

# THE SEVEN DISPENSATIONS

## Chapter One

### Rightly Dividing the Word

**“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15)**

When we undertake a study of the seven Dispensations we are sometimes labeled as ultra-dispensationalist, or only believing the portions of the Bible that fit our particular belief. The confusion among professing religions today makes this Bible study of the dispensations even more necessary.

Every false cult can be traced either directly or indirectly to a misunderstanding of “rightly dividing the Word of truth.” To try and place the “Church” under “Law,” or make the “Church age” replace “Israel” or the “Kingdom age,” leads to nothing but confusion.

If we were to read a history book at random, reading a chapter on Monday about the “First World War,” a chapter on Tuesday about the “American Revolution,” and another chapter on Wednesday about the “Civil War,” all the time thinking we were reading about the “Second World War,” we would think the history book nothing but contradictions. We would soon lose interest and give up completely. The same holds true of the Bible; therefore, recognition of the “dispensations” will shed more light on the whole message of the Bible than any other aspect of Bible study.

An understanding of the “dispensations” has been the greatest single aid to me personally, in my Bible study. I have found this type of Bible study most effective in promoting a deeper interest in the Word of God. Many Christians have testified to the blessings received as a result of understanding the Bible in its divine divisions.

It is a well known truth that the child of God must depend wholly on the Word of God and its teachings for instructions in their daily life, and to have sweet fellowship with the Father. However, the commands and the instructions found throughout the Bible are so diverse, and at times even seemingly contradictory, that it is important that the Christian recognize the portions of Scripture that apply directly to them. It is equally important that they recognize that which does not pertain to them. This would be a most difficult task indeed, apart from the knowledge of dispensational truths.

Knowledge of the dispensations will keep one from wallowing in the quagmire of legality of past dispensations, or fighting a hopeless battle to attain that which is yet future. We must distinguish, therefore, between that which was written FOR US, and that which was written TO US.

If there are those who object to the use of the word “dispensation,” at least they should recognize that there are seven well defined methods that God has used and is using in dealing with mankind.

The most important lesson that we can learn from this study is the faithfulness of God, His love, mercy and grace that is evidenced in every dispensation. We also see the absolute failure of man in every dispensation. Then, too, we can see the wisdom of God in choosing this method of dealing with man in this manner.

The first dispensation ended with the promise of a Redeemer. If God would have left man to himself, man would have destroyed any hope of a Redeemer being brought into this world.

### What is a Dispensation?

No better meaning can be given than that given by Dr. C. I. Scofield. We quote: "A dispensation is a period of time in which man is tested in respect to obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."

The Bible is logically divided into seven periods of time, starting with the creation of man, in the Garden of Eden, and ending with the new Heaven and new Earth. Each of these periods of time (or dispensations) deals with man, his sin, and his responsibility.

It would be of help, I am sure, to understand that the Greek word "aion" means "age," or "dispensation," and is translated forty times in the Bible as "world." Such is the case in Matthew, chapter 12, verse 32, when Jesus, teaching on the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, said, "...it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world (age), neither in the world (age) to come."

Of these seven dispensations (periods of time), five are past and have been fulfilled. We are now living in the sixth, and no doubt toward the end of this dispensation. The seventh is yet future.

These dispensations are not, as some might think, a trial and error method on the part of God to see if, by chance, He might hit upon the right combination whereby man would do what was right, and obey and worship Him. On the contrary, every age was specifically planned by God for a specific purpose.

God knew beforehand what man would do; therefore, He made the ultimate provision for him. He provided a perfect sacrifice, His Son; whereby man may be made righteous.

It might be noted also, while man was given different appointments and responsibilities at the beginning of each dispensation, man utterly failed, and each dispensation ended in Divine judgment. The dispensations show, beyond all doubt, that man is absolutely hopeless and helpless in making himself fit for fellowship with God. They show that man is incapable of running and ordering his own life. By using the dispensations, God has proven to man the absolute necessity of looking to Him to solve the sin problem.

In our first lesson on the dispensations we will introduce the "seven dispensations," and give a brief outline of their boundaries, and where they may be found in the Bible. Here is a brief outline of the seven dispensations.

#### (1) **Innocence**

The boundaries of this dispensation are "from the creation of man until his fall." The Scriptures covering this dispensation are found in Genesis, chapter 1, verse 27 through chapter 3, verse 24.

