then grew into sermons that were eventually prepared for publication. The book's title refers to a phrase from Romans 8:6: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be **spiritually minded** is life and peace." The work consists of two major parts. The first concerns the meaning, evidence, objects, and nature of spiritual mindedness. The second examines spiritual affections, which constitute "the peculiar spring and substance of our being spiritually minded" (395).

Given all the literature available today, it is reasonable to ask why plodding through thick Puritan prose is a worthwhile investment. But for me, the rewards well repaid the labor. Here are six reasons why.

First, the subject matter. When I contemplate the ills of our age, my own mindset might not head the list. But it should. To transpose the wording in Romans 8:6, "Life and peace is to be spiritually minded." The needs of the hour are many, but none more than the nature of our own thoughts. We are what we think. We need guides, preferably those unaffected by contemporary assumptions, to help us evaluate our thinking.

Second, the centrality of spiritual affections. One of the book's fundamental observations is that the "'minding of the Spirit' resides habitually in the affections" (270). Decades before Jonathan Edwards would call attention to religious affections, Owen remarked, "The heart will have something whereon, in a way of pre-eminence, it will fix itself and its affections" (327). In fact, God has designed His grace to "this end—namely, to recover the affections of man unto himself" (395). Our thinking inclines toward what we love.

Third, the scripturally balanced pastoral theology. For example, in our quest to abide in thoughts of God we will invariably encounter vain thoughts. These should humble us and make us "sensible of [our] own insufficiency" to think spiritually (383). Yet Owen does not pit humility against effort. "As good it is for a poor man to expect to be rich in this world without industry, or for a weak man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise, as to be spiritually minded without an earnest

endeavour after it" (385). In chapter 14 Owen exposes reasons unspiritual people delight in religious practices and rituals. However, the following chapter extols the importance of divine worship, lest preaching, prayer, and meditation be viewed as the problem.

Fourth, the specificity. Owen's multiple layers of subordinate points seem complex, but his precision mines the ore. It is one thing to tell ourselves not to love this world. But how does God graciously wean our affections from this age? By "pour[ing] contempt on the things of this world," "by shortening the lives of men," by "declar[ing] the danger," by challenging us to discern between use and abuse, and by showing the vile, "ridiculous" results of excessive affections (397–409).

Fifth, the simple yet vivid illustrations. Owen speaks of the temporary influence of preaching as rainwater that seems abundant but quickly dries up, leaving behind mere sediment (282). He pictures superficial thoughts as guests in an inn, whereas truly spiritual thoughts are children dwelling at home (297). Christians who are content with idle spirituality are like travelers who cross the boundary of an exquisite country only to plop down with a sense of security and refuse to explore its wonders (450).


Sixth, the searching statements. The point of good Christian literature is not tweetable soundbites. But memorable summaries give truth a handle for easier transport. Here are a few such handles:

If we cannot afford unto God our spare time, it is evidence that indeed we can afford nothing at all. (306)

They who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. (308)

Sincerity is the open avowment of the reality of men's affections. (396)

Prayer, patience, and highlighters will put a reader of *The Grace and Duty of Spiritual Mindedness* in good stead to grow in thinking on things above (Col. 3:2). There is much to gain.

This frame of mind brings the soul unto and keeps it at its nearest approaches unto heaven and blessedness, wherein lie the eternal springs of life and peace. (497) 

\*All page numbers refer to Banner of Truth's 1965 publication, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 7. A useful alternative to this standard edition is the Puritan Paperback volume entitled *Spiritual Mindedness*, abridged and made easy to read by J. K. Law (Banner of Truth, 2009).

Dr. Eric Newton is assistant pastor of Education and Outreach at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

"... when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
... the books"  
(2 Tim. 4:13)



At this point in chapter 4, James is still carrying on his previous discussion about healing contentious relationships (4:1–10). He is now exploring how pride manifests itself so that we can identify its subtle ways. This time, pride shows itself not only in relational strife but in subtly judging God. James tells us not to speak evil of others. “Speaking evil” (*katalaleo*) refers to abusive, derogatory, demeaning speech. A modern person might use the term “trash talking.” James forbids this sort of speech, but his main purpose is to show how trash talking someone is actually an attack on God’s authority. As such, speaking evil of people is a stunning display of arrogance, but we often don’t see it for what it is.

To help us see the subtleties of our sin, James points out that by speaking evil of others, we speak evil of God’s law. The act of trash talking others is *ipso facto* trash talking God. That is what James says: “He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law.” But someone might wonder how this is true. The abuse was directed at the person, not at God. How is trash talking others automatically trash talking God’s law?

James hints at the answer to this question: “If thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.” He’s saying that people who judge the law set themselves over it. We must obey His law, not judge it. The law forbids abusive speech; therefore, if you engage in it, you are by definition abusing the law that forbids it. To break God’s law against trash talking is to trash talk the law. It makes sense.

By speaking evil of others, you have exalted yourself above God. You have essentially said, “Yes, I know You have commanded us to love one another. I know You’ve said to be filled with the Spirit—with love, peace, and gentleness. But I have decided that I know better.” This is immense arrogance and a rejection of God’s lordship. Jesus asked quite simply, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Deciding to overturn the king’s law is a direct challenge to His kingship. Breaking a commandment may seem subtle to us, but to God it is most certainly not subtle. We find it so only because we are insensitive to God’s rights and prerogatives.

In reality there is just one king and lawgiver, James says. He alone has power to eternally save or eternally destroy. He has the authority, not us, and if we challenge it, whose side are we choosing to be on? We are clearly choosing to be against God. We

have no right to challenge His authority, yet we challenge it every time we sin.

When we begin to realize our natural insensitivity to God’s authority, it should have many important effects in our souls. *We ought to be immensely humbled* to realize that we have so often expressed rebellion against God. It ought to bring us down to the dust in tears and remorse, dismayed at our behavior, even as we cry to God for mercy in Christ. We ought to recant our rebellion and restore fealty to our one and only king.

*We also ought to rejoice* to know that Christ receives sinners like us. When we remember the marvelous news that Christ receives rebels who repent, we will come back to Him with the humility and joy that is always requisite in sinners who are saved by grace alone. But we also ought to come with greater zeal to oppose sin and with persistent prayer for strength.

We also should *live with immense carefulness*. Do you see how prone we are to revolt? We ought to see ourselves as people of oil-soaked tinder in a world full of sparks, sparks that so easily cause us to ignite and roar into flame. In our fallen natures we are rebels, and we set ourselves up as rival lords against the Lord. The worst part is that we can do it without so much as a thought.

We also should *live in zealous reliance on God*. When we realize how prone we are to revolt against God, we will begin to rely more and more on God’s Spirit (Gal. 5:16). We will seek continual filling by the Spirit for assistance in mortifying our flesh. We need His help not merely for our mouths but for our hearts. “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties” (Ps. 141:3–4). As John Owen said, “Always be killing sin or it will be killing you” (*Mortification of Sin*, 5).

People do not rely on God’s grace unless they feel the need for it. James here is showing us our need. We are dyed-in-the-wool rebels. We commit sin almost as easily as breathing. Even as Christians we continually fight and war against our flesh and find ourselves doing and saying things we regret. James has pulled the scales from our eyes. Take a long look at yourself, as you really are, and then run to Christ as your only hope, remembering that He is abundantly able and willing to pardon. ☞

“Rightly  
dividing  
the Word  
of Truth”  
(2 Tim. 2:15)

In the hills near Oakland California lies the Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve. In the preserve you will find a few mysterious labyrinths simply crafted with small rocks and worn footpaths. The labyrinths are varied in shape and range in size from fifty to about one hundred feet across. “The design is simple: A single pathway coiling toward the center is etched into the dirt and lined with rocks, and a stone pile, arranged like a crude shrine, waits in the middle. Three of the mazes are round, one is heart-shaped, and the fifth is actually a cluster of a half-dozen tiny ones. Some in the cluster are whimsical, such as one crafted into a smiley face, and others are ciphers.”<sup>1</sup> These labyrinths have taken on a spiritual significance and are very popular among religious seekers. Megan Williams, who bicycled fifteen miles from Berkeley to visit a maze, said, “Here, you’re a million miles away from everything, it’s wild, it’s open . . . it’s just . . . it’s the most spiritual place on Earth to me, I’m not sure why. It just is.”<sup>2</sup> This is one kind of path the world offers to spirituality. It is one path among many. The Bible says God has placed eternity in the heart of every human being, and as a result people seek for spiritual paths to spiritual destinations.

“I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). These words spoken by our Lord are concise yet clear. They clarify that the exclusive path to God is through Jesus Christ. In a pluralistic society belief in these words of Jesus is considered narrow-minded at best and arrogant or dangerous at worst. They oppose the pluralistic teaching of our day.

Garmin, TomTom, Google Maps, or Waze—there are a variety of navigation options for anyone wanting to find directions to a precise location. Plug in any address, establishment, or landmark and allow your favorite navigation device to take you there. From my home in Derry, New Hampshire, I can ask Google Maps to take me to Seabrook, New Hampshire, to see the ocean. The application will immediately return two or three different ways to get to Seabrook. I can take 101 or I can travel on I-495 to I-95. If I prefer country driving, I can avoid all the interstates and four-lane highways and make the trip a bit longer but perhaps more enjoyable. All of them lead to the same location in the end. Many think the same is true regarding the way to heaven, that there are a variety of ways to God. Choose your own route and remain true to it and the sincerity in your heart will lead you there. Unfortunately, people can be sincerely wrong.

