

Basic Dispensational Understanding

Series 1-10

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Introduction to the Basic Dispensational Understanding Series

Rightly Dividing the Word in a Confused World

The Bible is a perfect book—but many Christians struggle to make sense of it. They read the Old Testament and feel lost in laws. They read the Gospels and wonder why Jesus spoke of sheep and kingdoms. They read Paul’s letters and see something different entirely. How does it all fit together?

Enter **dispensational understanding**—not a theological trend, but a **biblical command**.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God... rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Right division doesn’t split the Bible into contradiction. It unfolds God’s plan with precision. It shows how God has administered His will through different ages, with different instructions for different people—while maintaining one unchanging truth: **salvation is always by grace, through faith**.

This 10-part series will walk you through the foundational distinctions that open the Bible like never before. You’ll discover:

- The difference between **Law and Grace**
- The unique role of **Paul’s apostleship**
- What Scripture calls **“the mystery”** hidden from ages past
- The difference between **Israel and the Church**
- Why the **rapture** is not the **Second Coming**
- How to understand your **standing in Christ today**

These are not minor doctrinal differences. Confusing the dispensations leads to fear, legalism, and flawed theology. But when the Word is rightly divided:

- Assurance becomes clear

- Prophecy makes sense
- Doctrine stands firm
- Liberty is protected
- And Christ is glorified

Whether you're a new believer or a seasoned teacher, this series will ground you in truth, challenge tradition, and help you **see the Bible with fresh eyes**.

The result? Not just head knowledge—but **stability, confidence, and clarity** in the age of confusion.

Welcome to the *Basic Dispensational Understanding Series*.
Your Bible is about to make more sense than ever.

1 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Rightly Dividing the Word: Why Dispensational Study Matters

Theme Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15 – “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Introduction: The Mandate to Divide

The Apostle Paul's command in 2 Timothy 2:15 is not a suggestion—it is a directive. Believers are not called to casually read the Bible but to **study** it. And not just to study it generally, but to do so with precision: “*rightly dividing the word of truth*.” This implies that if one can rightly divide it, one can also wrongly divide it. The result? Confusion, contradiction, and chaos in doctrine.

Dispensationalism is not a man-made system imposed on the Bible; it is a **recognition of the divine structure** God has already placed in His Word. When approached properly, dispensational study opens the Scriptures with clarity and harmony. This first essay in our series lays the foundation for why dispensational understanding is essential for every serious student of Scripture.

What is a Dispensation?

A “dispensation” simply refers to a **stewardship or administration**. It is the way God deals with mankind during a particular period of time. Just as a nation might have different administrations or policies under different leaders, God’s dealings with man—while always consistent with His nature—**have varied through time**.

The Greek word used in the New Testament is *oikonomia*, from which we get our English word “economy.” This idea of a divine economy or administration reveals that God has **ordered different ages with specific responsibilities, revelations, and tests for humanity**.

Paul uses the word repeatedly:

- *“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.”* (Ephesians 3:2)
- *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”* (Colossians 1:26)

There is no need to fear the term. A dispensation is not a new gospel or a change in God’s character—it is a **different program** God rolls out as He progressively reveals truth to man.

Right Division Prevents Doctrinal Confusion

Scripture is perfect, but men are not. When one fails to recognize dispensational boundaries, contradictions seem to emerge. Let’s examine a few examples:

- **Law vs. Grace**
Compare: *“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.”* (Leviticus 18:5)
With: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...”* (Titus 3:5)
- **Sabbath-Keeping vs. Liberty**
“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8)
“Let no man therefore judge you... in respect of an holyday, or of the sabbath days.” (Colossians 2:16)
- **Water Baptism vs. One Baptism**
“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16)
“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

How do we reconcile these? The answer is not to “blend” them into a theological smoothie but to **divide** them properly. Each passage is true, but they belong to different dispensations. The Bible must be interpreted **in context, within the correct administration of God’s revelation.**

The Bible is Already Divided by God

Far from being a novel invention, dispensationalism simply observes what God Himself has put in place. The Bible is divided by covenants, promises, and testaments. Consider these natural distinctions:

- **Old Testament vs. New Testament** (Hebrews 9:16–17)
- **Time Past, But Now, and Ages to Come** (Ephesians 2:11–13; 3:1–11)
- **Prophecy vs. Mystery** (Acts 3:21 vs. Romans 16:25)
- **Israel vs. the Church** (Matthew 10:5–6 vs. Romans 11:25)

The idea that the Bible should be interpreted consistently from Genesis to Revelation without any dispensational division is a **dangerous oversimplification**. It leads to confusion about salvation, law, church structure, spiritual gifts, and even the identity of the believer.

Paul: The Pattern and the Divider

Paul is not just another apostle—he is the **apostle to the Gentiles** (Romans 11:13). Christ revealed to him **the mystery** (Ephesians 3:3), which was hidden from ages past. Paul speaks with authority about God’s current program because it was **directly given to him by Christ.**

- *“That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”* (Ephesians 3:8)
- *“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”* (1 Timothy 1:11)

If you want to understand the age we live in—the “but now” dispensation—you must study Paul’s epistles (Romans through Philemon). They are not more inspired than the rest of the Bible, but they are **more directly applicable** for understanding the Church today.

The Danger of Covenant Confusion

Much of Christianity today operates under the **assumption that the Church is spiritual Israel**. This is the heart of what is called *Replacement Theology*, the belief that God is finished with the Jews and has replaced them with the Church.

But this is unbiblical. Paul makes it clear:

- *“Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”* (Romans 11:25)
- *“And so all Israel shall be saved...”* (Romans 11:26)

Israel and the Church are **two distinct groups with different origins, purposes, and destinies**. Mixing them leads to:

- Misapplying promises and curses
- Corrupting end-times prophecy
- Reinstating Sabbath laws, tithing systems, and priesthods

Dispensational study clears the fog.

Benefits of Right Division

Rightly dividing the Word does not puff up the student but **frees the believer** from confusion. It makes the Bible **coherent, consistent, and Christ-centered**. Some key benefits include:

1. Understanding God’s program across time

No longer will Genesis sound like Matthew and Matthew like Romans. Each has its place.

2. Recognizing your identity in Christ

You are not spiritual Israel; you are part of a heavenly Body with spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3).

3. Distinguishing between salvation messages

Though salvation has always been by faith, the content of faith (what must be believed) has **progressively unfolded**. You are not saved today by building an ark or offering animal sacrifices.

4. **Clarifying the future**

Prophecy about Israel's future kingdom, the tribulation, and the millennial reign of Christ makes sense when the Church is properly understood as **distinct from Israel**.

5. **Growing in sound doctrine**

Doctrines such as eternal security, justification by faith, the role of good works, and spiritual gifts become clear when studied dispensationally.

Common Objections Answered

“Dispensationalism is a modern invention!”

False. While the systematization of dispensational truth developed over time (as did Trinitarian theology), the **Scripture itself** contains dispensational distinctions. Paul taught it. The early church practiced it.

“It divides the body of Christ!”

On the contrary—it explains how the body of Christ came into being. Confusion arises when people take teachings meant for Israel under law and force them upon the Church under grace.

“It leads to multiple gospels!”

There is one way of salvation—by faith—but not all believers throughout history had the same content of revelation. Abraham believed God about a seed; we believe God about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

Conclusion: A Workman Approved

When Paul told Timothy to study, he wasn't speaking only to seminary students or pastors. He was speaking to **all believers**. Right division is not a niche doctrine—it is foundational. Without it, you will always bounce between law and grace, kingdom and church, fear and assurance.

The Bible is a complete book. It tells one unified story of redemption. But like any good story, it has chapters, characters, and settings. Dispensational study honors the Author's structure and brings clarity, not confusion.

You are commanded to rightly divide. You are invited to study deeper. And you are promised God's approval for your faithfulness to the truth.

Final Word: An Invitation to the Journey

As we proceed through this 10-part series, we will unfold the timeline of God’s dealings from **time past** to **the present** and into **the ages to come**. We will distinguish Israel from the Church. We will explore the hidden mystery revealed through Paul. And we will magnify the grace of God that governs this present dispensation.

Let us journey together—not as casual readers, but as **workmen**, approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

2 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Time Past: God’s Dealings with Israel Before the Cross

Theme Verse: Ephesians 2:11–12

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

Introduction: A Time of Separation and Structure

Before the cross, God’s redemptive dealings were focused primarily on **one nation**: Israel. This was not favoritism; it was **divine design**. Through Israel, God would reveal Himself to the world, give the Law, send the prophets, and eventually bring the Messiah.

Ephesians 2:11–12 calls this era “**time past**.” In that time, **Gentiles were outsiders**, cut off from the covenants, the promises, and the hope that belonged to Israel. To understand God’s dispensational plan, we must begin by understanding His **unique relationship with Israel** in the Old Testament.

This essay will explore:

- The national calling of Israel
- The Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants
- The structure of “time past” and why it matters

- How “time past” sets the stage for “but now”

I. The National Focus of God’s Plan in Time Past

A. God Chose One Nation to Reach the Nations

In Genesis 11, humanity had united in rebellion at Babel. In response, God scattered the nations and began a **new, focused strategy**—He would work through **one man**, Abraham, to form **one nation**, Israel, to eventually bless **all nations**.

Genesis 12:1–3:

“I will make of thee a great nation... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

While the Gentile world continued in idolatry and ignorance, God called Israel out to be a **separate, covenant people**. This marked the beginning of His distinct dealings with the Jewish people.

II. The Abrahamic Covenant – The Root of the Promise

The **Abrahamic Covenant** is the foundation of God’s redemptive plan through Israel. It includes **three key components**:

1. A People

“I will make of thee a great nation...” (Gen. 12:2)

Fulfilled in the formation of the nation of Israel.

2. A Land

“Unto thy seed will I give this land...” (Gen. 12:7; Gen. 15:18–21)

A literal, geographical inheritance with defined borders.

3. A Blessing

“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3)

Ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3:16).

The covenant is **unconditional and everlasting**. Though Israel often disobeyed, God promised to **preserve and fulfill** His word.

Genesis 17:7:

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant...”

III. The Mosaic Covenant – The Law Given to Israel

While the Abrahamic covenant was about **promise**, the Mosaic covenant was about **performance**. It was given 430 years later (Galatians 3:17) and introduced **conditional blessings** based on Israel’s obedience.

Exodus 19:5–6:

“If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure... and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests...”

This covenant:

- Included the Ten Commandments
- Governed Israel’s civil, ceremonial, and moral life
- Separated Israel from the Gentiles
- Revealed the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man

But it could not save.

Romans 3:20:

“By the law is the knowledge of sin.”

It was never intended to bring righteousness but to lead Israel to **see their need** for a Savior (Galatians 3:24).

The Mosaic law functioned like a **guardian or schoolmaster**—it preserved Israel until the promised Seed, Christ, would come.

IV. The Davidic Covenant – The Promise of a King

In 2 Samuel 7, God made a covenant with David that further clarified Israel’s future.

2 Samuel 7:12–13:

“I will set up thy seed after thee... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”

The Davidic Covenant promised:

- An eternal **dynasty**
- A permanent **throne**
- A coming **Messianic King**

This covenant is **unconditional and eternal**, and its full fulfillment awaits the **Millennial Kingdom**, when Christ will reign from Jerusalem (Luke 1:32–33; Revelation 20:4–6).

V. The Gentile World in Time Past

While Israel was under covenant, the rest of the world—the Gentiles—were described in Ephesians 2:12 as:

- **“Without Christ”** – No Messiah, no Savior
- **“Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”** – No political or national inclusion
- **“Strangers from the covenants of promise”** – No inheritance
- **“Having no hope”** – Spiritually lost
- **“Without God in the world”** – No relationship with the true God

This wasn’t because God didn’t care about Gentiles, but because He had chosen a different method: **to bless the world through Israel.**

VI. The Role of Israel in Time Past

Israel was intended to be:

- **A light to the Gentiles** (Isaiah 49:6)
- **A kingdom of priests** (Exodus 19:6)
- **The custodians of the oracles of God** (Romans 3:2)

They were chosen to **receive and reveal** truth—not because they were better (Deut. 7:7), but because of God’s sovereign plan.

Yet, Israel failed repeatedly. Despite their privileges:

- They broke the Law
- They killed the prophets

- They rejected their Messiah

But even in their failure, God’s plan was not thwarted—it was **advancing** toward the cross.

VII. Christ’s Earthly Ministry – Still to Israel

Jesus said plainly:

“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24)

His ministry was:

- To confirm the promises made to the fathers (Romans 15:8)
- To call Israel to repentance and kingdom readiness
- To fulfill the Law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17)

Even the apostles were **instructed not to go to the Gentiles** during His earthly ministry (Matthew 10:5–6). Why? Because the kingdom was being offered to Israel first (Acts 3:19–21).

Had they received their King, the prophetic program would have unfolded. But they rejected Him and crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8).

VIII. The Fall of Israel – A Temporary Setting Aside

Romans 11 outlines the tragedy and hope of Israel’s fall:

“Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles...” (Romans 11:11)

Israel’s national rejection of Christ did not cancel God’s promises—but it did initiate a new dispensation. Their fall opened the door for a new man, a new body, a **mystery hidden in God**—the Church.

God is not done with Israel. Romans 11:26 promises:

“And so all Israel shall be saved...”

But during this current age (which we’ll explore in the next essay), **Israel is temporarily blinded**, and God’s focus is on forming a new body—not a nation, but the Body of Christ.

IX. Why Understanding “Time Past” Matters

1. It protects against theological confusion.

Knowing where you are in God's program prevents misapplying laws, rituals, and promises not meant for the Church.

2. It magnifies the grace of God.

When you see how lost the Gentile world was in "time past," it magnifies the kindness of God in calling us now.

3. It maintains God's faithfulness to Israel.

God made unconditional promises to Israel. If He breaks those, how could we trust His promises to us?

4. It sets the stage for rightly dividing the Word.

Understanding "time past" lays the foundation for understanding "but now" and "ages to come" (Ephesians 2:13, 2:7).

X. Summary of Time Past

Category	Israel (Under Covenant)	Gentiles (Time Past)
Relationship with God	Nationally chosen, under covenants	Without God, alienated
Scriptures	Given the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2)	Not recipients of divine revelation
Covenant status	Under Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants	Strangers to the covenants of promise
Purpose	To be a light to the nations	Awaiting blessing through Israel
Ministry of Christ	Directed to Israel (Matt. 15:24)	Not the primary recipients during His life
Spiritual condition	Often rebellious, yet chosen and protected	Lost and without hope

Conclusion: Preparing for “But Now”

Ephesians 2:13 begins a new phrase: *“But now in Christ Jesus...”* That shift from *“time past”* to *“but now”* is not a poetic flourish—it’s a dispensational boundary. It marks a shift from God’s national dealings with Israel to His spiritual program for the Church.

Understanding “time past” is essential to rightly dividing the Word. It shows us how God:

- Began with a promise to Abraham
- Gave a Law through Moses
- Promised a King through David
- Offered a kingdom through Christ
- And began to reveal a **hidden mystery** only after Israel’s rejection

In the next essay, we will explore what happens in this **“but now”** phase—how God turned to the Gentiles, revealed the mystery through Paul, and began forming the Church, the Body of Christ.

Until then, let us stand in awe of God’s wisdom in history and thank Him that while we were **once far off**, we have now been **made nigh by the blood of Christ** (Ephesians 2:13).

3 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – But Now: The Mystery Dispensation of Grace

Theme Verses: Ephesians 2:13–16; Romans 16:25

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13)

“...according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”
(Romans 16:25)

Introduction: From “Time Past” to “But Now”

Scripture, when rightly divided, recognizes not only the progressive nature of God’s revelation but the distinct **dispensations** through which He deals with mankind. In the previous essay, we examined **“Time Past”**—a period marked by God’s national dealings with Israel, the Law, and covenants centered around Abraham, Moses, and David.

But Ephesians 2:13 marks a turning point:

“But now in Christ Jesus...”

This phrase signals a **dispensational shift**, a change not of God’s character, but of His administration. A parenthetical age begins—**not foretold by prophets**, but revealed through the Apostle Paul. It is the **Dispensation of the Grace of God** (Ephesians 3:2), characterized by the formation of the **Body of Christ**, a spiritual organism made up of Jew and Gentile alike.

This essay explores the “but now” of God’s plan—**the mystery dispensation**—and explains how it differs from all that came before.

I. Understanding the Term “But Now”

The phrase “but now” in Scripture often signals a **change in God's dealings** with man. It appears numerous times in Paul’s epistles and often marks a contrast between how things were under previous dispensations versus how they are **under grace**.

Examples:

- Romans 3:21: *“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...”*
- Ephesians 2:13: *“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh...”*
- Colossians 1:26: *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest...”*

These shifts are not contradictions—they are **right divisions** (2 Timothy 2:15). They call us to recognize the **unique character** of the current age: an administration not based on prophecy but on **mystery**.

II. What Is the Mystery?

Paul speaks repeatedly of a body of truth called “the mystery.” Contrary to popular belief, a mystery in Scripture is not something mysterious or unknowable—it is something **previously hidden and now revealed**.

Romans 16:25:

“...according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began...”

Ephesians 3:3–5:

“...by revelation he made known unto me the mystery... Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men...”

The Mystery Includes:

1. **Jew and Gentile made one new man in Christ** (Ephesians 2:15)
2. **The Body of Christ** as a spiritual entity, not a continuation of Israel (1 Corinthians 12:12–13)
3. **Salvation by grace through faith, apart from works or the Law** (Ephesians 2:8–9)
4. **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (Colossians 1:27)
5. **The pre-tribulational rapture of the Church** (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Corinthians 15:51)
6. **Heavenly citizenship and inheritance** (Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 3:20)

This was not taught by the prophets. It was **hidden in God** (Ephesians 3:9), kept secret since the world began, and revealed only through **Paul**, the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).

III. The Formation of the Body of Christ

In Time Past, God’s plan revolved around Israel, a nation, a people group with covenants and land promises. But now, under the dispensation of grace, God is forming something entirely new—a **spiritual body**, made up of all believers.

1 Corinthians 12:13:

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles...”

Characteristics of the Body:

- It is **not national**, but spiritual
- It is **not foretold**, but revealed
- It is **not earthly**, but heavenly

- It is **not under Law**, but under grace
- It is **not Israel**, but the Church

This Body is called “**the church, which is his body**” (Ephesians 1:22–23). It is not the same as the kingdom church of Matthew 16 or Acts 2; it is a **new man** (Ephesians 2:15), with a heavenly position and destiny.

IV. God’s Dealing with Jew and Gentile: A New Unity

Ephesians 2:14–16 explains how Christ **abolished the enmity** between Jew and Gentile and created “**one new man.**”

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one... to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”

In Time Past:

- Gentiles were alienated
- Jews were privileged
- The Law divided

But now:

- All are reconciled in Christ
- The wall of partition is broken
- Access to God is through one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)

This is not merely theological. It’s **dispensationally revolutionary**. God is not restoring Israel’s kingdom right now—He is creating a **new body**, with equal standing for all who believe.

