

# **ARE WE SAVED BY THE BLOOD?**

## **WEEK 4: “The Law of God”**

## Overview

# Are We Saved by the Blood?

1. The Pattern for Paradise - What was God's **purpose** in creating humans?
2. The Origin of Sin - How did humans get separated from God's *ideal*?
3. The Sacrificial System - What was the point of **blood** sacrifices?
4. The Law and Jesus - What do we mean by God's **Law**?
5. How does the **New Testament** <relate> to the **Old Testament**?
6. Righteous Judgment - Is God's character really perfect and complete?
7. The Substitutionary Atonement – “Jesus *died* in our place” – what does that mean?
8. The Price of Reconciliation - Was “the precious blood of Christ” a **price** that was paid?

# תּוֹרָה (tôrāh)

The Hebrew word **תּוֹרָה (tôrāh)** is usually translated into English as

**“Law”**.

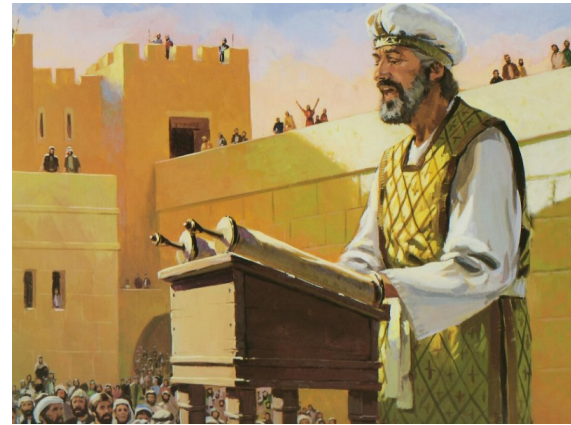
The basic meaning of **tôrāh** is **“instruction”**.

The Torah or “Law” is also the name given in the Hebrew Bible to the first five books together – Genesis to Deuteronomy



# “God’s Law”

in the New Testament when it speaks about the Law and the Prophets, or even sometimes just to “the Law”, it is referring to the whole of the Old Testament



But today we are particularly thinking of the body of instruction which God gave to his people through his servant Moses, recorded in the Bible from Exodus ch.19 onwards.



# The Law was the basis of His covenant

When **God** brought **His people** out of slavery in Egypt to Mount Sinai, the first thing He did was to declare His intention to enter into a covenant relationship with them (Exodus 19:1-6).

*“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession”* (Ex. 19:5a).

- The Law encompassed the spiritual, ethical, and practical expectations that God had for His people.
- The sacrificial system was also one component of God’s Law.



## Shaping the chosen nation

1. When God brought the descendants of Jacob (Israel) out of Egypt, they were essentially a huge rabble of oppressed former slaves.
2. He fashioned them into a people for himself.
3. He made a covenant with them, and the people were to agree to and obey the terms of the covenant.
4. He gave rules to govern this new society – a constitution as it were.
5. He gave rules which distinguished his people from all other nations.
6. He gave rules which revealed his holy character.

**Slaves** → **People** → **Nation**

# “God’s Law”

## The literary arrangement from Exodus to Deuteronomy.

First there are the **Ten Commandments** (Ex 20:1-17).

They were “inscribed by the finger of God” on tablets of stone (Ex 31:18), which clearly sets them apart as special or unique.

*Respect/Love for God (commandments 1 & 2), His Name (3) and His Day (4) come first.*

*Then come.. respect/love for Parents (5), for Human life (6) and for Marriage (7).*

*Then.. Property (8), Truth (9)*

*Finally... Non-Covetousness, which is a matter of the heart (10).*

This order shows us religious and ethical priorities of the OT. The priorities of other societies would have been quite different.

# “God’s Law”

The **other collections of laws which follow**, give examples of these principles in forms which could be administered by a judge.

- ❖ Ex 22:1-15 - deals with how cases of theft would be punished
- ❖ Deut 22:13-30 - deals with marriage violations.
- ❖ Deliberate violations of commandments
- ❖ nos. 1-6 were punishable by death and of no. 7 sometimes.
- ❖ For nos. 8 and 9 lesser penalties were imposed
- ❖ no. 10 of course could not be brought before any human judge because it was a matter of the heart and therefore visible only to God.



# “God’s Law”

For example, Ex 20:22-23:19 forms a unit or a collection of laws, and it would appear that the phrase “***the Book of the Covenant***” (24:7) refers to this collection.

It both begins and ends with rules about worship / religious matters (20:22-26, 23:10-19), and in second place (21:1-11) rules about the rights of slaves! This reflects the first commandment “I am the LORD your God who brought you out of ... slavery” (20:2). These priorities are very different from those seen in other law collections from ancient Middle East.

The laws are followed by a series of promised blessings and curses - which would follow from obedience or disobedience (23:20-33).

## “God’s Law”

The long section beginning from Exodus ch.25, continuing through Leviticus and the non-narrative sections of Numbers, is mainly concerned with the forms of worship, priesthood and sacrifice and the regulations governing holiness or purity.

Lev ch.17-26 are sometimes referred to as the “Holiness Code”. Key verses here include **“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy”** (Lev 19:1) and **“love your neighbour as yourself”** (Lev 19:18).

