

FAQ VOL II

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Frequently Asked Questions

VOLUME II

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<p><i>Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.</i></p>
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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	JBK: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Koren</i> (2000)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
Ara: Aramaic	KJV: King James Version
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LES: <i>Lexham English Septuagint</i> (2019)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	LS: <i>An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell-Scott)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	LSJM: <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	LXX: Septuagint
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	m. Mishnah
CGL: <i>Cambridge Greek Lexicon</i> (2021)	MT: Masoretic Text
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Holladay)	NASB: <i>New American Standard Bible</i> (1977)
CJB: <i>Complete Jewish Bible</i> (1998)	NASU: <i>New American Standard Update</i> (1995)
CJSB: <i>Complete Jewish Study Bible</i> (2016)	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NEB: <i>New English Bible</i> (1970)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NETS: <i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (2007)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
ESV: <i>English Standard Version</i> (2001)	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
Ger: German	NIV: <i>New International Version</i> (1984)
GNT: <i>Greek New Testament</i>	NJB: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic</i> (1985)
Grk: Greek	NJPS: <i>Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i> (1999)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	NKJV: <i>New King James Version</i> (1982)
HCSB: <i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i> (2004)	NRSV: <i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (1989)
Heb: Hebrew	NLT: <i>New Living Translation</i> (1996)
HNV: <i>Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible</i>	NT: <i>New Testament</i>
IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>	
IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>	
ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>	

OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Dispensationalism

Can you please elaborate on how dispensational theology has affected the development of the modern Messianic movement?

a Messianic Insider episode, 18 October, 2023

This episode of Messianic Insider has been entitled “**Dispensationalism and Our Messianic Prophecy Experience.**”¹ It should go without saying, that right now given the current crisis in Israel and the conflict with Hamas—and with a great deal of attention being focused on the Middle East—that many people, certainly in the evangelical Christian world, are asking questions about Bible prophecy and the end-times. Our own Messianic faith community is not immune to some of this, either. So what are some of the things we should be taking into consideration at the present time?

The issue of dispensationalism has been recently prompted, because I recently completed a series of McKee Moment shorts, afters reading through this book, *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism* by Daniel G. Hummel, released this year (2023). The subtitle is *How the Evangelical Battle Over the End Times Shaped a Nation*, and much of it gives an historical overview of the rise of dispensational theology in the Nineteenth Century.² It reviews the premises of some of the major dispensational publications, ranging from the *Scofield Reference Bible* to *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsay, among others. It discusses the rise of dispensational educational institutions, namely Dallas Theological Seminary (which I have here in my backyard in the DFW Metroplex). And, it reviews the dispensational influence on popular culture, particularly with Lindsay, the *Left Behind* series of fiction books and different movies, and different popular media. Now in the 2010s and 2020s, we have witnessed a (considerable) decline of dispensational influence, whether dispensationalists want to admit it or not.

I highly recommend reading this book if you are in a position of leadership or teaching. This does not mean you have to agree with everything. But you do have to take notice of not just the theological and spiritual, but also the cultural influence of dispensationalism. All of us, if we have been within the sphere of influence of conservative, evangelical

¹ This has been adapted and edited from the textual transcription provided by YouTube.

² Daniel G. Hummel, *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism: How the Evangelical Battle Over the End Times Shaped a Nation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023).

Protestantism—with few exceptions—have been influenced by dispensationalism in some way.

Even if many of us, for example, may not believe in an imminent pre-tribulation rapture, it has to be recognized how we are still affected by some aspects of dispensational culture. We need to acknowledge how today's Messianic Jewish movement, which specifically emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, definitely has seen its own development predicated on a great deal of dispensational theology. All of us have been influenced by dispensationalism, not always negatively; some of the aspects of dispensationalism are actually positive. But we do need to recognize how our approach to the Last Days, eschatology, and the return of Yeshua—even if we may not believe in a imminent, pre-tribulation rapture, which is the main hallmark of dispensationalism—has still been affected by it. We need to be willing to adjust some beliefs, and I think more importantly overhaul our religious culture, when it comes to the effects of dispensationalism.

