



## The Patriarchal, Mosaic, and New Testament Dispensations

The Bible speaks of three different dispensations or ages. The period of time from creation to the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt, is formally called the **Patriarchal** dispensation. The books of the Bible that detail this dispensation include Genesis through Exodus 20, and also the book of Job. The next dispensation, called the **Mosaic**, is historically and scripturally depicted in Exodus chapter 20 through the prophecy of Malachi — which brings the Old Testament pages to a close. It is during this period of time that the Israelites are officially organized as a nation by the Law of Moses, beginning at Mount Sinai and finding its fulfillment in the birth of Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23; 5:19-20; Galatians 3:26-29 et al.). The Law of Moses foretold of this event, and the New Testament confirmed that it took place (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-26). And the final dispensation is the **New Testament** dispensation which was ushered in with the Christ (Acts 2:36; James 1:25-27; Hebrews 1:1-3). It is also called the perfect or complete dispensation. It is founded upon the perfect Law of Liberty or the Law of Christ. It is also the last dispensation and thereby comprises the last days (Galatians 6:2). So in the Bible, you have sixty-six books, thirty-nine of them found during the Old Testament, and twenty-seven reveals the New Testament. Both Old and New Testaments refer to the change we refer to as dispensations (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 10:16-18). Hence, we can clearly identify with three different dispensations in our Bible.

### THE DISPENSATION'S DIFFERENCES

Patriarch means the male of a family or tribe. A Patriarch was a biblical figure regarded as a father of the human race, especially Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, according to the Oxford University Press Dictionary. During this time, God spoke directly to these individuals — hence, the Patriarchal period. In so doing, God did not communicate through written Law as He did during the Mosaic and also now, during the New Testament dispensations. This is why we read about God speaking directly to men like Adam, Cain, Noah, and Abraham. However, once this dispensation was fulfilled, God revealed a written Law to Moses, which became His authority for that dispensation, and then revealed a final Law through Christ. Authority is our primary issue of concern, regarding the different dispensations, because we must understand what is bound today as compared to then. Now, in the New Testament dispensation, we do not worry about obeying what Noah, Abraham, or the Jews had to obey under their respective laws. The Hebrews writer reminds us of this: “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by*

*his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Hebrews 1:1-3 **emphasis mine**). Therefore, God does not speak to man directly today, but does speak to everyone through His Word. And knowing this is His final say, today, Christ’s Words are for all to obey *now* under the New Testament (Colossians 3:16; John 8:31-32; 14:6).

### THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION IS THE LAST AND FINAL DISPENSATION

Contrary to popular theories advanced by Dispensational Premillennialists, the New Testament age is the last and complete age (Hebrews 1:1-3). In this last dispensation, all will stand condemned or justified by Christ’s blood (Matthew 26:28). There will be no second chance come Judgment Day, and the Bible teaches that we await this final day when all will be resurrected from the grave and stand before God (John 5:28-29; 8:24, 31-32; 12:48-52; Matthew 24:35; Romans 14:10-12). Heaven and earth will pass away, but the New Testament will stand. Are we prepared for eternity now (2 Peter 3:9-11)?

The patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations have been fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 24:44ff.; Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 2:14). The New Testament teaches that Christ’s Words, the New Testament, will judge us in the last day (John 12:48; Matthew 24:35). Therefore, as Paul said, we must do all things by the authority of Jesus Christ, not Noah, Abraham, or Moses (Colossians 3:16-17). We must rightly divide the Bible and know its contents (2 Timothy 2:15). If we will do this, we can be the thoroughly furnished man of God, ready for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

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# Jesus: Our Prophet, Priest, and King

Anointing is a practice and process that is seen throughout the Old Testament. The anointing process was God's authorized method of showing His "stamp of approval" on a sacrifice being offered to Him in worship, or of one who would serve as prophet, priest, or king. When we read of various anointings in the Old Testament, God was showing us a picture of what He was going to accomplish for mankind through His Son, Jesus.

That Jesus is called the Christ is indicative of this anointing process. The word "Christ" means "anointed." It is the New Testament Greek language equivalent of the Old Testament word "Messiah" also meaning "anointed."

After the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins, Peter the apostle preached of Him with these words: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that **God hath made Him both Lord and Christ**, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2.36). In other words, Peter was saying that God anointed Jesus to be the Lord. Jesus is indeed Lord of all (Acts 10.36).

Again, in Peter's second recorded gospel sermon, he told the people "that he (God) would send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been from of old. Moses indeed said, **a prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from**

among your brethren..." (Acts 3.20-23).

Nearly the entire book of Hebrews is written to establish the fact that Jesus is our High Priest. The point seems well taken and direct when the writer says "Having then a **great high priest**, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4.14).

Finally, the apostle John wrote of Jesus in his revelation this way: "these shall war against the Lamb (Jesus), and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and **King of kings**" (Revelation 17.14).

What does all this mean for us today? **Jesus** is the only sacrifice for our sins. He is the One Who stands before God proclaiming Heaven's message to mankind as God's **prophet**. Again note the letter to the Hebrews: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days **spoken unto us in his Son**" (Hebrews 1.1,2). He is the One Who mediates between men and God as our **High Priest**. And, He is the only **King** whom we serve in His kingdom (see Colossians 1.13), which is His body, the church of Christ.

