

What is meant by the term "Hyper-dispensationalism"

Answer: "Hyper-dispensationalism" is another form of false doctrine characterized by making a sharp division between the ministry of Christ and that of the Apostles and of further dividing Paul's teaching from that of Peter and the other apostles. Some of the well-known teachers of hyper- or ultra-dispensationalism are E.W. Bullinger, Cornelius Stam, J.C. O'Hair, Charles Welch, Otis Sellers, A.E. Knoch, and Charles Baker.

- See my workbook on Hyper-Dispensationalism.

A closer look at your question will reveal the fact that there are many varieties of hyper-dispensationalism but the following are some of the characteristics of this false doctrine:

1) The four Gospels are entirely Jewish and contain no direct teaching for the churches. Yet, the writer of Hebrews said that the same gospel of salvation that was preached by the apostles was preached by Christ (Heb. 2:3-4). In fact, the Gospel of John presents exactly the same gospel as that preached by Paul. Further, 1 Timothy 6:3 shows that Christ spoke directly to the church age.

(2) The book of Acts is also largely Jewish. Hyper-dispensationalists commonly believe that after Christ was rejected by Israel in the Gospels, that they were given a second chance to receive the kingdom in the first part of the book of Acts. Thus, they teach that there are two different churches viewed in the book of Acts and the true Pauline church only started after Acts 9, 13, or 28. The church mentioned in the first part of Acts allegedly refers to a different church than that of Paul's prison epistles. The earlier "church" in Acts is simply an aspect of the kingdom preached in the Gospels. Most of the book of Acts is therefore discounted as a guideline for the churches today. Yet, at the very end of the book of Acts we still find Paul preaching about the kingdom (Acts 28:23). In fact, he was still preaching about it in his epistles! (2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1). While we can see an obvious transition in the book of Acts, and not everything in Acts continues to be in effect in the churches today (e.g., tongues speaking and apostolic sign gifts) this does not mean that there are different gospels and different churches in various parts of Acts. The book of Acts is a book about and for the churches.

(3) The mysteries given to Paul are a different revelation from that given to Peter and the other Apostles, and only Paul's writings are directly for the church today. The other epistles, such as Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and the epistles of John are not for us today in a direct sense. Yet, Paul himself said that the church is built upon the "apostles" plural and not merely upon himself (Eph. 2:20) and the mysteries were "revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets" (Eph. 3:5) and not to him alone. Peter also referred to the writings of Paul and made no distinction between Paul's teaching and the teaching of the other apostles (2 Pet. 3:1-2, 15-16). Peter said Paul wrote to the same people and preached the same message. Though we know that Paul was the special apostle of the Gentiles and he was given unique revelations about the church as the body of Christ, his revelations in no way contradict the revelations given in the General Epistles (Hebrews - Jude).

(4) The gospel preached by Peter in the early part of the book of Acts is different from the gospel preached by Paul. Yet, there is actually no difference between the gospel preached by Peter and that which Paul preached. Peter preached salvation through the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:2), salvation by God's free mercy (1 Peter 1:3), the new birth (1 Peter 1:3), eternal security because of the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Acts 15 plainly states that all of the apostles, including Peter and Paul, agreed on the gospel. Paul plainly said in 1 Cor. 15:11-14 that they all preached the same gospel. Even in Acts 2, Peter was preaching the gospel of the grace of Christ rather than a "kingdom gospel." He preached Christ -- His crucifixion (Acts 2:23), resurrection (Acts 2:24-32), ascension and Lordship (Acts 2:33-36). He preached that the people should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). This is not a "kingdom gospel." Further, Paul states in Galatians 1, that anyone who preached a different gospel was cursed. If Peter were truly preaching a different gospel in those days, he would have fallen under this curse.

(5) Baptism and the Lord's Supper were given to Paul before he received the church age mysteries; thus they are not for the churches today. Hyper-dispensationalists differ on this point. Some accept both baptism and the Lord's Supper; some reject water baptism and the Lord's Supper altogether; while others reject only baptism and keep the Lord's Supper.