

## Chapter Four

# God's Answers to Impossible Situations

*One God, one Savior, three Dispensations, one key to understanding biblical history.*

Before the foundation of the world, God thought about how man should be made in order for him to love God. In Chapter Three, I talked about what God took into consideration. But there is much more to how He would get man to love Him forever.

\* God gave the **maximum incentives** of Heaven and Hell.

\* God provided **salvation in general** which incorporated answers to the three problems of persuading man to love God forever. That is, overcoming physical death, overcoming spiritual death, and loving God forever. The salvation plan is complicated by the fact that God deals with mankind differently in three different periods of time (dispensations). I will explain those as I go.

\* God gave Himself, **Jesus Christ, the first, center and last**, to demonstrate His awesome love and justice for us.

### Maximum Incentives

Since God wanted a people to love Him forever, and the project was of the highest importance, and choice was involved, He designed the maximum reward, Heaven; and the maximum punishment, Hell. The positive cannot be further opposite from the negative.

Heaven is the maximum *reward* that anyone can imagine. Pleasure, peace, non fatiguing work, everlasting life to the fullest. Sports, parties and joy abound forever.

We will be able to talk face to face with

Christ about all the questions we have about this life. Why this happened or that happened. God made Heaven to provide the maximum incentive possible to persuade men to draw near to Him and to go there.

Hell is the maximum *punishment* that anyone can imagine. Pain, strife, arguments and fighting are all that people experience. There are probably periods of calm, which deepens the contrast of pain and suffering, and causes dread of the next session of agony. God makes Hell to be the maximum incentive possible, *to not go there!*

Some day, at the end of God's persuasive effort, He will take to Heaven those people who have chosen to love Him.

And one thousand years later, those who do not want His love and grace, will be separated to outer darkness forever (Matt. 22:13). Perhaps outer darkness is a Black Hole, which has a gravity so strong that light cannot escape. There, people will have an eternity to contemplate their folly.

People who not only ignore His love and grace but despise God to the degree of working against Him, will get launched into the sun, the lake of fire, forever (II Peter 3:7).

If you think about it, Heaven and Hell don't make much sense except in the context of incentives. If we really have no choice to go one place or the other, then why should they be drastically different? Since God is love, couldn't He just put ones He didn't want to keep, off to them-

selves but not necessarily into a Hell. That would be more loving on His part, if He really makes the decision where everyone will go. Since He did make Heaven and Hell drastically different, deliciously good and horribly evil, lends credibility to the idea that there really is choice; and hence the *need* for drastic incentives. This evidence speaks against Calvinism. Because if people are chosen by God to Heaven, then what point is there to incentives?

This plan involving Hell may sound harsh but most people agree; even if they don't realize it. Do you want others around you causing trouble? It dampens your joy. Anger and strife make you feel bad. That's why God wants to avoid trouble and strife. They make Him feel bad too.

God simply wants people to accept Him and appreciate Him for who He really is; the Creator, Manager, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He owns the universe just like a man owns *his* property. And, He loves what He has made. Further, since He is the owner, He is also the central figure of all history. I say owner, not from a pride standpoint, but that it takes the sacrifice of God to redeem the world. There is no one else besides God, angels and man. Neither angels nor man is worthy to redeem the world only the God/Man, Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:9).

## Salvation In General

As you will remember in Chapter Three, Adam and Eve faced three "bigger" problems as they were driven from the Garden: (1) physical death, (2) separation from God, (3) and, for men living after Adam and Eve, they still are not able to love God. These three "bigger" problems for man, also turn out to be problems for God, which only He can solve. Hence the need for a salvation plan.

The general plan of salvation takes into consideration *how* God will solve those three "bigger" problems at different times in history. I am going to outline three fundamental ways God and man interact over all of Bible history. Over time, men have recognized that God has dealt with mankind differently in different periods of

history; theologians have termed these periods, dispensations.

This means I can discuss physical death by itself because it applies the same to all three dispensations. However, I must relate overcoming spiritual death and loving God within each separate dispensation; because the methods are different in each dispensation.

## Overcoming Physical Death

Physical death is the separation of the soul and accompanying spirit from the body. Apparently, at death, the soul and spirit are between bodies; meaning the soul and spirit has left the old body but God has not yet provided a new body. So the presumption is there is some middle state of existence. Since I don't know see that situation addressed in scripture, I will leave the situation at that.

God defeats the problem of physical death by rapture<sup>1</sup> if the person is alive, or by resurrection<sup>2</sup> if already dead. If alive, and a person is taken physically to Heaven, then that person will not experience physical death ever. He has bypassed that experience. If dead, resurrection allows life to come back into a new body. The Bible has noted the instances of rapture and resurrection.

The rapture of Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam. - Gen. 5:24.

The rapture of Elijah. - II Kings 2:11-14.

The resurrection of Jesus - Luke 24:1-14

The pre tribulation rapture and resurrection of the church - I Thess. 4:13-18.

