



Revised History

The Church Neutralized—Part Two

By Al Benson October 28, 2020

In the area of the neutralization of the Christian Church one of the greatest neutralizers has been the theology of what we call dispensationalism as promoted in the *Scofield Reference Bible*. This theology has reduced much of the church to doing little more than promoting an endless exposition of John 3:16, no matter what the sermon topic is listed as in your Sunday morning church bulletin.

I have been in churches like this. No matter what the church bulletin says it will be about the sermon almost always ends up as an exposition of John 3:16 with an alter call and twenty eight verses of “Just As I Am” to close out the service. After all, to preach on anything else might get us into dirty politics and we want to avoid that like the plague so we just stick to John 3:16 and you will never have to worry. This is the sad legacy that dispensationalism has left us—this and how everything centers around the promotion of national Israel to the exclusion of the Christian Church which is, in the final analysis, really only “Plan B” with national Israel being Plan A.

Many will be surprised to learn the dispensational theology is a fairly new occurrence in church history. You never saw it much before the 1820s. Biblical commentaries in the 1850s that I have seen never mentioned some of the material you see in the Scofield Reference Bible.

Rev. Duane Garner, a pastor in North Carolina, wrote about some of this several years ago now for a lecture. He wrote: “Some historians trace it (dispensationalism) to the visions of a young Scottish woman named Margaret McDonald, a member of the Plymouth Brethren Church whose trances revealed to her that the return of Christ would be in two distinct stages. She dreamed that the believer would be caught up with the Lord in the air preceding the days of the antichrist and before a final revelation of Christ at the end of the age. Others trace this view directly to Ms. McDonald’s pastor, J. N. Darby, who left the Church of England to join the Scottish Plymouth Brethren in 1827. Darby first made use of the two-stage return of Christ in his sermons in 1830 and continued to develop the idea throughout his ministry...Darby can rightly be considered to be the father of dispensationalism for he was the first in the history of Christianity to write and preach using the dispensational hermeneutic.”

Rev. Garner also informed us that, in 1956, a former president of the American Baptist Association, Albert Garner (no relation) admitted that the “then popular views concerning the rapture and the resurrection of the dead were not more than fifty years old.” So this was, indeed, a new doctrine, even though most of its adherents do not consider it so. Most people in this country got it from the Scofield Bible, first published in 1909

John Nelson Darby made several trips to this country and he made several trips across the Great Plains on the new Union Pacific Railway, something most Americans couldn’t afford. Robert L. Pierce, author of the book *The Rapture Cult* commented on this and noted: “Darby’s unusual mobility for his day and time, and his seeming lack of financial problems.” Most ministers in that day and time were just not all that wealthy, so if Darby had no apparent financial problems running all around this country, then who financed him?

There are a number of things that the dispensationalists claim are future events (which puts them in a context of being subjects for today's "prophecy conferences"). Christians adhering to the dispensational viewpoint spend much time dealing with these "end times" subjects and thereby mostly ignoring what goes on in the world around them now. Actually, most of those "end times" things they think are in the future have already happened.

In his book *He Shall Have Dominion* Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. has noted, on page 169 "That Matthew 24:4-33 *en toto* has been fulfilled seems quite obvious on the two following bases. First, its introductory *context* strongly suggests it. In Matthew 23, Jesus sorely rebukes the 'scribes and Pharisees' *of his own day* (Matt. 23:2ff), urging *them* finally to 'fill up then the measure of your fathers' who killed the prophets (23:31-32). Christ says that they are a 'generation' of vipers (23:33) that will persecute and slay His disciples (23:34). He notes that upon *them* will come all the righteous blood shed on the earth (23:35). He then dogmatically asserts: 'Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon *this generation*' (23:36).'...In 23:36, He dogmatically asserts *all* these things shall come upon this generation. He closes the relevant portion of the prophecy by repetition of the time frame: Matthew 24:34 says, 'Verily I say unto you, *this* generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled.' And just forty years later Jerusalem was destroyed! Contextually the 'this generation' of Matthew 24:34 *must* speak of the same idea as that of Matthew 23:36."

They are history, not present-day prophecy about our future. The Christian Church has been sold a bill of goods designed to keep them concentrated on history that has been reinterpreted as future prophecy. All this keeps their minds off current events while they hope for a secret, imminent "rapture" to get them out of the current world mess so they won't have to deal with any of it. The real truth may just be that the Lord wants them to deal with it not to try to run away from it.

To be continued.