***The Age of the Gentiles

DS1B***

In our study of the dispensations we have found that God has a plan for the ages. We have found that this plan is described in certain keywords. One of those was the word "times" and another one was "seasons." "Times," you will recall, is a succession of events. We may compare this to the progress of human history--the various events one after another that take place in a historical sequence. The word "seasons" may also be described by the word "era," or "ages" of time. This is time in larger segments within which the succession of events of human history takes place. These eras of time are what we refer to as dispensations. For example, you read about the dispensation of the grace of God in Ephesians 3:2 where Paul was teaching about that particular dispensation.

Again, to remind you: What is a dispensation? A dispensation is an administration or a stewardship of an estate or a household. During various eras of human history, God administered his world household in different ways. Each era is a dispensation within itself, and it is identified by an administrator who acts as God's responsible steward for that particular dispensation. So we may say that a dispensation is a distinguishable economy, or way of doing things, in the outworking of God's plan for the ages. It is a period of human history expressed in terms of divine viewpoint and divine interpretation.

There are certain basic features about the dispensations that you should keep in mind. It is God who delegates responsibility for his world household in each dispensation to a steward. Sometimes this steward is a group of people. Sometimes it's an individual. Specific responsibilities are given in each dispensation. The steward is responsible for fulfilling these responsibilities. The time comes in each dispensation when God calls the steward to give an account of his stewardship. The termination of the stewardship is based upon failure. That dispensation then is brought to an end because of the failure of the steward, and a new dispensation is instituted. In a new dispensation, some of the previous regulations are continued; some are annulled; and, new ones are added. So while a dispensation may end in failure, as they do, God's plan for the ages always continues.

We have found that we can think of dispensations in terms of their administrators in four eras of history. The first was the age or dispensation of the gentiles. This era lasted about 2,000 years. It went from the time of the creation of Adam to the Tower of Babel. This dispensation had gentile believers as its stewards. It covers scripturally the area from Genesis 1 through 11. The second dispensation according to the administrator is the dispensation of the Jews. This one also lasts about 2,000 years. It is covered in Genesis 12 through the gospels in the New Testament (minus a few chapters in the gospels). The dispensation of the Jews goes from the time and the call of Abraham until the death of Christ upon the cross. The third dispensation was characterized by the administration of Christians, and it is the dispensation of the church. It has lasted almost 2,000 years. How much longer, we don't know. It goes from the day of Pentecost to the rapture of the church.

Then there is this tribulation period which is actually part of the dispensation of the Jews. That will be a seven-year period, shortened somewhat in order to keep humanity from destroying itself on the face of the earth. Then in the final dispensation, the administrator is Christ, and this is the dispensation of the Millennium, and its length of time is 1,000 years. Some people have observed the lengths of the various dispensations as being 2,000, 2,000, 2,000, and 1,000 years. That makes 7,000 years. You will recall that seven is the number of perfection in Scriptures. Some people have suggested that this is another indication that we are close to the rapture, having come almost 2,000 years since the day of Pentecost, which would fulfill the years needed to complete that with the 1,000 years yet to come of a period of human history of 7,000 years.

Alright, this is the basic division of the dispensations, and within these divisions there are certain breakdowns, and we're going to take the divisions up one by one. In this session, we're going to look primarily at the dispensation of the gentiles, and we're going to begin with phase one. Phase one in the dispensation of the gentiles is often call the age of innocence. The age of innocence begins, of course, with the creation of man. We read in the Bible that sometime in eternity past, God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 tells us that. Then someplace along the line, something happen, and we get to Genesis 1:2, and we find that creation is in a condition other than that in which God had created it. There are other verses in the Bible that tell us that He did not create it without form and void. Yet, Genesis 1:2 tells us that it was without form and void. Something has happened to God's creation to cause it to go catastrophic.

