

WRONGLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH SESSION 2 – THE GOSPELS AND THE CHURCH

IRONSIDE'S ATTACK

- “HOWEVER they may differ in regard to minor details of their various systems, practically all ultra-dispensationalists are a unit in declaring that the four Gospels must be entirely relegated to a past dispensation (in fact, according to most of them, they are pushed two dispensations back), and, therefore, are not to be considered as in any sense applying to this present age.” pg. 12.
 - This is a grossly overstated claim. The wording is purposefully offensive to those who believe in verbal plenary inspiration, designed to get them to immediately reject *any* argument that the Gospels belong in a different dispensation.
 - However, what if someone said, "Though our New Testament begins with the Gospels, the reality of the New Testament did not begin until the resurrection." In this case (a case in which I am sure Dr. Ironside would agree), the Gospels suddenly become part of a "past dispensation," even for a non-dispensationalists.
 - When Ironside says that they are "not to be considered as in any sense applying to this present age," he further overstates his case. Does the Old Testament, which is clearly in a previous dispensation, "not in any sense" apply "to this present age?" Of course it does, but the application is not for daily Christian living.
 - The so-called ultra-dispensationalists simply believes that the Gospels are not the source for instruction for daily Christian living because they are records of the Israel-centric ministry of Jesus Christ. Dozens of examples could be given to back their claim. Would not Ironside agree that Jesus was **made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law** (Gal. 4:4)?
- “Here there is no setting aside of an earlier revelation as though it had no message for the people of God in a later day simply because dispensations have changed.” pg. 13.
 - Ironside neither adequately represents Bullinger nor any form of dispensationalism of which I am aware. "All of scripture is for me, not all of scripture is to me" would be a mantra held by all dispensationalists, including Ironside.
- “Spiritual principles never change; moral responsibility never changes, and the believer who would glorify God in the present age must manifest the grace that was seen in Christ when He walked here on earth during the age that is gone.” pg. 13.
 - Is Ironside a dispensationalist at all? What "Spiritual principles" is he talking about - those of the tithe? of the cities of refuge? of the clean and unclean animals? Too what "moral responsibility" does he refer? -- that of the Sabbath? --that of the Nazarite vow? To what "grace that was seen in Christ" does he refer? -- the grace shown those outside of the lost sheep of the house of Israel?
- “...it should be plain to any spiritual mind that the principles of the kingdom which He sets forth are the same principles that should hold authority over the hearts of all who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.” pg. 14
 - This is precisely the thinking that led to John MacArthur's Lordship Salvation doctrine (which is decidedly opposed to "sola fide.")
- “In John’s Gospel the case is somewhat different, for there Christ is seen as the rejected One from the very beginning. It is in chapter one that we read, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Then based upon that, we have the new and fuller revelation which runs throughout that Gospel of grace, flowing out to all men who have no merit whatever in themselves.” pg. 14.
 - Doesn't this negate what was just said? Ironside recognizes that Christ is shown in "the new and fuller revelation" and that John is "that Gospel of grace."

