

Mystery of The Ages

PART 3 - THE DISPENSATION OF CONSCIENCE

INTRODUCTION: This dispensation extends from the "Fall" to the "Flood." It lasted for 1656 years, and was the Dispensation of "Conscience." It shows what man will do when guided only by his conscience. Adam and Eve had no conscience before the "Fall". Conscience is a knowledge of good and evil, which Adam and Eve did not have until they ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Conscience may produce fear and remorse, but it will not keep men from doing wrong, for conscience imparts no "power".

I. SALVATION

In the Antediluvian Dispensation mankind was treated as a whole. There were no nations. That dispensation is called in (Acts 17:30) the "TIMES OF IGNORANCE," and is contrasted with the "Times that are NOW." We are told that in that dispensation God "WINKED AT" what He could not "OVERLOOK" in the Legal Dispensation. Conscience was then the standard of human conduct. It was the standard by which men accused or excused themselves (Rom. 2:15). The Sinaitic law was not given until after the Exodus. Being without law there was no legal standard for sin, for "by the law is the "KNOWLEDGE OF SIN" (Rom. 3:20). But, they were without "excuse" for God was very near to mankind in those days, and His voice was heard in rebuke, as to Cain (Gen. 4:14), in communion with Enoch (Gen. 5:22-24), or in counsel as with Noah (Gen. 6:3). They were, therefore, not without a knowledge of God, but they glorified Him not, and God "gave them over to VILE AFFECTIONS" including giving their daughters to cohabit with "Fallen Angels". The character of that dispensation is vividly disclosed in (Rom. 1:20-32).

The principles which governed God's administration of those "TIMES OF IGNORANCE" would not be appropriate then in the days of Moses, when God revealed His will in "The Law". We must then distinguish these two dispensations as being one "WITHOUT LAW", and the other "UNDER LAW". This therefore would affect the "Basis of Judgment" in these dispensations. This distinction is brought out clearly in (Rom. 2:12). "For as many as have sinned "WITHOUT LAW" shall also "PERISH WITHOUT LAW", and as many as have sinned "IN THE LAW" shall be "JUDGED BY THE LAW".

This clearly shows us the "ignorance of the law" is no excuse and will not save us from punishment. This "Principle of Judgment" will prevail at the "Great White Throne Judgment," when the inhabitants of both the Antediluvian and Legal Dispensations will be judged.

While there was no "WRITTEN LAW" in the dispensation before the Flood, there was an "UNWRITTEN LAW", and when the Gentiles who have not the law, do "BY NATURE" the things contained in the law, they show that they have the law "WRITTEN IN THEIR HEARTS", for not the HEARERS of the law are just (justified) before God, but the "DOERS," or those who keep it (Rom. 2:11-16).

It should be noted that a blood sacrifice became evident early in this dispensation. God clothed Adam and Eve in "coats of skins" (Gen. 3:21) which necessitated the "shedding of blood" (Heb. 9:22). The context of Hebrews 9 is not all inclusive of every dispensation, therefore it is impossible to say whether a blood sacrifice was an absolute necessity or not. However, there are some obvious facts that need to be studied:

- [1]. Abel knew about blood sacrifice (Gen. 4:4) as did Noah (Gen. 8:20).
- [2]. God communicated with men and made the message of obedience clear.
- [3]. God appointed a preacher of righteousness in the person of Noah. Undoubtedly others (such as Enoch) also preached.

II. IMITATION

One of the most significant events of this dispensation was the great Satanic effort to imitate God's original plan. To expedite this plan the fallen angels, called the "sons of God", were employed.

The title "sons of God" has not the same meaning in the Old Testament that it has in the New. In the New Testament it applies to those who have become the "sons of God" by the new birth. (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:6; I Jn. 3:1-2) In the Old Testament it applies to the angels, and is so used five times: twice in Genesis (Gen. 6:2-4) and three times in Job (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7). A "son of God": denotes a being brought into existence by a creative act of God. Such were the angels, and such was Adam, and he is so called in (Lk. 3:38). But Adam's natural descendants are not the special creation of God. Adam was created in the "likeness of God" (Gen. 5:1), but his descendants were born in his likeness, for we read in (Gen. 5:3), that Adam "BEGAT a son in his own likeness, after his image." Therefore, all men born of Adam and his descendants by natural generation are the "SONS OF MEN," and it is only by being "BORN AGAIN" (John 3:3-7), which is a "NEW CREATION," that they can become the "SONS OF GOD" in the New Testament sense.

These "gods" came from outer space (Acts 14:11-14) and brought the idea to populate the heavens. That their offspring were different is obvious from the fact that they were giants (Gen. 6:4). It stands to reason that God would not allow this wickedness to infiltrate the heavens, hence the judgment of the flood.

III. JUDGMENT

The characteristics of the "Antediluvian Dispensation," as outlined by the late Dr. A. T. Pierson, were, "First, an advance in fullness and clearness of revelation; then gradual spirit declension; then conformity to the world, ending with amalgamation with the world; then a gigantic civilization, brilliant but godless; then parallel development of evil and good; then an "Apostasy," and finally a "CATASTROPHE."

These we shall find are the characteristics of every dispensation that follows, except the last.

It is interesting to notice that just prior to judgment God called Enoch, who is a type of the church age saint, home. When Jesus was preparing the Jews for the Tribulation He compared the events to the days of Noah (Matt. 24:36-41).

There will be a great deal of emphasis upon space travel, immorality and divorce during the days prior to and following the Rapture. The day is near when there will be millions of Enochs disappearing - Praise the Lord!