

WHAT IS A DISPENSATION

DEFINING A BASIC IDEA

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God"

~ Colossians 1:25

1. God's One Purpose and Many Dispensations

- a. God's character never changes: he is always gracious, true, just, holy, loving
- b. God has a single eternal purpose: gathering in one all things in Christ - Eph 1:9-10
- c. Until then, there are things that are not one – Eph 1:10 → heaven and earth
- d. Thus, the two-fold purpose of God – prophecy/mystery; Israel/church – Eph 3:9-10
- e. He has revealed his will progressively in history through dispensations – Heb 1:1
 - i. Ex: Raising a child, a farmer in seasons, going through school – Gal 3:17-25

2. Dispensation in the Bible

- a. It is a Bible word found in Paul's epistles – 1 Cor 9:17, Eph 1:10, Eph 3:2, Col 1:25
- b. Not the Catholic 'dispensation' – the exemption from the obligation to follow their law
- c. You may have heard it described as 'economy', 'household management', 'stewardship'
 - i. The greek word is oikonomia thus they say economy, but it is not only this.
 - ii. It is translated stewardship here Lk 16:1-2; 1 Cor 4:1-2, but it is not only this.
 - iii. Described as a government administration, but not only this.
- d. Dispensation: A revelation describing God's ways of dealing with us, and our responsibility to him
 - i. This describes a relationship, participation, or arrangement God dispenses

3. God's Revelation

- a. A dispensation requires a revelation from God. Eph 3:3
- b. Scofield defined it as a period of time in his notes on Gen 1:28, but this is not accurate
- c. God spoke many times, and things happened in time, that are not God's dispensations
- d. Ex. A dispensary, business under new management

4. The Ways of God

- a. A dispensation describes the ways of God. (God's dealing, God's govt - Eph 1:10)
- b. Paul says the dispensation given to him fulfills the word of God – Col 1:25
- c. The dispensational question is "what is God doing? What should I do?"
- d. Studying dispensationally is different than studying the Bible theologically

5. Man's Participation

- a. A dispensation requires participants, responsible people, stewards. (Israel vs Church)
- b. The dispensation was committed to Paul toward us - 1 Cor 9:17, Eph 3:2, Col 1:26
- c. Important because it is not just God's thoughts, statements about God, or a new time

6. The Responsibility of Man

- a. A dispensation describes man's responsibility to God, and our place in Him (Eph 1:10)
- b. We see relationship in Eph 3:6, and Col 1:27, and responsibility in Eph 3:9, Col 1:28
- c. Before, man's responsibility was the law, but now our responsibility is as ministers