

Chosen as God's Purpose

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Hebrews 6:2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Hebrews 6:3 And this we will do, if God permits.

Ephesians 1:9 He (God) made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him,

Ephesians 1:10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is the summing up of all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

In the Old Testament the writers knew and understood the first advent, they understood the ministry of Christ on earth during His incarnation, they understood that upon the cross, He died His spiritual and physical death for all mankind. They understood His burial, His resurrection, His ascension and His session.

But they did not know the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They did not know about the beginning of the Church Age. They did not know about the universal priesthood of every believer, nor did they know of the universal

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indwelling of the Third member of the Godhead. They were totally ignorant of these things nor even what they meant. The real sad thing is that multitudes in the Church Age do not understand many of these things today in the Church Age. They do not even know or understand these richly elementary teachings in the Church Age. Now while none of the writers in the Old Testament knew about the rapture of the Church, they did understand the Tribulation which is the end of the Jewish Age. They did understand the Second Advent, they did know of the Millennium and they understood the eternal state.

Only Church Age Doctrine was not revealed to the writers of the Old Testament Scripture. The first person to introduce Church Age Doctrine or the mysteries was the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. And this He did in the upper room discourse and more extensively in the Gethsemane discourse. Then, in the teaching in the first years of the Church Age, these wonderful teachings were revealed to the apostles. It is taught to believers in the Church Age. And we should press on to maturity of learning more and more.

Ephesians 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His Will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him.

Good pleasure. This is repeated by God in verse 5:

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

I want you to think about what is going on here in verse 5:

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He (God) predestined us (believers in the Church Age) to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the purpose of His will.

Think about this, He, God, in developing the Church Age chose us to be the purpose of His will.

Look now at 1:9

Ephesians 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to be His kind intention, which He purposed in Him, --- according to His Good pleasure, or which He designed or played before the public for display which He did for His Gracious will.

We see this in verse 5...**kind intention of His gracious will.**

verse 10 **with reference to an administration**

The Greek word translated administration or stewardship is from the Greek word oikonomia. This is where we get the word dispensation. This Greek word refers to a period of time from God's point of view for God's government. God has designed history into sections and the divine outline of history is Dispensational teaching. This is a genitive of possession which means that this is the dispensation of the God, that is the one and only true God. Not Allah, not Buddha, etc., but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is no accident that we have dispensation here, getting ready for The Mystery period.

One must understand dispensations to rightly divide the Word of God.

God has divided up history as per His plan and each dispensation has a different designated authority. It is imperative that you know where you

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are in history. Not only do we have this word *oikonomia* in this verse we have another word for dispensations ...from the past ages this is the Greek word *aion* age—referring to an age of history or a period of time in history or to a Dispensation, and in the midst of these two words for dispensations we have The Mystery!

So let's take the time and look at Dispensations.

I. Definition:

What do we mean when we use the word dispensation? Let us start with the Greek word from which dispensations is derived. Here it is translated administration. In Colossians 1:25 it is translated stewardship. In the King James it is translated dispensation which dates back to AD 1611. The Greek is simply from the compound Greek word: *oikos* house; plus *nomos*—administration. It refers to the household administration or the management of a household. The responsibility or arrangement of an administration, the management, or economy. It came to be used for the administration of a State.

Now from this simple beginning we have moved to a depth from M. Unger's definition: (Unger's Bible Dictionary) "A dispensation is an *era* of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God's will. Seven such dispensations are recognized by many pre-millennialists...others speak of only 3 or 4."

These various stages mark off the distinguishably different economies in the outworking of God's Total Purpose. These economies are then called dispensations. The understanding of God's differing economies is essential to a proper interpretation of His revelation within various economies.

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Another definition that helps to grasp the parts of what makes a dispensation is by David Paul: (writer of several books on Dispensations) “A dispensation is God’s distinctive method of governing mankind or a group of men during a period of human history, marked by a crucial event, test, failure, and judgment. From the divine stand-point it is a stewardship; a rule of life or a responsibility for managing God’s affairs in His House. From the historical standpoint it is a stage in the progress of revelation.”