#### (2) **Conscience and Sacrifice**

The boundaries of this dispensation are "from the fall of man until the flood." The Scriptures dealing with this dispensation are found in Genesis, chapter 3, through Genesis, chapter 8, verse 19. This is the first dispensation in which we have an approximate time period. We have no way of knowing the length of the dispensation of Innocence, but we know the dispensation of Conscience and Sacrifice lasted approximately one thousand, six hundred and fifty-six years.

**(3) Human Government**

The boundaries of this dispensation are “from the flood to the call of Abraham.” The Scriptures that deal with this dispensation are found in Genesis, chapter 8, verse 20 through Genesis, chapter 11, verse 32. This dispensation covers a period of approximately 429 years.

**(4) Promise**

The boundaries of this age are: “from the call of Abraham until the giving of the Law.”

The portions of Scripture that deal with this dispensation are found in Genesis, chapter 12, verse 7 through Genesis chapter 19, verse 18. This age covered a period of time of approximately 430 years.

**(5) Law**

The boundaries are “from the giving of the Law to the death of Christ, or Pentecost.”

The Scriptures covering this period of time are most extensive. It starts with Exodus chapter 9, and goes all the way through Matthew chapter 10 of the New Testament. This period of time covered approximately 1,500 to 1,600 years.

**(6) Grace (the present dispensation)**

The boundaries are “from the resurrection of Christ to the Rapture.”

The specific Scriptures that deal with this dispensation are found throughout the New Testament, from Matthew chapter 13, through Revelation chapter 4, verse 1. Revelation chapter 19, verses 11 through 16 deals with this in particular. This dispensation has lasted some 2000 years, and may end at any moment.

**(7) Kingdom Age**

The boundaries of this age are “from the Second Coming of Christ, to the Great White Throne Judgment.

This seventh and final dispensation follows the age of Grace, and will last exactly 1000 years.

This is a brief outline of the Seven Dispensations. As we begin our study of each dispensation we will find that each one had a promising beginning and a disastrous ending; from the dispensation of Innocence to the Kingdom age.

We will study these “periods of time” from four aspects. In each dispensation we will look at: (1) Man’s condition. (2) God’s requirement. (3) Man’s conduct. (4) God’s retribution, or judgment.

When man has come to the end of his rope and all seems hopeless, and for him to continue in such a state would mean his destruction, then God intervenes. God gives man a new start, only to have him end this time of testing the same way, in utter failure.

CHAPTER TWO

Innocence and Conscience

Innocence

This “first period of time” begins with the creation of man and lasts until his disobedience and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The duration of this dispensation

is unknown. We do not know how long Adam was in the garden before he sinned and was expelled.

**“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.” (Genesis 2:7)**

This verse records the beginning of the history of man.

We look first at man’s condition in the dispensation of Innocence. The scene that greeted the first man was one of peace and beauty. Pain, sorrow, sickness and death were unknown. In the dispensation of Innocence man was in a perfect environment, without sin; not that it was impossible for man to sin, but he was at this time without sin.

The temptation to sin came from without. Man’s condition in the dispensation of Innocence was ideal. Adam did not inherit sin, as is the case with all the following generations.

The dispensation of Innocence found man in close fellowship with his Creator. The first dispensation found man created in perfect innocence, placed in ideal surroundings, and in perfect fellowship with his Creator.

God’s requirements of man were two-fold. First, man was given something to do.

**“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Genesis 2:15)**

Man was to dress and keep the garden. God said that he could eat of every tree of the garden except one.

Secondly, man was told something not to do. He was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**“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.” (Genesis 2:17)**

This, my friend, was the plain and simple instructions that God gave to those in the dispensation of Innocence. It would seem that these two commands would be easy to obey, and man would live forever enjoying the fruits of the garden and fellowship with his God. The instructions were so plain that no person should fail to understand. They consisted of only twenty-nine words, of which twenty-six are of one syllable. With such simple instructions how could one fail to not understand? Why? Why? Why? We find the answer, in Genesis chapter 3, verses 4 through 6.