V. The Gospel of Grace: Paul’s Distinct Message

Paul uses the phrase “my gospel” in Romans 2:16 and 16:25. Why?

Because he was given a **distinct revelation** of the gospel of the grace of God.

Galatians 1:11–12:

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man... but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Paul’s gospel includes:

- Salvation by grace alone through faith alone
- A full revelation of the cross and its accomplishments
- The formation of the Body of Christ
- The heavenly inheritance of believers
- The complete forgiveness and justification apart from the Law

This gospel is distinct from the **kingdom gospel** preached by Jesus to Israel (Matthew 4:17) or the gospel of the circumcision entrusted to Peter (Galatians 2:7).

VI. A Parenthesis in Prophecy

The dispensation of grace is **not the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy**. It is a **parenthesis** in the prophetic timeline.

The prophets foretold:

- The rise of Israel
- The coming of Messiah
- The kingdom of God on earth
- The tribulation and Day of the Lord
- The millennial reign of Christ

But they **never saw** the Church. They **never predicted** the rapture. They **never mentioned** a Body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles with heavenly blessings.

That’s why Paul calls it a mystery: it was “**not made known unto the sons of men**” (Ephesians 3:5), but “**kept secret**” (Romans 16:25).

VII. The Administration of Grace

Ephesians 3:2:

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward...”

We are living in the **dispensation of grace**, a period characterized by:

- No national covenant with Israel
- No temple, priesthood, or sacrifices
- No Law as a system of righteousness
- No prophetic timeline in operation
- No outward signs or wonders as normative

This is an age of **patience and longsuffering** (1 Timothy 1:16), where salvation is freely offered to all, Jew and Gentile alike.

VIII. The Role of Works Under Grace

Unlike the Law, which demanded obedience to earn blessing, grace offers salvation as a **gift**.

Ephesians 2:8–9:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works...”

Romans 11:6:

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works...”

While good works are still the fruit of salvation, they are never the cause. In the dispensation of grace, the believer is:

- **Justified** freely (Romans 3:24)
- **Sanctified** by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- **Complete** in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

There is no sacrificial system, no required Sabbath observance, no dietary laws. Believers walk **in liberty**, led by the Spirit, not under the bondage of the Law.

IX. The Hope of the Church: The Blessed Hope

Under grace, the Church is not looking for Antichrist or the tribulation—we are looking for **Christ**.

Titus 2:13:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This is the **rapture** of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18), a mystery event revealed to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:51), wherein believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

This is not the Second Coming in wrath and judgment—it is a private return **for the Church**, not **with** the Church.

X. Why This Matters

1. It Guards Against Doctrinal Confusion

Mixing Law and grace, Israel and the Church, prophecy and mystery, leads to:

- Legalism
- Conditional security
- Misplaced signs
- Doomsday prophecy timelines
- Confusion about water baptism, tongues, healing, etc.

2. It Grounds the Believer in Assurance

Under grace, salvation is **secure**. The believer is:

- Sealed with the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)
- Justified from all things (Acts 13:39)
- Dead to sin, alive in Christ (Romans 6)

3. It Glorifies the Cross

Only under Paul’s gospel do we see the **full meaning** of the cross:

- The breaking down of the middle wall
- The blood of Christ bringing Gentiles nigh

- The end of the Law for righteousness

4. It Shows God’s Patience

God is not slack concerning His promises (2 Peter 3:9). He is delaying judgment during this **age of grace**, forming a Body before He resumes His program with Israel.

Conclusion: “But Now” – Our Present Dispensation

We live in a glorious time—a time where God offers salvation **freely**, without works, covenants, or temple worship. We are **not Israel**. We are **not under Law**. We are **not in the tribulation**. We are in the **Dispensation of Grace**.

And just as surely as it began with Paul, it will end with the **rapture** of the Church. Then, God will resume His prophetic program with Israel, fulfilling every promise made to the fathers.

But now? We preach Christ crucified—not with signs, not with earthly kingdom authority, but with **grace and peace** from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. Let us proclaim the **unsearchable riches of Christ**. And let us rightly divide, so we may **magnify the grace of God in truth**.

4 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Ages to Come: God’s Future Plan for Israel and the World

Theme Verses:

- *“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” — Ephesians 2:7*
- *“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” — Hebrews 2:5*

Introduction: Beyond “But Now”

The Bible is not merely a history book—it is a **prophetic book**. Just as it records what God has done in the past and is doing now in the present, it also unveils what God **will do in the**

future. The Apostle Paul divides time into three dispensational categories: **Time Past, But Now**, and **Ages to Come** (Ephesians 2:11–13; 2:7).

We have studied God's dealings with Israel in the past and the mystery Body of Christ in the present. Now, we turn our eyes toward **the future**—the “ages to come.” This includes:

- The **resumption of God’s program with Israel**
- The **Tribulation**
- The **Millennial Reign of Christ**
- The **final judgment**
- The **new heavens and new earth**

This isn’t speculation—it’s **Scripture rightly divided**, prophecy harmonized, and promises still waiting to be fulfilled.

I. God Is Not Done With Israel

Romans 11:1:

“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”

Though Israel rejected their Messiah and was set aside during this current age of grace, God's promises to them are **irrevocable** (Romans 11:29). Dispensational understanding affirms that **Israel and the Church are distinct**, and that Israel’s prophetic future remains intact.

God will resume His dealings with Israel after the rapture of the Church. This future plan is tied to the literal fulfillment of:

- The **Abrahamic Covenant** (land and seed)
- The **Davidic Covenant** (eternal throne)
- The **New Covenant** (national cleansing and restoration)

II. The Tribulation – Daniel’s 70th Week

The first major prophetic event after the Church is caught up is the **Tribulation**, also called:

- The **Time of Jacob’s Trouble** (Jeremiah 30:7)

- The **Seventieth Week of Daniel** (Daniel 9:24–27)
- The **Day of the Lord** (Isaiah 13:9; Joel 2:31)

This is a **seven-year period** of judgment, purification, and preparation. It is not for the Body of Christ but for:

- **Unbelieving Israel** (to bring them to repentance)
- **The Gentile nations** (to judge their rebellion)
- **The unveiling of the Antichrist and his system**

Matthew 24 aligns closely with Revelation 6–19. It describes false christs, wars, pestilence, and great tribulation, all signs **not for the Church**, but for Israel and the nations.

The Tribulation will conclude with the **Second Coming of Christ** in power and glory, to destroy the Antichrist and establish His kingdom.

III. The Second Coming – Christ Returns to Earth

Revelation 19:11–16:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse... and his name is called The Word of God.”

Unlike the **rapture**, which is secret and for the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18), the **Second Coming** is public and for the world. Jesus comes **with His saints**, not for them (Jude 14).

Key features of the Second Coming:

- Christ physically returns to the **Mount of Olives** (Zechariah 14:4)
- The armies of the earth are defeated (Revelation 19:19–21)
- Satan is bound for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1–3)
- The **Millennial Kingdom** begins

This return fulfills prophetic promises to Israel:

- Restoration of the land (Amos 9:15)
- Reestablishment of the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7)
- National salvation of Israel (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26)

IV. The Millennial Reign – The Kingdom Age

Revelation 20:4:

“And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

The Millennium is a **literal 1,000-year reign** of Christ on earth. It is the fulfillment of all prophetic hopes and the reversal of the curse.

Characteristics of the Millennium:

1. **Jesus reigns from Jerusalem** as King (Isaiah 2:2–4; Zech. 14:9)
2. **Satan is bound** and cannot deceive the nations (Rev. 20:2–3)
3. **The curse is partially lifted**—longer lifespans, fertility of the earth (Isaiah 65:20–25)
4. **Peace and justice prevail**—Christ rules with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9)
5. **The temple is rebuilt** and sacrificial worship resumes (Ezekiel 40–48)

This kingdom is **not allegorical**, nor is it the Church. It is the literal reign of Christ **on earth**, with Israel in the lead role among nations (Isaiah 60:1–14).

V. The Final Rebellion – Satan Loosed

Revelation 20:7–10:

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison...”

After the thousand years, Satan is released for one final deception. Astonishingly, many follow him. This proves:

- Even in a perfect environment, man’s heart remains deceitful
- External righteousness cannot replace internal regeneration

God intervenes with fire, and Satan is cast into the lake of fire forever.

VI. The Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20:11–15:

“And I saw a great white throne... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books...”

This is **not** the judgment seat of Christ (for believers), but the final judgment of:

- All unbelievers from all time
- Those not found in the Lamb’s Book of Life

There is no salvation offered—only condemnation. Every secret is revealed. Every work is judged. Then death and hell are cast into the **lake of fire**, which is the second death.

VII. The New Heavens and New Earth

Revelation 21:1:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...”

This ushers in the final, eternal state. The old creation, tainted by sin, is **purged by fire** (2 Peter 3:10–13) and replaced with a new, incorruptible one.

Features of this eternal age:

1. **No more death, sorrow, or pain** (Rev. 21:4)
2. **God dwells with man**—the tabernacle of God is with men (Rev. 21:3)
3. **The New Jerusalem** descends—a glorious city (Rev. 21:10–27)
4. **No temple**—for God and the Lamb are the temple (Rev. 21:22)
5. **The river of life and the tree of life**—eternal healing and joy (Rev. 22:1–5)

This is the ultimate fulfillment of all things:

- The curse reversed
- God’s glory fully revealed
- His people eternally satisfied

VIII. Israel’s Role in the Ages to Come

Dispensational theology maintains that God’s promises to Israel:

- Were **never transferred to the Church**
- Will be **literally fulfilled** in the kingdom and beyond

In the ages to come:

- **Israel will be restored nationally** (Ezekiel 37)
- **The twelve tribes will be regathered** (Matthew 19:28)
- **The land will be fully possessed** (Genesis 15:18)
- **Gentile nations will flow to Jerusalem** (Isaiah 2:2)

Zechariah 8:23:

“In those days... ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you...”

