

THE DISPENSATIONS
FALL, 2020
“THE DISPENSATION OF LAW OR THE LAND
COVENANT”
OCTOBER 14, 2020

I. MAN’S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AND THE FAILURE OF MAN TO MEET IT

- A. **Freedom or innocence** failed as man listened to and trusted someone other than God. Faith or trust is the principle that operates all things in the created world. The principles given for the conduct of his stewardship were simple: Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue the earth, have dominion over land, sea, and air creatures, eat plants, eat the tree of life, tend the garden but do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **Judgment:** Expelled from the garden and barred from re-entry.
- B. **Conscience** or man coming to God on his own failed as now the twisted off spring of Adam and Eve did not have the desire or the capacity to get back to God. No new stewardship was given, only a new methodology of living the previous stewardship outside the garden and by one’s own conscience. They failed the first command to be fruitful and multiply as they chose non-human partners with which to have children. Their children were wicked, violent GMO human and angel. **Judgment:** World wide flood that destroyed all but 8 souls.
- C. In the new stewardship that would be given these 8 saved souls, we find the old stewardship repeated regarding marriage, family and the land use but altered or added to it was that of dietary changes. They could now eat the other living creatures and plants. Consequently, the animals were going to fear them. That was new. With this new requirement, the eating of blood was forbidden. God tells us that the life of the flesh is in the blood. We may eat things we have killed but we must drain its life out before we do. That life, found in the blood, we are not free to ingest. Related to that was the command to not kill other human beings. Even the animals are not free to kill human beings. If one kills a human, his life is forfeited and other humans are commanded to take it from him. This capital punishment is the first indication of the need for a civil government as it was clear that man’s conscience was not to be trusted to carry through on this command morally and faithfully. It was not that

man's conscience did not know right from wrong as he did; God had written in him. It was that man was willing to violate his conscience if he prized something higher than obeying it. Additionally, God had given him the natural world to understand God and His laws. This too was written in his heart. God was going to institute **societal government** as an authority to check man's failed compliance to law and order. This was to be taught and instituted by the members of the divine council who had been assigned to each ethnic group or nationality following the failure at the Tower of Babel. Failure on this one came when members of different ethnic groups began to conquer other ethnic groups, taking their land, murdering their citizens, enslaving them and trafficking them elsewhere, stealing their resources. **Judgment:** Yet to come! This age will not end until the Lord Jesus Christ returns and crushes all other kingdoms. Until then we will continue to see war, conflict, violence, slavery, human trafficking and ethnic hatred along with the attendant wickedness and occasional benefit that comes from it.

D. God had divided the nations among the sons of God for instruction and guidance, but He himself chose Abram from whom He was going to build His own precious treasure of a nation. It was to be the nation through whom He would make known His will, word and way and who He is. Through them he would make known prophetic truth about how He was going to restore the earth to the world He created it to be. Through them He would bring the deliverer who would deliver all peoples from the violence that had become the failed but common way of existence for all the earth. Sin in the human heart, every human heart, was at the root of this failure. The Deliverer would save people from their own iniquity and create a new people for inhabitation of a new heavens and a new earth! God made his election of Abram/Abraham known by means of a **promise or covenant** that God promised to keep to all his succeeding generations forever! The only condition of this covenant was that they must trust Him and trust Him to keep His covenant no matter what the world looked like at the time. Abraham would be a subset of all the nations and the covenant made to him was applicable only to him and his descendants after him. The rest of the nations were excluded from this covenant but were going to be blessed by it. From here on until the resurrection of Christ the Bible is focused on Israel and the nations who had a direct encounter with them.

E. Tonight, we see how God was going to give to Israel a special dispensation, administration or stewardship different from the other nations. The other nations were still (and do still today) operating under the law we call natural law: the law given to Noah; the law observed in nature; the law written in the conscience by God Himself and the law given through the mediation of angels due to the failure of man to obey what law he had.

- 1. Israel would go into enslavement in a foreign land, Egypt. At this point they had promises of land that would be solely theirs but they were not in occupation of it. Those promises were over 400 years later and no one had experienced a direct encounter with God since the days of Joseph. They were living among the idolaters of Egypt and had not direct knowledge of the God of the promises. They had nothing to fasten their hopes to. They were crying out to the One they had heard was God for delivery from slavery but had no plan for what was to follow such a liberation if they even had one. Exodus 1*
- 2. Moses would be the hand-picked, personally-taught deliverer from slavery. But little did any of them know how much more than that he would be to them. He spent 40 years being taught the way of the Egyptians: culture, religion and hierarchy. Growing up he recognized he was a Hebrew and sought to deliver his people. His failure to do so ended in his exile from Egypt. Exodus 2*
- 3. He spent the next 40 years being untaught the ways of the Egyptians and learning the ways of the shepherd. His father-in-law was the priest of the Most High God in Midian. This rural life-style would develop in him the skills of the shepherd and the knowledge of the wilderness. His encounter with God at the burning bush would dramatically change his life and his life's direction Exodus 3-4*
- 4. The next chapters of Exodus through the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy is about God giving them His special marriage/land covenant. One major facet of that covenant is found in what we call the 10 commandments in Exodus 19-20 where God makes it clear the preciousness that Israel is to Him and the special task of being His priests. In chapter 20 He gives clarification and specifics of the law He had already given the nations earlier. This was not new law but the stewardship dispensation of it was new. It is a subset of the law for the*

