

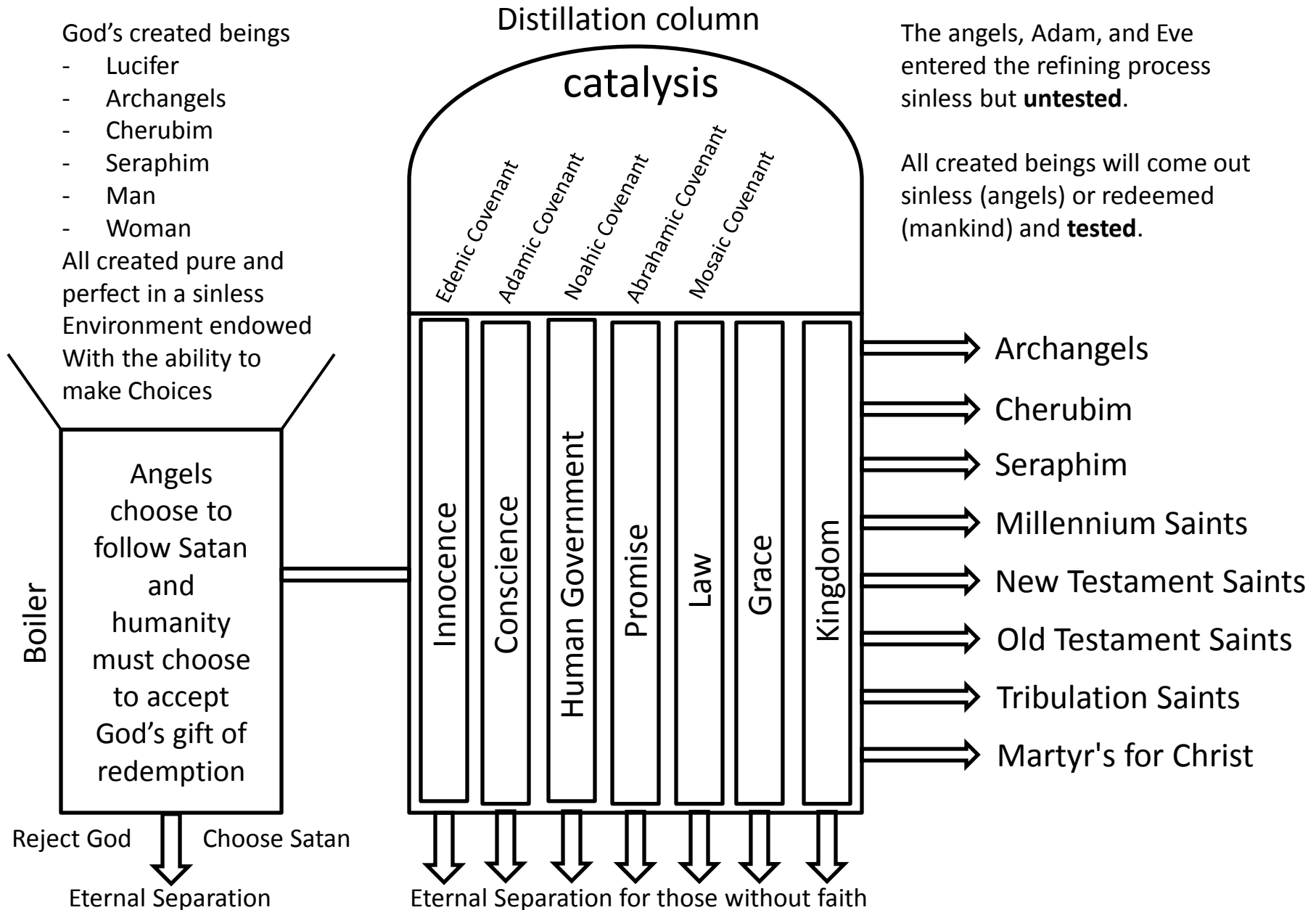
Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Revealed Plan of God from Eternity Past to Eternity Future



www.RefiningaCreation.org

God's Refining Process for His Created Beings



Refining a Creation for Eternity

God's Economies for Mankind

Overview



Edenic



Adamic

Innocence



Noahic

Human Government



Abrahamic

Promise



Mosaic

Law



Postponed

Grace

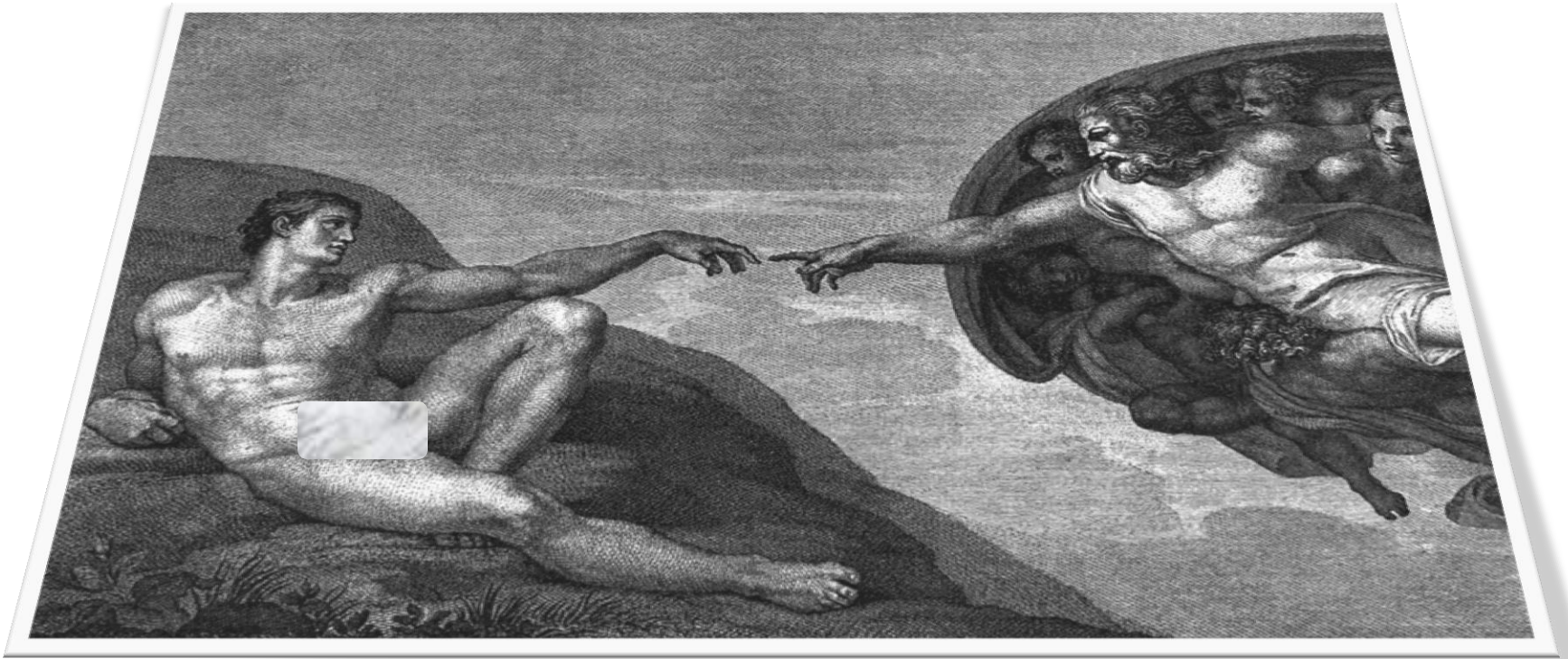


Fulfillment

Kingdom

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The First Economy



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Edenic Covenant (Gen 1:28-30; 2:15-17; Hos 6:7)

