

Dispensational Clarity

Part 1

Position Statement # 4 – Dispensations

DISPENSATIONS - A Dispensation is a specific manner in which God governs during a particular period of time. We are a dispensational church. That is, we believe that God has chosen to administer or govern His purpose on earth through man under varying dispensations. These changes in government are a result of God's choice, and do not indicate that His character ever changes. At least three of these dispensations are mentioned in the Bible and are the subject of extended revelation, viz.: the Dispensation of the Mosaic Law, the present Dispensation of Grace, and the future Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom. In interpreting the Bible, we believe that these are distinct and should not be intermingled or confused.

Position Statement # 3 – Hermeneutics

HERMENEUTICS - Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. The goal of the Biblical interpreter is to discover what the text (the Bible) meant in the mind of its original author for his intended audience. The means of accomplishing this is by applying a literal, grammatical, historical approach to interpretation. By literal, grammatical, historical we mean the customary, socially acknowledged meaning of a word or phrase within its context. The Bible uses figurative and poetic language and these portions should be interpreted accordingly. However, we reject any attempt to allegorize or spiritualize scripture which is not so intended.

Literal Interpretation

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, and literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.

David L. Cooper

Luke 1:30-35

Dispensationalists and Nondispensationalists agree on:

- Mary would have a baby
- Mary would remain a virgin
- The name of Jesus would be given to the child
- Jesus would be called Son of God
- The power of the Holy Spirit would come upon Mary to produce the Christ child in a miracle

Luke 1:30-35

Disagreements:

- Dispensationalists: God will give Jesus the throne of David
- Nondispensationalists: treat the throne of David as a heavenly throne

- Dispensationalists: Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever
- Nondispensationalists: the house of Jacob as having no national dimensions

- Dispensationalists: The nature of Jesus' kingdom
- Nondispensationalists: Jesus' kingdom being a spiritual one and not a concrete, earthly, ethnic, and politically based one

The Indispensable Positions of a Dispensationalist

1. A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the church distinct.

“The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity.”

The Indispensable Positions of a Dispensationalist

2. This distinction between Israel and the church is born out of a system of hermeneutics that is usually called literal interpretation.

Dispensationalists follow a consistently literal method of interpretation, which extends to eschatological studies. ... Literal interpretation recognizes both literal and figurative language. Dispensationalists insist on literal interpretation for prophetic Scriptures even though they abound with figurative language. One reason for this, besides consistency, is the demonstrable literalness of prophecies already fulfilled in Christ's first coming. There is every reason to expect the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Christ's second coming to be literal as well.

The Indispensable Positions of a Dispensationalist

3. The underlying purpose of God in the world is to manifest His divine glory.

To the normative dispensationalist, the soteriological, or saving, program of God is not the only program but one of the means God is using in the total program of glorifying Himself. Scripture is not man-centered as though salvation were the main theme, but it is God-centered because His glory is the center. The Bible itself clearly teaches that salvation, important and wonderful as it is, is not an end in itself but is rather a means to the end of glorifying God

Dispensation

With twenty occurrences in various forms, an examination of its usage in the New Testament demonstrates the lexical meanings of:

oikonomeō (verb-1): be manager; 2. manage, regulate, administer, plan

oikonomia (noun-9): management of a household, direction, office; 2. arrangement, order, plan

oikonomos (noun-10): (house) steward, manager

As Ryrie points out, “the central idea in the word dispensation is that of managing or administering the affairs of a household.”

Clear Divisions in Epistles

Prior to Church – Past Ages

Colossians 1:25-26

Of this church I was made a minister according to the *stewardship (oikonomia)* from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the **past ages** and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

Clear Divisions in Epistles

Church – Stewardship of Grace

Ephesians 3:1-3

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles if indeed you have heard of the **stewardship (oikonomia) of God's grace** which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

Clear Divisions in Epistles

Kingdom – Fullness of the Times



Ephesians 1:9-10

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an **administration (oikonomia)** suitable to the **fullness of the times**, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

Old Earth or New Earth?

Moses, led by the Holy Spirit, thought literal six (24 hr.) days.

Exodus 20:11 (NASB95)

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Old Earth or New Earth?

Moses, led by the Holy Spirit, thought literal six (24 hr.) days.

Exodus 31:17 (NASB95)

It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.

Old Earth or New Earth?

Moses, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote as though there are no gaps in the genealogy



Genesis 5:1-32 (NASB95)

1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God... 32 Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Old Earth or New Earth?

Moses, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote as though there are no gaps in the genealogy



Genesis 10:1 (NASB95)

1 Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood... 32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

Old Earth or New Earth?

The Prophet, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote as though there are no gaps in the genealogy

1 Chronicles 1:1-27 (NASB95)

1 Adam, Seth, Enosh, ... 26 Serug, Nahor, Terah, 27 Abram, that is Abraham.

Old Earth or New Earth?

Luke, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote as though there are no gaps in the genealogy

Luke 3:23-38 (NASB95)

23 When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, ... 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Old Earth or New Earth?

Jude, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote as though there are no gaps in the genealogy

Jude 14 (NASB95)

14 It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,

“for an educated man in the seventeenth or even eighteenth century, any suggestion that the human past extended back further than 6000 years was a vain and foolish speculation.”

The Original Earth: A Vapor Canopy

Genesis 1:6–8 (NASB95)

Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

The Original Earth: A Vapor Canopy

- Serve as a global greenhouse, maintaining an essentially uniformly pleasant warm temperature all over the world.
- With nearly uniform temperatures, great air-mass movements would be inhibited and windstorms would be unknown.
- With no global air circulation, the hydrologic cycle of the present world could not be implemented and there could be no rain, except directly over the bodies of water from which it might have evaporated.
- With no global air circulation, and therefore no turbulence or dust particles transported to the upper atmosphere, the water vapor in the canopy would have been stable and not precipitate itself.

