

The Dispensation of Promise

After the Tower of Babel, with its accompanying confusion of tongues, God called Abraham and gave him a promise that out of his seed would raise a great nation that would bless the whole world. The promise that God gave Abraham ushered in God's next dispensation – ***The Dispensation of Promise*** – because this promise formed the basis of God's dealings with man during this period of time, from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law at Mt Sinai, which was a period of 430 years (Genesis 11:10 to Exodus 4).

Man was saved during this Dispensation of promise through faith in the promise God had given him to send a "Redeemer," and God's test of man during this time was based on whether or not he would choose to believe God's promise and obey the gospel message revealed in the promise (Genesis 12:1-3). With the promise that out of him would come a race "*like the stars of the heavens, and the sand upon the seashore,*" God called Abraham into a strange land, where he would look for the city whose builder and maker is God.

The Jewish people have a divine origin, a divine history, and a divinely predicted future because God called Abraham, the father of the Jews, to establish a righteous nation through which He could reveal Himself to the world. This nation was to be three things, according to the Word of God: (1) A repository for the truth, (2) A witness to Himself before the other nations of the earth, and (3) The channel through which the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, was to come.

Even though Israel was a repository for the truth and was the channel through which the promised Redeemer came into the world, she, however, failed to be a witness among the nations of the earth because this chosen family failed God on many occasions. The Old Testament is filled with story upon story of the Israelites' sinfulness, God's judgment on their sin, their repentance, God's mercy and deliverance. One such story is the story of how, when the Egyptians' oppression of the Israelites brought them to repentance, God raised up Moses to deliver them.

Wasn't God a "respector of persons" by choosing Israel as His chosen people?

The answer to that question is, "No!" Israel was simply God's instrument through which He desired to save all nations. All humanity had failed God and, so, God chose a nation, Israel, which He raised up to be His *representative*, and a nation through which He could bring His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, to save the world. Because God could no longer deal with humanity as a whole, He called one man and his seed to make them His *example* among all nations to show the world that serving the true God was better than sinning (See Galatians 3:8 and John 8:56).

The Passover is given

God gave the Passover Sacrifice to Israel during the last judgment over Egypt. By the shed blood of the Passover lamb, God was again showing man that, "*without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins,*"

God's promises to the Jewish people

God's promise to the Jewish people were; (1) I will make of you a great nation, (2) I will bless your land, (3) I will make your name great, (4) I will bless them that bless you, (5) I will

curse them that curse you, (6) You will be a blessing, and (7) In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Israel's glorious future

Israel has a glorious future awaiting her. She will be restored completely to her own land, was will be abolished, the lion and the lamb will lie down together, (See Romans 11:1-15; Jeremiah 31:33 and 32:8; Isaiah 61:4-6 and Ezekiel 37), and, she will accept Christ as her Messiah (Zechariah 12:10).

The events of the Dispensation of Promise

Many important events took place during this dispensation of promise, such as, God's dealings with Abraham and Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, and Israel's bondage in Egypt.

The Dispensation of Law

God still desiring of communion with Man and a family who would choose to *willingly* serve Him, gave the Law on Mt. Sinai to Moses (Exodus 20) which ushered in yet another dispensation, the Dispensation of Law, and which was operative during the period of time from the giving of the law to the Day of Pentecost, a period that lasted 1,718 years. This complete code of Law that God gave man was to govern every phase of human life and was to become the rule of faith, and practice, during this dispensational time period.

What was wrong with the Law?

1. The Law brought condemnation, and death, not life.

King James Translation

Romans 3:19-20,

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Living Bible

So the judgment of God lies very heavily upon the Jews, for they are responsible to keep God's laws instead of doing all these evil things; not one of them has any excuse; in fact, all the world stands hushed and guilty before Almighty God. Now do you see it? No one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what the law commands. For the more we know of God's laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners.

Romans 4:15 states, *"Because the law bring wrath. And where there is no Law there is no transgression"* (King James). The Living Bible renders it, *"But the fact of the matter is this: when we try to gain God's blessing and salvation by keeping his laws we always end up under his anger, for we always fail to keep them. The only way we can keep from breaking laws is not to have any to break!"*

Romans 8:3-4, *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in*

the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The Living Bible, perhaps, makes this passage clearer to our English language, "We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours--except that ours are sinful--and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us."

Galatians 3:21 states, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The Living Bibles render is, "Well then, are God's laws and God's promises against each other? Of course not! If we could be saved by his laws, then God would not have had to give us a different way to get out of the grip of sin--for the Scriptures insist we are all its prisoners."

2. The Law would only profit man, if man kept it, however, it was impossible for man, in and of himself, to keep the Law.

Romans 2:25 states, "Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as through you had not been circumcised."

