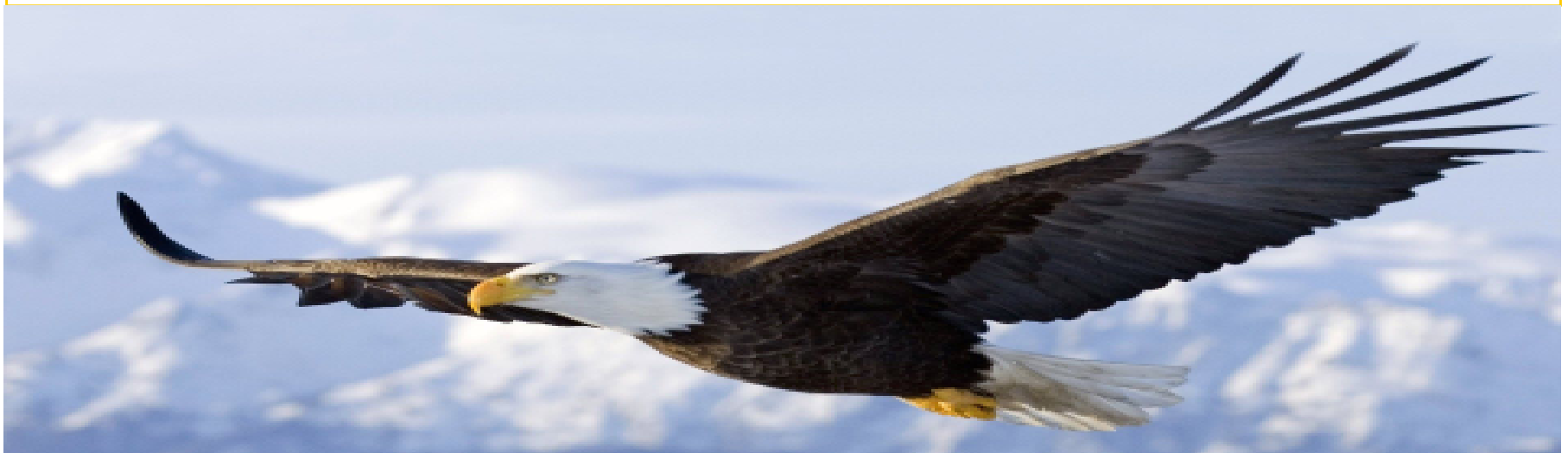


STATUS BIBLE COURSE (SBC)

THEME: HOW TO
UNDERSTAND THE
BIBLE.



UPDATE 7

KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE DISPENSATIONS OF THE BIBLE.

Dispensation, according to the Bible, refers to a system of order by which the Lord organized His people to a confined period of time. In other words, it refers to the rightful divisions of the Bible according to the periods of time. In Greek, it may be equivalent to the word **dianomí** in singular or **apallagés** in plural form.

Update 7 con't...

The Bible has dispensations and thus, Bible students should treat it as such. According to the 1,189 chapters of the Bible, there are **three main dispensations; the Patriarchal age, the Mosaical age, and the Christian age** (Heb 1:1-2). These periods are not the same, they differ from one another. Each of the dispensations have unique and separate covenant relationship(s), laws and signs. And whenever you come across any book or chapter or verse, you should first assess it according to its dispensation, and this will help you to understand the Bible better.

[We shall be dealing with each of the three(3) main dispensations in brief, as we proceed.]

WHY SHOULD WE GAIN KNOWLEDGE IN THE BIBLE DISPENSATIONS?

- 1) Knowledge in the Bible dispensations helps learners to rightly divide the word of truth.
- 2) It facilitates sound doctrine.
- 3) It enlightens one to know much about the covenants and signs in each dispensation.
- 4) It helps Bible students to know which laws are to be used by Christians or humanity in our era. For example, the Patriarchs had no written laws, God spoke His laws to the faithful, individually. God gave 613 laws in the Mosaical age (248 positive laws and 365 negative laws). Christ gave the law of love to all His followers (Rom 13: 8-10, Gal 5:14).

Update 7 con't...

Therefore, knowledge in the three(3) main dispensations can help you know which of the laws are reigning now; which is the law of Christ (1 Co 9:21).

5) It helps one to differentiate between the Old and New Testaments.

6) It gives clear conscience for better living.

7) It gives confidence in the current dispensation, Christianity.

8) It helps one to detect falsehood and deceptions.

9) It helps one to understand how God works now in Christianity.

10) It helps one to know and understand both fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible. etc.

In the following lessons, we shall be studying on **the three(3) main Dispensations of the Bible.**

UPDATE 7 (A)

STUDYING FROM THE PATRIARCHAL AGE/DISPENSATION.

The **Patriarchal dispensation** is simply the period of the Patriarchs. "Patriarchs," according to the Bible, refers to those biblical figures regarded as fathers of the human race, especially Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Most Bible students refer to Patriarchs as the fore fathers who were spoken directly to, by God to have particular covenant relationships with them.

We should also understand that, "After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D 70, Patriarch was the title of the Chief religious rulers of the Jews in Asia Minor and in early Christian times it became the designation of the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Anthioch and Jerusalem;" this is not the issue under discussion here.

Though the Patriarchal age has divisions, it starts **from Genesis chapter 1 through to Exodus chapter 19-20** (i.e. from creation to the Sinai law).

When reading or studying from Gen 1 to Ex 19-20, you should know and understand that, the laws and covenants given there, do not strictly affect Christians. If this is not well analyzed, you will misinterpret some tests and teach wrongly.

FEATURES OF THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

1. The Patriarchal dispensation proves God Almighty to be the Creator of all things (Gen 1-2).
2. The family head was the leader; e.g Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. (Deut 1:8).

Update 7 (a) con't...