Israel’s role was never permanently forfeited—it was postponed during the Church age. In the ages to come, it will be **gloriously restored**.

IX. The Church’s Role in the Ages to Come

The Body of Christ has a **heavenly position** and calling.

Ephesians 2:6–7:

“And hath raised us up together... That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us...”

Believers:

- Will be **glorified** (Colossians 3:4)
- Will **judge angels** (1 Corinthians 6:3)
- Will **reign with Christ** (2 Timothy 2:12)
- Are seated in **heavenly places** (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6)

Our role is not earthly kingdom administration but heavenly representation. While Israel inherits the earth, we inherit heavenly glory—**distinct roles in God’s eternal purpose**.

X. Why This Matters Today

1. It Reinforces Hope

The world isn't spiraling out of control—it's moving toward consummation. Knowing the future gives us **peace in the present**.

2. It Maintains Doctrinal Clarity

Mixing the Church with Israel's future leads to false dominion theology, replacement theology, and a denial of the pre-tribulational rapture.

3. It Elevates God's Faithfulness

God keeps His promises—to **Israel and to the Church**. If He could break His Word to one, He could break it to both.

4. It Fuels Evangelism

Knowing what's coming for unbelievers—judgment, wrath, eternal death—should compel us to **proclaim the gospel of grace** while there is still time.

Conclusion: History Is Headed Somewhere

We are not living in a cosmic accident. We are participants in the **unfolding plan of God**, which stretches from eternity past to eternity future.

“Ages to come” is not poetic language. It is a **doctrinal reality**, a divine timeline that includes:

- The restoration of Israel
- The reign of Christ
- The judgment of evil
- The renewal of all things

God has declared the end from the beginning. Every promise will be fulfilled. Every prophecy will come true. Every knee will bow.

Let us rejoice that we are part of His plan—**by grace, through faith**—and that our future is secure in Him.

5 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Israel and the Church: Two Distinct Programs

Theme Verses:

- *“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” – 1 Corinthians 10:32*
- *Romans 11* (entire chapter, esp. verses 1, 11, 25–29)

Introduction: Understanding the Divine Distinction

One of the most crucial distinctions in rightly dividing the Word of truth is the difference between **Israel and the Church**. Failure to make this distinction leads to spiritual confusion, false doctrine, and the widespread error known as **Replacement Theology**—the belief that the Church has replaced Israel and inherited her promises.

But Paul, under divine inspiration, draws a triple distinction in 1 Corinthians 10:32:

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”

This simple verse establishes three groups in God’s dealings:

1. **The Jews** – national Israel
2. **The Gentiles** – the nations outside Israel
3. **The Church of God** – the Body of Christ, a spiritual organism made up of both believing Jews and Gentiles

These are not interchangeable. They are distinct. God’s prophetic plan for **Israel** and His mystery plan for **the Church** must be understood separately for Scripture to remain harmonious.

This essay will:

- Contrast the origin, calling, and destiny of Israel and the Church
- Highlight their covenants and promises
- Refute Replacement Theology
- Explain how God's two programs magnify His glory

I. The Origin of Israel and the Church

A. Israel: A Nation Born of Promise

God formed the nation of Israel beginning with Abraham (Genesis 12). He gave Abraham a threefold promise:

- **A land** (Genesis 15:18)
- **A seed** (Genesis 17:7)
- **A blessing to all nations** (Genesis 12:3)

Israel's origin is national and ethnic. God called out a people **from among the nations** to be His **peculiar treasure** (Exodus 19:5–6). They were to be a kingdom of priests and a light to the Gentiles.

B. The Church: A Body Formed by the Spirit

In contrast, the Church—the **Body of Christ**—was a **mystery**, hidden in God and revealed only after Israel's rejection of their Messiah.

The Church began with the revelation given to Paul (Ephesians 3:1–6). It is not an ethnic nation but a **spiritual body**, formed by the Holy Spirit baptizing believers into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

While Israel was **formed physically** through lineage and covenant, the Church is **formed spiritually** by faith and regeneration.

II. The Calling of Israel and the Church

A. Israel's Earthly Calling

Israel's promises are tied to the **earth**:

- Land inheritance (Genesis 15)
- Kingdom reign (2 Samuel 7)
- Temple worship (Ezekiel 40–48)
- The Messiah reigning in Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:6–7)

Their calling is **national, visible, and prophetic**. God's dealings with Israel are centered on the world stage. The Jews are promised earthly blessings—rain, crops, wealth, peace—based on covenant faithfulness (Deuteronomy 28).

B. The Church's Heavenly Calling

In contrast, the Church's promises are **heavenly**:

- *"Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3)
- *"Our conversation is in heaven"* (Philippians 3:20)
- *"Seated with Christ in heavenly places"* (Ephesians 2:6)

The Church is not looking for land or a physical throne. We are looking for a **heavenly inheritance**, for a Savior to return and take us home.

III. The Prophetic Program vs. The Mystery Program

A. Israel's Program: Foretold by the Prophets

From Genesis to Malachi, Israel is at the heart of prophecy. The prophets spoke of:

- The coming Messiah (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2)
- The restoration of Israel (Isaiah 11:11–12)
- The reign of Christ in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14)
- The new covenant made with Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31–34)

Even Jesus' earthly ministry was to fulfill what was "spoken by the prophets."

Matthew 5:17:

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

B. The Church's Program: Hidden in God

In contrast, the Church was not the subject of prophecy.

Romans 16:25:

"...according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."

The Church was not known until revealed to Paul. It is a **parenthetical age**, interrupting Israel's prophetic timeline. The Old Testament never saw the **Body of Christ**, the **rapture**, or the **indwelling Holy Spirit in a universal body**.

IV. Distinct Identities and Covenants

A. Israel Has Covenants

Israel is the recipient of several **literal, unconditional covenants**:

1. **Abrahamic Covenant** – Land, seed, blessing (Genesis 12)
2. **Mosaic Covenant** – Law, conditional blessings (Exodus 20)
3. **Davidic Covenant** – Eternal throne (2 Samuel 7)
4. **New Covenant** – National forgiveness (Jeremiah 31:31)

These covenants were made **with the nation**, not with the Church.

B. The Church Has a Spiritual Position

The Church stands not on covenants made with fathers, but on a **heavenly position in Christ**:

- We are **in Him** (Ephesians 1:4)
- We are **justified by faith** (Romans 5:1)
- We are **sealed by the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 1:13)
- We are **complete in Him** (Colossians 2:10)

V. Distinct Destinies

A. Israel's Future: Earthly Kingdom Glory

Romans 11:26:

“And so all Israel shall be saved...”

The Bible predicts that after the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, God will resume His program with Israel:

- Christ will return to rescue and restore Israel
- The twelve tribes will be regathered (Matthew 19:28)
- They will inherit the land and lead the nations

Zechariah 8:23:

“We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”

B. The Church's Future: Caught Up and Glorified

The Church is not waiting for kingdom rule on earth. We are waiting for **the rapture**—our blessed hope.

Titus 2:13:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The Church will:

- Be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4)
- Be judged at the Bema for rewards (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Be glorified with Christ (Colossians 3:4)
- Reign with Him from the heavens (2 Timothy 2:12)

VI. What Replacement Theology Gets Wrong

Replacement Theology (supersessionism) teaches that the Church has replaced Israel, and all promises now apply to Christians in a spiritual sense.

This false teaching leads to:

- Denial of Israel’s future restoration
- Confusion about the Law and the Sabbath
- Mixing of kingdom and grace gospels
- Misuse of prophetic Scriptures
- Loss of assurance (since covenant curses are feared)

Paul refutes this in Romans 11.

Romans 11:1:

“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.”

Romans 11:25:

“...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

God’s program with Israel is **paused**, not canceled.

VII. How the Two Programs Harmonize God’s Plan

God has not made a mistake or changed His mind. The Church is not “Plan B.” It is a **heavenly parenthesis**, hidden from view but always in the heart of God.

After the Church is raptured:

- God will resume His prophetic timeline with Israel
- The 70th week of Daniel will be fulfilled
- The nation will be refined and restored
- Christ will reign from Jerusalem
- The promises made to Abraham, David, and the prophets will be literally fulfilled

In the **Ages to Come**, God will glorify both:

- **His earthly people** (Israel, on the earth)
- **His heavenly people** (the Church, in the heavens)

VIII. Key Contrasts Between Israel and the Church

Topic	Israel	The Church
Origin	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	Began with Paul’s gospel
Nature	Nation (ethnic)	Body (spiritual)
Covenant	Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic	No covenant; in Christ
Revelation	Known by prophecy	Revealed as mystery
Purpose	Kingdom on earth	Testimony in heaven
Gospel	Repent and believe, kingdom gospel	Gospel of grace
Hope	Land, throne, kingdom	Rapture, heaven, glorification
Identity	Physical seed	New creation
Ministry	Temple, sacrifices, Law	Spiritual gifts, grace, liberty

Topic	Israel	The Church
Relationship to Christ	Christ as King	Christ as Head

IX. Why the Distinction Matters

1. It Preserves Biblical Clarity

Blending Israel and the Church results in doctrinal chaos—especially in prophecy, salvation, and eschatology.

2. It Protects the Gospel

The grace gospel is threatened when Law and kingdom messages are mixed into Church teaching.

3. It Honors God’s Faithfulness

God’s promises to Israel were unconditional. If He could break them, He could break ours. Dispensational truth magnifies His trustworthiness.

