

# WHOLE BIBLE TIMELINE (CHARTED)

## Part I: Explaining Dispensationalism

### I. Introduction

- A. Interactions with class members have revealed the need to provide a *whole Bible timeline* together with the *dispensations* and an explanation of *dispensationalism*, and *why* we *hold* to *dispensational beliefs*.
- B. We will thus teach *two* lessons on the whole Bible timeline, with this *first* lesson being on *dispensationalism itself* and the *second* lesson being on *transitions* in the Bible timeline that occur *besides* the *dispensations*:

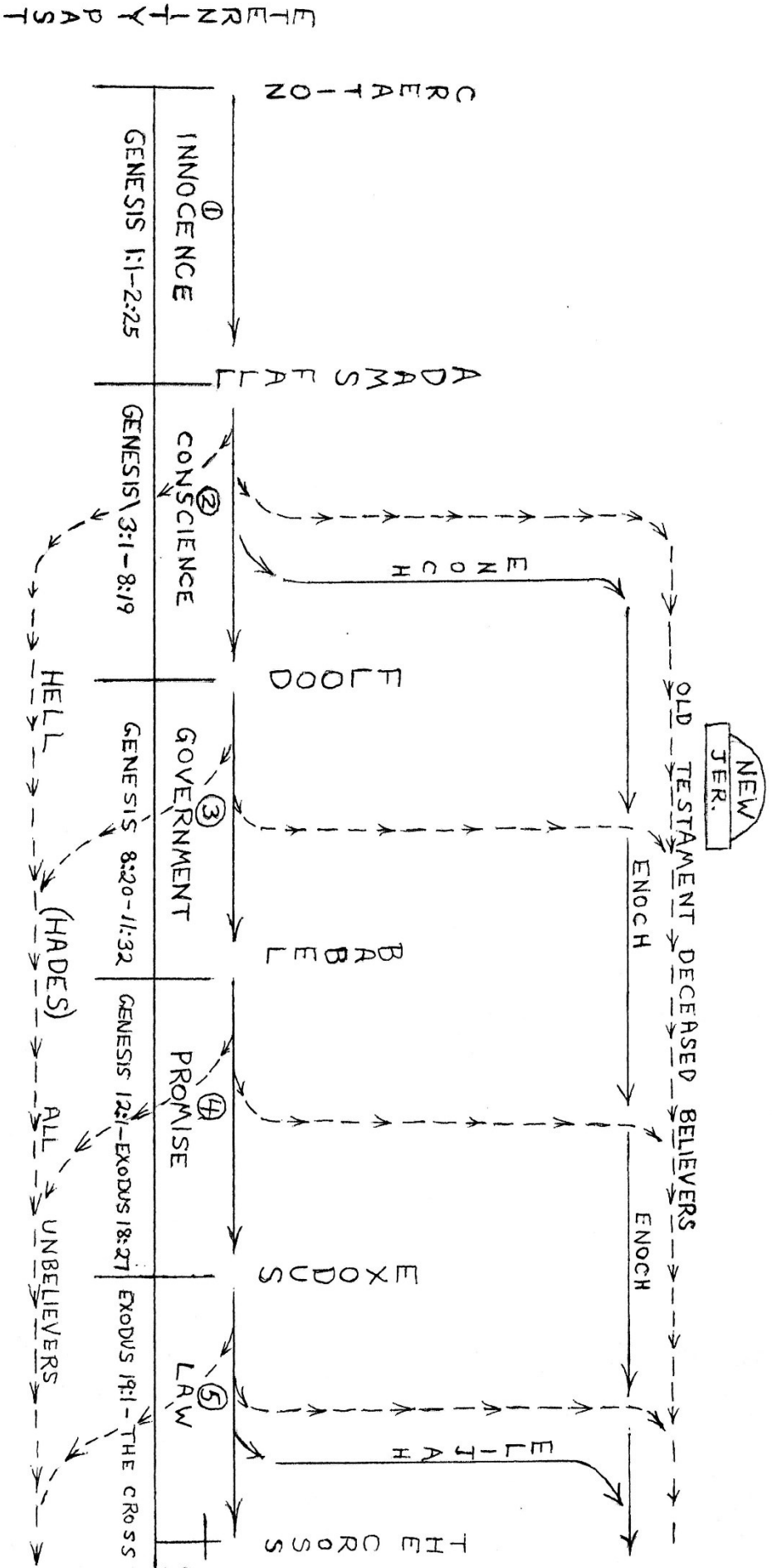
### II. Explaining Dispensationalism.

