

**Loris First Baptist Church**  
**“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”**

Doctrine #20: The Dispensations

Note: Most information based on pages 126-138 of the book “Major Bible Themes” by Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

**Opening Comments about the Dispensations**

1. In the study of Scripture, it is important to understand that scriptural revelation falls into well-defined periods.
2. These are clearly separated, and the recognition of these divisions and their divine purposes constitute one of the important factors in true interpretation of the Scriptures.
3. These divisions are termed “dispensations,” and in successive periods of time different dispensations may be observed.

**The Meaning of Dispensations**

1. A dispensation can be defined as a stage in the progressive revelation of God constituting a distinctive stewardship or rule of life.
2. Although the concept of a dispensation and an age in the Bible is not precisely the same, it is obvious that each age has its dispensation.
  - a. Ages are often mentioned in the Bible

**Ephesians 2:7** “...in order that IN THE COMING AGES He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

**Ephesians 3:5, 9** “...which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets...and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which FOR AGES PAST was kept hidden in God, who created all things.”

**Hebrews 1:2:** “...but IN THESE LAST DAYS He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.”

- b. Ages are also distinguished in the Bible

**John 1:17** “For THE LAW (i.e. “age of the law”) was given through Moses; GRACE AND TRUTH (i.e. “age of grace and truth”) came through Jesus Christ.”

**Matthew 5:21-22** “You have heard that it was said TO THE PEOPLE LONG AGO (i.e. “ages, past”), ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ BUT I TELL YOU (i.e. “age, present”) that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”

**2 Corinthians 3:11** *“And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”*

**Hebrews 7:11-12** *“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? FOR WHEN THERE IS A CHANGE IN THE PRIESTHOOD, there must also be a change of the law.”*

3. It is probable that the recognition of the dispensations sheds more light on the whole message of the Bible than any other aspect of biblical study. Often the first clear understanding of the dispensations and God’s revealed purposes in them results in the beginning of useful Bible knowledge and in the fostering of a personal interest in the Bible itself.
4. Man’s relation to God is not the same in every age. It has been necessary to bring fallen man into divine testing.
5. This, in part, is God’s purpose in the ages, and the result of the testing is in every case an unquestionable demonstration of the utter failure and sinfulness of man. In the end, every mouth will have been stopped because every assumption of the human heart will be revealed as foolish and wicked by centuries of experience.
6. Each dispensation, therefore, begins with man being divinely placed in a new position of privilege and responsibility, and each closes with the failure of man resulting in righteous judgments from God.
7. While there are certain abiding facts such as the holy character of God which are of necessity the same in every age, there are varying instructions and responsibilities which are, as to their application, limited to a given period.
  - a. In this connection the Bible student must recognize the difference between a primary and a secondary application of the Word of God.
  - b. Only those portions of the Scriptures which are directly addressed to the child of God under grace are to be given a personal or primary application. All such instructions he is expected to perform in detail.
  - c. In secondary applications it should be observed that, while there are spiritual lessons to be drawn from every portion of the Bible, it does not follow that the Christian is appointed by God to conform to those governing principles which were the will of God for people of other dispensations.
  - d. The child of God under grace is not situated as was Adam, or Abraham, or the Israelites when under the law; nor is he called upon to follow that peculiar manner of life which according to Scripture will be required of men when the King shall have returned and set up His kingdom on the earth.

- e. Since the child of God depends wholly on the instructions contained in the Bible for his direction in daily life, and since the principles obtaining in the various dispensations are so diverse and even at times contradictory, it is important that he recognize those portions of the Scriptures which directly apply to him if he is to realize the will of God and the glory of God.
8. In considering the whole testimony of the Bible it is almost as important for the believer who would do the will of God to recognize that which does not concern him as it is for him to recognize that which does concern him.
  9. It is obvious that, apart from the knowledge of dispensational truth, the believer will not be intelligently adjusted to the present purpose and will of God in the world.
  10. Such knowledge alone will save him from assuming the hopeless legality of the dispensation that is past or from undertaking the impossible world transforming program belonging to the dispensation which is to come.
  11. Because of imperfect translations, some important truth is hidden to the one who reads only the English text of the Bible.
    - a. This is illustrated by the fact that the Greek word *aion*, which means an age, or dispensation, is forty times translated by the English word "world." Thus, when it states in Matthew 13:49, "So shall it be at the end of the world," there is reference not to the end of the material earth, which in due time must come (Isa. 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:7; Rev. 20:11), but rather to the end of this age.

**Isaiah 66:22** "As THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure."

**2 Peter 3:7** "By the same word THE PRESENT HEAVENS AND EARTH ARE RESERVED FOR FIRE, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly."

**Revelation 20:11** "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. THE EARTH AND THE HEAVENS FLED FROM HIS PRESENCE, and there was NO PLACE FOR THEM."

- b. The end of the world is not drawing near, but the end of the age is. According to Scripture, there are in all seven major dispensations, and it is evident that we are now living in the extreme end of the sixth. The kingdom age of a thousand years is yet to come:

**Revelation 20:4** "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and REIGNED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS."