3. No written laws or Sinai law (Deut 5:2-3).
4. God spoke through the father of a particular family (Hb 1:1).
5. Some Patriarchs were friends of God e.g Abraham (Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23). etc.

THE DIVISIONS OF THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

Biblically, there are five(5) main divisions of the Patriarchal dispensation, namely;

a) Antediluvian period (period before the flood): This is the period from Creation until the flood. We can justify this period from Genesis chapter 1 through to chapter 6. From the 7th chapter of Genesis to the 8th chapter (Gn 7-8) gives much details of the flood during the period of Noah. In this period, we can see the fall of man into sin and how the sinners were punished. **Adam** becomes the father of this period; **child bearing** was the sign (Gn 3:16, 1 Co 11:12).

b) Postdiluvian period (period after the flood): This is the biblical account given after the flood. After the flood, man returned into sin again. This period is clearly identified in Genesis chapter 9 to chapter 11. **Noah** is the main character of this period, and clarified as the father of the given generations. **Rainbow** was the sign (Gn 9:8-17).

c) Generational period (period of bringing up the God's chosen people): This is the period of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God calls **Abraham and his family**. God plans to bless all nations through them. This is the longest period identified in the Patriarchal age. It covers Genesis 12 through to 50 (Gn 12-50). **Circumcision** was the sign (Gn 17:9-14).

d) Period of Bondage (captivity in Egypt): This speaks of the 400/430 years captivity in Egypt (Acts 7:6, Ex 12: 40-41). This period covers Exodus chapter 1 through to chapter 12 (Ex 1-12). In this period, we can see the influences of the Old Testament mediator, Moses (Deut 5:1-5, Jn 7:19, Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19), and his lineage and duties as a leader and prophet of the God's chosen people. This is where we can see the miracles performed by Moses in Egypt, in order to free the captives.

Update 7 (a) con't...

e) Period of Wandering (in the desert): This period is part of the 40 years wandering in the desert (Acts 7:36). The "40 years wandering period" in general, cuts across throughout the journeys of Israel. It starts from Exodus chapter 13 through to Joshua chapter 13; where the land of Canaan was shared amongst the 11 tribes excluding the Levites. That is, from Egypt to Canaan (Ex 13 - Josh 13). This period covers for about 137 chapters and 3,987 verses. **Manna and the Sabbaths** were the signs (Ex 16:33-35; Ez 20:9-12, 20).

There are divisions in this wandering period; wandering in the desert **before** the Sinai law, and wandering in the desert **after** the Sinai law. The wandering in the desert before the Sinai law is what can be counted as part of the Patriarchal age (i.e. Ex 13-19). This covers for about 7 chapters and 184 verses.

During the whole period of wandering, Israel journeyed through about 43 countries, from Egypt to Shittim (Num 33:1-49).

When studying, consider all these rightful divisions.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

1. The Patriarchal age proves the origin of mankind (Gen 2:7, 5:2; 1 Co 15:45), and every creature of this world (Gen 1).
2. It proves the origin of sin on earth (Rm 5:12).
3. It proves the origin of the national Israel (Gen 35:23-26).
4. All things pertaining to life, serve as examples to us (1 Co 10:11).



Update 7 (a) con't...

5. All things were written for our learning, to give us hope (Rom 15:4). etc.

THE POWER OF THE PATRIARCHAL AGE/DISPENSATION.

1. The institution of marriage has still remained (Gen 2:24-25; Mat 19:4-6).

2. Child bearing sign has still remained ((Gn 3:16, 1Co 11:12, Eccl 11:5).

3. Rainbow  still strikes to remind humanity of the fire  judgement to come (Gen 9:8-17; 2 Pet 3:6-7, 10-13).

4. Hard working spirit instilled into Adam (Gen 2:15, 3:19) is the ultimate way to make a blissful living (Eph 4:28, 2 Thes 3:8-10).

5. The circumcision of the flesh (Gen 17:9-14; Gal 5:6, Col 2:10-12), has created way for the "spiritual circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:25-29)," which is baptism (Col 2:8-12).

6. The flood in the period of Noah, is a symbol that saves all believers through immersion baptism (1 Pet 3:20-21). etc.

All these things teach us to study well the Patriarchal age, with the intention of using all the notified events as "the like figures" which created way for "the truth and spiritual worship" (Jn 4:23-24), but not to use everything as part of the Christian dispensation.

UPDATE 7 (B)

STUDYING FROM THE MOSAICAL AGE/DISPENSATION.

This period of time is named after a man called Moses (Ex 2:10). According to the Bible, the Mosaical age is the longest period of time, which covers for about 38 books of the Old Testament (only Genesis is excluded).

After the establishment of God's covenants with Israel with the conditions of the Sinai law, the Mosaical age immediately followed (see Ex 20).

We can see Moses displaying in some parts of the Patriarchal age; but the fact is that, during that period (Ex 2 - 19), he was still living under the power of the Patriarchs or Patriarchal dispensation, until the law was given on Mount Sinai.

The Mosaical age is traced from Mount Sinai to the cross of Christ (i.e. from Exodus 20 through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as well identified in Col 2:14). Jesus was born under the law (of the Mosaical age) in order to redeem His followers from it (Gal 4:4-6).

The **Mosaical dispensation** is therefore a period of time during which the 613 laws given by God through Moses reigned in the hearts of the worshippers, from the Sinai through to the cross of Christ.

In this period, we can speak of Moses as the mediator (Dt 5:5), and his mediation for the Israelites. When Moses died, the laws through him did not come to end; all the 613 laws in the book of law/the law/pentateuch (Josh 1:8) continued to reign in the hearts of only the Israelites, even all those under the law or Sinai law (Rom 3:19).

Update 7 (b) con't...

