



Magnolia Bible Church Sunday Bible Study - Prophecy Series

Lesson #3: Key Concepts Overview (1/3)

Dispensations, Israel, the Kingdom, the Bema, the Tribulation Period, the Millennial Reign, Eternity
Sunday, September 14, 2025 | 8:30 AM | Prepared by Chris Alexander (drchrisalexander@outlook.com)

This is the first of three series dealing with “key concepts” that serve as the foundation for much of this Prophecy Series. In this lesson we will be addressing Dispensations, Israel, and The Kingdom. Each of these subjects could occupy hours and hours of study, so you can imagine the challenge in trying to tackle all three in a single lesson! Provided below is commentary on each of the above subjects.

Dispensations

In all honesty the main focus of this lesson is **dispensations**. This might be a word you have never heard, but that’s OK because in this lesson we are going to explore what is *Dispensational Theology*, also known as dispensations. In going through this lesson refer to **Figure 1** (provided by Joe Wall) that shows seven dispensations; also refer to the detailed table provided on the next to last page. At its core, dispensationalism is a systematic method for studying how God has worked with man throughout history. A dispensation is a time period in which God evaluates man's obedience according to a specific level of revelation or standards. The pattern is that man fails each dispensation, which then results in God's judgment. During each dispensation men and women are held responsible to obey God relative to the requirements of that specific dispensation. As an example, God’s requirement today for obedience in terms of accepting Jesus as Savior is entirely different than God’s expectations for obedience in the time of Noah.

Covenant Theology is an alternate position to dispensationalism and is held by many Reformed Churches; the view is that God has one people Israel and the promises to Israel made in the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the new Israel, and the object of Abraham's hope. Believers who hold to this position see the Church as being the recipients of God’s blessing and “supplanting” promises made to Israel that have not yet been fulfilled.

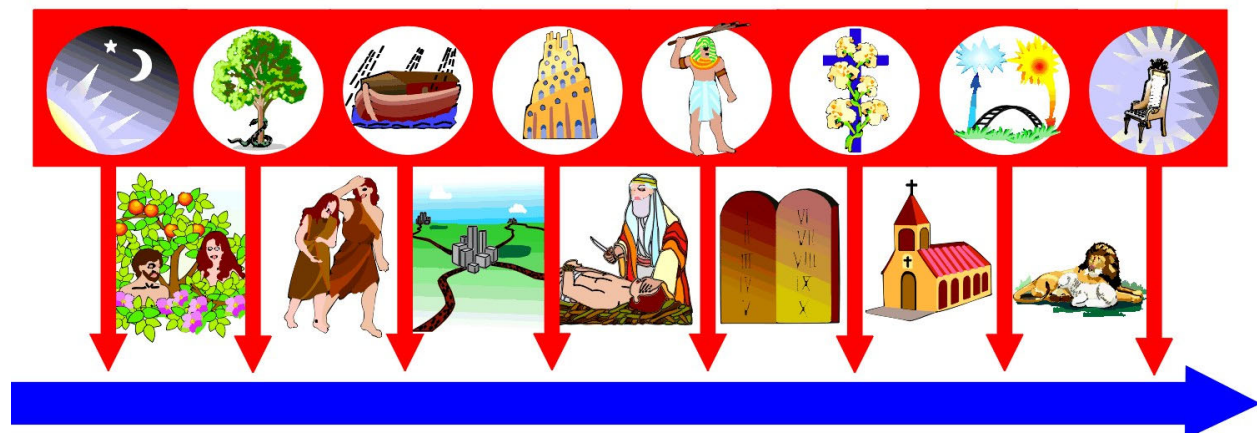


Figure 1 – Dispensational periods associated with Biblical history (from Joe Wall)

Israel

Typically, dispensationalists (Believers who view Biblical history through a “dispensational” lens) believe in distinct differences between Israel and the Church. Dispensationalists also believe that during the Tribulation Period Israel will embrace Jesus as Messiah. The Church is viewed as a “parenthesis” in Israel coming to see Jesus as the Messiah. Progressive dispensationalism “softens” the Church/Israel distinction

by seeing some Old Testament promises as expanded by the New Testament to include the Church. However, progressives never view this expansion as replacing promises to its original audience, Israel.¹

As will be seen in this series, Israel plays a critical role in End Time events. God's work through the nation of Israel centers on their reoccupation of Palestine after having been gathered from the four corners of the globe with Jesus' reign as King in Jerusalem. They will be re-established as a nation and occupy the land originally promised to them in the time of Abraham (i.e., Isaiah 11, specifically verse 11).

The Kingdom

In the context of this discussion, the Kingdom is NOT the Millennial Reign of Christ in the 1,000-year period, although that will be addressed in a future lesson. What is to be discussed here is the Kingdom of God, a subject about which Jesus spoke often. As Americans we are not very good with the whole "kingdom" concept. By our nature we don't like kingdoms and given the chance – we'll rebel every time! What is important to realize is that within a kingdom there is a ruler, a domain to be ruled, and subjects.

