Dispensationalism

By Barry Pendley, M.Div.
Course Description

This is one of the courses in the Tools for Teens curriculum. Dispensationalism is an approach to the interpretation of Scripture. This course introduces the student to the topic of Dispensationalism and contrasts this system with other systems of interpretation. Throughout this study, the student is enlightened to the progressive nature of revelation among the seven Dispensations. The study concludes with interpretational guidelines for understanding the Bible.  (1 Quarter)

About “Tools for Teens”

Tools for Teens is a complete discipleship curriculum designed to ground teens in biblical/theological content. The authors of this material believe in the following:

- Teens must be enabled to understand the doctrines of the Bible.
- Teens must be enabled to understand the content of the Bible.
- Teens must be enabled to understand the historical roots of Baptists, Christianity, and Fundamentalism.
- Teens must be enabled to relate to one another, authorities, and their community from a biblical perspective.

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS COURSE is to introduce teens to the system of dispensationalism. To date, there is a lack of systematic teaching of dispensationalism to teens. Traditionally, this teaching has been the private domain of Bible colleges and seminaries.

This unfortunate void has led some of its critics to think that dispensationalism is “on its way out.” There are some books on the issue that are written at a typical teen level. However, these are out-dated and do not reflect recent positive clarifications and revisions of dispensationalism. The fact that new books are being published, as well as curricula such as this, demonstrates that dispensationalism is “here to stay.”

This series of lessons stresses the importance of using a literal hermeneutic when approaching Scripture. Teens will gain a proper understanding of the goal of history. They will learn the distinctions between the Church and Israel. They will accurately see distinctions in the progressive outworking of God’s plan.

This particular course contains terms and concepts usually foreign to teens. Therefore the use of weekly quizzes will help facilitate the review and retention necessary. The quizzes are found on pages 107ff.

As the course is taught, teens will be asked to read from various articles and/or book excerpts. These have been included. However, it is strongly suggested that the teens at least purchase Charles Ryrie’s book, *Dispensationalism*, published by Moody Press, 1995.

Is Dispensationalism Valid?

**D**ISPENSATIONALISM IS ONE OF MANY different systems used for interpreting the Bible. Yet, as you will see from this lesson and future ones, dispensationalism has much to commend itself as a legitimate system of interpretation.

Even a critic of dispensationalism recognizes the value this system of interpretation provides.

What has dispensationalism produced? Good things like the Bible conference movement and many books refining prophetic studies. Dispensationalism offers a straightforward hermeneutic, a system of interpretation that fascinates laypeople and attracts large crowds to Christ and to Bible-believing churches. The concept and widespread use of study Bibles come from this tradition, and such Bibles are used by many Christians of various theological persuasions. Believers are thrilled by the design of history and clear sense of providence set forth by dispensationalist theology.¹

**Why is dispensationalism necessary?**

**Dispensationalism answers the question – “What is the overall theme of scripture?”**

History has a goal. Every event in history progresses until that goal is reached. What then is the overall goal of history? Simply put, the overall goal is the glory of God. But there is more to it than that. The

question one must ask further is “How then does God bring glory to Himself?”

A dispensationalist understands that God brings glory to Himself by establishing His kingdom. He will be glorified on the earth, within time, in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ, the Messiah, will physically begin reigning during the 1,000 year millennium. All the nations will bow down and glorify God. The saved will minister with and for Him during the kingdom

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Rev 5.13) cf. Is 45.23; Eze 7.17; 21.7; Ro 14.11; Php 2.10

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (Rev 20.4–6)
Dispensationalism provides a “grid” for understanding scripture

Everyone has a “grid” by which he interprets God’s Word. A “grid” is a system through which a person can strain out the good from the bad. This helps him to discern the true meaning of Scripture. We interpret the Bible dispensationally because:

- Dispensationalism explains apparent contradictions in Scripture.
- Dispensationalism is consistent. It uses a normal (a.k.a. literal) interpretation of Scripture in every passage.
- Dispensationalism helps protect against heresy. When a person takes God’s Word literally, he will not explain away the author’s obvious intent and meaning.
- Dispensationalism takes into account the way God gave out His truth over time. God gave his truth progressively as He desired.

Is dispensationalism the only system used today?

No. Dispensationalism is only one of many different systems that people use to understand the Bible. We believe that dispensationalism is the correct system of interpretation because it best takes into account the way God gave out His truth over time.

The fact that we are making much of dispensationalism begs the question, “What are the other systems that people use?” Here they are:

The system of covenant theology

The word “covenant” is a biblical word. A covenant is an agreement that binds two parties together.² Covenant theology sees two covenants.³ Covenant
The first covenant is the one that God made an agreement with Adam. Adam agreed to work the garden and have dominion over the earth (covenant of works). God agreed to give Adam and his descendants eternal life if they perfectly obeyed. When Adam sinned, God made a new covenant with him, providing salvation (covenant of grace). The covenant theologian believes that believers today are under the same covenant as Adam.

The Covenant system, which opposes dispensationalism, is rather pessimistic. In the Covenant system, God will not be fully glorified within time. Good and evil will exist simultaneously until eternity.

The basic problems with this system:

- Covenant theology lacks biblical support. Though the word “covenant” appears in the Bible, there is not biblical precedent for understanding that modern-day believers are still under the Adamic (and other Old Testament covenants).
- Covenant theologians do not consistently use a normal interpretation of Scripture.
- Covenant theology cannot properly resolve seeming contradictions. It sees little or no difference between Israel and the church. God has made it plain that the two are very different. Therefore, covenant theology cannot explain (and does not attempt to explain) the way God progressively gave His revelation. This will be explained in further lessons.
- Covenant theology ignores the differences between the Church and Israel. Therefore, in its attempt to explain the two groups, the covenant theologian merely states that the church is

3 Some covenant theologians have seen more covenants. However, the covenants of works and grace became the basis of all covenant theology.

4 Some posit a third covenant, the covenant of redemption. This was an agreement between God the Father and God the Son in eternity past. The Father agreed to elect and predestine the elect and the Son agreed to redeem them.
simply the continuation of Israel, without bibli-
cal support.\(^5\)

**Undeveloped “systems”**

Does this sound like the oxymoron “jumbo shrimp?” After all, how can a “system” be “undeveloped?” Well, everybody has a system by which he approaches Scripture, even if it is not systematically thought through. For example, the liberal has a system. He denies that miracles really happened. All miracle stories are merely fables, in his view.

True Christians deny the liberal’s approach to Scripture. Therefore, in these lessons, we will not concern ourselves with the liberal’s approach. We are interested in approaches that are considered “mainline Christian.” These are systems that are used by well-meaning Christians. They have not developed a well-thought out approach to Scripture. Yet they interpret the Bible according to some rules. Here are some examples of how many Christians improperly approach Scripture.

**“Goulash” systems**

The technical word for this is *eclecticism*. A person who uses this approach to Scripture will “pick and choose” an interpretation from commentaries, friends, and respected teachers.

*Problems with this approach:*

- There is no central **theme** to Scripture for this person.
- When this person faces a contradiction, he often simply follows the “majority” opinion.
- This person must rely on **others** in order to understand Scripture.

\(^5\) Of course the covenant theologian will claim that he has passages that prove his theory, but he simply interprets these passages in an abnormal way.
Experience-based systems

Man naturally wants to use his experience to interpret Scripture. Therefore, he will use his experience as a guide in determining truth.

Problems with this approach:

- There is no central theme to Scripture for this person.
- This person cannot be dogmatic about an interpretation unless he has experienced it.
- This person will have contradictions in experience and, thus, contradictions in interpretation.

Mystically-based systems

Those who favor this approach often speak of the “hidden messages” or “deeper meanings” in God’s Word.

Problems with this approach:

- There is no central theme to Scripture for this person.
- This person handles contradictions by “twisting” Scripture.
- This person misses the clear point of Scripture in his hunt for something else.

This is not a complete list of possible systems. As long as people continue to reject a normal interpretation of Scripture, they will develop new systems.

Conclusion

Look over the Undeveloped “systems.” Which system best describes your current way of interpreting Scripture? Why?

Learning the Truth

Read Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism, pp. 11–20.
IN THE PREVIOUS LESSON, we saw that Dispensationalism is a system that people use to interpret the Bible. It is not the only system, but there are good reasons for accepting dispensationalism as a valid interpretative system. It is a system of interpretation that consistently explains the way God has laid out His truth.

When we say that dispensationalism is a system used to interpret the Bible, this begs the question – “Aren’t you forcing interpretations by putting a man-made system on the Bible?”

As you will see today, the word “dispensation” and its concept is biblical. It is a difficult word to define, but once you understand the word, you will see how it makes sense.

The origin of the word “dispensation”

Our English word “dispensation” comes from the Greek word oikonomia. Oikonomia means “management” or “administration.” Therefore, when we speak of dispensations, we are literally speaking of different administrations or ways of managing.

For instance, you may have heard of the Bush Administration or the Clinton Administration. George Bush and Bill Clinton are two presidents. They each had their own administration. President Bush’s administration (dispensation) clearly opposed abortion. However, when President Clinton’s
administration took over it paved the way for “abortion rights.” This is one illustration of how dispensations or administrations differ.

Another example that illustrates a dispensation is your family. When you were born, your mom and dad administrated your home. When you were a new-born, they administrated your entire life (i.e., what you ate, what you wore, when your diapers were changed, etcetera). As you grew up, your parents were still the administrators, but things changed. They allowed you to wear your favorite clothes. They no longer changed your diapers. They were still the administrators, but the administration changed.

Now, let’s consider some verses where the words “dispensation” and “administration” are used.

Surely you have heard about the administration [oikonomia] of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. (Ephesians 3:2)

I have become its servant by the commission [oikonomia] God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness (Colossians 1:25)

The definition of a “dispensation”

Now that we have seen the origin of the word “dispensation,” we will now consider the definition.

“A dispensation is a distinguishable [administration] in the outworking of God’s purpose.”

Let’s break this definition down a bit further.

It is “distinguishable”

You can tell the difference between one dispensation and another. Each dispensation is different from
another. This does not mean that each dispensation is completely different, but each dispensation has its own characteristics. Dispensationalists recognize that God gave His truth at different times, in different ways, and in different amounts. The biblical writers recognized this.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. (Hebrews 1:1)

It is the outworking of God’s purpose

God is in charge. He is the one who sets up new dispensations. He is the one who creates new administrations. He is the one who is accomplishing the goal of history.

With each new dispensation, God gives new information

God distributed new information in each dispensation. God gave Adam new information. God gave Abraham new information. God gave Moses new information. God gave the Church new information. Theologians call this process “progressive revelation.” It is the backbone of dispensationalism.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. (Heb 1.1)

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2Pe 1.21)

With each new dispensation, man must prove faithful to God

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1Co 4.2)

Let’s put this together. Imagine again the “dispensations” within your own family life. When you were four years old, your parents gave you information: “Do not cross the street!” Now that you are fifteen, your parents have given you new instructions: “Look both ways before crossing the street!” What happened? Sound like a contradiction?
Can you distinguish a difference between the dispensation of your younger years and now? If so, what are some of those differences?

What new information did your parents give you when you became a teen?

Why would your parents change their administration? You grew up. You could now handle the new information. They know you know the danger of crossing a street. When you were four, you had no idea.

The core of dispensationalism

The definition provides one with an understanding of dispensationalism. However, when is a dispensationalist a dispensationalist? In other words, how can you tell that a person is a genuine dispensationalist? Here are the core issues:

- A dispensationalist will maintain that Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel. He will not blend the two together. He will not think that the modern believer is under the same law or receiving the same blessings as Old Testament believers.
- A dispensationalist will consistently interpret Scripture normally.
- A dispensationalist will recognize that God will be glorified in time by the reign of Christ in the future. Christ, though with God now, is not physically reigning on the earth as explained in many passages: Zechariah 14; Revelation 20.1–6.

Other things to understand about dispensationalism

- A dispensation is not primarily a period of time, but a method of administration. The time frame
is there, but a dispensation is not simply a period of time.

- Dispensationalism is not a cult or a heretical, unorthodox way of dealing with the Bible. Contrary to what some of its critics claim, dispensationalism stands in the orthodox, evangelical stream.

- Dispensationalism does not advocate more than one way of salvation. Men of all ages have been saved by grace through faith. The amount of revelation changes from one dispensation to the next, but the plan of salvation remains the same.

**Conclusion**

A dispensationalism is a way of managing things based on a certain amount of revelation. As God progressively unfolded revelation, He expected different things from different people at different times.

**Learning the Truth**

Read Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, pp. 25–34.

Also, read the following article, *What is Dispensationalism?*
What is Dispensationalism?²

Charles C. Ryrie, Th.D.

In our chaotic world, changes bombard us almost constantly. Governments fall and rise with disturbing ways of doing things, although the basics of the society usually remain unchanged.

On a personal level, prices change at the gas station or supermarket almost weekly. Just recently, I and other property owners in Dallas received the jolting news of a 100 percent property tax assessment – a new era for my tax bill! These changes help us to understand more fully a very common principle of life – dispensationalism.

In the New Testament, dispensation means to manage or administer the affairs of a household, as, for example, in the Lord’s story of the unfaithful steward in Luke 16.1–13.³

In theology, a dispensation is a “stage in a progressive revelation, expressly adapted to the needs of a particular nation or period of time . . . also, the age or period during which a system has prevailed.”⁴ But the concept is not only theological, it is also common to many aspects of life.

First, it is a religious concept

The Roman Catholic Church bases the granting of a dispensation on the Code of Canon Law. That Code defines it as “a relaxation of the law in a particular case: it can be granted by the legislator, by his successor in office, by a superior legislator and by a person delegated by the foregoing” (Canon 80). For example, the Church sometimes grants a special dispensation in the annulment of a marriage. The person receiving the dispensation may then remarry and remain in good standing in the Catholic Church. In this usage, the dispensation grants an exemption from normal procedures.