- “The break with the leaders of the nation comes in chapter twelve, where they definitely ascribe the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil. In doing this, they become guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the crowning sin of that dispensation, which our Lord declares could not be forgiven either in that age or in the one to follow.” pg. 14.
 - At a minimum, Ironside makes a clear and distinct dispensational change at the end of chapter 12. Is it such travesty to move this dispensational break until after the ascension, and thus after the Gospels? Furthermore, does Chapter 12 affirm Ironside's position?
- “In chapter thirteen, we have an altogether new ministry beginning. The Lord for the first time opens up the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, revealing things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, namely the strange and unlooked-for form that the kingdom would take here on earth after Israel had rejected the King and He had returned to Heaven. This is set forth in the seven parables of that chapter, and gives us the course of Christendom during all the present age.” pgs. 14-15.
 - Ironside takes the "already/not yet" position of *progressive dispensationalism*.
- “As a rule, the ultra-dispensationalists would ignore all this and push these seven parables [of Matt. 13] forward into the tribulation era after the Church, the Body of Christ, has been taken out of this scene. But this is to do violence to the entire Gospel and to ignore utterly the history of the past 1900 years.” pg. 15.
 - Does it really “do violence to the entire Gospel” if you don’t read the church into Matthew 13?
 - Does the history of the past 1900 years serve as our interpretive guide for Matthew 13?
- “In the light of the words, “Your house is left unto you desolate,” [Mt. 23:38] how amazing the presumption that would lead any to declare, as practically all these extreme dispensationalists do declare, that Israel is being given a second trial throughout all the book of Acts.” pg. 16.
 - Was the house left desolate with these words, or were these words prophetic of the events of A.D. 70?
 - Did Israel receive a "second trial?" What of "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" or "through ignorance ye did it" (Acts 3:17) or "lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:58).
- “People who have never investigated Bullingerism and its kindred systems will hardly believe me when I say that even the great commission upon which the Church has acted for 1900 years, and which is still our authority for world-wide missions, is, according to these teachers, a commission with which we have nothing whatever to do, that has no reference to the Church at all, and that the work there predicted will not begin until taken up by the remnant of Israel in the days of the Great Tribulation. Yet such is actually the teaching.” pg. 17.
 - "Such is the actual teaching," but the presentation given here does not adequately describe the actual teaching.
 - Consider the following:
 - Under normal rules of interpretation, is the Great Commission addressed to the church as her commission?
 - The commission is addressed to **the eleven** (Matt. 28:16).
 - If all teaching to the apostles is applicable to the church, then the church has been woefully negligent (save those forms which call themselves "Apostolic").
 - Under normal rules of interpretation, does the church (outside of its Catholic form) follow the commission?
 - It has sought to **Go and teach all nations**.
 - It has (in its evangelical and fundamentalist forms) not required baptism. (And, if this command is to be taken individually, the church has almost never, in any of its forms, taught that individuals were supposed to **go...baptizing**. Note the even stronger verbiage in Mark 16:15-16.
 - It has not taught the nations **to observe all things whatsoever** our Lord commanded the Apostles (consider Matt. 10:5-10, for example).

- Do so-called Ultra or Hyper dispensationalists avoid missionary or evangelistic work, as is implied here?
 - In practice, there is no evidence whatsoever that those being attacked have not had a missionary and evangelistic zeal. Ironside is unfair in his attacks, such as in this sample, "It is an offense against Christian missions everywhere to try to set aside the great commission for the entire present age" (pg. 23).
 - Those being attacked base their worldwide evangelism on other passages that can be taken, under normal rules of interpretation, to apply to the church. These instructions do not bring the problems associated with the instruction to the 11, as mentioned above (such as 2 Corinthians 5:19-20).
- Ironside's "continuationist" doctrine:
 - It is not true that a definite limit is placed in Scripture upon the manifestation of sign gifts, and that such gifts have never appeared since the days of the apostles. (pg. 23)
 - "The signs accompanied preaching the Gospel. Why continue to preach if such signs are not now manifest?" (pg. 20).
 - Concerning Mark 16:17-18 - "During all the period of the book of Acts, these signs did follow the apostles. More than that, if we can place the least reliance upon early Church history, the same signs frequently followed other servants of Christ, as they went forth in obedience to this commission" (pg. 21)

BULLINGER'S WORDS

- The contents of the Bible must therefore be seen and arranged with reference to Him. The counsels and purposes of God are all centered in Christ.
 - In the Old Testament we have the King and the Kingdom in Promise and Prophecy, Illustration and Type.
 - In the Four Gospels we have the King and the Kingdom presented and proclaimed by John the Baptist, and by Christ Himself. And we see the Kingdom rejected, and the King crucified.
 - In the Acts of the Apostles we have **the Transition from the Kingdom to the Church**. The Kingdom is once again offered to Israel by Peter; again it is rejected, Stephen is stoned, and Peter imprisoned (ch 12). Then Paul, who had been already chosen and called (ch 9), is commissioned for His Ministry (ch 13), and on the final rejection of his testimony concerning the Kingdom, he pronounces for the third and last time the sentence of judicial blindness in Isaiah 6, and declares that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:25-28). In Paul's final communication to Hebrew believers it is written that while in God's counsels all things had been put under Christ's feet, "we see NOT YET all things put under Him" (Heb 2:7-9). **The Kingdom thenceforth is in abeyance.**

RANDY WHITE'S ANALYSIS

- Ironside overstated his case and "proved too much."
- Ironside created a straw man that was easily defeated. Bullinger's position has much more depth than presented, and is not nearly so heinous.
- Somewhere every student of the Word must create a division between the dispensation of the Law and that of Grace. The whereabouts of this division will have strong implications on doctrines related to daily Christian life and expectation.
 - Does it belong at mid-Gospels, resurrection, Pentecost, mid-Acts or Acts 28?
 - This is a fundamental question for Biblical application and worthy of great consideration, using sola scriptura as the guiding principle.