

Doctrine



*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...
The entrance of Your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:105,130*

The Church Age

THEOLOGY

Calvary Old Path believes that God has consistently foretold of important events before they happen. We believe that our final destination is recorded in scripture.

DOCTRINE

We believe God has interacted with man differently during certain periods of time throughout history. Some use the term Dispensations to describe these periods of time. According to this view, the age in which we now live would be called the Church Age.

These are the areas we will cover to help you understand our beliefs regarding the Church Age.

1. What is Dispensational Theology?
2. What is the Church Age?
3. If True, What is the Length, From Beginning to End?
4. What Comes Next?
5. Is There Full Agreement on This Subject?

What is Dispensational Theology?

Simply put, God has worked with and among mankind differently at different times (Dispensations).

For instance, until Jesus came to pay the price for sin, God's people were under the Covenant of the Law. The keeping of all the ordinances, festivals, offerings and sacrifices prescribed in the Books of Moses dealing with the Law, found primarily in Exodus through Deuteronomy.

It was people's inability to keep the Law that led to something else being needed to solve the problem sin created (*Hebrews 7:18-19*). As we see in that passage, sin could never be removed by man's effort. They could have fellowship with God under the Law, but the Law was unable to do away with the consequences, eternally, for sin.

Here is where Dispensational Theology comes in. When Jesus came to this earth, He came to make the way to heaven and eternal life possible by paying the price for sin, by His life, sacrificial death and resurrection from the dead. There was an annulling of the requirements of the Law, because we are now saved by grace through faith (*Ephesians 2:8-10*).

Before we move on, let us state that the life of the believer is in no way less moral or godly than before the time of Jesus. We may not be under the Law, but we are to live to a greater standard of conduct since we claim to be followers of Jesus who gave the example of a perfect life. We cannot duplicate that, but we should be a holy people (*1 Peter 1:15, 2 Peter 3:11*).

What is the Church Age?

Simply put, the church age began at a certain event and will continue until the next major event on God's time table.

It is worth noting that before the resurrection of Jesus, there couldn't have been a church, as we know it, because people were still under the Law. Even Jesus was a person who kept the Law, albeit perfectly (*Matthew 5:17, Galatians 4:4*).

But what happened after His resurrection? The Church Age answers that question. What the church teaches and how we approach salvation, our practices, our teachings, our message and overall approach to all matters of faith have changed since Jesus came to His creation. We believe Jesus was the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament spoke of, so we are not hostile to Old Testament history and practices. Without them, so much of what we know as Christians would lack context.

If True, What is the Length, From Beginning to End?

As for the beginning, we see this in the events recorded in *Acts 2*. It is important to note that the people assembled in the upper room were already believers and were born again, but this was when the church became known to the world.

From that day forward, what we know as the church had a different message accompanied by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, exactly as Jesus promised in *John 14:15-17*, and *Acts 1:8*. This is seen in that latter part of *Acts 2*, when Peter is able to use the event as a platform for evangelism. The preaching of Jesus dying and resurrecting to conquer sin and death was an entirely new message. This was the beginning of the church.

So, does the Church Age have an end? The church as we know it certainly ends, but those who are part of it will spend eternity in heaven. However, there are matters which take place between now and when we see eternity.

When we read the book of Revelation, it is clear that there is a time coming when God will judge those on earth who are not part of the church. Of course, this assumes whoever reads this looks at *Revelation* as a future matter and not one of past history. **(See booklets, *Pre-Tribulation Rapture*, and *The Tribulation and the Church*)**

So, now to connect the two parts. We believe the church began, publicly, at Pentecost as we read in *Acts 2*. It will conclude when Jesus returns for His church, before the judgment of Revelation takes place. We call this the rapture of the church, or the catching away as described in *1 Thessalonians 4:17*.

What Comes Next?

As we have briefly mentioned, the next event which will close the Church Age will be the rapture of the church. Why does the church need to be removed? The answer is simply that the church isn't in need of judgment. That judgment fell upon Jesus (*1 Thessalonians 5:9*, *Revelation 3:10*).

We also see a watering down of the message of the church and a lack of seriousness among the people professing belief. We believe this will be a characteristic of the times right before Jesus returns for His church. The first century church looks very different from the commercial driven church we see in most of the western world.

When reading the New Testament writers it could be implied they are speaking about this very problem, in context of their warnings regarding end times church culture, *2 Timothy 3:1-7* being a fine example of this.

The Bible is filled with various measures of what the world will look like as the Church Age ends. We see them in our world today in ways not seen before. We deal with the topics in other writings in this series.

Is There Full Agreement on the Subject?

The simple answer is no, not all believe there is a future judgment as Revelation describes.

As for those who share our view of “dispensations”, there is not total agreement here. We would all agree that God acts through dispensations, but there is the extreme view known as **hyper-dispensationalism**. This view holds that the church didn’t begin until some time after the close of the books of Acts.

There are nuances of when exactly the Church Age started. Some point to Paul’s conversion in *Acts 9*, or Paul's commission to the gentiles in *Acts 13*. These are views we do not hold, since Peter was able to reach the gentiles while Paul was still in his spiritual infancy. One example of this is in *Acts 10*, where we read that Cornelius and his home were already believers while Paul was in his spiritual infancy.

As with all of our positions, we are not looking to debate or argue for one side or the other, but to identify the sides and to document the beliefs of Calvary Old Path.

We would direct you to a number of other topics related to this subject:

Pre –Tribulation Rapture

The Tribulation and the Church



On the Path Discernment Ministry

Discernment is always mentioned in scripture in a favorable light. Discernment was promoted as a way to avoid error and cause the believer to continually be seeking and watching with vigilance. Accordingly, these materials are provided for you in order to assist you in growing in your knowledge and understanding of God's Word. We have taken great care to give a thorough and expansive explanation of the positions of the church.

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These booklets are provided to explain Old Path's teachings on topics of theology and doctrine. Should you have questions on doctrinal matters or would like further clarity on these positions, you can email us and we will assist you by researching the needed matters. However, we do not provide these booklets with the intention of debating.