

Session 2: What Dispensations are there?

Michael Hardt

Bible Basics Conference
Catford, 08-09 November 2008

Note: The audio file (mp3) of this presentation is made available on www.audioteaching.org



Introduction



- What is less important:
 - Whether there are 7 dispensations, or 6, or 8
- What matters is:
 - that there are dispensations...

Introduction



- Motivation:
 - Think about the story of a young lady ('Mary') as told in H A Ironside's article on "Ultra-dispensationalism"
 - How Mary discovered the importance of dispensational truth...



Features of a dispensation

- A new 'rule' or 'way' of running or administrating
- 'Oikonomos' is a steward (and oikonomia an administration or dispensation)
- The steward runs the house according to certain rules, ways, methods
- God has the full right to 'set the rules' for the 'household' of mankind
 - He determines the rules or ways in which things should be done
 - He changes these ways from time to time – for good reasons
 - In other words: God introduces new 'dispensations' from time to time
 - But they all serve one purpose: the working out of His purpose to the glory of God

	Time	Dispensation	Reference	Failure	Judgement
1	Creation - Fall	Innocence	Gen. 2:15–17	The fall (Gen. 3)	Banned from Eden (Gen. 3:24)
2	Fall - Flood	Conscience	Gen. 3:7	Cain (Gen. 4:8)	Flood (Gen. 7)
3	Flood (Noah)	Government	Gen. 9:6	Noah (Gen. 9)	Confusion of language (Gen. 11)
4	Abraham's call – Sinai	Promise	Gen. 12:1	Gen. 13:26.27	Servitude in Egypt (Ex. 1)
5	Moses – Christ	Law	Ex. 19:1	Ex. 32:19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captivity in Assyria and Babylon (2. Kings 17:25): • Destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21: 6.21.24)
6	Pentecost – Rapture	Grace / Church / Spirit	Acts 2:1	Acts 5 and 6	Strong delusion (2. Thess 2:7–12; Rev. 3:16)
7	Christ's appearing – 1000 years later	Millennium	Rev. 20:4 Eph 1:10	Ps 101 and Rev. 20:8.9	Judgement of nations (Rev. 20:9) and the great white throne (Rev. 20:11).

God's plan with this earth will come to fruition – in the Millennium, and Christ will be vindicated, see session 8.

SEVEN DISPENSATIONS OF TIME

ETERNITY PAST

1
Innocence
Gen. 2 & 3

Adam
Cast Out

Gen. 4 to 8
2
Conscience

Noah's
Flood

3
Government
Gen. 9 to 11

Babel
Judged

Gen. 12 to 50
4
Promise

Israel
Enslaved

5
Law
Exod. 1 to Acts 1

Israel
Scattered

Acts 2 to Rev. 3
6
Church
Spirit / Grace

AD 32
+

Christendom
Tribulation

Israel put aside
Temporarily
Rom. 11
7 yrs
Great
Tribulation
Rev. 6 to 18

Abomination
of Desolation

Rapture
of the
Church
Rev. 4 & 5

Christ Returns
to Reign
Rev. 19

7
1,000 yrs
Kingdom
on earth
Rev. 20:1-9

Marriage
Supper
of the
Lamb

The
Beast
Reigns

Nations
Judged
Christ
Reigns
Unsaved
Judged

Rev. 21 and 22

THE NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH

606BC

"Jerusalem shall be trodden of the Gentiles... Luke 21:24
THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

The Lake
of Fire
Rev. 20:10-15

Possible modifications



-
- ‘Innocence’ and ‘Conscience’:
 - not necessarily to be regarded as a dispensation
 - Innocence is not ‘dispensed’, nor is a conscience
-



Possible modifications

- ‘Innocence’ and ‘Conscience’:
 - not necessarily to be regarded as a dispensation
 - Innocence is not ‘dispensed’, nor is a conscience
 - The church:
 - Does not belong to this world
 - Is not part of God’s ways with the world
 - Is entirely called out
 - It is the time of the Gentiles and of the Spirit
-



Possible modifications

- ‘Innocence’ and ‘Conscience’:
 - not necessarily to be regarded as a dispensation
 - Innocence is not ‘dispensed’, nor is a conscience
 - The church:
 - Does not belong to this world
 - Is not part of God’s ways with the world
 - Is entirely called out
 - It is the time of the Gentiles and of the Spirit
 - Can also be seen as the time of Israel:
 - Under the law
 - Under the priesthood
 - Under kings
 - The time of the law:
-



Dispensations

Another useful scheme of dispensations:

1. **Noah** (conscience)
2. **Abraham** ('promise')
3. **Israel** ('Jewish dispensation')
 - Moses ('time of the law')
 - Aaron ('time of priesthood')
 - Kings ('time of kings')
4. **Gentiles** ('times of the Gentiles')
5. **Church** ('Spirit / gospel / Christian / New Testament')
6. **Millennium** ('dispensation of the fulness of times')



More importantly...

Whether you regard the time of the church

- as a very special dispensation or
- as 'no dispensation':

The implications are clear:

the church is:

- distinct from Israel
- called out
- Heavenly
- Indwelt by the Holy Spirit
- Linked with Christ.

Israel:

- has a future on earth
- will be gathered out of its world wide dispersion
- will possess Palestine
- will dwell there in peace under Messiah's reign



The main points

1. 'Dispensations' are not a doctrine but a framework that helps understand the Bible
2. What matters is not whether there are 6 dispensations or 7 or 8
3. God deals with different people at different times in different ways
 - Not because He changed His mind but because He wanted to show what man is and who He is.
4. Man has failed under successive dispensations
 - This is why God sent Christ in pure grace
5. It is vital to notice that there are different dispensations
 - Remember the story of Mary (H.A. Ironside)
 - Christians who do not understand dispensational differences will easily fall into error (in worship, politics, etc.)
6. Only with a dispensational outlook can the Bible be interpreted fully and consistently
7. Dispensational teaching vindicates God!
8. Dispensational teaching sees the glory of God as ultimate aim – not merely the salvation of man!



O depth of riches!

- Paul reviews God's dispensational ways in Rom. 9 – 11:
 - God keeps His promises to Israel
 - God brings the Gentiles into blessing as well!
- It is not a theme for dissension but for worship!
- Here is his conclusion:

“O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen.”

Romans 11: 33-36