

The Blessed Hope!

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” –(Titus 2:13)

Diamond & Nugget #32

To God Be The Glory!

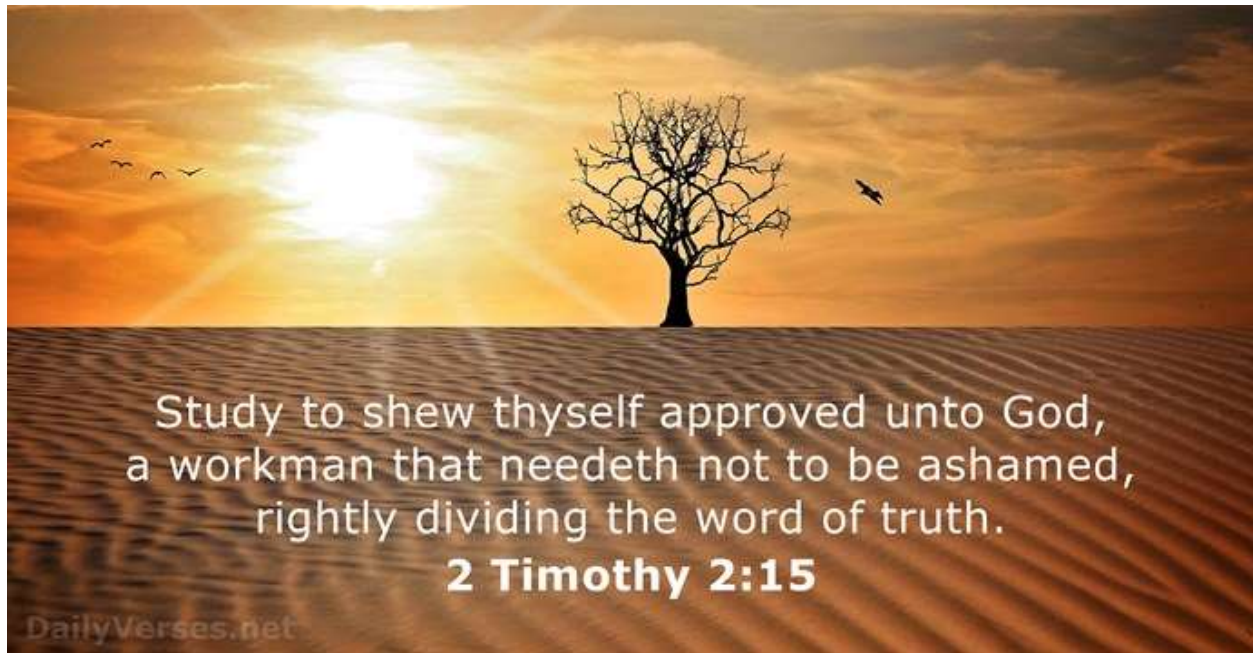
The sine qua non (the most basic, the minimal things) of dispensationalism, or that which distinguishes one as a dispensationalist, is defined very precisely by Charles Ryrie in *Dispensationalism Today* as one whom:

1. It keeps Israel and the Church distinct or separate entities.
2. It uses a consistently literal interpretation (this would mean a normal plain use of the language).
3. It understands God’s purpose in the world is for His glory (differing with covenant theology’s view as soteriological, i.e., salvation).

In reviewing articles that I have written or shared, it struck me as a serious oversight on my part for neglecting the third tenet above. As I was writing Blessed Hope #31-A,B,C, and D, reflecting on the Exodus event of the Israelites being delivered from Satan’s jaws of victory and as a “Type” of the forthcoming Rapture, I was reminded of something that I learned many years ago.

As with any category of thought, definitions are important, but that is not the easiest task with dispensationalism. The origin of the term in general refers to the idea that God has tested humanity in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God in the continuum of human history and that these ages can be seen as distinct “dispensations”. This idea, in theory, is not all that controversial. One familiar with the broad scope of Christian history can easily see ages like pre-fall humanity, humanity before the flood, the giving of the Mosaic Covenant, and the post-Christ church as being somewhat distinctly unique and unlike others.

Unfortunately, not all dispensational frameworks agree on the nature and number of ages but the primary set which has had the most acceptance and influence that will reoccur throughout the history of dispensational thought in the 19th-20th centuries). Those ages consist of: 1. Innocence, 2. Conscience, 3. Human government, 4. Promise, 5. Law, 6. Grace, and 7. Kingdom.



It can be argued whether these categories aptly describe the full extent of God's relationship with mankind but they nevertheless fit within the broad flow of Scripture.

But the dispensations themselves are not enough to describe what dispensationalists actually believe. To do that, we must look at the key tenets of dispensational thought. The two primary tenets are a literal interpretation of scripture and a strict understanding of Israel being distinct from the church. Critics of Dispensational theology or Dispensationalism want to argue the first two tenets; however, they tend to overlook what has to be the major theme of Dispensationalism.

Charles Ryrie put it this way:

“God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity.” – Ryrie

The list of the Seven Dispensations in the Bible, are more defined by the specifics in their aspects of understanding briefly here:

1) Dispensation of Innocence – this dispensation covers creation of man to the fall of man. All of creation lived in peace and innocence with one another. This dispensation ended when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law to abstain from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and they were expelled from the Garden.

2) Dispensation of Conscience – this dispensation began just after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden. Man was left to rule by his own conscience, which was

tainted by sin. This Dispensation ended in total disaster – with a worldwide flood. During this time man was totally corrupt and evil. God chose to end humanity with a flood, with the exception of Noah and his family.

