

**Eschatology: The Doctrine of Future Things  
Part Two**

***Introduction to Progressive Dispensationalism and Its Implications for the Interpretation of Bible Prophecy***

On more than one occasion, you have heard my disclaimer: I am not a theologian. Of course, I have studied biblical theology, and for many years I have preached and taught on the topic of biblical theology. And yet my studies have frequently taken me into the writings of men who dedicated their lives to the study of God’s Word, who have become experts in the analysis of its texts and of the theories of other men. I regard these men to be theologians, and by contrast I regard myself to be their student.

Throughout my Christian experience, my theological training, and my career as a pastor-teacher, I have been steeped in (and have embraced) premillennial dispensationalism as the lens through which the prophetic Scriptures are best understood. My personal library is rich in the writings of men so renowned for their mastery of premillennial dispensationalism that their names, their theories, and the institutions of higher learning representing their views, form the core of the first chapter of *Progressive Dispensationalism* by Blaising and Bock.

*Progressive Dispensationalism* was published in 1993, long after I had graduated from Grace Theological Seminary and had embarked on a career that included the teaching of Bible prophecy. I was unaware of the book or its explosive influence until I was well into my Doctor of Ministry studies. I regarded the book to be troublesome, heretical, and unworthy of serious consideration. In recent years I have taken another look, and have seen that Blaising and Bock have highlighted certain weaknesses and unanswered questions raised by dispensationalist authors. They have proposed alternatives which themselves demand scrutiny, but which attempt to hold all dispensationalists to the high standard of hermeneutic integrity.

What follows is a synopsis of *Progressive Dispensationalism*, followed by two appendices: a Wikipedia article titled “Progressive Dispensationalism”; and a GotQuestions.org article titled, “What is Progressive Dispensationalism?”

***An Overview of the Book, Progressive Dispensationalism (by Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock)***

1. Part One: History
  - The Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism
    - The Rise and Spread of Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism first took shape in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. The “Brethren Movement” (not affiliated with the Brethren Church) emphasized the unity of all believers, the freedom of Spirit-filled individuals to interpret the Scriptures without the assistance of professional clergy, and the value of non-denominational group Bible study as a supplement to local church teaching. In the United States, the movement spawned the growth of another phenomenon: the Bible Conference Movement beginning in the 1870s.

C. I. Scofield, a participant in the Bible Conference Movement, published the *Scofield Reference Bible* in 1909 as study aid that effectively put a “Bible Conference” into the hands of thousands of evangelical Christians. His notes proposed a system of Bible interpretation that was soon termed “dispensationalism.” Through the Bible conferences and the *Scofield Reference Bible*, dispensationalism came to characterize the beliefs of a large segment of American evangelicalism. When the struggle between fundamentalism and modernism came to a head, dispensationalists landed on the side of fundamentalism. Whole denominations became known for their commitment to the companion features of fundamentalism and dispensationalism: the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, the Conservative Baptist Association, the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, and the Independent Fundamental Churches of America. The institutions of higher learning associated with these denominations became centers for training in dispensational thought.

-- Common Features of the Dispensational Tradition

- Authority of Scripture
- Dispensations
- Uniqueness of the Church
- Practical Significance of the Universal Church
- Significance of Biblical Prophecy
- Futurist Premillennialism
- The Imminent Return of Christ
- A National Future for Israel

-- Forms of Dispensationalism

- Classical Dispensationalism
  - Arose from the writings of early dispensationalists such as John Nelson Darby, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and C. I. Scofield. The *Scofield Reference Bible* became the catalyst for the growth of the movement.
  - Features:

- a. The Kingdom of God (his control of the whole universe) vs. the Kingdom of Heaven (his special attendance to his people)
  - b. The Church as a “parenthesis” in God’s redemptive plan
  - c. Extensive typological interpretation of Old Testament texts
  - d. One form of salvation for Jews and another for the Church
- Revised Dispensationalism
  - Features:
    - a. God dealing with two groups concurrently: Israel and the Church
    - b. No difference between Israel’s and the Church’s experience of eternity
    - c. Salvation by grace through faith in all dispensations
    - d. The Church’s social responsibility to believers and nonbelievers
    - e. Insistence on “consistent literal interpretation” of Scripture
  - Alternative Kingdom views:
    - a. Alva McClain: “Universal” vs. “Mediatorial” Kingdom; the Church as an “Interregnum.”
    - b. Charles Ryrie: The existence of a separate “spiritual kingdom”: the Church
    - c. John Walvoord: The Mediatorial Kingdom began with David; it ends at the end of the Millennium
    - d. Dwight Pentecost: A “Theocratic” kingdom of which the Church is a part
- Progressive Dispensationalism
  - Features:
    - a. Holistic redemption: the Church is a revelation of spiritual blessings which all the redeemed will share in spite of their ethnic and national differences.
    - b. The dispensations are not merely different but successive.
    - c. The Church is not a separate category, but a collection of all the redeemed of all the ages.
    - d. Biblical interpretation includes factors in addition to history and grammar.
    - e. The Church is experiencing the promised blessings of the same New Covenant established in Jeremiah

- f. No substantive difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven

## 2. Part Two: Hermeneutics

- How we read texts
  - How we approach the text
    - Readers and Worldviews, Part 1
      - We all view the world with presuppositions
      - We all possess preunderstandings
      - Some changes in preunderstanding do not alter worldview
      - Not every presupposition or preunderstanding is a good one
      - Some presuppositions and preunderstandings are the product of the time or culture in which we live
    - Authors and Text
      - The Bible is unique; it is God's exclusively authoritative message
      - There is design and unity in the whole of Scripture
      - The Bible has a message that extends beyond its original setting
    - The Text and Readers, Part 1
      - The Bible speaks to the people of God across the ages. Our challenge is to determine which texts are context-limited, so we can avoid making the Bible say more than God intended.
      - When two "Spirit-guided" interpreters disagree with one another, we must remember that the Spirit is primarily concerned with our responsiveness to the message.
      - We must categorize each statement of Scripture according to the clarity of its application:
        - 1) The undeniable fundamentals of the faith
        - 2) Matters of firm conviction
        - 3) Matters of soft conviction
        - 4) Matters of genuine uncertainty
        - 5) We must recognize that the Bible is always able to teach us about our worldview and our relationship with God.
        - 6) We must be cautious not to interpret the Bible so that it says too much or too little.
    - Readers and Worldviews, Part 2 (Testing Our Traditions)

- Which interpretation of a text is the most probable?
- Which interpretation works better than the other options?
- Which interpretation is most consistent with the rest of Scripture?
- The Text and Readers, Part 2
  - Disagreements often arise from different perspectives.
  - Dialog about differences ought to lead us to appreciate each other's point of view, and to clarify our own point of view.
  - Whatever our interpretation, it must allow the text to speak for itself.
- How the text speaks to us
  - Historical interpretation

We must attempt to understand the historical and cultural context in which a text was written, so we won't apply a meaning that is consistent only with our own historical and cultural setting.
  - Grammatical interpretation

Words must be understood in their context. One should not make a technical term out of a word unless the context warrants it. Some distortions of meaning are trivial, but others are significant. Some words are obscure, others are broad, while still others are quite precise.
  - Unifying Message and Story: Literary-Theological: Be genre sensitive. Each biblical genre tells a story in its own way.
    - Theological narrative
    - Poetic literature
    - Wisdom literature
    - Prophetic literature
    - Epistolary literature
    - Apocalyptic literature
  - Ways of Reading the Bible and Relating Different Texts
    - The interpreter must read the text in three ways:
      - a. Historical-exegetical reading
      - b. Biblical-theological reading
      - c. Canonical-systematic reading