**Revelation 20:6** "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will REIGN WITH HIM A THOUSAND YEARS."

12. A dispensation is normally marked off by a new divine appointment and responsibilities with which it begins and by divine judgment with which it ends.
13. Seven dispensations are commonly recognized in Scripture: (1) Innocence, (2) Conscience, (3) Government, (4) Promise, (5) Law, (6) Grace, (7) Millennial Kingdom.
14. In studying the seven dispensations, certain principles are essential to understanding this teaching.
  - a. Dispensationalism is derived from normal, or literal, interpretation of the Bible. It is impossible to interpret the Bible in its normal, literal sense without realizing that there are different ages and different dispensations.
  - b. A second principle is that of progressive revelation, that is, the fact recognized by practically all students of Scripture, that revelation is given by stages.
  - c. Third, all expositors of the Bible will need to recognize that later revelation to some extent supersedes earlier revelation with a resulting change in rules of life in which earlier requirements may be changed or withdrawn and new requirements added. For instance, while God commanded Moses to kill a man for gathering sticks on Saturday (Num. 15:32-36), no one would apply this command today because we live in a different dispensation.

**Numbers 15:32-36** *“While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp.’ So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.”*

15. Although seven dispensations are frequently distinguished in Scripture, three are more important than the others, namely,
  - a. The **dispensation of law**, governing Israel in the Old Testament from the time of Moses;
  - b. The **dispensation of grace**, the present age;
  - c. The **future dispensation of the millennial kingdom**.

### **Dispensation of Innocence: Age of Liberty**

1. This dispensation began with the creation of man (Gen. 1:26-27) and continues until Genesis 3:6.

**Genesis 1:26-27** *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ SO GOD CREATED MANKIND in His Own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.”*

**Genesis 3:6** “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, **SHE TOOK SOME AND ATE IT**. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, **AND HE ATE IT.**”

2. In this dispensation man was given the human responsibility of being fruitful, subduing the earth, having dominion over animals, using vegetables for food, and caring for the Garden of Eden:

**Genesis 1:28-29** “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.’”

**Genesis 2:15** “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden **TO WORK IT AND TAKE CARE OF IT.**”

3. One prohibition was given, that is, man was instructed not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil:

**Genesis 2:17** “...But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

4. Although man was given a blessed estate, a perfect body, mind and nature, and everything needed for enjoyment of life, Eve succumbed to temptation and ate the forbidden fruit and Adam joined her in her act of disobedience (Genesis 3:1-6). As a result, divine judgment came, spiritual death, knowledge of sin, fear of God, and loss of fellowship.
5. Even in these circumstances, God introduced the principle of grace with a promise of the Redeemer, provided coats of skin, typical of provision of redemption. They were driven out of the garden, but were allowed to live out their natural lives, **and with God’s judgment upon them a new dispensation began.**

**Genesis 3:15** “And I will put enmity between you (i.e. “Satan”) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.”

**Genesis 3:21** “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”

**Genesis 3:23-24** “So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

6. In the dispensation of innocence, God revealed the failure of man, gave the promise of a coming Redeemer, revealed His sovereignty in judging His creatures, and introduced the principle of grace.

## Dispensation of Conscience: Age of Human Determination

1. This dispensation beginning in Genesis 3:7 and extending to Genesis 8:19 brought new responsibilities upon man, stated in the so-called covenant with Adam and Eve.

**Genesis 3:7** *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and MADE COVERINGS FOR THEMSELVES."*

**Genesis 8:19** *"All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another."*

2. A curse was placed upon Satan (Gen. 3:14-15), but a curse also fell upon Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:16-19). Although no detailed code of morals is revealed as given to man at this time, he was required to live according to his conscience and in keeping with such knowledge of God as was given to him.

**Genesis 3:14-15** *"So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, 'CURSED ARE YOU above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.'"*

**Genesis 3:16-19** *"To the woman He said, 'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' To Adam He said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' 'CURSED IS THE GROUND because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'"*

3. Under conscience, however, man continued to fail just as he has failed ever since. Conscience could convict, but it could not bring victory:

**John 8:9** *"At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there."*

**Romans 2:15** *"They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them."*

**1 Corinthians 8:7** *"But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled."*

**1 Timothy 4:2** *"Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."*

4. Adam's children had his sin nature manifested in Cain's refusal to bring a blood offering (Gen. 4:7) and the consequent murder of Abel by Cain (Gen. 4:8).

**Genesis 4:7** "IF YOU DO WHAT IS RIGHT, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

**Genesis 4:8** "Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel AND KILLED HIM."

- a. The resulting civilization of Cain was sinful (Gen. 4:16-24), and physical death became common (Gen. 5:5-31).
- b. The wickedness of the human heart reached such a stage that judgment again was necessary (Gen. 6:5, 11-13).

**Genesis 6:5** "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart WAS ONLY EVIL ALL OF THE TIME."

**Genesis 6:11-13** "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.'"

- c. Judgment was manifested on Cain (Gen. 4:10-15) and on mankind in general in death (Gen. 5).
- d. Finally God had to bring upon the earth the universal flood (Gen. 7:21-24).

