

Dispensations, Part 2

Review

Each dispensation reveals additional details of God's plan to recover what Adam lost in the Garden, with new revelations building on what has already been disclosed. It represents a series of periods or eras during which humanity is presented with blessings and a test. However, he invariably fails the test, leading to the dispensation concluding with judgment. Throughout this process, God discloses more of Himself to mankind while also allowing humanity to gain a deeper understanding of their own nature.

The Age of the Promise

The fourth dispensation is known as the Age of Promise, often referred to as the "Age of the Patriarchs." It began with God's call to Abram and continues through to the time of Moses and the giving of the Law. The previous dispensation's human government failed to provide justice to its fellow humans. God recognized that this method would not succeed, so He chose one individual through whom divine provision and justice would be realized. The selection of Abram is considered one of the most important events in all of human history. God establishes a covenant relationship with Abram, and the stewardship of this dispensation is based on that covenant, first mentioned in Genesis 12:1-3.

Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8, 15-19; 22:16-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 31:13; 35:9-12 confirms and elaborates on this.

A new species was created—the racial Jew—and with it came the responsibility to remain in a place of blessing, the land that God showed to Abram. God's promises of blessing to Abram were both unconditional and

conditional. The unconditional promises to Abram and his descendants rely solely on God's integrity.

In Genesis 12:1-3, Abram (who would later be called Abraham) receives important promises for both himself and his descendants that carry global importance (Galatians 3:14; see Hebrews 11:8-9).

The seven unconditional promises of the Abrahamic Covenant include:

1. I will make you a great nation
2. I will bless you
3. I will make your name great
4. You shall be a blessing
5. I will bless those who bless you
6. I will curse those who curse you
7. And in you all families of the earth shall be blessed

These unconditional blessings rest entirely on the sovereign power of Almighty God. The conditional promises rely on the Israelites' obedience to remain in a place of blessing.

This dispensation was designed to teach man to rely on God. It embodied a system of grace where God would provide everything that man needed. The only condition was that they trust in God's promises of delivery. Abram did not immediately follow God's instructions. Instead, contrary to God's explicit commands, he brought his father with him and did not go directly to the land that God would show him.

When God later promised him a son but did not deliver immediately, Abram and his wife, Sarai, took matters into their own hands. Abram fathered a son through Sarai's slave, believing that would fulfill the promise. Guess what? That is works, but God always rejects human efforts. Eventually, Abram trusted God, and Sarai gave him his son Isaac.

After arriving in the land, Abraham did not remain there but left (see Gen 12:10, 20:1, 21:31). Isaac also departed (26:1-2), followed by Jacob (29:1), and eventually, the family of Israel moved to Egypt (46:1-6). While the LORD approved their journey to Egypt, Israel finds itself there because of

Joseph's betrayal. Overall, Abraham's family struggles to trust God to meet their needs and continues to feel discontented while in the land.

Subsequent generations of Israelites continued to struggle with trusting God's promises, ultimately finding themselves enslaved in Egypt. The central lesson is to have faith in what God communicates and to follow His instructions exactly as given. This represents grace in its most basic form. Israel did not pass the grace test and, as a result, fell into slavery in Egypt.

The Age of Israel

The Age of Israel is often called the Age of the Law. It began with God's call for Israel to be freed from bondage in Egypt and continues until the end of the Tribulation, excluding the intercalary Church Age that is inserted into the Age of the Law near its conclusion. (More on this later.) Once again, God's grace aided humanity by redeeming His chosen people from their bondage in Egypt. Through Moses, God liberated His chosen ones from slavery.

During their wilderness wanderings, God established a covenant with Israel. When offered the Law, Israel arrogantly responded, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." What they should have said is, "No! We cannot do these things, but we wish to remain under our Lord's abiding grace!" They chose the legalism of the Law over grace. It's important to note that the Law was given to the entire nation of Israel, including both believers and nonbelievers. Every citizen was called to follow the Law.

The law served multiple purposes, one of which was regulating the social, religious, and moral aspects of their lives. It promised blessings for following the Law and warned of discipline from God for failing to do so (Deut. 28). Since Israel's blessings and discipline depended on their adherence to the code, it must be considered a conditional covenant. Furthermore, the Law was meant to reveal the true nature of sin. Because the Israelites had to uphold the Law through their own human efforts, it also aimed to demonstrate how that was impossible and that something greater was needed to produce righteous behavior.

