

DISPENSATIONS and THE MYSTERY

Colossians 1:25

Let us begin in Colossians chapter 1 verse 24

24 **Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.**

This sets up, the coming of **THE MYSTERY**.

SUMMARY:

1 **JESUS CHRIST was alone on the cross.**

2 **God had already declared that it was not good that the first Adam should be alone. So, it is with the last Adam (JESUS CHRIST). JESUS CHRIST had a body while on earth, and in the Rapture, He is going to have a bride. We, (members of the universal Church) will become the bride of Christ.. marriage in heaven after the Judgment Seat of Christ and the MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB will be here in His New Kingdom in Jerusalem.**

3 The BODY, the bride of Christ is in the process of being completed. The body is not complete but when it is, the Rapture will take place and the Church will become His bride.

4 The BODY, being formed now, needs food-substance, and JESUS CHRIST set the table for us:
man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. This is the purpose of the Local Church and of the gift of PASTOR-TEACHER.

Therefore, A SECOND SUMMARY:

1 Christ faced His sufferings in His teaching of the Kingdom. He endured it by the power of the Holy Spirit and applying biblical Truth to His life and His tribulations.

2 Paul faced his suffering and tribulations in teaching the Word of God; He endured it by the power of the Holy Spirit and believing in all that he taught.

3 The book of Colossians is an illustration of communicating the Word of God under pressure.

4 Almost every PASTOR-TEACHER who truly studies and teaches biblical Truth, face the occupational hazard of discouragement (this is why they need your prayers, not your criticism). They face the hazard of disappointment, delusion, disenchantment with people. Let me remind you, that while at various times you may be disenchanted with a pastor, that is just one pastor, but he has to face an entire congregation. Many pastors reach a point in their lives where they just give up, quit and go into some other ministry.

5 The Mental Attitude of every pastor, especially when he is suffering, should be Paul's Mental Attitude—
"I rejoice in my suffering."

Colossians 1:25

25 **Of *this church* I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the *preaching of the word of God***

of this *church* italics = not in the original; the particle translated **of**

Then we have the relative pronoun therefore translated **of which**

This is the feminine gender so we can go back and look for feminine noun as its antecedent (*what is it referring to?*) and

the feminine antecedent is in the previous verse translated

church the body is the church of which I was made –*became*

Yes at the point of his salvation. Paul was given the office of apostle but he had to go through some years of getting ready to fulfill that office.

Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God The

Greek word translated ***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. God

has designed history into sections and the divine outline of history is

Dispensational teaching. and 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!

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 are in history.

Not only do we have our word *oikonomia* in the next 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 Us take the Time
and
Look at Dispensations.

Definition:

I What do we mean when we use the word dispensations?

Let us start with the Greek word from which dispensations is derived. It is the word we have in Colossians 1:25 *oikonomia* translated there **stewardship**.

In KJ it is translated **dispensation** which dates back to AD 1611. It is also translated **administration of God**. The Greek word simply means *management of a household, the responsibility or arrangement of an administration, the management, or economy*.

Now from this simple beginning we have moved to a more indepth 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 HIS TOTAL PURPOSE, AND THESE ECONOMIES ARE THE DISPENSATIONS. THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S DIFFERING ECONOMIES IS ESSENTIAL TO A PROPER INTERPRETATION OF HIS REVELATION WITHIN VARIOUS ECONOMIES.”

Another definition that helps to grasp the parts of what makes a dispensation is by David Paul:

***“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 STAND-POINT IT IS A STAGE IN THE PROGRESS OF REVELATION.”

But all this is someone(what) 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**. This must be inserted here in respect to the testing of man by God. There are several areas of conflict between God and man.

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 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 here that
The Gospel For Eternal Salvation Is Always The Same
is because in most definitions of **Dispensations**
is **the idea of God testing man**
by His system of governing for each period or dispensation.

And while this is true, the Gospel is the second area where man is tested by God. Then 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 WHAT 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**.



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.

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

1 Innocence

Began 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 if you like*) was characterized by human degeneration and ended with Judgment of the flood.

B. **Period of the Jews:** Began with Abraham (1st Jew)

Jewish Race: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; (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.
 - (2) The last two Dispensations begin with God and therefore will not end in Failure.
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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 Glory!

Note: Civilizations always begin with Believers

1. Adam and Eve (Antediluvian -before flood)
2. Noah and his family (Postdiluvian)
3. Millennium
4. 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 all believers

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 do not discuss dispensations but you discuss how to interpret the Word of God.
2. Israel and the Church are distinct dispensations. The Church does not replace Israel.
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: 1-5**

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,**

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

3 **“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent**

4 **“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do**

5 **“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.**

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)
- 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 lived 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–) are 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.*

- 8 Radical differences between the Dispensation of Israel and the Church Age.

	Israel		Church-Age
1	Specialized Priesthood; family of Aaron	1	Universal Priesthood
2	Enduement of the Holy Spirit	2	Universal Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

3	Revelation through visions, conversations, prophets, etc..	3	Completed Canon of Scripture
4	C-A was a hidden mystery	4	Mystery revealed

V Categorical Outline of Dispensations

- 1 Theocentric—God Centered
 - a Dispensation of Gentiles
 - b Dispensation of Jews

- 2 Christocentric---Christ Centered
 - a Church-Age
 - b Millenium

- 3 Eschatological Dispensation
 - a Tribulation
 - b Millenium

AMEN

Now, for further comfort:

While the heavens and the earth will be destroyed

**the Bible is unchangeable,
His Word abideth forever.**

*You have more comfort, more stability in the Word of God
than you do in the universe.*

*You can rest in His Faithfulness
of your Eternal existence with Him.*

You have to make up your mind:

Is Christ sufficient for all your needs?

Or do you have to have other things or something else?

**This book is about the Sufficiency of JESUS CHRIST:
to God the Father;
and to you?**

Is the Word of God sufficient for you?

Sufficient to bring you to JESUS CHRIST?

Sufficient to bring you to God the Father?

Is the Word of God sufficient for **SAD** (*Stress, Anxiety, Depression*) in
your life or do you need outside help?

So we learn so much from the true understanding of the Gospel.