When reading or studying from the Mosaical dispensation, especially from Exodus 20 to Malachi 4, you should know and understand that, **the laws and covenants given there, do not strictly affect Christians.** If this is not well analyzed, you will misinterpret some tests and teach wrongly.

FEATURES OF THE MOSAICAL DISPENSATION.

1. Moses was the Mediator (Dt 5:5).
2. The law was given through Moses (Jn 1:17).
3. The Old law was given to one nation; Israel (Dt 5:1-4).
4. Israel was the only beloved nation of God (Hos 11:1, Pslam 147:19-20).
5. The Gentiles were rejected (Rm 2:14-16).

6. The Old law was ordained by angels in the hands of Moses, the mediator (Gal 3:19, Acts 7:53).
7. Many commandments were given (Ex 20:1-17, Dt 27:26; Acts 15:10).
8. The testimony of God (the law) was written on two tables or stones (Ex 32:15).
9. Israel worshipped according to the Letter (2 Co 3:7).
10. Sacrifices were performed yearly (Hb 10:1).
11. The sacrifices were based on the firstborn sons and firstfruits of all kind (Ex 23:19, 22:29).
12. Directed by the nation's priests, from the Levites (Dt 17:9,12).

- 13.** Over 22,000 Levites were chosen to be priests (Nm 3: 39, Hb 7:23) for more than 603,550 Israelites (Nm 1:46).
- 14.** The Levites were the priests (Ex 19:6, Nm 18:23).
- 15.** It was a shadow of the good things to come (Hb 10:1).
- 16.** There was a physical circumcision (Gn 17:9-14, Lv 12: 3-4).
- 17.** Baptism took place in the red Sea, the cloud was the Seal (1 Co 10:1-2).
- 18.** It consists of many Kings in the flesh (Mt 1:6-11).
- 19.** Israel had the kingdom, and Jerusalem was set to be the City (Ez 5:5).

Update 7 (b) con't...

- 20. It was full of Prophets (Hb 1:1).
- 21. Full of many festivals (Ex 23:14-18)
- 22. The Old Signs were Rainbow (Gn 9:8-17), Circumcision (Gn 17:9-14), 12 Stones (Josh 4:1-7), Manna and Sabbath (Ex 16:33-35; Ez 20:9-12,20).
- 23. Canaan was the only hope (Gn 12:7, Acts 7:5, Josh 21:43-45, 23:14).

THE DIVISIONS OF THE MOSAICAL DISPENSATION.

Critically, **there are seven (7) main divisions of the Mosaical dispensation, namely...**

a) Period of Conquest: This period speaks of how **Joshua**, after he succeeded Moses (Dt 34:9), led Israel to obtain the promised Land, Canaan (Josh 1:1-9). In this period, Israel begins to conquer Kingdoms (in the book of Joshua). **"Twelve(12) stones"** was the the sign (Josh 4:1-7).

One may ask of the period from Exodus 20 through to Deuteronomy 34; all the events are classified to be a period of "Exodus" (going out) of the Israelites under the command of Moses, but the great mission to inherit Canaan began with Joshua.

b) Period of Judges: This period is rightly seen from the book of Judges to 1 Samuel 1-7. The Judges came in the Mosaical age to direct the national Israel to know well God's commandments.

In this period, we can speak of Othniel (Judges 3:1-11); Ehud (Judges 3:12-30); Shamgar (Judges 3:31); Deborah and Barak (Judges 4-5); Gideon (Judges 6 - 8; the 9th chapter is about the sin and destruction of Abimelech); Tola (Judges 10:1-2); Jair (Judges 10:3-5); Jephthah (Judges 11,12:1-7); Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (Judges 12: 8-15); Samson (Judges 13 - 16); Samuel (was a Prophet and Judge; 1 Samuel 1 - 25:1).

c) United Kingdom: This is the period where Saul, David and Solomon reigned Israel. Israel was united as one Kingdom throughout the reign of the named Kings. The book of 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles give accounts of this particular period; and the poetic books too (Job - Songs of Solomon).

Update 7 (b) con't...

d) Divided Kingdom: This is the period in the Mosaical age where Judah departed from the other tribes of Israel to build a different Kingdom.

Therefore, Israel stood as one nation, so as the people of Judah: they had the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. This is recorded in 1, 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, and the prophetic books (from Isaiah to Zephaniah).

e) Period of Captivity in Babylon: This period covers for about 70 years of captivity in Babylon (2 Chron 36:17-21). This period of captivity as part of the Mosaical age is being recorded in the book of Daniel, Ezekiel and Psalm 127.

f) Period of Return and Restoration: This period is clearly identified in certain Old Testament books; Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. However, this period is sub-divided into two sections, **complete** and **incomplete** parts.

(i) The complete parts: This is the period where God used Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther to return His people from captivity in order to restore them as one nation; recorded in the (last 3) historical books (i.e. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther)

(ii) The incomplete parts: According to the last three(3) books of the prophets (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi), there are some portions which prove that the return and restoration of God's people could not completely succeed in the Mosaical age, but in the Christian age. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, all wrote to reassure the scattered tribes that it will only be the Messiah who can help return and restore completely God's people.

Though some returned in their era, not all of them were completely restored, so everything turned to be in a form of prophecy (Zech 7:8-14).

Hence, the last 7 chapters of the book of Zechariah (ch 8-14) and the last 2 chapters of the book of Malachi (ch 3-4) proved to the Old Testament worshippers that the restoration was not complete, even through the Intertestamental period.

The four(4) Gospel books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are the only New Testament books that mediate between the Mosaical age and the Christian age. Right after the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9), God began to complete this period of return and restoration.

Update 7 (b) con't...

Therefore, the **Pentecost day** (Acts 2:1), the **Holy Spirit** (Joel 2:28-29) and the **New Testament Church** (Acts 2:40-41; Col 1:13-14), helped to return and restore completely God's people.

g) The 400 years of Silence: This is simply the "**Intertestamental period**;" a period between the Old and New Testaments. During this period, no prophetic messages were unveiled to humanity; God's people were still using the Old Testament books.

If the book of Malachi (the last Old Testament book) was written sometime during the 5th century B.C, and the first book to be written in the New Testament, Galatians, was probably between A.D 47 & 49, then the Intertestamental period would be between Malachi and Galatians but not between Malachi and Matthew (which was written somewhere in A.D 60.)

Again, under some biblical estimation, some Bible students assume the 400 period of silence to be somewhere around **B.C 447 - A.D 47**.

It was during this 400 years of silence or the Intertestamental period that the 14 Old Testament Apocrypha books were written. Since such books were written after the close of the Old Testament canon of Scriptures, they were rejected by both the Jews and Jesus and His Apostles, as books which were not inspired and thus, were full of errors and contradictions.

These books were 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Song of the three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Baruch & Letter of Jeremiah.

Bible students should be careful not to take heed to these and some other books of Mormon; they are not inspired.

All these things tell us that, we have a lot to study.

ADVANTAGES OF THE MOSAICAL DISPENSATION.

1. It was a tutor, or Headmaster, to preserve some portions of Israel to see Christ (Mt 13:17, Isaiah 49:13, Lk 2:15).
2. It preserved the heritage of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3, Isaiah 41:8).
3. Everything written was purposely to teach us and give us hope (Rm 15:4).

Update 7 (b) con't...

4. It paved way for the coming of Christ (Jn 5:45-47). etc.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE MOSAICAL DISPENSATION.

1. The Letter kills (2 Co 3:6).
2. The disobedient died with no mercy under two or three witnesses (Hb 10:28).
3. The Israelites were condemned in the ministration (2 Co 3:9-10).
4. There is a vail in the reading of all the books under this dispensation, or the old laws (2 Co 3:13-15).

5. Those who strictly stick to this dispensation without the law of Christ (1 Co 9:21), are cursed (Gal 3:10-11).

6. The 613 laws are ineffective on all true worshippers of the Christian age (Rom 3:19, 10:4).

7. The Mosaical dispensation cannot save Christians (Rom 3:20).

8. The 10 commandments as part of the 613 laws of the Mosaical age deviate the lukewarm from the truth. etc.

THE POWER OF THE MOSAICAL DISPENSATION.

1. The idea of "one national Israel" (Hos 11:1; Ps 147: 19-20) connects with the "one ark" (Gen 6:18, 7:17-24) and then results in the "one Church" policy of the New Testament (Mat 24:37-39; Eph 3:10; 4:1-4). As the first two saved the worshippers, so as the Church saves (Acts 2:40,47; Col 1:13-14).
2. The number twelve(12) which stands for "governmental perfection" (according to the Hebrew gematria) is surely the exact pillar that symbolizes "complete set of God's people" consecrated in dispensations (Rev 7:4-8).

3. The fiery serpent of brass set upon the pole, to save Israel (Nm 21:8-9), was a symbol of the crucifixion of Christ (Jn 3:14).

4. The baptism that took place in the red sea, is a symbol of our immersion baptism (1 Co 10:1-2; Mat 28:18-19). etc.

UPDATE 7 (C)

STUDYING FROM THE CHRISTIAN AGE/DISPENSATION.

This period started after the death of Christ, and it shall end when Christ comes again to judge mankind on Earth. This **age** is named after **Christ** (Acts 11:26).

The four(4) Gospel books, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John mediate between the Mosaical age and the Christian age. Jesus Christ, as the mediator of the Christian age (Heb12:24), demonstrated many things which sought to link the Old Testament to the New Testament and vice versa. The mission of Christ helped to lead the minds of the Old Testament worshippers to the New one indeed. The New Testament which speaks of this period contains 260 chapters and about 7,959 verses.

The **Christian age** is therefore, a period which began in A.D 33 to house and lead all true and faithful worshippers till the mighty revelation of Christ, whence all the saints shall behold the eternal glory.

FEATURES OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

1. Jesus Christ is the Mediator (Hb 12:24, 1 Tm 2:5).
2. The law has been given through Christ (1Co 9:21).
3. The New law is given to all nations (Gal 3:26-27).
4. Christianity is the only spiritual nation of God (1 Pt 2: 9-10, Eph 2:19).
5. The Gentiles are included (Rm 9:30-33, Col 3:11, Acts 26:23).
6. The Holy Spirit is the witness of the New law (Rm 8:16, 2 Co 1:22, Acts 1:4-5).

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7. There is only one commandment; love (Rm 13:8-10, Gal 5:14).
8. The testimony of Christ is written in our hearts (Jer 31:31,33, Hb 8:10).
9. Christians worship in Spirit and Truth (Jn 4:23-24, 2 Co 3:8).
10. Christ's sacrifice was once (Hb 10:10, Hb 9:12-14).
11. Christ is the first of all kind (Lk 2:22-23, Col 1:15,18).
12. Directed by the High Priest, from Judah (Hb 7:24-25, Hb 7:13-14).

13. The High Priest is one, and rules over all nations (Hb 1:1-3, Hb 7:24,28).

14. All Christians are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:9-10).

15. It shows the real thing, which is the body of Christ (Col 2:16-17).

16. There is a spiritual circumcision (of the heart); baptism (Gal 5:2,6; Col 2:8-12, Rm 2:25-29).

17. Baptism takes place when one is immersed in water (Rm 6:3-4, Col 2:12), and the Holy Spirit is the Seal (Eph 4:30).

18. Christ is the only King, in the Spirit (Jn 18:36-37).

19. The Kingdom is the Church Of Christ (Col 1:12-14, 1 Tm 3:14-16, Eph 3:10, Rm 16:16), and we don't worship in Jerusalem for our Salvation (Jn 4:19-22, Gal 1:15-17).

20. The only Prophet for all humanity is Jesus Christ (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:20-23; Heb 1:2-3).

21. The only feast is in Christ (1 Co 5:8, Hb 13:20); the **Holy Communion** (Mt 26:26-30, 1 Co 10:16).

22. The only Sign is the death of Christ, which has permitted us to partake in the **Holy Communion** (Jn 6: 52-59, 1 Co 11:23-34).

23. Heaven is the better hope (Hb 11:16).

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THE DIVISIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Biblically, **there are four(4) main divisions** of the Christian age; the **Messianic age**, the **Kingdom reign**, the **Apostolic age**, and the **Apostasy period**.

a) The Messianic age: This is the period that speaks of the life of Jesus Christ, on Earth; it is given to show when the Messiah was revealed in this world. The four(4) Gospel books (i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), hold the Messianic Age of the New Testament.

The word "**Messiah**" is romanized in Hebrew as **māšîaḥ** and **messias** in Greek. Messiah/Messias is twice used in the New Testament of Jesus; in reference to the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ.

In the book of John (the Gospel), the "Messiah" is used in **John 1:41** and **John 4:25**; the two places in the New Testament, which word, was a reference to Jesus Christ (Jn 4:26). The "Messiah" means "anointed one." It is the equivalent of the New Testament word "Christ" (Acts 2:36) which also means "anointed." Jesus, as the Messiah was anointed (Mt 3:16) to carry out the three-fold ministry of **Prophet** (Deut 18:15, 18-19; Luke 13:33; Acts 3:20-23; Heb 1:2-3), **Priest** (Heb 6:20, 7:26, 8:1-2, 9:11) and **King** (Jn 18:36; Rev 17:14, 19:16, 1 Tim 6:15).

The name "**Christ**" is from the Greek word "**Khristós/Christós**" which means "the anointed." So there is no doubt that Jesus is the Messiah. With this biblical idea, "Jesus Christ" is simply called "Jesus the Khristós," i.e. "Jesus the Messiah" or "Jesus the Anointed;" by later Christians who believe that His Crucifixion and Resurrection fulfill the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (Mat 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-48).

Many prophecies were given in the Old Testament to help fulfill the Messianic age. In all, the book of Isaiah, is therefore, considered to be the messianic book of the Old Testament. It carries the message of the Christ who was to come for the salvation of all men, both for the Jews and for the Gentiles. The book of Isaiah is quoted 308 times in the New Testament, thus making Isaiah the most quoted prophet in the New Testament.

Hence, the **Messianic age** is the period of the mighty revelation of the Christ in the New Testament era to fulfill the prophecies (John 1:45, 5:45-47; Lk 24:44-48; Acts 13:29), and to accomplish His mission on Earth (John 4:31-33).

Some prophecies of the Christ, and their fulfillment.

1. He would be a descendant of Abraham through Isaac (Gn 12:3, 22:12,18).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Mat 1:1-2, 18-25, Gal 3:16-17).

2. He would be born during the days of Roman rule (Dan 2:44, 7:13-14).

***Prophecy fulfilled;**

i) Born during the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 B.C. - A. D. 14; see Luke 2:1-7).

ii) Reigns in heaven on His throne (1 Co 15:24, Luke 21:27, Rev 11:15).

3. He would be born of the tribe of Judah (Gn 49:10, 1 Chron 5:2, Mic 5:2).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Mat 1:2, Hb 7:13-14).

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4. He will be of the seedline of David (2 Sam 7:12-17, Isaiah 11:1).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Luke 1:32).

5. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Mat 2:1-2, Luke 2:4-7).

6. There would be a slaughter of babies surrounding His birth (Jr 31:15).

***Prophecy fulfilled in the period of King Herod** (Mat 2:1-2, 16-18).

7. He would be a sojourner in Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Mat 2:13-15).

8. He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Mat 4:12-17).

9. He would have a forerunner (Mal 3:1, 4:5-6).

***Prophecy fulfilled in John the Baptist** (Luke 1:17, Mat 11:7-10,14).

10. He would teach by parables (Psalm 78:2) and perform miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6).

***Prophecy fulfilled;**

i) He taught by parables (Mat 13:34-35).

ii) He performed many miracles (Mat 11:4-5, Jn 20:30-31, Jn 21:25).

11. He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech 9:9, Psalm 118:26, Isaiah 62:11).

***Prophecy fulfilled** (Mat 21:8-11, Luke 19:36-40).

12. He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of Silver (Zech 11:12-13).

***Prophecy fulfilled through Judas Iscariot** (Mat 26:14-16).

13. He would be **mocked** (Psalm 22:6-8), **whipped** (Isaiah 50:6), crucified with **malefactors** (Isaiah 53:9-12), **pierced** (Zech 12:10) and given **gal** to drink (Psalm 69:20-21).

***Prophecy fulfilled; Christ was...**

i) **mocked** by the people and the Chief priests (Mat 27:39-44).

ii) **whipped** and slapped (Jn 19:1, Mat 26:67-68).

iii) crucified with the two criminals or evildoers, the **malefactors** (Mark 15:27-28, Luke 22:37, Jn 19:18).

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iv) **pierced** after death on the cross (Jn 19:32-37).

v) given **gal** to drink when He was thirsty (Mat 27:33-34, 48), etc.

Thus, Christ fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies written of Him (Lk 24:44-48; Acts 13:29).

The exact mission of the Messiah.

1. To save the lost (Lk 19:10).

2. To lead mankind to God, the Father (1 Pet 3:18; Jn 14:1-2, 6).

3. To make Himself known for human salvation (Jn 3:14-15, Mrk 15:24).

4. To fulfill the law and the prophets (Jn 19:24, 28-30, 33-37; Lk 24:44-48).

5. To redeem those who were under the Sinai law or the 613 Mosaic laws (Gal 4:5; 2 Co 3:6; Col 2:14), to establish His own law (1 Co 9:21; 1 Jn 5:3).

6. To reveal to the world His grace and truth (Jn 1:17).

7. To defeat the satanic world (Jn 16:33, 1 Jn 5:4-5).

8. To sacrifice as the High Priest (Heb 10:1-10).

9. To unite all humanity under His control (Gal 3:27-29).

10. To arrange a new covenant with God the Father (Heb 9:15), so that we can also have a unique covenant relationship with God (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:6-13).

11. To make the Godhead superior in all things (1 Co 15: 28; Heb 3:1-4).

12. To help humanity gain eternal life in Him (1 Jn 5:11).

b) The Kingdom reign: This is the period where Christ extends His heavenly kingdom to mankind on earth, to build a Church to prepare all the faithful worshippers for eternal glory. This is the only period, even the only division of the Christian dispensation, which shall live eternally; forever and ever.

Amongst humanity, this period has a beginning on earth, as established in A.D 33, but does not have an end.

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The Christian age speaks of this particular period in different ways. We can understand it when we begin to trace the kingdom we behold today (Col 1:13) from some Old Testament prophecies.

Let us consider this messianic prophecy; it is written in **Isaiah 9:6-7**, "**6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon **his kingdom**, to **order it**, and to **establish it** with **judgment and with justice** from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (KJV)

We know that Prophet Isaiah was speaking of Jesus Christ. It is very clear in the **7th verse** that, the Christ would have a Kingdom, order the Kingdom, and establish the Kingdom with judgement and justice. We can re-arrange these to treat them accordingly;

Understanding the Kingdom reign (of Christ) amongst mankind.

i) Christ ordered the kingdom to come: [This is where I believe Bible students will surely understand, in this period of "the kingdom reign."]

Christ already had His heavenly kingdom (Jn 17:5), and left it (Phil 2:6-7; Heb 10:9-10) to save humanity on earth (Luke 19:10; Jn 10:10).

When He was about to leave the earth into heaven (Jn 16:10), He aimed to establish a part of His heavenly kingdom on earth, as it is evidently proven in Isaiah 9: 6-7, which kingdom shall register all the partakers into heaven (Heb 12:23).

This kingdom is called **"the kingdom"** (Matt. 8:12; 13:19), **"the kingdom of David"** (Mark 11:10), **"the kingdom of heaven"** (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 13:41), **"the kingdom of God"** (Matt. 6:33; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43), **"the kingdom of Christ"** (Matt. 13:41; 20:21), and **"the kingdom of Christ and of God"** (Eph. 5:5). It was this particular kingdom which Christ asked/ordered His disciples to pray for its establishment on earth, termed as **"Thy kingdom come"** as used in the Lord's prayer (Mat 9:6-13; Luke 11:1-4).

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Note that, the part of this kingdom under discussion here is the main reason for the Lord's prayer; thus, once it comes, the Lord's prayer becomes being answered already.

In order to answer this prayer of our Lord, Christ gave the key ("authority") to Peter, to the opening of this kingdom, as the "school" of the heavenly kingdom on earth (Mat 16:18-19). So that, people can be added to it (Acts 2:47) for the wisdom of the heavenly mysteries (Eph 3:10) that enables one to be completely saved from the untoward generation (Acts 2:40-41; 2 Tim 2:10), into eternity (1 Jn 5:11).

Thus, the kingdom which was ordered to come, came in A.D 33, as the Church, the Church of Christ (Rom 16:16).

ii) The kingdom was established: The Church as the Kingdom was established in A.D 33 at Jerusalem (Acts 1:8) on the Pentecost day (Acts 2:1). The 120 believers (including the eleven Apostles) and Matthias (Acts 1:15, 26), were the first people to partake in the Kingdom. About 3,000 souls were also added to the Church (Acts 2:41). In fact, many souls were won for Christ (Acts 4:4) to help sustain the Kingdom on earth. Jesus Christ is the Head of the established Kingdom, the Church (Col 1:18, Eph 5:23-24, Eph 4:15-16). **The Church is Christianity, and Christianity is the Church (1 Pet 2:9-10).**

The kingdom reign is not a period strictly in reference to the Church, but speaks of the Kingdom of Christ that extends to the Church. Thus, the Church is collectively the "subject" of the heavenly kingdom (2 Co 5:6-10).

iii) Christ reigns the kingdom: In reference to God's authority, the word "kingdom" (Greek, basileia) refers to kingdom reign from heaven. In this time, the Church (Greek, ekklesia) is the assembly of those on earth who have submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus from heaven.

In this sense, Jesus Christ reigns the Church and heads it (Col 1:18, Eph 5:30, Eph 4:15-16). And Christians presently reign with Him (Rom 5:17; 2 Tm 2:11-12).

It is not only the Church that Christ reigns, His kingdom also extends to...

- Heaven (Heb 8:1, Rev 21:9-10).
- All nations (Rev 2:26-27, 12:5).
- All things (Eph 1:20-22).

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The name of Christ reigns in heaven, in earth, under earth and everywhere (Phil 2:10-11).

iv) The kingdom will be eternally established with judgment and justice: Christ is the foundation of the Church (1 Co 3:11, Eph 2:20). For this reason, the Church will be eternally established in heaven (Heb 12:22-23). The members of the Church shall be built together for a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:21-22). The Church is the house of God (1 Tm 3:14-15) and hence, **judgment** will begin at the house of God (1 Pt 4:17-18) in **justice** (Acts 17:31, Rm 2:5-8).

Thus, with all these analysis, Christ has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and shall fulfill the messianic prophecy of "the kingdom reign" in Isaiah 9:6-7.

c) The Apostolic age: This period speaks of the peculiar spirit of the Apostles of Christ and the apostolical mission. According to the Bible, the apostolic age started in A.D 33 and then ended in the latter part of the 1st century, with John the Apostle (A.D 98-100).

Biblically, the word "apostle" is once used as a descriptive designation of Jesus Christ, the Sent of the Father (Heb 3:1; Jn 20:21). It is, however, generally used as designating the body of disciples to whom He intrusted the organization of His Church and the dissemination of His gospel, "the twelve," as they are called (Matt. 10:1-5; Mark 3:14; 6:7; Luke 6:13; 9:1). We have four lists (or tests) of the apostles, one by each of the synoptic evangelists (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14), and one in the Acts (1:13). No two of these lists, however, perfectly coincide. Another qualification was the power of working miracles (Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43; 1 Co 12:8-11).

The duties of the Apostles or how Jesus used them in the ministry.

1. To preach the kingdom of heaven to the lost in Israel (Mat 10:5-15; Acts 2:32).
2. To preach the kingdom of heaven to the whole world with confidence (Mat 10:16-33, Mrk 13:10).
3. To witness and understand every concept of the teachings of Christ (Mat 13:10-13).
4. To use them for the establishment of the New Testament Church (Mat 16:15-18, Acts 15:7).
5. To hold the secret of the Messiah (Mat 16:20, Mrk 8:30).

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6. To baptize people to become the followers of Christ (Jn 4:1-2; Mat 28:18-20).
7. To serve Christ while He was still living on Earth (Jn 4:8, Mat 17:27).
8. To help save people from the untoward generation (Luke 5:7-11, 10:16-20; Acts 2:40-41).
9. To take care of the Church (Jn 21:15-17; Acts 20:28).
10. To direct people to imitate Christ (1 Co 11:1, Phil 3:17).
11. To help write the New Testament books (1 Jn 1:1-4, Rv 1:1-4, 11). etc.

Clarifying some issues about the apostolic title used by some Christians.

Christians should not contextually come into conclusion that, in **2 Co 8:23** and **Phil 2:25** the word "messenger" is the rendering of the same Greek word, elsewhere rendered "apostle," and for that reason, the word "apostle" can be a title to those who first plant the Christian faith somewhere in this apostasy period, as some also believe that it can be a title of all Christians commissioned to preach the gospel. All these or such claims are false.

We should understand that, the "apostle" was a descriptive designation of Christ's chosen and commissioned groups in only the first century (Mat 10:1-5). And I believe this would be the exact meaning of the statement made by Christ in Rev 2:2; **"Them which say they are apostles, and are not."**

The word Apostle (apóstolos in Modern Greek), was defined by Luke the Physician, as **"The men which have companied with us [the appointed disciples] all the time that, the Lord Jesus went in and out among us [the ordained Apostles], beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us [the commissioned disciples]" (Acts 1:21-22).** These were the qualifications for the Apostleship. The 12 disciples of Christ were chosen or appointed (Mat 10:1-4); Judas Iscariot was part, even when they were ordained as Apostles. But when they were commissioned to work as Christ's Apostles, Judas was not part and when they needed someone to succeed him, the 11 Apostles used the given qualifications to choose one, counted unto them by the Holy Spirit, which was Mathias (Acts 1: 23-26).

The apostles therefore could have had no successors. They are the only authoritative teachers of the Christian doctrines. The office of an apostle ceased with its first holders. Paul then became the 13th Apostle of Christ (1 Tim 1:12, 2:7, 2 Tim 1:11). Barnabas was also an Apostle (Acts 14:13-14). As Paul was contemporary with Apollos, we would believe that, Apollos too was an Apostle (1 Co 3:5-9); all these people were called directly by Christ without succeeding the twelve apostles.

One thing we must consider here is that, there are certain people whose calling were not specifically identified in the Bible, but all what we know about them is that, they were part of the Christians with different titles. It may even happen that, Christ met many people and sent them to preach the word, but all those people were not known. But for the rest of the Apostles, their sources were and are known biblically.

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Man-made Apostles were truly embraced in the period of Constantine the Great in A.D 325, when he considered himself as the 13th Apostle of Christ in the Roman empire. According to the Bible, Constantine the Great does not qualify to be called the 13th Apostle of Christ (Acts 1:20-26) And this idea has resulted in the many Apostles, which is not biblically proven.

For these reasons, Christ saw that all such Apostles were man-made Apostles without being clarified biblically by Him.

d) The Apostasy period: "Apostasy" is simply the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief.

This period is when many ungodly doctrines propagated within and outside the Church, with the aim of condemning that which is true and just.

This period was working in the period of the Apostles, and the Church was warned against that (Acts 20:28-32). This is the same period that led to the death of the Apostles of Christ; it was polluting the divine doctrine of the Church (2 Tm 3:8-9), to deceive the saints (2 Pt 2:1-3, 1Jn 4:1-3).

The Apostasy period is parallel to the kingdom reign of Christ and the Church; because this period contains all the satanic tools and equipment which are aimed to strike down the part of the heavenly kingdom established on earth (which is the Church).

Reasons for (or causes of) the Apostasy.

1. Satanic attacks (1 Pet 5:8; Rev 2:10).
2. False prophets and false teachers (2 Pet 2:1-3).
3. False prophecies and false teachings (Jude 9-13; 2 Tim 4:3-5).
4. Anti-Christ(s) (1 Jn 2:18-19, 22, 1 Jn 4:3, 2 Jn 1:7) and false Christ(s) (Mark 13:21-22).
5. Occultism: It was/is the practice of magical arts as a religion (Acts 8:9-24).
6. The Greek/Roman pantheon: This speaks of when Roman names were applied to Greek gods.

