

Where do you stand? Are you in the camp of Covenant theologians, or do you agree with the Dispensational view? Answering credibly requires understanding of both positions, so the chart below highlights the differences between historic Covenant and historic Dispensational theology. Take a look and determine where you stand, and then feel free to print this chart out and pass it on to a friend.

A Comparison of Historic Covenant and Historic Dispensational Theology

ISSUE	COVENANT POSITION	DISPENSATIONAL POSITION
Pattern of History	Covenant of Works with Adam; Covenant of Grace with Christ on behalf of elect (some distinguish between Covenant of Redemption with Christ and Covenant of Grace with the elect).	Divided into dispensations (usually seven); e.g., Innocence (pre-Fall), Conscience (Adam), Human Government (Noah), Promise (Abraham), Law (Moses), Grace (Christ's First Coming), Kingdom (Christ's Second Coming).
View of History	Optimistic; God is extending His kingdom.	Pessimistic: the Last Days are marked by increasingly worse wickedness in the world and by apostasy in the church.
God's Purpose in History	There is a unified redemptive purpose.	There are two distinct purposes, one earthly (Israel), one heavenly (church).
View of the Biblical Covenants	They are different administrations of the Covenant of Grace.	They mark off periods of time during which God's specific demands of man differ.
Relationship of Old Testament to New Testament	Acceptance of Old Testament teaching required unless specifically abrogated by New Testament.	Old Testament prescriptions are not binding unless reaffirmed in New Testament.
Relationship between Israel and the Church	The Church is spiritual Israel, in continuity with true Israel of Old Testament.	The Church is the spiritual people of God, distinct from Israel, the physical people of God.
Old Testament Prophecy	Refers to God's people, the Church.	Refers to ethnic Israel.
Church Age	God's redemptive purpose continues to unfold.	There is a parenthesis between past and future manifestations of the kingdom.
Role of Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit indwells God's people throughout history.	The Holy Spirit indwells God's people only from Pentecost to the Rapture.
Baptism	Unified covenant generally used to support infant baptism.	Israel/Church distinction often (but not always) used to support believers' baptism.
Social Implications	Emphasizes "cultural mandate."	The only way to save the world is to save individuals; therefore evangelism takes precedence over "social action."
Eschatology	Usually amillennial; rarely postmillennial; occasionally premillennial.	Premillennial, usually pretribulational.
Millennium	Symbolic, often identified with present age.	Literal, earthly 1000-year reign after Second Coming.