When instructed to enter the land, they did not trust God and hesitated out of fear of the inhabitants, resulting in 40 years of chastisement before they

eventually entered and occupied it. With possession of the land and the Law, conditions were established for Israel's continued occupation of the land. This is known as the Deuteronomic Covenant. Some view this as a distinct covenant, while others see it as a restatement of the Law given at Horeb (Sinai). The term Deuteronomy derives from a Greek word meaning "second law." Additionally, some believe that only the Ten Commandments were given at Horeb, and what is recorded in Deuteronomy 29 represents the remainder of the Mosaic Law. The Land Grant Covenant in Deuteronomy serves as a restatement and clarification of the covenant made earlier with Abraham.

According to the Law, if Israel adheres to its commandments, it will be blessed; otherwise, it will face punishment. This punishment may involve the destruction of the nation and expulsion from the land, as outlined in the Deuteronomic Covenant (Deut 28). Nevertheless, since God made an unconditional promise concerning the land under the Abrahamic Covenant, such an expulsion would be temporary, and the Israelites would eventually reclaim the land. In other words, while ultimate possession is unconditional, the occupation of the land depends on Israel's adherence to the Law.

The Law did not produce righteousness in the Israelites. The history of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant is a long record of blatant and continuous violations of the Law, along with flirtations with idolatry and the worship of false gods. Israel misunderstood the purpose of the Law (1 Tim. 1:8-10) and sought righteousness through good deeds and ceremonial practices (Acts 15:1; Rom. 9:31-10:3), ultimately rejecting their own Messiah (John 1:10-11).

They were expelled from the land twice due to such failures. After numerous warnings from the prophets, God enacted judgment upon Israel. First, the Northern Kingdom fell into slavery, followed by Judah. Both were eventually restored to the land. Once back, the Messiah, "born of a woman —made under the Law," appeared, and Israel, once again immersed in religious apostasy, conspired to kill Him. For its apostasy and failures under the Law, Israel was ultimately destroyed as a nation in AD 70, exactly as Moses prophesied (Deut. 28:63-64). Israel continues to face its final discipline (and redemption) alongside an unbelieving world and the

apostate Christian church during the last seven years of the Age of Israel, known as the Tribulation.

The lesson humanity must learn here is that the Law cannot save or produce righteousness, as it relies entirely on human effort for its execution (Rom. 8:3-4). No one has ever been or can be justified and made holy through the deeds of the Law (Rom. 3:20; Heb. 7:19; Acts 13:39). The Law demands complete compliance, and no one can meet that perfect standard (James 2:10). If you consider yourself a "Law-keeper," whether Jew or Christian, you are destined to fail. Surprisingly, that lesson seems lost not only on most Jews but also on many Christians today.

The Law only reveals knowledge of sin and its serious consequences. It was intended to show humanity that true righteousness through works is unattainable. The only path to righteousness is through salvation by grace, made possible by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, and by living a spiritual life through faith, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in every believer. This indwelling and empowerment by the Spirit enables individuals to meet the Law's perfect standard (Gal. 5:16, 22-23; Mat. 22:37-40; Ro. 13:8, 10; Jas. 2:8; Mr. 12:33).

Although we are currently in the sixth dispensation, known as the Church Age or the Age of Grace, the Age of Israel has not yet completed its full course. It has been interrupted, and seven years remain for its fulfillment. With Israel's rejection of the offered Messiah and the accompanying Kingdom Age, God extended the Messiah to the Gentiles instead. In doing so, He interrupted the Age of Israel, which still has seven years left, and inserted the Church Age into it.

How Do We Know That?

Each dispensation consists of four parts: it begins with a blessing, followed by a test for humanity, then humanity's failure of the test, and finally divine discipline. Israel was blessed with entry into the land, faced the test of the Law, failed to keep the Law, and was removed from the land in AD 70 because of that failure. Additionally, they rejected their Messiah and crucified Him. Their discipline has lasted for nearly 2,000 years and is not yet complete.

