

## **Dispensationalism = Rightly dividing the word of truth.**

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15*

### **Definition of Dispensationalism**

Dispensationalism is a way or a method to understand the Bible, which makes what scripture actually says, in context, its most important focus. That means that we approach the Bible seeking the literal sense or the plain sense, not looking for allegorical meanings or hidden meanings, which are different from the plain meaning. In plainer words, dispensationalists believe what the Bible says, in context.

Dispensationalists apply proper rules of grammar and the meaning of words, while also recognizing the biblical context (its place in scripture), and the cultural, doctrinal, historical and religious context of the passages we study. Dispensationalists recognize the biblical differences and distinctions between Israel and the church. Dispensationalism is not based on human philosophy and is not based on the religious ideas of a church or a denomination. Dispensationalism is based on recognizing distinctions found in the Bible itself. Here are nine distinct dispensations in the Bible.

### **Examples of Dispensations in the Bible**

1. The Dispensation of Innocence: from Creation to the Fall of Adam.
2. The Dispensation of Conscience: from the Fall of Adam to the Flood.
3. The Dispensation of Human Government: from Flood to Abraham.
4. The Dispensation of Promise: from Abraham to Mt. Sinai.
5. The Dispensation of the Law: from Mt. Sinai to the Cross of Christ.
6. The Dispensation of Grace /Gospel: from Resur/Christ to 2nd Coming.
7. The Dispensation of the Tribulation - from the Rapture to the Millennium.
8. The Dispensation of the Millennium - from the Millennium to Eternity.
9. The Dispensation of the New Heavens and New Earth - for all Eternity.

### **Characteristics of A Dispensation**

**Each dispensation has 7 distinctive aspects.**

1. Each dispensation has a Chief Human Representative.

2. Each dispensation has a name that identifies its purpose.
3. Each dispensation contains a responsibility to God.
4. Each dispensation contains a test from God.
5. Each dispensation ends with man failing the test from God.
6. Each dispensation contains a judgment for failing God's test.
7. Each dispensation features God's amazing grace.

### **Definition of a Dispensation**

A Dispensation is a period of time in which God deals differently with the human race than He deals with the human race at other times. These different ways of dealing with the human race are focused on what God asks men to do at this particular time, for the working out of God's redemptive purpose. These periods of time are called dispensations.

### **The Purpose of Dispensations**

- a. They show man's failures throughout history.
- b. Dispensations end in moral or spiritual failure.
- c. They show how God relates to mankind throughout history.

Those nine are viewed as distinct dispensations because in each of them, God deals differently with the human race than He does in other dispensations. Dispensationalism requires us to use spiritual discernment, meaning: the ability to compare spiritual things with spiritual things, 1 Corinthians 2:5-13, in the Bible, to help us differentiate between truth and error. Dispensational discernment emphasizes two important points. **1.** Whenever possible, the Bible should be understood as literal. **2.** In the Bible, there is a definite distinction between OT and NT, between Jews and Gentiles, between law and grace, between Israel and the NT church.

### **What is Dispensationalism?**

Dispensationalism is recognizing that, in the Bible, God deals differently with the human race in a particular dispensation, than He does at other times and in other dispensations. Everyone recognizes that under the Edenic Covenant, in the Dispensation of Innocence (Adam and Eve, before the fall), God dealt differently with unfallen Adam than He dealt with fallen Adam. That is a common sense observation, based on what the Bible says about Adam and Eve.

Unfallen Adam lived in the Garden of Eden. Fallen Adam got kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Unfallen Adam walked and talked and fellowshiped with God in person, face to face. The human race after the fall of Adam and throughout the rest of the OT, could not look upon the face of God. Those are dispensational differences found in the Bible, which most Christians recognize.

Christians do not always agree on the number of dispensations in the Bible and we don't always use the same names for the dispensations but every Christian recognizes that there are different dispensations in the Bible. Dispensationalists recognize the differences between Israel and the church. Sometimes, people who are not dispensationalists, ignore the differences between Israel and the church. Verses written to OT Israel, to obey, are not aimed at the NT church, to obey.

Verses about God's requirements for Israel, under OT law do not normally apply to Christians under NT grace. Even in the NT, there is a major distinction between Israel and the church. Israel, because of her rebellion and unbelief, has been removed from the place of blessing, while believing, saved Gentiles (the church), because of their belief in Messiah Jesus, have been put into the place of blessing.

### **What are some biblical differences we should recognize when we study the Bible?**

1. The differences between the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God.
2. The differences between Israel and the Church.
3. The differences between the two advents of Christ.
4. The differences between the two resurrections.
5. The differences between the two future comings of Christ.
6. The differences between law and grace.
7. The differences between works righteousness and justification by faith.
8. The differences between justification by faith and sanctification by faith.
9. The differences between the believer's standing and state.
10. The differences between salvation and rewards.
11. The differences between believers and professing Christians.
12. The differences between the seven gospels.
13. The differences between the seven baptisms.
14. The differences between the seven judgments.
15. The differences between the seven dispensations.

When we do not recognize these differences, it is difficult to make sense of what the Bible says. The distinctions or differences listed above, are distinctions found in the Bible itself. They are not artificial or man-made or religion related differences. Because we recognize those biblical differences, dispensationalists are pre-tribulational and pre-millennial. We believe: **a.** about the tribulation, that the rapture will happen before the seven year long tribulation begins, and, **b.** about the millennium, that the second coming of Christ will happen before the 1000 year long millennium begins. The millennium is mentioned six times by John, in Revelation 20:2-7.

If you've heard of the rapture or, if you believe in the rapture, it's probably because: **a.** you've paid close attention to what the Bible actually says, in context, like a dispensationalist does, or, **b.** you've listened to a dispensational Bible teacher, or, **c.** you've read a book written by a dispensationalist, who believes the Bible literally.

### **What is an intelligent way to study the Bible?**

**a.** Relying upon the Holy Spirit while also, **b.** using critical thinking and, **c.** inductive reasoning are excellent ways to study and rightly divide the word of truth, so that we can learn and understand the Bible, 2 Timothy 2:15. Critical thinking means that we think logically, using context, comparison and contrast, to help us understand what the Bible means. The Bible tends to interpret itself if we will read it and become familiar with what it says, in context. Reading the Bible one time and deciding that's enough reading, is the wrong conclusion to draw.

Christians should read the Bible during a daily Quiet Time with God. There are 260 chapters in the NT. If you read three chapters a day, you can finish the NT in three months. That reading schedule allows you to read the NT four times a year. If you do that, you will grow in your knowledge of God and the Bible. If you neglect Bible reading and Bible study, you will be a biblically ignorant Christian, and that is not a good thing.

Spiritual growth and being a disciple of Jesus takes effort and dedication. It takes reading the Bible again and again and again, until it becomes familiar to us, so that we have a knowledge base to help us compare scripture with scripture. Since the Bible was written over a period of 19+ centuries ([Job to Revelation](#)), it should be self evident that the Bible was not all written to the same group of people at the same time. The Bible was written to different people for different reasons and in widely different circumstances, over 1900+ years.

I will make a diligent effort to read my Bible every day. Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Inductive reasoning is an excellent way to study the Bible**

In our Bible study, to help us think in a logical way, we use inductive reasoning, which means: **1.** we **Observe** what the Bible says, in context, **2.** we **Interpret** what the Bible says, in context, and, **3.** we **Apply** what the Bible says, in context. That is the inductive method and is the best way to study the Bible.

- 1. Observe**
- 2. Interpret**
- 3. Apply**

### **Watch out for false presuppositions**

Everyone, saved or unsaved, approaches the Bible with pre-suppositions. Some of those presuppositions may be true and some of them are false. Our goal as Bible students is to use inductive reasoning or observational reasoning, to help us understand what the Bible says, in context and how it applies to us. As we approach the Bible that way, of course, we are also trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, John 16:13, and give us discernment to differentiate between truth and error.

### **What are presuppositions?**

Presuppositions are the beliefs and world views we already have when we start reading and studying the Bible. The presuppositions we bring to the Bible may be true or they may be false. False presuppositions always get in the way of discovering truth. Our presuppositions may come from our previous religious experience or they may come from secular sources, like what we learned in high school or college, or from personal reading and study or from the University of Life.