Parties to the Covenant

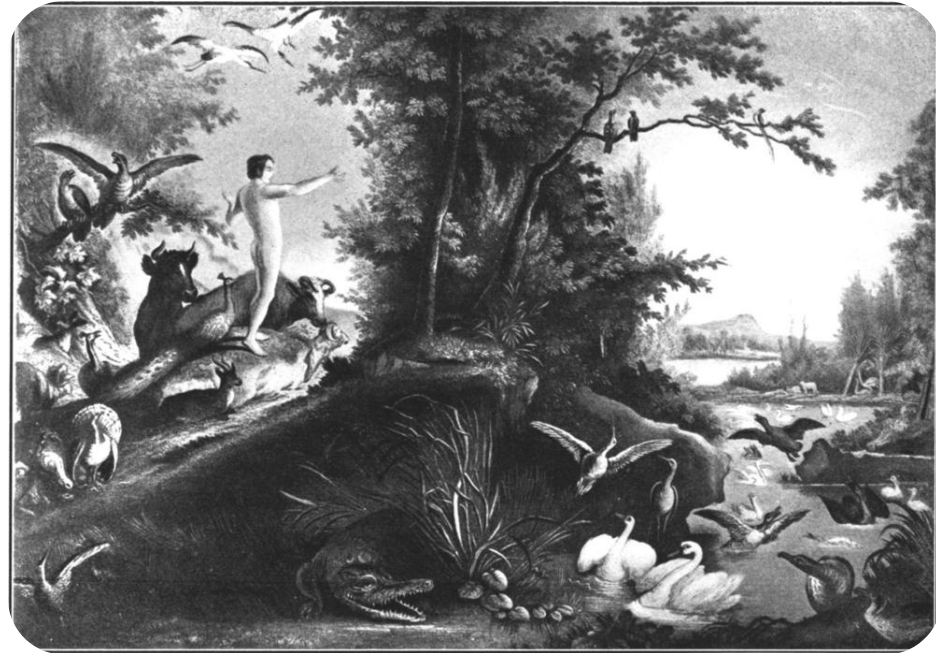
- God and Adam

Conditions of the Covenant

- Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth
- Subdue the Earth
- Rule over the animal kingdom
- Plants are for food (vegetarian)
- Defined roles
- Guard the garden
- Not eat from one tree
- Penalty for violating the commands is death

Token of the Covenant

- Tree of Life



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Review of past lessons

Dispensation of Innocence

Man's Responsibilities

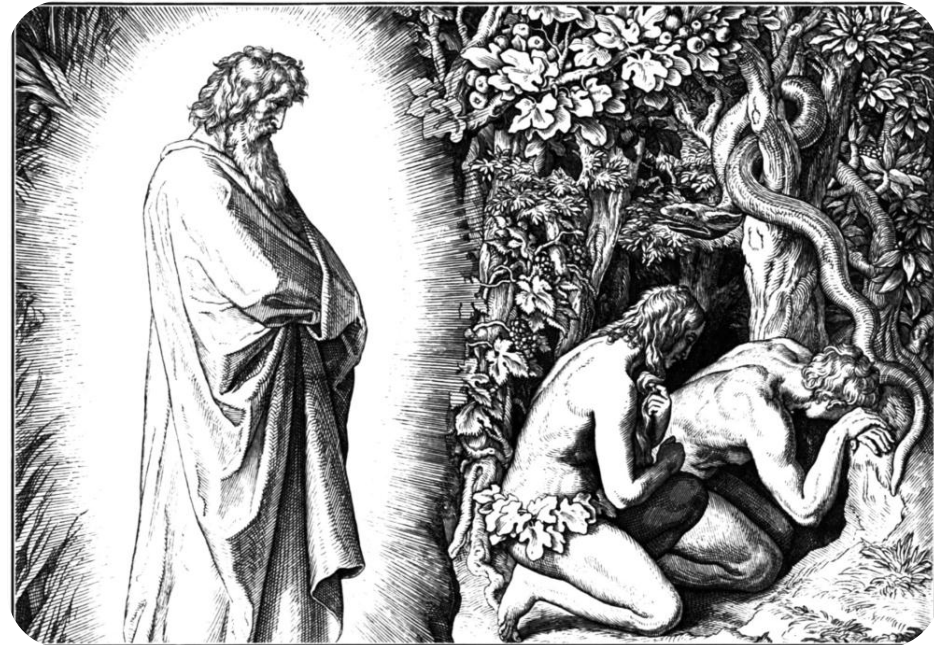
- Man's responsibilities in the garden were to fulfill the Edenic Covenant, essentially to multiply and fill the Earth and subdue it. Mankind was forbidden to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Man's Failures

- Man's failure was to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is important to note that while the woman was deceived, the man made a conscious decision to disobey God.

The Resulting Judgment

- Pain in childbirth, Authority struggle, Earth antagonistic to man, Man irresponsible to animals, Plants of the field for food, Expelled from Eden, Spiritual and physical death



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Approaching God in the Dispensation of Innocence

God walked with man

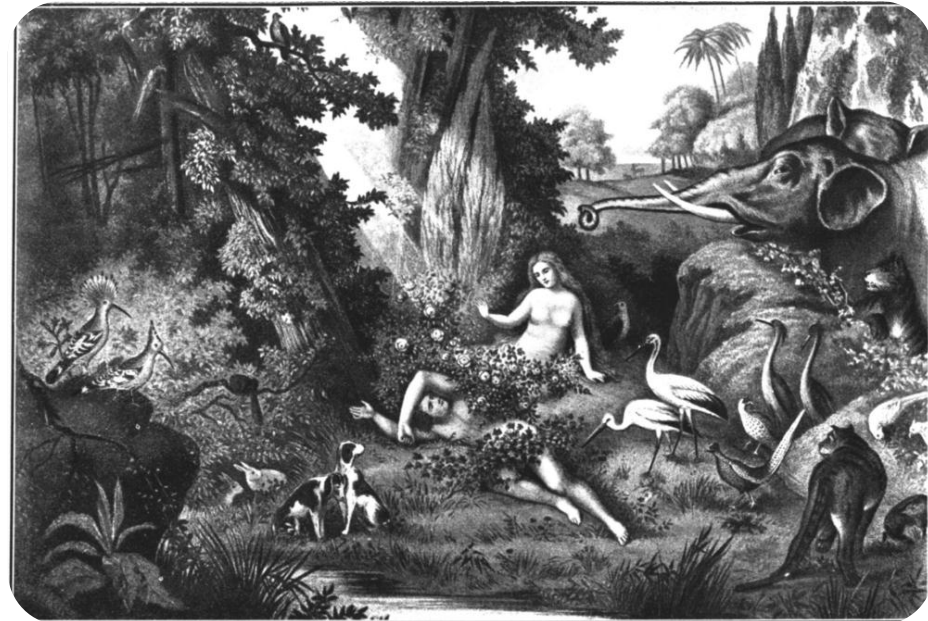
- Genesis 2:15 - Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
- Genesis 3:8 - They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,

God spoke to man

- Genesis 2:16 - The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

God had fellowship with man

- Genesis 2:19 - Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.



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The Second Economy



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Adamic Covenant (Gen 3:14 – 3:21)

Parties to the Covenant

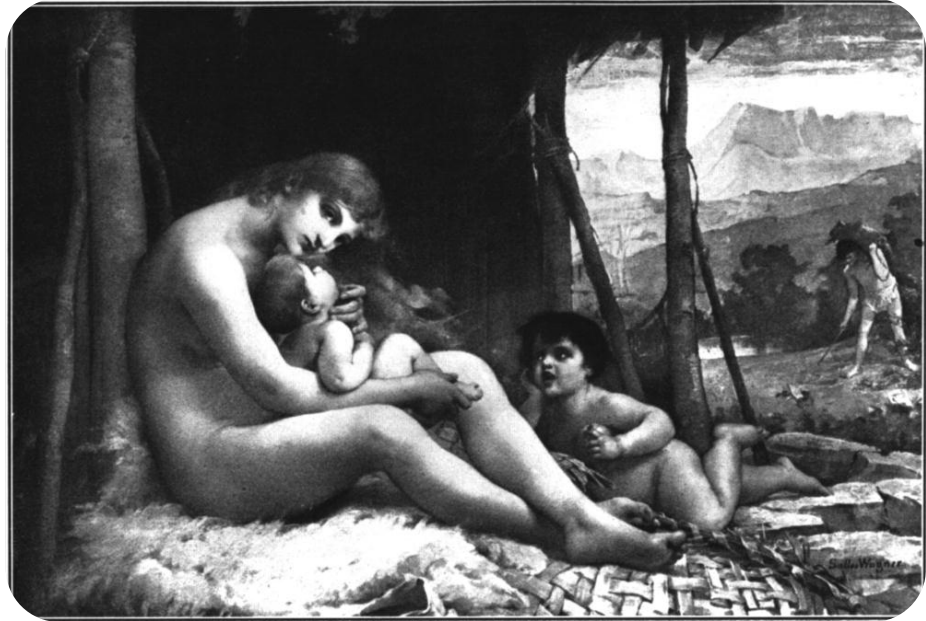
- God and Adam as the representative for mankind