Romans 7:7-25, "Well then, am I suggesting that these laws of God are evil? Of course not! No, the law is not sinful, but it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known the sin in my heart--the evil desires that are hidden there--if the law had not said, "You must not have evil desires in your heart. "But sin used this law against evil desires by reminding me that such desires are wrong, and arousing all kinds of forbidden desires within me! Only if there were no laws to break would there be no sinning. That is why I felt fine so long as I did not understand what the law really demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized that I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die. So as far as I was concerned, the good law which was supposed to show me the way of life resulted instead in my being given the death penalty. Sin fooled me by taking the good laws of God and using them to make me guilty of death. But still, you see, the law itself was wholly right and good. But how can that be? Didn't the law cause my doom? How then can it be good? No, it was sin, devilish stuff that it is, that used what was good to bring about my

condemnation. So you can see how cunning and deadly and damnable it is. For it uses God's good laws for its own evil purposes. The law is good, then, and the trouble is not there but with me because I am sold into slavery with Sin as my owner. I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to--what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. But I can't help myself because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things. I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is some-

thing else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be God's willing servant, but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin. So you see how it is: my new

life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free. (Living Bible)

Romans 8:7 states, *"The sinful mind is hostile to God, It does not submit to God's Law, nor can it do so."*

Galatians 3:10-25, *"Those who depend on the Jewish laws to save them are under God's curse, for the Scriptures point out very clearly, 'Cursed is everyone who at any time breaks a single one of these laws that are written in God's Book of the Law.' Consequently, it is clear that no one can ever win God's favor by trying to keep the Jewish laws because God has said that the only way we can be right in his sight is by faith. As the prophet Habakkuk says it, 'The man who finds life will find it through trusting God.' How different from this way of faith is the way of law, which says that a man is saved by obeying every law of God, without one slip. But Christ has bought us out from under the doom of that impossible system by taking the curse for our wrongdoing upon Himself. For it is written in the Scripture, 'Anyone who is hanged on a tree is cursed' (as Jesus was hung upon a wooden cross). Now God can bless the Gentiles, too, with this same blessing He promised to Abraham; and all of us as Christians can have the promised Holy Spirit through this faith. Dear brothers, even in everyday life a promise made by one man to another, if it is written down and signed, cannot be changed. He cannot decide afterward to do something else instead. Now, God gave some promises to Abraham and his Child. And notice that it doesn't say the promises were to his children, as it would if all his sons - all the Jews - were being spoken of, but to his Child - and that, of course, means Christ. Here's what I am trying to say:*

God's promise to save through faith - and God wrote this promise down and signed it - could not be canceled or changed four hundred and thirty years later when God gave the Ten Commandments. If obeying those laws could save us, then it is obvious that this would be a different way of gaining God's favor than Abraham's way, for he simply accepted God's promise. Well then, why were the laws given? They were added after the promise was given, to show men how guilty they are of breaking God's laws. But this system of law was to last only until the coming of Christ, the Child to whom God's promise was made. (And there is this further difference. God gave His laws to angels to give to Moses, who then gave them to the people; but when God gave His promise to Abraham, He did it by himself alone, without angels or Moses as go-betweens.) Well then, are God's laws and God's promises against each other? Of course not! If we could be saved by His laws, then God would not have had to give us a different way to get out of the grip of sin--for the Scriptures insist we are all its prisoners. The only way out is through faith in Jesus Christ; the way of escape is open to all who believe Him. Until Christ came we were guarded by the law, kept in protective custody, so to speak, until we could believe in the coming Savior. Let me put it another way. The Jewish laws were our teacher and guide until Christ came to give us right standing with God through our faith. But now that Christ has come, we don't need those laws any longer to guard us and lead us to Him. (Living Bible)

3. The law gave man a knowledge e of sin, made him aware that he was a sinner, but, it could not save man from his sins.

Read Romans 3:19-20 4:15 and 7:7-25 cited above, again, with this point in mind.

Romans 8:3-4, states, *“We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours--except that ours are sinful--and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us”* (Living Bible).

Note that even the priests under the Law were sinful.

Hebrews 5:1-4 states, *“The Jewish high priest is merely a man like anyone else, but he is chosen to speak for all other men in their dealings with God. He presents their gifts to God and offers to him the blood of animals that are sacrificed to cover the sins of the people and his own sins too. And because he is a man, he can deal gently with other men, though they are foolish and ignorant, for he, too, is surrounded with the same temptations and understands their problems very well. Another thing to remember is that no one can be a high priest just because he wants to be. He has to be called by God for this work in the same way God chose Aaron”* (Living Bible).

Hebrews 7:26-28 states, *“He is, therefore, exactly the kind of High Priest we need; for he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin, undefiled by sinners, and to him has been given the place of honor in heaven. He never needs the daily blood of animal sacrifices, as other priests did, to cover over first their own sins and then the sins of the people; for he finished all sacrifices, once and for all, when he sacrificed himself on the cross. Under the old system, even the high priests were weak and sinful men who could not keep from doing wrong, but later God appointed by his oath his Son who is perfect forever”* (Living Bible).

