

## DISPENSATIONALISM (18)

**QUESTION #8** – What does dispensationalism teach concerning salvation?

The most frequent argument that is used against dispensationalism is the argument of the method of salvation. Dr. Ryrie said, “In particular, dispensationalists are said to teach salvation by works in some dispensations and salvation by grace in others.” He goes on to say that “This is a very serious charge and must be examined carefully” (*Dispensationalism*, p. 105).

This allegation is a big one that is used against a dispensational approach to the Bible. Dr. Ryrie cited John Bowman, who wrote this in 1956: “If any man is saved in any dispensation other than those of Promise and Grace, he is saved by works and not by faith! The dispensationalist is clearly left with two methods of salvation on his hands—works for the majority of dispensations, faith for the rest and we have...to deal with a fickle God who deals with man in various ways at various times” (*Ibid.*, p. 105).

The fact is if God does deal with man in various ways at various times, He is not fickle because nothing God does is fickle.

One critical problem with those who allege these things about dispensationalists is that they tend to think that **when we call this period of time the dispensation of grace, we automatically mean that grace was not operative in other dispensations.**

Dispensationalists are clear to point out that God’s grace has been operative in any dispensation, including the dispensation of the Law. In our own study of “Law Versus Grace,” we clearly pointed out that even under the law, the grace of God was fully seen in granting forgiveness through shed blood (Exodus 20:24; 5:17-18; 17:11) (*Law Versus Grace*, p. 13).

**The problem with the opponents of dispensationalism is that they refuse to admit that God is capable of demonstrating more or less grace in any time period. However, a key verse of Scripture, which clearly establishes this very fact, is James 4:6.** It is very clear from this one verse that God is certainly capable of granting greater or lesser grace in any period of time.

We would suggest that all throughout time, God has demonstrated grace. However, that does not mean it is wrong to suggest that there is one period of time when grace is abundantly available and permeates the entire time.

When all is studied on this matter, dispensationalism does not teach there are two ways of salvation. **Dispensationalism teaches that in any salvation, it is a provision of God for man by God’s grace, and it is by shed blood.** In the O.T. economy, the shed blood of the animals pointed to the shed blood of Jesus Christ. In the N.T. economy, the shed blood of Jesus Christ is what takes away sin.

So in all reality, whether it is in the O.T. or the N.T., God’s grace provides a means of salvation that comes through shed blood that in God’s mind focuses on the sacrifice of His Son.

## DISPENSATIONALISM (19)

Now in much of the O.T., in order to have a relationship with God, one needed to connect with Israel, because His program was with Israel. There are instances when that happened. For example, Rahab, in Jericho, linked herself in with Israel because of Israel's connection to God. She became part of the national program, which included the shed blood sacrifices.

Back in the 1940's, Lewis Sperry Chafer was attacked by the Presbyterian Church in the United States and they charged him with teaching "various plans of salvation for various groups in various ages."

In response to their false allegations, Chafer wrote an article entitled, *Dispensational Distinctions Denounced*. The article appeared in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 101, July, 1944: 257. In his response, he wrote this: "The Editor has never held such views and...he yields first place to no man in contending that a holy God can deal with sin in any age on any other ground than that of the blood of Christ. The references cited by the Committee from the Editor's writings have no bearing on salvation whatever, but concern with rule of life which God has given to govern His people in the world. He has addressed a rule of life on the ground that they are His covenant people. Observing the rule of life did not make them covenant people."

Dr. Chafer brings out a very important point. Israel did not become a covenant people by obeying the law; she was a covenant people by God's choice. His forgiveness came through the blood sacrifice and that O.T. law was given to a people already set apart as His people.

What we learn from carefully studying the New Testament is that that O.T. law was given for many reasons and these reasons are still operative:

**Reason #1** - The law was given to close every mouth. Rom. 3:19a

**Reason #2** - The law was given to establish guilty accountability. Rom. 3:19b

**Reason #3** - The law was given to reveal sin. Rom. 3:20

**Reason #4** - The law was given to justify God's wrath. Rom. 4:15

**Reason #5** - The law was given to reveal God's Holiness. Rom. 7:12

**Reason #6** - The law was given to point us to Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:24

**Reason #7** - The law was given temporarily. Gal. 3:19, 25

**Reason #8** - The law was not ever given for justification. Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:28

**Reason #9** - The law was not given for sanctification. Gal. 5:2-4; Rom. 8:2

## DISPENSATIONALISM (20)

We believe that salvation with God, regardless of the dispensation, is by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. In the O.T., the animal sacrifices could not take away sin (Heb. 10:4), but they did pre-figure One who would come who could. Even though the Israelites, including the prophets, did not fully grasp this point—(Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:25; I Pet. 1:10-11). So the question comes, how were they saved? They believed that the shed blood of the animals was giving them a relationship with God even when they did not grasp the totality of what Jesus Christ would do on the cross.

In the N.T. Grace Age, the shed blood of Christ was made clear (Heb. 10:10; Romans 3:24-26). In this Age of Grace, we do understand the truth that only the shed blood of Jesus Christ may save us from our sins (Rom. 5:9).

During the Millennium, Israel will worship at a new Temple in Jerusalem and she will offer sacrifices and realize the ramifications of those sacrifices. They will all point back to Jesus Christ and what He did on that cross.

So as a dispensationalist, we believe that salvation has always been by God's grace and based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ. People at different times did not grasp this point, but the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ has always been the means of salvation.

**QUESTION #9** - What is the connection between Israel and the Church?

Here is a critical matter of dispensationalism. It is imperative that we realize that Israel is not the Church and the Church is not Israel. Israel has a program and the Church has a program and the two are not the same. The Church does not ever replace Israel and those who teach otherwise are teaching a very dangerous and heretical doctrine. The Church has been grafted into a program with Israel (Rom. 11:17-18). God has made some amazing promises to Israel and those promises are still to be fulfilled. These are not Church promises, these are promises to Israel.

There are many differences between Israel and the Church:

**Difference #1** - The promises to Israel are earthly and the promises to the Church are heavenly.

**Difference #2** - One becomes an Israelite by physical birth; one becomes a Christian by spiritual birth.

**Difference #3** - Israel is waiting for the reign of Jesus Christ (Jer. 23:5-8); the Church is waiting for the Rapture by Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:13-18).

**Difference #4** - At Christ's earthly reign, Israel is subject to her King (Ezek. 37:21-28); the Church is reigning with the King (Rev. 20:6).

**Difference #5** - O.T. Israel had a priesthood and the N.T. Church is a priesthood (I Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:4-6)—In millennium priesthood reinstated (Ezek. 45:3-5).