The Original Earth: A Vapor Canopy

- The planet would have been maintained not only at uniform temperatures but also at comfortable uniform humidities by means of daily local evaporation and condensation (like dew, or ground fog) in each day-night cycle.
- The combination of warm temperature and adequate moisture everywhere would be conducive later to extensive stands of lush vegetation all over the world, with no barren deserts or ice caps.
- A vapor canopy would also be highly effective in filtering out ultraviolet radiations, cosmic rays, and other destructive energies from outer space. Thus the canopy would contribute effectively to human and animal health and longevity.

The Original Earth: A Vapor Canopy

- Great increase in atmospheric pressure at the earth's surface resulting in good health and longevity.
- Later, when needed, these upper waters would provide the reservoir from which God would send the great Flood.

Genesis 2:21–23 (NASB95)

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”

Genesis 1:31 (NASB95)

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Edenic Covenant (Gen 1:28-30; 2:15-17; Hos 6:7)

Parties to the
Covenant

- God and Adam

Conditions of the
Covenant

- Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth
- Subdue the Earth
- Rule over the animal kingdom
- Plants are for food (vegetarian)
- Defined roles
- Guard the garden
- Not eat from one tree
- Penalty for violating the commands is death

Token of the
Covenant

- Tree of Life



Innocence

Dispensation of Innocence (Genesis 1:3–3:6)

Man's
Responsibilities

- Man's responsibilities in the garden were to fulfill the Edenic Covenant.

Man's Failures

- Man's failure was to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The Resulting
Judgment

- Pain in childbirth, Authority struggle, Earth antagonistic to man, Man irresponsible to animals, Plants of the field for food, Expelled from Eden, Spiritual and physical death

The Problem of Human Redemption

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- b. Could one of Adams descendants redeem the race?

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- d. Could God create another being powerful enough to redeem man?
- e. The God-man.

Genesis 3:15, 21 (NASB95)

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Adamic Covenant (Gen 3:14 – 3:21)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and Adam as the representative for mankind

Conditions of the Covenant

- Transformation of the animal kingdom
- Protevangelium (first gospel) and promise of Satan's defeat
- Woman cursed in area of assigned duties
- Man cursed in area of assigned duties
- Physical death (return to ground)
- Man remains a vegetarian

Token of the Covenant

- Spiritual death



Dispensation of Conscience (Gen 3:9 to Gen 8:14)

Man's Responsibilities

- Mankind was to respond to God through the prompting of his conscience
- As evidence of his faith in the promised seed, to bring an acceptable blood sacrifice.

Man's Failures

- Mankind, having been given the ability, through their conscience, to desire a relationship with God and through blood sacrifices, to approach God, failed. Wickedness and evil became widespread.

The Resulting Judgment

- God, being true to His word, spared the only faithful humans and a small remnant of air breathing creatures and started over in order to fulfill his promise of redemption

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

Genesis 6:1–4 (NASB95)

“Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, ... The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.
Two or more angels guarded the Tree of Life

Genesis 3:24 (NASB95)

So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

While there are several views on who the “sons of God”, the best answer textually and contextually is that they are fallen angels having offspring with human women.

The term “sons of God” as it occurs here in Hebrew (*bene Elohim*) refers only to angels in the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). A similar phrase “a son of the gods” (*bar Elohim*) used in Daniel 3:25 refers either to an angel or to a theophany. The term “sons of the mighty” (*bene elim*) is used in Psalm 29:1 and Psalm 89:6 referring to angels.

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

2 Peter 2:4–5 (NASB95)

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;”

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

Jude 6–7 (NASB95)

“And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

1 Peter 3:19–20 (NASB95)

“in which also He (Christ) went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.”

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

Satan’s first attempt at destroying the Messianic line.

“sons of God” in Genesis 6 are fallen angels.

Whenever angels have appeared visibly to men, as recorded in the Bible, they have appeared in the physical bodies of men. Gen 18:1-8, Dan. 10:5-6, Matt. 28:3

Sodomites were attempting to take angels for homosexual purposes. Gen 19:1-5

The “sons of God” in the antediluvian world.

Hebrews 13:2 (NASB95)

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Genesis 7:23 (NASB95)

“Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.”

Genesis 8:1–4 (NASB95)

“But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; ... In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.”

2 Peter 3:5–7 (NASB95)

“For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

The present Earth



The Pre-flood World

- Global greenhouse, uniform warm temperature all over the world.
- No windstorms or mass wind movements.
- Comfortable uniform humidities in each day-night cycle.
- Lush vegetation all over the world, with no barren deserts or ice caps.
- No ultraviolet radiations, cosmic rays.
- Human and animal health and longevity.

The Post-flood World

- Land areas less extensive than before the Flood, large portion uninhabitable.
- Strong temperature differentials leading snow and ice in the polar latitudes.
- Mountain ranges uplifted with many regions unfit for human habitation.
- Harmful radiation from space resulting in gradual reduction in human longevity.
- Tremendous glaciers, rivers, and lakes existed, gradually approaching its present state.
- Volcanic and seismic activity all over the world for many centuries.

Noahic Covenant (Genesis 8:20 – 9:17)

Parties to the
Covenant

- God and Noah as the representative for mankind

Conditions of
the Covenant

- Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth
- Man to be feared by animals
- Mankind allowed to eat meat
- Mankind not to eat or drink blood
- Institution of capital punishment
- Never again a universal flood

Token of the
Covenant

- Rainbow



Dispensation of Human Government (Genesis 9:1 to 11:32)

Man's Responsibilities

- Man's responsibilities were to fulfill the Noahic covenant.

