

## DEFINITION OF THE LEGAL DISPENSATION

At Sinai, Israel received a comprehensive code called “the Law.” Deuteronomy 27:26 and James 2:10 stress the Law’s unity—violating one part meant breaking the whole. Unique to Israel (Exodus 19:5–6; Psalm 147:19–20), this covenant continued until Jerusalem’s destruction (A.D. 70), ending the formal Mosaic system.

### TRANSITION FROM THE PATRIARCHAL ERA

Before Sinai, people relied on partial guidance (Genesis 8:20; 12:7). At Exodus 19:3–5, God formally presented His commands to the entire nation. This transformed Israel from loosely guided families to a people bound by written Law, complete with clearly defined blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 28).

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE LAW

### ISRAEL AS GOD’S SOLELY CHOSEN NATION

From this point on, God singled out Israel (Amos 3:2), while allowing individual Gentiles to join through proselytism (Exodus 12:48). But He did not extend the covenant to other nations, making Israel the exclusive steward of the Law (Ephesians 2:12).

### A UNIFIED WRITTEN CODE

Unlike the oral tradition of the Patriarchs, the Mosaic Law was meticulously recorded (Exodus 24:7–8). It addressed worship, morality, and community justice as a single, indivisible standard (Deuteronomy 27:26).

### DISTINCT NATIONAL GOVERNANCE UNDER GOD

Israel functioned under a theocracy (1 Samuel 12:12). Every sphere of life—political, religious, social—operated by the Lord’s direct commands (Numbers 9:18). Obedience brought blessing (Leviticus 26:3–5), while disobedience triggered curses (Deuteronomy 28:15).

### SUMMARIZING THE FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

A unique national calling, a unified code, and God’s direct governance characterized this dispensation. As Romans 9:4 notes, Israel held “the covenants” and “the giving of the law,” shaping their spiritual life and earthly existence.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEGAL DISPENSATION

### A DISPENSATION OF WORKS

#### The Central Emphasis on “Doing” and Obedience

Israel’s pledge—“All that the LORD hath said will we do” (Exodus 24:7)—stands at the heart of the covenant. Ezekiel 18:27 underscores that saving one’s life hinged on active righteousness.

#### The Law as the Standard of Judgment

The Mosaic Law determined both present and eternal fate. Deuteronomy 27:26 proclaims a curse on anyone failing to keep its entirety. Daniel 12:1–2 points to a resurrection where the Law remained the yardstick for judgment.

#### Blessings in the Present and at the Final Judgment

Leviticus 18:5 (“he shall live in them”) and Deuteronomy 6:24–25 link observance of the Law to well-being. Because no other path to righteousness was revealed, Israel understood that loyalty to the Law shaped both earthly and ultimate outcomes.

#### Note on Paul’s Emphasis

Though many Jews struggled to accept freedom from the Law, Paul insisted that believers in Christ moved into a new relationship—“not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

### ACHIEVABILITY OF THE LAW

Many claim the Law’s main purpose was to show its impossibility. Yet Scripture presents individuals who obeyed it faithfully (Luke 1:6; Philippians 3:6). Deuteronomy 30:11–14 insists God’s commands are not “far off,” and 1 John 5:3 states they are “not grievous.” Observing sacrifices, festivals, and moral directives was indeed possible and counted as righteousness under that covenant (Deuteronomy 6:25).

## CHRIST’S MINISTRY UNDER THE LAW

Despite popular perceptions, the Gospels depict Jesus operating under the Mosaic system. Red-letter Bibles often suggest His words apply directly to the Church-age, yet He came “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

### CHRIST AS “MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION”

Jesus was “made under the law” (Galatians 4:4) and served “the circumcision” (Romans 15:8), fulfilling old covenant promises. He observed the Law’s festivals and sacrifices, reinforcing continuity rather than immediately birthing a grace dispensation.

### THE GOSPELS AS CONTINUATION OF THE LEGAL DISPENSATION

Jesus upheld the Law (Matthew 5:17–20), urging sincere compliance. Early Acts retains a Jewish, Law-focused context, further confirming the Mosaic era lasted past Christ’s ascension.

### PETER’S OFFER OF THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL

Peter’s call in Acts 3:19–21 required national repentance—consistent with the Mosaic covenant. Only when Israel’s leaders rejected this message did God turn decisively to the Gentiles, paving the way for the grace-era church.

## THE CLOSE OF THE LEGAL DISPENSATION

Early believers in Acts continued worshiping at the Temple (Acts 2:46; 21:20–24) and upheld the Law. Yet Paul began preaching salvation apart from the Law (Acts 13:38–39). By the end of Acts, Jewish believers still observed the Law, while Gentiles embraced grace alone. Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70 ended the temple-based sacrificial system, effectively closing the Mosaic Dispensation.