

View Point	COVENANT THEOLOGY	DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY
<p>General Description</p>	<p>Covenant theology takes a view of God's revelation (the Bible) centered on covenants implied among the Godhead. These covenants exist in three parts: works, redemption, and grace. These are derived from Scripture, especially Ephesians 1:3-14, and John 4:34 and similar passages where God's purpose is declared and where Christ states He has come to do the Father's will. These are seen as an agreement among the Godhead in eternity past to elect, atone for, and save a people out of lost humanity.</p> <p>These covenants of redemption are being worked out on earth in history, beginning with the covenant of works and culminating in the covenant of grace known as the new covenant.</p> <p>The covenant of grace is used to explain the unity of redemption throughout all ages beginning with the fall when the covenant of works given to Adam ended.</p>	<p>Dispensational theology looks at mankind as a household over which God is moving through history before His heavenly host progressively revealing Himself and the outworking of His purpose and will. His plan from the beginning was a restoration of that lost in the fall and is progressively revealed in biblical history. He initiated His plan in Genesis 3:15 and the outworking of the plan continues. After revealing the sinful condition of man, God has largely worked by special covenants with Israel, whom He raised up to give us the Bible and the Messiah, and for whom He has special future promises. These promises will literally be fulfilled.</p> <p>Israel failed to be a light to the nations, and God temporarily raised up a new entity, the church, to herald His good news to the world. His church will continue until the last person God intends to save through the church is completed. His method of salvation by grace through faith has always been the same. These different methods of God and distinctions which God has used to unveil His plan are called dispensations.</p>
<p>Method of Biblical Interpretation</p>	<p>A literal and grammatical interpretation is used for Christological, anthropological, &amp; soteriological passages. Other passages are interpreted figuratively (especially promises pertaining to Israel's future) to fit their larger theological position. As it views the Scripture as one dispensation, it uses the New Testament to figuratively interpret promises given to Israel in the Old Testament.</p>	<p>A literal view of all interpretation in the historical and grammatical for all Bible passages. It views the Bible as a progressive revelation and strictly interprets literally according to context. Dispensational theology recognizes distinctions in how God has revealed Himself and His plan in different dispensations or times of history. These differences are viewed as aids to our biblical understanding.</p>
<p>The Biblical covenants</p>	<p>The Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, &amp; Davidic covenants are all subjected to the new covenant and are only considered applicable to the elect within the nation of Israel. The elect within the nation of Israel have been interpreted by the NT as the OT church. The particulars of the covenants are believed to be either fulfilled in the Old Testament or are spiritually fulfilled in the NT church which has also been defined as the spiritual Israel.</p>	<p>The covenants were made with representatives of the nation Israel to Israel and must be fulfilled literally through Israel. Not all the promises of the covenants have been fulfilled (complete possession of the land, permanence in the land, and an entire elect nation ruled by the Messiah). The nation of Israel has been temporarily displaced from their role as bearers of truth, and the church has been raised up for a time to herald it instead. Ultimately God will fulfill His covenants with and through Israel.</p>
<p>God's People</p>	<p>God has one elect people and these are not distinguished by the time or circumstances of their natural birth, their life, their dispensation, or promises made directly to them as members of Israel.</p>	<p>God has one elect people of all races and nations but has chosen to work revealing Himself and providing a Savior through a promised line of people out of Abraham known as Israel. As a part of this outworking of His plan, He has made literal promises to elect Israelites that only effect or apply to others by their being grafted into the life of God. Additionally, God is working temporarily through the church in distinctive ways not applicable to elect Israel.</p>
<p>God's Plan for His People</p>	<p>God has one people, the church, for whom He has one plan in all the ages since Adam: to call out this people into one body in both the Old and New Testaments.</p>	<p>God has one ultimate destination for all His chosen people whether Jew or Gentile, but He has a different plan through history for Israel than He has for the church.</p>

God's Plan of Salvation	God has one plan of salvation for His people since the time of Adam. That plan is an election to salvation by grace through faith.	God has one plan of salvation - that being grace demonstrated in a new birth and subsequent faith. Although the character, reality, or quality of the faith is consistent throughout all dispensations, distinctions in obedience according to the directives of the dispensations are recognized.
The birth and nature of the church	The church existed prior to the New Testament era, including all the redeemed since Adam. Pentecost was not the beginning of the church but the empowering of the New Testament manifestation of God's people. The church in the NT is an extension of the church within the nation of Israel.	The church was born on the day of Pentecost & did not exist in history until that time. The church as an organism is a mystery not previously revealed nor understood prior to the New Testament & represents a distinct dispensation of the elect of God. It has a unique organization, empowerment, & role within the overall kingdom of God & His plan.
The purpose of Christ's first coming and His kingdom	Christ came to die for sins and to establish the New Israel of God, or the New Testament manifestation of His church. This continuation of God's plan placed the church under a new and better covenant, which was a new manifestation of the same covenant of redemption. The kingdom that Jesus offered was the present, spiritual, and invisible kingdom. Christ rules over His spiritual kingdom from Heaven seated at the right hand of God. There will be no literal earthly kingdom.	Christ came to die for the sins of all His people for all time & to restore what was lost in the fall. He also came as the fulfillment of the promised Jewish Messiah and King over Israel. He rules in sovereignty at the right hand of God the Father over His elect and as the Head of the Church. He is working out history to complete the fullness of the church, at which time He will return to establish a literal earthly kingdom from Israel and over all nations for 1,000 years. He will then continue to reign eternally among all His elect in the New Jerusalem He has prepared.
The Old Testament Laws and Rituals	Since the church is a continuation of Israel, the laws and practices of the NT church are influenced or governed by OT laws, rituals, and practices. Use is determined based on NT interpretations of OT laws and practices, and the newer revelations of the NT.	The church is seen as distinct from OT laws and practices given to Israel. Christian life, practices, and obedience are focused on the reality of the inner workings of the Holy Spirit given to the church and within each Christian, and NT commands given to the church. Laws and practices in the OT are instructional to the church to teach the character and purposes of God.
Church Practices	Because there is one covenant of grace and one dispensation, most covenant churches practice infant baptism as the replacement for the sign of circumcision for the covenant made with Abraham. The Lord's table is considered by most covenant churches to be a sacrament - meaning that somehow the Lord is present in the elements and that as such grace is bestowed upon participants. Not all covenant churches hold sacramental views.	The practice of the Lord's table and baptism are ordinances given exclusively to the church. The Lord's table is an on-going commemoration of the work of Christ on the cross on behalf of sinners. It is to be practiced only by those of faith. Believers' baptism is practiced at the initiation of a person's faith and in recognition of their new birth. It is a onetime ordinance of obedience to serve as a public testimony of relational identification with Christ as Lord, and their new allegiance to Him by faith.
Future Events	Covenant churches generally believe that scriptural references to future events (including the tribulation) are figuratively or spiritually interpreted and fulfilled, or have been fulfilled, or are being fulfilled historically during this present age. Christ will return at the end of time, and this will be followed by judgment and eternity.	Dispensationalist generally believe the church will be removed from the earth when all the elect of the church era have been awakened in Christ. What will follow is the great tribulation in which all on earth will be recipients of God's wrath. During this time the nation of Israel will be awakened to recognize Christ as their Savior and Messiah. Israel will replace the church as ambassadors for the Gospel. The tribulation will end with the return of Christ to judge all unsaved and to rescue Israel, followed by His literal reign from Jerusalem over the entire earth for 1,000 years. This is followed by the final judgment of the unsaved and the eternal order.