nations. It is His covenant with Israel in His marriage to them and His promises to them of what will happen within His marriage to them. He is establishing what He will do for them and what they are to do for Him as they live in the land He is going to give them. In addition to it being a marriage covenant, it is a land covenant that He is making with Israel. They can stay in this land He promises to bless with His own fruitful Presence. If they violate His trust or offend His husband-love for them by taking on other lovers, He would expel them out of the land until such time they would cease their adultery and actually wanted to come back home to be with Him. If, while in exile, they would turn their hearts back to the covenant, to Him and to the land, He would bring them home out of all the areas into which He had scattered them. This is a perpetual covenant He has made with them. It is their stewardship.

5. The rest of the books of the Old Testament through the book of the Acts are God's continuing dealings with His "unfaithful wife". It is the way at which the kept covenant and then failed in it. Heroes of faith are found in it such as Joshua, Caleb, David and some of his descendants, the prophets and the occasional members of the covenant but they are few and far between. It is the story of failure and revival followed by more failure. The 10 northern tribes collectively called Israel or Ephraim did not follow the true God after they broke away from the 2 southern tribes at the time of the kingship of Solomon's son Rehoboam. They became idolatrous following many different idols. God finally raised up the Assyrians to put them in exile so much that many today call them the 10 lost tribes because we do not know where they all went. The two southern tribes followed Israel's errant path. God raised up the Babylonians to remove them from the land and put them in exile in Babylon. This exile was to last 70 years. When the 70 years were up they were allowed to return to Judah and Jerusalem. But it was only a remnant that went back as the others were content to continuing living outside the promised land.
6. From the time of Judah's turn to disobedience until the exile into Babylon the prophet Isaiah spoke of a time in which the Messiah would come to set up a new flourishing kingdom in a new age. He spoke of the Messiah taking away the sin of the people and a beautiful new kingdom unlike any other would follow. The

prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel would add to this vision the restoration of both Israel and Judah to the land in a new and better covenant in which a complete change of human would take place. But that of course would mean the end of the older land covenant God gave through Moses. They had broken that covenant and God had separated them from Him, looking for their heart change.

- 7. During the exile, the prophet Daniel was given the understanding of the end of the ages with the coming of a kingdom that would crush all previous kingdoms and establish a new age. He was given the understanding how Israel had been given a time of trouble that would be unmatched with any previous troubling time. But a restoration into a marvelous unending kingdom was assured. It was during the exile that the synagogue would be created to help them realize their dispensation of God's covenant rule.*
- 8. After the exile, attempts to rebuild the once glorious city and its temple were done with great difficulty especially considering the foreign occupation that dominated those times. Those returning from the exile would live through the Persians rule, the rule by the Greeks and the rule of the Romans. Those were very troubling times but some tried to return to the ways of the covenant. One major struggle for the covenant-restorers was the new habit of adding applications to the law that made it very difficult to keep. These traditions, as they came to be called, put more burden on the people to keep the covenant.*
- 9. Into this frustrating mix entered John the baptizer calling for people to repent from their sins and baptizing them into the coming Messianic kingdom. He was preparing the way for the Lord. It was at this point that the Lord Jesus Christ came onto the scene. He lived obediently to the law or Torah (which means teaching) with full trust in the Father. The Father was well-pleased with Him. He did not however follow the additional teachings added by the rabbis, Pharisees, scribes and lawyers and this departure from the "law" would create a problem for Him. Add to that the fact that He called Himself the Son of God and the mix for blasphemy and law-breaking charges were a sure thing. His death at their hands as well as the hands of the Romans who saw Him as a seditious was immanent. They had no idea that killing Him was going to pay for their sins, fulfill the*

Old Covenant, initiate the New Covenant and create a whole new people operating by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit!

10. His teachings clarified the law unlike what the scribes and Pharisees had done. His teaching was by the authority of God almighty and theirs was by the authority of each other. No comparison. He was setting the path for the new dispensation which would begin after His ascension into heaven. He was ending the old covenant to those who were willing to follow Him. To those who wanted to retain the old covenant they would have more and more difficulty after the temple was gone, the sacrifices ended, the priesthood was gone and they were scattered all over the world as was promised in Deuteronomy 28-30. By His sovereign work He had ended the possibility to keep the Old Covenant; they would have to turn to Christ. So far most of them have not turned to Christ as Messiah and continue to attempt to please God by their own ethical work. A new dispensation operating by the power of the Holy Spirit rather than human will power was beginning.