

## ***What Is Dispensationalism? An Ontological Definition***

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- **Preliminary Remarks**

- No theological movement in the last one hundred years has acquired the polarity of descriptions like those for dispensationalism. Vitriol marks one end, veneration the other.
- “Thoroughly evangelical and devoted to the Bible’s relevance for peoples of all eras”—D. Jeffrey Bingham (*Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption: A Developing and Diverse Tradition*, eds. D. Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R. Kreider [Chicago: Moody, 2015], 64).
- The urgency in its eschatology yields a Christian life that is more active and progressive than customarily assumed.
- Offers sophisticated positions on bibliology, Israelology, ecclesiology, hermeneutics, and missiology. Consistently advances all five *solas* of the Reformation (see *Forged from Reformation: How Dispensational Thought Advances the Reformed Legacy*, eds. Christopher Cone and James I. Fazio [El Cajon: SCS Press, 2017]).

- **Dispensationalism Is a Biblical Theology**

- Dispensationalism meets the three criteria of a genuine biblical theology: *inductive*, *historical*, and *descriptive* (see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell, *Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2023], 40).
- Dispensationalism seeks to be a pure canonical theology.
- Due to its commitment to *sola Scriptura*, dispensationalism is a self-correcting system.

- **Dispensationalism Is a Biblical View of World History**

- “Dispensationalists perceive biblical history—past and future—according to divinely arranged economies, which are, at least in part, punctuated by the biblical covenants”—James I. Fazio, “Traditional Dispensationalism,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 8, no. 2 (Jan/Feb 2024), forthcoming.
- World history is temporal and linear, leading to the Kingdom of God on earth where Jesus will reign physically from the throne of David in Jerusalem and will rule with his saints over multi-ethnic nations in accordance with prophecy (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 32:1; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 19:15).
- Contrary to popular redemptive-historical models, dispensationalism offers a *doxological-historical* framework (see Cory M. Marsh, “To the Praise of His Glory: A Doxological-Historical Model for Biblical Theology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 179 [July–September 2022]: 294–305).
- Definition: *Dispensationalism is a biblical theology that offers a view of world history which glorifies God through his dealings with creation by way of divinely governed economies punctuated with various covenants advanced throughout Scripture.* Its distinct pattern of beliefs are the *result* of a consistently applied grammatical-historical hermeneutic.