As much as possible, our presuppositions must be tested, and if found to be false, our false presuppositions must be abandoned. When we hold on to false presuppositions, we short circuit our attempt to discover truth. In plainer words, false presuppositions are deadly to our search for Bible truth. Are you willing to abandon false presuppositions so that you can discover and embrace God's truth in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_ Inductive Bible study helps us understand the Bible.

## How does Inductive Bible Study really work?

Inductive Bible study means that we: **Observe**, **Interpret** and **Apply**, what the Bible says, in context. Inductive Bible study requires us to read and reread the portion of the Bible we are studying, and to think about what we are reading. Then we compare spiritual things with spiritual, and we compare scripture with scripture trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us into His truth. Inductive Bible study helps us avoid false presuppositions and keeps us from assuming things that are not true, as we learn the Bible.

## How should we do Inductive Bible Study?

**I. We Observe what the Bible says, in context**, by reading and believing what we read, in the Bible. Context includes the biblical content and context, meaning, where it is written in the Bible, to whom it is written and what it says. What does the verse you are studying actually say? There are at least seven areas of context, to which we should pay attention as we read the Bible. Sometimes it is easy to determine context because the Bible often explains the context.

To whom are these three verses written? a. Exodus 9:1 \_\_\_\_\_ b. Leviticus 18:2 \_\_\_\_\_ James 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_ The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews was written to? **a.** Arabs, **b.** Christians, **c.** Gentiles, **d.** Hebrews.

Do you see how the Bible tells us, to whom it is written? \_\_\_\_\_

## Understanding context helps us understand the Bible.

### 1. What is the biblical context of the verse you are studying?

Where is the verse found in the Bible?

Is it OT or NT?

Is it before the law?

Is it during the law?

Is it after the law?

— **Discuss why these questions matter.**

Is it written to OT Jews or the twelve tribes of Israel?

Is it written to the Hebrews?

Is it written to Gentiles?

Is it written to Christians?

— **Discuss why these questions matter.**

Is it before the earthly ministry of Christ?

Is it during the earthly ministry of Christ?

Is it after the earthly ministry of Christ?

Is it before the crucifixion/resurrection of Christ?

Is it after the crucifixion/resurrection of Christ?

— **Discuss how and why that would make a difference.**

## **2. What is the cultural context of the verse you are studying?**

Culture refers to: customs, traditions and practices. Please write the cultural custom or practice next to each verse below. Do we observe these ancient cultural customs today? \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 19:8 - \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 20:2, 5, 12, 16 - \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 21:1-6 - \_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 - \_\_\_\_\_

## **3. What is the doctrinal context of the verse you are studying?**

Is it found in the OT or NT?

Is it found in the law of Moses?

Is it written in Romans, Galatians or Ephesians?

Is it written before the resurrection of Christ?

Is it written after the resurrection of Christ?

Is it written in a transition book, like Matthew, Acts or Hebrews?

## **4. What is the historical context of the verse you are studying?**

Is it before the fall of Adam?

Is it after the fall of Adam?

Is it before the giving of the law to Moses?

Is it under the law of Moses?

Is it after the law of Moses?

Is it in the OT?

Is it in the NT?

If in the NT, is it before the crucifixion/resurrection of Christ?  
Is it after the crucifixion/resurrection of Christ?

**5. What is the linguistic context of the verse you are studying?** This refers to the language and also, to the meaning of the words used.

Was it originally written in Hebrew? That would be the OT.  
Was it originally written in Aramaic? That would be mostly OT.  
Was it originally written in Greek? That would be the NT.  
What does the English text actually say? - That's the whole Bible.

**6. What is the literary context of the verse you are studying?**

Is it historical narrative? - Genesis, Exodus, 1 Samuel  
Is it a poem or a song of praise? - Psalms  
Is it a doctrinal or theological statement? - Romans, Galatians

**7. What is the religious context of the verse you are studying?**

Is it talking about idolatrous or pagan religions?  
Is it talking about Babylonian or Egyptian religions?  
Is it talking about Greek or Roman mystery religions?  
Is it talking about OT Judaism?  
Is it talking about NT Christianity?

### **What did God intend when He put commands in the Bible?**

Is every command in the Bible written to me to obey? \_\_\_\_\_

Give examples of commands which are not written to us to obey. \_\_\_\_\_

Can a Bible command be true and yet, not apply to me? \_\_\_\_\_

Can a Bible command be true and yet, not be written to me to obey? \_\_\_\_\_

How do commands which are true but are not written to me to obey, illustrate the practical importance of dispensational thinking, when we read the Bible?

---

God expects us to believe the entire Bible but God does not expect us to duplicate every story found in the Bible, meaning, He does not expect us to obey every command found in the Bible. Why? Because all of the Bible is written to us to believe, but all of the Bible is not written to us to practice. Commands given by God, to particular individuals, are for those individuals. Every command in the Bible is not necessarily a universal command for all Christians everywhere. We are not OT prophets living under OT law. We are NT Christians living under NT grace.

**Genuine Bible commands God does NOT want us to obey.**

**A. God told Abraham** to offer his only son Isaac, whom he loved, as a sacrifice on the altar, Genesis 22:2. If we have a son, God does not expect any of us to personally duplicate that story, follow that example or obey that command. Why not? Because that was something God told Abraham to do, to illustrate God's eventual great sacrifice of His only begotten Son, John 3:16. It was a one time command to Abraham, not a universal command to everyone who would ever have a son.

The story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 was a foreshadowing of God's redemptive plan. Some might describe it as a literary hook. It is historical narrative but is not presented in the Bible as a command for us to obey. We can learn many important lessons from Genesis 22 but, since the time of Abraham, God has never told any of us to kill our only son as an offering to Him.

**B. God told Isaiah** to walk around naked, Isaiah 20:2-4 but God did not intend others, Genesis 3:7-8, Exodus 20:26, or us, to duplicate or obey that command to Isaiah. That command was given in a particular time and place, for a particular purpose, to a particular man, the prophet Isaiah. It is not a universal command for all Christians to obey. God doesn't intend for us to walk around naked, in public, for one day or for three years.

**C. God told the prophet Hosea** to marry a harlot or a prostitute or, *a wife of whoredoms*, Hosea 1:2. That was a particular command for a particular purpose, to a particular prophet of God, Hosea, to illustrate the unbelief of a particular people, Israel, who were rebelling against God. Nothing in Hosea indicates that God has commanded Christians in the twenty first century to marry prostitutes.

When we ignore dispensations in the Bible (and fail to make dispensational distinctions or refuse to recognize dispensational differences), the following

verses illustrate how we might misunderstand verses or take verses out of context and misapply them to ourselves. When we recognize dispensations, the Bible becomes clearer and easier to understand, and we avoid some doctrinal mistakes and misunderstandings, which could stunt our spiritual growth.

*Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth*, Genesis 1:28, 9:7. Is that a command for us today? \_\_\_\_\_ Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Are the following verses commands for us to obey today?  
Why or why not?**

- Kill a lamb for passover, Exodus 12:1-10. \_\_\_\_\_
- You must keep it every year, Exodus 12:14. \_\_\_\_\_
- Animal blood sacrifice for sin, Leviticus 4:1-7. \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not eat pork, Leviticus 11:1-8. \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not eat shellfish, Leviticus 11:9-12. \_\_\_\_\_
- *Come to Bethel and transgress*, Amos 4:4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Context is important** as we study to understand the Bible. We observe what the Bible says, in context, by asking and answering questions, as we read and study the Bible.

What does the verse or chapter of the Bible actually say?

Who said it or wrote it?

To whom was it said or written?

When did the Bible say that?

Why did the Bible say that?

Is it before the fall of Adam?

Is it after the fall of Adam?

— **Why does that make a difference?**

Is it before the law of Moses?

Is it during the law of Moses?

Is it after the law of Moses?

— **Discuss why that makes a difference.**

Where or in what portion of the Bible, did it say that?

Why did the Bible say that?

What was God's purpose for saying that?

Is it a command for me to obey?

