



SESSION 1 - THE PENTATEUCH

Session 1 - Goal

Understanding God's relation to humanity through Law and Covenant from the beginning to Sinai. This session will overview the Patriarchal period, the Pentateuch, and the Sinai Covenant & Decalogue.

CLASS INTRODUCTION

Each session in this class will comprise of about 45 minutes of teaching, followed by a short 15-minute Q&A session or break, then 45 minutes of table discussions over a particular passage of scripture related to the session topic.

Here are the 8 sessions we'll be going through in this class:

1. **THE PENTATEUCH** - The Patriarchs, Sinai Covenant & Decalogue
2. **THE TORAH (Part 1)** - Tabernacle, Sacrifices, Priests, Feasts and OT Worship
3. **THE TORAH (Part 2)** - Law & Covenant, Promised Land and Foreshadowing
4. **THE PROPHETS & WRITINGS** - OT Prophets, Psalms & Wisdom Literature
5. **THE GOSPELS** - Matthew, Mark, Luke & John
6. **THE EARLY CHURCH** - Acts & Galatians
7. **THE PAULINE LETTERS** - The rest of the letters of Paul
8. **THE GENERAL EPISTLES** - The rest of the NT letters

As you can see, the scope of this class covers mostly the whole Bible! Since we only have limited in-class time, during the sessions, videos from The Bible Project will be used to provide helpful summaries of big topics or large swaths of the Bible. Our goal is to show you the interconnectedness of the Bible's message as a whole, so it is very important to try not to miss the sessions as you may miss some very important connections as we move from Old to New Testaments.

Additionally, each week, you will be assigned a passage of scripture to read and some short videos to watch before the next session. You will also be given one reflection question to

think about. At the beginning of the next session, we will start off by discussing the last week's reflection questions.

How to make the most of this course

In order to get the most out of this class:

- Get a folder to keep your handouts and notes from the sessions
- Write out notes as you do your weekly Bible reading assignments
- Write down questions for the next week's session
- Journal your thoughts and discoveries
- Pray that God would apply the truths you are learning to your lives.

THE KEY TO INTERPRETING THE LAW

At the end of Luke's Gospel, in chapter 24, we have the story of two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. They're heartbroken because their master and friend, Jesus, was dead and all their hopes were dashed to pieces. However, a stranger appears to them on the road and starts saying some strange things to them.

Instead of sympathizing with them, he rebukes them:

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"
(Luke 24:25)

The real problem of these disciples was that they did not understand the Old Testament. So, he helps them to understand:

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." **(v.26)**

This stranger was Jesus - but just as the disciples didn't recognize how the OT spoke of him - they didn't recognize him along the Emmaus way until he opened up their minds to see it. As he did, a remarkable transformation happened to them which I pray will happen more to us as we dive into this class. They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" **(v.32)**



Christ is the Key

The whole OT finds its focus in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, and he is the key that unlocks the riches of the OT. Again and again, God spoke to His people in the OT about Christ through symbols and shadows which were appropriate to them and their context and circumstances rather than immediately to our

modern context. That is why the OT often seems foreign to us and we miss it. But, the OT starts the big story of redemption that God has written throughout history, and thus it is the beginning of the story that lays a lot of the important groundwork we need to fully understand the latter half of the story. Just as you can't properly appreciate a novel if you just jump into the second half, we cannot fully understand the NT without spending the time in the OT.

We have a threefold task to understand the Law of Moses:

1. **In its own historical context** - what would it have meant to the original recipients?
2. **As the beginning of God's Story of Redemption** - which the New Testament completes.
3. **In our context** - how do we obey and apply God's word to ourselves today?

As with the two disciples on the Emmaus way, when the OT was opened up to them, they were in awe, amazed and overwhelmed by the beauty of God's big story. We pray this is what the Lord would do in each of us during this 8-week class.

STOP & PRAY: Let's pray that He does this by His Spirit

THE OLD TESTAMENT & PENTATEUCH

The Jewish Old Testament was also called the **TaNaK** - which stood for the 3 categories of books: Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvi'im - also known as the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. You will learn more about these 3 divisions in one of the videos for this sessions Assignments. Today, we will look at another grouping of books in the OT - the Pentateuch.



