

Dispensations and Creation Week

The six-day creation story as found in Genesis (along with the seventh day of rest) provides a perfect picture of the seven dispensations as generally taught by dispensationalists. Match each day of creation with the corresponding dispensation and you see some very interesting parallels. I list them in the following chart.

	Day of Creation	Dispensation
First	Divided light from darkness	Innocence
Second	Firmament in the heavens	Conscience
Third	Dry land appears; vegetation	Human Government
Fourth	Sun, moon and stars	Patriarchs
Fifth	Fish; fowl	Law
Sixth	Land animals; man	Grace
Seventh	Day of rest	Kingdom

First

Innocence – In the first dispensation, Adam and Eve are created and placed into the Garden of Eden. They live in a state of childlike innocence as to the effects and corruption of evil. They were given one, and only one, negative commandment. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To eat of this tree would bring certain death upon them. Yet, they ate of that tree.

First Day of Creation – On the first day of creation, God divided the light from the darkness and saw that it was good. In the Bible, light pictures truth and goodness while darkness pictures falsehood and evil. This is what God did with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the first dispensation. He made a clear line of distinction between good and evil. This point is made in [Romans 5:14](#):

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

Adam's sin is defined as a transgression. In eating of the forbidden fruit, he transgressed (i.e., stepped over a clearly defined line by directly disobeying a clearly defined commandment). He could not have transgressed (disobeyed a direct command) unless a direct command had been given. The clear division between good and evil in the Age of Innocence parallels with the clear division between light and darkness on the first day of creation.

Second

Conscience – In the second dispensation, Adam and Eve fall from their state of innocence by their sin. As a result, they are separated from their daily walk with God and cast out of His garden. Man’s separation from God profoundly changes everything about His life and being. In his fall from God’s presence, man loses more than could ever be regained—except by the future coming of the Saviour as the “seed” of the woman ([Genesis 3:15](#)).

Second Day of Creation – On the second day of creation, God puts a firmament (i.e., an expansion of space) between the waters that are above and below the firmament. What this firmament effectively does is put a great division between God’s heavenly abode and earth. Although the firmament is called Heaven, this title refers to the abode of the birds and the stars, not to God’s dwelling place.

The second day of creation is the only one without a divine declaration of blessing. Not once on the second day does God say that anything was good. The effect of the second day was to divide earth from man. How could that be good?

Compare this to the results of the second dispensation. The fall divided man (who dwells on earth) from God (who dwells in heaven). No other dispensation begins on a level this low. God’s mercy and His promise of a Deliverer ([Genesis 3:15](#)) are the only rays of light in an awful affair. Certainly, God could not look on Adam’s fall and say that it was good.

One final note: On the second day of creation, the earth is completely covered with water. The second dispensation, the Age of Conscience, ends with the earth being completely covered with water at the time of Noah’s flood.

Third

Human Government – In the Age of Human Government, God gives to Noah a set of basic precepts for government. The most basic of all was that of capital punishment. Those who kill others should themselves be put to death ([Genesis 9:5-6](#)). By this, government was given the power to bring order to the world and lead mankind toward God.

Third Day of Creation – On this day, God does two major things. First, He gathers the waters on the earth unto one place and causes the dry land to appear. Second, He brings life to the earth in the form of vegetation: grasses, herbs and trees. On both counts God looks at what He has done and sees that it is good.

Just as God causes dry land to appear on the third day of creation, so dry land appears after the flood so that Noah and his family can leave the earth. They know that the waters are receding

when the dove returns with an olive leaf plucked off ([Genesis 8:11](#)). This compares with the appearance of vegetation on the third day of creation.

God not only brings order to the new post-flood world by basic laws of government. He also brings order to the natural world. Not only does He promise no more worldwide flood, He establishes the seasons as long as the earth shall last (see [Genesis 8:22](#)):

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

Fourth

Patriarchs or Promise – This dispensation deals with the time when God chooses a man (Abraham) out of whom He will establish a chosen people (Israel). God calls Abram (his earlier name) out of Ur to a new land and promises to make of him a great nation ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). The patriarchs, or fathers, will rule over the people during this period.

Fourth Day of Creation – On the fourth day of creation, God creates the sun, moon and stars. He places them in the heaven as signs to indicate the days, seasons and years. He then looks on all that He has done and sees that it is good.