Is it a command for someone else to obey, but not me?  
— **Discuss why these questions are important.**

**II. We Interpret what the Bible says**, in context. We do that by thinking about the biblical answers to the questions we just listed. We also do that by walking in the Spirit and paying attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit, as He shows us the truth of God in the Bible, in context.

**III. We Apply what the Bible says**, in context. We do that by drawing logical and biblical conclusions based on the answers to the questions we listed above. We also do that by using spiritual discernment as the Holy Spirit teaches us to compare spiritual things with spiritual, 1 Corinthians 2:5-13. The bottom line is, God wants us to understand His truth in the Bible. He wants us to get it right.

I. Observe    II. Interpret    III. Apply  
**Dispensationalism originates in the Bible itself**

Dispensationalism means that we recognize and differentiate between the various distinctions and divisions found in the Bible. Since God Himself created the dispensational differences in the Bible, God expects us to understand those dispensational differences in:

**a.** their relationship to the covenants of God, **b.** the particular way God deals with mankind in that particular dispensation or period of time, **c.** the testing of the obedience of mankind, to see if they obey God's will in that dispensation, and, **d.** how our particular dispensation (the gospel dispensation, aka, the grace dispensation) fits into God's redemptive plan. Dispensationalism originates in the Bible itself. What distinguishes the dispensations is not their length but the way God deals with the human race in each dispensation.

**Is it reasonable to recognize Dispensational distinctions?**

1. Is it reasonable to recognize that God dealt differently with Adam and Eve before the fall, than He dealt with them after the fall? \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Is it reasonable to recognize that God dealt differently with mankind before the law of Moses, than He dealt with Israel and mankind after He gave Moses the law? \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Is it reasonable to recognize that God deals differently with mankind before Calvary and the resurrection of Christ, than He deals with mankind after Calvary and the resurrection of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Is it reasonable for us to recognize those and many other dispensational differences in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

When we recognize those basic Bible truths and factor them into the way we understand the Bible, that is dispensationalism. Recognizing these divisions or dispensations, and factoring them into the way we understand and interpret the Bible is basic biblical common sense.

### **Four biblical evidences for Dispensationalism**

**First, that dispensationalism originates in the Bible itself is** evident in the fact that the Bible contains an OT and a NT. The OT and the NT are different sections of the Bible, containing different information, aimed at different people. Recognizing those differences is what is referred to as dispensationalism.

1. Is the OT aimed mostly at Christians or mostly at Jews? \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Is the NT aimed mostly at Jews or mostly at Christians, or both? \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Was the law of Moses given, in the OT or the NT? \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Was Christ crucified and buried and risen from the dead, in the OT or the NT? \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Is the way God dealt with the human race, different in the OT, from the way God dealt with the human race in the NT? \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What are some differences? \_\_\_\_\_

The answers to those questions are self-evident, Bible based facts. The OT itself is made up of different sections, in which God dealt with the human race in different ways than He dealt with the human race in other administrations or sections or dispensations, in the OT.

**Second, that dispensationalism originates in the Bible itself is** evident in [God's covenants](#), which are different, throughout history. Since the OT is a progressive revelation, over a long period of time, of God to the human race, the various sections of the OT cover different and sometimes overlapping spans of time. Those spans of time are represented by: **a.** the covenants God made with the human race at particular times, and, **b.** the dispensations or eras or epochs or periods of time or divisions of time, represented by God's covenants. There are 7 covenants in the Bible.

**What is a covenant?** In the Bible, a covenant is an agreement or a contract or a treaty, between God and His people, in which God makes promises to His people and in return, requires certain conduct from His people.

### **Covenants and Dispensations form the framework of the biblical story.**

1. The Edenic Covenant - with unfallen Adam, Gen 1:28-31, 2:15-17, Hosea 6:7.
2. The Adamic Covenant - with fallen Adam, Genesis 3:14-19.
3. The Noahic Covenant - with Noah, Genesis 9:1-17.
4. The Abrahamic Covenant - with Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3, 7, 13:14-17.
5. The Mosaic Covenant - with Moses, Exodus 19:5-7.
6. The Davidic Covenant - with David (about Christ), 2 Samuel 7:8-11.
7. The New Covenant - with Israel, Jer 31:31-34, Matt 26:28, Hebrews 9:15.

### **The Purpose of Covenants**

- a. Covenants reveal God's earthly agreements with mankind.
- b. Covenants reveal God's spiritual promises to mankind.
- c. Covenants reveal God's earthly redemption for mankind.
- d. Covenants reveal God as mankind's only hope.

**Third, that dispensationalism originates in the Bible itself is** evident from the arrangement of the OT. From time immemorial, believing Jews have divided the Tanakh, what Christians call the OT, into three sections.

1. **The Torah**, aka: the Law, or the law of Moses or the Pentateuch (meaning five), aka, the Instructions.
2. **The Nevi'im**, meaning the Prophets
3. **The Ketuvim**, meaning, the Writings, aka, the Hagiographa, from the Greek word, hagio-graphos, meaning, holy writings.

Tanakh or Ta-Na-Kh is an acronym derived from the names of the three divisions in the Jewish OT: **a.** Torah (the Law), **b.** Nevi'im (Prophets), and **c.** Ketuvim (Writings). Jews call the OT the Tanakh. Christians call it the Old Testament. The OT contains: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

**The Torah** contains five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, all written by Moses, aka, the law of Moses.

**The Nevi'im** contains eight books, divided into the four historical books, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and then, the Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve (Minor—i.e., smaller or shorter) Prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Formerly, for ease of use, the Twelve smaller books or, Minor prophets, were all written on a single scroll, and thus, reckoned as one book.

**The Ketuvim** consists of religious poetry and wisdom literature, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, a collection known as the Five Megillot or, (Five Scrolls; i.e., Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther), which have been grouped together according to the annual cycle of their public reading in the synagogue, and the books of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

**Some people divide the OT into 5 major divisions.**

1. Law - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
2. History - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
3. Poetry and Wisdom books - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs.
4. Major Prophets - the longer prophetic books.
5. Minor Prophets - the shorter prophetic books.

**Other people divide the OT into 4 major divisions.**

1. The Law books of Moses.
2. The Historical Books.
3. The Wisdom Books.
4. The Prophetic Books.

Recognizing and understanding those natural divisions in scripture is part of what it means to be a dispensationalist. The point is, it is normal and natural for people who study the Bible, to recognize the divisions or the different types of literature and the different covenants, as well as the eras or epochs or parts or sections or administrations or dispensations, intrinsic to the Bible itself. God gave us the Bible in the form we have it because He intends us to understand it and its parts.

The law books are not the prophets and the writings. The prophetic books are not the law and the writings. The writings are not the law and the prophets. Things different are not equal. It is normal for us to recognize the divisions or sections or covenants and dispensations God has recorded in the Bible.

**Fourth, that dispensationalism originates in the Bible itself is** evident from the arrangement of the NT. Our New Testament is divided into three parts by some people and into five parts by other people. These are logical and natural divisions. Recognizing these logical divisions or differences or dispensations and

factoring them into the way we understand and interpret the Bible is biblical common sense.

### **Some people divide the NT into 3 major divisions**

1. The Four Gospels and Acts
2. The Eighteen Epistles or Letters
3. The Revelation

### **Other people divide the NT into 5 major divisions**

1. The Four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
2. The Acts of the Apostles
3. The Seven Epistles of Paul to Churches - Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians
4. The Three Epistles of Paul to Individuals - 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
5. The Nine General Epistles - Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude, Revelation

Most Christians recognize the difference between the gospels, most of the events of which, occur on the law side of Calvary, and the rest of the NT, which occurs on the grace side of Calvary. Recognizing and understanding those natural biblical divisions in scripture is part of what it means to be a dispensationalist, and part of what Paul meant when he told us to “*rightly divide the word of truth,*” 2 Timothy 2:15.

The glorious resurrection of Christ occurs at the end of each of the four gospels. From Acts on, everything that happens in the NT is on the grace side of Calvary, aka, on the resurrection side of Calvary. That means that, at that point, we are under the grace dispensation and are no longer under the law dispensation. Under NT grace, the way God deals with the human race is radically different from the way God dealt with the human race under OT law. Recognizing these differences or dispensations and factoring them into the way we understand and interpret the Bible is biblical common sense.

