

BIBLICAL
DISPENSATIONS
- PART III -

The Outworking Of God's Plan For The Ages

Three indispensable factors to Dispensationalism:

1. The recognition of the distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church.
2. The consistent use of a single method of interpreting the Bible -- *namely, the historical-grammatical-contextual method.*
3. The recognition that the ultimate purpose of history is not limited to the redemption of man, but includes other distinctive plans and purposes.

Covenant Theology advocates that the ultimate purpose of history is the glory of God through the redemption of the elect.

Dispensational Theology recognizes that God is working in many ways, at many times, with many groups, in many circumstances, to bring glory to Himself and to show what He is like.

We could say that the ultimate purpose of history is the glory of God through the demonstration that He alone is the sovereign God.

Dispensationalism is a system of theology which develops the Bible's philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God.

Dispensationalism represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by several dispensations of God's rule.

Some Important Considerations

1. The different dispensations are different ways of God's administering His rule over the world. They are not different ways of salvation. Salvation has always been by the grace of God through faith in the Word of God, and God has based salvation on the work of Jesus Christ.

2. A dispensation is not an age of history, even though a dispensation may cover the same time period as an age.

3. A dispensation may involve a particular way of God administering His rule over all of mankind or over only one segment of mankind.

4. A new dispensation may continue or discontinue some ruling factors of previous dispensations, but it will have at least one new ruling factor never introduced before.

5. Each new dispensation demands new revelation. God must reveal His new way of ruling and man's new responsibility near the beginning of each dispensation.

Essential Characteristics Of Each Dispensation

1. A particular way of God's administering His rule.

Each dispensation is characterized by a unique ruling factor or combination of ruling factors.

2. It must involve a particular responsibility for man. Each dispensation makes man responsible to obey God in accordance with its unique ruling factor or combination of factors.

3. It must be characterized by divine revelation which had not been given before.

Secondary Characteristics Of Each Dispensation

1. Each dispensation applies a test to man. The nature of the test is whether or not man will perfectly obey God's rule by fulfilling the responsibility which is characteristic of that dispensation.

2. Each dispensation demonstrates the failure of man to obey the particular rule of God which characterizes that dispensation.

3. Each dispensation involves divine judgment because of man's failure.

What are the Biblical Dispensations?

1. Favorable Disposition (Innocence)
2. Conscience
3. Human Government
4. Promise
5. Mosaic Law
6. Grace
7. Righteous Reign & Rule Of Christ (Millennium)

2. The Dispensation Of Conscience

The second dispensation extended from the fall of man through the flood. The Scripture which covers this dispensation is **Genesis 4:1-8:19**.

This dispensation had two ruling factors:

A. Human Conscience

B. Restraining Work Of The Holy Spirit

Man's responsibility was to obey God on the basis of his conscience and restraint of the Holy Spirit.

Man obtained an awareness of good and evil as a result of eating the forbidden fruit. In other words, human conscience began when man rebelled against God. (Gen. 3:5, 22)

Paul indicates that conscience functions as a ruling factor among the Gentiles even though they have not been given the Mosaic law in Romans 2:14-15.

Genesis 6:3 indicates that the Holy Spirit had been striving with man during the days prior to the flood. The verb translated “strive” signifies “to rule.” Thus, the Holy Spirit was also a ruling factor, working alongside the conscience.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul refers to the restraining work of the Holy Spirit in the world being removed during the tribulation period.

Man's responsibility subjected him to the following test: *Would man obey God on the basis of his conscience and the restraint of the Holy Spirit?*

Man failed miserably as Genesis 6:5 indicates.

This serious failure brought great judgment.

Through a worldwide flood God destroyed all mankind except for Noah and his family.

In Genesis 4:3-7 God accepted Abel's blood sacrifice but rejected Cain's bloodless sacrifice. This implies that the special revelation from God that man was to approach Him only by means of a blood sacrifice.

Hebrews 11:4 (NKJV) — 4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.