

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO DISPENSATIONS

In the last chapter we tried to answer the important question, “What is a DISPENSATION?” Can you remember what this word means? What do we mean when we say that Abraham and Paul lived during different dispensations? How was David's stewardship different from Paul's stewardship? Even though Abraham and David and Paul lived in different dispensations, they were all believers in the living God. What did they share in common?

In this chapter we want to try to answer another important question: “What is a DISPENSATIONALIST?” A dispensationalist is a PERSON who understand **God's dispensations** and who seeks to enter into the STEWARDSHIP which he has been given by God. God has entrusted him with certain privileges and responsibilities in light of the day in which he lives, and he is seeking to faithfully handle all that God has put in his hand.

Not everyone who reads and studies the Bible is a dispensationalist. Not everyone has a clear understanding of the things which were discussed in Chapter 1 of these notes. To better understand what a DISPENSATIONALIST is, let us **describe** this person. A dispensationalist can be described in at least 4 ways:

1. A DISPENSATIONALIST RECOGNIZES CERTAIN OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES THAT ARE FOUND IN THE BIBLE.

As we studied in the last chapter, a dispensationalist realizes that God has different ways of dealing with different men at different times throughout the course of history. He also realizes that God has been gradually revealing more and more of His truth to men. For example, Paul was told certain truths that David was never told and David had certain information from God that Noah never had. The Bible that Moses had was not the same as the Bible that Isaiah had; the Bible that Isaiah had was not the same as the Bible that the Apostle John had. As the centuries passed, God gave more and more books of the Bible. More and more truth was revealed. Today we have a completed Bible, containing 66 Books.

The dispensationalist recognizes these important differences:

1. The differences that took place after the fall of man.
2. The differences that took place after the great flood.
3. The differences that took place after the judgment on the tower of Babel.
4. The differences that took place after God called Abraham.
5. The differences that took place after the giving of the law.
6. The differences that took place after the death and resurrection of Christ.
7. The differences that will take place after the rapture of the church (when Christ will remove the church from the earth—see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and John 14:3).
8. The differences that will take place after Satan is cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-12).
9. The differences that will take place at the end of the thousand year kingdom (Revelation chapters 20-22).

We will carefully study these differences later in this set of notes when we study each of the dispensations.

2. A DISPENSATIONALIST INTERPRETS OR UNDERSTANDS THE BIBLE LITERALLY.

The word “literally” means “word for word, without exaggeration; without imagination.” When a person interprets the Bible literally he understands the words that he reads in their ordinary or primary meaning, in their usual and normal sense. He does not try to find secret or imaginary meanings for the words found in the Bible

A dispensationalist is a person who take the Bible seriously! He believes what the Bible says. He simply takes God at His Word and he believes that God **MEANS WHAT HE SAYS** and **SAYS WHAT HE MEANS!** He does not make God’s Word say something else, but he lets God’s Word say just what it says.

Let’s consider some examples: According to the Bible God created the universe, the world and everything in the world in how many days (Exodus 20:11 and compare Genesis chapter 1)?
 _____ The person who interprets this literally says this: “Six days means six days! God said that He created everything in six days and God means what He says! God said it, I believe it and that settles it!” [Or better, “God said it and that settles it, whether I believe it or not!”]

Did you know that there are many people today who do not believe that God created everything in six days? There are many people who say that the “days” mentioned in Genesis chapter one do not really mean “days” but they mean something else. They say that the days of creation were not really days at all but each “day” was really an **age** (a long period of time, with each “day-age” lasting thousands or perhaps even millions of years). They would say that creation took place in six very long ages! This is an example of how people take what God has said and make it mean something else (“**day** does not mean **day** but it means a **very long age**”). The person who takes the Bible literally believes that when God says “six days” (Exodus 20:9,11), He means “six days” and not something else.