The story has been told of a candidate for the Senate who traveled to a small town community to address the single church there. Unfortunately, he had forgotten to ask which denomination so that when

it was time for his speech, he inquired in this way:

My brethren, all. I must tell you that my great-grandfather was Presbyterian [absolute silence]; but my grandmother was an Episcopalian [more silence]; I must tell you that my other grandfather was a Catholic [deep silence]; while my other grandmother was Methodist [continued silence]. But I must tell you that I had an aunt who was a Baptist.

The astute politician paused for a moment as the room erupted into loud cheers. Then he concluded, “And I have always considered my aunt’s path to be the right one!”

Many prefer to follow the crowd regarding the way to God. It is always easier to swim downstream, but the results are damning (Matt. 7:13–14).

### Pluralism Is a Strategy

Apostates are gaining a following on social media platforms by going public with their deconversion stories. They have started the “#exvangelical movement.” Dr. Chris Stroop (a Stanford PhD) is a kind of prophetic voice for this group. In June 2019 he was interviewed in “Religion and Politics” by Bradley Onishi. According to Onishi,

The election of Trump induced, as Stroop told me, a “retraumatization” that has led him on a mission to change the narrative surrounding white American evangelicalism. Instead of viewing this religious group as a kind of national moral compass filled with pious patriots, Stroop argues we should see them as an insidious religious and political force.<sup>3</sup>

Stroop stated elsewhere, “When Christian nationalists are in power and perpetrating horrors, we should oppose their dominionism not with a different reading of the Bible, but with a robust defense of pluralism and secularism.”<sup>4</sup> A “robust defense of pluralism and secularism” is a tactic to sway people from the exclusive truth that Jesus is the only way to God. A robust defense of pluralism is the strategy for exvangelicals because they understand there is no different reading of the Bible when it comes to Jesus’ exclusive claim as the only way to God.

The prevailing thought in our Western culture is tolerance of all other views, and to declare an exclusive truth is to be labeled provincial, ignorant, or dangerous. Collin Hansen reports,

*“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”*

*Charles Spurgeon*

Belief in God remains somewhat stable among American evangelicals between the ages of 18 and 29, according to . . . the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Across all age groups, around 80 percent believe in life after death. About the same percentage trust the Bible as the inspired or literal Word of God. But the data begins to alarm when you examine other key doctrines. Pluralism in particular has ravaged young evangelicals' confidence in Jesus Christ's claims that he alone shows the way to the Father in heaven. Asked whether many religions can lead to eternal life, 52 percent of evangelicals from the so-called millennial generation agreed. Only 43 percent said Christianity is the one true faith that leads to eternal life. It doesn't help that barely more than half of these young evangelicals read the Bible weekly. The Pew survey accords with findings from the National Study on Youth and Religion, analyzed by sociologists Christian Smith and Patricia Snell for *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. They observed a fascinating side effect of Western society's value on diversity. Instead of appreciating differences, emphasizing diversity tends to devalue distinctive beliefs. So all religions tend to look similar to someone weaned on Western notions of tolerance and wary of exclusive claims. Nothing is more foundational to American education than tolerance.<sup>5</sup>

## Humbly Ask the Question

How does anyone get to have a relationship with God? You must humble yourself and ask the question as Thomas did (John 14:5). When making a large purchase you likely do a good bit of research. You ask questions about dependability and longevity. You are interested in the quality of the thing and look for valid information that will guide your decision. When it comes to your relationship with God you are dealing with a matter of extreme importance—your eternal destiny. Should your investigation be any less comprehensive?

## Listen to Jesus

Thoughts from Thomas à Kempis:

Follow thou me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. . . . I am the inviolable way, the infallible truth, the never-ending life.<sup>6</sup>

Bruce Milne on the uniqueness of Christ:

At a time when religious pluralism and syncretism are widespread, such claims are never going to be popular. Nothing less, however, is the implication of Jesus' incarnation. If, in Jesus, God has come among us in person to reconcile his rebellious lost world, it follows necessarily that through him, and him alone, is the way to God. The exclusiveness of Christ's salvation is simply the uniqueness of his divine person.<sup>7</sup>

Tim Keller on American pluralism:

About every other week, I confront popular pluralist notions that have become a large part of the way Americans think. For example, pluralists contend that no one religion can know the fullness of spiritual truth, therefore all religions are valid. But while it is good to acknowledge our limitations, this statement is itself a strong assertion about the nature of spiritual truth. A common analogy is often cited to get the point across which I am sure you have heard—several blind men trying to describe an elephant. One feels the tail and reports that an elephant is thin like a snake. Another feels a leg and claims it is thick like a tree. Another touches its side and reports the elephant is a wall. This is supposed to represent how the various religions only understand part of God, while no one can truly see the whole picture. To claim full knowledge of God, pluralists contend, is arrogance. When I occasionally describe this parable, I can almost see the people nodding their heads in agreement. But then I remind the hearers that the only way this parable makes any sense, however, is if the person telling the story has seen the whole elephant. Therefore, the minute one says, "All religions only see part of the truth," you are claiming the very knowledge you say no one else has. And they are demonstrating the same spiritual arrogance they so often accuse Christians of. In other words, to say all is relative, is itself a truth statement but dangerous because it uses smoke and mirrors to make itself sound more tolerant than the rest. Most folks who hold this view think they are more enlightened than those who hold to absolutes when in fact they are really just as strong in their belief system as everyone else. I do not think most of these folks are purposefully using trickery or bad motives. This is because they seem to have even convinced themselves of the "truth" of their position, even though they claim "truth" does not exist or at least can't be known. Irony isn't it? The position is intellectually inconsistent.<sup>8</sup>

The fact is that the "elephant" speaks. God has not left Himself without witness but has revealed Himself to us, most fully in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2). Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). There is no other name needed for salvation (Acts 4:12). He is the only way! ☞

<sup>1</sup> Kevin Fagan, *San Francisco Chronicle* (11/6/99).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <https://religionandpolitics.org/2019/04/09/the-rise-of-exvangelical/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "We Are All Theologians," *Christianity Today* (March 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Milne, *The Message of John* (InterVarsity Press, 1993), 212.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Keller, "Pluralism as a Religious Philosophy," <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/keller.html>.

Matt Fagan is the founding pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Windham, New Hampshire.



# CHURCH DIRECTORY



**HAMILTON SQUARE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
*A Welcoming and Transforming Church Since 1881*  
 1212 Geary Street, San Francisco, CA 94109 • [hamiltonsquare.net](http://hamiltonsquare.net) • 415.673.8586



**KEYSTONE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
 15 Keystone Lane • Berryville, VA 22611  
 540-955-3410 • [www.keystonebaptist.org](http://www.keystonebaptist.org)  
 Pastor Douglas B. Wright



*Showing forth the path of life*  
**Good News BAPTIST CHURCH**  
[goodnewsbaptist.org](http://goodnewsbaptist.org)  
 3252 Taylor Road, Chesapeake, VA 23321 • (757) 488-3241



**Hamilton Acres Baptist Church**  
 138 Farewell Avenue • Fairbanks, AK 99701  
[akhabc.com](http://akhabc.com) • 907.456.5995  
 Pastor Bruce Hamilton  
**Services:** Sunday – 9:45 & 11:00 A.M., 6:00 P.M.  
 Wednesday – 7:00 P.M.



**Grace Baptist Church of Victoria**  
 2731 Matson Road, Victoria, British Columbia  
[www.gbvc.org](http://www.gbvc.org)  
 We preach the Bible because we believe the Bible.  
 Don Johnson, Pastor



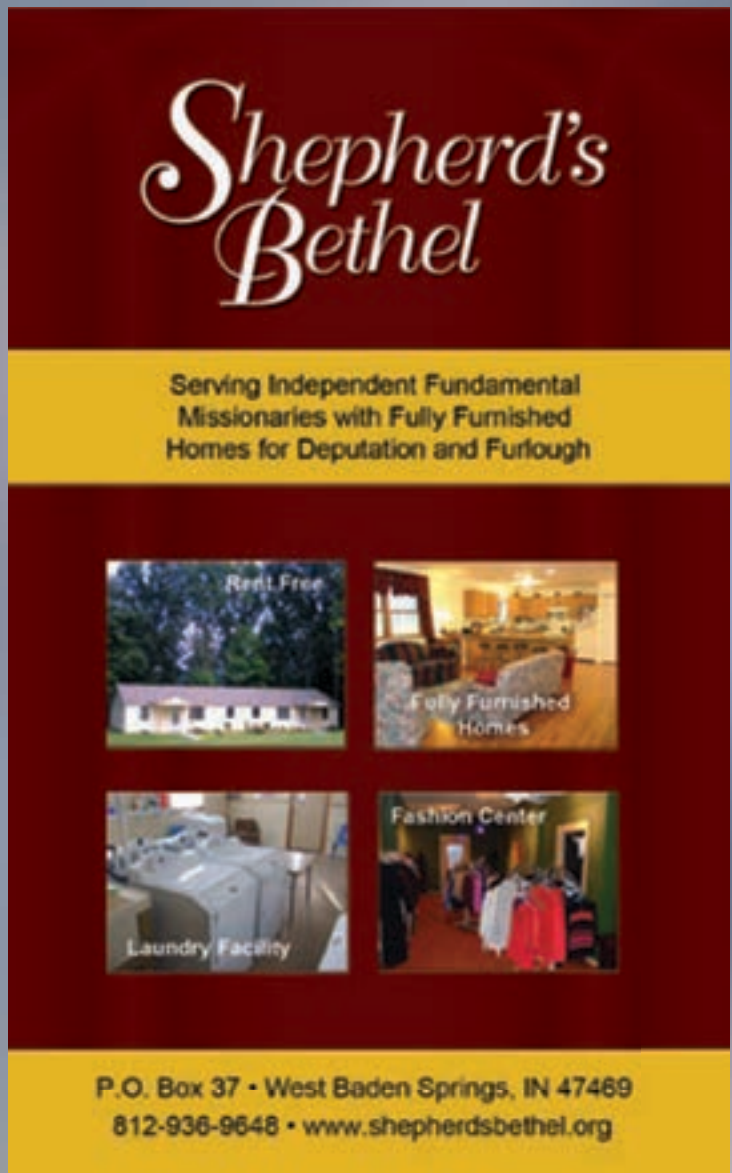
Join the conversation online  
**[proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org)**