Much of dispensationalism—and this is something I am sure many of you all are aware of—goes back to how someone may approach Paul's word of 2 Timothy 2:15. In the King James Version, this reads as, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” One of the main premises of dispensationalism, is making sure that the Holy Scriptures are properly divided, and in particular, that a strong distinction and difference is made, between Israel and “the Church.” Dispensationalists make it their theological job to inform you which Bible sections, texts of Holy Scripture, or passages, concern Israel—and what other books of the Bible or passages concern “the Church.”

There are certain advantages of Dispensationalism over Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology promotes supersessionism or replacement theology, the idea that the Christian Church has replaced Israel or the ethnic Jewish people, and that God has finished with Israel and is operating through a New Israel or Spiritual Israel known as “the Church.” One of the major advantages of dispensationalism, is that it advocates that God's promises to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob remain in effect. It just so happens that right now, because Israel corporately rejected Jesus as Messiah, Israel has been put aside. According to dispensationalists, God is working through a second group of elect or chosen, the Christian Church. After the imminent, pre-tribulation rapture takes place, then God will once again work with Israel.

Dispensationalists support the State of Israel, as they believe it has a definite role to play in end-time prophecy. They tend to be very strong Christian Zionists. They tend to be very supportive of the Messianic Jewish movement. They do not believe God is finished with Israel, but they do support at any moment pre-tribulation rapture. And, in their reading of Holy Scripture, in the most broad sense, the Tanach or the Old Testament is for Israel or the Jewish people. The Tanach may be regarded as important Biblical history, but it does not apply directly to members of “the Church,” for whom the New Testament is pretty much the only applicable Scriptures. Dispensationalists have a strong tendency to absolutely believe that the

Torah or Law of Moses has been abolished, and do not consider it to be too applicable to “the Church.” They also tend to pit God's Law for Israel, against God's grace for “the Church.”

One of the major theological criticisms of dispensationalism, is that it can seem to promote a “works free,” as it were, gospel. This means that not only are people not saved by works—**and we obviously do not believe people are saved by works**—but how much does God really expect the redeemed in the Messiah *to perform good works*? A common criticism of dispensationalism that it promotes a “free grace,” something without any incumbent responsibility on those in Messiah.

Now this is not intended to be a review of Daniel Hummel's book, although much of what I am going to be discussing today does come from me reflecting upon it. What I have read, involves some of the points which I think need to be raised when you look at the development of dispensationalism. This goes back to the Nineteenth Century figures like John Nelson Derby, and later C.I. Scofield, E.W. Bullinger, and Lewis Sperry Chafer. These are some of the very early voices, who got the idea going that God has worked in history through progressive dispensations.

There are, for sure, some points of truth raised by dispensationalism. It is stated in Hebrews 1:1-2 how God has revealed a progressive plan for the ages, steadily to humanity. But is this plan actually to be understood in the context of the Age of Reason, the Age of Law, the Age of Grace/the Church Age, the Millennial Age? Or, is it to be better understood, as is seen repeatedly throughout the Holy Scriptures, and in a great deal of Second Temple Jewish theology, as: the present evil age *and* the age or world to come?

One of the most influential resources of dispensational theology—and I did not know this until I read Hummel's book—has, of course, been the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which I have right here. The Scofield Reference Bible includes introductions, annotations, different notes. It has actually been the number one—you would never have guessed this, because I certainly did not—selling publication from the famed Oxford University Press. And the Scofield Reference Bible has influenced tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of Christian people, into believing a dispensational theology. It has also been re-released several times, with updated annotations made here and there. Of course, someone like me has to have them in his library.

Another resource common to dispensationalism is *The Companion Bible* by E.W. Bullinger. I have not looked at this for quite some time, but Bullinger was somewhat of an extremist when it came to his version of dispensationalism. Generally speaking, dispensationalists believe that the “birth of the Church” started in and around Acts chapters 2-3 with the Day of Pentecost. E.W. Bullinger actually concluded that the “birth of the Church” started much much later, namely around the end of the Book of Acts (cf. Acts 28:28). While according to customary dispensationalism, presumed Old Testament rites like the seventh-day Sabbath or the festivals were considered to only be for old Covenant Israel—this ultradispensationalism believed that even things like communion or water baptism, were not intended for the Christian Church.

