

The Dispensation of Innocence

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I want you to turn in your Bibles all the way back to Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3. We'll will be going back and forth in some verses there. And on your bulletin you have an outline, a brief outline, and you'll notice there on that outline that I tell you that I'm doing a series on the dispensations beginning tonight. So there'll be seven of these. And we're beginning with the first one that we call the dispensation of innocence. And so you have a brief outline there.

I decided to do this because this year we are talking about increasing in the knowledge of God, right? And I think one of the things that helps us in the knowledge of God is to have a good grasp on our Bible and especially the way it's put together and how the various things in the Bible fit together. And so this is one good way of looking at the Scripture. I want after we're done with looking at these dispensations to look at the covenants in the Bible, those biblical covenants that the Bible talks about. So throughout our Sunday nights this Spring we will be doing some of this.

What's generally called dispensationalism, which I hold to and our church has said that we do, sometimes it comes under criticism these days partly because it's known for its conservatism, sometimes it's separatism and things like that. Also some people don't believe that it's old, maybe it started only 100-150 years ago, which has been proven false and yet still people think that. The opposite theology, the other thing that evangelicals hold to if not dispensationalism is called Reformed or Covenant Theology. And perhaps along our way as we go through this I'll be able to compare the two. But if you had grown up in a Presbyterian church, there were many fundamentalists that were Presbyterians 100 years ago whether you realize it or not. But in that tradition you would probably be a Reformed or Covenant Theologian or hold to their theology. Whereas if you grew up in Baptist circles you probably wouldn't hold to that and at least in the last 100-150 years very likely you would have been more of a dispensationalist.

Well dispensationalism then, or the dispensations of the Bible, are an overall view of how we put together the unity and consistency of the Bible. It gives us a principle that we see flowing throughout the Scriptures. God has revealed himself to us step by step. He didn't say everything to Adam. He didn't say everything to Moses. But now having the Word of God we can look back over the ages and we see how God revealed Himself a little bit at a time. It's called biblical theology when you study it that way. So if we're coming along closer to the end of the age, if we are actually in the sixth dispensation called the dispensation of grace, and the one that's left is the kingdom of God when Jesus Christ will reign on the earth, then we actually have a better viewpoint of any believer that's ever lived. Because we can look back over it and we can see and God has revealed to us all of that history not only, then, a description of the age of grace, but then much detail about the coming last dispensation when Christ will reign on the earth.

So when we see all of these and see how God has built them, it helps us to understand. And when someone may talk to you about, well do we keep the law? Do we keep the Mosaic law? The very fact that we do not, is a dispensational principle and helps us to understand those kinds of things.

So dispensationalists have often talked about their signa-quo non or their irreducible minimum. In other words, what is it then that they believe that's unique? Charles Ryrie, a very well-known dispensationalist who wrote the textbook, *Dispensationalism Today*. I used it as a textbook when I was in school. He gave these three things. Number one, dispensationalists will hold to a literal interpretation of the Bible. Now even that has been criticized by some people because we know that the Bible has allegories and types and things like that in it. But even those we take literally as a type, literally as an allegory, that is if they're there. But basically we see this in our prophecy. This is why dispensationalists will always be premillennialists. That is, we still believe Jesus will return and we believe that he will return and reign on the earth. And why do we believe that? Well because when you read those prophecies, you have to take them as they are. If you spiritualize those away, then you're not taking the Bible literally. You might become an amillennialist. I think even a post-millennialist in that case. And so we take the Bible literally and most dispensationalists agree, yes that is true.

Another thing that dispensationalists do is that we separate Israel and the Church. Israel is Israel and the Church is the church. God made certain promises to Israel to the Jewish people which he will yet fulfill. Even in that kingdom of God when Christ reigns, he's going to give Israel their land and he's going to be their king and be there with them and they will have all that God has ever promised them. Those things will still come to pass. We as the church are a different thing. We are the Bride of Christ. It's not that Israel used to be God's people and now they're done away with and now the church is God's people, and we'll never see the two again after this dispensation. So the separation of Israel and the church is an important distinction. It comes out of literal interpretation by the way.

Then Ryrie added a third one called the doxological point of view but it's maybe not unique just to dispensationalism. That means we believe that God has done all things for his glory. The glory of God is his principle and so in all of history he does these things to bring glory to himself no matter what he does whether it's blessing or judgment. It's all to bring himself glory and that's a unifying principle we see throughout the Bible. We surely believe that. Others believe that as well.