God bless you in your study of His word, as you search the Scriptures and strive to serve Jesus, our Prophet, Priest, and King!

*Robin W. Haley, Reynoldsburg, OH*

## The Organization of the Lord's Church

Some two thousand years ago near the coasts of Caesarea Philippi Jesus said, "I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18). The Lord's church came into existence (Acts 2:27,38,41,47), and along with the church, Jesus provided a pattern of organization.

First, the divine pattern for the organization of the Lord's church is that Jesus is the head of the church. "And he (Jesus) is head of the body, the church..." (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23). As the head of the church, Jesus' role is to instruct, direct, lead and guide which he does through the New Testament (John 14:26; 16:13). It is important to note the church is not the authority, but Jesus as the head of the church is the authority. There is only one head of the church and that one is Jesus.

Second, the Lord's church is organized into autonomous congregations. The pattern in the New Testament is that there is no hierarchy of congregations, but each congregation is self-governing

under the authority of the Scriptures. Paul wrote, "unto the church of God which at Corinth..." (1 Corinthians 1:2), "...unto the churches of Galatia" (Galatians 1:2), "unto the church of the Thessalonians..." (1 Thessalonians 1:1), all of which indicates that the Lord's church is made up of autonomous congregations under the headship of Christ. Every congregation of the Lord's church answers only to Christ himself (Acts 20:17,28).

Third, the Lord's church is organized with each congregation having elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, and other members serving in a variety of other capacities. The Lord's will is that every congregation has a plurality of qualified elders (Acts 14:27, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). Other biblical terms for elders are pastors, bishops, shepherds, overseers, and presbyters (Acts 20:17,28, Philippians 1:1, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 5:1-4). Serving under the oversight of the elders are qualified deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-10,12-13), evangelists or preachers, and teachers, all who work under the oversight of the local elders carrying out their God-given charge to "preach the word..." (2 Timothy 4:2). All members of the congregation are to work and worship under the oversight and authority of the biblically qualified elders.

The New Testament pattern is often quite different from what is found in denominations. The denominational patterns often have one person ruling the denomination or congregation, a hierarchy whereby a congregation answers to regional, national, or international headquarters. How different it is in that the Lord's church answers first to the Lord, according to the New Testament, and is overseen by qualified elders within the congregation. May we ever seek to follow the divine pattern.

*Wayne Brewer, Mabelvale, AR*

### God's Plan of Salvation

- A person must HEAR the saving gospel (Romans 10:17).
- A person must BELIEVE in Christ (John 8:24; 20:31).
- A person must REPENT of their sins (Luke 13:4,5).
- A person must CONFESS Christ (Matthew 10:32-33).
- A person must be IMMERSUED, baptized (Acts 2:38).
- A person must live FAITHFULLY (1 Corinthians 15:58).

*"Come now, and let us reason together..."*

— Isaiah 1:18

# CAPITAL PUNISHMENT?

## *Women and the Home*

Citizens have a responsibility to their respective governments. To the Romans, Paul wrote, *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”* (Romans 13:1). Peter also wrote, *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well”* (1 Peter 2:13-14). Most of us recognize our responsibility to government and to obey the laws of the land. In reference to this, an often asked question arises concerning capital punishment: “Can we support capital punishment or vote for a candidate who supports capital punishment?” As with all questions of this nature, it must be answered in light of the holy scriptures and not in “I think...” or “I believe...” So, “what saith the Scriptures?”

From 1 Peter 2:13-14, government exists for two reasons: *“for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.”* This is further explained in Romans 13:2 which says, *“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”* Not only do the inspired writers reveal the purpose governments serve, they also reveal two reasons for obeying governing authorities: first, to avoid punishment and, second, *“for conscience sake,”* because to resist the government is to resist the ordinance of God. Please also notice this fact: punishment is and should be a deterrent to crime. In verse 4, Paul continues, *“For he [i.e. the one in governmental authority - CN] is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”* In other words, governments are God’s ministers or servants for the avenging of *“wrath upon him that doeth evil.”*

One way in which ancient governments inflicted punishment was by the sword. The sword was an emblem or symbol of authority to inflict the death penalty. The sword is a useless tool for anything other than personal protection and/or to inflict wounds upon another person. Because this passage says, *“for he (governments) beareth not the sword in vain,”* the Bible clearly teaches capital punishment.

There should be no doubt in any Bible student’s mind that under the law of Moses, the death penalty was demanded for many offenses. The death penalty, also, was given before the law of Moses. In Genesis 9:6, God said to Noah, *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”*

In actuality, capital punishment is for the betterment of society. It is a deterrent to crime, and it protects people from further injuries due to the wickedness of a criminal who has been put to death. But more importantly, it is the means by which God revenges *“him that doeth evil.”* The Bible teaches, *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Romans 12:19). Capital punishment is God’s wrath upon evil doers carried out through His servants — the governments.

