

LESSON - 1

Part - 2

Reference : 2 Peter. 3: 5-13, Genesis Ch :1-3,
Revel. 20 : 2 - 21 : 8

Memory verse : 2 Peter. 3: 8-9.

Introduction : For a better understanding of God's programme for the redemption of man. We can divide the time span between the creation and final redemption of man into different ages and dispensations.

Ages : This may be explained as a period of time between two major events that cause changes in the outside nature of the earth. There are certain phrases in the Bible like "the end of the world" (Matt.13:49) "this world" this present evil world" (2 Cori. 4:4, Gala. 1:3-6) etc., which are used in the sense of 'ages'. While considering the earth, time can be divided into three ages.

1. **'The ancient world'** (age) (2 Pet. 2:5) which spans from the chaotic state of earth to the flood in the time of Noah.
2. **'The present world'** (age). This is referred to as the heavens and the earth which are now in 2 Pet. 3:7-9. This age spans from the flood to the next major event namely the coming of Christ.
3. **'The future age'** (Heb. 2:5, 2 Pet. 3:10-13). This includes Christ's second coming (rapture and glorious appearance), tribulation,

millennium, renovation of the earth by fire and the ushering in the New Heaven and the New earth and eternal fulness of time.

Dispensation : Before we try to study about the dispensations, we must know the fact that the universe is not a random thing and human destiny does not hang on chance like the tossing of a coin. God is the mastermind behind the whole universe. He has a vivid blueprint for all things. Everything in the universe moves in perfect harmony with the will of God.

WHAT IS THE MYSTERY OF THE WILL OF GOD?

It is "that in the dispensations of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him (Eph. 1:10). Though God is the controller of the whole universe, the world is at present under the dominion of Satan. That's why Jesus taught the disciples to pray for God's will to be done in earth as it is in heaven. God's will is to redeem through Christ, the earth from the cursed condition so that all things in heaven and on earth be united as one realm.

WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE ABOUT MAN?

It is that man should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ or obtain His glory (Rom. 8:29, 30, 2 Thes. 2:14, 2 Cor. 3:18). The man created in God's image and according to His likeness was disfigured by sin. But God's plan for man is that through Jesus Christ, he may be conformed to His image. It begins by man's rebirth (Colos. 3:10). Just as a little child bears the image of its father right at the moment of conception but until it reaches the full growth, It doesn't appear to resemble the father. So also, we who are born again have born the image of the Lord but are yet to grow up to the full stature of Christ or upto all the fulness of God.

Man is the key of the universe while the restoration of both the universe and man is God's plan. He deals with man to bring about this great redemption. For this eternal purpose, God reveals His will to mankind, gradually and progressively. We find God's will as revelations in the Bible.

As discussed earlier, God gives His revelations to man bit by bit progressively in proportion to His spiritual growth. "Now we know in part but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part

will be done away (1 Cori. 13:9, 10). The gradual and progressive revelation is due to our human limitations.

Considering the nature of God's dealing with man, time can be divided into different dispensations. A dispensation is a period of time during which God deals with man in terms of some specific revelation of the will of God requiring him to obey it and punishing him for failure. After testing with respect to man's obedience to God's commandment, the particular dispensation comes to a close and man received a just punishment for his failure as well.

SEVEN DISPENSATIONS

1. **Dispensation of Innocence (sinless age)** : This is the period of time from the creation of Adam & Eve to their expulsion from Eden.
2. **Dispensation of Conscience** : From the expulsion of man from Eden to the Flood at the time of Noah.
3. **Dispensation of Human Government** : From the Flood to the call of Abraham
4. **Dispensation of Promise**: From the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law.
5. **Dispensation of Law**: From the giving of the Law to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.
6. **Dispensation of Grace**: From the cross of Calvary to the Rapture (transport to heaven) of the Church.
7. **Future Dispensation**
 - a) Rapture, marriage of the lamb with the Church in Heaven and tribulation on earth.
 - b) Millennium
 - c) The perfect eternal age.

Of these seven dispensations, two belong to the ancient age, the next four to the present age and the last one belongs to the future.

In the next lessons, we will study about God's dealings with man in each dispensation. As we study them, we can understand that we belong to the most blessed dispensation of all others - **the dispensation**

of grace. So we must be very careful to find God's will fulfilled in us. Moreover, we must lead a holy life in anticipation of Christ's second coming and His glorious reign. The Lord does not slacken to fulfil His promise. He wants everyone to come to salvation and be holy in life. Ample of opportunities are provided for that. Make the best use of opportunities!

EXERCISE -1

Answer the following questions

1. ✓ What is meant by an 'Age'
2. ✓ Into how many 'ages can the time be divided? What are they? Mention their span of period?
3. ✓ What is God's purpose about man?
4. What is the purpose of God's gradual revelations to us?
5. What is meant by dispensation?
6. Mention the seven dispensations and also write the time specified for each?
7. ✓ Under which dispensation are we living now?

