

Dispensationalism—God's Reign and Man's Stewardship

I. Introduction.

A. Backdrop:

1. Hi, my name is Ron Nyberg, and I'm a Dispensationalist.
2. There are many long series on Kingdom growth, although you read passages across the ages, most do not talk about God's reign throughout the ages. Since God is the Sovereign King, we should ask our self, *"how has He, is He, and will He reveal His ruling principle to us and what is our responsibility to those principles?"*

B. Questions:

1. Was God's rule (and our response) different before sin entered (Y/N)?
2. Are we still under the Law; e.g., why don't we put people to death for adultery in the church today like the Law commanded Israel—**Lev. 20:10** (Y/N)?
3. Are Israel and the Church the same people, with the exact same promises and plan (Y/N)?
4. Why do 7 Day Adventists and Jews worship on Saturday?
5. Why don't we sacrifice animals or at least go to Priests to confess our sins like the Catholics do?
6. Are we living during a time of peace where even the wolf and the lamb feed together, not on lamb, but on grass/straw—**Isa. 11:6; 65:25** (Y/N)?
7. Isn't God immutable, never changing (Y/N)?

C. Most theologians would align themselves in either a Covenant or Dispensational view of God's reign/plan and man's stewardship.

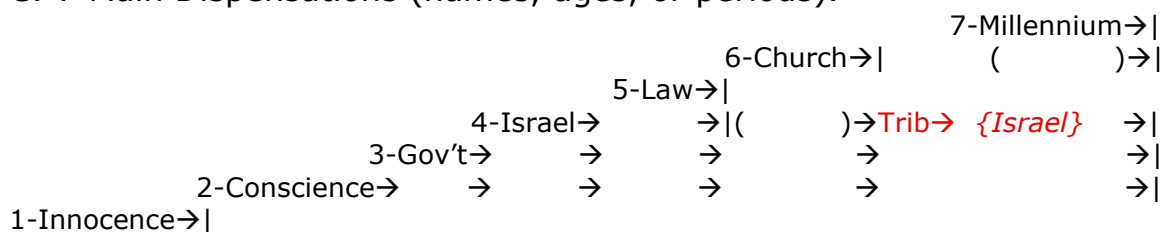
	Covenant	Dispensational
Biblical Interpretation	Spiritualizing or Allegorical	Literal (every word)
Israel or Church	Same	Separate
Rapture vs. 2nd Coming	Same (1 or back-to-back events)	Separate (2 events years apart)
God's Primary Goal	God's Grace	God's Glory

II. Scripture.

- A. Dispensation definition: Gr: *oikonomia*—dispensation; stewardship; the management of a household or its affairs; management, oversight, administration of another's property and word/will.
- B. Word (*Oikonomia* is found 7 times in the Bible; 4-translated in the KJV as "**dispensation**" and 3 times translated "**stewardship**").
 1. **1Co. 9:17**—"For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a **dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.**"

2. **Eph. 1:10**—"That in the **dispensation** of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him."
3. **Eph. 3:2**—"If ye have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward."
4. **Col. 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."
5. **Luk. 16:2**—"And he called him, and said unto him, 'How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy **stewardship**; for thou mayest be no longer steward.'"
6. **Luk. 16:3**—"Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the **stewardship**: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.'"
7. **Luk. 16:4**—"I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the **stewardship**, they may receive me into their houses."

C. 7 Main Dispensations (names, ages, or periods).



D. Dispensation Detail.

1. **Innocence**/Probation/Freedom (**Creation**→**Fall**; **Gen. 1:1-3:5**).

Alternate: Man's Creation→Man's 1st Sin (**Gen. 1:26-3:5**).

Messenger: God directly to man.

Command: Do not eat of "**the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**."

Worship: Direct fellowship, trust, faith, walking with the holy Triune God without knowledge of other offenses.

Consequence: Death (spiritual and physical).

Promise: Dominion, no guilt, living in a peaceful paradise.

Result: Death; innocence lost; depravity started; probation failed; murder—**Gen. 4:8**; Creation cursed with thorns and thistles and snakes on their bellies, hatred between Satan and mankind, man would have to work hard, woman would conceive more, have pain in child bearing, and be ruled by her husband (**Gen. 3:13-19**).