Conditions of the Covenant

- Transformation of the animal kingdom
- Protevangelium (first gospel) and promise of Satan's defeat
- Woman cursed in area of assigned duties
- Man cursed in area of assigned duties
- Physical death (return to ground)
- Man remains a vegetarian

Token of the Covenant

- Spiritual death



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Dispensation of Conscience (Gen 3:9 to Gen 8:14)

Man's Responsibilities

- Man's responsibilities, having been ejected from the garden, was to fulfill the Adamic Covenant, essentially to multiply and fill the Earth. Mankind was to respond to God through the prompting of his conscience and as evidence of his faith in the promised seed, to bring an acceptable blood sacrifice as God had instructed them to do.

Man's Failures

- Mankind, having been given the ability, through their conscience, to desire a relationship with God and the provision, through blood sacrifices, to approach God, failed to do so and instead followed after their own evil lusts. The wickedness and evil became so great and widespread, God decided to let mankind start anew.

The Resulting Judgment

- God, being true to His word, spared the only faithful humans and a small remnant of air breathing creatures and started over in order to fulfill his promise of redemption



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Approaching God in the Dispensation of Conscience

Approach God by Faith

- Hebrews 11:4 - By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Blood sacrifice as example of faith

- The test then becomes “with a conscience, guided by that conscience, will man choose to do good and approach God by means of sacrifice as the example of the sacrifice that God indicated”.
- Leviticus 17:11 - ‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.’



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Review of past lessons

At The End Of The Second Economy

Promise of Redemption Maintained - Genesis 6:8-9, 18; 7:1

- But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.
- “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.
- Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.

Angelic Conflict - 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6

- For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;
- And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

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The Third Economy



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Noahic Covenant (Genesis 8:20 – 9:17)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and Noah as the representative for mankind

Conditions of the Covenant

- Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth
- Man to be feared by animals
- Mankind allowed to eat meat
- Mankind not to eat or drink blood
- Institution of capital punishment
- Never again a universal flood

Token of the Covenant

- Rainbow



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Dispensation of Human Government (Genesis 9:1 to 11:32)

Man's Responsibilities

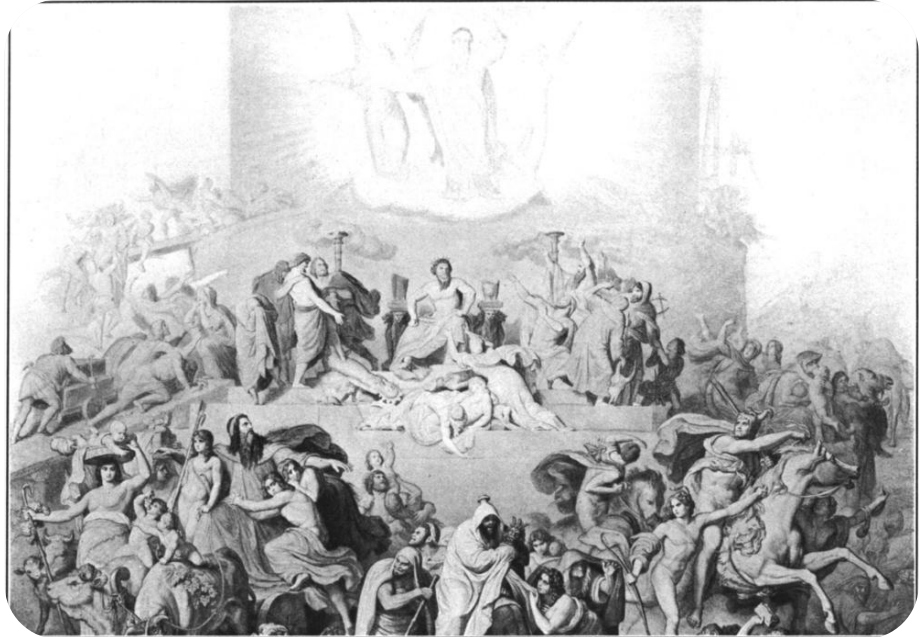
- Man's responsibilities were to fulfill the Noachic covenant. Mankind was to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. Mankind was to govern itself with the full authority of capital punishment.

Man's Failures

- Failure to govern successfully appeared on the scene almost immediately, for Noah became drunk and incapable of ruling. The people, instead of obeying God's command to scatter and fill the earth, conceived the idea of staying together and building the tower of Babel to help achieve their aim. Fellowship with man replaced fellowship with God.

The Resulting Judgment

- As a result, God sent the judgment of the tower of Babel and the confusion of languages. He also graciously intervened in that He did not utterly destroy the nations but chose to deal graciously with Abraham and his descendants.



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Small Remnant of Righteous – The Example of Job’s Theology

God’s sovereignty – Job 1:21

- He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. **The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.** Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

God’s justice – Job 13:15–16

- “Though He slay me, **I will hope in Him.** Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. **“This also will be my salvation,** For a godless man may not come before His presence.

God’s promise of salvation – Job 19:25

- “As for me, I know that **my Redeemer lives,** And at the last **He will take His stand on the earth.**



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

At The End Of The Third Economy

Promise of Redemption Maintained - Genesis 12:1-3

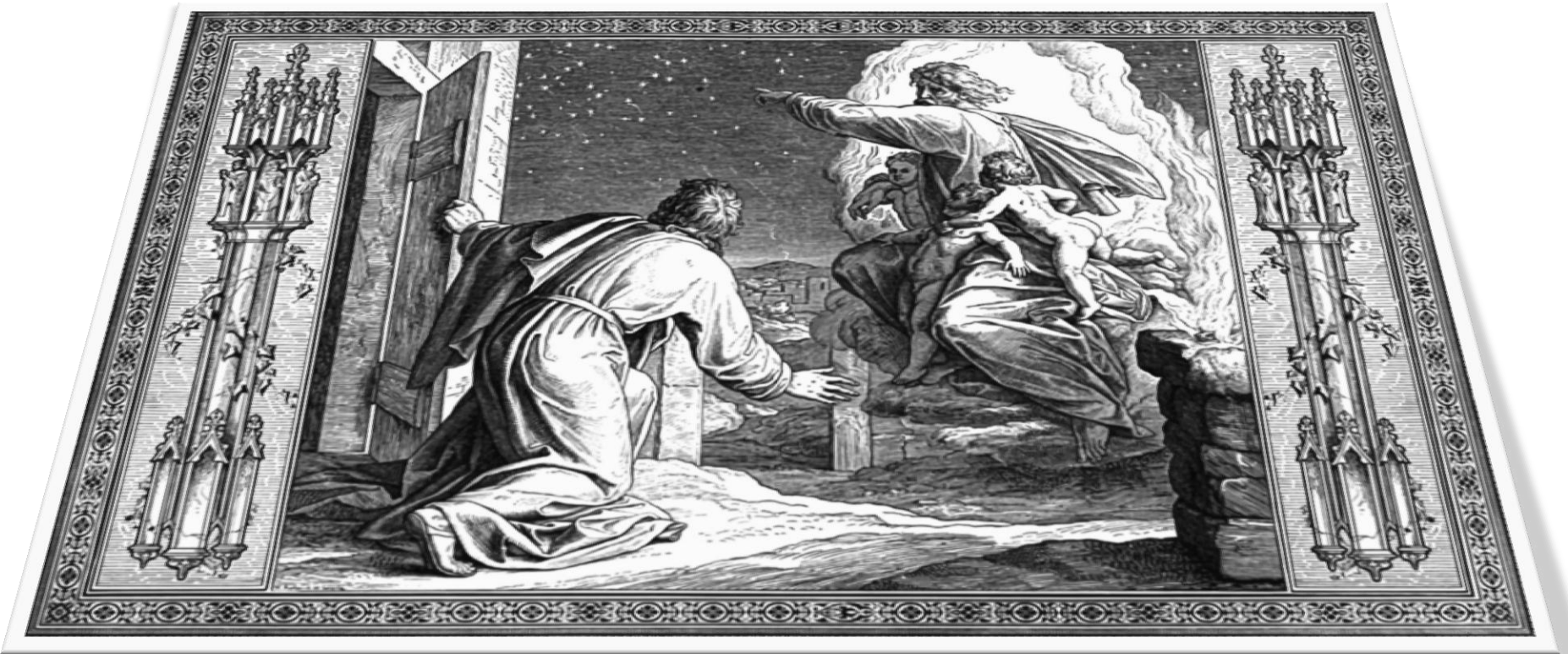
- Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Angelic Conflict - Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7

