

# *Bird's Eye View Of God's Master Plan*

Lesson #21 June 10, 2020

Tools [Methods] to Use To Study God's Master Plan > Prophecy & Dispensations

Why Should I Study Prophetic Scriptures & Dispensations?

Rev. 19:10 "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

If prophecy is properly taught, it should emphasize the centrality of Jesus.

II Tim. 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

## I. The Prominence of Prophecy in God's Word

a. Of the 216 chapters [7,959 verses] found in the New Testament, there are 330 references to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. IF you were to omit passages about prophecy, you would have to remove 1 of every 30 verses. You would skip 23 of the 27 New Testament books which mention prophecy.

b. There are 333 prophecies in the Bible about Jesus Christ.

109 were fulfilled in His 1<sup>st</sup> coming. 224 are LEFT to be fulfilled.

c. For every prophecy about the birth of Christ, there are 8 prophecies regarding His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

d. Less than 10 of the 46 OT prophets speak of Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> coming. 36 speak of His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

e. 1,527 OT passages refer to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

f. Next to faith, His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is the most dominant subject in the New Testament.

g. Jesus said 21 times in the New Testament: I will return to earth!

Question: In light of prophecy's prominence, can I say: "Prophecy is just not relevant?"

## II. Jesus' View Of Prophecy

a. He rebuked people who didn't seem to recognize the significance of the events taking place around them.

Luke 12:56 You play-actors (hypocrites)! You know how [intelligently] to discern and interpret and prove the looks of the earth and sky; but how is it that you...

DO NOT KNOW how to discern and interpret and apply the signs to this present time?

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Luke 19:41-44 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying,

If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. <sup>43</sup> For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies

shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

<sup>44</sup> And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Consider: It was no small thing to Jesus that the people of His generation remained IGNORANT to God's prophetic Word. He wants us to investigate and study the whole counsel of God.

At its most basic level, the study of prophecy centers upon God's self-professed plan to restore the broken and sin-wracked universe to a state of holiness, stability and purity.

Why study the Bible through the lens of dispensations?

- God's purpose for world history is to bring about His Kingdom and His King.
- The extent of God's rule is all-encompassing, but the method of His rule has changed periodically throughout Scripture with each successive dispensation. [period of time]
- God's purposes for His creation are to bring about His Kingdom entirely for His own glory.
- Christians can confidently point out where everything began [Genesis], and most can also point to how it will all end Rev. 20-21].

How God is working out His plan in between these two events is the issue!

The dispensational system provides a coherent, Scriptural blueprint to understand how and why God is advancing His Kingdom for His own glory with His King on the throne.

Dispensationalism is the system of theology that provides the best, most literal hermeneutic.  
Hermeneutics = theory of interpretation

- As you study, always read the passages in context
- Do not spiritualize or allegorize Scripture

Consider: Scripture studied this way yields:

- a. It gives a correct view of the distinct differences between Israel and the Church.
- b. It gives a clear view of God's elect, His redeemed, and His plan - past, present and future.
- c. A watchful attitude in a believer's life

The Scriptures divide time (the entire period from the creation of Adam to the "new heaven and a new earth" of Rev. 21: 1) into seven unequal periods, called dispensations (Eph. 3:2).

DISPENSATION = A moral or probationary period in the world's history

The classic seven dispensations are Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Law, Grace [Church Age], and Millennial Kingdom.

Innocence   Conscience   Human Gov't   *Promise*   Law   Church   *Law Continued*   Kingdom

1. Innocence, Conscience & Human Government pertained to people living prior to the time of Abraham.
2. Promise and Law pertained to Israel.
3. The Church Age interrupts the Law.
4. Church age pertains to believers since day of Pentecost until the Rapture of Church. The Church was not revealed in the OT. Paul called it God's "mystery."
5. There are 7 years of the Law still to be fulfilled. The last 7 years of Law will continue after God has completed building His Church. He will turn His attention back to Israel.
6. Jesus Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming occurs at the end of the 7 Year Tribulation Period.
7. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ is in the future after His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

Each dispensation may be regarded as a new test of man, and each ends in judgment, marking his utter failure in every dispensation. Four of these dispensations have been fulfilled. Dispensation #5 has completed 483 years out of 490 years.