**The Restoration of Creation**

The best answer to that is the fact that Satan had fallen through his rebellion in heaven. Even our astronauts declare that the earth is a gem as they view it from outer space--a gem out there in the universe with its color and its evidences of life. Thereby, this planet was very attractive to Satan and to his demonic hosts, and apparently, after they were dismissed from their places of authority in heaven, they came down and inhabited this earth. The Word of God speaks to us of inhabitants in this earth, but it points out that there was no man at that time. So we come to the first two chapters of Genesis, and there we read an account of creation. This is a creation in six 24-hour days. This had to be a restoration of a previous creation that had gone into disrepair.

We have three creative acts described for us in Genesis 1. They are signaled by the Hebrew word "bara," which means to call into existence simply with a word--God speaking, and material things coming into existence. Also, this is God speaking, and immaterial things like a soul or spirit being created just by the spoken Word of God. The heavens and the earth, we're told, were produced in this way. That's in the original creation. We're told that animal and human life were created during the restoration period (Genesis 1:1, 21, 27). All of this took place right here at the beginning of the dispensation of the gentiles.

**Evolution**

On the basis of the Bible's revelation at this point, evolution is totally condemned. We are not going to pursue that here, but the words "create" can in no way mean evolution. The word "create" means an instantaneous creation from nothing to something. There is no way that this word can ever mean a progression from life to life to life until man is evolved. There is no record of such a thing in the Scripture. The official biblical record declares for creationism for all of life and all of matter.

**Creation of Man**

The earth was prepared in this way to be the habitation of a new creature. Up to now, remember that the only personalities in the universe were God, who with one essence existed in three persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the angels. The angels at this point fell into two categories: the elect angels who had obeyed God, and thereby had passed their test period; and, the fallen angels who disobeyed God and had now constituted with Satan the demonic host. God begins to restore his earth. This, of course, is of great interest to the angels. They are always a curious lot. God creates a totally different kind of creature. He is not as high as angels. He is not as low as animals. He's right in between the two of them. He is a strange looking creature. God first makes him out of a glob of wet clay. He shapes and forms him into a human form with all of the parts absolutely perfect and complete.

Then God reaches down and breathes into the nostrils of this lump of clay. God breathes two kinds of life: a soul life; and, a spirit life. The eyes flutter and open, and Adam became a living soul. He was one who was indwelt with the image of God in that he has a soul, and thus a personality like God. He is one who is characterized as being in the likeness of God because he has a soul personality like everyone else. Yet he is a distinct individual being. So all the parts have been brought into function here--body, soul, and spirit. This man is put into this very spectacular new creation, or restoration, of God's creation.

**Phase one - Innocence**

The angels found this creature rather curious. He had no wings as they do. Therefore he was earthbound. Furthermore, he lacked the super power that angels have. He lacked many of the capacities and the abilities that angels do. He was in every way, very distinctively, an inferior creature. So God places this man in a garden called The Garden of Eden. We call phase one the phase of innocence in the dispensation of the gentiles because man in this garden--a garden of paradise--does not know by experience what evil is. All he knows is that there is one thing he is not to do. He is not to eat of a certain tree in that garden. If he eats of that tree, the result of eating of that tree is going to give him by experience a knowledge between good and evil. God has that knowledge. God has that knowledge in the opposite way that man gained it. Man gained it by ultimately experiencing evil. God knows the difference by experiencing only good, and rejecting the evil.

So this man Adam, who was a gentile remember, was made the steward of this dispensation number one. He is to manage the garden. That's his duty. He is to prune it. He is to guard it (Genesis 2:15b). I don't know what Adam thought when God said I want you to guard this garden. He must have thought, "I wonder why He's telling me that." As a matter of fact, he may have gone looking around the trees and over the hills and saying, "I wonder who's around here that I have to watch for." But the thing, of course, that God was pointing out to him that He perhaps did explain to Adam, was that there was a demonic host who was very curious and very interested in what God was doing, because man was going to play a major role in this confrontation between God and Satan. So he was told to take care of the garden and to guard it against the possible demonic encroachments. Adam had no knowledge of evil. He had perfect fellowship with God.