The posttribulation rapture and resurrection of the church - Rev. 14:14-16

Physical death was imposed by God, in His infinite wisdom, to protect the lives of people who love Him. It prevents the otherwise overwhelm-

---

1. Rapture is the physical taking up of a live person from Earth to Heaven.

2. Resurrection is the bringing a dead person back to life with a new body.

ing preponderance of “evil,” from squashing any pittance of love and goodness which might appear in the world. I mentioned that in Chapter Three.

God’s authorization for rapture or resurrection of the righteous, is their faith in the atoning death of Jesus the Christ (Rom. 5:15-19). The unrighteous people will be resurrected long enough to stand at the White Throne judgement; but after that, they will face a second death (Rev. 20:15-20; 21:8). This is how God overcomes physical death.

### Three Dispensations

Bible history can be divided into three periods of 2000 years each plus a 1000 year Millennium rest. Each period illustrates one of three fundamental ways that God and man can relate.

Any interaction between God and man, in any age, is either the “work”<sup>3</sup> of God or the “work” of man. Examples of “work” are; God creates, and man sacrifices a burnt offering.

And, any work done by God or man will be at the direction of God or man. Either He directs or we direct, what work will be done by either party. In other words, God’s “will” or man’s “will” guides the work of God or man. Examples of “will” are; God gives the ten commandments. Man says, I will go fishing today, I will not go to church.

Given those conditions, God and man can interact in only four possible ways. This means, for the purpose of persuading man, the interaction is either: (1) Man’s will - Man’s work; (2) Man’s will - God’s work (absurd; God will not do Man’s will because it violates His sovereignty);<sup>4</sup> (3) God’s will - Man’s work; (4) God’s will - God’s work. See Figure One on the previous page.

We can see these three ways of relating all through the scripture. They correspond to three of four periods of Bible history.

---

3. I define work as any action or activity that God or man can do. If only two parties are involved, then whatever happens between them must be the work of one or the other.

4. Duet. 4:39; Isaiah 45:7; Acts 17:24-25

From Adam to Isaac is the first period. From Isaac to the first coming of Jesus is the second period. From the first coming of Jesus to the second coming of Jesus is the third period. Each period is approximately 2000 years long. The fourth period is the 1000 year Millennium rest. Prior to Adam was creation; after the Millennium rest, is the unknown of eternity. Let’s look a little at each dispensation.

### The Period of Conscience

From Adam to Isaac, God allowed man to work out his own will (Option One). I have called this time the period of Conscience; where God gave an example of the shedding of blood, as an atonement for sins, to Adam’s family. The plan of salvation was communicated in the heavenly constellations.<sup>5</sup> God left the responsibility of seeking, following and loving God, to man. Man gets to direct (Man’s Will) and man gets to “do” (Man’s Work).

God’s witness of the Savior to come was given in the arrangement of stars into constellations. Originally, the 12 signs of the Zodiac told of His first coming as a suffering servant and His second coming as King of Kings.<sup>6</sup> The stars were those people’s form of Bible. Since then, Satan has polluted the witness of the stars into the present form of paganism known as Astrology. And with the advent of concrete and pavement, people do not have occasion to gaze at the stars for extended periods as they once did. So, in these days, that form of Gospel is not widely known. Job, who lived before Abraham, knew about a redeemer, and believed he would be resurrected (Job 19:25-27).

God overcame **physical death** in this period by the rapture of Enoch (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5), and by the resurrection of Job (Job 19:25-27) in the future.

Since God, in this period, left it up to man to appreciate and love God because of what was made (the creation), God judged love for Him by the following standard given in Romans 1:20.

---

5. See the book: “The Gospel in the Stars”

6. See “Gospel in the Stars”, p.10-12

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, has been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

This means that people like Job could love God because of the magnificence of the creation and the gospel written in the stars. **Spiritual death** was overcome, in this period by a witness everywhere in creation.

We also know that God judges sin in this period by the standard given in Romans 2:14-16.

“For when Gentiles (everyone not a Jew) who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

This means they had instinctive knowledge. The way people knew what to do and not do, is the “Golden Rule;” do unto others what you would want them to do unto you. And conversely, don’t do to them what you don’t want them to do to you. This is how people know that murder is wrong: I don’t want to be murdered. The same with other aspects of the Ten Commandments. **Love of God**, in this period, came out of their appreciation of the creator for the magnificent creation which He had made.

### **The Period of Promise and law**

From Isaac to the first coming of Jesus, God allowed man to work out God's will, Man's Work. This is the period of Promise / Law; where God gave man promises (incentives) and law (commands) that could cause man to seek, follow, and love Him. Some say promise and law are different ways of dealing with man. I suggest they are the same, one is the positive side, the other is the negative side.

A promise says if you do good, you get a

blessing; if not, you get neutrality. A law says if you do evil, you get punished; if not, you get neutrality. So they are just positive and negative sides of God's will and man's work.

