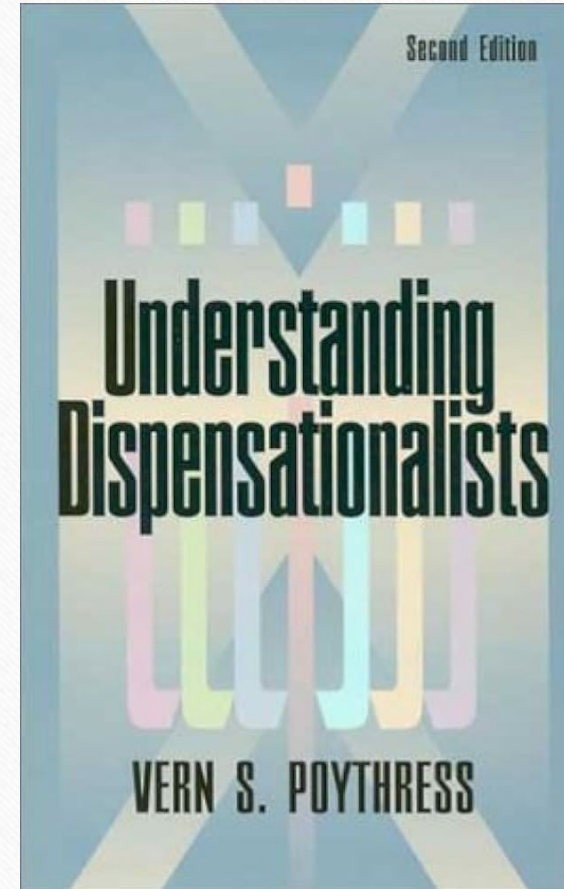


*UNDERSTANDING
DISPENSATIONALISTS*

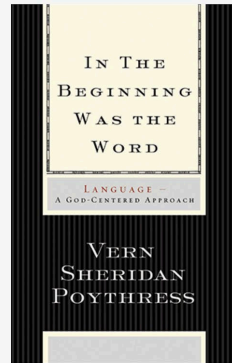
By Vern S. Poythress

Westminster Book of the Month
March 2024
G. Rush Hill

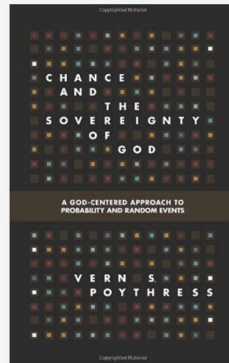


Poythress, Vern S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd Ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1994. 137 pages.

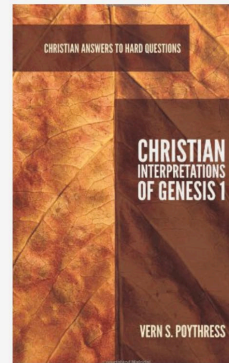
FREE EBOOKS BY VERN POYTHRESS



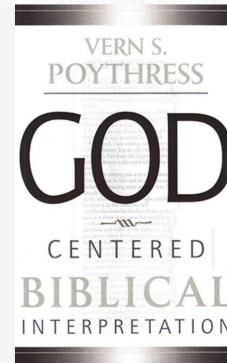
IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD



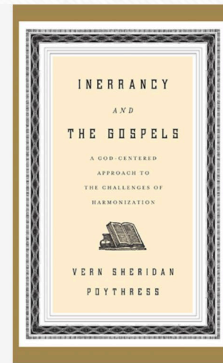
CHANCE AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD



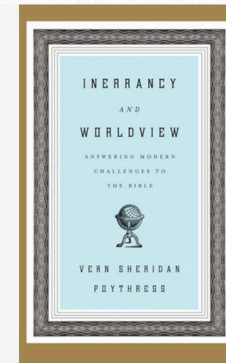
CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 1



