

## **Dispensation of Innocence** - *a study for the Bible Institute at Gulf Coast Baptist Church Spring 2021* by Steve Thomas

The four elements that must be present to constitute a dispensation are Master, Steward, Household and a Rule of Life.

### **Master**

The master of this dispensation is God the Father. God's goodness to man was very evident in this dispensation. He provided everything good that was necessary. Life was easy, there was no sweat, weeds, or toil.

### **Steward**

The steward of this dispensation was Adam. Gen 2:15 states that God formed man out of the dust of the ground and created his soul and spirit. Adam was given instructions directly from God. He was responsible for those in his household. Adam became responsible for the fall of mankind.

### **Household**

Adam's household was Eve. They were the only two people in that dispensation. God formed Eve from Adam. Her material and immaterial being was taken from Adam. (Gen 1:27, Gen 2:21-22). 1 Cor 11:12 tells us that Eve was Adam's counterpart, taken out of Adam. God created two beings from one substance.

### **Rule of Life**

God gave two instructions to Adam. First he told him to be fruitful and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28-30). He also told him to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (2:16-17). Before the Fall the garden was paradise. There was nothing lacking character in Adam and Eve. Their condition was that of unfallen. They were also untested. They were not described as righteous but good, or happy and content. They were created in God's image. He is able to think objectively, outside of his experience in a manner similar to God. Animals will only think in the realm of their experience or instinct. Adam and Eve were crowned with glory, that is they wore light like God wore light. (Psalm 104:2, Psalm 8:4-5). Man has a spirit and a soul (1 Thess 5:23, John 4:24). In this way we are still in the image of God.

This test was fair. God allowed the creation to demonstrate his loyalty and dependence on God. He showed his grace to them by revealing to them what would bring happiness and what would bring disaster. God knew it was not good for Adam to be alone, so he created a help-meet. God provided for their food, every need was met.

Adam's test was to see if he would rely on God as his remaining source of provision and happiness, or if he would act independently of God to choose his own means of happiness. Adam's failure was that he chose his own means of happiness. He did not depend on God. His actions are described as sin, trespass, and transgression (Rom 5:12, 14, and 16). A trespass can happen in the mind, when Adam made a choice to disobey God. Transgression requires the presence of law, the commandment of God not to eat.

## **Dispensation of Innocence**

Adam lost the image of God (the light or glory). Adam's son was produced in Adam's image (Gen 4:1-2). While man lost the image, he retains the likeness. He still has the ability of abstract reason, as well as the possession of soul and spirit.

The lesson from this dispensation is that even in a perfect environment, man will choose self-sufficiency and independence from God. Man chose to disobey God even before his nature was fallen and bent. Adam had a free will, but did not choose God. Many of the excuses we use today for our actions would be moot in this dispensation. We would have acted as Adam and Eve did. They had it all but wanted to figure it out for themselves. Innocence and goodness does not guarantee perfect obedience.