

PART I: THE ORIGIN OF ALL THINGS (LESSONS 1-8)

LESSON ONE

General Subjects Concerning God's Plan for Man Discussed

In our first lesson on “God's Plan for Man” from the eternal past to the eternal future, it is necessary to understand the general idea of the plan and of the terms used. The fifty-two lessons are divided into four parts as follows:

- PART I The Origin of All Things..... Lessons 1-8
- PART II God's Historical Dealings with Man..... Lessons 9-18
- PART III God's Present Dealings with Man..... Lessons 19-36
- PART IV God's Future Dealings with Man..... Lessons 37-52

I. Importance of the Study of “God's Plan for Man”

The study of “God's Plan for Man” is the most important subject of human existence, if one wants to know the Bible and be saved in eternity. It may be called “The Backbone of the Bible,” for it takes in all the ages and dispensations, and all the important subjects of the Bible, from eternity past to eternity future. If one will distinguish the ages and dispensations, the whole Bible will harmonize.

The main reason for much confusion and misunderstanding of the Bible is that men do not understand the plan of God for man. It will be impossible for the average student of Scripture to consider the Bible a difficult book to understand, if he will get a working knowledge of the blueprint of God's plan.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of these lessons, which are based on a correct understanding of the Bible itself. The name of each age and dispensation should be memorized, and the place each has in the plan of God should be carefully noted. In this way the student can have a mental picture of the particular time to which each lesson refers, and to which the various Scriptures apply. The outstanding features of each age and dispensation should also be kept in mind as we proceed from lesson to lesson. Then the ultimate purpose of God in His plan for man will begin to dawn upon the mind of the reader.

If you want a clear, sane, and harmonious understanding of Scripture, let yourself become well acquainted with God's plan of the ages and dispensations together with their outstanding features. Get an idea of the history of the past connected with the present, and also understand all the prophecies of the future. Then and then alone can you be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)). Along with a clear knowledge of the Bible as a whole, you will learn the right use of the Scriptures in your daily life. You will learn how to receive healing, health, prosperity and happiness here and now. After all, that is what you need now, is it not? You will not only gain knowledge of God, but you will learn how to appropriate the full blessings of life, by the proper use of this knowledge.

II. The Simplicity of the Plan of God for Man

The Bible, or God's plan in Scripture, is very simple to understand. No man has any excuse for misunderstanding it. Jesus constantly invited and provoked study of the Scriptures, and even rebuked men for their lack of knowledge of revealed truth. He attributed all error to a lack of knowledge of the Bible. He answered His critics by saying, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" ([Mt. 22:29](#)). He commanded men to "search the scriptures: for in them ye *think* ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" ([Jn. 5:39](#)).

After more than three years of the simplest teaching by the greatest of all teachers, the disciples had to be rebuked for their unbelief and hardness of heart: "O fools, and *slow of heart to believe* all that the prophets have spoken" ([Lk. 24:25-27](#)). This was not because they could not understand, but because they did not believe what Christ said. Even after Christ had appeared and manifested Himself to them in various ways, they still refused to believe until He "upbraided them *for their unbelief* and hardness of heart" ([Mk. 16:13-14](#)). The words Christ spoke were always simple enough to understand, but to *believe them* was another thing.

You, too, may struggle at first to realize that the benefits we promise you, according to Scripture, are true and really for you. We will prove them to you from the simple words of the Bible. You should begin now to believe the promises of the more abundant life and expect these benefits. You should begin to believe the good news that these blessings are for you and begin to appropriate them now.

Paul also taught that *hearing the Word of God* was sufficient to cause one to believe. He said, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom *they have not heard?* and how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who *hath believed our report?* So then faith cometh *by hearing* and hearing *by the word of God*" ([Rom. 10:11-18](#), emphasis added).

Nearly ninety times in the New Testament alone an appeal is made to readers *to believe* what "is written," as if everything was simple enough to understand if men wanted to understand and believe. In fact, not once in either Testament did any speaker or writer leave the impression that anything God said was hard to understand, if men would simply believe what God had said. The only hint of a misunderstanding on behalf of anyone is in connection with those who did not want to believe and obey the Gospel.

Jesus taught that it was only because of the willfulness of men not to believe that it was hard to understand. In other words, some do not want to understand. Those who do can understand without exception ([Mt. 13:9-17](#)). Peter speaks of the "unlearned and unstable," wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction ([2 Pet. 3:16-18](#)). However, no person belongs to this class if he will make up his mind to believe and obey what is written, instead of rebelling against it.

Pride, willfulness, and rebellion against what "is written" are the causes of the Bible being hard to understand. The hard part, then, is not understanding with the mind, but being willing to obey what he does not want to obey. If a person could not understand the truth, he could not reject it.

There is no excuse for anyone to misunderstand God's Word if he will, like a child, accept the Bible for what it says, and be honest enough to consecrate himself to obey it. He must accept the Bible as God's Word. He must believe that God could not be honest if He sought to hide from man the very things He will judge him by in the end. He must accept the Bible as the final Court of Appeal on its own subjects, and forget man's interpretations and distortion of the Word. He must believe that God knows what He is talking about; that He knows how to express Himself in human language; that He said what He meant, and meant what He said; and that what He says on a subject is more important than what any man may say about it.

It is not necessary for you to look up all the many Scripture references in these lessons in order to get the truth. They are given as proof that what is taught is biblical, and for those who desire to investigate for themselves what the Bible says on the various questions. It would enrich your life to look up all these references, and such will prove the greatest blessing. However, as we shall state exactly what the references do say, you can still get the same truth should you not have time to look up each citation in the Bible.

Nevertheless, should you have any doubts that we are stating sound doctrines, look up the references and see exactly what the Bible says and believe it in preference to any man. You cannot go wrong with this kind of advice. But in doing this, be sure you adhere to what is written, and that you do not let preconceived ideas cause you to be biased on any point. Do not try to make the Bible conform to your ideas. Always reconcile your ideas to the Bible. Let the plain language of the references given be read and understood in the same literal way that we would understand similar statements in any other book.

In Lesson Three, we will show you how to understand the Bible, but follow these simple rules of instruction until then. Just consider that the Bible is simple and that God's plan for man is clear, and nothing will be hard to understand as we proceed with the study. Do not defeat yourself before you start by thinking the Bible is the hardest book in the world to understand. Forget that idea here and now! It will be made clear, how utterly simple it is. You will marvel at its simplicity as we study lesson after lesson. So-called mysteries that have seemingly baffled the wise of this world are still revealed to "babes."

Jesus at one time said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, *because* thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" ([Mt. 11:25-26](#)). He said of the so-called wise and prudent, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they have closed*; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" ([Mt. 13:10-17](#)).

It is all-important, therefore, that you be simple and humble in your attitude. Take the place of a disciple (learner), and accept at face value everything that God says on any subject, whether or not it harmonizes with your theories or those of your former teachers. If you want truth just as it is in the Bible, you have finally found the true source of your information. We promise and guarantee that we will not change any part of the Bible to fit into our own ideas or those of anyone else, but we will give you chapter and verse for everything we say concerning God's plan for man.

Let us proceed with our study with an open Bible, an open heart, and an open mind to all that God says, and be honest to lay aside old theories for the plain, literal, and simple Word of God on all points discussed.