**Divine Institutions**

At this point, we have the first divine institution established. Divine institutions came in this dispensation of the gentiles. A divine institution is a rule or a regulation which applies to all humanity, whether they are believers or unbelievers. You have this in Genesis 2:16, where God says to Adam. "You *may* eat of all the trees of the garden." Then we have the negative in Genesis 2:17 where it says, "You shall *not* eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." What we have in those two words--"you may eat," and "you shall not eat"--is volition, or will. Man was told, "You can decide. I am hereby giving you the right to exercise your choice. I'm conveying to you free choice. This free choice operates, of course, within the sovereignty of God.

**Volition**

However, for Adam, it meant that he had the right to go where he wanted to go; to choose as he pleased in any situation; and, to work at any job that he chose. It meant private property ownership. It meant determining the course of his life. It meant everything that's involved in making choices and being free to make those choices. It means the same thing today. God has ordained that every living human being on the face of the earth shall be able to decide what he wants to do with his life; where he wants to live; how he wants to move around; what he wants to do with his money; and, what he wants to be associated with or not associated with--the whole course of your life, that is volition. Any form of government or any group--religious or otherwise--that interferes with this factor is violating a basic principle of the Word of God.

Now our old sin nature, through Satan, constantly strikes at volition. There are many ways in which you and I tend to be guilty about imposing our wills upon the wills of other people. We impose our choices, our preferences, and our tastes upon other believers. This happens within the relationship of husbands and wives who are imposing upon each other their choices without leaving volition and freedom open to the other. While a husband is in charge of the family, he is never given permission to squelch the volition of his wife. If his wife is his right woman, that will not pose a great problem. Here is the husband in the course of his life. If he marries the right woman, her volition will run parallel to his. There'll be very little problem and very little friction. If she is his wrong woman, she will go along and then begin veering off. Problems begin, and he will reach over and jerk her back in.

At this point, volition is violated--to make her conform. She'll go along, and then begin to start veering off, and he'll reach out and jerk her back in, and again volition is violated. They'll have this seesaw condition. Gradually it tends to get farther away and he finds it more difficult to pull her in until she fragments off into divorce. Most divorces basically have at the core the problem that the wrong man is with the wrong woman, and they cannot coordinate on volition. Finally, they just splinter off from one another because they cannot get together on that issue. You have no right to be destroying the volition of any other person. If your marriage is to the wrong person, your volition is going to be a problem on how to live. You may have a problem that you're going to have to live with. If it's to the right person, the volition of both parties is being spiritually oriented with a spiritual maturity structure being filled with the Spirit, and the wills will very easily coordinate.

So this was one of the great things that God did for man: "You may," and "You shall not." For man to say, "Yes I will," and, "No, I won't," obviously he had to have the freedom of making that choice. This is a divine institution and it is to be respected.

**Naming the Animals**

God took Adam into the garden on this first day, and He gave him a job. Remember that Adam had super intelligence. There was not one dead brain cell in his head. He was at the maximum capacity. Because he had such super intellectual capacity, it was no problem for God to parade the animals in front of Adam, and for him to name them and to classify them. Now that took some doing. He was a biology and a zoology student right off the bat. He knew how to categorize animals and plants. He could just put the whole thing together in its right order.

Now at the end of that day, when he got through with this fantastic feat, something very significant struck him. Out of all that animal life that paraded in front of him, he noticed that there was not another creature like himself; and, particularly one of the opposite sex. God was already aware of this problem, and had set in motion a solution. You know it well. He took Adam; put him to sleep; took a rib out; and, built and shaped a woman (the Hebrews says "banah"). He shaped up a woman. He closed Adam's wound, probably undoubtedly with no scar. Adam was none the worse for it. Remember that he had just spent the day classifying creatures. When he opened his eyes and looked at her, he said, "Aha, a new category--'ishshah'." He called her "woman." He was "esh," and she was "ishshah." Immediately he classified her, and immediately he recognized her as his kind of girl--his kind of person. He took to her right off the bat.

**Marriage**

However, there was something very interesting. As you read the Scriptures you will notice that Adam waited. God stepped in and made a very dramatic declaration. God stepped in and declared a second institution, and that was marriage. Adam immediately recognized her as the one who was designed for him. She was his right woman. Things were easier to decide in those days. Consequently, he rejoiced and welcomed her right off the bat. However, he did wait. Having found that girl, he waited until God said, "Now is the time for the next stage of your relationship," which is marriage. So God explained to them how a man and a woman leave their parents and they cleave to each other, and physically they become one being. They become one flesh.

And so God instituted the marriage union, and he signaled that this was to be a permanent relationship. We have this in Genesis 2:24, and you may compare this with Matthew 19:4-5. Genesis 2:24 was not spoken by Adam. The verse before was, but Genesis 2:24 was spoken by God. We know that from Matthew 19:4-5. So marriage as a divine institution was necessary, again, for the protection of the human race. All the divine institutions are for protecting the human race so that man does not destroy himself. This was not such a great problem before man's sin. After man's sin, the divine institutions were crucial, or humanity would rub itself off the face of the earth.

**Family**

So marriage was another one of those divine institutions which was to protect the relationship between a man and a woman in order to set the scene for a third divine institution which was coming along in the form of the family. It was necessary to have a stable relationship between the man and woman who were going to give birth to those children to be able to rear them and to train them over the period of years that was necessary. It was not in the plan of God, as the Lord Jesus pointed out, to have people who get married eventually get divorced. This is wrong. There are two basic reasons: adultery; and, desertions that you may find in Scripture for divorce. Neither one of those is ever presented in the light that even in that case you should seek divorce. It just says there is a ground for dissolving the union, but there is not an encouragement to do so. Instead, it was to be a permanent relationship.

Note that you will find something that is reflected in the defect of our society that many Christians pick up, and many young people pick up. They say, "I can get married, and try it out. If it doesn't work, I can always terminated it and try again." Frequently, people who terminate their marriages make a second one that is equally bad. As a matter of fact, I have been fascinated by this fact about people who have been married, divorced, and remarried. They marry the second time the same kind of clod they did the first time. They just seem sickly hung on making the same mistake twice. Divorce does not solve the problems that people are led to think it does.

In reference to the divine institution of marriage in terms of the family, the cruelest thing about divorce is children. I don't care who you are or what your problems are. You are a grown adult. Once you have committed yourself to marriage, and once particularly children are in the picture, it makes no difference what misery you go through in that marriage. It makes no difference how much you think you can't stand. It makes no difference what suffering you go through. The cruelest thing is to impose a divorce upon children. You have no right before God, on that score alone, to impose that on youngsters.

I heard about a man today who got tired of the fact that divorce was always looked upon as a sad occasion. So when he got divorced, he ran a party last week. One of the things he had was a huge wedding cake with just a groom standing on top. He had all of his friends in to celebrate his divorce in order to make it a happy occasion just like the original wedding had been. That's the kind of distorted sublimation you're going to be hearing more and more as we come to the end of the age.

God told Adam that he wanted Adam and his wife to populate the earth and to rule over it (Genesis 1:28). That meant to fill it up in the sense of reproducing themselves. So this led to the third divine institution which was the family. God has ordained that people, first of all, have freewill in order to make choices. Secondly, a right man and a right woman should come together in marriage, and out of that should evolve a family. They are now responsible to raise that family with certain understandings relative to God's viewpoint, to authority, and so on. This institution also was geared to preserving the human race.