**“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:  
For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.  
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.”  
(Genesis 3:4-6)**

The very same sin that caused the fall of Lucifer records the tragic results. **“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew...” (Genesis 3:7a)**

Many excuses may be made for man’s conduct in the dispensation of Innocence; however, none would make any more sense than those offered by Adam and Eve. Adam’s excuse was:

**“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” (Genesis 3:12)**

The woman’s excuse was:

**“And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” (Genesis 3:13)**

Their excuses were not accepted by God, no more than yours will be. They were told, in a language they understood, NOT TO EAT IT! They were free moral agents, self-governing, with the power of choice. They were responsible for their acts, as is the case with man in every dispensation.

The lesson we learn from this is that if man, in his sinless state, in a perfect environment, who could only be tempted from without, could not endure, what chance do we who inherited sin, tempted from within and without, living in an ungodly world that is controlled by Satan---- I say, what chance do we have? This tells us that if it was possible to be born without sin, we would still not be safe. Being in an innocent state, and in a perfect environment is no guarantee that you would not sin, therefore YOU NEED CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOUR.

The first dispensation (Innocence) ended in judgment. We read:

**“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;  
Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;  
In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Genesis 3:17-19)**

For those who do not believe the Bible account, look about you. We see ample proof everywhere! Yes, God said what He meant, and He meant what He said! God said that the day they partook of this tree they would die. One look at the graveyard should convince the most hardened skeptic of this truth.

**“And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and**

**thirty years: and he died.” (Genesis 5:5)**

Death was unknown in the age of Innocence. Adam died physically during the age of Conscience and Sacrifice, but his death warrant was signed in the Garden of Eden. The generation of Adam was a generation of death, and men have been dying ever since. You may think that that is an awful penalty to pay for such a small sin. My friend, there is no such thing as a “small” sin!

Yes, man failed in the dispensation of Innocence, but God, who loves us, provided not only for Adam, but for every one of us. While the dispensation of Innocence ended in judgment, it also ended with a promise.

**“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)**

### **Conscience**

We come now to the second dispensation, called Conscience and Sacrifice. The scriptures covering this dispensation are from Genesis chapter 3, verse 24 through Genesis chapter 8 verse 19. The duration of this dispensation covered a period of one thousand, six hundred and fifty-seven years. The scriptures that describe man’s condition, as God sees him in this dispensation, are found in Genesis chapter 3, verses 7 through 22. Verse 7 says:

**“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” (Genesis 3:7)**

There was a rude awakening for man when he disobeyed God. He found himself in a position where he could no longer stand before God in innocence. Man found that he needed a covering. He tried to cover himself, but this would not do. God must provide the covering before man could be in fellowship with Him again.

**“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21)**

God’s requirement was a blood sacrifice. We read also in the dispensation of Conscience and Sacrifice.

**“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. (Genesis 4:4)**

“God’s requirements in this dispensation must have been plain, or else Abel would not have known what to bring. We find God’s requirements to be “God’s simple plan of salvation.” (1) Salvation is a gift. (2) The atonement for sin must be by the shedding of blood. (3) It must be by the death of a substitute. The same holds true today---Christ, the free gift of eternal life.

Not only do we see God's wonderful plan of salvation in Abel's offering, but we see the first evidence of "modernism" and "liberalism" in the offering that Cain brought.

**"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord."  
(Genesis 4:3)**

Do not think for a minute that modernism started in recent years by those who deny the Deity of Christ and the blood atonement. No, No, it started just outside the Garden of Eden by the first offspring of our first parents.

We may think that teaching good works for salvation is something of recent origin, but not so. Right here, in Genesis chapter 4, we find that all the "religions" of the world started either by "faith" (by the shedding of blood) or by "works;" (by the fruit of man's own works). It makes no difference what the name of the church, one of two ways will be taught for one to have eternal life. One will teach "by grace through faith, without works; by the substitute of another," and the other will teach that you must "do" something, that is, you must work for your salvation. The Word of God tells us which one is acceptable to God.

**"And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.  
And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.  
But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."  
(Genesis 4:3-5)**

This Scripture, from the New Testament, needs no interpretation.

**"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:  
Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)**

You have only two choices, to accept it, or to deny it. If you choose not to believe the Word of God, that's your problem, and you, no doubt, have a lot of company. This, however, will be little, or no consolation when you stand before God and the books are opened and you find that your name cannot be found in the book of Life.

**"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Revelation 20:12)**

**"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15)**

Now we come to man's conduct in this dispensation of Conscience and Sacrifice. A description of man's conduct is recorded in Genesis, chapter 6.

**“And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” (Genesis 6:3)**

**“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” (Genesis 6:5, 6)**

Man started the dispensation of Conscience knowing right from wrong; knowing what God required, but it ended in disaster. Conscience, then, is not a safe guide. Knowing right from wrong is not enough. If you think that by letting your conscience be your guide, it will result in Eternal Life, look again, for neither being ignorant of sin, or being able to distinguish right from wrong will help one enter the Kingdom of God.

As in the dispensation of Innocence, the dispensation of Conscience ended in judgment and God's retribution.

**“And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.” (Genesis 6:7)**

**“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Genesis 6:13)**

The dispensation of Conscience ended with the judgment of the flood, when everything on the face of the earth, outside of the ark, was destroyed. However, even with this severe judgment God still had plans for man. God was still going to carry out His promise that He made to Adam and Eve. He took Noah and his family through the flood, and with this family started a new dispensation, the third dispensation, that of Human Government.

Today we are living in the sixth dispensation on God's calendar, which may end at any moment. Therefore, it is very important that you know God's requirement for you to have Eternal Life. The Bible is very clear on this subject. Eternal life is in His Son. **“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5:12)** Where do you stand today? Do you have the Son? To have the Son is to have Eternal Life. If you do not have the Son you do not have life. To be safe was to be in the ark. There were no pegs on the outside to hang on. There was NO OTHER WAY! TO BE SAVED YOU MUST BE IN CHRIST. **“Therefore if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature...” (II Corinthians 5:17)** Are you in Christ? If not, why not right now, take that step by receiving Christ as your Saviour.

**“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he**

**that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36)**

## CHAPTER THREE

### Human Government and Promise

#### Human Government

The third dispensation is called “Human Government.” The boundaries are “from the flood to the call of Abraham.” The scriptures covering this dispensation are Genesis chapter 8, verse 20 through Genesis chapter 11, verse 32. This dispensation covers a period of approximately 429 years.

The dispensation of Human Government was much the same as the former dispensation. Conscience was still man’s guide, however, there were some things added. These were added, we believe, to prevent a reoccurrence of the violence and corruption of the former age.

The first thing added in the dispensation of Human Government that would have far reaching effects upon humanity was the institution of capital punishment.

**“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Genesis 9:6)**

The second change, God gave man a “meat” diet.

**“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” (Genesis 9:3,4)**

I am sure that there were a number of other things that differed from the former age of Conscience and Sacrifice.

In keeping with the outlines of our lessons, we look now at man’s condition in the dispensation of Human Government. We read in Genesis, chapter 7:

**“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” (Genesis 7:1)**

Man had a new start; a new opportunity; and from Genesis, chapter 8, verses 20 through 22, it would seem that man was off to an excellent start.

**“And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for**

**man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.  
While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:20-22)**

God had certain requirements in this dispensation, too. After He had blessed Noah and his family, He gave them certain commands.

**And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (Genesis 9:1)**

God's command in this dispensation is again made plain. Man was to replenish the whole earth. This command is repeated again in verse 7.

**“And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.” (Genesis 9:7)**

We mention this because, as we shall see from man's conduct, man does just the opposite.

In the dispensation of Human Government conscience is still the guide, and there was still the offering of the sacrifice, but we see man's conduct in the following scripture.

**“And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.  
And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.  
And they said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”  
(Genesis 11:2-4)**

God's command in the dispensation of Human Government was to “multiply and replenish the whole earth;” however, man's conduct was just the opposite. Now the reason that God gave this command should be plain to all. When man has the numbers and union he has a tendency to trust these rather than to trust God. Instead of obeying God, man wanted a one-world government and a one-world religion; which was not God's plan at all, as we see in Acts, chapter 17.

**“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” (Acts 17:26)**

The United Nations was not man's first attempt to unite the whole world under one united kingdom. The first attempt at this type of organization was tried in the dispensation of Human Government. This was the first organized attempt of man to establish one united kingdom, and one universal world religion. It will be noted that this

attempt was in direct opposition to God's plan. God has a divine plan for a world under one Head, and under one Government, but this can only be brought about when the King of Kings sets up a righteous Kingdom. God told them to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the whole earth," but man said, "let us build a city." Man did this in direct defiance of God.

