

**Dispensationalism:** [Dispensationalism](#) is the system of theology that provides the best, most literal [hermeneutic](#) (method of Bible interpretation). Also, dispensationalism makes a clear distinction between Israel and the Church. The classic [seven dispensations](#) are Innocence, [Conscience](#), [Government](#), [Promise](#), [Law](#), [Grace](#), and [Millennial Kingdom](#). In each of these, there is a recognizable, six-fold pattern of:

1. how God worked with those living in the dispensation.
2. God gives a responsibility to people,
3. they fail to meet God's requirements,
4. their failure is judged, and
5. God extends grace and
6. hope for the future.

A **dispensation** is a way of ordering things—an administration, a system, or a management. In theology, a dispensation is the divine administration of a period of time; each dispensation is a divinely appointed age. Dispensationalism is a theological system that recognizes these ages ordained by God to order the affairs of the world. **Dispensationalism has two primary distinctives:** 1) a **consistently literal interpretation of Scripture**, especially Bible prophecy, and 2) a view of the **uniqueness of Israel as separate from the church in God's program**. Classical dispensationalism identifies seven dispensations in God's plan for humanity.

**Definition of dispensation:** a general state or ordering of things; *specifically:* a system of revealed commands and promises regulating human affairs

## 1. Dispensation of Innocence

*Stewards:* Adam and Eve

*The Period:* From the creation of man to his temptation and fall

*Responsibility:* To obey God ([Genesis 1:26-28](#); [2:15-17](#))

*Failure:* Disobedience ([Genesis 3:1-6](#))

*Judgment:* Curse and death ([Genesis 3:7-19](#))

*Grace:* A new chance and the promise of a Redeemer ([Genesis 3:15](#)). *[He also showed mercy by killing an innocent animal and providing skins to cover over (atone for) their sin. God's gracious provision showed the inadequacy of man's attempt to atone for his own sin and the sufficiency of God's atonement.]*

## 2. Dispensation of Conscience

*Stewards:* Cain and Seth and their families

*The Period:* From man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden until the Flood, a period of about 1,656 years

*Responsibility:* To do good and offer blood sacrifices ([Genesis 3:7](#), [22](#); [4:4](#))

*Failure:* Wickedness ([Genesis 6:5-6](#), [11](#), [12](#))

*Judgment:* The worldwide Flood ([Genesis 6:7](#), [13](#); [7:11-14](#))

*Grace:* Noah and his family are saved ([Genesis 6:8-9](#); [7:1](#); [8:1](#))

### 3. Dispensation of Human Government

*Stewards:* [Noah](#) and his descendants

*The Period:* From the Flood to the confusion of tongues at Babel, about 429 years

*Responsibility:* To scatter and multiply ([Genesis 9](#))

*Failure:* Refusal to scatter and the building of the [tower of Babel](#) ([Genesis 11:1-4](#))

*Judgment:* Confusion of languages ([Genesis 11:5-9](#))

*Grace:* [Abraham](#) is chosen—the start of the Jewish race ([Genesis 12:1-3](#))

### 4. Dispensation of Promise

*Stewards:* The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

*The Period:* From the call of Abraham to Israel's arrival at Mt. Sinai, a period of about 430 years

*Responsibility:* Dwell in Canaan ([Genesis 12:1-7](#))

*Failure:* Dwelt in Egypt ([Genesis 12:10](#); [46:6](#))

*Judgment:* Egyptian bondage ([Exodus 1:8-14](#))

*Grace:* Moses the deliverer is sent ([Exodus 3:6-10](#))

### 5. Dispensation of Law

*Stewards:* Moses and the children of Israel as a nation at Mt. Sinai

*The Period:* from Mt. Sinai until Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law with His death

*Responsibility:* Keep the whole Law ([Exodus 19:3-8](#))

*Failure:* The Law was broken ([2 Kings 17:7-20](#))

*Judgment:* Worldwide dispersion ([Deuteronomy 28:63-66](#); [Luke 21:20-24](#))

*Grace:* The promised Savior is sent ([Isaiah 9:6-7](#); [Galatians 4:4-5](#))

### 6. Dispensation of Grace

*Stewards:* The [church](#). All believers are ministers of their spiritual fruit and a “holy nation” ([1 Peter 2:9](#))

*The Period:* From the [Day of Pentecost](#) ([Acts 2](#)) to the [Rapture](#) ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)), a period of nearly 2,000 years and counting

*Responsibility:* To be perfected by [sanctification](#); to love one another; to exhibit ever-increasing godliness ([1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); [2 John 1:5](#))

*Failure:* A lack of maturity; worldliness; many churches falling into apostasy ([Galatians 5:4](#); [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#))

*Judgment:* The blindness of [apostasy](#) and false doctrine ([2 Thessalonians 2:3](#); [2 Timothy 4:3](#))

*Grace:* Forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus ([1 John 1:3-7](#); [John 14:20](#))

### 7. Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom

*Stewards:* The resurrected Old Testament saints, the glorified Church, and survivors of the [Tribulation](#) and their descendants

*The Period:* From the [Second Coming of Jesus Christ](#) until the final rebellion, a period of one thousand years

*Responsibility:* To be obedient, remain undefiled, and worship the Lord Jesus ([Isaiah 11:3-5](#); [Zechariah 14:9](#))

*Failure:* After Satan is loosed from the [Abyss](#), sinful man rebels one more time ([Revelation 20:7-9](#))

*Judgment:* Fire from God; the [Great White Throne Judgment](#) ([Revelation 20:9-15](#))

*Grace:* Jesus Christ restores creation and rules righteously in Israel, with all saints assisting ([Isaiah 11:1-5](#); [Matthew 25:31-46](#); [Revelation 20](#))