God gave man the Gospel during this period via promises to Abraham (God's Will). God promised that through Abraham's seed all the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). God repeated the same promises to Isaac and Jacob (Israel). In another way God gave the gospel to Abraham, the substitutionary sacrifice of the ram for Isaac (Gen. 22:9-11).

God defined through Abraham that if a Jew wanted to become included in the family of God, and go to Heaven, then he must be circumcised. Through this ritual a person would communicate his desire to God to be in the family of God (God's will, Man's Work - positive side). This is action by faith. Doing something painful and somewhat eccentric as a sign of commitment to God. This is similar to baptism today, where we produce witness to the world and God, of our commitment to Jesus Christ.

In this period, we also see examples of God **overcoming physical death** by rapture in the taking of Elijah (II Kings 2:11-14). Jesus, in the same period was resurrected after three days.

**Overcoming spiritual death** came through the witness of Abraham, through his lineage, and through the prophets.

At the Exodus, Moses gave the law (God's Will) concerning things to do and not do (Man's Work). The gospel lay in the picture of sacrifice of the passover lamb. And it was repeated and amplified by keeping of the various laws.

**Overcoming spiritual death** came through God's witness to Moses. It came from Moses to the people through the miracles performed by God throughout their wanderings; passing through the Red Sea, etc.

The acts of animal sacrifice provided temporary forgiveness of sins. The animal sacrifices looked forward in time to when the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, would die for the forgiveness of all sins, of all mankind, in all periods of history. Meanwhile, just as the passover lamb caused the death angel to pass over the house

<b>MAN'S WILL MAN'S WORK</b>	<p>ADAM</p> <p><b>CONSCIENCE</b> - GOD ALLOWS MAN TO LOVE GOD ON HIS OWN.</p> <p>2000 YEARS</p> <p>Adam a type of Christ. Rom.5:14</p>	<p>No awareness of sin</p> <p>THIS SHOWS MAN WILL GO BAD UNDER HIS OWN LEADERSHIP. Acts 14:15-17; Rom.1:18-25, 5:13-14</p>
<b>GOD'S WILL MAN'S WORK</b>	<p>ISAAC</p> <p><b>PROMISE AND LAW</b> - IF YOU DO GOOD, YOU GET A BLESSING; IF NOT NEUTRALITY. - IF YOU DO EVIL, YOU GET PUNISHED; IF NOT, NEUTRALITY.</p> <p>2000 YEARS</p> <p>Isaac a type of Christ. Heb.11:19</p>	<p>Awareness of, but no power over sin</p> <p>- GOD PROMISES REDEMPTION. - GOD GIVES THE LAW TO SHOW MAN HE NEEDS REDEEMING. Gal.3:19-24</p>
<b>GOD'S WILL GOD'S WORK</b>	<p>JESUS CHRIST - The Suffering Servant</p> <p><b>GRACE</b> - GOD PERSUADES MEN TO LOVE HIM</p> <p>2000 YEARS</p> <p>Christ, God in the flesh. I John 4:2</p>	<p>Awareness and power over sin</p> <p>GOD REDEEMS A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF BY GIVING HIMSELF FOR THEM.</p>
<b>REST</b>	<p>JESUS CHRIST - The King</p> <p>1000 YEARS</p>	<p>GOD PROVES HE LOVES MAN</p>

Figure One - Design in God's Interaction with Man

which applied the blood; so it was, that death from sin (Gen. 2:22; 3:3) would be passed over, if the fathers would sacrifice the lamb each time it was appropriate. In effect, the sacrifices said to God, "Please forgive me for my sins, and I give my lamb, my temporary payment, looking forward to the time when **You** will die to redeem me from Hell, the full payment for the penalty of my sins." This was God's Will, Man's Work - negative side.

**Loving God**, in this period, would follow from people appreciating God for including them in His family, and for Him forgiving their sin; which provided freedom to be close to Him.

In later years and during the time of Christ,

circumcision and sacrifice lost its significance in providing gratefulness to God. It became just something people had to do. For one reason or another, the priests did not teach people that they should be grateful to God for allowing them into the family of God through circumcision. The priests didn't teach that people should be grateful to God, for forgiving their sins through sacrifice of animals. All those actions became just things to do which were expected. The promises became like law. The law became a contest to see who could keep it the best. Thus, the righteousness of God became the self-righteousness of man, and gave God no appreciation or love.

## The Period of Grace

From the first coming to the second coming of Jesus, is the period of Grace (God's Will, God's Work). God has *worked* out His own *will* in the affairs of men. It is characterized by God's *will*, Him wanting people to love Him, and God's *work*, Him coming to Earth as a man, to seek and save that which was lost.

God's *will* has been written in the New Testament. God is *working* out His own *will* in the lives of men via the Holy Spirit and godly men. Jesus started the work, and the work continues through godly men who are the spiritual descendants of Jesus and the Apostles.