- God allows Satan to persecute the faithful that He knows are mature enough to endure the trials. This strengthens the faithful and allows God to show His grace, mercy, and love. God also demonstrates that His righteousness and justice are compatible with His love.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Fourth Economy



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and Abram as the father of the Jewish race

Conditions of the Covenant

- Fourteen provisions including the token of circumcision

Token of the Covenant

- Circumcision



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Promises made to Abraham

Father of great nation (Israel)

Possess the Promised Land

Father of other nations

Many descendants became kings

Receive personal blessings

Be a blessing to others

Name to become great

Promises made to Israel

Become a great nation

Become innumerable

Possess the Promised Land

Victory over enemies

Promises to Gentiles

Blessings for blessing Israel

Cursing's for cursing Israel

Spiritual blessings through the seed of Abraham – The Messiah

Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Dispensation of Promise (Genesis 11:10 to Exodus 18:27)

Man's Responsibilities

- The responsibility of the patriarchs was simply to believe and serve God, and God gave them every material and spiritual provision to encourage them to do this. The Promised Land was theirs, and blessing was theirs as long as they remained in the land. The people of the promise; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the children of Jacob (Israel) were to stay separate from the nations around them.

Man's Failures

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons continued to intermingle with the Canaanites and surrounding nations.

The Resulting Judgment

- God sent the family down to Egypt where the surrounding Egyptians would not associate with them. Soon after they would be enslaved.



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Approaching God in the Dispensation of Promise

Approach God by Faith

- Genesis 15:5–7 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”

Blood sacrifice as example of faith

- Genesis 31:54 Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

At The End Of The Fourth Economy

Promise of Redemption Maintained - Exodus 15:18–19

- “The LORD shall reign forever and ever.” For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea.

Angelic Conflict - Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7

- Paganism continued to spread throughout the world. The populations were coming together as powerful nations were formed. God’s chosen, the Israelites, were in the protective womb of Egypt yet Satan influenced the first cycle of young Jewish boys to be put to death in an attempt to block the birth of the Messiah.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Fifth Economy



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20:1 – Deuteronomy 28:68)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and Israel with Moses acting as a representative

Conditions of the Covenant

- Law of Moses which contained a total 613 commandments. Being a conditional covenant, it provided blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. (Ex. 15:26) The key element of the entire Mosaic Law was the blood sacrifice. (Lev. 17:11)

Token of the Covenant

- Sabbath

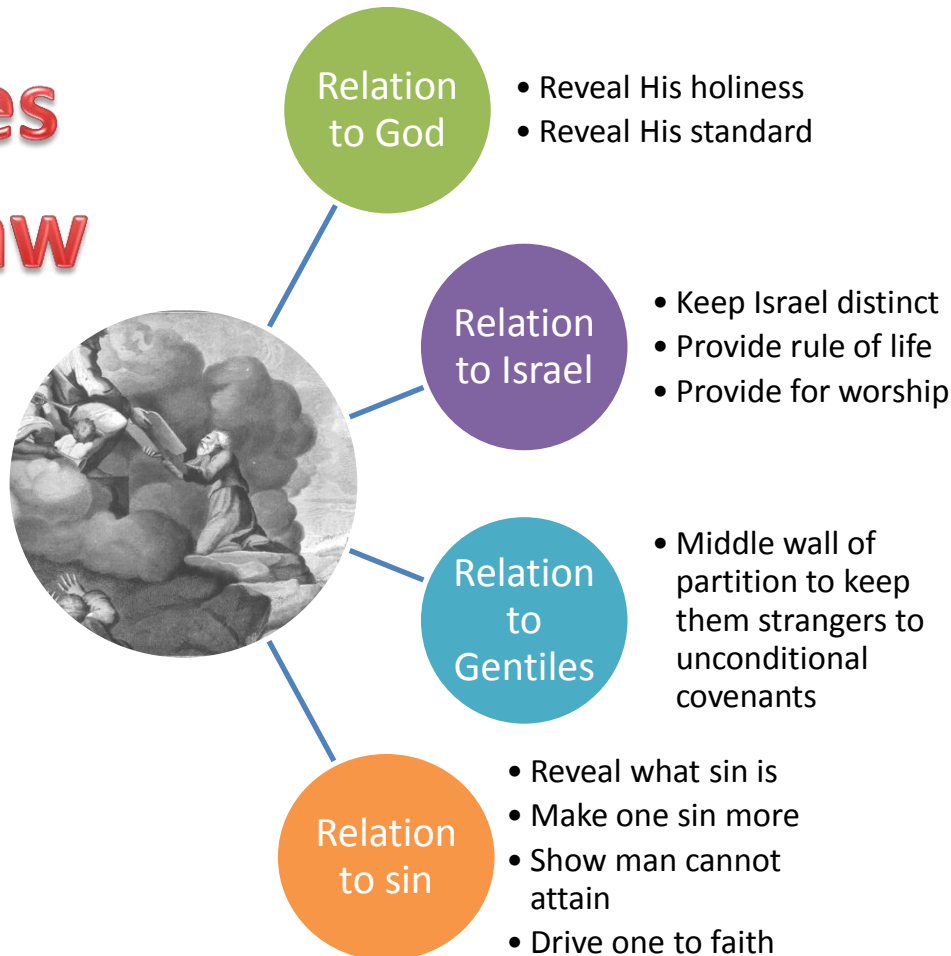


Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Fifth Economy

Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20:1 – Deuteronomy 28:68)

Purposes of the Law

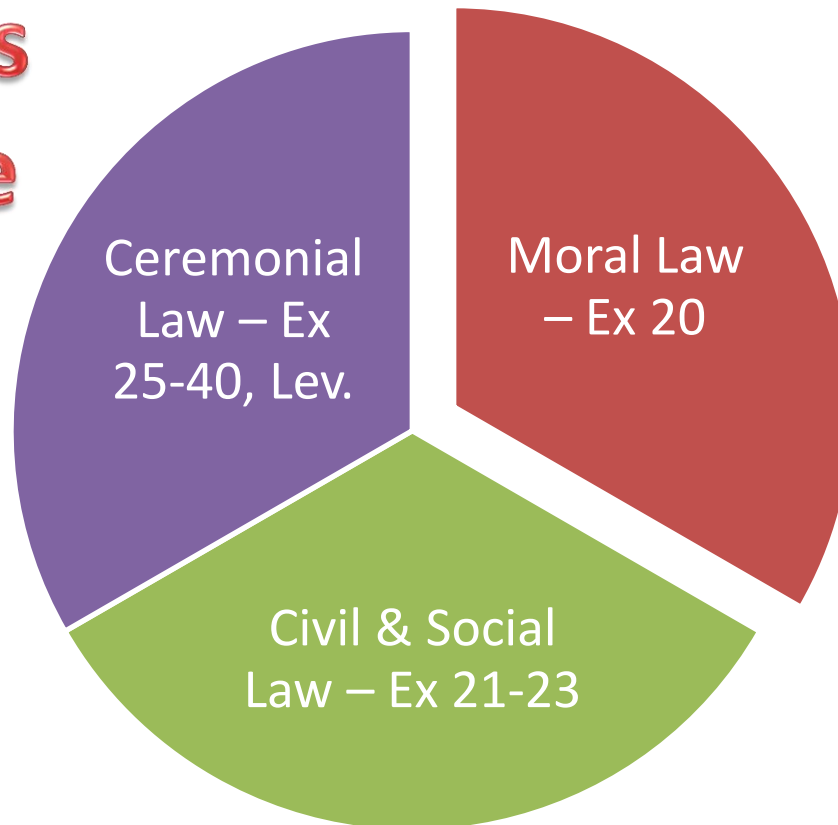


Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Fifth Economy

Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 20:1 – Deuteronomy 28:68)

**The Law is
the Entire
Pie!**



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Dispensation of Law (Exodus 19:1 – Acts 1:26)

Man's Responsibilities

- The responsibility of the Nation of Israel along with Gentile proselytes was to keep the Mosaic Law.

