

BIBLICAL
DISPENSATIONS
- PART V -

The Outworking Of God's Plan For The Ages

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)

Essential Characteristics Of Each Dispensation

1. A particular way of God's administering His rule.
2. It must involve a particular responsibility for man.
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.
2. Each dispensation demonstrates man's failure.
3. Each dispensation involves divine judgment.

5. The Dispensation Of The Mosaic Law

The fifth dispensation extended from the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross at Mount Calvary. The tearing of the veil in the Temple in Jerusalem when Christ died indicated that the Law was terminated at that time.

The Scripture portion which covers this dispensation is **Exodus 19** through **Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:41, Luke 23:49 and John 20:30.**

After failing to obey God on the basis of the four ruling factors, God introduced the Mosaic Law as a new ruling factor. This dispensation had five ruling factors:

1. Conscience
2. Restraint of the Holy Spirit
3. Human Government
4. Promise
5. Mosaic Law

The central core of the Mosaic Law was written on tables of stone. The Law inflicted the death penalty upon those who broke a number of its precepts. Thus, the Mosaic Law was a totally external way of God's administering His rule over Israel.

For this reason, the Apostle Paul declared that the Mosaic Law functioned as a tutor that acts as a moral restrainer (**Gal. 3:23-25**).

Dispensational Theologians have named the fifth dispensation after the new ruling factor because that is the factor which made the fifth dispensation distinct from the fourth.

The special revelation which God gave to Israel for the fifth dispensation is recorded in **Exodus 20 - Deuteronomy**. It consisted of the Mosaic Law with its 613 commandments. These gave in detail God's will for the moral, civil and ceremonial aspects of Israel's life.

Israel's responsibility during the fifth dispensation was to obey God on the basis of human conscience, the restraint of the Holy Spirit, human government, promise, *plus* the Mosaic Law. This responsibility subjected the Jews to the following test: ***Would they obey God on the basis of these five ruling factors?***

The people of Israel failed the test of the fifth dispensation. The Jews broke the Mosaic Law repeatedly (Jer. 31:32; Ezek. 16). God was forced to tell them that they had a heart of stone (Ezek. 36:26; Zech. 7:12). This was His way of saying that their inner control center was inflexible. It refused to bend, to conform to the Mosaic Law as an expression of God's rule over them.

Also, during this dispensation Israel rejected its Messiah and had Him crucified.

This failure brought God's judgment upon Israel. The nation suffered many judgments during the fifth dispensation. Among the worst were the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, Israel's temporary removal from its place of blessing (Rom. 11) and worldwide dispersion as the result of its rejection of Christ (Luke 19:41-44).

6. The Dispensation Of Grace

Several important truths concerning the grace of God should be considered before the sixth dispensation is examined.

First, in the Scriptures the grace of God deals with far more than salvation from sin. For example, it was by the grace of God that Noah survived the flood (**Gen. 6:8**), that Israel was restored to its homeland after the Babylonian captivity (**Ezra 9:8**), and that the afflicted were sustained in their trials (**Prov. 3:34**).

It is by the grace of God that believers are given spiritual gifts and ministries (Rom. 12:6; Gal. 2:9). Indeed, the grace of God has so many facets that Peter called it "the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10).

Second, although the grace of God was functioning throughout Old Testament times, it began to function in some new sense as a result of the ministry of Jesus Christ in His first coming.

This new sense is clearly seen in **John 1:17**.

John appeared to be making this new function of grace parallel with the function of the Mosaic Law.

The Mosaic Law never functioned as a way of salvation (**Gal. 2:16**), but it did function as a rule of life (a ruling factor).

In light of this, John is saying that grace began to function as a rule of life (a ruling factor) as a result of Christ's ministry in His first coming.

Third, other passages indicate that grace began to function as a ruling factor as a result of Christ's ministry.

Rom. 6:14

Titus 2:11-12

The word teaching means to "practice discipline, correct, give guidance." Paul is saying that the grace of God is functioning as a ruling factor "in this present age."

The sixth dispensation extends from the death of Jesus Christ to the rapture of the Church. The Scripture portion which covers this dispensation is Matthew 27:57; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:50; and John 19:31 through Revelation 3.

Israel clearly demonstrated man's inability to obey God on the basis of the five ruling factors (including the external Mosaic Law) of the fifth dispensation. Thus, God began a sixth dispensation by instituting His grace as a new ruling factor.

During most of its course, the sixth dispensation has five ruling factors which God uses to govern people: human conscience, the restraint by the Holy Spirit, human government, promise, *plus* grace.

It should be noted that the Mosaic Law is NOT a ruling factor in the present dispensation. God intended it to be in effect only until the ministry of Christ (**Gal. 3:19, 23-25; cp. Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 9:20**).

As a ruling factor for the believer, grace consists of two things:

1. A confirmed favorable disposition toward God (*the law of God in the heart*, **Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 3:3-11; Heb. 8:8-12**)
2. The indwelling Holy Spirit (**1 Cor. 6:19-20**)

Dispensational Theologians have named the sixth dispensation after the new ruling factor because that is the factor which makes the sixth dispensation distinct from the fifth.

The special revelation which God gave is recorded in the later part of the Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation 1-3.

The church is to fulfill the Great Commission, to maintain a pure membership, to discipline unruly members, to prevent false teaching from existing within it, and to contend earnestly for the faith. We are to live sensible, godly lives, to be associated with a local church, to evangelize and make disciples, and to use spiritual gifts properly.

Man's responsibility during the sixth dispensation is to obey God on the basis of five ruling factors:

1. Human conscience
2. The restraint by the Holy Spirit
3. Human government
4. Promise
5. Grace (new ruling factor)

This responsibility subjects man to the following test:
Does man obey God on the basis of these five ruling factors?

Man fails the test of the sixth dispensation. The majority of unsaved Jews and Gentiles do not accept the gift of righteousness. Organized Christendom does not fulfill the Great Commission, maintain a pure membership, discipline unruly members, prevent false teaching from existing within it, and contend earnestly for the true faith.

Individual believers do not always live sensible, godly lives, associate with a local church, evangelize and make disciples and use spiritual gifts properly.

Man's failure is evident in the early church and predictive prophecies relating to the church age.

Examples of failure in the early church:

1 Corinthians 1:4-11

1 Corinthians 5:1-12

Revelation 2 - 3

Prophecies of failure relating to the church:

2 Timothy 3:1-5

1 Timothy 4:1-2

Jude 17-18

By the end of this dispensation the organized Christendom will be very apostate (**Rev. 17**).

Also, the unsaved will stage a major revolt against God's rule (**Rev. 16:12-16; 19:17-19**).

Man's failure to allow God's grace to rule during this present dispensation brings God's judgment and chastisement.

God chastens and even brings premature physical death to some believers for disobedience (**Acts 5:1-6; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:27-32; Heb. 12:5-13**).

He puts some local churches out of existence (**Rev. 2:5**).

Toward the end of this dispensation God will remove the Holy Spirit's restraint of evil (**2 Thes. 2:7-8**).

Apostate organized Christendom will be destroyed (**Rev. 17:16**).

God will pour out severe judgments upon the world during the 7-year tribulation period (**Rev. 6-19; Rev. 24:21**).

During the tribulation period man will experience the tyranny and deceit of the Anti-Christ who will be allowed to rule for a short time and make war with the saints (**2 Thes. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:5-8; 11-17**)

God will crush the revolt of the unsaved at the battle of Armageddon (**Rev. 19:17-21**).

The tribulation period will not only bring judgment upon the world for failing to respond to His amazing grace, but also upon Israel in fulfillment of Daniel's 70th Week (**Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24-25**).