He accomplished His will by leaving Heaven, coming to Earth as a man with no personal powers (John 5:19-24). However, Jesus spoke the words of the Father and did the works of the Father, because the Father gave Jesus the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34).

Here on Earth, He declared Himself to be God in the flesh. He lived a sinless life in the midst of sinful men; and was a blessing to everyone. Only a few appreciated Him. Many did not believe Him, and thought He was an imposter.

After three and one-half years of ministry and doing good, men tortured and killed Him in a most horrible way. Through that agonizing experience, He could have called down enough angels to kill everyone in the world. He did not. He asked the Father to forgive them instead. Thus He proved that God loved man. *Loving man while they were torturing Him.*

He died and was buried. But this is not the end of His life. In the time of Adam, God said, "In the day that you eat, you will surely die." That was the decree that declared that death was the result of disobedience (Gen. 3:3-5). But those words also imply continued life for obedience.

When it came to Jesus, He was sinless. But yet He died on the cross. That was wrong! Death was only for sinners. Life was decreed for non-sinners. Since Jesus was sinless, but He died, the Father could not, by His own Word, leave Him in the grave. Therefore, the Father

was obligated to act on Jesus' behalf, and raise Him from the dead.

The resurrection proved that God validated the ministry and life of Jesus. And hence, it proved the validity of the promises of Heaven to those who believe through faith. The later taking (rapture) of Jesus up into the clouds (Luke 24:50-51), demonstrates that which is *said* to be done for His church, *will be done* for His church (I Cor. 15:50-54; I Thess. 4:16-17). Thus, **physical death** is overcome in the period of Grace.

Jesus promised that those who love God and love their neighbor through faith in Him, He will take to Heaven forever. And if we cooperate fully, He will provide the persuasion and point-of-view necessary to accomplish **loving (A) God** fully.

God **overcomes spiritual death** in the period of Grace by God asking for man's cooperation in learning about Him. Since the natural man has no true knowledge of God. He must cooperate to listen to get that basic knowledge from whatever godly man who is willing to impart that knowledge. That witness might come in the form of personal evangelism, or it might come in the form of going to church. In the section below, I go over how God overcomes spiritual separation.

## Overcoming Spiritual Death in the Period of Grace

God's goal is to persuade you to love Him. This requires a change in the natural man's thinking and actions. Whereas before one knows anything about God, ones thinking and actions did not include concepts of God. You knew and cared nothing about Him. Getting acquainted with God, coming to believe and have faith in Jesus Christ, is what it means to overcome **spiritual death** (separation from God). This is a process. The process is called Reconciliation.

As I said in Chapter Three, since Adam and Eve were displaced from the Garden, the "Natural (unregenerate) Man", born since Adam, cannot love God because you cannot love whom you do not know. And from whom you are

separated, you cannot come to know on your own. Many people all through history, if they ever have known about God, lost contact with Him through neglect or indifference. Therefore, it is not possible for man to know or love God by himself.<sup>7</sup>

The biblical explanation of how God overcomes separation from God is given in the whole New Testament. The most succinct explanation is covered in the Book of Romans.

Separation from God (spiritual death) is defeated by the process of using all three of the following components. (1) "Initial Cooperation," allows a person to hear and expose himself to theory about God, but it is not yet accepted as fact; (2) "belief," which is acceptance of some facts about God; (3) "faith," which is believing enough to act upon the belief in the finished work of Christ. This whole process is called "learning." Its the same process children use to become educated in schools about the tools of life. Learning about God is no different than learning about geography; except for the Holy Spirit which does His convicting and educating part.

**"Initial Cooperation"** is the idea that a man will listen when initially confronted with the basic concepts of God. This is man's part. In order for a person to listen, to hear about God, they must be open to listening, reading or both. Since God has allowed man sovereignty over his own life, this is man's part. Man is in control of whether or not he will listen; not God. God will not violate the sovereignty of man to force man to listen in order to hear. If He did, this would not be loving, and would therefore, compromise God's character and holiness. Many times people don't listen because they are "dull" of hearing (Is. 6:10; Matt. 13:15). They are not really listening intently, perhaps day-dreaming or uninterested, for whatever reason.

The people who have a need in their life may listen. Children will usually listen and take in the concepts because they are used to having teachers tell them about new concepts.

Initial cooperation to listen is extremely important. One can never know the truth about God without listening or reading (Rom. 10:17). I believe christianity needs to put more emphasis on initial listening from an evangelism standpoint.

**"Belief"** is the intellectual acceptance of certain facts concerning God. As one allows himself to be exposed to God's "light," the Holy Spirit will demonstrate the contrast between the "good" of God, and the "evil" of the world and of the man's own heart. This perception is what tells him that he wants God's blessings and doesn't want Hell. This perception is brought about by the Holy Spirit in His convicting role. Again, the person must cooperate long enough to receive the teachings of Christ. That is man's part in belief. The Holy Spirit's part is to convict of sin, righteousness and judgement.