3) Dispensation of Human Government – this dispensation starts just after the flood. God allowed Noah and his descendants to use animals for food and He established the law of capital punishment and was commanded to fill the earth. They did not fill the earth but instead bound together to create a Tower so that they could reach God on their own accord. God ended this dispensation by causing confusion with their languages so that they would be forced to spread to other areas.

4) Dispensation of Promise – this dispensation started with the Call of Abraham. It includes the Patriarchs and the Bondage in Egypt. Once the Jews fled Egypt and were officially the Nation of Israel the Dispensation was over.

5) Dispensation of Law – this dispensation lasted for almost 1,500 years. It started with the Exodus and ended with the Resurrection of Jesus. This was highlighted by God delivering the Law to Moses. The law was given to the people to show them that they must depend on God to save them because they could not hope to ever be holy on their own. It was a season of immense symbolism. The sacrifices of bulls and goats did not save the people, but is symbolized their need for salvation from the One who was the spotless Lamb and able to take away their sins.

6) Dispensation of Grace – this is the dispensation that occurs from the Resurrection and continues today. This is also known as the Church Age. Dispensationalists believe that there are more than 2,000 years of history between the 69th and 70th weeks in Daniels prophesy. It is in this age that we understand that Abrahams children are all those who have faith, including the Gentiles. It is only during this Dispensation that we are given the Holy Spirit. Most Dispensationalists hold to a Pre-Tribulation and Pre-Millennial Rapture. Meaning Christ will snatch away believers into the air before the Tribulation and before the Millennial Reign of Christ.

7) Dispensation of the Millennial Reign of Christ – this begins with the defeat of Satan and is a 1,000 literal years of peace where Christ will reign as King on the earth. After the 1,000 years, Satan will be released. People will follow him in a great battle against Christ but they will all be defeated again. Then comes the final judgement. After that the earth and heaven will be destroyed and replaced by a new earth and a new heaven. Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire and we will then enjoy the Eternal Kingdom.

These seven dispensations of God's Creation help us better understand our world from a historical frame of reference as well as that of the Creator Himself.

Any person who trusts in the Blood of Jesus Christ rather than bringing an annual sacrifice or any person who observes the first day of the week rather than the Sabbath is a Dispensationalist! That has to shock anyone that attacks Dispensationalism largely

because they have not studied the Whole Counsel of God through Rightly Dividing the Word of God.

Christians for the most part do not understand what Dispensationalism really is and yet they attempt to attack it without little substance or knowing what it really is. They think of it as something to do with the Scofield reference Bible. Ted Broer and his son Austin, host of Health Masters site never miss a beat to attack the Scofield Bible. I don't have a copy of Scofield's Bible, never owned one, and yet I still came to the conclusion that Jesus was a Dispensationalist. Read Luke 4:16, from which Jesus read in the temple references Isaiah 61:1-2, but closed the book before finishing the specific verse, which refers to a future act to be fulfilled. That verse shows that Jesus Christ was a Dispensationalist. Years ago I checked Amazon and of the hundreds of books on the topic, 95% of the titles listed on Amazon attack Dispensationalism. That tells me a whole lot about the authors' ignorance i.e.; lack of Biblical knowledge.

Any understanding of it must understand that salvation is by grace through faith in every dispensation, found in the Bible. The essence of Dispensationalism is that God dealt with His creation in different ways during in each of the "seven" dispensations.

Dispensationalism is actually a multifaceted system of thought. Dispensationalists believe the following:

1. The Bible is God's inspired and inerrant revelation to mankind. Scripture provides the framework through which we interpret the past, present, and the future. God's written Word tells us of His Plan for His creation, and His Plan will surely come to fulfillment.

2. Because the Bible is God's literal Word and His Plan for history [His-Story], we should interpret it literally.

3. The Bible reveals God's Plan for history. God's Plan includes different dispensations, ages, or epochs of history through which He tests His creatures (humans and angels). God is instructing His creatures through history as His creation progresses from the Garden of Eden to the Heavenly City.

4. All humanity fell into sin, so each person must individually receive God's provision for salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by believing and trusting in the Gospel. Thus, Jesus Christ is the only way to a relationship with God.

5. Scripture teaches that because of mankind's fall into sin, all humanity is naturally rebellious toward God and the things of God. This is why genuine believers in Christ Jesus are open to the teachings of the Bible. Thus, salvation through Christ Jesus is a prerequisite to properly understand God's Word.

6. God's Plan for history includes a purpose for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - that is, the Nation of Israel. This Plan for Israel includes promises that they

will have the land of Israel, they will have a seed, and they will be a worldwide blessing to the nations. Many of the promises to National Israel are still yet to be fulfilled. Therefore, God is not finished with Israel.

7. God's Plan from all eternity past until the close also includes a purpose for the Church. However, this is a temporary phase that will end with the Rapture. After the Rapture, God will complete His Plan for Israel and the Gentiles remaining.

8. God's main purpose in His Master Plan for history is to glorify Himself through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the goal and hero of history.

Someone once posted a statement, "Dispensationalism is neither here nor there. That's because dispensationalism is sectarianism, thinly disguised." Actually, whether that remark was intended as a 'noun' or an 'adjective', is in fact, irrelevant, since the term is Biblical. The term "dispensation" "***oikonomia***" is a means by which God uses to provide the believer with a Biblical World View. This is central to a Christian's understanding of his or her world. The term is found four times in the New Testament. In fact, the Greek word above is found elsewhere and used in different renderings as well. First, the four uses of the word "dispensation" are found in Paul's Epistles.