How does this day of creation relate to the fourth dispensation of promise? First, notice the special promise given to Abraham about his seed (the generations of people to proceed from him). Read [Genesis 15:5-6](#) where God is speaking to Abraham:

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

The seed of Abraham would number as the stars in the heaven. But Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, has a dream that further connects the fourth dispensation and the fourth day. He dreams ([Genesis 37:9-10](#)) that his father is the sun, his mother is the moon and his brothers are eleven stars. And, as you may know, these twelve sons become the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Notice also that the heavenly bodies are created to be signs for those on earth. In the Age of Promise, the Jewish people were chosen to be a sign to all on earth of God’s working in this world. God chose to make them a great nation as a testimony to all the nations of the earth (see [Deuteronomy 4:6-8](#)). It is also through God’s dealings with the Jews that we can know the change in the seasons (i.e., the dispensational changes). The next dispensation (kingdom) will be identified by God returning favor to the Jew.

Fifth

Law – The fifth dispensation is established when God delivers Israel from Egypt and gives to Moses His special law for the children of Israel. Under the law, God codifies the laws of sacrifice, ceremony and civil cases of disobedience. The Jews are under the law until the coming of the Messiah in the man of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifth Day of Creation – On the fifth day of creation, God creates two classes of animals: those that swim in the water and those that fly in the air. They are called the fish and the fowl. He looks upon His work and sees that it is good. He blesses these creatures and tells them to be fruitful and multiply.

The Age of Law began with special connections to bodies of water (the abode of fish). The Israelites cross the Red Sea in leaving Egypt and they cross the Jordan River in order to reach the Promised Land. Yet, their deliverance was also connected with birds of the air. God delivered them as an eagle would in stirring up its nest ([Deuteronomy 32:9-12](#)).

In an earlier article, Law and the Number Five, I point out a connection with the number five and the elements of the law. The law describes five major sacrifices (Leviticus 1-5). There are exactly five animals that are specifically mentioned as clean animals suitable for sacrifice (see [Genesis 15:9](#)). The first two of these animals (the pigeon and the turtledove) were created on the fifth day.

Sixth

Grace – The dispensation of grace begins with the coming of Jesus Christ as the God-man who would die on the cross for our sins. It ends when the people of God are taken out of this world and the tribulation begins. Although God’s grace has always been evident, the Age of Grace surpasses all other ages in this regard. This is because our salvation is clearly through the only begotten Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sixth Day of Creation – On the sixth day of creation, God creates the land animals first. Then He creates man in the image of God. He blesses man telling him to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it. He looks at everything He had made and declares it to be “very good.”

In order to provide a perfect way of salvation, God becomes a man in the person of Jesus Christ. This occurs at the beginning of the sixth dispensation—the sixth day being the day of man’s creation. As God sees His creation to be “very good,” so He testifies, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” ([Matthew 3:17](#)).

But Jesus is something else. He is the image of God. Adam was created in the image of God ([Genesis 1:26-27](#)). But Jesus Christ is the image of God. Read [2 Corinthians 4:4](#):

Through Jesus Christ, the last Adam ([1Corinthians 15:45](#)), we can regain the image of God that we lost in the fall of the first Adam. Six is the number of man. The sixth dispensation saw the coming of the perfect Man to this world so that we might be saved.

Seventh

Kingdom – In the Kingdom Age, the Lord fulfills all of the kingdom promises made to Israel. It occurs during a thousand year time on earth when Jesus Christ Himself will sit on the throne of David and rule and reign from Jerusalem. It will be a time of peace and righteousness on the earth as described in many Old Testament passages. In [Isaiah 32:17-18](#), we read:

“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;”

Seventh Day of Creation – On the seventh day, God rested from all His labors and established the Sabbath Day of rest. This day would later be given as a special sign to the nation of Israel ([Exodus 31:16-17](#)). God rested in that He ceased from His work on the seventh day and declared it a time of rest.

Just as the seventh day of creation week was a day of rest, so the seventh dispensation is a time of rest. As [Hebrews 4:9](#) says:

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

We, too, look forward to that time when the King of righteousness comes to bring peace to the earth. There will be no peace until we have the King of peace. And there will be no true peace until we have complete righteousness. We look forward to that day when Jesus will come for those of us who know Him as Saviour for we will be with Him when He comes.

Do you know Jesus as your personal Saviour? Is there a time in your life when you have turned from your own sin and way and have trusted entirely in what He did for you on the cross? Are you trusting in His resurrection for your hope of eternal life?

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