The concepts taught on the surface of scripture is just the way believing and faith happens. There is no Godly magic by which some people believe and some people don't.

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (understood, I Cor. 2:14). Before a believer becomes a person of faith and born again, this person, and all people, start their life not knowing about the theory of God. I say "theory", because when a natural man, a man not born again, initially hears about the concepts of God; that's all it is, a theory. It is a like a 15th century man hearing that the world is round for the very first time. Even if the man is open to the possibility, he does not know whether to believe it or not.

How then, does anyone come to believe and call upon the name of the Lord? "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:17). The writer asks the rhetorical question knowing the implication is that those elements are necessary to come to faith. "So faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom.

---

7. This is why, to this extent, Calvinism's Total Inability doctrine is correct.

10:17).

Men come to believe by allowing themselves to be open to the theory of God and Christ. And, the goodness of God, as revealed by the mercy, grace and love of Christ, draws all men to Himself (John 12:32). Exposure, over time, to the Word of God gives man an alternative world view, in which, he might believe. Once he has a certain quantity of alternative theory, the Holy Spirit begins to bring about an exchange of lies for the truth (Rom. 12:2 and John. 16:13). This is the process of renewing of the mind which transforms a persons point-of-view.

“**Faith**” is believing the facts of God to the degree that you will act on that belief. This requires much dedication, love and cooperation from godly men. Conviction of a believer is many acts of godly men and the Holy Spirit over time in a person’s life. The new believer must cooperate to learn enough additional theory, long enough, to be convicted by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be right there waiting to act, at the right time, upon what one has learned. One of the basic concepts is repentance.

Repentance is the idea that a person must change his life’s direction. He may not know how to change direction, he just knows that his life needs to change, to be conformed to the image of the Son. It is in this phase of “belief” that a man must face his own personal sin, and perhaps his first act of faith.

Facing and confessing one’s own sin can be very difficult. It carries with it the idea of shame; especially if it involves other people. It is kind of like standing on top of a cliff, and God is telling you to jump off. And if you jump, Jesus will catch you before you hit the bottom. He will catch you in the sense that He, and the others whom you have offended, will forgive you and you won’t have to pay the consequences of your sin. On the other hand, if He does not catch you, it would be like you hitting the ground, being injured or dieing, by having to suffer the humiliation of people looking down on you because of the shame of your sin. Many times, the guilt is too much to risk. Only a

great love shown by christian brothers, and God Himself, can overcome such shame.

But God, and most other people are gracious, and if you will confess your sin, most people, and God for sure, will forgive your sin and cleanse you from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). Confessing is very important because it takes away the wall of separation between you and God. Afterwards, you don’t have to hide from Him anymore. You feel clean before Him. You know He is pleased with you.

In confessing your sins, on the negative side; you must also confess that Jesus is God, and that He is manager of your life, on the positive side. It is a sign to yourself, God, and the demons that on such and such a day, you left the old sin life behind, drove a stake in the ground, and went forward into a new life with Jesus as manager of your life. The stake marks the time of your decision.

Mark 16:16 says:

“He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

Believing enough to act your belief is faith. This means that if you back up your words of confession with the action of baptism, that demonstrates your faith. This means you become a partaker in the *promises* of faithful people. And, there are many promises. I always ask a new believer to be baptized because it starts him out on the right path to further acts of faith.

However, the old habits and sins of the unregenerate life still persist in the life of the person wanting to change. Invariably, the new christian tries to live the christian life by sheer will power. It is not long before he learns he cannot live the christian life by himself. This experience is usually very discouraging, and causes one to doubt the truth of christianity. It doesn’t seem to be working!

Soon if he is blessed, some godly man will tell him that the christian life cannot be lived without God doing the changing. God allows this experience so the man learns that he needs to “abide in Christ” for success (John 15); he can’t do it alone. When a man trusts God in

faith for some issue, God will reveal Himself to the man by doing something which only God could do. This Godly action, seen by the man, feeds back to him the insight that God is real and working in his life.

When this trusting by faith and Godly action happens a few times, a man's point-of-view changes from a "believer" to a person of "faith" In the same way, when a man realizes that God will act in his life if only the man will trust God to act; this causes a change in point-of-view. This change in point of view is caused by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. *Over time, it is a paradigm shift in ones point-of-view, and resulting life change, which is referred to as being "born again."*

### **The Meaning of "Being Born-Again"**

I hear pastors, every now and then, preach about being "Born Again". That term doesn't convey much meaning for me. I know that the technical term is regeneration but even the word regeneration cries out for explanation.

Unger says Regeneration is, "the spiritual change wrought in man by the Holy Spirit, by which he becomes possessor of a new life." He goes on to say that Regeneration, ". . . is the change from the state of depravity, or spiritual death, to that of spiritual life." I'm don't think his definition helps much. It doesn't explain what actually happens inside a person that makes that person different.