**"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."**  
**(Genesis 11:4)**

The city that man wanted to build represents the POLITICAL program. The tower represents the RELIGIOUS program. Let us notice a number of things about man's conduct in his effort to build this city and this tower. First, they left God out of their program entirely. There is no recognition or mention made of God in man's efforts to build this city and tower. Does this sound familiar? THEY said, "Let US build US a city and a tower---let US make US a name, lest WE be scattered." God is entirely ignored, and man thinks he can bring about his own solution without the help of God. But this, of course, is doomed to failure. Six times the words "they," "us," and "we" occur in this one brief verse.

Yes, man made an effort to establish a political and religious civilization without God. The city was the political organization for the civil government. The tower in the center represents a unified religious organization. This has been man's dream in every age, to unite all nations into one, and all religions under one umbrella.

A tower, in Scripture, often refers to the central place of sacrifice and worship. This is especially true of most early idolatrous customs. The tower, then, was to be a man-made way to reach God.

Notice the purpose in building the city. It was to make a name for themselves. They said, "Let US make US a NAME." Now notice their ultimate aim, "Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This was in direct defiance of God's instructions.

All of this, of course, was an attempt of Satan to keep man in one place so that he could more easily control him. Satan is not omnipotent or omnipresent, BUT GOD IS! Even with man scattered throughout the earth, God can still deal with each individual, or nation. Satan's power is limited. Satan's goal is to have only one man in control of the whole earth, to use for his purpose as he tried to use Nimrod.

Now we shall see God's retribution in the dispensation of Human Government. God gave man a new start, with new commands, but man once more has shown his utter helplessness, for we read:

**"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.  
And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."  
(Genesis 11:5, 6)**

God said, **“And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”** Yes, they had reached the ultimate. God said, “that is enough---they are going no further.”

The same is true today. Man thinks he has discovered the secrets of creation. They have unlocked the secret of the atom. They have found that matter, as such, has energy and power; that it is unlimited and almost infinite in its possibilities. They have discovered DNA, Genetics, and Cloning. Now man has in his grasp, and in his control, something with which, if he were to go on unrestrained, he could do anything that his heart imagines to do.

Think of it! Over ninety percent of the scientists that the world has ever known are living today. Almost all of the major inventions have taken place in the past few years. To a certain degree man has conquered space, and could be on his way to building another tower of Babel. Truly nothing is restrained from man that he has imagined to do.

In the dispensation of Human Government, which closely parallels the age in which we live, when man seemed on the verge of being able to conquer all, God intervenes. We read in Genesis, chapter 11:

**“Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” (Genesis 11:7-9)**

The word “Babel” is a compound word of two fragments that means “the gate of God.” But God called it “confusion.” Thus ended the dispensation of Human Government.

#### Promise

The fourth dispensation is the dispensation of Promise. The boundaries are from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law. The Scriptures dealing with this dispensation are from Genesis, chapter 12, verse 7, through Genesis chapter 19, verse 18. The dispensation of Promise lasted approximately 430 years. Man’s condition in this dispensation is recorded in Genesis, chapter 12.

**“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” (Genesis 12:1)**

**“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)**

**“And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.” (Genesis 12:7)**

During the first three dispensations God dealt with the race as a unit. When He confounded their language, men of like speech began to drift together, and go out and form nations. This is called the age of Promise because God gave Abraham great promises of blessings if he would leave his own country, Er of the Chaldees, and go into a land that God would show him.

God had three purposes in the call of Abraham and his seed. First, God would give unto the world His written Word. **“...unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Romans 3:2b)**

Secondly, God would bring, through Abraham, His promised Redeemer. This is evident, through the record given of our Lord; that He sprang from the tribe of Judah. Thirdly, God gave Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan. Abraham would serve God, and God would bless Abraham, thus showing the nations of the world that it pays to serve the true and living God, in place of idols.

Let us remember that in the age of Promise salvation was the same as in all ages. It was BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH. **“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” (Galatians 3:6)**

God’s requirements are made plain.

**“And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.” (Genesis 17:9)**

Man’s conduct in the dispensation of Promise covers several chapters of the Bible. It starts in Genesis chapter 12, and goes through Exodus chapter 19. Man’s conduct reaches the heights of obedience when Abraham was willing to offer his son, and the lowest when Lot settled in Sodom.

As long as Abraham and his seed remained in Canaan, and obeyed and served God fully, God blessed them. But they did not stay in the land that God promised to them. The dispensation of Promise started with the call of Abraham and ends with a coffin in Egypt.

