

Recommended Reading in Dispensationalism

Dan Phillips has asked me to come up with a guide to the reading of Dispensational Theology. I hope this is what he expected. Anyway, this is what I have come up with. No “Progressive Dispensationalist” work is included because I do not consider that approach to be Dispensationalism proper (which does not mean dispensationalists can’t learn from them!). Neither have I included ultra-dispensational works, nor indeed, those post-trib./pre-wrath books which deny imminence. An asterisk indicates my recommendation of where money ought to go first.

No doubt I have let some vital resource run through the sieve that is my memory. If readers want to prompt me to remembrance I shall add to the following list:

Introductions

**Dispensationalism* – Charles C. Ryrie – Updated version of the author’s *Dispensationalism Today*, which should still be purchased. This is a must read, even if it is soft on the covenants. Irenic in style.

**Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths* – Michael Vlach – Short and punchy. I don’t like his restriction of Dispensationalism to ecclesiology and eschatology.

Understanding End Times Prophecy (2nd ed.) – Paul Benware -A very good introduction to the subject.

The End – Mark Hitchcock – A large but still fairly introductory level text. I haven’t read it yet, only skimmed its contents.

The Footsteps of the Messiah (2nd ed.) – Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum - Somewhat unique in its presentation of eschatology. Contains some “Pemberisms” (abodes of Satan, pre-Adamic crystalline earth, etc).

Major Bible Prophecies – John F. Walvoord – A handy resource.

Biblical Theology:

**The Dawn of World Redemption* – Erich Sauer – Perhaps the best study of God’s overall plan in the OT. Some glitches, but the main argument is very sound. Contains many ideas which deserve to be developed. Includes many seed-thoughts and insights

**The Triumph of the Crucified* – Erich Sauer – Coupled with the work above this is a must-have book.

From Eternity to Eternity – Erich Sauer – Provides both an overview of God’s plan and responses to objections. Recommended.

***The Greatness of the Kingdom** – Alva J. McClain – An outstanding, mature study of the subject. One of the “must have” books.

***The Theocratic Kingdom (3 Vols)** – George N. H. Peters – An extraordinary book. Notable for several reasons, not least because it is theocentric and so avoids treating eschatology in isolation. Not perfect (e.g. holds to a partial rapture), but *the* work on the subject. The person who masters Peters will be a formidable Bible teacher.

***Everlasting Dominion** – Eugene Merrill – An excellent Old Testament Theology, though again, soft on covenants in Genesis 2-3. Merrill gives due stress to the covenants.

A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament – Zuck/Merrill/Bock (eds.) – An often helpful treatment of the subject.

The Millennial Kingdom – John F. Walvoord – A solid contribution and critique of opposing positions. Adopts the “two new covenants view.” Has interesting, if not totally persuasive comments about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Walvoord’s best work.

***Israelology** – Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum – Massive and cumbersome, but thorough presentation and defense of the biblical data concerning Israel. An important study of millennial systems and Israel’s place in Theology. Ponderous and repetitive in style.

Important Studies:

The Great Prophecies Concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church – G. H. Pember – The author was known for his “Pemberisms” (Gap theory; Pre-Adamic fall; Partial rapture) but there is little evidence of them here. A good study, elegantly written.

Israel in Prophecy – John F. Walvoord – Brief and full of insight.

***Things to Come** – J. Dwight Pentecost – One of the finest texts on eschatology ever published. The style is “scholastic” and it needs updating.

***Thy Kingdom Come** – J. Dwight Pentecost – Thorough study of the biblical data. Good use of dispensations and covenants.

***Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate** - Matthew Wehmeyer – The best study of this vital passage. Undermines the whole foundation of amillennialism.

How Firm A Foundation – Hal Harless – A fine study of covenants and the Bible, even if he does teach covenants in Genesis 2-3.

***Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant** – (ed.) Michael Stallard – Chapters from a symposium on the subject seeking to answer the question of the Church’s involvement (or non-involvement) in the New Covenant. Our position that Christ is the New Covenant and all who are saved must be saved by it is not represented.

***Continuity and Discontinuity** - (ed.) John Feinberg – Top of the line articles by dispensationalists and covenant theologians (and one or two ‘inbetweenies’) about the relationship between the Testaments.

Specific Issues:

The Interpretation of Prophecy - Paul Lee Tan – A very useful guide.

***The Messianic Hope**- Michael Rydelnik – A slim but impressive study of the Messiah in the OT.

Jerusalem in Prophecy – J. Randall Price – Price is one of the best contemporary writers on Israel in prophecy.

***The Temple and Bible Prophecy** – J. Randall Price – An expanded edition of *The Coming Last Days Temple*. This is a definitive work.

Premillennialism and Amillennialism – C. L. Feinberg – Very competent analysis of these two systems.

***Future Israel** – Barry Horner – A recent study which shows, among other things, the latent Anti-Israelism of evangelicals who believe the Church is the “New Israel.” The editing could have been better.