² © Charles C. Ryrie. Used by permission.
³ BAGD.
⁴ Oxford English Dictionary.
Other more common occasions also illustrate the exemption idea of a dispensation. For example, you have been counseling all week at a church camp whose regulations provide for lights out at, say, 11:00 PM. Now it’s Friday, and your campers will return home tomorrow. Tonight will be filled with many “last” things – the last service, the last snacks, the last talks with new and old friends, and the last lights out. Realizing all that is involved in a last night, you suggest to the camp director that he make lights out later. He agrees, and says, “I’ll give you a special dispensation tonight. Lights out will be at midnight.”

So as a camp counselor or director, you have probably had a dispensational experience.

Second, it is an economic concept

The New Testament Greek word translated “dispensation” actually spells out “economy” in English. A dispensation is an economy, “a system of arrangement or mode of operation of something.”

When I studied in Great Britain, I had an experience that alerted me to these economic differences between countries. I became ill, and since I was a student at a university, I went to the health service. The doctor gave me some instructions and a prescription to be filled. I took it to the chemist (drug store), and when I started to pay for it I discovered it cost only a shilling (about twenty cents in those days). I couldn’t believe my ears, for I had never bought any medicine in the United States for twenty cents. Suddenly it dawned on me that I was living in a country that had socialized medicine.

For the sake of illustration, let’s assume that in those days Britain was a socialistic society and the United States a capitalistic one. Of course, there were capitalistic features in Britain and socialistic features in the United States, but in the total picture there were enough differences to distinguish the two economies. You may have flown to Britain on the British
government-owned airline (the United States owns none). You traveled within the country on British Railways. You received medical assistance through the National Health Service. There were obvious differences.

But there were also some similarities. Both countries had social security. Each had some government-owned utilities. Both capitalism and socialism use money, both have public and private ownership, both have laws (some of them exactly the same), but each economy is distinct. And when you move from one to the other you are aware of the economic or dispensational differences.

**Third, it is a social concept**

White shoes for men in the summer go in and out of style. But sometimes even in the same summer it is fashionable to wear them in certain parts of the country and not in another.

I learned this dispensational distinction the hard way. White shoes were the rage in Texas that summer, but not in California. So there I was speaking to hundreds of preachers in California, wearing my white shoes. I think only one other person in the entire audience also had on a pair. These differences in social arrangements make up the basic concept of dispensationalism. The person who fails to recognize the differences just isn’t being realistic.

**Fourth, it is a family concept**

All parents raise their children according to dispensational arrangements. When a child is small, bedtime, for instance, is at seven o’clock. As the youngster grows bedtime is changed to eight. The teenager receives special privileges, especially on weekends. To put a teenager under the rules that are necessary and appropriate for a child would be disaster, and vice versa.
At the same time, many things are the same for all ages. We teach children and teenagers not to lie. We incorporate a law forbidding stealing at every stage in child development. In other words, some particulars are always the same; some are similar though not exactly the same; and some change completely.

Families are reared this way, and God has governed His world differently at different times. Those different arrangements throughout the progress of history are the dispensations.

Fifth, it is a theological concept

Dispensationalists are often accused of [imposing] a concept on the Bible rather than deriving it from the Bible. It is alleged that dispensation is never used in the way dispensationalism uses it. But that simply is not true.

To be sure, not all the New Testament uses of dispensation (there are twenty) refer to a specific dispensation. Sometimes it refers to the steward who manages a household (Lk 16.1,3,8; 1Co 4.1–2). In Romans 16.23 Erastus is called the city treasurer (“dispenser”). Sometimes the word is translated stewardship, administration, or dispensation, and in some of those instances it does refer to a specific dispensation of the dispensational scheme.

For instance, Paul wrote of a dispensation in which God would make Jews and Gentiles equal members of the same body of Christ, an idea unknown in Old Testament times (Eph 3.6). That arrangement, which exists now, stands in sharp contrast to the former arrangement of the coming millennial kingdom (Eph 1.10). So at least three dispensations are specifically referred to in Scripture, and the word itself is used of them.

Do these clearly marked administrations point to a procedure by which God has been governing the household of His world throughout time? Apparently so. Certainly there were different arrangements
before and after the fall of man in Genesis 3. If so, then four administrations are clearly evident – that before the Fall, that after the Fall until the time of Christ, the Christian, and the coming millennial kingdom.

But the giving of the Mosaic Law introduced a different arrangement whereby God centered His attention on one nation and governed it by His special direction. Since that is so, then five dispensations are clearly distinguished in Scripture. It only remains to decide if God’s directions to Noah after the Flood introduced enough new arrangements to make out a new administration, and if the call of Abraham did also. Five administrations appear to be the minimum number that can be seen in the progress of revelation, and seven the maximum.
What are the Dispensations?

The overall goal of history is that God will be ultimately glorified in the Kingdom. God’s plan throughout history is going forward until that goal is reached. God will accomplish His goal.

Yet, God used and will use different means to accomplish His goal. Consider again Hebrews 1.1

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

These various ways were and are the various dispensations (or various administrations). Today, we will overview the various ways God dispensed or administrated His truth.

God dispenses His truth piece by piece

God did not reveal all of His information at once. He dispensed His truth piece by piece. Why did He do it this way?

God dispensed His truth piece by piece, ultimately, because He desired to do so

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ. (Eph 1.9)

The full answer is still known only by God. He has not given us every reason why He did it this way. Nor
is He constrained to give us all the reasons. We can be thankful that we do have some insight.

**God dispensed His truth piece by piece as man was able to handle it**

God doled out His truth bit by bit. Adam did not blame God for not telling him that work would become difficult if he sinned. David did not blame God for not giving him a clearer picture of life after death. You cannot call God unjust for not giving you all the information you would like about heaven. Actually, it would be reasonable to think that if God did give you full knowledge about heaven, you would become distracted from obeying God’s other commands for this present dispensation.

This demonstrates God’s grace. He has given us some information about the future. We should be thankful for what we have and not worry about what God has not yet revealed.

**God dispenses His truth progressively**

Early dispensationalists claimed that a dispensation was a period of time.¹ This view could be illustrated by using a time line or mailbox diagram.

*Time line (Mailbox) View*

This view taught that a dispensation had its own information for its own people. For instance, you would never think about reading the mail in your

¹ Note Scofield’s definition of a dispensation. “A dispensation is a period of time.” *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 5 & *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 3.
neighbor’s mailbox. That would be unethical (though interesting). Some dispensationalists teach that only Paul’s epistles have value for the believer today. They would say that the Gospels, the book of Acts, and Revelation have no application for us today.

Dispensations should not be viewed primarily as time spans or individual mailboxes.

As God dispenses truth, it accumulates

Spiral View

As dispensations come and go, revelation progresses. God’s truth accumulates with each dispensation. Some illustrate this accumulation by dumping all of the previous revelation into the next dispensation.

However, while the revelation does accumulate, not all of the information in each dispensation applies to the next. There is a better way to view God’s giving of revelation.

As God dispenses truth, a goal is being reached

God has given revelation progressively. This revelation also accumulates. Yet, all of this revelation also reaches a goal. As the dispensations progress, the kingdom is always in sight. In the older mailbox view, dispensations did not relate to each other. As we consider dispensations, we see them progressing.
building upon the other until the kingdom. A staircase illustrates this well.

Not only do the dispensations progress toward the kingdom, they spill over into each other. Unlike the spiral view, only some information passes from one dispensation into the other. These are called continuing principles. As we continue this study, we will look at many continuing principles. Let’s look at a couple of examples.

- A continuing principle from the dispensation of *Innocence*
  Adam was given the responsibility to care for and keep the earth. Each person in the following dispensations is to do likewise.

- A continuing principle from the dispensation of *Conscience*
  After Adam and Eve sinned, God told them to sacrifice animals. Sacrifices were part of the life of Israel from the dispensation of Conscience through the dispensation of the Law.

**So what are the dispensations?**

*Innocence*: From creation to the Fall (Ge 1.28–3.6)
**Conclusion**

God’s ultimate goal of establishing His kingdom on earth will be fulfilled. God is sovereignly moving history in that direction. As God revealed more information about Himself and about His plan. His administration of creation has changed. Dispensationalism reflects this truth.

**Learning the Truth**

Read *Dispensationalism*, pp. 39–41.
STARTING WITH THIS LESSON, we will examine the features involved in each dispensation. Since each dispensation contains new revelation and new responsibilities, they will be identified. Many principles from one dispensation spill into the next dispensation; those will be identified also.

The dispensation of innocence: from creation to the Fall (Ge 1.28–3.6)

What does “innocence”\(^1\) mean?

“Innocence” means freedom from guilt or the effects of sin. This accurately describes Adam and Eve’s situation. They did not experience sin, therefore, they were innocent.

Based on the word’s common usage, some people wrongly think

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1 Some dispensationalists like to name this dispensation “freedom” because of the trouble associated with the word “innocence.” The title may change in the future, but for now “innocence” will be used. Since the term has been used almost exclusively since the 1800s it is in the interest of this author to reflect a current presentation of dispensationalism.
“An innocent person is neutral.”

“An innocent person does not know the difference between good and evil.”

So then, what we mean by “innocence” is that Adam and Eve were free from the guilt and effects of sin. They were not morally neutral; they were holy and good.

The new revelations

Below are all of the responsibilities that we know God gave to Adam and Eve. Since God spoke directly with Adam in the garden, there may have been more, but these are the only ones with which we will concern ourselves.

- Fill the earth with people. Genesis 1.28
- Control the earth. Genesis 1.28
- Rule over the animals. Genesis 1.28
- Tend the garden. Genesis 2.15
- Eat vegetables. Genesis 1.29–30
- Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2.17

The new responsibilities

Both Adam and Eve were to obey God. If they kept the commands, they would be confirmed in holiness.

As you are well aware, Adam and Eve sinned. They were expelled from the garden, never to enter it again.

The continuing principles

- Man must continue to fill the earth.
- Man must continue to control the earth.

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2 That is, innocent people are neither sinful nor holy. Adam and Eve were holy. Louis Talbot, God’s Plan of the Ages, p. 24.

3 George Beckwith, God’s Prophetic Plan, p. 23.
• Man must continue to have a vegetarian diet.

Of these three principles, which one still applies today? Since the earth is filled, and man is now allowed to eat meat, controlling the earth is the one we are to continue practicing. Of course, because of sin, man’s control over creation is severely limited.

The dispensation of conscience: from the Fall to the Flood (Ge 4.1–8.14)

What does “conscience” mean?

The conscience is one’s inborn sense of right and wrong. It influences your decisions. The conscience uses the information it has been given to make a decision.

God ruled during this economy through man’s conscience (Ge 6.3). It was an internal administration with no external, civil restraint – no police, no jails, no human government.

After Adam and Eve’s sin, God placed restrictions, gave a promise of future victory over Satan, and established the sacrifices. These truths now guided the consciences of people.

During the dispensation of conscience, people were to live holy lives. Failure to do so “kicked in” their consciences, telling them that offerings were in order. If they failed to offer a sacrifice, their consciences would convict them again.

The new revelations

The promise of Genesis 3.15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.
• Eve and Satan were made bitter enemies. In order for Eve to receive help for her sin, she had to hate Satan.

• All of the descendants of Adam and Eve (believers) would be opposed to all those who follow Satan (unbelievers).

• Christ would triumph over Satan.

The need and purpose of sacrifices
But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The L ORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. (Ge 4.4–5)

Since Adam and Eve were now ashamed of their nakedness, they needed to cover themselves. God slaughtered an animal before their eyes and made them clothing from skin.

The sacrifices were continual reminders of the tragic results of sin. The life of an animal was tragically taken. The one sacrificing the animal must sacrifice in faith.

The new responsibilities
Man was to obey the Holy Spirit’s promptings on his conscience. He was to sacrifice and believe the promise of Genesis 3.15.

The continuing principles
The conscience still convicts of sin
Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. (Ro 2.14–15)
One must sacrifice in faith

This principle continued until the present dispensation (the church). We no longer sacrifice because Jesus Christ was our sacrifice.

Learning the Truth

Dr. Cyrus I. Scofield was the editor of the original Scofield Reference Study Bible. Dr. Scofield was one of the greatest contributors to our understanding of dispensationalism. It comes as no surprise that the notes of his study Bible are filled with the teachings of dispensationalism. This Bible alone did much to popularize the teachings of dispensationalism. To that end we are very grateful to Dr. Scofield.4

Dr. Scofield also wrote a little book, Rightly Dividing the Truth. Below is a chapter from the book entitled, “The Seven Dispensations.” I have highlighted some important statements. Read this article and answer the questions that follow.

4 Unfortunately, Dr. Scofield is also responsible for promoting several ideas that most dispensationalists now disavow. For example, He believed in the gap theory of Creation; a dispensation is a period of time; the test, failure, judgment motif of each dispensation; and different means of salvation in the different dispensations. The New Scofield Reference Bible fixes many of these errors.
The Seven Dispensations

by C.I. Scofield

The Scriptures divide time, by which is meant the entire period from the creation of Adam to the “new heaven and a new earth” of Revelation 21.1, into seven unequal periods, called, usually, “dispensations,” although these periods are also called “ages” and “days” – as, “day of the Lord,” etc.

These periods are marked off in Scripture by some change in God’s method of dealing with mankind, or a portion of mankind, in respect of the two questions of sin and of man’s responsibility. Each of the dispensations may be regarded as a new test of the natural man, and each ends in judgment – marking his utter failure.

Five of these Dispensations, or periods of time, have been fulfilled; we are living in the sixth, probably towards its close, and have before us the seventh, and last – the Millennium.

Man innocent

This dispensation extends from the creation of Adam, Genesis 2.7, to the expulsion. Adam, created innocent and ignorant of good and evil, was placed in the garden of Eden with his wife, Eve, and put under responsibility to abstain from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Dispensation of Innocence resulted in the first and, in its far-reaching effects, the most disastrous of the failures of the natural man, and was closed by judgment – “So He drove out the man.”

Ge 1.26; 2.16; 17; 3.6; 3.22–24

Man under conscience

By the Fall Adam and Eve acquired, and transmitted to the race, the knowledge of good and evil. This gave conscience a basis for right moral judgment, and hence the race came under this measure of re-
sponsibility – to do good and eschew evil. The result of the Dispensation of Conscience was that “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth,” 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 God closed the second testing of the natural man with judgment – the Flood.