Man's Failures

- The Nation of Israel was continually disobedient and God continued to bring them back through discipline. They continued to reject the ordinances of God. (2nd Kings 17:7-23)

The Resulting Judgment

- As a result, there were many judgments throughout this long period. The ten tribes were carried into Assyrian captivity; the two tribes were carried into Babylonian captivity; and later, because of their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, the people were dispersed into all the world (Matt. 23:37–39).



Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Abrahamic Covenant



Land

- Real Estate Covenant
- Deut. 29:1-30:20

Seed

- Davidic Covenant
- 2nd Sam. 7:11b-17
- 1st Chron. 17:10b-15

Blessing

- The New Covenant
- Jer. 31:31-34

Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

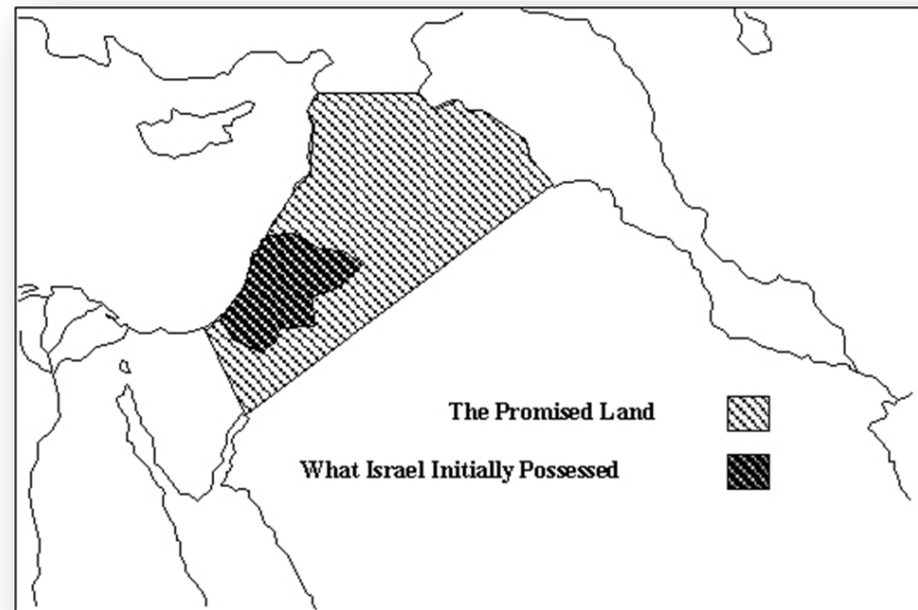
Land Covenant (Deuteronomy 29:1 – 30:20)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and Moses as the representative of National Israel

Conditions of the Covenant

- The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut. 30:1-3)
- There will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut. 30:1-3)
- The Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6)
- Israel will be restored to the land (Deut. 30:5)
- Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut. 30:4-8)
- Israel's enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7)
- The nation will then receive her full blessing. (Deut. 30:9)



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Seed (Davidic) Covenant (2 Sam. 7:10-14)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and David as the representative for the House of Israel

Conditions of the Covenant

- David's child, yet to be born, shall succeed him and establish his kingdom.
- This son, Solomon, shall build the temple instead of David.
- The throne of his kingdom shall be established forever.
- The throne will not be taken away from him (Solomon).
- David's house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever.



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Blessing (New) Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Parties to the Covenant

- God and the houses of Israel and Judah

Conditions of the Covenant

- The new covenant is an unconditional, grace covenant resting on the “I will” of God.
- The new covenant is an everlasting covenant.
- The new covenant also promises the impartation of a renewed mind and heart which we may call regeneration.
- The new covenant provides for restoration to the favor and blessing of God.
- Forgiveness of sin is also included in the covenant.
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also included.
- The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit will be manifested, and the will of God will be known by obedient hearts.
- As is always the case when Israel is in the land, she will be blessed materially in accordance with the provisions of the new covenant.
- The sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem.
- War shall cease and peace shall reign according to Hosea 2:18.
- The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all the blessings of the new covenant.

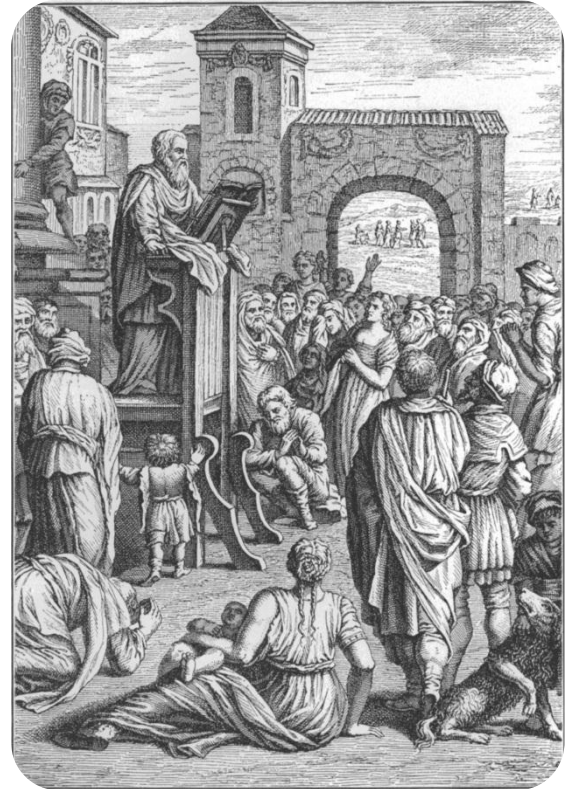
Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

Approaching God in the Dispensation of Law

Approach God by Faith (Heb. 11:30–34)

- By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace. And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.