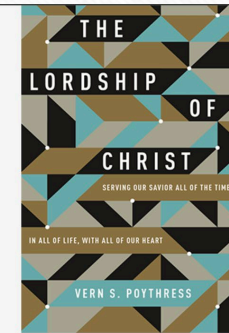
GOD-CENTERED BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION



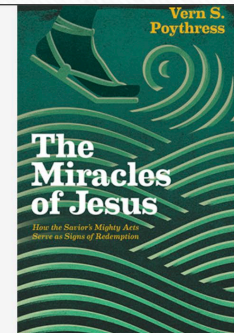
INERRANCY AND THE GOSPELS



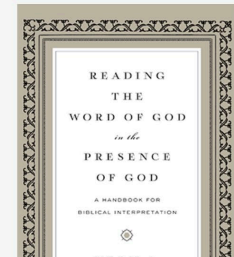
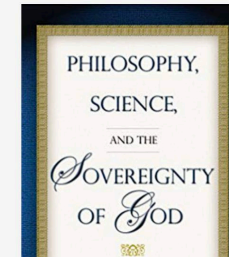
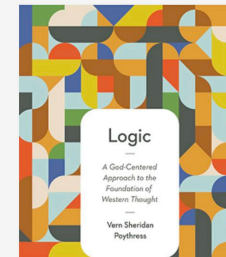
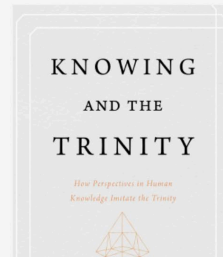
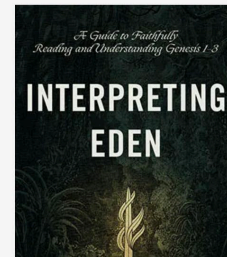
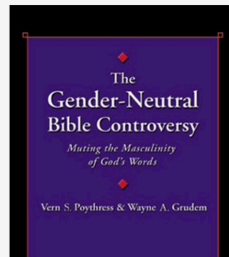
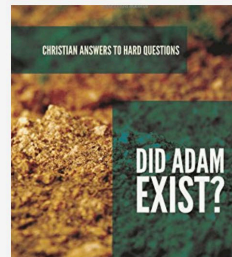
INERRANCY AND WORLDVIEW



THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST: SERVING OUR SAVIOR ALL OF THE TIME IN ALL OF LIFE WITH ALL OF OUR HEART



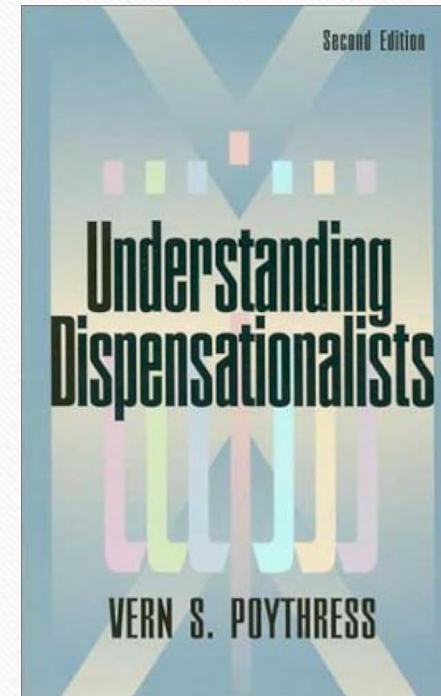
THE MIRACLES OF JESUS: HOW THE SAVIOR'S MIGHTY ACTS SERVE AS SIGNS OF REDEMPTION



frame-poythress.org/ebooks/

UNDERSTANDING DISPENSATIONALISTS

“Numerous books have been written in an attempt to show that dispensationalism is either right or wrong. Those books have their place. The Bibliography is a sampling of them. In this book, however, I intend to take a different approach, exploring ways that can be found to have profitable dialogue and to advance our understanding” (p.7).