What is the Pentateuch?

The word "Pentateuch" comes from two Greek terms, *penta* (πεντα), meaning 'five' and *teuchos* (τεῦχος), meaning 'book'. So, the word simply means "five books". It refers to the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) which were written by Moses.

The contents of the Pentateuch:

"The Pentateuch begins with the creation of the universe and records God's dealings with mankind in the Garden of Eden, his preparation of a seed-bearing line (the patriarchal stories), and the formation of the nation Israel. A substantial portion of the Pentateuch consists of laws governing the religious and civil life of the theocratic nation."

(Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, pg 1639)



Creation

God's story of redemption starts at creation. There's much we can get into on the creation story, however, in this class - we'll be focusing specifically at themes and topics related to understanding God's law within redemptive history. ***Here are the two important themes we must understand from creation:***

1. Order & Life

First, in Genesis 1, we see that **God brings order from disorder**. We see in the beginning, the earth as a formless and chaotic place. Then, in the days of creation, God brings order to the disorder of the unformed earth. He separates the various aspects of the earth's surface - the sky, atmosphere, waters, land, etc - to create the environments which He then fills with the creatures that inhabit them. He prepares the suitable environments to sustain life.

Secondly, we see that **God brings life from non-life**. He causes plants and animals to spring up from the earth, and he forms humans out of the dust of the earth.

These two concepts of order and life are important aspects of God revealed in creation that will be important for us to keep in mind to appreciate many parts of the Law.



2. The Fall

The Fall expresses the antithesis to God's giving of order and life to creation. God is the source of life and order - so disobedience and separation from Him results in death and disorder.

Thus, when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit - their relationship and connection to God are cut off. They die in a spiritual sense immediately as they are cut off from the source of life, and physical death is a fitting correlate consequence to this spiritual death. Also, we see that in their sinful rebellion, not only do they reap death instead of life, but they also cause disorder instead of order. Because of their sin, God curses the ground and creation, and Adam and Eve both receive curses that disorder their lives.

So, we see that **since the Fall - God's life and order have been disrupted in creation and humanity**. This is the second truth we must keep in mind to understand the Law.

The Patriarchal Period

The Patriarchal Period is:

"Period of time during which the biblical fathers of Israel lived. The Bible tells of long-lived patriarchs before the flood (Gn 1-5); of Noah (Gn 6-9); and of a line of patriarchs after the flood (Gn 10; 11). However, the word in the narrower sense usually refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gn 12-36), with the addition of Joseph

(Gn 37–50)."

(Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, p.1620)

This period of time is the history of the forefathers of the nation of Israel - God's chosen people in the OT - before the nation of Israel was formed through God's covenant and law. Its key themes and events are important for us to understand the historical background of the law.

Key Events and Themes

The narratives about the patriarchs focus on promise, covenant, election, and faith. Motifs such as childlessness, sibling rivalry, deception, and alienation are also present (Mathews, Genesis, 75–80). **These motifs show the patriarchs as humans who struggled when God's promises did not come to immediate fulfillment.** The themes of promise, covenant, election and faith are the foundation of the giving of the law.



The Abrahamic Promise

The promises of the patriarchs are given initially to Abraham, and transferred successively to Isaac and Jacob (later called Israel). All contain five elements:

1. (Gen 12:2)—God will make Abraham into a "great nation"
2. (Gen 12:2)—God will bless him
3. (Gen 12:2–3)—God will make him influential (his name will be "great" and he will be a "blessing" to the world)
4. (Gen 12:7)—God will give the land of Canaan (i.e. Palestine) to him and his descendants
5. (Gen 13:16; 15:5)—His descendants will be many

The last two promises, given after Abraham arrived in Canaan, are repeated many times in Genesis (Gen 13:14–18; 15:7, 13–16, 18–21; 17:6–8; 22:15–17). They are presupposed by the first three elements—a nation requires territory and a population. One could summarize the promise as pertaining to **land** and **seed** - two important concepts throughout the Bible.

This is important for us because the promise to Abraham is the basis of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus, where we find the 'Law of Moses'.