**COLONIAL HILLS Baptist Church**  
 8140 Union Chapel Rd.  
 Indianapolis, IN 46240  
 (317) 253-5597  
[www.colonialindy.org](http://www.colonialindy.org)  
 DR. CHUCK PHELPS, Pastor



**NORTHWEST VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
[nwvbc.org](http://nwvbc.org) | 623-581-3115  
*Multiplying Disciples in the Phoenix Metro Area*



**Shepherd's Bethel**  
 Serving Independent Fundamental Missionaries with Fully Furnished Homes for Deputation and Furlough

Rent Free

Fully Furnished Homes

Laundry Facility

Fashion Center

P.O. Box 37 • West Baden Springs, IN 47469  
 812-936-9648 • [www.shepherdsbethel.org](http://www.shepherdsbethel.org)

# Dispensationalism and Funda

A great many fundamentalists are not dispensationalists, but it is virtually impossible for a dispensationalist to be a theological liberal. There is a natural link between dispensationalism and fundamentalism regarding biblical authority. Because of this link, dispensationalists ought to be fundamentalists, and fundamentalists ought to be dispensational.

For some, the connection between fundamentalism and dispensationalism seems too obvious to merit comment, much less a sustained argument. Historically, the emergence of fundamentalism overlapped significantly with the rise in popularity of premillennialism. In our day, the pockets of Christianity that still refer to themselves as fundamentalists are dominated not only by premillennialists but specifically by dispensational pretribulationists.

While early fundamentalists were often premillennialists, many were amillennialists (and a smattering were even postmillennialists). Those exceptions to the rule, however, are less common now. Over the past one hundred years since the unhappy resolution of the fundamentalist/modernist controversies, self-identified fundamentalists became both less denominationally diverse (fewer Presbyterians, Methodists, and Anglicans, and overwhelmingly more Baptists) and also more dispensational. Why did this shift occur?

Ecclesiastically, while several influential early dispensationalists were Presbyterian, most Presbyterian denominations came to consider dispensational theology out of step with their confessions. Other reasons for the shift rest upon the difference between populists and elitists, especially in education. Fundamentalists were justifiably suspicious of the elite seminaries that had sowed liberalism in their former denominations. Consequently, they welcomed the intuitive, plain hermeneutic of dispensationalism.

While I rejoice in the fellowship I share with fundamentalist brothers who are not dispensational, I believe that dispensational theology is a more natural fit for fundamentalism. At the root of the agreement between fundamentalism and dispensationalism is a shared understanding of the nature of biblical authority.

“Fundamentalism” and “dispensationalism” are both disputed terms, which allows some flexibility in definition. For present purposes, the more that people believe in a redemptive future for ethnic Israel (or national Israel, not just a spiritual Israel manifested as the Church), and the more they insist that this redemptive future is essential to the fulfillment of God’s promises, the more dispensationalist they are. This eschatological consideration—a future for ethnic Israel as the fulfillment of God’s promises—is a good litmus test of dispensationalism. It is, however, built on a more foundational commitment, specifically a commitment to a

particular understanding of the nature of biblical authority. This understanding of biblical authority becomes the connecting point between dispensationalism and fundamentalism.

## Christian Fundamentalism

“What is a fundamentalist?” Many definitions have been given, and perhaps I should specify that I am writing about *Christian* fundamentalism. Intrinsic to Christian fundamentalism are two ideas. The first is that certain doctrines—the “fundamentals of the faith”—are essential to Christianity. The second is that Christian fellowship must never be extended to those who reject those essential doctrines. To maintain Christian fellowship with people who deny these essential doctrines is itself a sin; such fellowship may not entail the denial of those doctrines, but it inevitably devalues their importance.

As with dispensationalism, the ground of fundamentalism is a particular understanding of the authority of the Bible. The reason that certain doctrines are nonnegotiable is not a matter of personal or denominational preference. Rather, they are essential because God’s Word speaks clearly and with finality on them. The Thessalonian response to Paul’s preaching is a proper demonstration of the authority of revelation: “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.” Accepting the Word of God *as* the Word of God demands, among other things, affirming that it is the final word on any matter about which it speaks. A person who accepts the Word of God as the Word of God forfeits any supposed right to debate with the Bible.

Biblical separatism—not extending fellowship to those who deny the fundamentals—is not just something that Scripture teaches directly. It is also an implication of God’s authority. We are fundamentalists because the message that we proclaim is not our own. To articulate the boundaries of Christian fellowship, we assume that Scripture speaks with clarity.

I want to tread somewhat lightly here. There is no question that many covenant theologians, for example (as well as those who endorse any of the multiplying mediating positions between dispensationalism and Covenant Theology), are committed to the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. Their claims should not be discounted.

## A Slow Erosion

Yet we recognize that there are ways to affirm the inerrancy and authority of the Bible while emptying those terms of the practical weight that they ought to carry. As a current example, we are witnessing the slow erosion of biblical authority among professing Christians on hotly contested social issues. In some cases, those advocating new positions admit that



# mentalism

biblical texts speak a clear word about (for instance) human sexuality and gender roles. But those passages are dismissed as culturally conditioned. In this kind of treatment, inerrancy is simultaneously upheld and minimized.

A parallel does exist: those who reject a dispensational reading of the text must explain why certain passages do not mean what they seem to mean. Perhaps I can clarify my meaning with a few examples.

Recently I have been preaching through Paul's Thessalonian letters. In 2 Thessalonians Paul describes the future character and actions of the antichrist. This coming man of lawlessness "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3–4).

Dispensational readers take Paul's words in a straightforward way. We believe that, while no temple currently exists in Israel, a day must be coming in which it will be built again. But non-dispensational readers share no such commitment. In the evangelical *New International Greek Testament Commentary* Charles Wanamaker writes that 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4

reads like prophecy about historical events to come, and it is almost certain that this is how Paul and his readers would have understood it. The passage can no longer be understood as valid, since the temple was destroyed in AD 70 without the manifestation of the person of lawlessness or the return of Christ occurring. . . . A more straightforward way of treating the problem is to admit that the passage meant something very different to Paul and his original readers than it can mean for us today.

Wanamaker's language is stunning in its bluntness, especially in an evangelical commentary. He concedes the straightforward language of the text. He even acknowledges that it is likely that the straightforward reading is exactly what Paul meant and his readers would have understood. And then he simply dismisses the possibility that the text could mean that.

Wanamaker here adopts a hermeneutic that radically disconnects the text from both the intent of the author and the understanding of the original readers. Dispensational readers obviously recoil from this kind of reading, but all other fundamentalists should find it troubling as well. The problem is not that Wanamaker adopts a position that is not compatible with the eschatology of dispensationalism. The problem is that, to do so, he must reject what he himself accepts as the intended meaning of the text. The location of authority has moved.

## The Millennial Temple

Another example involves the prophesied millennial temple. The notion of a millennial temple has its difficulties,

and it is not something any dispensational interpreter would have invented. But dispensationalists find it implausible to read nine chapters of cubits and land divisions in Ezekiel as merely metaphorical or symbolic. Perhaps a single reference to a coming temple could be taken as a metaphor for Christ or the Church. But the blueprint-and-surveyor-level language of these chapters must either be accepted (as dispensationalists do) or rejected (as Wanamaker does with the Thessalonians passage). It does not lend itself to being read as an extended metaphor.

A similar problem occurs in Revelation 7. In verse 4–8 John hears specific numbers being given for each of the tribes of Israel. Then in verse 9 he encounters a "great multitude, which no man can number." This innumerable multitude is gathered from every nation, kindred, tribe, people, and tongue. Interpreters who equate the numbered people from each of the tribes of Israel (4–8) with the innumerable multitude from every tribe in the world (9) render the actual language of this passage nearly meaningless.

Dispensationalists resist the notion that the meaning of a text of Scripture ever changes. This does not mean that the progress of revelation is flattened—after all, dispensationalists do believe in dispensations. But it does mean, for instance, that when the Mosaic food laws were nullified, that change did not alter the meaning of the food laws themselves. While the food laws are no longer in effect, their meaning is unchanged. They are not now somehow "spiritually" true in a fundamentally different sense from their original intent.

I fully acknowledge that every system of theology, including dispensationalism, will run up against biblical texts that are difficult. Our non-dispensational brethren will point us to passages that they believe "straightforwardly" support their theological conclusions. We must continue to wrestle through all these texts together.

