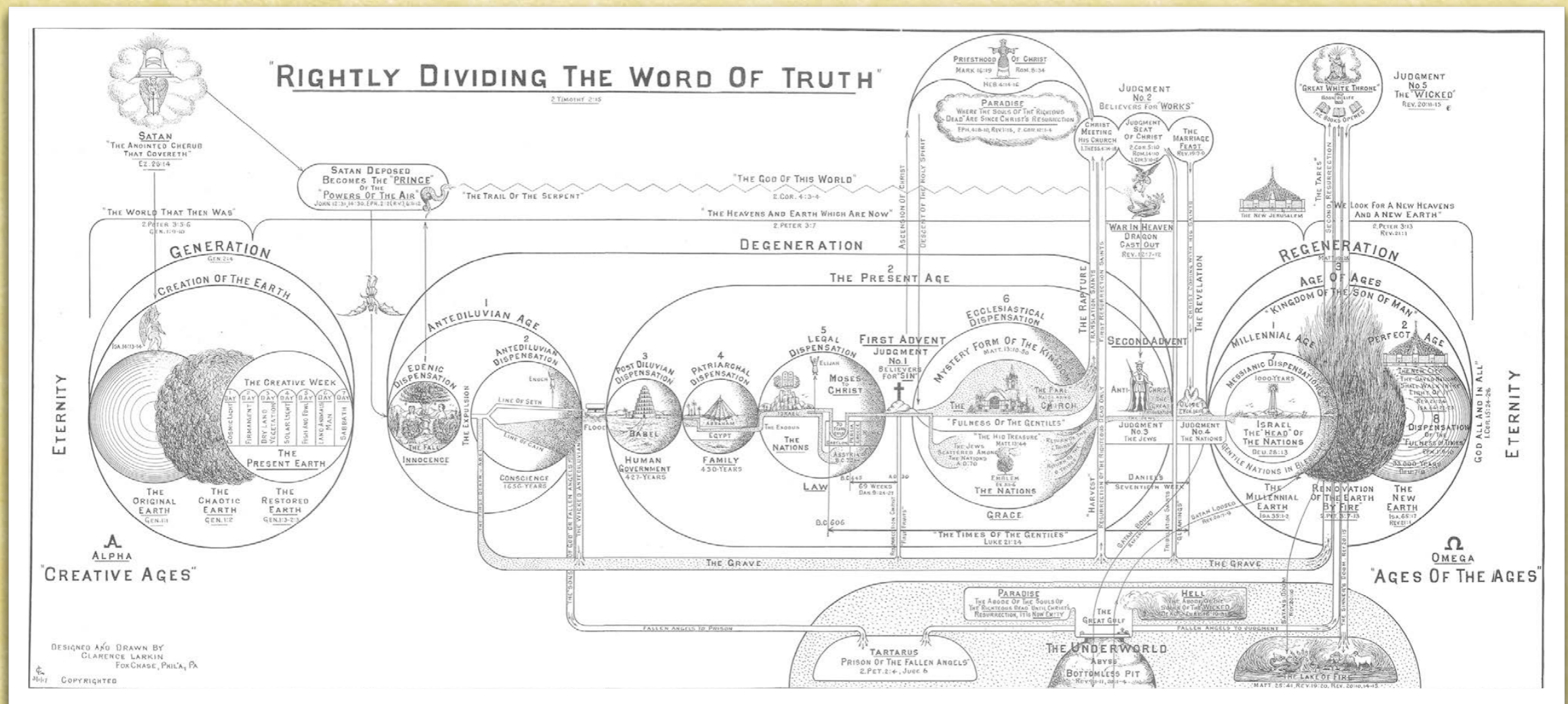


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What Are Dispensations? and What is Dispensationalism?

The Basics



WHY STUDY THE DISPENSATIONS?

- **God's plan for the ages**
- **Enables us to understand the Bible**
- **Reveals the profound corruption and sinfulness of human beings and the grace of God**

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

Latin: *dispensatio*, “to deal out, to weigh out, to dispense, or to distribute.”

Webster's *Third New International Dictionary*:

- (1) a divine ordering and administration of worldly affairs;**
- (2) a system of principles, promises, and rules divinely ordained and administered;**
- (3) a period of history during which a particular divine revelation has predominated in the affairs of mankind;**
- (4) any general state or ordering of things.**

***A dispensation takes place in time, but isn't necessarily related to time.**

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

Comes from the Greek word *οἰκονομία/oikonomia*

Combination of two words:

νόμος/nomos = law + *Οἶκος/oikos* = house

Wooden translation: “house law,” “house management,” or maybe “house rules.”

We get our English word “economy” from “*oikonomia*”

H.S. class “home economics”

1. The action of administering or ordering something; dealing out or distributing something.

2. The act of administering or dispensing with some requirement.

“Economy: the management of the resources of a community, country, etc. the disposition or regulation of the parts or functions of any organic whole; an organized system; the management of household affairs.” (Random House *Webster’s Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus*, College Edition 1992)

Thus it means managing or administering the affairs of a household. This is not a time word.

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

So it is usually translated (when it is translated) “management,” or “stewardship,” or “administration,” or “dispensation.”

We can go to a location where they will dispense or administer the COVID-19 vaccine.

A New Administration (Dispensation)



The inauguration of the president of the United States is a ceremony to mark the commencement of a new four-year term of the president of the United States.

Dispensation Defined

A dispensation is a distinct and identifiable administration in the development of God's design for human history.

God manages or administers the entirety of human history as a household, moving humanity through sequential stages of His administration.

In each dispensation God delegates to a human administrator (i.e., Adam, Israel, the Church).

Usage of the Word

***Oikonomia* is used 9 times in the New Testament:**

Luke 16:2, 3, 4

1 Cor. 9:17

Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9

Col. 1:25

1 Tim. 1:4

**Luke 16:1, “He also said to His disciples:
‘There was a certain rich man who had a
steward, and an accusation was brought
to him that this man was wasting his
goods.**

**Luke 16:2, “So he called him and said to
him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give
an account of your stewardship, for you
can no longer be steward.’ ”**

- a. Two parties involved, one party has authority to delegate responsibilities; the other has the responsibilities to carry the duties out (cf., Luke 16).**
- b. There are specific responsibilities for the steward (Luke 16:1).**
- c. Accountability and responsibility are part of the arrangement, “give an account.” At any point in time the steward can be called upon to explain how he has fulfilled his responsibilities (Luke 16:2).**
- d. A change can be made at any time if unfaithfulness is found.**

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

A dispensation is a distinct and identifiable administration in the development of God's design for human history.

What makes the dispensations distinguishable from each other?

Distinct, Identifiable Characteristics

- A change in God's governmental relationship with man and a corresponding change in man's responsibility to God
- Revelation explaining the change
- Test to see if man will obey
- Mankind refuses to obey—Rebellion (Sin)
- Judgment upon man's disobedience

HOW MANY DISPENSATIONS ARE THERE?

- ❖ **There is no universal agreement concerning the number of dispensations—the exact number is not considered vital to the system as a whole**
- ❖ **Nearly everyone agrees that there are at least two**
- ❖ **All premillennialists agree that there are at least three**
- ❖ **Nearly all dispensationalists agree that there are at least five**
- ❖ **Most dispensationalists hold to seven dispensations (C. I. Scofield/Ryrie)**
- ❖ **A few older systems held to eight (not necessarily the same eight: Charles Larkin/James M. Gray)**

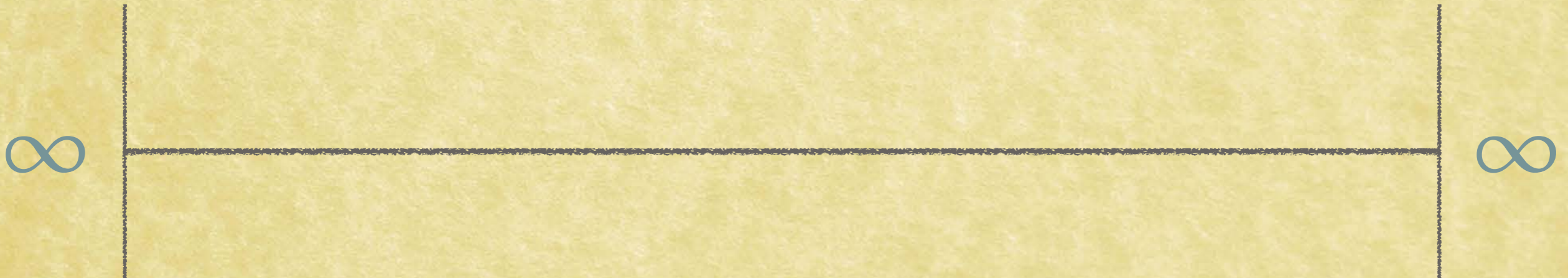
“Under the Old Testament dispensation the Spirit did indeed reveal the mind and purposes of God; but it was to selected persons chosen to be prophets, authenticated as divine messengers, whose instructions the people were bound to receive as coming from God. In like manner, under the new dispensation, our Lord selected twelve men ...”

**~Charles Hodge
Systematic Theology
Covenant Theologian**

THE MAJOR OBJECTION

- ❖ **Those opposed to dispensationalism claim:**
 - ❖ **Dispensational divisions are not found in the Bible**
 - ❖ **Drawn from our theology and then read back into the Scriptures**

EPH. 3:2–5, 8–11



EPH. 3:1–2, 5

Eph. 3:1, “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

Eph. 3:2, “if indeed you have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which was given to me for you,” οἰκονομία, *oikonomia*

Eph. 3:5, “which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has **now** been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:”

Before Now: at least
2 “ages”—plural

Now

EPH. 3:8–10

Eph. 3:8, “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

οἰκονομία, oikonomia

Eph. 3:9, “and to make all see what is the **administration** of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

Eph. 3:10, “to the intent that **now** the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by **the church** to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,”

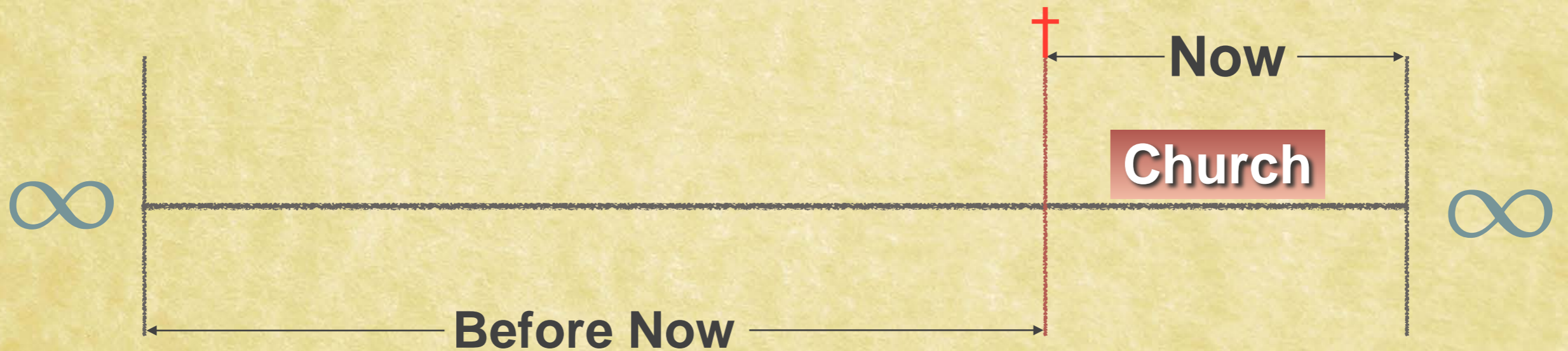
Before Now: at least
2 “ages”—plural

Now (Church)

EPH. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Eph. 2:7



EPHESIANS 2:7

Eph. 2:7, “that in **the ages to come** He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

