

# God's Plan for the Ages

Understanding the Dispensations

## Lesson 5 – The Dispensation of Conscience

**The Time**                    The second dispensation of God's rule extended from the fall of man through the Noahic Flood.

**The Scripture**            The Scripture portion which covers the second dispensation is Genesis 4:1-8:19.

### 1. Man's State at the Beginning

#### a. Adam and Eve were no longer innocent for they now knew

\_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 3:22    Know – to understand, perceive, to experience.

Genesis 3:6-10

- There was a sense of \_\_\_\_\_ toward God (v7)
- There as a \_\_\_\_\_ from God (v8-10)
- There was \_\_\_\_\_ (v10,11)
- There was a shifting of the \_\_\_\_\_ toward others (v12,13)
- There was a breakdown of personal relationships between Adam and Eve and their God. (Genesis 2:25)

#### b. God had built into man \_\_\_\_\_ so that he could experience the consequences of wrong choices.

For the first time Adam and Eve experienced what it felt like to hurt and to have pain due to a wrong choice. They were conscious of their failure.

#### What is the conscience?

God has given to man the capacity or the ability to know when he has sinned or when he has done right. Every person has a certain awareness or sense of what is right and what is wrong. This is something that God has built into man for his own good. God wants man to know when things are not right in his life so that man might fix whatever is wrong. When man sins, or does wrong, God wants him to feel bad about it and to feel guilty about it. If man felt good about sin then man would never want to get the problem fixed!

#### Some helpful illustrations of the Conscience

- Physical Body – Nervous System
- Warning Light on Dashboard
- Weighing Scales

### Usually the conscience works well

God has put into men a basic knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Man must judge his behaviour in light of this basic knowledge that he has.

**A man's conscience is only as good as his own knowledge of good and evil.** God gave the children of Israel the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and other laws so that they would know what is right and what is wrong.

But what about people who never had God's written law?

Do they know what is good and what is evil?

Do they know what is right and what is wrong?

Romans 2:14, 15 - **God has written the law in their hearts**

### Sometimes it does not work quite right

1 Corinthians 8:1-8                      A \_\_\_\_\_ conscience (v7)

Acts 26:9-11                              A \_\_\_\_\_ conscience

1 Tim 4:2                                    A \_\_\_\_\_ conscience

Titus 1:15                                  A \_\_\_\_\_ conscience

- c. Besides man's conscience God had introduced another ruling factor - the restraining power of \_\_\_\_\_.**

Genesis 6:3 - 'strive' means to govern or rule.

The Holy Spirit, if allowed will assist your conscience in restraining your flesh. Never let your conscience (by itself) be your guide.

## 2. Man's Responsibility

Man had knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:22). With knowledge there also comes responsibility. Man was responsible to live according to the knowledge which he had.

- a. Man was to approach God only by means of a \_\_\_\_\_.**

Genesis 4:3-5 - God accepted Abel's blood sacrifice but rejected Cain's bloodless sacrifice.

This implies that the special revelation which God gave to mankind for the second dispensation was that mankind was to approach God only by means of a blood sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4). Sinful man, no matter how sincere, could not come to God in his way. He could come only in the one way that God had ordained.

**b. Man was obligated to do what was good and refrain from \_\_\_\_\_.**

Genesis 4:6,7

Mankind's responsibility during the second dispensation was to obey God on the basis of the human conscience and the restraint of lawlessness by the Holy Spirit.

**3. Man's Failure**

**a. Cain refused to bring the kind of sacrifice that God required.**

When God rejected his improper sacrifice, he gave Cain opportunity to repent, but Cain became so enraged that he murdered his brother Abel.

**b. Cain and the civilisation that followed him rejected God and seared their conscience, doing evil instead of good.**

Cain began to build a godless civilization which became characterized by polygamy and violence.

By Noah's day *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth" and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5). Things had become so bad that God could find only one righteous man left—Noah, together with his family.

**4. God's Judgment**

(Genesis 6:5-7) This serious failure brought terrible judgment. Through a worldwide flood, God destroyed the perverted segment of mankind.

It should be noted that murder began as the result of mankind's rebellion against God's rule, and that the flood took place because of that rebellion and God's judgment of it.

The second dispensation demonstrated the following truth: *as a result of mankind's original rebellion against God, it had become so sinful that, in spite of the ruling factors of the human conscience and the restraint of lawlessness by the Holy Spirit, it would not obediently submit to God's rule.*

**5. God's Grace**

**a. Some pleased God during this time (Hebrew 11:4-7)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**b. Noah received grace from God and was saved from judgment**

Genesis 6:8 – Grace (first mention).

They were saved by grace, through faith (6:22, 7:5) – Ephesians 2:8,9

Genesis 6:18 - *"But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."*

## **Conclusion - The dispensation ends but conscience continues**

Even though the dispensation of conscience ends, men continue to live under conscience. The conscience is something that all men possess regardless of when they have lived on the earth. In every dispensation (including today) men are responsible to follow that which is good and avoid that which is evil (Romans 12:9 and 1 Peter 3:11).

God does not want us to "let our conscience be our guide." The Word of God is our guide. It is the Bible that tells us what is good and what is evil. It is the Bible that we should follow. Jesus said, "*Thy Word (God's Word) is truth*" (John 17:17).

If a person's conscience has been enlightened by God's Word, then it will approve what God's Word approves and condemn what God's Word condemns. In other words, it will send out the right signals. The scale will be very accurate.

**How accurate is your conscience?**