Well if you have grown up in the 20th century which most of you I think have or at least we're born there. I think all of us were born there maybe. Then you might have grown up hearing prophecy conferences and you might remember as a matter of fact I grew up with the Scofield Reference Bible didn't you? Well see I Scofield was a good dispensation. It's lived 100 years ago and dispensationalism has matured and grown and kind of fixed its fine points since then but when you read that old Scofield Reference Bible and basically he gives you the nuts and bolts of what we're talking about. You grew up with that maybe and then maybe you went to a school whether it was Moody Bible Institute or Dallas Theological Seminary or Talbot Theological Seminary or our Bible colleges that many of us knew as Baptist Bible colleges especially were dispensational in nature. We were taught this. We cut our teeth on it. Or do you remember seeing Clarence Larkin's big charts on the wall? Did you ever go to a prophecy conference where they had a big chart across the back of the wall and it had the circles? You were looking at dispensationalism. Clarence Larkin was quite a dispensationalist. So, we've all seen those things and kind of grown up with them.

Back 100 years ago at the turn of that century the Bible conferences and the Bible colleges and seminaries were born out of these prophecy movements and this back to the Bible movement of taking it literally and believing these promises and preaching that Jesus is going to return. It spawned missions that we have throughout the 20th century, soul winning, and I think also the local church, because it shows us and we'll see this when we get to the sixth dispensation, that the local church is God's plan for this age. It is the pillar and ground of the truth as Paul describes it. And so we believe in a connection with the local church. We believe we should be in one and serving there and attending one and so forth. So there's a lot of offshoots about dispensationalism that we have believed.

Now I ask you to turn to Genesis and we're going to start there because in Genesis chapters 1 through 3 is where basically we see this first age or dispensation of Innocence. A dispensation if you define it is not so much a period of time but it's a responsibility or a stewardship. But that stewardship does last for a period of time. And so when we look at the Garden of Eden and we see Adam and then Eve in this garden they have responsibilities. We're not even sure how long they were there in the garden before the Fall came before they fell into sin. But we know the earth is not millions of years old only thousands and so they weren't there that long. But they had responsibilities, didn't they? And we know that they succeeded in some of those, and they failed in some of those. And God judged them very severely for their failure. That's going to be true in every age or every dispensation.

Well, when we look at Genesis, think with me of Genesis chapter 1 through chapter 11, because who is the great character that comes along in Genesis chapter 12? His name begins with an A. Abraham. So when Abraham comes along and God calls Abraham, now we have the beginning of the Jewish people and their history. And that is about 2000 BC. And so from that time forward it's a lot easier to gather history. It's a lot easier to say, okay we know Abraham. We know Mesopotamia. We know Ur of the Chaldees. We know where all of that is. We know where it came from. But when we go back to the early chapters of Genesis, where is the Garden of Eden? Where was the Garden of Eden? I mean we have a harder time don't we. And before the flood of Noah what did the earth what was it like. What was the atmosphere like for that matter, and all of these kinds of things.

But a reason I say that is it's been a common ploy of liberalism over the last hundred years to take the first 11 chapters of Genesis as being not literal, kind of picturesque. Meaning that we don't have to believe that there really was an Adam and Eve. We don't have to really believe that God flooded the whole world with the guy named Noah and a big boat. That there was really a tower of Babel that people were building and trying to reach into the heavens. We don't have to take those things literally, that these are all figures, figures of speech, kind of pictures or stories that God put in the Bible to teach us lessons from these things, right? And so, we even have believers who believe in a theistic kind of evolution, that the earth really is millions or billions of years old, and they think that fits into Genesis 1 through 11. So you know that that's a big battleground right now among believers. Well, I believe, and I hope you do too, that the early chapters of Genesis were, we are to take them literally. We are to take them as they're written. Again, one of the tenets of dispensationalism.

One of the reasons is, is plain language. God doesn't change his language from the first 11 chapters to the rest. We have him talking the same way. We have Him using familiar words. He talks about people, places, things that they did, and all, and the rest. And we believe that it's scientifically consistent, that there's not contradiction between the days of Genesis 1 and the age of the earth.

