

Dispensationalism & Covenants

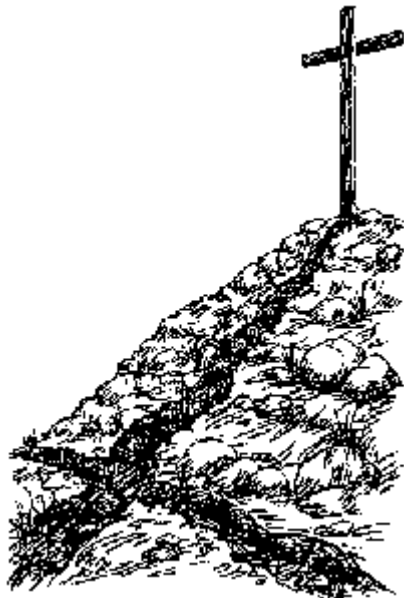
Book 1: Introduction
Dispensation of Innocence
Edenic Covenant

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Slide 1

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing¹ the word of truth."

¹ orthotomeo {or-thot-om-eh'-o}, Present Active Participle = to handle rightly, to proceed on straight paths, to hold a straight course.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God², and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect³, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

² theopneustos {theh-op'-nyoo-stos} = God breathed

³ artios {ar'-tee-os} = complete, mature, fully equipped

When Paul wrote (under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit) to Timothy, the intent of the letter was to instruct and encourage this new pastor as he worked in Thessalonica. The letters of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are called *pastoral epistles* because they contained special instructions for church leaders. God knew that Timothy was going to encounter a number of false teachers in Thessalonica, so He emphasized the twin disciplines of Christian growth – prayer and study of God's Word. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told that Scripture is *God breathed*, the only means that God has given us to reach maturity in our faith. The Bible is food for the Christian's soul. Unless we study it, absorb its precepts, cherish its

teachings, live by its decrees, and pattern our earthly walk by its models, then we cannot grow. Can a baby grow if it does not eat, first of all its liquid nourishment, then later pabulum, then more solid food, and in time adult food? Just as a baby grows from physical immaturity to physical maturity, the Christian grows from babyhood in Christ to a full service Believer. If you want to grow, and to be *approved* or satisfying to God in your daily walk, then you must study the Word. If you expect to be an effective worker for God our Savior you must study the Word of God. This is clearly taught in Scripture.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing¹ the word of truth."

We are to study the Word of God in order that we might grow as workmen for God. But how to study this vast Book? The Bible was written over a period of many years by prophets and apostles as they were guided by God the Holy Spirit:

2 Peter 1:21 (KJV) "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Does all of the Scripture apply to me? Did all of these prophets and apostles write things that are applicable to my walk with God? For instance, does this Scripture:

Numbers 19:16-19 (KJV) "And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be

unclean seven days. {17} And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: {18} And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: {19} And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even."

apply to us today? When the mortician prepares a dead body for burial, does he become *unclean* for seven days? Does he have to burn a heifer on an altar, and go through a purifying ritual on the third and seventh day before he is considered clean once more? No Beloved – even a cursory reading of Scripture – in particular Old Testament Scripture – will uncover the fact that portions of the Holy Text are addressed to Israel only, whereas other portions are addressed to the Church of Christ.

Scripture has divisions and applications that are addressed (1) to all people in all times, and (2) to certain people in certain times. Even our Bible is divided into “Old Testament” and “New Testament” to show that part of the Holy Text is an older covenant whereas another part of the Holy Text is a newer covenant. When we study Scripture we must – as the King James says – *rightly divide* the word of truth. As we interpret Scripture

we must ask ourselves:

- a. To whom is this addressed?
- b. Does this writing have an application for the Christian?
- c. Is there a truth in the text that I can apply to my walk with God?

