

## Definitions of a Dispensation

C. I. Scofield: A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.

H. A. Ironside: A dispensation, an economy, is that particular order or condition of things prevailing in one special age which does not necessarily prevail in another.

C. Mason: The word dispensation means literally a stewardship or administration or economy. Therefore, in its Biblical usage, a dispensation is a divinely established stewardship of a particular revelation of God's mind and will which brings added responsibility to the whole race of men or that portion of the race to whom the revelation is particularly given by God.

Associated with the revelation, on the one hand, are promises of reward, or blessing for those responding to the obedience of faith, while on the other hand there are warnings of judgment upon those who do not respond in the obedience of faith to that particular revelation.

However, though the time period (age) ends, certain principles of the revelation (dispensation or stewardship) are often carried over into succeeding ages, because God's truth does not cease to be truth, and these principles become part of the cumulative body of truth for which man is responsible in the progressive unfolding revelation of God's redemptive purpose.

Paul David Nevin: A dispensation is God's distinctive method of governing mankind or a group of men during a period of human history, marked by a crucial event, test, failure, and judgment. From the divine standpoint, it is a stewardship, a rule of life, or a responsibility for managing God's affairs in His house. From the historical standpoint, it is a stage in the progress of revelation.

Charles Ryrie: A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the out-working of God's purpose. (Ryrie notes with approval the above definition by Nevin stating that a dispensation is from God's viewpoint an economy; from man's a responsibility; and in relation to progressive revelation; a stage in it.)

W. Graham Scroggie: The word oikonomia bears one significance, and means "an administration," whether of a house, or property, of a state, or a nation, or as in the present study, the administration of the human race or any part of it, at any given time. Just as a parent would govern his household in different ways, according to varying necessity, yet ever for one good end, so God has at different times dealt with men in different ways, according to the necessity of the case, but throughout for one great, grand end.

C. R. Stam: A dispensation is not a period of time, but the act of dealing out or that which is dealt out. . . . A dispensation involves responsibility rather than merely denoting a period of time . . .