



January 24, 2010

*The Mosaic Dispensation*

In the beginning God dealt with mankind by speaking to the heads of households, or patriarchs. As time goes on, man departs from God, leading first to the destruction of all flesh, with the exception of Noah. Following the flood we find that man once more exercised a will that did not like to listen to the Lord and departed once more. A promise had been made however that one would come who would bruise the head of the serpent, Satan (**Gen 3.15**). This was the first prophecy of the coming of Christ. At a time when man once more had all but forgotten God, the Lord called upon Abram to become the first in a line of patriarchs that would bring this plan to fruition (**Gen 12**). From this point the Biblical narrative begins to limit the scope of the story. We no longer read about the dealings of God with the other nations at large, but see a deepening focus on the family of Abraham and his descendants. God told Abraham of a time when his descendants would return to the land that he was commanded to go to, following a period of trouble in a strange land (**Gen 15.13-16**). As the children of Abraham leave the land of Egypt, they do so under the guidance of Moses, a prophet through whom God will reveal a law to them that will shape their lives for generations to come. At Sinai (**Ex 19-21**) God began revealing a law to Moses that was to be given to the people which they were to keep. They were described by the Lord as a nation of priests and a holy nation (**Ex 19.6**). Over time the scriptures reveal details of a law that even in the first century when Christ was in the world, had been transformed into something else. The Law given at Sinai contained instructions for keeping certain feasts, the way in which the people were to worship the Lord and when. There were instructions for cleansings, sacrifices and many other things that today would make even the most devout pale with the enormity and tedium of the Law. During this time the Law, while not excluding foreigners entirely, was directed toward the household of Israel. There was a reason for that. God's purpose had been to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. There was a need for the establishment of a bloodline, an environment that would support and prepare for the birth of the son of God. The Law provided a backdrop against which God would demonstrate his own power in the manifestation of his son come to save the world. The Law provided numerous veiled images and references to the coming Messiah which are sometimes referred to as types, a figure of something else that demonstrates the essential nature and characteristics of that which is represented. The purpose of the Law was to prepare the minds of the people for the Messiah and to lay the groundwork for a system of proofs that is valid today. Moses, quoting God, foretells the coming of Jesus, stating, "***I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.***" (**Deut 18.18**). Paul tells us what the role of the Law is when he writes to the Galatians. "***Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.***" (**Gal 3.24-25**). Passages such as this one point to the nature of the Law and its role in preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah. It also speaks of the temporary nature of the Law. The writer of Hebrews indicates that in the first century the Law was fading and being taken away. "***In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.***" (**Heb 8.13**). The relationship with the new law brought in by Christ was problematic for those of the first century, and for many today. When Christ came the law was fulfilled in his death and resurrection from the dead (**Matt 5.17**). As we will see next week, the coming of the Gospel was critical for the Jews and the Gentiles.

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