



XIV. THE DISPENSATION OF THE CHURCH

A. The Contents of the Dispensation

1. The bookmark events
 - a. The beginning: the start of the New Testament Church
 - b. The end: the rapture of the Church
2. The passage covered
 - a. Began sometime between John 20:17 and Acts 2:47
 - b. Ends at Revelation 4:11
3. The time period spanned: approximately 2,000 years thus far

B. The Conditions of the Dispensation

1. Transitional changes in the Book of Acts
 - a. From Judaism to Christianity
 - b. From law to grace
 - c. From Jew to Gentile
 - d. From gospel of the kingdom to the gospel of grace
 - e. From Peter to Paul
 - f. From signs and wonders to the word of God
 - g. From temple and synagogue to the local church
 - h. From earthly kingdom to heavenly kingdom
 - i. From Jerusalem to Antioch
 - j. From east to west
2. The grace age gifts
 - a. Three views
 - (1) That apostolic gifts have continued unaltered
 - (2) That the gifts have been replaced by ministries, callings, etc.
 - (3) That the gifts have been transformed from the apostolic gifts to the grace age gifts—the view presented in this class
 - b. The purposes for the change—Why did God not continue the apostolic gifts as He originally gave them?
 - (1) The completed Bible removed the need for gifts of confirmation (Mark 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10); there is no longer any need to confirm the divine authority of the spoken word since we now have the written word as a check on the truth of the speaker.
 - (2) The transition from Jew to Gentile removed the need for the sign gifts (1 Corinthians 1:22). God deals especially with the Jewish people through signs but in this age He is working through the Gentiles.
 - c. The character of the changes
 - (1) From gifts of confirmation (confirming the spoken word) to gifts of edification (Romans 12:6-8)
 - (2) From gifts given in an immediate and supernatural way from the Spirit of God to gifts given according to the grace of God



- working in the believer (Romans 12:3, 6; Ephesians 3:7; Ephesians 4:7-8) and practiced according to the measure of faith in the believer (Romans 12:3, 6)
- d. The working of the grace age gifts
 - (1) A gift is something that is given; something transferred from one person to another. Both the sign gifts and the grace gifts fit this definition.
 - (2) The grace gifts come as abilities given to us by God according to His purpose for us (2 Timothy 1:9).
 - (3) These gifts of God's grace can appear at different times: in childhood or later in life. They can even appear before salvation since they are part of God's eternal plan for us. At other times, they appear when the need arises.
 - (4) Though their appearance may not be immediate and supernatural as with the sign gifts, they are still just as much the working of God in our lives. They are the result of His grace working in us to the performance of His will for His service.
 - (5) We still must decide to use these gifts for the Lord. He enables them by the working of His grace, but we must use them by the operation of faith.
 - (6) Finally, they are never to be a source of pride. Since they are given, we have nothing to glory in when we have received them (Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 4:6-7).
 - 3. The ministry of the apostle Paul
 - a. The positions Paul held
 - (1) He was a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15-16; Acts 26:16-18).
 - (2) He was the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Romans 15:16; Colossians 1:24-25).
 - (3) He was the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).
 - a) He was blessed with the signs of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12).
 - b) He considered himself the least of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).
 - (4) He was a teacher of the Gentiles (1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11).
 - (5) He was a prisoner for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1).
 - b. The gospel of the apostle Paul
 - (1) He received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-17; Galatians 2:1-2).
 - (2) His gospel was called by various titles.
 - a) The gospel of God (Romans 15:16)
 - b) The glorious gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Timothy 1:11)
 - c) The gospel of the uncircumcision (Galatians 2:7)
 - d) "My" gospel (Romans 2:16; Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8)
 - e) The gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24)
 - (3) The apostle Paul had various other ministries.



- a) He received and revealed the grace age mysteries (Ephesians 3:1-9; Romans 15:25-26).
- b) He preached the gospel in the regions beyond (Romans 15:20; 2 Corinthians 10:16).
- (4) Paul as a pattern for today
 - a) A pattern for salvation (1 Timothy 1:15-16)
 - b) A pattern for service (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17)
 - c) A pattern for sound doctrine (2 Timothy 2:2, 7)
- 4. The mysteries of the age of grace
 - a. The nature of the grace age mysteries
 - (1) They were previously unknown (Ephesians 3:4-5, 9).
 - (2) They were selectively revealed (Matthew 13:10-11; Ephesians 3:10).
 - (3) They were beyond man's ability to understand (1 Corinthians 2:7-10).
 - (4) They were meant to be taught (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).
 - b. A list of grace age mysteries
 - (1) The mystery of Israel's blindness (Romans 11:25)
 - (2) The mystery of translation (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; see Hebrews 11:5)
 - (3) The mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:3-6; Ephesians 5:29-32; Colossians 4:3)—that all [Jew and Gentile] are one in Christ
 - (4) The mystery of Christ in you (Colossians 1:26-27; Galatians 2:20)
 - (5) The mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:14)
 - a) That God took on a body of flesh in the person of Jesus Christ
 - b) May be the same as the mystery of the Father (Colossians 2:2; Matthew 11:27; John 10:30)
 - (6) The mystery of iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:7; Genesis 3:15)—the Devil incarnate in the antichrist
 - (7) The mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)—evidently, the gospel of the grace of God
 - (8) The mystery of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9; Titus 1:9; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23-25)—that the word is the source of salvation and all doctrine
 - (9) The mystery of His will (Ephesians 1:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28)—God's purpose for the ages
 - (10) The mystery of God (Colossians 2:2; Revelation 10:7)—God's plan for the ages

C. The Commission of the Dispensation

- 1. The call of the individual believer
 - a. From man to man—the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18)
 - b. From man to God—the glory of God (Revelation 4:11)



2. The example church—the church at Antioch
 - a. A soul-reaching church (Acts 11:19-21)
 - b. A preaching church (Acts 11:19-24)
 - c. A teaching church (Acts 11:26; Acts 13:1; Acts 15:35)
 - d. A faithful church (Acts 11:26; Acts 14:27)
 - e. A serving church (Acts 11:26)—called Christians first in Antioch
 - f. A holy church (Acts 11:26)—Christians would be Christ-like
 - g. A giving church (Acts 11:27-30)
 - h. A praying church (Acts 13:2-3)
 - i. A mission-sending church (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28)

D. The *Crisis* of the Dispensation

1. Generally
 - a. A time associated with departure from the truth (1 Timothy 4:1-5)
 - b. A time associated with spiritual decline (2 Timothy 3:1-5)
2. More specifically
 - a. The church is made up of a spiritual people.
 - (1) A people that have experienced a spiritual birth
 - (2) Looking for a spiritual kingdom
 - b. The church's last days are identifiable by spiritual problems (2 Timothy 3:2-4).
 - (1) Lovers of their own selves
 - (2) Covetous
 - (3) Boasters
 - (4) Proud
 - (5) Blasphemers
 - (6) Disobedient to parents
 - (7) Unthankful
 - (8) Unholy
 - (9) Without natural affection
 - (10) Trucebreakers
 - (11) False accusers
 - (12) Incontinent
 - (13) Fierce
 - (14) Despisers of those that are good
 - (15) Traitors
 - (16) Heady
 - (17) Highminded
 - (18) Lovers of pleasures
 - c. Note: With no forecasted space of time and no requirements for completion, it is imperative that all realize the church has been in the last days from the very beginning (Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 9:26).