- The use of the Old Testament in the New
  - a. Some texts are directly prophetic (Daniel 7:14)
  - b. Some texts are analogical (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10 referring to the Exodus)
  - c. Some texts assert the cancellation of previous revelation (circumcision in Acts 15)
  - d. Some texts assert substitution (Romans 11, where Israel is grafted back in)
  - e. Some texts are complementary (the New Covenant in Jeremiah and in Luke 22)

### 3. Part 3: Exposition

- Dispensations in Biblical Theology; the meaning of “dispensation”
  - General meaning: management of a household
  - Theological sense: the relationship between God and the world, including:
    - The sovereignty of God
    - The purpose and plan of God
    - An ordered set of relationships
    - Responsibilities and requirements
    - Dispensational change
- Dispensations in Biblical History
  - New Testament Dispensationalism and Salvation History
  - The dispensations of biblical history
    - Patriarchal
    - Mosaic
    - Ecclesial
    - Zionic
  - Dispensations and covenants
- The Structure of Biblical Covenants: The Covenants Prior to Christ
  - The Noahic Covenant
  - The Abrahamic Covenant
    - Contents of the covenant
    - Nature of the covenant
    - The Abrahamic Covenant and the Bible
    - The Abrahamic Covenant and the Narratives of Isaac and Jacob

- The Abrahamic Covenant in the History of Israel and the Nations
- The Mosaic Covenant
  - Contents of the Mosaic Covenant
  - Nature of the Mosaic Covenant
  - Fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant
  - The Mosaic Dispensation
- The New Covenant
  - Contents of the New Covenant
    - A new heart indwelt by God's Spirit
    - Forgiveness and cleansing from sin
    - Resurrection and everlasting life
  - The nature of the New Covenant
  - The New Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant
  - The dispensation of the New Covenant
- The Davidic Covenant
  - Contents of the Davidic Covenant
    - The promise to build the Davidic house
    - The promise of a special relationship with David's son
  - The nature of the Davidic Covenant
  - The relationship of the Davidic Covenant to the other covenants
    - The Davidic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant
    - The Davidic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant
    - The Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant
- The fulfillment of the biblical covenants through Jesus Christ
  - Jesus and the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant
  - Answering objections:
    - "The throne Jesus received at his ascension was not the throne promised to David."
      - Every New Testament description of the present throne of Jesus is drawn from Davidic covenant promises.
      - It fails to comprehend the relationship between God's heavenly rule over Israel and the rule of his chosen king.
    - "Jesus' present activity is best understood as divine sovereignty, not Davidic kingship."
      - The Bible explains Jesus' present activity in Davidic as well as divine terms.
      - The objection fails to understand the divine-human unity of Christ's person, as well as how that unity fulfills the converging prophecies of divine and messianic rule in the eschatological kingdom of God.
    - "To speak of the present fulfillment of Davidic promises by Christ in heaven is a spiritual interpretation of earthly, political promises."

- Jesus and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant
  - Blessing upon the Gentiles
  - The reception of the blessing by faith
- Jesus and the Mosaic Covenant
- Jesus and the New Covenant
  - The forgiveness of sins
  - The promise of the Holy Spirit, the new heart, and resurrection from the dead
- The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament
- The Kingdom of God in the New Testament
- Theological and Ministerial Issues in Progressive Dispensationalism
  - Church and Ministry
    - The internal social ministry of the church
    - The external social and political ministry of the church
    - The multicultural body of Christ
    - Theology and history
    - Prophecy and current events
    - Theology and the hope of Israel
  - Christology

### **Appendices**

The following articles appear on the internet, and are reproduced here for further discussion. Two words of caution are offered: (1) Internet articles do not possess the permanence of the printed page. The Wikipedia article, especially, is designed to be fluid and subject to alteration by writers of unknown credentials. (2) Internet articles come and go. What is posted today may be removed tomorrow, depending on the whims of website owners and administrators.

Appendix 1: “Progressive Dispensationalism” at [www.Wikipedia.com](http://www.Wikipedia.com).

Appendix 2: “What is Progressive Dispensationalism?” at [www.GotQuestions.org](http://www.GotQuestions.org).