Summary: Good man, in a good environment, fellowshiping with a perfect God; man did not trust and wanted to be like God; and lost the pure state of innocence.

Transition: None, halted at 1st sin or Conscience.

2. **Conscience** (**Fall** (1st Sin)→**Flood** or **Gov't**; **Gen. 3:6-8:22**).
 - Alternate:** Adam's/1st Sin→Heaven (**Gen. 3:6; Acts 24:16; Rom. 2:15; 1Ti. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2**).
 - Messenger:** Man's heart, mind, and sometimes God's Spirit.
 - Command:** **Do good and shun evil** (what your heart and mind tell you is right and wrong; from God's personal moral image and likeness—**Gen. 1:26-27**).
 - Worship:** Faith; trust and obey; do good and when do evil, confess and sacrifice substitutionary blood/offering.
 - Consequence:** Deception and death (defiled conscience).
 - Promise:** Good pure conscience; void of offense; peace.
 - Result:** Deceived, seared, defiled, weak, and evil conscience; violent corruption / killing—**Gen. 6:11-12**; evil imagination from very young—**Gen. 8:21**.
 - Summary:** Our conscience starts pure, but finishes defiled.
 - Transition:** None, it continues forever or at least to heaven.

3. **Human Government** (**Flood**→**2nd Coming**; **Gen. 9:1-7**).
 - Alternate:** Man exiting Ark→**Abraham** (**Gen. 9:1-11:32**).
 - Messenger:** Government authorities and sometimes God's Spirit.
 - Command:** Reproduce; eat all things, but blood; **civic/civil responsibility**; legal and capital punishment.
 - Worship:** Faith; do good; obey government; confession; blood sacrifice; some government, true worship, most false (limited government, the bigger the worse).
 - Consequence:** Death (by animals and government); National Diversity / Division.
 - Promise:** Protected by government; fruitful multiplying; feared by animals.
 - Result:** Man's political and national unity for evil against God and others; man tried to work their way to God—cf. **Gen. 11:4**; wars; violent killing, yet few capital punishments; sought knowledge, gained confusion.
 - Summary:** Man's attempt to rule other men always ended in war, suffering, and slavery.
 - Transition:** None, continues to heaven.

4. **Israel/Promise/Patriarchal** (**Abraham**→**Law**; **Gen. 12:1-Exo. 19:25**).
 - Alternate:** Abrahamic Covenant→**2nd Coming** (**Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:6**).
 - Messenger:** Jewish descendants (Patriarchs and Prophets, later Priests, Judges, and Kings); sometimes God's Spirit.

Command: Believe me, be circumcised (**Gen. 17:2-14**), and **go live in Promised Land** (physical boundaries).

Worship: Faith; circumcision; confession, blood sacrifice; gov't obedience (unless contrary to God).

Consequence: Land loss / lost; captivity; seed greed/sin (Arabs and Jews); cursing / death.

Promise: A great nation / a peculiar people (Israel: Land, Seed, and Blessing).

Result: Cycles of belief, obedience, and blessing→unbelief, disobedience, and cursing / death (captivity, slavery, removal and return to the land).

Summary: Patriarchs sometimes believed God and were blessed, and sometimes did not trust God to great harm; but God always kept His promises.

Transition: None, continues (see *Tribulation* in II-C above).

5. **Law (Moses→Church/Holy Spirit Indwelling; **Exo. 20—Acts 2:4**).**

Alternate: 10 Commandments→Faith in Christ (**Exo. 19:5-6; 20; Deu. 4:1-10; 5; Gal. 3:21-25**).

Messenger: Tablets; Jewish Gov't (Prophets, Priests, and Kings), sometimes temporarily by God's Spirit.

Command: Trust me, **Obe**y, and keep my covenant.

Worship: Faith and obedience to the Law and gov't; cleansing, confession, and sacrificial system.

Consequence: Judgment, cursing, death.

Promise: Peculiar protected and blessed people who keep Law out of trust and love (God's possession, kingdom of priests, and a holy nation).