Lewis Sperry Chafer was one of the major people who was behind, among others, systematizing dispensational theology, and was also critical in the establishment of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS)—right here in our backyard in the DFW Metroplex. Over the years, I have encountered many people who have taken classes at DTS, or who have taught at DTS. It is obviously not the only dispensational seminary out there. There are other seminaries and institutions, which have had some association with dispensational theology—some actually getting started out as dispensational. Hummel goes into detail regarding Fuller Theological Seminary out in Pasadena, California, and how it started out as dispensational, but now is not. Still, Dallas Theological Seminary is widely regarded as the main hub of dispensational theology, being one of the first places people normally turn to when they want a dispensationally-styled education. DTS has a reputation of being highly conservative in terms of its doctrine (certainly more conservative than an Asbury Theological Seminary where I attended.)

Dispensationalism, and DTS especially, generally has a Calvinistic or Reformed view to soteriology, being seen to promote the idea that God has predestined some to salvation and others to damnation. DTS, as well as many other dispensational institutions, would similarly be seen to promote a doctrine of eternal security, meaning that those who are the elect, those who are saved, cannot ever lose their salvation. So, in a lot of our own family's interactions with people from DTS—especially my mother and I, because we come from a Wesleyan-Arminian tradition—we have run into some conflicts. Another major theological premise seen in a great deal of, although not exclusively, dispensational theology (certainly from DTS alumni) would be cessationism. It is widely affirmed that the dynamic gifts of the Spirit ceased with the death of the Apostles and their immediate successors. Being a continuationist, I believe that the gifts of the Spirit continue (that does not mean that we should not be skeptical sometimes). But this has been one major, challenging area, we have had with people within the DTS sphere of influence.

I have a number of publications here, which have been in my library for quite some time, written at the semi-academic level, largely reflective of the perspectives which have come out of DTS from the 1950s to the 1980s. These are books which have circulated throughout tens of millions of Christian homes, and were things which my parents back in the 1980s were influenced by, as well as what extended members of our family were influenced by. You possibly are familiar with some of these, or may even have some of these on your bookshelf.

One resource which I read years ago, to just get a good feel for a dispensational eschatology, is this one: *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy* by John F. Walvoord.³ Walvoord (1910-2002) was a major professor at DTS for many years, although he has been deceased for over twenty years now (2023). He is frequently invoked as being one of the main intellectual voices and scholars behind the doctrine of pre-tribulation rapture. Indeed,

³ John F. Walvoord, *Israel In Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962); *The Church In Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964); *The Nations In Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967).

our ministry publication *The Dangers of Pre-tribulationism* cross-examines his fifty main reasons given in support of pre-trib. But this resource by John Walvoord is just one of his many books, and should give you a good idea about where he would have stood regarding some of the big picture aspects of the end-times.

Another major dispensational voice also came out of Dallas Theological Seminary, whose publications would have circulated definitely in the 1970s and 1980s. This is my copy of the *Ryrie Study Bible*,⁴ by Charles R. Ryrie, which has sold several million copies. This is much different from the *Scofield Reference Bible* or Bullinger's *Companion Bible*. The *Ryrie Study Bible* was produced more for modern people, and is quite thorough with its introductions and annotations. Flipping through the *Ryrie Study Bible* should give you a very good idea about what many people in the 1980s evangelicalism I grew up in, were expecting regarding: the pre-tribulation rapture, modern Israel, and concepts such as a Russian-Arab alliance which was going to attack Israel. Those kinds of ideas—most especially the imminent, any moment pre-tribulation rapture—are definitely seen in things like the *Ryrie Study Bible*.

Now another resource—you might actually be able to see it on my bookshelf, the white one with the navy blue cover—is *The Moody Bible Commentary*.⁵ Moody Bible Institute is also certainly a school, which was influenced by dispensational theology. It has a reputation being very conservative, and many people I knew and grew up with have gone through Moody Bible Institute—from my time at Calvary Christian School in Taylor Mill, Kentucky, to my time out here in the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex in the 1990s, and even until today. Many people, who had certainly attended classes or got a degree through Moody or DTS, had a huge amount of influence in the 1950s through the 1980s, on what we would regard as more of an academic or intellectual development of dispensationalism.