III. Definition of the Terms and Expressions of the Ages

There are some words and expressions which must be understood before the student of the Bible can "rightly divide the word of truth" ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)). Knowledge of these words and expressions and how they are used in Scripture is essential to a right understanding of the Word of God. *The necessary ones that we want you to get acquainted with, and which we want you to refer to quite often as we study the future lessons, are as follows:*

1. AGE. The Greek *aion* means "an age" or "period of time," whether *long* or *short*. In this sense there are *numberless ages*:

(1) PAST AGES. Paul said of the revelation of the mystery of the Church "which in *other ages* was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" ([Eph. 3:5-6](#); [Col. 1:26](#)). Paul said that God, by Christ, planned the ages—

“made the worlds” (Greek, *ages*, [Heb. 1:1-3; 11:3](#)). See also [Lk. 1:70](#); [Jn. 9:32](#); [Acts 3:21; 15:18](#); [1 Cor. 2:7](#).

(2) PRESENT AGE. This Age of Grace, between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ, is referred to many times in Scripture as, “this world” (Greek, *age*, [Mt. 13:22](#)); “end of this world” (*age*, [Mt. 13:39-40](#); [Mk. 4:19](#); [Lk. 16:8; 20:34](#); [Rom. 12:2](#); [1 Cor. 1:20](#)); “end of the world” (*age*, [Mt. 13:49](#); [24:3](#); [28:20](#)); and “present evil world” (*age*, [Gal. 1:4](#); [2 Tim. 4:10](#); [Titus 2:12](#)). In another sense the phrase “present age” refers to the period from the flood of Noah to the Millennium, as we shall see in Lesson Thirteen, and point (5), note c.

(3) FUTURE AGES. A particular age—the Millennium—is referred to as following “this age,” and is spoken of as “the world [*age*] to come” ([Mt. 12:31-32](#); [Mk. 10:30](#); [Eph. 1:21](#); [Heb. 6:5](#)) and “that world” (*age*, [Lk. 20:35](#)). After the next age, which is the last dispensation before the eternal perfect state, there will be ages after ages following each other, like links of a continuous chain. Paul speaks of the “ages to come” in which God will forever show “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” ([Eph. 2:7](#); [3:21](#); [1 Tim. 1:17](#)).

(4) THE CREATIVE AGES ([Gen. 1:1–2:25](#)). By this we mean the ages in the dateless past, during which time God created the universe and all things therein, called in [Gen. 2:4](#), “the generations of the heavens and of the earth.” During these creative ages, God brought into existence the vast heavens including the sun, moon, stars, and planets of our universe, as well as the innumerable things in the three heavens and the Earth, mentioned in Scripture ([2 Cor. 12:2](#); [Col. 1:15-18](#); [Rom. 1:20](#)). God also created the various kinds of spirit and human beings to inhabit the various planets, and to whom He planned to reveal Himself and show the riches of His glory and kindness forever. In Lessons Five through Eight, we shall study the most wonderful story of the creation of all things that has ever been told, from the standpoint of Scripture.

(5) THE FIVE MAIN AGES. There are five main ages in time in connection with God's dealings with free moral agents. *They are:*

A. THE ANTECHAOTIC AGE—from the original creation to chaos; that is, from the beginning of the creation of the heavens and of the Earth, as in [Gen. 1:1](#), to the chaotic state of the Earth in [Gen. 1:2](#). During this period Lucifer ruled the Earth, but fell because of pride and caused the Earth to be cursed, as we shall see in Lesson Seven.

B. THE ANTEDILUVIAN AGE—from the six days of the re-creation of the heaven and of the Earth (as in [Gen. 1:3–2:25](#)) to the flood of Noah, or from the flood of Lucifer ([Gen. 1:2](#)) to the flood of Noah ([Gen. 6-8](#)).

C. THE PRESENT AGE—from the flood of Noah ([Gen. 6-8](#)) to the Millennium, which follows the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon, as in [Rev. 19:11–20:7](#).

D. THE AGE TO COME—the Millennium, from the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon ([Rev. 19:11-21](#)) to the New Heavens and the New Earth ([Rev. 21-22](#)).

E. THE AGE OF THE AGES—eternity, time without end. In Lessons Forty-nine through Fifty-two, we shall study in detail the future and eternal conditions on this Earth and in the heavens, truths about which the average church member has seldom, if ever, heard anything about, but which the Scriptures picture in almost infinite detail. A study of these truths will make the believer in Christ rich in knowledge and will give him a concrete understanding of the eternal future events of which he has a hope.

2. WORLD. There are ten Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture translated by our one English word “world.” All these words have a different shade of meaning. Failure to understand just which original word is used in a particular Scripture may lead to a wrong understanding. The context and subject matter of a passage as well as how it is used will help determine the true meaning of the original word. This method should prove beyond all doubt which meaning to give

the word. However, if one wishes to go deeper he could find out which original word was used and then determine its exact meaning, before being satisfied that he has the true meaning. This procedure is not only sound in testing this one word for accuracy, but the same principle applies equally with every other English word, where there is the least doubt as to the meaning in any passage.

We do not have the space, neither shall we take the time, to go into a long technical discussion of these ten original words for “world.” However, we will list and define the important ones as follows:

(1) The Hebrew word *olam* means “unknown time,” “time out of mind,” “eternity,” “always,” “everlasting,” and “perpetual.” This word should never have been translated “world,” but always in connection with *time*. For example, in [Ps. 73:12](#), it should have been translated “continually” instead of “in the world.” In [Isa. 45:17](#); [64:4](#) it should have been translated “eternal” instead of “world without end.” In other words, it should always be understood as *time without any limits as to a beginning or an end*, as we shall see in the last lessons when this word is used regarding certain things as continuing in all eternity.

(2) The Greek word *aion* means “a period of time,” whether long or short. It always should have been translated “age” and never “world” as we have already seen. Sometimes this word is translated “eternal,” “forever,” and “for ever and ever,” and these are correct, as *aion* could mean a long or an eternal period, as well as a short period.

(3) The Greek word *oikoumene* means “the inhabited Earth,” or “the world of men.” Sometimes it is used to refer to only a part of the inhabited Earth, such as the Roman Empire ([Lk. 2:1](#); [Acts 11:28](#)).

(4) The Greek word *kosmos* means “order,” “regularity,” “arrangement,” “ornament,” and “social system.” It is always translated “world” except in [1 Pet. 3:3](#) where it is translated “adorning.” The true meaning is *the social system* or order in the Earth. When Peter said “the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished,” we must understand that only the social order on the Earth perished, not the ground on which it lived ([2 Pet. 3:5-7](#)).

(5) The Greek word *aionios* means “unknown time,” “time out of mind,” “eternity,” “always,” “perpetual,” and “forever.” This Greek word corresponds to the Hebrew word *olam*, above. The three places where it is translated “the world began,” it should have been translated “time without defined limits as to a beginning or an end” ([Rom. 16:25](#); [2 Tim. 1:9](#); [Titus 1:2](#)).

Wherever *olam*, *aion* or *aionios* are used dispensationally as in connection with the plan of God for man, God Himself, eternal life, eternal punishment, and other things that are eternal, they literally mean “everlasting,” “eternal,” and “perpetual,” as we shall see in our future studies.

3. TIMES AND SEASONS. There are twenty-eight Greek words translated “time” and “times,” and eight Greek words translated “season” and “seasons.” Each of these words has a different shade of meaning, but only two of them need be listed here in order for us to get a background for our future studies:

(1) CHRONOS, time unlimited, unless specifically defined ([Mt. 2:7](#), [16](#); [Acts 1:6-7](#); [3:21](#); [Gal. 4:4](#); [1 Thess. 5:1](#); [1 Pet. 1:17](#), [20](#); [Rev. 10:6](#)).

