

What About...Dispensationalism In One Verse?

BY DR. JERRY A. COLLINS

Dispensationalism is a theological system that recognizes differing administrations that advance God's program on earth, which are progressively and successively revealed throughout history. At a minimum, these dispensations include:

Innocence Gen. 1-3:6	Conscience Gen. 4:7	Promise Gen. 12:1-4	Law Ex. 19:1f	Grace Acts 2:1f	Kingdom Rev. 20:1-15
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Dispensationalism has three essential components called the *sine qua non* (absolutely indispensable) [Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, Chicago: Moody Press, 2007, pp. 46-48]:

- A **literal** at face value hermeneutic (interpretation of the Bible)
- A **distinction** between Israel and the Church
- The **glory of God** as the unifying goal of history

The last two essential components of dispensationalism grow naturally out of the first one, a consistently applied literal hermeneutic. The covenant system does not agree with the last two of the *sine qua non*, because this system does not apply a literal at face value hermeneutic to Israel passages in the Old Testament, and so spiritualizes future prophecy about Israel. Covenant theology also emphasizes salvation history as God's unifying goal for the ages, rather than the glory of God. So, the covenant system:

- Combines Israel and the church into one people and one program without distinction
- Merges the glory of God and redemption, making the plan of redemption, rather than the glory of God, the unifying purpose of history

Now comes Isaiah 26:15, which in one verse authenticates the three-fold *sine qua non* of dispensationalism, and disputes a covenant unifying redemptive history understanding.

You have increased the nation, O Lord, You have increased the nation, You are glorified; You have extended all the borders of the land (Isaiah 26:15).

The context is a song sung by Isaiah about Israel's future in chapter 25, which anticipates a similar song sung in that day...in the land of Judah in 26:1. The song is sung in the **millennial future** when the Israelites are back in the land after God destroys their enemies. Both songs describe a new era when Israel would enjoy a *lavish banquet* (25:6); the reproach of Israel removed *from all the earth* (25:8); Jerusalem rebuilt and fortified (26:1-2); the righteous prevail (26:7); deliverance is permanent (26:9-11); *peace* is established (26:12); and Israel's borders *extended* (26:15). The immediate context describes life in Israel when Christ rules on earth during the Millennium. So, Isaiah 26:15 documents an actual future for Israel, secured by God in the land, as a conclusion of a literal at face value hermeneutic, the first of the *sine qua non*.

Isaiah referred to Israel and her literal future in the land as having extended borders, *You have increased the nation...extended all the borders of the land*. This is not the church, which has an entirely different future. **The church does not inherit a land**, nor have its borders extended as a nation. This is future prophecy, along with many other specific prophecies, about the nature of the millennium in Israel, in Jerusalem from where Christ reigns. So, Isaiah 26:15 supplies the next essential component of dispensationalism, the distinction between Israel and the church, the second *sine qua non*.

The increased nation and extended borders of a millennial Israel indicate that, instead of being overrun by her enemies, the nation will be established and flourish. The Lord, by doing this, will have gained great glory for Himself. *You are glorified*. The nation's future inauguration and existence glorifies God. In the millennium, as Israel asserts her influence globally under Christ's rule, God's intrinsic value will be revealed, which is the purpose of all history. So, Isaiah 26:15 documents the glory of God as the purpose of Israel's establishment in the Millennium, authenticating the third component of the *sine qua non*.

All in one little verse, Isaiah 26:15.