Refining a Creation for Eternity

Review of past lessons

At The End Of The Fifth Economy

Promise of Redemption Maintained

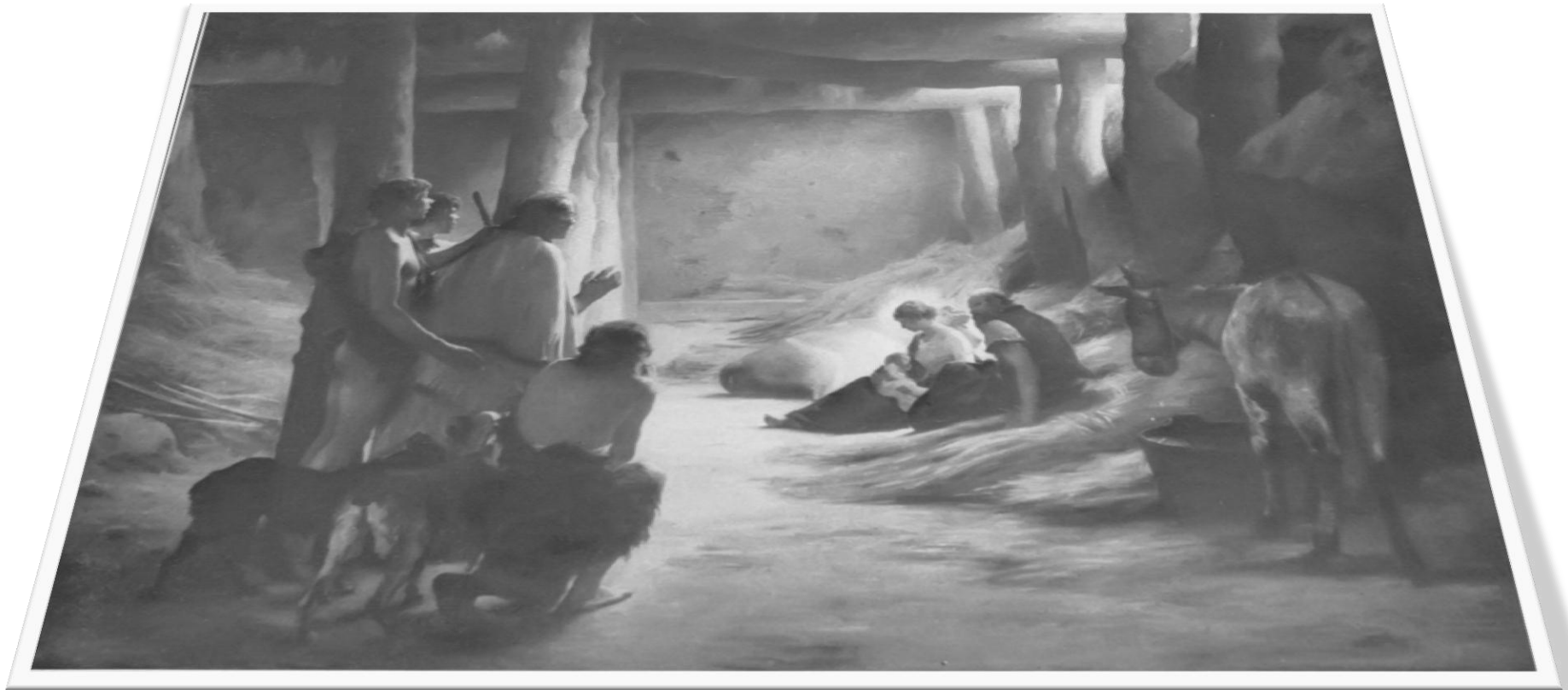
- By rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, the Nation of Israel opened the door for God to display the supreme demonstration of His grace. This unique demonstration, never previously revealed, is the elimination of the Jew/Gentile distinction in Christ. Further, God indwelling His people is also never known in history.

Angelic Conflict

- “Satan suffered a specific judgment at the time that the Messiah died. Satan knew it was coming, and that is why he tried to do everything he could to keep the Messiah from the cross. He constantly tried to have Yeshua killed either prematurely or in the wrong manner; such as, by sword or by stoning. But all such attempts failed because: his hour was not yet come. When His hour finally did come, and when Yeshua was dying on the cross, Satan was no longer in control; rather, the Messiah was in total control. The cross, which brought salvation to humanity, brought judgment upon Satan.”

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ



Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Meaning of the Incarnation

The word incarnation means “in flesh” and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth. The result is that Christ remains forever unblemished deity, which He has had from eternity past; but He also possesses true, sinless humanity in one Person forever (cf. John 1:14; Phil. 2:7–8; 1 Tim. 3:6).

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Explanation of the Incarnation

Genealogies. There are two genealogies that describe the incarnation of Christ: Matthew 1:1–16 and Luke 3:23–38. There is considerable discussion and controversy concerning the relationship of these two genealogies. One thing is noteworthy: both genealogies trace Jesus to David (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:31) and thereby emphasize His rightful claim as heir to the throne of David (cf. Luke 1:32–33). It appears that Matthew describes Joseph’s lineage (cf. v. 16), and because an heir made his claim through the father, Jesus’ right to the Davidic throne comes through Joseph, His adoptive father. Luke cites Jesus’ descent through Mary to Adam, “connecting Christ with the predicted seed of the woman.”

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Explanation of the Incarnation

Virgin birth. The virgin birth was the means whereby the incarnation took place and guaranteed the sinlessness of the Son of God. For this reason the virgin birth was essential. Isaiah 7:14 predicted the virgin birth and Matthew 1:23 provides the commentary, indicating its fulfillment in the birth of Christ. Matthew 1:23 identifies Mary as a “virgin” (Gk. *parthenos*, clearly denoting a virgin). The texts of Matthew and Luke are both clear on the teaching of the virgin birth. Matthew 1:18 emphasizes Mary was pregnant before she and Joseph lived together; moreover, the same verse indicates her pregnancy was due to the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:22–23 stresses that the birth of Christ was in fulfillment of the prophecy of the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14. Matthew 1:25 emphasizes that Mary remained a virgin until the birth of Christ. Luke 1:34 states that Mary had not had contact with a man, while in Luke 1:35 the angel explains to Mary that her pregnancy was due to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Person

- **He would be human** - Genesis 3:15
- **He would be a descendant of Abraham** - Genesis 22:18
- **He would be from the Tribe of Judah** - Genesis 49:10
- **He would be a son of David** - Isaiah 11:1–2; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 1 Chronicles 17:10b–14
- **He would be both God and man** - Genesis 3:15
- **Messiah is Jehovah** - Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7; Jeremiah 23:5–6; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 12:10; 13:7; Psalm 80:17; 110:1–7
- **He will live eternally** - 1 Chronicles 17:10b–14

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Nature

- **He would be full of the Holy Spirit** - Isaiah 11:1–2; 42:1–4; 61:1–2a
- **He would be humble** - Zechariah 9:9–10
- **He would be gentle** - Isaiah 42:1–4
- **He would have a unique relationship with God** - Psalm 16:1–11
- **He would be the son of God** - Psalm 2:7–12; Proverbs 30:4
- **Messiah would be the Good Shepherd** - Zechariah 11:1–17

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Appearing

- **His would be a virgin birth** - Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14
- **He would be born in normal circumstances** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- **He would be born in poverty** - Isaiah 11:1–2
- **He would be preceded by a herald** - Isaiah 40:3–5; Malachi 3:1
- **He would be born in Bethlehem, city of David** - Micah 5:2
- **He would be seen riding on a donkey** - Zechariah 9:9–10
- **He would be present 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (after the Babylonian Captivity)** - Daniel 9:24–27
- **He would appear before 70 A.D.** - Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 8:9–10; 9:6–7; Zechariah 11:1–17; 1 Chronicles 17:10b–14; Daniel 9:24–27

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Offices

- **He would be a king** - Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17a; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 1 Chronicles 17:10b–14; Psalm 2:7–12; 110:1–7
- **He would be a priest** - Psalm 110:1–7
- **He would be a prophet** - Deuteronomy 18:15–19; Isaiah 61:1–2a

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Mission and Ministry

- **He would be specially trained** - Isaiah 50:4–9
- **He would remove the curse due to Adam's fall** - Genesis 5:21–29
- **He would bring salvation to the Gentile nations** - Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–13
- **He would be rejected at first** - Isaiah 49:1–13; 52:13–53:12; Zechariah 11:1–17; 12:10; Psalm 22; 110:1–7
- **He would only be accepted by a small believing remnant of the people** - Zechariah 11:1–17
- **He would appear to fail but in fact be successful** - Isaiah 42:1–4

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Mission and Ministry

- **He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver** - Zechariah 11:1–17
- **His rejection would result in an attack upon Israel and the scattering of the people** - Zechariah 11:1–17; 13:7
- **His rejection would be followed by the acceptance of a false Messiah** - Zechariah 11:1–17
- **He would eventually be accepted** - Isaiah 49:1–13; Psalm 110:1–7
- **He would be seated at the right hand of God** - Psalm 80:17; Psalm 110:1–7

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Suffering and Death

- **He would suffer** - Isaiah 50:4–9; Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm 22
- **He would be legally tried and condemned to death** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- **He would die** - Psalm 16:1–11; Psalm 22
- **He would be executed** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Daniel 9:24–27
- **He would die a violent death by means of piercing** - Zechariah 12:10; 13:7; Psalm 22
- **His death would be substitutionary** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- **His death would result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple** - Daniel 9:24–27
- **He would be buried in a rich man's tomb** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12
- **He would be resurrected** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm 16:1–11; Psalm 22
- **He would bring justification to those who believe in Him** - Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Incarnation of Christ

Prophecies Concerning His Future

- **He will be ruler of the Gentile nations - Psalm 2:7–12**
- **He will rule over Israel in the Messianic Kingdom - Psalm 110:1–7**

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy



Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

Dispensation of Grace (Acts 2:1 to Revelation 19:21)

Man's Responsibilities

Under Grace the responsibility on man is to accept the gift of righteousness that God freely offers to all (Rom. 5:15–18). There are two aspects of the grace of God in this economy: (1) the blessing is entirely of grace and (2) that grace is for all.