4. It Fuels Mission

Knowing our heavenly calling helps us focus on evangelism—not cultural dominance or political conquest.

Conclusion: Two Programs, One Purpose

God has not abandoned Israel. Nor has He blurred His program for the Church. Instead, He is working two distinct plans—**earthly and heavenly, national and spiritual, prophetic and mysterious**—to bring all things under the headship of Christ.

Ephesians 1:10:

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ...”

Let us not confuse the callings. Let us not rob Israel of her hope. Let us not flatten Scripture to fit theological tradition. Instead, let us **rightly divide** the Word, glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in **our distinct role** in His eternal plan.

6 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Paul’s Apostleship: The Pattern for the Church Age

Theme Verses:

- *“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” — 1 Timothy 1:16*
- *“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” — Galatians 1:11–12*

Introduction: A Unique Man with a Unique Message

Among all the apostles in the New Testament, none is as distinctive, controversial, or vital to the Church Age as **Paul**—formerly Saul of Tarsus. He describes himself not only as a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15) but also as **the pattern** for all who believe during this age of grace (1 Timothy 1:16).

Paul’s apostleship is not simply a side-note in the unfolding narrative of Scripture—it is the centerpiece of God’s present program. His gospel, calling, and writings are distinct from the prophetic and kingdom ministries of Peter, James, John, and even Jesus’ earthly ministry to Israel. Paul was chosen, converted, and commissioned directly by the risen, glorified Christ from heaven—not on earth.

In this essay, we will explore:

- Paul’s radical conversion and divine commission
- His gospel received by revelation
- His role as the apostle to the Gentiles
- Why his apostleship is a pattern for the Church
- The consequences of rejecting this distinction

I. Paul’s Radical Conversion and Calling

Acts 9, Acts 22, and Acts 26 provide three accounts of Paul’s conversion—making it the most documented salvation story in Scripture.

He was:

- A **Pharisee of Pharisees** (Philippians 3:5)
- Zealous for the Law
- A violent persecutor of the Church
- Present at the stoning of Stephen
- Ravaging believers house-to-house (Acts 8:3)

But in a moment, **everything changed**. On the road to Damascus, Paul saw a light brighter than the sun, and heard a voice saying:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4)

It was the risen Lord Jesus Christ—not appearing in humility as in the Gospels, but in **heavenly glory**.

A. A Unique Encounter

Unlike the twelve apostles, Paul never walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. His call came **from heaven**, after Christ had ascended.

Galatians 1:15–16:

“When it pleased God... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen...”

Paul’s apostleship was:

- Independent of the twelve
- Validated by signs and wonders
- Affirmed by his suffering and endurance
- Rooted in divine revelation

II. The Gospel Paul Preached: A Direct Revelation

Paul is emphatic: **he did not receive his gospel from man**.

Galatians 1:11–12:

“The gospel which was preached of me is not after man... but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

What gospel is this?

Not the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23).

Not the gospel of circumcision (Galatians 2:7).

But the **gospel of the grace of God** (Acts 20:24), centered in:

- Christ’s death for our sins
- His burial
- His resurrection the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

This gospel:

- Requires no Law-keeping
- Includes no water baptism for salvation
- Is open to Jew and Gentile without distinction
- Offers complete justification by faith alone

It was given to Paul **as part of the mystery**, previously hidden but now revealed (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:3–6).

III. The Apostle to the Gentiles

Romans 11:13:

“I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.”

While Peter was the apostle to the circumcision (Galatians 2:8), Paul was sent to the uncircumcised—to the **Gentile world**, previously alienated from the covenants and promises (Ephesians 2:12).

A. His Ministry Was Global

Paul’s travels covered:

- Syria, Asia Minor (modern Turkey)
- Greece, Macedonia
- Italy (and likely Spain)

- Both Jews and Gentiles were evangelized

But his focus was to build the **Body of Christ**, not a Jewish kingdom.

IV. Paul’s Message and Ministry Were Different

Paul’s apostleship is not merely a change in personnel, but a change in **program**. Many differences emerge when comparing Paul’s ministry to that of the twelve:

Topic	The Twelve (Peter, etc.)	Paul
Audience	Israel, Jews primarily	Gentiles primarily (Acts 22:21)
Gospel Preached	Gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 10:5–7)	Gospel of grace (1 Cor. 15:1–4)
Baptism	Water (Acts 2:38)	Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13)
Hope Offered	Earthly kingdom	Heavenly inheritance
Relationship to Law	Law not yet abolished	Not under Law (Rom. 6:14)
Ministry Foundation	Prophecy fulfilled	Mystery revealed (Eph. 3:9)

This is why Paul calls himself a **wise masterbuilder** (1 Corinthians 3:10). He laid the foundation for the Church, the Body of Christ, based on **grace**, not Law or kingdom principles.

V. Paul as a Pattern for the Church Age

1 Timothy 1:16:

“That in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe...”

Paul’s salvation and ministry are not only historic—they are a **divine pattern** for this dispensation:

- A pattern of grace to the chief of sinners
- A pattern of apostleship outside Israel
- A pattern of direct revelation from Christ

- A pattern of suffering for the truth
- A pattern of walking by faith, not sight

He is the prototype believer in the **Body of Christ**, showing us how God saves by grace, empowers by grace, and sustains by grace.

VI. Why Paul's Apostleship Is Ignored or Rejected

Paul is arguably the most attacked figure in the New Testament today. Why?

A. His Message Undermines Legalism

Grace destroys the control of man-made systems. Paul preached:

- No tithing
- No Sabbath keeping
- No dietary laws
- No ritual purity
- No priesthood except Christ's

That unsettles religious hierarchies.

B. His Doctrine Separates Israel and the Church

Covenant theologians and spiritualizers reject Paul because he refuses to blur the lines. He keeps:

- Law and grace separate
- Israel and the Church distinct
- Prophecy and mystery clear

C. His Teachings Demand Study

Peter admitted Paul's writings were "hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16). His epistles demand careful thought and right division. Lazy readers prefer the simplicity of parables over the depth of Romans and Ephesians.

VII. The Cost of Ignoring Paul's Distinct Apostleship

When Paul's role is denied or diluted, the following errors result:

1. **Confusion about salvation** – Mixing repentance, water baptism, and works
2. **False doctrines** – Sabbath keeping, tongues, sign gifts, covenant curses
3. **Prophetic confusion** – Placing the Church in the Tribulation
4. **Loss of assurance** – Conditional security, backsliding theology
5. **Church division** – Legalism vs. liberty, Judaism disguised as Christianity

Rightly dividing the Word by recognizing Paul's unique apostleship **preserves sound doctrine**, protects the gospel of grace, and anchors the believer in truth.

VIII. The Fruit of Paul's Ministry

Paul wrote 13 epistles (14 if you include Hebrews), laying the doctrinal foundation for:

- Salvation (Romans)
- Justification (Galatians)
- Sanctification (1 Thessalonians)
- Church order (1–2 Timothy, Titus)
- Heavenly hope (Colossians, Philippians)
- Unity in Christ (Ephesians)

The Holy Spirit chose Paul to write **the doctrine for the Church Age**. Peter, James, and John never speak of:

- The rapture
- The mystery
- The Body of Christ
- The sealing of the Spirit
- Heavenly citizenship

These were revealed through **Paul alone**. He is the steward of the dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2).

IX. Paul's Authority Is Apostolic, Not Optional

Paul begins many letters with:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...”

He was not self-appointed or man-ordained. His apostleship is as authoritative as Moses, Isaiah, or Peter.

When Paul speaks, the Church should listen:

- His doctrine is our foundation
- His gospel is our salvation
- His pattern is our walk
- His hope is our future

To ignore Paul is to dishonor Christ’s revelation.

X. What Rightly Dividing Paul's Ministry Produces

1. Clarity in Salvation

Faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone—no rituals, no self-righteousness, no confusion.

2. Freedom from Legalism

We are complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). We do not need priests, feasts, or fasts.

3. Confidence in Our Position

We are seated in heavenly places. We are not trying to earn God's favor—we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).

4. Joy in Suffering

Paul shows how suffering is not a sign of disfavor but an opportunity to display grace (2 Cor. 12:9–10).

5. Stability in Doctrine

The Church built on Pauline doctrine is grounded in the truth and unshaken by fads or fear.

Conclusion: Follow Paul, as He Followed Christ

1 Corinthians 11:1:

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

This isn't arrogance—it's obedience. Paul is not our Savior, but he is our **pattern**, our example, and our doctrinal architect for the Church Age.

In this dispensation of grace, if we are to know:

- How to be saved
- How to walk
- How to serve
- How to hope

We must turn to Paul's writings—not ignoring the rest of Scripture, but interpreting them **in light of his revelation**.

Let us honor his ministry, cherish his message, and proclaim the gospel committed to his trust.

7 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – The Mystery: Truth Kept Secret Since the World Began

Theme Verses:

- *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”* — Colossians 1:26
- *“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God...”* — Ephesians 3:9

Introduction: From Hidden Truth to Revealed Glory

Among the most important yet misunderstood doctrines in all of Scripture is **“the mystery”** revealed to and through the Apostle Paul. In a world full of theological assumptions and blurred timelines, the doctrine of the mystery is the key that unlocks the clarity of **God's present dispensation of grace**.

The Bible proclaims this truth was:

- *“Hid from ages and from generations”* (Colossians 1:26)
- *“Kept secret since the world began”* (Romans 16:25)
- *“Hid in God”* (Ephesians 3:9)

The mystery is not merely a theological curiosity. It is the **cornerstone of the Church Age**. Without understanding the mystery, one will confuse Israel with the Church, misapply Scripture, and blur the lines between prophecy and grace.