Note: It is possible that the word “DAY” can be used to refer to a period of time that is longer than 24 hours. For example in Jeremiah 30:7 we read about a DAY which refers to the time of Jacob’s trouble. This day will last 3½ years (Revelation 12:6,14). Also we could say “we are now living in the **day of grace**” (the **day** of God’s longsuffering—2 Peter 3:8-9). Is this more than a 24-hour day? Consider this: “George Washington lived in a **day** when there were no cars or telephones or airplanes!” Did Abraham and Moses and Paul also live in this same day? In this last example the word “means “time” (“George Washington lived in a **time** when there were no cars, etc.”). When the word “day” does not mean a 24-hour period the context will usually make this clear. But when the word “day” is used in the plural (“days”) and when a number is put before it such as in Exodus 20:11 (six days) or in Genesis 1:13 (“the **third** day”) then we can be sure that it is talking about a 24-hour day. See our study: [The Six Days of Creation](#).

Another example of taking the Bible literally is found in Revelation Chapter 20. Read the first seven verses of this chapter. How many times do you read these words: “thousand years” ?
 _____ These verses teach us that Jesus Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years! What does God mean when He says “a thousand years”? The dispensationalist takes the Bible literally and says, “A thousand years means a thousand years! If God says a thousand

years then it must mean a thousand years!" But here again there are many people who claim to believe the Bible and yet they do not believe that Jesus Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years. They try to make the thousand years mean something else.

Here is an example of a non-literal approach to the "thousand years" mentioned in Revelation 20. The thousand years represent...

"...a vast, undefined period of time....It has already lasted almost 2,000 years, and will probably go on for many more. The thousand years is to be understood as a symbolical number, denoting a long period...It may require a million years" David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance—An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), 507.

This writer says that the thousand years is "a vast, undefined period of time" whereas the Bible defines it as a period of a thousand years. This writer says that it is a symbolical number, but this approach is dangerous because when a person abandons the literal sense ("a thousand years"), then he can make it mean anything he wants. This writer went so far as to say that the thousand years might even last a million years! If it does not mean what it says, then the interpreter can make it mean whatever he wants it to mean.

Did you know that when people read the newspaper they understand it literally? Suppose you saw these headlines: "THE PRESIDENT WILL VISIT CHINA IN FOUR DAYS." How would you understand this? Would you say, "This must not mean the President, it must mean the Secretary of State. This visit will not be in four days, it will probably be in a month. China does not mean China; it must mean India." This would be silly! No one would interpret a newspaper article in such a way. If we make the words mean something other than what they are supposed to mean then nothing would make sense! Any intelligent person would understand that "president" means "president" and "China" means "China" and "four days" means "four days." This is the normal, natural and literal way of understanding these simple words! This is the way we need to understand the Bible also.

The Bible is not some mysterious Book with secret meanings. The Bible is a very simple Book, and the only reason men do not understand it is due to unbelief and a failure to take God at His Word. The Bible is not a Book whose message must be decoded by brilliant men who have learned the secret code. No, the Bible is so simple that a young child can understand its message and receive the Saviour by faith. Do not look for hidden meanings in the Bible. Just come to God with a humble and open heart that is willing to believe and obey whatever God says in clear language that is not difficult to understand. See our paper, **Spiritual Requirements for Understanding God's Word.**

When we receive a letter from someone, we understand the letter literally. Suppose your friend sends you a letter and writes, "I fell off a horse and broke my leg and spent two days in the hospital." Would you make these words say something else or would you accept these words as they are? It would be silly to say that "horse" really means "elephant" and "leg" really means "head" and "two days" really means "two months." If your friend had meant to say "elephant" instead of "horse" then he would have made that clear in his letter.

A Simple Rule

When we study the Bible we always should understand a word in its literal, normal, natural and

basic meaning **unless** this meaning does not make sense. Here is our rule: **IF THE PLAIN (BASIC, NORMAL) SENSE MAKES GOOD SENSE, SEEK NO OTHER SENSE LEST IT RESULT IN NONSENSE.**

We have already seen that the “days” in Genesis chapter one make good sense. It is no problem for the ALMIGHTY GOD to create this universe in six days! We should not try to make these days mean something else (“seek no other sense!”). The same is true with the “thousand years” found in Revelation 20. We should not try to make the “thousand years” mean something else.