We are living in the sixth. Then dispensation #5 will complete its last 7 years.

We have still before us the seventh, and last: the millennium.

Scripture reveals that God has purposed to set up a Kingdom on this earth.

Kingdom ON Earth or Kingdom from Heaven = Mediatorial Kingdom

1. The rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God

2. A rule with reference to the earth

3. It has as its mediatorial ruler a member of the human race.

Consider: All Scripture points to the Future Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth.

Goal: Look at each dispensation, God's government revealed, God's King revealed

The Old Testament provides a "prophetic portrait" of the King.

There are 2 Ante-Diluvian Dispensations [before the Flood]: Innocence & Conscience

I. Dispensation of Innocence [Gen. 1:26-30 and 2:15-17 = Responsibility; Gen. 3:1-6 = Failure]

- God created man to live in perfect harmony with Himself. They were created in the image of God and innocent of sin. [Gen. 1:27]. They were ignorant of good and evil.
- They had an eternal soul, a free will and the ability to procreate.
- They walked and worked with God, who interacted with His creation. [Gen. 2:15]

*Stewards:* Adam and Eve

*The Period:* From the creation of man to The Fall & Expulsion ~33 years

*Responsibility:* To obey God (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-17); Do Not Eat Of 1 Tree

*Commands:* Replenish the earth, Subdue the earth, Have dominion over the animals, Care for the garden - God warned of the punishment for disobedience.

*Failure:* Disobedience (Genesis 3:1-6)

*Judgment:* Curse and death (Genesis 3:7-19); God drove out the man.

*Grace:* A new chance and the promise of a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15)

God's mercy: He killed an innocent animal and provided skins to cover over or atone for their sin. The slaughter of the animals introduced the Biblical principle:

"Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin". [Heb. 9:22]

The Mediatorial Kingdom:

A. It is clear from Scripture that God has been trying to set up a "visible" Kingdom on this earth ever since the creation of man, to whom He gave dominion.

However, it was to be exercised under the direction of God.

Gen. 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and Have Dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

That dominion was lost by the "Fall" and Satan set himself up as the "Prince of this world."

Clue: Who is the King?

1. Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [her seed] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

a. A future descendant of the woman who would be victorious over the Serpent.

II. Dispensation of Conscience—Genesis 3:23 to 9:29

- Demonstrates what mankind will do if left to his own will and conscience which has been tainted by the inherited sin nature. Man has a knowledge of good and evil.
- Man's conscience will be the basis for right moral judgment.

Major aspects:

- ❖ Curse on the serpent and on nature
- ❖ Change in womanhood and childbearing
- ❖ Imposing of difficult work on mankind to produce food

Stewards: Cain and Seth and their families

The Period: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden until the Flood, about 1,656 years

Responsibility: To do good and offer blood sacrifices (Genesis 3:7, 22; 4:4)

Failure: Wickedness (Genesis 6:5-6, 11, 12)

"All flesh had corrupted his way on the earth. The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

[Gen. 3:7, 22; Gen. 6:5, 11-12; Gen. 7:11-12, 23]

Judgment: The worldwide Flood (Genesis 6:7, 13; 7:11-14)

Grace: Noah and his family are saved (Genesis 6:8-9; 7:1; 8:1)

A remnant to continue His sovereign plan for mankind.

Kingdom and Government: From Eden To The Flood - ~1656 Years

Gen. 6:3 My spirit shall not always strive with man.

1. Adam's sin and the loss of his proper dominion left the race without any external divinely mediated controls.

2. God seemed determined to leave it that way.

Only twice is there any record of divine intervention in human affairs.

a. Gen. 4:14, 16 Cain was shut out of the "presence of the LORD" as manifested upon the earth.

b. Gen. 5:24 Enoch was translated from the earth to be forever in the presence of God.

c. This period ends with almost total moral corruption and the earth "filled with violence."

d. Sinful man needs a kingdom of God on earth which is spiritual and moral in nature.

Clue: Who is the King? ~1656 years since clue in Garden after the Fall

Gen. 9:26-27 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

a. Promised seed of the woman shall come through the line of Shem

Following the Flood, two important events:

1. God promised He would never again smite every living thing [Gen. 8:21] by the waters of a flood [Gen. 9:11]. His rainbow was a solemn pledge between man and God that He would keep the covenant. [Gen. 9:12-17]
2. God instituted human government to set up a control upon the lawless impulses of men.
  - a. Gen. 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.
3. We now have an institution by which God will now mediate His government over the nations through human rulers who, whether they acknowledge Him or not, are "ordained of God" as "ministers" of His.

Dispensation #3 God works in a new way with His creation via Human Government. ~429 yrs [Gen. 8:15 to 11:9]

Stewards: Noah [1<sup>st</sup> Civil Leader] and his descendants

The Period: From the Flood to the confusion of tongues at Babel, about 429 years

Responsibility: Obey God; To scatter and multiply (Gen. 9)

Failure: Refusal to scatter and the building of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-4)

Confusion of Tongues -

Gen. 11:1-2,4 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

<sup>2</sup> And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

<sup>4</sup> And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

➤ Built a ziggurat and worshiped the hosts of heaven and unified to make a name for themselves. 1<sup>st</sup> Global Empire

Gen. 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Judgment: Confusion of languages (Gen. 11:5-9); Forced command to fill the earth

Gen. 11:9 The LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.

1. The Table of Nations is given in Genesis 10.

We see the birth of nations, building of cities and the founding of empires.

2. God is opposed to a central world government.

3. 1<sup>st</sup> recorded urge of sinful men toward the "one world" government.

No Clue For The King

Dispensation #4 God calls Abram and the dispensation of Promise commences

God turned away from "man" in the collective sense and called out one particular man through whom His divine will is to be accomplished on earth. [Gen. 12:1-4]

Gen. 17:6 - Kings shall come out of thee.

Stewards: Abraham and the Patriarchs

God promised Abraham a homeland for his descendants [Genesis 17:8] and a son for him and Sarah [Genesis 17:15-16]. They grew tired of waiting and produced a son in their own way, who they named Ishmael [Genesis 16:1-2.15]. When God's promised son Isaac was born, Ishmael was sent away [Genesis 21:8-13] causing enmity between the Jews (descendants of Isaac) and Arabs (descendants of Ishmael) that continues to this day.

Note: Some promises were gracious and unconditional. These will be fulfilled in the future. Other promises were conditional upon the faithfulness and obedience of the Israelites. Every one of these were violated.

Period: From Abram's call until Moses Receives The Law At Mt. Sinai  
Gen. 12:1-Ex. 19:1-8 - Period of 430 Years

Responsibility: Dwell in Canaan - Gen. 12:1-7

Failure: Dwelt in Egypt - Gen. 12:10, Gen. 46:6

Judgment: Egyptian Bondage - Ex. 1:8-14

Grace: Moses The Deliverer is sent- Ex. 3:6-10  
God's Unfolding Plan of Redemption Begins To Unfold

God's grace came to the aid of helpless man and redeemed the chosen people out of the hand of the oppressor.

#### Clue For the King:

Gen. 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: <sup>2</sup> And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: <sup>3</sup> And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

a. Abraham will be the father of the race from whom the King shall come.

Gen. 17:18-21 - God revealed to Abraham the covenant would be established with Isaac who would be born of Sarah.

Gen. 28:10-15 God revealed to Jacob at Bethel that he was to be the one chosen for the line of the promised one.

a. The Abrahamic Covenant passed over Esau, the firstborn.

b. No descendant of Esau may claim the Messianic title.

Gen. 49:8, 10 Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. <sup>10</sup> The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

a. Sceptre indicates Kingly power. Shiloh = name for Messiah

b. God chose Judah, the 4<sup>th</sup> born son of Leah.

c. The Messiah must come through Judah and not Levi, the progenitor of the Priestly order.

Note: 475 years pass to the time of David of the tribe of Judah

It is clear God does not always work exactly the same way in each dispensation.  
What God required of Adam > Don't Eat Of The Tree > He did not require of Moses.  
What He required of Noah > Belief; Build the Ark > He did not require of David.  
What He required of Moses & David > Keep The Law > He doesn't require of us today.

#### Dispensation #5 God Gives His Law & Establishes a Covenant With Israel

Consider: The Sojourn In Egypt - Acts 7:17 - The people grew and multiplied in Egypt.

1. The sojourn in Egypt, under God, became a providential means of disciplinary training.
  - a. They were brought in contact with a high and well-organized civilization
  - b. A great leader was raised up who was educated in all the wisdom of Egypt.
  - c. Sufficient oppression was permitted to weld the tribes into a nation in preparation for the theocratic kingdom that would soon be established.

God gave Moses the 10 Commandments and promised the Jews a life of peace and plenty in a Kingdom of their own if they obeyed [Ex. 19:5, Ex. 20:1-17]. Positions them for His purpose

Stewards: Moses & Nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai

Period: From Mt. Sinai until Christ fulfilled the Law with His Death - ~1500 years  
Ex. 19:1-8 - John 19:30 - It Is Finished!

Responsibility: Obedience; Keep God's Law & Covenant - Ex. 19:3-8

Ex. 19:3-6 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.<sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

<sup>6</sup> And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Note: When Israel was standing before Mt. Sinai and God wanted them to draw near, He wanted to draw them to His transforming fire so He could meld them into a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation. They would be His treasured possession.

He wanted to purify them to be His servants and vessels of His holy presence.

Failure: Broke God's Law & Rejected Jesus Christ - II Kings 17:17-20; Matt. 27  
And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. <sup>18</sup> Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. <sup>19</sup> Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

<sup>20</sup> And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

Judgment: Captivity to Assyria & Babylon

A remnant returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah and in due time, Jesus was born.

World Wide Dispersion - Deut. 28:63-66; Luke 21:20-24

Grace: The Promised Savior was sent. Isaiah 9:6-7; Galatians 4:4-5

### Clue For The King During Dispensation of Law

A. Davidic Covenant: II Sam. 7:16 And thine [David] house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever.

a. God confirmed this promise with an oath:

Reaffirmed to Israel through Jeremiah many years after David's death when Israel had lapsed into idolatry [Jer. 33:17-26]

Consider: It is clear these promises did not mean there would be an unbroken line of successors.

a. After Solomon, the kingdom was divided.

b. In 587 BC the last king of Judah was carried captive to Babylon.

Jeremiah refers to a future king that God would raise up to sit on the "Throne of David."

Jer. 23:5-6 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous BRANCH, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. <sup>6</sup> In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

c. Compare with Isaiah 11:1-2 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a BRANCH shall grow out of his roots: <sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

Note 1: "Branch" is common to both.

Note 2: "The Spirit of the Lord" shall rest upon Him in Isaiah & compare with...

d. Luke 2:40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

B. Scripture also foretells His [God's King] Divine Parentage

1. Isa. 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

2. There are 4 prophecies in reference to the origin of the Messiah that were literally fulfilled in Jesus. (1) Be born in Bethlehem (2) Born of a virgin (3) Come out of Egypt (4) Nazarene  
There can be no question that "Jesus of Nazareth" was the promised "Son of David" who is to reign upon the "Throne of David." But being rejected and crucified, and risen from the dead, he now sits on His Father's Throne until the time comes for Him to take His Kingdom.



C. OT Scriptures prophesy an earthly Kingdom for Jesus Christ

Ps. 2:1-9 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

<sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.

<sup>4</sup> He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.

<sup>5</sup> Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure.

<sup>6</sup> Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. <sup>7</sup> I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

<sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

<sup>9</sup> Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

D. Old Testament Scriptures teach there is to be an earthly and visible Kingdom over which the Son of Man is to rule. Crowning glory of Jesus Christ

Dan. 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

<sup>14</sup> And There Was Given Him Dominion, And Glory, And A Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. [Kingdom of or from Heaven].

Zech. 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.