



January 31, 2010

*The Christian Dispensation*

The pagan world of the Gentiles continued on while the Hebrews received the law from Moses, fell away, were exiled in Babylon, returned and became the Jews; a nation that would experience social and spiritual upheaval throughout the rest of their history. Then Christ was born. To view Christ as the beginning of a new covenant does little to address and appreciate the depth of what God did when Jesus came into the world. The power of the Gospel does not lie solely in the fact that it is a new law. The depth of the greatness of God's plan lies in the effect the appearance of the Messiah was to have on the relationship between man and God. Paul sums this up very well as he writes, "***That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him..***" (Eph 1.10). The gathering together of all things included the family of man. Remember, God told Abraham that through him all families of the Earth would be blessed (Gen 12.3). The Hebrews received the Law to prepare them for the coming of the prophet like Moses (Deut 18.18) whose voice they were to hear. That provided a backdrop against which Christ's life and work could be scrutinized and shown to be the fulfillment of the promise of God. Some today view the New Testament to be an outgrowth of the Jewish culture, a splinter group that followed a well organized teaching that was nonetheless only a story and traditions. The appearance of Christ however was not just for the salvation of the Jews, nor did he come to them in answer to their prayers. He came when he was sent, and sent when God was ready. Paul states, "***But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law...***" (Gal 4.4). The fullness of time was such that both the Jew and Gentile were gathered together in such a way that they would share in the benefit of Christ. The first century was such a time. Roman rule provided stability and avenues of communication. The Jewish culture, intertwined with the Gentile world of the day, was known for the worship of one God. The Greek culture united the world under a common language and culture of exchange. Christ appeared at a time when both the Gentile and Jewish world would be gathered against Christ. Luke records Peter's statement in Acts concerning this. "***The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.***" (Acts 4.26, Psm 2.2). In the event of Christ's death, he became the only sacrifice acceptable to God to save the world. Paul comments on this in his letter to the Romans. "***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.***" (Rom 1.16). God united all of mankind together in one family. A fellowship that does not take into account the origin of any person. Throughout the scriptures we are told that God is no respecter of persons and some mistakenly think that there was something special about the Hebrews themselves that got them the title of God's chosen people. The truth is, they were special because of the faith of Abraham and the role they would serve in bringing the entire world together under one law, in one family. For that reason we can more fully appreciate the statement that Christ made when he said, "***... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***" (John 14.6). The Bible leads us to realize some very critical truths. All of mankind is under the command to believe, repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 17.30). All of us are equal in that we have sinned against the Lord (Rom 3.23). God sent his son to die for all of us because he cared (John 3.16). He has provided a single point of entry (John 14.6) and a single law (Rom 1.16). No one is excluded in the offer of salvation. All will die (Heb 9.27) and all will confess the name of Christ (Rom 14.11).

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