

The Dispensational Principle

Lesson 9

Intro: When interpreting the Bible, it is important to understanding the principle of dispensationalism. This principle recognizes that God dealt with people differently; depending on which time period they lived in. Every Scripture was written “for” me, not every Scripture was written “to” me. Certain passages must be interpreted according to the dispensation they were written in, in order to rightly divide the Word of truth. Every person, regardless of the age they lived in, is saved by grace through faith. Dispensationalism does not contradict grace, it compliments it. In each dispensation, God is proving to mankind that he cannot save himself.

Goals:

1. To know what a dispensation is.
2. To understand the principle of dispensationalism.
3. To learn what the different dispensations are and how to use them in order to rightly divide the Word of truth.

Important Definitions:

- 1. Dispensation:** The dealing of God to his creatures; the distribution of good and evil, natural or moral, in the divine government. Neither are Gods methods or intentions different in his dispensations to each man. (*Webster's 1828*)
- 2. Dispensationalism:** The teaching that God has had different plans for different periods of time in man's history.
- 3. Stewardship:** The management of another person's property, finances, or household affairs. As far as the Christians are concerned, stewardship involves the responsibility of managing God's work through the church. God has appointed all Christians to be His stewards on earth. Stewardship is not an option, as Paul points out about his own call. Being a steward is a necessary part of believing the gospel, even if it involves sacrificing personal rewards. 1 Cor. 9:17 (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)

Something to Consider: While we may not agree with the exact division and naming of the dispensations and with every detail of any one dispensational system, it is plain that God has dispensations in the sense of dealing with man in different ways in different eras. Man is no longer tending the Garden of Eden, or building arks, or setting up tabernacles, or offering animal sacrifices, or rearing magnificent temples. Creation is over; the Flood is over; the Law is over; Pentecost is over. It is apparent that we have moved from the Mosaic dispensation to the Church dispensation. These are all examples of dispensational divisions. (*Way of life encyclopedia*)

1. Dispensation:

A. The Definition of Dispensation:

1. Dispensation – oikonomia – administration (of a household or estate); specifically, a (religious) “economy” (*Strong's*) The management of a household or of household affairs specifically; the management, oversight, administration, of other's property; the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship administration, dispensation. (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*)
2. A dispensation is the responsibility, or stewardship, that God gives certain people for a time. In Paul's case, his personal responsibility of ministry is described as a stewardship. Eph. 3:2. (*Robert Hackaman's How to Interpret the Bible*)
3. A dispensation states, in the form of a command, what God wants people to do. It is a responsibility or stewardship. 1 Cor. 9:17, Eph. 1:10, 3:2, Colossians 1:25.

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B. The Division of Dispensations:

1. Dispensation of Innocence or Created Man
 - a. Time – From the creation of man to the fall of man.
 - b. Responsibility – Man must choose whether he will believe God's Word or the statements of Satan.
2. The Dispensation of Conscience or Fallen Man
 - a. Time – From the fall of man to the flood (1656 years) -Genesis 3-7.
 - b. Responsibility – Man is to choose between doing good and evil. He insists on evil.
3. The Dispensation of Human Government or Governed Man
 - a. Time – From the flood to the confusion of tongues (427 years) – Gen. 8:1-11:9
 - b. Responsibility – Noah was given the power to govern and the power of capital punishment. As a responsibility, it has never ended.
4. The Dispensation of Promise or the Patriarchs
 - a. Time – From the call of Abraham to the Exodus (430 years) – Gen. 11:10-15:21.
 - b. Responsibility – to stay in the land which God gave to him and not to go down into Egypt, which is a type of the world.
5. The Dispensation of Law
 - a. Time – From Sinai to Calvary (1491 years)
 - b. Responsibility – to keep the law; includes the Ten Commandments, and all laws, social and civil.
6. The Dispensation of Grace
 - a. Time – From Calvary to the Rapture.
 - b. Responsibility – to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. The Dispensation of Judgment or Tribulation

- a. Time – From the Rapture of the Church to the Millennium.
- b. Responsibility – to recognize God and to worship God.

8. The Dispensation of the Kingdom

- a. Time – From the descent of Christ to the Great White Throne.
- b. Responsibility – obedience, submission, and worship to the King.

2. Divisions within Dispensations: There are other divisions that need to be considered when correctly interpreting Scripture. An important rule to follow, in order to rightly divide the Word of Truth, is to understand that not only much truth be divided into dispensations, but it must be divided within its own dispensation.

A. Ages to Consider:

1. An age refers to various periods of time in which God is working out His plans. The Bible speaks of *ages past* (Eph. 3:5, Col. 1:26) the *present age* (1 Cor. 10:11, Eph. 1:21, 2:2, Titus 2:12) and the *future ages* (Eph. 1:21, 2:7, Heb. 6:5) (*Wat of life encyclopedia*)
2. Dynamically, an age is a period of time that is characterized by some activity of God, man, or Satan. The period during which the Lord Jesus is building His Church is called **the Church age**. The pretribulation rapture view, the period immediately after the rapture of the Church and before Christ's second coming to earth is called **the Tribulation Age** because of the many judgments earth will experience during this time. (Rev. 6-19). This period during which God deals with Israel (the 70 weeks of Daniel 9) is sometimes called **the Jewish Age** (Matt. 24:3). Our Lord's reign over the earth for a thousand years is called **the Kingdom Age**. (Robert Hackaman's' *How to Interpret the Bible*)

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B. Covenants to Consider: (Robert Hackaman's *How to Interpret the Bible*)

1. This is solemn statement that God made to certain people of what He promised to do. While a dispensation states in the form of a command what God wants people to do, a covenant declares in the form of a promise what He will do.

2. The Major Covenants are as follows:

a. The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9:8-17)

b. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:1-19, 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:4-21, 22:15-18)

c. The Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19:1-8, 24:1-8, Lev. 18:5)

d. The Palestinian Covenant (Deut. 28:1-29, 30:1-10)

e. The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:10-16)

f. The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-40, Heb. 8:6-13, 10:15-17, 12:24)

Closing: