



## A BETTER WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

### Session 6

#### THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE

To be Dispensational means to read the Bible using the normal rules of grammar and the universally accepted meaning of words as expressed by the writer. In other words, unless the writer indicates otherwise, we take him at his word.

*“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.”*

How is this possible? Only by studying. Studying the Bible takes work.

The apostle Paul makes it clear how we are to approach the Scriptures. In **2 Timothy 2:15** he writes,

*“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”*

The Seven Dispensations							
	Innocence	Conscience	Government	Promise	Law	Grace	Kingdom
<b>Scripture</b>	Genesis 1-3	Genesis 4-8	Genesis 9-11	Genesis 12 - Exodus 18	Exodus 19 - Acts 1	<b>Acts 2 - Revelation 19</b>	Revelation 20
<b>Duration</b>	From the creation of Adam to his fall.	From the fall of Adam to the flood of Noah.	From the flood to the call of Abraham	From the call of Abraham to the giving of the Mosaic Law	From the giving of the Mosaic Law to Pentecost (?)	<b>Transitions from Pentecost to the Rapture</b>	
<b>The Responsibility Before God</b>	Fill and steward the earth; do not eat from the tree.	Obey the dictates of conscience.	Replenish the earth; rule righteously	Live in light of the promise	Keep the Mosaic Law	<b>Believe the Gospel by faith alone.</b>	
<b>The Judgment From God</b>	Separation from God	The flood	Confusion of language	Egyptian slavery	The curses of the covenants and captivities	<b>No judgment for believers. Rapture.</b>	

Today we will look at the fifth dispensation, called the dispensation of Grace that begins in the book of Acts.

What is Grace? It is God's undeserved favor toward man. Throughout history, God has always been gracious. His character never changes, yet in the dispensation of grace it is much more evident. The reason we use the term dispensation of grace is to distinguish it from the dispensation of the law. There is a sharp contrast between the two.

### **What's the difference between the Law and Grace?**

The Law is God's standard of righteousness. It is a standard so high that no one can achieve it, no one except Jesus Christ. But God in his grace gives us righteousness, even though we cannot keep the law, the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ. We don't have to try to achieve the standard or righteousness anymore, God has done it for us. That is truly grace!

### **When did this grace arrive?**

Grace appeared at an identifiable moment in time (John 1:15-18). And this grace dwelt with men (John 1:14). With the coming of grace, all the sins of mankind would be forgiven the moment the final sacrifice was made on the cross of Christ. All man would need to do is believe—the sacrifice had been made and there would be no need for any law for man to follow in order to partake in God's grace. It is free (John 3:16; Titus 2:11).

### **What is the benefit of Grace?**

Everyone who believes has God himself living within them through the Holy Spirit.

1. Every believer is freed from the burden of seeking to please God through numerous laws that regulate every aspect of their lives (Galatians 5:1, 13).
2. On the other hand, it means believers are empowered to obey God's will from the heart; sometimes called the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). God's grace teaches us (Titus 2:11-14).
3. The union of Jews and Gentiles into one body (Ephesians 2:16).

### **How were people saved in the Old Testament (before Christ's final sacrifice on the cross?).**

A standard answer that is often given (and your pastor has taught this) is, "All people of all time have always and forever been saved in the same way, "by grace, through faith." The typical teaching is people were saved by looking forward to the cross. I first heard this many years ago from a pastor in a baptist church, and I believed it. I never studied it. And as we typically do, I just repeated it over and over again. Today, I do not think people in the Old Testament were saved that way.

Genesis 15:6 does say, "Abraham believed, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness", but what did he believe? He believed the Lord concerning his promise to make a great nation through his heir (not Eliezer, but of his own body, Genesis 15:4). He believed that God would give him a physical offspring and that through the boy a nation would come—Abraham believed this promise, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Actually, the Bible doesn't answer the question for us! So maybe we are asking the wrong question?

**What is the Old Testament about?**

It is fairly clear it is about the restoration of creation, and man's dominion over it (Genesis 1:28). Remember what happened in the garden (Genesis 3)? Man lost dominion and in fact, handed it over to Satan. So, we see a pattern in the Old Testament of creation being brought back to man's dominion (Genesis 3:15).

How would this restoration come about?

It would happen through a man (Abraham) who would produce a nation (Israel) who would produce a King, who would have dominion over all the earth.

The Old Testament doesn't tell us about how a person was saved because it doesn't deal with the individual. The salvation of the Old Testament is salvation of a nation, and the created order. There is little about heaven and hell or a personal relationship with God in the Old Testament.

But Gentiles did not even have the Law and the only way anyone could be righteous was by keeping the Law—and even the Jews could not keep the Law and they had it.

Only with the current dispensation of Grace did the individual become the primary concern. It is only in the dispensation of grace that we are personally saved, have a relationship with God through Christ, and will immediately be in Heaven when we die, or are raptured.

**So what happened to those who died in the Old Testament?**

They are in Sheol awaiting the final judgment and will be judged for their works. In fact, before Christ, Gentiles non-jews were without hope (Ephesians 2:11,12). That doesn't sound nice to our ears, but that is the beauty of the dispensation of Grace is that suddenly, the entire world HAS hope.

**My current proposition:** I do not believe those who died in the Old Testament were saved. They will one day be resurrected and stand before the Great White Throne Judgment.