

Intro:

BT = the “big picture” part of the hermeneutical circle; driven by *synthesis*, rather than analysis

Sometimes refers to examining themes of one Bible book or of one biblical author (e.g. “a Biblical Theology of the book of James”; “a BT of the Pauline Epistles”). Might even get a BT of OT or NT.

However, one has to assume the dual authorship nature of Scripture to attempt a Biblical Theology of the entire Bible → the focus of our attention in this lesson

Without that assumption, one simply cannot account for the **combination of unity and diversity** found across the whole Bible. (66 books by ~40 authors across ~1500 years). Therefore, it’s only been in recent decades we’ve seen significant scholarly attempts at whole-Bible biblical theology.

In other words: “How do we view all of Scripture in light of itself?” → Theological hermeneutics

Another relevant question: “Where does this particular passage fit in the storyline of Scripture?”

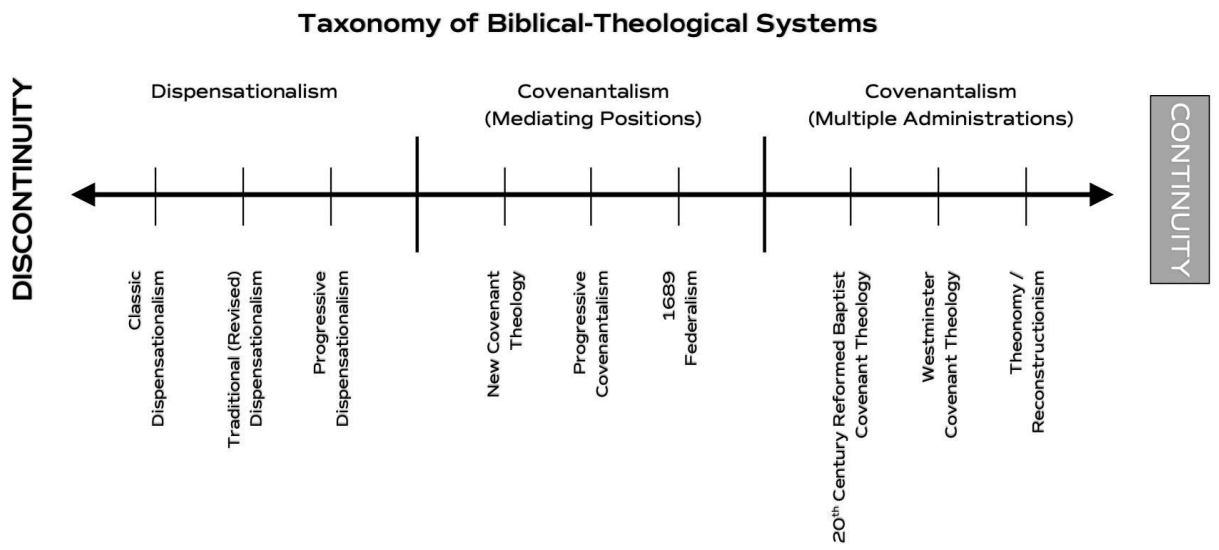
If we believe Scripture is inerrant and infallible, then there’s some way that all of Scripture makes sense in light of itself. Not easy to determine, but still worth doing (cf. Prov. 25:2).

Different theological systems:

Different ways of putting all of Scripture together → how much continuity between the OT & NT?

If you’re like me, you’ve sat under teachings of several different systems, without really realizing the implications and scriptural inconsistencies you’ve imbibed in doing so (value of the Tree!)

[Diagram below by Matthew DelValle, mod. from Ben Merkle’s diagram in *Discontinuity to Continuity*]



Common “test cases”:

- How to view Israel’s relationship with the church
- How to view the Law of Moses in the church age

Dispensationalism (“Dispensations” – different arrangements under which God dealt with man):

Israel and the church are distinct → The central tenet of all forms of dispensationalism

Literal hermeneutic → prophecies to Israel must be fulfilled literally; church is interpreted spiritually (b/c it’s a heavenly purpose). They call this spiritual interpretation “typological interpretation,” but this is very different from the typology I present below.

NT does not take pre-eminence over OT

Requires a certain eschatology: an earthly reign of Christ for a literal 1,000 years over the nation of Israel restored with a unique national identity (i.e. every dispensationalist is a dispensational premillennialist);

Most dispensationalists are also credo-baptistic (the church is believers by faith)

Classical Dispensationalism → John Darby, C. I. Scofield, D. L. Moody, Lewis Sperry Chafer

Today this view hardly exists at the scholarly level, only at the popular level

Church = heavenly people of God; Israel = earthly people of God

God is pursuing two different purposes of redemption for two different peoples of God

Abrahamic covenant is the foundational covenant (especially the land promise)

New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah was not for the church

Revised/Traditional Dispensationalism → John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, J. Dwight Pentecost (1950s/60s)

No distinction b/t heavenly and earthly people, and not two redemptive plans, but still two peoples of God

Abrahamic covenant is the foundational covenant (especially the land promise)

New Covenant being fulfilled spiritually in the church today, but Israel will experience national and political aspects of it in the future (actually several different views in TD about the NC and the church)

Progressive Dispensationalism → Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, Bruce Ware, Gregg Allison, R. Saucy

Literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic

“Progressive”: God’s revelation and accomplishment of redemption *progress* across time; the different dispensations do lead to a unified redemption, but there is a qualitative progression in redemption (unlike Covenant Theology)

One people of God (more continuity b/t Israel and Church than other forms of dispensationalism)

The church is new in the history of redemption, but it is not a completely different kind of redemption; inaugurated eschatology (“already/not yet”).

The New Covenant is with Israel, but is extended to the church as well.

When Christ comes, He will rule over the nations of the redeemed, who do not lose their political, ethnic, national, and/or cultural differences (Land promise is still key). Jewish Christians today do not lose their relationship to Israel’s future promises.

Suggested Reading:

Merkle, Benjamin L. *Discontinuity to Continuity*

Brent Parker and Richard Lucas, eds. *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*

Blaising Craig, and Darrell Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*