

LESSON - 6

DISPENSATION OF LAW

References : Exodus. 19 : 5 - 24 : 18
Acts. 7 : 30 - 53

Memory verse : Romans. 3 : 20

Objective : To know that the Law given to Israel was not sufficient to save the people from sin and judgement. The Law was not perfect without Jesus Christ. Salvation is in Jesus Christ only.

Introduction : The dispensations that followed that of Innocence, such as dispensations of Conscience, Human Government and Promise all failed to redeem man from sin and get him closer to God. So God gave definite commandments and Laws to the Israelites, His chosen people. This paved the way for the dispensation of Law beginning from Sinai where the Law was given, upto the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross - 1524 years.

THE TEST :

In the dispensation of Law, God tested the obedience of man to the Law.

THE LAW GIVEN :

God delivered Israelites from Egypt through Moses. In their Journey towards Canaan, the Lord led them forth with pillar of cloud on the day and pillar of fire at night. Though the people were under the shadow of grace, they rebelled and murmured against God. Under these circumstances, it necessitated God to give them a thorough knowledge of sin and its subsequent punishment. That is why the Law was given. (Rom. 3 : 20). God appeared on the Mount Sinai in his unique glory and splendour revealing His holiness and man's shortcoming. There God gave the divine Laws to the people. These Laws consist of three parts.

1. **Commandments** : They were the Ten Commandments revealing God's will. The first four of them lay down God - ward duties and the next six lay down duties towards man (Exo. 20: 2 - 17).
2. **Judgements** : This consists of social Laws (Exo. 21 : 1 -23 : 3).
3. **Ordinances** : This consists of laws regarding spiritual life and ceremonies of worship. They are mainly to do with the construction of the tabernacle the place of worship and its instruments.

OATH TAKING :

The people of Israel took oath three times saying that they would do everything God said. Then it was confirmed and sealed by the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice.

FAILURE :

If we examine the history of the Israelites who received the great Law, we can see that it was one of failure, rebellion and punishment.

IN THE WILDERNESS :

After receiving the divine commandments, Moses came from the Mount Sinai to find that the Israelites had made an idol cast in the shape of a calf and worshipped it ! Paul in the New Testament has notably summarised their sins (1st Cor. 10:6 - 10) Thousands of Israelites were killed in the wilderness because of such sins as idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, grumbling ,lust etc. They had travelled and reached the borders of the promised Land. All they had to do was to obey God's commandments and go possess the land. But by their unbelief and cowardice they closed the promised Land to themselves (Numb. 14). Consequently, they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. They were not just wandering but wandering to death. All of them perished in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb of those who started out from Egypt above the age of 20 years. Even Moses who received the commandments directly from God's hands violated it and was disqualified to enter Canaan (Numb. 27 : 14)

IN THE PROMISED LAND :

Notice, first of all, that from those who started out from Egypt only Joshua and Caleb could enter the promised Land. After entering Canaan, the Israelites renewed their covenant with God in the presence of Joshua

and they had pledged themselves to following the Lord Jehovah only. (Joshua 24 :16-18) But during the times of Judges and kings, the people became idolaters and law-breakers. God raised prophets, from among them, Who gave the people strong admonitions and warnings (Isa. 1:16-20, Jere. 5:28-31). But, whether it be priests, kings or ordinary people, none heeded to their words. The prophets were not only unheeded but some were severely persecuted like Jeremiah. The kingdom of Israel was divided into two as Judah and Israel due to their transgressions. Then in B.C. 724 Israel the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by Assyria and was led into captivity. In 586 B.C. Judah the Southern Kingdom was taken captive by Babylon.

POST - EXILIC HISTORY :

The Jews who returned to Canaan from the exile re-built the Temple bit by bit and attempted to restore the ceremonies and services. The people had affirmed by an oath that they would stick to God's laws and commandments (Neh. 10:39). Nevertheless, they defiled themselves by such sins as intermarriage, Sabbath violation, social injustice, unfaithfulness etc (Neh. 13:15-30; Mala. 3 :7-15). As a result, they underwent persecutions by foreign powers namely Greece, Egypt, Syria and Rome. The sin of Israel reached the climax at the crucifixion of the son of God, their promised Messiah and Redeemer. He came to His own but His own did not receive Him (Jn. 1:11). They said. "Let his blood be upon us and our children". It was literally fulfilled. The Jews had reaped the bitter fruit of their own sowing.

Thousands were killed by the Roman emperors in A.D. 50 and 66. In A. D. 70 Titus the son of Vespasian, the Roman Emperor besieged Jerusalem, killed about a million Jews and burnt the Temple of Jerusalem to ashes. The remnant Jews were scattered all over the world.

Israel had received the law from God. Yet they did not keep it. They received God's punishment for their disobedience from time to time. The history of Israel in the dispensation of Law tells us that by law man can not be saved. Before the Law, all are sinners condemned to death. But Jesus Christ is able to save us, having born the penalty of sin on Himself. Let's put our trust in Him!

EXERCISE - 6**Answer the following questions**

- ✓ 1. What did God test, in the dispensation of Law?
- ✓ 2. Why was the Law given?
- ✓ 3. Where did God give the divine laws to the people?
- ✓ 4. What did the law consist of?
5. How many times did the Israelites take oath? How was their oath confirmed and sealed?
6. How was the Promised Land closed for the Israelites?
7. How many years did they wander in the wilderness? Who were the two men that could enter Canaan?
8. When and how was the covenant of Israelites renewed with God?
9. Why did God raise prophets?
10. What did the Jews do after returning from Israel?
11. How did they defile themselves? What was its result?