Therefore, God has sanctioned the death penalty in the days of Noah, in the Mosaic age, and in the New Testament age. We not only have the right to support capital punishment, we have the obligation and responsibility to support and defend what God teaches in His word — for governing authorities *“beareth not the sword in vain.”*

**Chuck Northrop**, Conway, AR

Oftentimes, the roles different ones play in various contexts are skewed by culture. Some of the most vivid examples of this in the United States are the roles of various members of the home. The Bible teaches *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”* (2 Peter 1:3). For a moment, consider what the Bible says concerning the role of women as daughters, wives, and mothers in the home.

Primarily the role of daughters would be included in the role of all children. Paul instructed, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’”* (Ephesians 6:1-3). In Ephesians 6:3, Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 5:16. This indicates that the command for children to obey their parents in an age-lasting command — it was a command in the Old Testament and now is a command in the New Testament. A good example of a daughter by marriage is Ruth. As Naomi was preparing to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem (the place of her origin), her daughter-in-law, Ruth, made a vow to return with her and to be with her until death (Ruth 1:16-17). The principle is clearly seen: children have a responsibility to their parents. They are to take care of their parents as they age (cf. 1 Timothy 5:4).

In 1 Peter 3:1-2, Peter tells how wives are to treat their husbands. In this case, he is appealing to the wives of unbelieving husbands. He says, *“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.”* One way a believing wife can win her husband to the Lord is by submitting to him as the Bible instructs and then by setting a good example for him. In Colossians 3:18-21, Paul gives further instructions for each person of the home. For the wives, he simply says, *“...submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”* In Proverbs 31:10-31, the mother of King Lemuel taught him what kind of qualities to search for in a wife. Among other things, she said a virtuous wife has *“worth far above rubies,”* and *“She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household.”* She goes on to say, she clothes her household and speaks words of wisdom. Finally, she says a *“...woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”* There is much to learn about God’s woman of the home in Proverbs 31.

Titus 2:3-5 says, *“...the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things — that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”* Paul’s instructions are for older women in the church to help the younger women in their walk with God. A godly mother will teach her children things about God and His creation, Jesus and His church, and the Bible and its teachings.

At the present time, the United States needs in a very significant way women who will choose to be God’s women. She needs women who will show care and compassion for others while not taking advantage of others for personal gain. She needs women who will choose to be keepers of the home, not the expense account. She needs women who will raise children to put God, not money, first. She needs women who will be virtuous, not selfish.

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**Just the other day I broke a mirror, and the first thing my friend said was, “that’s seven years of bad luck.”  
Does the Bible Speak about Such Superstitions?**

To answer this question, we first need to determine what “superstition” is. *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines “superstition” as “a belief or

practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance or a false conception of causation.” Superstitions, such as the one you inquired about, come from the ignorance of man, especially to the truth revealed in God’s Word. Let’s look at a few common superstitions, and how they relate to the truth of God’s Word.

• **SEVEN YEARS BAD LUCK FROM BREAKING A MIRROR.**

This belief comes from the ancient myth that the image in the mirror (or any other reflective object) was our actual soul. Thus the breaking of a mirror resulted in the soul being astray from the body. Early Romans believed that man was renewed every seven years. When these ignorant concepts were joined, the belief came about that for seven years (until the time of renewal) your soul would be astray, and thus you would have bad luck. God’s word teaches that it is God who is in control of our soul (Matthew 10:28; Acts 2:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). The idea that breaking a mirror would separate man from his soul would actually teach the death of man, for man without his soul is dead (James 2:26).

• **A BLACK CAT CROSSING YOUR PATH IS BAD LUCK.**

This foolish teaching comes from the idea that black cats are connected with the supernatural activity of witches and such (a belief begun during the witch hunts of the middle ages). Again the Bible is very clear that such beliefs are founded on ignorance and rejection of God. The idea of such supernatural beings is always associated with idolatry and the rejection of the

true and living God (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; 1 Kings 17:16-18). God called the claims of such people a “thing of nought” (Jeremiah 14:13-14).

• **IT IS BAD LUCK TO WALK UNDER A LADDER.**

This idea comes from the days before the gallows, when criminals were hung from the top rung of a ladder. It was believed that their spirits lingered underneath and thus to walk beneath a ladder was to enter the area of evil ghosts and spirits. The Bible concept of death and the destiny of the spirit of man is far different! In Ecclesiastes 12:7, we are told that at death “the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” Many other passages in God’s Word teach that the spirit does not linger upon this earth at all upon the death of the individual (cf. Luke 16:19-31; Hebrews 9:27).

An examination of other superstitions (13 is an unlucky number, don’t step on a crack, if you spill salt throw some over your shoulder, etc.) would likewise show a basis in those things which are clearly ignorant of, and in opposition to, the truth of God’s Word. Given the teachings of God’s word and the foolishness of superstitions, it is easy to see the validity of the saying, “As knowledge increases, superstition fades.” Instead of filling our minds with and falling prey to the foolish superstitions of man we ought to strive to study the Word of God that we not be deceived. As Paul said,

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power...” (Colossians 2:6-10).

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