



THE KEY TO INTERPRETING THE LAW



Christ is the Key

The whole Old Testament (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. Just as you can't properly appreciate a novel if you just jump into the second half, we cannot fully understand the New Testament (NT) without spending the time in the OT.

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

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

PENTATEUCH: Creation to Abrahamic Covenant

CREATION: *Here are the two important themes we must understand from creation:*

1. _____ & _____

First, in Genesis 1, we see that **God brings order from disorder**. Secondly, we see that **God brings life from non-life**. 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.

Since the Fall - God's life and order have been _____ **in creation and humanity**. This is the second truth we must keep in mind to understand 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).

God's promise to Abraham of _____ and _____ are repeated many times in Genesis (see Gen 13:14–18; 15:7, 13–16, 18–21; 17:6–8; 22:15–17). This is important for us because the promise to Abraham is the basis of the Mosaic covenant (see Exodus 2:24–25).

LAW & COVENANT

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
- **Command(ment)s** (cf. Dt 5:28; 6:1, 25) - regulations given by a higher authority
- **Decrees** (cf. Lv 10:11; Nm 30:16; Dt 4:1) - commands spoken from the King
- **Precepts** (cf. Ps. 119) - a general rule intended to regulate behavior or thought
- **Stipulations, Requirements** (cf. Dt 4:45; 6:20) - a condition that is demanded as part of an agreement
- **The "Way(s)"** (cf. 1 Kgs 2:3; Pss 18:21; 25:9; 37:34).



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.

"...**The Law of God is his means of** _____. 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 _____.



WHAT IS A COVENANT?

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. _____ - An identification of the parties involved and recounting the previous relational interactions between them

2. _____ - Specification of their mutual obligations
3. _____ - 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.

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:

1. **PERSONAL** _____ - Corresponding with His self-identification to and relationship with His chosen people
2. **DIVINE** _____ - Corresponding to His covenant stipulations
3. **GOD'S** _____ 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 _____ God's people, but rather are given to us because we are His people. They presume a prior relationship with Him already.

THE SINAI COVENANT



Exodus starts off with this predicament: God's people (Israel) are in Egypt, not in the Promised Land, and 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. (See Exodus 5 - 15) It is only after these saving works of God that we arrive at the Sinai Covenant of Exodus 19 - 24.

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



The Decalogue (10 Commandments)

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 Ten Commandments are an expression of God's holy _____ and _____.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. You shall have no other _____(Ex. 20:3) | 5. Honour your _____(Ex. 20:12) |
| 2. You shall not make _____(Ex. 20:4-6) | 6. You shall not _____(Ex. 20:13) |
| 3. You shall not take the Lord's Name in _____ (Ex. 20:7) | 7. You shall not commit _____(Ex. 20:14) |
| 4. Remember the _____ and keep it Holy (Ex. 20:8-11) | 8. You shall not _____(Ex. 20:15) |
| | 9. You shall not _____ (Ex. 20:16) |
| | 10. You shall not _____(Ex. 20:17) |

The Ten Commandments form the basis for what is called the _____ 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 as they recognize their sinfulness and inability to keep it (see Exodus 20:18-19).

God's law acts like a _____ to show us our own dirtiness.

What is the solution?

Since our own sinfulness is the source of our guilt, we need something external to us to look to in order to take away our sin and the feeling of our guilt.

Exodus 20:20-24 - 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.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION 2

READ

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

WATCH

- [Overview: TaNaK](#)
- [READ SCRIPTURE: Leviticus](#)
- [NEW CITY CATECHISM - Q14](#)

(Video links are in your email)

ASK

- 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