- A. The word “dispensation” occurs in the KJV in 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 1:10, 3:2 and Colossians 1:25.
- B. This word renders the Greek noun *oikonomia*, meaning “office of stewardship, dispensation,” an arrangement where a steward of a household or an estate oversees and dispenses his master’s goods to the people in the household (G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the N. T.*, 1968, p. 313; cf. Luke 12:42; 16:1-8).
- C. Ephesians 3:1-8, Colossians 1:25 and 1 Corinthians 9:17 reveal that God made Paul the steward of the “dispensation” of the grace of God, identifying it as the Church and showing how God gave Paul the calling of revealing that dispensation as the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body, the Church.
- D. One other “dispensation” is named in Scripture, the “dispensation of the fulness of times” (Eph. 1:10 KJV), namely, the Millennial Kingdom (*Ryrie Study Bible, KJV*, 1994, fn. to Eph. 1:10). Christ as the Steward of the Kingdom defeats all enemies before turning the Kingdom back to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28).
- E. Thus, a Biblical, spiritual “dispensation” is “a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose” in human history (Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 1970, p. 50).
- F. Since *Jesus exemplified* the need to *interpret Scripture* in a *consistently literal* way (Matt. 5:18; Mk. 12:18-27), the *consistently literal* view of *Scripture* leads us to *identify* a *total* of *seven dispensations* (Ibid., p. 57-64):
  - 1. As noted above, the *dispensation of the Church* is revealed in 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 3:2 and Colossians 1:25, and Ephesians 1:10 reveals the future *dispensation* of the *Millennial Kingdom*.
  - 2. Also, Colossians 2:11-17 reveals that the *cross* of *Christ ended* the rule of the *Mosaic Law*, so the *dispensation* of the *Mosaic Law* with Moses as its steward existed *before* the *dispensation* of the *Church*.
  - 3. In addition, the definition of *oikonomia* requires us to identify *four more* dispensations that came *before* the *dispensation* of the *Mosaic Law*, and we identify those dispensations as follows (Ibid., p. 57-64):
    - a. The *dispensation of Innocence* involved God’s telling man not to eat of the forbidden tree lest he die, Gen. 2:16-25. Man disobeyed, death entered the human race and God drove man from Eden, Gen. 3:1-24.
    - b. After sin entered the human race, God had man rely on his conscience in the *dispensation of Conscience* to do what was right (Gen. 3:1-24; 4:1-7). Cain failed to heed his conscience so as to repent of his evil sacrifice, so he killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8-16). Men later committed many murders in violation of their consciences until God had to end the dispensation with the Genesis Flood, Genesis 4:23-8:19.
    - c. After the Flood, God instituted the *dispensation of Government* where murder was to be handled with capital punishment administered by human government (Gen. 8:20-9:6). However, human government turned away from God in world apostacy at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-32).
    - d. To disciple this apostate, paganizing world, God graciously instituted the *dispensation of Promise*, calling Abraham to leave Ur and sojourn in Canaan that He might eventually bless the world through Abraham’s “seed,” which is Israel in general but is specifically Christ (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:13-19).
  - 4. In *summary*, then, the *consistently literal interpretation* of *all of Scripture* as taught by *Christ’s example* leads us to belief in a *total* of *seven Biblical dispensations* of *Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Mosaic Law, Church* and the *Millennial Kingdom*.
- G. *The end result* of *consistently interpreting all of Scripture* in a *literal* way *is dispensational THEOLOGY with its distinctives as follows*: (1) *Israel* and the *Church* are *always distinct from each other*, (2) the *main purpose* in history is *God’s glory* (Ibid., p. 43-47), (3) the rapture of the Church is *pretribulational*, (4) the Tribulation Period is *literally seven years long*, (5) Christ’s Second Coming is *premillennial* (6) and the Kingdom of Christ is a *literal thousand-year reign* (C. C. Ryrie, *A Survey Of Bible Doct.*, 1978, p. 164-171).