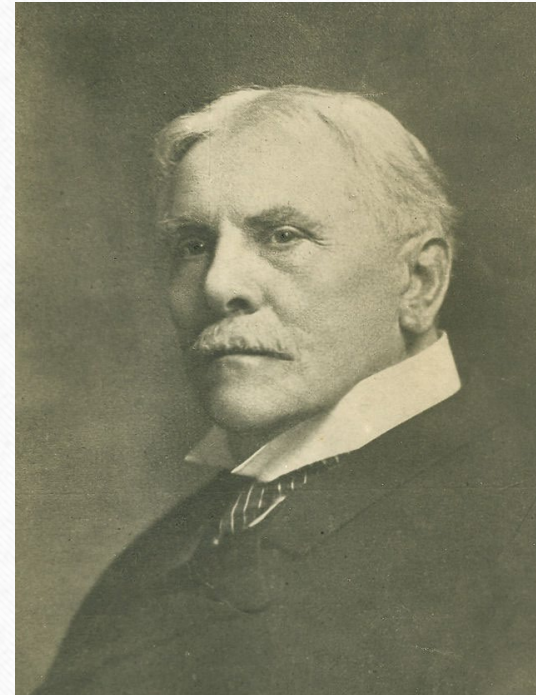
MUTUAL CHARITY

“In the dispute between dispensationalism and covenant theology, both sides cannot be right. It might be that one position is right and the other wrong. Or it might be that one position is mostly right but still has something to learn from the opposing position. So it is important to seriously listen to more than one point of view to ensure that some significant truths have not been overlooked. If, after our investigation, we concluded that people in one position are basically mistaken, that still does not mean that every aspect or concern of their theology is in error” (p.7).



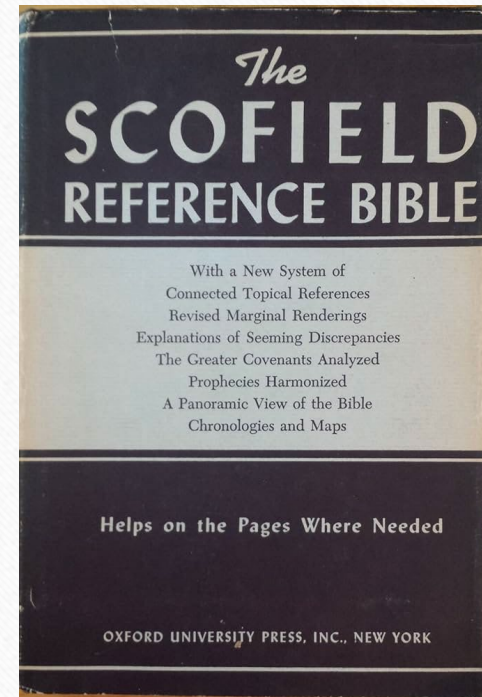
WHAT IS DISPENSATIONALISM?

- *Definition:* Dispensationalism is a system of Christian theology which maintains a sharp distinction at every point between Israel and the church.
- Developed by John Nelson Darby; propagated by C. I. Scofield
- *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 1st Ed. 1909
- Dr Poythress outlines four pillars of Scofield Dispensationalism beginning on p.21.



FIRST PILLAR: INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

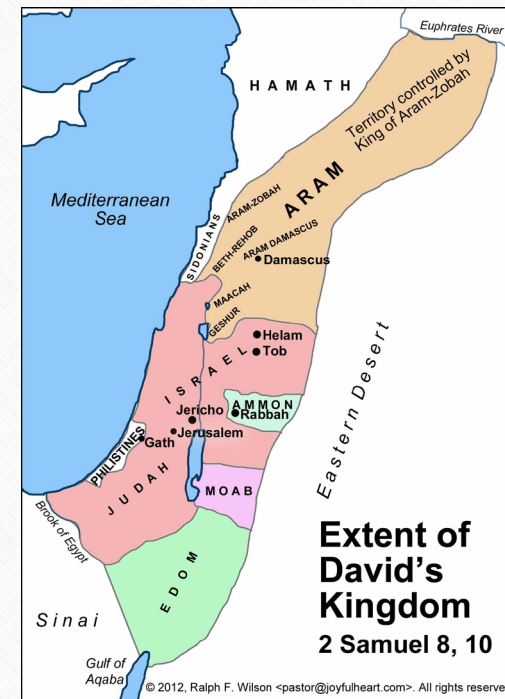
“Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation. This means interpretation which gives every word the same meaning it would have in *normal* usage, whether employed in writing, speaking, or thinking” (p.87, quoted from Ryrie).