God’s retribution upon this nation was over four hundred years of slavery. It seemed the very existence of this nation would be wiped from the face of the earth during this time, and not one of the promises that God made to Abraham would be fulfilled, however, God still had a plan, and a purpose.

When it seems as though all is lost, God once more deals with men, as we shall see in the next dispensation, the dispensation of Law.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Law, Grace and the Kingdom Age

#### Law

In our first four lessons on the dispensations we covered the dispensation of Innocence, Conscience, Human Government and Promise. This lesson is on the fifth

dispensation, the dispensation of Law. The boundaries of this age are from the giving of the Law to the resurrection of Christ. We read:

**“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)**

The Law period lasted from between 1500 and 1600 years. Man’s condition in the age of Law is described in Exodus, chapter 2.

**“And it came to pass in the process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.  
And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.  
And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” (Exodus 2:23-25)**

God remembered the covenant that He had made with Abraham. He was not going to forget His promise, even though Israel had failed time after time, and ended up in bondage in Egypt.

In the dispensation of Law, God’s requirements are stated in several places in Scriptures, but Exodus, chapter 20, verse 3, gives us some idea. The very first command is **“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”** Then in verse 4 we read:

**“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” (Exodus 20:4)**

This is only one portion of the total Law that God gave this nation. Man’s true conduct in this age began before the Law was even delivered, recorded in Exodus, chapter 32.

**“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.  
And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.  
And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.  
And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 32:1-4)**

In keeping with our outlines, it is the same old story of man's failure. Man's conduct under the dispensation of Law is no different than any of the other dispensations. Under the Law we see an almost continuous rebellion of Israel against God.

We also see God's retribution. God's judgment upon the nation of Israel for their failure and disobedience in the dispensation of Law was their dispersion among the nations of the earth. There is not a country where you will not find part of this nation to whom the Law was given. They will, however, one day be restored as a nation.

Before we go to the next dispensation we will take a look at the Law itself. There are not two laws, or three laws, as some would have us believe. There is only ONE LAW. This one Law consists of a moral law, a civil law, a dietary law, and a sacrificial law. Together these constitute the ONE LAW OF GOD.

The "moral law" was given to govern their conduct. The "civil law" was given to enforce the moral law. The "dietary law" was given to govern their health, and the "sacrificial law" was given to govern their religious life. They all constitute one combined Law. All four of these form one Law given by one God to one man, Moses, to be delivered to one nation, Israel.

In these lessons on the dispensations we will not go into detail on the "dispensation of law." We covered this dispensation in some detail in our lessons on "The End of the Law and the Age of Grace."

#### Grace

We come now to the sixth dispensation called, by Paul, "the dispensation of grace."

In the first three dispensations God dealt with man as a family, and as a complete nation. Starting with the dispensation of Promise, God called out a nation. Mankind was divided into two groups, the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations. The same was true in the dispensation of Law. However, in the dispensation of Grace we have three classes of people represented; the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God.

**"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (I Corinthians 10:32)**

These three elements of society are living side by side in the dispensation of Grace. The dispensation of Grace started with the resurrection of Christ and will run its course until the "translation of the Church." John gives us the dividing line between Law and Grace. **"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)**

This age has lasted some 2000 years. We do not know how long this age will last. It could end at any moment with the Rapture of the Church.

The boundaries of this dispensation are "from the resurrection of Christ," until the Rapture of the Church. As to man's condition in this dispensation, no better description can be found than that recorded in Romans, the third chapter.

**"What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." (Romans 3:9)**

**“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”  
(Romans 3:19)**

**“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”  
(Romans 3:23)**

This Scripture plainly states man’s condition in the age of Grace. The Scriptures also state God’s requirements in this dispensation of Grace are, **YOU MUST RECEIVE CHRIST AS SAVIOUR --- YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN**. The Scriptures make this very plain.

**“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.  
But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1: 11,12)**

The clear outline of what God requires of you today, to be saved, is found in Romans, chapter 10, verses 9 and 10. There should be no misunderstanding of what God requires.

**“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.  
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”  
(Romans 10:9, 10)**

What is man’s conduct in this dispensation of Grace? It seems as though in this enlightened age, when the Bible is readily attainable from so many sources, that everyone would read it and believe. There is not a person in the United States, if they want one, that cannot obtain a copy of the Word of God. We have always made it a practice, if there are those who do not have a Bible, or can’t afford one, to give them a Bible. There are many, many Churches and Missions that do the same.