Though the Bible is a Book written by One Divine Author, and though its central theme has always been Jesus Christ, we do need to recognize that all Scripture – though it has value because it is of God – does not immediately apply to the Christian way of life. In this study we want to look at the *natural divisions* of Scripture. There are *seven major divisions of time* in Scripture. Theologians call these divisions “dispensations” or “ages”. Paul recognizes that the Church age was not fully revealed in the other ages or dispensations:

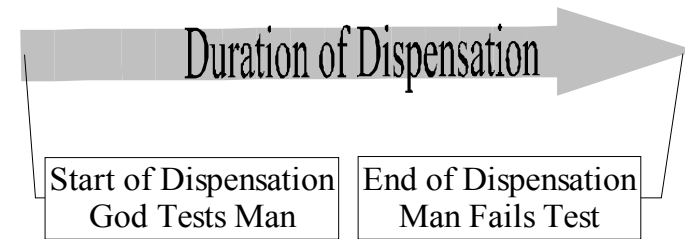
Slide 2

Ephesians 3:3-6 (KJV) "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, {4} Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) {5} 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; {6} That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"

Each dispensation in Scripture has the Divine purpose of *testing man*, showing us that God is sovereign (God is in

control) and man is ultimately fallible. Each dispensation ends with man failing the test, emphasizing the truth that “apart from God I can do nothing”. Five of the dispensations of God have been fulfilled. The Christian is now living in the sixth dispensation, and the last dispensation – the millennial reign of Christ – has yet to come.

Slide 1b



Why should we understand the dispensations? Proper interpretation of Scripture *demands* that we carefully examine the text we are reading and determine if it has any application for the Christian. Many false doctrines have entered the Church because the dispensations have not been considered when the Scripture is interpreted. In the early Church Christians were expected to be circumcised *even if they were Gentiles*, and circumcision was made a mandatory part of salvation. God raised up the Apostle Paul to combat this false doctrine. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone, not by works of righteousness which we have done (**Titus 3:5**).

Because Churches have failed to recognize the dispensations of God, many today make water baptism a requirement for salvation – an echo of the old “if you're

not circumcised you're not saved" heresy. Some local Churches have asserted that Christians must keep the Sabbath, whereas others have made keeping the Mosaic Law a requirement for salvation - or a requirement to *maintain* your salvation. This in spite of the clear Scriptural admonitions that:

Slide 2

(Romans 3:28 NASB) "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."

(Galatians 3:24-25 NASB) "Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. {25} But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

(Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

We need to understand the dispensations if we are going to "rightly handle the Word of Truth".

Slide 1b

There are *seven dispensations* found in the Scripture. These are:

1. Dispensation of Innocence
2. Dispensation of Conscience
3. Dispensation of Human government
4. Dispensation of Promise

5. Dispensation of Law
6. Dispensation of Grace
7. Dispensation of Divine Rule

Let's look at the first Dispensation - The Dispensation of Innocence.

Dispensation of Innocence

The first Dispensation is, quite naturally, found in the book of Genesis. The Dispensation of Innocence was the period of time from God's *sinless* creation of man (Adam) and nature - and ended when man sinned. Adam's sin resulted in God casting both Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden.

This Dispensation began with God creating the heavens and the earth in *six literal twenty four hour days*. There are some who point to the Scripture:

Slide 3

(2 Peter 3:8 KJV) "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

and then erroneously isagete Genesis based on this text, making each day of creation "a thousand years" long. This, however, is poor exegesis. The proper student of the Scripture *reads his text*, and any reading of Genesis shows the following statements:

Slide 3

(Genesis 1:5 KJV) "... And the evening and the morning were the first day."

(Genesis 1:8 KJV) "... And the evening and the morning were the second day."

(Genesis 1:13 KJV) "And the evening and the morning were the third day."

(Genesis 1:19 KJV) "And the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

(Genesis 1:23 KJV) "And the evening and the morning were the fifth day."

(Genesis 1:31 KJV) "... And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

God created all things in six literal twenty four hour days, days characterized with “evenings” and “mornings”. The days were tied to the cycle of the sun, and as earth is on a twenty-four hour cycle, God created all things in six literal days. We did not *evolve*, we were *created*. In fact, *all things*, both man and beast, were created sinless and perfect. God called creation **good** about **twelve times**, and when creation was completed God called it **very good**.