**Lesson:** *The consistently literal interpretation of all of Scripture as exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ leads us to dispensational theology with its seven dispensations and the pretribulational, premillennial view of Bible prophecy.*

**Application:** *May we heed Christ’s example to interpret Scripture literally and thus hold to dispensationalism.*

# BIBLE TIMELINE 1

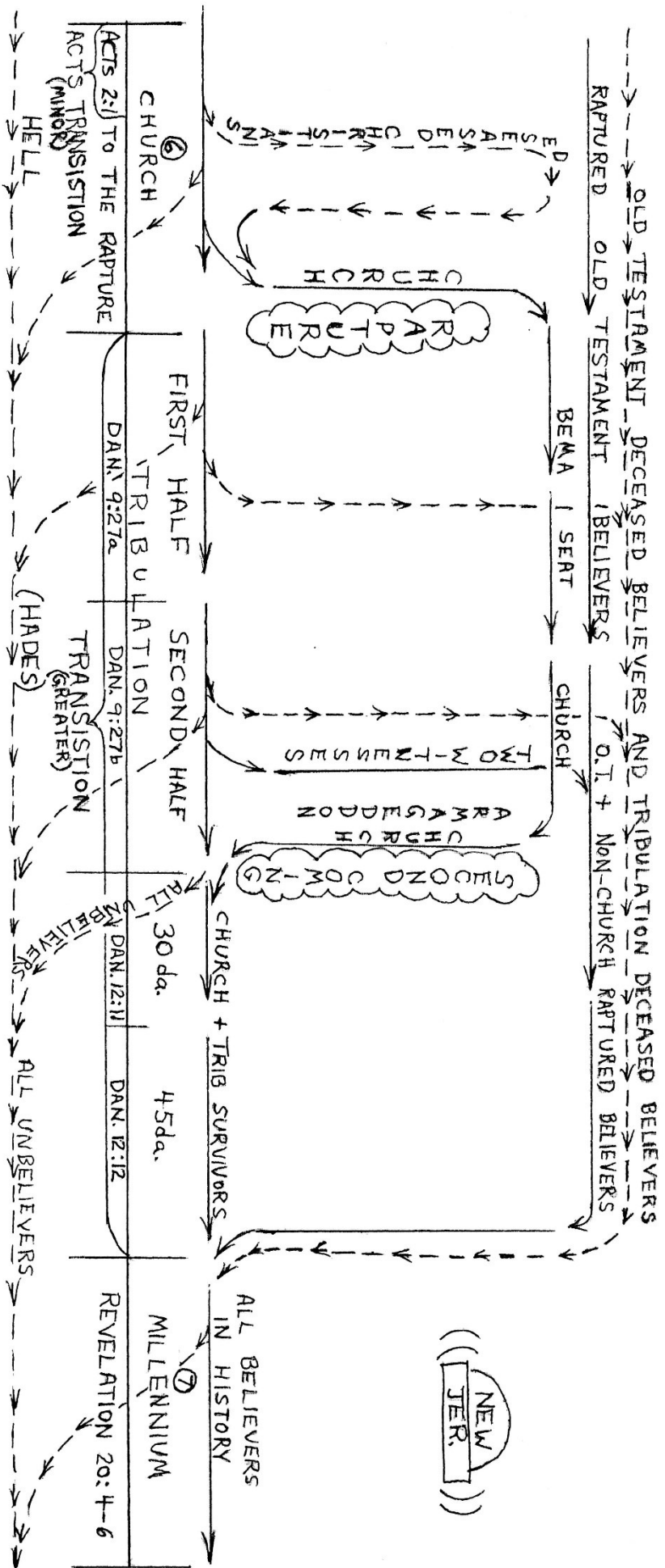


## LEGEND

- LIVING (OR RAPTURED)
- - - - - DECEASED
- ETERNALLY CONDEMNED
- ⊙ . . . . ⊙ DISPENSATIONS

ETERNITY PAST

# B I B L E T I M E L I N E 2



# B I B L E T I M E L I N E 3