Genesis 1:29-30 tells us that the diet of the people in this phase one of the dispensation of the gentiles was vegetarian. No animals were eaten. The man Adam took his wife and showed her the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He explained to her that God said that they are not to eat of that tree. However you know what happened. They did fall into sin. Adam and Eve lived as husband and wife in that garden of paradise for some time with maximum happiness. All of their needs were provided. They just didn't have to do anything. It was just fun and games all day long in a perfect environment. All their needs were provided by a God who knew exactly what they needed. The best part of all was that every evening, in the cool of the day, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the garden. He sat down with them at the close of the day and He held a Bible class. This was because, while Adam was a super intellect, he needed to learn doctrine just like you and I do. That's how he did learn it, and that's how he progressed in the developing of divine viewpoint.

**The Fall into Sin**

Satan who had previously fallen, as you know, attacked the woman in this perfect setting during the absence of her husband. He led her into sin. He did this by attacking God as to the grace of God; the Word of God; and, the character of God. She ate the forbidden fruit, and indeed she became like God. She knew good and evil by experience, but from the opposite side--from the side of evil. She invited her husband Adam to eat the fruit.

Adam saw that something had happened. The minute he came home, the first thing he noticed was that her covering of light had been removed. They had been surrounded by light, as God is light, and they were moving in His holiness. They had the covering of light. But Adam saw that Eve's covering of light was gone. It was clearly evident as she stood there without any covering before him that something had happened, and he knew exactly what. He ate the fruit anyhow (1 Timothy 2:14). This is a testimony to the magnetic drawing power of a right man toward his right woman. They both had acquired a sin nature, and they knew it (Genesis 3:7). Satan had won a great victory. They both had lost their clothing of light, so they made a substitute of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). This was kind of a human good attempt.

Satan, in that moment, became king of the world which Adam had been given to rule (Luke 4:5, 7). The failure at this stage of the dispensation of the gentiles was judged by God. You have this in Genesis 3:8-19. A curse was pronounced upon everybody who was involved in the failure--upon the man, the woman, and the serpent animal--and upon creation itself. Satan was not judged because he had already been placed under judgment previously. However, at the time of this judgment, Genesis 3:15 was declared which was a promise that a savior was coming. Adam believed this gospel. We find this in Genesis 3:20 and in 1 Timothy 2:15. His wife believed, and consequently God provided the skins of animals (Genesis 3:21, Isaiah 61:10) which spoke of the fact that they were under the blood of Christ which was to be shed in behalf of their sins. So the man and the woman were placed under these various judgments. They were removed from the Garden of Eden and from the perfect lifestyle that they had known (Genesis 3:22-24). So, phase one here of the dispensation of the gentiles came to an end. Phase two was ready to begin.

**Phase Two - Conscience**

They were driven out of the garden. Phase two had to do with the human family. Phase two is the conscience stage of the first dispensation. Genesis 5:4 tells us that Adam and Eve had many many children. They reared them, and they taught them the Word of God. Remember that there was no written Bible. They all spoke the same language. There was no organized missionary activity except that parents trained their children. The two oldest children were named Cain and Abel. Both of them learned the gospel from their parents, and both of them were taught how to proceed to worship God with an altar and a sacrifice. Cain was an unbeliever, but he was a successful farmer. Abel was a believer and he was a successful shepherd. In this phase of the dispensation of the gentiles, man was being guided by his conscience. In other words, he was made responsible to do everything that he knew was right, and to avoid doing everything that he knew was wrong.

Here he is a fallen creature with an old sin nature. He has information from God on what is right; he has information from God on what is wrong; and, he has a conscience within him. He has a signal that God has built into his mind to signal to him right from wrong. He is responsible to believe the gospel. He is responsible to approach God through the sacrifice of animals upon an altar. This was the guidance of conscience. The way that Satan puts it today is, "Let your conscience be your guide." When conscience was the guide, we experienced the first murder of human history. As you know, Cain murdered his younger brother Abel. It happened on the occasion that the two brothers brought a sacrifice as they had been taught by their parents. However, Cain, because he was a farmer, decided that he was going to offer a human good type of sacrifice because he was an unbeliever. So he brought some of his produce. He put it on the altar. Abel brought a lamb from his flock; slaughtered him; and, put him upon the altar.