The notion that the Age of Israel will be interrupted by the Church Age stems from various Biblical sources, but its foundation lies in a study of a prophecy in Daniel 9. This prophecy from God was given to Daniel during the Israelites' exile in Babylonian captivity. The angel Gabriel conveyed it to Daniel. The prophecy indicates how much time Israel has remaining. The countdown commenced with a specific event: the decree to rebuild the destroyed Temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Daniel 9:24 “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

This three-verse passage outlines the remaining time designated for the Age of Israel: 490 years. While “weeks” can be interpreted as weeks of days, months, or years, the only interpretation that can find fulfillment is that these are seventy weeks of seven years each, totaling 490 years. “Thy people” can only refer to Daniel’s people, the Israelites. Therefore, Daniel was informed that Israel, symbolizing the Age of Israel, has 490 years left.

The 490 years are divided into three periods: seven weeks (49 years), sixty-two weeks (434 years), and one week (7 years), each marked by significant events. The countdown began with the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the king of Persia, in 444 BC. Although several decrees were issued, this one is the only one that resulted in action to restore Jerusalem. Forty-nine years (seven weeks) later, the Israelites returned to the land,

and Jerusalem was considered walled and rebuilt from its previous ruined state.

It then states that 434 years later, "the Messiah would be cut off but not for himself." The Hebrew word means "anointed one" and is typically rendered as "Messiah." In this context, it clearly refers to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The term "cutoff" refers to death, while the phrase "but not for himself" implies that nothing intended for him as the Messiah was granted at that time. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a young donkey on Palm Sunday, when he first proclaimed himself as Israel's Messiah, occurred, according to most calculations, 434 years plus 49 years after the decree of Artaxerxes, thereby perfectly fulfilling the prophecy. This leads us to the Cross.

Then, verse 26 states, "The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." This suggests two events occurring **after** the Messiah is cut off. First, the "people," identified as belonging to "the prince who is to come," will destroy the city and the Temple. Those "people" were the Roman legions under Emperor Titus in AD 70. They destroyed Jerusalem and took many Jews captive, while others scattered to save their lives.

Between the Messiah being "cut off" (the Cross) and the arrival of the "people of the prince" who destroy the city and the Temple in verse 26, there is another *unmentioned* event: the Church Age. This dispensation interrupts the Age of Israel.

The Church Age is not mentioned in Daniel's prophecy because its existence was not disclosed in it. Daniel was shown only what specifically relates to "his people," Israel.

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other

generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Paul describes the Church Age as the “stewardship of God’s grace.” The Greek word translated as “stewardship” is our familiar term, *oikonomia*. Paul refers to this dispensation of the Church Age as a “mystery.” The Greek word for this is *musterion*, which indicates a hidden secret. The Church Age was concealed from ages past and revealed to Paul and the other apostles much later. In the context of Daniel’s prophecy, this mystery Church Age begins after the Messiah is “cut off” in AD 30 but before the “people of the prince to come” arrive to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, which happens 40 years later in AD 70. We will return to the Church Age shortly.

Meanwhile, back to Daniel.

Daniel sees the events described in verses 26 to 27 of chapter 9 as a single, continuous series of occurrences.

Daniel 9:26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

After the middle of Daniel 9:26, with the statement, “Its end shall come with a flood,” we transition beyond the Cross of AD 30 *and* the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70, jumping ahead to the Tribulation, which is the final week of Daniel’s prophecy. He viewed these events in verses 26 and 27 as happening within seven years of those in the first half of verse 26 (the coming of the Messiah). As of now, that represents a 2,000-year gap in time that Daniel was not shown.

The “prince who is to come” refers to the antichrist of the Tribulation. Since the people of the “prince who is to come” were the Roman legions under Titus, it follows that the antichrist will be Roman. Additional passages in Revelation seem to support this idea. Most commentators believe that the Antichrist of the end times will be the leader of some form of a revived Roman Empire.

The “prince” confirms “the covenant with many for one week” (v. 27). This is a treaty of some kind that he establishes with Israel, and possibly with other nations as well. What is the nature of this treaty? Many commentators suggest that it might be a form of mutual defense agreement between this Revived Roman Empire (European Union?) and Israel, but we lack sufficient details to be dogmatic about that.