But all this is somewhat overwhelming, so let us see if we can simplify the definition. “A dispensation involves God’s government of mankind for a period of time.” This of course is opposed to Satan’s or to man’s view of government, and here is the clash of two opposing views: God’s and Satan’s or God’s and man’s which is all part of the Angelic Conflict.

Satan and man have their views on how things ought to be run,
and

God has His view.

And where it really gets messed up is when man accepts God’s view but desires to improve upon what God has set up or tweak it just a little. Therefore, Scofield’s definition inserts the conflict: “a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.?” (note on Genesis 1:28)

Therefore, I am compelled to make part of the definition of Dispensations that Eternal Salvation is the same throughout all history regardless of the dispensation. This must be inserted here in respect to the testing of man by God. There are several areas of conflict between God and man.

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The First area of testing is in man coming to the personal decision, "Does God exist? Is there one Sovereign God?"

This sets up the Second area of testing: How does man have a relationship with God?

What is the Gospel? And regardless of how one view's history, whether there are 4 or 7 dispensations or none... The Gospel is always the Same.

Man is always saved eternally

by FAITH ALONE in CHRIST ALONE,

or FAITH ALONE in the coming MESSIAH ALONE.

It is here that many who do believe in the Sovereign, Omnipotent God... the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Scriptures, yet when it comes to the Gospel they feel compelled to tweak the Gospel. Add something that man must do to be saved.

The primary reason for inserting some works by man, in the Gospel is because there are different requirements in each dispensation. Each period changes in each governing period or dispensation. While this changing is true in each dispensation, to God the good of intention for salvation is the **same** in every dispensation, here the Gospel is always the same. In other words, each dispensation changes in many different ways but the Gospel in each and every dispensation is always the same, by grace through faith. While each man in each dispensation is saved by the same Gospel, they are tested by God differently in each period of history or in each dispensation.

For example, in the first dispensation, known as the Age of the Gentiles which covers from the period of Adam and Eve after

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taken out of the Garden of Eden to the period of the beginning of Israel. After the Flood, it was known as Human Government. Here, spiritually, the husband is the spiritual authority and leader while the development of Government was established by God.

But in the next Age, things are changed greatly. Overall, it was known as the Age of Israel. First it was the period of Promise, which covered from Abraham to Moses. Spiritually, it was centered on the Abrahamic covenant. The next period, the Age of Israel, was known as the Law. First, this was when each of the 12 Tribes was under its individual rule, and spiritually headed by the priest in each of the tribes. But it was ruled by the Kings where all the tribes were under the kings yet, spiritually they were under the rule of the Priesthood. The priests are in authority. However, in many of these periods others are in authority such as the scribes and prophets who were teachers and leaders appointed by God.

Next was the Age of the Church. This period of the dispensation began with the death, burial and resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ. Here the pastor-teacher is teaching the truth to each individual local church. No one is designed by God to be in authority in teaching more than one local church.

But again, each period of dispensation is saved by the same gospel of faith in the Messiah or known as Jesus Christ

After the period of the Church Age, the history of mankind continues in the last seven years of the 490 years period promised to Israel. This period is known as the Tribulation. After this seven year period, Jesus Christ returns to the earth putting an end to wars on earth after the Battle of Armageddon and the return to Israel for the marriage of the Lamb in Jerusalem and setting forth the 1000

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years known as the period of Millennium. Here Jesus Christ Himself is the King, ruler and spiritual head of the entire world.

And while this is true, the Gospel is the same in every stage of Dispensations. But if man believes the Gospel now, he is tested as per God's economy for the period of history in which he-or-she lives.

This is why it is so important to know where you are in history

So in Summary: a dispensation is:

1. A period of history expressed in terms of Divine revelation
2. Divine outline of human history.
3. Divine viewpoint of human history.
4. Divine interpretation of human history.
5. God's system of governing segments of human history, where each segment is known as a dispensation.

II. There are basically Four Dispensations or segments of human history.

A. Period of the Gentiles ---from Adam to Abraham.

B. Period of the Jews from---Abraham to the cross.

C. The Church--- The Mystery from The Cross to the Rapture (technically from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture)

D. The Millennium--- from The Physical return of Jesus Christ to earth, to the end of the Millennium.

What about the Tribulation? Remember that the period of history known as the Tribulation is the last 7 years promised to Israel by God after the return from Babylonian captivity, so it is under the Period of the Jews.

