

COUNTING DISPENSATIONS

CORRECTING SCOFIELD - PART III: SEVEN DISPENSATIONS

*"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God
which is given me to you-ward..."*

~ Ephesians 3:2

1. 7 Dispensations and Scofield

- a. Scofield said to be who popularized dispensationalism (but he was not first, only, best)
 - i. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, chapter 2: "The Seven Dispensations" intro
 - ii. Dispensational study now often misdefined as a system of seven dispensations.
- b. Are there dispensations? What is one? How many are there? Did Scofield get it right?

2. Dispensations Before Scofield

- a. "Dispensations" were not new with Scofield, he repeated language already used.
- b. Gen 1:28 SRB - "*A dispensation is a period of time...*" was wrong, but popularly wrong.
- c. John Owens, Isaac Watts, Jonathan Edwards all spoke of dispensations as times/ages.
- d. There have been divisions of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and more "dispensations" (periods)
- e. There are ages in the Bible (times past Eph 2:3, but now Eph 2:13, to come Eph 2:7)
- f. Respecting progressive revelation and context is indispensable to Biblical understanding

3. Correcting Scofield's Dispensations

- a. His notes and book divide the Bible with dispensations, but not rightly.
- b. Scofield's dispensations: begin with testing/trial, end with judgment. (problematic)
- c. "...seventh, and last—the millennium." – but what of Ephesians 1:10
 - i. Only 4 verses using 'dispensation' in the Bible, Scofield references 1 (Eph 3:2)
- d. Disp #1-3 – Gen 1-11 – 10 chapters, 3 dispensations, periods: days, 1700yrs, ~100 yrs
 - i. Dispensationalists use Adam and Noah to this day to teach diff instructions.
 - ii. No verse identifying dispensations of innocence, conscience, or government.
 - iii. God did not dispense innocence or conscience – but these have clear judgments
 - iv. In the SRB he blends 7 dispensations with 8 covenants, starting with Edenic.
- e. Disp #4 – Promise – Gal 3:16, but says it ends with judging Israel as slaves in Egypt?
 - i. Rom 5:14 describes a period between Adam and Moses, but there goes 3 disps
- f. Disp #5 – Law – Gal 3:17, Exo 19:1-8, again the judgment has trouble...
 - i. If this dispensation ends with the dispersion, what of the return and >500 yrs?
- g. Disp #6 – Grace – The only Pauline verse he quotes is Eph 2:8-9, until the end.
 - i. The death of Christ introduced this dispensation, then why quote John 5, 6, 10?
 - ii. "The predicted result of this testing... under grace... is judgment". (facepalm)
 - iii. He puts Great Tribulation/wrath of Matt 24:21-22 in this dispensation of grace
- h. Disp #7 – Millennium reigning over restored Israel and the saved of this dispensation

4. What We Can Learn

- a. What is a dispensation? (Pez, a dispensary, a business under new management)
 - i. God's revealed administration and your responsibility in it – Eph 3:2-4
 - ii. A dispensation describes the ways of God, what he does – Eph 1:10, Col 1:25
 - iii. A dispensation of the gospel was committed responsibly to Paul – 1 Cor 9:17

- b. More important division than time periods is His purpose revealed in Prophecy/Mystery
 - i. His 'hidden wisdom' 'kept secret' vs. what was spoken – Rom 16:25, Acts 3:21
 - ii. His purpose for heaven and earth, Israel (covenants) vs. Body of Christ
- c. Don't count dispensations – understand them (What has God revealed...)
 - i. Don't measure dispensations – respond to them (What God is doing...)
 - ii. Don't set the time – discern the times (Know when you are in God's will)

"Now will I exhort thee, whosoever thou art that readest scripture, if thou find ought therein that thou understandest not, or that appeareth to be repugnant, give no temerarious nor hasty judgment thereof; but ascribe it to thine own ignorance, not to the scriptures. Think that thou understandest it not, or that it hath some other meaning, or that it is haply overseen of the interpreters, or wrong printed.

Again it shall greatly help thee to understand scripture, if thou mark, not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and unto whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after."

~ Miles Coverdale, Prologue to his 1535 version of the Bible