Hebrews 9:7 states, *“But only the high priest went into the inner room, and then only once a year, all alone, and always with blood that he sprinkled on the mercy seat as an offering to God to cover his own mistakes and sins and the mistakes and sins of all the people”* (Living Bible).

4. The law demanded righteousness, however, it could not produce righteousness

Romans 8:1-4 states, *“So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit--and this power is mine through Christ Jesus--has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours--except that ours are sinful--and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us”*

Also read the 3rd chapter of Galatians.

5. The law required that man offer animal sacrifices on a daily basis.

Hebrews 9:11-28 states, “ *He came as High Priest of this better system that we now have. He went into that greater, perfect tabernacle in heaven, not made by men nor part of this world, and once for all took blood into that inner room, the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat; but it was not the blood of goats and calves. No, he took his own blood, and with it he, by himself, made sure of our eternal salvation. And if under the old system the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of young cows could cleanse men's bodies from sin, just think how much more surely the blood of Christ will transform our lives and hearts. His sacrifice frees us from the worry of having to obey the old rules and makes us want to serve the living God. For by the help of the eternal Holy Spirit, Christ willingly gave Himself to God to die for our sins - He being perfect, without a single sin or fault. Christ came with this new agreement so that all who are invited may come and have forever all the wonders God has promised them. For Christ died to rescue them from the penalty of the sins they had committed while still under that old system. Now, if someone dies and leaves a will - list of things to be given away to certain people when he dies - no one gets anything until it is proved that the person who wrote the will is dead. The will goes into effect only after the death of the person who wrote it. While he is still alive no one can use it to get any of those things he has promised them. That is why blood was sprinkled as proof of Christ's death before even the first agreement could go into effect. For after Moses had given the people all of God's laws, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled the blood over the book of God's laws and over all the people, using branches of hyssop bushes and scarlet wool to sprinkle with. Then he said, ‘This is the blood that marks the beginning of the agreement between you and God, the agreement God commanded me to make with you.’ And in the same way he sprinkled blood on the sacred tent and on whatever instruments were used for worship. In fact we can say that under the old agreement almost everything was cleansed by sprinkling it with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. That is why the sacred tent down here on earth and everything in it - all copied from things in heaven - all had to be made pure by Moses in this way, by being sprinkled with the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven, of which these down here are copies, were made pure with far more precious offerings. For Christ has entered into heaven itself to appear now before God as our Friend. It was not in the earthly place of worship that He did this, for that was merely a copy of the real temple in heaven. Nor has He offered Himself again and again, as the high priest down here on earth offers animal blood in the Holy of Holies each year. If that had been necessary, then He would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But no! He came once for all, at the end of the age, to put away the power of sin forever by dying for us. And just as it is destined that men die only once, and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died only once as an offering for the sins of many people; and He will come again, but not to deal again with our sins. This time He will come bringing salvation to all those who are eagerly and patiently waiting for Him (Living Bible).*”

Hebrews 10:3-4 states, “*But just the opposite happened: those yearly sacrifices reminded them of their disobedience and guilt instead of relieving their minds. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats really to take away sins*” (Living Bible).

6. The law was only temporary

Hebrews 8:13, states, “*God speaks of these new promises, of this new agreement, as taking the place of the old one; for the old one is out of date now and has been put aside forever*” (Living bible).

Hebrews 9:9-25 states “*This has an important lesson for us today. For under the old system, gifts and sacrifices were offered, but these failed to cleanse the hearts of the people who brought them. For the old system dealt only with certain rituals--what foods to eat and drink, rules for washing themselves, and rules about this and that. The people had to keep these rules to tide them over until Christ came with God's new and better way*” – Read verses 11 through 25 on previous page

Hebrews 10:1-9 states, “*The old system of Jewish laws gave only a dim foretaste of the good things Christ would do for us. The sacrifices under the old system were repeated again and again, year after year, but even so they could never save those who lived under their rules. If they could have, one offering would have been enough; the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all and their feeling of guilt would be gone. But just the opposite happened: those yearly sacrifices reminded them of their disobedience and guilt instead of relieving their minds. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats really to take away sins. That is why Christ said as he came into the world, ‘O God, the blood of bulls and goats cannot satisfy you, so you have made ready this body of mine for me to lay as a sacrifice upon your altar. You were not satisfied with the animal sacrifices, slain and burnt before you as offerings for sin.’ Then I said, ‘See, I have come to do your will, to lay down my life, just as the Scriptures said that I would.’ After Christ said this about not being satisfied with the various sacrifices and offerings required under the old system, he then added, ‘Here I am. I have come to give my life.’ He cancels the first system in favor of a far better one*” (Living Bible).