Ge 3.7, 22; 6.5,11,12; 7.11, 12, 23

Man in authority over the earth (government)

Out of the fearful judgment of the Flood, God saved eight persons to whom, after the waters [went away], He gave the purified earth with ample power to govern it. This, Noah and his descendants were responsible to do. The dispensation of Human Government resulted, upon the plain of Shinar, in the impious attempt to become independent of God and closed in judgment – the Confusion of Languages.

Ge 9.1,2; 11.1–4; 11.5–8

Man under promise

Out of the dispersed descendants of the builders of Babel, God now calls one man Abram, with whom He enters into covenant. Some of the promises to Abram and his descendants were purely gracious and unconditional. These either have been, or will yet be, literally fulfilled. Other promises were conditional upon the faithfulness and obedience of the Israelites. Every one of these conditions was violated, and the Dispensation of Promise resulted in the utter failure of Israel, and closed in the judgment of the Egyptian Bondage.

The book of Genesis, which opens with the sublime words, “In the beginning God created,” closes with, “in a coffin in Egypt.”

Ge 12.1–3; 13.14–17;15.5; 26.3; 28.12–13; Ex 1.13–14
Man under law

Again the grace of God came to the help of helpless man and redeemed the chosen people out of the hand of the oppressor. In the Wilderness of Sinai He proposed to them the Covenant of Law. Instead of humbly pleading for a continued relation of grace, they presumptuously answered: “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” The history of Israel in the Wilderness and in the Land is one long record of flagrant, persistent violation of the Law, and at last, after multiplied warnings, God closed the testing of man by law in judgment, and first Israel, and then Judah, were driven out of the Land into a dispersion which still continues. A feeble remnant returned under Ezra and Nehemiah, of which, in due time, Christ came: “Born of a woman – made under the law.” Him both Jews and Gentiles conspired to crucify.

Ex 19.1–8; 2Ki 17.1–18; 25.1–11; Ac 2.22–23; 7.51–52; Ro 3.19–20; 10.5; Gal 3.10;

Man under grace

The sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ introduced the dispensation of pure grace – which means undeserved favor, or God giving righteousness, instead of God requiring righteousness, as under Law.

Salvation, perfect and eternal, is now freely offered to Jew and Gentile upon the one condition of faith.

Jn 5.24; 6.29; 10.27–28; Eph 2.8–9

The predicted result of this testing of man under grace is judgment upon an unbelieving world and an apostate Church.

Lk 18.8; 17.26–30; 2Th 2.7–12; Rev 3.15–16

The first event in the closing of this dispensation will be the descent of the Lord from Heaven, when sleeping saints will be raised and, together with be-
lievers then living, caught up “to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1Th 4.16–17

Then follows the brief period called “the great tribulation.”

Da 12.1; Jer 30.5–7; Zep 1.15–18; Mt 24.21–22

After this occurs the personal return of the Lord to the earth in power and great glory, and the judgments which introduce the seventh and last dispensation.

Man under the personal reign of Christ (kingdom)

After the purifying judgments which attend the personal return of Christ to the earth, He will reign over restored Israel and over the earth for one thousand years. This is the period commonly called the Millennium. The seat of His power will be Jerusalem, and the saints, including the saved of the Dispensation of Grace, viz., the Church, will be associated with Him in His glory.

Isa. 11; Ac 15.14–17; Isa 2.1–4; Rev 19.11–21; 20.1–6

But when Satan is “loosed a little season” he finds the natural heart as prone to evil as ever, and easily gathers the nations to battle against the Lord and His saints, and this last dispensation closes, like all the others, in judgment. The “great white throne” is set, the wicked dead are raised and finally judged, and then come the “new heaven and a new earth” – eternity begun.

Rev 20.3,7–15; 21, 22

The following phrases were underlined in the article above. Answer the questions that follow.
1. “The Scriptures divide time, by which is meant the entire period from the creation of Adam to the ‘new heaven and a new earth’ of Revelation 21.1, into seven unequal periods, called, usually, ‘Dispensations.’”

According to this paragraph, how does Scofield primarily define a dispensation? Is it consistent with the definition you learned?

Scofield primarily defines a dispensation as a period of time. According to the definition in lesson two, a dispensation, though having some time element, is an administration.

2. “These periods are marked off in Scripture by some change in God’s method of dealing with mankind, or a portion of mankind, in respect of the two questions of sin and of man’s responsibility.”

According to Scofield, what are the two elements of a dispensation? In other words, what distinguishes one dispensation from another?

Sin and man’s responsibility; Scofield sees dispensations as cycles of judgment. Man sins, therefore he gets new responsibilities.

3. “Adam, created innocent and ignorant of good and evil.”

What is wrong with this statement?

Scofield misunderstands the meaning of “innocent.” Innocence does not mean ignorance.

4. “Some of the promises to Abram and his descendants were purely gracious and unconditional. These either have been, or will yet be, literally fulfilled.”

What does this paragraph tell us about Dr. Scofield’s principle for interpreting Scripture?

He does not unnecessarily find fulfillments in Scripture unless they are stated literally. He is careful to use a normal method of interpretation.
Dispensations of Civil Government and Promise

The dispensation of civil government: from the Flood to the call of Abram (Ge 8.15–11.9)

What is civil government?

Man has always been ruled by something. Adam and Eve knew right from wrong because their consciences governed their actions. Even after the Fall, Cain knew that it was wrong to kill Abel because of his conscience. The conscience governed (and still governs) men internally.

Yet, God desired that man be governed externally. So, God introduced the concept of government so that man would have external restraint.

The new revelations

Because of the sinfulness of man, God destroyed the world with a universal flood. Yet, as you may remember, God saved Noah and his family from the flood by instructing them to build the ark. They built
it, the animals and Noah’s family boarded the ark, the floods came, and they were saved.

After the flood waters subsided, Noah walked off the ark. If you were on an ark for 1 year and 10 days with all the animals, how would you have responded?

Some would have been thrilled to still be alive. Many of us would have been complaining, “. . . the animals smell . . . these are cramped quarters . . . this is the same old food for a whole year . . . there is no change scenery . . . I’m tired of being at sea!” Remember, Noah and his family were not sailors accustomed to living their lives on the sea.

Consider Noah’s response:

So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds – everything that moves on the earth – came out of the ark, one kind after another. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. (Ge 8.18–20)

Notice verse 20, Noah took of every clean beast and fowl and offered them as a sacrifice to God. Noah spent a tremendous amount of time and effort to sacrifice that many animals. Theologians would call Noah’s focus theocentric – i.e., God-centered. Noah responded in praise and worship to God!

After the offering, God gave Noah and his family some new information.

*Animals began to fear man (9.2)*

The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands.

*Man was given permission to eat animals, provided they handled them correctly (9.3–4)*

Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. “But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.
Man was to enact capital punishment (9.6)

And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

Man would never be destroyed by a world-wide kind of flood again (9.8–17)

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

The new responsibilities

Man was to remember and believe the promise given by God. Man was also to keep justice by enacting capital punishment on those who murder. In this way, man would continue to rule and have righteousness prevail.

The continuing principles

All of the above principles still apply. Man is still to establish and obey external government (e.g., laws of the land, authorities, etc.). Assuming government has enacted laws that don’t conflict with Scripture, man must obey government and submit to the penalties for disobedience. Capital punishment continues to be the appropriate judgment for murderers (Ro 13.1–7). Animals still have a basic fear of man. Man is still permitted to eat animals, and the promise of no more worldwide floods still continues.

1 This “belief” is not saving faith. Man is still to believe and trust in the coming redeemer of Genesis 3.15.
Though these people continued to worship God through sacrifices, the sacrificial system is not continuing today.

The dispensation of promise: from the call of Abram to the giving of the law (Ge 11.10–Ex 18.27)

What is this “promise”?

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. (Heb 6.15)

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of the nation of Israel. Out of all the peoples on the earth, God chose for Himself the people of Israel. This passage speaks of God’s plan to “give birth” to a group of people that would receive special blessings.

The new revelations

The above passage shows that God said that He would give Abraham many descendants. This was the main piece of revelation. However, God gave more information regarding how this family would be treated.

This family would have their own land and be separated from other nations

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.” (Ge 12.1–3)

This family would be blessed by God

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will
curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Ge 12.2–3)

The male descendants were to have their own identity – the rite of circumcision

Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. (Ge 17.9–11)

The new responsibilities

Since Abraham was chosen by God to be the Father of the nation of Israel, he and his descendants were to believe this promise. They were to take possession of and to remain in their land. They were to be God’s unique (separated) people. For this reason, the people of Israel were not to intermarry with people from other nations (Ge 24.4). They were to have the sign of the covenant – circumcision (Ge 17.9–11).

The continuing principles

Even now the people of Israel are still without full possession of and rule in their own land. This will be fulfilled in the future, during the Kingdom.

This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.” This is what the LORD Almighty says: “It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me?” declares the LORD Almighty. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.” (Zec 8.4–8)

The people of Israel continued the practice of circumcision. They received blessings, but they will not receive all of the blessings until the Kingdom.
Learning the Truth

The following article appears on the Internet. This was written by a dispensationalist. It has many good things to say, but there are problems with this article. Note the statements that are highlighted. Answer the questions that follow.
Dispensationalism and God’s Glory

Greg Herrick, Th.M.  

The glory of God is an ocean in which many have swam, but none have ever touched bottom. It is a great theme in the Scriptures perhaps even the central theme or motif. Hence, there are many ways in which this truth is revealed in the Bible. Yet, the primary focus of the following paper (which is intended primarily for people for whom this is a completely new concept), is to discuss the glory of God as it is seen in the dispensations. In order to accomplish this a definition of glory will be offered followed by a definition of a dispensation. Then each of the seven classically held dispensations will be defined and related to the greater theme of God’s glory as seen most clearly in His sovereignty, holiness, grace, wisdom, and faithfulness over and above the wickedness of man.

The glory of God is His intrinsic greatness or weightiness, His manifold majesty, brilliance, depth, awesomeness. It is all His attributes to infinity in perfect balance. Everything He does is simply a reflection of His glory. Hence, His plan for the ages will reflect His greatness and glory (Eph 1.11).

The word dispensation means an ‘order of things regarded as established or controlled by God’ (Oxford Dictionary, 4th edition, p. 233). According to Walvoord it is a “stage in the progressive revelation of God constituting a distinctive stewardship or rule of life.” Ryrie says it is a “distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.”

There are, as characteristically understood by many dispensationalists, seven such economies running through the Word of God (Nevin, p. 99). The major characteristics or features of a dispensation have been and continue to be debated, but it is believed that there are two primary characteristics, namely the governing relationship which God enters into with the world and the resulting responsibility on mankind. There are three secondary elements. They are: 1) some test given to man, 2) resulting failure on the part of man and 3) the subsequent judgment of God. The seven dispensations of Scripture have been titled as 1) freedom, 2) conscience, 3)
civil government, 4) patriarchal rule, 5) Mosaic law, 6) grace and 7) Messianic rule. Let us now look at the dispensations.

**Dispensation of freedom (innocence)**

In the dispensation of freedom (Freedom seems better to me than does innocence. I can dispense my freedom, not my innocence.) God created man with a perfect heart and put him in a perfect environment (Ge 1.27, 2.15) and commanded man to reproduce and to work the garden (2.15), but not to eat of the tree “of the knowledge of good and evil” (2.16). Satan tempted man and he rebelled against the word of God and fell into sin. The dispensation ended with judgment upon the man, his wife and upon Satan. God would no longer rule man as if he were “innocent” or “free” because he wasn’t. God’s glory or weightiness is seen in his final and exacting judgment upon Satan (3.14–15), thus demonstrating His sovereignty (He is the highest court of appeal) and His judgment and mercy extended to heads of the human race. He expelled them from the garden but promised a redeemer (3.15) typified by garments of skin in Genesis 3.21.

**Dispensation of conscience**

The subsequent arrangement or order of things has been referred to as the dispensation of conscience (3.6–9.19). In this dispensation man was left to the dictates of his conscience which could produce guilt (Jn 8.9; 1Ti 4.2) but was powerless to promote righteousness (Ro 3.10). He was to learn to deal with sin (Ge 4.7) and understand the need for a sacrifice; the penalty of sin being death (cf. Abel in 4.4). However, man was utterly unable to keep God’s standard and murder resulted immediately and as the population grew the wickedness of the earth grew greatly in God’s sight (Ge 6.5). Judgment (i.e. the flood) followed man’s failure, but grace was evidenced in the
salvation of Noah and his family (Ge 6.8, 7.13) and the possibility of a redeemer was kept alive through Noah’s family. In this dispensation God’s glory or brilliance is seen in his holiness which parcelled out justice and judgment not on just two or three individuals but on a great population—the whole earth. There is no man who can escape from God (Jer 23.24) and man should not take a God such as this lightly.

Dispensation of civil government

After Noah came out of the ark, God blessed him and his sons (Ge 9.1) and gave them further revelation with accompanying responsibility to be fruitful and multiply (8.17), eat anything he wanted except animals with their life blood still in them (8.19) and maintain the practice of sacrifice (8.20). God promised not to destroy the earth by water again and then laid down the authority basis for civil government (8.15–11.9) – capital punishment. In connection with this notes, “Unless government has the right to the highest form of punishment, its basic authority is questionable and insufficient to protect properly those whom it governs” (Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 60). Human or civil government did not curb man’s sin as Noah’s drunkenness and the tower of Babel indicate. Man is unfit to govern himself and the end result will be world-wide disobedience and turning from God and the marring of His glory (Ro 1.23). Again, the unquestioned judgment of God in the confusion of the languages and dispersing of the people (11.9–8) shows forth His glory (in His sovereignty) and greatness as above the peoples of the earth. His glory shows through His wisdom in this judgment because with different languages sin now has a barrier and will not spread as fast.