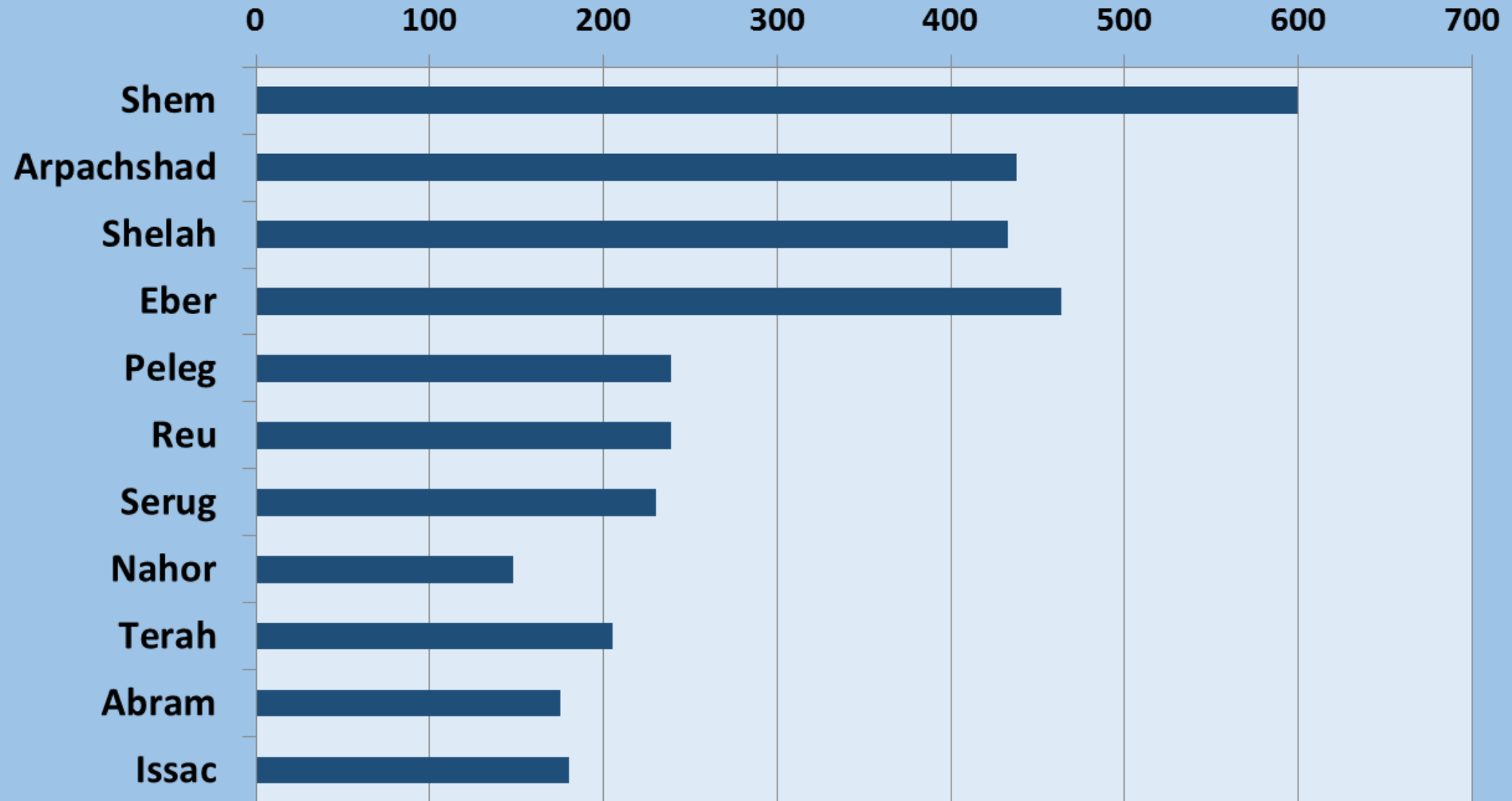
Man's Failures

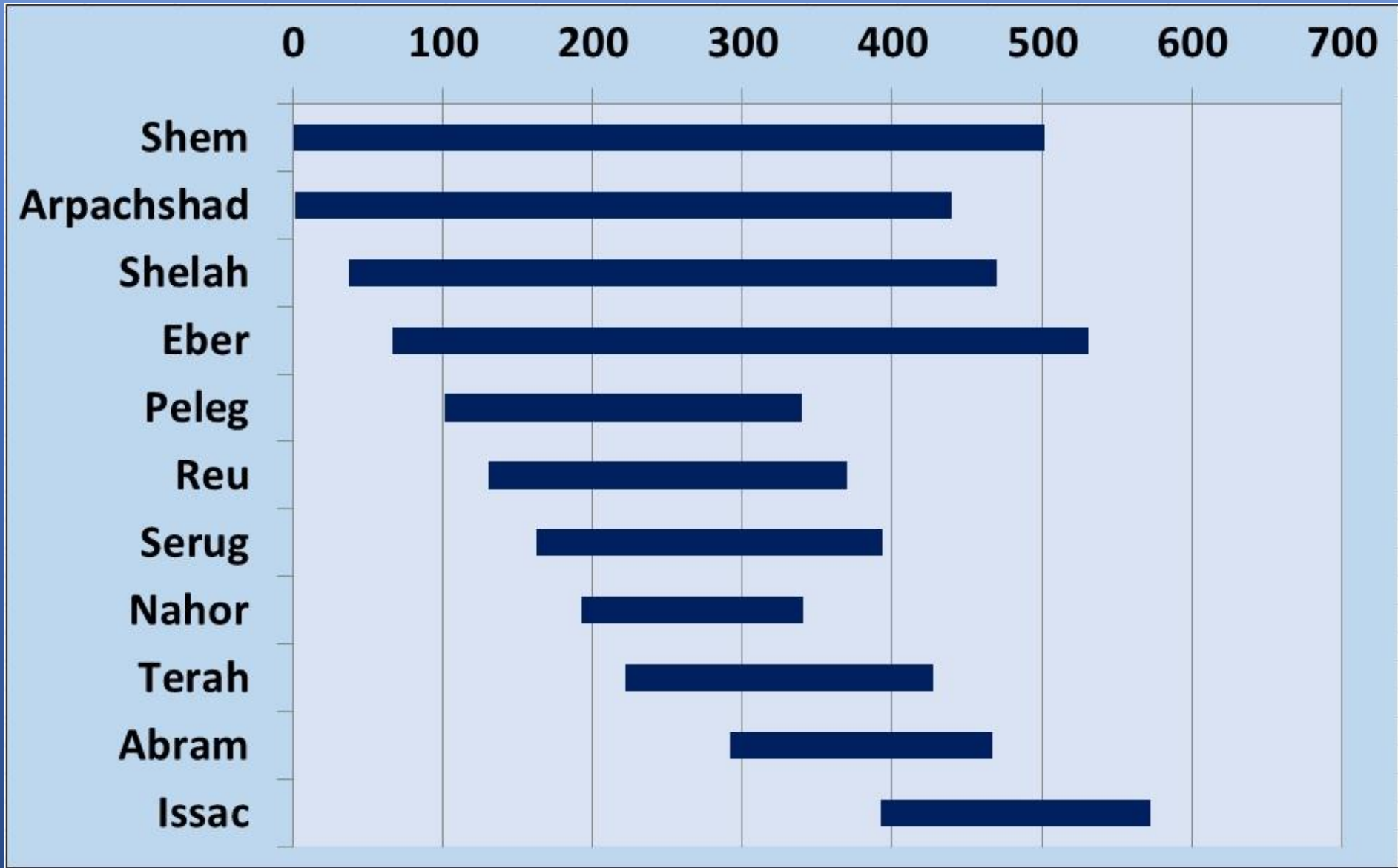
- The people, instead of obeying God's command to scatter and fill the earth, conceived the idea of staying together and building the tower of Babel to help achieve their aim. Fellowship with man replaced fellowship with God.

