

A Dispensation Of The Fulness Of Times

"Unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in him, I say ..." (Eph. 1:10).

The word "*dispensation*" alludes not (as is sometimes commonly taught) to a period of time. The word "primarily signifies the management of a household or of household affairs ..." (W.E. Vine, Vol. I, p. 320). It is used in at least two senses in the scriptures. First, it describes the stewardship entrusted to Paul in revealed and preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 9:17). Second, the word is used of "the arrangement or administration by God in the fullness of time. God will sum up all things in Christ" (W.E. Vines, Vol. 1, p. 320). It is true there have been three dispensations: the Patriarchal period in which God's Word was administered by the patriarchs; the Mosaic time, where God's word was administered by Moses, and the present era, in which God's Son administers God's Word. The thought of "stewardship" is inherent in the word "*dispensation*."

Paul calls this the dispensation of "*the fullness of times*." Clearly, we live in the last days. Anything earthly, which might follow our present era, would be anti-climatic. After all, what being or beings, however mighty or great they might be, could compare with God's own Son who presently administers the world? Old Testament prophets spoke of the "*last days*" (Isaiah 2:2f; Micah 4) and New Testament writers tell that our present era is the fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies. Paul wrote the Galatians, "*But, when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son ...*" (Gal. 4:4). The mystery of God's will, which concerned God's good pleased bound up in Christ, involved Christ's administering God's word through Christ.

God's purpose was that in the fullness of time, God would bring together (sum together) all things in Christ, whether things in heaven or things on the earth. Here Paul states the truth, so often found throughout the New Testament, of the authority and power of Christ. Jesus claimed this authority in Matthew 28:18: "*All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth*." Peter told his Pentecost audience that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). To sinners pricked in their hearts because they were convinced Peter's accusation was true and who had cried out in anguish, "*Brethren what shall we do*," Peter gave these instructions: "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). Him whom God had made Lord and Christ, by his authority, his name, commanded all men to repent and be baptized to obtain remission of sins.

"Summing up all things in Christ" and God giving unto Jesus a name above every name say essentially the same thing (Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:9). A similar statement is when Peter said, *"And in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, where we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Paul commanded, *"Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of Lord Jesus Christ"* (Col. 3:17). The assurance of Joel, *"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,"* is God's promise that those who recognize God has summed up all things in Christ and have bowed in submission to the will of His Son, will be saved.

Jim McDonald