You will remember the twelve spies Moses sent into the promised land. The bible says that Joshua and Caleb had a different point-of-view than the other 10 spies (Num. 13:30-31). They thought the land could be taken and the other ten spies thought the land couldn't be taken. Numbers 14:24 says Caleb had a "different spirit" than the other ten spies.

Calvinists would say Joshua and Caleb's different "spirit" produced their different point-of-view. Or is it possible that their different point-of-view, concerning God's help in taking the land, produced a different spirit?

Could it be that the Holy Spirit used their previous Godly training to convince the two that,

with God's support, Israel's grasshopper army, could take the land? In contrast, the other ten spies did not believe that God would be involved. And, in judgement, they did not factor in God's support in taking the land. Therefore, they saw defeat, with only their own grasshopper army fighting giants. The difference is point-of-view about God working in their everyday life. It is the same today.

I suggest to you that to be born again is to gain a new point-of-view about life; a point-of-view different than what you previously had; a Godly point-of-view; a point-of-view different from the world. A point of view about the God of unlimited power, that will actually be involved in your life (Matt. 17:20). When the bible says, ". . . old things have passed away, behold, new things have come" (II Cor. 5:17). Its not that life around you has changed; its that your own point-of-view *about Gods action* in your life has changed.

In John 3:3, when the Lord said to Nicodemus, unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God, all Nicodemus could think of was obstetrics! He did not make the connection that Jesus, as God, was doing something new in his life, and in the lives of others in the world. He was changing their point-of-view with respect to God's involvement in their life.

What was going on with Nick? He said in verse two, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Nick seemed to realize, at least intellectually, that Jesus was connected with God. But apparently, he didn't have enough personal conviction to trust that Jesus, as God, was establishing a new kingdom. In other words, he didn't believe enough to act upon his belief which is the definition of faith. Joshua and Caleb believed enough to act upon their belief. They were men of faith.

Is it possible that regeneration and being born again is another way of saying that one has enough old thought patterns changed, such that a new point-of-view about life emerges? I believe so!!

## Loving God in the Period of Grace

Once regenerated, if we continue to cooperate and take responsibility for doing what God asks, the Holy Spirit will gradually accomplish the changing of our heart (our spirit) to the divine nature (II Peter 1:4-8). God changes our nature from a sinful nature to the divine nature through managed cooperation. Managed Cooperation is the process of setting apart the person of faith such that the person sees the hand of God operating in their life.

Managed Cooperation is just that. God manages and men cooperate. Sometimes this concept is called "Lordship." In the first century, under the discipleship of Jesus, He taught, and the disciples followed. It is the same today. God manages; we cooperate. Jesus walked; the disciples followed. Jesus directed; they complied. Jesus said do; and they did. Nowadays, godly men (mature disciples) lead, and the new disciples follow.

God does the management, we just follow Jesus by seeking **first** the kingdom of God and **His** righteousness (Matt. 6:33). That is our job. His job is to manage; that is, to provide and make us successful, by His standards.

He has our future under control. He is responsible for our success by adding "all these things" (Matt. 6:33). All these things, are the things you need to make your life work correctly (food, shelter, clothing, etc.). God's goal is to make your life successful by His standards. See Jeremiah 29:11:

"I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare, and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope."

This means your future will be guided successfully by God. Jeremiah 29:11 equals future success. But you have to trust Him for the outcome. Trust God for what you need and He will provide. See Matt. 7:7-11.

"Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. "For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be

opened. "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

This means God will take care of you. Your Father in Heaven loves you, just like you love your sons and daughters. Remember, Jeremiah 29:11 equals future success, so trust Him. Our tendency is to worry about the future, managing our life again, forget it! We did that unsuccessfully for years. See Matt. 6:31-33.

"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

This means don't concern yourself about how to make your way successful in life. That is God's job. Your job is to seek God and His righteousness. This is such a hard concept for responsible adults to grasp. They have been taught from children to think for themselves (manage their own lives). That is one of the major deceptions of our society. You must manage your life because no one else will do it for you.

**WRONG!!** God will do it for you, and do a much better job of it. See Proverbs 3:5-6.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path."

This means He will direct. If you will trust God, whatever happens to you in life **is** God's will for your life. Because if you are trusting, He **is** directing. The implication is that if some circumstance comes into your life, and you are trusting, that means its there because God **wants** it there. Usually, its there because God wants

you to learn something by dealing with the situation in a godly manner. This is how He teaches you and everybody. See Hebrews 12:11.

“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who are trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

This means that trials and troubles are not for your destruction, they are for your training!! Remember, Jeremiah 29:11 equals future success, but you have to continue to cooperate. Depending on God like this is the meaning of faith.