"And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew." (**Exodus 2:24–25**)

God's mighty saving acts in Exodus are the outworking of His faithfulness to the promise He made to Abraham. So, the Mosaic Covenant is a result of God's prior choice and love for the patriarchs.

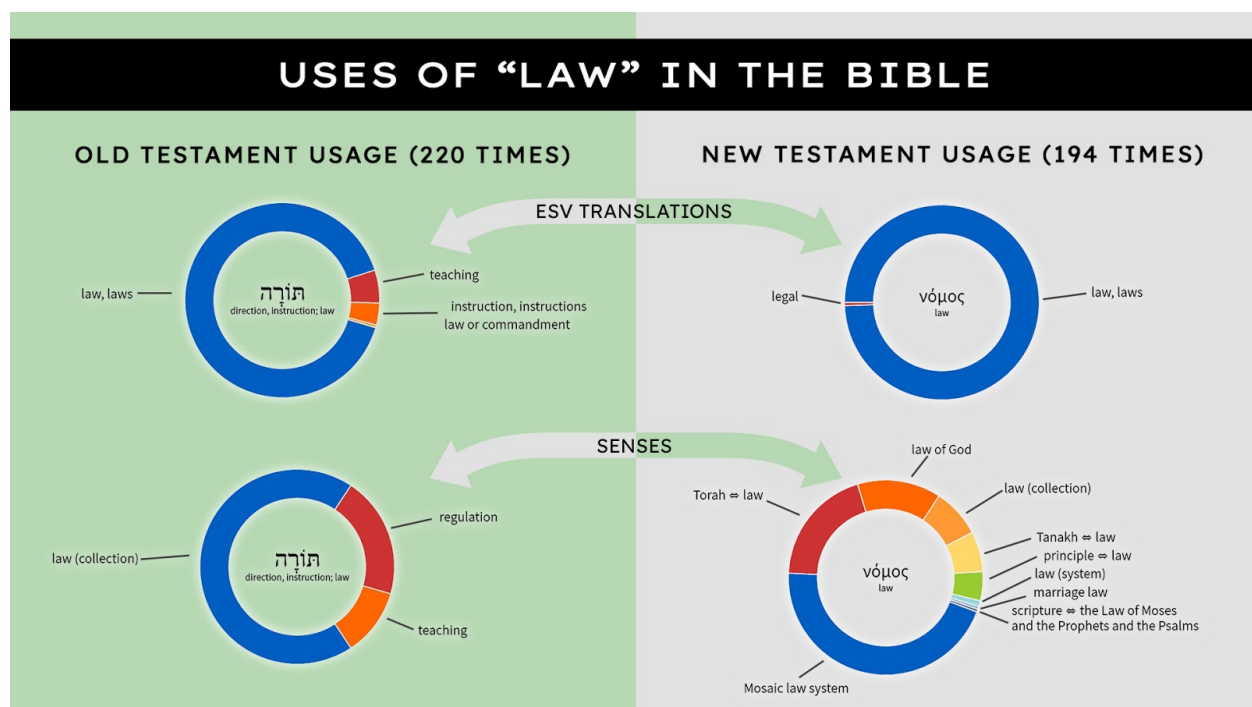
LAW & COVENANT



In order for us to understand Biblical Law as a category, we must understand that it is intricately and inseparably connected with covenants. So, we must understand what we mean by biblical 'law' and what is a 'covenant'. Only then we can put the two together to get the big picture.

LAW

The topic of "Law" in the Bible is pervasive throughout all of Scripture - occurring 220 times in the OT and 194 times in the NT. So, we can see the importance of understanding the topic of 'law' in understanding the Bible's message as a whole!



Part of the reason why the topic of 'law' can be confusing is that the Old Testament has many words for the concept of God's Law. The most general word is Torah, which signifies instruction of any kind: religious and secular, written and oral, divine and human.