**Genesis 7:21-24** "Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days."

5. In this period, however, there was divine grace also manifested, as some were saved like Enoch (Gen. 5:24), and Noah's family was saved by the ark (Gen. 6:8-10; Heb. 11:7).

**Genesis 5:24** "Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."

**Genesis 6:8-10** "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth."

**Hebrews 11:7** "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear BUILT AN ARK TO SAVE HIS FAMILY. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith."

6. The dispensation ended with the flood in which only Noah's family was saved.

7. The purpose of God in this dispensation was to demonstrate again man's failure under the new situation in which he operated under conscience.
8. However, in this period God preserves the line of the future Redeemer, demonstrated His sovereignty in judging the world by the flood, and manifested His grace to Noah and his family.

### **Dispensation of Human Government: Covenant With Noah**

1. This dispensation covers the period from Genesis 8:20 through 11:9.
2. To Noah God gave an unconditional covenant (Gen. 8:20—9:17) in which He promised the following:
  - a. No further destruction by a flood:

**Genesis 8:21** *"The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."*

**Genesis 9:11** *"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."*

- b. That seasons in the course of nature would not change:

**Genesis 8:22** *"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."*

- c. He gave man the renewed command to multiply:

**Genesis 9:1** *"Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.'"*

- d. For man to continue his dominion over animals:

**Genesis 9:2** *"The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands."*

- e. The eating of flesh was now allowed even though blood was forbidden:

**Genesis 9:4** *"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it."*



- f. Most important was the establishment of the essence of government in which man was given the right to kill murderers (i.e. “capital punishment”):

**Genesis 9:5-6** *“And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”*

4. In this covenant, as in the others, there is human failure as indicated in Noah’s drunkenness and Ham’s irreverence:

**Genesis 9:21** *“When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent.”*

**Genesis 9:22** *“Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside.”*

5. It is a period of moral and religious deterioration (Gen. 11:1-4). Human government, like conscience, failed to curb man’s sin, and the Tower of Babel was the result (Gen. 11:4).

**Genesis 11:1-4** *“Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, SO THAT WE MAY MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’”*

6. God’s judgment was to confound their speech (Gen. 11:5-7), and man’s civilization was scattered (Gen. 11:8-9).

**Genesis 11:5-7** *“But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The LORD said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’”*

**Genesis 11:8-9** *“So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.”*

7. In this period, however, grace was evident as the godly remnant was preserved and Abram selected (Gen. 11:10—12:3).

**Genesis 12:1-3** *“The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’”*

8. Also, the seed of the woman was preserved and God’s sovereignty was manifested.

9. The dispensation of human government, God's covenant with Noah, ended with the judgment of the Tower of Babel and preparations for the next dispensation.
10. It is important to note that both conscience and human government continue in later dispensations.
11. Only Abram and his seed come under the dispensation of promise.
12. In general, the dispensation of human government revealed the failure of man under this new rule of life, revealed the selective judgment of God, and continued to manifest divine grace.

### **Dispensation of Promise: Covenant With Abraham**

1. This covenant beginning in Genesis 11:10 extended through Exodus 19:2.

**Genesis 11:10** *"This is the account of Shem's family line. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad."*

**Exodus 19:2** *"After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain."*

2. In it the human responsibility was given to trust in the promises of God revealed to Abraham.

- a. The content of their divine revelation included God's promises to Abraham:

**Genesis 12:1-2** *"The LORD had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.'"*

**Genesis 13:16** *"I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted."*

**Genesis 15:5** *"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"*

**Genesis 17:6** *"I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you."*

- b. The promise to Israel, Abraham's seed, that they would be a great nation and channel of the fulfillment of God's promise: (Gen. 12:2-3; 13:16; 15:5, 18-21; 17:7-8; 28:13-14; Josh. 1:2-4);

**Genesis 15:18-21** *"On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, dmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.'"*

**Genesis 17:7-8** *"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*

**Genesis 28:13-14** “There above it stood the LORD, and He said: ‘I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.’”

**Joshua 1:2-4** “Moses My servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.”

c. And a promise of blessing to the entire earth through Abraham:

**Genesis 12:3** “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

3. The principle was also laid down that God would bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham’s seed.
4. Abrahamic covenant is one of the important covenants of the Bible and includes the provision that Israel will be a nation forever, have title to the land forever, be blessed in spiritual things, be under divine protection, and have the special sign of circumcision:

**Gen. 17:13-14** “Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

5. The covenant was both gracious in principle and unconditional as it did not depend upon human faithfulness but upon the faithfulness of God.
6. Only partially fulfilled in Abraham’s lifetime, the blessings and promises of the Abrahamic covenant continue in their fulfillment to the end of human history.
7. Some of the immediate blessings of the covenant for any particular generation were conditioned on obedience, but the covenant itself was declared to be an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron. 16:16-17; Ps. 105:10).

**Genesis 17:7** “I will establish my covenant AS AN EVERLASTING COVENANT between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.”

