

Bible Basics Conference 2008: Dispensations

Part 12

Speaker	Bible Basics Conference; Ernest Brown; Hugh Clark; Simon Attwood; Michael Hardt; Graham Warnes; Nick Fleet; Andrew Poots
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[00:00:01] Thank you very much for that time. I'm very glad for what has been brought out. If there was anyone here or anyone who wondered before the conference whether this is a topic that you need to study at all, dispensations, and whether it's practical, I think those doubts have gone now.

And there's been a lot of food for thought, and I'm sure there'll be a full question box afterwards as well. Most of them with Simon and Rusty on there.

Now, this last session, I'm not quite sure, how many minutes have I got?

I always listen to David. It depends.

Right. The topic for the last session is a dispensational panorama.

And perhaps the exercise behind it is best described by a verse from the longest psalm, [00:01:05] and that's verse 18 of Psalm 119. Open thou mine eyes.

I'm convinced that this framework of dispensational teaching is something that can open our eyes to see things in the Word of God that otherwise we wouldn't see there. It says, open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

There's another rendering that I like even better which says, and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law.

There are wonderful things in the Bible that you can see by just reading it and taking it as things are said, but there are also things that you will only discover if you know about different dispensations and different distinctions. [00:02:05] And I'll try to go through some of these panoramas.

Now, one thing about panoramas is that this is one of the alps here. If you look at a panorama, you can't see all the little wonderful flowers and details, but you get an overview. And we'll have to concentrate on one or two overviews. So I'm just skipping over some points to save a little bit of time.

This is panorama number one, perhaps a very simple one, and one that will show to you that it's not something scientific, but something that you've done more or less already.

If you read the story in Genesis 22 following of Abraham and Isaac, you find, if you just read it as a story, you find that, yes, [00:03:03] well, in chapter 22, Abraham demonstrates that he's willing to offer up his son. And then you read on, and you find in chapter 23 that Sarah dies. And then you read on, and you find in chapter 24 that a bride is found for the son.

Now, that's a beautiful story.

There are practical lessons in there for the life of faith. But I do believe that there is more to it that you can see once you have these dispensational spectacles, if you like, the dispensational framework.

You'd all agree that Abraham offering Isaac is a picture of God giving his son, providing, as it says, the Lord will provide, God providing the sacrifice that is needed. Now, that happened at the cross. What's the next thing that happens? [00:04:02] Well, chapter 23, Sarah died.

Now, Sarah, of course, was the mother of Isaac.

Now, the Lord has come out of Israel. Sarah has died, has been set aside. Now, that means Israel has now been set aside. And what's the next thing that happens? Well, a bride is looked for, is searched for the son.

And that's exactly the order in which it happened. Once Israel was set aside, well, that was the time for the church for the bride.

Now, another sort of story we love from Genesis is the story of Joseph.

And normally we sort of concentrate on chapter 37.

That tells us how Joseph was loved by his father, how his brothers hated him, [00:05:01] how he looked for them, how they threw him into the pit, and how he was sold into Egypt.

And perhaps sometimes we read on and we find how actually he then was exalted in Egypt and he ended up being the second man in the country after Pharaoh. What we tend to concentrate a bit less on is what happens afterwards. And you have chapters and chapters and chapters of what happened to his brethren and how in the end they come to Egypt and how Joseph is hard against them and how they go back and then the story with Benjamin and so on. And you kind of ask yourself, well, why are there so many chapters about these details about the brethren of Joseph?

Well, if you look at the story dispensationally, and again I have to run through this rather quickly, it all falls into place.

[00:06:09] You see that Joseph is a picture of the son whom the father loved, how his brethren represent Israel that hated him, how he was sold to the Gentiles, how he went down into the pit, how he was exalted later on.

But then there is a story that perhaps for God was more important than it sometimes is to us. And

that's his brethren.

How Joseph takes care, how he goes slowly to make sure that there is real repentance and that his brethren return to him. And then the moment comes when Joseph actually unveils to them who he is and when the relationship with his brethren is restored. [00:07:01] Now, again, having listened to the talks on dispensation, it's not that difficult for us to understand that Christ was the Son of God, he suffered, he was rejected, but a time will come when actually Israel will recognize him. And that gives me an opportunity to mention one verse that is very important also in the context of those that actually say the church is Israel and Israel is the church. If you go to 2 Corinthians 3, Paul talks about Israel. That's the time when the church existed already. And you know what Paul says about Israel. He says, the veil is on their eyes, their understanding is hardened, and that will remain so, and in the future the veil will be taken away. Now let me ask you, who wants to be part of that Israel? [00:08:01] I guess nobody.

We belong to those who behold the glory of the Lord and who can look into his face and see the glory of God in his face.

Now that's what will happen to Israel, and it's beautifully foreshadowed in the story of Joseph and his brethren. And if you don't have the dispensational spectacles, you are very likely to miss that message. Now example number three, the feasts.

Leviticus 23. If you just read them without knowing anything about dispensations, what you'll get is an annual calendar that has a number of special days, a number of feasts, and it describes how Israel had to observe these feasts.

Now thankfully, in the light of the New Testament, we're not left in the dark. [00:09:03] 1 Corinthians 5 says, For Christ our Passover has been slain.

So the meaning of the first feast is clear. Now the next thing that happens is the feast of firstfruits, and Christ is called the firstfruits as the one who is risen.

And there was a gap of 50 days, 7 weeks, and it was on the day after that Sabbath, the 50th day, that there was a new feast, the feast of weeks. And it says in Acts 2, And when the day of Pentecost was fulfilled.

So we're not left in the dark at all, and I'm not speculating as to what the feasts mean. But you have the work of Christ, his resurrection, the formation of the church. Now what is left?

The trumpets were there to gather Israel. [00:10:01] And we know from the prophets that that's going to happen. The two tribes and the ten tribes will be gathered by the trumpets of God. And then there will be the day of atonement, when they will recognize the one whom they have pierced in repentance. And what will follow is foreshadowed by the feast of tabernacles, the millennium. Now if you are non-dispensationalists, amillennialists, whatever, I don't see how you could see any of these beauties of that chapter.

Now, this one perhaps very quickly, Saul, David, Solomon.

Again, you get a picture of the man of sin, the Antichrist in Saul. In David, you get a picture of Christ

who was rejected, but who then subjects and conquers the enemies. And in Solomon, you get a picture of Christ again, but this time as the king of peace, [00:11:05] one who reigns in peace and righteousness and glory and splendor. It's wonderful to read those stories as biographies of these men. You can learn many things. But I believe that this is the real meaning that God had in mind. And again, you need to understand something of the dispensations to see this. Now this one perhaps just very briefly, Daniel, 70 weeks.

Well, there are the first 69 weeks, 62 plus 7, but they go together.

And then there is the last week, which is kind of separated from the first 69.

Now again, if you just had that chapter, Daniel 9, you might wonder why that is. But having learned a bit about dispensations today and yesterday, [00:12:03] and perhaps even before that, you will realize that Daniel's last week is the week of tribulation. That is still future. And in between those blocks, first 69 and the very last week, there's a gap, and that is the time of the church in which we live. I need to speed on. I think I've got about 8 or 10 panoramas.

The next one is the Gospel of Matthew. Now again, you can read the Gospel of Matthew. You can read it as beautiful stories about what the Lord said, what the Lord did, how he healed, and so on. But I firmly believe that the true meaning of the Gospel of Matthew is that it is the dispensational gospel. And the events in that gospel are arranged in such a way that they help us to learn about dispensations. Now let's run through this very quickly. [00:13:03] Chapter 1, you have the genealogy. The king is introduced. Chapter 2, Israel reacts, well, basically by not reacting. It's only the men from the east who do, and the shepherds, as we know from Luke. Now then you find that the king is prepared.

He announces his constitution in chapters 5 to 7, the Sermon on the Mount. And then he performs the miracles that actually demonstrate that he was the real Messiah, chapters 8 to 10.

And at this point in time, nobody should have doubted that this was actually the one whom God had sent as Messiah. And what happened?

They all believed him, yeah? Well, chapters 11 and 12, they reject the Messiah.

They say you cast out demons through Belzebul, the highest of the demons. [00:14:05] And then what happens when the Lord is rejected? It says he leaves the house and he goes to the sea. He leaves the house of Israel, he goes to the sea of the nations, and he now speaks about the kingdom of heaven, which means the kingdom will be remote-controlled. The king is going to be absent in heaven because he is rejected on this earth.

And that actually opens the door to bring in something new, and that's chapter 16, the church. The Lord says, upon this rock will I build my church.

Now, one of the questions we had yesterday was, does this mean that God abandons his plans with Israel, the fact that he's brought in the church? Well, just read on to chapter 17.

The Lord says, there are those with me here who will not die [00:15:03] before they have seen the kingdom. And what happens? He takes them onto the mount of transfiguration, and they see the

kingdom, you might say, in miniature form. They get a preview of the kingdom.

And you see, it's wonderfully in line with everything we've been taught yesterday and today about the dispensations, that the church is brought in after the rejection and suffering of Christ, and that nonetheless God will fulfill his plans with Israel.