Sometimes when we are reading the Bible the plain sense will not make good sense. For example, in John 10:9 Jesus said, “I am the _____.” Now we know that Jesus was not actually a door that sheep pass through (see John 10:1,2,7). This does not make good sense. Jesus meant that He was like a door. A door is something that animals or people must pass through. To get into a room you must open a door and pass through. To be saved a person must go through Christ. He is the only Saviour! It is only through Him that we can enter in and find God's great salvation.

Another example is found in John 15:5. Jesus was not actually a vine and his disciples were not actually branches. But again we understand what Jesus meant. The vine and the branches give us a beautiful picture of the Saviour and His believers. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it stays connected to the vine, so believers cannot bear fruit unless they stay connected with Jesus Christ (stay in close fellowship with Him).

Here is one more example. On the night before He went to the cross Jesus took bread and said to His disciples, “Take, eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26). He also took the cup and said, “This is my blood” (Matthew 26:27-28). Was this bread really His body? Did this cup actually contain His blood? Did the disciples really eat His body and did they drink His actual blood? Of course not! This does not make sense and this is not what Jesus meant.

This illustration might help: Suppose a man has a picture or a photograph of his wife. One day he shows it to a friend and says, “Look, this is my wife.” What does he mean? Obviously he does not mean that this small piece of photographic paper is actually his wife! He is merely using a common figure of speech called a metaphor. What he really means is, “This represents my wife. This is a picture of my wife. When you look at this picture you will think of my wife.”

This is what Jesus meant when He spoke of the bread and the cup. Our Lord was saying, “This bread *represents* My body and this cup *is a picture of* my blood. When you eat this bread and drink this cup you will be reminded of Me and what I am going to do for you on the cross.” This is what we remember every time we take communion (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

Let the Bible Say What It Says!

We need to always let the Bible say what it says. We must never **force** the Bible to say what we want it to say. Just let the words say what they say, and don't look for the words to have some strange or secret meaning! Consider 1 Samuel 17:40. How many stones did David take out of the brook? _____ Someone might take a verse like this and make it say what it never was meant to say. He might say something like this: “These five stones mean five different things. The first stone is for courage, the second stone is for faith, the third stone is for strength, the fourth stone is for victory and the fifth stone is for success!” Does the Bible say this about these stones? _____ These stones were just stones. And one of these stones went into the forehead of

Goliath! It is true that David had courage and faith and that God gave him strength and victory and success, but we learn about this by reading the 17th chapter of 1 Samuel, not from the five stones that David picked up. We need to be careful that we do not give strange meanings to simple words!

A dispensationalist is a person who takes the Bible seriously and who interprets the Bible literally. He lets the Bible say just what it says!

See the MBC paper, [Do I Interpret the Bible Literally? Seven Tests to See if I Do.](#)

3. A DISPENSATIONALIST MAKES A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH.

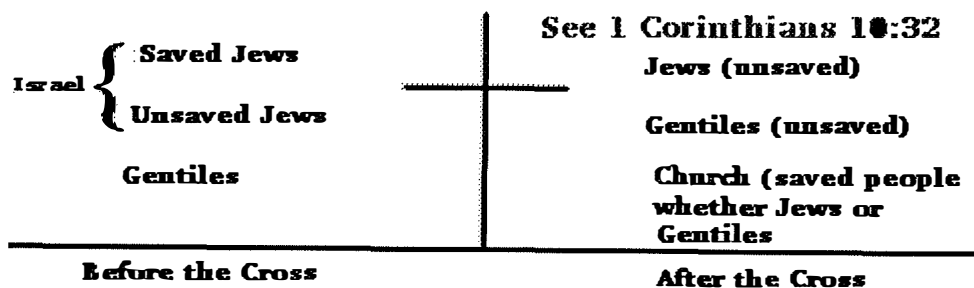
Those who read the Bible need to make a very careful difference between Israel and the Church. There are many people who believe that saved Israelites (Jews) who lived during Old Testament times were part of the church. This is not true. The church did not begin until the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2). Before this time no one was part of the church.