**Genesis 17:13** “Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be AN EVERLASTING COVENANT.”

**Genesis 17:19** “Then God said, ‘Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as AN EVERLASTING COVENANT for his descendants after him.’”

**1 Chronicles 16:16-17** "...the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as AN EVERLASTING COVENANT..."

**Psalms 105:10** "He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as AN EVERLASTING COVENANT..."

8. The covenant with Abraham was directed primarily to Abraham and his descendants as far as dispensational responsibility is concerned. The world as a whole continued under human government and conscience as its primary responsibility.
9. Under the Abrahamic covenant, however, there was a constant pattern of failure which was manifested in
  - a. The delay in going to the Promised Land:

**Genesis 11:31** "Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, THEY SETTLED THERE."

- b. In Abraham becoming the father of Ishmael through Sarah's maidservant (Gen. 16:1-16).
  - c. When Abraham went down into Egypt and claimed Sarah was his sister (Gen. 12:10—13:1).
10. It is evident, however, that Abraham grew in faith and grace and ultimately was willing even to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience to God (Gen. 22).

**Genesis 22:11-12** "But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son.'"

11. Following Abraham, Isaac failed, living as close to Egypt as he could without violating God's command (Gen. 26:6-16).
12. Jacob likewise failed, in not believing the promise made to his mother at his birth (Gen. 25:23; 28:13-15, 20); he was guilty of lying, deceit, and bargaining (Gen. 27:1-29) and eventually moved out of the land to Egypt to avoid the famine (Gen. 46:1-4).
13. In Egypt, Israel also failed God
  - a. In their complaining and lack of faith (Exod. 2:23; 4:1-10; 5:21; 14:10-12; 15:24),

**Exodus 14:10-12** "As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'"

**Exodus 15:24** "So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, 'What are we to drink?'"

b. In their desire to go back to Egypt:

**Exodus 14:11-12** *"They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'"*

c. And in their constant murmuring:

**Exodus 15:24** *"So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, 'What are we to drink?'"*

**Exodus 16:2** *"In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron."*

**Numbers 14:2** *"All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness!'"*

**Numbers 16:11** *"It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?"*

**Numbers 16:41** *"The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 'You have killed the LORD's people,' they said."*

14. Their failure is evident both at the time of the giving of the law and subsequently in their failure to trust the promises of God at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 14) when the 12 spies came back from the promised land and only Caleb and Joshua encouraged the people to take the land. The other 10 convinced the people to rebel against God, because of their lack of faith that He would help them.
15. The failure under the period when the Abrahamic promise was especially their responsibility resulted in their temporary loss of the land, their bondage in Egypt, and their wilderness wanderings before reentering the land. Their failure set the stage for the bringing in of the Mosaic law.
16. In the dispensation of promise, there was much divine grace illustrated in God's constant care of His people, their deliverance from Egypt, and the institution of the Passover feast.
17. The dispensation of promise ends at the time of the giving of the law (Exod. 19) but ends only in the sense of being the principle or main test of responsibility.
18. The dispensation of promise continues to the end of history, and many of its promises are still in force as an object of faith and hope.
19. The promises to Abraham are the basis for the later dispensations of grace and of the kingdom.
20. To some extent the promises to Abraham and his descendants never end and are fulfilled in the eternal state.

21. The dispensation of promise established clearly
  - a. The principle of divine sovereignty,
  - b. Provided a channel of special divine revelation to the nation of Israel,
  - c. Continued provision of divine redemption and blessing,
  - d. Revealed the grace of God,
  - e. And promised a witness to the world.
  
22. Like the other dispensations, however, it ended in failure as far as bringing conformity to the will of God, and it laid the ground work for bringing in the law as a schoolmaster to bring believers to Christ.

**Galatians 3:24** *"So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith."*

### **The Dispensation of the Law**

1. The dispensation of the law begins in Exodus 19:3 and extends throughout the whole period up to the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, although the law ended in one sense at the cross.
2. Certain portions like the gospel of John and selected passages in the other gospels anticipated the present age of grace, however.
3. The Mosaic law was directed to Israel alone, and Gentiles ***were not judged by its standards***. The law contained a detailed system of works including three major divisions:
  - a. The 10 Commandments (the moral law of God, Exod. 20:1-26);
  - b. The Judgments (the social and civil laws of Israel, Exod. 21:1—24:11);
  - c. The Ordinances (the religious laws of Israel, Exod. 24:12—31:18).
4. The sacrificial and priestly system which was included was both gracious and legal.
5. Government in this dispensation was a "theocracy", a government by God through His prophets, priests, and (later) kings.
6. The Mosaic covenant was also a temporary covenant, in force only until Christ should come.