Man was created innocent, and creation itself was created innocent. Nothing was killed, for both man and creature were *vegetarian*. The Bible tells us:

Slide 4

(Genesis 1:29-30 KJV) "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. {30} And to every beast of the earth,

and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is life*, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so."

Man was given *dominion* or control over all that God created:

(Genesis 1:28 KJV) "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Adam showed his dominion over creation by naming all the animals that God brought to him:

(Genesis 2:19-20 KJV) "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. {20} And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him."

There was no sin in either man or creation - everything that God had made was *very good* (Genesis 1:31).

One of the *key components* of the Dispensation of Innocence was the *Edenic Covenant*. A *covenant* is a

contract made between two people - in this instance the Edenic Covenant was made between man and God. Covenants can be either *one sided and unconditional*, or *two sided and conditional*. For instance, if I were to say "I promise to give you two dollars no matter what", this would be an *unconditional covenant*. However, if I were to say "I promise to give you two dollars if you wash the dishes", this would be a *conditional covenant*. Unless you met certain conditions, I would not be bound to honor my portion of the covenant. The Edenic Covenant, found in:

Genesis 2. 8-17 "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is **Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is **Gihon**: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is **Hiddekel**: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good**

and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

is a *conditional covenant*. God told Adam, "If you keep this covenant you will live. If you do not keep this covenant, you will die".

Adam had a **glorious endowment**. He was absolutely free from sin, a state that no man outside of Jesus Christ has every enjoyed. He was in the greatest, non polluted environment. The maximum freedom was given to Adam, with the minimum restriction. Every opportunity was given for Adam to succeed. On top of all this, God specifically forbade eating the forbidden fruit. There was no confusion, no half suggestions. God was very plain: "Do not eat".

The probation that God placed on Adam was a model of parental care. The child, Adam, was sheltered but not smothered. God did everything possible to make the probation palatable. There was plenty for Adam and Eve to eat, plenty of things to do. The probation to not eat of one tree was a minor one, all the more horrible because God provided so many other things that were much better than disobedience.

Some have *mistakenly* assumed that Eden was a mythological place, that Adam was a figment of a writer's imagination, that the whole scene was not real. However, the scene is real, not mythological. Geographic phrases are used all throughout the text, rivers are mentioned (Euphrates), real places (Ethiopia). **Myths**

never weave reality within their contexts, but speak of mythical places like Valhalla. The geographical references are described in minute detail. The Bible testifies that Eden, and Adam, were painfully real.

Hosea 6:7 "But they like men ^(ADAM = Adam) have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."

There was a clear reward for obeying the Edenic covenant, and a clear punishment for disobeying. You see, Adam was the **representative** of all humanity:

Romans 5:18-21 "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

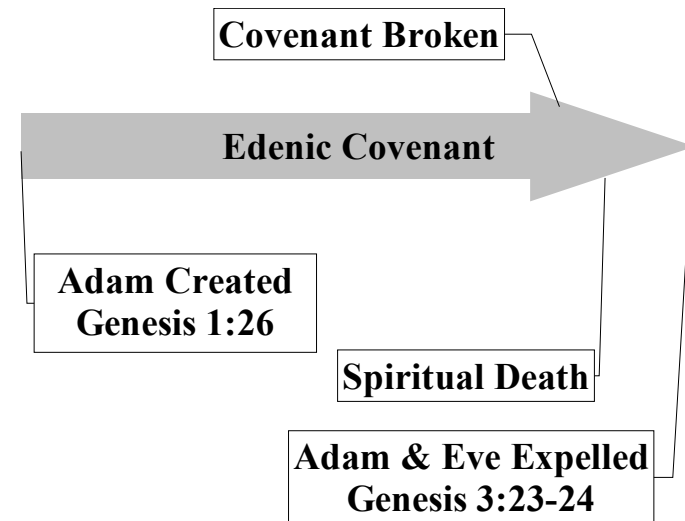
1 Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

His action, his failure brought sin on the entire human race. Adam could have stayed within the bounds of the covenant, and his children would have been born sinless just as he and Eve were. He was born into a state of glorification, and would have remained in that state

along with all humanity. Yet he failed, and with his failure we all died.

