

“The Plan of the Ages”
(Dispensationalism)
By Rev. Robert S. Oliver

INTRODUCTION

I. Scriptural Evidence that there is a “PLAN OF THE AGES”

- A. God Reveals Himself to Mankind.
- B. The God of Israel is a God of Order not Confusion.
- C. God Desires Understanding by Believers.

II. Definitions and Overview

- A. Dispensation: “A Dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God” *C. I. Scofield*
“A Dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose” *Charles Ryrie*
“A Dispensation is a particular way of God’s administering His rule over the world as He progressively works out His purpose for world history” *Renald Showers*

1. The Basic Etymology

2. The 3 Distinguishing Principles/Marks of Dispensationalism:

- a. A Literal Interpretation of the Scriptures whenever possible and a reliance on the **“Literal, Historical, Grammatical”** method of Hermeneutics.
“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”
“The Golden Rule of Interpretation” by *Dr. David L. Cooper*

- b. A Clear and Consistent Distinction between Israel and ‘The Church’ and a recognition of the irrevocable, unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant.

- c. The Purpose/Theme of History is “The Glory of God”

3. The Biblical use and resultant characteristics:

- Two Parties
- Specific Responsibilities

- Accountability
- Change of Participants
- Responsibility to God
- Faithfulness Required
- Termination Possible
- Specific Revelation by God
- Time Periods Distinguished

B. Progressive Revelation

“God’s message to man was not given in one single act, but was unfolded in a long series of successive acts through the hands of many men of varying backgrounds.”

1. The UNITY found in progressive revelation.
2. The DIVERSITY found in progressive revelation.

C. Covenant Theology

“A system of theology based upon the two covenants of Works and Grace as governing categories for the understanding of the entire Bible.”

1. Its Historical Development.
2. Its Biblical Evidence.
3. Its Shortcomings:
 - a. Use of Allegory when not warranted by the text.
 - b. Reliance upon Church Creeds as a starting point for Doctrine/Truth.
 - c. Forced reading of New Covenant Principles into Old Testament.
 - d. An attempt to co-opt/steal the Promises of God to Israel.

D. Ultra-Dispensationalism or “Hyper-Dispensationalism”

“The school of interpretation which places more than one Dispensation between Pentecost and the end of the Church age.”

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TIME PERIODS OR DISPENSATIONS OF GOD’S PLAN:

1. Innocence or Freedom: *Creation to the Fall*, Genesis 1:28 – 3:8
2. Conscience: *The Fall to the Flood*, Genesis 3:9 – 8:14
3. Human Government: *The Flood to The Tower of Babel*, Genesis 8:15 – 11:9
4. Promise or Patriarchal: *Call of Abraham to the Giving of Mosaic Law*, Genesis 12:1 – Exodus 18:27
5. Mosaic Law: *Giving of the Law to the Sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua*, Exodus 19:1 – Acts 1:26
6. Grace: *Day of Pentecost to the Tribulation*, Acts 2:1 – Revelation 19:21
7. Kingdom or Millennium: *Return of Messiah to the Final Judgment*, Rev 20

1)st “THE DISPENSATION OF INNOCENCE” (From Creation To The Fall)

I. DIVINE GRACE

A. Creation

1. World – Genesis 1:13
 2. Mankind – Genesis 1:26-27
- B. Marriage – Genesis 2:18-25

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Work

1. Subdue – Genesis 1:28
 2. Cultivate – Genesis 2:15
- B. Submission – Genesis 2:16-17

III. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. The Test – Genesis 3:1-5
- B. The Fall – Genesis 3:6-13

IV. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. For The Woman – Genesis 3:16
- B. For The Man – Genesis 3:17-24
- C. For The Serpent – Genesis 3:4-15

2)nd “THE DISPENSATION OF CONSCIENCE” (From The Fall to The Flood)

I. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Family and Human Relationships – Genesis 2:18-25
- B. Work – Genesis 1:28, 2:15

II. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. Work – Genesis 4:1-8
- B. Family and Human Relationships – Genesis 6:1-5

III. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. The Universal Flood – Genesis 6:9-12, chapter 7
- B. The Total Annihilation – Genesis 7:23-24

IV. DIVINE GRACE

- A. The Promise of a Redeemer – Genesis 3:15
- B. The Salvation of Some – Genesis 6:13-18

3)rd “THE DISPENSATION OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT” (From the Flood to the Tower of Babel)

I. DIVINE GRACE

- A. The Noahic Covenant – Genesis 9
- B. A Universal Language – Genesis 11

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Subjugation of Creation – Genesis 9
- B. Propagation Of A Godly Race – Genesis 9
- C. Human Government Established – Genesis 9

III. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. Noah’s Drunkenness – Genesis 9:20-29
- B. Ham’s Rebellion – Genesis 9:22-25
- C. Nimrod’s New Society – Genesis 10:8-10
- D. Mankind’s New Religion – Genesis 11:1-4

IV. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. Predictions (prophecies) Concerning Man’s Descendants – Genesis 9
 - 1. Ham
 - 2. Shem
 - 3. Japheth
- B. Confused Languages – Genesis 11:5-7
- C. Forced Scattering – Genesis 11:8-9

4)th “THE DISPENSATION OF PROMISE OR PATRIARCHAL” (From Abraham To Egypt)

I. DIVINE GRACE

- A. The Continuation Of The Promises
 - 1. Abraham – Genesis 12:1-3
 - 2. Isaac – Genesis 26:1-4
 - 3. Jacob – Genesis 35:9-15
- B. The Growth Of The Nation – Exodus 1
- C. The Deliverance from Egypt – Exodus 1-14

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Faith in God’s Promises – Genesis 15:6
- B. Pursuit of God’s Will – Genesis 17:1-2

C. Sacrificial Worship System – Genesis 26:25

III. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. Abraham – Genesis 16
- B. Isaac – Genesis 26
- C. Jacob – Genesis 27
- D. The Whole Nation – Genesis 49

IV. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. Postponement Of Some Blessings
- B. Bondage In Egypt

5)th “THE DISPENSATION OF MOSAIC LAW” (From Moses to the Sacrifice of Messiah)

I. DIVINE GRACE

- A. The Giving of the Mosaic Law
 - 1. Its Purpose – Exodus 19:1-8
 - 2. Its Limitation
 - a. Limited to Israel only: Exodus 24:1-8, Deu. 7:6-12, 33:4 Psalm 147:19-20
 - b. Limited to a certain time period: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Galatians 3:23-26
 - c. Limited in its ability to cover sin: Hebrews 10:1-4
- B. The Revelation of The Prophets
 - 1. The Provision of Prophets – Deuteronomy 18:20-22
 - 2. Promise of Preservation of the Nation – Isaiah 7:1-9
 - 3. Promise of the Messianic Kingdom and its Davidic King – Isaiah 7:10-14

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Submission To The Mosaic Covenant – Exodus 19:5, 24:3
- B. Submission to Theocratic Representatives – Joshua 1

III. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. The Rejection of God’s Revelation – Judges 21:25
- B. The Rejection of God’s Representatives – Jeremiah 38

IV. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. The Devastation Of The Kingdoms of Israel And Judah
- B. The Intertestamental Period
- C. The Occupation by Rome
- D. The Destruction of Jerusalem (followed by the Diaspora)

6)th “THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE!” THE CHURCH AGE (from Pentecost to the Tribulation)

I. DIVINE GRACE!!!

- A. The Incarnation of Messiah – John 1:1, 14
- B. The Believer’s Position in Messiah – II Corinthians 5:17-19
- C. The Believer’s Privilege Of Serving Messiah – II Corinthians 5:20-21
- D. The Birth of the Body of Believers/Church as a Home/Family for Believers!
 - 1. The Birth of the ‘Church’ as a new entity at Shavuot/Pentecost!
See Acts 2:1-4, Ephesians 2:11-3:11
 - 2. The Jewish Distinctive within the Body of Believers –Galatians 3:23-29;
Romans 2:17-29, 11:1-5