**Galatians 3:24-25** *"So the law was our guardian UNTIL CHRIST CAME that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."*

7. The nature of the dispensation was "conditional", that is, blessing was conditioned on "obedience".

8. For the first time in history, Scripture revealed a complete and detailed religious system under the law, provided a ground for cleansing and forgiveness, worship, and prayer, and offered a future hope for sinful mankind.
9. Under the law there was continual failure. This is especially evident in the period of judges, but continued after the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom of Israel into two kingdoms.
10. There were periods when the law was completely forgotten and ignored, and idolatry reigned supreme.
11. The New Testament continues the record of failure, culminating in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, who in His life perfectly kept the law.
12. Many judgments were inflicted during the dispensation of the law as described in Deut 28:1—30:20.
13. The major judgments on God's people were the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities from which they returned in due time.
14. The judgments on Israel also came after the close of the dispensation and included the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the worldwide dispersion of Israel.
15. Another time of "Jacob's trouble", the great tribulation, is still ahead (Jeremiah 30:1-11; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:22):

**Jeremiah 30:5-7** *"This is what the LORD says: 'Cries of fear are heard—terror, not peace. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it.'"*

**Daniel 12:1** *"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered."*

**Matthew 24:22** *"If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened."*

16. Under the law, however, divine grace was also administered in that a sacrificial system was provided as a way of restoration for sinning Israel, and the longsuffering
17. God is manifested in the provision of prophets, judges, and kings, and in the preservation of the nation of Israel.
18. At various times, genuine repentance of Israel was accepted by God, and throughout this period the Old Testament was written.
19. The crowning blessing was the coming of Christ as the Messiah of Israel, whom the nation as a whole rejected.

20. In one sense the dispensation of the law ended at the cross:

**Romans 10:4** “Christ is THE CULMINATION OF THE LAW so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”

**2 Corinthians 3:11-14** “And if what was transitory (i.e. “the age of the Law”) came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.”

**Galatians 3:19** “Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come...”

**Galatians 3:25** “Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.”

21. But in another sense it was not concluded until the day of Pentecost, when the dispensation of grace began. Although the law ended as a specific rule of life, it continues to be a revelation of the righteousness of God and can be studied with profit by Christians in determining the holy character of God.
22. The moral principles underlying the law continue, since God does not change; but believers today are not obligated to keep the details of the law, as the dispensation has changed and the rule of life given Israel is not the rule of life for the church.
23. Although many applications of the law may be made, a strict interpretation relates the Mosaic law to Israel only.
24. The purpose of the law was to provide a righteous rule of life and to bring sin into condemnation. Israel’s experience under the law demonstrated that moral, civic, and religious law cannot save or sanctify.
25. The law was never intended to provide for man’s salvation, while in force or later, and by its nature was weak in that:
  - a. It could not justify:

**Romans 3:20** “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

**Galatians 2:16** “...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”



- b. It could not sanctify or perfect:

**Hebrews 7:18-19** *"The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God."*

- c. It was limited in its force and duration:

**Galatians 3:19** *"Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator."*

- d. It could not regenerate:

**Galatians 3:21-22** *"Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe."*

- e. It could only bring sin out into the open (Rom. 7:7-9; 8:3; 1 Cor. 15:56).

**Romans 7:7-9** *"What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died."*

**Romans 8:3** *"For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in the flesh."*

**1 Corinthians 15:56** *"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law."*

26. The law made it possible for God to demonstrate that everyone was guilty and every mouth stopped (Rom. 3:19), and made the need of Christ evident (Rom. 7:7-25; Gal. 3:21-27).

### **Dispensation of Grace**

1. The dispensation of grace begins properly at Acts 2 and continues throughout the New Testament, culminating with the rapture of the church.
2. Some teachings concerning the dispensation of grace were introduced earlier, as in John 13—17. Scriptures involved in this dispensation extend from Acts 1 through Revelation 3.
3. The dispensation of grace was directed to the church alone, as the world as a whole continues under conscience and human government.

4. In it salvation is clearly revealed to be by faith alone, which was always true, but in this age of grace is now more evident:

**Romans 1:16** *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."*

**Romans 3:22-24** *"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

**Romans 4:16** *"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."*

5. The high standards of grace elevate this dispensation above all previous rules of life:

**John 13:34-35** *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

**Romans 12:1-2** *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

**Philippians 2:5** *"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus..."*

**Colossians 3:1** *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."*

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** *"May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

6. Under grace, however, failure also was evident as grace produced neither worldwide acceptance of Christ nor a triumphant church.
7. Scripture in fact predicted that there would be apostasy within the professing church (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Pet. 2 – 3; Jude).
8. Although God is fulfilling His purpose in calling out a people to His name from Jew and Gentile, the professing but unsaved portion of the church left behind at the Rapture will be judged in the period between the Rapture and Christ's coming to set up His kingdom (Matt. 24:1-26; Rev. 6-19).

9. The true church will be judged in heaven at the judgment seat of Christ:

**2 Corinthians 5:10-11** *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.”*

10. In this present age, divine grace is especially evident in

a. The coming of Christ, in the salvation of the believer

**John 1:17** *“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*

b. Our standing before God (Rom. 3:24; 5:1-2,15-21; Gal. 1:1—2:21; Eph. 2:4-10),

**Romans 3:24** *“...and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*

**Romans 5:1-2** *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”*

c. The nature of grace as a rule of life (Gal. 3:1-5:26).

