

40 Recommended Resources for Understanding Dispensationalism

By Michael J. Vlach, Ph.D.

Sometimes I am asked about which books and articles have influenced me the most in regard to my understanding of Dispensationalism. My first answer is the Bible, but after that I have decided to list those works that have helped me the most in regard to such topics as Hermeneutics, Law, Kingdom, People of God, and other issues. I list 40 such works (including two of my own) that have really helped my understanding of God's Word on important theological issues. There are many more books, articles, and commentaries that have helped me but I consider these 40 below to be the best of the best. For the most part, these resources listed are positive presentations of biblical issues. I have purposely not included commentaries or works that are refutations of certain views such as Covenant Theology, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, Preterism, Replacement Theology, etc. That is a project for another day. Instead, these works are positive presentations of biblical issues from a dispensational perspective. I do this because the strength of Dispensationalism is in its positive presentation and explanation of biblical issues and that is what I want to focus on here.

I hope the following three categories of readers will learn the following from this list:

Dispensationalists: If you are dispensationalist I hope you will be encouraged from the following works that offer a scholarly but readable presentation of key beliefs associated with dispensational theology. I think your beliefs will be reaffirmed and you will appreciate even more that Dispensationalism really offers a credible and biblical approach to understanding God's purposes, much more than other alternative systems of theology that address eschatology and ecclesiology.

Opponents of Dispensationalism: If you are committed to the belief that Dispensationalism is wrong or dangerous, I ask that you seriously consider these works in your discussions regarding Dispensationalism. While we dispensationalists often embrace some or much of what earlier dispensationalists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries wrote, much has been written in the last 25 years from a dispensational perspective that should also be taken into consideration. It is fair game to talk about Darby, Scofield, Chafer, etc... but if you do not also talk about Saucy, Feinberg, Turner, Blaising, and Bock and others you are not being fair in your presentations. In fact, you lose our hearing when the only discussion of Dispensationalism offered is in regard to pre-1950 writings.

The undecided and those in the middle: I hope you would consider reading several of these works listed below to get a fair understanding of what dispensationalists believe. Keep in mind that most critics of Dispensationalism are not interacting seriously with these works, but that does not mean you have to follow the same error. We are not claiming to be perfect in our theology, but I think you will find an honest attempt to be biblical and to make modifications when needed.

Big Picture Presentations of Dispensationalism

The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology by Robert L. Saucy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). (NOTE: Simply the best book on ecclesiology/eschatology I have ever read. Saucy interacts often with non-dispensationalists on key issues. If I could only recommend one book on ecclesiology/eschatology this would be it.)

“Systems of Discontinuity,” by John S. Feinberg in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 63–86. (NOTE: The best article explaining the essence of Dispensationalism in print.)

“Premillennialism,” by Craig A. Blaising in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 157–227. (NOTE: A capable defense of Premillennialism and how Premillennialism is most consistent with a New Creation Model of eternity.)

Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths by Michael J. Vlach (Los Angeles: Theological Studies Press, 2008). (NOTE: This book is my attempt to summarize the main issues that are at the heart of Dispensationalism. It also addresses many myths about dispensational theology.)

Progressive Dispensationalism by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993). (NOTE: The inclusion of this book is not a blanket recommendation of Blaising and Bock’s version of Progressive Dispensationalism, but there is much helpful historical and theological information in it.)

Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988). (NOTE: I mention the John Feinberg article in this book above, but the whole book is excellent matching dispensationalists and discontinuity theologians against covenant theologians on the key issues of Law, Kingdom, People of God, Hermeneutics, and Salvation. In my view, the dispensationalists/discontinuity theologians score a decisive victory presenting a much better perspective on the key inter-testamental issues in the Bible.

Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism

“Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” by Paul D. Feinberg in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 109–128. (NOTE: A very capable explanation of dispensational hermeneutics. Feinberg addresses difficult passages such as Acts 2/Joel 2 and Acts 15/Amos 9.)

“Biblical Meaning of ‘Fulfillment,’” by Charles H. Dyer in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 51–74. (A very helpful discussion of the meaning of “fulfill” terminology in Matthew.)

“Dispensational Hermeneutics,” by Thomas Ice in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994).

Inter-testamental Theological Issues (Law, Kingdom, People of God, etc.)

