

Dispensations and Covenant Theology

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). **If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

There are 2 dramatically different ways of organizing the Bible: by Dispensations and by Covenant Theology. The first is correct and Biblical and the second is a distortion of Biblical truth. Since we are going to talk about the Noahic Covenant, it might be a good idea to differentiate between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology.

These topics and doctrines were covered previously in:

Genesis 9 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Genesis Lesson #82 ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

Charts and Special Topics	
A Review of Dispensations	Covenant Theology
Problems with Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology
Points on Covenants	Additional Readings on Dispensations and Covenant Theology

Although we have already covered **dispensations** in the past, this is a very brief review:

A Review of Dispensations

1. A dispensation is a period of time in which God has a specific plan for spirituality, evangelization, judgment, and the writing, preservation and dissemination of His Word. The Greek noun which is occasionally translated *dispensation* does not mean this exactly; although it has come to mean *a specific period of time as defined by God*. The Greek noun is *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία) [pronounced *oy-koh-nohm-EE-uh*]; which specifically means *the administration or management of a household*. The idea is, those administering God’s household here on earth

A Review of Dispensations

- change from time to time. Strong's #3622.
2. God organizes and administers His household here on earth in different ways through the ages.
 3. There are 7 dispensations throughout human history:
 - a. Innocence: this is Adam and the woman in the garden
 - b. The Age of the Gentiles is broken down into 2 parts
 - i. The antediluvian era: from the Fall to the flood
 - ii. Post-diluvian era: from the flood to Abraham
 - c. The Age of the Jews is broken down into 3 parts
 - i. The Age of the Patriarchs
 - ii. The nation Israel
 - iii. The Tribulation, which is future, and marks the resumption of the Jewish Age
 - d. The Dispensation of the Hypostatic Union (also known as the First Advent of Jesus Christ)
 - i. This short period of time acts as the hinge between the Church Age and the Age of Israel.
 - ii. Jesus Christ lived under the Law in the nation Israel. At no time did He violate the Law of Moses and He fulfilled all of the Messianic prophecies pertinent to the first advent.
 - iii. However, Jesus primarily functioned as a man under the power of the Holy Spirit, test-driving, so to speak, the life of the Church Age believer.
 - e. The Church Age or the Intercalated Age (the Church Age is intercalated between the 1st and 2nd advents of Jesus Christ). The Church Age was unknown to previous dispensations, and it is a part of the mystery doctrine which Jesus taught in the Upper Room and the Apostles taught in the epistles (particularly Paul).
 - i. The pre-canon period began with signs and miracles, which conferred upon the Apostles the authority to teach and to write Scripture (the canon refers to the completed Word of God).
 - ii. The post-canon period; the Bible is complete, all of the doctrine that we need has been recorded, and now, the authority of God is in the completed Word of God. Signs and miracles are no longer needed in order to confer authority on this or that person; because, if they teach the Word of God accurately, we place ourselves under their authority. Furthermore, our faith is strengthened by the Word of God, and not by witnessing some random miracle.
 - f. The Millennium is a literal 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth, during which we will enjoy perfect environment. This will end with a revolt against God.
 - g. The Eternal State, in which there is a new heavens and a new earth.
 4. Dispensations allows us to give the most literal interpretation to the Bible. God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (in the Book of Genesis) will mean exactly what they appear to mean. All of the New Testament references to dispensations, mystery doctrine, and the times and the seasons all make perfect sense as well.
 5. Dispensations do teach that man is saved the same way in every dispensation: by placing one's faith in the 2nd person of the Trinity (Jehovah Elohim in the Old Testament and Jesus Christ in the New). Gen. 15:6 John 3:36

We have previously studied [dispensations](#) back in [Introductory Lesson 6](#). This is covered in even greater detail in the [Doctrine of Dispensations \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Please refer to the links for further information, including Biblical documentation for this correct interpretation of the Bible.

The reason that one would apply the dispensational framework to the Bible is, this allows for the most literal interpretation of all Scripture. Jews are Jews; the land of Israel is the land of Israel; God's promises to the patriarchs mean exactly what they seem to mean; and the church (the body of believers) is treated as a separate, but closely related entity.