***Jews, Gentiles and the Church** – David L. Larsen – An important study of historical and biblical matters pertaining to the subject.

The Rapture Question – John F. Walvoord – A well written apology for the pretrib position

Maranatha!?! Our Lord Come – Renald Showers – A newer treatment which interacts with contemporary views.

The Greatness of the Rapture- David Olander – A thought-provoking work

***Kept From The Hour** – Gerald Stanton – Still the best book on the subject of the Rapture

Messianic Christology – Arnold Fruchtenbaum –A handy set of expository studies, some more persuasive than others.

There Really Is A Difference – Renald Showers – Plain but solid comparison of Dispensational and Covenant theologies.

***Has the Church Replaced Israel?** – Michael Vlach – Perhaps the best treatment on the subject. Vlach is nuanced which makes him more valuable.

**The Company of Hope* – David L. Larsen – A valuable historical study of eschatology. Poorly edited. Lauds Lindsey and LaHaye.

Collected Essays:

Walvoord: A Tribute – (ed.) D. K. Campbell – This book contains several excellent articles.

Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost – (eds.) S. Toussaint & C. Dyer – Similar quality articles to above.

Issues in Dispensationalism – (eds.) J. Master & W. Willis – Some good explorations of in-house ideas can be found here.

**Dispensationalism: Tomorrow and Beyond* - (ed.) Christopher Cone – A good if rather dislocated series of essays in celebration of Charles Ryrie.

Vital Prophetic Issues – (ed.) Roy B. Zuck – Reprints of fine articles from BibSac. A little overly reliant on Walvoord’s contributions.

**Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* – (ed.) Mal O. Couch– An important if imperfect contribution. Contains some terrific articles. Poorly indexed.

The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy – (eds.) T. LaHaye & E. Hindson – Many fine articles on issues to do with Israel in prophecy. The one on “Dispensations” ties them too closely to the covenants.

The Gathering Storm – (ed.) Mal Couch – This is a very helpful book full of interesting essays.

Israel in the Spotlight – (ed.) C. L. Feinberg – Hard to procure but with some fine contributions. Somewhat dated.

Christ’s Prophetic Plans – (eds.) R. Mayhue, J. MacArthur, et al – I haven’t read this but it looks good.

**Israel: The Land and the People* – (ed.) H. Wayne House – A very solid and informative work.

An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics – Mal Couch (ed.) – Some excellent chapters on correct interpretive issues.

The Return of Christ – David Allen & Steve Lemke (eds.) – An uneven but helpful survey of Premillennialism

Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism – (ed.) Herbert W. Bateman – Dispensationalists and “Progressives” discuss three important matters. I found the Progressives rather confusing to read, particularly on the distinction between Israel and the Church, where the

writer seems to be talking out of both sides of his mouth, but the questions raised are important. The book is not as good as it should have been.

Along “Dispensational” Lines:

Recovering the Unity of the Bible – Walter C. Kaiser – A short study of Kaiser’s “Promise Theology” which somewhat overlaps our study

**The Promise-Plan of God* – Walter C. Kaiser – A large work in Old and New Testament Theology centering on God’s Promise.

Unfolding Drama of Redemption – W. Graham Scroggie – An uneven but helpful survey of the redemptive story. Alliteration everywhere.

Explore The Book - J. Sidlow Baxter – A great companion to bible study, even if the author commits some fouls here and there.

In addition these works on theology will be helpful:

**Basic Theology* – Charles C. Ryrie – Ryrie’s best book

Systematic Theology – Lewis Sperry Chafer – Old and not as thorough as might be hoped, but there is much good material in these volumes. The dispensationalism crops up everywhere (which is a good thing in a Dispensational Systematic Theology).

Lectures in Systematic Theology – Henry C. Thiessen – Good eschatological sections

Practical Christian Theology – Floyd Barackman – Basic but solid.

**Systematic Theology* (Vol. 4) – Norman Geisler – The best of an uneven set. Worthwhile.

A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity (Vol. 3) – Rolland McCune – As with the other volumes in this set, somewhat disappointing, but worth studying.

Kregel Dictionary of the Bible and Theology - Henry Holloman

**The Moody Handbook of Theology (Revised & Expanded)* – Paul Enns

Top Three Recommendations For Students:

I’m going to insert here a little moan about the awful lack of methodological groundwork which has stifled dispensationalist thinking for decades. Should we be concerned about defending our system, or should we be concerned with representing God’s Truth? The former encourages a trench mentality; the latter is open to improve and grow.

1. *Dispensationalism* – Ryrie – A good primer for getting oriented.

2. *Has The Church Replaced Israel?* – Vlach – Sound argumentation based upon robust methodology.

3. *The Greatness of the Kingdom* – McClain – The only volume of a proposed Systematic Theology (what might have been?). This is the kind of work dispensationalists should have built on for the past 50 years and haven't!