An **Israelite** is a person who has descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Romans 9:4-5; and keep in mind that Jacob's other name was "Israel"). Moses and Joshua and David and Solomon and Isaiah--all of these men were Israelites. Today Israelites are often called "JEWS."

Gentiles are those who are not Israelites. A Gentile person is a person who has not come from the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Ephesians 2:11-12).

The **Church** is something new that God is doing. Moses and Joshua and David and Isaiah were saved men and were Israelites but they were not part of the church. In Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18 we learn that the CHURCH is the **body of Christ**. Today when a person is saved he is "baptized" or placed into the body of Christ and he becomes a part of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). Peter and John and Paul and Timothy were all members of the body of Christ. They were all part of the Church. Those who believe in Christ today become part of the Church also.

The following diagram may be helpful:



As we see from the above diagram, those who lived in the days before the cross were not members of the church. The Church did not begin until after the death and resurrection of Christ. (See Matthew 16:18--Jesus said, "I WILL build My Church." The building of the church was something that Christ would do **in the future.**)

For further help see the following MBC study: **When Did the Church Begin?**

There are many people who misunderstand the Bible because when God tells us something about ISRAEL (the Jewish people), they think that He is speaking about the CHURCH. Suppose that you read in the newspaper that Sally was given a free trip to Boston and Betty was given a free trip to New York City. If you were to then go and tell everyone that Betty was going to Boston, this would be very confusing! The same kind of confusion comes if we read the Bible the wrong way. God has something very special for the Church and God has something very special for the nation Israel. But we must be careful not to take the wonderful promises that God has given to the nation Israel and say that these are for the church! That is like saying that Sally's trip to Boston should be given to Betty.

A dispensationalist is one who makes a difference between Israel and the church. He also believes that God has made some wonderful promises concerning the future of the nation of Israel and that God will keep these promises (compare Romans chapter 11). See the paper, **A Comparison and Contrast Between Israel and the Church.**

4. A DISPENSATIONALIST SEES THE GLORY OF GOD AS THE UNIFYING THEME OF THE BIBLE.

God is doing something very special in each and every dispensation. There is one thing that God is concerned about more than anything else: HIS GLORY! The **glory of God** is the outward expression of who God is. The glory of God is the making known of God's WEALTH and WORTH and WEIGHT. God is a great God and throughout history He has been making Himself known to men and angels.

We have been studying many of the **differences** found in the Bible. However, we must also realize that there is something that God has always been doing, even though He has been doing this in different ways and at different times and with different people. Consider the following verses and see if you can tell what God has been doing in the world:

1. Joshua 4:24 (the days of Joshua). What does God want people to know?

2. 1 Samuel 17:46 (the days of David and Goliath). What does God want all the earth to know?

3. 1 Kings 8:43 (the days of Solomon). What does God want all people to know?

4. 1 Kings 18:36 (the days of Elijah). What does God want people to know?

5. 2 Kings 19:19 (the days of King Hezekiah). What does God want all the kingdoms of the earth to know?

6. Ezekiel 36:23 (the days of Ezekiel). What does God want unsaved people (heathen) to

know?

7. Psalm 46:10. What does God want every person who has ever lived to know?

For a related study see the paper, **God's Primary Purpose**.

Throughout history God has been making Himself known to men. Whether men are saved or not saved, God will be glorified and all will know that HE IS GOD! Someday **every** knee shall _____ and **every** tongue shall _____ that Jesus Christ is Lord (see Philippians 2:10-11).

There are many people who believe that God's **main** purpose is to SAVE PEOPLE. The Bible clearly teaches that God desires to save all men (1 Timothy 2:4; John 3:16; etc.) and that God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the _____ (1 John 4:14 and compare John 3:17). But the salvation of men is not God's **main** purpose.

