

Some see a connection between this period of terrible suffering, when evidently most livestock died and presumably many people also (1 Kings 18:5), and the three and one-half years of divine wrath, producing world-wide tribulation. This drought of Ahab's time is a historical and hermeneutical landmark of Scripture. The dramatic close of the drought is set forth in connection with the bloody victory of Yahvism over Baalism reported in 1 Kings 18.¹

25. He said, "Ahab, things are a little over your head. You are really out of your depth right now. I suggest that you go up into the picnic grounds and crack a bottle of champagne and have a little of that *pâté de foie grois* [goose liver paste], and just have yourself a ball up there; because it is going to rain."
26. Ahab has not repented, and Ahab is absolutely no good. He has no capacity and is a reversionist.
27. Go up is a Qal imperative. He did not give imperatives to the people. He gave instructions, but not imperatives. But, to the king he says: "get up and go up." Then, he tells him what to do.
28. Two more in Qal imperatives: *eat*, "*akal*." He always did want to break out his "pheasant under the glass," and here is his chance. "Go on up there and eat, everything is going to be alright and drink," the Qal imperative of "*shathah*," and, by the way, "*shathah*" does not mean "to drink water."
29. This is not, either for or against alcoholic beverage, but it indicates that Ahab was for it; that's all. "*Shathah*," means "to eat and banquet, to eat and live it up, to eat and get hilarious."
30. "*Shathah*" means, "to have a party or go up on the mountain. Spread out your picnic basket and have a party." This is all Ahab is capable of doing? God the Holy Spirit has recorded what mediocrity really is.
32. We next proceed to the final two verses of James 5: verses 19 and 20. But first, two very important doctrines suggested by the preceding events just studied.

James 5:19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

v. 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
(NASB)

(End JAS-32 See JAS-33 beginning on p. 321.)

¹ R. D. Culver, "Ahab," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 1:79–80.



DOCTRINE OF DISPENSATIONS

A. Definition and Description

1. A dispensation is a period of time in human history expressed in terms of divine revelation. The inerrancy of the Word of God is the source for looking at history from the divine viewpoint. Therefore, dispensation is a technical theological term used primarily by the apostle Paul in the presentation of the mystery doctrine of the Church Age.
2. Dispensations are divine categories of human history; therefore, both the divine outline and the divine interpretation of human history. There are many interpretations of history, but the only accurate interpretation is dispensational, i.e., divine.
3. Dispensations are the vehicle by which believers living at a specific time in history can orient to God's will, plan, and purpose for their lives. God's plan is not the same for every dispensation. In fact, the plan is quite different in each dispensation.
4. The most difficult and subtle plan to learn by a believer is the Church Age or the protocol plan of God. Old Testament believers were under the ritual plan of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ was under the incarnation plan of God.
5. A dispensation is defined traditionally as a period of time during which a particular revelation of God's mind and God's will is operative, and during which man is tested as to his obedience to that specific manifestation of God's will, purpose, and plan. The believer's orientation to both time and to human history is vitally necessary for understanding God's plan and God's purpose.
6. Dispensations constitute the divine administration of history. In fact, the Greek word translated "dispensations" also means administration of some organization. Dr. H. A. Ironside defined dispensations in his book, *In the Heavens*, as follows: "It is an economy or a particular order or a condition of things prevailing in a special age which does not necessarily prevail in another age."
7. In every dispensation, God has a plan for believers, and in grace He provides the means for executing that plan. We must understand the other dispensations and then learn why only one dispensation is called the "dispensation of grace" (Ephesians 3:2).
8. While there is a different plan for believers in each dispensation, there is only one way of salvation throughout human history: personal faith in Jesus Christ. In all of human history, there is only one Savior, Jesus Christ, and He is revealed in different ways in different dispensations.



B. The New Testament Greek Vocabulary for Dispensations

1. The Greek word, **οικονομία** (*oikonomía*), is translated “dispensation.” It means the administration of a business or an estate, the management of a household. It is translated by three words: “order” (instead of chaos), “a plan” (instead of confusion), and “arrangement” (instead of disarray).
 - a. It was used in the Attic Greek by Xenophon and Plato, who used it for household administration. It was also used for the authority of parents over children, the provision of parents for their children, and the policy of parents for their children. The study of dispensations always teaches the authority God provides for every period of history. It connotes policy, administration, and provision by God for believers in a period of history. The translation policy, administration, and provision by God for believers in a period of history. The translation of “dispensation” originates from the policies and provisions of God for a particular historical era.
 - b. The word is used in Eph 1:10, 3:2; Col 1:25, all by the apostle Paul, the greatest teacher of all.
 - c. The word is now used as a technical theological term for an era of human history from the divine viewpoint.
 - d. Those who translate this as “administration” are wrong; this word is more technical than that, and it must refer to dispensations as separate from all other types of administrations.
2. The Greek word, **αἰών** (*aiṓn*) is generally translated “age.” It refers to a dispensation as a category of human history such as the “age” of Israel or Church “age.” Hence, the noun is used for divine categories in human history in such passages as Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26.
3. The Greek word, **καιρός** (*kairós*), means time as an epoch or era, a chronological order or system, a period of time characterized by distinctive development within that period. This word is used for the organization of historical events into their dispensational categories as in 1 Thessalonians 5:1.

It is used specifically for orientation to the Church Age in Romans 13:11, 8:18, 11:5. It is used for orientation to the Jewish Age in Ephesians 2:11-12. In Luke 21:24, it is used for the “times of the Gentiles” which runs co-terminus with the Church Age, when only Gentile nations can function as client nations to God. It is used for the word “epochs” in Acts 1:6-7.
4. The Greek word, **χρόνος** (*chrónos*) means time as a succession of events. It is used to portray the chronology of history or time as a series of points.



Occasionally, it is used for a section of time in chronology, which then refers to a dispensation. In Romans 16:25, *chrónos* is used for all dispensations prior to the Church Age. Peter also used this word for dispensations in 1 Peter 1:20. So this word is used three ways:

- a. Time in its course.
- b. A section of time, i.e., a dispensation.
- c. A point of time.

C. Dispensations are a Biblical subject.

Ephesians 1:8 he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight.

v. 9 He did this when he revealed to us the secret of his will according to his good pleasure that set forth in Christ,

v. 10 toward the administration of the fullness of times, to head up all things in Christ—the things in heaven and the things on earth.

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

v. 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you. (NET)

- a. Though a fantastic genius, Paul could not have understood this dispensation on his own. This mystery had to be a matter of revelation in order for him to understand it. This knowledge was given to him, as it is to us, through grace.
- b. Dispensational study is beneficial. It will keep you out of confusion. It will from to function in the wrong dispensation.

Ephesians 3:3 “that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly was made known to me, just as I have already written you briefly.

v. 4 By reading this, you ought to be able to understand my technical knowledge about the mystery of Christ.” (NET)

- c. The dispensation of the Church is a technical dispensation. It requires understanding technical words and knowing the *modus operandi*. This is the first time in history that the ordinary believer must think in terms of doctrine, must think like a prophet or an apostle, and must reconstruct his entire mental attitude.
- d. Therefore, every believer is given the ability to think through the filling of the Holy Spirit, and is given the complete Canon as the information about which to think. In order to think you must know the doctrine and be able to think in terms of its application. You think for yourself and do not need others to think for you.

