

Hermeneutics 101: God's Changing House Rules – Dispensations

Literal (normal) Interpretation:

1. Literally (do not allegorize or spiritualize; the text means what it says)
2. Historically (as the reader would have understood it; bridge the gaps)
3. Grammatically (in its natural sense following normal rules of language)
4. Progressively (do not read the NT into the OT)
5. Synthetically (let the Bible interpret the Bible)

Key Bible Interpretation Distinctions:

1. God will literally fulfill His Old Testament promises to Israel.
2. The Church is not Israel.

Because we accept the Bible as God's communication to mankind, and that it is to be understood as normal communication would be understood (literally, grammatically, and historically) as well as progressively, we come to see that God has given different sets of instructions for man to follow as time has progressed. Those different sets of instructions we call "**dispensations**." We call ourselves "**dispensationalists**" because we see these in Scripture. Our framework of understanding is thus called "**dispensationalism**."

Where Does the Term Come From?:

οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*) management of a household; responsibility; stewardship (from *oikos* "house" and *nomos* "law"). The term is well used in our day: **economy** (usually referring to the rules the financial world is running by at the time).

Forms of the word are used: verb (to steward, 1x); a position (a steward, 10x); a responsibility (stewardship, 9x). Here are Biblical examples of the latter:

Luke 16:2 "So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your **stewardship**, for you can no longer be steward.' (also vv. 3 & 4)

1 Cor 9:17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a **stewardship**.

***Eph 1:10** that in the **dispensation** of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.

Eph 3:2 if indeed you have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

***Eph 3:9** and to make all see what *is* the **fellowship** of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

Col 1:25 of which I became a minister according to the **stewardship** from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

1 Tim 1:4 nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly **edification** which is in faith.

Dispensations have not necessarily ceased as they have progressed. God's purposes continue, and portions of each dispensation continue, along with or in conjunction with God's overall plan. Thus they are not time periods.

How Dispensations Work

1. God Governs Through _____ and _____
2. Man Is to Acknowledge & _____ to Revelation, & _____ Upon God's Grace
3. God Sends _____, then More Revelation and Grace

What Are the Different Sets of Rules We See in the Bible?

1. **The Dispensation of** _____
When: Creation
Who: Adam & Eve
Rules: Gen 1:28 (5x); eat vegetables; keep garden; don't eat of TOKGE
2. **The Dispensation of** _____
When: The Fall
Who: Adam & Eve
Rules: Gen 3:15 promise; Gen 4:4-5 blood sacrifice
3. **The Dispensation of** _____
When: The Flood
Who: Noah & his family
Rules: Animals fear man (Gen 9:2); man can eat flesh (Gen 9:3-4); man must kill those who murder other men (Gen 9:6); promise of no more world-wide floods (Gen 9:8-18)
4. **The Dispensation of** _____
When: The Calling of Abraham
Who: Abraham
Rules: God promised to Abraham land (Gen 12:1), seed (Gen 12:2;15:5) and personal, national, and universal blessing (Gen 12:2-3)
5. **The Dispensation of** _____
When: The giving of the Law at Mt Sinai (moral, civil, & ceremonial aspects)
Who: Israel
Rules: Keep the whole law (Lev 18:5; Gal 3:10; James 2:10)
6. **The Dispensation of** _____
When: Pentecost
Who: The Church
Rules: Believe (Acts 3:19;16:31); make disciples (Mt 28:18-20); serve God through a local assembly (Acts 2:41; Eph 4); become sanctified and mature (Eph 4:11-16)
7. **The Dispensation of the** _____
When: The second coming of Christ
Who: The world.
Rules: New covenant (Is 2:3; Joel 2:28; Jer 31:31-34); obey the King.