

DISPENSATIONS

Request: Would you do a study on dispensations?

The English word is derived from Latin (dispensare). It is transliteration of the Greek word (oikonomia).

We will begin by studying six definitions of the word Dispensation.

American College Dictionary defines dispensation as “the divine ordering of the affairs of the world, an appointment or arrangement as by God, a divinely appointed order or system: the old, Mosaic, or Jewish dispensation; the new, gospel, or Christian dispensation.” (pg.349)

Scofield Reference Bible defines it as “a period of time during which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the will of God.” (pg.5)

Ryrie Dispensationalism Today defines it “a dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.” (pg.29)

Chafer Systematic Theology defines it “as a time measurement, a dispensation is a period which is identified by its relation to some particular purpose of God – a purpose to be accomplished within that period. The earlier dispensation, being so far removed in point of time from the present, are not as clearly defined, as are the later dispensations. For this reason, bible expositors are not always agreed regarding the precise features of the more remote periods.” (pg.40)

Unger Bible Doctrine defines it “ a dispensation is an era of time during some definite revelation of God’s will.” (pg.269)

General definition for this study is “a dispensation is a definite age or period in human history from a divine viewpoint. It is a divine category of human history from divine interpretation in which a special agency of God functions with a set revelation as it represents God in the world.”

The purpose of teaching the doctrine of DISPENSATIONS is to orient believers to their time in human history to the plan of God and to its set of divine revelation (Acts 10:9-23, 44-48).

This lesson will study THREE aspects of DISPENSATIONS of biblical history.

1. There are four Greek words used in the NT to describe the doctrine of Dispensation.

Kairos refers to the extent and character and events of an appropriate period (winter is described this way) (1 Pet.1:10-11).

Chronos refers to time and duration in its sequences of important events (chronology) (Rom.16:25).

Aion refers to time viewed in relation to what takes place in that period. This word is used to merge time and eternity (Eph.3:9).

Oikonomia refers to the administration of a household or estate or business (stewardship). It relates to the function or direction of the dispensation in the plan of God (Eph.1:10; 3:9).

2. This study will examine the following four dispensations of biblical history [Gentile, Jewish, Church, and Millennium].

The Gentile dispensation covers the period from fall of Adam to Tower of Babel (Gen.3 –11). Actually time in human history as we experience it, began with Seth, the seed bearer of Christ (Luke 3:38).

The divine agency was the Sethite family prior to the flood and Shemite family after flood until Abraham (Heb.11:4-7; Jude 14-15; 2 Pet.2:4-5; 1 Pet.3:18-20).

During the Gentile dispensation, it was a culture of one language and three races (Cainites, Sethites, and Shemites) that was changed because of the Tower of Babel.

The Jewish dispensation covers a period from Abraham to first coming of Jesus Christ minus the Church age (Gen.12- NT Gospel). Abraham, a Shemite, became the bearer of the messianic seed (Gen.10:21-32; 12:1-3; Matt.1:17).

The divine agency was patriarchs until Moses and the priest-nation of Israel (Ex.19:6). The Jewish age is characterized by the following *eight events* - patriarchs, Mosaic law, Judges, monarchy, divine discipline of north and south kingdoms, first coming of Christ, and interruption of the Jewish age by the church age, and then last seven years of Tribulation (Rev.6-19).

The Church Age dispensation covers a period from First Coming leaving of Jesus Christ (Pentecost/ Acts2) to Rapture of the church from the world (1 Thess.4:13-18) (Acts – Rev.5).

The divine agency is the church, the mystical body of Christ in the world (Rom.11:25; 1 Cor.4:1; Eph.3:1-9; Gal.3:26-28; 1 Cor.12:13; Col.1:26; 1 Pet.2:5,9). The Church dispensation is characterized by the following *seven events* – ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts1), coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17), apostolic period, New Covenant, world evangelism, the establishment of the Christian church in the world, and the Rapture of the church from the world.

The Millennium dispensation covers a 1000 year period from the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the end of human history (2 Sam.7:12-16; Isa.65:20-25; Rev.20).

The divine agency will be Christ and the Church in resurrection bodies. It will be characterized by the following *six things* - perfect environment since the curse of earth from AOS will be removed (Rom.8:19-23), Satan and demons will be removed, third biblical civilization, Israel and Jerusalem will be restored to their national glory, universal peace, and Satan and demons will be released and result in final war (Gog and Magog).

3. Each biblical dispensation has a set revelation that is not pertinent to the function of other dispensations. However it is important to their function in human history in the plan of God.

There are at least three ways divine truths from one dispensation are carried over into another.

- **Divine institutions** – i.e. Marriage (Gen.2:18-25; Ex.20:14; Deut.24:1-4; Matt.5:31; 19:4-9; Eph.5:31-32).
- **Doctrinal principles** – i.e. Man made in the image and likeness of God (Gen.1:26-27; 1 Cor.11:7); fall of mankind in Adam (Gen.2:17; 3:13-19; Rom.5:12), and curse of the earth (Gen.3:17-19; Rom.8:19-22).
- **Divine truths** – i.e. Scriptural references – 1 Cor.3:18-23; Job 5:12; Ps.94:11; Book of Proverbs).