**Dispensations – Summary – DS1A**

We welcome you to this first session this evening of a new series of studies entitle, "The Dispensations of the Bible." The doctrine of the dispensations is a very pivotal truth within Scriptures, and I want to make it very clear and definitive right off the bat that the Bible does teach the doctrine of the dispensations. I will not get into the resistance which is offered to this truth or the confusion which often exists upon it. Rather, I will pursue a positive exposition from the Word of God. If you encounter questions, opposition, and resistance, you will probably be able to answer for yourself.

This doctrine deals with God's plan for this ages. This plan that He has equated in eternity past, evolves in human history. So what we are talking about is what the Bible reveals as to how God looks at human history, as that history unravels itself from the time of Adam until the time of eternity to come. When we understand the eras into which God classifies human history, our own present location in God's time table is made clear. That's why the study of the dispensations is so vital. The reason there is so much confusion in churches today is because the preachers who are teaching those people, when they do teach, have not realized that God has given us a single book of revelation--the Bible. However, this book is contains information which is specifically directed to different groups of people, and is specifically applied to groups of humanity in different ways in different ages.

Now if you sit down and just start reading the Bible and say, "Here's a book for me," you are going to become very confused. It won't be long before you are trying to take some portion of the Word of God that belongs to a different era of history and to a different group of people than yourself, and you are going to try to apply these things to where you live today. We are constantly hearing men who are in prominent positions of national leadership quoting portions of the Word of God as encouragement for us to follow as guidelines for us to pursue which have nothing whatsoever to do with this age in which we live and your status as a member of the body of Christ.

The dispensations are a pivotal truth. It is a key to the understanding of Scripture. Seeing human history from the divine viewpoint is what the Bible means about "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" in 2 Timothy 2:15. Unless you understand these ages, you cannot rightly divide the Word of Truth; you cannot put each portion of Scripture in the place where it belongs. People who attack or ridicule the doctrine of the dispensations, and there are many of them, are downright ignorant about what the Bible teaches on this subject, and it teaches a great deal about it, and they don't understand God's revelation.

However, dispensationalism often suffers also at the hands of its friends. People who are sympathetic to the inspired scriptures, and people who are sympathetic to the dispensation point of view, but who don't really understand the doctrine. Therefore, they convey ideas that are not true dispensational instruction.

Who is a dispensationalist? Well, I'll tell you. For one thing, if you are not offering animal sacrifices, if you have not recently gone to the temple with your lamb to have it sacrificed on behalf of your sins, you have given yourself away as a dispensationalist. When somebody says they are not a dispensationalist, the first thing I ask them is, "When was the last time you had a lamb sacrificed at the temple on your behalf." This stops them short because they suddenly realize, "Yes, I don't do that anymore."

Or, I ask them where is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that you're not supposed to eat of? Immediately, if they've got any sense at all, they realize, "Yes, I do act in a different way under a different order in a different system. I don't live in an era of conditions that apply to an era in the past. So, dispensationalism is analyzing human history in the way God sees it.

**The Ascension**

If you turn to Acts chapter one, I think we'll begin there this evening. Acts chapter one, the very first verse, where we read, introducing Luke's special letter to his friend Theophilus. "The former have I made of Theophilus of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom also he showed Himself alive after his fashion through many infallible truths, being seen by them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the father, which, said He, ye have heard from me."

The Lord Jesus Christ is about ready to return to Heaven. He is gathered with His disciples. He has been with them for forty days. He has been instructed them concerning what Luke calls here the Kingdom of God, which is a term which applies to all believers of all ages in all dispensations of one group. They belong to the Kingdom of God. He has given them some final instruction trying to prepare them for what is to come in the age of grace--a whole new dispensation, and a whole new arrangement of things.

Now the disciples apparently had a very difficult time grasping that things were going to change. Right up to the very moment that they stood upon the Mount of Olives and the final moments were ticking out when Jesus Christ was going to rise up and be caught out of their sight by that cloud, they were still in confusion as to what was coming. They were still seeking to pursue a previous era. As a matter of fact, it was up to the apostle Paul, who came later, to clarify these issues. This did not come through one of the original eleven.

So the Lord has told them now that they are to wait here at Jerusalem until they receive a special power. Verse 5 says, "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." That was ten days later on Pentecost. Then verse 6 says, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him saying, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?'"

They were reflecting that they had not yet grasped that a new age was coming in. They were still thinking in terms of the Lord Jesus Christ completing that which had been indeed the first part of His mission. He came to the Jews as their king, but they had rejected them, and ultimately sealed their rejection with His crucifixion. With that rejection, the Lord Jesus Christ turned from his mission to Israel to fulfill the Old Testament covenants. He turned to a brand new thing, creating the Church body, which was a secret--a mystery which had never been revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

In response to this question, the Lord Jesus Christ could have given them the answer, but He does not. Verse 7 does not give the answer to the question that they proposed in verse 6. Apparently, this was for the simple reason that the Lord could not yet get through to these men what was taking place. This was still going to take some preparation, and finally some revelation, through somebody like the apostle Paul who could grasp the distinctives of the dispensation of grace.

**Times and Seasons**

So what the Lord does say in verse 7 is, "And He said unto them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power (or authority).'" The key words are, first of all, "times." The Greek word for this is "chronos." "Chronos" refers to time as a secession of events--events in sequence. This is the Greek word from which we get the English word "chronology." Chronology means events put in order of time. The word "chronos" refers to an orderly progression of events, one after another. The Lord Jesus Christ does not answer their question as to whether Israel's earthly kingdom is going to be restored. He does not answer whether that is next in line. That's what they were asking. They were asking, "Is the next event to be the restoration of our earthly kingdom?" Jesus says, "That's not for you to know." You're not to know the times, but also you are not to know the seasons.

The word "season" is the Greek work "kairos." "Kairos" refers to time organized by various components into eras. These are larger segments. This is not stressing the orderly progression of one thing after another. This word views time as being broken up into definitive segments. It is synonymous with the word "dispensation," which we are studying. It is large eras of time in which certain components and factors follow in chronological order, and they make up and era, or a season. So, God, in His plan for the history of mankind, has distinct eras of time which follow in a specified (specific) order, or series. The times follow in an orderly way within the seasons. Jesus, here in Luke 1:7, told the disciples that this divine plan of the ages was not for them to know, but that it was under the Father's authority and control at that time.

As the revelation of Scripture is unfolded to us, that is as one book after another of the New Testament has been written, and we get to the book of 1 Thessalonians, and we discover that the secret has been told. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 says, "But of the times and the seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.

What the apostle Paul is revealing here is that the times and seasons have now been revealed to him from the Lord, and he in turn has taught the Thessalonian Christians, so that when he wrote back to the church at Thessalonica, he could say to them, that which the Lord could not say to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, Paul could say to them, "You know the times and the seasons," as the disciples on the Mount of Olives did not know the times and the seasons. Paul uses the identical two words, "chronos," and "Kairos." This ties this to that same concept as the Lord expressed on the Mount of Olives.

The Thessalonian Christians know all about this, and verse 2 says that they know about it perfectly (or accurately). 2 Peter 3:14, 16 indicate to us that Peter recognized that Paul's writings were Scripture, and that in the writings of Paul are some very deep and significant things. Peter is saying that in the epistles of Paul, there were magnificent revelations of a very deep nature that did not come from the other apostles. They came directly to Paul. Now one of the things that was revealed to the apostle Paul was this doctrine that we will be studying--the doctrine of the dispensations, or God's plan of the ages.

So, this tonight is going to be in the form of an introduction to that study. God has times--an orderly series of events. He has those times within seasons, eras of time. These refer to human history. We are going to look at human history as God views it. That's what dispensationalism is all about.

We begin by looking at the words which are used for dispensations. The word is "dispensation." It comes from a Latin word, "dispensatio." "Dispensatio" has been transliterated into "dispensation." This is the word that is used in the Latin Vulgate of Scriptures to translate to Greek words which are used in reference to these eras of time. "Dispensatio" from the Greek is the English word "dispensation."

**Stewardship**

Now here are the Greek words: Number one is "oikonomia." "Oikonomia" is used nine times in the New Testament. In our King James translation of the Scriptures, the translators had a way of using various English words to translate this one Greek word "oikonomia." This makes it somewhat confusing. Here's what they did: You'll find this work in Luke 16:2-4. There it is translated by the word "stewardship." You'll find it in Ephesians 3:9. There they translated it as "fellowship." In 1 Timothy 1:4, you have "godly edify." In 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 1:10, Ephesians 3:2, and Colossians 1:25, they finally went with "dispensation." That's the English word that you find in the translation there.

**Administration**

This word means the administration of an estate or household. In the ancient world, large estates were administered by stewards who ran the operation for their master. This word points out the fact that during the different periods of human history, or dispensations, God has administered the world in certain ways of His own choosing, through certain agents. This word "oikonomia" then means an administration of something in a certain period of time. It is from this word that we get our English word "economy," which gives us some additional insight to what a dispensation is. For example, you know about home economics, which is a study in school on how to manage a household. Political economy is another area of study--an arrangement of a political system. Capitalism is a political economy. It is a certain way of doing things. Communism is another economy, a political economy with a different way of doing things. These two economies have certain things in common. However, the important thing is the things that are different between the two. You would make a very grave mistake if you thought, as some people like to tell us, that capitalism and communism have many things in common, and they are becoming more like one another. They will never become like one another because they have some very pointed and specific features that make them mutually exclusive, and you have to know these differences in the dispensations or you will be doing the same kind of foolish things of overlapping dispensations, and you will "rest the Scriptures," as Peter says, to your own destruction.

**Economy**

So, the word "oikonomia" means an administration or an economy. There is a second, "oikonomos." This is a noun and it is used ten times in the New Testament. It is translated as "steward" nine of those times, in Luke 12:42, 16:1,3,8, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Galatians 4:2, Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 4:10. It is also in Romans 16:23 where it is translated "chamberlain." The word means the manager of a household or an estate--an administrator. "Steward" is a good translation of "oikonomos." In each period of human history, God administers His world household, so to speak, through believers who are appointed as His stewards. There's a group of people who are appointed as God's stewards who are the "oikonomos" in each dispensation. These divinely appointed administrators are called to account, therefore, for the administration of their stewardship. The "oikonomos," the administrator, administrates the "oikonomia," the stewardship.

There's another word, a verb, similar again, "oikonomeo." "Oikonomeo" means to be a steward. It is used once in the New Testament, in Luke 16:2, and it is translated as "steward." It means to manage or to regulate. It refers to the work of the "oikonomos" during an "oikonomia." "Oikonomeo" speaks of the work of an "oikonomos" during an "oikonomia." In other words, this refers to the work of administering of a steward during a dispensation, or a stewardship.

**Age**

Another word, "ion" means an "age." It refers to an extended period of time, and it also refers to a dispensation. Sometimes it is used for an entire dispensation such as the Church age. Other times, it is used for just part of a dispensation, such as the Tribulation which is part of another dispensation. This word will give you some trouble unless you have a corrected translation of the Scriptures. It is sometimes mistakenly translated as "world," such as in Matthew 24:3, but it should be translated as "age." This poor translation in Matthew 24:3 creates confusion because it is part of the Olivet Discourse. The Lord Jesus said, "As he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately saying, 'Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the age'". It is the end of an age--a particular era of God's dealings, not the end of the "world." This also occurs in Galatians 1:4, Titus 2:12, Hebrews 1:2, and other places. All of these are confused in these translations by the use of the word "world" instead of the word "age."

So, from these four words we structure the concept of a dispensation. So the first thing we need is a definition. A definition always has a problem, because when you're trying to be concise, you can't say it all and still be concise. There are some features that you won't be able to include in the definition, but which will give a general idea of what the Scriptures mean by "dispensations." One definition is: a dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's plan for the ages. Another definition is: A dispensation is a period of human history expressed in terms of a divine viewpoint and interpretation.

In Luke 16, we have this idea of a dispensation illustrated. This applies in the form of a parable to a steward and his responsibility for a household. This gives us a picture of how God views a dispensation.

This gives us an illustration of a dispensation. Luke 16:1-2 says, "And He said unto His disciples, 'There was a certain rich man who had a steward (an "oikonomos"), and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, 'How is it that I hear this of thee. Give an account of thy stewardship (his "oikonomia") for you may no longer be steward.'"

Now notice how this parable is telling us about important features of a dispensation. There are basically two parties here. One who has delegated certain duties, that is the wealthy landowner, to a steward. This, of course, represents God. Then we have the steward who is responsible for carrying out the owners plan. This refers to mankind. There were specific responsibilities in connection with this stewardship. There were certain known duties which the steward ignored and did not perform. He took the master's goods and he wasted them. The goods refer to the master's estate, or in the parable application, this refers to the world, which God has entrusted for administration to mankind.

The steward here has been called to account for the discharge of his stewardship. God always clearly outlines, in every dispensation, what he expects of mankind. He clearly outlines who is responsible for what. Then, at a certain point, he calls that group of humanity to account for what He gave them to do and for the duties He has placed upon them. Dispensationalism views the world as God's household conducted and run by God. Failure in managing one's stewardship leads to termination of office, so the steward here in the parable was dismissed from his stewardship. As failure in each dispensation occurs, we will discover that God terminates those who have been the stewards, and a new dispensation is instituted. The dispensations demonstrate that regardless of who's in charge, regardless of what segment of humanity has been appointed as steward, and regardless of the conditions under which that administration is operating, man is always a failure without God. That's part of the point of the dispensations--man is utterly a failure without God. However, the dispensations always go on.

Here are three main things to remember about the continuance of dispensations, one to another:

1) As one dispensation ends in failure, and God terminates that stewardship, there is a continuation of certain ordinances into the next dispensation. Everything is not discontinued. Certain regulations in one dispensation carry over into the next dispensation.

2) Certain things are not continued from one dispensation to another. This is where the Scriptures can be considerably twisted--if we do not recognize where the regulations have ceased from one dispensation to another. This is where we referred to your slaughtering of a lamb. The reason we don't do that is because that belonged to a previous dispensation, and that's one of the regulations that has been discontinued. The reason we don't go to church on Saturday is because that belonged to a previous dispensation, and that's one of the regulations that has been discontinued and does not apply today. The reason you can go home and eat lobster and shrimp tonight is because, although this was forbidden in previous dispensation, this regulation has been discontinued. We can eat all the shrimp and lobster that we want to. All is now available to us.

3) Each dispensation has the introduction of certain new principles and new regulations which were not previously in effect. God sets a dispensation in motion; He establishes responsibilities for certain stewards; they fail in their duties; God comes in and asks for an explanation; the failure is exposed; and, and, the dispensation comes to an end. Certain regulations of that dispensation are carried over into the next one; other regulations are terminated; and, some new regulations are instituted.

**The Age of the Gentiles**

Now we will look at a summary of all of the dispensations in the Bible. We begin with dispensation number one, the age of the Gentiles. The age of the Gentiles begins in Genesis chapter one and goes through Genesis chapter 11. Within the age of the Gentiles, there are certain subgroups which we may recognize as God moved along in dealing with the dispensations. Sometimes these are viewed as separate dispensations, but it is better to view them as a subcategory of the overall general classification of Gentiles. What we will show is that God has moved from dealing with Gentiles to dealing with Jews, to dealing with the Church, to dealing with Christ in the Millennium.

**The Age of Innocence**

So, this era is really one big segment of God's dealing with humanity because He was dealing only with Gentiles. That's all there were on the earth. Subgroup number one we may call the Age of Innocence. This doesn't mean that man was innocent, but he was not yet a sinner. This is the condition that existed for the fall of man. It is simply an age that we may call one of man's positive volition toward the regulations that had been imposed upon him. This one is in Genesis 2.

**The Age of Conscience**

There is a second breakdown here, and that is called the Age of Conscience. This is in Genesis 3. This is an age of negative volition. Man said, "No," and he rejected God. In this age, some things did change. There were still Gentiles and God was still administering His world (His household) through Gentiles, but there was a certain change which had been instituted. Then there came human government, or nationalism. This is particularly found in Genesis 11. This is where God established His normal pattern for dealing with mankind, which is that He deals with individual nations. Here are the characteristics of this age: There was only one language on the face of the earth--everybody spoke the same language. There was only one race. Everybody had was the same color and everybody had the same racial features and situations. There was one race and one language. At this point there came the attack during this period of Gentile rule upon four basic divine institutions. The minute that man sinned, the course was clear that something would have to be done to keep man from destroying himself. Therefore, God instituted certain regulations which apply to everybody in the world, in every dispensation. It matters not whether you are a man or a woman, a Gentile or Jew, or saved or unsaved. These apply to you.

**Volition**

The first one is the institution of volition. God has made it part of the regulations of dealing with the word that people should be free to exercise their wills. Therefore, any government that restricts people from the exercise of freewill is a government which is dominated by satanic viewpoint. And, remember that you cannot have freewill within a nation unless you can own private property. Private property is the cornerstone of freedom. If you have private property that you can do with as you please, you have freedom. If you do not have private ownership of property. That's why the communist world violates this principle, this divine institution immediately. And, that's why the communist world cannot prosper. If it were not for such idiot nations like the United States, the communist world would have long since succumbed. We have consistently maintained a nation that denies the volition of its people. We have consistently kept the communist world function. We did it back in 1920 when it almost collapsed in Lenin's hands. If it hadn't been for our care and our provisions, they would have gone under. We did it in World War II. If it hadn't been for the United States and its provision (which incidentally Russia still has refused to pay us for--our lend lease), they would have gone under. Now we are again feeding our enemies because the communist world cannot feed its people. Its system cannot produce food sufficiently. That's why your food is going to feed the communist world. The reason it's having to go over there is because that nation denies volition to its people. Its communal farms are non-productive because it has denied the thing that God has placed within man to motivate him to be productive, which is profit, and to exercise the freedom of his will in what he does with himself, his time, and that which he earns.

**The Institution of Marriage**

There is also the institution of marriage. Marriage is a self-evident preserver of the human race--one man to one woman. It is not the pattern of the word of God for polygamy.

**The Institution of the Family**

Then there is the family which has been provided as a divine institution for the rearing of children and to bring them into adult maturity with the things they need to know.

**The Institution of Nationalism**

Then there is the institution of nationalism. It is the will of God that all peoples on the face of the earth should exist within national entity groups. Now, we're not going to go into detail on the Scriptures for that tonight. This is a summary.

**Satan**

These four institutions were immediately attacked by Satan. The volition was struck in the Garden of Eden. That's what led man into sin. The attack on marriage and family is what we read about in Genesis 6 when the angels intermarried with the human race. The attack on nationalism we find in Genesis 11:1-9 with the tower of Babel, which was the first United Nations building. That Scripture tell us that if man was not stopped in building that international structure and organization that he was designing, no evil would be restrained to him. It is the classic scriptural declaration that when you have one world, Satan has a field day. When Satan can control the whole world, which he will do through the antichrist, the world will be a cesspool of evil and denial of divine principles.

So this first dispensation of the Gentiles characterized the establishment of these four divine institutions. This dispensation goes from Adam to the tower of Babel. During this period, there was no Bible--no canon of Scriptures. What revelation they did possess was by the spoken word of God directly to them and that which parents passed on to their children, but there was no written form. How were people saved during this dispensation? The same way you are saved today, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was in the form of the promise of Genesis 3:15 of the savior who would come who would match Satan, who would deal with Satan, who would conquer Satan, and God would make provision for sin. People were saved by faith in Christ.

The reason I stress that is that one of the ignorant attacks upon dispensationalism is the suggestion that we dispensationalists suggest that there was a different way of being saved in different dispensations. This attack comes in part because the old Scofield Bible, before the revised edition, made a statement that seemed to sound like that was what he was teaching--that a dispensation has its own way of salvation. That is not what Dr. Scofield meant, as we know from other writings in his other notes. Because he was emphasizing a certain thing, he couched in such words that it sounded like that, and that has been made much of. So let's lay that to rest once and for all. People are saved the same way in every dispensation--by faith in Jesus Christ, sometimes looking ahead to Him, and sometimes (as we do) looking back to the cross.

During this time, there was no basic missionary agency in the world. What evangelism there was, was on a family basis, and it was not, apparently, very extensive.

**The Age of the Jews**

The second age is the Age of the Jews. After the Tower of Babel, things came to the end. We have the outline of this age found in Genesis 12 through the Old Testament, minus passages that deal with the millennium. We find it in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, except for John chapters 13 through 17. Here and there in the gospels, we have a little reference to the church, but most of it has to do with the Jews. This dispensation can be divided: first, into the segment of the patriarchs. This was from Abraham through the giving of the law. The second segment was the giving of the law. This dispensation went from the time of Abraham through the time of the cross. It was the dispensation of the Jews.

**The Tribulation**

There is another segment of this dispensation that we call the tribulation--seven years of Daniel's timetable which comes after the rapture of the church. That is also part of this. But, there's a break, and then the tribulation comes as part of the dispensation of the Jews.

Here are the characteristics of this dispensation: There were then many languages. From Babel, God ensured nationalism by doing several things: First, He forced people to have different languages, and that caused them to separate. Secondly, He caused those who separated, who had certain genetic characteristics, to have the same language. These genetic characteristics gradually evolved into differences of color and of race. He also put them into different geographic areas. All of these factors contributed to ensuring nationalism on the face of the earth.

So there were now many races and many languages. There was a specific missionary agency in the form of the regenerated people of Israel. Israel was to give the gospel to its own people and to others about them. Remember that Abraham himself was a gentile. By regeneration, he became a Hebrew, a Jew, and from him came the race of the Jewish people. God, who had been dealing with a wide stream of the Gentile humanity, now zeroes down to a certain segment of humanity, the people of Israel themselves. Through this missionary agency, the Jews were to reach out. They did a very poor job. Salvation, again, was not by keeping the law but by faith in Christ. Spirituality was different, and we'll be getting into that in this era. But, by and large, they failed as the repository of the word of God.

**The Age of the Church**

The next age is the age of the Church. The age of the Church, that you are more acquainted with, we find in John 13 through 17, the book of Acts, the New Testament epistles, and Revelation 1 through 3. It deals with all portions except that tribulation era that you read about in the New Testament. There was a pre-canon period in the age of the church before we had the written Scriptures. There was a post-canon period beginning after 96 A.D., after the Bible was completed with the writing of the book of Revelation. This era I don't have to labor because you are well acquainted with it. There are certain characteristics such as positional truth--union with Christ. There is the universal indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the universal indwelling of God the Holy Spirit for spirituality. There is the universal priesthood of all believers so that every believer is an ambassador in full-time service and fully responsible for himself to God. We now have a completed Bible. We have a supernatural way of life for which God has given us supernatural resources to live. If you know those techniques, you will be able to live a supernatural life. If you do not know those techniques, backwards and forwards, you'll have difficulty living the supernatural life, and you'll go nowhere relative to spiritual maturity. We have the experience of the filling of the Holy Spirit by which to execute this supernatural life. And, of course, salvation, again, is by faith in Jesus Christ.

**The Millennium**

The fourth era is the millennium. The millennium is the thousand-year rule of Christ upon the earth. This period goes from the second advent of Christ through eternity future. It ends with the baptism of fire where Jewish and Gentile unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire. This period begins with everybody saved. Jews who are unbelievers die at the end of the tribulation. Gentiles who are unbelievers die at the end of the tribulation. There are a thousand years of perfect peace on this earth with Christ ruling. At the end of this period, there is a time when Satan is again released. Remember that Satan is bound during this period and that's why there's no religion on this on this earth, and there's a perfect environment. You cannot have a perfect world scene when Satan is free to operate with his demons. All the demonic hosts are cut off. The only sin is sin which comes from the old sin nature. There is no religion on earth. It is the greatest period of spirituality that humanity has ever known. Israel is restored as a nation, under God. That's where Israel is (hopefully) today trying to go. That's where she is going to go, no matter what happens to Israel today. There will be universal peace. Everybody will be prosperous. There will be universal knowledge of God--no missionary activity. Everybody will know about God. There will be a perfect world government. There will be a radical change in nature. Animal ferocity will be removed. Plant life will abound. Creation itself will be loosed from the bondage of sin. There will be unbelievers who develop from the children who are born during this period of time. Life will be greatly extended. Anybody who dies at the age of 100 will be considered a child. Salvation will still be by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, here is the picture of the dispensations, in brief: Here is eternity past. We come along for a certain period that we call the Age of the Gentiles. This goes from Adam to the Tower of Babel. Then we have another period which is the Age of the Jews. This comes to the point of time of Christ. Then we have the era of the Church, which is characterized as the Age of Grace. Then we have a small period of seven years which constitutes the end of the Age of the Jews. That's the tribulation period. Then we have the period of the millennium. Then we have eternity future.

Now, that is what we mean by the dispensations. This is what we mean by God's plan of the ages. The Bible--that one book which God wrote--applies to all of these. Certain parts apply directly to the Age of the Gentiles. Certain parts apply to the Age of the Jews. Certain parts apply to the Age of the Church. Some parts apply to Age of the Millennium. Now, if you take that one Bible, and you, as a Christian, try to live on something that applied to the Age of the Jews, you are out of the will of God, and you will distort your spiritual life. The same is true if you try to live on something that applied to the Age of the Gentiles. That's why the dispensations are the key to the understanding of Scriptures.

John E. Danish, 1971