–Save This Page as a PDF–

Week 5: The Dispensation of Conscience Genesis 3:6 to 8:14

The second dispensation also has two names. It is called the Dispensation of Conscience or the Dispensation of Self-Determination. The first name emphasizes the principle by which **the LORD** dispensed **His** economy, the conscience. Conscience was the way **God** governed mankind. The name for this dispensation comes from **Romans 2:15** which states that for a period of time, **Elohim** dealt with men on the basis of their conscience until finally their conscience became so defiled and seared that it was no longer possible for **ADONAI** to continue to govern in that way. The second name emphasizes the other side of the coin of conscience, in that man was given the freedom to follow the dictates of his conscience. If he followed his conscience, his self-determination would have led to holiness; but if he did not follow his conscience, or if his conscience was defiled, darkened, or seared, then his self-determination would lead to his ruin.

There are seven dispensations described in the Bible: (1) the Dispensation of Innocence or Freedom **(Genesis 1:28** to **3:5)**; (2) the Dispensation of Conscience or Self-Determination **(Genesis 3:6** to **8:14)**, (3) the Dispensation of Civil Government **(Genesis 8:15** to **11:32)**, (4) the Dispensation of Promise or Patriarchal Rule **(Genesis 12:1** to **Exodus 18:27)**, (5) the Dispensation of the Torah **(Exodus 19:1** to **Acts 1:26)**, (6) the Dispensation of Grace **(Acts 2:1** to **Revelation 19:21)**, and (7) the Dispensation of the messianic or millennial Kingdom **(Isaiah 4:2-6, 11:1** to **12:6, 54:11-17, 60:1-22).**

The chief ***person*** in this dispensation, as in the previous one, was **Adam**. **He** received new revelation from **God** in **3:17-19** that helped to explain the principles and requirements of this new dispensation.

The ***responsibility*** was for **him** to simply follow **his** conscience. If one listens to **his** conscience, it will convict **him** of sin and lead **him** to salvation. But if **he** doesn't listen to it and hardens it, all **he** has to look forward to is judgment.

The ***test*** during that dispensation was first, obedience in **the knowledge of good**

and evil, but secondly, where there was failure, they were to offer a proper and acceptable blood sacrifice. This can be learned from **3:21** and **4:4**.

As with the previous dispensation, there will be a ***failure***. This was seen as early as the case of **Cain** in **4:3-5**, who failed to bring a proper blood sacrifice and thought **he** could come to **God** on **his** own terms. In **4:8**, failure was seen in the first act of murder when **Cain** murdered **his** brother Abel. Failure was also seen in **6:1-5**, which speaks of open violence, corruption and widespread sin. The heart of man sought evil continually. Therefore, since the people from **Adam** to **Noah** ignored their conscience and followed wickedness, **God** was forced to bring judgment in the form of a worldwide **Flood**.

As with the previous dispensation, this one, also, contained the issue of ***judgment***. The judgment in this case was the worldwide **Flood (6:7** and **7:23)**. This brought humanity to an end with the exception of one family. They had become so evil that they could no longer follow their consciences. The conscience of man had become so dark and degenerate, that it was no longer a reliable guide.

As with every dispensation, this one had an element of ***grace***. It was displayed during the Dispensation of Conscience in that **God** commanded **Noah** to build **an ark (6:14)**. As a result, **Noah and his family** were saved and found grace in the eyes of **the LORD**.