This essay will define the mystery, expose false assumptions about it being known in the Old Testament, and explain its practical impact for believers today.

I. What Is “The Mystery”?

The term “mystery” in Paul’s writings refers to **truth that was previously hidden but is now revealed** through divine revelation. It does **not** mean mystical or unknowable—it means previously unrevealed.

The mystery, according to Paul, includes several key truths, all tied to the present dispensation:

- Jew and Gentile in one body (Ephesians 3:6)
- Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27)
- The gospel of grace apart from the Law (Galatians 1:11–12)
- The rapture of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:51)
- The temporary blindness of Israel (Romans 11:25)
- The formation of a new man (Ephesians 2:15)

These truths were **never revealed in the Old Testament** or in Christ’s earthly ministry. They are not developments of prophecy—they are **part of a new program**, now made manifest to and through Paul.

II. The Mystery Was Not Known Before Paul

Paul states it plainly in Romans 16:25:

“According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”

If something was *kept secret since the world began*, then it could not have been:

- Spoken by the prophets
- Found in the Old Testament
- Known to Israel
- Included in Christ’s earthly teachings

This clearly **refutes Covenant Theology** and **progressive dispensationalism**, both of which claim the Church was foreseen or spiritually foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

Paul, under the Holy Spirit, insists:

- The mystery was **not known** (Ephesians 3:5)
- The mystery was **hidden in God** (Ephesians 3:9)
- The mystery was **revealed first to him** (Colossians 1:25–27)

III. The Mystery Is the One New Man: Jew and Gentile in One Body

Ephesians 2:15:

“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity... for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.”

Prior to the mystery, God's dealings were almost exclusively with **Israel**, the circumcision. Gentiles were:

- Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel
- Strangers from the covenants of promise
- Without hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12)

The mystery reveals a new truth: **Jew and Gentile are now made one in Christ**, forming the **Body of Christ**, where there is:

- No Jew or Gentile (Galatians 3:28)
- No circumcision or uncircumcision (Colossians 3:11)
- No wall of partition (Ephesians 2:14)

This was not seen in Isaiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel. It was hidden until revealed to Paul. No Old Testament prophet ever foresaw a **joint body** where national distinctions are dissolved in Christ.

IV. The Mystery Contrasted with Prophecy

A. Prophecy (Known Since the World Began)

Luke 1:70:

“As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.”

Prophecy concerns:

- God’s program with Israel
- Earthly kingdom reign of the Messiah
- Visible signs and wonders
- The temple and priesthood
- Judgment of nations
- Christ reigning in Jerusalem

B. The Mystery (Kept Secret Since the World Began)

Romans 16:25:

“The revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”

The mystery concerns:

- The Body of Christ
- A spiritual people, not a nation
- A heavenly inheritance
- Salvation by grace through faith
- No distinction between Jew and Gentile
- The rapture and glorification of the Church

These two systems cannot be harmonized without **right division**. Blending prophecy and mystery leads to theological confusion—mixing law and grace, earthly and heavenly, kingdom and body.

V. Christ in You: The Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:27:

“To whom God would make known... this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Under the mystery:

- Christ does not just reign **over** believers (as in the kingdom)
- He dwells **in** believers by His Spirit

This was unheard of in the Old Testament. The Spirit came **upon** men temporarily. Under grace, Christ **indwells** every believer permanently (Ephesians 1:13).

The mystery reveals that:

- We are **in Christ** positionally (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Christ is **in us** practically (Galatians 2:20)
- Our hope is not in this world, but in **future glorification** (Romans 8:18)

VI. The Rapture: Another Mystery Revealed

1 Corinthians 15:51:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

The rapture of the Church was **not taught by Jesus during His earthly ministry**, nor was it mentioned in Old Testament prophecy. It was revealed **only to Paul** as part of the mystery.

Key points:

- It is a **“mystery” event**, not prophetic
- It is **imminent**—not tied to signs
- It involves the **catching away** of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

- It precedes the **Day of the Lord** and the Tribulation

Israel awaits the coming of the King to set up His kingdom. The Church awaits the **coming of the Bridegroom** to take His bride home. Two different comings, for two different programs.

VII. The Fellowship of the Mystery

Ephesians 3:9:

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery...”

The mystery is not only a doctrine to be believed—it is a **fellowship** to be entered.

This includes:

- Unity in the Body (Ephesians 4:3–6)
- Liberty from the Law (Romans 6:14)
- Ministry under grace, not performance (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- Fruit-bearing through the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)

Paul labored to **make all men see** the fellowship of this mystery—not just salvation, but the full riches of life in Christ. Sadly, many believers today live in the shadows of tradition and Old Covenant thinking because they have never been taught the fullness of Paul’s revelation.

VIII. Dangers of Rejecting the Mystery

When the doctrine of the mystery is ignored or rejected:

- The Church is seen as the **new Israel**
- Law-keeping reenters grace
- Water baptism, tongues, signs, and Sabbaths are revived
- Confusion about end times escalates
- Assurance is lost—salvation becomes conditional

The denial of the mystery is not a small doctrinal issue—it strikes at the heart of the gospel of grace.

Galatians 1:8:

“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel... let him be accursed.”

Paul’s gospel was part of the mystery. To substitute it with the gospel of the kingdom or the Law is to preach another gospel.

IX. The Mystery Elevates Grace and Glorifies Christ

The mystery is not about hiding truth—it is about **revealing grace**.

It glorifies Christ by:

- Presenting Him as Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18)
- Revealing His full accomplishment at the cross (Ephesians 2:13–18)
- Uniting all things in Him (Ephesians 1:10)
- Displaying His wisdom to principalities and powers (Ephesians 3:10)

The mystery magnifies God’s mercy, patience, and love in creating **a new people**, not by works, lineage, or Law—but by **faith in Christ alone**.

X. Summary: Mystery vs. Prophecy

Category	Prophecy	The Mystery
Revealed	Since the world began (Luke 1:70)	Kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25)
Focus	Israel, nations, kingdom	The Body of Christ
Revelation	Through prophets	Through Paul
Time	Earthly ages, millennial kingdom	Present Church Age
Blessings	Earthly, physical	Heavenly, spiritual
Hope	Kingdom on earth	Rapture and heavenly inheritance
Ministry	Law, priesthood, temple	Grace, liberty, indwelling Spirit

Conclusion: Let Us Not Be Ignorant of the Mystery

Romans 11:25:

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery...”

Sadly, Paul’s warning has not been heeded by much of Christendom. The mystery has been buried under centuries of tradition, creeds, and theological systems that obscure the simplicity and liberty found in the grace of God.

But now is the time to **recover it**, rejoice in it, and proclaim it.

Let us embrace:

- The **gospel of grace**
- The **unity of the Body**
- The **hope of glory**
- The **Christ who dwells in us**

And let us make all men see the fellowship of the mystery—for in it is the key to understanding the Church, salvation, and God’s eternal purpose in Christ Jesus.

8 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Law vs. Grace: Different Dispensations, Different Administrations

Theme Verses:

- *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”* — Romans 6:14
- *“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ...”* — Galatians 3:23–24

Introduction: Rightly Dividing Two Divine Systems

The Word of God presents two primary administrations by which God has governed human behavior and revealed His righteousness: **Law** and **Grace**. These two are not at odds with each other in purpose, but they are **distinct in their operation, requirements, and results**.

Dispensational understanding makes it clear that **the Law and Grace belong to different administrations**. When one fails to rightly divide these systems, confusion arises in doctrines of salvation, sanctification, Christian liberty, and the believer's identity.

Paul, writing under divine inspiration, teaches emphatically:

"Ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14)

This essay will explore:

- The purpose and limitations of the Mosaic Law
- The distinct nature of the dispensation of grace
- How to rightly understand what carries over and what has passed away
- How this understanding transforms Christian life and doctrine

I. What Is the Mosaic Law?

The Mosaic Law refers to the system of commandments, ordinances, and judgments given by God to **Israel** through Moses on Mount Sinai. It consisted of:

- The **moral law** (e.g., Ten Commandments)
- The **ceremonial law** (temple rituals, sacrifices)
- The **civil law** (national governance)

Exodus 24:3 tells us the people entered into a covenant with God:

"All the words which the Lord hath said will we do."

The Law was not given to Gentiles or to the Church. It was given to **Israel alone** (Deuteronomy 5:1–3) as part of their covenant relationship with God.

II. The Purpose of the Law

Paul reveals why God gave the Law:

A. To Reveal Sin

Romans 3:20:

“By the law is the knowledge of sin.”

The Law showed God’s holy standard and exposed man’s inability to meet it.

B. To Condemn the Sinner

The Law was never a ladder to heaven. It was a mirror to expose the filth of sin.

Romans 7:10:

“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”

C. To Guard Israel Until Christ Came

Galatians 3:23:

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law...”

The Law preserved Israel and prepared them for the arrival of their Messiah.

D. To Lead to Christ

Galatians 3:24:

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

The Law taught, convicted, and pointed to the One who would fulfill it completely.

III. The Weakness and Limitations of the Law

Romans 8:3:

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh...”

The Law is holy and just, but it could not:

- Justify the sinner (Galatians 2:16)
- Give life (Galatians 3:21)
- Empower obedience (Romans 7:15–24)
- Perfect the conscience (Hebrews 10:1–4)

The Law demanded righteousness but gave no power to produce it.