I am going to briefly cover Covenant Theology and what is wrong with it. If you are not getting the contrast between these theologies, then you need to go back to links above.

I have made references to Covenant Theology throughout this study of Genesis without ever properly defining it. Let me emphasize up front that this is a false theology. Like all false systems of interpretation, this will have some truth in it.

Covenant Theology

1. The general idea is, God has a relationship with man through covenants (by contract). This is not in dispute by any theologian of any stripe.
2. Covenant Theology provides a framework within which we interpret the Bible. This approach is what is in dispute.

3. There are 3 basic covenants: a covenant of works, a covenant of redemption and a covenant of grace. These definitions come from the Theopedia¹:
 - a. *The first covenant in logical order, usually called the Covenant of Redemption, is the agreement within the Godhead that the Father would appoint his son Jesus to give up his life for mankind and that Jesus would do so (cf. Titus 1:1-3).*
 - b. *The second, called the Covenant of Works, was made in the Garden of Eden between God and Adam and promised life for obedience and death for disobedience. Adam disobeyed God and broke the covenant, and so the third covenant was made between God and all of mankind, who also fell with Adam according to Romans 5:12-21.*
 - c. *This third covenant, the Covenant of Grace, promised eternal blessing for belief in Christ and obedience to God's word. It is thus seen as the basis for all biblical covenants that God made individually with Noah, Abraham, and David, nationally with O.T. Israel as a people, and universally with man in the New Covenant. These individual covenants are called the "Biblical covenants" because they are explicitly described as such in the Bible.*
 - d. Sometimes, covenant theology speaks only of the latter 2 covenants, as they are the general covenants between man and God.

4. These covenants are not found specifically named anywhere in the Bible; they are inferred from the Bible, and then used as a framework for Biblical interpretation.
5. The general idea is, God was working through the nation Israel and through the race of the Jews, and they failed so badly, that God began working with a new entity, believers in Jesus Christ (and the church), who then became the spiritual heirs of Abraham. Since the Jews now rejected the covenant of grace, God offered this covenant of grace to the Gentiles, the spiritual heirs of Abraham. In Covenant Theology, there is no real difference between Israel and the church, except that Israel failed, so God had to move on.

Covenant Theology

6. In Covenant Theology, the covenant of grace is the constant, and those with whom God makes this covenant are believers in Jesus Christ.
7. Covenant Theology takes all of the promises which God made to Israel (to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—men we will study in Genesis) along with the covenants made with Moses, with the Jews and with David, and *spiritualizes* these covenants.
8. That is, the actual words of these covenants are no longer precise. Abraham's seed no longer refers to those physically descended from Abraham but those who are *spiritually* descended from Abraham.

9. The covenants made previously to Israel and to various patriarchs of Israel are no longer applicable to that particular plot of ground nor are they applicable to that particular race of people.
10. All of these promises are *spiritualized*, which, of course, calls into question exactly what these promises really mean.

11. The reason that this happened is, Israel screwed up so many times, again and again and again, that God just decided, "These people are just not working out. I need a new group of people who are better and more faithful." That turns out to be us, believers in the Church Age (however, covenant theologians do not recognize the Church Age as a separate dispensation).
12. Covenant theologians do not recognize a substantive difference between the church and Israel; the latter morphed into the former.
13. Israel, as a people and as a nation, was simply too disobedient and they rejected the covenant of grace at the advent of Jesus Christ.
14. There is also a new covenant theology which has sprung up, which seems to try to find a place in between dispensational theology and covenant theology.

¹ From http://www.theopedia.com/Covenant_theology accessed May 12, 2010.

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I should point out that, most people who believe in covenant theology are believers in Jesus Christ. That is, at some point in their lives, they exercised faith in Jesus Christ, and they are eternally saved. Believing a false doctrine does not remove someone's salvation. We are saved based upon what Jesus did for us on the cross; not based upon our lives as Christians (most of us can give testimony as to the sub-standard way that we conduct ourselves from time to time).

