



A BETTER WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Session 5

THE DISPENSATION OF LAW

To be Dispensational means to read the Bible using the normal rules of grammar and the universally accepted meaning of words as expressed by the writer. In other words, unless the writer indicates otherwise, we take him at his word.

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.”

How is this possible? Only by studying. Studying the Bible takes work.

The apostle Paul makes it clear how we are to approach the Scriptures. In 2 Timothy 2:15 he writes,

*“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”*

The Seven Dispensations							
	Immorance	Conscience	Government	Promise	Law	Grace	Kingdom
Scripture	Genesis 1-3	Genesis 4-8	Genesis 9-11	Genesis 12 - Exodus 18	Exodus 19 - Acts 1	Acts 1 - Revelation 19	Revelation 20
Duration	From the creation of Adam to his fall.	From the fall of Adam to the flood of Noah.	From the flood to the call of Abraham.	From the call of Abraham to the giving of the Mosaic Law	From the giving of the Mosaic Law to Pentecost(?)		
The Responsibility Before God	Fill and steward the earth; do not eat from the tree.	Obey the dictates of conscience.	Replenish the earth; rule righteously	Live in light of the promise	Keep the Mosaic Law		
The Judgment From God	Separation from God	The flood	Confusion of language	Egyptian slavery	The curses of the covenants and captivities		

A dispensation is a period of time. What this means is that while God never changes, over the course of time, the way he relates to humanity has changed. Therefore, dispensationalism is the belief that God has related to people in the course of human history in unique ways. Each of these unique historical relationships between God and people is called a *dispensation*.

Today we will look at the fifth dispensation, called the dispensation of Law, found in Exodus 19 - Acts.

God singles out the nation of Israel for special attention.

God delivered Israel from 400 years of bondage in Egypt through a mighty demonstration of His power over the false gods of Egypt, including Pharaoh himself.

At the foot of Mt. Sinai the Lord made a proposal to the people through Moses (Exodus 19:4-6).

- God offered to make the nation of Israel "a peculiar treasure unto me above all people..." (vs. 5)
- They would have the responsibility of representing God to the nations as "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (vs. 6).
- This proposition was a key step in the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, otherwise known as the Abrahamic Covenant, given 400 years earlier.

However, in this proposed plan, God refers to another covenant (vs. 5), a new covenant, which is commonly called The Mosaic Covenant.

There are a couple of important aspects of this covenant"

1. It was offered to a redeemed people (Exodus 19:4).
 - This is probably referring to their redemption from slavery in Egypt. It was wholly due to God's gracious work on their behalf.
 - For the believer (see Ephesians 2:8,9).
 - In this offer to a redeemed people, the nation as a whole is in view as being in a right relationship with God.
2. Because this Mosaic Covenant was made with a redeemed people, its purpose was not to effect the salvation of that people.
 - Paul explains in the New Testament (Galatians 2:16; Acts 13:39).
 - To the Christians in Rome, Paul wrote (Romans 3:20)

So what was the purpose of the Law? Paul says, *to increase transgressions or to give sin the character of transgression so that people might be even more conscious of their sinfulness and their corresponding need of salvation from sin (see Galatians 3:19).*

The Primary purpose of the Law? To regulate the relationship between God and his people. This was accomplished through 613 commandments, or laws, contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which governed every aspect of the life of the Israelites:

- Moral laws (Ten Commandments)
- Civil laws (property, business, judicial)
- Ceremonial laws (washing, sacrificing)

Thus, the name *dispensation of law*. Jews refer to the Law as Torah. The responsibility of Israel in this dispensation was to obey the law.

There would be great material and social blessing in exchange for obedience to the law (Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Psalm 81:10-16).

Conversely, if they disobeyed God, they would suffer curses that would result in the loss of their blessing and prosperity (Deuteronomy 28:15-35). Disobedience to the law was often met with strict penalties, including death in cases of most severe disobedience.

Israel agrees to the Lord's proposition! (Exodus 19:8)

Yet, before Moses had even finished receiving all of the law from the Lord God, the Israelites disobeyed God in heinous acts of idolatry and immorality (Exodus 32:1-6). This type of behavior continued over the next 700 years of Israel's history.

God keeps his promises:

- 722 B.C. Assyrians swept down through Israel and took the northern kingdom captive.
- Beginning in 605 B.C. and continuing until 586 B.C. the Babylonians attacked the southern kingdom of Judah, finally destroying the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God (See 2 Kings 24:1 - 25:21)
- From that time on the nation and its people were subjected to Gentile domination through a succession of world empires (c.f. Daniel 7-8).

Many people think that our society's problems can be remedied with more education, under the assumption that if people understand right from wrong they will by nature choose to do the right thing. Do you think this is true?

It appears God's chosen people, Israel failed miserably.

Yet, again God grace and mercy pours through. Throughout Israel's history God has promised to provide a specially anointed king, the Messiah, who would establish His kingdom on earth and rule both his people and the entire world from Jerusalem (Joel 3:9-21; Amos 9:11-15; Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-16; 26:6-9).

That promise began to be fulfilled with the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:31-33). When Jesus began his public ministry, he made a bona fide offer of this promised kingdom to the people of Israel, contingent upon their repentance (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:14). The nation as a whole refused to do this.

God held out the offer, even after his death and resurrection to the nation through the remnant of believing Jews who would become the nucleus of the early church (Romans 9:29; 11:1-6).

The Jews sought to save themselves through their own good works, rather than receive the only means of salvation and true righteousness through Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-26).

Even today, most Jews remain blind to their need for a Savior (Romans 11:25). The vast majority of the world's population are ignorant and in a hopeless state before a holy God (2 Corinthians 4:3,4; Ephesians 2:11,12; 4:17-19).

One day the nation of Israel will turn again to the Lord (Romans 11:25-27), and the Lord will fulfill the promises to Israel that He made long ago through the prophets (Romans 11:28-29).

Yet, the great national revival that will come to Israel will take place during the darkest and most terrifying period in human history, known as the tribulation (Matthew 24:21,29)

Can man obey the law? Apparently not. Thank God for the next dispensation; the one in which we now live. The dispensation of GRACE!.