I do not find it surprising that the past one hundred years of fundamentalist history have brought a greater overlap between dispensationalism and fundamentalism. It would be wrongheaded and even slanderous to assert that covenant theology somehow "opens the door" to liberalism. But the hermeneutic of dispensationalism is a natural fit for fundamentalists. It fits because both fundamentalism and dispensationalism share a commitment to a clear authority for the unaltered text of the Bible.

Michael Riley, PhD, pastors the Calvary Baptist Church of Wakefield, Michigan, and teaches as an adjunct professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis.





## What Is God's Ultimate Purpose?

Continued from page 13

The other element in the definition of dispensationalism is the literal interpretation of Scripture. Consequently, the Bible (and especially the Old Testament) need not be subjected to the absurdities proposed by evangelical and Reformed uses of typology. These attempt to make sense of the biblical story by squeezing all of Scripture into a *gospel* matrix. For dispensationalists, the Bible can be read as it was originally intended, i.e., as a repository of truth for both realms, both redemptive and civil. We are not obligated, for instance, to find Jesus and the Church in the Song of Solomon; this delightful little book can stand as instruction for an ideal marriage (a civil institution) *as a direct means of glorifying God*. The story of Samson's suicide need not be retold as a foil for the substitutionary suffering of Christ; instead, the story can give civil guidance to governors in every age *so that their governing may be to the glory of God*. It also anticipates a coming civil order in which there *is* a king in Israel: not an ordinary king like those of the Old Testament, but the quintessential Messiah-King, Jesus Christ.

In sum, then, dispensationalists believe that God's glory is a broad goal for God's universe. This goal is comprehensive in scope, including not only the redeemed but also the unredeemed, the irredeemable, the civil realm, the material realm, and the ethical realm. We are to glorify God in every sphere of life, and we must not reduce the story of the Bible to a mere story of redemption. We can glorify God by embracing Christ as Savior in community and by anticipating our future citizenship in God's heavenly kingdom. We can also glorify God by bringing all of life under the Lordship of our sovereign God as individual citizens, neighbors, laborers, parents, children, and so forth. All these ways of glorifying God create a rich and variegated tapestry of divine glory. We cannot reduce God's glory to any one of these ways; rather, we must strive to bring glory to Him through them all.



Mark Snoeberger, PhD, is professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

## What Do We Do with the Sermon on the Mount?

Continued from page 18

we cannot and should not apply every teaching of Jesus directly to our lives. Nevertheless, we must sometimes make a "secondary" application. In other words, there are times when we must apply the spirit or the principle of what Jesus taught, because He was speaking to those under law, not to those liberated by the Spirit. This approach should not surprise or disturb anyone, for we often apply the OT in this manner, as well as NT statements that we know are not directly for us (e.g., paying the temple tax, Matt. 17:24–27; showing oneself to the priest and bringing sacrifices after healing, Luke 5:14; 17:14). For example, Jesus presents to the Jews the startling requirement that they should actually leave their "gift" before the altar of sacrifice, in order to seek reconciliation with a brother before completing the offering (Matt. 5:24). Church saints will never find themselves in this exact situation, so they must make a secondary application. A good application is that our devotion to God is incomplete until we are equally devoted to maintaining peace with others. There are many other applications of the Sermon to the Church, including those that could seemingly be lifted directly out of their context and applied immediately to the Church. But a consistent application of the Sermon based on a consistent exegesis should always consider primarily that Jesus is speaking to Jews living under the Law.

Second, because we in the Church Age are living by the indwelling Holy Spirit, not by legal code, we recognize something fascinating about Jesus' teaching in the Sermon. Jesus is anticipating the pouring out of the Spirit in the way He interprets the Law. For example, a person walking by the Spirit in this dispensation would never condone lust in his heart and be falsely satisfied with the fact that he has not actually committed the act of fornication. Yet Jesus instructed His hearers that lustful thoughts approximate the very act of adultery (Matt. 5:27–30), implying that fulfilling the Law's original intent goes far beyond keeping the letter. A good way to read the Sermon for application, then, is to consider how Jesus foresees life in the Spirit in the way that He instructs His hearers to righteously fulfill the Law. Read in this way, the Sermon will overflow with application about a proper love for God and a corresponding love for others.

Thus, far from binding the meaning of the magnificent Sermon on the Mount to a particular time in redemption history, a consistently dispensational reading opens up the full possibility of proper interpretation and application of the Sermon for the edification of the Lord's Church.

Greg Stiekes, PhD, teaches New Testament and theology at Bob Jones University. He also pastors Gateway Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.



Visit the FBFI blog at  
**[proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org)**





# A Biblical Counseling Degree More Accessible Than Ever

MORE

## FLEXIBILITY

MODULE & HYBRID  
COURSES

MORE

## REACH

100% AVAILABLE  
VIA LIVESTREAM

MORE

## MICROCREDENTIALS

GRADUATE CERTIFICATES  
[credits applicable to full advanced degrees]

Graduate Certificate, Master of Arts, Master of Divinity and  
Doctor of Ministry with Biblical Counseling Concentration

Contact our admission team to learn what program best fits your ministry goals.



Andrew Minnick  
864-241-1657  
aminnick@bju.edu



Moriah Woodruff  
864-241-1657  
mwoodruf@bju.edu



PROCLAIM. SERVE. ADVANCE.

**BJU SEMINARY**

Greenville, SC • [seminary.bju.edu](http://seminary.bju.edu)



## NYC Regional Fellowship

*Matt Recker*

The Lord gave us a wonderful time of fellowship in our NYC Regional FBFI meeting on September 14. We were honored to have Dr. Kevin Schaal, FBFI president, as our keynote speaker. Debbie Recker gave a message to the women in a special session as well. Dr. Schaal preached two messages. The first was on how to “Live Among the Enemy,” and he spoke from 1 Timothy 6:1, 2. While Paul had to carefully navigate the sin of slavery in the Roman Empire, we have to navigate all the issues related to the pandemic. We must live out our faith in an unjust world and remember that the salvation of souls is more important than my rights. Dr. Schaal then spoke on “How to Respond When Your Flaws Take Center Stage.” While our imperfections are real, we have to remember that real forgiveness through confessing our sin as David did in Psalm 51 is available.

After the preaching we had a panel discussion with Dr. Schaal, Dr. Craig Hartman, Evangelist Chris Miller, and Dr. Jim Bickel, the host pastor. Each answered important questions from those who were present.

Heritage Baptist Church Deacon Ashook Ramroop led in a delicious salmon luncheon that everyone enjoyed. We had over fifty in attendance, including many wives and children of the pastors and others present. We look forward to continued fellowship at our NYC Regional FBFI meetings!



## Fundamentalism Seminar

*Christian Torres*

On September 27–28, 2021, Riverside Baptist Church, Riverside, California, was delighted to host a pastors’ seminar on “What Is A Biblical Fundamentalism.” Dr. David Innes, from Hamilton Square Baptist Church, San Francisco, taught on the “Biblical Imperatives on Separation,” “Biblical Commands of Love and Unity,” “The Jehoshaphat Principles”, etc. What struck us about Pastor Innes’s lecture on “The Jehoshaphat Principles” is “You do not have to be a wicked man to do untold, immeasurable damage to the cause of Christ. You can be a godly, sincere, doctrinally correct revivalist and still set a disaster in motion.”

The other honorable mention is the Categories of Truth chart. This is a practical help in navigating what and how we should teach and preach to our congregation. As a new senior pastor, this chart is helpful because there are topics that rightly fit in the “speculation” column that may end up in the “very biblical statements” column if we’re not careful.

Overall, it was refreshing to learn or re-learn these important axioms in biblical fundamentalism. You can watch the sessions on YouTube at <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAHppimABfU7Aw3Bm3MxBgDqdFgxdB1t1>.



## FBFI Central Regional Fellowship

On October 4–5 the Central FBFI Fellowship met at Bethel Community Baptist Church in Fort Scott, Kansas. Pastors from Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Kansas joined for our annual meeting. Dr. Ben Heffernan and his church did a wonderful job planning and ministering to us. The fellowship started with the opportunity for golfing for those who could come early. During the services Dr. Bruce McAllister and Chaplain Joe Willis faithfully preached from



God's Word and reminded us all to stay faithful. Not only did we hear good preaching, but we also had a separate session for singing great songs of the faith led by Dr. Ben Heffernan. The church was so gracious to provide housing and wonderful meals. Thank you, Bethel Community Baptist Church! It was truly a wonderful time of fellowship.



## New England Foundations Conference

Taigen Joos

On Saturday, October 16, 2021, the New England Foundations Conference enjoyed a great time of fellowship at Heritage Baptist Church, Dover, New Hampshire, around the Word of God. We enjoyed fellowshiping with over one hundred believers from around the region. Our guest speaker for the day was Dr. Carl Herbster, who currently serves with Advance USA. People from numerous

churches representing four New England states were in attendance (many who have come in years past while for others it was their first time.) The day was filled with three general sessions all centered around the theme of, "Standing on the Foundation of the Christian Family." There were also several workshops presented by area pastors, as well as a question-and-answer time with our guest. One particular time of encouragement was when several attendees joined in a focused time of prayer for many New England churches who are currently looking for pastors. The harvest of New England is great, but the laborers are few. We are praying for God to send more laborers into the harvest of New England. As Jonathan Edwards once prayed, "Lord, give us New England!" So we pray still today. We look forward to our next regional fellowship on Saturday, October 15, 2022, with our guests Dr. Bruce McAllister and Dr. Marshall Fant, both from GFA Missions.