Result: Israel was God's possession; priests, sometimes holy; disobeyed, judged, cursed, and died.

Summary: Lost purpose of Law for knowledge of sin and to lead them to the Messiah (and His permanent payment).

Transition: Rule halted at start of the Church (after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of His permanent indwelling Spirit at Pentecost).

6. **Church/Grace (Faith in Christ→**Rapture; Acts 2:4—Rev. 20:3**).**

Alternate: Pentecost/Permanent indwelling of Spirit→Rapture (**Mat. 16:18** church is future; **Acts 1:4-8** Jesus says to wait for the promised Spirit outpouring; **Acts 2:1-4f** Spirit mightily poured out; **Acts 2:16-21** Peter says this outpouring was a prophetic fulfillment; **Acts 2:47** the Church is 1st mentioned as present).

Messenger: Holy Spirit, Scripture, mind, gov't, Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and lay people).

Command: "...*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved...*" (*Acts 16:31*); "...*whosoever believes on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (*Joh 3:16*); "...*He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten of God.*" (*Joh. 3:18*); trust and obey God/Jesus.

Worship: Attend local church, be water baptized, communion, love, give, trust and obey God, repent, confess...

Consequence: Heaven or Hell, blessing, cursing—including sickness and death.

Promise: Eternal life in Heaven or eternal death in Hell.

Result: Few receive God's gift by faith to unmerited favor eternally in Heaven; many blasphemously reject God's gracious gift and Holy Spirit's miraculous drawing work to receive eternal wrath in Hell.

Summary: Churches struggle as men struggle; many false, 1-world church will not be the true church.

Transition: Halts at Millennium; though gets to rule with Jesus.

7. **Millennium (2nd Coming→Great White Throne Judgment-GWTJ; *Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-6, 11-15*).**

Alternate: Kingdom→GWTJ (*Isa. 2:1-5; 11-12; 59:16-60; Jer. 23:1-8; Mic. 4:1-8; Rev. 19:11-20:7; Eze. 40-48*).

Messenger: Jesus Christ, Gov't, Israel, and Priests.

Command: Trust and obey Jesus Christ's rule on earth.

Worship: Jesus in Millennial Temple with sacrificial system.

Consequence: Instant judgment or death.

Promise: Peace/prosperity/life or pain/judgment/death.

Result: Peace, prosperity, and life; or pain, judgment, and death (ultimately man is deceived, man's Gov'ts rebel, and must be destroyed).

Summary: God ruling man directly on earth with the greatest peace, still ends with rebellion by man and war.

Transition: Ends after 1,000 years, leads to the GWTJ, none.

II. Application.

A. Why Dispensations?

B. What do you learn from each individual **Dispensation** (about yourself, about God)?

C. Do you choose a Covenant or Dispensational understanding of God's Word, His plan, His Coming, and His purposes? Why?

D. Use caution when you read, understand, and apply God's Word in the context of each Dispensation to those individuals in another Dispensation...or you may misinterpret its meaning and your responsibility. **Can you think of examples where this is true?**

E. Dispensational Summary.

#	Name	Scripture	Start	End	Ruling Principle
1	Innocence	<i>Gen. 1:1-3:5</i>	Creation	Fall	Do not eat of “<i>the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.</i>”
2	Conscience	<i>Gen. 3:6-8:22</i>	Fall	Flood or Gov’t	Do good/shun evil.
3	Human Government	<i>Gen. 9:1-11:32</i>	Flood or Gov’t	Abraham or 2 nd Coming	Civil responsibility.
4	Israel	<i>Gen. 12:1-Exo. 19:25</i>	Abrahamic Covenant	Law or GWTJ	Faith/Circumcision. God Promises Land, Seed, and Blessing.
5	Law	<i>Exo. 20-Acts 2:4</i>	Law	Pentecost	Obey commands.
6	Church	<i>Acts 2:4-Rev. 20:3</i>	Pentecost	Rapture	Believe in Jesus. Great Commission.
7	Millennium	<i>Rev. 19:11-20:15</i>	2 nd Coming	GWTJ	Obey Christ’s Rule on earth for peace.