1. 1 Corinthians 9:17 - ***"For of I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me."***

2. Ephesians 1:10 - ***"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:"***

3. Ephesians 3:2 - ***"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward."***

4. Colossians 1:25 - ***"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God."***

As I stated, "dispensationalism" provides us a Biblical World View of history [His-Story]. It helps us develop a worldview for living in accordance with God's will. A believer who has a divine perspective of the past, present and future is much more able to know what God expects of him in every area of life in this present day.

In the current Church Age or Age of Grace, the New Testament teaches us how to live privately and publicly. Dispensationalists, for example, do not live in this Age of Grace as if we were still under the rule of the Mosaic Law. Instead, we understand that we are now under what the New Testament defines and calls the Law of Christ -(1st Corinthians 9:11; Galatians 6:2). Current dispensational obligations combined with responsibilities from previous ages provide a New Testament believer with a complete Biblical framework for understanding how to relate to God, to please God in every area of our life. Covenant/Reformed theology does not provide the believer a proper Biblical World View, which is absolutely essential for living the Christian life.

Dispensationalism is not the majority view within the universal church; however, it is, as I have stated, Biblical and it can be identified throughout the Bible. Case in point, Covenant/Reformed theology identifies basically, 2 covenants in the Bible, the Old and the New. This is contrary to the Word of God and a gross over-simplification of the Word of God, whereas, God has revealed "seven" dispensations. The Bible defines "eight" covenants and not simply "two" as Covenant/Reformed theology and churches teach is the Old and New Testament. This over-simplification of Scripture immediately should tell the reader that something is hugely wrong with Covenant/Reformed theology and how the Bible is understood.

Therefore, classic Pauline Dispensationalism is used to describe the Biblical emphasis as originally set forth in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, with portions historically recovered by Martin Luther during the 16th century (Protestant Reformation), and a further major recovery by John Nelson Darby during the middle of the 19th century. This framework was embraced by a majority of the original Plymouth Brethren, and dispensational Bible teachers in America such as Clarence Larkin, and others. Many American dispensational scholars drew heavily upon the deeply-spiritual writings of the original Plymouth Brethren. Many critics consider the Plymouth Brethren a cult, errantly so. The Plymouth Brethren was never a cult.

Something that we should never forget is that clarity of Scripture has steadily come into sharper focus with the advance of time. An example case would be that of the "Mark" of the Beast. Even the restoration of Israel noted in Isaiah 66:8 could not have been understood with clarity in 1860, at the time of Darby. What I am stating with firmness is that there is a progressive understanding of unfolding events with time as they take place in our period of history. Some will call this "Progressive Dispensationalism", which in my opinion fails to explain properly the Scriptures.

God gave us 66 books, from Genesis to Revelation, that told us history in advance, we call it prophecy but really He was giving us a road map of man's 6,000 year reign of planet Earth. As we see the Bible being revealed in history in our lifetime, we are really seeing God's Word confirmed against the backdrop of current history. Each time we see one of those "Diamonds & Nuggets" of the Bible coming to pass, we are being confirmed to the Scripture's Truth and Reliability. A few segments ago, I noted that in August and September, there have been several prophecies fulfilled that have not been noted by Bible prophecy teachers. We are all watching to see when Isaiah 17:1-2 or the Ezekiel 38/39 scenario occurs. These two in particular stand out as momentous events in the Nation of Israel, Iran, Syria, and the Middle East in general.

Among dispensationalists, confusion has arisen regarding the term. At the end of the 20th century and start of the 21st, the label is used by various groups with both subtle and not so subtle differences in meaning. Our explanation will hopefully clarify these differences.

The Church/Body began on the Day of Pentecost in the book of Acts, but the doctrinal details of this spiritual event were a complete mystery until revealed to Paul by the

Risen Christ -(Galatians 1:12) and then expounded by this Apostle to others of the first century Church. Contrary to a narrowly-held, dispensational error, the Apostle Paul was not the first member of the Body of Christ. For several decades following Pentecost, the other Jewish Apostles, including Peter, were unclear regarding much of this new truth and would subsequently learn it 'second-hand' in greater clarity from Paul -(2nd Peter 3:15,16).

We hold to the following indispensable tenets regarding the Church--the Body of Christ:

1. First and foremost, "Classic Pauline Dispensationalism is based upon the division of LIFE, not simply that of economies. Once that total separation of the two seminal lives [First and Last Adam] is seen and maintained, these economies will never coalesce." The quintessence of the rightly divided Word is the doctrine of the two Adams!

2. The Church (Body of Christ) was neither prophesied nor revealed in Old Testament Scriptures. The Church is a heavenly entity. The institutional Church as we know it today is largely an inferior substitute. The Church is not, as per Reformed/Covenant theory, the fulfillment of the promised blessings to Gentiles according to the Abrahamic Covenant. Furthermore, the Church is not the recipient of blessing formerly promised to the nation of Israel or of any "spiritual blessings" from Israel's New Covenant. God made no covenant with the heavenly Church. The Body of Christ is unique.

3. The Church was a complete mystery until revealed doctrinally by Paul. It is the Body of Christ and her uniqueness that is the central mystery, not the principles of grace or faith. There is one Body of Christ, whose advent was on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts Chapter 2. The Church (Body of Christ) did not begin with the Apostle Paul, but rather his ministry was one of unfolding the truths associated with that one Body. We know that after Paul's Damascus Road experience led into the Arabian Desert for approximately three years and taught by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

4. Paul, in the Church Epistles, was the minister of Church Truth. Those who do not center in the truths which the ascended Lord communicated directly to this Apostle will not know who and where they are in Christ, nor what their part is in the purpose of God. Neither will they know their heavenly privileges and responsibilities. Those who are ignorant of, and not centered in, the Pauline Gospel as set forth exclusively in Paul's epistles, are constantly led astray in their interpretation of the Gospel, to say nothing of Church truth.

