

DISPENSATIONS

Conscience

Genesis 4-7 records events that occurred during the second dispensation, which is called "Conscience." After Adam and Eve sinned, they had a conscience to let them know good from evil. However, this knowledge did not bring them righteousness.

The first sons born to Adam and Eve illustrate the attempt of many to please God by their good works instead of pleasing Him by simple obedience. It was the father's responsibility to instruct his family concerning offering sacrifices to the Lord, which Adam had done. However, since Cain was a tiller of the ground, he thought God would be pleased with the best of the fruit of the ground. He used his own reasoning! But God would not accept an offering when blood had not been shed. Any offering we bring to God must be because of the blood His Son shed upon the cross.

Abel obeyed God and brought a lamb for an offering. We read in Hebrews 11:4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

Cain became very angry because God had not accepted his offering. But notice how the Lord so graciously talked to him about it, giving him opportunity to obey and let his offering be accepted (verse 7). However, Cain refused and instead, killed his brother. In I John 3:12, we read that Cain slew Abel "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

God punished Cain by not allowing him to be a "farmer" any longer, but he would be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. However, we see God's mercy in verse 15, by setting a mark on Cain "lest any finding him should kill him."

Adam's and Eve's next son was named Seth, and through Seth was the righteous line preserved. Notice the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38.

Genesis 6-8 records the great flood God brought upon the earth because of man's wickedness. We read there that the earth was filled with violence and corruption, with only Noah and his family preserved through the flood. Much has been said concerning the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" in Gen. 6:2. However, this is just referring to the fact that believers (sons of God) and unbelievers (daughters of men) were joining in marriage. Of course, this led to unrighteous living.

So the dispensation of Conscience ends with judgment of the flood on the whole earth. Some have questioned whether this was a literal flood or not. Jesus spoke of this flood in Matthew 24:37-39, letting us know it was literal. In studying prophecy, remember, if the literal meaning of a scripture makes good sense, it is to be taken literally. If it doesn't make good sense, then it is figurative.

The dispensation of Conscience covered approximately 1656 years.

Human Government

The next dispensation is called Human Government because God is now giving man the responsibility of governing themselves (Gen. 9:5). Of course, God is still over all, giving instructions. Genesis 8-11 records the happenings during this time.

This dispensation began with a righteous family worshiping God. God now gave permission for them to eat meat, whereas before they were only to eat plants and fruit. In

verses 5, 6, God impressed upon them the sacredness of life, with capital punishment instituted. He also established the Noahic Covenant, with the rainbow as a token to remember that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood.

Through Noah's sons, the world once again began to be populated. Briefly stated, the Hebrews (with Syria, Persia, Mesopotamia and Northern Arabia) came from Shem. The people of Africa and Arabia came from Ham. The Russians, British, Germans, and Europeans came from Japheth.

In Gen. 11:1-9, we see man attempting to reach heaven by their own works—even as Cain tried to please God by his own works. In verse 4, we read they spoke of building a city and a tower, "...lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." They were attempting to create unity by their own efforts. However, God was not pleased. Therefore, He confounded their language so they could not understand each other's speech, and thus "The Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth..." (verse 8).

Once again, the people of the earth have disobeyed the Lord and brought judgment on themselves.