## New Mexico Regional Fellowship

Dan Mauldin

Ten pastors attended the New Mexico FBFI regional fellowship on October 14–15 with a total attendance of approximately thirty people. Mike Kleeberger and the Emmanuel Baptist Church family in Gallup, New Mexico, hosted this two-day fellowship. Jim Welch, pastor emeritus of Victory Baptist Church, Montrose, Colorado, was the keynote speaker on the theme "Spiritual Leadership" using J. Oswald Sanders' book *Spiritual Leadership*, and attendees enjoyed Navajo Tacos for Lunch on Friday!



# Mentors Wanted

## Perfection Not Required

*"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." Titus 2:4*

Life is not easy, even for Christians. We are not exempt from the cares of this world. Families are being destroyed from within.

I was just twenty-three when my husband left me with two very young children. The oldest was twenty-two months, the youngest a month old. What was I going to do? My pastor said I should divorce him, but I knew in my heart that was not right even though he had been unfaithful. While there are many views regarding in what circumstances God allows divorce, He always prefers reconciliation. So I fought for my marriage.

My father knew of another pastor and suggested I talk with him. The first thing he said to me was to get divorce off the table and seek to restore the marriage. He put me in touch with a godly woman who had been in a similar situation. After meeting with this pastor, I decided to change churches.

My heart was broken. I was lonely, isolated, and overwhelmed. I was married but no longer fit in with couples nor with single women. When the loneliness overtook my heart, God's Word would soothe my soul: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3).

### My Mentor

I began meeting with the lady the pastor recommended. We would meet in person or on the phone at least once a week. She understood how I felt and pointed me to Scripture verses I could claim, such as Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me, and I will

answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." This verse gave me an expectant hope.

Although I wanted my marriage to be healed, I was still deeply wounded by my husband's actions. How could we fix the damage and get back to a loving relationship? The Bible has the keys to be able to do this.

- The starting point for me was confessing my own sins. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- Psalm 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That's a scary thought. I needed to take responsibility for my part in the breakdown of our marriage.

After much prayer, Bible reading, and encouragement from my mentor, I forgave my husband and began praying for him. I acknowledged my own sin to him and asked for forgiveness. We eventually did get back together and had two more children. However, he left again when they were two, four, six, and eight.

If it were not for the influence of godly mentors in difficult times, the entire trajectory of my life would be vastly different. The influence of a godly role model gave me the faith to bear two more children after my husband's first departure. Those children are precious gifts from God.

Another way my life changed was that I studied Proverbs 31 in our ladies' group. It's a beautiful picture of the godly characteristics we need to develop in our lives.

Many women, both Christian and non-Christian, have grown up in homes where they did not have good role models and therefore don't know how to be godly wives and mothers. Christian women bear the burden of teaching one another



how to be the wives and mothers God expects them to be. By being a role model to these precious ladies, mature Christians set a pattern that they can follow.

## My Responsibility

How can we help families blossom and love God with all their hearts?

Recognizing a need, our church began a Bible study group called Mentoring Moms, with the goal of teaching younger women to be successful wives and mothers by incorporating daily Bible study into their lives. Here are a couple of testimonies.

Kara: "The younger moms are where I'm at right now and can sympathize with the day to day 'mom things.' Mentoring Moms has been great in encouraging me to think about the big picture of being a mom. Still working on that, but it's good to think both short and long term."

Brittany: "My husband and I had been going to church here for only a few weeks, but the Lord led me to sign up. This was hard for me to do because I didn't know anyone in the group. This year has been incredibly difficult for me physically, mentally, and spiritually. I had difficulty leaving my house at times. Everyone was genuinely friendly. Our meetings became the highlight of my week! I enjoyed the fellowship with other moms. I also valued the wisdom from the older women as they shared how they handled a similar situation and gave encouragement through God's Word, which I desperately needed. I know God is using Mentoring Moms to encourage me during a difficult time in my life."

Mentoring is a blessing and can change lives drastically through God's Word. Mentors don't have to be perfect, just willing to love and serve others.

Julie grew up in a Christian home and accepted Christ at the age of 9. Through life's challenges, she has experienced God's grace and faithfulness. Julie and her husband, Curtis, attend Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina.



## Let Them Know

Continued from page 34

Seminary, where I get to be a part of training young people to take the Word to the world.

This is just my story; I can't imagine all the pastors, missionaries, deacons, and Sunday school teachers who can trace the day they got saved to sitting under the preaching of a passionate evangelist named Tom Farrell. First Corinthians 3:5-8 states,

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

It is God who saved me, but He used Tom Farrell to help me understand my need.

My two takeaways are

1. If the person who led you to Christ is still alive, maybe you should send a note or give him a call and let him know how thankful you are for him (or her!).
2. Never underestimate the worth of serving God. Only in heaven will you fully know how God used you to change the destiny and direction of generations to follow. Whether you lead a ministry or support a ministry, you are making a difference in someone's life.

Tom Farrell made a huge difference in my life, and for that I will be forever grateful. Who has made a difference in yours? Perhaps now is a good time to let him or her know.

Jim Tillotson has served as the president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, since June 2015. Previously he was the senior pastor of Meadowlands Baptist Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, for eighteen years. During his time in Canada, he led Meadowlands Baptist in planting three new churches and helped start a Christian school and a Bible institute.

## New Normal? New Opportunities!

Reach out with literature designed to carry your message to your community.

Call or e-mail today  
for a free quote.

847.352.4345  
info@harvestmedia.com



**HARVEST  
MEDIA**



A smiling graduate in a cap and gown, with a blue tint overlaying the image.

# say yes

## TO A GRADUATE DEGREE AT MBU

- ✓ MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING
- ✓ MASTER OF EDUCATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING
- ✓ MASTER OF NONPROFIT ADMINISTRATION
- ✓ MASTER OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Graduate Certificates in Special Education, English, History,  
Mathematics, Nonprofit Administration, and Leadership



**MARANATHA**  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

*Your plan. Our program.*  
**VISIT [MBU.EDU/GRAD](http://mbu.edu/grad)**

Maranatha Baptist University is accredited by the Higher Learning  
Commission. [www.hlcommission.org](http://www.hlcommission.org) | 312.263.0456

# FROM *the* CALL TO *the* FIELD



BWM connects local churches with God-called church planters  
and enables them to fulfill the great commission together.



[BAPTISTWORLDMISSION.ORG](http://BAPTISTWORLDMISSION.ORG)

## FrontLine

### Editor

Kevin Schaal

### Managing Editor

Malinda Duvall

### Publication Editor

Steve Skaggs

### Assistant Editors

Kevin Bauder  
Gordon Dickson  
Mark Herbster  
Bruce McAllister  
Ken Rathburn  
David Shumate

### Contributing Editors

Mark Minnick  
Layton Talbert

### Design

Mike Moreau

### President

Kevin Schaal

### Executive Officers

Gordon Dickson  
Chairman

Taigen Joos  
Vice Chairman

Bud Steadman  
Secretary

Michael Privett  
Treasurer

### Executive Board

Ron Allen  
Mike Ascher  
James Baker  
Earl Barnett  
Dave Byford  
Robert Conduct  
Jeff Davis  
Roger Duvall  
Ken Endean  
Tony Facenda  
Gary Fisher  
Terry Hamilton  
Mike Harding  
Craig Hartman

Dale Heffernan

Arin Hess

David Innes

Don Johnson

Stephen Jones

Larry Karsies

Mark Minnick

Jeff Musgrave

Larry Oats

Dave Pennington

Chuck Phelps

Kent Ramler

Matthew Recker

Stephen Russell

Dale Seaman

Will Senn

David Shumate

Ron Smith

Bud Steadman

Jeremy Sweatt

Dan Unruh

Wayne Van Gelderen

John Vaughn

Joe Willis

Doug Wright

Mike Yarborough

Aaron Young

### Advisory Board

Mark Brock

Ron Ehmann

Mark Herbster

Marty Herron

Jeff Kahl

Greg Kaminski

Tavis Long

Brock Mawdesley

Bruce McAllister

Nathan Mestler

Dan Pelletier

Mike Shellman

### Board Emeritus

Rick Arrowood

Charles Britt

Gerald Carlson

Ed Caughill

Walt Coles

Johnny Daniels

Collins Glenn

Phil Golden

Bill Hall

Bruce Hamilton

Bob Jones III

Tom Knauf

Peter Maruyama

Mike Moreau

Fred Moritz

Ed Nelson

Tom Nieman

Les Ollila

Wilbur Schoneweis

Bob Taylor

George Youstra

**Mission Statement:** The Foundations Baptist Fellowship International exists to provide a rallying point for Fundamental Baptists seeking personal revival and the opportunity to work with committed Bible-believers in glorifying God through the uncompromising fulfillment of the Great Commission.

As the journal of the FBFI, *FrontLine* Magazine provides a forum for God's people to reverently express a conservative Christian perspective on pertinent issues. In an effort to keep readers informed, quotes and references to many different individuals and organizations will appear. This does not imply the endorsement of the magazine or its board. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork accepted for review.

**Advertising:** For information contact Harvest Media at (847) 352-4345 or FAX (866) 583-5709. All advertising in *FrontLine* is for the sole purpose of sharing valuable resource materials with our readers. Although we carefully screen the materials, we are not giving a blanket endorsement of any products or advertisers.