The Kingdom is God's redemptive reign. Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom at the start of His ministry where he announced, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). For what Israel had long waited, Christ had now inaugurated. Additionally, Jesus is the Kingdom (i.e., *where the king is, there is the kingdom*). This is reflected in Jesus' statement to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). Jesus revealed that His purpose was to proclaim the Kingdom when He stated that He "must preach the good news of the kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43). Through the parables we often see important concepts in the Kingdom; concepts like using resources with an eternal mindset, stewardship, and serving the Master.

Questions for Consideration

1. Referring to **Figure 1** and the table on Page 3, list the seven (7) dispensations and the corresponding judgment associated with each dispensation.
2. As part of the lecture for Lesson #2 we discussed the concept of the Rapture. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 and extract from this passage some important elements associated with the Rapture.
3. Using the line provided below, identify the following events on the timeline (feel free to review the chart provided in **Figure 2**). The *Bema* is also known as the Judgment of Believers.

Church Age	Rapture	Bema	Tribulation Period
Jesus 2 nd Coming	Armageddon	1000-Year Reign	White Throne



¹ Mike Stallard, *Progressive Dispensationalism*.

Dispensational Theology

Dispensation is derived from the Greek word *oikonomia* (οικονομία) meaning administration and in some contexts addresses the issue of stewardship (Luke 16:2-4). Several good examples of dispensations in the Scriptural context of dispensational theology are Ephesians 1:9-10 and Ephesians 3:8-11. The table below provides an overview of the seven major dispensations commonly accepted by Dispensationalists. A *dispensation* is a time period in which God evaluates man's obedience according to a specific level of revelation or standards. The pattern is that man fails each dispensation which normally results in God's judgment. Prepared by Chris Alexander (October 21, 1999).

Dispensation	Start of Time Period	Key Player(s)	Judgments	Covenants	Miscellaneous Notes
Innocence	4,000 B.C. (?) (Start for mankind)	God and Adam	Fall of Man (Gen 3:1-13)	Edenic (Gen 1:26, 2:15-17) Adamic (Gen 3:14-19) RG	The Edenic Covenant established man's dominion over the earth The Adamic Covenant was issued by God because of man's sin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of dominion • Fellowship • Image
Conscience	.	Adam	Flood (Genesis 9)		The dispensation of Conscience ended with the judgment of the Flood
Human Government (Single Nation)	4,000 B.C.	Noah	Tower of Babel	Noahic RG (Gen 9:1-17, 24-27)	Covenant with Noah: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be fruitful and multiply • Eat meat (no blood) The <i>Tower of Babel</i> created and disbursed the nations. One language would not exist until the end times under the reign of the Anti-Christ.
Promise	2000 B.C.	Abraham	Captivity	Abrahamic Gen 15:9-21 RG Gen 17 S-V	RG Covenant – God's promise of land to Abraham's descendants S-V Covenant - Conditional promise to be God of Abraham's descendants (sealed with act of circumcision)
Law	1300 B.C. (Deut 29:29)	Moses	Christ's Death (ends Law)	Mosaic/Siniatic S-V Exodus 19-24	Davidic Covenant made during this dispensation (RG , 2 Sam 7:15-16, not fulfilled until Messianic Reign of Christ)
Grace (Church Age)	1 A.D.	Christ	Rapture	New Covenant RG Jeremiah 31:31-34	The dispensation of Grace relates to the Church Age (Gentiles, Rom 11:25). Using a historical view of Revelation 2-3, this time period can be divided into 7 periods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ephesus (Neg.) Apostolic Era (Christ - 70 A.D.) • Smyrna (Pos.) Persecuted church (70 - 324, Constantine) • Pergamum (Neg.) Idolatry/Sexual immorality • Thyatira (Neg.) Jezebel (Middle Ages, Catholic Church) • Sardis (Neg.) Reformation (insufficient break from Rome) • Philadelphia (Pos.) Worldwide mission movement (1650 - 1900) • Laodicea (Neg.) Lukewarm, wealthy time period
	Tribulation Period (awaiting the full number of Gentiles as described by Paul in Rom 11:25)		Great White Throne (last judgment)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapture - Christians removed from Earth (1 Thes. 4:13-18) • Tribulation Period (Daniel's 70th week, Daniel 12:1, 9:27) • First 3-1/2 years (1260 days) - 2 prophets in Revelation 11 • Last 3-1/2 years - False prophet, beast and Anti-Christ • Armageddon (Rev 16:16, 20:7-10) • 1,000 Year Reign (Rev 20:4-6, Isaiah 65:17-25 - emphasis on vs. 20) • Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15) • Gentile judgment (Matt 25:31-46) • Israel judgment (Ezekiel 20:39-44)
Kingdom	2,000+ A.D.	Christ		Everlasting Reign of Christ (Revelation 21-22, 2 Sam. 7:12)	