Personally, I’m not convinced that the term “many” specifically refers to Israel. The Hebrew word can be translated in various ways, including many, great, more, long, multitude, or even captain. It might refer to a much larger group of nations, or—if we consider that this word could be translated as “great” or “captain”—perhaps it suggests that the antichrist makes this covenant with Satan. That interpretation is starting to resonate more with me. Again, it’s difficult to be dogmatic here.

The 70 Weeks prophecy concludes with, “For half of the week, he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” (v.27).

Three and a half years into the Tribulation, the prince arrives in Jerusalem, erects a statue of himself in the Temple, and demands worship, referred to as the “abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. The term is still used in Israel today to describe idol worship. What follows is the final half (3.5 years) of the seven-year Tribulation week, often referred to as the “Great Tribulation.” Conditions were bad before, but they become exponentially worse during this time.

The statement, “the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” (v.27) refers to Satan being confined in the Abyss at the Second Advent, which

signifies the conclusion of the Tribulation and the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy.

The primary purpose of the Tribulation is to prepare Israel for her Messiah. Numerous Old Testament scriptures confirm this (Deut. 30:3; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9). Matthew 24:9-26 reflects the same purpose for the Tribulation. Daniel chapter 9 specifically refers to Daniel's people.

Verse after verse about the Tribulation includes particularly Jewish details, such as fleeing on the Sabbath, the Temple, the "holy place," Jerusalem, the "twelve tribes," the "son of Moses," "signs" in the heavens, the "sanctuary," the "covenant" with the beast, the "abomination of desolation," and the "sacrifice and oblation" related to the Temple ritual. All these details point to Israel, not the Church.

Not the Church—since Jesus has taken His bride home with the Rapture. With the true Church gone, God will turn His attention back to His chosen people, the Israelites. At the start of the Tribulation, there were no believers in Israel—or anywhere else. All will have been removed with the Rapture. It likely won't be long before some of those "left behind" connect the dots and become believers, and eventually, we will have 144,000 Jewish evangelists spreading the truth. Many will come to a saving knowledge of Christ during the Tribulation, especially Jews, because of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7:4-8).

God's purpose during the Tribulation is to lead a multitude of Jews to conversion and redemption. These individuals are the redeemed of Israel who will enjoy the blessings of the long-promised Kingdom Age that follows. The good news proclaimed during the Tribulation will be that the King is about to return and assume His earthly throne.

This is the event that Israel yearned for in the first century when John the Baptist called Israel to come out of its spiritual apostasy and repent of its sins in preparation for the promised Kingdom. Jesus offered the Kingdom to Israel; however, Israel was so troubled by its Gentile occupation that all it desired was for that occupation to end. Israel was looking for what I call the "kick-butt Messiah," the triumphant warrior King who would drive the

occupiers out and restore Israel to a position of national prominence in the world, as promised in Jeremiah 31. This will indeed happen in the last of the seven dispensations, known as the Kingdom Age or Millennium, which follows the Tribulation.

But Israel rejected the necessary suffering Messiah, the Lamb who had to come to take away Israel's (and the world's) sins. In its spiritual blindness, Israel could not recognize the need for the suffering Messiah or the need to confront the issue of sin. They only needed to read Isaiah 53 to see the suffering Messiah and the detailed prophecy of the Cross. They merely had to read Psalm 22 to witness the agony of the Cross from the perspective of the one nailed to it. No, Israel had fallen into the religious apostasy of legalism (much like parts of the church today), and in its sinful arrogance, it did not want the suffering Messiah. They wanted the kick-butt King!

The "restrainer," which includes the Holy Spirit and the Church, is removed at the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:7). The Tribulation relates to God administering the final discipline for Israel's apostasy and their murder of the Messiah. With the Church absent, the focus shifts to Israel and God preparing them for the Kingdom. The Tribulation is not linked to the Church Age; it represents the last "week" of Daniel's 70 weeks.

Through the Tribulation, God is gathering His lost sheep back into the fold for national redemption. During this period, Israel's spiritual blindness will be removed, and the people will acknowledge what they rejected centuries earlier. This blindness is both national and partial. Throughout the last two thousand years of the Church Age, many Jews have found personal redemption and salvation through faith in Yeshua ha Meshiach (Jesus the Messiah).