In some way, God signaled that Abel's offering was acceptable as an offering of faith, and Cain's was not. Perhaps this was the same way that Elijah demonstrated to the prophets of Baal that his offering was acceptable. It may have been that God simply struck fire from heaven and consumed Abel's offering and just left Cain's untouched. The result was that Cain, who was acting very religious (while Abel was acting in faith on Christ) was angered. He had this mental sin (Genesis 4:5). However, God, because he always treats us in grace in every dispensation, appealed to Cain to give him another chance. God appealed to Cain to repent (Genesis 4:7). However, Cain, who was operating on conscience in this phase of the dispensation, rejected God's appeal and went to negative volition. Therefore we may call the first phase "the phase of positive volition." The second phase of the dispensation of the gentiles we may call "the phase of negative volition," because that's what characterized it.

The Bible says that Cain, upon this occasion, went over and talked with his brother Abel. Later in the field, after this conversation with his brother Abel, Cain took a knife and he cut his brother's throat, and thus slew him (Genesis 4:8, 1 John 3:12). I would be curious to know what the two brothers talked about on that earlier occasion after Cain's sacrifice had been rejected and he talked with his brother Abel. It may have been that on that occasion, Abel gave Cain his last and final testimony concerning the gospel--the last and final appeal to move off from negative to positive toward the gospel message.

In any event, Cain, by this act of murder, violated the moral code against murder that he had been taught. He also violated this divine institution of volition because he had denied his brother's right to live, and the brother's freedom to live out his life. Murder always interrupts this divine institution of volition. The motivation for the murder, of course, was Satan through the old sin nature (1 John 3:12, John 8:44). Satan killed Abel in order to try to stop the line of descent from Adam which was to eventuate in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to fulfill Genesis 3:15.

Well, God put a judgment upon Cain near the end of phase two here of this dispensation. This unbeliever Cain had all of his conscience filled with wrong values and wrong standards. Consequently, he made the wrong decisions. I must stress that even an unbeliever today may have a conscience that has in it right concepts. You may get this from the home that you're reared in as an unbeliever. You may get this from school. You may get this from social groups. You may even get this from political areas. You may get right concepts within your conscience as an unbeliever. God honors what is right.

However, the problem with Cain, who also received these things from home, was that when he was confronted with the gospel, he went negative. When an unbeliever receives the gospel and he goes negative toward it, he begins building up those callouses upon the soul which eventually destroy his conscience. Whatever right values and whatever right standards are in an unbeliever's conscience are destroyed once he starts going negative to the gospel. From the point that he hears the gospel, which is what happened to Cain, he starts going downhill in his conscience values.

So God exposed the results of the conscience of Cain. He pointed this out to him by asking him the question, "Where is your brother?" You know the story. Cain lied. He revealed no remorse whatsoever. He would not bring a lamb in sacrifice, but he didn't mind killing his brother. Abel's blood was innocent, and God said, "His innocent blood is crying to me from the ground." It's innocent because he didn't deserve to be executed. It is not murder to execute somebody who has taken another person's life willfully. The Bible requires us to do that. It is not murder for a soldier to kill the enemy in combat under the authority of the state. The Bible requires us to do that. There is a difference between killing and murder, but Abel's was innocent blood. Cain had taken innocent blood.

So God passed judgment at phase two of the dispensation of the gentiles. That judgment was that from now on, Cain would not be a successful farmer (Genesis 4:11-12). Where he had been very successful, his thumb was no longer going to be green, but it was going to turn blue while he tried and tried and just bruised himself to no avail. Also God said, "You'll be a wanderer. Your roots will be pulled up." Cain complained about this sentence. He called it cruel and unusual punishment in Genesis 4:13-14. One of the things that Cain feared was that when people would discover in his wanderings who he was, that they would take vengeance upon him for killing Abel.