Consider for example the days of Noah. How many people were saved in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20)? _____ Only eight people were on that ark! All the rest of the people on the face of the earth PERISHED (2 Peter 3:6)! Does this mean that God was a failure because so few people were saved? If saving lost men were the one thing that God was most concerned about, then we would have to say that in the days of Noah God must have failed because so few were saved and so many perished. Even today the Bible says that only F_____ will be saved (Matthew 7:14). We know that GOD HAS NEVER BEEN A FAILURE! Even in the days of Noah God was making Himself known to men. God made it known to all men that He was a HOLY GOD who hates sin and must judge sin. He also showed that He was a GRACIOUS God to those who believe Him and obey His Word (Genesis 6:8-9; Hebrews 11:7). God succeeded in making Himself known, even to a world that rejected Him.

No matter what period of history you are reading about in the Bible, you can be sure that God is demonstrating and revealing and making known WHO HE IS to men! A dispensationalist is one who recognizes that God's main purpose is to bring GLORY to Himself in each and every period of human history.

For further study, see the paper, **The Glory of God**.

THOSE WHO ARE NOT DISPENSATIONALISTS

As we mentioned before, not everyone is a dispensationalist. There are many who believe in what they call "Covenant Theology." Instead of believing in the different dispensations, they believe in what they call **TWO MAIN COVENANTS**. Let us briefly consider what these people believe:

Covenant Theology

Those who believe in Covenant Theology (including many who believe in REFORMED THEOLOGY--see our study, **Problems with Reformed Theology**) say that there are two main covenants and that all of God's dealings with men can be explained in light of these two

covenants:

1. The Covenant of Works.

A Covenant is a special agreement between God and man. Those who believe in Covenant Theology say that God made a special covenant with Adam which is called THE COVENANT OF WORKS. Four things are said about this covenant:

1. It was an agreement which God made with Adam.
2. It contained the promise of eternal life.
3. The condition which Adam had to meet was PERFECT OBEDIENCE. He had to do exactly what God said.
4. The penalty for disobedience was DEATH (see Genesis 2:15-17).

Of course, Adam disobeyed God's command and thus Adam failed to meet the requirements of the "covenant of works."

2. The Covenant of Grace.

Because of Adam's sin and failure, a second, covenant, THE COVENANT OF GRACE, was brought into operation. This covenant is defined as a gracious agreement between an offended God and sinful man, in which God promises salvation to man if man will believe in the promised Saviour (compare Genesis 3:15). The Covenant of Grace is the only hope that sinful men have of entering into eternal life. The only way sinful men can be saved is by the grace of God through faith in God's Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some Problems

Much of what these people say is very true. It is true that Adam failed to obey God and it is also true that God has devised a gracious plan whereby He can save lost sinners. But those who believe in Covenant Theology try to use these two Covenants alone (especially the Covenant of Grace) to explain all relationships between God and men from the beginning to the end of time.

If these two Covenants are so important you would think that the Bible would mention them many times. But the fact is that the Bible **never** says anything about a "Covenant of Works" or a "Covenant of Grace." These are terms that men have made up and they are not found in the Bible.

The Bible does mention several different covenants, but it never mentions the "covenant of works" or the "covenant of grace." Here are **some** of the covenants that we do find mentioned in the Bible:

1. The covenant God made with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17).
2. The covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-4).
3. The covenant God made with Moses and the children of Israel (Exodus 19:5-8).
4. The covenant God made with David (2 Samuel 7).
5. The covenant God made with Israel called "the new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Many different covenants are mentioned in the Bible, but the Bible never talks about a "Covenant of Works" or a "Covenant of Grace."