"On occasion torah may be legitimately translated as "law." However, its everyday meaning is illustrated by the book of Proverbs, which applies the term to the "instruction" that the wise provide..." (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p.1015)

Some words for the law in the Old Testament are:

- **Words** (cf. Ex 24:3; 34:27) - duties of man to God (eg. 10 Commandments)
- **Judgments** (cf. Ex 24:3) - civil regulations and duties
- **Ordinances** (cf. Lv 3:17; Nm 9:12, 14; Dt 6:2) - cultic regulations or ceremonial laws (especially in Leviticus), or any expectation or regulation

- **Command(ment)s** (cf. Dt 5:28; 6:1, 25) - regulations given by a higher authority

Other synonyms for law in the OT:

- **Decrees** (cf. Lv 10:11; Nm 30:16; Dt 4:1)
- **Precepts** (cf. Psa. 119)
- **Stipulations, Requirements** (cf. Dt 4:45; 6:20)
- **The "Way(s)"** (cf. 1 Kgs 2:3; Pss 18:21; 25:9; 37:34).

So, whenever you see these words in your Bibles, it is talking about some aspect of God's law.



What was the purpose of the Law?

Israel was a theocratic nation - meaning that they were ruled by God - and thus they needed a legislative corpus to govern them. Israel had been rescued from 400 years of slavery in pagan Egypt, and they did not have an intuitive grasp on God's holiness, justice, righteousness, love and forbearance which He required of them. They had adopted the pagan ways of Egypt and needed God's revelation to learn His divine will. This law was mediated to them primarily by Moses.

"However, Moses and the prophets emphasize that the purpose of the Law is not strict adherence to the Law for its own sake (legalism) or for a reward (Pharisaism). Keeping the Law is an act of devotion to God, for the sake of God.

...The Law of God is his means of sanctification. He consecrated Israel by an act of grace, and he required Israel to remain holy."
(Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 2, p.1316)

The purpose of the Law was to help transform God's redeemed people into maturity.

"The saints in the OT who loved God delighted in his Law as a reflection of his will; saw in it God's fatherly concern for his children to learn to love, to be just and righteous, and to walk humbly before him (cf. Gn 17:1; Mi 6:8). God's goal was to train individuals in Israel to maturity, freedom, and sonship.
(Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 2, p.1317)

We will see more about the purpose of the law later in this class when we get to the New Testament, but for now, we can see that God's law was meant to help sanctify, not to save, His people. This is one of the reasons God's Law is still valuable to us today.

To sanctify simply means - "to make holy" - or to "set apart". Israel, that is - God's people, are meant to be set apart for Him alone - they are to be distinct from all the other people.



WATCH VIDEO: Reading Biblical Law

COVENANT

According to Bible Scholar, Vern Poythress:

"A covenant is a formalized pact with sanctions... When such pacts were made between human beings, the parties expressed loyalty to one another and spelled out their mutual obligations (e.g. Gen. 21:26-31; 26:28-30; 31:44-54). They also took an oath calling down curses on themselves if they did not keep the terms of the covenant."

(Poythress, The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses, p.63)

A covenant is a formalized pact expressing loyalty between two parties to one another based on prior relationship, outlining their mutual obligations, blessings and the curses/consequences for failing to keep the terms of the covenant.

All covenants necessarily had three parts:

1. **IDENTIFICATION** - An identification of the parties involved and recounting the previous relational interactions between them
2. **STIPULATIONS** - Specification of their mutual obligations
3. **SANCTIONS** - An oath indicating how God would reward obedience and punish disobedience to the stipulations

Many covenants also had some sort of sign or symbol associated with them to illustrate the relationship, or the sanctions, or simply as a seal or guarantee of covenant faithfulness. For example, circumcision in the OT or baptism & communion in the NT.



Hittite Suzerainty Treaties

Historically, in the Ancient Near East, it was a common practice among Hittite (pagan) kings to make pacts with other kings called suzerainty treaties. The powerful king, the suzerain, made a treatise or pact with the lesser, subordinate ruler, called the vassal. The vassal promised loyalty, obedience and support to the suzerain, and in return, the suzerain promised blessing and protection.

In these treaties, they would write up a document that contained:

1. **Preamble** identifying the parties
2. **Historical Prologue** explaining their relationship

3. **Stipulations** specifying the duties of the vassal
4. **Provision for a written copy** to be deposited in the vassal's temple and periodically read publicly
5. **List of witnesses**
6. **Sanctions** - a list of curses and blessings for violations or loyalty to the treaty.