**Ages *to come*: at least
2 “ages”—plural**

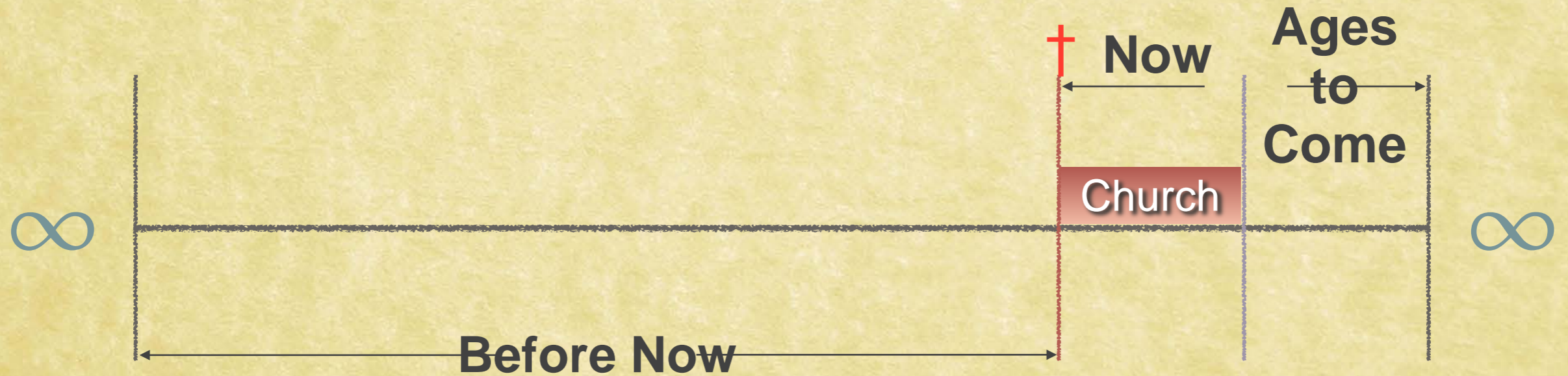
Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Hebrews 2:5–6

Eph. 2:7

Ages to Come



HEBREWS 2:5–6

Heb. 2:5, “For He has not put **the world to come**, of which we speak, **in subjection to angels.**”

Heb. 2:6, “But one testified in a certain place, saying:

After Now

‘What is **man** that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him?’ ”

Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Eph. 2:7

Hebrews 2:5–6

Before Now/Now

Ages to Come

The World to Come

2 Thess. 1:5–7



2 Thessalonians 1:5–7

2 Thess. 1:5, “which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

2 Thess. 1:6, “since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

2 Thess. 1:7, “and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,”

Kingdom



Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Eph. 2:7

Ages to Come

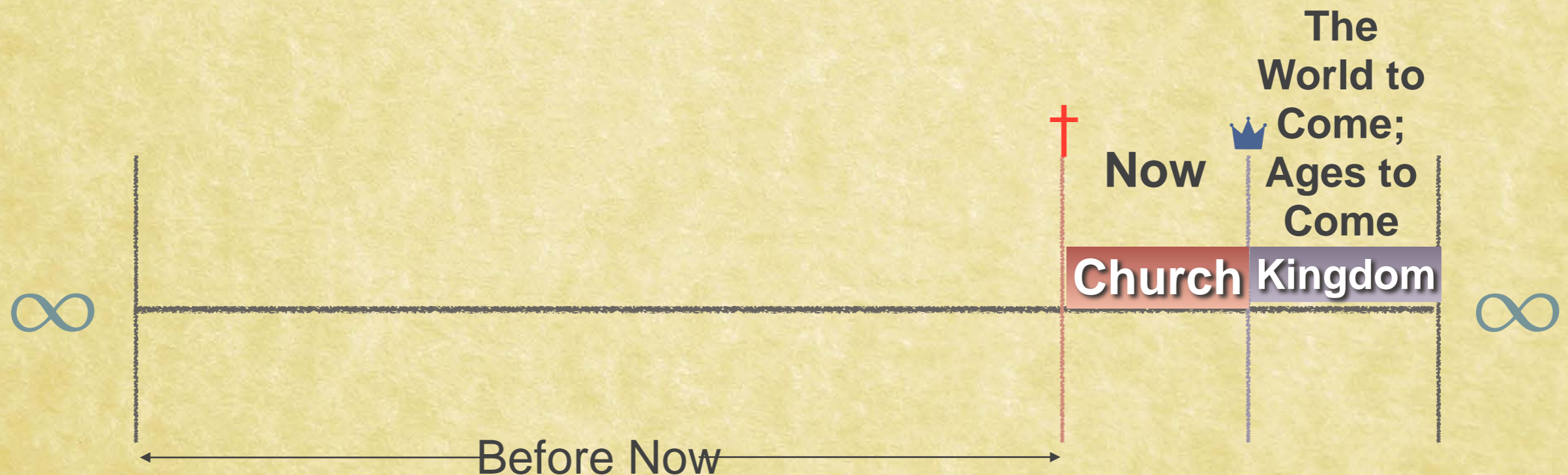
Heb. 2:5–6

The World to Come

2 Thess. 1:5–7

Kingdom

Rom. 5:12–14



ROMANS 5:12–14

Rom. 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Rom. 5:13, “(For **until the Law** sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Rom. 5:14, “Nevertheless death reigned from **Adam to Moses**, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”

Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11 **Before Now/Now**
Eph. 2:7 **Ages to Come**
Heb. 2:5–6 **The World to Come**
2 Thess. 1:5–7 **Kingdom**
Rom. 5:12–14 **Adam–Moses**



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Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Gal. 3:17–18

Eph. 2:7

Ages to Come

Heb. 2:5–6

The World to Come

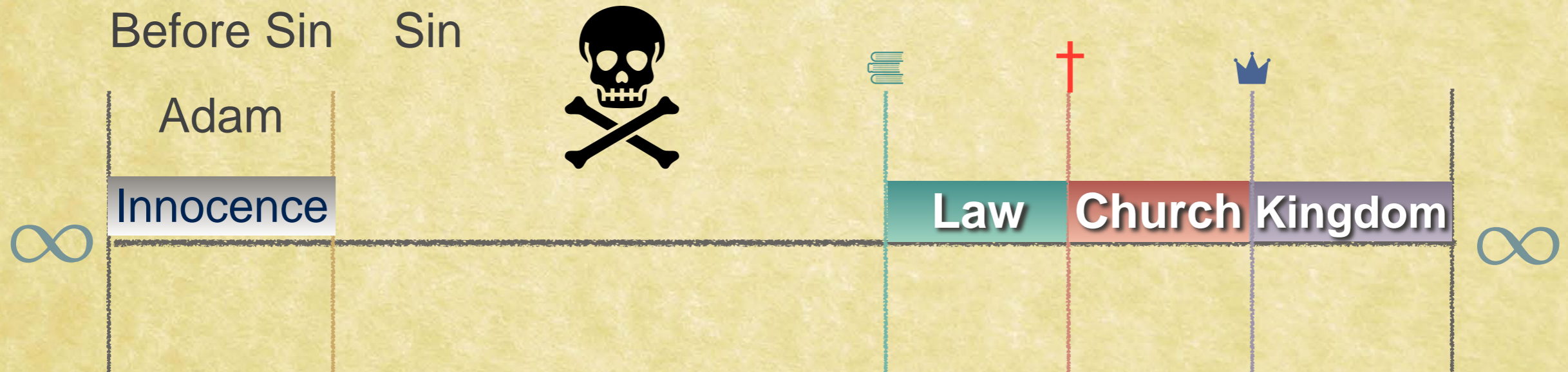
2 Thess. 1:5–7

Kingdom

Rom. 5:12–14

Adam–Moses

Before Sin/Sin



GALATIANS 3:17–18

Gal. 3:17, “And this I say, that **the Law**, which was **four hundred and thirty years later**, cannot annul **the covenant** that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the **promise** of no effect.

Gal. 3:18, “For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of **promise**; but God gave it to Abraham by **promise.**”

Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Eph. 2:7

Ages to Come

Heb. 2:5–6

The World to Come

2 Thess. 1:5–7

Kingdom

Rom. 5:12–14

Adam–Moses

Before Sin/Sin

Gal. 3:17–18

**Abrahamic Cov't/
Law**

Gen. 3:7, 22

Rom. 2:14–15



GENESIS 3:6–7, 22

Gen. 3:6–7, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. **Then the eyes of both of them were opened,** and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

Gen. 3:22, “Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, **to know good and evil.** And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—”

ROMANS 2:14–15



Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Eph. 2:7

Ages to Come

Heb. 2:5–6

The World to Come

Gen. 9:4–6

2 Thess. 1:5–7

Kingdom

Rom. 5:12–14

Adam–Moses

Before Sin/Sin

Gal. 3:17–18

Abrahamic Cov't/Law

Rom. 2:14–15

Conscience



GENESIS 9:3–7

Eph. 3:2–5, 8–11

Before Now/Now

Eph. 2:7

Ages to Come

Heb. 2:5–6

The World to Come

2 Thess. 1:5–7

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Rom. 5:12–14

Adam–Moses

Before Sin/Sin

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Gen. 9:4–6

