

# Doctrine of Dispensations

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1. Definition: A dispensation is a period of time in which God expresses a divine viewpoint of human history.

1.1 God has chosen to divide time into segments; He has appointed agents, or an agent, to disseminate His revelations in each of the respective time segments. Let's place several real time circa dates on events seen on what we have named "Our Regular Dispensation Chart:"

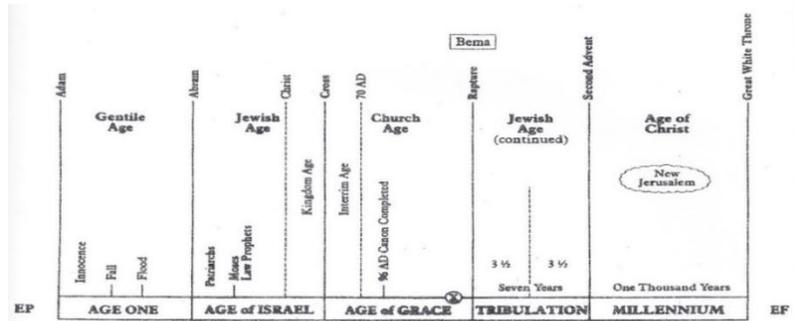
Flood -- 5000 B.C.

Abram – 2000 B.C.

Moses – 1450 B.C.

Christ – 4 B.C.

Cross – 32 A.D.



1.2 Human history may be classified into five "major" and seven "minor" dispensations. These can be grouped into three categories of two dispensations each: Theocentric, the Christocentric and the Eschatological.

1.3 The Theocentric consists of the Age of the Gentiles and the Age of Israel. Each of which occurred before God spoke to us through His Son thus they are pre-incarnate.

Heb 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

Heb 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

1.4 The Christocentric consists of the Kingdom Age and the Church Age.

1.5 The Eschatological dispensations consist of the Tribulation and Millennium.

2. It is important to understand that biblical revelation falls into these well-defined periods; the time line is God's clock for His history. Be reminded it is Jesus Christ who controls history and though we are responsible for our choices, all choices were anticipated and our spiritual life developed.

3. Recognition and understanding of the dispensations of God will facilitate an understanding of God's word. God has chosen in His omniscience to reveal Himself differently in His designated segments of time called dispensations or ages.

4. What might be true for one dispensation may not be appropriate for another dispensation.

4.1 In every age there are differences but there are also inexorable axioms which are "sacrosanct." For example, in every age the salvation mechanics are the same - faith alone in Christ alone.

Gen 15:6 And he (Abraham) believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Rom 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

4.2 In every age there is only one Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer may be looking toward the coming of the Messiah, at the Messiah or back at the crucified Lord.

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Joh 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Acts 14:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

4.3 God reveals Christ in many ways throughout the ages, but faith in Him is the only way of eternal salvation.

5. The English words Age or Ages are often found in the New Testament. More often than not Ages in Scripture refer to a dispensation and often **Aion** the Greek word for Ages is mistranslated "world."

Eph 2:7 That in the **ages** to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Eph 3:5 Which in other **ages** was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Eph 3:9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for **ages** past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the **ages**;

5.1 In the Bible ages are often distinguished by their differing protocols. For example:

Joh 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Luk 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: but since John the Baptist the kingdom of God is preached, and every man pressed into it.

Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell.

5.2 Compare the protocols described in the Lord's platform found in Matthew chapters five, six and seven with the the protocols described in such Scriptures as:

Acts 16:31 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved ...

Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Gal 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Rom 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Rom 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

Rom 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Rom 4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

Rom 4:7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Rom 4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Rom 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

6. An understanding of dispensations is a must if we are to make sense of the Bible.

Dispensations when understood can spark an interest in Bible study; this because suddenly the Bible doesn't seem like a hodge-podge of contradictions.

7. The wrath of God so vividly displayed in the Old Testament (these Scriptures clearly relate to the Age of the Gentiles and the Age of Israel proper) morphs into mercy and grace in the Kingdom Age and Church Age.

8. The protocol of God may not be the same for every age. For example, Isaiah and Micah speak about a protocol appropriate for when the Lord returns at His Second Advent as the protector of His people and Joel speaks of attitude and futile action on the part of the unbelievers who arrive for the last battle of Armageddon.

Isa 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Mic 4:3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Joe 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

Joe 3:11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.

8.1 Scripture must, therefore be studied in Categories, i.e., by subject. We must look and see if the protocol changed as the Scripture evolved. An acronym has been developed to help us understand this concept. It is called ICED.

#### **ICED**

**I The I stands for Introduction, meaning those facts which introduce historical nuances and background information about the book, the author and the historical setting.**

**C The C stands for Categories meaning that study of a subject found throughout the Bible as opposed to an eclectic approach.**

**E The E stands for Exegesis, meaning a critical analysis of the Bible performed from a study of the original language using the best manuscripts available.**

**D The D stands for Dispensation, meaning that analysis of the biblical passage or passages given the epoch to which the Scripture relates.**

9. While God Himself does not change, He has in His Omniscience elected to give varying instructions and responsibilities which are, as to their primary application, limited to a given period. For example:

10. Only those portions of Scriptures that are directly addressed to the child of God under grace in what we call the Church Age are to be given primary application—for example we are not to give Church Age rules to Israel and vice-a-versa.

