***The Dispensations

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-201***

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Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is alive and active, and sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow; and, able to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

2 Timothy 4:2-4: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and will turn aside to myths."

We direct your attention this morning to the Word of Truth in Colossians 1:25-29. Our subject is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 16.

**Dispensationalism**

The apostle Paul was chosen by God to receive a special revelation from Him, previously hidden from all mankind, and from all previous eras of believers. Colossians 1:25 says, "Of this church (that special revelation) I was made a minister (a servant) according to the stewardship (according to the dispensation) from God bestowed on me for your benefit." The revelation which Paul received is described here as "a stewardship." This word "stewardship" looks like this in Greek. It's the Greek word "oikonomia." "Oikonomia" is made up, actually, of two Greek words. This first part is made up of the word "oikos." "Oikos" means house. The next part of the word comes from the Greek word "nomos," it means "law." So, literally what this word means is "the law of the house." "Oikonomia" refers to the law of the House, or we might say "to the management of a household" ("to the arrangement of a household," or, to the conduct of a household") – keeping certain guidelines which have been set by the master, for the administration of that household.

Now, we have seen, and as we shall walk you through this morning, that in various times in human history, God has arranged His world to operate by certain guidelines; certain principles; and, certain ways. Then it comes to an end, and He rearranges the household, and He tells the steward, who's in charge at the time, to conduct His world now on a different basis. That's what dispensations are all about. The reason this is so important is that you cannot live your life in a previous dispensation. You cannot live your life and find a relationship with God, and a happiness, and a fruitfulness, if you're trying to live under rules that no longer exist. You have to operate within a certain time period of the principles that are pertinent at that time. So, what this connotes is rules which are enforced, and are the guidelines for the steward in governing life in a certain household.

Now, the apostle Paul has received a special revelation from God relative to life in one of these arrangements – one of these dispensations. Paul refer to the dispensation of the church as his special insight (his special revelation). Paul's message, relative to the divine plan for the administration of the church dispensation, was not his own invention. He didn't make this up. People who do not understand the doctrine of dispensations are very ignorant, and they have very useless lives.

One of our band people yesterday brought me a large, full-page advertisement from a religious publication, and the title was "Dispensationalism: A Wart on the Nose of the Bride." And then it proceeded to challenge dispensationalism with something like six or eight falsehoods. And he listed them: one; two; three; and, right down the line. Every one of them was not what dispensationalism teaches. For example, one of them said that dispensationalism teaches that Jews and gentiles are separated, whereas Scripture says, "The dividing wall has been removed, and now they are joined in one body." Well, I don't have to explain to you people that that's exactly what we have repeatedly said – that that's what dispensationalism teaches. In the past, that's right – the Jew was separated from the gentiles. If you wanted to come under the blessings of God, you had to quit being a gentile, and come over and be a Jew, you had to become a proselyte. You had to cross over. For example, like Ruth. Ruth, who was a Moabite. If she wanted to come under the blessings of God, she had to accept the God of Israel, and she had to stop being a gentile, and cross over and become a Jewess. Well, we all know that. But I point this out to you – that there's a great antagonism toward the fact that God rearranges His household, and has different guidelines for living in different eras of time. That's one of the great victories of Satan.

The sad thing about it was that this article had a website. So I thought, "Here you go." They invited people to bring up their site, and to call in for information, which will give them all these sermons that have been preached by whoever this preacher is (some Baptist preacher) on the falsehood of dispensationalism. And I thought: "How I thank God that gradually the Berean website is getting out there, and expanding, and people all over the world, once they get our code, can call us up." And there is a voice of truth out there. The ignorance on this important doctrine shows you that the devil is never asleep.

So, the apostle Paul said that to him was given a special responsibility. He didn't invent it. The dispensational doctrine is not something that's invented. One of the principles of this article was that a woman had come up with the idea of dispensationalism in the 18th century, and that's where it began.