I've taken a great deal of time to copy the above Scripture into the above pages, because I feel it is imperative that we use the Bible to prove our conclusions.

The divisions of the Dispensation of Law

1. The period of Pilgrimage – The time under the leadership of Moses
2. The period of Conquest – The time under the leadership of Joshua
3. The period of the judges – the 350 years the Judges ruled
4. The period of the Kings – The time when Kings ruled
5. The period of Restoration – The time when Israel returned to Palestine
6. The period of silence – The time between the Old and New Testaments

~~~~~

Someone has said, “*If you don’t understand the words, look at the pictures.*” This certainly applies to understanding the spiritual truths of the New Testament. We can look at the pictures in the Old Testament because the *concrete* stories throughout the Old Testament affords wonderful insight in what sometimes seem *elusive* truths in the New Testament.

For example:

1. The Israelites, application of blood on their door posts, before leaving Egypt, to save their people from death is a *picture* of salvation and how Christ's blood saves us from sin and eternal death.
2. The Israelites passage through the Red Sea is a *picture* of Water Baptism.
3. The way that the cloud, and the pillar of fire, led the Israelites is a *picture* of the way the Holy Spirit leads us.
4. The Israelites having to wander in the wilderness, to be tested by God, before they could attain the Promise Land, is a *picture* of God's having to test us, after our salvation, before we can attain real victorious Christian living, because, the promised land is a *type* of God's promises, and provision, for the Christian who walks in obedience to His commands.

The dispensation of law covers almost all of the Old Testament; a period of 1,718 years, from the time God gave Moses the commandments until the time when Christ fulfilled the law by His death and life.

The teachings of Christ and the writers of the New Testament, time and time again make reference to the happenings of the Old Testament, especially God's dealing with the children of Israel.

For example 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, which states, "*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*"

The Living Bible renders this passage, "*For we must never forget, dear brothers, what happened to our people in the wilderness long ago. God guided them by sending a cloud that moved along ahead of them; and he brought them all safely through the waters of the Red Sea. This might be called their 'baptism' - baptized both in sea and cloud! - as followers of Moses - their commitment to him as their leader. And by a miracle God sent them food to eat and water to drink there in the desert; they drank the water that Christ gave them. He was there with them as a mighty Rock of spiritual refreshment. Yet after all this most of them did not obey God, and he destroyed them in the wilderness. From this lesson we are warned that we must not desire evil things as they did.*"

### **Why do we not worship on the SEVENTH day of the week?**

1. The Old Testament *Sabbath* was a day of *rest*, not a day of worship.
2. When Scripture tell about God giving the *New Covenant* to the Church (See Romans 14:1-14; Galatians 4:9-11 and Colossians 2:14-17), while it mentions the other Old Testament commandments, nothing is said of the *Sabbath* commandment.
3. According to Exodus 31:13-18 and Ezekiel 20:12-20, the Old Testament *Sabbath* was a special sign to *Israel*.



4. The *Sabbath* was the **only** commandment that was *typical*, that was a part of the *ceremonial* law rather than the moral law, because the *Sabbath* has nothing to do with morals (See Deuteronomy 5:156; Hebrews 4:1-11; and Colossians 2:14-17).
5. God stated that the “*Ceremonial*” part of the Law would come to an end (See Hosea 2:11 and Isaiah 1:10-15).
6. History does **NOT** record that Constantine, or any Pope, changed the Sabbath day. The Encyclopedia Britannica states that Constantine merely accepted the Christian’s Sunday as the day of worship. Nor did the Leodican Council, in 365 A.D. change the day of worship for Christians, it merely confirmed what had been the practice of Christians for over 300 years.
7. Christian worship on the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK because that is when the redemptive work of Christ was completed.
8. Many examples are given in the New Testament of Christians worshipping on the “*first day of the week.*” (See John 20:1, 19,26; Acts 2:1; 13:41; 20:6-12; I Corinthians 11:17; 14:21-22; 16:2; and Hebrews 10:25).
9. While it is true that Paul preached on the Sabbath, it is also equally true that he was preaching to *unbelieving* Jews and, since the onloly time jews met was on the Sabbath, Paul, therefore, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath because it ws the most effective way to contact the Jews to preach to them. (See 1 Corinthians 9:19-20 and Acts 18:4-6). On the other hand, the believer never met on the Sabbath, but, rather, on the ***first day of the week!***

The “*Sabbath*” commemorated God’s *rest* day, when He finished creation, while the “*Lord’s Day*” commemorates *Christ’s resurrection*, when He finished redemption.

The Law dictated that to work on the Sabbath meant “death,” however, because Christ fulfilled the Low He did not hesitate to work on the Sabbath (See Matthew 12:18) The Sabbath was for the Israelite who was under the Law, while the Lord’s Day is for the Christian who is under God’s grace.