# Progressive dispensationalism

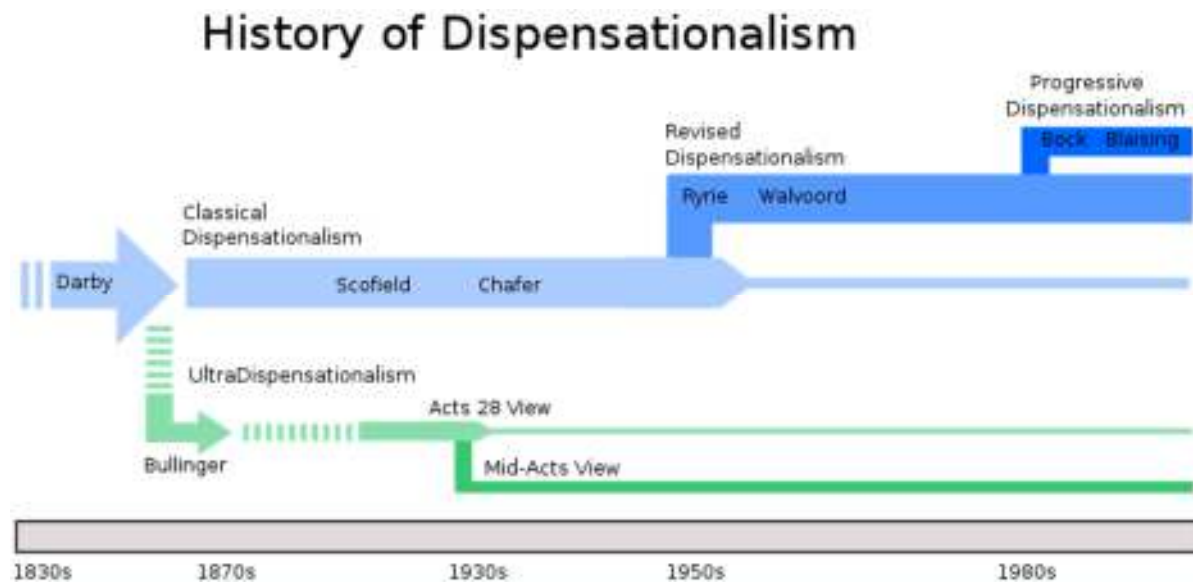
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In [Evangelical Christian theology](#), **progressive dispensationalism** is a variation of traditional [dispensationalism](#).<sup>[1]</sup> All dispensationalists view the [dispensations](#) as chronologically successive. Progressive dispensationalists, in addition to viewing the dispensations as chronologically successive, also view the dispensations as progressive stages in [salvation](#) history.<sup>[2]</sup> The term "progressive" comes from the concept of an interrelationship or progression between the dispensations. Progressive dispensationalism is not related to any social or political use of the term progressive, such as [progressive Christianity](#).

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## Development



While elements of progressive dispensational views were present in earlier dispensational writers, including Scofield and Eric Sauer, the view itself coalesced around specific issues and questions raised in the 1980s. Numerous dispensational scholars came to a rough consensus and in the early 1990s produced three main books articulating progressive dispensationalist views.<sup>[3][4][5]</sup> Consequently, the editors and authors of the books - [Craig A. Blasing](#), [Darrell L. Bock](#), and [Robert L. Saucy](#)— are considered the primary spokespersons for progressive dispensationalism.

## Comparison with traditional dispensationalism

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Progressive and traditional dispensationalists hold to many common beliefs, including views that are uniquely dispensational. The vast majority of adherents in both schools hold to a distinction between [Israel](#) and the [Church](#),<sup>[6]</sup> a future [pre-tribulation rapture](#),<sup>[7]</sup> a seven-year tribulation, and a [Millennial Kingdom](#) <sup>[8]</sup> in which the rule of [Jesus Christ](#) will be centered in [Jerusalem](#) (there are some variations within progressive dispensationalism where the rapture question is concerned).