The Resulting Judgment

- As a result, God sent the judgment of the tower of Babel and the confusion of languages. He also graciously intervened in that He did not utterly destroy the nations but chose to deal graciously with Abraham and his descendants.

age at death





Nimrod is the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah

Genesis 10:8–10 (NASB95)

“Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.” The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod is the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah

Genesis 11:1–4 (NASB95)

“Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there... They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

Nimrod is the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah

Genesis 11:6–8 (NASB95)

“The LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

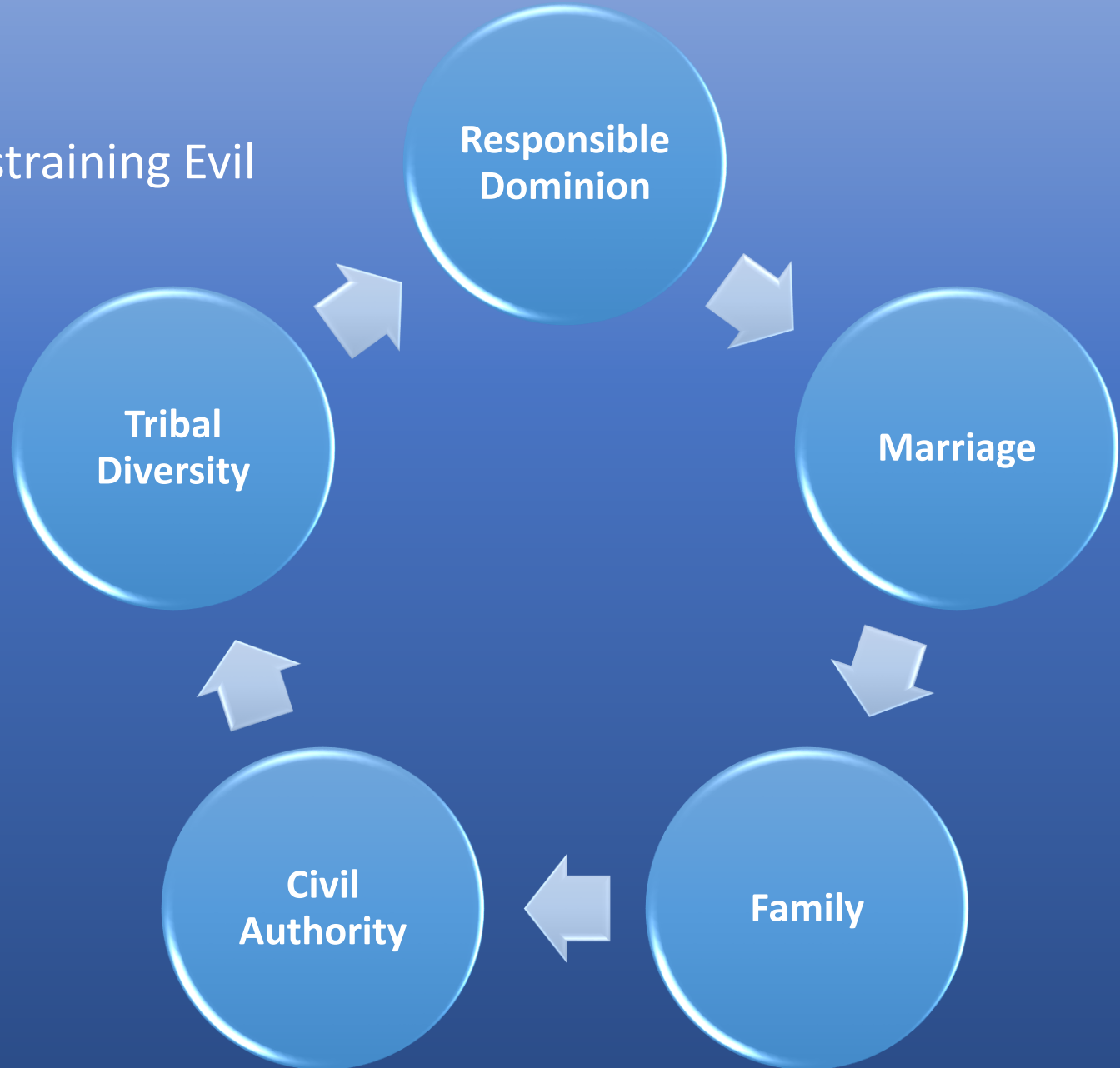
Eber is the great-grandson of Shem, the son of Noah

Peleg was born 101 years after the flood, and his name means division

Genesis 10:25 (NASB95)

“Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan.”