### **Dispensationalism is the scriptural way to approach the Bible.**

The truth of God has been revealed to the human race over a long period of time, not all at once, in one fell swoop. God did not give us the 66 books of the Bible all at the same time. God gave us the Bible over more than 1600 hundred years,

from about 40 human authors. As mankind experienced God's dispensations, one by one, one after another, God progressively revealed more and more of His plan of redemption.

Beyond that, chronologically, God did not reveal all of his redemptive plan in the first books of the Bible which were written, Job and Genesis. God spread out the revelation of His truth over the 66 books of the Bible. God's plan of redemption was revealed gradually, over a 1600 hundred year long span of time, as the Bible was written. God's plan of redemption includes the woman's seed, (in contrast to the man's seed). The woman's seed is a reference to the virgin birth, (that Christ was born without a human father). This was first mentioned in Genesis 3:15.

### **The Proto-evangelium and progressive revelation.**

The first inkling of the progressive nature of God's plan of redemption is found in Genesis, the second book of the Bible, chronologically speaking. Job is the first book of the Bible, chronologically speaking. God, the ultimate author of the Bible, puts a literary hook in Genesis 3:15. This literary hook was no doubt, intriguing to people who only had the OT, but was difficult to understand with precision, until God gave the NT, where we see the life of Christ and Satan's activities against Christ. Then, Genesis 3:15 becomes more clear, more understandable.

Knowing that God put that literary hook in Genesis 3:15, on purpose, encourages us to believe that God plans things out perfectly, especially His plan of redemption, because He knows the end from the beginning. Where we see it clearly, because we have the NT, it was less clear in the OT time frame. It may have provoked discussion and interest, as literary hooks are wont to do but its meaning didn't become clear until the NT. We recognize this literary hook now, because God, the ultimate author of Genesis and of the OT, has also given us the wonderful NT revelation, which explains much more about Messiah Jesus.

In Genesis 3:15 (the woman's seed), Isaiah 7:14 (the virgin birth of Christ), Matthew 1:20-23 (the virgin birth of Christ), Matthew 23:33 (ye generation of vipers), Galatians 3:16 (thy seed, which is Christ), 19 (till the seed should should come), 1 John 3:10 (the children of the devil), Revelation 12:1-17 (the remnant of her seed), we learn who the woman's seed is and how He triumphs. Please look up, read and compare the verses, paying special attention to, the seed.

Genesis 3:15 has been called, **the Protevangelium**, meaning: the first mention of the good news of the gospel. In the immediate context of the fall of Adam, God

promises, in Genesis 3:15, He will make right, everything Adam made wrong. The woman's seed, the virgin born Jesus, will triumph over Satan's seed, John 8:44. Keep in mind that the apostle Paul makes the undeniable comparison between the first Adam and the last Adam, in Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

*“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* Genesis 3:15.

*“And I will put enmity between thee (meaning the serpent) and the woman (meaning Eve), and between thy seed (the serpent's seed, John 8:44) and her (Eve's) seed; it (the woman's seed) shall bruise thy (the serpent's) head, and thou (the serpent) shalt bruise his (Messiah's) heel.”* Genesis 3:15.

*“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”*  
Galatians 3:16.

*“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Revelation 12:17.

*“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”* Galatians 3:19.

1. Does a woman really have seed? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Since a woman does not have seed, does Genesis 3:15 refer to the virgin birth of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Does Paul, in Romans 5:12-19, compare Adam and Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, compare Adam and Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

The Protoevangelium demonstrates the progressive nature of God's revelation of the glorious gospel of Christ. That revelation in the Bible, happened over time, not immediately. Another example of the progressive nature of God's revelation is found in the gospel of John, where Jesus Himself gives us an example of the progressive nature of revelation in scripture. Recognizing this progressive revelation (that God reveals His truth over time), is part of what it means to be a dispensationalist.

*“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” John 16:13.*

Jesus promises more information, more knowledge, more revelation in the future, from the Holy Spirit. This promise refers to the written NT, which would begin to be written after Jesus ascended to heaven. God did not reveal, in the book of Genesis, everything He wanted us to know. God did not reveal, in the OT, everything He wanted us to know. God did not reveal, during the earthly ministry of Jesus, everything He wanted us to know. Some of the truths God wanted us to know were not revealed until the NT was written, between AD 40 and AD 98. The revelation of God and His redemptive plan for the human race was revealed progressively, over time, through the dispensations God put in the Bible.

### **Dispensationalism is biblical common sense**

Because the Bible itself recognizes a distinction between the OT and the NT, Christians have enough biblical common sense to also recognize that distinction. Because the OT recognizes distinctions between the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, Christians have enough biblical common sense to also recognize those OT distinctions. Because the NT recognizes distinctions between the Gospels, the Epistles and the Revelation, Christians also have enough biblical common sense to recognize those NT distinctions and to use them to help us understand and interpret the Bible.

### **The rich young ruler vs. the Philippian jailor.**

When we read the Bible and believe what we read, in context, the human authors of the Bible point out dispensational differences for us. For example, in Matthew 19:16, the rich young ruler asked an important question.

*“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”*  
Matthew 19:16.

Jesus doesn't answer him by saying: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.* Instead, Jesus recognized the dispensational distinction between the OT and the NT, between law and gospel, between law and grace, on the matter of salvation. Because He hadn't yet died on the cross and paid for sins, Jesus points the rich young ruler to the law of Moses and the Ten

Commandments. Why? Because at that point in time, they were still in the Law Dispensation, living in the land of Israel, under the law of Moses.

### **NT salvation by grace through faith is a dispensational distinction**

In Acts 16:30-31, when the Philippian jailor asks: “*What must I do to be saved,*” Paul and Silas don’t give the same answer Jesus gave to the rich young ruler. Have you ever thought about that Bible truth? \_\_\_\_\_ They recognized the same dispensational distinction that Jesus recognized, that they were in the Gospel Dispensation or the Grace Dispensation, not the Law Dispensation. For that reason, they don’t point the jailor to the law of Moses, like Jesus did. Instead, they tell the jailor: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*” Acts 16:31, with no reference to the OT law.

Why are there two very different answers to the question about salvation? Because there is a dispensational difference, a dispensational distinction, about getting saved, before the death and resurrection of Christ and getting saved after the death and resurrection of Christ. If Paul and Silas had given the jailor the same answer Jesus gave the rich young ruler, they would have been lying; they would have been wrong.

The answer Jesus gave to the rich young ruler would not have worked for the Philippian jailor. Why? Because they were in different dispensations. God dealt differently with unsaved sinners, under OT law, than He dealt with unsaved sinners, under NT grace. Is it biblical and logical to recognize dispensational distinctions as we read and interpret the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_ What event happened between the time Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler and Paul and Silas spoke to the Philippian jailor? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Review: What is a dispensation?**

A dispensation is: a stewardship or an administration, in which God dispenses His grace and mercy and administers His affairs in a way which suits His redemptive purpose. In politics, we speak of the Nixon administration, the Reagan administration, the Obama administration and the Trump administration, because each of those men was President of the United States, in charge of leading the Executive branch of the American government. They were in charge of running things in their period of responsibility or, in their administration. In an administration or period of responsibility or dispensation in the Bible, God, or

some man He chooses, represents God's redemptive purpose at that point in human history.

In the Bible, the Greek word, οἰκονομία, oi-kon-o-mē'-ä, (from which we get our English word, economy), is translated as, dispensation, 4 times in the NT, in 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 1:10, 3:2, Colossians 1:25. The word means: economy, as in, careful management of resources, or stewardship, management, oversight, administration or period of responsibility or dispensation. This same Greek word, οἰκονομία, oi-kon-o-mē'-ä, is used 3 other times in the NT, in Luke 16:2, 3, 4, and in those verses, it is translated, stewardship.

*"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.*

*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.*

*4 - I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses."* Luke 16:2, 3, 4.

*"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."* 1 Corinthians 9:17.

*"That in the dispensation of the fulness 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."* Ephesians 1:10.

*"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:"* Ephesians 3:2.

*"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;"* Colossians 1:25.