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. To Receive God’s Gift of Righteousness in Salvation – Ephesians 2:8-9
- B. To Walk in The Fruits of Salvation – Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 5:22-26

III. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. The Rejection Of Yeshua As Messiah – Matthew 12
- B. The Apostasy Of Nominal Christianity – Matthew 7:15-23
- C. The Sins Of Genuine Believers – I John 1:5-10

IV. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. In the Lives of Individuals – I Corinthians 11:27-34
- B. In the Great Tribulation – Revelation 9:20-21
- C. In The Judgment Seat of Messiah – II Corinthians 5:9-10

7)th “THE DISPENSATION OF THE MILLENNIUM!” (from Return of Messiah to Final Judgment)

I. DIVINE GRACE

- A. Return of Yeshua – Revelation 19:11-16
- B. Salvation During the Messianic Kingdom – Isaiah 11:4, 10
- C. Physical Blessings During the Messianic Kingdom – Isaiah 11:1-9
- D. Complete Regathering of Israel – Isaiah 11:11-12
- E. Complete Fulfillment of the New Covenant – Jeremiah 31:31-34

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Worship of The King – Isaiah 2:1-3
- B. Obedience to the King – Isaiah 2:4

III. HUMAN FAILURE

- A. Refusal to Worship by the Nations – Revelation 20:7-8
- B. Rebellion At The Close Of The Millennium – Revelation 20:7-8

IV. DIVINE JUDGMENT

- A. Judgment upon the Rebellion – Revelation 20:10-15
- B. Destruction of The Earth – Revelation 21:1-4

OBJECTIONS AND FALLACIES ABOUT A DISPENSATIONAL VIEW OF SCRIPTURE:

1. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism was first invented by J.N. Darby in the 1860's.*

Answer:

a. The Primacy of Scripture!

b. Early 'Church Fathers':

Papias (60-130 CE)

Epistle of Barnabas (c. 140 CE)

Justin Martyr (100-165 CE)

Irenaeus (c. 180 CE)

c. Pierre Poiret (1687), John Edwards (1699), Isaac Watts (c. 1720)

2. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism teaches that the 'Gifts' of the Holy Spirit have ceased.*

Answer: The Gifts of the Spirit are Alive & Well "Throughout" the Disp of Grace!

3. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism teaches that the Old Testament has been "done away with".*

Answer: The Entire Canon of Scripture is God's Word and Must be Utilized!

4. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism is anti-Jewish, i.e., when Jews believe in Yeshua, they stop being Jewish.*

Answer: Jewishness is Ethnicity, NOT RELIGION!

5. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism teaches Racism, i.e., that Jews are Superior to Gentiles.*

Answer: GOD is NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS!

6. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism is opposed to the Messianic Jewish Movement.*

Answer: Dispensationalism PROMOTES the Messianic Movement!

7. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism teaches a salvation based on works during Old Testament times.*

Answer: Dispensationalism teaches that IN EVERY DISPENSATION man is only SAVED BY FAITH!!

8. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism makes false and sensational predictions about the Second Coming.*

Answer: Dispensationalism Teaches that EVERY PROPHECY concerning the Second Coming WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED EXACTLY as it says!

9. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism disregards the teaching of Jesus.*

Answer: Dispensationalism Teaches that JESUS CHRIST IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY in all matters of Faith & Practice!

10. Fallacy: *Dispensationalism is fiction, just like their “Left Behind” books and movies.*

Answer: *Dispensationalism is Non-Fiction, According to God’s Holy Word, and Clearly Reveals “GOD’S PLAN FOR THE AGES!”*