FIRST PILLAR: EXAMPLES

Israel = ???

- (1) OT, ethnic, theocratic kingdom of Israel;
- (2) the land of Israel;
- (3) the patriarch Jacob, later Israel.



FIRST PILLAR: EXAMPLES

“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day” (Ex. 20:11).

- Six days = ???

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
light	sea/ sky	land plants
Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
sun moon stars	fish birds	animals humans

FIRST PILLAR: CASE STUDY

*In that day,
“A pleasant vineyard, sing of it!
3 I, the LORD, am its keeper;
every moment I water it.
Lest anyone punish it,
I keep it night and day;
4 I have no wrath.
Would that I had thorns and briers to battle!
I would march against them,
I would burn them up together.
5 Or let them lay hold of my protection,
let them make peace with me,
let them make peace with me.”*



FIRST PILLAR: CASE STUDY

*Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.*



FIRST PILLAR: CASE STUDY

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. *For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel ...* (Rom. 9:6-7).

SECOND PILLAR: ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

“The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinctive purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved” (p.22).



ISRAEL



THE
CHURCH

SECOND PILLAR: ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David (2 Sam. 7:16-17).

For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11).

SECOND PILLAR: ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

“No dispensationalist has shown a way to maneuver around the fundamental dilemma: the one way of salvation is through union with Christ. Union with Christ leads to full enjoyment of all blessings, whether we are Jews or Gentiles. The future never undoes what Christ has accomplished ...”
(p.137).



ISRAEL

THE
CHURCH

THIRD PILLAR: DISPENSATIONS

“A third point of distinctiveness is the precise scheme for dividing the history of the world into epochs or dispensations” (p.22).

ADAM >> FALL >> NOAH >> ABRAHAM >> MOSES >> DAVID >> EXILE >>
CHRIST >> APOSTLES >> NT CHURCH

THIRD PILLAR: DISPENSATIONS

“A third point of distinctiveness is the precise scheme for dividing the history of the world into epochs or dispensations” (p.22).

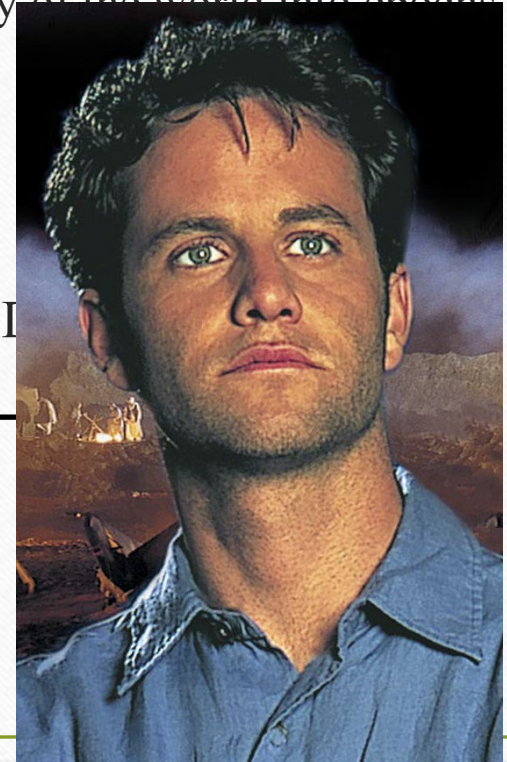
ADAM || NOAH || ABRAHAM || MOSES || DAVID || EXILE ||
CHRIST || APOSTLES || NT CHURCH

THIRD PILLAR: DISPENSATIONS

“A third point of distinctiveness is the precise scheme for dividing the history of the world into epochs or dispensations” (p.22).