In the Bible, a dispensation is a period of responsibility or stewardship or an administration, where God deals with the human race in a particular way, at that particular time in human history, a way that is different from God's administration, at other times in history. In summary, **we again define a dispensation.**

**A dispensation is:** the way God deals with, manages and oversees the human race during a particular time in history, to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

## **Covenants and Dispensations are linked to each other.**

In general, the biblical dispensations (periods of administration) are linked to a covenant of God. In general, the covenants of God are linked to a man. Those covenants of God explain what God expects of the human race at that particular time in redemptive history. In each dispensation, God is administering His redemptive plan and testing the obedience of the human race, to the particular covenant He put them under. As covenants and dispensations follow, one after another, God deals differently with the human race, as He sees fit.

For God's good purposes in redemptive history, God's covenants are linked to a man, while God's dispensations are linked to a particular period of time. Over the last two thousand years, people have come up with different numbers of dispensations, from only two dispensations, the OT and the NT, to three or four or seven or more dispensations. The Scofield Reference Bible, for example, lists 7 dispensations.

### **Here are 9 dispensations which make biblical sense.**

1. The Dispensation of Innocence: from Creation to the Fall of Adam.
2. The Dispensation of Conscience: from the Fall of Adam to the Flood.
3. The Dispensation of Human Government: from Flood to Abraham.
4. The Dispensation of Promise: from Abraham to Mt. Sinai.
5. The Dispensation of the Law: from Mt. Sinai to the Cross of Christ.
6. The Dispensation of Grace: from Resurrection of Christ to 2nd Coming.
7. The Dispensation of the Tribulation - from the Rapture to the Millennium.
8. The Dispensation of the Millennium - from the Millennium to Eternity.
9. The Dispensation of the New Heavens and New Earth - for all Eternity.

### **Examples of natural divisions or dispensations recognized in the Bible.**

Whether they recognize it or not, all Christians approach the Bible as dispensationalists. For example, every Christian recognizes that we have an OT and a NT and those testaments have many differences between them. That means every Christian recognizes at least two dispensations. The OT is mostly associated with Law and the NT is mostly associated with Grace. Every Christian also recognizes the difference between law and grace - under law, you have to keep the law. Under grace, salvation is free. Beyond that, every Christian who

has read the Bible, knows that Adam didn't live under the law of Moses. Adam lived 2600 years before the law of Moses

### **Adam - Moses - Christ**

The law of Moses was given 2600 years after the creation of Adam and Eve. That means that there was a third dispensation, from Adam to the law of Moses. That gives us at least three dispensations - **1.** From Adam, who was not under law, to the law of Moses, covering 2600 years. **2.** From the law of Moses, to Christ on Calvary, covering 1400 years, and, **3.** from Christ on Calvary to the present day, covering almost 2000 years. At a bare minimum then, every Christian recognizes at least three administrations or dispensations in the Bible.

There are many differences of administration which illustrate how God dealt with the human race, in the OT and the NT, at different periods of time. In the Garden of Eden, before the fall, God walked and talked directly with Adam and Eve, face to face. After the fall, God communicated with Moses through a burning bush, not face to face. Then, in the gospels, God became man and once again, God, in the person of Jesus, walked and talked face to face, with human beings.

Those are genuine, biblical, dispensational differences, which everyone recognizes, in the way God deals with the human race. Do those dispensational differences make biblical common sense to you? \_\_\_\_\_ Have you ever walked and talked directly with God, face to face? \_\_\_\_\_ Might your answer indicate that you live in a dispensation different from Adam's dispensation and Moses' dispensation? \_\_\_\_\_

The excellent biblical historian, Dr. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, recognized and wrote about the progressive revelation revealed in the dispensations, in Acts 10 and 11, when he pointed out Peter's reluctance to witness to Gentiles. Peter was still stuck in an OT frame of mind, in the Law Dispensation, even though God had already moved on, from the Law Dispensation to the Gospel Dispensation, aka, the Grace Dispensation.

Because most of the NT had not then been written, the Holy Spirit had to instruct Peter about the change of dispensations, from the OT to the NT, from law to gospel, from Israel to the church, from law to grace. Peter faithfully received the message from God in a dream. He responded obediently to what God showed him and therefore, God blessed Peter's evangelistic efforts by saving Cornelius and many in his house.

The Apostle Paul recognized the dispensational distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in the book of Romans, when he wrote: "*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*" Romans 9:3-5.

The blessings and information Paul lists were part of the law dispensation. They were given to OT Jews living under the law of Moses. That is a dispensational difference or a dispensational distinction.

### **The Dispensations are linked to men and their covenants.**

1. The Dispensation of Innocence - Adam.
2. The Dispensation of Conscience - Noah.
3. The Dispensation of Human Government - Abraham.
4. The Dispensation of Promise: from Abraham to Mt. Sinai - Abraham.
5. The Dispensation of the Law: from Mt. Sinai to the Cross of Christ - Moses.
6. The Dispensation of Grace: Resurrection/Christ to the 2nd Coming - Paul.
7. The Dispensation of the Tribulation - 7 years of Jacob's trouble - Moses/Elijah.
8. The Dispensation of the Millennial Reign - 1000 years long - King David.
9. The Dispensation of the New Heavens and New Earth - Christ for Eternity.

### **The Covenants are linked to men.**

1. The Edenic Covenant - with unfallen Adam, Gen 1:28-31, 2:15-17, Hosea 6:7.
2. The Adamic Covenant - with fallen Adam, Genesis 3:14-19.
3. The Noahic Covenant - with Noah, Genesis 9:1-17.
4. The Abrahamic Covenant - with Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3, 7, 13:14-17.
5. The Mosaic Covenant - with Moses, Exodus 19:5-7.
6. The Davidic Covenant - with David, 2 Samuel 7:8-11.
7. The New Covenant - with Israel, Jer 31:31-34, Matt 26:28, Hebrews 9:15.

### **Introduction to the Dispensations**

We've done a brief overview of Dispensationalism. Now we begin our study of the Dispensations and how a Dispensationalist approaches the Bible. As we begin our study, it is important to remember that our God is the unchangeable God of Eternity. He never changes, therefore, He is always the same.

*“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” Numbers 23:19.*

*“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Malachi 3:6.*

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17.*

*“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Hebrews 13:8.*

1. Does God change or is He unchangeable? \_\_\_\_\_
2. When the Bible says, “*For I am the LORD, I change not,*” does that testify to the consistency and constancy of God? \_\_\_\_\_
3. If God changes not and is consistent and constant in His dealings with us, does that mean it’s always safe to trust God? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Since Jesus is the same yesterday, and to day and forever,” Hebrews 13:8, does that mean we must bring an animal to offer as a blood sacrifice for our sins? \_\_\_\_\_ If No, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

The verses we looked at testify to the character of God, that His character is consistent and doesn’t change. As we will see later in this Bible study, while God Himself doesn’t change, the way He deals with the human race does change, from covenant to covenant, from dispensation to dispensation.

We can always count on God being God. We never have to worry about God suddenly becoming different than who He is. God will never break His word or do something different than what He promised in the Bible. Yet our unchanging God deals differently with different men, as recorded by God in the Bible. Because He is God, God has the right to deal with different men in different ways at different times in history, to achieve His redemptive purpose.

## **I. From Dispensation to Dispensation, there is a difference in what God requires of the human race.**

### **1. Noah and Solomon**

God did not deal the same way with Noah that He dealt with Solomon. Although God never changes, He required different things of Noah than He did of Solomon. Noah's responsibility before God was to build an ark. Solomon had a much different responsibility. He was required to rule Israel as King and also, to build a magnificent temple for God. The truths that God revealed to Noah and Abraham were different than the truths God revealed to Solomon and Paul. Why is that? Because those men lived in different dispensations. They served the same God but what God required of them was different.

1. In which dispensation did Noah live, p. 23? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Under which covenant did Noah live? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In which dispensation did Solomon live? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Under which covenant did Solomon live? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did Noah live under the law of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did Solomon live under the law of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did Noah have the same responsibilities as Solomon? \_\_\_\_\_
8. If Noah had tried to fulfill Solomon's responsibility to build the temple, would God have accepted that? \_\_\_\_\_ Why not? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If Solomon had decided to build an ark instead of the temple, would that have satisfied God? \_\_\_\_\_ Why not? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you see how God's requirements for people can be different, from one dispensation to another, yet God is still the same? \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. Abraham and Paul**

God did not deal with Abraham the same way He dealt with the Apostle Paul. God was gracious and loving and merciful to Abraham and Paul. God saved both men and they will spend eternity with God in heaven, but God did not deal with Abraham and Paul in the same way. Why is that the case?