Romans 5:15b–18

For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

Dispensation of Grace (Acts 2:1 to Revelation 19:21)

Man's Failures

The vast majority have rejected Him and as a result will be judged. The dispensation will end at the second coming of Christ since, as suggested, the tribulation period itself is not a separate dispensation but is the judgment on those living persons who are Christ rejecters at the end of this present dispensation.

Romans 1:18–20

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

Dispensation of Grace (Acts 2:1 to Revelation 19:21)

The Resulting Judgment

The judgment to non-believers is death. The judgment to believers for not walking with Christ is a loss of rewards. The earth, which was to be controlled by Adam and handed over to Satan, will be ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:19–21

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Origin of the Universal Church

In Matt. 16:18, the Lord considered the Church to be a future institution: “I will build My church.” In John 17:11 and 21, Christ prayed that all believers would become one. According to 1 Cor. 12:12-13, the oneness in the body of Christ, the Church, comes about by Spirit baptism. Therefore, the origin of the Church must be traced back to the beginning of the Holy Spirit’s baptizing ministry.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Origin of the Universal Church (cont.)

Throughout the gospels Spirit baptism is presented as a future work. At the ascension, the Lord said that Spirit baptism would occur “not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). Peter in Acts 11:15-16 teaches that Spirit baptism had already occurred and did so “at the beginning.” Therefore, the Church was formed not long after the events in Acts 1:5 but long before the times of Acts 11:15,16. Also, the foundation of the Church involved Peter and the other apostles. All lines of evidence point to Pentecost in Acts 2 as being the time of the first Spirit baptism and hence the time of the Church’s origin.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Spirit's Baptism

In Spirit baptism the Holy Spirit baptizes (Gr. baptidzo, lit. submerges) the believer into the body of Christ. He makes us a part of it. Water baptism illustrates this. Every believer experiences Spirit baptism regardless of his or her race or social status. We are now on equal footing in the sense that we are all members of the body of Christ. The figure of drinking of one Spirit recalls John 7:37–39 where Jesus invited the thirsty to come and drink of Him to find refreshment. Baptism and drinking are both initiation experiences and take place at the same time. In the first figure the Spirit places the believer into Christ, and in the second the Spirit comes into the Christian. This is probably a case of Semitic parallelism in which both clauses make essentially the same point.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Daniel 9:24–27

The prophecy concerns the nation Israel, for the angel speaks of Daniel's people (verse 24). The prophecy concerns seventy weeks of years which are divided into seven weeks (49 years), sixty-two weeks (434 years) and one week (7 years). The beginning of the reckoning is the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, 445 B.C. According to Sir Robert Anderson's calculations, the Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem exactly sixty-nine weeks of years later. Therefore there remains but one week to be fulfilled, and since the first sixty-nine have been fulfilled literally, it may be expected that the seventieth will be fulfilled in the same manner. Clearly there is an interval of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, and the interval is the church age.

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The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Isaiah 61:2–3.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was reading in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–19) He read from this passage in Isaiah, but He significantly stopped the reading with the words “the acceptable year of the Lord” even though the Isaiah passage goes on to speak of “the day of vengeance of our God.” The Lord, however, was distinguishing between the events connected with His first coming and those of His Second Coming. He did not continue the reading because He knew that the events of Isaiah 61 were not continuous and that the day of vengeance of our God was not due to begin at that time. In other words, the Lord Jesus made room for the parenthesis of this church age which has already lasted more than nineteen hundred years.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Daniel 2.

In this chapter which sets forth the times of the Gentiles, the parenthesis occurs within the Roman empire. The last condition of the empire, symbolized by the feet with the ten toes, has never existed, for there have never arisen these ten kingdoms at the same time. This same parenthesis is seen between verses 23 and 24 of the seventh chapter, between 8:22 and 23, and between 11:35 and 36. These passages should be studied in detail, but the only point to be made here is that the Old Testament allows for the present age although it does not foresee it.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

In Hosea.

In Hosea 3:4–5 the gap occurs again, for the “afterward” indicates the long period of time during which Israel is wandering among the nations. Again, in the last verse of chapter 5, there is reference to the ascension of the Lord and in the first verses of chapter 6 to Israel’s repentance. The ascension took place nearly two thousand years ago, but the events of chapter 6 have not yet taken place.

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The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

In the Psalms.

Ironsides lists three Psalms which give examples of the intercalation period. In Psalm 22:1–21 the sufferings of the Lord on the cross are pictured. Verse 22 tells of His Resurrection and appearance among His own, but verse 23 sets forth the coming of the kingdom and deliverance of Israel. Surely this is yet future for it is not true that “all the ends of the world ... remember and turn unto the Lord” (verse 27). Psalm 110:1 speaks of the present work of Christ—“sit thou at my right hand”—and the second verse of His return in power. Again it is evident that this is unfulfilled for surely today He does not “rule ... in the midst of thine enemies.” Psalm 34:12–16 affords another illustration of this parenthesis principle because it is partially quoted by Peter (1 Pet. 3:10–12).

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The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Israel's ecclesiastical year.

Leviticus 23 also gives a further picture of the parenthesis. In the spring of the year occurred the feasts of Passover, firstfruits, and Pentecost, all of which have already had a fulfillment in the death of Christ, in the Resurrection of Christ, and in the descent of the Holy Spirit. In the fall of the year, beginning with the seventh month, occurred three more feasts, trumpets, atonement, and tabernacles. Trumpets have to do with the calling back of Israel to her land (Isa. 18:3–7; 27:12–13); atonement, with Israel's cleansing (Zech. 12:10–14; 13:1); and tabernacles, with Israel's millennial blessings. The break between the two sets of feasts is clear and definite, and illustrative of this principle.

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The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Romans 11

Paul asks in this chapter if God has cast away His people, that is, natural Israel. The answer is an emphatic no, for Paul himself and the remnant prove that God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew (verse 2). In verses 7 to 10, the rest of the nation, that is, the unbelieving part, is contrasted with this remnant, but that distinction cannot vitiate the irrevocable promises made to Abraham. It is true that this unbelieving part has been judicially hardened, but the hardening is not permanent. In the meantime their fall has brought riches to the Gentiles, for the gospel has come unto them. But, this being true, “how much more their [Israel’s] fulness?” (verse 12). In other words, the fullness of blessing for Israel will be “much more,” but since this is future it conclusively proves that Israel will have a future.

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The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Romans 11 (cont.)

In verses 17 to 24, Paul introduces the figure of the olive tree. The apostle does not say that Israel is the olive tree; rather, the olive tree is the place of privilege. Israel was the first definite group to be called to this place, but because of unbelief she was set aside or broken off. Now the place of privilege is occupied by the Gentiles, but it is perfectly clear that Israel will again be grafted into the olive tree (verses 23, 24). What would be the point of all this argument if there were no contrast in the mind of Paul between Israel and the Church?