Dispensation of promise

The next dispensation is that of promise (Ex 11.10–19.2). In this dispensation promises were
given to Abraham and his seed. There were failures on the part of the patriarchs and of the Nation of Is-
rael (and subsequent judgment) but God in His grace will yet fulfill the promises in spite of human inability to believe (cf. Jer 31.31–33). **God’s glory is revealed in His utter faithfulness to Israel, who was chosen for His glory, and who will finally possess the land as promised.**

### Dispensation of law

The next dispensation, that of Mosaic Law, conditioned Israel’s life while in the promised land (Dt 4.1–2). It was given to teach them and by extension the whole world, their need for a Savior. Israel disobeyed many times leading to their Exile in 722 BC and 586 BC. Yet, God dealt with them graciously and revealed His glory at the beginning of the Law (Ex 19,33,40) during the Law (Isa 6.3) and at the end of the Law in the coming of Christ (Jn 1.14). The Law had moral, civil and religious components which taught Israel of the glory of their God above the pagan non-gods of the nations around them. The Law itself was the revelation of the glory of God, especially His holiness and grace, and man’s utter sinfulness. The judgment on Israel for the rejection of their Messiah has been dispersion from the land for over 1900 years.

### Dispensation of grace

The dispensation of grace begins in Acts 2 and carries through to Revelation 19.21. The Church is the main revelation of this period and is made up of all those who are baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Church is to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth and rely on the indwelling Spirit to overcome sin. The ultimate end of the church age is apostasy (1Ti 4.1–3) and judgment in the great tribulation (after the rapture of the church). Since the revelation extends to the whole world, the whole world will experience God’s judgment (Rev 3.10). The glory of
God is seen primarily in His grace to undeserving sinners through the loving sacrificial death of His Son and His wisdom in devising such a plan to include everyone in his mercy (Ro 11.33).

Dispensation of messianic rule (kingdom)

The final form of testing or administration is the dispensation of the Messianic Rule. This will commence at the return of Christ through a one thousand year period and will spread over the whole earth with Christ Himself ruling and Satan bound (Rev 20.3). It will be a righteous and good rule, yet it will end in rebellion with armies gathered at the direction of Satan (then released) to defeat Christ. The glory of God is seen world-wide in the presence of the glorified Christ in all His majesty. It is always amazing to me how God can have such patience with sinners like us. “The dispensation of the kingdom differs from all preceding dispensations in that it is the final form of moral testing. The advantages of the dispensation include a perfect government, the immediate glorious presence of Christ, universal knowledge of God and the terms of salvation, and Satan rendered inactive” (Walvoord, “In the dispensations God has demonstrated every possible means of dealing with man. In every dispensation man fails and only God’s grace is sufficient. In the dispensations is fulfilled God’s purpose to manifest His glory both in the natural world and human history. Throughout eternity no one can raise a question as to whether God could have given man another chance to attain salvation or holiness by his own ability.”)

In conclusion, the dispensations reveal the glory of God primarily in His sovereignty over the earth, sovereignty that was perhaps questioned in eternity past when Satan fell. It seems that it has been the eternal purpose of God to show forth His glory (cf. Eph 3.10–11 – here through His wisdom) to Satan and his cohorts (as well as to man as was previously mentioned) and settle an issue concerning the righ-
teous character of God before all the heavenly hosts. Hence, the glory of God is eternally revealed to men and angels.

Bibliography


1 “The glory of God is an ocean in which many have swam, but none have ever touched bottom. It is a great theme in the scriptures perhaps even the central theme or motif.”

Is this statement completely accurate? Why or why not?

The “glory of God” is too broad to consider the central theme, especially if one is considering this unique to dispensationalism. People other than dispensationalists believe that the “glory of God” is the theme of Scripture. The better question is “How does God bring Himself glory?” God brings Himself glory by the reigning of His son on the earth with His people. This is the great goal that is found in Scripture.

2 “The word dispensation means an ‘order of things regarded as established or controlled by God’ (Oxford Dictionary, 4th edition, p. 233). According to Walvoord it is a ‘stage in the progressive revelation of God
constituting a distinctive stewardship or rule of life.’ Ryrie says it is a ‘distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.’”

Underline the most accurate definition in this paragraph.

3 “The major characteristics or features of a dispensation have been and continue to be debated, but it is believed that there are two primary characteristics, namely the governing relationship which God enters into with the world and the resulting responsibility on mankind.”

Do you agree? Why or why not?

If one takes the “governing relationship which God enters into” as synonymous as giving new revelation, then this is an accurate statement. It does seem that this is similar to the judgment scenario of Scofield.

4 “In the dispensation of freedom (freedom seems better to me than does innocence. I can dispense my freedom, not my innocence).”

Does this change in titles cause any problems?

No. Dispensationalism, as with any systematic system that seeks to explain Scripture, will refine its terminology year after year.

5 “God’s glory is revealed in His utter faithfulness to Israel, who was chosen for His glory, and who will finally possess the land as promised.”

When will the Israelites finally possess the land and what does this tell us about the glory of God (when will He be glorified)?

During the Kingdom. God will be ultimately glorified during the kingdom.

6 “The glory of God is seen world-wide in the presence of the glorified Christ in all His majesty.”

Is seen, or will be seen? Does it matter?

The glory of God is seen world-wide by general revelation (Ro 1). However, the world does not yet see Christ and thus glorify God. They will glorify God when they see Christ ruling during the kingdom.
WHEN YOU HEAR the word “law,” what images go through your mind? Do you have basically negative or positive thoughts? Do you equate the law with negative restrictions to be resisted? Or, do you enjoy the law and see it as a blessed thing?

When the Old Testament saint thought of the Law, he had positive thoughts. Consider the following passages.

Moses

The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees [law] and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. (Dt 6.24)

David

The precepts [law] of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. (Ps 19.8)

An unknown Israelite

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. (Ps 119.97)

I hate double-minded men, but I love your law. (Ps 119.13)

The people of Israel

He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men,
What is the “law”?

God gave Moses the Law on Mt. Sinai. The Ten Commandments are the most well-known part of the Law given to Moses. There is much more to the Law than the Ten Commandments. The giving of the Law extends over three chapters (Ex 20–23).

There were many different commands within the Law. Some had to do with moral absolutes (e.g., “do not lie,” “do not murder,” etc.) There were commands to establish and celebrate special holidays. Some commands were given that had to do with worship. While others helped keep order in the community.

The new revelations

The new information is all of the Law that was given. Many commands and instructions made up the Law. Most people recognize that the Law has three aspects:

Civil aspect

These commands helped maintain peace among the people. It served to keep the family together. The people were to treat each other fairly. For example, you are familiar with the phrases “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” These relate to serious injuries. If a slave owner punches his slave and knocks out his tooth, the slave is free to go.

If a man hits a manservant or maidservant in the eye and destroys it, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of a manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the tooth. (Ex 21.27)

Ceremonial aspect

These were special instructions that made their worship unique. The Israelites were to worship God by
special festivals. They were to celebrate three times a year. During the festivals, they were to bring offerings of their crops. And there were special regulations regarding the crops.

Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD. “Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast. “The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning. “Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.” (Ex 23.17–19)

**Moral aspect**

These were commands that involved moral absolutes. Stealing was wrong, adultery was wrong, murder was wrong. These are the more familiar commands you find in the Ten Commandments. By the way, it’s still wrong to break most of the Ten Commandments. We will see this in the continuing principles.

Covenant Theologians take three aspects of the Law and run! They say something like the following:

“The New Testament believer is bound to follow the Moral laws. The New Testament believer is not under the Civil nor the Ceremonial parts of the Law.”

They illustrate the Law as a three sliced-pie that he can divide up, choosing the piece he wants. Covenant theology asserts that the moral aspects of the Law are still in force, but not the civil or ceremonial aspects. Such thinking is flawed.
While it is easy to recognize these three aspects of the Law, the Law is really a unified whole that cannot be divided. The Law is a complete unit, not three parts.

Using the pie illustration, the correct view can be illustrated. For instance, when you make a pie, it has different ingredients – the crust, fruit, and filling. When they are all put together, you have a pie. You would never think of a piece of fruit as a pie, nor would you think of a crust as a pie, only when these three ingredients are put together do you have a pie.

Notice the following laws. Imagine that the Ceremonial, Civil, and Moral aspects are the ingredients of the whole pie (the Law). Notice how the following commands have more than one aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceremonial</th>
<th>Civil</th>
<th>Moral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy. (20.8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness. (23.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>On the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the slave born in your household. (23.12)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, these aspects are so intertwined in Moses’ Law that you cannot separate the different commands. Neither Jesus nor the apostles recog-
nized any divisions within the Law. The reason for this is simple. The Law is one unit. It cannot be divided. A person cannot claim to follow only the moral commands of the Law because the moral commands are inseparably connected to the civil and ceremonial commands. The Law is one whole unit made up of many commands and instructions. That is why James writes:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (Jas 2.10)

God gave much revelation, so much we cannot list it all here. The important thing to remember is that this information, though there are many aspects, commands, and instructions make up one law – the Law of Moses.

This Law contained the guiding principles for the worship, life and well-being for the nation of Israel. We could rightly consider this the Constitution of the Nation of Israel.

The new responsibilities

Yes, there are many new responsibilities. Yet, don’t forget, those who trusted in God loved His Law. They meditated on it all day long (Ps 119.97); they knew the Law was a source of blessing and life (Dt 6.24); and whenever the Law was read, they listened very closely (Ne 8.3).

Since the Law is a whole, it cannot be divided. Remember the pie; you need all the ingredients to make the pie. The Old Testament saint viewed the Law as a way of life. To maintain a proper relationship with God and others, one had to follow the Law.¹

¹ This does not mean that a person was saved by keeping the Law. Hypothetically that could have happened, but because man is a depraved sinner by birth, no person would have kept the Law in its entirety. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (Jas 2.10)
The continuing principles

Remember, the Old Testament is profitable. We need to look at the Old Testament as the Old Testament saint did. He had a positive attitude toward the Law; so should we.

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. . . . Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 3.24–27; 6.2)

The New Testament believer is not directly under the Law of Moses, or any of its commands.

However, since the Law is based on God’s holy character, we can expect the New Testament to repeat some of the same principles found in the Old Testament.

There are approximately 1,100 commands given in the New Testament. These commands are similar to the Old Testament commands because they reflect God’s morals.

Conclusion

The Law is a complete, indivisible unit that applied directly to the nation of Israel. The NT believer is not under the Law, although he can learn much from it.

Learning the Truth

Read Dispensationalism, pp. 109–113. This chapter has some difficult words. Note some new vocabulary words.

“antithetical style” = “looking at opposites
“antithesis” = “opposition”
“retrogression” = “return”
“abrogate” = “cancel”
Dispensation of Grace

Day of Pentecost to the 2nd coming of Christ
(Ac 2.1–Rev 19.21)

God has been, is, and will continue to be gracious to mankind. Yet, it wasn’t until this dispensation that grace became so magnificently demonstrated.

As time progressed, God graciously gave new revelation, establishing new dispensations. He did not need to do this. He did this because it was His pleasure. If God would have let man run the show, that would not have been very gracious. One could only imagine the despair and hopelessness if He had let man control his own destiny.

God, our Father, showed an immense amount of grace in both the OT and the NT. In the OT, God repeatedly displayed His grace in His dealings with people and nations. The entire OT is full of examples of God’s graciousness toward sinful people. In the NT, God’s greatest display of His grace was in the provision of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin. Salvation is purely by grace.

For this reason, the Apostle Paul and others referred to the church age as the dispensation of grace.¹

¹ Some also call this dispensation the dispensation of the church. This is also correct. Since grace is the biblical label for this particular dispensation and since the focus of the dispensation emphasizes grace, we will call this dispensation the “dispensation of grace.”
Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. (Eph 3.2–3)

**What is “grace”?**

The word “grace” comes from the Greek word “charis” (καρις) and the Hebrew word “chanan” (חנן). They mean basically the same thing. “Grace” means that God “shows favor upon,” “has pity upon,” and “spares man from his deserved wrath.”

God is gracious to man in at least the following ways:

**God is gracious to all men – common grace.**

God is gracious to all men. The fact that the rain falls on the farmer’s field whether or not he blesses or curses God is a demonstration of God’s common grace.

He (your Father in heaven) causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Mt 5.45)

Man does not deserve God’s grace. Man deserves only a torturous existence in Hell. The fact that man survives and has relative comfort (in some cases lavish comfort) is a testimony of God’s common grace. Common grace includes such things as wealth, earthly blessings, health, happiness, etc.

**God is especially kind to those He has chosen – saving grace.**

God showed pity on some people and saved them from a deserved punishment in Hell. Unlike common grace, salvation grace never wanes. It is beyond all measure and without end. Salvation grace extends only to the elect. It guarantees the salvation of those to whom it is extended. It includes such things as the ability to persevere, show mercy, love, etc.
Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care. . . . Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1Pe 1.10; 4.10)

Notice the chart below:

In life, the unbeliever experiences certain degrees of grace. But notice, he is never without grace while he walks on the earth. Yet, when a man becomes a believer, he benefits from both common grace and salvation grace.

In summary, while grace has been seen in earlier dispensations, the church age especially features grace. It is a dispensation characterized by grace provided by the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The new revelations

As in the dispensation of Law, the new revelations given in the dispensation of Grace are too numerous to list. The new revelations have at least two features not previously known.

Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to every-
one the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph 3.8–11)

God revealed Jesus Christ, the law of Christ, and all connected truth.

As mentioned last week, we are no longer under the Law. We are not under the moral, ceremonial, or civil aspects of the Law of Moses. We are not under any command of Moses’ Law, in any way.

Yet, we are not without law. We are not lawless. We are now under the Law of Christ (Gal 6.2). Paul states this clearly.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. (1Co 9.20–21)

Again, we are not under Moses’s Law. The Ten Commandments are a part of Moses’ Law. In no way are we under the Ten Commandments. It is true that many of the commands found in the Law are wholesome. They reflect God’s holy character. That is why the Law of Christ restates many of the same commands. Notice the way Christ adjusted the commands.

The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” [adjustment] Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Ro 13.9–10)

Covenant theologians charge dispensationalists with error at this point. They say that dispensationalists are antinomians. That is, dispensationalists live as if they have no law. This is not true. As demonstrated in this lesson, dispensationalists are under the Law of Christ.
... serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” [adjustment] (Gal 5.13)

God revealed that the church is to proclaim Jesus Christ, the law of Christ, and all connected truth.

How was God’s new revelation of Jesus Christ to be spread throughout the world – through the church. This too is new revelation. God chose people to make up the church to promote the cause of Christ.