Was Adam's sin just a little thing? After all, he only took a bite of some fruit. Yet God held his action as much greater. You see, God, up to this point, was the only Person on earth that had the autonomous authority to determine right from wrong. The Edenic Covenant established the boundaries of the Dispensation of Innocence. As long as man remained obedient, he would remain in paradise. When he failed, he would leave paradise.

Slide 4



The first Dispensation, the Age of Innocence, tested natural man's obedience to God. Could Adam maintain the Edenic Covenant, or would he fall? Adam fell, showing us a great truth: Even perfect man *needs the Grace of and empowerment of God*.

The lesson of the first Dispensation is that we all must

rely on God our Savior. I noticed as I read through Genesis that the Edenic Covenant promised that Adam *would die* if he ate of the forbidden fruit. Now think on this: Adam is a new, sinless creation of God, living inside of a new, sinless creation of God - the Garden of Eden. God promised Adam that "in the day that thou eatest thereof (the forbidden fruit), dying thou shalt die" (**Genesis 2:17**). Does Adam *even know* what that means? There has been no death in creation. Adam had never seen anything or anyone die. It would have been a simple thing for him to have asked God, "What do you mean by 'dying thou shalt surely die'? What is this 'death', God?" Adam asked no questions, but I'm certain that he had no idea how far reaching his act of rebellion would be. Quite frankly Adam, just as we have all done before, *assumed* that he could face the test without God's help. He never asked God what death was - he just accepted the Covenant as God presented it.

God wants His creation, both man and woman, to *walk in communion* with Him. He expects us to *depend* on Him. That's a natural thing, isn't it? God is *infinite*, holy, without creator, self existent. Even Adam should have asked God questions, relied on God, loved God. God is infinite, and man only a small speck - a *created speck* - inside of God. Slide 5

Man is made sinless and perfect - will he pass the test? No, because man would *assume he had ability where he had none*. He would assume that he could pass this test without God's help. How foolish! Even Adam needed God.

Adam's failure caused not only his expulsion from Eden,

but caused him and *all his progeny* to be born under *spiritual death*:



(Psalms 147:5 KJV) "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite."

Slide 5

(Romans 5:17-19 KJV) "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) {18} Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. {19} For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

(1 Corinthians 15:21-22 KJV) "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. {22} For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Not only did Adam bring death on mankind, but he also brought sin *into creation itself*:

(Romans 8:19-22 KJV) "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. {20} For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, {21} Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the *bondage of corruption* into the glorious liberty of the children of God. {22} For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Adam's foolishness plunged both humanity as well as *all animal and vegetable life* into the corruption of sin. Prior to Adam there was *no death in creation*, but after Adam's failure *death reigned over creation*. Adam's failure brought the curse of sin on all creation:

(Genesis 3:17 KJV) "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: *cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*"

The corruption of old age, death, pain, thorns, trials, sweat, tribulation, agony - every terrible thing that we as humans suffer came on us through Adam's disobedience.

There are two bright angels of hope that stand out, even in the midst of Adam's foolishness. First, God - even as

He punished man - promised that the Redeemer would come out of the "seed of the woman". God told Satan, that old serpent:

Slide 6

(Genesis 3:15 KJV) "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

This was the first promise of Messiah, God our Savior, Jesus Christ, who would come and *be bruised* in order to *destroy Satan*.

Hebrews 2:9-10 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

God promised that He would destroy the works of Satan - sin - through the "seed of the woman". This Savior was born of a virgin named Mary. This Savior is Jesus Christ our Lord. When we accept Jesus Christ as Savior our souls are saved from the spiritual death that Adam brought on the earth - and one day our bodies will be glorified (purged from sin - **1 Corinthians 15.25-26**). The earth will one day, through the future reign of Christ, be restored to its pristine glory as it was in Eden (**Revelation 22.2-3**). That day will not come by our own efforts, but only when Jesus Christ returns and cleanses

the earth of all sin. Though the first Adam failed the first Dispensation, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, did not fail us when He died on the Cross for our sins.