This historical context provided a ready analogy for Israel to understand their relationship with the True God. It was something from their historical context that the Israelites would have readily understood. The Biblical Covenants have many similarities with these suzerainty treaties. Or rather, God's Kingship is the origin and pattern for all earthly kings.

DEUTERONOMY: An example of the OT Covenant

The whole book of Deuteronomy is organized as a covenant renewal ceremony. If we don't understand the context of the covenants (which mirror the Hittite treaties), we would miss the significance of this and wonder why Deuteronomy just repeats a lot of things from the earlier books.

The structure of the book can be divided like this:

1. **A Preamble** - identifying the parties (1:1-5)
2. **Historical Prologue** - recounting the prior relationship of God and His people (1:6-4:49)
3. **Stipulations** - list of duties (5:1-26:49)
4. **A written copy** was placed in ark in the temple/tabernacle (10:1-5)
5. **Sanctions** - blessings & curses (27:1-30:20)
6. **Covenant Continuity** - Moses sets up Joshua to take his place, and charges the people to be faithful to the covenant and blesses the people before his death (31:1-34:12)

The analogies to the practices of the Hittite Kings continues with what was done with the covenant documents (the Ten Commandments). Like the Hittite Suzerainty Treaties, two copies were produced on the two tablets of stone. **However, unlike the Hittite practice, where one copy was given to the vassal and the other to the suzerain to keep in their separate temples - both copies were placed in the tabernacle since in Israel's case, God (the Suzerain) dwelt with Israel (the vassal)! They alone were put inside the ark of the Covenant (Deut. 10:1-5), whereas the rest of the instructions Moses received from God was put beside the ark (Deut. 31:24-26). So, the Ten Commandments were very closely understood to be tied to the Covenant God made with Israel.**

The tabernacle had two cherubim on the ark and woven into the pattern of the curtains - representing royal guards to God's throne room. The tabernacle also used imagery from creation in the lampstand, bread, and the details of the decor including pomegranates and other garden-like imagery. **All these details together show us that God is indeed the Great King over both Israel (His people) and all of creation.** The tabernacle represented God's heavenly throne room from where God sits as King (cf. Isa. 6:1-4). From His throne come all His utterances. Thus the "Ten Words" were stored in God's

“footstool” of His throne - the ark of the covenant. The tabernacle and temple to the Israelites represented God's presence with them which foreshadows Christ - Immanuel - “God with us.”

In delivering this ‘Covenant Renewal Ceremony’ in Deuteronomy, Moses acted like the King's emissary - reminding the people of God's covenant with them and the blessings and curses attached to it. This was the function of the OT prophets - which we will explore more later. In the next session we will focus more on the details and significance of the tabernacle and temple. For now, we will look briefly at each of the Ten Commandments and their meaning.

GOD'S COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE

The following three elements of covenants are used in God's relationship to His people in the Old Testament, Israel. His relationship with His people, then, can be said to be ‘covenantal’ since it involves:

1. **PERSONAL PRESENCE** - Corresponding with His self-identification to and relationship with His chosen people
2. **DIVINE ORDER** - Corresponding to His covenant stipulations
3. **GOD'S POWER** to bless or curse and to make atonement - corresponding to the covenant sanctions.

The relationship between Law & Covenant

Much of Biblical Law occurs within the context of Biblical Covenants. That is, in the context of God's covenantal relationship with His people. Thus, the laws (or covenantal stipulations) are not how people establish or maintain their relationship with God, but rather are the result of them already being in a covenant relationship with God. The Ten Commandments fit within the stipulations section of the covenant.

The Ten Commandments aren't about how we become God's people, but rather are given to us because we are His people. They presume a prior relationship with Him already.

