



It comes as a surprise to some to learn that not all Protestants apply the same principles of Biblical interpretation (Hermeneutics).

THE RESULT

Based on these different approaches the outcome of doctrine differ.

BRIEF HISTORY

The Catholic (universal) Church dominated 12 centuries of church history 314ad—1500AD. Catholics believe that they alone represent the continuation of the church on earth and rule in the place of Christ. The Catholic popes (one who rules as Christ on earth) persecuted and often executed any dissenting voice. The Dark Ages of Christian History portray corruption and the abuse of power. Only the priests could interpret Scripture which led to the common people being barred from access to Biblical Truth. The supreme authority of the pope was the iron fist that controlled monarchs and governments.

Martin Luther, a German Catholic scholar, born in 1483 shook the Catholic establishment and opposed the papacy exposing fake teaching of the church. He died in 1546 at the age of 63. His bold stand led to the protestant reformation (protestant means protestor).

Contemporaries of Luther and those that followed included Calvin, Zwingli and a host of protestors. German theologians in Europe promoted nationalism (The people of a nation being God’s chosen). The Dutch, Scots, English embraced reformed doctrine and nationalism. Note that the South African Dutch Reformed Church taught nationalism (Die Volk), the people as God’s elect. German theology gave birth to white supremacy, Calvinism and Nazism—a super race.

Comparison of Theological Tenets

<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Dispensational</u>
• God has one people: OT and NT compose the body of Christ	• God has two people: Israel in OT and the Church in NT
• God has one plan: throughout all the OT and NT ages	• God has two separate plans: one for Israel; another for the Church
• Salvation: one plan of grace throughout history since the fall	• Salvation: early view had two plans & modern view is by faith in Christ
• Eternity: all who make up the body of Christ will be together in one place in His presence	• Eternity: Church rules w/ Christ in the New Jerusalem; while Israel is head of the nations
• The Church: includes all redeemed people since the fall	• OT saints not in the body of Christ
• Christ: offered a spiritual kingdom and not an earthly one	• Christ: offered real kingdom to Jews; kingdom postponed until Millennium

TULIP ACRONYM

The following acronym, called **TULIP** is a brief summary of reformed doctrine:

- T** **TOTAL DEPRAVITY**
Man is so depraved he cannot be saved.
- U** **UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION**
Only God can elect those who he chooses to be saved.
- L** **LIMITED ATONEMENT**
Jesus atonement was not for sinners, only those who God elected.
- I** **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**
Because God predestined the righteous they cannot resist His favour.
- P** **PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**
Those whom God elects will persevere to the end.

METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

Reformed or covenant churches use the “allegory” method of Bible interpretation. Israel is replaced with Christianity and the Scriptures are allegorised to mean what they taught (Reformed Theologians).

