

DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH.

In the course of God's dealing with men, we may observe that He is again and again *testing* them ; and yet always providing for the failure in which He knew this testing would end.

He began thus with Adam in the Garden. He put him to proof, setting him as under law. But in the mystery of the sleeping man, and the woman taken out of him, He would have us learn, that from the very beginning He knew where this would end, and provided another and a better thing.

So with Israel afterwards. He tested them by the law ; but He revealed to them " the shadows of good things to come " (Heb. x. 1), the pledges of grace and salvation ; knowing that man would again destroy himself, and be ruined under the law of Mount Sinai, as he had already been under the law or command delivered to him in the Garden of Eden.

Then, by the ministry of the prophets, the Lord was leading the people back to obedience, if so be they would be led that way. But by the same prophets, He was anticipating the grace in which a self-ruined, helpless and incorrigible people must finally stand, if blest at all.

John the Baptist then came, according to the prophecies which went before upon him, as the Voice, the Messenger, the Elijah, of Messiah. But he was also, in another aspect of his ministry, the *Witness of the Lamb of God*, and the *Harbinger of the Light of the world* ; characters in which the prophecies had not foreshewn him, but which put him in company with the Messiah, or the Christ, as dispensing grace and salvation to Israel and to man, on the clear assumption that all would fail under the ministry that was then about to test them.