

The Dispensational Key to Bible Interpretation

by Ezekiel T. Abernathy III

Foreword: Brother Ezekiel T. Abernathy III, is the descendant of a long line of Bible-based evangelists. He has been a valued associate of Bob Dinkins Ministries since 1979, when he began ministering jointly with Dr. Dinkins in some of his overseas Healing & Deliverance Crusades. He appeared five times on the Hour of Sweet Anointing TV broadcast from 1982 to 1984. In 1989, Brother Abernathy joined the faculty of the School of the Sons of the Prophets at Faith Confession Tabernacle in Burbank, California as an adjunct instructor, specializing in Bible Prophecy and the various dispensations of God's dealings with both human and angelic beings. He is the routine key-note speaker at the Annual Prophecy Conference at Faith Confession Tabernacle and still maintains a thriving evangelistic ministry which spans the globe.

--Alex Mentis, CEO of Feema Press

In my study of the word over the past 40 odd years, I have determined there are 27 ($3 \times 3 \times 3 = 3^3$) different dispensations with differing ways that God has dealt with his creation. It is noteworthy that there are 27 (3^3) dispensations since the number 3, as any student of biblical numerology will know, is the number of Divine manifestation and when 3 is raised to the 3rd power, we are presented with the fulness of the Divine manifestation throughout the course of the 27 dispensations comprising the sum of the ages. As you might guess, the first nine of these dispensations pertain to Jehovah, the Fatherly personage of God. The second set of nine dispensations pertains to the preparation and fulfilment of the Filial personage of God in human form. And, of course, the last set of nine dispensations pertains to the Ghostly personage of God.

Of these 27 precious dispensations, three of them relate in some way to God's dealings with the angels: the first dispensation is concerned with

Jehovah's exclusive dealings with the angelic race, the fifth dispensation is concerned with Jehovah's inclusive dealings with both human beings and fallen angels, and the last dispensation, the 27th, is concerned with the Holy Ghost's inclusive dealings with resurrected believers and the elect, unfallen angels. The remaining 24 dispensations are concerned exclusively with God's dealings with human mortals. You will notice as you review the second set of nine that none of the Filial dispensations are addressed to angels. Only the non-material, Fatherly and Ghostly dispensations can be addressed to angels.

The Filial dispensations deal only with humanity because it was God's Filial aspect that took on the form of a human being when God used a little Jewish woman as a transporter system and beamed down to planet earth, materializing in human likeness. Another thing to note is the fact that the dispensations 8 through 14 (numbering seven) involve the angelic form of the Filial aspect who appears in the Old Testament as the illustrious "Angel of Jehovah" in preparation for condensating even further into a human manifestation. Although the Filial aspect was masquerading in angelic form during dispensations 8 through 14, those seven dispensations are all addressed to human beings, not angels. That's because in every dispensation other than the first, the fifth, and the 27th, the angels are on lockdown.

Having made these distinctions, I shall now list the 27 different dispensations and the unique means of salvation specific to each dispensation. Afterwards, I shall discuss the usage of these 27 dispensations as the primary Key to a proper interpretation of the Word of God. The 27 dispensations and their unique means of salvation are listed in TABLE A on the following page.

As we look at the 27 dispensations and the specific means of salvation available to those under each dispensation, we are met with the fact that there are three primary categories of the 27 specific means of salvation which span the course of the created order from the creation of the angels to the Epoch of the New Heavens and New Earth. These three categories into which these 27 varied means may be classified are as follows: 1) *Abstinence from an action*, 2) *Performance of an action*, and 3) *Maintaining a proper attitude*. So some means of salvation, (depending on which dispensation your dealing with), having to do with action