IV. Grace: The New Administration

Paul introduces a new dispensation: **the dispensation of the grace of God** (Ephesians 3:2). In this system:

- Righteousness is **imputed by faith** (Romans 4:5)
- The believer is **sealed with the Spirit** (Ephesians 1:13)
- Sanctification comes through **walking in the Spirit**, not striving in the flesh (Galatians 5:16)

Under grace:

“Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”
(Romans 6:14)

V. Contrasting Law and Grace

Topic	Under the Law	Under Grace
Time	Old Covenant, Israel	Present Age, Church
Basis	Works and obedience	Faith and trust in Christ
Salvation	Conditional, never fully attained	Freely given, eternally secured
Righteousness	Demanded by the Law	Imputed through Christ
Power	External regulation	Internal transformation by the Spirit
Relationship to God	Through the temple and priesthood	Direct access through Christ
Motivation	Fear of punishment	Love, gratitude, and liberty

VI. Are We Free to Sin Under Grace?

Romans 6:15:

“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”

Grace is not a license to sin—it’s the power to live righteously. Under the Law, sin dominated. Under grace:

- We are **new creatures** (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- We have a **new nature** (Romans 6:6–7)
- We are **dead to sin and alive to God** (Romans 6:11)

The Spirit of God, not tablets of stone, now writes God’s will on our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

VII. The Law’s Role Today: What Is Profitable, What Has Passed

Paul says:

“All scripture is profitable...” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Even though we are not under the Law, the Law is still profitable for:

- **Learning** about God’s holiness
- **Seeing** the severity of sin
- **Understanding** the shadows of Christ

Romans 15:4:

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...”

However, Paul warns against:

- Teaching the Law as binding for believers (1 Timothy 1:7)
- Returning to the weak and beggarly elements (Galatians 4:9)
- Mixing Law and grace, which frustrates the gospel (Galatians 2:21)

VIII. Rightly Dividing What Has Been Fulfilled

The Law is fulfilled in Christ:

- He fulfilled the moral Law (Matthew 5:17)
- He ended the ceremonial Law (Hebrews 10:1–14)

- He removed the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13)

Colossians 2:14:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us... and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

Believers are no longer under:

- Animal sacrifices
- Dietary restrictions
- Sabbath laws
- Tithing as a command

Instead, we are under the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2)—a law of love, led by the Spirit.

IX. Dangers of Mixing Law and Grace

A. Legalism

Adding works to grace leads to bondage. Paul called this “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6–9).

B. Insecurity

Law-keeping leads to fear and self-condemnation. Grace gives **peace and assurance**.

C. Confusion in Christian Living

Under Law, we focus on **doing** to be accepted. Under grace, we live from a position of **being accepted** in Christ (Ephesians 1:6).

X. Practical Liberty Under Grace

Grace liberates, but it also directs. It teaches us to:

- Deny ungodliness (Titus 2:11–12)
- Walk in love (Ephesians 5:2)
- Serve others (Galatians 5:13)

Liberty is not lawlessness. It’s the Spirit-led life that produces:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Longsuffering
- Gentleness
- Goodness
- Faith
- Meekness
- Temperance (Galatians 5:22–23)

Against such there is no law!

XI. Paul’s Consistent Emphasis on Grace

Paul’s epistles open and close with **grace**:

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father...” (Romans 1:7)

His life was shaped by it:

“By the grace of God I am what I am...” (1 Corinthians 15:10)

His ministry proclaimed it:

“The ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24)

Grace is not a side-note. It is **the ruling principle** of this dispensation.

XII. Will God Use the Law Again?

Yes—but not in the Church Age.

After the rapture, God resumes His prophetic dealings with Israel:

- The temple will be rebuilt (Matthew 24:15)
- Sacrifices will resume (Daniel 9:27)

- The Law will again be prominent in Jewish life

But during this **mystery age**, the Church is not under Law. We are under **grace**, a unique period where God magnifies His mercy apart from the Law system.

Conclusion: Law and Grace Cannot Be Mixed

Romans 11:6:

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.”

God has used both Law and Grace to reveal His character—but He never operates them simultaneously.

Under Law: do and live.

Under Grace: live and do.

Let us rejoice that:

- The Law pointed us to Christ
- Grace places us in Christ
- The Spirit conforms us to Christ

Rightly dividing Law and Grace brings clarity, freedom, and assurance. Let us walk worthy—not under fear, but in the power of His glorious grace.

9 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – The Rapture vs. The Second Coming: Two Future Events

Theme Verses:

- *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout... and the dead in Christ shall rise first...”* — 1 Thessalonians 4:16
- *“Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations... and his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...”* — Zechariah 14:3–4

Introduction: A Vital Distinction in Bible Prophecy

One of the most misunderstood and neglected distinctions in biblical eschatology is that between the **rapture of the Church** and the **Second Coming of Christ to establish His kingdom**. The Word of God teaches these are **two separate events**, separated not only by function but also by timing, audience, and purpose.

The confusion of these two events has led to:

- False date-setting
- Church-age believers fearing the wrath of the Tribulation
- Replacement theology infecting end-time teaching
- Believers being robbed of their **blessed hope**

To rightly divide the Word of truth is to understand that **Jesus is coming twice**—once **for** His Church (the rapture), and once **with** His Church (the Second Coming).

This essay will contrast these two events in detail, using Scripture to show their differences, proper timing, and doctrinal implications.

I. What Is the Rapture?

The word “rapture” does not appear in the English Bible, but it comes from the Latin *rapturo*, meaning *to be caught up*, and is based on **1 Thessalonians 4:17**:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...”

A. Key Features of the Rapture:

- Christ **comes in the air**
- Believers are **caught up** (Greek: *harpazō*)
- The **dead in Christ** rise first
- The **living are changed** and meet the Lord
- It is **imminent** (can happen at any time)
- It is a **mystery** revealed through Paul (1 Corinthians 15:51)

The rapture is the event that concludes the dispensation of grace and removes the Body of Christ from earth **before** God resumes His prophetic program with Israel.

II. What Is the Second Coming?

The Second Coming refers to the visible, physical, and glorious return of Jesus Christ **to the earth**, as foretold by the prophets and reaffirmed by Jesus Himself.

Zechariah 14:4:

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...”

Revelation 19:11–16 describes Christ returning on a white horse with the armies of heaven, judging and making war.

A. Key Features of the Second Coming:

- Christ **returns to the earth**
- He descends to the **Mount of Olives**
- He judges the nations (Matthew 25:31–46)
- He delivers Israel (Zechariah 12:10)
- He destroys the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:8)
- He establishes the **millennial kingdom**

III. Differences Between the Two Events

Feature	The Rapture	The Second Coming
Audience	The Church (Body of Christ)	Israel and the nations
Location	Christ comes in the air	Christ returns to the earth
Timing	Before the Tribulation (pre-trib)	After the Tribulation
Revelation	A mystery (1 Cor. 15:51)	Prophesied throughout the Old Testament
Visibility	Private (believers only)	Public and visible to all (Rev. 1:7)
Purpose	Rescue the Church	Judge and reign over the earth

Feature	The Rapture	The Second Coming
Result	Church is taken to heaven	Christ sets up His earthly kingdom
Associated Judgment	Judgment Seat of Christ (believers)	Sheep and goat judgment (nations)
Participants	Only believers	All people on earth

These distinctions are not arbitrary—they are biblical, and failure to uphold them results in **doctrinal chaos**.

IV. The Rapture Is a Mystery Revealed to Paul

1 Corinthians 15:51:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

The rapture is not found in Old Testament prophecy because the Church itself was a **mystery hidden in God** (Ephesians 3:9). It was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul, who called it:

- “My gospel” (Romans 2:16)
- “The blessed hope” (Titus 2:13)
- “The day of Christ” (Philippians 1:6,10)

Since Israel and the Church are distinct, the coming of Christ **for His Church** must be distinct from His return **to Israel**.

V. The Second Coming Is the Subject of Prophecy

Unlike the rapture, the Second Coming is the **main theme** of much of Old Testament prophecy. It is tied to:

- The Day of the Lord (Joel 2)
- The Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16)
- The restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 37–39)
- The visible return of Messiah (Zechariah 14:4)

- The judgment of the nations (Matthew 25)

Jesus described His return in Matthew 24:

“Immediately after the tribulation... then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.”
(v.29–30)

This coming is **after the Tribulation**, and it fulfills Israel’s prophetic expectations.

VI. Why the Rapture Precedes the Tribulation

A. The Church Is Not Appointed to Wrath

1 Thessalonians 5:9:

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation...”

Revelation 6–19 describes the wrath of God poured out on the earth. Since the Church has been **justified and reconciled**, she cannot be the object of that wrath.

B. The Church Is Not in Daniel’s 70th Week

The Tribulation is the **seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy** (Daniel 9:24–27), concerning **“thy people and thy holy city”**—Israel and Jerusalem. The Church was not present during the first 69 weeks and will not be present for the final one.

C. The Doctrine of Imminency

The rapture is **imminent**—it can happen at any moment. If the Church were to go through the Tribulation, we’d be watching for the Antichrist, not Christ.

VII. Jesus Comes For and Then With His Church

1 Thessalonians 4:17:

“...caught up... to meet the Lord in the air...”

Jude 14:

“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.”

The order is clear:

1. Christ comes **for His saints** at the rapture

2. Christ comes **with His saints** at the Second Coming

We are caught up to be with Him **before** He pours out judgment, and we return **with Him** when He reigns in power.

VIII. What Happens Between the Two Events?

After the rapture and before the Second Coming, several events unfold:

A. In Heaven:

- **Judgment Seat of Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:10) – where believers are rewarded
- **Marriage of the Lamb** (Revelation 19:7–9)

B. On Earth:

- **Rise of Antichrist** (2 Thessalonians 2)
- **Tribulation period** (Revelation 6–19)
- **Sealing of 144,000 Jews** (Revelation 7)
- **Two witnesses** (Revelation 11)
- **Abomination of desolation** (Matthew 24:15)
- **The nations gather for war**

IX. Practical Impact of This Distinction

A. Clarity in Bible Prophecy

Understanding this distinction keeps prophecy in proper order. It separates mystery from prophecy and prevents doctrinal error.