11. The dispensation of grace ends with the rapture of the church, which will be followed by judgment on the false church:

**Revelation 17:16** *“The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute (i.e. “the false church”). They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”*

12. The age of grace is a different dispensation in that it concerns the church comprising Jewish and Gentile believers.

13. By contrast, the law of Israel was for Israel only, human government was for the entire world, and conscience extends to all people.

14. In the present dispensation, the Mosaic law is completely canceled as to immediate application, but continues to testify to the holiness of God and provides many spiritual lessons by application.

15. Although all dispensations contain a gracious element, the dispensation of grace is the supreme manifestation both in the fullness of salvation received and in the rule of life.

## Dispensation of the Kingdom

1. The dispensation of the kingdom begins with the second coming of Christ (Matt. 24; Rev. 19) and is preceded by a period of time including the Tribulation, which to some extent is a transitional period.
2. Scriptures which apply are all passages on the future kingdom, whether in the Old or New Testament (major Scriptures being Ps. 72; Isa. 2:1-5; 9:6-7; 11; Jer. 33:14-17; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:9-14,18,27; Hos. 3:4-5; Zech. 14:9; Luke 1:31-33; Rev. 19—20).

**Isaiah 2:1-5** *"This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD."*

**Isaiah 9:6-7** *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."*

**Daniel 2:44-45** *"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."*

**Zechariah 14:9** *"The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and His name the only name."*

**Luke 1:31-33** *"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; His kingdom will never end."*

3. In the kingdom, the human responsibility will be to obey the king who will rule with a rod of iron:

**Isaiah 11:3-5** *"...and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist."*

**Revelation 19:15** *"Coming out of His mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty."*

4. The kingdom will be theocratic, that is, a rule of God, and there will be a renewed sacrificial-system and priesthood (Isa. 66:21-23; Ezek. 40 – 48).

**Isaiah 66:21** “*‘And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites,’ says the Lord...*”

5. An unusual feature of this period is that Satan will be bound and demons rendered inactive:

**Revelation 20:1-3** “*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.*”

**Revelation 20:7** “*When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison...*”

6. The kingdom, however, will also be a period of failure (Isa. 65:20; Zech. 14:16-19), and there will be rebellion at its close (Rev. 20:7-9).

**Isaiah 65:20** “*Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.*”

**Zechariah 14:16-19** “*Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles.*”

7. The divine judgment which follows includes destruction of the rebels by fire (Rev. 20:9) and destruction of the old earth and heaven by fire (2 Pet. 3:7, 10-12).

**Revelation 20:9** “*They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.*”

**2 Peter 3:7** “*By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*”

**2 Peter 3:10-12** “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”*

8. In the millennial kingdom, divine grace is also revealed in fulfillment of the new covenant:

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** “*The days are coming,*’ declares the LORD, *‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,’* declares the LORD. *‘This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’* declares the LORD. *‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’* declares the LORD. *‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’”*

- a. In salvation (Isaiah 12).
- b. In physical and temporal prosperity (Isaiah 35).
- c. In abundance of revelation:

**Jeremiah 31:33-34** “*This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,*’ declares the LORD. *‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’* declares the LORD. *“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

- d. In forgiveness of sin:

**Jeremiah 31:34** “*No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’* declares the LORD. *‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’”*

- e. In the re-gathering of Israel back to the promised land (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 30:1-11; Ezekiel 39:25-29):