The difference is this:

- **It is NOT:** do these things and keep these laws, then you'll have a right relationship with God
- **It IS:** God, out of His love for us, has provided the way to have a right relationship with Him, therefore, this is the way we are to live in light of that

Covenant Through Christ

We will get to how Christ connects to the Old Testament and Law in later sessions, but briefly here, we can observe how Christ is the fulfillment of the whole Mosaic law and covenant in the Pentateuch:

1. **PERSONAL PRESENCE** - Christ is God dwelling with His people - Immanuel - "God with us". (cf. Col. 2:9; John 14:20-23)
2. **DIVINE ORDER** - Christ's character is the perfect pattern of righteousness as he perfectly kept the law of God for us (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 13:14)
3. **GOD'S POWER** - Christ expresses God's power to atone for sin (cf. Heb. 9:28; 1 John 2:2)



[WATCH VIDEO: The Covenants](#)

THE SINAI COVENANT



After the last story in Genesis of Joseph rescuing the descendants of Abraham and Jacob (Israel) by offering them shelter in Egypt, some time passes and the Hebrews multiply greatly in Egypt under its prosperity. However, God's promise to Abraham was not only that his descendants would be many, but also that they would inherit the Promised Land - yet, at the end of Genesis, they are in Egypt.

Furthermore, a new Pharaoh comes to power who didn't know Joseph, and he starts to oppress the Jews since they seem to be a growing threat to him.

So Exodus starts off with this predicament - God's people, Israel - are in Egypt, not in the Promised Land, and they are being oppressed by a tyrannical king. They cry out to the Lord and He hears them. And He acts through an unlikely hero - Moses - to rescue and deliver His people through many mighty acts. God sends plagues that challenge the Egyptian gods - showing He is the only supreme God - which eventually wears down the wicked king to release the Israelites. Then as they flee Egypt (with its riches in hand), Pharaoh chases them with his army, and God again rescues His people through mighty acts - splitting the Red Sea and drowning the Egyptian armies. (See Exodus 5 - 15)

Indicatives *THEN* Imperatives

It is only after these saving works of God that we arrive at the Sinai Covenant of Exodus 19 - 24. This is an important point to note:

God's commands (imperatives) are always predicated on the description (indicatives) of His gracious saving work.

In other words, God first graciously acts to save, then tells His redeemed people how to live. This is the framework for God's law, and also for all of the Bible. This same pattern can be seen even in the letters of the New Testament - their first half tells of God's saving grace (the Gospel) and the second half tells us how we ought to live in light of that (commandments). If you flip this order, you end up with legalism - thinking you get to salvation by following the commandments. However, if you get it right, you get grace-driven, joyful obedience out of gratitude for God's salvation apart from your good works.



The Decalogue (10 Commandments)

The word "Decalogue" comes from two Greek words. The first, "deca" meaning 'ten' and the second "logos" meaning 'word' - so it means, "the ten words". This was the common phrase that the 10 commandments was called - the ten words from God.

The Ten Commandments are unique in that God spoke them directly to all of Israel from the top of Mount Sinai, in contrast to the rest of the Law which was received through Moses. Only the Ten Commandments were written personally by the finger of God on two stone tablets (Exodus 20:1-21).

Note that before the Lord gives to Israel the Ten Commandments which are part of the Sinai Covenant, He reminds them first of His saving work (Exodus 19:3-6 & 20:2). They are to obey these commandments in light of the fact that God has already freed them from their bondage.

The first four commandments (the first table of the law) deal with our relationship to God, and the last six commandments (the second table of the law) deal with our relationships to other people.

The Ten Commandments are an expression of God's holy character and order.

Let's take a brief look at them:

1. YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS (Ex. 20:3)

God is the sole LORD, Creator and source of life, so any competition with another supposed 'god' introduces disordered worship and leads to spiritual death. Every sin has the same root - it is idolatry - a confusing of who God is as the standard of all earthly order.

2. YOU SHALL NOT MAKE IDOLS (Ex. 20:4-6)

The second commandment deals with making images for worship. It expands on the first commandment by forbidding not only the worship of false gods, but also the improper

worship of the True God through attempting to make images of Him. The attempt to make an image of God is inappropriate because it misses the fundamental character of the revelation at Sinai where on the mount, no image appeared (Deut. 4:15-20). It shows us that worship to God must conform to the order of God's own revelation.

3. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN (Ex. 20:7)

This command enjoins us to protect the holiness of God's Name which is the revelation of His character.

