

Hymns: 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 62 The Solid Rock  
Scripture: Psalm 19:1, 7-10; 14

Big Idea: The Law of the Lord is Good.

*Banana republic.* What is it? Of course, there's an upscale women's clothing store with that name, but where did the term come from? According to Wikipedia:

*“The phrase **banana republic** was coined (ca. 1904) by the American writer O. Henry (William Sydney Porter, 1862–1910).*

*Banana republic ... is a **political science** term for politically unstable countries in Latin America whose economies are largely dependent on exporting a limited-resource product, e.g. bananas. It typically has stratified social classes, including*

*a large, impoverished working class*

*and a ruling plutocracy of business, political, and military elites.*

*This politico-economic oligarchy controls the primary-sector productions to **exploit** the country's economy.*

*In economics, a banana republic is a **country** operated as a **commercial enterprise** for **private profit**, effected by **a collusion** between the State and favored monopolies, in which the **profit** derived from the private exploitation of **public** lands is **private** property, while the **debts** incurred thereby are a **public** responsibility.”*

Does this sound familiar? Who can forget TARP, direct bank bailouts, and the private Federal Reserve itself changing the rules to make its losses the responsibility of U.S. taxpayers rather than their private stake holders. And let's not forget our \$19 trillion-dollar debt and our \$100 trillion-dollar unfunded liabilities.

The principles *rule of law*, *equal justice under the law*, and *limited government*, if not disdained and ignored entirely are given only lip service to give the appearance of evenhandedness and fairness in these republics. In reality, their despotic leaders seek to create ever-increasing regulations to oppress the masses and magnify their privilege. How sad that many in the highest offices of Washington D.C. who **pledged** to **defend** and **uphold** the Constitution, treat it instead with contempt and revulsion.

From the historical record, we know the Egyptians had a civil code of **laws**. The Sumerians also had formal **laws**. The first significant artifact came from Babylonian **law** at the time of King Hammurabi around the 1800<sup>th</sup> century B.C. We have preserved the stone containing Codex Hammurabi on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Then came the **law** that God Himself delivered to the Israelites through Moses.

Between anarchy on one end of the political spectrum and totalitarianism on the other, lies the kind of law that protects us and assures our greatest freedom. It defines truth and directs people to do what is right. We heard some of this in our devotional reading from Psalm 19 earlier. Let's listen to more from

the psalmist:

*Psalm 119*

[72] *The **law** of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver*

[97] *O how love I thy **law**! it is my meditation all the day.*

[103] *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

[104] *Through **thy precepts** I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

[105] ***Thy word** is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

[127] *Therefore I love **thy commandments** above gold; yea, above fine gold.*

[128] *Therefore I esteem **all thy precepts** concerning **all things** to be right; and I hate every false way.*

[129] ***Thy testimonies** are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.*

The Bible has much to say about law. Our study of dispensations has brought us to the Dispensation of Law. What's that all about? And what does it mean for us today?

Today, we will witness how God gave his laws to man. And how man responded to them. While we often think of the Ten Commandments as *the law*, Jewish scholars have determined that the Torah contained over 600 commandments encompassing *moral, civil, and ceremonial* laws. The Ten Commandments fall into the *moral* law category.

## Review

Now by way of review and to set the context, we're continuing our task of understanding the Bible by looking at *dispensations*. The purpose of this study is to put together a framework taken from the Bible. That framework will enable us to navigate scripture better and as a result better know God and His plans, and apply His wisdom and direction to our lives. Each dispensation is marked most emphatically by man's failure and God's judgment. So far, we've covered dispensations one through four.

Let's quickly recap them now:.

The first called *innocence* spans the time from the creation of Adam through his fall and God's curse. We have only 54 verses in Genesis to tell us about it. Adam was the main character. He and his wife were given dominion over the earth that lasted **less than 130 years**. The story ended in sorrow – paradise lost.

The next dispensation called *conscience* was the first test of man operating with the knowledge of good and evil. It covers the time from man's banishment from the Garden of Eden to the end of the worldwide flood. In Genesis, this period is documented in about 120 verses and spans roughly **1700 years**. Noah was the main character. God preserved a minimum set of animals and eight humans (Noah's family) on the ark and destroyed the remainder of all living, breathing creatures in a worldwide flood. After a year on the ark, Noah, his family, and the animals emerged and set foot on a new, untainted world.

The third dispensation, called *human government*, is described in just 96 verses and lasted only 220

years.

We saw man from a godly heritage (Noah's family) getting a new start in a purged world – a **clean slate** on a renewed earth.

**Animals were changed** to fear man and were given to man for food. Blood began to flow.

He was also told to not murder his fellow man for man was created in the image of God – **capital punishment came via human government.**

Man was told to **fill the earth.**

Instead, he united under a single leader, Nimrod, and built a city in **defiance** of God and His instruction in order **to make a name for himself.**

God scrambled their languages and scattered them to create nations from the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Last time, we finished the fourth dispensation called Promise. Unlike the three that preceded it, this dispensation is documented in the Bible not with 50 or 100 verses but in 1640 verses and covers a period of 645 years.