“The Law of Moses or The Law of Christ,” by Douglas J. Moo in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), (NOTE: I am not claiming that Moo is a dispensationalist but he presents a discontinuity view of the Mosaic Law/Law of Christ issue that many dispensationalists share and does so in a compelling way.)

“The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Discontinuity,” by Allen P. Ross in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 161–180.

“Israel and the Church: A Case for Discontinuity,” by Robert L. Saucy in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 239–262.

The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God by Alva J. McClain (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959). (NOTE: Simply the best work on the Kingdom. McClain avoids simplistic definitions of the Kingdom and works the reader through the Kingdom program from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22.)

“The Kingdom and Matthew’s Gospel,” by Stanley D. Toussaint in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, eds. Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 19–34.

“The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” by Bruce A. Ware in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 68–97. (NOTE: A great explanation of how the New Covenant applies to the Church now but will be fulfilled with Israel in the future.)

“The New Man of Ephesians 2,” by Carl B. Hoch, Jr. in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 98–126. (NOTE: A very significant article that shows how spiritual unity between Jews and Gentiles does not rule out a future for ethnic Israel in the future. Hoch shows how Eph 2:11–22 harmonizes with dispensational theology.)

“The Church as the Mystery of God,” by Robert L. Saucy in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 127–155.

“The New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1–22:5: Consummation of a Biblical Continuum,” by David L. Turner in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 264–292. (NOTE: An important article that shows that there may be more continuity between the Millennium and the Eternal State than many think.)

“Israel and the Church,” by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 113–132. (NOTE: A survey of key texts showing the distinction between Israel and the Church.)

“Paul and ‘the Israel of God’: An Exegetical and Eschatological Case Study,” by S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 20:1 (Spring 2009): 41–55. (NOTE: Johnson dismantles the idea that Gal 6:16 identifies the Church as “Israel.”)

“The Significance of the *Syn-Compounds* for Jew-Gentile Relationships in the Body of Christ,” by Carl B. Hoch, Jr. in *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 25:2 (1982): 175–183.

“The Contingency of the Coming of the Kingdom,” by Stanley D. Toussaint in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, eds. Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 222–237.

Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate by Matthew Waymeyer (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2004).

Bible Books

“Evidence from Isaiah,” by John H. Sailhamer in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 79–102.

“Evidence from Jeremiah,” by Walter C. Kaiser in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 103–118.

“Evidence from Ezekiel,” by Mark F. Rooker in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 119–134.

“Evidence from Joel and Amos,” by Homer Heater, Jr. in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 147–164.

“Evidence from Matthew,” by David K. Lowery in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997),

“Evidence from Romans 9–11,” by S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 199–224.

“Evidence from 1 Corinthians 15,” by D. Edmond Hiebert in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 225–234. (NOTE: Hiebert shows how 1 Cor 15 leaves room for a millennial kingdom.)

“Evidence from Revelation,” by Harold W. Hoehner in *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 235–262.

Future of Israel

“The Dispersion and Restoration of Israel to the Land,” by John A. Jelinek in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. Wayne H. House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 231–260.

“The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10: 6–12),” by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. Wayne H. House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 209–230.

Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum (Tustin, CA: Ariel, 1994). (NOTE: The best book in print on Israel’s past, present, and future.)

The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism by Michael J. Vlach (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). (NOTE: While this book is a critique of Replacement Theology it offers much in regard to the future salvation and restoration of the nation Israel)

Rapture / Tribulation

“Arguing for the Rapture: Who Must Prove What and How?” by John S. Feinberg in *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 187–210. (NOTE: This is not your average article on the Rapture. Feinberg excels on the proper methodological approach to the Rapture issue and tough theological issues in general.)

“Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?” by Stanley D. Toussaint in *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 235–250.

“The Olivet Discourse,” by Thomas Ice in *The End Times Controversy: The Second Coming Under Attack*, eds. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 151–200.

“The 70 Weeks of Daniel,” by Thomas Ice in *The End Times Controversy: The Second Coming Under Attack*, eds. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 307–354.

“The Little Apocalypse of Zechariah,” by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum in *The End Times Controversy: The Second Coming Under Attack*, eds. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 251–282.

“The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position,” by Paul D. Feinberg in *Three Views on the Rapture*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 45–86.

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