DISPENSATION	UNIQUE MEANS OF SALVATION
1) Pre-Edenic, Luciferian	Staying humble
2) Edenic, Paraisaical	Not eating the forbidden fruit
3) Adam to Cain	Not committing murder
4) Cain to Enoch	Walking with God
5) Methuselah to Lamech	Not mixing with fallen angels (Nephilim)
6) Noah to Nimrod	Animal bloodshed, including hunting
7) Babel to Terah	Not trying to usurp place of Deity
8) Abraham to Jacob	Being circumcised & dwelling in the land
9) Joseph to Moses	Living in peace with good pharaoh and opposing bad pharaoh
10) Aaron to King Saul	Obedience to the Aaronic sacrificial system
11) King David to King Jehoikin	Obedience to Kings, Priests, and Prophets
12) Prophet Daniel to Ezra the Scribe	70-year submission to captivity followed by return after the 70 th year
13) Zerubbabel to Zechariah	Rebuilding Temple & Jerusalem
14) Malachi to John the Baptist	Blameless performance of the Law
15) Jesus' baptism till Gethsemane	Following the earthly Jesus as his disciple
16) Jesus' trial till his crucifixion	Obedience to the prophetic foreordination
17) Jesus' death till his resurrection	Hope alone
18) Jesus' resurrection till his ascension	Receiving his teaching about the Kingdom
19) The ten-day interlude till Pentecost	Prayer & supplication continuance
20) Pentecost till Book of Revelations	Faith plus believer's baptism
21) Temple destruction till John's	Faith plus hope & love translation
22) John's translation till the Pre-trib rapture of the Bride	Faith alone
23) Revelation of the Antichrist till the Abomination of Desolation	Faith plus Animal Sacrifice in the Temple
24) Mid-trib till Armageddon/2 nd Advent	Faith plus self-sacrifice
25) Satan bound till Satan loosed	Not following Satan
26) Satan's being cast into Lake of Fire till Great White Throne Judgment	NO MEANS OF SALVATION AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME
27) New Heavens & New Earth Epoch	Remaining perfectly holy at all times

TABLE A

(whether abstaining from an action or performing one) or attitude, and sometimes with both action and attitude.

One of these 27 dispensations, the 26th, is unique in that *there will be no means of salvation available to the lost during the 26th dispensation*. Interestingly, the numerical value of the Hebrew Letters of the name of Jehovah (יהוה) add up to a total of 26,

$$5 (\text{ה}) + 6 (\text{ו}) + 5 (\text{ה}) + 10 (\text{י}) = 26$$

indicating that the 26th dispensation pertains to the Fatherly, Jehovah personality of God which is the resentful, unmerciful, vengeful aspect of the Godhead. It should be no surprise to us that the dispensation of the Great White Throne Judgment should be the 26th dispensation of God for the number 26 is Jehovah's number.

Also of interest is the fact that if we remove the 26th dispensation, the dispensation lacking any means of salvation, we are left with a conspicuous number of remaining dispensations, 26 in number, which do have a means of salvation specific to each of them. The number 26—again the number of vengeful, unmerciful Papa Jehovah God... How can this be? How can there be a merciful means of salvation found within the remaining dispensations when the sum total of them is equal to 26—the numerological identity of resentful Papa Jehovah? I believe God designated the remaining 26 dispensations with a means of salvation in order to demonstrate that His wrathful side is an ever-present reality, even in the times of His mercy. The ubiquitousness of the number 26 throughout the 27 dispensations of God demonstrates that the most basic essence of God is pure, infinite Holiness and Justice. The fulness of His Wrath is found in the 26th dispensation, whereas to the remaining 26 dispensations, He has allotted but 1/26th of His Wrath in order that He might have mercy on a limited number of His chosen. Blessed be His name.

Leaving the consideration of the Biblical significance of the number 26 aside for a moment, I would like to point out that the means of salvation of the remaining 26 dispensations can be categorized as follows. [I have indicated the *Fatherly*, *Filial*, and *Ghostly* dispensations in TABLE B, on the following page, by the letters **(F)**, **(S)**, and **(HG)** respectively].

Abstinence	Performance	Attitude + Action	Attitude Alone
Not eating the forbidden fruit (F)	Walking with God (F)	Faith plus believer's baptism (HG)	Staying Humble (F)
Not committing murder (F)	Animal bloodshed, including hunting (F)	Faith plus Animal Sacrifice in the Temple (HG)	Hope alone (S)
Not mixing with fallen angels (Nephilim) (F)	Being circumcised & dwelling in the land (F)	Faith plus self-sacrifice (HG)	Faith plus hope & love (HG)
Not trying to usurp place of Deity (F)	Living in peace with good pharaoh and opposing bad pharaoh (F)		Faith alone (HG)
Not following Satan (HG)	Obedience to the Aaronic sacrificial system (S)		
	Obedience to Kings, Priests, and Prophets (S)		
	70-year submission to captivity followed by return after the 70 th year (S)		
	Rebuilding Temple & Jerusalem (S)		
	Blameless performance of the Law (S)		
	Following the earthly Jesus as his disciple (S)		
	Obedience to the prophetic foreordination (S)		
	Receiving Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom (S)		
	Prayer & supplication continuance (HG)		
	Remaining perfectly holy at all times (HG)		