He accomplishes changing your heart to the divine nature by managing your life for you. Since God has infinite wisdom and perfect character and He loves you, He can manage your life better than you can. The difference between your thinking and His thinking is sin! You must allow Him to manage, in order to reap the benefit of His infinite knowledge and perfect character. He will manage perfectly. So when you get to Heaven, God will beam at you and say, “Your life came out just exactly the way I wanted. “Didn’t I do a good job? “I am so pleased that you allowed Me to be God in your life.” Another way to look at it is; God is our loving heavenly Father, shouldn’t we as His children, allow the Father to guide us into spiritual adulthood? Of course we should. Cooperating with God to draw near to Him, leads Him to draw near to you (James 4:8).

“**Knowing**” is acting in faith for a long enough time, that God feeds back to you confirmation of the truth of your faith. the confirmation usually comes in the form of God doing unusual things over and over again. Things like, in the case of a poor man, he prays for food, God provides money from where none was expected.

When this kind of experience happens over and over again, God becomes real by experience. Just like the little kid who burned his fingers. We need that confirmation from God to survive spiritually.

The bottom line is that if you will trust Him

to manage your life, He will make it a success by His standards. The result is you become conformed to the image of His Son, you take on the divine nature, you will love God, and you will be welcomed into Heaven accompanied by great glory.

## **Jesus, The First, The Center and The Last**

The significance of this section is to reinforce the truth of the three dispensations. The genius of God is demonstrated in that, all three periods are punctuated with the appearance of Jesus, either in similitude (type) or in person.

Jesus can be seen in the sacrifice of the animal as a covering for Adam’s sin; in the sacrifice of the ram instead of Isaac; in the sacrifice of the Passover lamb; in the sacrifice of Jesus for the world; and in the sacrifice of men for themselves at Armageddon.

Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the most important “man” to ever live, stretches His influence over the entire time of mankind.

He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the First Adam (Rom. 5:14) and the Last Adam (I Cor. 15:45). Jesus is First in the sense that he existed before the earth was created (John 1:1-3, 14; 8:58). And Adam is a type, in contrast, to Him. He is the Last in that He will return to establish a literal kingdom upon the earth.

Not only is Jesus the first and last in the absolute sense; but in “type,” He is also the first and last of each dispensation. But before we see how, let’s define a “type.”

Types are models or similitudes that have common elements with other descriptions of events in biblical history. One of the more common types; picture Jesus as the Passover lamb. You will remember that God, via Moses, asked each person to sacrifice a lamb and apply the blood to the lintel and two door posts, so the death angel would pass over their house and not kill the firstborn (Ex. 12:1-13). Thus, by their faith in doing so, their firstborn was saved from death. That’s where the Passover Feast celebration came from. The sacrifice of the lamb

