

Bible Basics Conference 2008: Dispensations

Part 8

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Place	Catford
Date	08.11.2008
Duration	00:29:28
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/cbb002/bible-basics-conference-2008-dispensations

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[00:00:00] It is clear that with the amount of material available, that to present a balanced view of the points that need to be considered, we haven't time to read every verse, and we haven't time to expand every verse that we do read. Now as David has said, all the notes corresponding to the slides are available online. Now even in this advanced age, it's possible that there are one or two who don't have access to online facilities.

Now if you're one of them, all you need to do is go to Michael Hart at the end of the conference, tell him what a nice English gentleman he is, how lovely his wife is, [00:01:02] and how delightful his children are, and how well behaved they are, and a credit to the way they've been brought up, he'll provide you with hard copy.

I thought he was editing that out. And if he isn't available, go to any of the speakers and they will arrange for a hard copy of any talk, or the whole lot if you wish.

In part I'm saying that because this session definitely finishes 5.30 and it's now 5.05. Would you turn again please to a verse that Mark listed, 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 32.

Give non-offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

[00:02:07] At the present time, indeed since the day of Pentecost, when the church of the living God was inaugurated, God has recognised three entities, three groups of people on the earth.

The nation of Israel, the other Gentile nations, and as a separate entity, the church of the living God. I'm sure we're getting that message by now. And that will continue as long as time shall last, which that will emerge in other things that need to be said.

So that's the only scripture I read and I want us all to bear that in mind.

[00:03:01] This has been made to the next event, the next climactic event when the Lord Jesus comes for his own and takes them to be with himself, a scriptural consideration, the rapture of the believers

of the present dispensation and one or two others who don't concern us this afternoon.

When that takes place, when we've gone to be with the Lord, there are certain prophetic events which need to be fulfilled to fulfil God's word and they will take at least approximately, perhaps a little more than seven calendar years as we know them. And on slide 96, we list the basic prophecy in Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel 9, and we find that that period of seven years, as Michael indicated on the original overall dispensational talk, [00:04:09] that that seven years is split into two periods of three and a half each. Now, not much is said about the first three and a half years of that seven year period, but we get a lot of information in the book of Revelation about the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, which we've listed there.

We'll start now with reminding and refreshing our memories. Israel has a future, God says so, and as said earlier, there's nothing new under the sun.

[00:05:04] The world at large at the moment is saying, well, we hope for a final improvement, but things will get worse before they get better, and I'm sure they're right. We know from scripture that for the nation of Israel, things will get much, much worse before they get better. And where we turn to for that, we look at Daniel and Revelation and others. This is not the scope of this afternoon's talk. Just a reminder, it is a scriptural topic, and scripture gives the details if we are prepared to look forward. Well, there will be that seven year period when Israel will find to their horror that things will get worse and worse, and eventually, when they are on the brink of extermination [00:06:04] by all their enemies round about them, with enemies to the north of Palestine, the east of Palestine, and to the south of Palestine, there with their backs to the Mediterranean Sea, they will be on the point of extermination as a nation, and then, and only then, will they be delivered by a personal Redeemer, their personal Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. And when that happens, I'm telescoping a lot together, when they are delivered, they will find to their delight that they are constituted God's earthly nation again, which as we've heard, they've forfeited by their sinfulness and wickedness, but God will give them life [00:07:02] as a nation, and they will rejoice in that which God is bringing in.

Now we get little touches of this. In Ezekiel 36, we get an illustration of new birth.

In chapter 37, we get an illustration of quickening. Let me remind you what we've heard. Things that will be true of Israel as a nation are true of Christians now as individuals.

We need deliverance as they need deliverance. We need to be born of God as individuals. They will need to be born of God as a nation, Ezekiel 36. We need new life. We need to be quickened as individuals, and they need to be given new life, Ezekiel 37, [00:08:04] and so on. We've had a little bit about the dispensational part of Romans 9, 10, and 11. I won't repeat that.

Israel has a future then, set aside at the moment because of their rank disobedience. Because of that, they will pass through a terrible time of tribulation, details of which Scripture gives, which are outside the scope of this particular talk. But they have a hope, and what we have to bear in mind, Mark referred to it briefly – Israel's hopes are earthly, relative to the earth, they are material, and related to material things, and they are temporal, related to time. Whereas the Christian's hope, the Christian's blessings, are heavenly rather than earthly, [00:09:08] spiritual rather than material, and they are eternal rather than temporal. Well, these things we've learned from Scripture.

It will be an amazing thing for the nation of Israel.