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A. Period of the Gentiles is sub-divided by some into:

1. Innocence. It begins with man in innocence and in perfect environment, Adam and Eve. They were given one simple test. The woman fell through being deceived, while the man fell deliberately. And even though God saved both the original man and woman, this period ended in judgment of being expelled from the garden.
2. Conscience. Here God set up a dispensation of the Family and coming to Him on basis of sacrifices, looking forward to and teaching of the coming of the Messiah and His suffering on the Cross. This segment of history (dispensation) was characterized by human degeneration and ended with the Judgment of the flood.

B. Period of the Jews. Began with Abraham (1st Jew) and the beginning of the Jewish Race: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the only race by Regeneration. This period of history ended in disaster by Israel rejecting their Messiah, (Sent Son of God) and turning Him over to be Crucified.

(1) So, the first 2 or 3 dispensations began with man in harmony with God but ended in total failure of sin.

(2) The last two Dispensations begin with God and therefore will not end in Failure.

C. The Church-Age begins with the Holy Spirit and ends in the Glorious Rapture. There is failure in the Church-Age but it will end in Glory.

D. The last Dispensation: The Millennium begins with Jesus Christ, the God-man, and will end in His Glory!

Note: Civilizations always begins with believers:

1. Adam and Eve (Antediluvian -before flood)

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2. Noah and his family (Postdiluvian)
3. Millennium: only of believers
4. Eternity: begins with believers. (Unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire for eternity)

Dispensations begin with believers:

1. Age of Gentiles –Adam and Eve
2. Age of Israel –Abraham
3. Church-Age –believers Indwelt by the Holy Spirit
4. Millennium –Jesus Christ and only believers from Tribulation

III. Necessity of Understanding Dispensations

“There are, of course, those who do not believe in (or object to the idea of) Dispensations. Some of these objections are to points that do not characterize Biblical Dispensations.” (C. Ryrie).

Accurately Understanding Dispensations is dependent On Three Essentials.

1. Literal, Grammatical, Historical interpretation of the Word of God. And the key here is to be consistent in your interpretation of the Word of God. If one spiritualizes parts of the Bible or allegorize them, they will of, course, never see nor understand Dispensations. Before you even begin to talk with these people you should not discuss dispensations but you discuss how to interpret the Word of God.
2. Israel and the Church are distinct dispensations or different government rules by God. The Church does not replace Israel.

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3. The Purpose of all human history? Renald Showers states it beautifully. "The ultimate purpose of history is the glory of God through the demonstration that He alone is the Sovereign God" This is so beautifully stated in the Lord's Prayer in:

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

John 17:2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent

John 17:4 "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do

John 17:5 "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory"

IV. Difference between Dispensation of Israel and The Church.

1. The Age of Israel began with Abraham and included all the Covenants to Israel.
2. It also included the giving of the Law because the people were rebellious against God. (Deuteronomy 5)

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3. This age also included the prophecy of the Birth, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ.
4. But this dispensation knew nothing of the Church to come. This was a mystery, hidden from them.
5. Jesus Christ was born and lived and died in the Age of Israel.
6. Jesus Christ was the first Prophet of the coming of the Church. (Matthew 16). Therefore, the Sermon on the Mount; the Disciples Prayer; and even the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 are not for this age.
7. The Age of Israel (–including the Law–) is not pertinent to the way we are to live in the Church Age. The believers' way of life in the Church-Age is found in the Book of The Acts-;-and in the Epistles –Romans –Jude and Revelation 1-4.
8. Radical differences between the Dispensation of Israel and the Church Age.

Topic	Israel	Church
Priesthood	Specialized, family of Aaron	Universal, all believers
Holy Spirit	Endowment, certain people	Indwelling, all believers
Revelation	Visions, certain people	Completed canon of conversations, prophets, etc. Scripture
Church Age	Mystery/Hidden	Mystery Revealed

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- V. Categorical Outline of Dispensations
 - 1. Theocentric—God Centered
 - a. Dispensation of Gentiles
 - b. Dispensation of Jews
 - 2. Christocentric---Christ Centered
 - a. Church-Age
 - 3. Eschatological Dispensation
 - a. Tribulation
 - b. Millennium