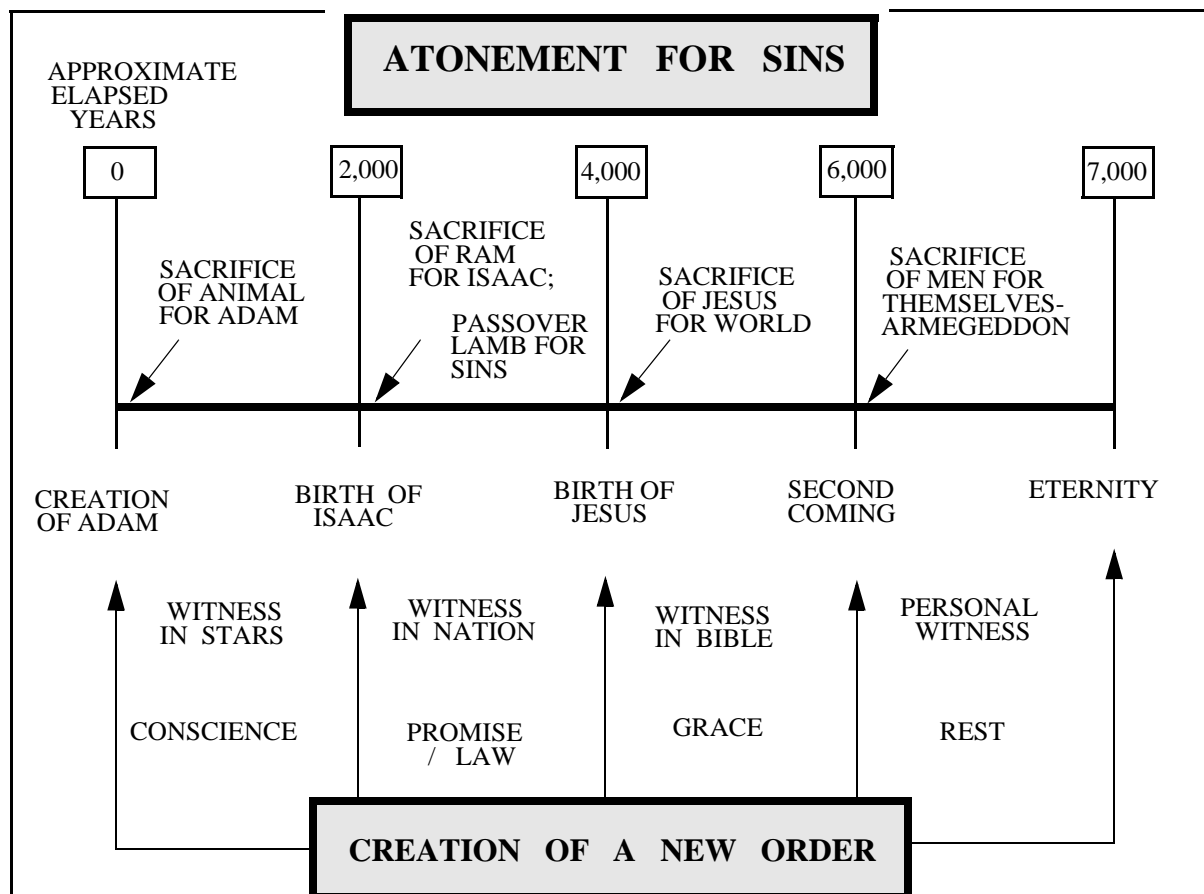


Figure Two - Design in Bible History

under the law looked forward to Jesus, “the Lamb” (John 1:29). And 1500 years later, we find Jesus sacrificed by the Father so that whoever might trust in Jesus might be forgiven and saved to Heaven. Thus the Passover lamb is a type of Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross.

The type adds meaning to the identity of Jesus and our relation to Him. In this way, we can relate more easily to the concept of savior. Now, the following shows how Jesus is the first and last of each period or dispensation.

From the fall of Adam (when Adam and Eve ate) to the sacrifice of Isaac is about 2000 years. We know that Adam is a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:39-49) as is Isaac a type of Christ (Heb. 11:19). Adam dying spiritually (on the day he ate, Gen. 2:17) is a type, in contrast, of Jesus' sinlessness. We see in Genesis 3:21 that God slew the animal and made a covering for the garden couple that demonstrated His

grace. Likewise, God made a “covering” for you and I that by Jesus' blood, shed on the Cross, we might be shielded from God's wrath. Therefore Jesus, in type, is the “first” of this dispensation. See Figure Two.

We see Isaac as a type of Jesus' sacrifice. You remember how Abraham and Isaac went up on the mountain at God's request to sacrifice his only son on an altar (Gen. 22:1-19). The sacrifice of Isaac corresponds to the sacrifice of Jesus. And in type, Jesus is the last of the dispensation of Conscience. Thus, Jesus is the First and Last of the period of Conscience.

In the period from the sacrifice of Isaac to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is also about 2,000 years. Since Isaac is a type of Jesus, we see that “at the right time” (Rom. 5:6) the type was fulfilled in the actual death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, He is also the first and last of the dispensation of

Promise/Law.

In the period from the first coming to the second coming of Jesus is about 2,000 years. Here we easily see that Jesus is the first and the last of this dispensation of grace. The Second Coming will complete a total of 6000 years of time. With the additional 1,000 years of rest in which Jesus applies His government to mankind, where He will *prove* that God's way is best (Rev. 20:6). He will truly be the First and the Last; the Alpha and the Omega.

The significance of this observation about Jesus, the First and Last, is that it defines how Jesus, the Christ, the God-man is the **center** of **all** biblical historical happenings through out history. Jesus, as this demonstrates, is the center of God's plan for the salvation of mankind. Jesus is God come in the flesh. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus of Nazareth, who is called Christ, is the first, the center and the last of all time.

## Summation

This chapter demonstrates how and why there is just three dispensations or fundamental ways in which God has interacted with mankind. Since Jesus is the First and Last of each dispensation, means He defines dispensations. There are three dispensations not seven. His involvement with each dispensation lends credibility to this particular dispensation definition.

These dispensations limit the scope of how God will deal with mankind, and how He will get a people to love Him forever.

He overcomes **physical death** by very long life, rapture, ascension and resurrection.

**Separation from God** is overcome by believing, by faith and by knowing.

The real impetus to **loving God forever** comes from God's example of love to man. God will get people to love Him by illustrating the difference between the *good* of God and the *evil* of man throughout Bible history. God illustrates "good," man demonstrates his "evil" nature. It is the contrast between "good" and

"evil" that tells a man that God is good and preferable in the long run. Evil tells a man that sometimes its fun, but it leads to pain and death.

The Holy Spirit convicts in three areas of faith; (1) the personal *sin* of the man, and mankind in general, (2) the *righteousness* of God, and (3) the *judgement* to come. From the contrast between good and evil, the Holy Spirit produces conviction. As a result of conviction, man perceives that God's way is better, and that he needs God to manage his life.

When Managed Cooperation is employed; loving God and loving one's neighbor naturally follows. That is the faith needed by christianity for God to show Himself great among us, once again.

