

both corporately and individually. God never intended that the Mosaic Law be used as a works covenant by which to earn salvation, but rather as a grace covenant to reveal to Israel their sin, the way of salvation, and the way of life.

7. With regard to Dispensationalism's interpretation of history in terms of recurrent cycles of testing of the natural man, each testing period ending in failure and judgment, versus a view of history that affirms stages in the progressive unfolding of revelation concerning both law and gospel, it should be noted that both Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology stress the progressive unfolding of revelation; both agree that, since the Fall, the natural man in every age has failed to meet God's standards; both affirm human responsibility for sin and unbelief in every age; and both posit divine judgment for failure and sin in every age. Thus there are aspects of each dispensational cycle that run as threads throughout human history; and this would allow for considerable continuity as well as diversity.

With respect to a definition of "dispensation", Roy C. Aldrich suggests a simple definition on which he believes there could be close agreement by both sides of the issue. He quotes the following from *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary*: "The period during which a particular revelation of God's mind and will has been operative on mankind; as during the Christian dispensation; during the patriarchal dispensation."

-- Roy C. Aldrich, "A New Look at Dispensationalism," in *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol. 120, No. 477 (January-March), p. 46.

Aldrich also suggests (on the same page) that "Some of the seven dispensations outlined by many dispensationalists may be only convenient historical divisions."

Accordingly, from a Covenant Theology point of view a dispensation may be defined as a historical period in which the administration of one of the major covenants of Scripture is prominently featured.

With this definition in hand, the dispensations of Scripture may be formulated. By way of comparison, Dispensationalism discerns seven dispensations in Scripture:

1. Innocence
2. Conscience or Moral Responsibility
3. Human Government
4. Promise
5. Law
6. Church
7. Kingdom

From a Covenant Theology point of view, the dispensations of Scripture may be schematized as follows (again, one proposal, not the only possible one):

1. The Adamic (pre-Fall) Dispensation
2. The Mosaic (post-Fall) Dispensation