Yes, it does seem that man would readily accept the remedy for sin, as plain and simple as it is; however, on the contrary. Notice, if you will, man’s conduct in this enlightened age.

**“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.  
For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,  
Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;  
Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (II Timothy 3:1-5)**

Man will be religious, but he will not be “born again.” Man will give lip service, but not “heart service.” Most of man’s religion today is in his mouth, not his heart. This age will end the same as all the other dispensations, not with revival as some claim. We read in Revelation, chapter three:

**“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write;  
These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness,  
the beginning of the creation of God;  
I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I  
would thou wert cold or hot.  
So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor  
hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”  
Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods,  
and have need of nothing; and knoweth not that thou art  
wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.”  
(Revelation 3:14-17)**

The apostasy and corruption will be so bad that God is going to spue the apostate religion into the Tribulation. This does not sound like a revival to me. However, those who are born again, those who have Christ as Saviour, will have been translated before the Tribulation period starts.

The next event on God’s calendar is the translation of the Believers, (the Rapture of the Church) which will bring to a close the “dispensation of grace.”

After the Rapture God will then, once more, deal with the nation of Israel. After the nation of Israel, along with the ungodly nations, have been judged, the Lord will set up His Kingdom.

#### Kingdom Age

We come now to the seventh and final dispensation called “the Kingdom age.” The boundaries of this dispensation are “from the public revelation (or the literal second coming of Christ) to the Great White Throne Judgment.

Once more, please do not confuse the translation of the Believers, when they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, with when He comes with the Believers, and plants His feet upon the Mount of Olives, which starts the Kingdom age.

Of the many, many Scriptures that tell of man’s condition in this dispensation, the glorious Kingdom age, we quote one from Isaiah, chapter two.

**“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain  
of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the  
mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all  
nations shall flow unto it.  
And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up  
to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;  
and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths:  
for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the  
Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:2,3)**

Man finds himself once more in an ideal society, with a perfect Ruler. There will be no war, but a time of peace and prosperity. If there was ever a time that man should be convinced that it pays to serve God it would certainly be this time.

God's requirements in this dispensation of the Kingdom can be summed up in these verses found in Isaiah, chapter twelve.

**“And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee:  
though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away,  
and thou comfortedst me.  
Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid:  
for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also  
is become my salvation.  
Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of  
salvation.  
And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his  
name, declare his doings among the people, make mention  
that his name is exalted.  
Sing unto the Lord; for he has done excellent things: this is  
known in all the earth.  
Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the  
Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.” (Isaiah 12:1-6)**

What is man's conduct at the end of this perfect age? We read in Revelation, chapter 20:

**“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be  
loosed out of his prison,  
And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the  
four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them  
together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the  
sea,  
And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed  
the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire  
came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”  
(Revelation 20:7-9)**

Yes, after one thousand years of peace, prosperity and plenty, man will still rebel against God, as he has done in every one of the ages that we have been studying, in these lessons on the dispensations.

The Kingdom age ends with God destroying, by fire, the rebellious nations of the world that have come up against Him. This will end the history of man on this earth.

Then will begin the new Heaven and the new Earth; **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Revelation 21:1a)** and for the saved, all the “blessedness” that follows. (Revelation chapters 21 and 22)

We trust that you have seen through this study on the dispensations how God has dealt with man at different periods of time, **BUT REMEMBER, MAN'S SALVATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH.**

There may have been many reasons for the dispensations in God's plan for this world, but we know it was all for our benefit. First, to prove that we cannot save ourselves, that we must depend upon God.

The primary reason of course, was to keep man from completely destroying himself, so God could fulfill His promise to Adam to bring us a Saviour.

The last and final act for man will be the Great White Throne Judgment. This is God's judgment for all the unsaved – those who have rejected His salvation, throughout the ages. We read of this judgment in Revelation, chapter 20.

**“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.  
And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.  
And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.  
And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.  
And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)**

We close this series of lessons with a question, “Is your name in the book of life? There is only one way to have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

**“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”  
(John 14:6)**

**“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” (John 10:1)**

**“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.” (John 10:7)**

**“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)**

**“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (I Timothy 2:5)**

**“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.  
And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.  
He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not**

**the Son of God hath not life.” (I John 5:10-12)**

**“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)**