

## Theology 101

# Dispensations and Covenants

Theologians sometimes divide the Bible and history into eras based on certain criteria. Today, the most prevalent of these are Dispensations and Covenants. I believe there are elements of truth in these systems, but that many people take them too far.

### I. Dispensations

- A. Although they will not admit it (or may even know it), many in our circles are Dispensationalists in how they view the Scripture
- B. Basically, Dispensationalists see defined periods in the Scripture where God deals with man in differing ways.
- C. There is a danger in taking this idea too far, often called hyper-dispensationalism.
- D. The Seven Dispensations
  1. Age of Innocence
    - a) From Creation to the Fall of Man
    - b) Genesis 1:26-29
    - c) Basically man had it perfect conditions, with only one rule to obey, and yet fell into sin.
  2. Age of Conscience
    - a) From the Fall of Man to the Flood
    - b) No law or code for man to live by, but still they fall into sin.
  3. Age of Government
    - a) From the Flood to Abraham
    - b) Genesis 8:20-9:17
    - c) Human government is ordained (9:5-6), but still man falls into sin.
  4. Age of Promise
    - a) From Abraham to the Law
    - b) Genesis 12:1-3 and others
    - c) God makes big promises to Abraham and his descendants, but still they fall into sin.
  5. Age of Law
    - a) From the Law to the Christ
    - b) Exodus 20 (Ten Commandments) and more
    - c) God gives man a religious and moral code in explicit detail, but still man falls into sin.
  6. Age of Grace
    - a) From Christ to Tribulation
    - b) Romans 3:22-28 and others
    - c) With the payment now made for sin and God revealed through his Son, man still falls into sin.
  7. Age of the Kingdom
    - a) Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom

- b) Revelation 19
  - c) Christ Himself rules on the earth, yet men rebel and fall into sin.
- II. The Covenants
- A. There are certain promises that God makes in the Scripture that transcend all others. Special note needs to be paid to these.
  - B. Definition of covenant: “an agreement that brings about a relationship of commitment between God and his people”.
  - C. The Covenants
    - 1. The Edenic Covenant - Genesis 1:26-31, 2:16-17
    - 2. The Adamic Covenant - Genesis 3:16-19
    - 3. The Noahic Covenant - Genesis 9:1-18
    - 4. The Abrahamic Covenant - Genesis 12:1-4, 13:14-17, 15:1-7, 17:1-8
    - 5. The Mosaic Covenant - Exodus 20:1-31:18
    - 6. The Palestinian Covenant - Deuteronomy 30:1-10
    - 7. The Davidic Covenant - 2 Samuel 7:4-16, 1 Chronicles 17:3-15
    - 8. The New Covenant - Jeremiah 31:31-33
- III. Misc. Comments
- A. Note some overlap between the Dispensations and the Covenants? Maybe there are bigger truths behind them!
  - B. Man is still saved by grace through faith in EVERY age, era, dispensation, year, or period! Each era does not change God’s requirement of faith but may differ in how God reveals the fact to man.
  - C. Remember the Bible is a complex book written by an infinite God. Some things simply do not fit simple systems like these to fully understand the Scriptures
    - 1. Example - see the varied opinions of Dispensationalists on Acts, James, and the Tribulation.
  - D. There is truth in these systems of interpreting the Bible. However, too many get it backwards and try to fit the Bible into their system instead of letting the Bible be the final authority.