Well, suppose that some woman did do that. Does that mean that it's not true? Suppose that some woman propagated (proposed) the doctrine of the dispensations. What do we do? We don't say, "She's wrong. We know that." No, we don't. We go back to the Bible. Let's see if what she is saying is true: "Well, yes, that is what the Bible teaches. That is true." Well, of course, in this case, it's a false accusation. We have the writings of the church fathers. And for the first 250 years from the time of the ascension of Jesus Christ until about 250 A.D., the dispensational doctrine was frequently referred to by the early church fathers. They all made a great distinction between the age of Israel and the age of the church. This was no secret. So, the truth of the matter is, it's what Scripture teaches. That's what we have constantly sought to focus your attention on.

**The Church Age**

So, Paul's message, about the dispensations, came from God, and therefore, he proclaimed the will of God for life in the particular era in which we live – the church age. Now, the reason it was given to Paul was because the other disciples didn't get this. This wasn't revealed to them. They only had a little bit of it. After that total rejection by Israel, Jesus gradually began giving little bits of information that something big was coming. He never told about in the Old Testament. It was a big secret then, but something big was about ready to break. And He would give them a little bit here, and a little bit there, and Jesus said, "I have much I want to tell you, but you can't bear it. Now, when the Holy Spirit comes, after I'm gone, the full truth of the new age of the church will be revealed to you. And this would come, we found later, through the apostle Paul.

Now, knowledge of the principles of life in the dispensation of the church is very vital to every Christian. It governs our spiritual maturity. If you do not understand how to function in the age of grace (the church), you will never grow up spiritually. You'll be a little shallow bumpkin all your life. You will never come to the great enjoyment of freedom in Christ. You'll use it for liberty. You'll use it for license. You'll use your liberty for license. The immature Christian always finds reasons not to do the will of God on the basis that he is free in Christ in the age of grace. The devil says, "Go to it, buddy." That's what I want you to do. I want to take your freedom in Christ, and refuse to do the will of God. Hot dog! Use your freedom to do what is sinful. Quench the Holy Spirit. Say 'No' to Him. Grieve the Holy Spirit. Engage in immorality. Walk by means of your reason and the society around you, and your sin nature – not by means of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God cycles doctrine up to your memory."

If you don't understand how living in fellowship with the Spirit of God (with God, your Heavenly Father) through maintaining the filling of the Holy Spirit (which no Jew ever understood, because he never could do that), you will never understand how to have freedom in a maximum way. And without freedom, God cannot bless you. If you cannot handle your freedom, you cannot be blessed.

The Jews, once they were released from their imprisonment in Egypt, they could never be anything but slaves in their minds. And God said, "For 40 years, I loathed them," as we read in the Scripture this morning, "I was nothing but disgusted with that Exodus generation. They never could enjoy their freedom, because they never could function under the principles of the Word of God that were being revealed to them.

So, this knowledge of how to live in the age of grace was very important. It also will determine your relationship to Satan's world system. This, of course, is always a concern. What Satan does is try to keep you from believing in Christ. The Scriptures say that he blinds us to the gospel. But if the Spirit of God comes through, and you are a chosen person, and you believe the gospel, then the devil comes and says, "I want you to live in the world. I want you to be part of the system. I want you to just have a wonderful time here. Follow Lot's example. Set up your life in Sodom and Gomorrah, and live it to the hilt."

Now, if you know the principles of the church age, you won't do that. You'll know how to beat that game. You'll know how to step aside from the world system. You’ll know how to move through the world and not be part of it. You also understand the power of God for your personal guidance in your daily life.

Last night, Mrs. Danish had Charles Stanley on, preaching. He is a great Baptist preacher, very knowledgeable, and very straight. And all of a sudden, I thought for a moment that I was listening to myself. He was saying, "Now, what you need to know is how to be led by God the Holy Spirit. And God the Holy Spirit leads you through a thought in your mind. He will give you almost an imperceptible impression." And he just carried on, and I said, "Use the word 'intuitive,' Stanley. That's what we at Berean – just an intuitive thought." But right down the line, He was right on target. And anybody who is filled with the Spirit (with all known sins confessed, and who ceases and desists the resistance), with no quenching; no grieving; and, no walking by means of the sin nature – that person is going to have signals from God, and you will be directed. That is a powerful life.

When you get into it (that kind of maturity), you'll love it. It'll be so relaxing. It'll be so comforting. The tough times will become so much easier. This is the power for personal guidance. It is for real. And knowing how to live under the principles of the age of the church enables one to have a life of divine good works, so that they will be rewarded in heaven.

How I wish there was some way that we could dial a phone number up to heaven, and ask the Lord to let us speak to some Bereans! Boy, could they tell us things! They could clarify things? They could help those who are resisters, and dragging their feet, and getting mad at me for showing them what the Word says, and for suggesting the implications. I don't need their approval to tell you what the Word of God says, and you don't need my approval to decide whether to do it or not. Everything is cool. Everything is relaxed. But people who have the perspective of heaven – I'll tell you what they would say. They'd say, "Oh, if I could do it again, I would never do this anymore. I would never live my life like this. I've never had this attitude. I'd never act like this. I would really carry on."

I have a brother-in-law in heaven, who once told me that I made him feel that everything he ever believed was wrong – and a lot was. Now he would like to speak to his relatives, and to the rest of my kin folks, and say to them, "John is right. We were wrong. He was on target. Don't make my mistake," because when you do that, you'll go to heaven poor, and that won't be any fun. You'll go to heaven with less than what God has set aside as your inheritance that you have to qualify for.

So, let's look at the "oikonomia" (the dispensations) – these divisions. Now I know that we talk about dispensations at the time, and that is not exactly what a dispensation is. I think you understand that a dispensation is a way of life. That's why I use that term. It's how you live. But it is within a segment of time. The word "stewardship;" the phrase "way of life;" and, the word "household" refers actually to the rules of the protocol of how you conduct yourself in a certain period of time.

**The Dispensations**

Now, you can divide the dispensations, as they're revealed in Scripture, in a variety of ways (in a variety of numbers). Your Scofield Bible does it in seven divisions. I'm going to do it in four, but those seven will be included.

1. **The Age of the Gentiles**

This first dispensation number one is the age of the gentiles. Who's the steward? The steward in this dispensation are gentile believers. The scriptural territory that is covered by this is Genesis chapters 1-11. That is the area of Scripture that is covered by the age of the gentiles. Then it has three phases:

* 1. **The Phase of Innocence**

The first phase we refer to as the phase of innocence. The age of innocence is the age of positive volition. The territory which is covered by this is Genesis 1:28 through Genesis 3:6. This is referring to the time of Adam and Eve in the garden before they sinned. Everything is wonderful. They were made in the image of God. They were clearly different from the animals because, they not only had a body like the animals do, and they not only had a soul (that is, a personality) like the animals do, but they had a spirit – a living spirit, breathed into them by God. It was that spirit which was their connection with God. So, they had a very close connection with God.

Each day, the Lord Jesus Christ (the preincarnate Christ) – the manifest person of the Trinity, would meet with them at the close of the day, and conduct a Bible class in which they were taught the principles of living. And they were shown how to live in the Garden of Eden. That was their era (their dispensation). And they were gentiles, and they were to live under certain principles. They could eat of all the trees of the Garden of Eden except for one. They could not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if they did, they would now disobey God. And when you break the rules of God, the consequence is death.

Now, God knows good and evil, but God knows it because He knows well. God is perfect. His character is a standard of good. God knows evil because it’s the opposite to everything that He is. But Adam and Eve made the mistake of learning about the difference between good and evil by going the evil route. They disobeyed God. They broke the rule about eating of that tree. And now, they too, learned (by experience), the knowledge of good and evil, but from the wrong side. And what it did was that it permanently (totally) contaminated their person, so, that they had now a sin nature, and a propensity to do evil. They had everything they needed in the garden provided for them. They were supposed to take care of the garden. They were to cultivate it. They were to deal with the animals (naming them), and they were to enjoy themselves.

We don't know how long this period of time existed, but it was the best of all worlds. It was the best of all times. It came apart at the point of testing. Eve, the woman, decided to make a move without consulting with her husband, who (now that they were married, and were a family) was the authority in her life. Therefore, she took off on her own, when he was off going about the business that he was supposed to be doing in the garden. And she had the confrontation with Satan, and was led to eat of the tree the knowledge of good and evil.

When he came home, he saw that her covering of the glory of God was gone. He still had his. She explained to him what she had done (how she had lost that covering of glory). And now there was the kiss of death upon her. Because he loved her, he refused to separate from her. So, he deliberately chose to eat of the fruit also, and his glory covering was also lost. Now they were both sinners. Now they were both dead spiritually. And they had now demonstrated that man, even under the best of conditions, in phase one of the dispensation of the gentiles, cannot attain absolute righteousness.

There was another tree in the garden that was called the tree of life. There was something about this tree (something in the fruit of this tree), medicinally, similar to what will be in the millennium, on the trees which are planted by the river of life, that it would sustain life. And if they kept eating of this tree, they would physically stay alive, but separated from God in sin. The penalty had to be carried out.

So, the Godhead said, "We must remove man from the garden, lest he eat of the tree of the life, and remain constantly in separation from us."

Now, please remember that the dispensations were God's arrangement to demonstrate to the devil that the devil was wrong in accusing God of being unjust, and condemning him to the lake of fire. God was going to show that he was going to be just. He had now condemned Adam and Eve. The dispensation came to a rousing crash, and a failure. And now God brought upon them the death that He promised them. They died spiritually, immediately, on the spot. And they immediately began accusing one another, and immediately began acting sinful. And several hundred years later, they both died physically.

So, God said, "We take that away. They do not live. We stop them from having that." And the result was that they were taken out of the garden.

So, phase one of the dispensation of the gentiles ended. And, by the way, the period of time of the gentile dispensation was about 2,000 years. It was the age of positive volition.

* 1. **The Phase of Conscience**

Then came the second part, and that is the phase of conscience. This was the age of negative volition, and it went from Genesis 3:7 through Genesis 8:14. This was the era now, when man was guided by his own conscience. He did, according to his own conscience, what he believed was right. Have you ever heard somebody say, "Follow your conscience," or "let your conscience be your guide?" Well, the conscience was now totally contaminated by the sin nature, so it was not a good guide. Now they were living on their own, guided by their own conscience. It was in this era of negative volition that Cain killed his brother. Things got worse as time went along.

Eventually the Sodom-and-Gomorrah type of lifestyle became prominent, until God found that every thought of man's mind was evil continually. This was the era of being able to do your own thing, and think your way through, because these people were smart. Their minds hadn't been contaminated by the generations of sin. So, think your way through. Do what you think is right. Just do your own thing. And when they did it, they again demonstrated that they could not meet the standard of God. They could not come to absolute righteousness. They could not qualify themselves for heaven.

So, the result was the great flood. There was only one family (Noah's family) that were still true, genuine human beings (not a mixture of demons and humans) who were saved. So, they were preserved.

* 1. **The Phase of Human Government**

So, we come to phase three of the dispensation of the gentiles, and that's the phase of human government. This is the age of nationalism. This goes from Genesis 8:15 through Genesis 11:32. This was the era now following the flood when God set up nations. He told the people from the flood to multiply, and to repopulate the earth, and then to divide up into nations – to spread out and repopulate the earth from Mount Ararat, outwardly from there. They refused to do it. Instead, in very short order, even though these patriarchs, like the sons of Noah and Noah himself, lived for hundreds of years. So, there was constant testimony to the people being born as to what had happened, and what God required in this new phase of this dispensation, that they were now to live under certain rules.

Noah was told: "From now on, you may eat not only vegetation, but you meet animal life as well. You are now also to establish law and order. If anybody takes a life, which they were doing in the previous conscience phase (first degree murder), you take that person's life. If an animal kills a person, you kill the animal.

So, God set up human government so that there were controls upon the sin nature, s that there would not be a condition that would arise again, as there was before the flood. Of course, they went to the Tower of Babel, deciding to ignore God, and do their own thing, and God had had to come down upon them by mixing up their languages. So, they could not speak to one another. That stopped the buildings. Then they went out and separated themselves.

These three phases of the dispensation of the gentiles had certain characteristics. One: they all spoke the same language. Secondly, they all were of the same race. It was only until after the Tower of Babel that they separated according to language groups, and went out and migrated to different parts of the earth, as per the language that they spoke. And God, apparently, in those language groups, also brought about certain genetic, physical qualities that would become dominant, that would gradually change the color of skin; the shape of eyes; and, facial features, and would bring about the distinguishing characteristics of the various races of people on the face of the earth. So, during the dispensation of the gentiles, there was only one race.

**The Four Divine Institutions**

Now, one of the things that came about in this first dispensation (the dispensation of the gentiles), in these three phases, was that the four divine principles were established, and were constantly attacked by Satan. The first was positive volition. This was attacked in Genesis 3:1-5. That was the institution of marriage. This was attacked in Genesis 6:1-4 (the demonic interjection). There was the divine institution of the family, which was also attacked in Genesis 6:1-4. Then there was the institution of nationalism, which was attacked in Genesis 11:1-9.

These divine institutions were applied to people whether you were a believer or not, and they do still apply to us today. This is the way that God works. This is the way that God prevents the human race from self-destruction. Therefore, anybody (or any government) that restricts the freedom of people to choose is undermining the purposes of God, and is giving Satan the chance to control. Anybody who violates marriage (heterosexual marriage) for a lifetime is breaking the rules of God. Anybody who violates the sanctity of the family, and the preeminence of the family in the life of a man or woman is violating the purposes of God, – opening the door to Satan. And anybody who is for internationalism; for world government; and, for the breaking down of national entities is violating this institution, because the devil cannot control all the different nations. But if he has one world government, he can control the whole world. And that's what's going to happen.

This is the time period from Adam to the Tower of Babel. There was no written revelation at this time. There was, however, a great deal of revelation, as Romans 1 indicates to us, that had been made known to people, and they passed it on verbally. Salvation, as always, was by faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior Who was to come. This was established in Genesis 3:15, when God revealed that, through the woman would come the Savior Who would restore what they had lost in the Garden of Eden. Evangelism at this time was on a family basis. There was no missionary agency.

1. **The Age of the Jews**

The second dispensation is the age of the Jews. This dispensation also was about 2,000 years long, plus seven years of the tribulation. Who were the stewards? God stewards during this era was a select nation – the nation of Israel. The age of the Jews is covered in Scripture from Genesis 12 through the book of Malachi (except those Old Testament passages which deal with the millennium). The rest all deals with the age of the Jews – the age of the Mosaic Law. Also, in the New Testament, Revelation chapters 6 through 19 deal with the tribulation. But that section of Scripture doesn't deal with this particular area initially. And the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) deal with the age of the Jew, except for John chapters 13 through 17, which deal with the church. This age also had three phases.

* 1. **The Phase of the Patriarchs**

Phase number one was the age of the patriarchs. The phase of the patriarchs go from Abraham to Moses, and it covers the territory of Genesis 12 through Exodus 19:2 (these are approximate segments). Here you had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the great patriarchs. They were the ones who governed mankind (who governed the people of God). These were a special people now (the Jews) that God was bringing out from the mass of the gentiles. And Abraham was the gentile chosen from Ur of the Chaldees to begin this new group of people. Abraham was a gentile until the day he was circumcised. Then he became the first Jew. And from him, through the line of Isaac and Jacob, came the Jews, that were the stewards of this dispensation.

The patriarchs conducted themselves according to the revelation which continued to be given to them from God directly.

* 1. **The Phase of the Law**

The second part of this dispensation was the Law. This goes from Moses to Christ, and the Scriptures are Exodus 19:3 through Acts 2:26. This was the period now when God gave the formal guidance of the Law for people to live by – the Mosaic Law, with its 613 regulations that were to guide them. This was a totally different way of life.

Here you begin to see that there is a difference between how we are to live today, and how they lived then. The Law of Moses is good, and holy, and perfect, but it never applied to gentiles, and it certainly never applied to Christians. The Law of Moses is what people are constantly trying to mix into the age of the church. That's why it was so important for God to take one man like Paul, and definitively explain to him how different the church lifestyle is from the lifestyle under the Law.

One of the great differences is that, under the Law, you couldn't do right. You tried and you failed. But under the age of the church, with the power of the Spirit of God who indwells every believer, you can do right. And as long as you stay in fellowship, and feed upon the Word of God, you can consistently do right. And what does that mean? That means that all the inheritance of blessing, that God has set aside on you, comes showering down. And the showers of blessings are there. And, suddenly you realize: "Boy, I'm adding the years, but I'm not on a treadmill. I'm actually moving along. I'm going someplace. Every day is an adventure with God. Every day is an achievement where, suddenly, I find that I have the means and the capacity to do something for the work of the church in this age of grace. And every time I do that "something," the records in heaven click in, and there is another great inheritance (reward) for me." So, the Law of Moses to Christ was that second phase.

* 1. **The Phase of the Tribulation**

The third phase is one that is interrupted. It doesn't follow immediately, because it is the tribulation. This one is that seven-year period (the last seven years) of Israel's history. It goes from the rapture to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This is the era when God will bring everything together, and have all the judgments. Everything is going to be straightened out. And His judgment is going to come upon all of humanity in a most horrendous way. And what people are doing today increasingly shows how just God is.

Remember that every dispensation shows that God is fair. And, within the next 48 hours, this nation will now declare itself in terms of what it thinks of God; what it thinks of Scripture; and, what its attitude is, and God will now have an anchor point from which (I guarantee you), He will now proceed in dealing with this country. There is no question about it. So, the tribulation is yet ahead for the Jews. This part has not been fulfilled.

What are the characteristics of this era? During the dispensation of the Jews, there are many languages; many nations; and, many different races of people. The responsibility for the specific missionary agency is regenerated Israel. Regenerated Israel were to be the missionaries. Abraham was regenerated, and he founded the posterity which now were the stewards of this dispensation. They were to speak the gospel to people, speaking in different languages. The national promises to Israel were based on four unconditional covenants.

**The Four Covenants**

First, there was the Abrahamic Covenant. God made promises to this nation (not to us). And they're going to be fulfilled. Now, when I was in Baylor University, in the Bible class (the instructor was an amillennialist, and we were debating this issue of the promises of God on the basis of what He promised Israel. And when I spoke to a lot of our students in the class, I said, "Well, God has promised that this very special country would be possessed forever. Where do you have a special country that's going to be possessed forever?" And he says, "Well, we have the United States." But the country that God was talking about was Israel, up there on the Mediterranean Sea. You can see how trying to squeeze in from the Mosaic era, something into Christianity, turns into nonsense. The Abrahamic Covenant had promises to the Jews. We are the beneficiaries, Paul says, of the Abrahamic Covenant, because we have a spiritual salvation that comes to us through Abraham's line.

There was also the Palestinian covenant. And when I say unconditional, I mean that it doesn't contain an "if". There's only one conditional covenant that God made with Israel, and that's the Mosaic Covenant. He said, "If you people will do this, then I'll do this blessing for you. If you don't, then I'll do this cursing on you. And it was an "iffy" job all the way along. The Palestinian Covenant said that this territory that God gave (once possessed by the Canaanite civilization) was forever in the possession of Israel. Israel has just given away 13% more of this land to the Arabs who are bound and determined to destroy Israel.

The Davidic Covenant promise a King which would come through the line from Abraham, and it would come through the line of David, and through the tribe of Judah, and would end up in the final King – Jesus Christ.

Then there was the New Covenant, where the Jews would have the capacity to obey the Mosaic Laws, and all the expressions of righteousness, because it would be written upon their hearts instead of on tables of stone. The national failure, when it came, came through a series of disciplines. These are recorded for us in Leviticus 26:27-46. There's a cycle of five things that God said, "I'll do to you if you disobey Me, and if you do not obey My commandments, and if you violate the principles of this dispensation.

First, he said, "I'll bring illness upon your families, and military defeat. The diseases that I put upon the Egyptians, I'll put upon you. But if you obey Me, you're not going have any of those diseases. You'll obey My dietary laws, and your physical bodies will work just fine." The second stage was famine: "I'll strip away your food. If you keep disobeying Me, the third stage will be that I'll send in a plague of beasts that will be so wild that you'll be fearful day and night. They will destroy your fields." In the fourth cycle of discipline, God said, "I will bring great disease upon you – pestilence. And people will be dropping like flies. And if that doesn't bring you back, the fifth cycle of discipline will be dispersion among the nations of the world. In 70 A.D., the fifth cycle of discipline was imposed upon the people of Israel. They'd gone through it before. They came back, and the judges were constantly circulating. And the last time was 70 A.D. And they were thrown out of the land.

The time for this dispensation of the Jews is from Abraham to the Second Advent, minus the church age, which comes between the era of Moses and the tribulation. The Old Testament Scriptures were gradually written and completed, and salvation was by faith in Jesus Christ.

1. **The Age of the Church**

The next is the age of the church. You can see that different lifestyles have preceded us. And this is a period of about 2,000 years so far. And the stewards are Christians. The Scriptures are John 13-17, and Acts through Revelation 3 (minus sections that deal with the tribulation). Before 96 A.D., there were there was no completed New Testament. It was being written. After 96 A.D., the New Testament canon was complete. The characteristics of this period were that there was positional truth based upon the fact of union with Jesus Christ. Nobody ever thought that a human being could be united to God. In this age of the church, you are. There was the universal indwelling by Jesus Christ of believers for fellowship – God indwelling the physical body of a believer. That was unheard of. He's there for fellowship and for orientation. There's the universal indwelling of Christians by the Holy Spirit, to give them power for living, and capacity to do divine good service. Nobody had ever heard about the Spirit of God permanently indwelling a human being, and blessing his life.

There was the universal priesthood of all believers. They were no longer approaching God through the ironic priesthood. But every believer was standing before God Himself. That is a very important doctrine to remember, because the pastor-teacher priest has as his duty to instruct you in the Word of God, and to explain Scripture, and to suggest its implications. He doesn't need your permission to do that. And as a priest, you are free to reject what you are taught; to say that it is wrong; and, to choose to follow a different course. And you don't need the pastor-teacher's permission to do that. You're your own priest. You have that freedom to conduct your own life.

However, the consequences of your decision will all be reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It's important to remember that. Do you think that He's telling you to do something that you don't want to do, because you don't have to do it? Yeah, you're free in Christ, but be sure that you're right, because all these differences of opinion will be adjudicated at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And you will discover who's right and who's wrong.

There is now the completed canon of Scripture, both Old and New Testament. There is a supernatural way of life which is dependent upon God alone, and doctrine. There is the filling of the Holy Spirit to execute the supernatural way of life. Confession of all known sins puts the Holy Spirit in power to do the right thing for you. Salvation, of course, is, as always, by faith in Christ as Savior. And Israel is dispersed among the nations – completely ripped out.

1. **The Age of the Kingdom**

The final dispensation is the age of the kingdom. This is why we don't talk about bringing in the kingdom. We are bringing in the body of Christ in the church age. This is a period of 1,000 years. We refer to that as the millennium. The steward is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Scriptures pertaining to this are Revelation 20, and portions of the Old Testament Scriptures which deal with the millennial period. There will be a 1,000-year, physical reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth. This will include the last judgment on Satan and on unbelievers, at the end of that 1,000 years.

Now, this is the dispensation that is also particularly rejected by anti-dispensationalists. They don't believe that Jesus Christ is going to literally reign upon this earth, although the Old Testament prophets spoke of just exactly that kind of a reign. And that was what was revealed to Mary. She was told that her Son would reign upon the throne of David, His father, meaning this earthly throne, and not some heavenly throne. It was St. Augustine of the Roman Catholic Church that proposed that this throne was going to be in heaven, and that it would be a spiritual throne. And, thus, the Catholic Church was the kingdom of this earth, not the kingdom of Jesus Christ reigning.

During the kingdom age of this 1,000 years, Satan will be bound, so, there'll be no religion on this earth. That deception will be gone. Do you want to know religion in action? One of our big, big churches in town is celebrating Halloween. That's very apropos. Tonight at 6:30, you're going to see it on the screen, pulled together.

The age of the kingdom will be the greatest period of spirituality ever known on earth. The devil will not be here to be able to twist emotions. People will be inordinately emotional. The Spirit of God will be in control. It'll be a great moment of praise, and enthusiasm, and euphoria.

Israel will be restored as a leading nation on the face of the earth. There will be universal peace on the face of the earth. There'll be no armies. There'll be universal prosperity for everybody. And everyone will have a knowledge of God. Everyone will know doctrine. It'll be a perfect world government under the international rule of Jesus Christ. He will be a beneficent dictator.

There will be radical changes in nature. It'll be a perfect environment. There will be no more earthquakes; no more storms; and, no more devastations such as we've been hearing about – the floods. Creation will be free from the bondage of sin. So, everything will grow wonderfully. Animals will lose their ferocity. There'll be no more cages at the zoo. You'll be able to walk in and play with the big kitty lions. Plant life will abound beyond anything that man has ever seen before.

At the beginning of this dispensation, all unbelievers will be put to death, both Jews and gentiles. So, on day one of the dispensation of the kingdom, following that judgment, everybody left on this earth in their physical bodies will be born again – all spiritually alive. The rest of us will be on this earth from the church age, and from all previous dispensations of believers. We will have what we call glorified bodies – bodies free of the sin nature. We will not be flesh and blood type of bodies, though we will still be that. But we won't need to eat, and we will not be limited by time and space, and so on. We will be here, but we will be the agents of the King, the Lord Jesus. The people who are believers will begin life in the millennium, and we will all have the great things that we dream about and talk about, like now NASA is going to put out a space station within ten years. So, we'll have a space station, so that we can move to Mars, and set up a colony there. These things will be routine because of the magnificence of the mind of man under the administration of Jesus Christ – what man will be able to achieve. And what the Lord said, at the beginning of the book of Genesis, was for them to have dominion over creation. We can't even dream and imagine the kind of dominion mankind is going to have.

During this period, lifespan will be greatly extended. People will live for hundreds and hundreds of years. Probably, the only reason people will die is because of sin. They'll be executed. Or they'll bear the consequences of their sin. The Scripture says, "If somebody should die at 100 years of age, they'll consider him dying as a child then." There will be perfect justice on this earth. You won't have any mafia. You won't have any criminals. You won't have any anybody being able to do anything secretly in evil, because the angels will all be there. Everything will be clear. Christ, the King, will know. And everything's going to be right. And salvation will be by faith in Jesus Christ. That is a magnificent, final era – the final dispensation that God has arranged. There will be total Scripture, and total knowledge of the Word of God.

But how does it end? Well, Satan, during this period of time, is in a prison. At the end, they turn him loose. What happens? All these kids who have been born during the tribulation – they hate King Jesus. They want to be out there rocking-n-rolling. They read about the history of how it used to be. They want to be out there, indulging their sin nature. They want to just live the way the devil would like them to live, but he's no longer there to encourage them. The world is a perfect, righteous place, and they're just itching to be able to live the way they used to live in those old days. They want Sodom and Gomorrah all over again.

Suddenly, the devil comes on the scene, and these kids (now grown – hundreds of years of a new generation) – they flock to him. And he rallies a huge army, and he marches on Jerusalem. All these people who have grown up in the wonderful dispensation of the kingdom (you would think that absolute perfect condition for a person to do right and to please God, show that they cannot again achieve absolute righteousness on their own. If you don't get it as a gift from God, you never will. Adam and Eve didn't. Abraham didn't. The Jews under the Law didn't. In church-age freedoms, we don't. And in the kingdom age, with Christ Himself running everything perfectly, they won't make it.

So, at that point, the Lord Jesus Christ destroys all those people, and takes Satan, and throws him into the lake of fire, where the Scriptures say that he has two friends waiting for him: the false prophet; and, the antichrist. And they've been there, folks, for 1,000 years, and they haven't been incinerated. They're still conscious. They're still in agony. The Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong. You don't get wiped out of existence. You continue. The result will be then that the Lord Jesus Christ takes Hades (the weigh station), and He will tip it over, and pour out all those condemned of humanity, from Adam's time on, into the lake of fire. The door will be slammed shut on the darkness. And eternity will begin in the new Jerusalem, with a new heaven and a new earth.

The Jewish people now have their homeland – this whole earth. We Christians have our heavenly position in our new Jerusalem, hovering above planet earth. It will be the final demonstration of what the dispensations have, in seven segments, taught us that, without God, there is no hope.

Our Heavenly Father, we want to thank You that You have brought us salvation that can only come through You. We thank You that You have demonstrated to Satan Your justice by giving various conditions of life, under which people were able to live, and You treated them according to what they deserved. And they were a failure every time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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