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body [the church], and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Eph 3.4–6)

The new responsibilities

Man must be saved by repenting of sin and placing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. (Ac 13.38–39)

Saved people must be committed, serving members of Bible-believing churches.

God currently demands that every believer is to worship in and through a Bible-believing church. Notice the practice of the new church at Jerusalem.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Ac 2.42–47)
As you can see from the practice of the New Testament believers, they ministered through the local church. This is an important point. All ministry is to be carried out through the local church.

Saved people must spread the gospel around the world.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Mt 28.18–20)

Conclusion

The current dispensation is the Age of Grace or the Church Age. It is so called because of the awesome display of God’s grace in calling sinners to Himself and making salvation possible through the person and work of Jesus Christ the Lord.
A Short History of Dispensationalism

Scott Estell

Systematic Dispensationalism has suffered abuse from its critics as being recent, and thus unorthodox. But as we’ve previously seen, doctrinal development is not illegitimate, and systematic Dispensationalism is not much younger than covenant theology is.

Early dispensational ideas (not systematized, but dispensational-like ideas)

- Church fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria (c. 110–220 AD) all recognized certain differences in God’s administration of events and people.
- Augustine (c. 354–430) reflects dispensational concepts in his writings.
- Pierre Poiret (1646–1719) represents a form of premillennial, dispensational Calvinism.

Systematized dispensationalism

John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) studied to be a lawyer, but abandoned that upon his conversion. He became a priest in the Church of England in 1826, but left that communion shortly thereafter, disillusioned with the cold intellectualism he found there. In time, he joined an already existing group of like-minded individuals, which eventually evolved into the Plymouth Brethren. Darby became their first spokesman and most prolific writer. He systematized (but did not originate) dispensational thought, and is thus often thought of as the “father of modern Dispensationalism.” It is often alleged that
Dispensationalism goes back no further than Darby, but such is clearly not the case. The first record of dispensationalism is 1864–65, when Darby twice visited the country. Through these two visits the 16th and Walnut Avenue Presbyterian Church in St. Louis (then Dispensationalism by Dr. James H. Brooks) became the principal center of Dispensationalism in America. Dr. Brooks became Darby’s most prominent supporter and has been call the father of American Dispensationalism.

Cyrus I. Scofield (1843–1921) was a lawyer who converted to Christianity under the ministry of D. L. Moody and later became a student of James Brooks. With support from several businessmen, he published the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909) which promoted dispensational thought. It was widely used within Evangelical Christianity and became the unofficial study Bible in many dispensational churches and schools. It was revised in 1967, and its popularity has diminished recently. Scofield’s dispensational scheme is significantly different than Darby’s.

Lewis Sperry Chafer was the successor of Scofield at the Scofield Memorial Church in Dallas, Texas. He was also an original founder of Dallas Theological Seminary and helped edit the *Scofield Reference Bible*. His multi-volume Systematic Theology advocates dispensational thought.

Note: Although many church historians and theologians have assumed an unbroken line of dispensational development from Darby to Scofield to Chafer, there is no direct historical evidence that Scofield knew or even met Darby personally, although Darby made three trips to the United States between 1870 and 1874. Rather, Darby’s ideas were mediated to Scofield by evangelist D. L. Moody (1837–1899), who did know Darby, and whom Scofield greatly admired (Moody also knew C. H. Mackintosh [1820–1896], the man originally
responsible for popularizing Darby’s views in America). A second mediating influence was Plymouth Brethren Bible teacher James Hall Brookes (1830-1897), who became Scofield’s personal theological tutor upon the latter’s conversion in 1879. A third influence was Arno C. Gaebelein (1861–1945), who served as a consulting editor for the original Scofield Reference Bible.5

The Bible Conference movement

Beginning in 1876 at Swamscott, Massachusetts, a nondenominational prophetic conference movement began. Meetings continued in Niagara, NY, where premillennialism and dispensational thought were advanced. These conferences took place outside of the established theological institutions of this country, but the perceived educational and ministerial benefits of the Bible and prophecy conferences gave rise to the vision of building institutions to perpetuate this approach. This vision was strongly encouraged by rising tensions between fundamentalism and modernism with respect to the established schools.6

Scholastic era

- Philadelphia College of the Bible was founded in 1913.
- Dallas Theological Seminary began in 1924 with L. S. Chafer was its first president. Bibliotheca Sacra, a scholarly journal, was acquired by DTS in 1934 to be an official scholarly organ for Dispensationalism.
- Grace Theological Seminary has been an influential dispensational school until recently.


Other small dispensational colleges and seminaries abound throughout the U.S.

Modern dispensationalism

Normative/essentialists

Charles C. Ryrie, in Dispensationalism Today, traced out what he saw as the essential tenets of dispensationalism and distanced himself from some of classical dispensational ideas:7

- A dispensation is based on progressive revelation, not a period of time. Previous to this the emphasis had been on time.
- The idea that each dispensation contained a test, failure, and judgement was downplayed (although not abandoned).
- That the dispensations were separate “boxes” of time with little or no continuity was abandoned in favor of a stair step approach with continuing principles from earlier dispensations into succeeding ones.
- The distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven was dropped (although Walvoord still holds it nominally).
- The two peoples of God approach (Israel – earthly, church – heavenly) was abandoned. There is one singular people of God in two separate families, Israel and the church. This is a view of basic discontinuity but with limited continuity between the two.

Sensational dispensationalism

Sensationalists, like Jack Van Impe, are those who assert that today’s headline events are somehow related to or even fulfill Bible prophecy. In 1970 Hal Lindsey (a DTS grad) wrote the popular Late, Great

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Planet Earth (one of the biggest selling religious books of all time) which advanced dispensational views, but also suggested various countries and time-tables supposedly involved in the rapture, tribulation, and millennium. Such emphasis on apocalyptic theology was enhanced by the re-formation of the nation of Israel in 1948. There have been many books, films, and other media of the same ilk that rashly set dates and name names. Such sensationalism has been an embarrassment to serious dispensationalists and the root of many criticisms by nondispensationalists.

**Progressives**

An article by Kenneth Barker in the March 1982 edition of *JETS* enunciated early progressive thought. The term “progressive dispensationalism” came from a group of scholars who met prior to the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1985. The purpose for the meetings was to seek doctrinal agreement and genuine dialogue among evangelicals of differing theological backgrounds. Progressive thought suggests a mediating position between non-dispensationalism and traditional dispensationalism that revises or abandons Ryrie’s essential tenets. What started with 24 participants has risen to over 200 in recent years. Several books have been written espousing progressive thought (cf. Ryrie, p. 161 for a list). Leading authors include Darrel Bock, Craig Blaising, and Robert Saucy.
With this lesson, we come to the last dispensation – the Kingdom. We don’t know what the new revelations will be, however, we do know something of life in the Kingdom. This dispensation is the fulfillment of all the previous dispensations.

What is the kingdom?

What is the kingdom like?

The word “kingdom” is a very descriptive word. In your mind’s eye, you may picture a king, sitting on an ornate throne. He is clothed in majestic robes flowing over the sides of the throne and trailing down the steps in front. He holds in his left hand a long pole called a scepter. He is positioned in the center of a room which is decked with golden furnishings. Everything about this vision spells out the word “majesty.” It would be an awesome sight to be in the presence of such pomp and opulence.

Throughout history, many kings have ruled in this kind of setting. Some were wicked. They drained their subjects by heavy taxation. If you were in the presence of such a king you would fear for your life.
You would never want to go to court for fear that his judges would be as equally wicked. Some may even be compelled to join other citizens in a revolution against the tyranny. Worship of God would be illegal. You would be expected to worship the evil king and denounce all other loyalties. The thought of standing before such a king would invoke sheer terror.

Now imagine that you were standing before a perfectly righteous king. In the past, this king had declared you righteous. What could you expect his kingdom to be like?

If you had an audience with this king you would be overwhelmed by the spiritual blessings (Zec 9.9). He would be worthy of your worship (Zec 6.12–13). Justice would prevail (Isa 42.3). The unrighteous would not get away with any injustices. Would the righteous revolt? No, they would celebrate (Isa 61.4)! Imagine if this king had control over the weather, earthly conditions, and the physical health of all his subjects. It would be paradise (Eze 34.26; Isa 33.24)! Would other nations win any wars over this king? No, he would be perfectly wise and completely powerful, able to conquer all other nations (Isa 2.4).

Does this sound too good to be true? It’s not. The Bible very clearly states that such a kingdom will exist. Jesus Christ will be the King. He will rule in a real, earthly, physical kingdom.

On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or night-time – a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. (Zec 14.6–9)

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1 Covenant theologians believe that we are currently in the kingdom. They take all of the descriptions of this kingdom as spiritual, not physical. Dispensationalists reject this notion. The kingdom is still future and will be physically real.
. . . at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. (Php 2.10)

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever. (Rev 11.5)

**When will this kingdom come?**

The kingdom is the next dispensation to be established. All dispensations progress to the Kingdom. Notice that the Bible refers to the Kingdom as the dispensation when the “times have reached their fulfillment” (Eph 1.10).

We are now living in the dispensation of grace. Near the end of this dispensation all believers will be raptured (1Th 4.16). After the rapture, the tribulation will begin and will last seven years (1Th 5.3; Da 12.7). At the end of the tribulation, the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Joel 3.1–2). A banquet feast will introduce the coming kingdom (Rev 19.6–10).

**Who will inhabit the kingdom?**

*The King and queen*

The King will be Jesus Christ. His Bride (the Queen) will be the church.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (Rev 19.7)

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (Rev 21.2)

*The Old Testament saints and martyrs from the tribulation will be considered princes*

See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. (Isa 32.1)

*Jews who survived the tribulation*

In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. (Isa 19.24)
Gentiles who survived the tribulation

He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” (Mt 25.33–34)

The new revelations

Since the dispensation of the kingdom is still future, these new revelations await that time. Just like the Old Testament saints knew little of the dispensation of grace, we know little about the dispensation of the kingdom (1Pe 1.10).

We do know some things, however, during the kingdom, God will establish a New Covenant with Israel. Jesus Christ also gave us some insight to kingdom life in His Sermon on the Mount.

This covenant is for the people Israel. Notice its particular features.

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jer 31.31–34)

The Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount describes life in the Kingdom. Jesus Christ offered the Kingdom while He was on the earth. If the people of Israel had accepted Him as the Messiah, the Kingdom probably would have been introduced at that time.
At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ taught the Sermon on the Mount to prepare His people for the coming kingdom. The people rejected Christ as the King; therefore, the kingdom was postponed.

One of the most popular commands in the Sermon on the Mount is the “golden rule.”

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Mt 7.12)

During the kingdom, this rule will be a way of life. It will also be strictly enforced. Just like the Law of Moses, the Sermon on the Mount does not directly apply to us today. It describes life in the kingdom, not life in the church. Yet, it does contain moral teachings that are taught elsewhere in the Bible and are, thus, applicable to us today. Again, this is due to the fact that the Sermon on the Mount is based on God’s holy character.

The new responsibilities

Man must obey and worship the King. Man will also obey the New Covenant and the new responsibilities that Christ reveals when He rules the Kingdom.

The continuing principles

After the kingdom has lasted for 1,000 years, the unsaved will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. The earth and heavens will be restored to perfection. The Kingdom will continue into eternity. Many of the principles established during the Kingdom will continue throughout eternity. How many is not known for certain.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will...
there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. (Rev 22.1–3)

Conclusion

Jesus Christ will personally reign over the earth for 1,000 years. This is the kingdom in which all history will culminate.

Learning the Truth

Read the following article entitled “Permeating Postmillennialism.” This article shows how the dispensational view of the kingdom affects one’s view of the world.
Permeating Postmillennialism

by David Durst

A counselor helps a couple work through their marital problems. Citing biblical principles, he assures them a wonderful marriage awaits their obedience. These hopes soon wane as another crisis threatens their bliss.

Christian voters work to elect the “right” candidates. They even hope for a political takeover and a return to the “good old days.” In reality, the “good old days” fail to live up to rosy memories. Furthermore, the electorate soon learns that the “right” politicians are subject to the established power brokers, the whims of their electorate, and the pressure of reelection.

Defective thinking threads through these situations. If only we can do the right things, it says, our problems are over, and we can enter into some form of pre-eternal ecstasy, presumably some form of the earthly kingdom.

Broad evangelicalism stumbles under the cultural baggage laid on it to remain “respectable,” “relevant,” “influential,” and “powerful” (contra 1Co 1.17–25; 4.20; Gal 1.10). Issues promising present bliss, such as feminism, homosexuality, divorce, etc., slowly creep into evangelical theology. With their arrival, kingdom truth creeps out. Life becomes a man-centered quest for happiness rather than a doxological yearning for the kingdom. Instead of beaming lights pointing to the kingdom (Mt 5.14–16), modern evangelicals work for ecstasy (previously reserved for the kingdom) in this life. The “now” of kingdom truth supersedes the “not yet”; thus, a subtle form of postmillennialism permeates most evangelical thought.

Additional pressure comes from a desire to influence society. Often, this bypasses the biblical method of individual conversion through the gospel. Rather, evangelicals attempt to change society by political and cultural influence. In the minds of many evangelicals, the kingdom is tightly connected to western democracy and free enterprise. In practice, they pin their kingdom hope to the American way. Yet, one must admit that the USA looks more like Romans 1.18–32 and less like the kingdom described in Scripture. While most will admit that preaching the gospel is important, some place a high priority on morally influencing society. Thus, it appears to be a permeating postmillennialism attempting to bring kingdom blessings by might, power, but not the Spirit.
Four kingdom-related truths run counter to this permeating postmillennialism. First, the world lies under the power of Satan (1Jn 5.19). God has allowed this for His purposes in this age. Second, God has ordained the gospel as the only means of releasing individuals from Satan’s grip (Ro 1.16). Third, man’s role in this process is the “foolishness of preaching” (1Co 1.18, 23–24). Fourth, the faith an individual exercises to obtain this release looks forward (Heb 1.13–16, 39–40). In other words, the promises obtained by such faith are primarily eschatological. Faith focuses on the kingdom, not the here and now. What the believer now possess positionally by faith is realized in the next life. These truths contribute in three ways at the end of the twentieth century.

