

AN INTRODUCTION TO DISPENSATIONAL TEACHING

An Introduction To Dispensational Teaching

Not every Bible student accepts the idea of "arrangements" or dispensations. Nor will every teacher who accepts the idea hold to seven. Someone said, "Anyone who believes that salvation is through the Blood of Christ rather than through the blood of bulls and goats is a dispensationalist." For this writer, Scripture is more easily handled when it is looked at in this way. Accepting the full validity of this approach is not necessary for growth and certainly it is not necessary for salvation or being considered a lover of the Scripture or the Lord Jesus Himself.

There are two basic ways of approaching the Scripture and its interpretation. One is through **covenant theology** and thinking. The other is through what we will call **dispensational** approaches. Among the differences are those listed below:

1. The place of the Jewish race in history and in the economy of God.
2. The place of the Kingdom of God on the earth.
3. The Church—its beginning, existence, and ultimate place.
4. The coming of the Lord Jesus and His personal reign on earth.
5. The relationship between circumcision and baptism and their place and meaning in the Church today.
6. Many things that relate to the doctrine of last things such as various judgments as opposed to one general judgment.

Definition: What is a dispensation?

We will define a dispensation with a very simple statement. "A dispensation is a period of time in which God deals with a particular people in a particular way." This is a rather simple definition, but it adequately covers the concept. Another definition might be stated as a particular arrangement God has with His people.

The Seven Dispensations

Creation of the universes

Creation of man and present earth

Covenant	Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15-17
Failure	Genesis 3:1-7
Judgment	Genesis 3:14-24 - Expulsion from Eden

Covenant	Genesis 4:7
Failure	Genesis 4:8; 6:2-5 - Flood needed to save the race
Judgment	Genesis 7 - Flood

Covenant	Genesis 9:1,6,7,11-17
Failure	Genesis 9:20,21 - Babel
Judgment	Genesis 11:6-9

Covenant	Genesis 12:1-3
Failure	Gen. 12:4; 13:1-18; 14:1-24
Judgment	Slavery in Egypt, Ex. 1-12

Covenant	Exodus 19,20
Failure	Matt. 27:32-56, Ex. 32:15-35
Judgment	Romans 11 and Titus' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Covenant	Acts 16:31
Failure	Man's unbelief
The Rapture	The Great Tribulation
Judgment	Rev. 4:19 - Daniel's 70th week

Covenant	Rev. 20:1-6, Matt. 25:31-46 - Satan bound
Failure	Rev. 20:7-9
Judgment	Rev. 20:9-11 - Great White Throne

New Jerusalem

Characteristics of Each Dispensation

1. A covenant between God and man.
2. Man's failure in relation to that covenant.
3. God's punishment for failure.
4. Salvation by faith. Grace and faith form an unmistakably clear means of salvation in any age.

The Dispensations

I. Innocence

A. The Covenant

Location of man--in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 1,2.

Content of the Covenant, Genesis 1:27-31; 2:15-17. "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." To work the Garden of Eden and take care of it. "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die."

B. Man's Failure--Genesis 3:1-7.

Eve allowed herself to be deceived by Satan and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then gave it to Adam.

They realized they were sinners and tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves (symbolic of works).

They rationalized and displaced blame for their sin to the serpent. This was the beginning of mechanisms of defense or ego defenses.

C. God's response to their sin, Genesis 3:14-24.

He banished them from Eden, vs. 23.

He cursed the ground and introduced toil to labor, vs. 17.

Pain in childbearing and man's rule over his wife, vs. 16.

Physical death, vs. 19. The day they ate, they began to die.

A dispensation is a period of time in which God deals with a particular people in a particular way."

D. Grace and Salvation.

The first promise of a Redeemer, Genesis 3:15. (The seed of the woman--Christ. The first sacrifice, Genesis 3:21. Innocent life for the guilty (an animal).

The way to the tree of life is guarded, 3:24.

II. Conscience

A. The Covenant

The location of man outside the Garden.

Content of the Covenant.

It begins in Genesis 4:7. Man is to live and let conscience be his guide. If he does not do well, sin lies at his door ready to pounce on him.

B. Man's failure.

The first murder — Cain killed Abel, Genesis 4:8.

Cain's lack of **faith** in the offering he brought.

Sons of God took the daughters of men and cohabited with them. Genesis 6:2-5. See also 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. The result of this sort of union was great wickedness in the earth and a contamination of the human race. God was sorry that He made man.

C. God's **judgment** upon the earth, Genesis 7.

The flood destroyed all but Noah and his family.

D. Grace and Salvation.

The sacrificial system was established--See Abel's offering.

The birth of Methuselah suggests the longsuffering of God. The name **Methuselah** means "when he is dead, it shall come." This man lived longer than any man has ever lived. The year he died, the flood came, Genesis 5:21.

The ark was a type of Christ. It had only one door of entrance. It was the only refuge from the ravages of judgment that God sent to

destroy the earth. Entrance to the ark was open to all. One only had to enter the ark to be spared.

Immediately after the flood, the length of man's life was shortened, taking away longer years for man to get himself into more difficulty.

Enoch walked with God and God took him. He was the father of Methuselah, Genesis 5:24. Enoch was like believers who will be alive when the Lord returns. They will never die.

III. Human Government

A. The Covenant

Be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth, Genesis 9:1.

Capital punishment — a life for a life — was established, Genesis 9:6-7.

God will never again destroy the entire earth with water, Genesis 9:11-17. He set a rainbow in the heavens to remind Himself of this promise.

B. Man's failure

Noah's drunkenness, Genesis 9:20-21 (though he may not have known the wine would make him drunk).

Man gathered in rebellion against God and in disobedience to His command. They deliberately violated His command to disperse and cover the entire earth.

Man built a tower in defiance of God...Babel.

C. God's punishment, Genesis 11:6-9

He confused their languages so they wouldn't understand each other and therefore would have to go elsewhere.

The place was called Babel, and here different languages began.

D. Grace and salvation.

The sacrificial system and shedding of blood spoke of salvation by grace.

IV. Promise

Up to this point, God had dealt with larger groups of people. Now He turns to one man, Abraham.

A. The Covenant, Genesis 12:1-3.

Abraham would leave his family.

He would go to a place God would show him.

God would make Abraham a great nation.

God would bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him.

This was an unconditional covenant.

B. Abraham's failure.

His obedience was incomplete.

He took Lot, his nephew, who was to be a source of difficulty for him. Genesis 12:4; 13:1-18; 14:1-24; Chapter 18.

Abraham fled to Egypt when there was a famine in the land of plenty.

Abraham took Hagar, an Egyptian handmaiden, for a wife. Genesis 16.

C. God's punishment or response. Slavery in Egypt.

The book of Genesis begins with God and ends in a "coffin in Egypt".

D. Salvation and grace are seen in the justifying and giving righteousness to Abraham, Genesis 15:6. He was justified by faith. Joseph, a person, exemplified and typified Christ.

V. Dispensation of Law

- A. The Covenant, Exodus 19-20. Jehovah, Who had borne them on eagles' wings, (grace) Exodus 19:4, was now giving the law.

"Keep my covenant and be a treasured people among all nations."

The response of the people, Exodus 19:8, "we will do everything the Lord has said."

The Lord gave the LAW.

Please observe: the law immediately separated Israel from God, Exodus 19:12-14. And so is its effect today in the world.

The purpose of the giving of the law.

To hold us prisoners and lead us to Christ, Galatians 3:23-24.

We become conscious of sin, Romans 3:20.

The law enables us to see the sinfulness of sin, Romans 7:7-12.

It seems that the law was never given for the purpose of giving life, but rather for the purpose of helping man see his sinfulness and failure more clearly.

- B. Man's failure.

Exodus 32:15-35. While Moses was getting the law, Israel was practicing idolatry and worshipping the golden calf.

Continual failure and unbelief on the part of Israel, during the period of the judges and kings. There was a continual return to idolatry.

The crucifixion of the Savior sent by the Father--the rejection of the Messiah of Israel, Matthew 27:32-56.

- C. God's punishment for failure.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Titus.

The removal of Israel from her land of promise.

The cutting off of the natural branches and the grafting in of the wild olive branches, Romans 11. Salvation is come to the Gentiles.

D. Salvation and grace is seen through the sacrificial system. The Passover lamb and its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God's providing.

VI. Dispensation of The Church

Time: From the day of Pentecost to the second coming of Jesus to reign in His kingdom.

- A. Covenant with man, Acts 16:31. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household."
- B. Man's failure — The majority of the world lies in darkness and has rejected the direct message of the grace of God.
- C. The punishment for man's failure — Daniel's 70th week, Daniel 9, the Great Tribulation, Revelation 4-19. The Tribulation is the fulfillment of the yet unfulfilled prophecy relating to the 70th week of Daniel's prophetic vision. See the book of Daniel in the Old Testament.
- D. Grace and salvation. Man is saved by believing in and placing hope for eternity in the Son of God, the Lamb of God's providing. The Church, which did not fail during this time is delivered from the final punishment and taken to heaven, Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; John 14:1-3.

The Holy Spirit in the Church, which has been the Restrainer of the working of the mystery of iniquity, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, will be taken out of the way before the beginning of the Tribulation. This will set the stage for the final drama which will culminate in the Great Tribulation and the return of the Lord to smite the antichrist and the binding of Satan for 1,000 years.

VII. The Kingdom

The Millennial Reign of Christ over the Earth

This is the last of the arrangements God has with men and it will involve the personal reign of Jesus Christ over the earth. At last, the King is here! Men have long said, "If only Jesus were here in person, things would be different." Now He is here!

- A. The **covenant** with men, Matthew 25:31-46, (the judgment of the living nations who enter the kingdom and millennial reign) Revelation 20:1-6.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of God."

Satan bound for 1,000 years so he cannot deceive the nations.

Christ will reign from Jerusalem on the throne of David.

The first resurrection (all dead believers including Israel and the Church).

Glorified and unglorified people will be together on the earth.

War will end, Isaiah 2:1-5.

The former curse will be lifted, Isaiah 11:1-9.

These are only a few of the blessings involved in the covenant made during the kingdom age.

B. The FAILURE of men, Revelation 20:7-9.

Satan is released for a little while at the end of this time. Once again men are deceived by him, and they gather themselves to do battle against Jesus the King and His saints. It makes no difference if Jesus is here or not. Men are yet the same. With Satan again loose to lead rebellion against God, that rebellion comes.

C. The JUDGMENT of God, Revelation 20:9-15.

God's dealings in judgment result in fire that destroys Satan's armies, and the Great White Throne Judgment, which is the final judgment before the eternal state and the New Jerusalem.

D. Grace and salvation —There is no indication that there will be any other method of salvation during the Kingdom than has characterized all time. The Risen King and Sacrificial Lamb will be here. Jesus is the only Way, the Truth and the Life, John 14:6.

Notes