For a dispensationalist it is best not to refer to the difference between the Old Testament (books) and New Testament (books), as such. Much of the New Testament (Synoptic Gospels) is Old Testament (related to Israel and her covenants): all is Old Testament to Matthew 27, Mark 15, and Luke 23. Church (Body) Truth, the new, is totally different from Judaism truth, the old; and it was not fully revealed until after the Cross, via Paul.

5. The thirteen epistles of Paul (Romans to Philemon) form a distinct body of Truth; and this realm of Truth is about us, the Church, the Body of Christ, as no other Scriptures are. The Apostle Paul is the Father's special messenger to us. As has been truly said, the entire Bible is for us, but it is not all about us.

Should your Dispensationalism fall below or depart from these standards, it may be time to take a long and hard look at the differences. If your theological ancestors or contemporaries have spent their livelihoods arguing and debating among themselves, even attempting to draw others into the incessant fray, and not focused upon developing a deeper and more meaningful relationship with the Risen and Ascended Lord Jesus Christ, maybe it's time you considered Classic Pauline Dispensationalism.

I previously noted the four uses of the word "dispensation" in Scripture. The same Greek word also appears in Luke 16:2; 16:3; and 16:4, but is rendered in English as "stewardship". On two other occasions in Ephesians 3:9 and 1 Timothy 1:4 it is rendered "administration". The word "***oikenomia***" is derived from the word "***oikos***" (house) and "***nemo***", (to deal out) or (to administer).

Those opposed to "Dispensationalism" misconstrue the understanding of what it means. 'Vine's comment is appropriate: "*A Dispensation is not a period or epoch (a common, but erroneous, use of the word) but rather a mode of dealing with, an arrangement or administrator of affairs*". -(*Vine's Expository Dictionary*).

To understand the Plan and Objectives of God throughout the ages, one must see the difference and relationship between a "dispensation" and a "covenant". A "dispensation" is a temporary period of time based on a conditional test to determine if humanity will be faithful to the conditions of God. Scofield defined a "dispensation" as "a period of time during which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the will of God". According to Charles Ryrie "*A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose. If one were describing a dispensation he would include other things, such as the idea of distinctive revelation, testing, failure and judgment.*" Humanity has failed these various testing's, and thus, each dispensation ended in judgment.

A Biblical covenant is an eternal agreement God makes with mankind, revealing what He will do for humanity. God made "seven" covenants with humanity, not "two" as Covenant/Reformed theology state, throughout history. Each covenant reveals principles by which God will relate to man. Man has the "free will" to reject the covenant or principles of God, but when he violates the covenant, he suffers the consequences.

There are certain essentials of "Dispensationalism", and these distinctions are largely between Israel and the Church. This comes out of the dispensationalist's consistent employment of normal or plain or historical-grammatical interpretation of the basic purpose of God in all His dealing with humanity as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well. Personal salvation is not the primary purpose of God, as most people seem to think. First and foremost, the primary purpose of God is

to bring His own Glorification. You will find this fact out by reading the entire Bible. God leaves no doubt in the reader's mind, God wants ALL the glory! You may not know this but it is an underlying axiom for both the Exodus as well as the soon Rapture!

If you doubt it, I can identify as many as 80 passages of Scripture that explicitly state such. This is the purpose of worship.

It is important that the reader recognize that this view or interpretation of the Bible is the only view that offers a coherent systematic view of the Bible, where the Biblical narrative offers a connected and integrated grand panorama of His-Story. It begins with and ends with an overarching story, and is not simply a collection of fables or myths. It is a historical record of humanity.

The first essential of Dispensationalism is not just a literal interpretation, but more fully a consistent literal hermeneutic. It is an interpretation that does not "spiritualize" or "allegorize" as does Covenant/Reformed interpretation. Bishop Augustine of Hippo, North Africa found the allegorical approach and the spiritualizing of Scripture to his advantage as a means to distance the church and minimize the focus on the Jews in history.

The third essential of Dispensationalism is aptly summarized in a quote by Dr. Renald Showers, ***"The ultimate purpose of all history is the glory of God through the demonstration that He alone is the Sovereign God."*** Certainly this point is well dispersed throughout the Bible. One of the most significant Scripture passage is found in Ezekiel 36:22, ***"Therefore say unto the House of Israel. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O House of Israel, but for mine Holy Name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went."*** This theme is found five times just in the book of Ezekiel: 20:9; 20:14; 20:22; 20:44; and 36:22. This point is explicitly found elsewhere in over 80 passages throughout the Bible.

Dispensationalism is a system of theology that has been properly developed from the Bible itself. It does not rest on any human before or now. Accusations by those opposed to the Dispensationalist hermeneutic often pontificate by stating that this is the creation of C.I. Scofield, then go on to tell the world had bad he was in their strawman attacks. They then attempt to buttress their words by attacking Dr. Tim LaHaye and Hal Lindsey, leading to the idea these men proclaims heresy about the Bible. Then they go on to attack the late Chuck Smith, Chuck Missler, and Jack Van Impe. The fact is most of those critics can't begin to hold a candle to any of the names noted.

We can defend the Rapture teaching of the Apostle Paul beginning with how God is going to deal with Israel during the final 70th Week of Daniel. That God has a plan to bring the Jews to repentance is part and parcel in one's understanding that God had another Plan "B", by which He refers to as ***"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."*** -(John 10:16). This passage is a specific reference to the Gentile world. That fact is confirmed by Paul's message to the Gentile world.

Paul calls himself ***“the apostle to the Gentiles”*** in Romans 11:13. It’s not as though Paul never preached to the Jews - on the contrary, his custom was to preach first in the synagogue when entering a new city -(Acts 17:2). And it’s not as though the other apostles never preached to Gentiles (see Acts 10). But in a real sense, Paul’s ministry among the Gentiles was unique. Paul’s mission was to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles: ***“He chose me to be a servant of Christ Jesus for the Gentiles and to do the work of a priest in the service of his good news. God did this so that the Holy Spirit could make the Gentiles into a holy offering, pleasing to him”*** -(Romans 15:16).

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles by God’s choice. The Lord Jesus declared that He had a specific mission for Paul: ***“This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel”*** -(Acts 9:15). Paul had been set apart from birth and called by God’s grace so that he might ***“preach [Christ] among the Gentiles”*** -(Galatians 1:15–16).

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles because the bulk of his ministry was spent in pagan lands planting churches among the Gentiles. Paul was the first to preach the gospel on European soil. His three missionary journeys took him far from Jewish lands to Gentile areas where Diana, Zeus, and Apollo were worshiped, to Cyprus, to Athens, to Malta, and eventually to Rome. He desired to preach in Spain as well -(Romans 15:24), but it’s not totally clear if he ever made it that far.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles because he was under obligation to serve in Gentile lands. Paul’s testimony was that ***“this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ”*** (Ephesians 3:8). Peter preached (mainly) to the Jews, and Paul was commissioned to preach (mainly) to the Gentiles: ***“God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews”*** -(Galatians 2:7, NLT).

Paul was well-qualified to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He was well-educated, being thoroughly trained in the Mosaic Law under Gamaliel -(Acts 22:3) and having received a classical Roman education in Tarsus. He had the ability to argue his point from Jewish Law -(Galatians 4:21–31) and to illustrate it from Greek literature -(Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12; 1st Corinthians 15:33). Paul’s training as a Pharisee -(Philippians 3:5) allowed him access to synagogues everywhere, and he also held the privileges of Roman citizenship, which opened doors of opportunity throughout the Roman world -(Acts 22:3, 25–29; 28:30)..

The Lord specifically chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles to show that salvation is offered to all people. Ephesians 3:6 speaks of how Christ brings together both Gentile and Jew: ***“And this is God’s plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God’s children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus”*** (NLT).

The well of Hermeneutics was long ago poisoned by Roman Catholic false teachers, subsequently by the Jesuits, who infiltrated Protestant churches and schools, and finally into the Bible Translation Societies. In the 19th century the heresies of the cults came along and further confused the laity of the church.

Getting back to our understanding what a dispensation is, it is seen as an administration of God's economy that includes the following elements:

- ++Promises from God
- ++Commandments from God that test humanity's obedience
- ++Principles for humanity to live by
- ++Humanity's failure to keep God's commands
- ++Progressive revelation of God's plan for history

The first dispensation is commonly referred to during the first period or Dispensations as the Edenic and Adamic Covenants. While they are not actually covenants, but for learning purposes, they can be discussed for comparison purposes.

1. The Edenic Covenant and the Dispensation of Innocence. The first covenant involved man's physical existence on Earth. Adam had no history and therefore no knowledge of how to care for his physical needs. Rather than leaving man to experiment with ways to provide for his necessities, God revealed to Adam how he should care for his human needs. Mankind's primary needs have not significantly changed throughout time.

When God created Adam sinless in the Garden, He gave Adam certain principles to follow. If Adam kept these principles, he would prosper:

1. Replenish the Earth with children -(Genesis 1:28).
2. Use nature (subdue the Earth) for food, shelter, and clothing -(Genesis 1:28).
3. Have dominion over animal life -(Genesis 1:28).
4. Eat fruit and vegetables -(Genesis 1:28).
5. Work for sustenance -(Genesis 2:15).
6. Obey God (abstaining from eating of the tree that God prohibited) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil -(Genesis 2:17).

The Edenic Covenant is tied to the Dispensation of Innocence, whereby God tested man to see if he would live by God's conditions. God told man not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil -(Genesis 2:17. The Dispensation ended in man's failure - Eve was deceived -(1 Timothy 2:14), and Adam deliberately disobeyed. As a result, the first man had personal and experiential knowledge of good and evil. What seemed like a simple, limited act of eating fruit ended in a broad, conscious knowledge of right and wrong. In the next Dispensation, the descendants of Adam were responsible for this new awareness of sin.

Because Adam could not keep the conditions of the first Dispensation, God judged him. The judgment was expulsion from the Garden. The first Dispensation - and the others as well - reveals that natural man is incapable of obeying or pleasing God. Man lost the benefits of living in the innocent environment of Eden. This point should be noted by those that think they will achieve God's love from strict obedience to the Law will not earn them brownie points. It's a futile effort. But the Covenantal Principle would continue: Man was responsible to provide for his own needs. As a result of man's failure, God placed cherubim at the entrance to the Garden to keep man from returning -(Genesis 3:24). What does this tell you about God's character?

Next we will look at the Adamic Covenant and the Dispensation of Conscience. The second covenant grew out of man's failure in the first Dispensation. The Adamic Covenant promised not only redemption for humanity but also judgment for the one who was responsible for the first sin.