And that's a big battleground today, I know. But we think that God created the world in six literal days, 24-hour days. After all, he rested on the seventh day, and when He compared the seventh day of rest to a Sabbath that He gave to the Jewish nation, how long was that Sabbath every week? 24 hours. And so we're the first six days. And so we believe that that scientifically it's correct.

Without Genesis being literal, folks, where does the idea of sin come from? If we say that we are sinners and we have fallen into sin, if we say that we need a Savior, but you don't have an Adam and Eve and a Garden of Eden that really existed, then where did it come from? Why are we sinners? Really, we have no idea why. So I think that's important.

Also, inspiration guarantees that it happened this way. When God says it and He inspired it, then we can believe it that way. Now, when God wants to give us a type or an analogy or a parable, a metaphor, a simile or something like that, He always makes it plain that that's what he's doing. But when he just says, here's the person and here's when they lived, we can take it that way. And by the way, the New Testament writers talk about these people and these times. If Jesus talks about Adam and Eve, but Adam and Eve didn't really exist, what's Jesus done to us? He's tricked us or fooled us. When the New Testament writers talk about Noah and people like that, or Enoch or whoever, were they not inspired? Did they not know what they were talking about? So, I say all of that to say is we kind of spend some time here tonight in Genesis 1, 2 and 3 that we understand that this really happened. We believe it this way.

So, we have what we call dispensation of Innocence. Time-wise, it goes from when God created human beings, which were on the sixth day of those creative days. And it goes up until the time when Adam and Eve sinned, disobeyed, and God expelled them from the garden. So, in that early time in the Garden of Eden, it was a time of innocence. They were sinless. They had fellowship with God. They were the kings and queens of the earth, if you will. Everything was at their command. And so we will notice that man was created for certain things. And that's why I have the outline the way I did. He is created to have fellowship with God. He's made in the image and likeness of God. He's created to have dominion over this creation. "Here it all is. I made it in six days. And Adam, you take care of it. You're over. You have dominion over everything that I have made." Quite a thing to do with the human being.

Now the goal of all history then, folks, is to live and fellowship with God and have dominion. And the only time human beings have been able to do that properly has been in the Garden of Eden before sin. And it will be in the Kingdom of God when Jesus Christ reigns on the earth and brings the earth back to its kingdom form as it should be. In the meantime, we're having to live in different dispensations in different times.

Think of how you and I live only in this life, and we don't think about where God is and what God is doing. We're afraid of our own mortality, aren't we? We're afraid we're going to die. We're afraid we won't live very long. We're afraid that something will happen to us. And yet what happens when we do? We go to be with the Lord, have fellowship with Him. We think retirement is the end of our existence. If I don't get it done here in my retirement years, then all of life is over and it's all done and I'll never do anything ever for eternity again. Your eternity has just begun when that is over. So we think like that, don't we? It helps us if we can think of eternity and what God's purposes are with missions, with stewardships, and various things we do.

So now go with me to chapter 1 and verse 26 through 27 and look at the first point that I've made in the bulletin and that is, man ... and when I say man you understand that I mean Adam and Eve is

mankind... was created to have fellowship with God and so after he's made everything else it says in verse 26, "God said let us make man in our image after our likeness," and it's proper to point out that that he said that to no other creature no other part of his creation but to these human beings, to Adam and then he will create Eve of course as we know out of out of Adam.

So he says, "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea over the fall of the air," those things are not created in God's image and likeness, "over the cattle over the earth every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth so God created man in his own image in the image of God created he him and by the way male and female created he them," as Jesus reminded us as well. Do you understand that the triune God God existed always in a trinity we understand that, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That arrangement didn't come to pass just for the age of the earth God has always existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and in a unique way there is fellowship within the Godhead. I mean among the father, Son, and Holy Spirit the Bible hints at such a thing. I'm going to read first John 1 3 a little bit later where John says, That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you may also have fellowship with us," and then John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son," because there's fellowship among the Father and the Son, and when we become children of God we get to we get in on that fellowship that is among the Godhead. It's a wonderful thing when you think about it and so here is God who not only has eternal fellowship within the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not three Gods, but one God manifest in three persons, but one essence of God. And he desires to create creatures if I may call us that but made in his image and likeness so that he can have fellowship with them. Pretty amazing thing! You know if ever we have a reason a cause to be prideful as creations of God it's only in the sense that God wants to glorify Himself in us. God wants to have fellowship with us and has done everything possible in order to bring us to that fellowship