(2) KAIROS, a certain limited or definite portion of *chronos* or *time* ([Mt. 8:29](#); [11:25](#); [12:1](#); [13:30](#); [Acts 3:19](#); [Eph. 1:10](#); [Rev. 12:12](#), [14](#)).

God has spoken “at sundry times and in divers manners” concerning certain times and seasons in history ([Heb. 1:1](#)). To understand and rightly divide the Word of Truth, it is essential that we understand the times in which the different books of the Bible were written, as well as the times to which they apply. There is a *time* and a *season* for everything done *under the sun* ([Eccl. 3](#)).

Besides the natural times and seasons, there are also certain *times* and *seasons* for preordained events in God's eternal plan for man. The children of Issachar "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" ([1 Chron. 12:32](#)). The wise men knew by a star when Christ was born: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him . . . the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was" ([Mt. 2:1-10](#)). Jesus understood the signs of His time and rebuked the Pharisees for not discerning the signs of the time as well as they could discern the natural seasons. He said, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" ([Mt. 16:1-3](#)). After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" ([Acts 1:6-7](#)). Even Satan and demons know the time of their impending doom ([Mt. 8:29](#); [Rev. 12:12](#)).

Nevertheless, there are certain *times* and *seasons* we can now know, concerning prophetic events of the last days ([1 Thess. 5:1-9](#)). What we can and should know of God's plan is the part He has plainly revealed in Scripture. Moses said, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" ([Deut. 29:29](#)).

4. THE ETERNAL PAST. By this we mean the dateless past before the beginning of time as we know it since the six days of [Gen. 1:3-2:25](#).

5. THE ETERNAL FUTURE. By this we mean the eternal continuation of time after the Millennium, when God will be all-in-all as before the rebellion was started in the universe by Lucifer and Adam.

6. THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES. By this we mean the dispensation or administration of the Gentiles as the rod of chastening upon Israel, and to further God's purpose concerning them. It began with Israel's oppression by the Gentiles in Egypt, and it continues with the history of Israel until the Second Advent of Christ, as we shall see in Lesson Fifteen.

7. DISPENSATION. The Greek word *oikonomia* means "an administration," "a stewardship of a household or estate," "a dispensation." We could speak of it as a guardianship. In [1 Cor. 9:17](#); [Eph. 3:2](#); [Col. 1:25](#), Paul speaks of his responsibility or trust in preaching the Gospel as a "dispensation of the gospel," and as "the dispensation of the grace of God." The Millennium is called "the dispensation of the fullness of times," during which time God is to gather together all things in Christ, and put all enemies under His feet ([1 Cor. 15:24-28](#); [Eph. 1:10](#)).

The word "dispensation" comes from two Greek words, *oikos*, "a house," and *nomos*, "a law." As applied to the various ages, it means "a moral or probationary period in human and angelic history." In each period, God tests free moral agents according to a fixed standard of conduct or responsibility, under which they are supposed to remain true to God and rule for Him on the Earth, or elsewhere in the universe.

Each dispensation has its own beginning and ending; each is characterized by certain distinctive principles of God's dealings with men; each begins under favorable circumstances and a particular test and ends in failure and judgment. Nothing but confusion can arise from reading certain meanings into Scripture that do not apply to a particular age. In each age God has a different purpose and what He has said during one dispensation may or may not apply to another.

IV. The Dispensation of Angels

The dispensation or administration of angels was before the days of Adam, as we shall see in Lesson Seven. It included rulership of the Earth and other planets in the heavens.

Paul speaks of “invisible things” in the heavenly world as being as real and understandable as the visible things on Earth ([Col. 1:15-18](#)). In fact, he states that these “invisible things of him from the creation of the world are *clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” ([Rom. 1:19-23](#), emphasis added). That is, there is no excuse for being ignorant of heavenly things.

He further speaks of heavenly bodies as being as real as earthly bodies: “There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial . . . There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body . . . As is the earthy such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly ([1 Cor. 15:35-50](#)).

Let us forget the idea that Heaven is an invisible nothing, or merely a cloud that the redeemed will float around on in space and play a harp for all eternity. The Heaven in which God dwells is a real planet, “a better country” than the planet Earth ([Heb. 11:14-16](#)). As we shall see in Lesson Forty-two, Heaven is a real place, created with cities, mansions, food, water, trees, and other things that we know of in this visible world. Lucifer is spoken of as having a “throne” ([Isa. 14:12-14](#); [Ezek. 28:11-17](#)) and other “thrones” are mentioned in [Col. 1:16-18](#) as being in the heavens. These are evidently thrones of other angels, so there is such a doctrine as the dispensation of angels taught in Scripture.

V. The Seven Dispensations of Man Between the Two Eternities

There are seven dispensations in human history between the eternal past and the eternal future; between the creation of man in the six days of [Gen. 1-2](#) and the final restoration of man in the New Heavens and the New Earth of [Rev. 21-22](#). *The seven dispensations are as follows:*

1. THE DISPENSATION OF INNOCENCE ([Gen. 2:15–3:21](#)). This age was from the creation of man and his commission to rule the restored Earth and all things therein, to the fall of man and his expulsion from the new Garden of Eden. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Nine.
2. THE DISPENSATION OF CONSCIENCE ([Gen. 3:22–8:14](#)). This age was from the fall of man and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden to the flood of Noah, a period of 1,656 years. This age will be studied in Lesson Eleven.
3. THE DISPENSATION OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT ([Gen. 8:15–11:32](#)). This age was from the flood of Noah to the call of Abraham, a period of 427 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Thirteen.
4. THE DISPENSATION OF PROMISE ([Gen. 12:1–Exod. 12:37](#)). This age was from the call of Abraham to the exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses, a period of 430 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Fifteen.
5. THE DISPENSATION OF LAW ([Exod. 12:38](#); [Mt. 2:23](#); [11:10-13](#); [Lk. 16:16](#)). This age was from the exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses to the preaching of the kingdom of Heaven by John the Baptist; or from Moses to the first coming of Jesus Christ, a period of over 1,718 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Seventeen.
6. THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE ([Mt. 3:1–Rev. 19:10](#)). This age has already lasted nearly 2,000 years from the first coming of Christ, and it shall continue until the Second Coming of Christ in the near future. How much longer the age will last is not known. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Nineteen.

7. THE DISPENSATION OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT—THE MILLENNIUM ([Rev. 19:11–20:15](#)). This age will cover the period from the Second Coming of Christ to the last rebellion of Satan and man on the Earth, a period of 1,000 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Forty-nine.

VI. The Dispensation of the Redeemed and Faithful Angels

The final dispensation will be after the Millennium in the New Heavens and the New Earth. God's original purpose will then be fully realized as it was before rebellion started in the kingdom of God by Lucifer and Adam. He will then have a universe free from any possibility of rebellion in all the eternal future, governed solely by Himself and the redeemed human beings and the faithful angels ([Rev. 21:1–22:5](#); [1 Cor. 15:24-28](#)). This administration will be an eternal one, as proven in Lessons Forty-nine through Fifty-two.

Man will again be restored to his original glory. In the eternal future, he will once again have dominion over all things through Christ, and will become “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ” of all creation ([Rom. 8:17-18](#); [1 Cor. 15:24-28](#); [Heb. 2:5-11](#)). This does not mean, however, that God will dethrone the faithful angels who have remained true to Him through all ages in the rebellion of both angels and men. All free moral agents who have proven true to God will have part in helping God administer the affairs of the universe forever, as we shall see in future lessons. That angels are free moral agents and that many have sinned is clear from [2 Pet. 2:4](#); [Jude 6-7](#); [Rev. 12:7-12](#); [Mt. 25:41](#). We shall study the doctrine of angels in Lesson Six.

VII. Reasons for God's Dispensational Dealings

There are a number of reasons why God deals with free moral agents, using various dispensational or probationary tests. *A few reasons are:*

1. God created free moral agents with a free choice, instead of mere machines that He could cause to run forever without any choice of their own. If man could create as God can, he would also choose to create creatures with powers of free choice instead of making them mere robots. Man would glory in making something after his own image and likeness, that could intelligently and willingly cooperate with him in all matters to the common good of all.

Man is even proud that he can make automatic machines which he can run and which make his work easier. How much more proud would he be if he could create machines with the powers of choice and self-action along every line, so that he would not have to direct them? If such were possible, men would be free to do other things and would not be tied down to running machines. If man could create free moral agents, he would naturally have to regulate and limit them and hold them responsible for their moral acts. Otherwise, they might rebel and destroy man and rule in his place.

Man could not afford to make such creatures and turn his whole existence over to them to do as they pleased, regardless of what he might wish. Man could not permit them to rule him, if he was to continue in authority. It would be necessary for man and such creatures to work together for the common good, if society was to continue for the best good of all.

So it is with God. He did make man a wondrous machine, but a free moral and self-acting one. So God must also of necessity have some restrictions and limit the acts of man in the best interest of all. Otherwise, man might rebel and destroy the Creator and rule in His place. When man chooses to rebel against God, there is war just the same as when there are any two opposing forces. Nevertheless, God deals with man as a free moral agent because He created him that way.

God's dealings with man must be on the basis of such a cooperative plan for the common welfare of all, or His universe would become chaotic and could not continue.

2. The wills of all free creatures must be tested to see if they are willing to cooperate with God for the greatest good of all. Moral agents must prove themselves true by such tests and thus become worthy of the confidence of the Creator, before being entrusted with the eternal administration of the universe.

3. All free moral agents must have their wills purged of all possibility of falling, so there can be mutual confidence in each other. In this way, there would be no possibility of man marring God's plan sometime in eternity, through the misuse of man's will.

4. Free wills must be put through all possible tests so that there can be no possible transgression against any part of the eternal plan, at any time. This is the only sure way that the plan can have a guarantee of success, forever.

5. All free wills must eventually learn the following lessons:

- (1) That God must be respected and obeyed.
- (2) That His laws are final and just.
- (3) That sin does not pay and will never be excused.
- (4) That God's form of government is the only correct one.
- (5) That a loving and free submission to God is the highest and most noble principle of free moral government.
- (6) That justice and righteousness must prevail, or no society can be eternally preserved in the universe.
- (7) That consecration to the greatest good of all is the nature and highest glory of the creature.
- (8) That God is merciful and forgiving to rebels who will be penitent, and who learn obedience through their experiences.
- (9) That God is the only absolutely just and perfect Being, and the only one capable and worthy of unquestionable authority.
- (10) That all the accusations of present rebels against God are untrue.
- (11) That God does only those things that are for the common good of all creation.
- (12) That He should, by virtue of His own position as Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Lordship, and His own history of justice and righteousness in all of His dealings, be recognized by all as the Supreme Moral Governor of the universe. Until free moral agents of all kinds learn these lessons, they naturally are in ignorance of certain facts and need such training.

6. One of the chief reasons for God's dealing with man is to bring him back to the place where he was before his fall. Having purged man of all possibility of falling in the future, God will

place redeemed man in his original position of having dominion over all things. Thus, God does not have the slightest doubt as to the future of His plan for man.

7. God's dealings with free moral agents in holiness and absolute justice to all alike gives God a sound basis of punishing rebels who refuse to conform to the plan, and of blessing those who do conform. God can still be just and holy in the judgment and confinement of rebels to everlasting punishment, since they have refused all merciful dealings. They have hardened themselves against all that is holy and good. There is nothing else for God to do but mete out justice according to deeds committed, for the continued good of society, forever. God must make examples of both classes—the good and the bad—for the sake of all generations who come into existence in eternity. God cannot excuse rebels and bless them contrary to His revealed plan, or there would be no end to the breaking of His eternal laws. He would have to continually excuse all wrongdoing forever if He should start such a program, and under circumstances of this kind, free wills would have no true restraint. If He excused some and not others, and showed any degree of partiality, then free agents would lose proper respect for Him as the Moral Governor. If He failed to reward for obedience and punish for disobedience, or in any degree carried on government contrary to prescribed laws for the best good of all, there would be no true incentive for free wills in all eternity to conform to the eternal plan.

The Bible plainly reveals that rebels in everlasting Hell will be an eternal monument of God's wrath toward sin, in order to cause coming generations to conform to the highest good of their own being and of the universe ([Isa. 66:22-24](#); [Rev. 14:9-11](#)).

Why should not present free wills cooperate with God to the best interests of all, if there is such a place as an eternal monument of God's wrath? Why should they not do it, since it is the creative purpose and the only natural and normal life for each creature? Why should not God punish rebels who persist in destroying themselves and the eternal society planned by God? Why should not God finally take action, and confine all eternal rebels away from such society? Why should not God bless all who voluntarily and wholeheartedly cooperate with Him in His plan for the highest good and well-being of the universe? This plan of rewarding obedience and punishing disobedience is the only just plan, and it is the only one that could be used with free moral agents. Everyone can be blessed if he so desires, or can be cursed if that is his choice. Therefore, punishment is not compulsory for anyone. It is the free choice of the individual, and he alone is to blame for his eternal choice and destiny. God's will is that none should be lost ([1 Tim. 2:4-6](#); [2 Pet. 3:9](#); [Jn. 3:16](#)).

8. God's dispensational dealings are necessary to assure lasting benefits for the eternal society. They guarantee the preservation of God's eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ. Paul expressed the purpose of God's dealings with man this way: “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” ([Eph. 1:10](#); [3:1-11](#)). This eternal purpose will be dealt with fully in Lessons Forty-nine through Fifty-two.

9. Another chief reason for God's present dealings with man is to make it eternally possible for Him to be all-in-all. This will avoid constant worry, doubt, or anxiety on His part concerning the eternal working of His predestined plan for all creation now and for all generations that shall yet be brought into being.

PART I: THE ORIGIN OF ALL THINGS (LESSONS 1-8)

LESSON ONE

General Subjects Concerning God's Plan for Man Discussed

In our first lesson on “God's Plan for Man” from the eternal past to the eternal future, it is necessary to understand the general idea of the plan and of the terms used. The fifty-two lessons are divided into four parts as follows:

- PART I The Origin of All Things..... Lessons 1-8
- PART II God's Historical Dealings with Man..... Lessons 9-18
- PART III God's Present Dealings with Man..... Lessons 19-36
- PART IV God's Future Dealings with Man..... Lessons 37-52

I. Importance of the Study of “God's Plan for Man”

The study of “God's Plan for Man” is the most important subject of human existence, if one wants to know the Bible and be saved in eternity. It may be called “The Backbone of the Bible,” for it takes in all the ages and dispensations, and all the important subjects of the Bible, from eternity past to eternity future. If one will distinguish the ages and dispensations, the whole Bible will harmonize.