ADAM || NOAH || ABRAHAM || MOSES || DAVID

CHRIST || APOSTLES || NT CHURCH



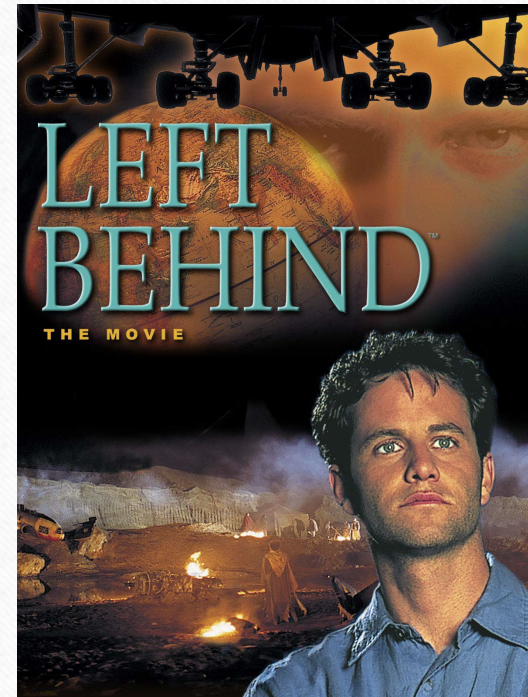
THIRD PILLAR: DISPENSATIONS

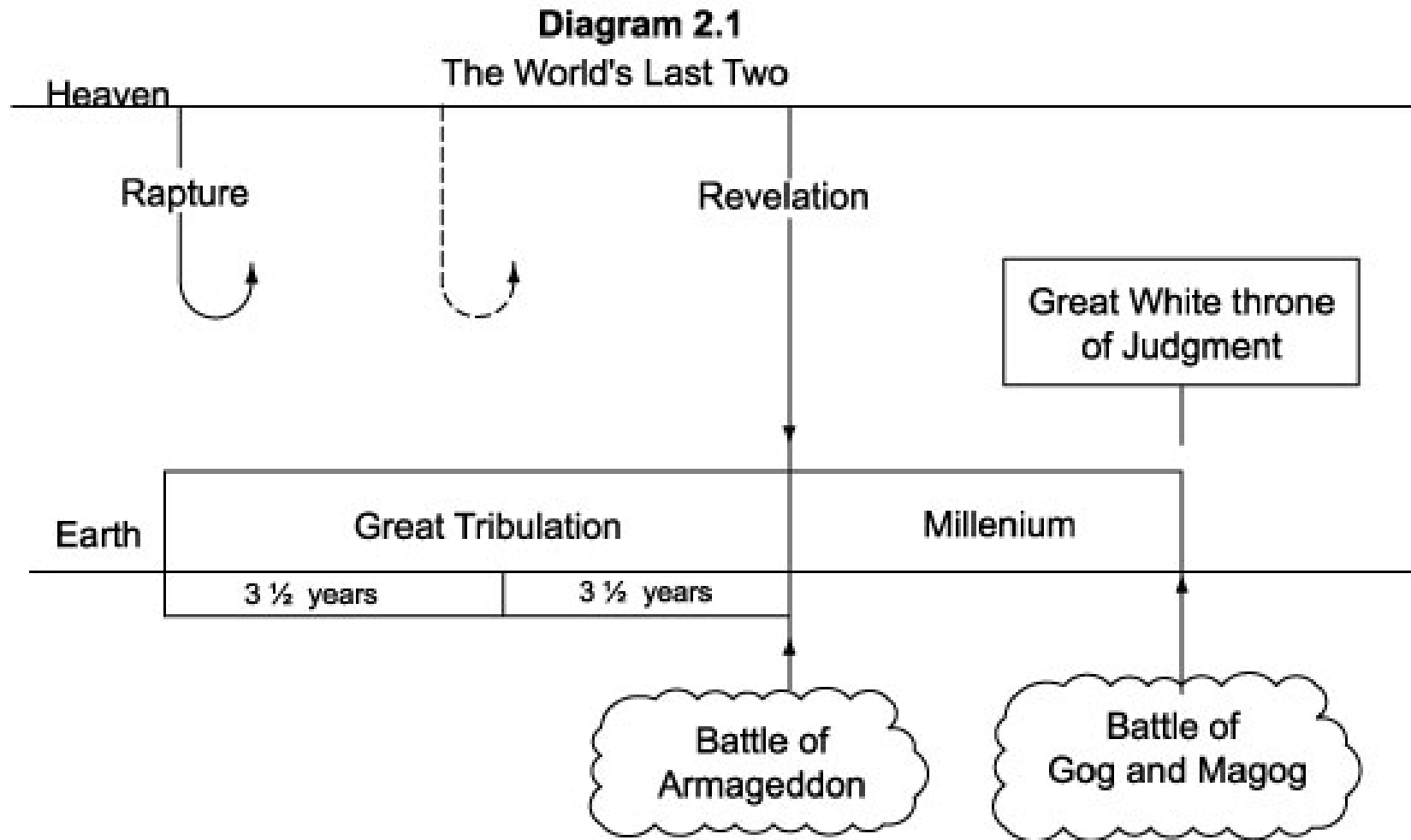
Westminster Confession of Faith, 7-5:

[The covenant of grace] was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old testament.

FOURTH PILLAR: THE RAPTURE

“A fourth and final point of distinctiveness is the belief in a pretribulational rapture ... Though this is one of the best-known aspects of popular dispensationalism, it is not as foundational as the other distinctives. It is simply a product of the other distinctives. Nevertheless, it is an important product. Scofield maintains that the church and Israel have distinct, parallel destinies” (p.22).





(dotted line shows the view of a midtribulational rapture)

From Jensen Bible Study Charts by Irving L. Jensen. Copyright 1976, 1980 Moody Press. Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Used by permission.

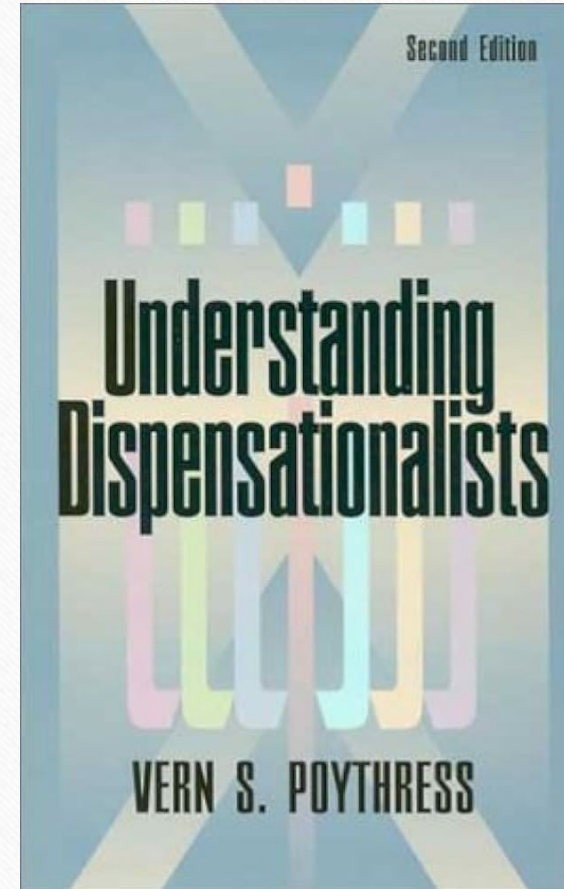
WCF: of the LAST THINGS

1. God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

2. The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

WCF: of the LAST THINGS

3. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.



Poythress, Vern S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd Ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1994. 137 pages.