Although I have implied that there are problems with covenant theology, let me enumerate them:

Problems with Covenant Theology

1. God's promises are not what they seem. God made many specific promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, to the nation Israel and to David. These promises involve a specific bloodline and a specific plot of ground. If the nation Israel is no longer a part of God's plan and if the Jews are no longer God's people, then dozens of promises that God made directly to various Jews from God make very little sense.
2. According to Covenant Theology, there is a limit to God's patience. The Old Testament is a book which testifies to Jewish failure more than almost anything else, yet God is with the Jews throughout the Old Testament. The book of the Judges is remarkable as to how many times Israel would go astray, and yet God was always faithful to them. In Covenant Theology, God's

Problems with Covenant Theology

patience has limits; you can fail enough times where God removes you completely from His plan.

3. Most people who believe in covenant theology do not believe in eternal security (which means, once you have believed in Jesus Christ, you cannot lose this salvation).
4. The Jews failed so spectacularly, that God, for all intents and purposes, withdrew His specific promises from the Jews, and has substituted a *spiritualized* meaning and understanding of these promises. Or, more accurately, covenant theology always believes that these promises were spiritual promises.
5. Covenant Theology takes two very different entities—the church and the nation Israel—and says that they are, in essence, the same thing.
6. Dan Smedra writes: *With all varieties of Covenant theology, there is an obsession for an overriding continuity or unified purpose for the sixty-six books (Canon) which comprise Holy Scriptures. Rather than having wisdom to discern the real difference among things which resemble one another, the covenantist is driven to find an "integrating" principle to produce theological uniformity, in hope of discovering "what the Bible is really all about." Their "key" is the erroneous concept that every relationship between God and man must take the form of a covenant or legal agreement. From this notion, albeit logical, has arisen their apocryphal and overarching Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace.*¹
 - a. As an aside, there are a variety of consistencies throughout the Bible: God's character and essence, the fundamental concept of believing in Jesus Christ (or Y^ehowah Elohim) for salvation, etc.
7. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, a dispensationalist, writes:²
 - a. *A theology which penetrates no further into Scripture than to discover that in all ages God is immutable in His grace toward penitent sinners, and constructs the idea of a universal church, continuing through the ages, on the one truth of immutable grace, is not only disregarding vast spheres of revelation but is reaping the unavoidable confusion [fog] and misdirection which part-truth engenders. The outworking of divine grace is not standardized, though the Covenant idea of theology would make it so...*
 - b. *A form of Covenant Theology which would thread all of Jehovah's purposes and undertakings upon His one attribute of grace could hardly avoid confusion of mind [fog] in matters related to His varied objectives. Covenant Theology, in consistency with its man-made premise, asserts its inventions respecting an Old Testament church, which, it is claimed, is an integral part of the New Testament Church and on the ground that, since God's grace is one unchanging attribute, its accomplishments must be the realization of one standardized ideal.*
 - c. *A Covenant Theology engenders the notion that there is but one soteriology and one eschatology, and that ecclesiology, such as it is conceived to be, extends from the Garden of Eden to the Great White Throne. The insuperable problems in exegesis which such fanciful suppositions create are easily disposed of by ignoring them.*
 - d. *Covenantism, which has molded the major theological concepts for many generations, recognizes no distinction as to ages, therefore can allow for no distinctions between law and grace. This dominating attitude of Covenantism must account for the utter neglect of life-truth in all their works of theology. No more representative theological dictum from the Covenant viewpoint has been formed than the Westminster Confession of Faith, which valuable and important document recognizes life-truth only to the point of imposing the Ten Commandments on Christians as their sole obligation, this in spite of the teachings of the Pauline Church Epistles which assert that the law was never given to Gentiles or Christians, and that the latter has been saved and delivered from it--actually*

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dead to it (Gal. 2:19).

8. In short, covenant theology takes something which is clearly found in the Bible (covenants between God and man), and from this, infers 2 or 3 overarching covenants (which are not found in the Bible), and then superimposes the inferred covenants over all of Scripture, in order to give it a unifying set of factors.
9. Covenant theologians must therefore go back and interpret all of the covenants which appear to have a clear meaning, and yet that meaning must be reinterpreted to fit within the umbrella of covenant theology. The end result is, many of God's promises are not what they seem.
10. Therefore, those who believe in covenant theology often reject God using Jews in the future; they reject the importance of the nation Israel (although it is found in prophecy); and they reject the millennial rule of Jesus Christ. Again, promises and prophecies which appear to have clear meanings must be reinterpreted to fit into covenant theology.

