

Harvest Christian Assembly

Dispensationalism Lesson 1

Key Text: **Hebrews 5:13-14** For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. **{14}** But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their **senses exercised** to discern both good and evil.

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth.

Introduction: There are many matter in the scriptures that at first glance appear contradictory and can be difficult to understand. From the milk of the word, we know that we are sinners; Jesus died to save us; and we are saved by faith. From these truths, we can advance to deal with the larger picture of the bible and how it all fits together. One of the tools we can use for doing this is Dispensationalism.

I. What is a dispensation:

(Gr. oikonomia, "management," "economy", "dispensation")

- A. "Dispensation" is a biblical term.
 - 1. The word "dispensation" occurs nine times in the New Testament (Luke 16:2-4; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4). Oikonomia, a combination of oikos, "house" and nomos, "law," means "administration, stewardship, or management."
 - 2. The verb oikonomeo, "to administer or manage," is used in Luke 16:2, and the noun oikonomos, a steward or manager, occurs ten times (Luke 12:42; 16:1; 3, 8; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Gal 4:2; Titus 1:2; 1 Pet. 4:10).
 - 3. These words refer to the human administration of a house, property, state, or nation, or to God's administration of the human race or part of it.
- B. A dispensation is a period of time in which someone hold a stewardship and is responsible for the affairs they have been entrusted with.
 - 1. This invokes the idea of being a **steward** or a **manager**.
 - 2. This stewardship happens over a period of time, which can be called a **dispensation, administration, age** or **economy**.
- C. Thus dispensationalism views the world as a household or administration run by God
 - 1. God is the master administrator of this household
 - 2. Man, is a steward, entrusted by God with this administration.

- II. A DISPENSATION IS A PERIOD OF TIME DURING WHICH MAN IS TESTED IN RESPECT TO HIS OBEDIENCE TO SOME SPECIFIC REVELATION OF THE WILL OF GOD:
- A. Three important concepts are implied in this definition:
1. A **deposit** of divine revelation concerning God's will, embodying what God requires of man as to his conduct;
 2. Man's **stewardship** of this divine revelation, in which he is responsible to obey it; and
 3. A **time-period**, often called an "age," during which this divine revelation is dominant in the testing of man's obedience to God.
- B. The dispensations are a progressive and connected revelation of God's dealings with man, given sometimes to the whole race and at other times to a particular people, Israel.
1. These different dispensations are not separate ways of salvation. During each of them man is reconciled to God in only one way, i.e. by God's grace through the work of Christ that was accomplished on the cross and vindicated in His resurrection.
 2. Before the cross, man was saved in prospect of Christ's atoning sacrifices, through believing the revelation thus far given him. Since the cross man has been saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ in whom revelation and redemption are consummated.
 3. The purpose of each dispensation, then is to place man under a specific rule of conduct, but such stewardship is not a condition of salvation. In every past dispensation unregenerate man has failed, and he has failed in this present dispensation and will in the future. But salvation has been and will continue to be available to him by God's grace through faith.
- C. A dispensation is much like a contract.
1. There are requirements that are to be followed while the contract is being enforced. This is what we are stewards of.
 2. There are consequences for not abiding by the contract, and a judgement that comes with this.
 - a. Man has always failed to perform his part of the contract.
 - b. At the end of every dispensation, God must bring a judgement upon sin.
 3. A new contract is drawn up where
 - a. Some old requirements continue to be enforced without change.
 - b. Some old requirements of the contract are no longer relevant and are removed.

- c. Some old requirements of the contract are modified.
- d. Some new requirements are added to the contract.

III. DISPENSATIONS AND COVENANTS:

- A. There are seven easily recognizable dispensations in the bible.
 - 1. Innocence (Gen 1:28)
 - 2. Conscience or Moral Responsibility (Gen 3:7)
 - 3. Human Government (Gen 8:15)
 - 4. Promise (Gen 12:1)
 - 5. Law (Ex 19:1)
 - 6. Church (Acts 2:1)
 - 7. Kingdom (Rev 20:4)

- B. Since a dispensation is like a contract, it should be no surprise to discover that there are contracts (or covenants) related to these dispensations.
 - 1. There are eight great covenants in the bible and most of those relate directly to a dispensation.

Dispensation	Verse	Covenant	Verse	Made To
1 Innocence	Gen 1:28	Edenic	Gen 1:28	All men
2 Conscience	Gen 3:7	Adamic	Gen 3:14	All men
3 Human Government	Gen 8:15	Noahic	Gen 9:1	All men
4 Promise	Gen 12:1	Abrahamic	Gen 15:18	Abraham
5 Law	Ex 19:1	Mosaic	Ex 19:25	Israel
		Palestinian	De 30:3	Israel
		Davidic	2 Sam 7:16	David
6 Church	Acts 2:1	New	Heb 8:8	Church
7 Kingdom	Rev 20:4			