Those who believe in Covenant Theology try to understand all of the Bible in light of the “Covenant of Grace.” They believe that God’s main purpose in the world, in any age, is the redemption and salvation of lost men. The dispensationalist does not minimize the importance of God’s plan of redemption in the Bible, but he also understands that God has even a greater purpose: TO BRING GLORY TO HIMSELF. The salvation and redemption of men by God’s grace is one of the chief ways that God receives glory unto Himself:

Ephesians 1:6	“to the _____ of the _____ of His grace”
Ephesians 1:12	“that we should be to the _____ of His _____”
Ephesians 1:14	“unto the _____ of His _____”

God will even be glorified by the damnation of lost men (such as Pharaoh—see Romans 9:21-22). This means that even men suffering in hell will bring glory to God. Whether men are saved or lost, God’s purpose will be fulfilled and God will make Himself known to all men!

Ultra-Dispensationalists

Another wrong understanding of the Bible is known as Ultradispensationalism. The word “ultra” means “going beyond others, going beyond due limits, being **extreme**.” An ultra-dispensationalist is a person who has carried the idea of dispensations too far! This person sees too many differences in the Bible and this results in confusion.

The main problem centers around this very important question: WHEN DID THE CHURCH BEGIN? Dispensationalists believe that the Church began when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (about 30 A.D.), as described in Acts chapter 2. Ultra-dispensationalists believe that the Church began much later. Some say the church began in Acts Chapter 13 (about 47 A.D.) and some say the church began in Acts Chapter 28 (about 60 A.D.).

Because they begin the church much later, ultra-dispensationalists say that there are certain things that we read in the New Testament which are **not** for today. For example, they teach the following:

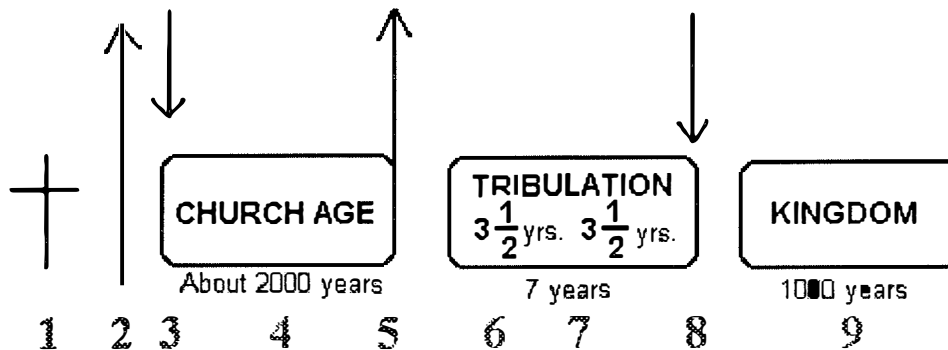
1. Water baptism is not for today.
2. The Lord’s Table (Communion) is not for today (not all Ultra-dispensationalists believe this but many do).
3. The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16 is not for today. They would say that these commands given by Christ were never meant for the Church.

Did the Church really begin in Acts Chapter 13 or Acts Chapter 28? There is a simple way to show from the Bible that this is not true. According to Acts 2:47 we learn that God was adding people to His _____. Therefore the Church must have already begun! Also in 1 Corinthians 15:9 the Apostle Paul said, “I persecuted the _____ of God.” We read

about this persecution in Acts 7:58; 8:1-3 and 9:1-2. In Acts chapter 9 we read about Saul's (Paul's) conversion. This is when Paul was saved! If Paul persecuted the Church before he was saved, then the Church must have been in existence at this time! You cannot persecute something that does not exist. Therefore the Church must have begun before Paul was saved. The Church could not have begun in Acts Chapter 13 or in Acts Chapter 28 because Paul was already saved by then!

For a more detailed study on when the church began, see [When Did The Church Begin?](#)

Terms To Understand



THESE NUMBERS ARE EXPLAINED AS FOLLOWS:

- 1 The Lord Jesus Christ is crucified for the sins of the world.
- 2 The risen Christ returns to heaven (Acts 1).
- 3 The Holy Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost and the Church Begins (Acts chapter 2).
- 4 The Church Age (every person who believes in Christ becomes a member of the Church which is the body of Christ—see 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:47).
- 5 The rapture of the Church (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- 6 The seven year period of tribulation (time of great trouble on the earth). The last half of this seven year period is called the time of “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21 and see Jeremiah 30:7).
- 7 The middle of the tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15).
- 8 The return of Jesus Christ to the earth (Revelation 19; Mt.24:30).
- 9 The thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth (Rev. 20).