And so here is man as we read in these verses made in God's image and God breathes into him the breath of life as he creates him. Notice chapter 2 verse 7 where he says, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." And I think it happened just like that there's no reason to think that this is some kind of imagery that we take some other way. God formed that body out of the ground. There was the body lying there, and that body had nostrils by the way. So it didn't it didn't evolve later into having nostrils it had nostrils and God breathed into it you know. He imparted life into Adam at that point. He imparted a soul by the way is what he put into him so back in in verse 27 "He created him in his image and in the image of God," and in chapter 2 verse 7 "He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life." And you know that though in our English it doesn't come across this way, but in that language breath of life is equal to soul of life. He put that soul of life in us.

Now just a little note when you look at chapter 1 verse 24 it says God said let the earth bring forth the living creature and literally it's the living soul. Does it bother you if the Bible's language is that even the animals have souls. But we understand that to mean life, but since they are not made in God's image these this life in the animal is not the same as the life that's in the human. Because we will live beyond this life. We will live forever but the animals will not. There's a there's a verse in the book of Revelation and the trumpet judgments, I think, the second trumpet when the judgment is poured out upon the waters and in the sea it says, "every soul that lived in the sea died." It says every living creature, "but every living soul in the sea died." I don't think it just means scuba divers that you know human beings that happen to be in the water at that time. It means everything that had life. So sometimes the Bible can talk about the life that God gives to human beings or even to

animals is a soulish life. A spiritual life in other words. Here's the flesh. Here's the body but inside it there's some kind of life, but because you and I are made in his image we will live beyond just when this body dies and our spirit will go either to be with the Lord or be separated from Him. In other words he wants to have fellowship with us eternally and he designed us and made us that way.

Love is a reciprocal thing So God gave us a will to choose Him. God gave us a will so that we would choose to have fellowship with Him. You don't want to fall in love with somebody that doesn't want to fall in love with you. I mean, maybe you did for a while, but that went away real quickly. You want it to be a reciprocal thing. You want to have love back and forth, and fellowship should be that way also.

And so this first thought that God created us, created man for fellowship, consider this too lastly about Adam under this, and that is, in that garden, Adam had what we call unconfirmed holiness. He was holy. He had not fallen into sin. He didn't have the inhibitions you and I have. He didn't have the separation from his Creator that you and I have, but it was unconfirmed because God wanted him to pass the test of voluntarily saying, I love you and I will follow you. And so He put Adam to the test. We know that Adam failed. So now on this side of the Garden of Eden, we have kind of an unconfirmed unholiness. In other words, you and I are not holy. We are sinful. And yet that is not confirmed yet because you and I have an opportunity to have our sins forgiven and washed in the blood of Christ so that when we stand before God, we can be holy again. And so, he was in that place of waiting to see what was going to happen.

Roland McCune in his Systematic Theology says, "The image of God enables human beings to enjoy the creation, fulfill God's mandate to rule the earth, participate in loving fellowship with God, and thus to glorify Him." And that's what was going on here. So number one, man was created to have fellowship with God.

Number two, man was created then to have dominion over the creation. Go back to chapter one, verse 26 again, and see that word in the middle of the verse. "Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion," over everything. Fish of the sea, fowl of the air, the cattle, over all the earth, every creeping thing. And so man did have dominion. And again in verse 28, "God blessed them, God said unto them, be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living creature that move upon the earth." And so you have a certain dominion mandate, we might say.

Now Adam, having this constitution that was innocent and holy, was evidently physically perfect. I mean, if ever there was a man that walked on the earth besides the Lord Jesus Christ who was physically perfect, it was Adam before he fell into sin. I wonder what his capabilities were. He named the animals in one day after all. I can't remember what one bird is from the other, you know, from one day to the next. I mean, he had 100% mental capacity, 100% physical capacity. It's hard for us to even imagine what kind of a human being Adam was, and then Eve also when she's created. Morally excellent so that God could walk with him and have fellowship with him in the garden. You and I can't do that right now. We're separated by our sins and we're separated by God, by our distance also. But one day we will.