Abraham and Paul lived at different times in history and they had different responsibilities before God. Abraham started life as a pagan Gentile, with at least three wives and with concubines, and who became the first Jew on earth. Paul started life as an unsaved Jew, a single man who never married, and who became a Christian Jew for Jesus. God was the same in Abraham's day and in Paul's day but the way He dealt with Abraham and Paul was different because God had different purposes for each man and because they lived in different dispensations.

1. In which dispensation did Abraham live, p. 23? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In which dispensations did Paul live? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did Abraham live under the law of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did Paul live under the law of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Was the law of Moses in effect for all of Paul's life? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What happened to end the law of Moses? \_\_\_\_\_

## **II. From Dispensation to Dispensation, there is a difference in the amount of truth revealed by God, at that time.**

Down the corridors of time and across the centuries of human history, God has slowly but surely revealed His truth to the human race. In every dispensation, God always chose a point man, someone to be His spokesman, someone God could rely upon, to obey Him and do the right thing. Can God count on you to obey Him and do the right thing in this dispensation? \_\_\_\_\_

Imagine that you could observe Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Adam had many responsibilities as well as immense freedom before God. Responsibilities included tending the garden and having fellowship with God. Early on, God gave explicit instructions to Adam. Essentially, Adam and Eve had carte blanche, meaning, absolute freedom to do anything they wanted to do in Eden, with only one minor prohibition.

*“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*  
Genesis 2:16-17.

When Adam was created, there was no OT, no NT, no Bible available for anyone on earth to read and memorize. There were no Ten Commandments and there were no 613 commands to obey in the law of Moses. Adam and Eve had only one command to obey, only one responsibility to fulfill. God's solitary command was to a perfect, unfallen man in a perfect, unfallen world, a world not stained by human disobedience and sin.

In the beginning, the Edenic Covenant and the Dispensation of Innocence ran concurrently and ended with the fall of Adam, when he deliberately disobeyed God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Dispensation of Innocence can never be repeated. Every covenant in the Bible is a one-off covenant and every dispensation in the Bible is a one-off dispensation, and then God and the human race move on to the next covenant and the next

dispensation. For earth and the human race, the covenant system and the dispensational system ends when God's redemptive purpose is accomplished and eternity begins.

God revealed many important things to Adam and taught him many important lessons. Have you ever considered what Adam learned from his experience in the Garden of Eden?

1. Adam learned that, when God says something, He means it.
2. Adam learned that, actions have often unexpected consequences.
3. Adam learned that, it is better to obey God than to give in to Eve.
4. Adam learned that, disobeying God resulted in being kicked out of Eden.
5. Adam learned that, sinful disobedience has lifelong consequences.
6. Adam learned that, the sin of disobedience affected his whole family.
7. Adam learned that, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

God revealed many things to Adam, but there were also many things that God did not reveal to him. The revelation of God to the human race, over time, is partial and progressive, not immediate and complete. The written revelation began around 1900 BC with the book of Job and ended around 100 AD, when the apostle John finished writing the book of Revelation.

### **III. Explaining Dispensationalism, Or, How To Rightly Divide the Word of Truth.**

We have defined the word, Dispensation, and we have listed the Covenants and the Dispensations and the men linked to the Covenants and the Dispensations. Now we will examine Dispensationalism and what sets Dispensationalism apart from other ways people use to understand and interpret the Bible.

#### **God's revelation of Himself in the Bible is progressive and perfect.**

The smartest thing a born again Christian can do is believe the Bible. The dumbest thing a born again Christian can do is doubt and disbelieve the Bible.

It was the first created being, Satan, who questioned what God said: "*Yea, hath God said?*" (Did God really say that?) Apostasy, unbelief, sin and death started with questioning God's words, **a.** subtracting from them, **b.** changing them and **c.** adding to them. Let's do some simple Bible study here.

Compare Genesis 3:2-3 with God's original command in Genesis 2:16-17. What in the world did Eve do? \_\_\_\_\_ God gives three warnings against doing what Eve did: Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19. What is your understanding of God's three warnings about scripture? \_\_\_\_\_

In spite of God's warnings against messing with His written word, the human race has been doing precisely what Eve did in the Garden of Eden and what Jehudi did around 600 B.C. in Jeremiah 36:23-24. Eve and Jehudi didn't take God's word seriously. Eve changed God's words and Jehudi destroyed God's words. Don't be foolish enough to follow Eve and Jehudi. Should any Christian follow Eve and Jehudi and their handling of God's words? \_\_\_\_\_

**Inspiration and Preservation are Inseparable Twins  
to every Christian who takes the Bible seriously.**

God inspired His words, Job 32:8; 33:4; Jeremiah 36:2-4; 2 Peter 1:20-21, and God preserved His words, Psalm 12:7-8; Matthew 24:35. 1. Why is inspiration useless without preservation? \_\_\_\_\_

2. If God inspired the words of the Bible but didn't preserve the words of the Bible inspiration wouldn't mean much. Do you understand that reasoning? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did God preserve His words for us today? \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which Bible is the preserved word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Bible provides interesting insight  
about Inspiration and Preservation.**

God's inspiration and preservation of scripture is not limited to the original writings, sometimes called, the original autographs or the original manuscripts. Compare Jeremiah 36:1-2 with Jeremiah 36:21-23 as well as Jeremiah 45:1 with Jeremiah 51:63. The third original is what the Lord actually gave us to read and study. The first two originals were destroyed. In addition to this, the scriptures never refer to themselves as originals, Acts 8:32; 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Did Timothy, as a child, have original manuscripts of the OT? \_\_\_\_\_ Even though Timothy, as a child, did not have the original manuscripts of the OT, did he still have the scriptures, according to 2 Timothy 3:15? \_\_\_\_\_

When you read the Bible, do you think about what you read? \_\_\_\_\_ Do you believe what you read? \_\_\_\_\_ In your Bible reading, have you noticed

that God blesses inspired translations as given in Scripture? 1. Joseph speaks Egyptian, to his brother, which was interpreted to the brothers, Genesis 42:23, and translated into Hebrew, by Moses, when he wrote Genesis. In the New Testament, Paul speaks in the Hebrew tongue (in the Bible, a tongue is a language) in Acts 21:40, but Luke writes Acts 22:1-21 exclusively in Greek, and we read it in English.

The same phenomenon occurs in Acts 9:5-6 and 26:14, where Jesus Christ's Hebrew words are written down as scripture, by Luke, in Greek, and we read the English translation. It is interesting to note that, the words: translate, translated and translation, in the KJV, indicate a change from a worse to a better situation, 2 Samuel 3:10, Colossians 1:13, and Hebrews 11:5.

### **The OT was given by inspiration of God.**

The OT was God-breathed, or, *given by inspiration of God*, Jeremiah 36:1-4, 2 Timothy 3:15-17. God showed Adam what Adam needed to know, Job 32:8, 33:4, Genesis 2:7, even though Adam had no written scriptures but He also left many other Bible truths hidden (unrevealed) until later. When Abraham came along, God had additional spiritual truth for Abraham, that He had not revealed to Adam or to Adam's children.

1. The word, inspiration, means: **a.** God-breathed, **b.** imma give you special information, **c.** okayed by holy mother church, given under Creative Commons.
2. Was the OT given by inspiration of God or is it just written by wise men? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Adam and Eve only had: **a.** the five books of Moses, **b.** Job and Psalms, **c.** the minor prophets, **d.** Adam and Eve had none of the written Bible.

For the first one thousand years that the law of Moses was in effect (from Exodus 19 to the book of Malachi), God continued to reveal Himself to His people, through His prophets and through the human authors of the Bible. Then, abruptly, with the Book of Malachi, the flow of revelation stopped. From Malachi to Matthew, there is a period known to history as, the 400 silent years.