What we are possibly, or probably more influenced by—even though I do suspect that many of you have been influenced by a *Ryrie Study Bible* (and that is not to say we have to disagree with everything in it)—were some of the popular versions of dispensationalism which came out in the late 1960s and 1970s. For many people, resources of those like Walvoord, Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, and other dispensationalists, who largely came out of a Dallas Theological Seminary (but not exclusively), were too technical and unaccessible. Many were more likely to be influenced by the book *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsay, originally released in 1970. My own mother took a Sunday school class through this book in the early 1980s. It was released multiple times, having sold tens of millions of copies. While not necessarily putting any dates on the possible return of the Messiah, this book has now been around for over 55 years, and it has had a huge influence on popular dispensationalism.

Later, a figure like Tim LaHaye and his avid promotion of the pre-tribulation rapture, came on the scene. Right here—and I have had this now for over twenty years—is my copy of

⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, ed., *The Ryrie Study Bible*, NASB (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978).

⁵ Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, gen. eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).

the *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*.⁶ And of course, I would be remiss if I did not point out that right in the middle of this Bible, there is a big giant fold out Tribulation chart right. Given the fact that I am a Bible teacher, I have to have this in my resource library. Tim LaHaye, along with Jerry Jenkins, was co-author of the popular fiction series, *Left Behind*. Many Millennials grew up reading these books in their church youth groups, being primed to eagerly anticipate the pre-tribulation rapture.

Many Baby Boomers, involved in different church studies and prophecy seminars, were affected by the views of something like The Pre-Trib Research Institute. Some of you all may be familiar with the 1970s series of low budget films *Thief in the Night*, and their song “I Wish We'd All Been Ready.” I remember having to watch that in seventh grade with my Bible class. I distinctly remember the vans labeled as UNITE: United Nations Imperium of Total Emergency. The *Thief in the Night* low budget films contributed to a lot of the rapture culture of the 1970s and 1980s, mainly reading current events into the Holy Scriptures. My own late father even had a copy of the film *Thief in the Night*, so this is something which affected everyone, and with it a great deal of pre-trib rapture date setting.

How were many affected by these things? Many Millennials can attest how their parents were obsessed with the end-times on various levels. *You need to pay attention to what's going on in Israel. See what's going on in Europe—you know, that's the ten nation confederacy (Daniel 7:7)—the E.E.C. See what's happening in the Soviet Union. See what's happening in the Middle East.* This was all of the unbridled speculation, soft date setting, and in particular the anticipation that something big was going to happen at the end of the Twentieth Century, around the Year 2000.

I have just covered: early dispensationalism of the Nineteenth Century (Darby, Scofield, Bullinger, Chafer), and then more the academic dispensationalism the 1950s through the 1980s (Walvoord, Ryrie, Pentecost), and then popular dispensationalism (Lindsay, LaHaye). At the same time much of dispensationalism was influencing a great deal of evangelicalism, there was also an emerging Messianic Jewish movement the 1960s and the 1970s. And one of the things which early Messianic Judaism needed was Christian allies. It needed not just Christian allies who would pray for Israel and support the Jewish people. It needed more than just those who would be good Christian Zionists, and recognize that God was not finished with Israel. Messianic Judaism specifically needed Christian allies with economic resources. And, throughout a great deal of the development of the modern Messianic Jewish movement, much of it, although not exclusively, has indeed been funded by dispensational dollars.

We know of a few Messianic Jewish pioneers who got near full ride scholarships to Dallas Theological Seminary. (I do not think it was entirely free, but almost free.) This involved some of the major Messianic Jewish pioneers, like Zola Levitt, who influenced my late father into understanding Jesus and the feasts. When we moved to Dallas the first time in 1994, my mother got remarried, and it was a Zola Levitt tour to Israel which influenced the new couple,

⁶ Tim LaHaye, ed., *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, KJV (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000).

Mark and Margaret Huey, to enter into the Messianic movement. And of course, where did Zola Levitt get some of his training? DTS. He was definitely a pre-tribulationist!

Another major theological voice in the Messianic Jewish sphere of influence—by the way these are the names mentioned in Hummel's book *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism*—is Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Here is one of his books, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. Fruchtenbaum is also a dispensationalist. He believes that the Torah of Moses has been abolished, and he is looking for the pre-tribulation rapture. Dispensationalism has had an influence on the development of the modern Messianic movement! I have certainly gleaned valuable things from Fruchtenbaum. He has got some very good and solid defenses of the Messiahship of Yeshua. But you indeed have to know how dispensationalism has had a sizable impact on Messianic thought and culture.

