

Interpreting the Bible

- I.** A systematic approach to a literal interpretation of the Bible results in a dispensational practice.
1. The term for 'dispensation' is used nine times in the New Testament.
 2. The term references more than one period of time in God's plan and thusly establishes a pattern of God changing how He deals with mankind.
 3. The Bible's revelation about God is progressive (*i.e.*, a snowball effect).
 4. Four of the seven dispensations are given names.
 - 1) Promise (Acts 7:17).
 - 2) Law (Josh. 8:34).
 - 3) Grace (Eph. 3:2).
 - 4) Fulness of the Times, Kingdom, Millennium (Eph. 1:10).
 - 5) This pattern allows us to induce descriptive names for Innocence, Conscience, and Human Government.
- II.** A simple example to use showing how God changes the dietary rules for some, or all of mankind: dispensation. This implies other changes in God's requirements.
1. Adam to Noah—vegetarian (Gen. 2:9, 16).
 2. Noah to Moses—eat anything, except blood (Gen. 9:3-4).
 3. Moses to Pentecost—highly restricted diet includes some meats, excludes pork, shell fish *etc.* (Lev. 11:1-47 *cf.* Gal. 5:3).
 4. Pentecost to the Rapture—eat anything you can be thankful for (1 Tim. 3:3-4)
 5. During the Tribulation, the 70th 'week' of Daniel, the Nation Israel is back under the Law's restrictions described above in #3.
 6. Eternity—no diet needed (Rev. 21:1).

How to use the Old Testament

The Old Testament has great value for the Christian. The correct position of the New Testament believer regarding the Old Testament can be summarized:

- 1) We understand the Old Testament to be the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; Jn.20:9 *cf.* Ps. 16:10).
- 2) We use the Old Testament to understand more about Who and What God is (*e.g.*, Ps. 8:1; 104:1-2; Is. 57:15).
- 3) We apply the Old Testament exactly how the New Testament instructs us to use it for admonition—what not to do, and for comfort that God takes care of His people (1 Cor. 10:6, 11; Rom. 15:4 *cf.* Acts 15:14).
- 4) The truth of Christ’s redemptive work for the church is not in the Old Testament; therefore, the current Gospel for salvation is not in the Old Testament (1 Pet. 1:20).
- 5) The Dispensation of Grace is not seen between the Suffering and the Glory in the Old Testament (1 Pet. 1:10-12 *cf.* Ps. 22; Is. 52:13-15; Eph. 3:1-9) “*The dispensation consisting of a quality of a mystery*”, *i.e.*, a truth not revealed in the Old Testament but now is made plain in the New Testament (Rom. 16:25).

Elements of a consistent hermeneutic:

1. **Literal**—what the author(s) are communicating.
 - 1) Understanding figurative speech is literal.
 - 2) If the direct meaning does not make sense, it is figurative: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole.
2. **Historical**—what the word/term would mean to the reader at that time (1 Cor. 6:20).
3. **Grammatical**—what the original text actually says (Acts 8:37).
4. **Contextual**
 - 1) Words derive their meaning by context (Phil. 2:12 *cf.* 15).
 - 2) Taken out of context you can get hung! (Jn. 13:27; Mt. 27:5; Lu. 10:37).
5. **Cannot contradict** with any other Scripture (Is. 66:3 *cf.* 1 Tim. 4:4).