The main reason for much confusion and misunderstanding of the Bible is that men do not understand the plan of God for man. It will be impossible for the average student of Scripture to consider the Bible a difficult book to understand, if he will get a working knowledge of the blueprint of God's plan.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of these lessons, which are based on a correct understanding of the Bible itself. The name of each age and dispensation should be memorized, and the place each has in the plan of God should be carefully noted. In this way the student can have a mental picture of the particular time to which each lesson refers, and to which the various Scriptures apply. The outstanding features of each age and dispensation should also be kept in mind as we proceed from lesson to lesson. Then the ultimate purpose of God in His plan for man will begin to dawn upon the mind of the reader.

If you want a clear, sane, and harmonious understanding of Scripture, let yourself become well acquainted with God's plan of the ages and dispensations together with their outstanding features. Get an idea of the history of the past connected with the present, and also understand all the prophecies of the future. Then and then alone can you be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)). Along with a clear knowledge of the Bible as a whole, you will learn the right use of the Scriptures in your daily life. You will learn how to receive healing, health, prosperity and happiness here and now. After all, that is what you need now, is it not? You will not only gain knowledge of God, but you will learn how to appropriate the full blessings of life, by the proper use of this knowledge.

II. The Simplicity of the Plan of God for Man

The Bible, or God's plan in Scripture, is very simple to understand. No man has any excuse for misunderstanding it. Jesus constantly invited and provoked study of the Scriptures, and even rebuked men for their lack of knowledge of revealed truth. He attributed all error to a lack of knowledge of the Bible. He answered His critics by saying, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures,

nor the power of God” ([Mt. 22:29](#)). He commanded men to “search the scriptures: for in them ye *think* ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” ([Jn. 5:39](#)).

After more than three years of the simplest teaching by the greatest of all teachers, the disciples had to be rebuked for their unbelief and hardness of heart: “O fools, and *slow of heart to believe* all that the prophets have spoken” ([Lk. 24:25-27](#)). This was not because they could not understand, but because they did not believe what Christ said. Even after Christ had appeared and manifested Himself to them in various ways, they still refused to believe until He “upbraided them *for their unbelief* and hardness of heart” ([Mk. 16:13-14](#)). The words Christ spoke were always simple enough to understand, but to *believe them* was another thing.

You, too, may struggle at first to realize that the benefits we promise you, according to Scripture, are true and really for you. We will prove them to you from the simple words of the Bible. You should begin now to believe the promises of the more abundant life and expect these benefits. You should begin to believe the good news that these blessings are for you and begin to appropriate them now.

Paul also taught that *hearing the Word of God* was sufficient to cause one to believe. He said, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom *they have not heard*? and how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who *hath believed our report*? So then faith cometh *by hearing* and hearing *by the word of God*” ([Rom. 10:11-18](#), emphasis added).

Nearly ninety times in the New Testament alone an appeal is made to readers *to believe* what “is written,” as if everything was simple enough to understand if men wanted to understand and believe. In fact, not once in either Testament did any speaker or writer leave the impression that anything God said was hard to understand, if men would simply believe what God had said. The only hint of a misunderstanding on behalf of anyone is in connection with those who did not want to believe and obey the Gospel.

Jesus taught that it was only because of the willfulness of men not to believe that it was hard to understand. In other words, some do not want to understand. Those who do can understand without exception ([Mt. 13:9-17](#)). Peter speaks of the “unlearned and unstable,” wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction ([2 Pet. 3:16-18](#)). However, no person belongs to this class if he will make up his mind to believe and obey what is written, instead of rebelling against it.

Pride, willfulness, and rebellion against what “is written” are the causes of the Bible being hard to understand. The hard part, then, is not understanding with the mind, but being willing to obey what he does not want to obey. If a person could not understand the truth, he could not reject it.

There is no excuse for anyone to misunderstand God's Word if he will, like a child, accept the Bible for what it says, and be honest enough to consecrate himself to obey it. He must accept the Bible as God's Word. He must believe that God could not be honest if He sought to hide from man the very things He will judge him by in the end. He must accept the Bible as the final Court of Appeal on its own subjects, and forget man's interpretations and distortion of the Word. He must believe that God knows what He is talking about; that He knows how to express Himself in human language; that He said what He meant, and meant what He said; and that what He says on a subject is more important than what any man may say about it.

It is not necessary for you to look up all the many Scripture references in these lessons in order to get the truth. They are given as proof that what is taught is biblical, and for those who desire to investigate for themselves what the Bible says on the various questions. It would enrich your life to look up all these references, and such will prove the greatest blessing. However, as we shall state exactly what the references do say, you can still get the same truth should you not have time to look up each citation in the Bible.

Nevertheless, should you have any doubts that we are stating sound doctrines, look up the references and see exactly what the Bible says and believe it in preference to any man. You cannot go wrong with this kind of advice. But in doing this, be sure you adhere to what is written, and that you do not let preconceived ideas cause you to be biased on any point. Do not try to make the Bible conform to your ideas. Always reconcile your ideas to the Bible. Let the plain language of the references given be read and understood in the same literal way that we would understand similar statements in any other book.

In Lesson Three, we will show you how to understand the Bible, but follow these simple rules of instruction until then. Just consider that the Bible is simple and that God's plan for man is clear, and nothing will be hard to understand as we proceed with the study. Do not defeat yourself before you start by thinking the Bible is the hardest book in the world to understand. Forget that idea here and now! It will be made clear, how utterly simple it is. You will marvel at its simplicity as we study lesson after lesson. So-called mysteries that have seemingly baffled the wise of this world are still revealed to "babes."

Jesus at one time said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, *because* thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" ([Mt. 11:25-26](#)). He said of the so-called wise and prudent, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they have closed*; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" ([Mt. 13:10-17](#)).

It is all-important, therefore, that you be simple and humble in your attitude. Take the place of a disciple (learner), and accept at face value everything that God says on any subject, whether or not it harmonizes with your theories or those of your former teachers. If you want truth just as it is in the Bible, you have finally found the true source of your information. We promise and guarantee that we will not change any part of the Bible to fit into our own ideas or those of anyone else, but we will give you chapter and verse for everything we say concerning God's plan for man.

Let us proceed with our study with an open Bible, an open heart, and an open mind to all that God says, and be honest to lay aside old theories for the plain, literal, and simple Word of God on all points discussed.

III. Definition of the Terms and Expressions of the Ages

There are some words and expressions which must be understood before the student of the Bible can "rightly divide the word of truth" ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)). Knowledge of these words and expressions and how they are used in Scripture is essential to a right understanding of the Word of God. *The necessary ones that we want you to get acquainted with, and which we want you to refer to quite often as we study the future lessons, are as follows:*

1. AGE. The Greek *aion* means "an age" or "period of time," whether *long* or *short*. In this sense there are *numberless ages*:

(1) PAST AGES. Paul said of the revelation of the mystery of the Church "which in *other ages* was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" ([Eph. 3:5-6](#); [Col. 1:26](#)). Paul said that God, by Christ, planned the ages—"made the worlds" (Greek, *ages*, [Heb. 1:1-3](#); [11:3](#)). See also [Lk. 1:70](#); [Jn. 9:32](#); [Acts 3:21](#); [15:18](#); [1 Cor. 2:7](#).