The main thing we are having to contend with today in the year 2023, almost 2024—especially as we contemplate what is happening right now in the Middle East, which we can definitely classify in the general category of wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6)—is to sort through how people are going to talk people. People are going to wonder what is going to result from all of this. Whether we have been in evangelicalism, the Messianic movement, or even if we have gone back and forth between these communities—we have been affected by popular dispensationalism or populist dispensationalism, and the culture it has helped see emerge through popular media.

Hummel's book goes into detail describing how Hal Lindsay's *Late Great Planet Earth* went from tens of millions of copies, to a media empire, involving: radio, television, tours to Israel, a show where he would talk about current events, and how he believed they would fit into prophecy. Lindsay would do some soft date setting, meaning that while Believers could not know the day or the hour, he would claim that this might be the season of the return of Jesus.

Of course, many of you are familiar with how in the mid-1990s the series of *Left Behind* prophecy novels by Tim LaHaye was released, and they got a huge amount of circulation not just among Believers but also non-Believers. So much of it was focusing the attention of people on how something big, prophetically, was going to happen around the Year 2000 and the turn of the the Millennium. Many indeed thought that Y2K, the computer bug, could be the rapture be taking place. And, many people in the mid-to-late 1990s (our family was not immune) got caught up in prophecy predictions around the turn of the Millennium.

I think it is very difficult even today (in 2023, almost 2024) for many to break out of the "I'm going to read current events into the Holy Scriptures" mindset. Many are not as restrained as they ought to be! One resource which I got a copy of back in 1998, was this book: *The AntiChrist and a Cup of Tea* by Tim Cohen. It promotes the idea, as is seen on his cover, that Prince Charles of Wales is the antichrist/antimesiah. (And I understand that a new edition of this book is planned to come out in the future, because now of course he is King Charles III.) Charles was not the only person targeted as a possible antichrist figure, but this kind of culture of reading current events into the Scriptures—certainly making soft predictions for

the return of the Messiah, or for other things—is directly influenced by dispensationalism. Even though it may be seen how many have abandoned the pre-tribulation rapture, the culture of wanting to predict matters and have the proverbial “edge,” still too often persists. Our family specifically remembers the predictions of Monte Judah, who foretold that in mid-March 1997, the Abomination of Desolation was to take place, on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It has been almost 27 years (2023) now, since that false prophecy came and went.

This whole culture of reading current events into the Bible, and with it putting out soft dates (or maybe even hard dates), came from a great deal of the popular dispensationalism in the Twentieth Century. Our family has witnessed various persons come out with various predictions, and even stress to “treat me as a false prophet if those things don’t come to pass”—but then when their predictions fail, they continue to make more of them. We have to come to a reckoning with all of this, and with the religious culture which tolerates unwarranted end-time speculation. Many sectors of the Messianic community, which understandably focus on matters in Israel and the Middle East, are saturated with a great deal of fear and paranoia. This has affected our overall theology, and how the Messianic movement is under-developed in too many critical areas. Dispensationalism affects how we look at what is happening in Israel today, and it is going to affect some of the decisions we make.

I believe we are living in the Last Days, and I believe that we are getting closer to Yeshua's return. But I believe we need to do so in a responsible way, which performs critical work for God's Kingdom, and which heralds the return of the King.

One of the things which Hummel goes into detail describing in his book *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism*, is how dispensationalism kind of hit a fallout in the 2000s and into the 2010s. Some of this was the result of dispensationalism having become a big business through people like Hal Lindsay, the *Left Behind* novels, etc. There were also some very serious theological challenges issued to dispensationalism, such as: *Why are you compartmentalizing the Bible, the Old Testament and New Testament, Israel and “the Church”? Do you not know how some major ethical dilemmas have come as a result of Christians not having a firm grounding in the moral principles of the Old Testament? This idea of dispensational “free grace” has resulted in a huge amount of sin!* Approach them as you will, but these are some of the (legitimate) criticisms of dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism has also lost considerable support for other reasons. Many from the Millennial generation, who grew up in dispensational, pre-tribulation rapture environments, did not just get a theological package, mainly in conservative America, of reading the Bible as split between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church, and an any-moment rapture. You also got Christian Zionism, because you have to support Israel, because Israel has an important role to play in the end-times, and God is not finished with Israel. And on top of that, you also frequently got a great deal of fundamentalism, very hyper-literal readings of Holy Scripture which were not open to for questioning. You definitely got Young Earth Creationism, because some of the early supporters of dispensationalism supported Young Earth (like Henry Morris of the Creation Research Institute). You also got

