

THEME : DIVINE DISPENSATIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I-DEFINITION

1-The dispensation

II-DEVELOPMENT

1-Innocence or freedom

2-Conscience or self-determination

3- Civil government

4-The promise or patriarchal reign

5- The institution of the law

6-The time of grace

7-The messianic reign or the millennium

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Since the creation of the first man and his sequel, no one has been able to perfectly follow the way of the Lord. Knowing that he (Man) is made of dust, He (God) will help him in the face of the seduction of the enemy (satan). This help (love) remained infallible until the advent of Jesus Christ.

I-DEFINITION

1-The dispensation

The dispensation is a period in the history of humanity during which God managed it (humanity) differently. It is the set of remedies provided by God to the failings of Man. In other words, it is the revelation of God to men at different times ; Job 33 : 14 God speaks sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, and we pay no attention to it.

II-DEVELOPMENT

The dispensation reflects rules of life given by God. Each dispensation has a characteristic element of divine grace. This grace is due to the imperfect nature of man.

1-THE FIRST DISPENSATION : Innocence or Liberty

Adam and Eve were innocent when it came to sin. The holiness of Adam and Eve had not yet been confirmed, because they had not yet been tested. Freedom

emphasizes Adam and Eve's free will over sin. God revealed his will to Adam. Man had the responsibility of subduing the earth, of multiplying every good thing on it, of controlling it, of guarding and cultivating the garden ; Genesis 1 :28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and subdue the fish of the sea, and the birds of the heaven, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth. But the deceiver (satan) will push them to disobey God ; something that will keep them away from the Lord ; genesis 3 :1-12 :1 Now the serpent was the finest of the beasts of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Would God have said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden ? 2 And the woman said to the serpent, We eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden ; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God said, Ye shall not eat of it, nor touch it ; lest you die. 4 And the serpent said to the woman, You will not die at all ; 5 but God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. 6 And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable for the sake of understanding ; and she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 And the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked ; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves girdles. 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God passing through the garden in the wind of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 And the LORD God called to the man and said to him, Where are you ? 10 And he said, I heard you in the garden, and I feared, for I am naked ; and I hid. 11 And he said, Who showed you that you are naked ? Did you eat from the tree that I told you not to eat from ? 12 And the man said, It was the woman whom you placed with me who gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I ate. As a result, their holiness was invalidated. God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. They are prevented from eating of the tree of life ; genesis 3 :23-24 :23 And the LORD God brought him out of the garden of Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. 24 And he drove out the man, and set on the east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard the way of the tree of life. The curse on the earth will force Adam to have to work the earth with the sweat of his brow in order to eat. The earth will henceforth be an enemy : it will produce thorns and thorns. God's grace was manifested in the promise of a Savior Genesis 3 :15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your descendants and her descendants ; this seed will bruise your head, and you will bruise your heel.

2-THE SECOND DISPENSATION : The dispensation of Consciousness or Self-determination

Conscience was the way God governed humanity. Rom 2 :14-15 For when Gentiles (heathens), who do not have the law, naturally do what the law commands, these men, who do not have the law, are a law unto themselves ; they show that the work of the law is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or defending themselves by turns. Self-determination reflects the freedom that man has been given to follow the voice of his conscience. Man's responsibility to work the land with the sweat of his brow. The consequence of their disobedience : physical death ; Genesis 3 :17 And

he said to Adam, Because you have obeyed the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, You shall not eat of it. The ground is cursed because of you. You will get your food from it with work all the days of your life. 18 And it will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 You shall eat your bread in the sweat of your face until you return to the earth, because from it you were taken ; for you are dust and to dust you will return. In the Covenant in Eden God had given the authority of this earth to man. During the fall, man lost this authority and it passed into the hands of Satan. Accordingly, even in the New Testament, Satan is called prince of this world ; John 14 :30 I will not speak much more with you ; for the prince of the world is coming ; and he has nothing in me. Man's conscience has completely degenerated Genesis 6 :5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth, and that all the thoughts of their hearts were daily only toward evil. The judgment for this dispensation was the universal flood which wiped out all mankind except the family of Noah ; Genesis 7 :7 And Noah entered into the ark, and with him his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, from before the waters of the flood.

3-THE THIRD DISPENSATION : The dispensation of civil government

Human government, which is in the image of divine government, must support conscience to push man to act well ; Genesis 1 :26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing. Which crawls on the earth. Man receives the right of life and death and the authority to judge others ; Genesis 9 :6 If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. A law is thus established even if it is not perceptible. Man should rule with justice. But he will abandon the straight path to try to reach God through the Tower of Babel (astrology) ; Genesis 11 :1-9 :1 Now all the earth had the same language and the same words. 2 And when they went eastward, they found a plain in the land of Sinear, and they dwelt there. 3 And they said among themselves, Come, let us make bricks and bake them in the fire. And brick served them as stone, and bitumen served them as mortar. 4 And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and make us a monument, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of all the earth. 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of men were building. 6 And the LORD said, Behold, they are one people, and they all have one language, and this is the beginning of their undertakings ; and now, whatever they want to do, nothing will stop them. 7 Come on ! let us go down and confuse their language there, so that one no longer understands the language of the other. 8 And the LORD scattered them from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased from building the city. 9 Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth, and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of all the earth. Astrology meant the rejection of God, the one and only Creator, the rejection of the concept that God directs us and not the stars. Being a rejection of the worship of the one God, astrology meant that man became polytheistic. The judgment consisted of the confusion of tongues. Having the same language was a major element allowing humans to live and stay together. Through the confusion of languages, God forced men to group together by family according to the language they spoke and to disperse : this gave birth to different nationalities.