Kingdom truth gives a proper view of government.

Many Christians mistakenly place their hope in the future of America. While not stated, one draws this conclusion from the practice of most. The rush to elect the “right” candidates, the fight to legislate morality, and the vigorous lobbying, while not wrong in themselves, indicate an unhealthy focus away from the coming kingdom. Any success Christians have in changing the nation is temporary at best. Mankind has rejected the King, so God sovereignly allows the nations of this world to exist under the dominion of Satan. Satan’s dominion continues until Christ returns to set up the kingdom. All world powers, including the USA, will be crushed before the triumphant King. He will bring them under His authority forever (Rev 11.15; 19.15–16). For now, believers must prepare people for the kingdom, not turn society into the kingdom.

Kingdom truth contributes to a philosophy of ministry.

Almost daily the mail brings another program promising to help churches grow (for a fee, and legalistic adherence to certain men and methods). Supposedly, these programs promise something comparable to the kingdom in exchange for an investment of
time and effort. While the intentions may be right, the only guarantee is that such appeals will transfer funds from the local church to whoever provides the program in question. Many a pastor has been disappointed because a successful program did not “work” for him.

Pastors often change ministries based on the church’s endless search for the perfect church growth and/or happiness facilitator. Or, the church seeks the perfect “ear scratcher.” The true kingdom pastor fits neither of these molds. As a faithful ambassador of the King, he proclaims the truth, expecting abuse and persecution from the followers of the prince of this world. This faithful shepherd leads his flock in a kingdom context, trusting the sovereign King, not falsely promising simple keys to success, wealth, happiness, etc. in this life. Such things, he knows and preaches, await the King’s return, whose ways and timing in this age are not always known. The kingdom pastor mainly states the means of entrance to Christ’s kingdom and points believers to the hope of His rule. The Christian life centers on these.

Unfortunately, too many pastors and churches view the ministry as church growth and/or happiness facilitation. If a pastor does not produce, the church fires him and hires another more sensitive to their “needs.”

A true kingdom pastor knows he is “blessed,” not when the pews and offering plate are full, but when he is persecuted for his faithful stand for the truth (Mt 5.10–12; 1Pe 2.19–20; 3. 14, 17). He is not surprised when he suffers for proclaiming the coming kingdom to a world that has rejected the King.

When God blesses the church’s labors with temporal results, He expects all the glory, because it is His power, not human methods and programs. Those who claim to have the methods and programs that get results are operating in the power and desire of the flesh, not the Spirit. They long and labor for “suc-
cess” here and now instead of faithfully pointing people to the future kingdom. As men of God seek the kingdom, the message is advanced through the foolishness of preaching, not man’s wisdom in producing programs. Acts begins and ends with the kingdom message, not temporal blessing (Ac 1.6; 28.31). The New Testament looks for a future kingdom, for which Jesus Christ is the only appropriate preparation (1Co 6.11; Col 1. 13–14).

Some make Christianity attractive to the world by offering the false hope of comfort and ease in this life, when they really ought to prepare people for such things in the kingdom. Any “foretaste” should be received purely as a gracious act of God. For now, believers enjoy the blessing of being pre-positioned in the kingdom, and any present successes are enjoyed as “first fruits” of the kingdom message (Ro 8.23). Faith, then, is eschatological. It is not exercised merely for the “deal” one receives now. The great faith chapter, Hebrews 11, commends faith that looks for fulfillment beyond the grave, not here and now (Heb 11.13–16, 39–40). This implies that living believers, with those who have departed, wait for complete fulfillment beyond this life, longing for the future kingdom (Mt 6.10). Faith focuses not merely on resolution of life’s present problems, but assurance of a place in the coming realm where such problems will be resolved.

This is not to say that a degree of resolution is impossible in this life. If this were true, teaching and preaching on such issues would be worthless. These issues must be kept in perspective as a by-product of the hope of the gospel. Because of the Holy Spirit’s work, the believer can respond obediently and enjoy a degree of success in this life. Unresolved life issues are endured with a faith and joy in the hope of resolution in the kingdom.

The believer can do nothing about the external, uncontrollable forces that affect life. Therefore, even the most godly believer cannot control life’s path. A wayward child, a difficult marriage, financial and
health problems, etc., may plague the best believer. He or she must simply respond in personal obedience to revealed truth and joyful faith in the eschatological hope.

**Kingdom truth contributes to the doctrine of separation.**

Broad evangelicalism labors to unite all believers to change the world for the better. This involves pooling talents and resources to effect such change. A problem arises when one remembers that this world is under Satan’s dominion by God’s sovereign permission. Things truly change only when the Holy Spirit intervenes directly in the lives of individuals through regeneration. Satan’s dominion continues until Christ returns to set up His kingdom (Rev 20.2). Satan will meet his ultimate fate after the kingdom, when he is removed once and for all (Rev 20.10). Since God expects men to proclaim the biblical truth that effects this change (Ro 10.17; Eph 6.17), compromising the truth for greater unity (=human power) is foolhardy. Too often believers allow Satan to weaken their weapons and dilute their power by tolerating error for the sake of human resources. In this the church loses its only advantage.

The answer does not lie in artificially uniting “Christians” to solve the world’s problems, while ignoring key tenets of the gospel to achieve this unity. Human effort minus a complete gospel will never weaken Satan’s grip on individuals. Until the return of Christ, the only hope is allowing the Holy Spirit to use the full benefit of His truth on the lives of individuals. Complete social change will come only at the return of Christ, when the King Himself will correct all social, political, moral, physical, and spiritual problems. The church does not usher in the kingdom, so it should not act as if it does.
Conclusion

Some may say that this emphasis on the kingdom results in a pessimistic outlook on life. To a degree, that is true. True believers are pessimistic of the prince of this world’s desire to make his realm a better place for people. True believers are pessimistic of pagan government’s desire and ability to biblically correct society’s evils. True believers are pessimistic of the “advances” of pagan culture. True believers are pessimistic of broad evangelicalism’s ability, working within a largely pagan system, to effect biblical change and unity through compromise of sound doctrine.

Rather than trying to do this work through human methods, the believer must order his or her life by an eschatological hope with a doxological purpose. By living as clear, shining lights pointing to the Father, believers can be optimistic about real, lasting change in individuals as the Holy Spirit works freely through believers’ lives and lips. One also can be optimistic about real, lasting change in this world when the Prince of peace returns. For now, believers must function as salt and light, directing people to the King and His kingdom (Mt 5.13–16).
At the beginning of time, God created a beautiful earth and put Adam and Eve in charge. Some generations later, God chose out from all the peoples of the earth a new nation—Israel. Since this was a new nation, it would be governed in an unique way. Israel was promised to have her own land. She would receive many blessings and had a unique sign to distinguish her from all other peoples, the sign of circumcision. She was to be clearly separated from all the other peoples.

As you read the Old Testament, you find the people of Israel rebelling against God over and over. Though God always spared a remnant of righteous people, the nation’s rebellion culminated in the rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah. God’s promise of the kingdom was then delayed.

In the dispensation of grace, God established a new group of people— the Church. Again, God established unique blessings and instructions for this group of people.

What is the “church?”

The church is made up of saved, Spirit-baptized individuals.

Before Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He instructed His disciples to spread the good news. After Christ’s death, the Holy Spirit came down and gave

1 Note the terminology used throughout the Old Testament that pictures Israel’s rebellion: “children of Belial” (Dt 13:13); “adulteress” (Jdg 2:17); “children of pride” (Job 41:34).
the disciples power to preach the gospel. The first person who responded in faith to the gospel, including the disciples, constituted the church. At that moment, the church was that group of people. Since that conversion, many have also been saved and added to the church.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Ac 2.41)

The church is made up of every saved person from that day until the rapture. Therefore, the church includes people who have died and will include those who place their faith in Christ until the rapture occurs. The church is unique to the dispensation of grace.

The church is also a group of saved, water-immersed individuals in a certain location. This body is often called the “local” church. While all believers together are called the “universal” church. There are many local churches; there is only one universal church.

The church is not to be confused with any group.

Some confuse the church with a particular denomination

You will often hear people talk of the church as a denominational group. That is, some believe the church is the Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, etc. Some (such as the Landmark Baptists) believe that they are the only true church.

This is not correct. The church is made up of all saved individuals. There are saved people in many different denominations. Though it may be difficult for some to imagine, there are a few saved people sitting in the pews of Roman Catholic churches.
Some confuse the church with Israel

Again, this is where covenant theology and dispensational theology disagree. The covenant theologian wants to see the church as the “New Israel.” He thinks that the church will receive the blessings of Israel and has a unique sign – baptism. But, as we will see, the church is not a continuation of Israel. The church and Israel are distinct, separate entities.

How is the church different from Israel?

The church and Israel do not have the same beginnings.

The church was not known to Old Testament believers

The Apostle Paul calls the church a “mystery.” No one in the OT knew about the church, it was not revealed to them. This is the heartbeat of dispensationalism, progressive revelation.

Adam did not know that the Jews would become the chosen people of God. Abraham did not know the Ten Commandments. Moses did not baptize people into local church membership. As history progressed, God gave new revelation.

The Apostle Paul shows in the following passage that the church was unknown by the Old Testament believers.

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. . . . This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. . . . His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. (Eph 3.4–12)

3 Currently a group of individuals called “progressive dispensationalists” blur the distinction between Israel and the church. Therefore they are not genuine dispensationalists. In fact, one recent progressive dispensationalist begins to show his true colors with a journal article he wrote proclaiming he was a dispensationalist with a small “d.” See Darrell Bock’s article “Why I am a dispensationalist with a Small “d.” in the Journal of the Evangelical Society 41:3 (September 1998).
The church began at Pentecost

The church did not exist during the Old Testament. While Jesus Christ was still on the earth, He said that the church was still future – “I will build my church” (Mt 16.18). The church began after Christ died, rose, and ascended to heaven. It began at Pentecost.

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Ac 2.38–41)

The church and Israel are treated as separate groups in the New Testament.

When the writers composed the New Testament, they were careful not to mix the terms “Israel” and “church.” For example, in the book of Acts, “Israel” is used 20 times and “church” 19 times.4

Conclusion

One of the hallmarks of dispensationalism is its insistence upon distinguishing Israel from the church. They are not the same and are not to be confused. There are many other reasons, not stated in this lesson. Read the following article for more elaboration.

Learning the Truth

Renald Showers wrote a book called There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies. This is a very well-written book that you should purchase. The following excerpt is from a chapter in his book entitled; “The Beginning and Nature of the Church.”

The Beginning and Nature of the Church

By Renald Showers

Covenant theology and dispensational theology disagree concerning two major matters related to the church. Those two matters are the time the church began and the nature of the church. Both of these matters will be examined in this chapter.

The time the church began

Covenant theology declares that the church began during Old Testament times. Some covenant theologians believe that it began during the days of Adam. For example, R.B. Kuiper wrote that it may be asserted that Adam and Eve “constituted the first Christian church.”

Other covenant theologians are convinced that the church started when God established the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham. One such theologian, Charles Hodge, stated, “The church under the new dispensation is identical with that under the old. It is not a new church but one and the same. It is the same olive tree (Ro 11.16–17). It is founded on the same covenant, the covenant made with Abraham.”

In contrast with the covenant theology view, dispensational theology declares that the church did not begin until the Day of Pentecost of Acts 2. Thus, the church did not exist in Old Testament times. Radmacher wrote that “the church did not come into functional existence until the day of Pentecost.” Although the church was an essential part of

God’s plan for history which He determined in eternity past, God did not put that part of His plan into effect until ten days after His Son ascended from earth to Heaven.

The nature of the church

Concerning the nature of the church, covenant theology asserts that the church is the continuing covenanted community of God’s people throughout history. It consists of all people who have had the covenant of grace relationship with God regardless of the period of history in which they have lived. Thus, the church is the same, in essence, throughout history. The earlier quotation of Charles Hodge clearly indicates that this was his understanding of the nature of the church. Louis Berkhof, another prominent covenant theologian, wrote that “the church existed in the old dispensation as well as in the new, and was essentially the same in both.”

It should be noted that the covenant theology view of the nature of the church leads logically to several conclusions. Israel and the church are the same; there are no distinctive groups of saints throughout history; all saints of all periods of history are members of the church; since saints will be on earth during the tribulation, and there will be one general resurrection of dead saints at one time, not more than one resurrection of dead saints at different times.

In contrast with the covenant theology view of the nature of the church, dispensational theology asserts that the church consists only of those saved people who live between the Day of Pentecost of Acts 2 and the rapture of the church from the earth. Saints who died before the Day of Pentecost and people who become saved after the rapture of the church are never part of the church. Thus, the church consists of

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a distinctive group of saints who live during one particular period of history – namely, those saints who are baptized with the Spirit.

It is essential to note that the dispensational theology view of the nature of the church also leads logically to several conclusions. Israel and the church are not the same; there is something distinctive about the relationship of the Holy Spirit to saints between the Day of Pentecost and the rapture of the church; there are distinctions between groups of saints throughout history (Old Testament saints, church saints, tribulation saints, millennial saints); the fact that saints will be on earth during the tribulation period does not require the church to be on earth during the tribulation; and there will be more than one resurrection of dead saints at different times of history, not just one general resurrection of saints.

Evidence that the church did not exist in Old Testament times but began at Pentecost

Holy Spirit baptism

The New Testament presents several lines of evidence to the effect that the Church did not begin until the Day of Pentecost. The first line of evidence is that the Church was not formed apart from the baptism with the Spirit, and Spirit baptism did not begin until the Day of Pentecost. In Colossians 1.18 and 24 Paul declared that the body of Christ is the Church. In 1 Corinthians 12.13 he indicated that all believers in Christ (Jew and Gentile alike) are placed into the body of Christ through Spirit baptism. Thus, Paul was teaching the necessity of Spirit baptism for the formation of the Church.

John the Baptist clearly indicated that he was not baptizing people with the Spirit in his time. Instead, he stated that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit in the future (Lk 3.16). On the day of His ascension, Jesus declared that His believers should remain in Jerusalem for a few more days to receive the baptism
with the Spirit to which John referred, which the Father had promised and about which Jesus had talked (Ac 1.4–5). The language of Jesus’ statement implied that Spirit baptism had not yet begun historically and would not begin until a few days after His ascension. Acts 2 indicates that it began on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus’ ascension.