When they are delivered by their personal Messiah, they will look at him on the point of their deliverance, and they will be obliged to say, it's him, the one that we crucified, [00:10:01] the one that we put to death, Isaiah 53, is the belated cry from the redeemed of Israel when he appears in power and great glory as they look back to what happened at Calvary. Think of that, the words were prophesied about 800 BC, they will be spoken at his appearing which is probably just a little more or about seven years from now, and they will say words that will take them back to what happened at the cross of Calvary. That's prophecy as the Scripture gives it. Now this hope that Israel as a nation has, where do we look for it in Scripture?

Well for a start, the public appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus is spoken about much, [00:11:10] much more than the private coming for his own which we speak of as the rapture, a scriptural expression usually referred to in Scripture as catching away or snatching away, but the word and the thought is there.

But when the Lord Jesus comes in power and great glory, bringing his heavenly saints with him, he will then introduce this period of blessing for the nation of Israel.

Now how are we to recognise from Scripture when that period is referred to? Well there are a number of terms. One is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Peter. [00:12:05] The other is, another is the millennium, well we'll come to that, the word is scriptural even if the Latin word isn't found in our English Bibles and we read about that in Revelation 20. But I would certainly encourage us all to take account of this other term which is not used so much or so often as it might be because it gives part of the character of the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Six times over in the Synoptic Gospels, Ephesians and twice in Hebrews, we get this phrase, the world to come.

Now speaking about things at the moment, the Bible speaks about the present world, sometimes [00:13:02] it talks about the present evil world and sometimes the world that now is. Well that's in contrast to the world that is to come. And it is a reminder that the world that is coming, Christ's world when he will be supreme will be entirely different in character to the world as it is now. And we are just for a few moments going to think about this.

Clearly we cannot limit our knowledge to what we see or hear today and tomorrow.

We do really need to get to the scriptures to study them and to meditate upon them prayerfully and carefully.

And when we do that, you will find that one way of putting it is that there will be seven [00:14:04] major features about the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the millennium, the world to come. It has its own character. It has its own king.

There are those who are given the privilege of being subjects of that kingdom. There are blessings or benefits connected with the kingdom. The kingdom has a beginning, a commencement. It has a duration and it has an end.

We need to go to Daniel chapters 2 and 5 where again it may seem a surprise but God raised up a Gentile king, the first, the head of the first of four Gentile kings who would successively conquer and have the rule over the nation of Israel or at least part of it.

[00:15:11] And we get in him, even though apart from a small period he could not be called a godly man, nevertheless he was put in a position which attracted certain features which illustrate the kind of king that God's king in the kingdom will be like.

So we have here that this, the overriding principle will be one of righteousness. Old Testament, Isaiah 32, behold a king shall reign in righteousness. And that lovely verse, we use it in the gospel, that's fine, but really it's about the world to come that the verse really refers to at 1731, God has appointed a day in which he [00:16:07] will rule the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained whereof he is given assurance in that he has raised him from among the dead.

Third feature, this kingdom will never be superseded by any other.

Yes, literal interpretation of the Bible, all for it, we must be.

But we have to read words with care, taking account of the immediate context and then the context of scripture as a whole. Now it's like that when we come across the word eternal or the word everlasting. Usually we would expect it to mean forever and ever, although the main emphasis in the [00:17:02] word eternal is not duration but the character of the thing. But we have to learn that there are places in scripture where everlasting or eternal is used, not in the sense of everlasting duration, but in the sense that having been installed by God, it will never be superseded by any other, neither man nor demon can eradicate it or remove it, and this kingdom will never be superseded by another.

To the believer, one of the most delightful things about this kingdom is, and the king is, his name is Jesus, my saviour, who loved me and gave himself for me.

[00:18:05] Oh yes, there's much to instruct the renewed mind in the prophetic outline, whether it's about Gentiles, the Jew, or the church of God, but central to this is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I would say this ranks in a tremendous way as an outstanding feature.

His name is Jesus. Secondly, because he is the king, he gives character to the kind of kingdom that he is. And when you get the notes in detail, look at these features.

When we start reading the Bible as Christians, it takes some length of time, reading the Bible carefully, before we realise that everything relates to Christ as such.

[00:19:08] And one of the most delightful blessings about trusting Jesus as saviour is that when he comes in glory, we'll be alongside of him.

He's coming for us, that we might be with him, and then at a later stage, that he might come at his appearing and we, to use the word, his consort, his companion in his public presentation in glory, will be the church of the living God. A delightful thing. In fact, scripture goes further than I could ever go in my own reasoning.