10.1 All such primary instructions the Church Age believer is to perform in detail.

11. It should be observed there are spiritual lessons to be drawn from every portion of the Bible; it does not follow, however, that every Christian is appointed to conform to the governing principles which were or will in the future be the will of God for people of other dispensations.

11.1 We will see numerous such examples later but just to whet our appetites:

12. In the Millennium there are some obvious protocols which if embraced, apart from a dispensational understanding, could prove very dangerous for the present Saint.

Isa 11:6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

Isa 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Isa 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

12.1 Since we depend entirely upon the Word of God for our instructions and since the principles imposed in the various dispensations are so diverse and even at times seemingly contradictory, it is important that we recognize those portions which directly apply to us.

13. If we are to realize the will of God for our life, we must then understand which portions of Scripture have primary and which have secondary application. Let's review the various ages and note their similarities and commonalities.

### **Age One-The Gentile Age**

1. Let us see if we can't learn a little about the concept of primary and secondary application by taking a look at the first sub-age. The age or sub-age of Innocence:

1.1 This first dispensation is said to begin with the creation of man (Gen 2:7 and Gen 2:21-24) and end with the fall of man. (Gen 3:6)

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul ...

Gen 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Gen 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

1.2 In this age man was responsible for being fruitful, subduing the earth, having dominion over the animals, using vegetables for food, and caring for a place called Eden. Gen 2:15.

Gen 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

1.3 Much of that which occurred we understand but only in part because the Garden and Innocence are foreign to us.

1.4 To attempt to make direct application in our life of the instructions given Adam and Eve is impossible therefore innocence as an age makes for a good teaching tool.

1.5 Though there is no direct application to the Church Age saint in the Age of Innocence, there is significant secondary application and many truths appropriate for us.

1.6 Let's look at a few secondary principles taught in this unique little sub-age which is called by many "The Age of Innocence:"

- There was one prohibition given to man in that beautiful garden, "you may not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

- As church age Saints we learn from Gen 2:17 that volition is important to God; He left in perfect environment a mechanism for exercising our freewill. Volition recall is the first of four divine institutions: volition, marriage, family and nationalism.
- People need then to be free to choose Christ or reject Christ.
- We learn that in perfect environment man does not need either sin or human good; grace and human good are mutually exclusive.
- In this Age of Innocence, God introduces us to the principle of grace with a promise of a Redeemer (Gen 3:15); God provides to fallen man coats of skin, typical of the provision of the redemptive sacrifice to come. (Gen 3:21)

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee **and the woman**, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head (*Satan's*), and thou shalt bruise his heel (*Christ's*).

Gen 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

- The principle of a right woman being brought to the right man as his completer is taught.

Gen 2:20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Gen 2:21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

Gen 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Gen 2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

- The need for the right man and the right woman to come together as one is taught in this age. Both soul and physical oneness are taught.

Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Gen 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

- The need to support one another even against the future attacks of in-laws is taught in this first dispensation; this was long in advance of their being any such human genre of “in-laws”.

2. So you see in a dispensation there may be little if any primary application for us but ample secondary application (e.g. Mat 5:40). Salvation was a product of looking forward to the coming of the Lord. After the fall the blood of the animal was symbolic of the blood of Christ and the animal skin represented a covering ergo an atonement for our sins.

Mat 5:40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

3. The Age of Innocence like all dispensations begins with man being placed in a divinely appointed position of privilege and blessing and ends with the failure of man resulting in judgment from God.

Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:

Gen 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

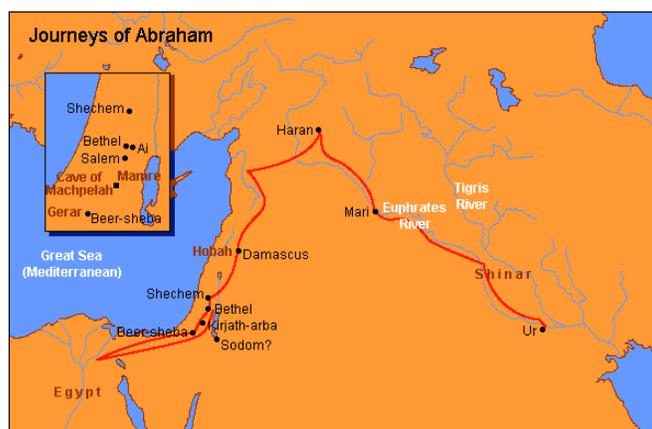
Gen 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

## Age of Israel-Jewish Age

1. Now let's continue our study of the two Theocentric Dispensations by looking at the Age of Israel or as it is better termed The Age of Israel Proper.

2. As can be seen from our dispensation chart the Age of Israel, or Jewish Age as it is often called, has a very important sub-age called the Kingdom Age: a period of time when Jesus becomes the Godman and presented His Kingdom to Israel.

2.1 God elected Israel as His special people when He called Abram (later to be named Abraham) out of the land of the Chaldeans. Specifically, God asked him to leave the city of Ur on the Euphrates River and seek a Promised Land. It is important to note God said, "leave your family in the apostate land of Chaldea and follow my instructions."



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