¹ From <http://withchrist.org/covtheo.htm> accessed May 12, 2010.

² From Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Volume IV (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) pp. 156, 311; Vol. VI, p. 167.

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The very fact that we find covenants in the Bible (particularly in the Old Testament), does not *prove* that Covenant Theology is correct and Dispensationalism is not.

Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology

Characteristic	Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism
The Framework of Biblical Interpretation	There are 2 overarching covenants and God's relationship to man is interpreted according to those covenants. The church is not a separate entity from Israel but a new or evolved Israel. Or, Israel 2.0.	The Bible is interpreted with respect to the outline of dispensations. What is done in one era is not necessarily repeated in another era.
Pattern of History	A Covenant of Works is established with Adam (but not specifically called this in Scripture); and a Covenant of Grace between Christ and the elect (one might interpret this as the gospel).	Divided into dispensations (usually seven); e.g., Innocence (pre-Fall), Conscience (Adam), Human Government (Noah), the Age of Israel (which is further subdivided into the time of the patriarchs, the time of the Law and the Tribulation); the Age of the Hypostatic Union; the Church Age; and the Millennium.
View of History	Optimistic: God is extending His kingdom. Some even have an evolutionary view of man and God.	Pessimistic: the Last Days are marked by increasingly worse wickedness in the world and by apostasy in the church. Things get worse in the end times, not better.

Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology

Characteristic	Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism
God's Purpose in History	There is a unified redemptive purpose.	There are two distinct organizations, one earthly (Israel), one heavenly (church). However, the gospel is constant in relationship to Israel and the church. God furthers His purpose in human history primarily through these 2 institutions.
View of the Biblical Covenants	They are different administrations of the Covenant of Grace.	They mark off periods of time during which God's specific demands of man differ. God works through various institutions, and one might see this as a covenant relationship in many of these cases, but with varying covenants (however, salvation is always through faith in Christ).
Relationship of Old Testament to New Testament	Acceptance of Old Testament teaching required unless specifically abrogated by New Testament.	Old Testament prescriptions are not binding unless reaffirmed in New Testament.
Relationship Between Israel and the Church	The church is spiritual Israel, in continuity with true Israel of Old Testament.	The church is the spiritual people of God, distinct from Israel, the physical people of God.
Israel	This can refer to the literal seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or to their spiritual seed, depending upon the context.	Israel is a literal nation with Jews who are genetically descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and Gentiles could choose to become a part of Israel). The church is not spiritual Israel and the church does not replace Israel. Israel, as the entity through which God works, is temporarily set aside during the Church Age.
Old Testament Law	In effect unless specifically abrogated in the New Testament.	Not in effect unless specifically reaffirmed in the New Testament.
The Mosaic Law	The Mosaic Law still stands as the Law of God, except for ceremonial laws and some civil laws.	The Mosaic Law has been replaced by the law of the Spirit and life. The Mosaic Law remains as an excellent guide to human freedom.
Old Testament Prophecy	Some refer to a literal Israel and some refer to God's people, the church, which is spiritual Israel.	Refers to ethnic Israel. All prophecy pertaining to the church is given either during the Age of the Hypostatic Union or during the Church Age.

Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology

Characteristic	Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism
Jesus offering of the kingdom	This spiritual kingdom was rejected by Israel, but will later be accepted by spiritual Israel.	When Israel rejected the Kingdom of God, a bona fide offer from the Person of Jesus Christ, God turned to the Gentiles, who, along with Jewish believers, make up the church.
Interpretation of History and Prophecy	Promises to Israel as well as the identity of Israel is generally spiritualized. .	Accepts both literal and figurative interpretation of the Bible. The Jews are seen as a literal race which will exist throughout human history; and the nation Israel is seen as a literal nation. However, God works through regenerate Israel.
Prophecies of the Church Age	There are prophecies of the church and the time of the church throughout the Old Testament.	There are no Old Testament prophecies which deal with the church directly.
The Indwelling and Filling of the Holy Spirit	God indwelt and filled both Old and New Testament saints.	God only indwells and fills Church Age believers. This is a part of the mystery doctrine. Some believers in the Old Testament had the Holy Spirit, but this could be lost (David, for instance, prayed, “Do not take Your Spirit from me.”).
The Body of Christ	Believers of all ages are in Christ and make up the body of Christ.	Church Age believers are the body of Christ. This is a part of the mystery doctrine.
Doctrine of the Church Age	Doctrine related to the church is found throughout the Bible.	Church Age doctrine is found in the Upper Room Discourse (in the book of John) and in the epistles.
The Church	The church began in Abraham’s tent. It finds its complete fulfillment in the New Testament. Acts 7:38	This entity known as the church was born on the Day of Pentecost around A.D. 33.
The Place of the Church	The church is simply the evolution from Israel.	The Church Age is parenthetical , and separate from the Age of Israel. God works through the church (the body of believers) similar to how He worked through Israel, but these are separate entities.

Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology

Characteristic	Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism
Church Age	God's redemptive purpose continued to unfold. There has been little or no change from God working through the nation Israel.	There is a parenthesis between past and future manifestations of the kingdom (Israel is the past manifestation of His kingdom; and the millennial rule of Jesus Christ will be the future manifestation of His kingdom).
Role of Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit indwells God's people throughout history.	The Holy Spirit indwells God's people only from Pentecost to the Rapture. There are differing opinions when it comes to the Tribulation and the Millennium.
Baptism	Unified covenant generally used to support infant baptism.	Israel/church distinction often (but not always) used to support believers' baptism.
Social Implications	Emphasizes "cultural mandate."	The only way to save the world is to save individuals; therefore evangelism takes precedence over "social action."
Eschatology	Usually amillennial (there is no millennium); rarely postmillennial; occasionally pre-millennial (there will be a tribulation before the millennial kingdom).	Pre-millennial, usually pretribulational. The Age of Israel is completed by the Tribulation, which is then followed by the Millennium. The church is removed before the Tribulation.
The Kingdom of God	Represents heaven, for the most part.	The Millennium (1000 year reign of Jesus Christ on earth) is seen as the literal Kingdom of God on earth.
Millennium	Symbolic, often identified with present age. This could be identified with heaven.	Literal, earthly 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ after the Tribulation and the Great White Throne.
Animal Sacrifices	Fulfilled in Jesus Christ and never to be repeated.	Animal sacrifices will resume in the Millennium as a testimony to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins.

Taken from: <http://reformed-theology.org/html/c-vs-dis.htm> accessed May 19, 2010 and from <http://faithbibleonline.net/MiscDoctrine/DispCov.htm> accessed May 19, 2010. Both sources are edited.

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Although some of this came from Robby Dean's own notes, I have changed up this doctrine quite a bit.

Points on Covenants

- 1) In Genesis 6:18 we have this first mention of the word "covenant." And in this passage God says, "I will establish my covenant with you." What follows is a promise that God would bring a flood upon the earth and that there would be one way of salvation, which is the ark that God would have Noah build. You will recall that there were a number of parallels between Jesus Christ and the ark in which Noah's family was saved.
- 2) This same language will be repeated here in Gen. 9:11. What we find here is the hiphil stem of the Hebrew verb *qum* (קָם) [pronounced *koom*], which means *to set in place or to establish*. In the hiphil stem it means *to cause to be in place* and it can have the connotation of confirming something that is already in existence.
- 3) Even though the word *covenant* is new verbiage in Gen. 6:18, we read in Hosea 6:7a: **But, like Adam, they have broken the covenant.** Therefore, Adam was subject to a contract of some sort with God.
- 4) In Gen. 1:28–30, we read: **And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the seas, and over birds of the heavens, and over all beasts creeping on the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant seeding seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree seeding seed; it shall be food for you. And to every beast of the earth, and to all birds of the heavens, and to every creeper on the earth which has in it a living soul, every green plant is for food. And it was so.** You will note how close this is to Gen. 9:1–7.
- 5) God also said, "Eating you may eat of every tree in the garden; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you may not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, dying you shall die." (Gen. 2:16b–17). This would have been the covenant which Adam violated. I would think that this would have been accompanied with God allowing Adam and the woman to eat from every tree of the garden, as the woman later confirmed: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." (Gen. 3:3b–4). Although the woman appears to have embellished God's covenant somewhat, the standing contract between man and God was, Adam and the woman could eat from every tree in the garden, except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is the covenant which Adam violated. Often, this is called the Edenic Covenant (the Covenant of Eden). Some call this the Adamic Covenant as well (because it is made with Adam). These are logical and reasonable theological designations which do not appear in Scripture.

