

God's Plan for the Ages

Understanding the Dispensations

Lesson 8 – The Dispensation of The Law

The Time - The fifth dispensation extended from the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross at Mount Calvary.

The supernatural tearing of the veil in the Temple in Jerusalem when Christ died signified that the Law was terminated at that time.

The Scripture - The Scripture portion which covers the fifth dispensation is Exodus 19:1 through Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:41, Luke 23:49, and John 19:30.

1. Man's State at the Beginning

The climax of the previous dispensation, the Dispensation of Promise resulted in Egyptian bondage, because the nation of Israel was not willing to walk according to the promise of God. God permitted her to go into four hundred bitter years of slavery in the land of Egypt.

The compassion which God manifested in the Dispensation of Promise was emphasized in the deliverance from the land of Egypt in the wilderness of Sinai, and the Dispensation of Law begins.

Man's state at the beginning is best illustrated by what we find in Exodus, chapter 19:

a. Israel meets with God at _____(Exodus 19:1-8)

In the third month after coming out of Egypt, the children of Israel arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:12; 19:1-2). This was the place where God would give to the children of Israel His laws and His commandments. After they arrived at Mount Sinai, God had a message for His people. God reminded them about something.

What are the first three words in Exodus 19:4? _____

The children of Israel had seen

- what God did to the Egyptians (Exodus 14:30-31).
- the way God made the bitter water sweet (Exodus 15:25).
- how God provided food in the middle of a desert (Exodus 16:11-15).
- how God brought forth water out of a rock (Exodus 17:6).
- how gracious and merciful God had been to them in spite of their murmurings and their unbelief!

They had seen God's power and greatness demonstrated again and again.

In Exodus 19:5 we learn that God was going to make an agreement or a covenant with the children of Israel. This is sometimes called the Mosaic Covenant (named after Moses who was Israel's leader at this time).

What were the terms of this covenant?

According to Exodus 19:5-6, God promised to bless the children of Israel in a special way **if** the children of Israel would keep their part of the deal- *"if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant"* (Exodus 19:5).

If Israel would _____, God would _____.

So, unlike the previous covenants we have looked at (Noahic and Abrahamic) **the Mosaic covenant was conditional.**

What was the response of the children of Israel in Exodus 19:7-8?

What does this tell us about them?

b. God gives Israel _____

God gave to the children of Israel a unique set of laws, something that no other nation on the face of the earth had ever received (see Deuteronomy 4:5-8). God gave His people 613 commandments in the law of Moses (according to Jewish calculations).

These commands covered all phases of life and activity:

- **The _____ Law** (Exodus 20:1-17) given in the Ten Commandments listed their responsibilities to God and to their fellow man.
- **The _____ Law** (Exodus 21:1-24:11) presents the laws the Lord gave to Israel to govern her social and civil life.
- **The _____ Law** (Exodus 25:1-31:8) contained ordinances for Israel's religious life, including worship, the priesthood and authorised approach to God.

We need to also understand that the law was given only to the nation Israel, the nation which God brought out of Egypt (see Exodus 19:3; 20:2). God's law was not given to the Egyptians or to the Canaanites or to the Babylonians or to any other nation. God made this covenant with Moses and with Israel (Exodus 34:27). This special package, containing numerous laws and commandments, was given to a very special nation - Israel. No other nation had such a law (Deuteronomy 4:8, Romans 9:4)

2. Man's Responsibility

God had put His holy laws into Israel's hands. The children of Israel had a great responsibility: they were to obey God's and keep God's commandments, memorising them and teaching them to their children (Deuteronomy 6:1; 6-9).

According to the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant, the children of Israel would be blessed for obedience and they would be cursed for disobedience.

This is most clearly seen in Deuteronomy chapter 28:

- **Obedience** (v 1) if followed by **blessings** (v2-13)
- **Disobedience** (v15) is followed by **curses** (v16-45)

We should also keep in mind that the children of Israel were responsible to **keep all of the Law**, not just some of the Law. (Deuteronomy 6:2, James 2:10). They were to obey all of the commandments. Why did God give all of these commandments? (Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

God knew that no man (except Jesus Christ) would ever keep the law perfectly. He knew that even the best of men would fail and disobey and sin. Therefore, God's law contained many commandments which told men what to do about sin.

For example, in Old Testament times (according to the law of Moses) men were told to bring animals for sacrifice (see Leviticus chapters 1-5).

The children of Israel were responsible to follow God's instructions carefully and to bring the right kind of animal for the right kind of sacrifice. God had important rules and regulations for His people to follow whenever they sinned.

3. Man's Failure

The Israelites said, *"All that the LORD hath spoken we will do!"*

Did they really do this or not?

In Jeremiah 31:32 we learn that they **broke this covenant!**

They failed to keep the law. The history of the nation of Israel is one long and sad record of flagrant and persistent violation (breaking) of the law.

4. God's Judgment

We have already seen that disobedience to God's law must be followed by God's **curses**. This is exactly what happened to the nation Israel. The many curses that we read about in Deuteronomy 28:16-26 have actually happened to this nation.

Three of the great judgments upon the nation of Israel are:

- **The Assyrian Captivity** (722 BC) 2 Kings 17:3-6; 7-18
- **The Babylonian Captivity** (605/586 BC) 2 Kings 25:1-11; 2Chr 36:14-17
- **The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans** (70 AD) Mt 23:37-24:2

5. God's Grace

God sent prophets to proclaim the coming judgement on Israel and to plead with them to turn from their wickedness and rebellion.

He also gave them a message of hope.

In Jeremiah 31:31-37 God promises a **New Covenant** that he will make with Israel, one that would replace the Mosaic Covenant, which was temporary. **This covenant was unconditional** and would replace external obedience with a renewed heart and mind, bring a personal relationship with the Lord and, provide forgiveness of sins.

It also would restore Israel as a single nation in their promised land with peace and great blessing (Jeremiah 32:37-41).

The foundation of this New Covenant is the saving work of the **Lord Jesus Christ** on the cross. This covenant will ultimately be fulfilled at Christ's second coming in the Millennial Kingdom.

While these blessings are for the nation of Israel, we as the church have partaken of some them, the spiritual blessings through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion – God's Commands to Us

Believers living today are not told to obey the law of Moses, but there are Certain commandments which God has given us to obey.

The 10 Commandments in Exodus 20	Commandments repeated in The New Testament
Have no gods before me (v3)	1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Acts 14:15
Make no graven images (v4)	Acts 17:29; 1John 5:21
Do not take the name of God in vain (v7)	Matthew 6:9; James 5:12
Keep the Sabbath day holy (v8)	(None)
Honour thy father and mother (v12)	Ephesians 6:1-3
Do not kill (v13)	Matthew 5:21-22, Romans 13:9
Do not commit adultery (v14)	Matthew 5:27-28, Romans 13:9, Hebrews 13:4
Do not steal (v15)	Romans 13:9, Ephesians 4:28
Do not bear false witness (v16)	Colossians 3:9, James 3:4
Do not covet (v17)	Romans 13:9, Ephesians 5:3

What are you doing with the commands that God has given to you in His Word?
How can a believer prove that he really loves Jesus (John 14:15,21,23)?

We are much like the children of Israel. Our hearts are sinful and rebellious. We are prone to disobey God's Word and God's commands. This is even true for believers. Without God's help and power, we could never live an obedient life.

***For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.***
(John 1:17)