

GOD'S GLORIOUS PLAN FOR THE AGES

1A. THE DEFINITION OF DISPENSATIONALISM

1b. The definition of "dispensation":

It would be difficult to improve on Ryrie's definition, "A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose" (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 29).

2b. The etymology of the word:

1c. *Dispensatio*, the Latin term

"To weigh or dispense"

2c. *Oikonomia*, the Greek term

Oikos = house; *Nomos* = law

The Greek term, *oikonomia*, thus means "the managing of a household"

3b. The usage of Scripture:

1c. The general usage:

1d. The usage of the word dispensation:

The various forms of the word *dispensation* are used in the New Testament twenty times. The verb *oikonomo* is used once in Luke 16:2 where it is translated "to be a steward." The noun *oikonomos* is used ten times (Luke 12:42; 16:1, 3, 8; Rom. 16:23; I Cor. 4:1, 2; Gal. 4:2; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 4:10), and in all instances it is translated "steward" except "chamberlain" in Romans 16:23. The noun *oikonomia* is used nine times (Luke 16:2, 3, 4). In these instances it is translated variously ("stewardship," "dispensation," "edifying"). The Authorized Version of Ephesians 3:9 has "fellowship" (*koinonia*) whereas the American Standard Version has "dispensation" (Ryrie, 25).

2d. The Lucan passage Luke 16:1ff

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a **steward**; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

² And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy **stewardship**; for thou mayest be no longer **steward**.

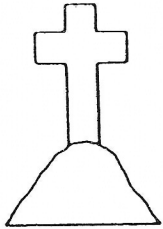
³ Then the **steward** said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the **stewardship**: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

3d. The inference from the usage:

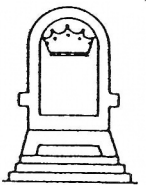
- 1e. A stewardship involves two parties.
- 2e. A stewardship involves an obligation of one party to the other.
- 3e. A stewardship involves accountability.

2c. The specific usage of the word dispensation:

Interestingly, the Bible uses the term dispensation exactly as we would use it in reference to three distinct dispensations.



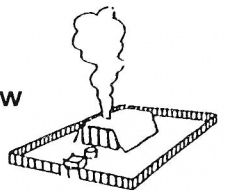
1d. Ephesians 1:10—**“Dispensation of the fullness of time”**
That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:



2d. Ephesians 3:2—**“Dispensation of the grace of God”**
If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3d. Colossians 1:25-26—“I am . . . a minister, according to the dispensation of God”
Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
²⁶ Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Paul implies a prior dispensation, i.e., **the dispensation of law**



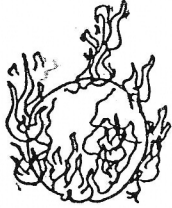
2A. THE DISTINCTIVES OF A DISPENSATION:

1b. The characteristics of a dispensation:

1c. Primary characteristics:

- 1d. God’s change in governmental relationship:
God initiates a new stewardship on earth.
- 2d. A new responsibility for man:
Man receives new obligations as a steward.
- 3d. God’s revelation to that end:
Before God can expect man to function under his new responsibility, added revelation is necessary.

2c. Secondary characteristics:



- 1d. Divine test:
Each dispensation is a test to see whether man under whatever circumstances can please God.
- 2d. Human failure:
Invariably man falls short of God's expectations.
- 3d. Eventual judgment:
Each dispensation concludes with a divine judgment.
- 4d. Divine Grace:
God's justice is tempered by His love and despite miserable human failure and inevitable judgment, God manifests His grace.

2b. The *sine qua non* of a dispensationalist:

1c. Negatively: A dispensationalist is not one who

- 1d. Uses the word "dispensation."
- 2d. Subscribes to a certain number of dispensations.
- 3d. Believes in a premillennial return of Christ.

2c. Positively: A dispensationalist is one who

- 1d. Consistently distinguishes Israel and the Church.

A dispensationalist sees two eternal purposes of God, expressed in His dealings with Israel and the Church. Israel is always Israel; the Church is the Church, not spiritual Israel.

- 2d. Uses literal hermeneutics:

Dispensationalism practices consistent literal interpretation of the Bible.