God created man to work and put him in the garden to work. It's interesting because sin hadn't come along yet, folks, and yet his job was to work. So next time you go to work and say, I can't wait to get rid of this sin so I don't have to work, it may not be that way. Henry Morris in his commentary said, "Man's body had been," oh excuse me, up above. "It is noteworthy that even in the perfect

world as God made it, work was necessary for man's good. The ideal world is not one of idleness and frolic, but one of serious activity and service. Even in the new earth to come after sin and the curse have been removed, Scripture says that his servants shall serve him." So we will always be working for God. We will always be doing that kind of thing.

So if Adam is working, God, you know, man became a scientist. He studied the ground. He planted things. He tilled things. He used it for experiment. He was excellent in what he did. He knew how to take what God had given him and use it to the best of his ability. If there was any kind of technology, whatever was available in those days, I'm sure Adam had complete control over it and knew how to do it. That would be good, wouldn't it? It would for me since my garden surely doesn't look like his garden. But when we talk today sometimes about nature on the one hand and sometimes about culture on the other, nature should be those things that God had given us, the tools, the world that we have to use. And then culture ought to be what we form and make. And so when we make things, even our life or what we put our hands to in our occupation, whatever we do, we are making our culture.

Sinful man looks at it and says, well, culture is what it is. I can't change it, but we can sure change the atmosphere. We can change what God made. We have it just backwards, I think, today. So what were his responsibilities here to have in his dominion that he had? Let me have you notice these again. In chapter 1, verse 28, he is to fill and reproduce and fill up the earth. And so he said, "Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth." By the way, that word replenish is simply, fill up. It's not refill as if there had been a world before this and now there's a second one. It's not replenishing necessarily. It's just fill it up. And so they are to reproduce. The animals are and so is Adam. That's one responsibility. Secondly, he's to have dominion, which we've already spoken about. And so you're to take control and be in charge. He's to "rule over the animals," verse 28 says, and other verses. And so we are to be in control of the animals. We are the one in control on the earth.

They are to eat vegetables, by the way. Eat your vegetables. Verse 30, "Every beast of the earth and fowl of the air to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wearing this life, I have given every green herb for meat. And it was so." In other words, we don't have any record that any meat was eaten until after the flood of Noah. Maybe it was and God didn't tell us. I suppose that's a possibility. We just don't have any record of it. And we don't have any specific prohibition to it either. But if they were eating meat, maybe they ate the things that they sacrificed. That's one possibility. But we do know that they did eat these vegetables and they did eat these herbs. And they planted things and they ate the fruits from the trees and they ate the things that grew out of the earth. That was what they were supposed to do. We're supposed to do it also.

He was supposed to name the animals. Chapter 2, verse 19, "Out of the ground, the Lord formed every beast of the field, every fowl of the air, brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them. And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." And whatever language he was speaking, that's what he used. And he's supposed to keep the garden, chapter 2, verse 15, to dress it and keep it.

And then finally, he's not to do something. And here is the test. You're not to eat of that tree. So he says in verse 16, "The Lord commanded the man saying, Every tree of the garden now may as freely eat, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." We don't know what kind of a tree it was, necessarily an apple tree. But it was some kind of tree, and this was the test. It may have been the most beautiful tree. It

may have had the kind of fruit that looked the most beautiful of all of them. But God had said, eat everything else, just don't do that.

Now, of all that list of things that I just read to you, some of them continue and some of them don't. In other words, some of them were just for that dispensation. And we can't, even the prohibition to eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we don't have that tree around anymore. That's not one of our commands in the Age of Grace. To have dominion over the earth is in a certain way. To eat vegetables, eat your vegetables, that is. But we have additional things added to that later. So some continue, some don't. Many things are added even beyond this. Only one restraint is given. And it is given because of God's desire for a loving relationship with Adam. And that is, Adam, do you love me? And do you trust me? And will you do, as I ask you, so that we can have fellowship together? I'm choosing you, you will choose me. And if you respond that way, then we will have fellowship.