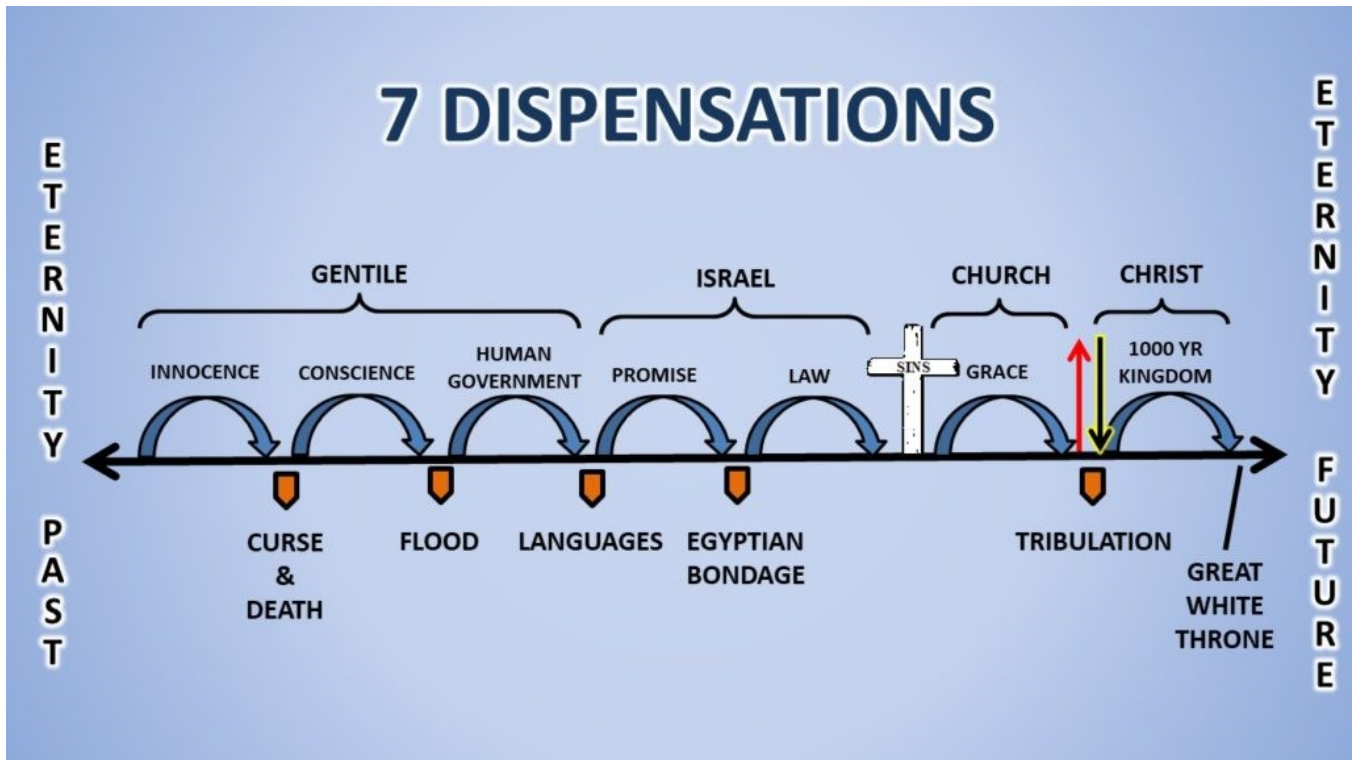
REFORMED TRADITION

In essence (RT) teaches the covenant of works (Old Testament) and the covenant of Grace (New Testament). The church replaces Israel and, therefore, can claim Israel’s inheritance of the Abrahamic blessings. The church is God’s elect because Israel, as God’s elect, rejected the blessing in Christ. This led to anti-semiticism. Hitler could declare that “we the German Volk are God’s chosen people. We are the Aryans (super race) and the Jews murderers of Christ.” The Jews were seen as sub-human. Reformed theology is also called Federal Theology, which combines the church with the state to rule over a nation.

SUMMARY

Accordingly, some have (reasonably) concluded that Covenant Theology takes the position that the church has either replaced or superseded ethnic Israel. Promises in the Bible made to ethnic Israel—people connected by blood to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—covenant theologians consider as metaphorically fulfilled in the Church, as “Israel” and the Church is all one “people of God,” a group that may or may not include people of Jewish ancestry, depending on the context. Unlike dispensationalists, covenant theologians deny any connection between ethnic Israel and the current or future land of Israel: “The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the ‘Holy Land’ cannot be supported by Scripture”, they say.

Many more things could be said regarding Covenant Theology, but the important thing to keep in mind is that Covenant Theology is an interpretive grid for understanding the Scriptures. As we have seen, it is not the only way to interpret Scripture. Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism have many differences, and sometimes lead to opposite conclusions regarding certain secondary doctrines, but both adhere to the essentials of the Christian faith: salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone, and to God alone be the glory!



CRUCIAL POINTS

A CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY)

Covenant doctrine believes the church (Christianity) consists of all who are chosen by God and replaces Israel. The covenant of redemption is believed to be an agreement within the Trinity to elect, atone for, and save a chosen group of individuals. Though not explicitly stated in Scripture, the eternal nature of salvation's plan is affirmed, with Jesus frequently referencing His task as carrying out the Father's will. The covenant of works considered the first covenant in redemptive history, was established when God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden and outlined the consequences of obedience and disobedience. This covenant reflects a suzerain-vassal relationship, with blessings promised for obedience and punishment for disobedience (Suzerain-monarchs/rulership), vassal (subjects).

B FUTURE (ESCHATOLOGY)

Covenant teaching claims that the Kingdom of God on earth is the church. The Book of Revelation is not futuristic, but an overview of the past (preterism).

C SALVATION (SOTERIOLOGY)

God's elect are those God has chosen from the beginning and therefore, the Blood of Christ was shed for the elect only.

BIBLICAL RESPONSE

- A The covenant view is flawed because the following test declares that God has not cast away Israel **Romans 11:1-7 & Romans 11:25-26** “ *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.*”
- B The Old Testament promises to Israel’s restoration and Peter’s declaration in **Acts 3:19-21** “*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets,*” confirms that God will restore Israel in their own land:
Jeremiah 30:2-3, Ezekiel 37:11-12, Zechariah 8:23 and Zechariah 12:10.
- C In salvation we recognise God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. We need faith to believe and faith comes by hearing God’s Word, **Romans 10:17** “*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*”

Salvation comes to all who call on His name, **Romans 10:13 and Ephesians 1:13.**

We are chosen in Christ. Jesus is God’s agent of election. If we are in Him by faith we are God’s elect.