Divine Institutions for Restraining Evil



**Responsible
Dominion**

Marriage

Family

**Civil
Authority**

**Tribal
Diversity**

Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)

Parties to the
Covenant

- God and Abram as the father of the Jewish race

Conditions of
the Covenant

- Fourteen provisions including the token of circumcision

Token of the
Covenant

- Circumcision

Promises made to Israel

- Become a great nation
- Become innumerable
- Possess the Promised Land
- Victory over enemies

Promises to Gentiles

- Blessings for blessing Israel
- Cursing's for cursing Israel
- Spiritual blessings through the seed of Abraham – The Messiah

Promises made to Abraham

- Father of great nation (Israel)
- Possess the Promised Land
- Father of other nations
- Many descendants became kings
- Receive personal blessings
- Be a blessing to others
- Name to become great



Dispensation of Promise (Genesis 11:10 to Exodus 18:27)

Man's Responsibilities

- The responsibility of the patriarchs was simply to believe and serve God. The Promised Land was theirs, and blessing was theirs as long as they remained in the land. The people of the promise; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the children of Jacob (Israel) were to stay separate from the nations around them.

Man's Failures

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons continued to intermingle with the Canaanites and surrounding nations.

The Resulting Judgment

- God sent the family down to Egypt where the surrounding Egyptians would not associate with them. Soon after they would be enslaved.

Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20:1 – Deuteronomy 28:68)

Parties to the
Covenant

- God and Israel with Moses acting as a representative

Conditions of
the Covenant

- Law of Moses which contained a total 613 commandments. Being a conditional covenant, it provided blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. (Ex. 15:26) The key element of the entire Mosaic Law was the blood sacrifice. (Lev. 17:11)

Token of the
Covenant

- Sabbath



Dispensation of Law (Exodus 19:1 – Acts 1:26)

Man's Responsibilities

- The responsibility of the Nation of Israel along with Gentile proselytes was to keep the Mosaic Law.

Man's Failures

- The Nation of Israel was continually disobedient and God continued to bring them back through discipline. They continued to reject the ordinances of God. (2nd Kings 17:7-23)

The Resulting Judgment

- As a result, there were many judgments throughout this long period. The ten tribes were carried into Assyrian captivity; the two tribes were carried into Babylonian captivity; and later, because of their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, the people were dispersed into all the world (Matt. 23:37–39).



Land

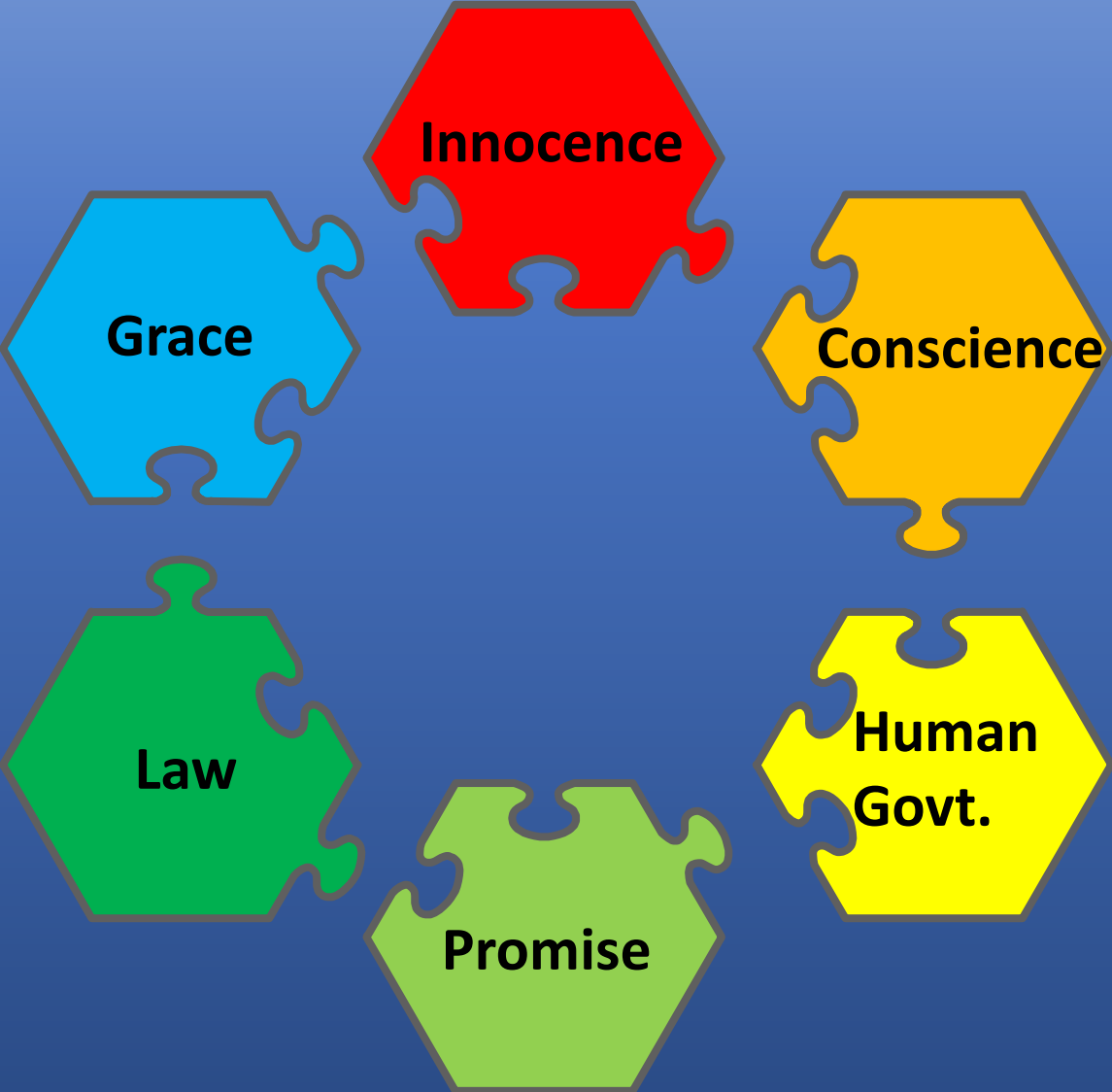
- Real Estate Covenant
- Deut. 29:1-30:20

