

# Unmasking the Origins of America's Most Popular End Times Theology

## A Study on the Rise of Dispensational Premillennialism and the Zionist Connection

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### Introduction

Thank you for joining me today on *Jay Slay: Made in the USA*, where we explore truth, expose deception, and inspire courage. This essay is the first in a multi-part series covering crucial topics regarding end-times theology: the little-known origins of America's most popular end-times view; the journey from Darby to Hagee; the occult moorings of Zionism; the true identity of the synagogue of Satan; and finally, a hopeful look ahead to Christ's return.

Our focus here will be on the little-known origins of America's dominant end-times view: dispensational premillennialism. This system includes three central components—dispensations, the pre-tribulation rapture, and a separate plan for ethnic Israel. I will define these as we proceed, but if you're confused now, stay with me.

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# Background: A Southern Baptist Upbringing

Growing up in a Southern Baptist church in Tennessee, I was steeped in dispensational premillennial eschatology without realizing there were other views. A key belief was the “rapture,” where, on an unknown future day, Christian believers would be physically and quietly transported to meet the Lord in the air, disappearing suddenly from the earth. This event, often termed the “secret rapture,” leaves unbelievers puzzled by the sudden vanishings, with no visible appearance of Christ except to believers.

Following the rapture, a seven-year period of horrific tribulation would supposedly unfold on earth, culminating in the rise of a literal antichrist and a one-world beast system. At the conclusion of these seven years, ethnic Israel is saved in some form, and Christ returns to cast Satan into the bottomless pit, ushering in a literal 1,000-year millennial reign. During this millennial kingdom, God would fulfill Old Testament promises to ethnic Israel, including the restoration of a Jewish temple, a sacrificial system, and a renewed priesthood. As explained by Dr. David Jeremiah and others, this sacrificial system would serve as a memorial to past sacrifices.

In this system, the Church—composed primarily of non-Jews—reigns spiritually with Christ, having already received glorified bodies, while ethnic Jews reign physically on earth. After the millennium, Satan is released once again, deceives the nations, but is ultimately defeated and cast into the lake of fire. This sequence is followed by the final judgment—the sheep entering eternal life, and the goats consigned to eternal punishment—before the earth is made anew and the New Jerusalem descends (Revelation 21–22, KJV).

As a boy, fascinated by these teachings, I could explain the

steps confidently even by seventh grade. My belief was reinforced when Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series became a bestseller. During all my experiences at Christian youth camps, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and other church events, I never heard of any competing end-times views. It wasn't until college that I even became aware of other interpretations, though I initially dismissed them.

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## The Complication and Growing Doubts

Even as I trusted church leadership, I privately wrestled with how complex our eschatological timeline was. When I read Revelation for myself, it seemed highly symbolic and difficult to map onto the neat charts provided by dispensational theologians. Nevertheless, I assumed our view must be ancient, likely affirmed by the early church fathers. After all, I thought, surely Kirk Cameron and the *Left Behind* team couldn't be wrong. Ironically, years later, Kirk Cameron himself would publicly reject belief in a pre-tribulation rapture.

Concerning Israel, my childhood church focused far more on Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Gospel for all men. Galatians 3:28 (KJV) shaped our view: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* While dispensational premillennialism usually emphasizes a separate prophetic future for ethnic Israel, I didn't hear much about this in my local church.

That changed dramatically in college. Over pancakes at a Cracker Barrel, a respected pastor educated at Hebrew University passionately explained how Israel's founding in 1948 was a direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy. He emphasized Christian duty to support the political state of Israel and marveled at its survival amidst hostile Islamic

neighbors. From that moment, my support for Israel became absolute, intensified especially after 9/11. I revered the Israeli flag almost as much as the American flag—and, disturbingly, nearly as much as the cross.

So committed was I that I once suggested to a missionary friend that the U.S. should protect Israel by any means necessary, even nuclear action if needed. While my friend, based in Beirut at the time, was dismayed, I remained staunchly pro-Israel for many years.

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## **The Social Pressure to Conform**

I share these personal experiences to make clear: I am not motivated by hostility toward dispensational believers or modern Israel. Most of my family and friends still hold these views (though not the nuclear enthusiasm, thankfully). To oppose these beliefs now is emotionally and socially costly. Among evangelicals today, questioning unconditional support for modern Israel—or questioning dispensational premillennialism—can quickly earn accusations of anti-Semitism or biblical heresy.