TABLE B

In light of the fundamental nature of God as Holiness, it should not surprise us that, by far, the most common means of salvation among the 27 dispensations of God should be the fulfilment of His righteous demands. Whether Fatherly, Filial, or Ghostly, God's righteous demands are found within each of these three categories of the Divine dispensations. As I peruse TABLE B for the various means of salvation which are based on performance, I see them as being categorized into three main types of performance: 1) obedience, 2) bloodshed, and 3) prayer. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.ⁱ Whether it involve sacrificial offering, circumcision, or holy war, bloodshed, along with obedience and prayer seems to run throughout the means of salvation among the positive, performance-oriented means.

Similar to the performance-oriented means of salvation, if we look under the "Attitude Alone" column we will notice that, again, the Fatherly, Filial, and Ghostly aspects of God all possess means of salvation which are through Attitude Alone. Though significantly less in number than the performance-oriented means of salvation due to the limited election of grace, the attitude-alone means of salvation reveal the conditional, limited mercy available to the believer through the limited atonement of God's predestinating foreknowledge. This shows us that, although the primary essence of God is holiness, He has made provision for mercy as the exception to the rule for those He has chosen through His unmerited favor.

If we look under the "Abstinence" column in TABLE B, we will notice that only the Fatherly and Ghostly aspects of God involve Abstinence as a means of salvation. The Filial aspect of God does not appear here. What can account for the glaring absence of Abstinence as a means of salvation among the Filial dispensations of God? I believe the answer lies in the following passage from the Gospel of Matthew:

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.ⁱⁱ

Jesus was not an advocate of abstinence as a means of salvation. Though certainly not a drinker of fermented wine, he certainly loved his juice. And based on this Scripture, he was no stranger to food. So abstinence was little

more than a bleep on his radar. Rather, he wished to save us through our attitude alone—that is, by faith alone. That was the ultimate blessing he came to bring. It was the blessing of newbirth, by which wisdom—God’s Wisdom—gave birth to children who have a faith attitude—not perfection, but, as Dr. Brother Bob would say, “a get-up-and-go, shake-the-dust-off, and keep-on-a’keepin’-on kind of attitude.” Hallelujah!

The Abstinence means of salvation all involve a rejection of Satan and a refusal to follow His leading. For example, way back in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were saved by their constant refusal to follow the prompting of the Serpent to eat the forbidden fruit. We don’t know how long they refrained from following His lead: it could have been a few hours or it could have been millions or even billions of years before Eve decided to heed the Enemy and give place to the Devil by sinking her teeth into the fruit God told her to abstain from. And when she did, she lost her salvation because that was the only means of salvation at that time, though future provision had already been made in the foreknowledge of God.

Fortunately for Adam and Eve, God provided another means of salvation through their abstinence from committing murder. In this respect they maintained their abstinence and thus were saved and only their son Cain lost his salvation by following Satan and killing his brother Abel. The Devil is a murderer from the beginning.ⁱⁱⁱ Nevertheless, once Cain lost his salvation by losing his abstinence from murder, God provided another means of salvation by avoiding sexual intercourse with the fallen angelic hosts. Cain got resaved by abstaining from cross-breeding with the angels, but some of his descendants did not abstain. They lost their salvation and perished in the Flood. At Babel, many lost their salvation by following the antics of Lucifer and trying to usurp the place of Deity, but God provided a way through the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision-bloodshed and holy-land-occupation. Someday at the close of the Millennial Reign, during one of the Ghostly dispensations of God, abstinence from following Satan will again be the means of salvation.

Under the “Attitude + Action” column in TABLE B, we will notice the means of salvation listed here all pertain to one of the Ghostly dispensations of God. Attitude and Action, or Attitude and Performance, are never both required in any of the Fatherly or Filial dispensations. What that tells me, Neighbor, is that some of the greatest demands of God as a means of salvation are laid down as Law when the Holy Ghost is the aspect

of God which is most in manifestation. In other words, with the Holy Ghost comes responsibility and a responsibility so great as to determine the ultimate destiny of your soul. The three means of salvation listed here under the “Attitude + Action” column of means of salvation all involve Faith plus some kind of liquid, whether it be the water of believer’s baptism, the blood of temple sacrifices, or the pouring out of one’s own soul unto death.