Now, thanks to Simon, I think I can skip this one here, except for saying that I still remember how impressed I was as a youngster when a brother spoke for three nights in a neighboring meeting and explained how God had predicted the entire history of the church in advance.

[00:16:07] And I recommend this to anyone who has not yet seen this. It's impressive how God has foreshadowed the history of the church in Revelation 2 and 3.

Now, I need this for the last one, the last panorama.

And again, this is one where you can say things fall into place very nicely if you know about dispensations. If you don't, it must be very complicated. Revelation chapter 1, Christ will return.

It says that they see him coming with the clouds.

Every eye shall see him. And then it says they will lament. [00:17:01] Now he comes in judgment, and Christ is presented as judge.

Now that's what is called the things that thou hast seen. Then in chapters 2 and 3, as we've just said, the time of the church.

Simon mentioned that at the end of that, in chapter 4, verse 1, it says, come up hither, the church is now called to heaven. You find in chapters 4 and 5 that the church is there, actually engaged in worship. And this is the starting point where Christ resumes his ways with the earth, where he starts intervening in judgment.

And as has been pointed out often, in those chapters that follow, 6 to 18, you don't read about the church at all. Now why is that?

[00:18:02] Well, because the church has nothing to do with this world. Simon has just explained this. And that's why before the world is being dealt with, the church is being taken out. And then you have these chapters, 6 to 18, that talk about the tribulation period. Simplifying a little bit, I know that in chapter 11 it is already said that Christ reigns, and then the same period is presented again, starting from chapter 12, under a different angle, focusing on the key players. But on the whole, you have the rapture, the time of the rapture, you have the church in heaven, and then you have the tribulation period. Now what happens after that? Well, chapter 19, and I saw the heavens opened, and then you see that Christ appears, he's followed by his saints. And then he judges the enemies, and he sets up the kingdom.

[00:19:06] And that's what you find in chapter 20.

There are thrones, and it says that Christ reigned for a thousand years, and to those who sat on the thrones it was given to reign with him. Now, you tell me, and perhaps we just go to 21, 22, after that

you have the eternal state, and then you have a kind of retrospect of the time of the church during the millennium.

But you tell me, how do you want to understand the book of Revelation if you believe what is widely taught, that some think we are already in the tribulation and some think we are already in the kingdom, and some think we are in the tribulation and in the kingdom at the same time. Well, we aren't. We are neither in the tribulation, nor are we in the kingdom and the millennium. [00:20:03] We are now during the time of the church. And once you know this framework, then things fall into place, as I hope has been clear from these outlines.

I'm conscious this was rather quick, but you'll be pleased that we can finish almost on time for tea. Perhaps this verse again, Open mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law.

I trust that all your eyes will be opened. All our eyes are opened, because there are so many good things to discover in the Bible. Perhaps just as a very quick recap on what we have heard as conclusions, point number one, God has tested man in successive dispensations.

[00:21:03] Being very patient, he has given man every opportunity, and he has done this to demonstrate, not to find out whether, but to demonstrate how unable man is and how lost man is.

Now this test ended at the cross.

Even when God had shown the favor to the two tribes of sending a remnant back to the country, and then they were there in the right place, and then God sent them the Messiah, something that was already unmerited. Now what did they do? Well, they rejected him and they nailed him to the cross, and that's what you and I would have done before conversion. Now that's the end of God testing man. At the cross of Christ, man is shown to be completely and utterly hopeless. [00:22:01] Now what has God done then? Well, God formed the church and blessed the church more than anyone had blessed before, taking her out of the world, uniting her to Christ. And then what happens after that? What does it mean for God's promises? Will God break them? Will God forget them? Well, no. God does not give up Israel, nor this earth, nor his promises.

Israel will receive Christ.

This earth will finally know peace and justice in Christ's reign. I come back to that verse from Romans 11, really, where Paul anticipates this objection.

He had preached the gospel of grace, and he anticipates that somebody might object, well, you know, if we're all lost, Jews and Gentiles, and there's no difference, how does that fit with the Old Testament promises?

[00:23:03] And at first sight, it's a big problem. Now Paul examines that in detail, and he says, well, be assured, God will still fulfill his promises. God is faithful.

And that leads him to say in the end, O depth of riches, who has been his advisor? It will be rendered to him. God didn't hire any consultants or any advisors. It's almost ironic that Paul says, well, they should be paid their fees then. It was God's counsel. It was in God's heart. And I trust that our eyes will be opened to study these things and to see more of the beauties that are there for us in the word

of God.