

# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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## THREE ERAS OF HUMAN HISTORY

By Andrew Dow

Reading and studying the Bible can be hard. It is not particularly difficult to read the words on the page, but it can be hard to know where certain events happen in the course of human history. The Bible covers a vast span of history. Understanding *when* an event takes place will go a long way toward determining how we should interpret it.

One of the simplest ways to think about biblical history (and all of human history) is to consider three eras or dispensations: the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian eras. These periods of time are divided based on how God communicated His will to His people.

**The Patriarchal dispensation:** This era of history begins with the creation of the heavens and earth (Gen 1:1) and ends when God gave the Law to Israel on Mount Sinai (Exo 19). During this period of time God communicated His will through the patriarchs or fathers of households. God spoke directly to men like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He expected them to relay His will to their families.

**The Mosaic dispensation:** This period of time began when God gave Israel the Law on Mount Sinai (Exo 19) and ended at Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Acts 1). In this era God did not communicate with the patriarchs (at least not in Israel). Instead He communicated

through the Law which was delivered by Moses from Mount Sinai. The Levites were expected to teach this Law to the people so that all would know what God wanted.

**The Christian dispensation:** The final era of history began at the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ (Acts 1). Now God communicates His will for all mankind through Jesus, the Christ (Heb 1:1–2). The teaching of Jesus is recorded in the New Testament (cf. John 13–14). This is the era in which we live today. We are expected to read the teaching of Christ in the pages of the Bible and follow them in our lives.

God does not change (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8). God has, however, changed what He expects of His people and how He communicates with them. As you read your Bible this week identify which era of human history you are reading about. It will help you identify how God is communicating and what He expects of His people at that time.

## **THINGS OF VALUE**

By Andrew Dow

We all have things in our lives that we consider to be valuable. Perhaps it's some family heirloom or a hand-me-down from a loved one. Maybe it's something we worked hard to create or a collection. One might even consider relationships with friends or family as valuable. Whether there is actual monetary value in these things is irrelevant; we value them based on their meaningfulness to us.

The Bible teaches us to value things differently than the world values them. Jesus taught us to change the way we think about our valuables:

**“do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”** (Matt 6:19–21).

If everything you value is contained in this world then you will be wholly focused on what the world has to offer. If, on the other hand, everything you value is contained in the spiritual realm then you will be wholly focused on God and what He has to offer.

Of course, Jesus is not teaching us that we cannot have valuable things or consider things as valuable in this world. He is talking about recognizing true value and behaving accordingly. One day it will become apparent that your soul is worth far more than your money, heirlooms, family, friends, hobbies, jobs, etc.

We would do well to be like the men in Jesus’ parables:

**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it”** (Matt 13:44–46).

Are you willing to give up everything you have in order to attain the spiritual blessings of being in Christ?

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**“NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS; FOR EITHER HE WILL HATE THE ONE AND LOVE THE OTHER, OR HE WILL BE DEVOTED TO ON AND DESPISE THE OTHER” (MATTHEW 6:24).**

## SOME WORDS ABOUT SILENCE

By Andrew Dow

The God-given wisdom of Solomon offers us a number of practical life lessons. Among them is this gem found in Proverbs 10:19—

**“When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable,  
But he who restrains his lips is wise.”**

Here, as is typical of the proverbs, we find a simple contrast meant to nudge us in the direction of wisdom and away from the path of folly. Many of the proverbs in this immediate context describe the need to say good things. While this proverb falls along these same lines, it is actually an instruction to be silent—or at least to speak less.

One who always feels the need to say something will eventually say an unwise thing. **“If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man”** (James 3:2). Consider the advice of another proverb: **“even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise”** (17:28). Simply put, *sometimes it is wise to be silent.*

**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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### AM LESSON:

Wisdom or Foolishness:  
Which Will You Choose?

### PM LESSON:

Living the Good Life:  
Life With Wisdom

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”**  
**(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**