*“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Galatians 4:4.*

Christ came at the perfect time, to put into action, God's plan of redemption. The earthly ministry of Christ occupied 3.5 years of time, at the end of which, Christ

was offered up to die, to appease the wrath of God against the sins of the human race. That was God's propitiation plan, not a plan that came from wicked men.

And yet, God's plan of redemption didn't stop with the death of Christ for our sins. The death of Christ for our sins could never save anyone because we are not saved by His death and no one on earth has ever been saved by the death of Christ. We are saved by his life, not by His death, Romans 5:10. Never, ever forget the importance of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

*"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* Romans 5:10.

1. What did the death of Christ do? **a.** It saved us, **b.** It reconciled us to God, **c.** It made us automatic church members, **d.** It made us Presbyterians?
2. Does being reconciled to God by the death of His Son mean that we were saved? **a.** Yes, being reconciled and water baptized did the trick, **b.** No, being reconciled made us savable but being reconciled didn't save us.
3. According to Romans 5:10, which are we saved by, the death of Christ or the life of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Could we get saved if Jesus hadn't resurrected from the dead? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How important is the resurrection of Christ from the dead? \_\_\_\_\_

### **The NT was given by Inspiration of God.**

The NT was also *given by inspiration of God*, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, (inspiration means, God-breathed), and began to be written by human authors, from about AD 40 to AD 98. We know that 2 Timothy 3:15-17 also refers to the NT and that the NT is also scripture, because Peter calls the writings of Paul scripture, in 2 Peter 3:15-16, just like the OT is scripture.

Once the apostle John finished writing the book of Revelation, God's revelation of Himself in the Bible was complete. For that reason, instead of being in the period of time where God was revealing new truths as the Bible was being written, we are now in the period of time where God is illuminating our understanding about His truth already revealed in the written word.

*"The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."* Psalm 12:6-7.

*“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” Psalm 119:160.*

1. The NT was given by inspiration of God. That means: **a.** God helped men write it but it still contains errors, **b.** “Given by inspiration of God” means that God supervised the writing of the OT and NT, so that, they contain exactly what God wanted us to have, without any errors.
  2. Does it make sense that God would give the Bible by inspiration (Himself breathing out the words of scripture to the human authors of the Bible), and give them errors, or breath out errors to them? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Do Psalm 12:6-7 and 119:160 support the Bible having errors or do they support the Bible being without error? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Does the word, pure, imply purity or impurity? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Does the word, true, imply truth or falsehood? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. God preserving His pure and true word - Does that mean He will preserve it with errors or without errors? \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Does Psalm 12:6-7 mean that no Bible anywhere will ever have errors in it? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your reasoning on this topic? \_\_\_\_\_
  8. Do typesetter’s errors mean God failed to preserve the pure Bible? \_\_\_\_\_
- Discuss: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The difference between Revelation and Illumination.**

There is a big difference between illumination and revelation. Revelation, means the written words of God in the Bible, come from God, and are given by inspiration of God. Illumination, our Holy Spirit given ability to understand the truth God has revealed in the Bible, comes from God but our understanding of scripture and our illumination are not inspired by God.

For that reason, we have liberty of conscience and we need to extend that grace and liberty of conscience to others. That doesn’t mean we cannot know what God says and means in the Bible, but it does mean that we need to love each other with grace, when we disagree. Why? Because different people come to truth in different ways, some more slowly than others, some more quickly.

1. What is the difference between the written revelation of God in the Bible and illumination from God as we read and study the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

Notice carefully what the Bible says about itself. The Bible presents itself as the pure and true words of God, meaning free from error, or inerrant or infallible,

Psalm 12:6-7, 119:160. 2. Do you believe that the Bible is the pure and true words of God, preserved by God as He wanted us to have them? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Those verses mean that the written revelation from God, in the Bible, is: **a.** perhaps as much as 95% accurate, **b.** as accurate as any writing by fallible men can be expected to be but certainly not perfect, **c.** *pure words tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*, **d.** words that are *true from the beginning*. 4. What is the Christian basis for believing that the Bible is true and not full of errors?

---

### **Dispensationalists have a high view of the Bible, God's written words.**

Dispensationalists understand that God has many different ways of dealing with different men at different times, across the centuries, in the ongoing down rush of human history. Dispensationalists also understand that God, over time, has been gradually revealing more and more of His truth to the human race. This truth of God has been revealed, slowly, over time, across the span of as many as 19 centuries.

How many years is 19 centuries? \_\_\_\_\_ By the first century AD, the Tanakh, with its 39 books corresponding to our Christian OT, was accepted as given by God and the canon of OT scripture was set. Yet, during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus, He revealed even more truths to His disciples, which were unknown to OT believers.

### **Truths Jesus revealed to His disciples.**

Those truths include: His miraculous healing power, His ability to raise the dead, His scathing indictment of the Pharisees, His cleansing of the temple, His rejection by Israel and His coming death on Calvary for sinners. These truths were later written down in the NT, which is why we know about them today.

Because the revelation of God in the Bible is progressive, meaning, it happens over the long span of time, in centuries instead of in minutes, after Jesus was rejected by the Jews, and after He was buried and rose again from the dead, God's revelation of Himself in the Bible continued. In the first century AD, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their gospels. Paul wrote his fourteen epistles (letters), to churches and to individuals. Peter and James and Jude wrote their epistles. By around AD 98, when the apostle John finished the book of Revelation, the NT was complete and the canon of scripture was closed.

God revealed to Paul, more than to any other human author of the Bible, His glorious gospel of grace, His plans for the NT church, His propitiation for everyone (not just the elect), 1 John 2:1-2, His reconciliation of the whole world, to God, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 (which didn't save anyone - you still have to believe on Jesus to get saved), and therefore, His genuine, heartfelt, sincere offer of salvation for every one who believes on Jesus, John 3:16, Romans 1:16, 10:9-10, 13. God didn't show everything to the apostle Paul. God's final truths revealed in the Bible were reserved for the apostle John, some thirty years after Paul died.

### **Truths God reveals through the Covenants and the Dispensations.**

**A.** God placed perfect, unfallen Adam in a beautiful garden and gave him everything he needed, including: a clean, safe, sinless, unfallen world, face to face personal fellowship with a holy God, a sinless, unfallen, compatible wife, the entire earth under his personal dominion and unfettered access to the tree of life. At the first opportunity, unfallen Adam forsook everything God had given him and chose death. Thus ended the Edenic Covenant and the Dispensation of Innocence.

**B.** God left mankind alone with their conscience to guide them and man became so exceedingly wicked that God removed them from the earth with a worldwide flood. Thus ended the Adamic Covenant and the Dispensation of Conscience.

**C.** Give mankind great freedom and precious promises and mankind will flee those promises and use his freedom to rebel against God. Thus ended the Noahic Covenant and the Dispensation of Human Government.

**D.** Separate out a small and mightily blessed chosen nation, Israel, for God to speak through and to whom God gives His written words, and among whom God dwells, with His holy temple, law and priesthood, and even those chosen people will abandon God and worship idols of wood and stone. So far do they stray from God that, they end up rejecting and killing their own Messiah. Thus ended the Mosaic Covenant and the Dispensation of the Law.

**E.** Give mankind reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ, the free gift of eternal redemption from sin and hell, everlasting life, new birth into God's own, eternal family, as God's sons, the gift of the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit, the promise of a new, glorified body and an eternal home in New Jerusalem, and

saved men will repay their Savior with rebellion, worldliness, and indifference. Thus ends the Davidic Covenant and the Dispensation of Grace.

F. God refuses to give up. He places man on a perfect earth, in an harmonious environment, with no Satan to tempt him (he being in the bottomless pit for 10000 literal years), mankind enjoying a greatly extended lifespan, and Jesus Christ himself reigning over the peaceful kingdom, and still, man revolts and tries to drive Christ from His throne. Thus ends the Messianic or Millennial Dispensation.

*“Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.” King David, Psalm 39:5.*

**Conclusion:** Man is an evil, selfish, vain and wicked creature. Apart from the saving grace of a loving God, man is utterly hopeless and bound for hell. The surest proof of this is the proof offered by the covenants and dispensations, in which man continually fails God. Dispensational study drives us to the free grace of God, in Christ. God’s amazing grace is the only hope we have, and God’s grace is the steadfast and sure hope we have as the anchor of our souls.