Seed

- Davidic Covenant
- 2nd Sam. 7:11b-17
- 1st Chron. 17:10b-15

Blessing

- The New Covenant
- Jer. 31:31-34



Innocence

Grace

Conscience

Law

**Human
Govt.**

Promise

Dispensation of Grace (Acts 2:1 to Revelation 19:21)

Man's Responsibilities

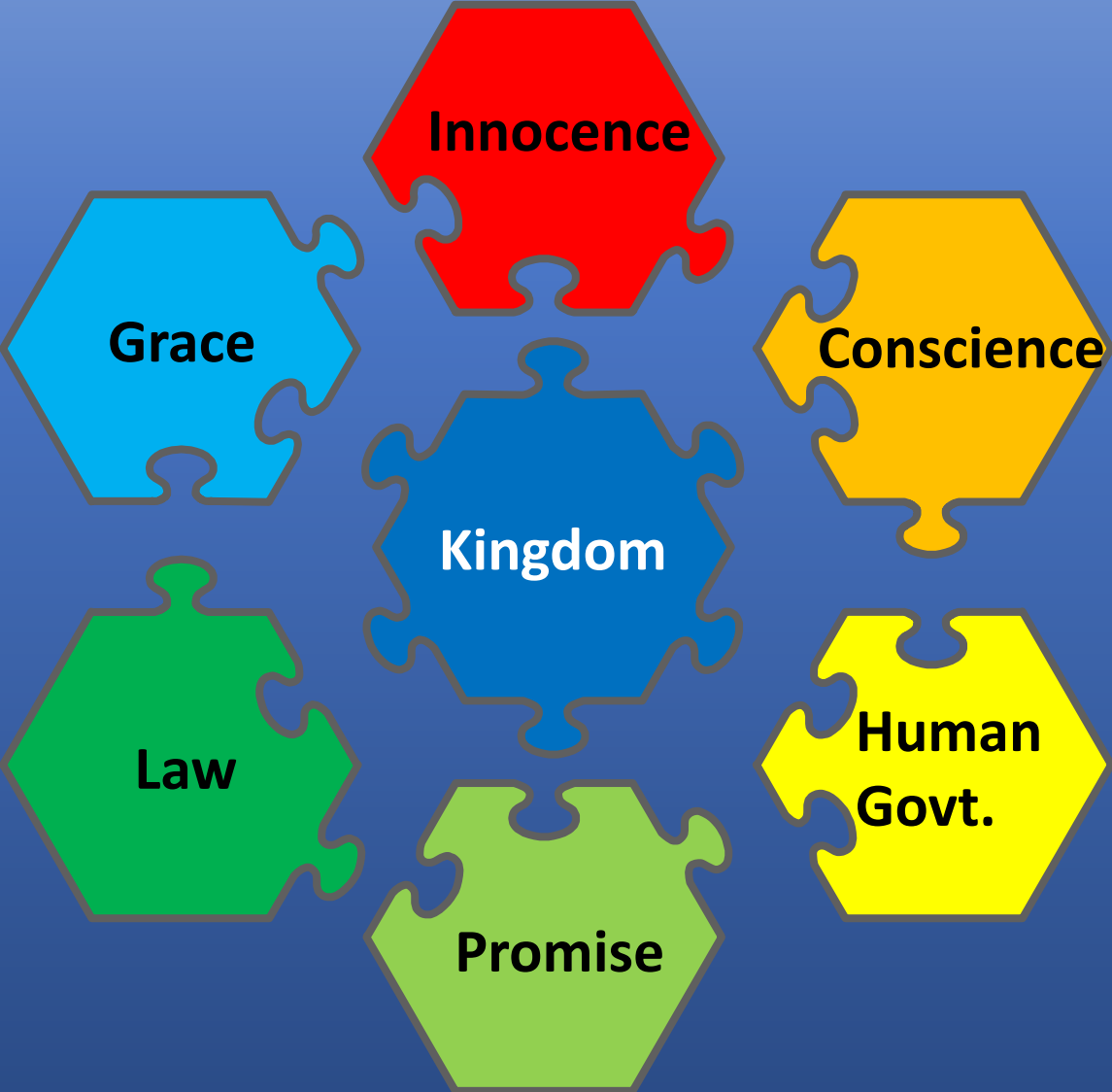
- Under Grace the responsibility on man is to accept the gift of righteousness that God freely offers to all (Rom. 5:15–18).