Terms That Are Helpful to Understand

Question Number 1—When will the rapture take place? Will this event take place before, during or at the end of the tribulation? See number 5 on the chart given on the previous page.

* Pre-tribulation Rapture:	This is the belief that the church will be raptured (taken to heaven) before the seven years of tribulation.
Mid-tribulation Rapture:	This is the belief that the church will be raptured in the middle of the seven years of tribulation.
Pre-wrath Rapture:	This is the belief that the church will be raptured about 3/4 of the way through the seven years of tribulation.
Post-tribulation Rapture:	This is the belief that the church will be raptured after the 7 years of tribulation.

Question Number 2—When will Jesus Christ come to the earth? When will this event take place in relation to the millennial kingdom? See number 8 on the chart given on the previous page.

* Premillennial:	This is the belief that Jesus Christ will come to the earth before the 1000 year kingdom. The term “millennium” refers to that thousand year period described in Revelation 20:1-7.
Postmillennial:	This is the belief that through the preaching of the gospel man will bring in the kingdom and that Christ will not come until after the kingdom has already come to earth.
Amillennial:	[This term means “no kingdom” or “ <i>no millennium</i> ”.] This is the belief that there will be no literal, earthly kingdom of Christ. Those who are amillennial usually believe that the many verses in the Bible that describe the kingdom are being fulfilled today in the Church.

* The asterisk indicates that this is the view which is taught in the Bible.

A Dispensationalist believes that Christ's coming to earth as King will take place before the millennium (premillennial) and he believes that Christ will come for His church before the tribulation period (pretribulation rapture).

For more information on Prophecy, see the MBC set of Bible study worksheets entitled *Prophecy--Preview of Coming Events*.



Simply Taking God at His Word!

From Genesis to Revelation it becomes quite evident that “GOD HATH SPOKEN” (Hebrews 1:1-2). He has spoken with unique authority and with unquestionable clarity. It is man’s full responsibility to understand and believe God’s Word as it is revealed on the pages of sacred Scripture.

Since the dawn of human history the subtle Serpent has been causing men to question and doubt God’s Word; “YEA, HATH GOD SAID?” (Genesis 3:1). Today this same spirit is working in the children of disobedience, creating in them an ungodly suspicion as to *what* God has spoken or even *whether* God has spoken.

How frequently we hear the objection, “But that’s just *your* interpretation!” What they are really saying is this: “We cannot really be *sure* about what God says. The Bible means different things to different people. Please don’t force your interpretation on us!” Of course, if Scriptural statements can mean different things to different people then the message of the Bible is totally ambiguous and utterly worthless.

It is refreshing to read the inspired writings of the Old Testament prophets. They gave forth God’s Word with a healthy and positive dogmatism. They would *never* introduce their message as follows:

“I think this is what God said...”

“The mouth of the LORD may have spoken this, but, on the other hand, perhaps it is merely my own subjective interpretation...”

“Here is God’s message. Interpret it any way you want...”

No, on the contrary, they asserted the following:

“Thus saith the LORD!”

“The mouth of the LORD hath spoken it!”

God means what He says and says what He means!

Consider a specific verse of Scripture such as John 3:16. Those who believe in God’s Son will have everlasting life. Those who do not believe in God’s Son will perish. This not someone’s fanciful interpretation. *This is what it says!*

Every true believer in Christ strongly affirms that the Bible speaks with certainty and plainness. God has given to us a clear written record (1 John 5:11-12). Those who believe not this record do so to the danger of their own eternal souls (1 John 5:9-10). But those who do believe it are saved forever!