Well, everything goes fine in the first two chapters until we get to chapter three. And when we get to chapter three in the first part of this chapter, then of course we find the famous passage of Adam and Eve eating that fruit, the serpent tempting them, and then their failure. So now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. And by the way, we understand then later, as God fills in and gives us more information, in other words, increased revelation as we go along, that Satan was in this serpent. He was using this serpent to test them. And it seems very natural. I mean, actually Adam and Eve don't seem too surprised that they're talking to a snake, do they? Or maybe the snake had legs at that time, you know, and then God put him on his belly to crawl after that. Maybe they had communication with animals that are different than ours. I don't know, before the Fall, before the curse on the ground and so forth. But they don't seem all that surprised that they're having this conversation. But again, here's the serpent in verse one saying, "He said, under the woman, hath God said, you shall not eat every tree of the garden? And the woman said, Well, we may eat of every tree of the garden. But of that tree, we can't even touch it." Now, that was a lie that God didn't say that. But you know the story.

And so Satan puts a doubt into Eve's mind here and kind of denies that God really has the best intentions for her. God really is trying to trick you. God's trying to keep something back. God doesn't really love you. He's just trying to protect Himself. Why don't you do what you need to do? Kind of. And exalt yourself. And Eve falls for it and so does Adam. And then what happens? Well, then the test is done. We'll talk about that in a minute.

You know what love is really? Love is wanting the best for someone else. If you love someone, you want the best for that person. And you and I as believers in God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, know that the best thing for another person is the will of God. If that person is walking in God's will, there is nothing better for that person than that. Some of you have loved your children and yet your children, some of mine too, were called away by God to a certain service, away from us, far away, where we don't get to see them very often. But what do you say? The safest place to be in the world is in God's will, right? And if I love them, I want the best for them, and the best thing is God's will.

As I thought about that, I thought, you know, what greater motivation do you and I have for being soul winners? Witnesses to the gospel. Think about it. You and I know what happens to a person when they die without Jesus Christ. Could you care for a person at all and not care that that's going to happen to them? I don't care if you go, if you die and go to an eternal hell. I don't care? It doesn't bother me. It won't hurt me. And yet, not only that, but we have the remedy and we know what it is for a person to receive Christ as Savior. And so even though the person doesn't want it, kind of like

we've got your medicine and they're saying, I don't want to eat that medicine. They close their mouth, you know. What did you do with your children when they said, I don't want to take the medicine? Somehow you got it down their throat, you know. Somehow you kept after it until it happened. So if we love somebody, we want God's will for them, and God's will is eternal life through Jesus Christ. And that is a great motivation for us to continue on with the gospel in every way that we can.

Alright, so secondly, not only is man made to have fellowship with God, he's made to have dominion over his creation.

And lastly, man was made to be confirmed in holiness forever. In other words, this is what God wanted for him. He wanted him to pass the test. He didn't want him to fail. God's intention is always to have fellowship with us for eternity, to be confirmed in that. And so we know what the test was. Do these things. And it seems like the positive things Adam and Eve had no problem with. They did the positive things without question, but that negative thing. Why is God withholding something from us? And the devil tricked them with this subtly into that. But if we trust him, if Adam had trusted him, and Adam had obeyed, and Adam and Eve had obeyed through their love and faith in God, we must suppose that they would be confirmed in their holiness, and sin would not have entered into God's creation. Or at least only through the angelic world which God would have taken care of in a different way. I think we can assume that, but of course it didn't happen that way. What we do know is the way it happened. And we know that they failed in this test.

Now I have three words there and those three words can be repeated for every dispensation. Because remember, a dispensation is a responsibility. It's a stewardship. And no matter when you lived, in whatever of those ages, there was a revelation from God and you were required to keep it. And if you did not keep that revelation from God, the judgment of God fell on you.

So there's always a test. There's always a failure. That is, in every dispensation, man comes to a place where he has failed and there's always a judgment. And that doesn't mean God has always wiped out the earth. He did it in the flood. And he will do it at the end of all things. But whatever his judgment was, it came because of the failure.

And so what is the failure? Well, we read about it again in chapter 3 verses 1 through 6. And we find out that in verse 6, the woman saw the tree that was good for food. It was pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired to make one wise. In other words, everything except loving God. Everything except my loving God that I have fellowship with told me not to do it and that must be the best thing to do. No. Everything was about her. She took of the tree thereof and did eat. And evidently Adam was standing right there agreeing with her the whole way and gave also under her husband with her and he did eat. And so they failed in the test, doubting God's goodness. Thinking that God somehow was trying to withhold something, keep something back.

