

# COVENANT & DISPENSATIONALISM

## EXPLAINED

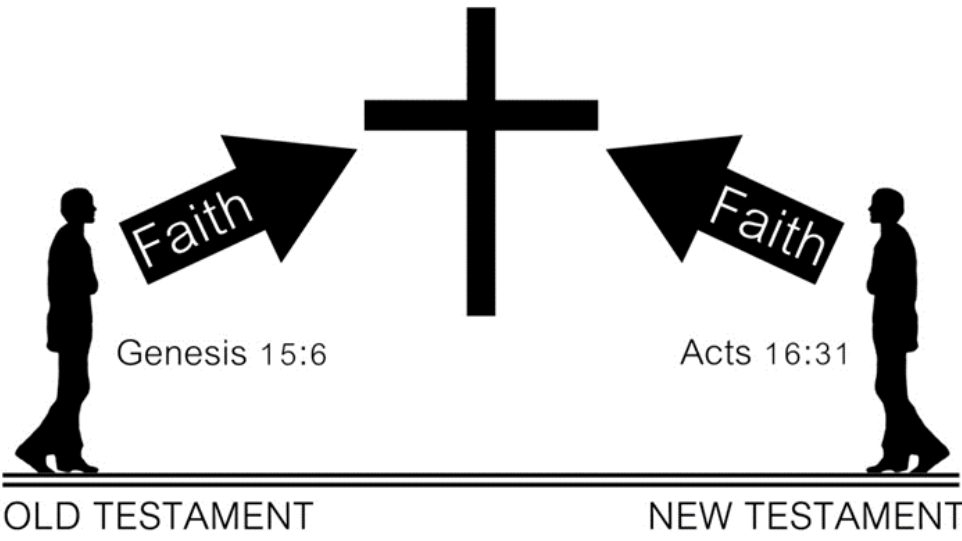
By Bruce Woolard Lesson 2



### DISPENSATIONS

Some have called Dispensationalism a modern fad and because of this false label some believers have become prejudiced and have closed their minds to the great truths of the Word of God in relation to the dispensations. Dispensationalism is not a fad but is definitely a FACT of Scripture. The Old English Bible uses the word “dispensation” 1 Cor. 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2 and Col. 1:25). This word is translated from the Greek word OIKONOMIA. Our English word “economy” is derived from two parts of this word – OIKOS (house) and NOMOS (Law). It literally means, “the law of a household” or the policies of the family’s budget.

We are reminded in 2 Timothy 2:15 to “study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word.” In very simple terms, rightly divided means to OBSERVE distinctions and differences in Scripture. In our everyday life we are exposed to this principle of dispensing different items. If one goes shopping one can speak in terms of general shopping, or shopping for specific products. When purchasing clothing, you give distinction to what type of clothing you will be buying, etc. This principle applies in Scripture. Does the passage under consideration refer to Israel as God’s elect out of all the nations or does the text refer to the Body of Christ as God’s elect out of all the world, or does the narrative refer to the Gentiles as pagans, cut off from the blessings of God? If one applies the above method, you will realise that the whole Bible is written FOR us, but not all of it is written directly TO us or is about us.



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## **WE'VE BEEN ROBBED**

For decades the Church has been robbed of the great gems found in Scripture because wolves in sheep's clothing (Acts 20:28,29) have attacked and ridiculed the dispensational approach to rightly understanding the Word. The Bible has been taken away from the people and the clergymen have had a "field day" with their so-called "superior" knowledge of Scripture. This has robbed believers of their heritage. The time has come for us to take it back again and put the Word back into the hands of the people.

## **FACT OR FAD**

As previously stated, the dispensational approach to Scripture is a FACT of the Bible – it is not a fad, it is not some fancy method to make the Bible easier to understand. It was used and employed by the writers of Scripture themselves.

## **THE ROOTS OF DISPENSATIONALISM**

As one traces the roots of the Dispensational approach to Scriptures, one is encouraged to find that these principles were advocated throughout Christian history. Far too many people believe that Scofield, Larkin and Darby were the inventors of this method of teaching. This lie has been so often repeated that some astute scholars have closed their minds to the validity of dispensational theology. Closer scrutiny of the facts give well documented evidence to support the claims of dispensationalism. Most Christians accept that the Bible has an Old Testament and a New Testament. This division is an acknowledgement of two different testaments. The fact that we do not sacrifice animals as taught in the Old Testament but that we recognise Christ as the Lamb of God is further evidence of the difference between two periods of time.

## **CHURCH HISTORY**

As we trace our history as Christians, we discover that great evangelicals like Jonathan Edwards (1703) believed in the divisions of Scripture in God's dealings with mankind. This is to be found in his book entitled "History of Redemption".

Isaac Watts (1674), a great theologian and hymn writer identified the dispensations of the Scriptures and embraced their significance.

John Edwards (1639), a Cambridge graduate wrote two volumes of 800 pages giving the history of all the dispensations.

Pierre Poiret (1646), an influential French philosopher presented his systematic theology entitled "The Divine Economies." He strongly embraced the dispensational approach to Scripture.

Miles Coverdale, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, who was the first Englishman to translate the entire Bible into English was a dispensationalist and wrote the following words:

*It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows after.*

Alfricus Grammaticus (1020) spoke of divisions in Scripture between the Mosaic and Christian era.

We can go back to the first Century and discover people like Augustine, Clement and Theodoret who gave credit to the Dispensations of God in their writings. The great apostle Peter also acknowledges that God has said some things through the Apostle Paul that are difficult to understand (because they obviously fitted into a Gentile programme distinct from the programme to Israel) – 2 Peter 3:15,16.

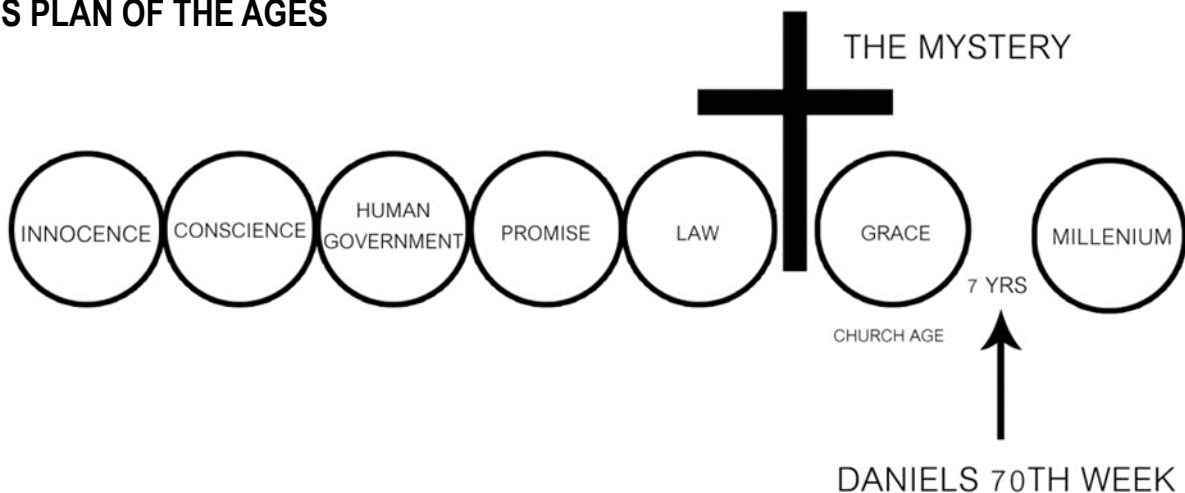
The writer of Hebrews also makes reference to God having spoken in different ways, in time past (Heb. 1:1,2), and Paul the Apostle, in his writings particularly Romans 16:25,26 refers to God keeping as a secret the programme of the Body of Christ as distinct from the programme for Israel.

Dr Lewis Chafer, Sir Robert Anderson (head of Scotland Yard) and Dr A Gaebelien were also great dispensationalists. These men are often quoted by modern day theologians as great experts of the Scriptures but then they go on to attack the dispensational approach which Chafer, Walvoord and Ryrie embrace, as reputable commentators.

### WAS JESUS CHRIST A DISPENSATIONALIST?

There is a dramatic example of rightly dividing the word in the earthly ministry of Christ found in Luke 4:16-21. Jesus took part in a synagogue service at Nazareth and He read publicly from Isaiah 61:1,2. After His reading, Jesus proclaimed “this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” He stopped reading in the middle of Isaiah’s sentence and did not continue to read the latter part of Isaiah 61:2b which states “the day of vengeance of our God”. Significantly, the latter part of this reading could only be fulfilled at a later time. The Lord Himself rightly divides this prophecy between His present and future ministry as Israel’s Messiah. May our Lord give us the wisdom by His grace to understand His Word rightly divided and may we revive dispensationalism in our society so that the clarity of the Word, as God intended, will be prevalent.

### GOD’S PLAN OF THE AGES



In every dispensation people are saved through faith in God’s provision. The expression of faith was exercised differently.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES	THE APOSTLE PAUL
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL 12 Tribes – 12 Men. 12 Thrones. <b>Matt. 19-28</b>	REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST One man both Hebrew and Roman-Reconciled <b>Eph. 2:16</b>
CALLED BY CHRIST ON EARTH <b>Luke 6:13</b>	CALLED BY CHRIST FROM HEAVEN <b>Acts 9:3-5</b>
KNEW ONLY CHRIST ON EARTH <b>Acts 1:9</b>	KNEW ONLY CHRIST FROM HEAVEN <b>1 Cor. 15:8</b>
SENT TO ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS <b>Matt. 10:5,6; Luke 24:47,48</b>	SENT TO ALL MEN EVERYWHERE <b>Rom 10:12; 11:32</b>
SENT TO PROCLAIM GOD'S PROPHESED PROGRAM Salvation of Gentiles through Israel's RISE <b>Acts 3:24-26</b>	SENT TO PROCLAIM GOD'S SECRET PURPOSE Salvation of Gentiles through Israel's FALL <b>Rom. 11:7-33</b>
AGREE TO CONFIRM THEIR MINISTRY TO ISRAEL AFTER THE RAISING UP OF PAUL <b>Gal. 2:1-9 &amp; Acts 11:19</b>	SUPERSEDES TWELVE AS APOSTLE OF GENTILES AS ISRAEL REJECTS KINGDOM <b>Gal. 2:1-9</b>

COVENANTS	DISPENSATIONS
Only those God chooses are saved	Whosoever may be saved
Israel is replaced by the church.	God will still save Israel –Romans 11:25 Israel and Church different
The Kingdom of God on earth is the church.	The Kingdom of God on earth is futuristic.
No Rapture	Rapture of Believers
No literal 1000 years.	1000 year reign.
Credo-baptism—Pardo-baptism	Spirit baptism (One baptism <b>Eph.4:5</b> ).
Israel is not promised Holy Land.	Israel is promised her own land.
Covenant doctrine is dangerous because it teaches God chooses to condemn some to hell and others to heaven. <b>Romans 9:13-24</b> .	
This passage deals with God's programmes and is vocational not salvational. See <b>2 Peter 3:9</b> —Not God's will that anyone should perish.	