

I. Dispensationalism (Introduction):

The word “Dispensationalism” is a Biblical Term:

- *1Co 9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*
- *Eph 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*
- *Eph 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:*
- *Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;*

Definition of the term:

οικονομία (oikonomia oy-kon-om-ee'-ah)

The term is made up of two words:

Oikos – House

Nomos – Rules or Laws

Oikonomia speaks of the management of a household or of household affairs

1a) specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property

1b) the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship

1c) administration, dispensation (Strong)

The word refers to the management of the household or the exercise of a responsibility or stewardship.

See: Luke 16:1-13 – where we find Jesus' parable of a rich man and his stewards. Ryrie enumerates four basic aspects of any “stewardship” (or “dispensation”) which are apparent from this passage:

1. There are two parties involved, an owner of the property to be entrusted, and a steward to whom it is entrusted (16:1).
2. There is carefully defined responsibility on the part of the steward (16:1).
3. There is accountability at any time; it is the prerogative of the owner to demand a reckoning (16:20).
4. There can be a change at any time, according to the discretion of the owner (16:2). (Ryrie, cited by Doug Bookman: Pillsbury Baptist Bible College and A Definition of Dispensationalism)

Various Definitions of a “Dispensation”

Scotfield Reference Bible:

“A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.”

Clarence E. Mason, Jr.:

“...in its Biblical usage, a dispensation is a divinely established stewardship of a particular revelation of God’s mind and will which brings added responsibility to the whole race of men or that portion of the race to whom the revelation is particularly given by God.”

George D. Beckwith:

“A dispensation is a period of time during which God tests man in regard to man’s relationship to Himself. In each period of time there is some revelation of the will of God, and a new test of man. Each dispensation begins in fresh divine light and inspiration, and ends in darkness, gloom, and judgment.”

Charles Ryrie:

“A dispensation is a distinguishable economy (stewardship) in the outworking of God’s purposes.”

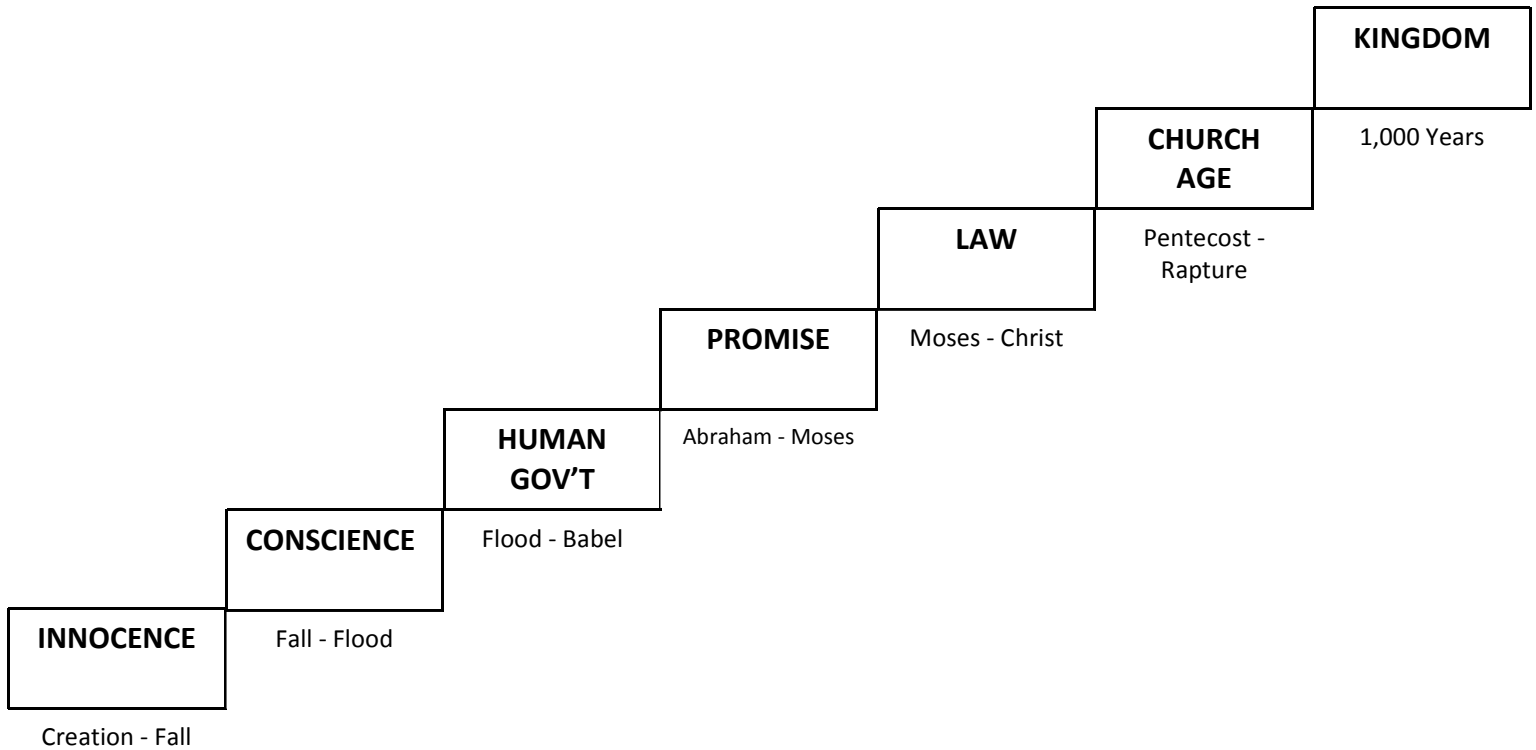
Essential Features of each dispensation:

- A New Revelation given by God
- A New Responsibility expected from Man (obedience is expected to that New Revelation)

The essentials of Dispensationalism:

1. A dispensationalist recognizes and maintains the **distinction** between God’s dealings with **O.T. Israel** and the **N.T. Church**.
2. A dispensationalist will consistently employ a **normal (literal) hermeneutic** in his interpretation of Scripture; This applies to **prophecy** as well as all Scripture.
3. A dispensationalist regards the underlying purpose of God to be **His own glory**, rather than the redemption of men; the dispensationalist’s approach to Scripture is decidedly God-centered (theocentric), not man-centered (anthropocentric). A **Doxological** perspective.

Illustration of the seven dispensations position:



Characteristics of each Dispensation:

1. God pours out **new revelation** during the **transition** period between each dispensation.
2. Each dispensation is **built upon the former** dispensation
3. Each dispensation has **more improvement** than the previous one.
4. Each is **not a trial and error** dispensation (God is unfolding His One Plan progressively)