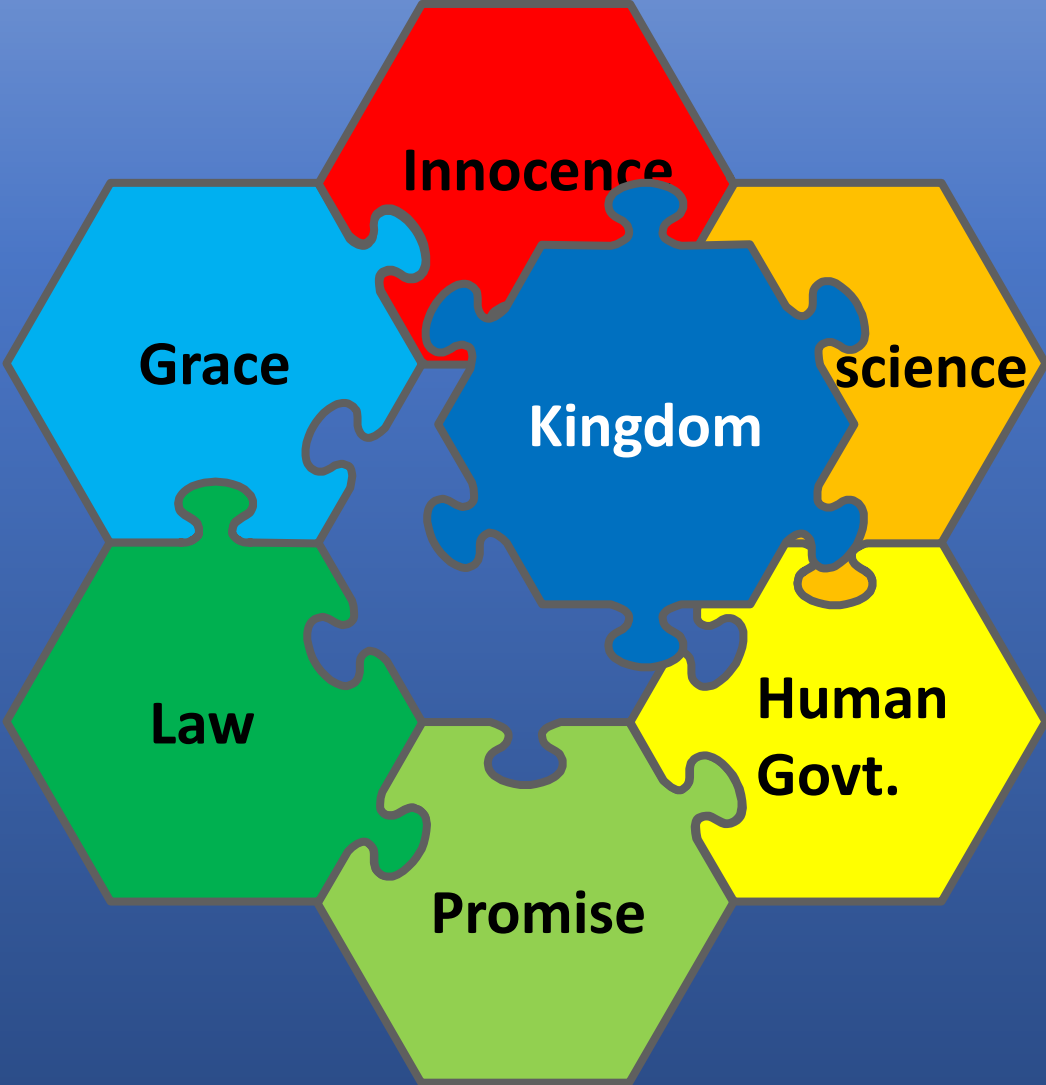
Man's Failures

- The vast majority have rejected Him and as a result will be judged. The dispensation will end at the second coming of Christ since

The Resulting Judgment

- The judgment to non-believers is death. The judgment to believers for not walking with Christ is a loss of rewards. The earth, which was to be controlled by Adam and handed over to Satan, will be ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ.





Innocence

Grace

science

Kingdom

Law

**Human
Govt.**

Promise

Dispensation of the Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-15)

Man's Responsibilities

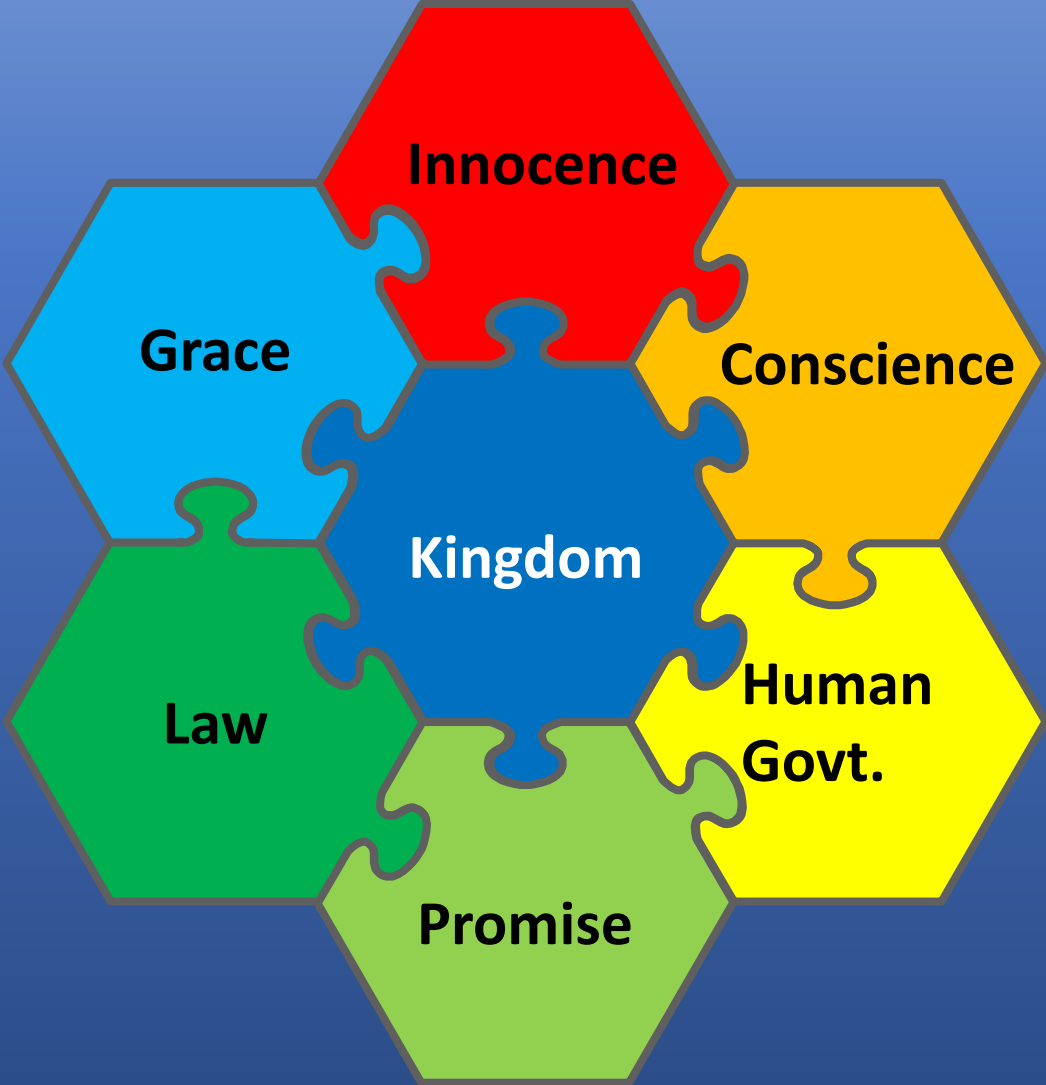
- Man will be responsible for obedience to the King and His laws. Satan will be bound, Christ will be ruling, righteousness will prevail, overt disobedience will be quickly punished.