complementarianism, meaning that men lead the family, with the husband being the sole leader of the family with the wife abiding by all of his decisions.

You even got, along with those matters, that if you are a true born again Christian, if you are indeed loyal to Jesus, then you will be Republican and you will support the policies of the Republican Party. The main issue you had to be one-hundred percent agreed on, was of course, abortion. There can be no abortions, with no exceptions at all, perhaps even to save the life of the mother, or incidents of rape or incest.

Much of this composed the conservative, dispensational package, many Millennials (myself included) were expected to abide by and not question in any way.

Well, that package of dispensationalism, to divide the Bible between Israel and “the Church,” an any-moment pre-tribulation rapture, Christian Zionism and unfeigned support for the State of Israel, Young Earth Creationism, complementarianism, and support for the Republican Party—guess what? In the 2000s to the 2010s, that was all substantially rejected by Millennials. *People like myself rejected some of it, retooling our approach in other areas.* Many of my peers broke out of this “conservative package” as a direct consequence of the 2003 Iraq War, and a failure to find any weapons of mass destruction. They concluded that the conservative establishment, the Christian establishment, lied to them.

I have relatives in my family who had this conservative, package deal sold to them as young adults—and now today they would be considered Woke, Ex-vangelical, and deconstructing.

Looking at my own theological development, I am someone who dismissed with dispensationalism quite a long time ago, and became a post-tribulationist upon receiving the Lord into my life in September of 1995. I would consider myself a Zionist, as I do support the State of Israel. I absolutely believe it has a Biblical right to exist, but I do not believe that we are supposed to support Israel solely on the basis of providing the proverbial “fuse for the end-times.” We are supposed to support Israel because God supports Israel; He has promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the nexus of what God is doing on this planet is Israel. And, as we stress in the Messianic community, non-Jewish Believers are to look at themselves as Ruths—meaning that it is not just about “your God will be my God,” but “where you are buried I will be buried” (cf. Ruth 1:16, 17).

To be sure, though, I have definitely moved beyond a fundamentalist, hyper-literal reading of Holy Scripture. I would still be considered to have a small “c” conservative reading of Holy Scripture, certainly consistent with evangelicalism—but not necessarily some of the hyper-literal approaches dispensationalism is known for attracting. These may not always come from Dallas Theological Seminary or Moody Bible Institute and others, but can definitely come from those who are dispensational.

In contrast to those who espouse a Young Earth, I believe in an open discussion regarding Genesis 1-11, because that is what Millennials actually require today. If we do not believe one’s approach to early Genesis is a salvation issue, then we should be able to discuss different points of view. The Jewish community, which is overwhelmingly liberal, widely

believes that God used evolution to bring about the human race. I myself do not believe in evolution, but we should not make it a matter of division the way those in the dispensational sphere often do.

I am definitely not a complementarian, and instead strongly identify as an egalitarian. I believe that at Creation, man and woman were equal, that their equality lost via the Fall, and that via the work of the Messiah on the tree the equality of men and women has been restored. Restrictive instructions like 1 Timothy 2 have to be understood for what they meant concerning the false teaching in Ephesus Timothy had to clear up; they are not universal for all times and settings.

As far as it concerns Republican or GOP politics, I have actually gone back and forth politically over the years. I have been a registered Republican, I have been a registered Democrat (although some of that has been to vote in that particular party's primary). I have never voted Democrat in a major national election, or even a major state election. I have voted Republican in both national and state elections. But I have voted, in piecemeal, at times, for Democrats at the very local level. And, it has usually been because I know the person, and they are old, conservative Democrats (an endangered species now).

