



# Cherrequine Bible Doctrine Ministries

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## THE 6 DISPENSATIONS

Human history may be classified into six dispensations. These six can be grouped into three categories of two dispensations each.<sup>1</sup>

The Theocentric (or the pre-Incarnation era) dispensations are the Age of the Gentiles and the Age of Israel, which occurred "long ago" before God had spoken to us in His Son [Hebrews 1:1-2].

The Christocentric dispensations begin with the first advent of Christ (also called the dispensation of the Hypostatic Union) and continue with the Church Age, which is the present dispensation. The Church carries out to completion the precedent established in our Lord's first advent.

The Eschatological dispensations are the Biblical prophecies and promises for the end of history compose of the Tribulation period and the Millennium kingdom.

There are six major dispensations because God's unified, integrated, unchanging plan for human history calls for many expressions of His grace. In every dispensation God has a particular plan for the believer's post-salvation way of life. God graciously provides the means for executing that plan, and the Bible reveals these various provisions.

Salvation however, is appropriated in only one way throughout the human history, which is by grace through faith [Genesis 15:6, Acts 16:31, Romans 3:22, 30, Ephesians 2:8-9]. In every dispensation, there is only ONE Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, as He is revealed in that dispensation [John 14:6]. Faith in Christ secures an eternal relationship with God.

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved " [Acts 4:12]. God remains the same. The way of salvation remains unchanged. But against a background of immutability and continuity, the doctrine of the mystery reveals the strategic change that makes this new dispensation unique.

Church Age believers are a new spiritual species [2 Corinthians 5:17] with a totally new position in Christ [Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30] and a magnificent array of privileges, responsibilities, and opportunities never available to believers of earlier ages [Ephesians 1:3-14].

Divine administration becomes an important issue in distinguishing the dispensations from one another. At decisive junctures in His overall plan for mankind, God institutes changes in

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<sup>1</sup> See figure 1 –page 130

delegated authority, responsibility, procedure and available assets. These changes in the divine administration of human history involve first one group of people, then another, and another.

The Person and the essence of God are never subject to change –He is completely and perfectly immutable. The changes in the plan of God in relation with men are:

- o Delegated authority
- o Responsibility
- o Accountability
- o Procedure
- o Available assets and resources

In each dispensation, God issued different types of responsibility and authority. The authority issued to Adam is quite different from authority given to Moses or to Gideon. We must be very careful in identifying such delegated responsibilities.

God's dealing with His creation is different from person to person. The divine resources imputed to OT believers are different from those of the Church Age- even the categories of suffering, resources and financial blessing. The changes are because we are changing not because God is changeable.

## **DIVINE DISTINCTIONS**

The landscape of dispensations reveals the majestic character of God through the progression and variety of His grace. Each dispensation has a divine purpose, supported by the right divine provisions operating under the divine plan of grace.

The divine purpose for each segment of human history is unique to a particular dispensation because of its unique needs. The variation and changes in divine purpose is due to the changeability of men and not to the changeability of God.

Each dispensation is an expression of God's grace with special objective of glorifying Christ to the maximum. The changes in divine purpose and divine provisions for each era or dispensations explain the differences why the Christian way of life differs from the outpouring of God's grace to believers during other periods of history.

The Church Age believers should be eager to understand and use what God has designed specifically for him thus allowing the glory of God to be manifested in his life. God makes the distinctions of each segment of human history. These distinctions or divisions of times are very clear in the Bible.

Continuities and distinctions established by the sovereign God must receive our complete respect, for they reveal something about God. The unity of God's Word actually is embodied in this doctrine that presents the relationship between the Bibles's many parts.

The doctrine of dispensations provides the believers the telescopic and microscopic views of God's plan for the human race. It provides us the panoramic view of God's operations in the human history. It is a very systematized and organized order of events designed for the benefit of man. You remove the dispensations and nothing is left except chaos and disorder.

Several principles are related to these divine distinctions:

The divine distinctions are created by God and not human invention as claimed by some reversionistic theologians. The divine distinctions are designed to make the study of God's Word systematic and simply contrary to notion that its complicated, The divine distinctions are designed to guide the believers to live their Christian way of life in the world.

It is impossible for any believer to live up accordingly to divine protocol without recognizing these divine distinctions. As the believer learns to utilize what God has given to him, he became aware of divine policies and assets that are legitimate for other era or dispensations but do not directly govern the Christian way of life.

The believer with maximum Bible doctrine knows the answers to questions that seem to be contradictions to ignorant believers. The contradictions are in the mind of those without knowledge of the Bible doctrine. The doctrine of dispensations provides the biblical system of interpretation for clear understanding why certain divine provisions are currently non-operational, as well as why others are currently operational.

Each dispensation is God's administration, not human. It is God's firm and ample system of guidance for every period of human history. Knowledge of dispensations will prevent the believers from becoming disobedient to divine mandate, or in danger of becoming lawless because they do not observe the rules God set forth for another age.

Spiritual growth comes from obedience to God's instructions for the current or present dispensation and not obedience to following the instructions for the previous or future dispensations.