

# Dispensationalism — Overview

“Dr. Charles Hodge, a postmillennialist, outlined four dispensations. Loraine Boettner, a post-millennialist, sees only two dispensations. R.B. Kuiper, of Westminster, recognizes two dispensations. Floyd Hamilton, an amillennialist, speaks of at least three, and Albertus Pieters objects to more than three dispensations. Thus we see that it is not only the premillennialists who have recognized dispensations, but many others as well.”

—— W.W. Barndollar, *The Validity of Dispensationalism*, (Des Plaines, IL: Regular Baptist Press), 36.

“A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.”

—— Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 28.

“Dispensational Theology can be defined very simply as a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible’s philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by several dispensations of God’s rule.”

—— Dr. Renald Showers, *There Really is a Difference*, 27.

“Dispensationalism is a system of biblical interpretation that sees a distinction between God’s program for Israel and His dealings with the church.”

—— John MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 219.

“At least three dispensations (as commonly understood in dispensational teaching) are mentioned by Paul. In Ephesians 1:10 he writes of ‘an administration [dispensation, KJV] suitable to the fullness of the times,’ which is a future period here. In Ephesians 3:2, he designates the ‘stewardship [dispensation, KJV] of God’s grace,’ which was the emphasis of the content of his preaching, at that time. In Colossians 1:25-26 it is implied that another dispensation precedes the present one in which the mystery of Christ in the believer is revealed. It is important to notice that ... there can be no question that the Bible uses the word dispensation exactly the same way as the dispensationalist does.”

—— Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 27.

“When we talk about a dispensational theological system, we should understand this to mean the harmonization of biblical principles and events that are not isolated but seen as a collection of truths working together towards a single common goal that God has established for his glory. The system itself represents a tool that organizes these truths into a coherent systematic structural approach to the Scriptures, that can then be used to aid in better understanding God’s revealed revelation concerning his eschatological plans.”

—— Reid A. Ashbaucher, *Dispensational Theology: A Textbook on Eschatology in the Twenty-first Century*.

“Israel – As used in this work, the term Israel is viewed theologically as referring to all descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, also known as the Jews, the Jewish people, Israelites, Hebrews, etc. The term is not limited to the present political and national state in the Middle East, which is merely a part of the whole; nor is it limited to those who adhere to the religion of Judaism only.”

—— Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, (Ariel Ministries, 2016), 3.

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Ephesians 3:2 NASB

if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;

οἰκονομία

Transliteration: oikonomia

Pronunciation: oi-ko-no-mē'-ä

Part of Speech: feminine noun

Root Word (Etymology): From οἰκονόμος (G3623)

## Outline of Biblical Usage:

1. the management of a household or of household affairs
  2. specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property
  3. the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship
  4. administration, dispensation
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## 7 Dispensations (Each Dispensation Man Has Failed)

### ETERNITY

#### 1 — Dispensation of Innocency (Gen 1:26-3:24)

Dispensation of Innocence. Man was created innocent in a perfect environment, provided a test given by God, but was disobedient resulting in judgment, curse and expulsion from the garden (Gen. 1:26-3:6).

Ruling Factor: Unconfirmed Favorable Disposition

Favorably disposed to God...Unconfirmed because man has not chosen this disposition for himself

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#### 2 — Dispensation of Conscience (Gen 4:1-8:19)

Dispensation of Conscience. Man disobeyed God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:8). His disobedience resulted in sin and man's eventual death. Man's wickedness became so great, making it necessary for God to destroy all of humanity on earth, except for Noah and his family (Gen. 3:7-8:19).

Ruling Factor: Human Conscience, Restraint by the Holy Spirit

As seen in Romans 2 (HC) and Genesis 6:3 (HS)

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#### 3 — Dispensation of Human Government (Gen 8:20-11:32)

Dispensation of Human Government. God established the Noahic Covenant, wherein He inaugurated the judicial rule within the society of mankind in order to control the wickedness of man (Gen. 8:20-11:32).

Ruling Factor: Human Conscience, Restraint by the Holy Spirit, Human Government

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#### 4 — Dispensation of Promise (Gen 12-Exodus 18)

Dispensation of Promise. Begins with the Abrahamic Covenant made exclusively with the family of Abraham and nation of Israel (Gen. 12:1-Ex. 18:27).

Ruling Factor: Human Conscience, Restraint by the Holy Spirit, Human Government, Promise

Promises made to Abraham....

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#### 5 — Dispensation of Mosaic Law (Exodus 19-Matthew 27:56)

Dispensation of Law. Instituted at Mount Sinai setting forth the Moral, Religious, and Civil laws to govern Israel under the Mosaic Covenant, and the Law of Moses as a way of life but was abrogated at Christ's death and Resurrection (Ex. 19:1-Acts 1:26).

Ruling Factor: Human Conscience, Restraint by the Holy Spirit, Human Government, Promise, Mosaic Law

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#### 6 — Dispensation of Grace (Matthew 27:57-Rev 19:21)

Dispensation of Grace or Church Age. Begins after the Ascension of Christ on the Day of Pentecost with salvation of Jewish people and quickly spread throughout the Gentile world, and will be culminated with the Rapture of the church (Acts 2:1).

Ruling Factor: Human Conscience, Restraint of the Holy Spirit, Human Government, Promise, Grace

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#### 7 — Dispensation of the Millennium (Rev 20:1-6)

Dispensation of the Kingdom Age. Jesus Christ returns to earth at His Second Coming to setup the Millennial Kingdom on earth. It will include the conversion and restoration of Israel along with the ultimate fulfillment of the unconditional covenants made with the nation (Rev. 20:4).

Ruling Factor: Human Conscience, Human Government, Theocratic Rule

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### ETERNITY

Website Reference:

#### Six Essential Beliefs of Dispensationalism

1. Progressive Revelation from the New Testament does not interpret Old Testament passages in a way that cancels the original authorial intent of the Old Testament writers as determined by historical-grammatical hermeneutics.
2. Types exist, but national Israel is not a type that is superceded by the Church.
3. Israel and the church are distinct, thus the church cannot be identified as the new or true Israel.
4. There is both spiritual unity in salvation between Jews and Gentiles and a future role for Israel as a nation.
5. The nation Israel will be saved, restored with a unique identity, and function in a future millennial kingdom upon the earth.
6. There are multiple senses of "seed of Abraham"; thus, the church's identification as "seed of Abraham" does not cancel Gods promises to the believing Jewish "seed of Abraham".

—— Michael Vlach

"(1) belief that the Bible refers to multiple senses of terms like "Jew" and "seed of Abraham"; (2) an approach to hermeneutics that emphasizes that the Old Testament be taken on its own terms and not reinterpreted in light of the New Testament; (3) belief that Old Testament promises will be fulfilled with national Israel; (4) belief in a distinctive future for ethnic Israel; (5) belief that the church is a distinctive organism; and (6) a philosophy of history that emphasizes not just soteriology and spiritual issues but social, economic, and political issues as well."

—— John S. Feinberg, *Systems of Discontinuity, in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 67–85.