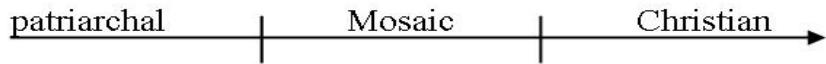


DISPENSATIONS

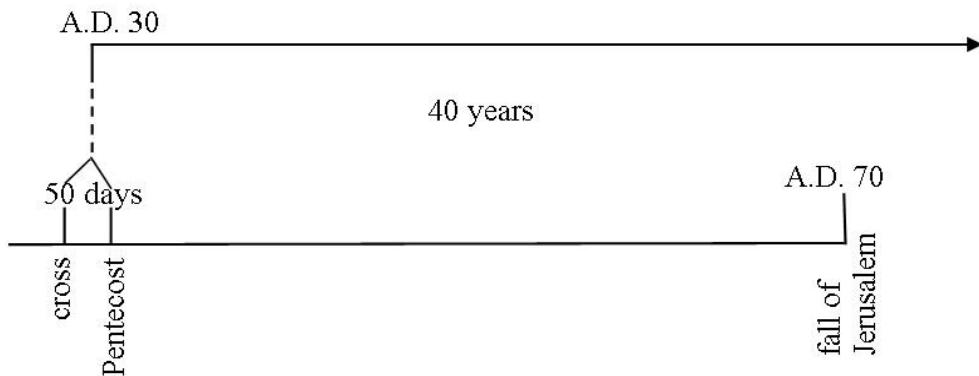
Virgil Warren, PhD

Human history may be organized according to the ways God has operated with mankind. The accompanying diagram pictures that history in three periods, or “dispensations”: the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. The patriarchal period is so called because during that era God operated through the heads of families, or “patriarchs.”



God dispensed his grace through family heads all the way from the beginning up to the time when the Israelites left Egypt. The Mosaic period is so called because during that time God operated through the Law he gave through “Moses.” He called a nation to serve as a light to the other nations—the Gentiles. God worked in this fashion from Moses to Messiah, nearly 1500 years. Since the coming of Messiah, God has been dispensing his grace to individuals through “Christ.”

The next diagram enlarges the connection between Mosaic and Christian eras pictured more generally in the previous diagram. The switchover occurred in three different ways. From the standpoint of **(a) theory**, the legal basis for relating to God came to an end at



the death of Messiah. Paul speaks of the Law as being “nailed to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). The foundation had been laid for relating to the Father on a purely interpersonal basis. Technically Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection fell within the Mosaic dispensation since the Mosaic Law was still in force over the people of God.

From the standpoint of **(b) fact**, the church began on Pentecost A.D. 30, fifty days after the Passover feast during which Jesus died. On the subsequent Pentecost of that year, the Spirit came from on high to empower the official spokesmen for the new Messianic kingdom and to be with all the individuals who identified themselves personally with the “Anointed One.” Pentecost was the first time the gospel was preached as a historical reality. People were now able to relate to God by “faith in grace” instead of “works of law.”

From the standpoint of (c) history, the nation of Israel ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that was needed to carry out the ritual requirements of the Mosaic Law. The forty-year period between the establishment of the church and the destruction of Israel allowed the Jews to see that Jesus of Nazareth was not just another fly-by-night Messianic claimant (cp. Gamaliel's argument in Acts 5:33-39).