On the basis on the statements by Paul, John the Baptist, and Jesus, two conclusions can be drawn. First, since Spirit baptism is necessary for the formation of the Church, and since Spirit baptism did not begin historically until the Day of Pentecost, the Church did not begin historically until the Day of Pentecost.

Second, on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit began to be related to believers in Jesus Christ in ways which He was not related to Old Testament believers. Certainly the Holy Spirit was at work in the world in some ways before the Day of Pentecost (cf. Ge 6.3; Ex 35.30–33; Nu 11.26–30; 24.2), but on Pentecost He came with some new ways of working which had not been present before. Thus, there is something distinctive about the relationship of the Holy Spirit to saints in the period of history since Pentecost. This is substantiated by other statements in the New Testament. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus promised that the believer would have rivers of living water flowing out of his heart (Jn 7.37–38). John explained Jesus’ statement this way: “But this spoke he of the Spirit, whom they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn 7.39). John indicated that the Spirit would come in a new, distinctive sense after Jesus was glorified through His death, resurrection, and ascension (Jn 12.16, 23–27; 17.1; 5; Php 2.8–9).

The night before Jesus was crucified He promised that after He returned to the Father in Heaven, the Father would send the Holy Spirit to His disciples (Jn 14.2–4, 16–17, 26; 16.12–16). He declared that the Spirit would not come while He was present on
earth (Jn 16.7). He also drew a clear distinction between the relationship of the Spirit with His disciples before His ascension and what it would be after His ascension: “for he with you, and shall be in you” (Jn 14.17).

The use of the word “mystery”

[Another] line of evidence for the church beginning in Acts 2 is Paul’s teaching concerning “the mystery.” Paul used the term mystery to refer to a body of divine knowledge which was kept completely hidden from man in ages past (Ro 16.25; 1Co 2.7–8; Eph 3.4–5, 9; Col 1.26), which man could never have discovered through the use of his senses or reason (1Co 2.9), and which God has now revealed to man (Ro 16.25–26; 1Co 2.10; Eph 3.3–5; Col 1.26–27).

The specific body of divine knowledge which Paul called “the mystery” in Ephesians 3 was that there would be a period of time in which believing Gentiles would be equal heirs of God’s blessings, equal members of the same body, and equal partakers of God’s promise in Christ with believing Jews (v. 6). In Ephesians 2.11–19 Paul made it clear that Gentiles did not have these privileges before the death of Christ.

The teaching of Paul concerning the Ephesians 3 mystery leads to several conclusions. First, man knew nothing about the church until the time of the apostles and New Testament prophets. Second, the church did not exist before that time. If the church had existed before the time of the apostles and New Testament prophets, then certainly man would have known about it before then.

Third, the Old Testament contained no revelation concerning the church. The Old Testament did contain revelation to the effect that Gentiles would experience great salvation in the future, but revelation concerning salvation and revelation concerning the church are not the same because salvation and the
church are not the same. Just as a ticket, which is necessary to enter a sports stadium, is not the same thing as the stadium, so salvation, which is necessary to enter the church, is not the same as the church. Although the Old Testament contained revelation concerning the salvation of Gentiles, nowhere did it contain revelation to the effect that there would be a time when saved Gentiles would be united with saved Jews as equals in one body.

Fourth, the church was not formed until the time of the apostles and New Testament prophets. Had the church been formed earlier, the angels would have know about those aspects of God’s wisdom earlier.

### Evidence that Israel and the church are not the same

In the previous chapter it was noted that covenant theology proposes that the church is the continuing covenanted community of God’s people throughout history. It consists of all people who have had the covenant of grace relationship with God regardless of the period of history in which they have lived. Thus, the church is the same in essence throughout history.

Covenant theology further asserts that Israel was the major people of God in Old Testament times because God entered into Mosaic Covenant relationship with that nation, and the Mosaic Covenant relationship was one aspect of the covenant of grace relationship.

Covenant theology also teaches that the New Testament Church is the people of God today because God entered into the new covenant relationship with the New Testament church, and the new covenant relationship is also an aspect of the covenant of grace relationship.

These concepts have led covenant theology to the following logical conclusions: Since the church con-
sists of all people who have had the covenant of grace relationship with God regardless of when they have lived, and since both Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church have had the covenant of grace relationship with God, then the church consists of both Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church, which are essentially the same.

In contrast with this view, there are several lines of evidence to the effect that Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church are not essentially the same.

[One line of evidence is that] in spite of the fact that Old Testament Israel was the people of God through its Mosaic Covenant relationship with Him, it rejected Christ, just as God had forewarned the nation that it would (Isa 53; Jn 1.11; 12.37–41). By contrast, the New Testament Church received Christ.

[Another line of evidence is] that Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church are not the same is that Old Testament Israel was the original persecutor of the New Testament church.

[Also,] as long as a Gentile remained a Gentile, he was excluded from membership in Old Testament Israel (Eph 2.11–12). In order to become a member, he had to become an Israelite through circumcision and placement under the Law. In other words, he had to enter fully into Israel’s Mosaic Covenant relationship with God. By contrast, a Gentile can be in full, equal membership in the New Testament church as a Gentile. He does not have to become an Israelite in order to enter that membership (Eph 2.13–16; 3.1–6). The Holy Spirit led the early leaders of the New Testament church to recognize this distinction which God had made between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church (Ac 15.1–29).

[Finally,] in Romans 11 the Apostle Paul presented the following teaching: As the covenant people of God, Old Testament Israel was in the place of God’s
blessing. Because Old Testament Israel rejected Christ through unbelief, God removed it temporarily from the place of His blessing. During the time that Israel is removed, God has placed the New Testament church into the place of blessing. Thus, the church is in the place of God’s blessing while Israel is out of it. God will restore Israel to the place of His blessing when Israel receives Christ at His Second Coming. In light of this teaching, the following conclusion can be drawn: Since Israel is out of the place of God’s blessing which the church is in it, Israel and the church are not the same.9

Each lesson on the dispensations concluded with a look at the continuing principles. You are already aware that continuing principles are those principles that carry over from one dispensation to another. Let’s review some examples:

A sampling of continuing principles from the dispensation of . . .

**Innocence**

- Man must continue to fill the earth.
- Man must continue to control the earth.
- Man is to continue his vegetarian diet.

**Conscience**

- The conscience still convicts of sin.
- One must sacrifice in faith.

**Government**

- Animals fear man
- Man was given permission to eat animals, provided they kill them first.
- Man was to inflict capital punishment.
Promise

- The family of Abraham will have their own land and be separated from other nations.
- This family will be blessed by God.

A diagram of the principles

These principles carry over from one dispensation to the next. That is why they are called “continuing principles.” You will notice that God, in the dispensation of innocence, required man to control the earth. That principle extends even to the dispensation of grace. Also during the dispensation of innocence, God revealed that man was to have a vegetarian diet. That continued through the dispensation of conscience, but ceased with the dispensation of government.

Notice the diagram below:1

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1 You will note that the “fill the earth” principle fades. This is illustrated this way to show that this principle did not end at a particular dispensation, but rather ended when the earth experienced some measure of “fullness.”
How does one identify a continuing principle?

Continuing principles are stated as continuing in the Bible

The Bible often clearly states when a principle continues. For example, the conscience still convicts of sin (cf. Ro 2.15), and human government still has authority to inflict capital punishment (cf. Ro 13.1–7).

We do not have the luxury of having a “chapter and verse” for every continuing principle. Yet, this does not mean that the Bible is silent. We can determine what the continuing principles are by how the Bible describes life in each dispensation.

For example, God commanded man to “fill the earth.” During the dispensation of government the earth was considered “full.” It was filled with violent people (cf. Ge 6.11, 13).

Notice also that man is still to dominate and control the earth. Though no certain verse repeats the principle, it is illustrated in James 3.7.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man.

A continuing principle is based on God’s unchanging nature

God’s person, character and attributes never change. Because they do not change, one can expect to find principles that “spill over” from one dispensation to another.

For example, the Bible directly states within the dispensation of government that murder is wrong because man is made in the image of God (cf. Ge 9.6). Within every dispensation, murder is wrong. Why?

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2 The word “fill” (from the Hebrew תָּמָן) literally means “to fill.” In this context, it is used figuratively, meaning “to populate sea and earth.” BDB: 570.
Because murder is a violation of God’s nature; it ends the life of someone in God’s image.

**A continuing principle is based on nature**

Nature has established laws. These laws are non-changing. God has ordained it that way. For example, children are always born of parents. Therefore, children must obey their parents (Eph 6.1).

Men are made to love people of the opposite gender – women. Therefore, natural law teaches that men are not to love men (Ro 1.27).

**Conclusion**

Continuing principles are those principles that carry over from one dispensation to the next. We are responsible for those that “spill over” into the dispensation of grace (e.g., rule the earth, capital punishment). Many principles do not carry over (e.g., obey the Sabbath, sacrifice); therefore, we are not responsible for them.

Continuing principles are not randomly picked from Scripture. Since the Bible contains principles from many different dispensations, a wise Bible student will learn to apply only legitimate continuing principles. Legitimate continuing principles are those that:

- Are stated in the Bible.
- Are based on God’s nature.
- Are based on nature.
NOW THAT YOU HOPEFULLY HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING of dispensationalism, let’s consider how this approach enables you to properly interpret God’s Word.

Think back to the first lesson. In that lesson you learned that there are many different systems for interpreting the Bible. The covenant theologian sees little or no difference between Israel and the church. That will affect his interpretations of many passages. Those who have undeveloped systems (e.g., eclectically, experientially, and mystically based systems) will interpret the Bible in a way consistent with their interpretive grid.

As we interpret the Bible dispensationally, we allow the Bible to speak for itself. Dispensationalism keeps us from imposing our own interpretations upon the Bible. As one becomes more familiar with these principles and applies them consistently, he will be safeguarded from interpretational errors.

Principle 1: Interpret the Bible normally (literally)

The overriding principle for the dispensationalist is that he interprets the Bible normally (literally). The writers of Scripture used common grammatical rules when they wrote. The dispensationalist also uses these same rules to interpret Scripture. While the Bible is not to be compared with Edgar

Please note that some of these principles are also taught by those who are not dispensationalists. Those who have other interpretive schemes do not consistently apply these principles.
Alan Poe’s poems or a Shakespearean drama, there are universal grammatical rules that govern the way one interprets words and their meanings. There is an old saying that describes a normal (literal) interpretation: “If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.” How then does one correctly understand the clear sense of Scripture. In other words, how can one identify what the Bible really says. Let’s consider some important interpretive rules.

A word can only mean one thing in one verse

Words have a range of meaning

Most words have more than one meaning. Just browse through your dictionary and you will find that there are often many meanings for one word. No matter what language you speak or read, words often contain more than one meaning.

Notice the following definition for the Greek word teleios and you will see all the various meanings.

• brought to its end, finished
• reaching a goal
• perfect
• full grown, adult, of full age, mature

Even though “teleios” is one word, it has more than one meaning.

Words have only one meaning in a given verse

As we have just seen, teleios has at least four different meanings. However, it cannot have more than one meaning at a time. Notice the following verses which contain the word teleios and determine which meaning above best fits the verse.

After the Feast was over [teleios], while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. (Lk 2.43)

He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal [teleios].’ (Lk 13.32)

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect [teleios], but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Php 3.12)
All of us who are mature (telios) should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. (Php 3.15)

**Principle 2:**

**A passage cannot mean what it never meant**

Have you ever written a letter to a friend and found out that he or she completely misunderstood what you meant? What happened? How did your communication break down? There are many possibilities. Let us consider some:

- Possibly your friend was reading between the lines. He may have read too much “into” your letter. Sometimes readers read something that was not intended by the author. This is a common mistake. Some people assume that there is a “deeper meaning” when in actuality there is not.

- Maybe your friend jumps to conclusions quickly without considering all of the factors. Did your friend overlook the purpose for which you have written? Was he familiar with the people, circumstances, and objects you identified in the letter? If he missed any of these things, you know why your letter was misunderstood.

When you attempt to interpret Scripture, you must be very careful that you do not make the same mistakes as your friend. Don’t read in between the lines. Nor should you jump to hasty conclusions that are not valid.

You can be confident in what the writers of Scripture have written. Their message made complete sense to them and their hearers in the days that the document was written.

Your goal as an interpreter of Scripture is to find out what the author meant when he composed that portion of Scripture. Sometimes this is not an easy task,
since we live in a different culture with a different language and different background than the authors.

Let’s consider some passages to see how important it is to consider what the author meant.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls. (Pr 11.30)

Did Solomon intend that this verse speak of evangelism? No. Evangelism is a New Testament concept. Solomon, living in the Old Testament, would not know anything about our modern-day concept of soul-winning.

How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. (Ps 36.7)

As David wrote this Psalm he speaks of the Lord as having wings. Does this mean that God has wings? What did David intend? He is using a figure of speech. As an eagle protects its young by covering them with its wings, so the Lord is our protector.

Note: The only other method of interpretation is non-literal. That is, the text doesn’t really mean what it says. Instead, it has a “deeper,” symbolic, spiritual meaning that may or may not be evident. Obviously, one loses all objective meaning if he rejects a literal interpretative grid.

Conclusion

One of the fundamental distinctions of dispensationalism is its commitment to understanding the Bible literally (i.e., normally). A consistent literal method of interpretation results in a dispensational view of Scripture.
LAST WEEK we considered two overriding principles that enable a person to interpret the Bible the way it was intended to be understood. Those principles are:

- Interpret the Bible normally (literally). Use normal grammatical rules when interpreting a passage. You should also realize that within normal grammatical structure, you will find figures of speech and metaphors.

- A passage can not mean what it never meant. Your goal as an interpreter is to determine what the author meant when he wrote a passage of Scripture. Failure to consider the author’s background, culture, and language trademarks may lead you to a false interpretation.

Today, there are many great resources to help you interpret the Bible. You will find “How to Study the Bible” books. There are books of charts, commentaries, and study Bibles. These books are written from a variety of doctrinal perspectives (covenant theology, Lutheran theology, etc.). You may find in your reading that these non-dispensational authors use many of the same principles found in these final lessons.

While it is true that people of varying theologies employ these two principles in interpreting the Bible, the dispensationalist consistently uses them. Your goal as an interpreter of Scripture is to remain consistent, utilizing proper interpretational rules, so that Scripture can speak for itself.

In many ways, this lesson will cover the same material found in other Tools for Teens courses, “Doctrine of the Bible” and “From Moses to You.” This
will be a good review. Yet, this lesson differs from those in that it directly states how the dispensationalist uses these methods.

Consider the information (i.e., revelation) the author had

The dispensational system best explains how God parcelled out information throughout the history of mankind. That is one of the main strengths of the dispensational system.

Think back to the two elements that make up a dispensation – God gives new information and man has new responsibilities. This means that David had more revelation on hand than Moses. Adam did not have nearly the information that Isaiah had. Do you also realize that people who live during the kingdom will have more revelation than we do? So when you approach a passage of Scripture keep in mind that the author may not have had all the information you do today.

As you read the following passages, consider what revelation the author had. Can you name the dispensation in which the following authors lived?¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Dispensation/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Promise &amp; Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zechariah</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostle Paul</td>
<td>Law &amp; Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Realize that some individuals lived in two different dispensations.
Consider the **audience** the author had in mind

When Scripture was being written, it had an intended audience. Not only did the author have certain information, but also he was writing to a certain group of people.

Throughout Scripture, you will find passages that relate directly to the Israelites. Other passages are commands and instructions for the church. Certain passages were composed primarily for future generations. Determine the audience and dispensation to which each of the following passages directly apply:

**Israelites during the dispensation of law**

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. “You shall not murder. . . . “Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death. “Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death. “Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.” (Ex 20.12–13; 21.15–17)

**The church during the dispensation of grace**

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for law-breakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine. . . . Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. (1Ti 1.8–10)

**Citizens of the kingdom during the dispensation of the Kingdom**

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (Mt 5.21–22)
You may have noticed that in the above passages, the same topic is addressed, yet each passage is written with a different audience in mind.

As you consider the intended audience (with dispensational factors), you will notice some variations. Notice the differences among the above passages:

**Differences in the offense itself:**

**Exodus 20.12–13; 21.15–17**

- The Israelite people are not to attack or curse their fathers and mothers. They are not to commit murder.

**1 Timothy 1.8–10; 1 John 3.13**

- Members of the church are not to commit murder or hate others.

**Matthew 5.21–22**

- Jesus Christ describes that during the kingdom, not only are murderers liable for punishment but also those who are angry with their brothers or anyone who says, “You fool!”

**Differences in the punishment to be carried out:**

**Exodus 20.12–13; 21.15–17**

- Death was the punishment for Israelites who attacked, cursed, or murdered their parents.

**1 Timothy 1.8–10; 1 John 3.13**

- Eternal death will be the punishment for those in the dispensation of grace who continue in the lifestyle of hating and murdering.²

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² This lifestyle reflects a heart attitude that is not consistent with genuine Christianity. Therefore, a person who does these things continually demonstrates that he or she is not a genuine believer and is, therefore, liable for eternal death in hell.
Matthew 5.21–22

- Eternal death is the fitting punishment for citizens of the kingdom who are angry with other people. ³

You may have noticed that among these passages, different punishments are to be executed for different offenses. Yet, all these passages refer to the overall topic of murder.

Which passage directly relates to you? Are you to be put to death for cursing your parents? Why does Jesus Christ say that a person will be liable for a greater punishment (i.e., eternal death) when the offense seems less (i.e., anger toward brother)? Why are there three different standards of justice? How does one explain these differences?

Progressive revelation is what accounts for these differences. People are not judged by three different standards. They are judged by the standard revealed to them according to their particular dispensation.

Since Exodus 20 and 21 do not directly apply to our situation today, we are not compelled by Scripture to put to death everyone who curses or attacks their parents.

Conclusion

When you approach Scripture with a dispensational grid, you will be able to account for the seeming contradictions in Scripture. You will learn to discover what the author intended. You will also learn to identify the intended audience.

Of course there is more to consider when interpreting the Bible. Those principles can be found in other Tools for Teens curriculum, “Doctrine of the Bible” and “From Moses to You.”

³ Again, the thought here is that a genuine believer, who is a citizen of the kingdom, will not be one who continues in a lifestyle of anger towards others.
Across

4. Israel will receive all her blessings during the kingdom.

6. The law has three aspects: moral, civil, and ceremonial.

7. When interpreting the Bible, you need to consider the audience the author had in mind.

8. A principle that “spills over” into the next dispensation is called a continuing principle.

9. The word “normal” best describes the way a dispensationalist interprets the Bible.

10. Common grace refers to the fact that God is kind to all men.

Down

1. God’s revelation and man’s responsibilities mark a new dispensation.

2. Covenant theologians teach that the church and Israel are the same.

3. Dispensationalists believe that God will be glorified during the kingdom.

5. The progression of dispensations is best viewed as a staircase.

8. The church is called a mystery because it was unknown in OT times.
Is Dispensationalism Valid?

True or False (12 points)

True  Dispensationalism views the kingdom of God as the goal of history.

False  Dispensationalists consistently look for “deeper meanings” in Scripture.

True  Covenant theology is basically made up of two covenants – covenant of works and covenant of grace.

False  Covenant theology teaches that we are under a different covenant than Moses.

True  Everyone has a “grid” by which they interpret Scripture.

True  Neither the Goulash, Experience, or Mystical-based systems have a central theme to Scripture.

Short Essay (3 points)

Diagram the dispensationalist’s goal of history.

Reading (5 points)

☐ I read Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism, pp. 11–20.

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1 If you correct a false statement you will earn an extra point. You cannot simply change a negative to a positive. For example, Dispensationalism is not for everyone.
What is a Dispensation?

**True or False (12 points)**

- **False** Dispensationalism is only one of many valid systems for interpreting the Bible.
- **False** Each dispensation is completely different from another.
- **True** The word “dispensation” means “administration.”
- **False** It is difficult to see the difference between one dispensation and another.
- **True** God gave Moses information that Adam did not know.
- **False** God begins a new dispensation when man wants more information.

**Complete one of the following (3 points)**

A Dispensation is . . . a distinguishable administration in the outworking of God’s purpose.

**Hebrews 1:1** In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

**Reading (5 points)**

- I read the article *What is Dispensationalism?*
What are the Dispensations?

True or False (12 points)

True The phrase “various ways” in Hebrews 1.1 refers to the different dispensations.

False God dispensed His truth bit by bit because man was not able to handle all of the information at once.

False God dispensed His truth bit by bit because man continually rejected it.

False We are currently in the last dispensation and God will not give any more revelation.

True We have all of the information we need.

False The dispensations have very little or nothing to do with each other.

Complete One of the Following (3 points)

Dispensations should not be viewed as mailboxes. Rather when God gives His truth it . . .

1. Accumulates

2. Reaches toward a goal

Diagram the seven dispensations:

Reading (5 points)

☐ I read Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism, pp. 39–41.
Dispensations of Innocence and Conscience

True or False (12 points)

False “Innocence” in dispensationalism means that Adam and Eve did not know the difference between good and evil.

True If Adam and Eve obeyed God, they would have been confirmed into holiness.

False Two factors help us distinguish the different dispensations. These factors are that man sinned and God gave new revelation.

True A continuing principle from the dispensation of Innocence is “Control the earth.”

True Your conscience influences your decisions.

False One of the new promises (revelations) God gave to Adam and Eve is that Eve was to apologize to Satan for her sin.

Short Answer (discuss one of the following 3 points each)

1. How did a sacrifice continually remind Adam and Eve of sin?

   The tragic nature of a sacrifice would remind them of the tragic consequences of sin.

2) What are the two continuing principles from the dispensation of conscience?

   1) Make sacrifices; 2) Conscience still convicts of sin

Reading (5 points)

☐ I have read and critiqued the article by C.I. Scofield entitled “The Seven Dispensations.”
Dispensations of Civil Government and Promise

True or False (12 points)

**False**  Man has always been and continues to be governed by government.

**False**  Capital punishment is based on an out-dated, barbaric command.

**False**  The word “theocentric” means a world-centered mind.

**True**  One of the ways by which the Lord made Israel a unique nation was to give them special blessings.

**False**  The Israelites were not to marry people from other nationalities because it would result in physical deformities in their children.

**True**  Israel will receive all of her blessings in the Kingdom.

Explain one of the following (3 points)

*Answer according to the lesson.*

1. Is capital punishment still valid today, why or why not?
   
   Yes, it is valid. It is a continuing principle based on God’s holy character and as found in Romans 13.

2. Abraham was the father of the new nation of Israel. List below one of things that would distinguish this nation from others.

   1) Land with borders; 2) Blessings; 3) Circumcision is sign of covenant.

Reading (5 points)

☐ I have read and interacted with the article entitled “Dispensationalism and God’s Glory.”
Dispensation of Law

Multiple Choice (5 points)

A Moral Aspects  E “The Law cannot be divided.”
B Civil Aspects  D “The believer is bound to follow the moral laws.”
C Ceremonial Aspects  C Special instructions for worship
D Covenant theologians say  A Involved absolutes to regulate behavior
E Dispensational theologians say  B Helped maintain peace.

True or False (6 points)

False The New Testament believer is bound by the Ten Commandments.
True The reason the law of Moses and the law of Christ have similarities is because both are based on God’s holy character.
False The covenant theologian recognizes that there are three aspects to the Law – moral, civil, and promissory.

Short Answer (4 points)

Which aspects of the Law are found in the following command: “Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.” (23.1)

Civil and Moral

Reading (5 points)

☐ I have read Dispensationalism, pp. 109–113.
Dispensation of Grace

True or False (12 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True/False</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>Until the dispensation of grace, grace did not existent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>Grace basically means that God has pity on man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>Common grace refers to grace that is not that great.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>Salvation grace includes benefits such as wealth, earthly blessing, health and happiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>Since dispensationalists do not view themselves as under the law of Moses, they have no law and are free to do whatever they want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>Church membership is a requirement for all believers in this dispensation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Complete One of the Following (3 points)

List at least two new responsibilities for the believer in the dispensation of grace.

1) Be committed to and have faith in Jesus Christ.
2) Serve as a member in Bible-believing church.
3) Spread the gospel around the world.

Explain the difference between common and salvation grace. (You may use a diagram to explain the difference.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common grace means that God is gracious to all people. Salvation grace is only extended to God’s chosen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading (5 points)

☐ I have read the article entitled “A Short History of Dispensationalism.”
Dispensation of the Kingdom

True or False (12 points)

- False  Since Jesus Christ is in heaven, we are in the kingdom.
- True   The kingdom is characterized by swift, appropriate judgement.
- False  The Sermon on the Mount directly applies to you.
- False  Since the Kingdom is the final dispensation, there are no continuing principles.
- True   We do know what some of man’s responsibilities will be during the kingdom.
- False  The marriage feast will celebrate the end of the tribulation.

Listing (3 points)

Identify three of the inhabitants in the kingdom.

1. King and Queen (Jesus Christ and the Church)
2. OT saints
3. Martyrs from the Tribulation
4. Jews who survived the Tribulation
5. Gentiles who survived the Tribulation

Reading (5 points)

- I have read “Permeating Postmillennialism.”
The Church and Israel

True or False (15 points)

False  A good definition of the church is: “A church is a body of baptized people.”

True    Israel was distinguished from all other nations by circumcision.

False   Only Baptists are the true church.

False   The church began when Christ gathered the disciples together.

True    The church was not known by the OT believer.

True    The church is made up of every saved person from Pentecost until the rapture.

True    The church is called a “mystery.”

False   The NT writers often used the words “church” and “Israel” synonymously.

False   The church will have the same blessings as Israel.

False   Since the Bible says “where two or three are gathered,” Adam and Eve constituted the first church.

Reading (5 points)

☐ I have read “The Beginning and Nature of the Church.”
Continuing Principles

True or False (10 points)

True Some continuing principles skip over dispensations.
False Man is still responsible to fill the earth.
True Some principles from the first dispensation continue throughout the kingdom.
True Capital punishment is to be practiced even into the Kingdom.
True The principle “not to commit murder” is based on God’s nature.

Short Answer (10 points)

1. What is a continuing principle?

A principle that carries over from one dispensation to future ones.

2. Give two examples of continuing principles.

See pages 91f for a list.

3. List two of the three things that determine what a continuing principle is.

1. They are stated in the Bible.
2. They are based on God’s nature.
3. They are based on nature.

4. Why doesn’t a continuing principle that is based on God’s nature change?

Because God’s nature does not change.

5. Give at least one reason why “you shall not commit adultery” is a continuing principle.

Because it is based on God’s nature, nature, and repeated in the New Testament.
Putting It Into Practice, Part 1

True or false (16 points)

True   A word can only have one meaning in one location.
False  Dispensationalists prefer to use the word “literally” when describing their approach to interpretation.
False  The authors of Scripture did not use grammatical rules when composing Scripture.
False  The authors of Scripture may not have understood what they were writing.
True   The authors of Scripture wrote with purpose.
False  Good preaching is characterized by novel (new and interesting) interpretations of passages.
True   When the believers in ancient Colosse read the book of Colossians, they knew what Paul was saying.
False  Studying the background, language and culture of Scripture enables you to find the deeper meanings of Scripture.

Complete one of the following (4 points each)

You may use your Bible to answer the following.

Some people believe that the number “666” in Revelation 13.18 refers to Nero. Do you think they arrived at this conclusion correctly? If so, why? If not, why? No, this is not a correct conclusion. This is not applying a normal interpretation to Scripture. The author of Revelation did not intend the number 666 to refer to Nero, but to the antichrist.

Some dispensationalists teach that Revelation 9.7–10 literally refers to high-tech helicopters. Are they right? If so, why? If not, why? No, they are not. This is not a literal interpretation. This is applying a figurative interpretation that is not warranted by the text.
For Further Study

The following list of books are recommended for further study. Books that are highlighted are especially helpful and should be a part of your personal Christian library.