Quite frequently, this “conservative package” as one of the major fruits of dispensationalism—and is thoroughly documented by Daniel Hummel—is something rejected by Millennials. It is also widely something rejected by Generation-Z.

Having differing points of view, is one of the major generational challenges which affects the Messianic community, every bit as much as affects evangelicalism. There is one major thing, which we do have to take into account—especially as we reckon with dispensationalism, and in particular popular dispensationalism. This involves people, not only pushing an imminent pre-trib rapture, but also trying to predict the time of the pre-tribulation rapture, or perhaps even not the pre-tribulation rapture at all—**but promoting a religious and spiritual culture of hyper-compartmentalizing the Bible, and putting together their own timelines of the Last Days.** *These are timelines which almost always fail to deliver the return of the Messiah.* All of us have been affected by this, and there is, I think, a period of reckoning soon coming, where we are going to have to acknowledge some of the negative influence of dispensationalism, even on contemporary Messianic culture.

I do not believe that the answer to dispensationalism means that we have to abandon a pre-millennial eschatology, meaning the Messiah returns before His thousand-year reign on Earth. I do not believe we have to embrace a post-millennial or amillennial eschatology, which are both rooted in supersessionism or replacement theology—and where the world is going to get better, with it all being “Christianized.” *The Christian Church is then going to reign, and it is going to hand over the keys to Jesus.* I believe we can still be pre-millennial, because a pre-millennialism has the Messiah returning to Jerusalem, He restores Israel, and we see the prophecies of the Tanach or Old Testament involving a literal return of descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the Holy Land take place.

I do think we are going to have to shift backwards, a little bit, to more of what would be considered historical pre-millennialism. Historical pre-millennialism, before the rise of dispensational pre-millennialism and the imminent pre-trib rapture, actually advocated that God's people were going to go through difficulty leading up to the return of the Messiah. It held out the hope of a restoration of Jewish people to the Holy Land. Now, it may have had some interpretations of different numbers or days or years—depending on what the passage was in Daniel, Ezekiel, or Revelation. It may have looked at them as more “big picture” than limited—but those are things which require further study and investigation. But having an orientation which is more historically pre-millennial, will doubtlessly aid us better in the future, than dispensationalism has.

Indeed, one of the things which I think, more than anything else is part of the negative legacy of dispensationalism, is actually people putting together their pre-packaged end-time charts. *Here, I have a chart from the Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible.* This is one of the many thousands which have been produced. Many people make it their life's end to actually calculate the year of the Messiah's return, thinking that they can micromanage the end-times.

Many well-meaning people fail to consider how the prophetic texts of both the Tanach and Apostolic Writings, are not two-dimensional. They are often three-dimensional or four-dimensional, multi-dimensional. God is trying to communicate some of the most significant aspects of human history, in unique language, and it is arrogant of any of us to think that we can micromanage them and compartmentalize them. Look at some of the Tribulation charts out there, and how the seals, trumpets, and vials/bowls are all laid out and arranged. *We think we can figure this all out, when in actuality we do not know. All we can do is put possibilities out there.* If we discuss the end-times, then we need to do so with humility, and with the recognition that pending new or more information, we may have not gotten it all accurate.

One of the things which continues to hit me about much of the whole end-time matter, is how within Second Temple Judaism, there were specific expectations of what the Messiah was going to do. The Messiah was going to be a political or revolutionary figure, overthrowing the Romans, and reestablishing the throne of David. Of course, Yeshua of Nazareth came on the scene, and He was executed by the very people He was expected to overthrow. Yet, because of Yeshua's resurrection from the dead, various Messianic prophecy expectations had to be recalibrated and altered, and even needed to be significantly reviewed in many cases. Many Messianic prophecy expectations from the Tanach, did indeed fit Yeshua, but not in the way many were anticipating.

So, as it concerns the Second Coming, how many of us, because of some of the legacy of dispensationalism—in particular how various ideas have been presented ideas from these prophecy charts, which may not be entirely correct or accurate—are going to have to review, reevaluate, and change some things? *How many people have you possibly encountered, who have made presumptuous claims about the return of the Messiah, the Abomination of Desolation, or the rise of the antimessiah/antichrist? **How many people have put a chart together, spoken presumptuously, and have let their speculation on the end-times get way out of hand?***