This section also ends with a series of *blessings and curses* (ch.26).

# “God’s Law”



**Holiness** – the character of God which he expects of his people

I. **Separate / different.**

II. **Whole / pure / unmixed.**

As a striking example of being separate / different – in Lev ch.18 and 20, after the excruciating lists of who you can’t have sex with, it says bluntly,

**“for *all* these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you.”**

(18:27-28, cf. 20:22-23).

This concept of being **separate** also helps us to understand some more regulations...e.g. 19:26-28 “Do not practise divination or seek omens. Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves.”

The concept of being **whole / pure / unmixed** helps us to understand 19:19 “Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material”, and very strikingly 13:13 “if the disease has covered his **whole** body, ... he is clean.” We may wish to reflect on what might be for us some relevant contemporary applications of these concepts.

# “God’s Law”

## The Covenant Reminder

The book of **Deuteronomy** (meaning literally “**second law**”) is so named because it is set almost **40 years later just before** the Israelites crossed into **the Promised Land**.

A **Reminder of the Covenant** and **urges the people to be faithful** to its rules and regulations **if they want to prosper** in the land that God is giving them.

He restates the Ten Commandments (ch.5). Some sections enlarge on themes in the “Book of the Covenant” (e.g. Deut 15:1-18 on the year for cancelling debts, and on freeing servants, relates to Ex 21:1-11 on Hebrew servants).

Ends with a series of *blessings and curses* (Deut ch.26).

*It is very regrettable that so many popular preachers today like to quote only the blessings in three sections, without reference to the context which is one of obedience to God’s revealed will.*





**Question:**  
Did the Laws conform to prevailing  
cultural practices of the time?

“God’s Law”

# “God’s Law”

We could say that there are some parallels in outward form – the form of legal language. We call this the literary genre – e.g. see the case-by-case laws in Ex 22:5, 6, 7, 10, 14 – “if x occurs, then the penalty is y”. Also some topics are dealt with – theft, marriage violations, agricultural matters, kingship – which also (unsurprisingly) overlap with the laws of other nations.

Yet other topics which do occur in the laws of other nations (e.g. hiring of labour, or dowry/ brideprice, or sale of property) are basically not dealt with. And instead we find a great quantity of law dealing with uniquely honouring God and details of worship and purity. So overall in terms of content and priorities, the Laws of Moses are quite contrasting with those of the other nations. And we have to emphasize again that the Bible account presents the Law as being something initiated by and given by God, not something that was borrowed or copied from the nations around. Later when the Israelites wanted to have a king, the Bible tells us that it was out of a desire to be like the other nations (1 Sam 8:5), but in the case of receiving the covenant at Mount Sinai, this was clearly not what happened.

# Question: How many laws were there?

\*<https://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm> (a Jewish website) contains a list which is one version of the 613 commandments which are traditionally said to be contained in or derived from the Law. I don't want to emphasise the number of rules or to get too involved in analysing and dissecting them. Because what I definitely see from the New Testament is that it is possible to become extremely knowledgeable about the Law but to miss the point.

## Question:

# So what was the point or the purpose of the Law?

1) The law was a part of the relationship between God and his people. The Law was given by God, as an expression of His character and particularly His holiness. The law was a gift from the Creator God who had chosen this one nation to be his treasured possession (Ex 19:5). The laws were an indicator of God's nearness to them which no other people enjoyed (Deut 4:7-8).

2) God had already "saved" the Israelites out of Egypt by his grace. They were not saved by their own efforts or good works. The laws were given to define how those who were God's people should live.

3) Obedience to the law would lead to greater blessings for the nation, and disobedience to all kinds of disasters. In reality it was more of the second which actually happened.


So – obedience to the law did not earn salvation for Israel, but obedience to the law was necessary if the people were going to continue to enjoy the benefits of salvation. Possessing the law was a privilege and a responsibility.

There was and is considerable misunderstanding about the law – even attempted misuse of the Law as a means of salvation. The sacrifices (which we looked at last week) were the element that dealt with the sin problem; but it was never envisaged that a person could "earn" personal perfection or salvation by law-keeping; the concept of "merit" is not even mentioned.

Jesus points out the error of Legalism and of self-righteousness based on rule-keeping, e.g. his parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee assumed that God would accept him because of his rule-keeping. But it was the tax-collector who cried out for God's mercy and went home right with God.

**Question:**  
So was Jesus against the Law?

*Didn't he say,  
"You were taught... but I say..."?*



This is a misunderstanding. Jesus upheld and fulfilled the Old Testament Law. Jesus' teaching does not contradict or criticize the Law, or even remotely suggest that it was not from God.

The apparent contrast that we can see in Matthew 5:21 onwards stems from

1. **His critique of the man-made legalistic traditions** that had been added to it in the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees; and
2. **His focus on the inward application of the Law** and not its mere outward observance.

Jesus validated the Law by both His teaching and His practice, and declared that He had come to fulfill it and not to nullify it. (Matthew 5:17-20; Deut. 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-40). Note especially that Matthew 5:21 onwards must be read in the context of Matthew 5:17-20.

“Sacrifice”



Questions ?