

Dispensations

Basic Doctrine

Motivation

- When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, God gave them certain rules.
- When they sinned and God put them out of the Garden, their environment changed, they changed and there were different rules governing them.
- When Noah left the Ark after the Flood, humanity had changed, the environment changed and there were additional rule changes.
- God was administering Earth in different ways for His purpose. He changed the rules.

Purpose

- This is not an encyclopedic coverage of Dispensations
- This is presented to make you think critically
- It is limited primarily to the book of Genesis

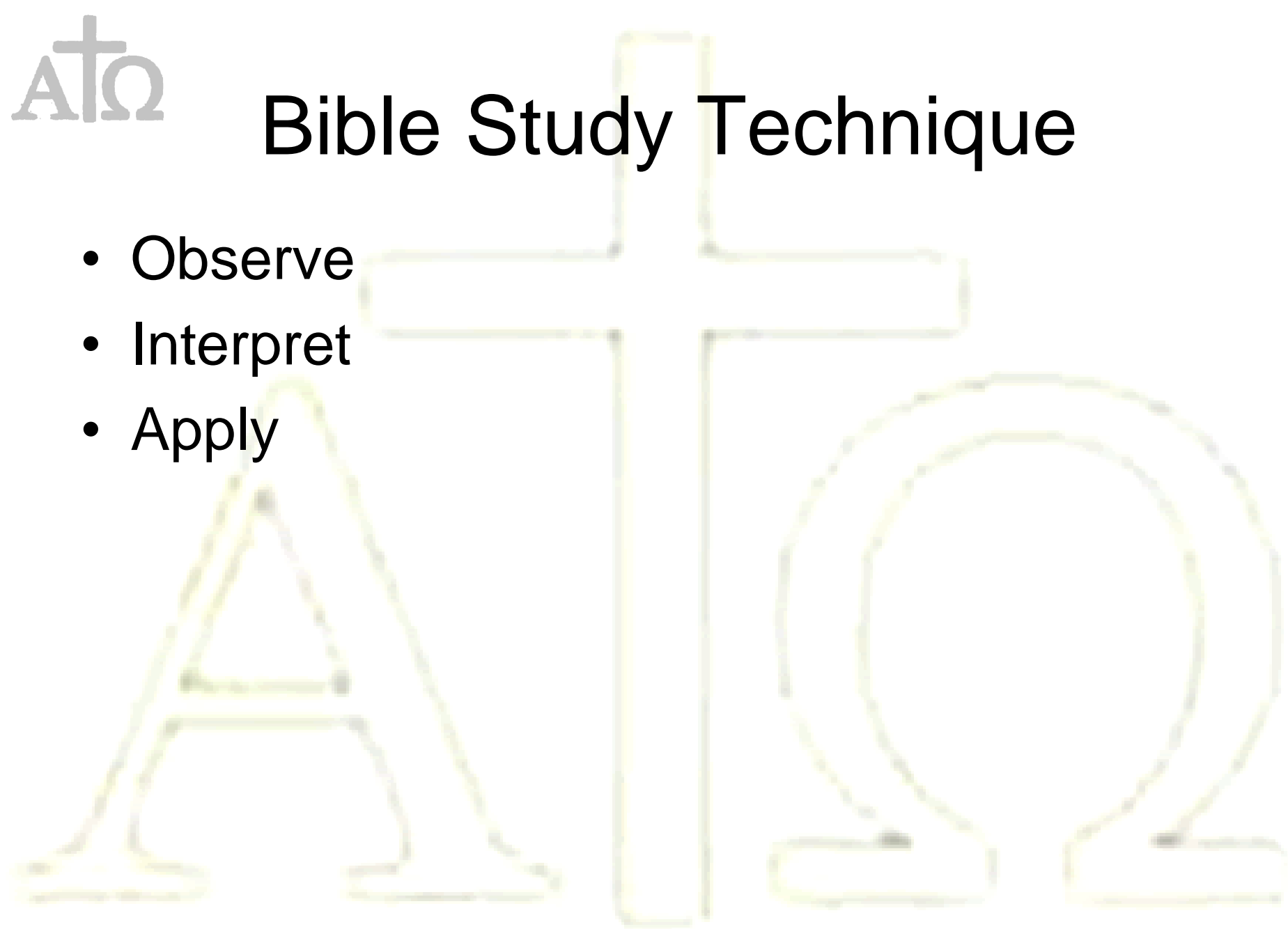
Approach

- Rather than provide a definition of dispensationalism and enumerate the dispensations, let us observe what Scripture says about “breaks” in history
- In other words, instead of studying dispensations from the top down, let us start from the bottom up
- But there are some preliminaries that need to be defined as we approach the study of Scripture



Bible Study Technique

- Observe
- Interpret
- Apply



“Sine Qua Non”

1. Consistent Literal Interpretation
2. Distinction Between Israel & the Church
3. Purpose of History is to Glorify God

[Sources:

1. Ryrie, C.C., *Dispensationalism Today*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1970, pp43-47
2. R. Dean at deanbible.org lessons on “God’s Plan for the Ages”

Golden Rule of Interpretation

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”

[Cooper, D.L., Messiah: His Historical Appearances, Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1958]

Web site: <http://www.biblicalresearch.info>

Consistent Literal Interpretation

- Dispensationalism is based on Scripture
- Dispensationalism is based upon an inerrant, infallible Scripture
- Dispensationalism is based upon consistent literal interpretation of Scripture
- Dispensationalism depends on inductive study of Scripture
 - Observation: What does the text say?
 - Interpretation: What does the text mean?
 - Application: How do I use this meaning?

Distinction Between Israel & the Church

- **Consistent** Literal Interpretation distinguishes between Israel and the Church
- Literal Israel is Israel
- God is **Faithful** to Israel and to the Church

Purpose of History: Glorify God

- Whether New Testament or Old Testament, God is glorified in the outworking of His plan in human history

OIKONOMIA

- “Dispensation” comes from Greek OIKONOMIA
 - Literally oikos = house or home & nomos = law or rule (House Rule)
 - KJV translates it “dispensation” in 1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1:10; Eph 3:2; Col 1:25 and stewardship in Luke 16:2,3,4
 - Oikonomos = steward or “house manager” in Luke 12:42; Luke 16:2; Luke 16:1,3,8; 1 Cor 4:2,2, Titus 1:7; 1Pet 4:10
 - Oikonomeo = to be a steward or house manager in Luke 16:2
- The Greek word simply means management of a household, the responsibility or arrangement of an administration, the management, or economy. (Mattox)
- Dispensations have to do with God's governing or administering human history through a sequence of divinely directed administrations marked by distinct periods of time as He works out His plan to destroy sin and evil. It is an understanding of the meaning and purpose of history; but when you think of the words 'purpose of history,' that means history is going somewhere. (Dean)

Word “Dispensation”





Elements of Administration

- Owner (God)
- Steward or Administrator (Believers)
- Objects that are Managed or Administered (People, Earth, Animals)

Observed Disruptions

- Fall of Satan/Creation of Man
- Fall of Man
- Flood of Noah
- The Tower of Babel
- Promise/Covenant to Abraham
- The Exodus
- Incarnation/The Cross
- The Rapture
- The Tribulation/Millennium
- Judgment of Satan at End of Millennium

Fall of Satan

1. Ezek. 28:16 [28:11-19]
2. Isa. 14:12
3. Job 1:6
4. Luke 22:31,32
5. Eph. 6:11, 12
6. Rev 12:7-9
7. Lk 10:18

[List taken from Chafer, L.S., Satan His Motive and Methods, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1919. pp8-11]

Human History as Trial of Satan

- Why Satan is thus allowed to continue his reign is perhaps but partly revealed. The real Church which is the Bride of Christ, is to sit with Him upon His throne (Rev. 3:21; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Matt 19:28), and the present age must continue until that glorious heavenly people are gathered out from the world. Again, it seems the course of God's purpose to make a sufficient and final trial of every claim of His adversaries; and when this age, with all its developments, shall have passed by, every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world and Satan will know their own failure and sin before God. They will stand self-condemned, and nothing could accomplish this but the testing, by actual trial, of all the self-sufficient claims of Satan and man.
Chafer, L.S., Satan: His Motive and Methods, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p16

The Trial

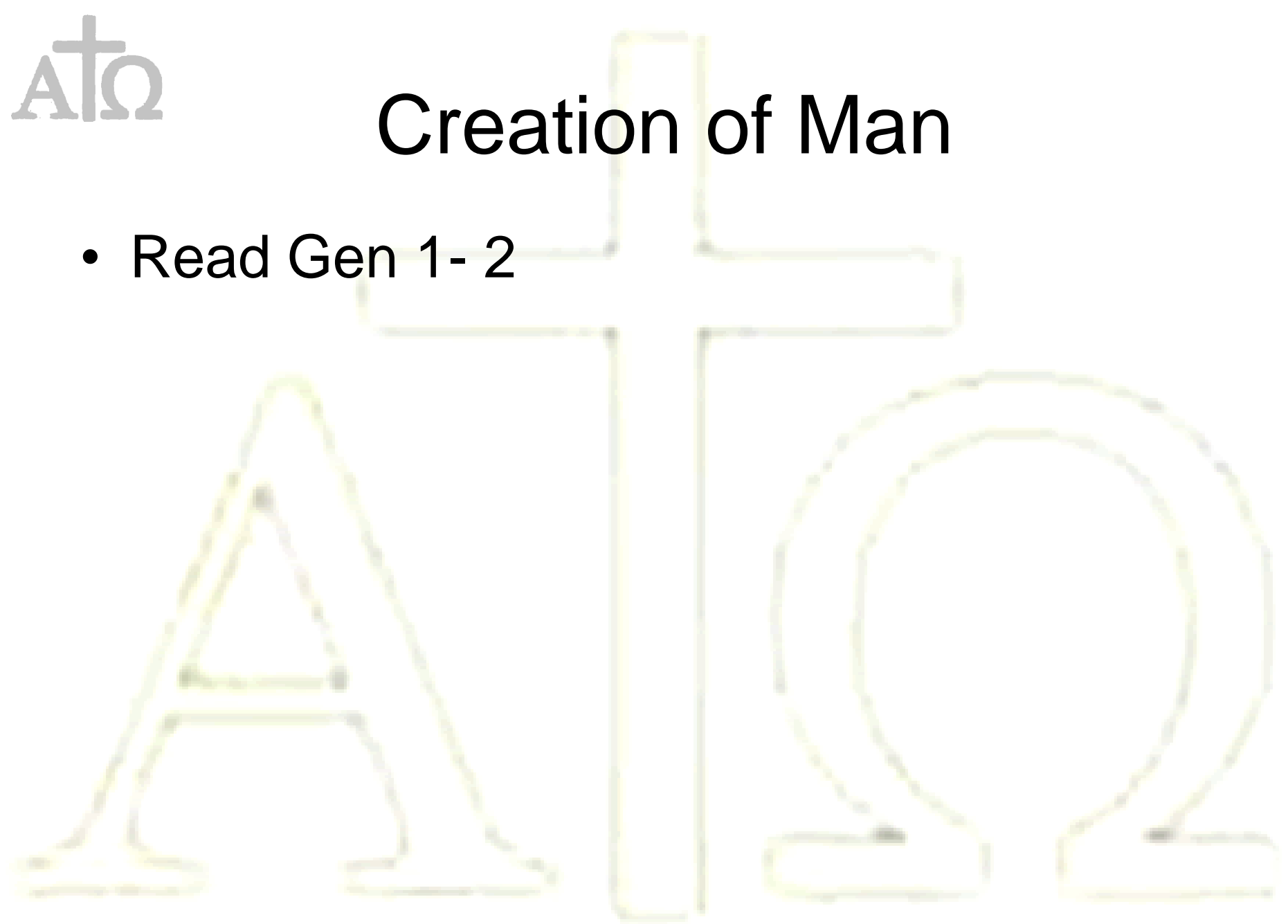
“The claims of Satan to equality or superiority in power should have their complete trial. The universe should see, once and for all, if it were possible for any creature whatsoever, of any rank, however exalted, to live for even a moment independent of God the Creator. That full trial of the possibilities of a second will in government is the nature of the duration we call time.” [Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, p52]

The “Gap” After Creation

- Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.
- Is 45:18 For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), I am the Lord, and there is none else.
- “When we see, however, that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and that “He created them not a chaos,” but that they became that way as a result of judgment, we have the truth, and are both instructed and satisfied. Barnhouse, D. G., *The Invisible War*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965, p21

Creation of Man

- Read Gen 1- 2



Edenic Responsibility

- Be **fruitful** and **multiply** Gen 1:26, 28
- **Subdue** the earth, Gen 1:28
- **Rule** over the animals, Gen 1:26, 28
- Every plant given for food Gen 1:29
- To serve and guard Eden Gen 2:15
- Don't eat fruit of a specific tree Gen 2:17
- Woman as helper Gen 2:18

[based on slides from: deanbible.org God's Plan for the Ages, lesson 8]

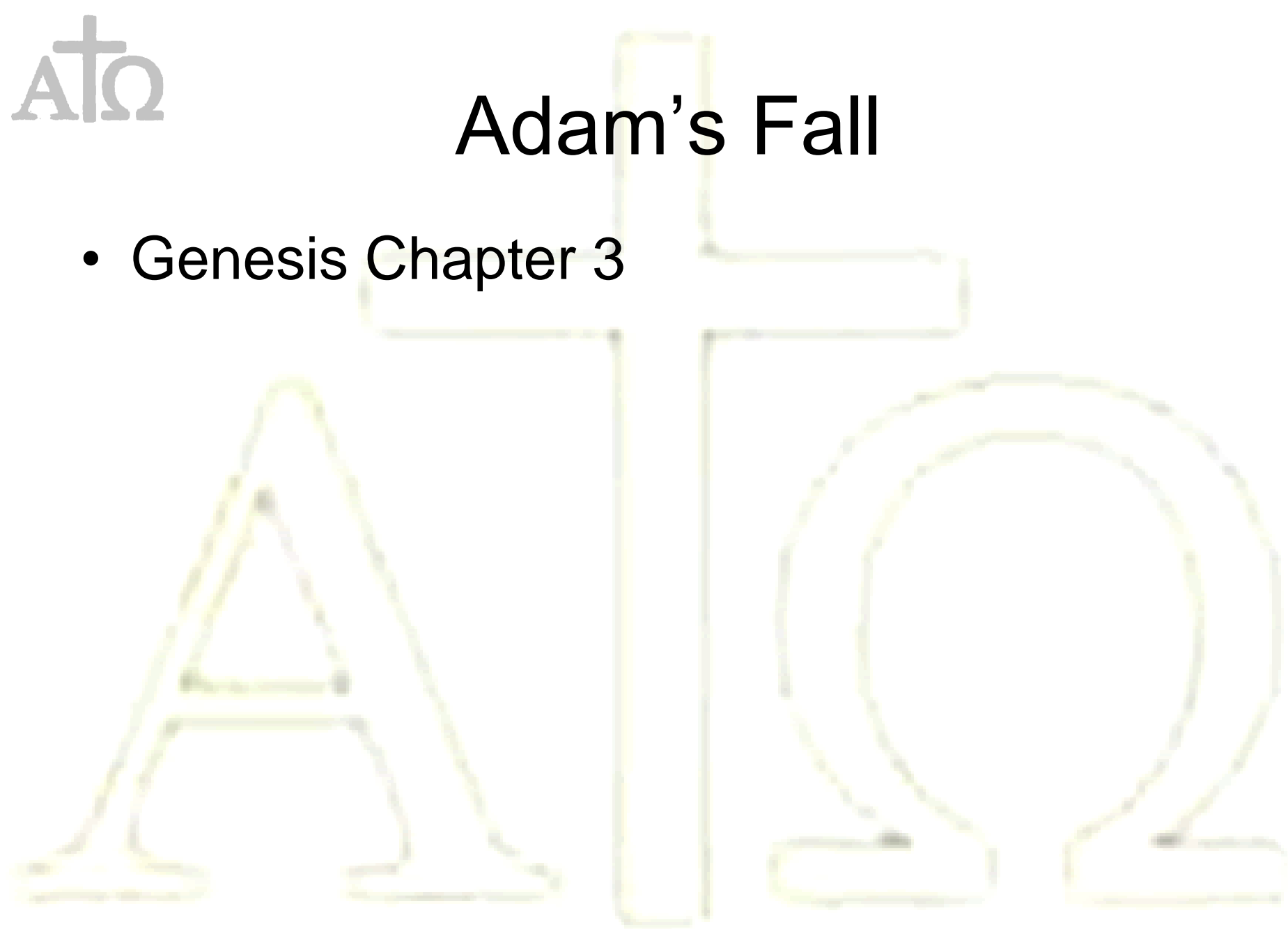


Administration of Adam in the Garden “Innocence”

- Gen 2:16-17 The Lord God commanded the man saying
 - (Positive) From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;
 - (Prohibition) but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,
 - (Penalty) for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.
- Verb “commanded” has the same root as the Hebrew word for commandment

Adam's Fall

- Genesis Chapter 3





Result of Adam's Fall

[The Rules Changed - Conscience]

- Satan was cursed Gen 3:14
- “Proto-Evangelium” Gen 3:15
- Pain in childbirth Gen 3:16
- Authority struggle Gen 3:16
- Earth cursed, thorns Gen 3:17
- Eat plants of the field Gen 3:18
- Expelled from Eden Gen 3:24
- Spiritual death brings physical death
Gen 2:17, 3:19, 5:5

[based on slides from: deanbible.org God's Plan for the Ages, lesson 8]

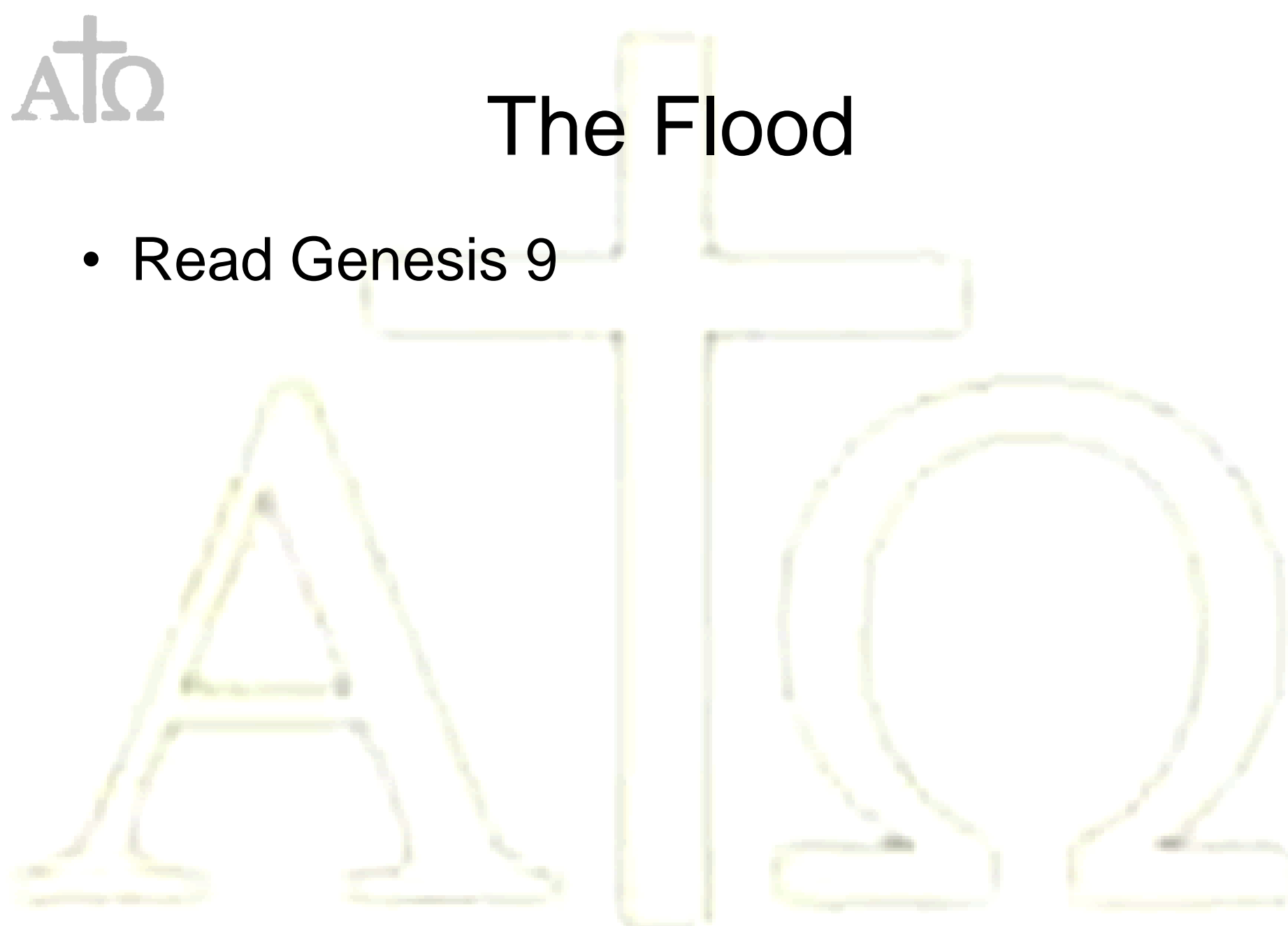
The Fabric of Scripture

Call Upon the Name of the Lord

- Gen 4:26 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the Lord.

The Flood

- Read Genesis 9





Post-Flood Rule Changes

Human Government

- Be **fruitful** and **multiply** Gen 9:1, 7
- **Fill** the earth, Gen 9:1, 7
- Animals Fear Man, Gen 9:2
- Eat Meat as well as Plants Gen 9:3
- Don't Eat Meat with its Blood Gen 9:4
- Capital Punishment Gen 9:6

[based on slides from: deanbible.org God's Plan for the Ages, lesson 8]

Some Characteristics

- Particular way of God's Administering His Rule
- Particular Responsibility for Man
- Characterized by Divine Revelation
- Applies Test to Man
- Demonstrates Man's Failure (apart from God)
- Involves Divine Judgment

Showers, Renald E., There Really Is A Difference, pp 30-31

Tower of Babel

- Read Chapter 11
- Is There a Change of Rules?



Initial Questions

1. Dispensationalism, why should I care?
2. What is the significance of dispensationalism?
3. Why is it important to my spiritual life?

Dispensationalism is a theological system, not a system of hermeneutics.

What is Dispensationalism

- It is not a hermeneutic (i.e. not dispensational hermeneutic)
- It is a theological system
- The difference is, if it is a system of hermeneutics then it is a way of interpreting the Bible. If it is a theology then it is the result of a hermeneutic or a system of interpretation.

“Sine Qua Non”

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1. Ryrie, C.C., *Dispensationalism Today*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1970, pp43-47
2. R. Dean

Word “Dispensation”



Dispensations: Purpose of History

- This relates it ultimately back to, as we will see in a minute, back to the angels. And what we refer to as the angelic conflict or the satanic rebellion or spiritual warfare; there are different terms that are used. And often you have heard that part of the purpose of human history is to resolve the angelic conflict. I bet not one person here could give me an accurate understanding or definition of what that means, 'to resolve the angelic conflict.' That is one of those phrases that sound good. It sounds heavy. I've said it all my life. What does it mean though? It means that once sin and evil entered into the universe through the fall of Satan; God has to resolve that problem by ultimately ending it and removing it from His creation. So that is the ultimate goal of history; (it) is to remove and destroy sin and evil from God's creation.

R. Dean

Purpose of History

- “A Third aspect of the sine qua non of dispensationalism is a rather technical matter...”
- “It concerns *the underlying purpose of God in the world*. The covenant theologian, in practice, believes this purpose to be salvation (although covenant theologians strongly emphasize the glory of God in their theology), and the dispensationalist says the purpose is broader than that; namely, *the glory of God*.”
- Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p 48