2. The Adamic Covenant and the Dispensation of Conscience. The Adamic Covenant and the Dispensation of Conscience included:

1. God cursed the serpent, Satan's tool, and reduced it from a beautiful creature to a hated reptile.
2. God promised destruction for Satan in a future blow to the head -(Genesis 3:15). Genesis 3:15 is the very first Biblical prophecy unfolding the master plan of redeeming mankind.
3. God promised that the woman would bear a seed, a redeemer for mankind who would destroy Satan -(Genesis 3:15).
4. God would provide for the physical necessities of life through hard and despised physical work -(Genesis 3:19).
5. God cursed nature (the creation). It reluctantly gives its fruit for man's necessities, and its beauty is veiled -(Genesis 3:17-19).
6. The woman would have multiplied sorrow in childbirth and be submission to her husband -(Genesis 3:16).
7. The human race would experience physical death -(Romans 5:12).

Because man failed to live up to the test of the Dispensation of Innocence, God gave him a second Dispensational test. Mankind could not go back, so it went forward to its next test. As humanity entered a hostile environment outside the Garden, God gave a second set of conditions to live by. This Dispensation of Conscience is guided by the living by the limited knowledge of right and wrong that Adam and Eve experientially accumulated. God introduced the Adamic Covenant at the beginning of this Dispensation.

During the Dispensation of Conscience, man enjoyed long life but was still not able to follow his conscience. Humanity failed the test and revealed that it would not keep the general principles of goodness. Instead **"every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"** -(Genesis 6:5), and **"it repented the Lord that He**

had made man" -(Genesis 6:6). The Dispensation of Conscience ended in the judgment of the Flood. In the last fifty years we have learned much from archeology, paleontology, medicine, and geology that fills in the gaps of history pertaining to the subject of Genesis 6, as to why God expressed regrets of His creating mankind. God destroyed humanity via the Flood chiefly because the gene pool of man had been polluted and corrupted by intercourse between fallen angels and women. We have evidence today that suggests God's Flood did not eliminate all of the angelic beings. In fact, there are many examples of how the Genesis 6 account has been discovered to have greater substance than first thought.

After the Flood wiped out society and left only eight people alive, God introduced a new covenant with new promises. It came with a new Dispensation and new tests as well. The principles of the first and second covenant continue (people must provide for themselves and live by their conscience), but now man no longer lives as a private individual, responsible only to himself. We refer to this as the Noachic Covenant and the Dispensation of Human Government.

3. The Noachic Covenant and the Dispensation of Human Government. The Noachic Covenant includes the institution of human government. Mankind is to live in a corporate society. Prior to this, people lived in extended families ruled by tribal heads. But as society became larger, people came to be organized under corporate government.

After the Flood, God made a Covenant with Noah and gave the Rainbow as a sign: ***"This is the token of the Covenant which I make between Me and you."*** -(Genesis 9:12). The Noachic Covenant became the third period of time, the Dispensation of Human Government. God no longer allows the conscience of individuals to be the sole basis of human life. Mankind failed to live according to personal conscience, so God punished mankind through the universal Flood.

In the Covenant of Human Government, God confirms elements of the previous covenants: man is to subdue the Earth and provide for his necessities -(Genesis 9:3), and the physical laws of the universe will remain ordered -(Genesis 8:22). God also adds a new promise. The Earth will never have another universal Flood -(Genesis 9:15). The core of the Noachic Covenant was the judicial taking of life -(Genesis 9:6), which is the ultimate expression of government.

The test of the Dispensation of Human Government was for humanity to divide into nations or societies and govern itself. The Bible does not tell us a whole lot about how men lived under its test. Most of the generations of the sons of Noah, and Genesis 10 are only representative of this lengthy and mysterious period of time. However, the judgments that end this era are well known.

Humanity's failure is evident from the Divine judgment of the Tower of Babel -(Genesis 11:6-8). Even though mankind failed the Dispensation of Government, God did not

dissolve the principles He gave Noah. The principles of government and the principles from the first two covenants continued forward.

Everything heretofore is based upon a "Literal" reading of the text. The fact is that God said what He meant, and meant what He said. Once we begin to "spiritualize" away the "literal" meaning of the words of Scripture, we are in danger of telling "spiritual lies". The Bible is a historical [His-Story] document with no equal in the story of humanity. It is also prophetic, and tells us how history will conclude. These points are not to be subject of debate because they are self-evident to even the casual reader of the Bible.

4. The fourth period is the Abrahamic Covenant and the Dispensation of Promise. When God called Abram, the turning point of man experienced a dramatic turning point. God had previously dealt with all humanity in each of the Dispensations. But with Abram, God chose one man and planned to make from him a single nation as the center of His work. Through this single nation, God planned to save the world. People often ask, why did God choose the Jews? The answer may be in the fact the Hebrews were the only mono-theistic people of the nations all around them.

The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant include:

1. God would make out of Abraham a great nation - a nation that would influence the other nations, a nation that would continue while others disappeared.
2. God would bless this nation with financial and spiritual prosperity -(Genesis 12:2).
3. God would make the name of Abraham universal and enduring.
4. God would bless Abraham - (Galatians 3:13-14).
5. God would bless the nations that bless the seed of Abraham.
6. God would bless all the families of the Earth all through Abraham's seed, the Christ - (Genesis 12:3).
7. God led Abraham to that land -(Genesis 12:1) and then promised to give it to him - (Genesis 12:7). It is therefore called the Promised Land.

The most important aspect of God's covenant to Abraham is its promise. This fourth period, the Dispensation of Promise, tested God's people's willingness and ability to accept and live in light of the promise of God. They were to live in the Promised Land and trust God for the Promised Seed.