Points on Covenants

- 6) Later, after Adam and the woman sinned, breaking the Edenic covenant, God gave them the repercussions of violating this covenant, which consequences contained a promise: *And Jehovah God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed above all beasts, and above every animal of the field. You shall go on your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. He said to the woman, I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception; you shall bear sons in sorrow, and your desire shall be toward your husband; and he shall rule over you. And He said to the man, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat from it, the ground shall be cursed because of you; you shall eat of it in sorrow all the days of your life. And it shall bring forth thorns and thistles for you, and you shall eat the plant of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until your return to the ground. For you have been taken out of it; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."* (Gen. 3:14–19). God promises what will happen in the future. Because they violated the original covenant (Hosea 6:7), God, in Gen. 3:14–19, explains to them what He means when He warned them, *in dying, you will die*. These are the consequences of violating the Edenic Covenant. Buried within this curse is the promise of the Seed of the Woman, an early example of cursing turned to blessing.
- 7) A covenant often (but not always) implies that there are responsibilities on the part of man as a covenant partner. That is what we see played out all through Genesis. A covenant establishes the way God is going to interact with man and man's responsibilities, if any, in association with the covenant.
- 8) God, being God, can define the exact terms of the covenant. God, being God, can require man to fulfill certain conditions or not.
- 9) Since God is God, we can hold Him to the covenants which He makes with us. If you should ever doubt your salvation, then you hold God to His promise: **Believe in the Son and you will have eternal life** (John 3:16, 36). God cannot lie (Num. 23:19 Heb. 6:18).
- 10) In most cases, each new covenant may be seen as a furtherance of each previous covenant. God will make several covenants with Abraham, which indicates that God is reaffirming or amending the original contract (however, the original contract is never abrogated). This is because God is immutable (He does not change) and He does not lie.
- 11) In Gen. 9, we have a new covenant made with Noah, but it does not abrogate the results of violating the Edenic Covenant. The promise of the Seed of the Woman still stands, and this was well understood throughout the ages, and more well-defined as time went on. He was called the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16–19 Heb. 2:16) and the Seed of David (Rom. 1:3 2Tim. 2:8).
- 12) When we get to Abraham, there will be some additional vocabulary words associated with covenants, which we will discuss then.

Points on Covenants

- 13) A covenant is essentially a legal contract. That implies several things.
- (1) First, there are two parties involved. There is God who is the party of the first part, and man or a group of men, who are parties of the second part. This implies that for there to be a legal contract that both parties are persons. You can't have a covenant between a thing or an impersonal force or a non-person. So this implies that the God who gives this covenant or contract is a personal entity, an individual. The Bible clearly indicates that God is a Person who is capable of relationships.
 - (2) Secondly, a covenant or contract implies that the person who establishes the contract is able to guarantee what he promises in the contract. He is able to control the situation and circumstances and all of the details of history to be able to fulfill what He, God, has promised. That tells us things about God's character. It implies that one who makes this contract is sovereign; He is ultimately in charge. It relates to His immutability. If God is not immutable, if He is going to change His mind tomorrow, then is that contract any good? It implies His love. One of the key words that we find over and over in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word chesed, a word that is a little difficult to translate into English, but it is usually translated "loving kindness." But it means much more than that, it has to do with loyalty, faithfulness. It is love that is faithful to a free, established contract. God honors His obligations even when we don't.
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- 14) The covenant relationship which we find here is not a contract between equals; God made us, God made the world, and He has the authority to establish whatever contract He chooses. We don't get to come back and negotiate this contract with Him. If this bothers you in any way, then recognize God's character; God may be sovereign, but He is also just and righteous. Therefore, we may be assured, on the basis of His essence, that any contract which he establishes will be righteous and just as well.
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- 15) The giving of a covenant is the expression of God's grace to fallen man and provides the guidelines for the relationship.
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- 16) The very fact that God enters into a covenant with us shows that man's relationship with God is always based on immutable legal principles that are articulated in specific written regulations. That has implications for understanding the inerrancy of the Bible. This is the old covenant and the new covenant. God writes down and signs the contract. The terms aren't going to change, they are inviolable.