Remember that this must have been offensive even to unbelievers at the time because a human being had never been killed before. As a matter of fact, the only way they knew how to kill a person was by the fact that they had seen animals killed. That's why Cain, when he came about to kill his brother, did what he did. What did he do? Hit him on the head? Run him over with his chariot? The only thing that occurred to him was to do the same thing he had seen his brother do with a lamb--to cut the brother's throat. They just didn't know how to go about killing people. They weren't too keen on the idea. Cain seems to sense that. So God gave him a physical identification--a mark. I don't know what God did to him. Maybe he changed his whole color. He made him to stand out clearly that this was the man who was under the special protective custody of God. People knew to beware that anybody raise their hand against him.

Cain did not repent. His conscience led him to walk out on God, and to go to live in the land of Nod (which means "exile"), and there to proceed to create a godless civilization. One of the things we're going to take up next time is civilizations, or what you may call "society." A great deal of confusion and distortions that we come by as Christians is because we don't understand the biblical progression of civilizations, and what happens to our thinking as we become adapted to our civilization. This is what Cain went out and did. He created the first great civilization, but it was a veneer of culture for their old sin natures. They had advanced technology as we shall see, but it was corrupted by the sin nature within them.

So the civilization of Cain was a determined attempt as he went out from God to create a happy society on this earth--a happy society without God. Satan rules this world. Therefore, you cannot have a happy society. Man's old sin nature prevents any human solutions to social problems from working. No matter how sincere man is, whatever solutions he comes up with cannot work. This is because man has an old sin nature. Today we are not more civilized than Cain. We only possess more leisure. We have more pleasures; we have more learning; and, we have more comfort, but our technology has still left us with a rotten moral core.

**Civilizations**

Any civilization which seeks to operate without God is going to find that it cannot make it. This is because what civilizations do is that they deny these divine institutions of volition, marriage, and family. Just as an introduction to this subject, there are actually four major civilizations with cultures within these civilizations. Number one is the antediluvian civilization. That's what Cain went out and prepared. The word "antediluvian" comes from the Latin, and it simply means before the flood, or before the deluge. This was before the flood civilization. When we talk about a civilization, we're referring to a stage of man's intellectual, cultural, and social progress in some era of history. The civilizations are related to dispensations, but they do not always coincide with them exactly. Within every civilization, such as the antediluvian, there was a series of cultures of various people. This formed a certain way of life within itself.

The second main civilization is the postdiluvian which means "after" the flood civilization. This is the one in which you are living today--the civilization subsequent to the flood. A third civilization which is coming will be the millennial under the reign of Christ. Then the fourth will be the eternal civilization for all eternity. Each civilization has certain characteristics. Each civilization has its own climate. It has its own plant and animal life. It has its own ecological balance.

For example, in the antediluvian civilization, there was a perfect stable climate with no seasons; no rain; and, long life. There was something about the climate, apparently, that was connected with man being able to live hundreds and hundreds of years. Each civilization will begin with everybody a believer. Antediluvian, postdiluvian, millennial, and eternal--each one begins with everybody a believer. And each one ends with population decimation where vast numbers of the population are slaughtered, except in the last one--the eternal one.

Each of these civilizations has believers in it who will survive the catastrophic end of the civilization. The antediluvian began with Adam, and it ended with the flood. Only Noah and his family survived that one. The dispensation of the gentiles goes from Adam to the tower of Babel. The antediluvian civilization went through part of the gentile dispensation. The postdiluvian civilization began with Noah, and it ends with the coming of Christ. It covers the end of the dispensation of the gentiles and the dispensation of the Jews. The millennial civilization begins with a dispensation of the millennium. It's coterminous with that. The eternal, of course, begins after that and goes on forever as a civilization all itself.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971

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