

# John MacArthur, Jr.

## DISPENSATIONALIST?

**DR. JOHN F. MacARTHUR, JR.** claims to be a dispensationalist. In his recent book (1988), The Gospel According to Jesus, he wrote:

*Dispensationalism is a fundamentally correct system of understanding God's program for the ages. Its chief element is a recognition that God's plan for Israel is not superseded by or swallowed up in His program for the church. Israel and the church are separate entities, and God will restore national Israel under the earthly rule of Jesus as Messiah.*

*I accept and affirm this tenet, because it emerges from a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture. And in that regard, I consider myself a traditional premillennial dispensationalist (p. 25).*

So far so good; but don't go too far! Farther down on the same page, the author begins to qualify:

*There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they can make biblical distinctions. An almost obsessive desire to categorize everything neatly has led various dispensational interpreters to draw hard lines not only between the church and Israel, but also between salvation and discipleship, the church and the kingdom, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repentance, and the age of law and the age of grace (emphases ours).*

Now, dear friend, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, in His exclusive message to His beloved Bride, the Church, through Paul, was hard line! "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). "Divided", not shaded.

In his book Dr. MacArthur quotes no less than 39 anti-dispensational, Covenant theologians in an effort to validate his thesis of Lordship Salvation. What dispensationalist would or could ever do that?! And from his Covenant stance he attacks Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (pp. 24-27), blaming his "hard line" dispensationalism for what Dr. MacArthur terms our present-day gospel of "easy believism."

Despite his claim to be a dispensationalist, the following may explain something of why he is actually in the Covenant camp. Upon being asked what books have had the greatest impact on his life, Dr. MacArthur listed nine titles in his quarterly magazine, Masterpiece (Fall, 1988; p. 20)--each and every one authored by an anti-dispensational, Covenant theologian:

- A. Bennett** -- *A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions (Banner of Truth, 1975)*
- Stephen Charnock** -- *The Existence & Attributes of God (Klock & Klock, 1977)*
- J.I. Packer** -- *Knowing God (Inter Varsity Press, 1973)*
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** -- *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount (Eerdmans, 1977)*
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** -- *Preachers and Preaching (Zondervan, 1971)*
- Arthur Pink** -- *Spiritual Growth (Baker, 1971)*
- John R.W. Stott** -- *The Preacher's Portrait (Tyndale, 1967)*
- Thomas Watson** -- *A Body of Divinity (Banner of Truth, 1970)*
- Thomas Watson** -- *The Beatitudes (Banner of Truth, 1975)*