Originally taken from Robby Dean's Genesis series, lesson #047, and greatly edited. His notes are found here: <http://phrasearch.com/Trans/DBM/setup/Genesis/Gen047.htm> The audio lesson may be downloaded from here: <http://deanbible.org/Media/Audio%20Files/2003%20-%20Genesis/Genesis-047b.mp3>

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Covering both of these topics in a single lesson is impossible. In this, we are barely skimming the surface of these two theologies. Luckily, the internet provides a wealth of information.

Additional Readings on Dispensations and Covenant Theology

Dispensations:

Additional Readings on Dispensations and Covenant Theology

<http://kukis.org/Doctrines/dispensations.htm> (or)
<http://kukis.org/Doctrines/dispensations.pdf>

<http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d&sf=rea&did=8>
<http://dtbrents.wordpress.com/category/doctrine-of-dispensations/> (same as above but a better format)
<http://www.christiandoctrinediscussion.com/doctrine-debate-forum/1411-7-dispensations.html>
(Scofield's notes on dispensations)
<http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/dispensations.html>
<http://www.churchofhopeontheweb.org/archives/218> (a 10 minute video covering dispensations by a missionary in the Philippines; who is a student of R. B. Theme, Jr.)
<http://www.spokanebiblechurch.com/study/Bible%20Doctrines/dispensations-definitions-explanation.htm>

Dispensations and the gospel:

<http://www.brethrenonline.org/articles/disp Gosp.htm>

Covenant Theology:

<http://withchrist.org/covtheo.htm>

<http://www.ukapologetics.net/07/COVENANTTHEOLOGY.htm>

Dispensations and Covenant Theology Contrasted:

<http://www.4himnet.com/bnyberg/dispensationalism02.html>
<http://www.4himnet.com/bnyberg/dispensationalism01.html> (to be read in that order)

<http://www.christinyou.net/pages/dthctchth.html> (this article gives some of the historical background of both theologies).

<http://www.xenos.org/essays/covdisp.htm>

New Covenant Theology:

<http://www.mbbc.edu/download/Fundamentalism/2008/OatsNewCovenantTheology.pdf>

Covenant Theology versus New Covenant Theology

http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/faq/covenant_theol.html

All 3 Systems Contrasted

http://pressiechurch.org/Theol_1/a_comparison_of_three_systems.htm

Listing these sites does not constitute approval of all that is found on these sites.

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In summary, the correct interpretation of human history is, God divides our history into different epochs, ages or periods of time, which we often call dispensations (which, admittedly, slightly distorts the actual

meaning of the word *oikonomos*,¹ which is translated *dispensation*, and means *the administration of a household*). There are certain truths which transcend all dispensations: *that Jesus Christ dies for our sins and we are saved by faith in Him*, is one of these truths. This was taught in the Old Testament, although quite obviously, OT believers did not have a clear understanding of what they were believing in (which is true of NT believers, who first believe in Jesus Christ, and then find out exactly what it is they signed up for).

Dispensationalism simply provides the most literal interpretation of the Bible and dispensationalists believe that Jews have a specific future in God's plan, which involves very specific promises which include a very specific place.

Charts and Special Topics	
A Review of Dispensations	Covenant Theology
Problems with Covenant Theology	Dispensationalism versus Covenant Theology
Additional Readings on Dispensations and Covenant Theology	

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¹ This means, *the management of a household*.