"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:5-7)

This also means that we, as God's people, are not to do or say anything that would profane God's holy character.

4. REMEMBER THE SABBATH AND KEEP IT HOLY (Ex. 20:8-11)

This commandment is special in character in that it focuses on human relationship to God, but it also involves a creation pattern as well taken from the seven days of creation. It is a sort of mediating point between the commandments concerning God and the commandments concerning one's neighbour.

5. HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (Ex. 20:12)

This is the first commandment dealing with our responsibilities to other humans. It makes sense that it would relate to the primary relationship of closest family. The family is the proper place for production of new life, and thus the preeminent form of protecting and honouring life which comes from God. Also, because parents have the primary responsibility to teach children about God and His law (Deut. 6:6-9), the parents represent the primary means by which the knowledge of and conformity to the divine order is to be passed on and preserved. An attack on parents then is an attack on God Himself.

6. YOU SHALL NOT MURDER (Ex. 20:13)

Enjoins the preservation of human life as image bearers of God.

7. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY (Ex. 20:14)

Enjoins orderliness of human sexuality - which is closely related to the creation of new life and thus is a natural consequence of the call to holiness.

8. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL (Ex. 20:15)

Deals with the orderliness of human property since theft disorders the relationship of human ownership which is closely related to the dominion that humans have been given, which images God's dominion over the world.

9. YOU SHALL NOT LIE (Ex. 20:16)

Orderliness of human speech - truthful human speech imitates God's speech and law.

10. YOU SHALL NOT COVET (Ex. 20:17)

This commandment demands orderliness of our desires and is the only commandment on the second table that deals with the heart. We can see murder, theft, and adultery - but we cannot see covetousness. Jesus expands on this point by saying that all sin ultimately springs from the heart (Mark 7:20-23) and that breaking the other commandments starts in the heart (lust, hatred - cf. Matthew 5).

Notice that the order of the focus of the Ten Commandments transitions from heaven to earth.

The Ten Commandments form the basis for what is called the MORAL LAW.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN AND THE LAW

Notice that right after God has given to Israel His Moral Law - the Ten Commandments - their response is one of fear and trembling.

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." (**Exodus 20:18-19**)

When faced with the perfect moral law of God, the people realize their problem - they cannot perfectly keep this Law because of their sin. They feel afraid in the presence of a Holy God who has given them His Holy Law. This is the impact that God's perfect law has on us, even today. When we look at it, and then look at ourselves, we realize how much we don't live up to it and can't live up to it. **God's law acts like a mirror to show us our own dirtiness.** We feel guilty.

What is the solution?

We all feel the guilt of sin when we break God's laws. Something deep inside us cries out that we are not worthy of approaching or seeing God's holiness and glory when we are stained with sin. We need something to look to in order to take away our sin and the

feeling of our guilt. God knew this and we find very soon after the Israelites shrink back in fear of God that He gives them the means by which their guilt can be dealt with and something to look to for the solution to their sin.

Just one verse later, Moses reassures the people:

Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." (v.20)

Then, as Moses draws near to God in the thick darkness (v. 21),

And the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. (**Exodus 20:22-24**)

God introduces the sacrificial system to them - where an innocent animal would be sacrificed in place of guilty sinners as a substitute for them on an altar. This is what we will turn our attention to in the next session.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION 2

READ

For next week's session, please read:

- Exodus 40
- Leviticus 4-7 and 16 & 17

WATCH

- [Overview: TaNaK](#)
- [READ SCRIPTURE: Leviticus](#)
- [NEW CITY CATECHISM - Q14 - Did God create us unable to keep His law?](#)

ASK

For next week's session, ask yourself this question and write down your answer for us to discuss:

- How does God's Covenant relationship with us relate to the Laws that He gives to us today?
- From Exodus 40, what stands out to you?

- From Leviticus 4-7 & 16-17, if you lived in ancient Israel, how would these laws make you feel? How do you imagine the sight of all these things impacting you?

Recommended Resource

[The Ten Commandments: What They Mean, Why They Matter, and Why We Should Obey Them](#) by Kevin DeYoung