Scripture speaks of the church of the living God as the complement, the fullness of him [00:20:05] that filleth all things.

And I wouldn't dare to say it, but scripture tells me the church, you and me, all believers of the present day, we are so special to the Lord Jesus that he does not count himself to be complete

unless he has us with him as his partner, his bride, his wife, and as the scripture variously distinguishes this.

The church is the king's consort.

Scripture makes it plain that when Jesus comes to take us to be with himself privately at the rapture, that he will come, set up the kingdom, and then having established the kingdom [00:21:05] by his power and great glory, he will then withdraw from the earth, but he will leave in Jerusalem a prince regent of the house of David to conduct his affairs on earth during that thousand years reign.

This is something that takes us time to come to, but it's what scripture says. We need to read the later chapters of Ezekiel to come to that conclusion. Who are the subjects of the kingdom? Well, we need, there are various, there's a hierarchy relative to this. The chain of command from God through Christ through the church of the living God down to earth to Jerusalem and out through the nation and the tribes of Israel to the four [00:22:02] quarters of the earth.

And there will be features I can do no more than list now in order to keep to the time. And Jerusalem will be God's earthly center. Now let us say again, the main emphasis in the blessing of Israel is that it is the center and administrative center of a world government.

Micah tells us that it will be the teacher's training college for the world, tells us it will be the center of worship.

And so we could go on.

We are being selective. There are other features for which there isn't time. But wonderful thing, for a period of a thousand years, there will be things that are rarely [00:23:05] seen now.

First of all, there will be justice or righteousness. There will be peace. There will be joy. Now pause there.

Your minds will be going to Romans 14 and you'll be thinking, ah, the New Testament says something very similar. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, material things, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The moral features, which will be stable and current in the world to come, are intended to be seen in Christian believers of the present day.

Fourth feature, fertility, the scriptures are listed. The curse having been removed, there will be fertility, increased yield in persons and [00:24:06] in land.

There will be longevity. Have you ever wondered why the oldest man that ever lived, Methuselah, was taken out away from earth in 969?

He didn't quite make the millennium. He didn't quite make a thousand years, a full cycle of time. We can expect that in a world that's riddled by sin. But in the millennium, in the world to come, the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, death when it occurs will be exceptional, but it will be summary judgment when sin occurs. Animal creation will show itself in the way they treat each other. Scripture tells us that the bigger ones, the more powerful, will no longer be carnivorous, [00:25:04] but that they will all be at peace with one another, eating, having a common diet. Seventhly, I've said opposition,

rebellion, idolatry will be no more.

This wonderful situation, this future where Israel is the administrative center of blessing for the whole world, it will commence with the appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will last for a thousand years. Now here's a case where we must take it literally. Sometimes people have said to me, but it's only mentioned in one place. If it is clear and within the framework of Bible prophecy, if there were only one place, [00:26:05] it would be sufficient, wouldn't it? But I like the way that in this concentrated section of seven verses in Revelation 20, we get a thousand years, the thousand years, to couple it, repeated three times. So it is a period extending a thousand years, but it's not any old thousand years. It's a special thousand years, a specific thousand years where God will be vindicated for the way he has been long suffering with men and with the nation of Israel until that happy period dawns. So it's not only a thousand years, it's a specific thousand years. Now, again, it will never, ever be superseded by another kingdom. [00:27:02] As time merges into eternity, and it's not our subject this afternoon, we can see what scripture intends us to understand. Where all previous kingdoms have been conquered and superseded by someone else, that will never be true of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. When God's ways have been recognised, fulfilled on earth, time will merge into eternity after one expression of defiance and rebellion by Satan and his hordes.

This kingdom, proper as in the future, it's the climax of God's ways on earth. As all blessing and for the glory of God, it centers on Christ personally. [00:28:03] It rests upon the work of the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we need the whole scripture to give us the force and the balance of it. One more thing. We will come to this. There are two sessions which give us the practical implications of the things we're talking about. I would only say this, does God give us information about the future of Israel? Yes, he does.

Does he give information about the future of the world? Yes, he does.

But when God gives us information about the future, it's with the intention that it regulates our lives at the present time. Now, it gives us the grace and the facilities for acting now in the light of what God is [00:29:01] going to do in the future, and acting in the light of what he has taught us to be true. As we say, God grants that having been here and saturating ourselves in what scripture says about what God is going to do in the future, that he would give us the grace and the courage to be obedient to what he says he's going to do.