Each Dispensation included a test, and the fourth Dispensation reflects man's inability to live by the Promise of God. The descendants of Abraham refused to live in the Land by faith, so they migrated to Egypt. This Dispensation's final test and failure of God's people (Israel) occurred when God attempted to bring them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. At Kadesh-Barnea, the people refused to trust God and enter the Promised Land. God judged them, and every one of them who did not accept the Promise of God died in the wilderness. Only those of faith (Joshua and Caleb) and those younger than twenty years of age later were permitted to enter the Promised Land.

5. The Mosaic Covenant and the Dispensation of Law. The fifth Dispensation of Law is linked with the Mosaic Covenant. It was given on Mount Sinai where the Law was given to Moses. The Law demonstrated to each individual that he was a sinner before God. During the previous Dispensations, man was a sinner even when he did not have the knowledge of the Law. The Apostle Paul tells us, "**Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.**" -(Romans 5:14). That passage also points out that God uses such things as "similitudes", "symbology", "types", and "themes" and many other linguistic tools and object lessons to communicate His Word.

The Mosaic Covenant had three parts to it:

1. The commandments expressing the righteous will of God.
2. The judgments expressing the social life of Israel.
3. The ordinances directing the religious life of Israel.

Jesus called all these "The Law" -(Matthew 5:17), and Paul explained that it was a ministry of condemnation -(2 Corinthians 3:7-9). No one was ever saved by keeping the Law - it was simply God's way of testing Israel. The nation's failure to keep the Law ended in judgment, as did all the other Dispensations. Those today that have chosen to go back under the Law have been deceived into believing a lie, furthermore, it reflects their ignorance of the Biblical message, since no one was saved by the Law, ever. This is the major error of the Hebrew Roots movement that has enamored Christians thinking they will be "better" or more "religious" by becoming a Jew first.

Paul stated that it was a "**schoolmaster**" to communicate the hopelessness of trying to live under the Law. Today, many religious groups attempt to get people to believe that things will change if they return to the Law of Moses. This is very common with all the cults, even Jewish believers, in some cases. Salvation comes by ONLY ONE WAY - by the grace of God through faith in the Messiah Christ Jesus! It is Grace + nothing. Anyone that teaches you have to be baptized, you have to be a church member, do good works, perform rituals, tithe, whatever is putting the person under the Mosaic Law which was a failure in itself. There is a real possibility that it nullifies salvation by grace through faith. I have found Biblical evidence to validate that statement. There is another aspect of the Torah that people fail to know. The Hebrew word for Law is "**nomos**", however, the meaning of Torah (referred to as the books of the Law) literally, means "teachings".

The Dispensation of Law ended with Jesus Christ. He alone, kept the Law (fulfilled it perfectly) -(Matthew 5:17), and then nailed the Law to the Cross -(Colossians 2:14), and "**abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances**" -(Ephesians 2:15).

Finally, just as principles from the previous covenants continued into the subsequent Dispensations, so the principles of the Law continue past the Cross of Jesus Christ. He did not take away the wisdom of the Law, or the "Spirit" of the Law, but rather the

penalties of the Law. Legalists insist the keeping of the "**letter**" of the law at the expense of the "**spirit**" of the Law. Law-keepers may believe seriously they are in Covenant, however, this Dispensation applied strictly to the Jews alone. My experience over five decades has been that they use so-called Law-keeping as a badge of showing off to others, that they are super-spiritual. We see this with Sabbath-keepers, of all stripes and names. They are quick to boast and undercut those believers that worship formally on Sunday. There is only way in dealing with Law-keepers, or the "Legalists" which most of them are not, truly keepers of the Law, by the things that they continue to do on the Sabbath, and that is to know your Bible. There were more requirements of Sabbatarianism than just worshipping on the Sabbath.

6. The New Covenant is associated with the Dispensation of Grace. The Old Testament looked ahead to the New Covenant, "**Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah**" -(Jeremiah 31:31). Note that passage affirms the day when the two houses of Judaism will be reunited. It is a "future" event, and "Covenant/Reformed" theology does not teach that, and, for all intent and purpose, rejects the importance of the Jews. It is also called the Second Covenant, in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant of the Law: "**For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the Second**" -(Hebrews 8:7). The New Covenant is "better" than the Old Covenant:

1. It is unconditional. "**I will make [a covenant] with the House of Israel" and "I will be to them a God"** -(Hebrews 8:10).
2. God guarantees that men will keep its conditions. "**I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts"** -(Hebrews 8:10).
3. It extends to all, "**For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest"** - (Hebrews 8:11).
4. It will completely eradicate sin, "**There sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"** -(Hebrews 8:12).
5. It rests upon the sacrifice of Christ, the better Mediator, and assures eternal blessedness from those that accept it.

Jesus Christ predicted the New Covenant on the night of His death, when He instituted the Lord's Supper. "**This is my blood of the New Covenant [Testament] which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" -(Matthew 26:28). The results of the New Covenant apply primarily to the Dispensation of Grace or the Church Age, but in the same way that the previous Covenants have all had eternal applications to the future Dispensations, the New Covenant provides the benefits of salvation for believers from previous Dispensations.

The Dispensation of Grace does not test legal obedience. Rather, the question is this: What will a person do with Jesus Christ? The believers in this Dispensation must accept Christ Jesus and live by Grace. The Dispensation of Grace will end with the professing Church rejecting Grace and sliding into apostasy. If one doubts that: simply look at the state of the Church today regarding the LGBTQ movement. The resulting

Tribulation is God's judgment that ends the era of Grace. The apostasy began with the Church surrendering to the abortion movement, and the recent cave-in to the sodomite movement that has been adopted by nearly all of the mainline Protestant churches.