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Acts 15

The last passage to be cited as proof that the real form of the kingdom has not been abrogated is the Amos quotation in Acts 15:14–17. While it has been shown that on the basis of literal interpretation of Luke 1:31–33 it is God's purpose to fulfill the Davidic covenant, that there is not one reference connecting the present session of Christ with the Davidic throne, that the kingdom is in mystery form today, that the real form is still expected in the future, a proper understanding of this passage will clinch the argument that the present work of Christ is not identical with the future kingdom reign.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church an Intercalation or Parenthesis

Acts 15 (cont.)

The entire ninth chapter of Amos from which the quotation is taken bears on the interpretation of these verses in Acts, for Amos confirms the fact that the “tabernacle of David” is the nation of Israel in contrast to the Gentile nations. No exegesis could make it equivalent to the New Testament Church. Gaebelien gives a good analysis of James’ words citing four points in the progression of thought. First, God visits the Gentiles, taking from them a people for His name. In other words, God has promised to bless the Gentiles as well as Israel, but each in his own order. The Gentile blessing is first. Secondly, Christ will return. This is after the outcalling of the people for His name. Thirdly, as a result of the Coming of the Lord, the tabernacle of David will be built again; that is, the kingdom will be established as promised in the Davidic covenant. Amos clearly declares that this rebuilding will be done “as in the days of old” (9:11); that is, the blessings will be earthly and national and will have nothing to do with the Church. Fourthly, the residue of men will seek the Lord, that is, all the Gentiles will be brought to a knowledge of the Lord after the kingdom is established.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

The overall purpose for the local church is the same as the universal Church. The church exists to glorify (i.e., honor, praise, worship, reverence, give homage to) God. This general purpose of honoring God occurs through several important church functions. While the format may change from culture to culture and generation to generation, fundamental doctrine and these essential church functions may not change. They are not listed in any order of importance. All are important, and they need to be implemented with balance to fulfill God's intention for a local church.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

1. Teaching/Doctrine

Sometimes Christians forget that teaching is a major component of the great commission. “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). Many texts support the statement that a non-teaching church is not in compliance with the Bible. Teaching should be construed to involve not just theology but also ethics and Christian service. The church as a pillar of truth (1 Tim. 3:15) must teach the Word of God. (See also Eph. 4:11-12.)

Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:12; 1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:2;
2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 4:2

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

2. Observance of the Ordinances

A local church is supposed to carry out the great commission by baptizing new believers and is supposed to create a reminder of Christ's sacrificial love by observing the Lord's Supper.

Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

3. Prayer

Prayer is one of the primary functions of a local church. It may not be relegated beneath teaching, evangelism, worship or any other facet of church life. Although the doctrine of prayer is relevant to individuals, it is also a practice that ought to be observed corporately. Prayer helps forge unity among believers. It is foundational for evangelism. Most important is the truth that prayer pleases God and tends to bring about His favor and blessings. No church dare minimize the role of prayer as a necessary ingredient to a healthy church. Notice that the apostles viewed prayer and the ministry of the Word as priorities (Acts 6:4).

Luke 18:1; Acts 2:42; Acts 12:5; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; James 5:14-15

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

4. Evangelism (Includes Missionary Out-reach)

While it is true that the Great Commission was addressed to the apostles, the Lord clearly envisioned that it would be a work carried on through those who believed the apostolic message “even unto the end of the age.” Thus, it is still God’s will for the church to be involved in proclaiming the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ. Individuals witness, but, in another sense, the whole church can be a witness to God’s saving grace. In addition to proclaiming God’s glory in its own locality, a church should be separating and sending missionaries to other regions.

Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 9:31; Acts 13:2-3; Acts 16:5; Rom. 10:14-15;
1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

5. Worship

The commandment to “remember the Sabbath” (Ex. 20:8) is the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated for the Church. There is a command to assemble (e.g., Heb. 10:25), but there is no prescribed day of worship for the church (Rom. 14:5-6; Col. 2:16). However, by tradition the early churches assembled on the first day of the week, Sunday, in order to commemorate the Lord’s resurrection on the first day of the week (John 20:1). His two appearances to the disciples in the upper room on the first day of the week (John 20:19, 26), and Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, also occurred on a Sunday. By tradition the church has assembled to worship on Sunday from the New Testament times (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2) until the present time.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

5. Worship (cont.)

Modern believers from Bible-teaching churches would have felt comfortable in early church gatherings. There was Bible teaching (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:19, 26; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2), singing (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), collections (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9), prayer (Acts 2:42), fellowship including love-feasts (Heb. 10:24-25; Jude 12), and communion (Acts 20:7). Services were conducted in homes (1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15, etc.) and were conducted in orderliness without confusion (1 Cor. 14:32, 40). 1 Cor. 14:26 comes the closest to giving an order of service.

What is the outcome then brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue (languages), has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification [1 Cor. 14:26].

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

5. Worship (cont.)

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country, gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers according to his ability, and the people assent saying Amen....And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning, among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.” (Justin Martyr lived A.D. 100-167, in Israel.)

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

The Purpose for the Local Church

6. Benevolence

A church has an obligation to provide for those honestly poor. Assistance is not exclusively for believers but is especially for them: (Gal. 6:10)

The New Testament presents many examples of Christians helping the brethren. It also gives commands for Christians to help other Christians in need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-38; 11:28-30; Gal. 2:10; 1 John 3:17-18; James 1:27; 2:15-16). The early church was particularly involved in a formal ministry to widows (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:3-16). This seems to have been a system of permanent support as opposed to temporary assistance that could be given to anyone. There were strict guidelines that had to be met in order to qualify for any support, especially for widows who wanted help of an ongoing nature (2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:4, 9-11).

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

Church Ordinances

Communion

1 Cor. 11:23-32 gives essential practices that are binding upon the church relative to communion practices. (See also Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20.)

The pattern of communion laid down in 1 Cor. 11:23, mandates that thanks be given first, before the bread and then before the cup. It is best to follow this pattern of prayer before partaking and the order of the bread first and then the cup.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

Church Ordinances

Communion (cont.)

Beyond the order of the ritual, 1 Cor. 11:28 (also v. 31) requires self-examination before participating in the Lord's Supper. Verse 27 refers to drinking in an "unworthy manner." This is an adverb stressing unworthy manner of observance, not so much unworthiness of a person. In the ultimate sense no one is worthy to take communion. Christ's sacrifice on our behalf was pure grace. Paul, in this context, is mainly concerned that participants in communion "discern or judge the body" correctly, i.e., that they observe with the respect and honor due the serious-ness of the ordinance.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

Church Ordinances

Communion (cont.)

Churches in the Reformed, Presbyterian, and Baptist traditions generally adhere to the memorial view of communion. This means that the elements are not the actual or mystical body and blood of the Lord, but rather they are symbols to assist in remembrance. Several phrases reveal that this is one intent of the communion service: “do this in remembrance of Me” [Luke 22:19], “do this in remembrance of Me” [1 Cor. 11:24], “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” [1 Cor. 11:26].

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

Church Ordinances

Communion (cont.)

What does God want His people to remember? This can be nicely classified by the three terms used for this ordinance:

1. Eucharist

The term Eucharist is not just an ecclesiastical term that is the property of specific denominations. It is a form of the Greek word for “thanksgiving.”

2. Communion

Communion has a Latin derivation and refers to having something in common. The Greek word translated as communion in the English New Testament means “fellow-ship.”

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

Church Ordinances

Communion (cont.)

What does God want His people to remember? This can be nicely classified by the three terms used for this ordinance:

3. Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper reminds us that He is the unseen host of the observance. Also, more than the other terms, it points back to the origin of the ordinance at the time of the Last Supper before the cross. It is the Lord's Supper because He is the one who originated it. In observing the Lord's Supper we should remember that Last Supper, and especially Christ's promise to come again and partake with us in His Kingdom.

Refining a Creation for Eternity

The Sixth Economy

The Church

Church Ordinances

Baptism

Baptists, unlike Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Reformed, etc., do not practice infant baptism. Unlike the Church of Christ, they do not believe baptism is essential to salvation. Yet, Baptists do stress baptism as a necessary observance to obey the commands of Christ. The Baptist understanding is that only those who already believe may be candidates for baptism. This excludes infants who are un-able to believe. It also views baptism as occurring after salvation.