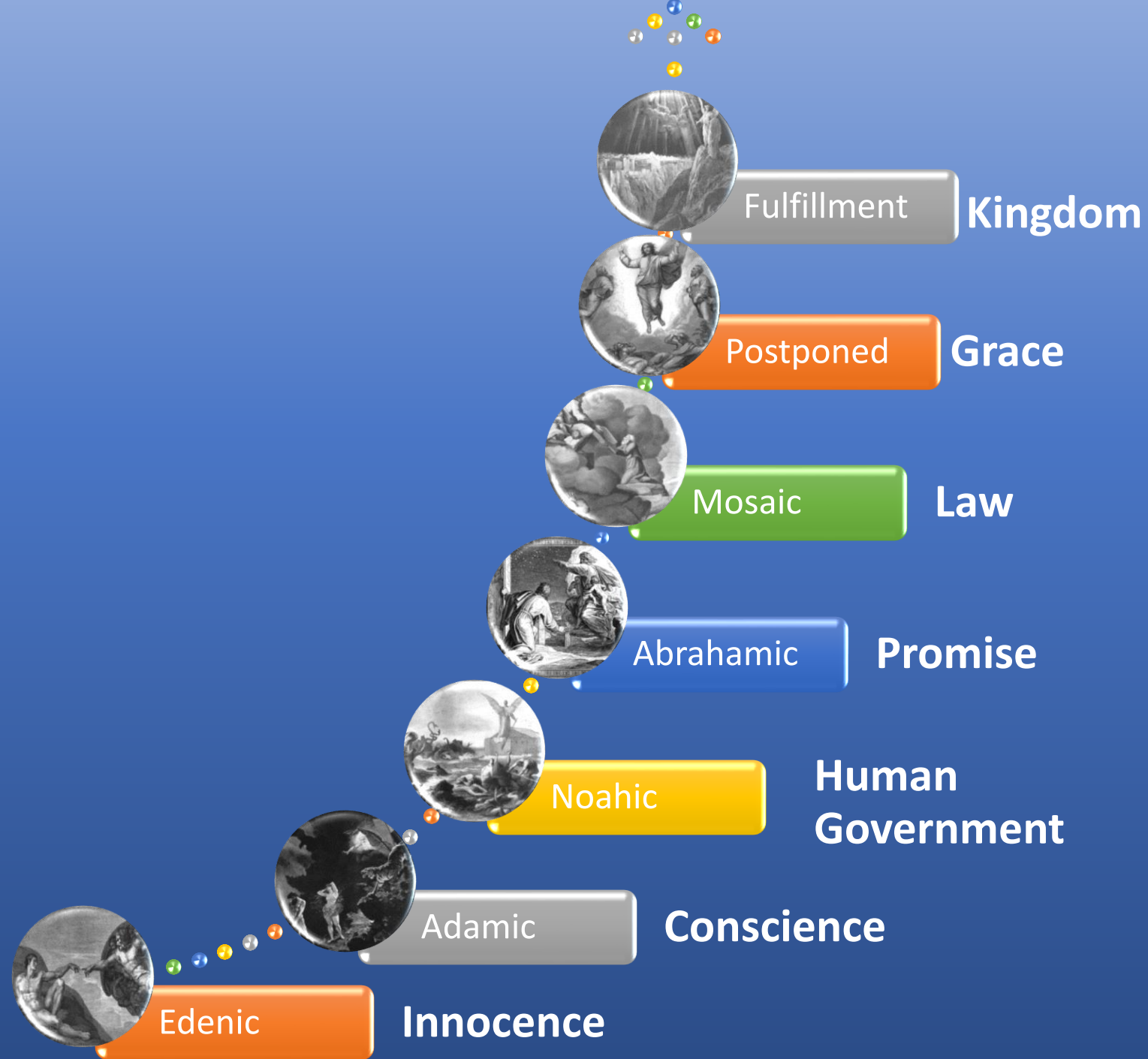
Man's Failures

- At the end of the period enough rebels will be found to make a formidable army that will dare to attack the seat of government (Rev. 20:7–9). The revolt will be unsuccessful, and the rebels will be cast into everlasting punishment.

The Resulting Judgment

- The Great White Throne Judgment





Conclusion