### *FrontLine* Magazine

#### FBFI Chaplaincy Endorsing Agency

2801 Wade Hampton Blvd., Suite 115-165 • Taylors, SC 29687  
(864) 268-0777 • [info@fbfi.org](mailto:info@fbfi.org) • [www.fbfi.org](http://www.fbfi.org)

Layton Talbert

## “The Fulness of . . . Time”:

God’s providential preparation for the “fulness of . . . time” (Gal. 4:4) was literally centuries in the making. The divine casting and staging encompassed social, political, religious, and even philosophical elements; it ranged from individual to international preparations; and it included both broadly circumstantial and intimately personal issues. Some of these details are explicitly outlined in Scripture. Others are discovered only in the textbook of history, the illustrated encyclopedia of divine providence where the observant eye can trace the outline of the invisible hand of God.

### Cultural Providences

#### Providence in Politics

The groundwork for a single, dominant, amalgamating political influence had been laid with each successive empire over the centuries: Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—each essentially extending the borders of the previous one and expanding the number of people brought under its influence. The extent of the Roman Empire was, therefore, centuries in the making. The *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace, 27 BC–AD 180) facilitated the spread of the message of God’s coming into the world.

#### Providence in Commerce

In order to transport troops and transmit information more efficiently, the Roman Empire devised a brilliant system of communication and transportation. That is the human side. The divine side is that God (through the free choices of men ignorant of Him and His purposes) directed the building of this system in order to facilitate the movement of His armies and ambassadors for the communication of His message. The Romans engineered an unprecedented network of roads, some of which survive to this day, which made the empire’s farthest reaches accessible.

#### Providence in Language

A single universal language was the enduring legacy of Alexander the Great’s conquest three centuries before the birth of Christ. The introduction of Greek as the common tongue throughout the known world enormously facilitated the widespread and rapid communication of the gospel. But providence also made use of that linguistic unity in another respect. With the establishment of Greek as the *lingua franca* came another vital preparatory work of providence—the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into a universally accessible language. This translation (called the Septuagint), produced from about 250–150 BC, introduced God’s revelation to the world at large. It became the Bible of Christ and the apostles, the Bible of the writers of the New Testament, and the Old Testament of the early church. Why was this significant? “The Septuagint had, in the providence of God,

a great and honorable part to play in preparing the world for the Gospel.”<sup>1</sup> It is not too much to say that “Greek Judaism, with the Septuagint, ploughed the furrows for the gospel seed in the Western world.”<sup>2</sup> Because of its ubiquitous presence throughout the known world, the Septuagint “paved the way for later Christian missions” as “the Christian missionaries were able to discover a ready point of contact wherever there had already spread a knowledge of the Old Testament.”<sup>3</sup>

#### Providence in Philosophy

When the Apostle John introduced the Messiah to the world as the *Word* (John 1:1–14), the concept was not entirely novel. The Greek term is *logos*, used four times in these verses to refer to Christ. This Spirit-inspired expression sprang up in a providentially prepared philosophical soil. God’s providence was at work even through the philosophical world of ideas. Heraclitus (ca. 500 BC) was one of the first to use *logos* in a philosophical sense to describe a universal reason or order in the world. Anaxagoras (ca. 400 BC) described this *logos* as a sort of intermediary between God and man. The Septuagint employed *logos* to depict God’s “word” as both the agent of creation (Ps. 33:6) and the controller of creation (Ps. 147). Philo (ca. 20 BC), an Alexandrian Jew influenced by Greek philosophy, synthesized the Greek and Hebrew concepts of *logos*. He viewed the *logos* as an intermediary between God and the world and even described it as God’s firstborn son, an ambassador, an advocate, a high priest—though he apparently had no incarnational theology and no inkling that this Word would appear in his own lifetime. God was providentially at work plowing the soil of the philosophical musings of men who did not know Him in order to set the stage for introducing His Son as the very expression and communication—the *Word*—of God Himself.

### Scriptural Providences

#### Timing of Zacharias’s Lot (Luke 1:9)

The burning of the incense was an unusual honor that few priests enjoyed since their duties were assigned by lot. Zacharias might have been selected by lot early in his life and never again have had opportunity to perform for that ministry. But by the choice of Providence, “for the first, and for the last time in life, the lot had marked him for incensing” at this particular moment in history.<sup>4</sup> God governs the “chances” of lots and their timing. The timing and location of the angelic announcement to Zacharias at the temple guaranteed a public announcement and widespread anticipation of the coming of Messiah’s forerunner.

#### Conception and Birth of John (Luke 1:5–7, 24–25, 57–66)

Elisabeth was barren all her life, and now “they both were now well stricken in years” (Luke 1:7). How long before do



# Providences in the Coming of Christ

you suppose this godly old couple had given up praying for a child? It is a happy coincidence that Zacharias means “the LORD remembers.” Zacharias may have long since forgotten all their prayers for a child, but God had not.

## Conception of Jesus (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38)

Timing was crucial: after the betrothal so that it would not prevent the engagement, but before the marriage so that the Child was clearly not Joseph’s (Matt. 1:18). God could have forewarned Joseph, just as He had informed Mary ahead of time, that the birth of this child was coming. Why would God not have told Mary *and* Joseph ahead of time? The announcement to Mary was necessary to prepare her for what was about to happen to her, and why and how. But imagine the suspicions aroused if both Mary and Joseph had prior knowledge of this pregnancy. (“So, you **both** had a ‘vision’ that God was sending this child? How convenient!”) Nevertheless, it was also necessary for Joseph not only to decide to keep the matter quiet, but also to marry her to preserve her honor and the event’s credibility.

## A Census (Luke 2:1–6)

Caesar’s census magnifies God’s providence over human decisions. God used a pagan emperor’s census to inconvenience a massive population in order to bring one couple to a town prophesied seven centuries earlier as the Messiah’s birthplace (Micah 5:2). Why did God not simply direct Joseph to take Mary down to Bethlehem for the birth? Again, think of the suspicions that would naturally arise. (“Another ‘vision,’ eh? To go to **Bethlehem**? That’s a convenient coincidence!”) Providence preserved the integrity of the event. This way, no one could accuse Joseph of fabricating a “messiah” by simply moving to Bethlehem for the birth and alleging a prophetic fulfillment. The providential means employed to accomplish these events transcended human contrivance.

## Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:6–7)

God’s providences come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes they’re simple, elegant, but unnecessary extra touches to the canvas for the pleasure of the Artisan and the admiration of the attentive observer. Because there was no room in the inn, Mary was obliged to lay the *Bread of Life* (John 6:35) in a *feeding trough* in a town named “House of Bread” (Bethlehem).

## Shepherds (Luke 2:8–20)

The divinely ordained presence of shepherds at the birth of the Lamb of God (John 1:29) who would Himself become the Good Shepherd (John 10) over His people (Ezek. 34:22–25, 37:24; Isa. 40:11) is not without significance. These “shepherds watched the flocks destined for sacrificial services” in the temple nearby<sup>5</sup>—the very sacrifices that Christ came to fulfill. They became the first evangelists to spread the good

news revealed to them about the arrival and identity of the long-awaited Messiah.

## Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25–38)

God promised Simeon that he would see the promised Messiah before he died and then led him “by the Spirit” into the temple at the very moment of the Child’s dedication. The arrival of godly Anna, “coming in that instant,” was also providentially timed.

## Magi (Matt. 2:1–12)

Elements of providence connected with the magi include a number of factors: the providential preservation of the knowledge of God’s prophecy in their distant Gentile society; the appearance of the star at the right time to bring the magi to the Christ-child; the fact that the star did not lead them directly to Bethlehem but first to Jerusalem, which resulted in a public announcement of the event and the citation of Micah’s prophecy in the court of Herod; the fact that Herod did not send spies after the magi to discover the child’s location but instead trusted the magi to return; and the dream warning them not to return to Herod in order to gain time and protection for the Child.

## A Final Thought

What ramifications does God’s providential rule over empires and nations and individuals have for us? If God superintended all the affairs of politics and commerce, culture and philosophy in preparation for His Son’s first coming into the world, we can be sure He is overseeing the preparation for His Son’s second coming into the world. God oversaw the minutest and most intimate details of individuals in the middle of these momentous events, and we can trust that His providences are at work in our lives as well.

This abbreviated excerpt was originally published in *Not by Chance: Learning to Trust a Sovereign God* by Layton Talbert (© 2001 by BJU Press; reprinted by permission of BJU Press).

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce in *The Books and the Parchments* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), 162.

<sup>2</sup> Adolf Deissmann in *New Light on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 95.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Rahlfs, “History of the Septuagint Text,” in *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart, 1979), LVII. The Septuagint, he adds, “being already everywhere widespread and well-known, was simply adopted by the Christians as the Church’s Bible” while the NT was being penned.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 137. For a detailed and colorful description of Zecharias’s experience at the temple see 137–41.

<sup>5</sup> Edersheim, 187.

## Let Them Know

Jim Tillotson

**Editor's Note:** On Monday evening, July 26, 2021, Evangelist Tom Farrell stepped into the presence of his Lord. According to his obituary, "Thomas Clay Farrell, age 69, passed away with family by his side." Traveling as an evangelist since 1979, Tom also served on the staff of the Wilds Christian Camp in Brevard, North Carolina, before forming Tom Farrell Ministries in 1990.