We encountered the important word *covenant* -- a binding, usually written, agreement or **promise.** God **promised** to Abram the **Promised Land**, innumerable descendants, and blessing to all. He instituted circumcision as a sign of that covenant. Abraham and Sarah failed to believe God but over time Abraham's faith matured to the point he trusted God above all else. The promised nation, the Israelites, were judged by God with slavery in Egypt and then miraculously delivered through the plagues and finally through the parting of the Red Sea.

With that, we arrive at the Dispensation of Law which covers approximately 1500 years and encompasses over 25,000 verses or 80% of the Bible. We will start where we left off last time. Our setting is Mount Sinai.

### *Exod.19*

*[1] In the third month [after] the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day they [came] into the wilderness of Sinai.*

*[2] ... ; and there Israel camped before the mount.*

*[3] And Moses **went up** [don't miss all of his trips up and down the mountain] unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, ...*

*[4] Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians,*

*and how I bare you on eagles' wings,*

*and brought you unto myself.*

*[5] Now therefore,*

Here comes the covenant. Notice unlike the previous two, it is **conditional** and **dependent upon** man's holding up his end.

*if ye will **obey** my voice indeed,*

*and **keep** my **covenant**,*

*then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me  
above all people:  
for all the earth is mine:  
[6] And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests,  
and an holy nation. ...*

*[7] And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.*

Those commandments appear and the following chapters.

*[8] And all the people answered together, and said,  
**All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.**  
And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

So here we have God's covenant and the people accepting its terms.

*[9] And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud,*

Why?

*that the people may **hear** when I speak with thee,  
and **believe thee** for ever.*

*And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.*

Then the LORD instructed Moses to prepare the people to see the LORD descend on Mount Sinai, but once the trumpet sounds, not to touch the mountain under penalty of death.

*[14] And Moses **went down** from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.*

*[15] And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: ...*

*[16] And it came to pass **on the third day in the morning**, that there were*

**thunders**

*and **lightnings**,*

*and **a thick cloud** upon the mount,*

*and the [sound] of the trumpet exceeding[ly] **loud**;*

*so that all the people ... in the camp **trembled**.*

*[17] And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the [foot] of the mount[ain].*

*[18] And **mount Sinai** was [engulfed in] **smoke**,*

*because the LORD descended upon it **in fire**:  
and the smoke thereof ascended as the **smoke of a furnace**,  
and the **whole mount quaked** greatly.*

Has anyone here been in an earthquake? It's quite an experience.

*[19] And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long,  
and waxed louder and louder,  
Moses sp[oke],*

*and God answered him [with] a voice.*

*[20] And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and **Moses went up**.*

*[21] And the LORD said unto Moses,*

***Go down**, [warn] the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.*

*[25] So Moses **went down** unto the people, and sp[oke] unto them.*

## Exod.20

*[1] And God spake all these words, saying,*

*[2] I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

*[3] Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

*[4] Thou shalt **not** make unto thee any graven image,*

*or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above,*

*or that is in the earth beneath,*

*or that is in the water under the earth:*

*[5] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:*

Why?

*for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God,*

Here comes a two-sided promise from God:

***visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;***

*[6] And sh[ow]ing **mercy** unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

[7] *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

[8] *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

[9] *Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:*

[10] *But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:*

Why?

[11] *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

[12] *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

[13] *Thou shalt not kill [murder].*

[14] *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

[15] *Thou shalt not steal.*

[16] *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

[17] *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,  
thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant,  
nor his maidservant,  
nor his ox,  
nor his ass,  
nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

[18] *And all the people saw*

*the **thunderings,***

*and the **lightnings,***

*and the **noise of the trumpet,***

*and the **mountain smoking:***

*and **when** the people saw it, they **removed,** and **stood afar off.***

[19] *And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear:*

*but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*

[20] *And Moses said unto the people, **Fear not:** for God is come to*

***prove** you,*

*and that his **fear** may be before your faces,*

Why?

*that ye **sin not.***

**Application**

We will have to break with the story here, pick up there next time, and wrap-up today's study with a final thought.

We started today considering the concept of a banana republic. In recent days especially, we've come to understand how uncomfortable it is to live in a society where the laws are applied differently for different people and where innocent policemen, charged with enforcing the law and protecting us from harm, are targeted and gunned down in cold blood in the name of "justice" which is more accurately vengeance. Of course, in a free society it is not our right to be judge, jury, and executioner.

As we live in this increasingly violent and lawless environment, we see the value of God's law and true justice. Those limits and boundaries bring us security and comfort. It's hard to look at a bird in a cage and not think of how it should be released to fly through the air freely and unfettered. But that same cage that confines the bird also protects it from predators that seek to destroy it.

So too it is with God's law. It's there to protect us, to show us the boundaries, and to keep us on the straight and narrow way. Like a ship without a rudder, our society is drifting to sure destruction as absolute and even objective truth is abandoned and morality is left to the devices of twisted, reprobate minds. As our country drifts evermore swiftly toward becoming a banana republic, we can take comfort in the fact that God's truth never changes.

**Benediction**

*The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:*

*The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

*The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

(Numbers 6:24-26)