(2) PRESENT AGE. This Age of Grace, between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ, is referred to many times in Scripture as, "this world" (Greek, *age*, [Mt. 13:22](#)); "end of this world" (*age*, [Mt. 13:39-40](#); [Mk. 4:19](#); [Lk. 16:8](#); [20:34](#); [Rom. 12:2](#); [1 Cor. 1:20](#)); "end of the world" (*age*, [Mt. 13:49](#); [24:3](#); [28:20](#)); and "present evil world" (*age*, [Gal. 1:4](#); [2 Tim. 4:10](#); [Titus 2:12](#)). In

another sense the phrase “present age” refers to the period from the flood of Noah to the Millennium, as we shall see in Lesson Thirteen, and point (5), note c.

(3) FUTURE AGES. A particular age—the Millennium—is referred to as following “this age,” and is spoken of as “the world [age] to come” ([Mt. 12:31-32](#); [Mk. 10:30](#); [Eph. 1:21](#); [Heb. 6:5](#)) and “that world” (age, [Lk. 20:35](#)). After the next age, which is the last dispensation before the eternal perfect state, there will be ages after ages following each other, like links of a continuous chain. Paul speaks of the “ages to come” in which God will forever show “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” ([Eph. 2:7](#); [3:21](#); [1 Tim. 1:17](#)).

(4) THE CREATIVE AGES ([Gen. 1:1–2:25](#)). By this we mean the ages in the dateless past, during which time God created the universe and all things therein, called in [Gen. 2:4](#), “the generations of the heavens and of the earth.” During these creative ages, God brought into existence the vast heavens including the sun, moon, stars, and planets of our universe, as well as the innumerable things in the three heavens and the Earth, mentioned in Scripture ([2 Cor. 12:2](#); [Col. 1:15-18](#); [Rom. 1:20](#)). God also created the various kinds of spirit and human beings to inhabit the various planets, and to whom He planned to reveal Himself and show the riches of His glory and kindness forever. In Lessons Five through Eight, we shall study the most wonderful story of the creation of all things that has ever been told, from the standpoint of Scripture.

(5) THE FIVE MAIN AGES. There are five main ages in time in connection with God's dealings with free moral agents. *They are:*

A. THE ANTECHAOTIC AGE—from the original creation to chaos; that is, from the beginning of the creation of the heavens and of the Earth, as in [Gen. 1:1](#), to the chaotic state of the Earth in [Gen. 1:2](#). During this period Lucifer ruled the Earth, but fell because of pride and caused the Earth to be cursed, as we shall see in Lesson Seven.

B. THE ANTEDILUVIAN AGE—from the six days of the re-creation of the heaven and of the Earth (as in [Gen. 1:3–2:25](#)) to the flood of Noah, or from the flood of Lucifer ([Gen. 1:2](#)) to the flood of Noah ([Gen. 6-8](#)).

C. THE PRESENT AGE—from the flood of Noah ([Gen. 6-8](#)) to the Millennium, which follows the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon, as in [Rev. 19:11–20:7](#).

D. THE AGE TO COME—the Millennium, from the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon ([Rev. 19:11-21](#)) to the New Heavens and the New Earth ([Rev. 21-22](#)).

E. THE AGE OF THE AGES—eternity, time without end. In Lessons Forty-nine through Fifty-two, we shall study in detail the future and eternal conditions on this Earth and in the heavens, truths about which the average church member has seldom, if ever, heard anything about, but which the Scriptures picture in almost infinite detail. A study of these truths will make the believer in Christ rich in knowledge and will give him a concrete understanding of the eternal future events of which he has a hope.

2. WORLD. There are ten Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture translated by our one English word “world.” All these words have a different shade of meaning. Failure to understand just which original word is used in a particular Scripture may lead to a wrong understanding. The context and subject matter of a passage as well as how it is used will help determine the true meaning of the original word. This method should prove beyond all doubt which meaning to give the word. However, if one wishes to go deeper he could find out which original word was used and then determine its exact meaning, before being satisfied that he has the true meaning. This procedure is not only sound in testing this one word for accuracy, but the same principle applies equally with every other English word, where there is the least doubt as to the meaning in any passage.

We do not have the space, neither shall we take the time, to go into a long technical discussion of these ten original words for “world.” However, we will list and define the important ones as follows:

(1) The Hebrew word *olam* means “unknown time,” “time out of mind,” “eternity,” “always,” “everlasting,” and “perpetual.” This word should never have been translated “world,” but always in connection with *time*. For example, in [Ps. 73:12](#), it should have been translated “continually” instead of “in the world.” In [Isa. 45:17](#); [64:4](#) it should have been translated “eternal” instead of “world without end.” In other words, it should always be understood as *time without any limits as to a beginning or an end*, as we shall see in the last lessons when this word is used regarding certain things as continuing in all eternity.

(2) The Greek word *aion* means “a period of time,” whether long or short. It always should have been translated “age” and never “world” as we have already seen. Sometimes this word is translated “eternal,” “forever,” and “for ever and ever,” and these are correct, as *aion* could mean a long or an eternal period, as well as a short period.

(3) The Greek word *oikoumene* means “the inhabited Earth,” or “the world of men.” Sometimes it is used to refer to only a part of the inhabited Earth, such as the Roman Empire ([Lk. 2:1](#); [Acts 11:28](#)).

(4) The Greek word *kosmos* means “order,” “regularity,” “arrangement,” “ornament,” and “social system.” It is always translated “world” except in [1 Pet. 3:3](#) where it is translated “adorning.” The true meaning is *the social system* or order in the Earth. When Peter said “the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished,” we must understand that only the social order on the Earth perished, not the ground on which it lived ([2 Pet. 3:5-7](#)).

(5) The Greek word *aionios* means “unknown time,” “time out of mind,” “eternity,” “always,” “perpetual,” and “forever.” This Greek word corresponds to the Hebrew word *olam*, above. The three places where it is translated “the world began,” it should have been translated “time without defined limits as to a beginning or an end” ([Rom. 16:25](#); [2 Tim. 1:9](#); [Titus 1:2](#)).

Wherever *olam*, *aion* or *aionios* are used dispensationally as in connection with the plan of God for man, God Himself, eternal life, eternal punishment, and other things that are eternal, they literally mean “everlasting,” “eternal,” and “perpetual,” as we shall see in our future studies.

3. TIMES AND SEASONS. There are twenty-eight Greek words translated “time” and “times,” and eight Greek words translated “season” and “seasons.” Each of these words has a different shade of meaning, but only two of them need be listed here in order for us to get a background for our future studies:

(1) CHRONOS, time unlimited, unless specifically defined ([Mt. 2:7, 16](#); [Acts 1:6-7](#); [3:21](#); [Gal. 4:4](#); [1 Thess. 5:1](#); [1 Pet. 1:17, 20](#); [Rev. 10:6](#)).

(2) KAIROS, a certain limited or definite portion of *chronos* or *time* ([Mt. 8:29](#); [11:25](#); [12:1](#); [13:30](#); [Acts 3:19](#); [Eph. 1:10](#); [Rev. 12:12, 14](#)).

God has spoken “at sundry times and in divers manners” concerning certain times and seasons in history ([Heb. 1:1](#)). To understand and rightly divide the Word of Truth, it is essential that we understand the times in which the different books of the Bible were written, as well as the times to which they apply. There is a *time* and a *season* for everything done *under the sun* ([Eccl. 3](#)).

Besides the natural times and seasons, there are also certain *times* and *seasons* for preordained events in God's eternal plan for man. The children of Issachar “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” ([1 Chron. 12:32](#)). The wise men knew by a star when Christ was born: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him . . . the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over

where the young child was” ([Mt. 2:1-10](#)). Jesus understood the signs of His time and rebuked the Pharisees for not discerning the signs of the time as well as they could discern the natural seasons. He said, “O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” ([Mt. 16:1-3](#)). After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples asked Him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” ([Acts 1:6-7](#)). Even Satan and demons know the time of their impending doom ([Mt. 8:29](#); [Rev. 12:12](#)).