The major difference between traditional and progressive dispensationalism is in how each views the relationship of the present dispensation to the past and future dispensations. Traditional dispensationalists perceive the present age of grace to be a "[parenthesis](#)" or "[intercalation](#)" in [God's plans](#).<sup>[9]</sup> In general, the concept means God's revealed plans concerning Israel from the previous dispensation has been "put on hold" until it resumes again after the rapture. Therefore, for traditional dispensationalists, the only relationship between the dispensations is chronologically successive. Instead of viewing the present dispensation as a parenthesis, progressives perceive the present age of grace as a vital link in God's plan of [redemption](#).

## "Progressive" relationship between the covenants

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Progressive dispensationalists perceive a closer [relationship between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant](#) than do most [traditional dispensationalists](#). One of the [covenants](#) which highlight the differences between the two views is the [New Covenant](#). In the past, dispensationalists have had a variety of views with regard to the new covenant. Some dispensationalists, including [Charles Ryrie](#) and [John F. Walvoord](#) in the 1950s, argued for two new covenants: one new covenant for the Church and another new covenant for Israel. Other dispensationalists, including [John Nelson Darby](#) and [John Master](#), argued for one new covenant applied only to Israel. And still other dispensationalists, including [Cyrus I. Scofield](#) and [John McGahey](#) in the 1950s, have argued for one new covenant for a believing Israel today and an ongoing partial fulfillment, and another new covenant for a future believing Israel when Jesus returns for a complete fulfillment.

Progressive dispensationalists, like Blaising and Bock, argue for one new covenant with an ongoing partial fulfillment and a future complete fulfillment for Israel. Progressives hold that the new covenant was inaugurated by Christ at the [Last Supper](#). Progressives hold that while there are aspects of the new covenant currently being fulfilled, there is yet to be a final and complete fulfillment of the new covenant in the future. This concept is sometimes referred to as an "already-but-not-yet" fulfillment.

## Hermeneutics

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Both traditional and progressive dispensationalists share the same [historical-grammatical method](#). As with all dispensationalists, [progressive revelation](#) is emphasized so that the dispensationalist interprets the [Old Testament](#) in such a way as to retain the original meaning and audience. Thus progressives and traditionalists alike place great emphasis on the original meaning and audience of the text. The primary differences in [hermeneutics](#) between traditionalists and progressives are that progressives are more apt to see partial or ongoing fulfillment, and progressives are more apt to utilize complementary hermeneutics.

These differences between traditionalists and progressives show up in how one views the Old Testament texts and promises in the [New Testament](#) and how they are handled by the New Testament writers. For traditionalists, who perceive the present dispensation as a parenthesis, the standard approach has been to view Old Testament quotations in the New Testament as applications rather than fulfillment. If an Old Testament quotation is said to have a fulfillment role in the New Testament (outside of the gospels), then that may imply that the present dispensation is no longer a parenthesis, but has a relationship or connection with the prior dispensation. In contrast, progressives, instead of approaching all Old Testament quotations in the New Testament as

application, attempt to take into account the context and grammatical-historical features of both Old Testament and New Testament texts. An Old Testament quote in the New Testament might turn out to be an application, but it also might be a partial fulfillment or a complete fulfillment or even something else.

As a framework for biblical interpretation, [covenant theology](#) stands in contrast to dispensationalism in regard to the relationship between the [Old Covenant](#) with national Israel and the [New Covenant](#) in [Christ's blood](#).

## Complementary hermeneutics

[Complementary hermeneutics](#) means that previous [revelation](#) (such as the Old Testament) has an added or expanded meaning alongside the original meaning. For example, in [Jeremiah](#) 31:31–34, the original recipients of the new covenant were Jews—i.e., "the [house of Israel](#) and the house of [Judah](#)." Progressives hold that in [Acts](#) 2, [believing Jews](#) first participated in the new covenant based on Jer 31:31–34. [Gentiles](#) were not named as original participants. However, additional revelation came in [Acts](#) 9–10 concerning believing [Gentiles](#) where God (through [Peter](#) and [Cornelius](#)) formally accepted believing Gentiles as co-heirs with the Jews. In other words, God used additional New Testament revelation to further expand the participants of the new covenant to include believing Gentiles. God did not [replace the original recipients](#) or change the original meaning of the new covenant, He simply expanded it. This expansion of meaning while keeping the original intact is what is called complementary hermeneutics.