**Dispensationalists recognize obvious differences in the Bible.  
These dispensational differences matter as we study the Bible.**

1. The differences between the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God.
2. The differences between Israel and the Church.
3. The differences between the two advents of Christ.
4. The differences between the two resurrections.
5. The differences between the two future comings of Christ.
6. The differences between law and grace.
7. The differences between works righteousness and justification by faith.
8. The differences between justification by faith and sanctification by faith.
9. The differences between the believer's standing and state.
10. The differences between salvation and rewards.
11. The differences between believers and professing Christians.
12. The differences between the seven gospels.
13. The differences between the seven baptisms.
14. The differences between the seven judgments.
15. The differences between the seven dispensations.

1. If we ignore these biblical differences, what will happen to our understanding of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which makes the most sense to you: **a.** that God wants us to ignore the differences listed above, or, **b.** that God wants us to recognize those differences and factor them into our understanding of the Bible?
3. Are those 15 differences clear and recognizable in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

**These genuine differences in the Bible were not  
invented or made up by dispensationalists.**

These biblical differences and distinctions are not artificial differences made up by dispensationalists but recognized by no one else. They are genuine differences contained in the text of scripture. If we read and study the Bible while ignoring the genuine differences listed above, we will wind up confused and confounded because, things different are not the same. God gave us a Bible full of differences, to help us make sense of and understand the scriptures and the way He deals with mankind.

**Rightly dividing the word of truth - 2 Timothy 2:15.**

That is one important reason that 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us: “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” Because the Bible tells us to rightly divide the word of truth, there must be spiritual danger if we wrongly divide the word of truth.

1. As a Christian, which do you want to do, to please your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? **a.** Rightly divide the word of truth, **b.** Wrongly divide the word of truth.
2. What is the best way to wrongly divide the word of truth? **a.** Ignore the differences in the Bible, **b.** Ignore context in the Bible, **c.** Assume all of the Bible is written to you to practice, **d.** Refuse to take the Bible literally, **e.** Assume that the Bible is full of mistakes, since God produced it using human authors, **f.** Allegorize most prophetic verses and passages, **g.** All of the above.
3. What is the best way to rightly divide the word of truth? **a.** Believe what the Bible says, in context, **b.** Take it literally, meaning, word for word, in the ordinary, normal, plain sense of the words used, **c.** Assume that God intends you to understand and live up to the scriptures He gave and preserved for you, **d.** Take the differences in the Bible seriously, **e.** All of the above.

## **Dispensationalism is simply taking God at His Word Nothing more, nothing less.**

Recognizing dispensations and factoring dispensational distinctions into our understanding of the Bible is, historically, the way Christians have approached the Bible. It is sometimes claimed that dispensationalism is a modern belief system, first proposed by John Darby around 1830. That claim is sometimes called, the historical attack. The historical attack alleges that the early church, way back in history, did not believe in dispensationalism, therefore, since the early church didn't recognize dispensationalism, dispensationalism is wrong.

There are three truths to consider here, to answer the historical attack. **1.** Dispensationalism is found in the Bible and is based on what the Bible says, in context, as we have already pointed out in this Bible study. **2.** The early church believed in [forms of dispensationalism](#) similar to our modern beliefs. **3.** The historical evidence is overwhelming, that the church fathers of the first three centuries AD were uniformly premillennial, not amillennial and not postmillennial.

### **Justin Martyr and Irenaeus**

**Justin Martyr, AD 100 - AD 165**, understood four distinct dispensations or periods of time: 1. from Adam to Abraham, 2. from Abraham to Moses, 3. from Moses to Christ, and 4. from Christ to Eternity.

**Irenaeus, AD 130 - AD 202**, also understood four distinct dispensations or periods of time: 1. from Creation to the Flood, 2. from the Flood to the Law, 3. from the Law to the Gospel, and 4. from the Gospel to Eternity. Irenaeus believed that dispensations were God's way of revealing Himself to men.

"7. Therefore the Son of the Father declares [Him] from the beginning, inasmuch as He was with the Father from the beginning, who did also show to the human race prophetic visions, and diversities of gifts, and His own ministrations, and the glory of the Father, in regular order and connection, at the fitting time for the benefit [of mankind]. For where there is a regular succession, there is also fixedness; and where fixedness, there suitability to the period; and where suitability, there also utility.

And for this reason did the Word become the **dispenser** of the paternal grace for the benefit of men, for whom He made such great **dispensations**, revealing God indeed to men, but presenting man to God, and preserving at the same time the

invisibility of the Father, lest man should at any time become a despiser of God, and that he should always possess something towards which he might advance;

but, on the other hand, **revealing God to men through many dispensations**, lest man, falling away from God altogether, should cease to exist. For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God.” [Against Heresies, by Irenaeus, book IV, chapter XX, section 7.](#)

### **How the Covenants relate to the Dispensations.**

1. The Edenic Covenant and The Dispensation of Innocence - Unfallen Adam
2. The Adamic Covenant and The Dispensation of Conscience - Fallen Adam
3. The Noahic Covenant and The Dispensation of Human Government - Noah
4. The Abrahamic Covenant and The Dispensation of Promise - Abraham
5. The Mosaic Covenant and The Dispensation of the Law - Moses
6. The Davidic Covenant and The Dispensation of Grace - Christ, David's seed
7. The Palestinian Covenant - Deuteronomy 30:1-10 - Israel belongs to the Jews
8. The New Covenant, Jer. 31:31-37, Heb. 8:7-13 & The Messianic Dispensation

### **Common Sense Dispensational Differences Quiz**

1. Did Abraham worship God in Solomon's temple at Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did Abraham worship at the First Baptist Church of Bethlehem? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Was Abraham saved by doing Romans 10:9-10, 13? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Explain the dispensational differences for 1, 2, and 3.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many times did you sin this week? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which animal(s) did you bring to the temple as a sacrifice for your sins? **a.** a lamb, **b.** a ram, **c.** a turtle dove, **d.** a bullock, **e.** None of the above.
7. Does your answer to 6. indicate there is a dispensational difference, so that you don't need to bring an animal sacrifice for your sins? \_\_\_\_\_
8. According to Exodus 35:2, people who work on Sunday should be put to death. Should we do that today? \_\_\_\_\_ If you answer No, please give reasons for your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

9. When Exodus 35 was written, were they in the same dispensation that we are in today? \_\_\_\_\_ What dispensation were they in? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What dispensation are we in today? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are there different circumstances, different requirements, different expectations, in the grace dispensation vs. the law dispensation? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Did King David ever baptize believers in Jesus Christ in water? \_\_\_\_\_
13. In Matthew 10:5-7, list two groups Jesus commanded His disciples NOT to go to. \_\_\_\_\_
14. What dispensation were they in, in Matthew 10? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Who did Jesus tell His disciples to go to in Matthew 28:18-20? \_\_\_\_\_
16. What changed between Matthew 10 and Matthew 28? \_\_\_\_\_
17. What dispensation were they in, in Matthew 28? \_\_\_\_\_

When we recognize differences and distinctions in the Bible, we are able to see and apply to our understanding, the differences and distinctions God Himself put in the Bible. It helps to draw a line on a piece of paper, with a cross in the middle of the line. If you have a question about where a verse or command or teaching fits, ask yourself where it fits on the line you drew. Is it before the Cross or after the Cross? Is it OT or NT? Is it under law or under grace? Answering those questions helps you fix in your mind, where things fit in the Bible.

#### **14. People who are not dispensational often hold these false views.**

1. They make little distinction between Israel and the Church.
2. They take promises to Israel and apply them to the Church.
3. They teach infant baptism as a continuation of circumcision covenant.
4. They allegorize and spiritualize prophesy, making it non-literal.
5. They deny the pre-tribulation rapture of the saved.
6. They deny the pre-millennial coming of Christ.
7. They deny the literalness of the millennial reign of Christ, Rev. 20.
8. They teach preterism = Jesus' promises in Matt 24 are already fulfilled.
9. They advocate amillennialism and/or postmillennialism.

Thank you for studying the Bible with us.  
We appreciate your prayers and support.