Through the confusion of languages, God accomplished his original goal of dispersing men throughout the earth to repopulate it.

4-THE DISPENSATION OF THE PROMISE or patriarchal reign

The promise was made to Abraham ; genesis 13 :16 And I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth ; If the dust of the earth can be numbered, your descendants will also be numbered. The dispensation of Patriarchal Reign emphasizes its governmental aspect. The responsibility for this dispensation rested on the covenant made to Abraham, which emphasized each person's responsibility to believe God's promises. The test of this dispensation was to remain in the Land where God was going to take them. Abraham was promised a specific land, the land of Canaan ; a symbol of paradise. But here again Abraham will wander in certain countries. Despite everything, God remained faithful to his promises to fulfill them ; Genesis 12 :1-20 :1 And the LORD said to Abram, Go from your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you ;2 and I will make you a great Nation ; I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing : 3 I will bless those who bless you ; and whoever reviles you, him I will curse ; and all the families of the earth will be blessed in you. 4 And Abram went as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all the goods with which they had become rich, and the people which they had acquired in Haran, and they went out to the land of Canaan. And they came to the land of Canaan. 6 And Abram went through the land to the place where Shechem is, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanites were then in the land. 7 And the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, To your descendants I will give this land. And he built there an altar to the LORD who had appeared to him. 8 Then he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east, and he built there an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the Lord. 9 Then Abram set out, going from camp to camp toward the south. 10 And there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, because the famine was great in the land. 11 And when he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, Listen ; I know that because you are a beautiful woman, 12 this will happen: When the Egyptians see you, they will say: She is his wife; They will kill me and let you live. 13 Say therefore that you are my sister, that good may come to me for your sake, and that I may be spared life for your sake. 14 And as Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that his wife was very beautiful, 15 and Pharaoh's nobles, having seen her, praised her to Pharaoh, and this woman was taken and brought into Pharaoh's house. 16 And he did good to Abram for her sake. And he had sheep, and oxen, and donkeys, and menservants, and maidservants, and donkeys, and camels. 17 And the LORD brought great calamity upon Pharaoh, and upon his house, because of Sarai Abram's wife. 18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said to him. What did you do to me ? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife ? 19 Why did you say, "She is my sister ; so that I took her as my wife ? Now, here is your wife ; take it and go away. 20 And Pharaoh commissioned men to remove him, his wife, and all that he had. Joshua 24 :3 And I took your father Abram from beyond the river ; I brought him throughout all the land of Canaan and made his descendants numerous and gave him Isaac.

5-THE FIFTH DISPENSATION : The dispensation of the Law

God gave commandments which the children of Israel had to obey. Exodus 24 :12 And the LORD said to Moses, Come up to me into the mountain, and stay there, and I will give you the tablets of stone, and the law, and the statutes which I have written for their teaching. Man's responsibility during this dispensation was to keep the law. In addition to the 10 commandments, there are a total of 613 commandments (orders) that God has given to his people. It covers the period from Moses to Jesus Christ ; Romans 5 : 13-14 ; 13 For until the law came, sin was in the world ; but sin is not imputed when there is no law ; 14 yet the law reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in a transgression like that of Adam, which is a figure of him who was to come.

6-THE SIXTH DISPENSATION : The dispensation of Grace

God in his immense love has made a provision according to which man can overcome sin and return to his Creator. The Bible tells us in John 1.17 that the law was given by Moses. With the coming of Jesus, a very unique manifestation of grace appeared. Man must be willing to grasp the free gift of salvation in Jesus by faith alone ; Romans 6 :23 For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. However the majority of humanity rejects salvation through faith in Jesus and the Church which possesses the knowledge of the truth will enter into apostasy ; Matthew 24 :12 And because iniquity is multiplied, the charity of the many will grow cold. And the Great Tribulation will spread to all the earth, because the majority of human beings have rejected the Gospel ; unbelieving Christians will go through the Tribulation and suffer the wrath of God.

7-THE SEVENTH DISPENSATION : The dispensation of the Kingdom or the Millennium

Christ will return to reign a thousand years with his redeemed ; Revelation 20 :1-10 1 And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he took hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 And he cast him into the deep, and shut it up, and sealed it upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were fulfilled ; and after that he must be loosed for a little while. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and it was given to them to exercise judgment. And I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and of those who had not worshiped the beast nor his image and who had not taken his mark on their foreheads and on their hands ; and they came to life and became kings with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Happy and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection ! Over these the second death has no power ; but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are

completed, Satan will be delivered from his prison. 8 And he shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they came up upon the expanse of the earth, and they surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city ; and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. It will be a time when peace will reign on earth. But men will have refused salvation. Not all men will recognize and believe in salvation in Jesus Christ at the end of the Millennium, Satan will deceive humanity again ; many will find themselves in Gehenna ; Revelation 21 :8 But for the cowardly and the unbelieving and the abominable and the murderers and the fornicators and the sorcerers and the idolaters and all liars, their portion is in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death.

CONCLUSION

God is a God of order, and we can understand this through his dispensations. They are of paramount importance because they allow us to understand God's plan to save humanity. Faced with the weakness of Man, the Lord has always made a way to show him His love. Ezekiel 18 :23 Shall I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked, saith the Lord GOD ? Is it not rather that he turn from his ways and live ? John3 :16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Evangelist SIDIANE Jean Alexandre alias Godwill Chosen Joshua