## Charles Ryrie

[Charles Ryrie](#) had also laid less stress on the parenthetical nature of the age of the Church. The restatement of the "parenthesis" comes from the nature of the Church as the mystery, previously not known and now revealed, that Jews and Gentiles are united in one body (Eph. 3:1-7). Although Ryrie opposed some of the tenets of progressive dispensationalism, he also advanced in the late 1970s, many years prior to the progressive movement, something very similar to complementary hermeneutics, particularly in his interpretation of the new covenant which he held was one new covenant that had successive (complementary?) applications to different groups of believers. In other parts of the world, outside of the United States, dispensationalists had also laid a strong emphasis on the present aspect of the Kingdom of God (cp. Other revisionist, like Emilio Antonio Núñez, in Guatemala, who was also a theological heir of Ryrie).

## Recommended book list

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- *Bateman, Herbert W (1999). Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications. [ISBN 0-8254-2062-8](#).*
- Bigalke Jr., Ron J., "Progressive Dispensationalism." University Press, 2005. [ISBN 0-7618-3298-X](#)
- *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1992). Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House. [ISBN 0-310-34611-8](#).*
- *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. [ISBN 1-56476-138-X](#).*
- *Campbell, Donald K.; Jeffrey L. Townsend (1992). A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus. Chicago: Moody. [ISBN 0-8024-0899-0](#).*
- *Dyer, Charles H.; Roy B Zuck; Donald K Campbell (1994). Integrity of Heart and Skillfulness of Hands: Biblical and Leadership Studies in Honor of Donald K. Campbell. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.*

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- *Hoch, Carl B (1995). All Things New: The Significance of Newness for Biblical Theology. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books. ISBN 0-8010-2048-4.*
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- *Ryrie, Charles Caldwell, "Dispensationalism Today". Moody Press, 1965. ISBN 0-8024-2256-X*
- *Saucy, Robert L (1993). The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan. ISBN 0-310-30441-5.*
- *Stauffer, Douglas D (1989). One Book Rightly Divided: The Key to Understanding the Bible. Millbrook, Alabama.: McCowen Mills Publishers. ISBN 0-9677016-1-9.*

## See also

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- [Christian eschatology](#)
- [Christian Zionism](#)
- [Covenant theology](#) (opposing [hermeneutical](#) framework)
- [Dispensationalism](#)
- [Historical-grammatical method](#) of interpretation
- [New Covenant Theology](#) (attempted synthesis of classical covenantalism and dispensationalism)

## References

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1. *Bateman, Herbert W (1999). Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications. p. 309. ISBN 0-8254-2062-8.*
2. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. p. 127. ISBN 1-56476-138-X.*
3. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1992). Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House. ISBN 0-310-34611-8.*
4. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. ISBN 1-56476-138-X.*
5. *Saucy, Robert L (1993). The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan. ISBN 0-310-30441-5.*
6. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. pp. 49–51. ISBN 1-56476-138-X.*
7. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. p. 317. ISBN 1-56476-138-X.*
8. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. pp. 54–56. ISBN 1-56476-138-X.*
9. *Blaising, Craig A.; Darrell L. Bock (1993). Progressive Dispensationalism. Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint. p. 33. ISBN 1-56476-138-X.*



**Question: "What is Progressive Dispensationalism?"**

**Answer:** In order to present progressive dispensationalism, it is first necessary to understand what traditional dispensationalism is. According to Charles Ryrie, author of the book *Dispensationalism*, there are three primary principles of dispensationalism:

1) The Church and Israel are distinct and separate. Israel was not absorbed into the Church (which began on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2). Promises made specifically to Israel in the Old Testament that have not been fulfilled will still be fulfilled to the nation of Israel. These promises are not to be spiritualized or assumed they now apply to the Church. For example, in the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to Abraham that a large section of land in the Middle East would belong to Abraham's descendants. This is yet to be fulfilled, but will be in the future, in the 1,000-year kingdom that Christ will rule over.