*We believe that, like Paul, Brother Farrell could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).*

There are moments in life when time seems to stand still. I remember where I was when the news broke that President Reagan had been shot. I remember when the Space Shuttle *Columbia* exploded off the Florida coast, and I remember watching live as the second plane slammed into the Twin Towers. I remember where I was when I got the news my youngest sister had passed away, and where I was when my mom passed away.

Probably for all of us, the moment we understood the gospel and accepted God's gift of salvation is a moment we never forget. I have been married for thirty-one years, and although I do not remember everyone who attended our wedding, there are some people whom I will never forget. I will never forget my bride, the pastor, our wedding party, family, and a few special guests. The same is true when I think of the moment I got saved. I will never forget the person God used to bring me to Christ—Tom Farrell. And I will also never forget where I was when I heard that Tom Farrell had passed away on July 26, 2021.

I was a sophomore in Bible college when Tom came to speak for a week. It was very clear he loved illustrations, and he was very passionate about whatever topic he was speaking on. I was a kid who looked good on the outside, but on the inside I was a mess. He preached that night on repentance. He pointed out that repentance was a change of thinking that leads to a change of action. He made it clear that believing there was a God was not enough, according to James 2:19—that when God works in your heart, there will be repentance.

Tom used the illustration of a father who had a pet lion and wanted to go on vacation. He called up his son, who had a kennel, and asked if he would take care of his lion while he was away. The son said, "Sure," so Dad brought the lion over and got him situated with his son's help and then drove off. The son had a little yippy dog that hated cats. When the son walked in the house,

the dog smelled a cat. The little dog went racing out of the house yipping the whole way, right up to the lion's fence. The lion looked at the dog and gave a loud roar. The little dog whipped right around and ran straight back to the house. Tom Farrell said, "That's repentance."

In that moment, I realized I had never truly repented, but I also realized I was not willing to repent. I left that service knowing I was lost and not willing to repent. For three days I wrestled with God, but on the third day I broke, repented of my sin, and asked God to save me. I called my parents that night to let them know. As soon as I told them, my mom said, "Jim, we have been praying for that." What I thought would be a surprise to them ended up being no surprise at all. I immediately had a huge change of heart. All of a sudden I wanted to read the Bible and wanted to follow it.

Though I have followed God's Word imperfectly, the desire to follow it has never left me. I know it is God who saved me that night, but God used Evangelist Tom Farrell to confront me and force me to make a decision about my sin and Jesus Christ.

God ended up calling me to preach and in my senior year of college calling me to go to Canada. After college I served as a youth pastor for five years and ended up attending a youth workers' conference at the Wilds. The keynote speaker that year was Tom Farrell. He preached a session on how to help teens have holy standards and a happy spirit. I immediately went home and retaught that to my youth group. He used a basketball court illustration, saying that players are not focused on the out-of-bounds line, but they are focused on the net, and they stay in bounds so their shots will count. His application was when a teen is focused on the right goal, he stays in bounds and enjoys the game. I have reused that illustration in many places and seen the light come on for many teenagers.

Of course, there is no way to quantify how much being saved has changed our lives—it is hard to imagine where we would be today without Christ. That is why communion and Easter are such emotional events for me. When I think of what Christ did for me on the cross, when I did not ask Him to or deserve it, I am moved with profound gratitude.

I am also very grateful for the man God used to bring me to Christ. I took the opportunity to let Tom Farrell know at the youth workers' conference that I had gotten saved as a direct result of God using his preaching to speak to my heart. I am just one of, I am sure, tens of thousands who came to Christ under his preaching.

God did end up taking us to Canada, where we saw hundreds of people come to Christ. God then redirected us to work at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological

Continued on page 29



# Faith Baptist Theological Seminary CELEBRATING 35 YEARS IN 2021!



**Discover our one-on-one culture of discipleship and increase your skills in preaching, church-planting, counseling and evangelism.**

**100% OF OUR CLASSES  
ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE!**

**MASTER OF DIVINITY STUDENTS  
RECEIVE A FREE TRIP TO ISRAEL!**

**Apply online at [faith.edu/admissions/apply](https://faith.edu/admissions/apply)**



**faith** baptist bible college  
and theological seminary

**1900 NW Fourth Street  
Ankeny, Iowa 50023**

**515.964.0601  
[faith.edu](https://faith.edu)**



# Should Dispensationalism Be in Your Church's Doctrinal Statement?

A church, by its very name, is both singular and plural. It is one and many—one thing that is also many things. The New Testament describes the church not only as a communion of saints but also as a *commonality* of saints, as individuals who are baptized into one Lord, and who share a common faith, believing a common apostolic teaching that was once-for-all delivered in Scripture. Therefore, a church's statement of faith does more than merely announce what the church believes; it confirms what that church holds in common with the apostles, historic Christianity, and other churches. For this reason, many churches wisely supplement their doctrinal statements with historic creeds or confessions.

## Things Held in Common

In addition to historical connection, doctrinal statements should also include a second element of commonality. Though a church comprises individual believers who may have a variety of views, its doctrinal statement also represents what these members hold in common *with each other*. A church's doctrine can never merely be *credo*, but must also be *credimus*—that is, my church's faith is not just about what I believe, but about what we all affirm together. The church's belief is not represented by many divergent statements, but a single, common statement.

Therein, however, lies the rub. If a church's confession is doctrinally too broad, it will permit the unnecessary inclusion of those whose views are outside of the church's historical teachings. With certain issues, this kind of doctrinal breadth will threaten commonality by introducing unavoidable disagreement.

On the other hand, if it is too narrow, a church's doctrinal statement will unnecessarily exclude those who hold divergent views on matters that should not divide a congregation. This unnecessary exclusion also threatens the church's commonality, leading to doctrinal particularity. Such a church may become individualistic or even idiosyncratic.

An example might clarify the point. If a Baptist church lacks a statement regarding the mode of baptism, it may permit baptismal practices that are too broad to qualify as baptistic. At the opposite extreme, if a Baptist church has a statement that insists baptisms must take place in rivers (perhaps following the literal example of Jesus), then this statement is too narrow. It will exclude most Baptists, and the church will effectually become non-baptistic. Both extremes produce the same outcome: an avowedly Baptist church becomes non-baptistic.

## Two Extremes

So we are faced with two extremes that we must avoid in the interest of church unity. With this principle in mind, we now turn to an important question: should a church include dispensationalism in its doctrinal statement? At first glance, this question may seem simple, particularly if the church has historically taught dispensationalism. As we examine this question, however, we shall discover that we must nuance our answer. If a church includes no aspects of dispensationalism in its formal doctrinal commitments, then it may leave itself open to influences that will endanger unity. Yet if it makes every aspect of dispensationalism into a test of fellowship, then it may unnecessarily limit the possibility of allowable doctrinal variety within its membership. Doctrinal particularism and doctrinal ambiguity equally threaten church unity.

To develop a thoughtful and well-written statement of faith, a church will take account of these warnings. It will presume, and perhaps even articulate, a proper "tiering" of Christian doctrine in which the church's beliefs are assigned their correct levels of importance. In the case of dispensationalism, this tiering can be accomplished only by asking several questions. What is the nature of dispensationalism? Is it fundamental to the historic Christian faith? Which aspects of dispensationalism are important to the teaching of a specific church? A good statement of faith must answer these

questions well, and it must do it so that both the unity of *and* variety within the church membership are maintained.

What kind of thing is dispensationalism? Is it an interpretive scheme, a system of theology, a philosophical assumption, or all the above? The answer to this question will help a church decide whether and how much of dispensationalism to include in its statement of faith. Many see dispensationalism primarily as an interpretive scheme that both comes from and produces a straightforward reading of Scripture. This simplicity causes all kinds of confusion, because some dispensationalists infer that doctrines such as inspiration and inerrancy result directly from this dispensational hermeneutic. Instead, dispensationalism should be viewed as an interpretive system of theology that includes various philosophical assumptions (as every system does). This broader understanding allows dispensationalism to be separated into various elements. For example, the distinction between Israel and the Church is more critical to dispensationalism than affirming exactly seven distinct dispensations. Belief in a future earthly kingdom of God is more important than the specific timing of the New Covenant. Old Testament prophetic fulfillment is more crucial than the exact length of the Tribulation. The ability to separate these questions will help a church to decide which aspects of dispensationalism are either too broad or too narrow to include in a statement of faith.

Is dispensationalism, or any aspect of it, fundamental to historic orthodoxy? This question has a straightforward and unequivocal answer. The answer, of course, is decidedly *no*. Dispensationalism, though theologically important, should never be placed on the same level as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, or the substitutionary atonement. Wrongly assessing the importance of dispensationalism will change the nature of Christianity itself. The tiering of doctrines—including dispensational doctrines—in terms of their importance is the idea upon which fundamentalism itself is based.

### **Not Absolute Conformity but Substantial Agreement**

Distinguishing fundamental doctrines from non-fundamentals is important, but this simple distinction cannot be the only goal of a statement of faith. A church not only desires a faith that is unified with the apostles but also a faith that is shared with its heritage and its members. In 1890, Edward Hiscox, a New England pastor, published the *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*. In discussing a church's doctrinal statement, Hiscox wrote, "Members, on being received to fellowship, are not required to subscribe or pledge conformity to any creed-form, but are expected to yield substantial agreement to that which the church with which they unite has adopted" (56, 1903 ed.). This is wise. Baptist churches have historically not required absolute conformity to a particular confession (though Hiscox includes the text of the New Hampshire Confession as a good example for a doctrinal statement). Yet the unity of any church depends upon "substantial agreement" to teachings that the church has traditionally adopted. This is the last and perhaps most important question. Including dispensationalism as a whole system in your doctrinal statement may narrow the church's

doctrine too much to allow for substantial agreement among your members.

