

LESSON 1

Ages and Dispensations

Objective : The eternal God has clear plan about human being and the universe where he/she inhabits. To understand this plan and to inspire everyone to get molded in accordance with the pattern of 'Fullness of time'.

Bible Portion : 2 Peter 3:5-13, Genesis Chapters 1-3
Revelation 20:2-21:8

Memory Verse : 2 Peter 3:8-9 (KJV)

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Introduction :

Have you not heard about the Five-Year Plans introduced in India after post independence? What are their goals? In each plan which last for five years has a set of developmental projects to be implemented. These plans are meant to build a welfare state. However these are intended for temporary things and often times end up in failure. But Bible reveals that the eternal God has an eternal and complete plan about this world. To understand this great plan of God which ultimately lead us to prepare ourselves for a complete system, one must know the past history and analyze modern events.

Ages

An event which make changes to the globe outwardly and another event which make further changes to former is called an age. What is

said in Mathew 13:49 is all about the end of an age. What is mentioned as world in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Galatians 1:3-4 is also about age. Ages can be divided into there:

1. Ancient Age. 2 Peter 2:5; 3:5-6. Age between creation to the Flood.
2. Present Age. 2 Peter 3:7-9. Age between The Flood to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
3. Future Age. Hebrews 2:5; 2 Peter 3:10-13. Millennium Rule after second coming of Christ.

Dispensations

Ages

God has a glorious plan about the universe and the human being he created. The ultimate plan of God about human beings is that they must get conformed to the image of Christ else they must get the glory of Christ (Romans 8:29-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18). In Ephesians 1:10 Paul makes clear the mystery of the will of God. That is to unite what all is there in heaven and earth in Christ and make them to the pattern in the fullness of time. The will of God about the universe can be seen in Revelation chapters 21-22 as the picture of globe in the complete pattern. To take human being and the universe to this glorious state God constantly intervenes with human being. Let's understand these revelations from the Bible.

Godly Revelations are progressive

In Ephesians 3:5 Paul makes clear this. Let's understand from the apostolic saying in 1 John 3:2, we'll become this and not yet revealed, it is clear that the godly revelations are progressive. The important reasons for this are the limitations of human being. See John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 13:12; John 13:7. The purpose of the progressive revelation is to give man with opportunities to profess faith (Romans 8:24-25). God had given the wisdom and knowledge about the good and bad. But they were not enduring enough to wait upon the lord and fell into the temptation and eventually led to the fall.

Seven Dispensations

Considering the distinctiveness of God's intervention in the life of human beings, the time can be divided into seven ages. According to the Bible language a dispensation is not necessarily understood as a long span of time. The period of time in which God intervenes with human beings with certain agreements is understood as dispensation. In each dispensation God entrusts his will to human beings with suitable special revelation and provides them with special responsibilities. God does examine whether human beings will live according to the covenant and the failure will draw punishment upon the closure of dispensation. The names and span of seven dispensations are given below:

1. **Dispensation of Innocence.** This dispensation starts with the creation of human beings to the expulsion of first parents from the Eden (Gen. 1-3).
2. **Dispensation of Conscience.** From the expulsion of human beings from the Eden to the Flood (Gen. 4-8)
3. **Dispensation of Human Government.** From flood to the Call of Abraham (Gen. 9:11-12:1).
4. **Dispensation of Promise.** From the Call of Abraham to the Law (Gen. 12:1-Exo. 12:36).
5. **Dispensation of the Law.** From the receipt of Law to the crucifixion of Jesus (Exo. 12:37-Matt.3:12)
6. **Dispensation of Grace.** From Calvary to the rapture of the Church (Rev. 3:12-19:21).
7. **Dispensation of Future** (Rev. 20:1-20:15).
 - a) Human Rule.
 - b) Millennium Rule.
 - c) Eternal dispensation.

Among the seven dispensations the first two belong to Ancient ages, next four in modern age and the last in future age.

The following chapters are dealing with the way and purpose of Godly interaction with human being. As we are living in the Dispensation of Grace let's fully submit in the hands of God to fulfill the will of God in and around us. Moreover let's be hopeful for the second coming of Jesus and lead a holy life for the blessings thereafter. God never delays to fulfill His promise. God desires everyone to be repented and live holy life. He even provides opportunities for the same. Make use every opportunity.

Questions

1. What is the divine purpose about the universe?
 2. What is the divine purpose about the human being?
 3. What are the three ages related to the earth? Figure out their span.
 4. What is Age? What is dispensation? Make clear the difference between the both.
 5. What is the reason and purpose of giving the divine revelation to human being progressively?
-