2) God's purpose in all that He does is to bring glory to Himself. Other theological systems would say that all God does is to bring about the salvation of mankind, but this simply cannot be true, for there are many things that God has done that have no effect on the salvation of mankind.

3) A literal or normal hermeneutic is to be used for interpreting all of Scripture, including unfulfilled prophecy. Hermeneutics defined is "the method used for interpreting Scripture." Using a literal or normal hermeneutic means simply that you read and understand the Bible text in a normal sense. You understand the words of Scripture in a normal sense with their normal meanings. This does NOT mean you ignore figures of speech. Figures of speech are also part of normal interpretation. A modern-day figure of speech is "it is raining cats and dogs outside." Anyone would recognize this as a figure of speech and understand that what is meant is a very heavy rain. Figures of speech are important because dispensationalism is often wrongly criticized for using a literal hermeneutic. It is wrongly stated that dispensationalism takes figures of speech literally.

Figures of speech are accounted for in normal interpretation. Another theological system uses a dual hermeneutic for interpreting Scripture, where a literal or normal hermeneutic is used for all of Scripture EXCEPT prophecy. For unfulfilled prophecy, an allegorical hermeneutic is used. Normal meanings of words are ignored, and the words of prophecies are "spiritualized." An example of an allegorical hermeneutic or spiritualizing would be that the future 1,000-year kingdom spoken of in Revelation 20:1-6 would NOT be understood to be a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. Instead, it is treated as a kingdom that is happening now, and the reference to 1,000 years represents a long period of time, not a literal 1,000-year period.

Different theological systems always differ in the way they interpret Scripture (they differ by their hermeneutic). Progressive dispensationalism is held by those who believe that the normal

hermeneutic held by traditional dispensationalists should be slightly modified. Progressive dispensationalists hold to what they describe as a "complimentary hermeneutic." This hermeneutic is BASICALLY the same as that held by traditional dispensationalists, BUT progressive dispensationalists come to different conclusions than do traditional dispensationalists.

The greatest debate between those who hold to traditional dispensationalism and those who hold to progressive dispensationalism concerns the issue of David's throne. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised David that he would never permanently cease to have a descendant sitting on the throne. Although there have been times prior to Christ's coming—and presently there is no one sitting on David's throne as king over the kingdom—this promise to David will be ultimately fulfilled by God when Jesus Christ returns to set up and rule the kingdom on earth (Revelation 19:11 - 20:6).

The debate is this: progressive dispensationalism says that Christ is right now at this present time sitting on David's throne and ruling. Progressive dispensationalists do not deny a literal 1,000-year kingdom that Christ will rule over. But they say that He is already sitting and ruling on David's throne. This is known as "already but not yet." Jesus is already on David's throne but has not yet completely fulfilled the promise of God to David for a descendant to sit on his throne. Central Bible texts for this issue are Psalm 132:11; Psalm 110:1-4; Acts 2:30; and Acts 3:19-22. Traditional dispensationalists hold that, although Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father and is obviously ruling, this does not mean that He is sitting on the throne of David. They say that progressive dispensationalism assumes too much. Jesus can sit on a throne and rule now and not be sitting on the throne of David.

This has been very brief. Though progressive dispensationalism is relatively new (probably less than 15 years old), volumes have been written on the subject.

**Recommended Resource:** Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism by Herbert Bateman

Resources

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**Assignments for Next Segment ("The Grace Brethren Statement of Faith")**

1. Read the "Statement of Faith of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches" and "The Charis Commitment to Common Identity."
2. Compare the two documents. Note the similarities and the differences. Evaluate the differences: What has been changed? In your opinion, are the changes good or bad? Explain your answer.