Notes

1. Judgments most often represent the end of a dispensation (usually indicating man's failure or the completion of God's plan for mankind during that time period)
2. The dispensations are not indicators the man has changed God's plans, but that man has merely fulfilled what God knew would already happen (Job 42:1)
3. In terms of the Covenant, **RG** means *Royal Grant* (unconditional) and **S-V** means *Suzerain-Vassal* (conditional)
4. In the listing of the churches in Revelation 2-3, Neg. (negative) and Pos. (positive) refer to the comments made by Christ to that respective church.

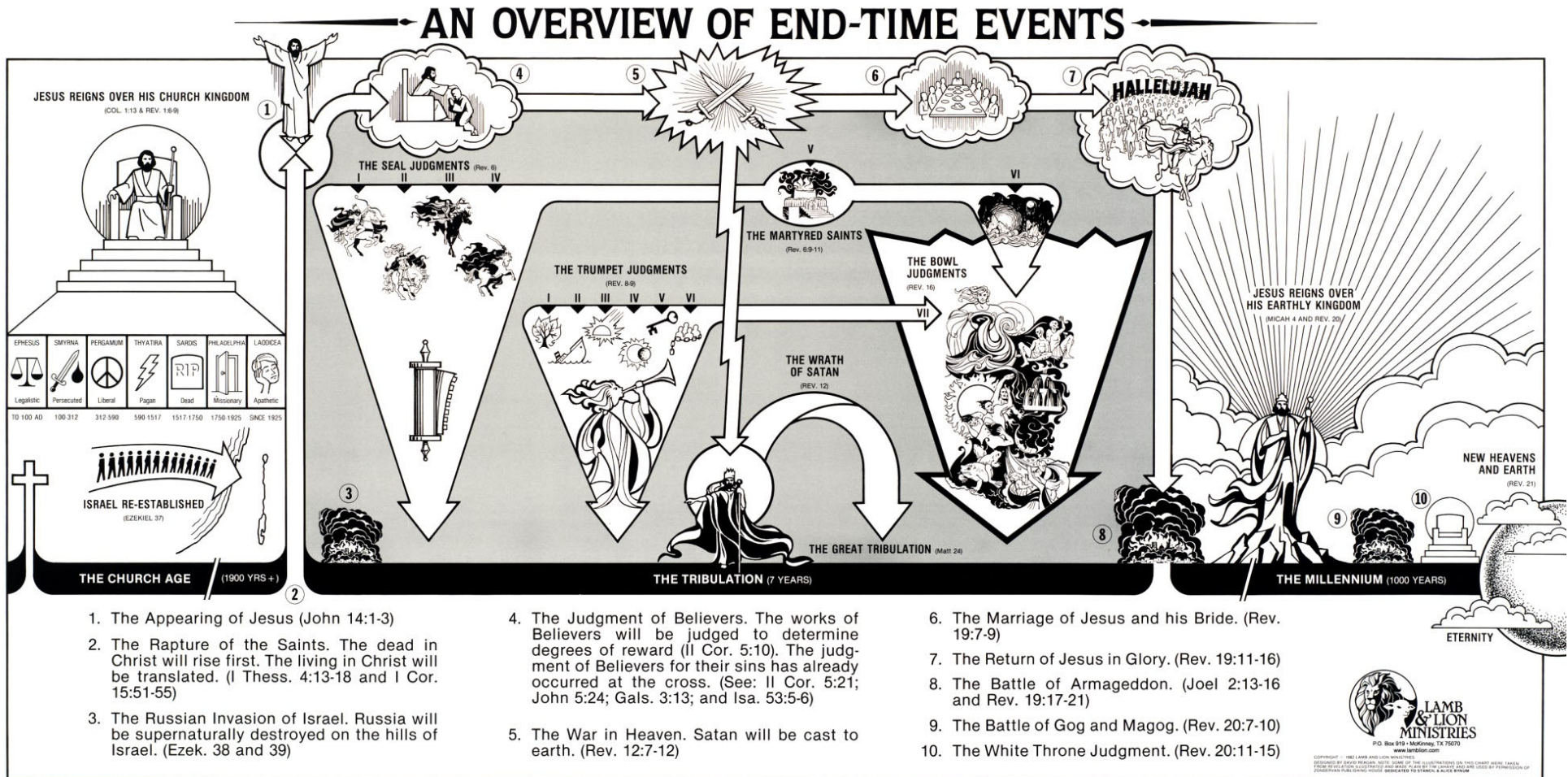


Figure 2 – Chart showing *An Overview of End Times* (Dr. Dave Reagan, Lamb & Lion Ministries, printed with permission)