You see, my Beloved, that following Pentecost and prior to the completion of the book of Revelations and its predicted destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., God required not simply faith, but faith and believer’s baptism in order for a person to be saved. Why? Because as the Book of Hebrews tells us,

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made
the first old. Now that which decayeth and
waxeth old is ready to vanish away.^{iv}

The Book of Hebrews, written prior to the destruction of the Temple is stating here that the Old Covenant was still in force to some degree since it was still in the process of decay and had not yet fully vanished away even though it was about ready to disappear and remain defunct for two millenia during the bulk of the parenthetical Church Age. So while the outwards of the Old were in force, the outwards of the New were in force also as a necessary means of salvation for the believer. That is why Peter and the other Apostles in the book of Acts command believers to be baptized rather than leaving it as an optional outward witness of an inward faith and an optional point of contact for the release of their faith. The word “command” implies a requirement—an obligation to be fulfilled in order to receive a beneficial consequence, that is, salvation.

Do you see, Precious Child of Papa God, how important it is, yea, how necessary it is to have a good grasp on the distinctions between the 27 dispensations of God? If you fail to grasp this dispensational knowledge, you will easily misinterpret Scripture and consider something as binding and in full force when, in actuality, you’re dealing with an element of a different dispensation which no longer is relevant in the current dispensation. For example, when you read Acts 2:38, you might make the

mistake of believing that you have to be baptized in the name of Jesus in order to receive remission of sins:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now don't get your cart ahead of the horse, Brother! I didn't say that being baptized in the name of Jesus isn't important anymore. It is important because it's in the Word of God. But what I am saying is that it was only required as an essential to salvation during the time when Christianity was still under the era of the Temple and certain outwardly elements of the Old Testament were still in force and had not yet vanished away until the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Reign.

Nevertheless, despite the strict demands of a Ghostly dispensation of God, God loosened up His requirements for salvation during this current, Salvation Day of the parenthetical Church Age. God created a new dispensation upon the absencing of the last apostle through Enochian translation, releasing the church to be saved through faith alone apart from works or supplementary attitudes such as hope or love. Satan stole this dispensational information from the church, transfiguring the church into carnal churchianity for nearly 1400 years until the Holy Ghost got hold of Brother Martin Luther and brought him into the revelation of justification by faith alone apart from works. With Luther began, not only the restoration of the key doctrine of justification by faith alone, but also the key hermeneutical knowledge of the 27 dispensations of God.

Out of concern that you might not yet have grasped the absolute necessity of knowing the P's & Q's of God's dispensational workings as the essential key to correct Bible interpretation, let me point you to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. Now this teaching of Jesus took place during the 15th dispensation of God—a time when the freshest, most poignant means of salvation was the act of becoming a disciple of Jesus and following his teachings. In this sermon, you will find all kinds of troubling statements by Jesus which don't seem to line up with other statements in the Word. For instance, in Matthew 5:22, the earthly Jesus says, "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell

fire.”^v If that pre-Gethsemane statement by the earthly Jesus still applied to believers after the day of Pentecost, how could the Apostle Paul be so sure of his salvation when he says that he had finished his course, had kept the faith, and was about to receive a crown of righteousness laid up for him?^{vi} After all, if the pre-Gethsemane commands of the earthly Jesus were still in force as a means of salvation, then Paul was in danger of hell fire for calling the Galatians fools when he said, “O foolish Galatians!”^{vii} Do you see, Sister, how ignorance of the 27 dispensations of God can result in error and even heresy?

Let me give you another example of the problems that arise when folks are destroyed for a lack of knowledge of the 27 dispensations of God. Another thing the earthly, pre-Gethsemane Jesus says is, “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”^{viii} A believer in the current dispensation will say to Jesus (and rightfully so), “Jesus, you’re preaching works righteousness.” Well, at that point in time, prior to Gethsemane, during the 15th dispensation, he *was* preaching works righteousness. Of course, we, standing in the 22nd dispensation, know now that he said those things to tease them and frustrate them with the impossibility of works righteousness, so that they could hit rock bottom and open up their hearts to a righteousness by faith apart from works. But if you lack the proper teaching on the 27 dispensations of God, your house will be built on shifting sands and great will be the fall of your house, according to the Word.^{ix}