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These gods were worshiped throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 14:12; 19:27, 35).

7. Philosophy: Plato lived in the fourth century before Jesus.

His philosophies permeated the philosophical world at the time of Jesus. Plato believed that the real world was composed of ideas. The material world was only an extension or manifestation of these ideas. To him, knowledge was salvation. This idea polluted Christianity.

8. Gnosticism: This system of thought began in the 1st century and then led to the apostasy of many in the Church in the 2nd century.

Some people believed that the knowledge of one's inner self elevated him to a higher level of spirituality. The focus of his salvation, therefore, depended on his self-awareness of the supposed inner spark of light that brought salvation. This idea hurt Christianity a lot.

9. Emperor worship, amongst the Romans.

10. Judaism; mostly the negative influences of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots.

11. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D 70 (Luke 21:20-24), and the persecution of the Church(es) in Asia Minor (Rev 1:11; 6:9-11).

12. The death of the Apostles (Acts 20:29-31).
13. The extension of Christianity (Mat 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).
14. The dark ages.
15. Private studies (2 Tim 3:7) and private interpretations (Mat 15:9).
16. Politics. etc.

The effects of the Apostasy.

1. Many Apostles and some believers died (Acts 12: 1-3; Rev 6:9-11).
2. Christianity suffered much in the hands of the persecutors (Acts 4:3).

3. Some agents of Satan tried to turn away people from the truth (Acts 13:8-12).
4. Many believers backslide (Acts 21:21; 2 Thes 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1); either partial (Prov 14:14) or complete (Heb 6:4-6, 10:38-39).
5. Satan uses this opportunity to dwell in many men (Mat 12:43-45).
6. True teachers of the gospel find it difficult to correct what have been destroyed by false teachers (2 Tim 4:2-5).
7. This period will surely reduce the number of those who shall inherit heaven (Mat 22:14). etc.

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How to remain faithful in the Apostasy period.

1. Not forsaking the gathering of the saints (Heb 10:25, 3:13).
2. Studying the Scripture regularly (1 Tim 4:13,16).
3. Praying (Luke 18:1, 1 Thes 5:17) for God's knowledge and wisdom to understand the Bible better (James 1: 5-8; Jn 3:27; Eph 3:10).
4. Listening to the messages which the true gospel Preachers give (Rom 10:17; James 1:22-25).
5. Allowing yourself to be rebuked (2 Tim 4:2; Prv 12:1, 13:1,18).

6. Practice what you hear or learn (Mat 5:15-16).
7. Practicing righteousness (Job 29:14, Prv 11:5, 12:28; Mat 5:20; Rom 1:17, 3:22, 5:17,21, 2 Co 5:21).
8. Exhibiting the spirit of Faith, Hope and Love (1 Co 13:13).
9. Not fighting physically with the false teachers (2 Tim 2:22-26).
10. Teaching others with the truth you have had (2 Tim 2:2).
11. Steadfasting to the end for the grace in Christ (1 Pet 1:13), etc

ADVANTAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

1. The Christian dispensation shows the fulfillment of the Abrahamic seed in Christ (Gal 3:8,16-18).
2. It justifies Christians in Christ by faith (Gal 3:24-25).
3. It explains things that happened in the Old Testament and gives them to us as examples (1 Co 10:11, Hb 9:9).
4. It fulfills everything written about Christ (Mat 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-48, Jn 1:45, Acts 13:29).
5. The Spirit (of the new covenant and law) gives life (2 Co 3:6, Rm 7:6).
6. The disobedient have to face the vengeance of the Lord Himself (Hb 10:29-31).

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7. No condemnation for those in Christ (Rm 8:1).
8. There is no vail covering the New Testament (2 Co 3:12,16-18).
9. Eternal life, in Christ alone (1 Jn 5:11).
10. Spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7-8; 1 Co 12:4-11) from above (Jn 3:27; James 1:17). etc.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

1. Satan hates this dispensation and all the believers in it (Rev 2:10; 12:13-18).
2. It goes through series of apostasy. etc.

THE POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

1. Our salvation is beyond the imaginations of angels (1 Pet 1:12; Rom 11:33).
2. One is justified in the truth, in Christ, alone (John 8:32; 14:6).
3. The Christian dispensation is the revelation of all hidden **mysteries** of all past, present and future events (Eph 3:9-11);
 - i) We speak "the wisdom of God in a mystery" in understandable languages (1 Co 2:7; 14:2, 23);
 - ii) The calling of the Gentiles into the Christian Church, so designated (Eph 1:9-10; 3:8-11; Col 1:25-27);

- iii) The union between Christ and His people symbolized by the marriage union (Eph 5:31-32; 6:19);
- iv) The seven stars and the seven candlesticks (Rev 1:20);
- v) The woman clothed in scarlet (Rev 17:7);
- vi) Jesus Christ being the Almighty God (Rev 1:8; 1 Jn 5:6-8) is the "great mystery of godliness" (1 Tim 3:16);
- vii) The resurrection of the dead (1 Co 15:51);
- viii) And other doctrines which need to be explained but which cannot be fully understood by finite intelligence (Matt 13:11; Rom 11:25; 1 Co 13:2).

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4. Christ has been lifted upon a cross to save all humanity (Jn 3:14-15, Col 2:14); anyone who fails to believe in Him cannot be saved (Jn 8:24; Mrk 16:16).
5. No Jesus, no eternal life (Jn 3:36; Rom 5:21).
6. This dispensation is the grace time; the grace ends with death (2 Co 6:1-2; Hb 9:27). etc.

THE END!

[TO GOD BE THE GLORY]

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