We see the second ray of hope:

Slide 6
(Genesis 3:7 KJV) "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

(Genesis 3:21 KJV) "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

in the wonderful *grace of God*. When man deserved nothing but punishment, God still showed us that His grace is greater than our sin. God took the pitiful works of righteousness that Adam did (the fig leaves that were supposed to cover their nakedness), and, killing animals, took and made fur clothing for these wayward people. God would later refer to all *human good works* and their *utter uselessness in the eyes of God* when He said:

(Isaiah 64:6 KJV) "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Just as Adam's fig leaf clothing was ragged and pitiful to the eye, nearly useless as a covering for sin, so are our pitiful works of righteousness. Adam should have relied on God from the beginning of the Edenic Covenant - and we *must* rely on God in all that we do. Listen, my

Beloved! God included man in His infinite Plan from the beginning of time - so we must include God in our lives if we expect to prosper. The only way that finite and mortal man can work within the infinite immortal God's Plan is by *uniting himself with God*. We must rely on God's resources for life and for salvation. As the Scripture says:

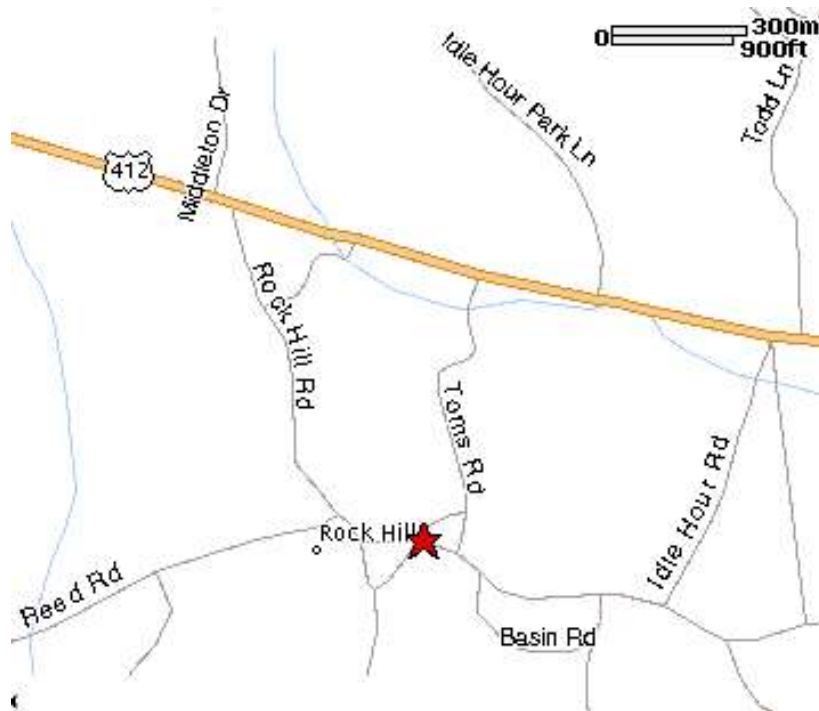
(Titus 3:5-7 KJV) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; {6} Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; {7} That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

(Ephesians 2:4-10 KJV) "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, {5} Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) {6} And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: {7} That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. {8} For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast. {10} For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Only a fool would study the Dispensation of Innocence

and, after that study, conclude that we *can be good enough for God on our own*. Adam wasn't good enough when he was sinless. Man needs God. We need Jesus Christ, and need to surrender to God our Savior. Without Jesus we are truly nothing at all!

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Rock Hill is an independent Church affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and is a regular contributor to missions through the Cooperative Program.

Rock Hill Baptist Church is located between Parsons and Lexington, Tennessee, on Highway 412. Look for our sign! We have services on Wednesdays (Adult, Youth, and children's Bible studies) at 7:00 PM, Sundays at 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Rock Hill is a family oriented Bible believing Church - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Our Pastor, Brother David Buffaloe, will answer any questions you have about our Church if you contact him at 731-845-6104, or through his website at bibleteacher.org; or e-mail him by writing