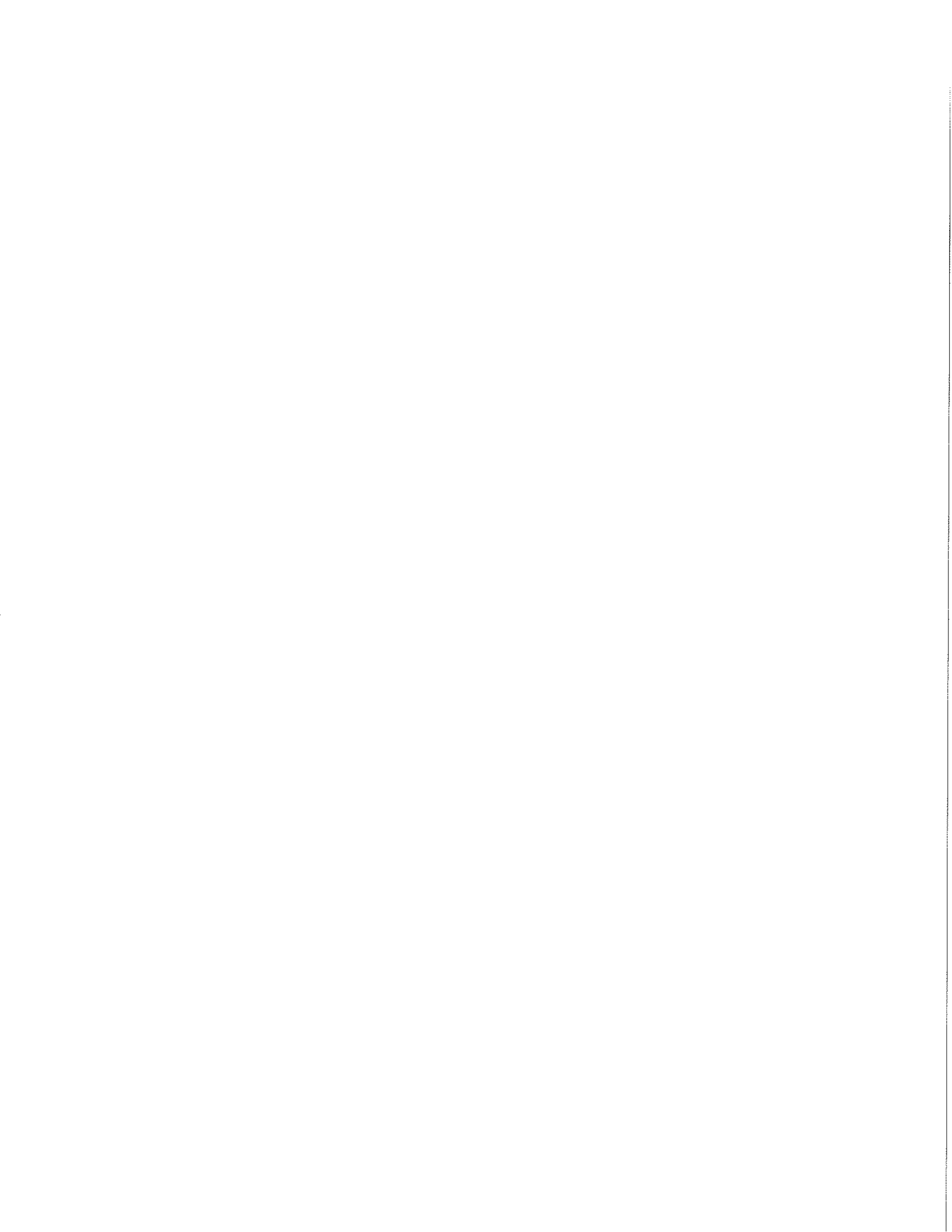
**Isaiah 11:11-12** “*In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.”*

**Ezekiel 39:25-29** “*Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD.”*

9. The millennial kingdom ends with the destruction of the earth and heaven by fire and is followed by the eternal state (Revelation 21 – 22).
10. The dispensation of the kingdom differs from all preceding dispensations in that it is the final form of moral testing.
11. The advantages of the dispensation include:
  - a. A perfect government,
  - b. The immediate glorious presence of Christ,
  - c. Universal knowledge of God and the terms of salvation,
  - d. Satan rendered inactive. In many respects the dispensation of the kingdom is climactic and brings to consummation God's dealings with man.

### **Summary of the Dispensations**

1. In the dispensations God has demonstrated every possible means of dealing with man.
2. In every dispensation man "fails" and only God's "grace" is sufficient.
3. In the dispensations is fulfilled God's purpose to manifest His glory, both in the natural world and in human history.
4. Throughout eternity no one can raise a question as to whether God could have given man another chance to attain salvation or holiness by his own ability.
5. A knowledge of the dispensations is, accordingly, the key to understanding God's purpose in history and the unfolding of the Scripture which records God's dealings with man and His divine revelation concerning Himself.





**Loris First Baptist Church**  
***“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”***

**Doctrine # 20: “The Dispensations” (part I)**

1. Read Pages 1-12 from the Doctrine#20 Study Guide by next Wednesday.
2. Answer the following Questions about “The Dispensations” as you read:

**a. Some Important Facts About The Dispensations:**

- 1) True or False. Scriptural revelation seems to fall into well-defined periods called “dispensations”.  
(page 1, top)
  
- 2) True or False. Recognizing the clearly separated divisions in Scripture called “dispensations” constitute one of the most important factors in true interpretation of the Scriptures.  
(page 1, top)

**b. The Meaning of Dispensations**

- 1) What is the definition of a “dispensation”? (page 1, middle)
  
- 2) The first clear understanding of the dispensations by a Bible reader, and God’s revealed purposes in them, results often in the beginning of “what”? (page 2, top)
  
- 3) True or False. God is “never changing”; therefore, His relationship to “man” has remained the same in every age throughout history. (page 2, top-middle)
  
- 4) God’s purpose in the ages, and the result of the testing of mankind in every case, is an unquestionable demonstration of “what”? (page 2, middle)

- 5) How does each “dispensation age” start? How does each “dispensation age” end? (page 2, middle)
  
- 6) What are the only portions of the Scriptures which are to be given a “personal” and/or “primary” application by a student of the Bible? (page 2, bottom)
  
- 7) True or False. “Secondary applications” of portions of Scripture is based on the fact that, while there are lessons that can be drawn from every portion of the Bible, it does NOT follow that the Christian is appointed by God to conform to those governing principles which were the will of God for people of “other” dispensations. (page 2, bottom)
  
- 8) In considering the whole testimony of the Bible, it is almost as important for the believer who would do the will of God to recognize that which does “NOT” concern him as it is for him to recognize “what”? (page 3, top)
  
- 9) Apart from the knowledge of dispensational truth, the believer in Christ will NOT be “what”? (page 3, top-middle)
  
- 10) What does the Greek word “aion” really mean? How often is it defined by the English word “world” in the Bible? (page 3, middle)
  
- 11) How many dispensations are commonly recognized in Scripture and what are their names? (page 4, top)
  
- 12) True or False. It is possible to interpret the Bible in its “normal”, “literal” sense without realizing that there are different ages and different dispensations. (page 4; top-middle)

- 13) All expositors of the Bible will need to recognize that later revelation to some extent “supersedes” earlier revelation with a resulting change in “what”? (page 4, middle)
  
- 14) What was done in the “dispensation of law”, revealed in Numbers 15:32-36, that believers should not be doing in this “dispensation of grace”?
  