B. Comfort for the Church

1 Thessalonians 4:18:

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

We are not destined for wrath. Our hope is in **seeing our Savior**, not surviving judgment.

C. Urgency in Evangelism

Knowing that the Church will be removed before judgment motivates us to share the gospel while there is still time.

X. Refuting Common Errors

A. Error: The Rapture and Second Coming Are the Same

Refutation: The timing, location, audience, and results are completely different. They must be divided.

B. Error: The Church goes through the Tribulation

Refutation: This confuses Israel with the Church and undermines the gospel of peace and grace.

C. Error: The rapture is not in the Bible

Refutation: The word “rapture” is Latin for *caught up*, clearly stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Conclusion: Let Us Hold Fast the Blessed Hope

Titus 2:13:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The rapture is not merely a doctrine—it is **our hope**, our comfort, and our motivation.

Christ is coming again:

- Once **for His Church** in love
- Then **to the world** in judgment

Let us not confuse these two events. Let us proclaim the gospel of grace, comfort one another with the promise of the rapture, and rejoice in the coming kingdom of Christ.

Until then, we say with joy:

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20)

10 of 10: Basic Dispensational Understanding – Standing and State: Your Position in the Dispensation of Grace

Theme Verses:

- *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” — Colossians 2:10*
- *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...” — Romans 5:1–2*

Introduction: The Two Sides of the Christian Life

One of the most freeing and foundational truths a believer can learn is the difference between their **standing** and their **state**. In this final entry in our dispensational series, we focus on the believer’s **position in Christ** and how that shapes our identity, walk, and security.

In the dispensation of grace, understanding this distinction brings clarity to:

- Eternal security
- Assurance of salvation
- Growth without guilt
- Service without fear
- Rest instead of striving

While the world is busy striving for worth and religious systems are working to maintain salvation, the believer in Christ is called to **stand in grace**—not perform to stay in favor.

This essay explores what it means to have a perfect standing in Christ, a fluctuating state in the flesh, and how to live victoriously by grace in this present age.

I. Definitions: Standing and State

A. Standing (Position)

- Who you are **in Christ**
- Your legal status before God

- Unchanging, eternal, secure
- Based on grace, not works

B. State (Condition)

- Your daily experience
- Your walk, emotions, behavior
- Fluctuates with obedience and growth
- Subject to failure, renewal, correction

Just as a child never ceases to be a child even when disobedient, so the believer's standing **never changes** despite an imperfect state.

II. Our Standing: Complete in Christ

Colossians 2:10:

“And ye are complete in him...”

In Christ, you are:

- Forgiven (Ephesians 1:7)
- Justified (Romans 5:1)
- Sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- Accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)
- Seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6)
- Sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)
- A new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17)

This standing is:

- Not earned
- Not maintained by works
- Not lost by failure

It was secured **at the moment of salvation** and is rooted in the finished work of Christ.

III. Our State: Growing in Grace

Unlike standing, your **state** changes from day to day:

- You may feel weak, but you're still righteous
- You may sin, but you're still justified
- You may fall, but you're still a child of God

Paul often opened his epistles by **affirming standing**, then moved into **correcting state**.

Examples:

- To the Corinthians (carnal, divided): *“Sanctified in Christ Jesus”* (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- To the Galatians (legalistic): *“Grace to you and peace...”* (Galatians 1:3)
- To the Ephesians (mature): *“Blessed with all spiritual blessings...”* (Ephesians 1:3)

This order matters: **We don't live for acceptance—we live from it.**

IV. Justified by Faith: The Foundation of Peace

Romans 5:1:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God...”

Justification is not a process—it is a **declaration**. It happens once, by grace, through faith, apart from works (Titus 3:5).

This is your standing:

- You're at peace with God
- The war is over
- There's no more condemnation (Romans 8:1)
- You've been reconciled

That peace is not a feeling—it is a **fact**. Whether you feel worthy or not, you stand before God **as righteous as Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

V. Access into Grace: The Ground Where We Stand

Romans 5:2:

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...”

Grace is not just the doorway to salvation—it is the **ground we stand on daily**.

We stand in grace when we:

- Fall but get back up (Proverbs 24:16)
- Forgive ourselves and others (Ephesians 4:32)
- Rest instead of strive (Hebrews 4:10)
- Abide instead of perform (John 15:5)

Grace fuels growth, not guilt. It empowers, not enslaves.

VI. Eternal Security: The Unshakable Standing

Standing in Christ means you are:

- **In the body** (1 Corinthians 12:13)
- **Sealed unto the day of redemption** (Ephesians 4:30)
- **Kept by the power of God** (1 Peter 1:5)
- **Predestined to be conformed** (Romans 8:29)

Salvation is not a probation—it is a **position**. You cannot lose what you didn't earn. If salvation could be lost, it would already be gone.

Jesus said:

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:28)

VII. Living the Christian Life: Grace Over Guilt

A. Law-Based Living

- Focuses on performance
- Measures closeness to God by behavior
- Results in fear, burnout, or pride

B. Grace-Based Living

- Focuses on Christ's finished work
- Rests in identity, not activity
- Leads to humility, joy, and love

Paul urges:

“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)

The Spirit doesn't produce perfection overnight—but He does produce fruit (Galatians 5:22–23).

VIII. Your Identity in the Dispensation of Grace

In this present dispensation, the believer has:

- A **heavenly position** (Ephesians 1:3)
- A **spiritual inheritance** (Colossians 1:12)
- A **calling to be an ambassador** (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- A **daily walk by faith** (2 Corinthians 5:7)

The believer is not:

- Under Law
- Awaiting wrath
- Working to stay saved

Instead, we are:

- Free from the curse of the Law
- Waiting for the rapture
- Walking in the Spirit

IX. Practical Application: Standing Transforms State

A. Temptation

- Stand: “I am dead to sin”
- State: I flee, resist, and walk in the Spirit

B. Failure

- Stand: “I am still accepted”
- State: I repent, renew, and grow

C. Suffering

- Stand: “I have peace with God”
- State: I trust, endure, and rejoice in hope

D. Service

- Stand: “I’m complete in Christ”
- State: I serve not for reward, but from love

Understanding your standing empowers your state. You are not climbing a ladder to God—you are **already seated with Him in heavenly places.**

X. What If You Don't Feel Saved?

Feelings are not facts.

1 John 3:20:

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart...”

Stand on Scripture, not emotion:

- You are **complete in Him**
- You have **peace with God**
- You are **sealed by the Spirit**
- You are **accepted in the Beloved**

Your feelings may fluctuate. God's Word does not.

XI. How the Enemy Attacks Your Standing

Satan knows he cannot change your standing, so he attacks your perception of it.

His tactics:

- Condemnation: “You’re too messed up.”
- Confusion: “Maybe you’re not really saved.”
- Comparison: “Look how spiritual they are.”
- Distraction: “Focus on doing, not being.”

Answer every lie with truth:

“It is written...” (Matthew 4:4)

We fight from victory, not for it.

XII. The Future of Our Standing: Glorification

Romans 8:30:

“Whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Your standing will one day become your full **state**:

- No more sin (1 John 3:2)
- No more death (1 Corinthians 15:54)
- No more separation (Romans 8:39)
- You will be like Him (Philippians 3:21)

That is not a maybe—it’s a guarantee. It is **your destiny**, sealed in grace.

Conclusion: Stand Fast in Grace

Galatians 5:1:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free...”

The believer's standing in Christ is perfect, unchanging, and eternal. Your state may rise and fall, but your position is secure. You are:

- Justified

- Sanctified
- Accepted
- Complete
- Kept
- Loved

And nothing can change that.

So let your standing influence your state. Let your position drive your practice. Let your identity empower your walk. This is the heartbeat of grace in this dispensation.

You are not trying to be someone—you **are someone** in Christ.

Conclusion to the Basic Dispensational Understanding Series

The Power of a Rightly Divided Bible

You've reached the end of this 10-part series—but really, this is just the beginning.

Dispensational understanding is not a side doctrine. It is the **framework** through which the entire Bible begins to make sense. Like putting on spiritual lenses, it allows you to see **what God said, to whom He said it, and when He said it**—without twisting Scripture, forcing contradictions, or blending covenants that God kept separate.

Throughout this series, you've learned that:

- God **spoke in times past** to Israel through the Law and the prophets
- He **now speaks** through His Son and through Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles
- He will **yet speak again** when Christ returns in glory to fulfill His promises to Israel

You've seen the clear distinction between:

- Law and Grace
- Israel and the Church
- Prophecy and Mystery
- Earthly promises and heavenly blessings
- The Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Grace of God

And above all, you've seen the importance of **rightly dividing the Word of truth** (2 Timothy 2:15)—not so you can boast in doctrine, but so you can **stand firm in grace**, walk in assurance, and minister the gospel with clarity.

When you don't divide the Bible properly:

- You confuse your identity
- You lose your liberty
- You risk preaching another gospel
- And you rob yourself of the riches of what Christ has freely given you

But when you embrace the truth of this present dispensation—**the dispensation of the grace of God** (Ephesians 3:2)—you'll rest in your standing, rejoice in your position, and live with confidence in the hope that is to come.

This isn't about being a theological expert. It's about **knowing who you are in Christ**—where you stand, what you've been given, and what's ahead.

So don't stop here.

Keep studying. Keep dividing. Keep proclaiming. Because when you rightly divide the Word, you don't divide Christ—you exalt Him.

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Colossians 1:27)

This is your place.

This is your calling.

This is your message.

You are complete in Him. Now go walk in that truth.