- 3d. Sees the underlying purpose of God as His glory.

God's overall purpose in the universe is to manifest His glory through salvation and other means. (This is Ryrie's *sine qua non*, opposed by the "progressive dispensationalists.")

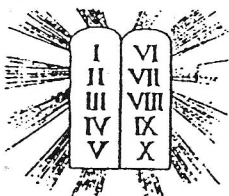
3b. The number of dispensations:

1c. The importance of the number:

The number and names of dispensations are of relatively minor importance. It is possible to have between 3 to 8 dispensations. Covenant theologians only see the Old and the New dispensation.

2c. The inference from Scripture:

1d. The New Testament refers to three dispensations:



1e. The millennium: Eph. 1:10

2e. Grace: Eph. 3:2

3e. Law: Col. 1:25-26



These three dispensations, Law, Grace and Kingdom are the subject of extensive Scripture.

2d. The Old Testament implies five dispensations:

1e. A dispensation before the fall: Man's life under innocence.

2e. A dispensation after the fall: Man's life under conscience, offering sacrifices.

3e. A dispensation after the Flood:

In Gen. 9:10-17, four new features for man's stewardship

1f. The fear of man upon animals, v. 2.

2f. The eating of meat, v. 3.

3f. Capital punishment, v. 6

4f. A promise of never causing another flood, vv. 8-17.

4e. A dispensation beginning with Abraham, involving a covenant of promise.

5e. A dispensation commencing at Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Mosaic Law.

3c. The inconclusiveness of some periods:



1d. Should the tribulation be a separate dispensation?

The tribulation is probably not a separate dispensation, but the climactic judgment concluding grace. The 70 weeks of Daniel began about 1,000 years after the law was given and are completed during the tribulation, but are not necessarily the same as the dispensation of the Law.

2d. Should the eternal state be a separate dispensation?

It seems that when temporal history ends, so do God's stewardship arrangements with men.

3A. THE BENEFITS OF DISPENSATIONALISM:

1b. It answers the need for biblical distinction:

Everyone faces problems in practicing some kind of consistent interpretation. Every expositor needs to account for the differences between the Old Testament economy and this dispensation in areas such as:

1. The inheritance of the land.
2. The keeping of the Passover and Sabbath.
3. Animal sacrifices.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said that one is a dispensationalist, whether he realizes it or not, if one does not claim or practice the above.

2b. It answers the need for a philosophy of history:

- 1c. Dispensationalism recognizes progressive revelation.
- 2c. Dispensationalism provides a unifying factor to history. Whatever God does is for His glory, that is, it serves a doxological purpose.
- 3c. Dispensationalism provides for a goal of human history, the millennium.

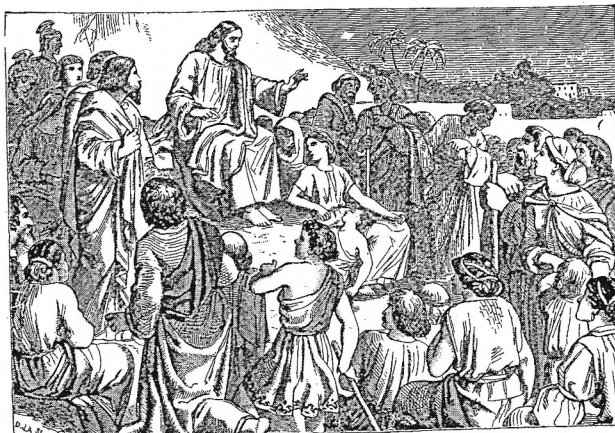
3b. It provides a consistent procedure in hermeneutics:

- 1c. The two Great Commissions: Matthew 10; Matthew 28

In Matthew 10, Christ demands the disciples not to preach to the Gentiles or Samaritans. In Matthew 28, He commands the same disciples to go and disciple all nations. Only a dispensational distinction will help solved the apparent discrepancy.

- 2c. The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7

Certain commandments in this passage cannot possibly be practiced literally in the Church Age, such as turning the other cheek and giving to anyone who asks of us. Seeing that part of the Sermon on the Mount applies to the Kingdom Age relieves apparent hermeneutical tensions.