- 15) What are the three most important dispensations revealed in Scripture? (page 4, bottom)

**c. Dispensation of Innocence: Age of Liberty**

- 1) The dispensation of “Innocence” began with “what”? (page 4, bottom)
  
- 2) The dispensation of “Innocence” ended with “what”? (page 5, top; see also Genesis 3:6)
  
- 3) What was the “one” prohibition given to man during the “dispensation of Innocence”? (page 5, middle)
  
- 4) What were some of the “results” of man’s disobedience during the “dispensation of Innocence”? (page 5, middle)
  
- 5) In the dispensation of Innocence, what are some things that God reveals in the Bible? (page 5, bottom)

**d. Dispensation of Conscience: Age of Human Determination**

- 1) What began the dispensation of “Conscience”? (page 6, top; see Genesis 3:7)
  
- 2) Although no detailed code of morals was required of man during the dispensation of “Conscience”, man was required to live “how”? (page 6, top-middle)
  
- 3) True or False. One major thing that occurred during the dispensation of “Conscience” is that God placed a curse of both man and woman which carries over even until this day.  
(page 6, middle; see Genesis 3:16-19)
  
- 4) Why did man continue to fail during the dispensation of “Conscience”? (page 6, middle; Rom 2:15)
  
- 5) As man’s sinful heart led him to become more and more wicked, how was judgment on mankind “in general” administered by God during the “Conscience” dispensation? (page 7, middle; see Genesis 5)
  
- 6) True or False. Because all men were so “wicked”, there was no revelation of “divine grace” manifested during the dispensation of “Conscience”.  
(page 7, bottom; Genesis 5:24, 6:8-10, Heb 11:7)
  
- 7) What in Scripture “ended” the dispensation of “Conscience”? (page 7, bottom)
  

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- 8) What was the purpose of God in revealing the dispensation of “Conscience” to the Bible reader?  
(page 8, top)

**e. Dispensation of Human Government: Covenant with Noah**

- 1) What block of Scripture covers the “Dispensation of Human Government”? (page 8, top)
  
- 2) True or False. One of the commands of God’s covenant with Noah was for mankind to “increase” and “spread out” over the entire earth. (page 8, middle; Genesis 9:1)
  
- 3) What new “institution” was established as a part of God’s covenant with Noah and what major “right” was this institution given? (page 9, top; Genesis 9:5-6; see also Romans 13:1-6)
  
- 4) What did man do during the dispensation of “Human Government” that ultimately brought God’s divine judgment on mankind and also brought an end to this “age”?  
(page 9, middle-bottom; Genesis 11:1-9)
  
- 5) True or False. Both “Conscience” and “Human Government” as a guide for mankind “ended” when their dispensations were ended by God. (page 10, top)
  
- 6) Who are the only ones who come under the “Dispensation of Promise”? (page 10, top)

**f. Dispensation of Promise: Covenant with Abraham**

- 1) What is the block of Scripture that is revealed as the “Dispensation of Promise”? (page 10, top)
  
- 2) During the dispensation of “Promise”, what was the human responsibility in God’s covenant with Abraham? (page 10, middle)

- 3) What are some of the promises God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-2?
  
- 4) What are some other promises God made to Abraham in Genesis 17:6?
  
- 5) Who is the “Abraham’s seed” that God promised would be a great nation and the channel of the fulfillment of God’s promise? (page 10, bottom)
  
- 6) True or False. When God was making a covenant with Abraham during the Dispensation of Promise, He only intended it to apply to the nation of Israel and ultimately be a blessing to only the Jews. (page 11, middle; Genesis 12:3)
  
- 7) The Abrahamic Covenant is one of the most important covenants of the Bible and God confirmed it with Abraham and his descendants with what “physical” sign? (page 11, middle; Genesis 17:13-14)
  
- 8) In reference to Abraham, who did God promise to “curse” and who did God promise to “bless”? (page 11, middle; Genesis 12:3)
  
- 9) True or False. The Abrahamic Covenant was based “solely” on man’s obedience and so the covenant “as a whole” was only good as long as Abraham and his descendants (i.e. Israel) obeyed God. (page 11, bottom; see also Genesis 17:7, 13, 19)
  
- 10) True or False. The reason God kept His covenant promise with Abraham was because he was a man who always obeyed the Lord. (page 12, top; Genesis 16:1-16; Genesis 12:10-13:1)