In most cases, *elements* of dispensationalism should be included in certain areas of your church's doctrinal statement without necessarily including dispensationalism as a whole system. Two obvious areas are ecclesiology and eschatology. If your church is clear on the nature, role, and regulative polity of the *New Testament* Church, a distinction between Israel and the Church will be evident without necessarily referencing dispensationalism by name. With eschatology, a clear articulation of the premillennial return of Christ and His reign in a future earthly kingdom may be sufficient to clarify the church's views. A church probably does not need to require its members to decide about the reestablishment of the sacrificial system during said millennial kingdom. It is not that this specific debate is unimportant, but rather that it is not equally important.

Clear statements in ecclesiology and eschatology will allow your church to be narrow enough to ensure continuity with its heritage and beliefs, while at the same time remaining broad enough to allow members to espouse a variety of views without damaging church unity. The same method can be applied to other theological systems. If a church clearly understands and articulates its beliefs regarding the doctrines of salvation, it does not need to address systems such as Calvinism or Arminianism. This is not because a church should desire to somehow camouflage or conceal its theology. Rather, if a church wants to make its theology known, then it should deal with the elements of its theological systems and not simply the complete systems. Systems are broad and can become convoluted. Statements are specific and clear.

Because dispensationalism is a theological system, a church would do well to avoid including it in a statement of faith simply *as a system*. That way, members can hold various views on some elements of dispensationalism without compromising either the unity or the commonality of the church. The more important elements and tenets of dispensationalism, however, can be articulated so as to ensure that the church's tradition and beliefs are clearly established, avoiding ambiguity on important matters. Christians have performed the difficult business of tiering and weighing doctrines since the earliest days of the Church (e.g., Acts 15). In fact, this activity is one of the most important things that a church can do.

### **"Commonality Is Key"**

Doctrinal statements should always seek to unite your church with the common Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Reinvention is often the devil's handiwork. Thoughtful doctrinal statements will include whatever is necessary to maintain both the church's heritage and the unity among members. This double objective is accomplished by allowing variety on lesser doctrines while requiring specificity on more important ones. Commonality is key. Our task is to articulate the most important elements of dispensationalism that make our churches what they are. We should be crystal clear on those. With the others, let the conversation continue!

Brett Williams, PhD, serves as provost of Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis.



# God Has a Plan

God has a plan. In 1973 I graduated from high school and also, after nearly a year of hearing the gospel, I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. What took me so long? What was I concerned about? I believed that I was good enough to get into heaven on my own! I wasn't going to let a pretty girl convince me otherwise (more on that later). The fact that my righteousness and my good works were as filthy rags in the sight of God was unknown to me. I didn't know enough about God's perfect love to care about heaven. I also didn't know enough about God's perfect judgment on sin to care about hell. So where did that leave me? My pride left me in the cauldron of Romans 3:10. During a message on being out of gas (I liked cars) and being out of excuses (I liked my ideas), God's Holy Spirit brought me to the end of myself. I humbly accepted God's free gift of salvation at His invitation.

God has a plan. I joined the Army in 1974. In 1977 the Lord allowed me to marry the girl who was primarily responsible for my trusting the Lord! As a growing Christian I sought counsel as to whether I should become a Warrant Officer and a helicopter pilot. In the spring of 1981 I was commissioned a WO1 and awarded my silver wings. Achievements? Yes, but I realized that achievements were but starting points from which to continue learning. Every achievement, whether great or small, has served me well under the kind and firm hand of my Father.

God has a plan. I had not planned a career in the Army for myself, but God had—a thirty-year career, retiring in 2004. In those three decades I was truly blessed beyond measure, pressed down, and running over. I was privileged to fly Blackhawks from 1981 through 2004, becoming an Instructor Pilot early on. With time and experience behind me, the Army's Master Aviator Wing was presented to me. During those military years my precious wife, three sons, and two daughters served in the shadows of my wings. God used my faithful, hard-praying, and hardworking wife as my Aaron and Hur, and we prevailed. In those years of permanent changes of stations, we had the honor to wor-

ship and serve in several different churches. During one temporary duty assignment in Bosnia, God allowed me to function additionally as the Protestant Chaplain for a few months for a multinational force. I was willing, and God did the rest! Settling down after retirement was a great blessing for my wife and for our shrinking family. We settled where God directed in Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO).

God has a plan. Within a short period of time God allowed me to fly in KCMO as a Life Flight pilot for Emergency

Medical Service (EMS). It was at Eagle Heights Baptist church (EHBC) that I met CH Joe Willis. He shared information with me about the chaplaincy, something I had never considered. For the last decade in KCMO I was asked to preach and teach in two men's shelters as an outreach ministry of EHBC. Mentoring is what military officers are wise to do, verbally as well as by example. Church leaders are also exhorted to mentor their young men, as exemplified by the apostle Paul. I was well mentored by several godly men through the years.

God has a plan. In June of 2019 we moved to Pensacola, Florida, so our youngest daughter could

attend Pensacola Christian College. As members of Faith Baptist Church of Pensacola, I providentially again met CH Joe Willis, our keynote speaker at our church men's retreat. Joe and I again discussed the possibility of my becoming a chaplain. I fasted and prayed fervently. I solicited counsel and prayer from my pastor, Jeff Bailie. The year 2020 was one of pandemic chaos, but for me it clearly became a year of transition from doing things of ministry to becoming an FBFI-endorsed chaplain in mid-spring 2020. I was now a chaplain without a ministry. EMS was still dear to my heart, so I called the Escambia County EMS manager. To my unbelieving surprise he said they needed a chaplain! I met with the manager, the county medical director, and an administrator. They unanimously agreed to have me become part of their EMS family. I am truly enjoying this ministry.

God has a plan!



FBFI Chaplain Glenn Booth (right) with Florida Escambia County EMS staff.



# God Uses Both Rugged and Refined Men

I find it extremely interesting to see how the Lord chooses to use diverse men for His glory. We see all throughout Scripture how God used men of all kinds of temperaments, personalities, skills, and vocations.

First let us consider two of the rugged men the Lord used. In the Old Testament we will look at the ministry of Elijah. We read in 1 Kings 17:1, "And Elijah, the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead. . . ." In describing Gilead, the *Pulpit Commentary* states, "Gilead was a wild, unsettled country compared with Ephraim and Judah. Instead of stately palaces and flourishing towns, it boasted tent villages and mountain castles." It was from this poor area that the Lord shaped the life of Elijah. He may have come from poor surroundings, but he was being prepared by God for the work he was going to do.

A man of God once said, "A rough man is needed to do rough work." Elijah was strong physically. How do I know this? We read in 1 Kings 18:45-46, "And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." God granted Elijah supernatural strength that day, but he must have already been in good shape in order to outrun a chariot! Not only was Elijah strong physically but he was also very bold and courageous. This one man stood up against the 450 false prophets of Baal and defeated them and had them killed. We read in 1 Kings 18:40, "And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." What a combination of strength and courage coexisted in this rugged prophet!

In the New Testament we find another rugged man whom the Lord used greatly: John the Baptist. Look how he is described in Mark 1:6: "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey." He would have been quite a sight, don't you think? Now let's take a look at what Jesus said about John in Luke 7:24-26: "He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in

kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet." And this rugged man John was greatly used of God. Jesus said of him in Luke 7:28, "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." So we see how these two rugged men, Elijah and John the Baptist, were greatly used of God to do His work.

Now we are going to observe two of the refined men that the Lord used for His glory.

The first man is Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel was a brilliant, highly educated man. Daniel 1:17 says, "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Verse 20: "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." Daniel's knowledge and devotion to the Lord was so great that King Nebuchadnezzar confessed in Daniel 4:37, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." Daniel impacted the life of a king!

The second man is the apostle Paul in the New Testament. This man was indeed a man of knowledge and wisdom and was also greatly used of the Lord. This is what Scripture records of Paul when he stood before King Agrippa and proclaimed Christ to him in Acts 26:24: "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." But Paul answered in verse 25, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Paul was a gifted, intelligent man who was used mightily of God.

Allow me to give this admonition to all of God's people. If a person is not well educated or gifted with great knowledge, let him minister with the abilities he does have. On the other hand, if a person is highly educated and has superior comprehension of the Scriptures, let him minister with those skills. Don't look down upon or be critical of either, but encourage them both. Pray that Christ will be magnified through their ministry, whether they be rugged or refined.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at [evangjsivn@aol.com](mailto:evangjsivn@aol.com).

**Fundamental Baptist  
Fellowship International**

2801 Wade Hampton Blvd., Suite 115-165  
Taylors, SC 29687

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 823  
Greenville, SC

**Return Service Requested**

00:00:00

**AWAKE**

**PROCLAIMING TRUTH TO A BROKEN CULTURE**

**JOIN US JAN. 31-FEB. 1**

Hear from leading conservative thinkers including **Christopher Cone** and **Dave Doran**  
how to awaken your church to the Gospel opportunity in a broken culture.



**REGISTER TODAY**  
[seminary.bju.edu/core](http://seminary.bju.edu/core)

**CORE**  
CONFERENCE