C. I. Scofield

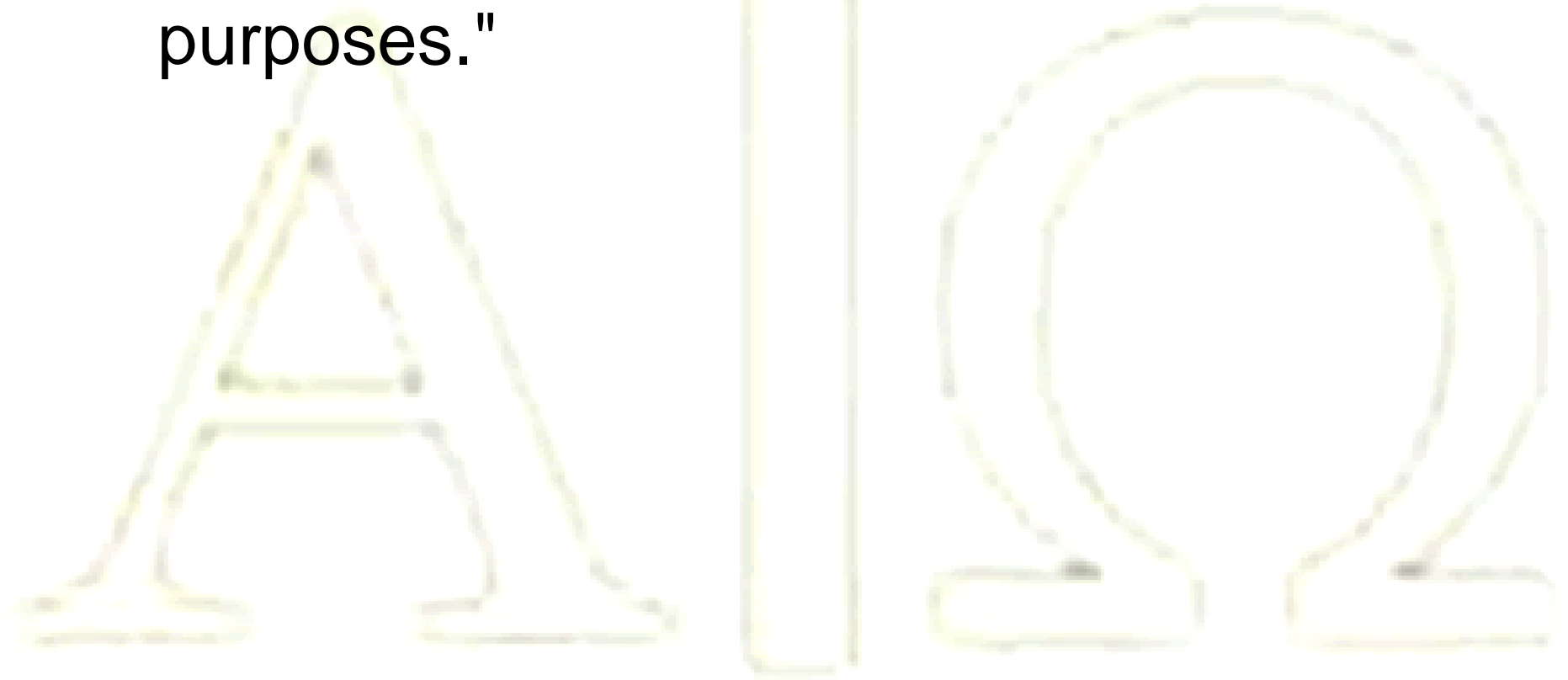
- He defined a dispensation as a period of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. What is wrong with that definition? Time! The first thing he says is that "a dispensation is a period of time." This is why you ask a lot of people and they immediately try to define dispensation as time. But if you do a word study you realize that "time" is not part of it. But he (Scofield) brought out some important characteristics that apply to each dispensation. There is specific revelation from God; this is how you know that there is a change. God reveals new information. There is a responsibility given that man is tested on in regard to obedience. So he says some very good things there.

W. Graham Scroggie

- He wrote that "the word OIKONOMIA bears one significance and means "an administration," whether of a house, or property, of a state, or a nation, or as in the present study, the administration of the human race or any part of it at any given time. Just as a parent would govern his household in different ways, according to varying necessity, yet ever for one good end, so God has at different times dealt with men in different ways, according to the necessity of the case, but throughout for one great, grand end."

C. C. Ryrie

- "A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purposes."



R. B. Thieme

- He said it is "a period of human history expressed in terms of divine revelation." What is wrong with that definition? Time; just like Scofield. Chafer incidentally, and I did not have time to go back and pull his quote; Chafer in his pamphlet on dispensationalism defined it as an administration. So Thieme says it is "a period of human history expressed in terms of divine revelation. History is a sequence of divine administrations"; see it is brought in as a secondary idea in the next sentence. "...divided into eras, each having unique characteristics, as well as certain functions in common with the other ages. These consecutive eras reflect the unfolding of God's plan for mankind; they constitute the divine viewpoint of history and the theological interpretation of history," which is an excellent statement.

L. S. Chafer

“Dispensation. Translated from the word oikonomia, meaning primarily stewardship, a dispensation is a specific, divine economy, a commitment from God to man of a responsibility to discharge that which God has appointed him.”

Chafer, L.S., Systematic Theology: Volume VII Doctrinal Summarization, Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1971, p122

Robbie Dean

- "a dispensation therefore is a distinct and identifiable administration." That means it has certain characteristics. So you can distinguish one from another. They have distinct, identifiable characteristics, distinct identifiable "administration in the development of God's plan and purposes for human history. A closely connected, but not interchangeable, word is age, which introduces the time element. God manages the entirety of human history as a household, moving humanity through sequential stages of administration, determined by the level of revelation He has provided up to that time in history."

Showers

“Dispensational Theology can be defined very simply as a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible’s philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by several dispensations of God’s rule.”

Showers, Renald E., *There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology*, Bellmawr: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc. 2010, p27