4A. THE DETAILING OF THE DISPENSATIONS:

1b. The listing of the dispensations:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1c. | <i>Innocence:</i> | Creation to Fall |
| 2c. | <i>Conscience:</i> | Fall to Flood |
| 3c. | <i>Human Government:</i> | Flood to the call of Abraham |
| 4c. | <i>Promise:</i> | Call of Abraham to Mount Sinai |
| 5c. | <i>Law:</i> | Mount Sinai to the Cross |
| 6c. | <i>Grace:</i> | Pentecost to Rapture |
| 7c. | <i>Kingdom:</i> | Second Advent to Great White Throne |

2b. The features of each dispensation:

- 1c. The beginning:
- 2c. Related Scriptures:
- 3c. The state of man:
- 4c. Human responsibility:
- 5c. Human failure:
- 6c. Divine judgment:
- 7c. Divine grace:
- 8c. Divine covenant:

3b. Concluding general observations:

- 1c. Innocence has devoted only 37 verses to it.
- 2c. Law and grace have the most Scripture relating to them.
- 3c. It is best to see seven dispensations.
- 4c. Our GARBC fellowship is the largest dispensational group in the USA.

XVIII. Israel

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people, that she is now dispersed because of her disobedience and rejection of Christ, and that she will be regathered in the Holy Land and, after the completion of the Church, will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ. (Gen. 13:14-17; Rom. 11:1-32; Ezek. 37.

(General Association of Regular Baptist Churches 1988 Church Directory, p. 16, pages 13-16 "Articles of Faith")

XIX. Rapture and Subsequent Events

We believe in the premillennial return of Christ, an event which can occur at any moment, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the seven years of the Tribulation. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-54; Phil. 3:20, 21; Rev. 3:10.

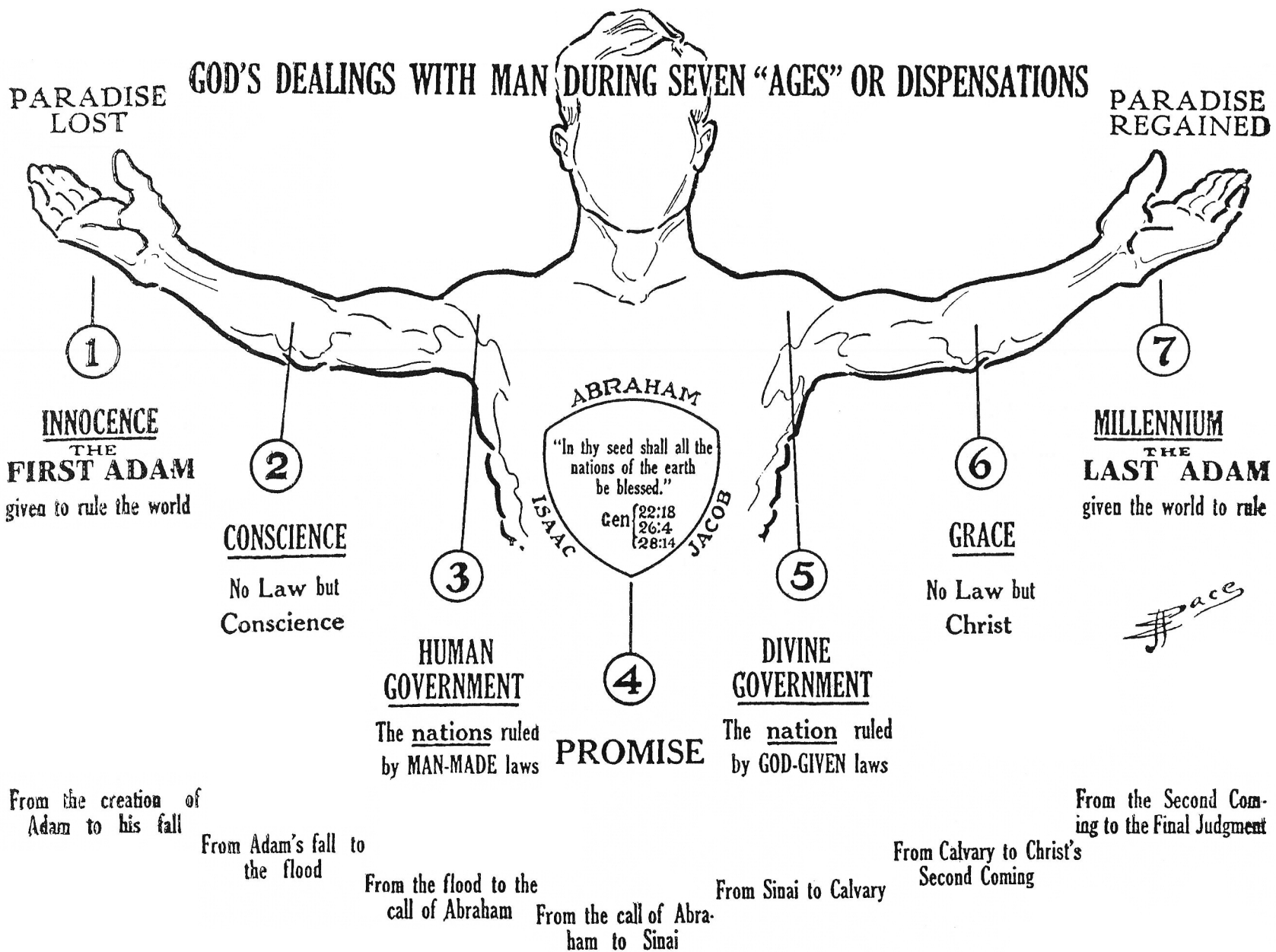
We believe that the Tribulation, which follows the Rapture of the Church, will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom. Dan. 9:25-27; Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 1:30-33; Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1-9; Acts 2:29, 30; Rev. 20:1-4, 6.

This writer recalls Dr. John F. Walvoord repeatedly observing in his classes that when he went held meetings in churches and his ministry was in a Regular Baptist church, he could always be sure he was among dispensational friends. He observed that the GARBC is the only fellowship of churches where the churches are consistently dispensational.

FBBC's statement of faith:**Dispensations**

We believe that the dispensations are not ways of salvation, which has always been by grace through faith, but are stewardships by which God administers His purpose on earth through humanity under varying responsibilities; that changes in dispensational dealings depend upon changed situations in which humanity is found in relation to God due to human failures and God's judgments; that, though several dispensations cover the entirety of human history, only three of these are the subject of extended revelation in Scripture; that these three (Mosaic Law, Grace, and millennial Kingdom) are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused.

<http://www.faith.edu/about-faith/position-statements/doctrinal-statement> 2015



GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES OR THE DISTINGUISHABLE ECONOMIES IN THE OUTWORKING OF GOD'S PURPOSE

1. THE ETERNAL GOD
Deut. 33:27
2. THE ETERNAL SON
John 1:1-2
3. THE ETERNAL SPIRIT
Heb. 13:14
4. THE ETERNAL PURPOSE
Eph. 4:11

ETERNITY



THE ORIGINAL EARTH
John 1:3
Col. 1:16-17
Heb. 11:3
DATELESS

THE CHAOTIC EARTH
Is. 14:9-14
Is. 45:18
Eze. 28:12-15

THE RESTORED EARTH
Gen. 1:1-2:25

THE PRESENT EARTH

Judgment.....

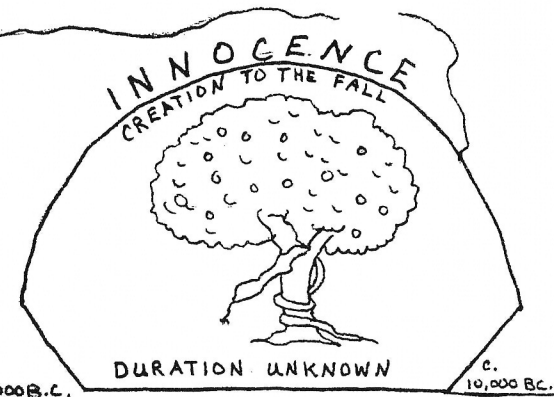
Scripture.....

Persons.....

Responsibility....

Failure.....

Grace.....



EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN

GEN. 1:26-3:6

Adam and Eve

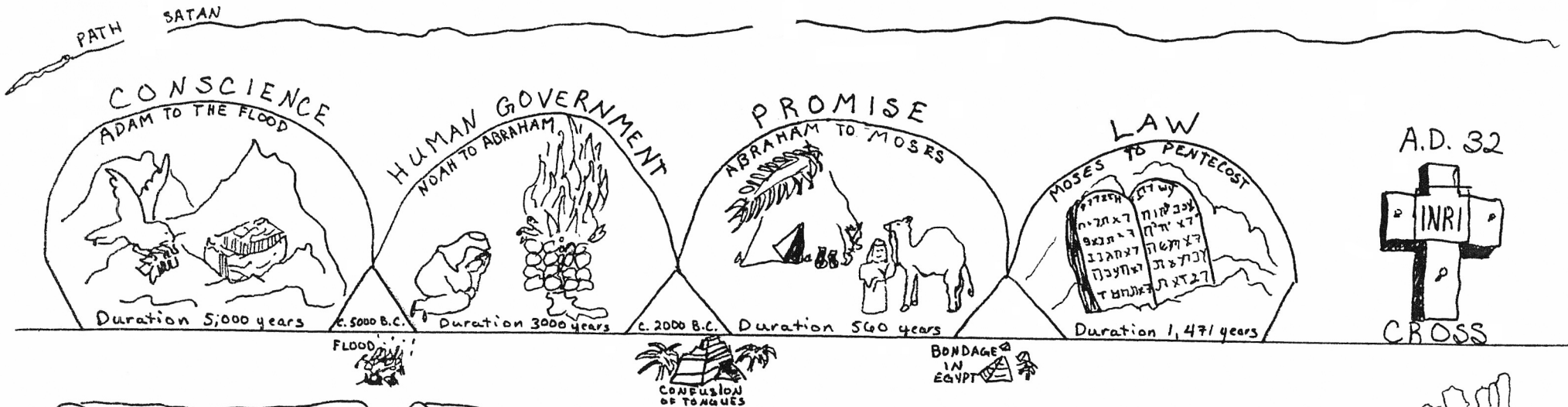
Populate and subdue the earth
Dress and keep the Garden
Desist from eating of the Tree
of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

They doubted God's word,
goodness, judgment, and motive,
and ate of the forbidden tree.

Promised Redeemer, Coats
of skin, Long life, Supply of
needs, Separation from Tree of Life.

EDENIC COVENANT
GEN. 1:28-30; 2:15-17





GEN. 3:7-8:19

Adam, Eve, Seth, Noah, and Enoch

Life under a curse.
Conscience as a rule of life.
Blood Sacrifices

Failure to live up to conscience.
Universal wickedness

Salvation of some
Preservation of Noah
Long suffering before judgment

ADAMIC COVENANT
GEN. 3:14-19

GEN. 8:20-11:9

Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth

Renewed command to multiply and have dominion.
Essence of government established involving organization and legislation.

Noah's drunkenness, Ham's irreverence
Failure of human government to curb sin.

The seed of the woman
Preservation of a godly remnant

NOAHIC COVENANT
Gen. 8:20-9:17

GEN. 11:10-EX.19:9

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph

Faith in the material, spiritual, and social promises of God

Abraham's delay, doubt, and descent into Egypt. Isaac's doubt. Jacob's deceit. Israel's murmurings.

A deliverer was promised.
Victory over enemies was given.
Unconditional promises renewed.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT
Gen. 12:1-3

EX.19:9 - JOHN 21:25

Moses, Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Prophets

Israel is to obey a detailed system of works comprised of 613 commandments.

The entire Old Testament is a record of failure, culminating in the crucifixion.

Sacrifices provided a way of restoration. God raised up deliverers. The nation is preserved. Millennium promised.

MOSAIC COVENANT
EX.19:5-31:18

JERUSALEM DESTROYED
A.D. 70