Examples abound. One televised preacher exhorted viewers: *“Go to the phone right now and call that number and say yes, I’m going to stand with Israel. I’m going to bless the people of the Bible. I’m going to bless God’s church.”* Another called for the entire audience to rise and cheer for the state of Israel.

Such emotional appeals often shut down meaningful dialogue. Instead of answering concerns thoughtfully, they dismiss critics with labels and assumptions. In my view, this tactic shows a desire to kill honest conversation rather than to engage it seriously. It also raises a troubling question: why

do most leading voices of dispensational premillennialism and Christian Zionism rarely address the serious concerns critics are raising today?

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## **A Call to Research and Humility**

I encourage you not to trust me blindly. I am a fallen human being capable of error or even deception. I will provide abundant source links, including some opposing views, for your own research. If you disagree with me, please prayerfully cross-reference what you hear with Scripture. Test your biases. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment.

I am acutely aware of my own sins and shortcomings, and I do not claim to be a great theologian with impressive credentials. Nevertheless, like so many others today, I feel compelled to seek the truth and share it, believing that understanding apocalyptic scripture correctly has never been more critical.

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## **After 1800 Years, a New Eschatology Emerges**

As a young believer, I assumed the rapture and dispensational views were as old as Christianity itself. Shockingly, they were virtually unknown until about 1800 years after Christ's ascension. Dispensationalism is a man-made system dividing biblical history into stages, or "dispensations," in which God deals with humanity differently across time periods.

This system began replacing the Reformed Covenant theology of the Protestant Reformation in the early 1800s. It allowed for

progressive revelation within the church—meaning that radically new theological ideas could now be embraced as “truth” even if the early church had never taught them.

When I began asking seminary-trained pastors about the origins of the rapture teaching and dispensationalism, ninety percent pointed to John Nelson Darby of the 1800s, and to the later impact of the *Scotfield Reference Bible* in the early 1900s. I was disturbed by the lateness of its arrival in church history. Surely, I thought, they must be wrong.

But my research confirmed it. While Darby and Scotfield popularized dispensationalism, they were not the true originators. In 1812, a book titled *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* was published in Spain under the pseudonym Juan Josef Ben-Ezra, supposedly a converted Jew. In reality, it was written by Manuel Lacunza, a Catholic Jesuit priest.

The Protestant Reformers overwhelmingly identified the Catholic Church as the Antichrist system and the Whore of Babylon, as documented by a long list of quotes from their writings. From this fact alone, it is clear that a pre-tribulation rapture was not even considered by the Reformers, who believed the Antichrist was already operating in their midst.

Lacunza’s work reinterpreted key prophetic passages, steering theology away from historic Protestantism. Daniel 9:26–27, for instance, was traditionally understood by scholars like John Wesley, Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, and Albert Barnes to refer to the Messiah, not a future Antichrist. Lacunza introduced the novel idea of a future Antichrist who would rebuild the temple—an interpretation later expanded by the *Scotfield Reference Bible*.

Similarly, Lacunza’s distortion of Romans 9 and 11 shifted focus. Where earlier commentators emphasized salvation through faith and spiritual Israel, Lacunza emphasized a future mass

conversion of ethnic Israel after a false Messiah was destroyed. Notably, he altered the word “so” (adverb of manner) in Romans 11:26 to “then” (adverb of time), fundamentally changing the text’s meaning.

When Lacunza’s book was translated into English by Edward Irving in 1827, it found fertile ground. Irving, a Scottish Protestant minister, became captivated by Lacunza’s futurism, even using the word “dispensation” 75 times in his introduction alone. The London Oxford Press, owned by the Rothschild family, published the English edition, an act that would shape future Christian Zionism.

Irving’s theological ideas gained influence at the Albury Prophetic Conferences and through Lady Powerscourt’s meetings—where none other than John Nelson Darby attended. While modern dispensationalists often downplay Irving’s influence on Darby, the historical connection is clear. Irving taught a two-phase return of Christ and emphasized Israel’s national restoration, aligning closely with later dispensational teaching.

Thus, with Irving translating Lacunza’s work and preparing the ground, and Darby systematizing and popularizing it, dispensationalism as we know it today was born. It was a seismic shift—one that would eventually reshape American evangelicalism and profoundly impact global Christian thought.