Nevertheless, there are certain *times* and *seasons* we can now know, concerning prophetic events of the last days ([1 Thess. 5:1-9](#)). What we can and should know of God's plan is the part He has plainly revealed in Scripture. Moses said, “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” ([Deut. 29:29](#)).

4. THE ETERNAL PAST. By this we mean the dateless past before the beginning of time as we know it since the six days of [Gen. 1:3–2:25](#).

5. THE ETERNAL FUTURE. By this we mean the eternal continuation of time after the Millennium, when God will be all-in-all as before the rebellion was started in the universe by Lucifer and Adam.

6. THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES. By this we mean the dispensation or administration of the Gentiles as the rod of chastening upon Israel, and to further God's purpose concerning them. It began with Israel's oppression by the Gentiles in Egypt, and it continues with the history of Israel until the Second Advent of Christ, as we shall see in Lesson Fifteen.

7. DISPENSATION. The Greek word *oikonomia* means “an administration,” “a stewardship of a household or estate,” “a dispensation.” We could speak of it as a guardianship. In [1 Cor. 9:17](#); [Eph. 3:2](#); [Col. 1:25](#), Paul speaks of his responsibility or trust in preaching the Gospel as a “dispensation of the gospel,” and as “the dispensation of the grace of God.” The Millennium is called “the dispensation of the fullness of times,” during which time God is to gather together all things in Christ, and put all enemies under His feet ([1 Cor. 15:24-28](#); [Eph. 1:10](#)).

The word “dispensation” comes from two Greek words, *oikos*, “a house,” and *nomos*, “a law.” As applied to the various ages, it means “a moral or probationary period in human and angelic history.” In each period, God tests free moral agents according to a fixed standard of conduct or responsibility, under which they are supposed to remain true to God and rule for Him on the Earth, or elsewhere in the universe.

Each dispensation has its own beginning and ending; each is characterized by certain distinctive principles of God's dealings with men; each begins under favorable circumstances and a particular test and ends in failure and judgment. Nothing but confusion can arise from reading certain meanings into Scripture that do not apply to a particular age. In each age God has a different purpose and what He has said during one dispensation may or may not apply to another.

IV. The Dispensation of Angels

The dispensation or administration of angels was before the days of Adam, as we shall see in Lesson Seven. It included rulership of the Earth and other planets in the heavens.

Paul speaks of “invisible things” in the heavenly world as being as real and understandable as the visible things on Earth ([Col. 1:15-18](#)). In fact, he states that these “invisible things of him from the creation of the world are *clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” ([Rom. 1:19-23](#), emphasis added). That is, there is no excuse for being ignorant of heavenly things.

He further speaks of heavenly bodies as being as real as earthly bodies: “There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial . . . There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body . . . As is the earthy such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly ([1 Cor. 15:35-50](#)).

Let us forget the idea that Heaven is an invisible nothing, or merely a cloud that the redeemed will float around on in space and play a harp for all eternity. The Heaven in which God dwells is a real planet, “a better country” than the planet Earth ([Heb. 11:14-16](#)). As we shall see in Lesson Forty-two, Heaven is a real place, created with cities, mansions, food, water, trees, and other things that we know of in this visible world. Lucifer is spoken of as having a “throne” ([Isa. 14:12-14](#); [Ezek. 28:11-17](#)) and other “thrones” are mentioned in [Col. 1:16-18](#) as being in the heavens. These are evidently thrones of other angels, so there is such a doctrine as the dispensation of angels taught in Scripture.

V. The Seven Dispensations of Man Between the Two Eternities

There are seven dispensations in human history between the eternal past and the eternal future; between the creation of man in the six days of [Gen. 1-2](#) and the final restoration of man in the New Heavens and the New Earth of [Rev. 21-22](#). *The seven dispensations are as follows:*

1. THE DISPENSATION OF INNOCENCE ([Gen. 2:15–3:21](#)). This age was from the creation of man and his commission to rule the restored Earth and all things therein, to the fall of man and his expulsion from the new Garden of Eden. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Nine.
2. THE DISPENSATION OF CONSCIENCE ([Gen. 3:22–8:14](#)). This age was from the fall of man and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden to the flood of Noah, a period of 1,656 years. This age will be studied in Lesson Eleven.
3. THE DISPENSATION OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT ([Gen. 8:15–11:32](#)). This age was from the flood of Noah to the call of Abraham, a period of 427 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Thirteen.
4. THE DISPENSATION OF PROMISE ([Gen. 12:1–Exod. 12:37](#)). This age was from the call of Abraham to the exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses, a period of 430 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Fifteen.
5. THE DISPENSATION OF LAW ([Exod. 12:38](#); [Mt. 2:23](#); [11:10-13](#); [Lk. 16:16](#)). This age was from the exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses to the preaching of the kingdom of Heaven by John the Baptist; or from Moses to the first coming of Jesus Christ, a period of over 1,718 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Seventeen.
6. THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE ([Mt. 3:1–Rev. 19:10](#)). This age has already lasted nearly 2,000 years from the first coming of Christ, and it shall continue until the Second Coming of Christ in the near future. How much longer the age will last is not known. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Nineteen.
7. THE DISPENSATION OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT—THE MILLENNIUM ([Rev. 19:11–20:15](#)). This age will cover the period from the Second Coming of Christ to the last rebellion of Satan and man on the Earth, a period of 1,000 years. This dispensation will be studied in Lesson Forty-nine.

VI. The Dispensation of the Redeemed and Faithful Angels

The final dispensation will be after the Millennium in the New Heavens and the New Earth. God's original purpose will then be fully realized as it was before rebellion started in the kingdom of God by Lucifer and Adam. He will then have a universe free from any possibility of rebellion in all the eternal future, governed solely by Himself and the redeemed human beings and the faithful angels ([Rev. 21:1–22:5](#); [1 Cor. 15:24-28](#)). This administration will be an eternal one, as proven in Lessons Forty-nine through Fifty-two.

Man will again be restored to his original glory. In the eternal future, he will once again have dominion over all things through Christ, and will become “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ” of all creation ([Rom. 8:17-18](#); [1 Cor. 15:24-28](#); [Heb. 2:5-11](#)). This does not mean, however, that God will dethrone the faithful angels who have remained true to Him through all ages in the rebellion of both angels and men. All free moral agents who have proven true to God will have part in helping God administer the affairs of the universe forever, as we shall see in future lessons. That angels are free moral agents and that many have sinned is clear from [2 Pet. 2:4](#); [Jude 6-7](#); [Rev. 12:7-12](#); [Mt. 25:41](#). We shall study the doctrine of angels in Lesson Six.

VII. Reasons for God's Dispensational Dealings

There are a number of reasons why God deals with free moral agents, using various dispensational or probationary tests. *A few reasons are:*

1. God created free moral agents with a free choice, instead of mere machines that He could cause to run forever without any choice of their own. If man could create as God can, he would also choose to create creatures with powers of free choice instead of making them mere robots. Man would glory in making something after his own image and likeness, that could intelligently and willingly cooperate with him in all matters to the common good of all.

