

Chapter 6



Dispensationalism

“The foundation for all prophecy, Daniel 9:24-27, is a self-contained forecast. It is not necessary to look to Genesis 29:20, 27 for direction. This is the story of Jacob, who worked for his uncle Laban seven years, though ending up married to Rachel’s older sister Leah. Jacob worked seven additional years for Rachel’s hand in marriage (fulfilling her week). It must be understood the key to comprehending the word, ‘week,’ in Daniel’s Seventy Weeks, lay within the four-verse context of Daniel. In Daniel 9:26 is the story of Israel’s last jubile celebration under the law. This is determined by subtracting 62 weeks from the previous 69 weeks. The product of this formula, 7 weeks of years, or 49 years,¹ is produced. If this were not enough, Daniel 9:27 tells us the length of Jesus’ ministry. It says he was crucified in the middle (“midst”) of the week, or 7 years, thereby making Jesus’ earthly ministry 3.5 years long. When God’s ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ was made, all future sacrifices and oblations ceased.² Jesus’ final act as sin bearer for mankind made future offerings desolate, or empty and ineffectual. You guessed it, the remaining 3.5 years is found in the last book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”
--The Author

¹ **Leviticus 25:8**--And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times 7 years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee **forty and nine years**.

² **Hebrews 10:1-4**--For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. 2. For then would they not have **ceased** to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. 3. But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The Day of the LORD

Simply put, a dispensation is *an economy, or period of time, in which God has dealt with men in specific ways.* This treatment by God toward men has been commensurate with the amount of truth God has revealed to men, and which ultimately involves a revealing of God's redemptive plan through his son, Jesus Christ.

Let it be understood that the amount of truth does not refer to levels or degrees of truth. Truth is truth no matter how you slice it. What the phrase 'amount of truth' means is a progressive unfolding of God's plan. For us today it means the utilization of God's word solely, without the office of prophet, priest, or apostle. With the completion of God's word and the indwelling Holy Spirit, it means illumination of God's mysteries is possible.

One of the more important verses emphasizing a differentiation in God's economy can be found in John 1:17. This verse compares and contrasts the works of the law and the grace of God. In John 1:17 the beloved disciple stated, "For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." This period mentioned in John 1:17 is the dispensation for which all previous dispensations had their fulfillment.

No longer would man appease God by doing (Judaism, alone), but only by God's grace through faith in Christ's finished sacrifice. Through Christ's sacrifice and Holy Spirit baptism man's position before God would be eternally secure.

Revealed in the law was a picture of God and his expectations for men. This probationary period involved God's requirements of men and God's standards he demanded men have toward one another.

A response by man from "Thus saith the Lord" was always met with a blessing or a curse—an outcome revealed

by God's determined counsel. This dynamic between God and men is what is called the treatment, the expected outcome, or how God has dealt with man.

This relationship God established with men was to be manifested in one's faith through works. Faith in the promised Redeemer, Jesus Christ, was to be the motive. Works were the tangible evidence of the faith that the Spirit produced through the godly actions exhibited externally.

It is interesting to note the word faith is used only twice in the Old Testament. First, in Deuteronomy 32:20³ where God reveals his people have no faith in him. Second, in Habakkuk 2:4⁴ where God inspires the writer of the Book of Hebrews 10:38⁵ to echo this same Old Testament exhortation, "the just shall live by faith."

To those who singularly live by God's commandments, his Law also condemns them. To those who attempt to justify themselves by the keeping of the law it is a two-edged sword that also judges their motives.

In the New Testament, more so than in the Old Testament, God's grace through faith would be imparted to men through the Holy Spirit, not by the efforts of the flesh. God's grace through faith would be the measure of one's standing before God—God would save men. Man cannot redeem himself!

The specific ways God related to men involved His communication through:

- Tongues (an audible voice that was capable of translation and linguistically discernable)
- Dreams
- Visions or a trance
- God's Prophets
- God's Priests
- The King anointed by a godly priest

³ **Deuteronomy 32:20**—And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith.

⁴ **Habakkuk 2:4**—Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

⁵ **Hebrews 10:38**—Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

The Day of the LORD

- Animals—Balaam's ass
- The Bible
- His Creation
- Direct audible communication
- And, yes, even through the unredeemed

Even though Old Testament saints were looking forward to Jesus' incarnation, there was the additional element God required besides an animal sacrifice, or the shedding of blood. How was man to come into a right relationship with God? It was only through the blood of Jesus Christ.⁶ It was belief or faith in Jesus' death for the sinner that freed man's conscience and made it possible for sinful creation to be forgiven by a perfect, holy God.⁷

When all is said and done, man has never been without God's triad of revelatory signatures—God's word, God's creation, and God's son, Jesus Christ. When man stands before God, as all men must do, man will be without excuse.

⁶ **Heb. 9:12-14**—Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. **13.** For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: **14.** How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb. 10:1-4—For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. **2.** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. **3.** But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. **4.** For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

⁷ **Deuteronomy 32:20**—And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith.

Habakkuk 2:4—Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

The biblical maxim which states, 'to whom much is given, much is also required' (Matthew 11:20-24),⁸ is a truth that falls heavy on the shoulders of this generation. It has also born a heavy load on all previous generations since the completion of the New Testament.

With the advent of Johannes Gutenberg's (c. 1398-1468) German printing press and his completed work of the first printed Bible (Gutenberg Bible, 1456) the burden upon men to respond to Christ has been increasingly magnified.

I believe, as well as some Bible teachers and students, that there is a significant link between Gods' six-literal-day creation account in Genesis and the various dispensations, or periods of time. The emphasis will not be specifically on what period of time these dispensations cover as much as stressing the fact they have occurred.

What follows this chapter is an arbitrary dispensational categorization of the various biblical time epochs (*a period of time in history marked by notable events*) that have been the core of every dispensational view.

John Nelson Darby is the one typically credited with the formulation and systemization of the dispensational perspective⁹ of Bible history. This concept is evident within the pages of scripture and not a new methodology in the formulation of Bible history.

Although evident to any serious student of the Bible, dispensationalism is not, as some contemporary theologi-

⁸ **Matthew 11:20, 21, 22, 23, 24**—Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: **21.** Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **22.** But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. **23.** And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. **24.** But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

⁹ Elwell, Walter A. *Elwell's Evangelical Dictionary of the Bible*, Copyright © 1984, Baker Publishing Group, 6030 East Fulton Road, Ada, MI 49301

ans assert, a new doctrine or perspective of scripture. Its underlying framework is evident in Old and New Testament writings. Although under heavy attack by many contemporary believers, a dispensational perspective guard's one against the onslaught of counterfeit miracles, false signs and lying wonders.

The evidence of miracles, signs and wonders, by the Holy Spirit's moving among God's apostolic leaders was to demonstrate God's power and authenticate the message of Christ's apostles. Today Lucifer is using these same methods to deceive countless Christians to gravitate towards accentuating the faith of experience rather than faith in Christ and the Bible.

In Acts 17:30¹⁰ Paul, in the matter of dispensationalism, and its position towards progressive revelation, proclaimed to the heathen Greeks on Mars Hill, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

In Paul's passage to Hebrew believers, in Hebrews 1:1, 2,¹¹ several key elements are connoted (inferred, implied), or denoted (literal, obvious). Upon closer examination what becomes evident is:

1. God spoke in times past differently, namely, through his prophets
2. The Old Testament was always pointing toward Jesus Christ—through types, pictures, feasts, celebrations and the like
3. The New Testament did not abolish God's requirement of a perfect sacrifice. Jesus said he came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it
4. God would no longer speak through his prophets and apostles once the canon of scripture was complete, but through his Son, Jesus Christ, the Word
5. Upon completion of the New Testament, apostolic authority shifted from human agents and the spo-

¹⁰ **Acts 17:30**—And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

¹¹ **Hebrews 1:1, 2**—God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **2.** Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

ken word, to the immutable, inspired word of God. No longer would there be a looking to the apostles for guidance, nor the authenticating signs, miracles, or wonders to give weight to the power of God's truth.

6. After the canonization of scripture, there was a marked absence of apostolic authority, and apostolic power (signs, wonders, and miracles). This was also true of prophetic utterances (predicting, or foretelling the future). According to Mark 16: 17, 18¹² and I Corinthians 12:9¹³ there was also the absence of certain spiritual gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, apostolic miracle healing, laying on of hands to heal the sick, physical immunity from the bite of venomous serpents, and the physical immunity from the consumption of deadly beverages).

Even though these five points, from Hebrews 1:1- 2 are noteworthy, the one that is most salient (most noticeable or important) to our discussion is the item that deals with how God speaks to us today.

The Bible clearly indicates that it is through Jesus, namely his Spirit and the written Word, that we gain a greater degree of faith. A believer cannot understand and read the Bible without the Holy Spirit.

Finally, let us again restate the spiritual truth that was mentioned above. The biblical dispensation that was to outshine all other dispensations was the historical niche in which the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ occurred.

¹² **Mark 16:17, 18**—And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; **18.** They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

¹³ **1 Corinthians 12:9**—To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit . . .