

## THREE GREAT DISPENSATIONS OF BIBLE HISTORY

### Introduction

1. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hosea 4:6).
2. “Have ye not read?” was a regular question of Jesus to His critics (Matthew 12:3, 5 ; 19:4 ; 21:42 ; Mark 2:25 ; 12:10).
3. A pervasive misunderstanding of biblical details is threatening the bright future of the church. We need to get back to the basics in our study of the Scriptures. This sermon will explore the three dispensations of Bible history.

### I. THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

- A. This is the first age of biblical history. It was a time during which the fathers communicated God’s Will to their families. Patriarch means a man who is the head of a family or group.
- B. Distinguishing Characteristics
  1. This biblical age is characterized by non-uniform communication.
  2. God’s instructions to Adam about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15-17) did not apply to Noah.
  3. Noah’s command to build the ark (Genesis 6:14) only applied to him.
  4. Only Abraham was told to depart from his family (Genesis 12:1-3) and sacrifice his son, Isaac (Genesis 22:2).
  5. There was no single code of for all the patriarchs to follow. God communicated His Will individually to the heads of families.
- C. Observations
  1. This biblical age offered great closeness to God as Genesis 3:8 suggests, “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.”
  2. The patriarchs could approach God without a medium. These patriarchs offered their own sacrifices as Job 1:5 and other passages reveal.

### II. THE MOSAICAL AGE

- A. This is the second age of biblical history. It is referred to in Hebrews 1:1 which states, “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.”
- B. Distinguishing Characteristics
  1. This age offered great uniformity of communication.

2. The Law of Moses appears to have been given only to the Jews. “The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deuteronomy 5:2, 3).

C. Observations

1. God appears to distance Himself from his people during this age. God’s presence, for example, was associated with great fear by the people. “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exodus 20:18, 19). Contrast this with the patriarch’s communication with God.
2. The people could not offer their own sacrifices. The priestly tribe was established, and the high priest only entered the holiest place once a year (Hebrews 9:7).

### III. THE CHRISTIAN AGE

A. This is the final dispensation of man described as the “last days” (Hebrews 1:2 ; Acts 2:17 ; Isaiah 2:2 ; 2 Timothy 3:1).

B. Distinguishing Characteristics

1. This age is universal and uniform in its scope. The word “whosoever” is used 110 times in 93 New Testament verses.
  - a. “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:9).
  - b. “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26).
2. In this Christian age, God speaks to us by His Son (Hebrews 1:2).

C. Observations

1. Some of the closeness that was lost is regained. Christians serve the role as (Mosaical) priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Christians can approach God by themselves. God becomes known in the Christian Age as Father.
2. Regaining more of that closeness is promised in Jesus Christ. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:14-16).