And then comes the judgment. He had told them back in chapter 2, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And the serpent said, you'll not die. And you might think that Eve went up there and reached out and put her hand on that fruit and waited to see what would happen. Of course, the disobedience had already taken place, right? And the rebellion against God had already happened. But as she takes that fruit, nothing happens. She pulls it off the tree, nothing happens. She takes a bite of it, nothing happens. Oh, maybe God did lie. And man's been supposing that ever since.

But let me tell you, first of all, they did die, didn't they? Immediately they died spiritually, separated from God. And so you and I are dead in our trespasses and sin because that sin was passed on to us. As a matter of fact, we were there doing it with Adam and Eve in the loins of Adam while he was doing it. So they died spiritually. Secondly, Adam and Eve began to die physically. And so at this point, I don't know how old they were. By the way, I think when the Bible says Adam died being 930 years old, that means 930 years from the sixth day of creation. So he lived some of those years in innocence, but he died being 930 years old. So maybe they were there a year or two. Maybe a few, I don't know how long. But now we read in the remaining chapters, "And so and so lived this long and he died. And then he began this son and this son lived so and so, you know, 800, 900 years long and he died. And he died and he died," and always throughout all the genealogies. So we, they began to die physically and it's appointed unto man wants to die. And the reason you and I are going to die is because of this sin.

But there's a third death and that is eternal death. And so if our predicament of being separated from God's fellowship is not remedied through Jesus Christ, we will be separated from God forever through an eternal death. And I believe that is the lake of fire and it is real also.

Well, the good news is God had a backup plan. And of course, because God knew everything from the beginning. And so Genesis 3:15, the proto-evangelicalism is the first gospel, in other words, where he says, "I will put enmity between thee," (that is speaking to the serpent and the woman,) "between thy seed and her seed." The first time we have a prediction of a coming Messiah who will take care of things. "And it shall bruise thy head. Thou shall bruise his heel." And so there's someone coming who's going to conquer Satan and conquer this sin. And so it'll take time. It's not going to happen within the next few minutes, Adam and Eve. It's not going to happen within your lifetime. It's not going to happen for thousands of years. But the seed of the woman will come and there will be a way out of your predicament. And so that is the beautiful thing that God does.

And so that in every dispensation, whether back then looking ahead into the unknown, God sees Christ on the cross for Adam, for Noah, for Abraham. And now we have the privilege of standing on this side of the cross. We can look back at it as a historical fact, but everyone is saved by faith in what God is doing through Jesus Christ. And so the remedy is on its way.

There's kind of a reversed faith test here, you know. Adam went from being a friend of God to being an enemy of God, thinking God is his rival. And yet we go in our lifetime from being an enemy of God to being a friend of God and having fellowship again with Him. And it's our privilege to do that.

So this is the first dispensation, the dispensation of innocence. It lasted for a little while, not real long, but that's where it all started. And the Bible refers to this many times in many ways. It refers to Adam and Eve, Adam often. It refers to the sin that happened there.

The thing about it is that when man failed the test, the trial was over, and God's judgment did come. And in this case, you leave the garden. You're not going to be in the presence of the Tree of Life, which means you're in the presence of eternal life. You're going to be put out, and you're going to sin, and you're going to die. And if that sin isn't covered by faith, then you will be separated from Me forever. God's judgments are final.

And even in this age of grace, we have a very similar thing. We have a lifetime to reconcile with God. We have a lifetime to say, give me the remedy. I'll accept it because I love you and I know you love me. And then God gives us forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We'll study each of those ages. They're kind of interesting. Whether we talk about Noah and the Flood, the Tower of Babel, all of those kinds of things, I think it'll be kind of a fun study on Sunday night. Stand with me now, if you will. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Thank you for the time tonight to explain all of that at the beginning of this series that we're doing. Let's pray.

Father, how we love You, and we thank You for your revelation that You give us in the Word of God so that we can read it and know it and have confidence in what happened. But Father, help us to learn what we should learn from it. And even though we live in a different time, obviously, than Adam and Eve did, we know, Father, that You've given us stewardship. You've given us responsibility. Help us to be faithful to that and to love You, to look forward to that time when we will be in Your presence and have fellowship with You forever and have dominion at that point as You would have us to have. So Father, bless now as we think about these things, even as we sing a song, send these truths to our heart and minds that we may walk in them as we should. Well, thank you for these things. In Jesus' name, Amen.