Man is even proud that he can make automatic machines which he can run and which make his work easier. How much more proud would he be if he could create machines with the powers of choice and self-action along every line, so that he would not have to direct them? If such were possible, men would be free to do other things and would not be tied down to running machines. If man could create free moral agents, he would naturally have to regulate and limit them and hold them responsible for their moral acts. Otherwise, they might rebel and destroy man and rule in his place.

Man could not afford to make such creatures and turn his whole existence over to them to do as they pleased, regardless of what he might wish. Man could not permit them to rule him, if he was to continue in authority. It would be necessary for man and such creatures to work together for the common good, if society was to continue for the best good of all.

So it is with God. He did make man a wondrous machine, but a free moral and self-acting one. So God must also of necessity have some restrictions and limit the acts of man in the best interest of all. Otherwise, man might rebel and destroy the Creator and rule in His place. When man chooses to rebel against God, there is war just the same as when there are any two opposing forces. Nevertheless, God deals with man as a free moral agent because He created him that way. God's dealings with man must be on the basis of such a cooperative plan for the common welfare of all, or His universe would become chaotic and could not continue.

2. The wills of all free creatures must be tested to see if they are willing to cooperate with God for the greatest good of all. Moral agents must prove themselves true by such tests and thus become worthy of the confidence of the Creator, before being entrusted with the eternal administration of the universe.

3. All free moral agents must have their wills purged of all possibility of falling, so there can be mutual confidence in each other. In this way, there would be no possibility of man marring God's plan sometime in eternity, through the misuse of man's will.

4. Free wills must be put through all possible tests so that there can be no possible transgression against any part of the eternal plan, at any time. This is the only sure way that the plan can have a guarantee of success, forever.

5. All free wills must eventually learn the following lessons:

- (1) That God must be respected and obeyed.
- (2) That His laws are final and just.
- (3) That sin does not pay and will never be excused.
- (4) That God's form of government is the only correct one.
- (5) That a loving and free submission to God is the highest and most noble principle of free moral government.
- (6) That justice and righteousness must prevail, or no society can be eternally preserved in the universe.
- (7) That consecration to the greatest good of all is the nature and highest glory of the creature.
- (8) That God is merciful and forgiving to rebels who will be penitent, and who learn obedience through their experiences.
- (9) That God is the only absolutely just and perfect Being, and the only one capable and worthy of unquestionable authority.
- (10) That all the accusations of present rebels against God are untrue.
- (11) That God does only those things that are for the common good of all creation.
- (12) That He should, by virtue of His own position as Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Lordship, and His own history of justice and righteousness in all of His dealings, be recognized by all as the Supreme Moral Governor of the universe. Until free moral agents of all kinds learn these lessons, they naturally are in ignorance of certain facts and need such training.

6. One of the chief reasons for God's dealing with man is to bring him back to the place where he was before his fall. Having purged man of all possibility of falling in the future, God will place redeemed man in his original position of having dominion over all things. Thus, God does not have the slightest doubt as to the future of His plan for man.

7. God's dealings with free moral agents in holiness and absolute justice to all alike gives God a sound basis of punishing rebels who refuse to conform to the plan, and of blessing those who do conform. God can still be just and holy in the judgment and confinement of rebels to everlasting punishment, since they have refused all merciful dealings. They have hardened themselves against all that is holy and good. There is nothing else for God to do but mete out justice according to deeds

committed, for the continued good of society, forever. God must make examples of both classes—the good and the bad—for the sake of all generations who come into existence in eternity. God cannot excuse rebels and bless them contrary to His revealed plan, or there would be no end to the breaking of His eternal laws. He would have to continually excuse all wrongdoing forever if He should start such a program, and under circumstances of this kind, free wills would have no true restraint. If He excused some and not others, and showed any degree of partiality, then free agents would lose proper respect for Him as the Moral Governor. If He failed to reward for obedience and punish for disobedience, or in any degree carried on government contrary to prescribed laws for the best good of all, there would be no true incentive for free wills in all eternity to conform to the eternal plan.

The Bible plainly reveals that rebels in everlasting Hell will be an eternal monument of God's wrath toward sin, in order to cause coming generations to conform to the highest good of their own being and of the universe ([Isa. 66:22-24](#); [Rev. 14:9-11](#)).

Why should not present free wills cooperate with God to the best interests of all, if there is such a place as an eternal monument of God's wrath? Why should they not do it, since it is the creative purpose and the only natural and normal life for each creature? Why should not God punish rebels who persist in destroying themselves and the eternal society planned by God? Why should not God finally take action, and confine all eternal rebels away from such society? Why should not God bless all who voluntarily and wholeheartedly cooperate with Him in His plan for the highest good and well-being of the universe? This plan of rewarding obedience and punishing disobedience is the only just plan, and it is the only one that could be used with free moral agents. Everyone can be blessed if he so desires, or can be cursed if that is his choice. Therefore, punishment is not compulsory for anyone. It is the free choice of the individual, and he alone is to blame for his eternal choice and destiny. God's will is that none should be lost ([1 Tim. 2:4-6](#); [2 Pet. 3:9](#); [Jn. 3:16](#)).

8. God's dispensational dealings are necessary to assure lasting benefits for the eternal society. They guarantee the preservation of God's eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ. Paul expressed the purpose of God's dealings with man this way: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel . . . to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Eph. 1:10](#); [3:1-11](#)). This eternal purpose will be dealt with fully in Lessons Forty-nine through Fifty-two.

9. Another chief reason for God's present dealings with man is to make it eternally possible for Him to be all-in-all. This will avoid constant worry, doubt, or anxiety on His part concerning the eternal working of His predestined plan for all creation now and for all generations that shall yet be brought into being.

VIII. God's Plan is Eternal

The following Scriptures are just a few of many that teach an everlasting plan for man on the Earth, and they mean exactly what they say, so they do not need interpretation ([Gen. 8:22](#); [9:12](#), [16](#); [17:7-9](#), [17](#); [26:1-4](#); [28:10-16](#); [Exod. 15:17-19](#); [2 Sam. 7](#); [Ps. 72](#); [89](#); [Isa. 9:6-7](#); [59:20-21](#); [Dan. 2:44](#); [7:13](#), [14](#), [18](#), [27](#); [Ezek. 37:21-28](#); [Zech. 14](#); [Lk. 1:32-33](#); [Rev. 5:10](#); [11:15](#); [22:3-5](#)).

The fall of man does not do away with God's original plan and purpose. It merely postpones it until the times of the restitution of all things, as before the first rebellion started on Earth against God's kingdom. One should try to conceive of the wonderful conditions that would have continued on Earth forever if man had not fallen. Then if he will transfer that idea to the New Earth after the Millennium, he will have the right idea of the eternal plan of God for man on the Earth.

IX. How to Get the Answers to the Lesson Questions

The answers to the list of questions at the end of each lesson are found by referring back to the lesson. The first question will be found in the first paragraph of the lesson. Then in order, the other questions may be found in the lesson, following each other in the same order that the questions are listed. For example, Question 1, "How are the fifty-two lessons divided?" This is answered in the first paragraph: The fifty-two lessons are divided into four parts. The second part to Question 1, is, "Name the lesson divisions." The answer is again found in the first paragraph of the lesson. To get an idea of the lessons as a whole, a good method of study is to find the answers to the questions in the lessons, and put the number of the question beside the answer in the lesson. Then in going over the lesson you can quickly find the answer to each question by the number without searching for the answer.

Go over and over the answers, until you can answer from memory each question. Then choose at random about twenty of the questions and write out the answers, and see how many you have right. By this method you can see for yourself how much you have learned.