7. The Davidic Covenant is associated with the Dispensation of the Kingdom. This Covenant is the least understood today by non-Dispensationalists. God's Covenant with David is unique. An extended gap of time separates God's past revelation of the Covenant to David from its future accomplishments. The Davidic Covenant had immediate implications for Israel, but it was the basis for a future Dispensation known as the Kingdom Age - the Millennium - when David's Son will sit on the throne of Israel and rule from Jerusalem. We are talking here about Revelation 20. 90% of the Church community dogmatically rejects the idea of the Millennial earthly reign of Christ Jesus. Just ask people, do you believe Christ is coming back to rule and reign from Jerusalem?

Previously, God had promised Eve she would have a seed who would be the Redeemer -(Genesis 3:15). God later narrowed the line of Promise to the descendants of Shem - (Genesis 9:26), then the family of Abraham -(Genesis 12:3), and finally to the Tribe of Judah -(Genesis 49:10). Now the focus narrows even more and the Redeemer - the Seed of Promise to come from the descendants of David.

The Davidic Covenant -(Psalm 89:20-37) is conditional and based on the nature of God. God established His Nation through the Abrahamic Covenant. He provided laws for the people of the nation through the Mosaic Covenant, and He established a ruler over them in the Davidic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant has a fourfold Promise found in 2nd Samuel 7:13.

1. God will establish David's family line.
2. God will rule over His people through His Son, the Son of David.
3. God will establish His Kingdom.
4. God will recognize David's reign forever.

This Covenant is perpetual and unbreakable: ***"My covenant will I not break ... once I have sworn by My Holiness that I will not lie unto David"*** -(Psalm 89:34-35). When Israel disobeyed, God did not abrogate or cancel the Covenant. He only chastised His people for their disobedience. The chastisement came when the Kingdom divided under Rehoboam. God confirmed the Davidic Covenant by an oath -(Psalm 89), later confirmed it to the Virgin Mary -(Luke 12:31-33), and Peter repeated it on Pentecost -(Acts 2:29-32).

We can know for certainty that God will fulfill this covenant in a future Kingdom. This seventh and last era of time to govern man's life on Earth will follow the apocalyptic judgment at the end of the Church Age. Man will fail to please God even though He is giving man ample opportunity to do so. In this last Dispensation, man will live in a perfect environment, Jesus Christ, Himself, will rule mankind, and God will remove the curse on nature. But even in these ideal circumstances, man will still fail to please God. This explains why God will release Satan from the abyss for a short while.

The "Dispensation of the Fullness of Times" -(Ephesians 1:10) is another name for the future Kingdom, which David's son will rule -(2 Samuel 7:8-17; Zechariah 12:8; Luke 1:31-33). This era will be filled with blessings:

1. Christ Jesus will take control of the Kingdom -(Isaiah 11:3-4) and put an end to anarchy and misrule.
2. God will reward mankind and provide rest -(2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).
3. God will glorify those who have suffered -(Romans 8:17-18).
4. God will save all of Israel -(Romans 11:26), cure her blindness -(Corinthians 3:4), and restore her -(Ezekiel 39:25-29).
5. The time of the Gentiles will cease.
6. God will lift the curse on the creation and nature will be magnified -(Genesis 3:17; Isaiah 11:6-8; 65:20-25; Romans 8:19-21).

Even the last Dispensation of ideal circumstances will end in judgment. The test will be for people to submit to the Son of David, Christ Jesus. He will rule with a rod of iron, which means He will be the Absolute Ruler who will guide mankind with justice and equity. But at the end of the 1,000 year reign, a group will gather in rebellion against the King -(Revelation 20:7-9). God will judge them along with Satan -(Revelation 20:10). Then at the final judgment of the ages (Dispensations), those who rejected God will be cast into the lake of fire along with Satan -(Revelation 20:11-15).

Thus God will have demonstrated that in every age (Dispensation), under every circumstance or test, man could not or would not live according to the principles expressed in the covenants nor keep the requirements of the Dispensations.

Those who live with God throughout eternity will do so by the Grace of God. Man has done absolutely nothing to merit salvation. GRACE is "**G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense." Those who suffer eternal separation will realize that God gave mankind multiple opportunities and different tests through which to demonstrate faith in Him. And in every Dispensation, humanity failed. Therefore, in future ages, no person will be able to say that God was unfair or unmerciful.

The Dispensations enabled us to correctly understand God's prophetic timetable of history. The current era focuses on the Church as the instrument through which God works, not on Israel. Yet for the rest of Daniel's prophecy -(Daniel 9:25-27) look for it to be fulfilled literally in the same way the initial sixty-nine weeks were fulfilled, the Church must be removed from the Earth. This event is called the Rapture. It could happen at any moment and it will precede the last "seven" years of God's decree for Israel, known as the Tribulation.

Dispensationalism is the only Biblical hermeneutic that provides a coherent, "World View". If you have digested these posts on Dispensationalism, you may have discovered a clearer understanding of many questions that you may have had in the back of your mind. You can see why certain groups of people are so spiteful and

hateful of the Dispensational hermeneutic, and anyone that holds to this way of understanding the Bible. It brings out the anger of those that claim they are the true church, or you have to observe the Sabbath, and a host of other things that get in their craw, such as the Pre-Tribulational Rapture!

We are weeks away from going home!

Blessings from God,

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