Lest your ears have grown dull of hearing, I wish to share one more example of this key doctrine of the 27 dispensations so that you may come into the know if you ever hope to glean the soul-saving truths of the Word of God. I will show you a clear example of how the earthly, pre-Gethsemane Jesus of the 15th dispensation contradicts the Holy-Ghost-inspired Apostle Paul of the 20th dispensation. In the satirical works-righteousness teaching of his Sermon on the Mount, the earthly, pre-Gethsemane Jesus states very clearly that “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”^x I believe Jesus is speaking tongue-in-cheek here because he knows it is impossible for his unregenerate listeners to do the will of his Father. I say this, of course, having a 22nd-dispensation perspective on the matter which allows me, not only to see past his words, but also to see Jesus’s belly-laugh sense of

humor. But I'm sure that Jesus' listeners, with their works-righteousness, Jewish upbringing, were taking Jesus just as serious as a medical quack attack.

Now, let's turn to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, keeping in mind that Paul wrote this epistle during the 20th dispensation of God prior to the complete phasing out of the Old Testament and the fullness of the parenthetical Church Age.

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, ...That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.^{xi}

Here we see the exact opposite of what the pre-Gethsemane, 15th-dispensation Jesus said. If you miss seeing the change of dispensations, you'll think God is contradicting Himself. But He's not. He's simply working within the constrictions of each respective dispensation.

I hope you are beginning to understand how crucial it is to grasp and differentiate between the 27 dispensations of God in order to correctly interpret the precious Word of God and not fall into the error of the Wicked. Satan is a liar and He wants nothing more than to confuse the saints of God and bring them into bondage by stealing out from under their noses the dispensational key to proper Bible interpretation. He stole it from carnal churchianity, that vestige of faith, and left them wallowing in the muddied waters of their amillennial and post-millennial confusion. By their tradition, they made the Word of God of none effect.

Strangely, the Light of the Word concerning the 27 dispensations of God began to flicker once again in 1590 when Francisco Ribera, a Jesuit theologian, published his treatise on the book of Revelations. The torch of dispensational revelation was then transmitted among the faithful for over two centuries until it fell into the hands of Brother John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) of the Plymouth Brethren who, in turn, added to the conflagration through his study of the Word. A handful of folks continued

to search the Scriptures to see whether those things be true, but not too many people knew about the 27 dispensations of God at that time. But then God raised up a man who was prophesied in the Book of Isaiah in a passage which, I believe, has a dual fulfilment:

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is* none beside me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else.^{xii}

The LORD raised up Brother Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921), guided his right hand to communicate dispensational truth to the nations and bring them into subjection to *the two-leaved gates* of the Word, now opened permanently in a straightforward manner to Brother Scofield as he, under the anointing, broke through the hellish *gates of brass* and *bars of iron* which had held the treasures of the 27 dispensations imprisoned in darkness.

Brother Scofield, by Divine revelation, brought forth the *hidden riches of secret places* in preparation for the restoration of the nation-state of *Israel, God's elect* in 1948. The revelation in Brother Scofield's notes infiltrated the bastions of carnal churchianity through the Trojan Horse of

God's Holy Word, subduing the nations to the truths of God's Divine dispensations so that this knowledge is known from *the rising of the sun, and from the west*, the north, and the south even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Others instrumental in the cause have been Brother Jack Chick, Brother Hal Linsey, Brother and Sister Jack Van Impe, Brother Tim LaHaye, and Brother John Hagee. But none has done more to disseminate the dispensational key than God's anointed Cyrus with his reference Bible.

If you don't have a Scofield Reference Bible, my Beloved, I recommend that you get one as soon as possible. Or, even better, get yourself a Dake's Annotated Bible which contains a Pentecostalized version of Cyrus's anointed notes. In addition, I encourage you to get some study materials from a good, Bible-based ministry such as E.T. Abernathy Ministries International or Bob Dinkins Ministries. Though Brother Scofield and Brother Dake come close to the truths I have presented here, they confuse some of the dispensations and fail to see the twenty-seven, distinct dispensations set forth in the Word of God. Dr. Brother Bob Dinkins and I are in agreement concerning everything I have set forth in this paper. May God bless and enrich your study of the Word. 🙏

ⁱ Heb 9:22.

ⁱⁱ Matt 11:19.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jn 8:44.

^{iv} Heb 8:13.

^v Matt 5:22.

^{vi} "I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim 4:7-8).

^{vii} Gal 3:1.

^{viii} Matt 6:15.

^{ix} Matt 7:24-27.

^x Matt 7:21.

^{xi} Rom 10:5-9.

^{xii} Is 45:1-6.