

## DISPENSATIONS

### Grace (Church Age)

The Dispensation of Grace is the period of time that we are presently living in. It is sometimes called the Church Age because it has to do with the New Testament Church. The events concerning this dispensation are recorded in Acts--Revelation. During the dispensation of the Law, God was dealing mainly with the nation of Israel. But now, read Ephesians 2:12—20 to see how God has made Jew and Gentile “one body by the cross.”

In Galatians 3:13, 14, we read, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, we have been delivered from the law and are free to serve Christ through faith.

After Jesus’ resurrection, He remained on the earth forty days, being seen of many. Then, after instructing His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit, He ascended to His Father in heaven. While the disciples were waiting for God’s promise of the Holy Spirit, they realized the importance of appointing someone to take the place of Judas as one of the twelve disciples—Judas having hanged himself. Therefore, after praying for the Lord’s guidance in the matter, they chose Matthias to fill this place.

Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit appeared to the disciples and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2) This was the beginning of the Church, which is called the “body of Christ” in Eph. 1:22, 23 and Col. 1:18.

In Acts 9, we read that God chose Saul, later called Paul, to be the apostle to the Gentiles. In Romans 2:16, we read that we will be judged according to Paul’s gospel. Therefore, it is very important that we understand the gospel he brought to the church. Of course, Paul’s message was basically the same as all the Word of God. Salvation has always been by grace through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. However, Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:3-7 that God had revealed to him the mystery that had not been known in other ages—that is, that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs (with the Jews) and of the same body, and partakers of God’s promise.

This is not to say that God has cast away His people, Israel. Romans 11 tells us that God has temporarily set Israel aside because of their unbelief, but He will one day receive them back again and Israel as a nation shall be saved. Scripture nowhere states that the church has replaced Israel.

God’s ultimate desire for the church is given in Ephesians 5:25-32. God said concerning Adam that it was not good for him to dwell alone, so God made a helpmeet for him. Even so God desired a helpmeet for His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus gave Himself for the church, “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Note verses 31, 32: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

This wonderful dispensation of grace will also end in judgment because of the unbelief and disobedience of the people. Jesus is going to return for those who are looking for His coming (I Thes. 4:13-17), and then there will follow seven years of much tribulation and sorrow upon the world. The anti-Christ will be ruling during this time. God has allotted him exactly 1,260 days to be ruler of the world, after which time he, along with the false prophet, will be cast alive into the lake of fire. Then all remaining sinners will be destroyed during the Battle of Armageddon. Satan, himself, will be thrown into the bottomless pit where he will remain for one thousand years. The world will then enjoy a rule of peace and righteousness, which is the dispensation of the Millennium.

### **Millennium**

The word “millennium” means “thousand.” This thousand years is spoken of in Revelation 20:1-6, and is the final testing of mankind before the beginning of the eternal state. It begins with only believers on the earth, Satan bound in the bottomless pit, and the Lord reigning over all the earth in peace and righteousness. What a wonderful beginning! During this time, Israel will be the leading nation (Isa. 60:12), the seat of government will be in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:17), there will be no war (Isa. 2:4), no wild animals (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25), no sickness (Isa. 35:5, 6, 10), and the earth will blossom (Isa. 35:1; Joel 3:18). There will be longevity of life during this time (Isa. 65:20, 22; Zech. 8:4).

How sad that even in this almost perfect environment, there will still be disobedience and men rejecting God. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that man’s heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Therefore, many will not obey God from the heart. At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed for a short period of time. He will go throughout the nations and deceive these who have not received God’s plan of salvation. Then he will gather them together, as many as the sand of the sea, to battle against God’s people. At that time, God will send down fire from heaven to devour the unbelievers, and will cast Satan into the lake of fire, where he will remain forever and ever. All sinners will then stand before the great white throne to be judged. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Rev. 20:15.

Thus, the last dispensation ends in judgment. However, that will be the last need for judgment. After that, there will be no more sin, no unbelief or disobedience—but only righteousness, peace and joy for God’s people through all eternity.