Many Jews will come to Christ during the Tribulation, and many Gentiles will as well. At the judgments associated with the Second Advent, God gathers Israel and the nations. The sheep will be separated from the goats (the saved from the unsaved), and only the sheep will enter the Kingdom.

The second purpose of the Tribulation is for God to pour out His judgment on an unbelieving and Christ-rejecting world (Jer. 25:32-33; Isa. 26:21; 2 Thess. 2:12). God will judge the nations of the earth for their unbelief,

rejection of His provisions for salvation, and failure to meet His standard of righteousness. This judgment will include those deceived by the false doctrines of the "harlot," the ecumenical, "Christian" religious system that arises from the apostate church left behind at the Rapture. It will encompass individuals from all denominations who have rejected the truth in favor of the lies of human traditions and satanic-inspired deceptions (Rev. 17).

The apostate church, the harlot, will proclaim the antichrist as the Messiah. The characteristics and events of the Tribulation seem to mirror the upcoming Kingdom, as Satan endeavors to mislead humanity into thinking that the Messiah has come to establish His promised Kingdom. Many will be misled, and the apostate church will actively engage in and support that deception.

Satan has only one opportunity to evade his sentence to the Lake of Fire. This single chance is to somehow prevent God from realizing His plan of redemption. From Adam to Christ, Satan did everything possible to disrupt the line leading to Christ but ultimately failed. This is why the genealogies in the Bible are significant; they provide evidence that Jesus fulfilled God's earliest promises. God promised the woman that a Savior would come from her. Had Satan succeeded in thwarting that plan, God would have been considered a liar and unable to uphold His promises, thus unqualified to judge Satan.

Satan tried to prevent the Cross, but ultimately failed. He wanted Jesus dead, but not on the Cross; he preferred that Jesus be stoned to death according to Jewish law. God secured a strategic victory when Jesus went to the Cross and sin was judged. All those promises of redemption from the Age of Innocence through the Age of Israel became effective through the Cross. Perhaps disturbed but undeterred, Satan shifted to Plan B—destroy the Jews.

Throughout human history, God has made a series of promises to Israel. The promises we will focus on here are known as "unconditional covenants." There are four of these promises, referred to as unconditional because Israel is not obligated under their terms. The only one obligated by these unconditional promises is God. In other words, God has declared His

commitment to do something for Israel, and no conditions are placed on Israel to receive these promises, except to arrive at the designated time to claim them. Consider it this way: Your parents promised you a trust of \$500,000 when you turn 21. All you need to do to collect is reach that age. You don't need to do anything to earn the money; it is promised to you on a future date, provided you show up to collect. That is how these unconditional promises function.

These four unconditional covenants to Israel are:

1. The Abrahamic Covenant
2. The Davidic Covenant
3. The Land Grant Covenant
4. New Covenant to Israel

These promises are all ultimately connected to the Kingdom Age, which represents the final stage of God's redemptive plan. God will fulfill them immediately after the Second Advent, the event that marks the conclusion of the Tribulation. Israel must be present to receive the promised blessings. Consequently, Israel will carry the promised blessings of the four unconditional covenants into the seventh and final dispensation, the Kingdom Age. However, these promises cannot be fulfilled if Israel is not present to receive them.

To prevent God from fulfilling His promises to Israel and, consequently, hindering the Theocratic Kingdom, Israel must be kept from appearing at the appointed time to collect. If even one Jew is present to receive the blessings that God promised, then Satan fails. Therefore, Satan must completely annihilate Israel—every single Jew, both believing and unbelieving. Reflecting on historical events like the Inquisition and the Holocaust makes Satan's objective of eliminating the Jews abundantly clear. The Tribulation represents his last chance to achieve this.

This, my beloved, is why we have anti-Semitism in the world. It is Satan planting the seeds of hatred for the Jews to help facilitate his plan of elimination when the time comes. This is the answer to the question of why the holocaust happened. During the 1930s, there were around 12,000,000 Jews in the world. During WWII, Satan got over half of them before he was stopped. You might ask, "Can't Satan just kill the saved Jews?"

Theoretically, yes, but how can he be sure he got them all? Some will be obvious, but many will not be. He has to kill them all in order for his plan to succeed.