

Series: **Exodus: Seeing God in the Journey**
Title: **Covenants and Commandments: Contracts and Codes**
Law and Grace: Applying the OT law to NT life
Text: **Exodus 21 -25**

Marriage – a covenant

Law and Grace: How do we apply the OT law to NT life?

Ex. 24:7, 8b

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Deut. 28:1,2,9

¹ *"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.*

⁹ *The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways.*

COVENANTS AND CONTRACTS

Covenant: Literally, a contract

"In the Bible, an agreement between God and his people, in which God makes promises to his people and, usually, requires certain conduct from them."

There is a distinction between the covenant and the command.

There is a difference between the contract and the code.

The Covenant or Contract is the basis of relationship.

The Commandments or Codes are the behavior expected within the relationship.

There are Seven Covenants in the Bible

They are contracts/ agreements/ promises between God and man

- Some are conditional, others are unconditional
- They are the basis by which God enters into relationship with man

Edenic – of works (creation) Gen. 1:26-30

- When God created Adam, He entered into a covenant with Adam whereby Adam was required to obey God in order to secure God's blessing. When Adam failed this covenant as a result of his works, he brought sin and the curse into this world.
- Dominion over the earth

Adamic – of grace (covering) Gen. 3:16-19

- God showed mercy to His chosen people and purposed to save them through a covenant of grace.

- Through the administration of the covenant of grace, God fulfills the covenant of works for us and grants us the favor that we could never earn ourselves.

Noahic – of Promise (Rainbow) Genesis 8:20–9:7

- Because of God’s faithfulness to always do what He says He will do, we can know today with certainty that there will never be another worldwide flood as there was in the days of Noah, no matter how wicked mankind becomes.
- Establishes the structure by which he protects and promotes the seed of the woman promised prior.

Abrahamic – of Blessings (Circumcision) Gen. 12:1-3

- The Promised Land. The promise of the descendants. The promise of blessing and redemption. The promised Savior.

Mosaic – of Identity (A People of God) Exodus 19:5–6

- a conditional covenant made between God and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai – A Calling and a code
- The Mosaic Covenant is a significant covenant in both God’s redemptive history and in the history of the nation of Israel through whom God would sovereignly choose to bless the world with both His written Word and the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

Davidic – of Kingdom (A Promised Savior) 2 Sam. 7:8–16; 1 Chr. 17:7–14

- During the Mosaic covenant era after Israel settled the promised land, Yahweh advanced his promise of a coming royal Savior by pledging to David an eternal kingdom (
- the covenant where God promises a descendant of David to reign on the throne over the people of God. It is a continuation of the earlier covenants in that it promises a Davidic king as the figure through whom God would secure the promises of land, descendants, and blessing.

Jesus – of Redemption (Final and Eternal Covenant) Luke 22:20

- The New Covenant is the promise that God will forgive sin and restore fellowship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him. Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant, and His death on the cross is the basis of the promise

COMMANDMENTS AND CODES

613 laws in Exodus and Leviticus

20:1-17	10 commandments (Decalogue)
20:22-26	Altars
21:1-32	Slaves, struggles
21:33-22:15	Disputes and Restitution
22:16-23:9	Social Justice
23:10 – 19	Sabbath and festivals
Lev. 11-15	Offerings applied to sins / Purification and food restrictions

These Commandments (laws) fall into three categories

Moral laws

Civil laws

Ceremonial laws

Moral

- The moral law, being based on the character of God that does not change, remains forever applicable.

Civil

- Civil laws are regulations to be enforced by the theocratic, national state of Israel in order to maintain a civil society.

Ceremonial

- Having to do with religious ritual or ceremonies: the sacrifices, the festivals, the tabernacle, laws of clean and unclean and the like.

Note that all of these views hold that the ceremonial laws and purification laws are all fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ

How are we to view OT laws through the lens of NT Grace in Jesus Christ?

FOUR APPROACHES

APPROACH ONE: MORAL LAW ONLY

Only the moral law is directly applicable to both the Christian and the non-Christian.

- Unlike moral law, ceremonial laws are no longer directly applicable to Christians, but have been supplanted by Christ.
- Civil laws are not directly applicable to the Church.

Strength: Jesus places more weight on some

- It rightly recognizes that (as Jesus put it) moral duties like justice, faithfulness and mercy are "weightier" than ceremonial matters like tithing"

Strength: Moral obedience is better than ceremonial rituals

- It provides a framework for understanding why the moral obligation of obedience is better than ceremonial rituals like sacrifice and why ceremonial laws such as clean and unclean foods could be abolished by Christ.

Strength: We are not told to make all OT law the law of the heart or the state

- It explains why the New Testament does not admonish Christians to make the Mosaic Law the law of the state.

Weakness: The categories are not completely distinct.

- For example, sometimes there are ceremonial elements among moral laws, moral elements among civil laws, and ceremonial elements among civil laws.

- Thus, the categories moral, civil, and ceremonial are not strictly distinct. David
- Ask, "Which of the 613 laws is not moral?"
 - The obvious answer is that they were all moral, and for an Israelite to disobey any of them would have been immoral.

Examples: Sabbath, Ox, manslaughter, steps to an altar, eating flesh, cooking

- The ceremonial Sabbath law is the only one of the Ten Commandments that is nowhere repeated in the New Testament- and is among the moral precepts of the Decalogue.
- Goring ox law has a ceremonial aspect in that the flesh of the stoned animal could not be eaten, presumably because of impurity
- The civil law on murder allows freedom for a manslayer to leave the city of refuge conditioned upon a ceremonial element: the death of the high priest.
- The ceremonial law's prohibition against going up by steps to an altar is related to moral decency in worship (not exposing one's nakedness).
- The ceremonial admonition not to eat flesh torn by animals is probably based on the moral notion that such behavior is dehumanizing – reducing man to the level of vulture.
- The ceremonial prohibition against cooking a kid goat in its mother's milk is probably related to avoiding human cruelty nurtured by such a practice.

APPROACH TWO: TWO LAWS – OT AND NT

The only Old Testament laws that apply today are the ones repeated by the New Testament

- Mosaic Law as a whole is no longer applicable today. Instead, according to this view, the only Old Testament laws that apply today are those repeated by the New Testament.
- All others applied solely to Israel, not to the church.

Alexander Campbell, a founder of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in America, states of the Mosaic law, **“It was given to the Jewish nation, and to none else.”**

- Campbell conceived of the overlap between commandments in the Mosaic dispensation and commandments in the Christian dispensation like the overlap of laws of the American colonies under British rule and the laws after the establishment of the American Constitution.
- The British laws remained valid if and only if they were reaffirmed by the United States.

Therefore, Mosaic laws remain valid only insofar as they are reaffirmed under the new covenant.

This approach divides history into different time periods.

"Dispensations" –Campbell

Three time Periods: Patriarchs, Mosaic, and Christian

The Patriarchs time period

- The period from creation to the law of Moses at Sinai

The Mosaic time period

- The period from the giving of the law of Moses until the Crucifixion/Resurrection/Ascension

The Christian time period

- From the day of Pentecost 22 through the end of time.

Seven Time Periods –Darby

Innocence, Conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, kingdom age

1. Time of Innocence
 - a. (in the garden of Eden),
2. Time of Conscience
 - a. (after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden),
3. Time of human government
 - a. (up until Abraham),
4. Time of promise
 - a. (the patriarchal period),
5. Time of law
 - a. (after Moses),
6. Time of grace
 - a. (the church age),
7. Time of the kingdom age
 - a. (the millennium after the Second Coming of Christ).

Christians are not under the Law of Moses in any way at all,
Because we live in the TIME OF GRACE

Strength: We are not under law, but grace.

- The Christian's relationship with the Mosaic Law has been terminated because "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." – Rom. 10:4
 - If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. – Gal. 5:18
- The Mosaic Law in its totality is abrogated in Christ and is no longer applicable.
- The Mosaic Law is neither a means of salvation nor a guide for Christian living.
 - We are not under no law but are under a different law: the "law of Christ."
- May have overlap but is not authoritative to Christians, it is the law of Christ.
- Many NT verses describe the New Covenant and its superseding of the OT law.
 - But it cannot mean that the OT is be ignored.

Weakness: Scripture Does Not Support It

"All Scripture is breathed out by God"

2 Tim. 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

- All Scripture" includes the Mosaic civil laws.

- These approaches, however, typically ignore the Mosaic civil laws in practice and find little if any profit in them.
- If this verse is true, it must be possible to find profit even in the judicial regulations.

“I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

Matt 5:17-18

¹⁷ *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.* ¹⁸ *For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

Not to abolish the law, but to fulfill.

Some say, fulfill means bring to an end. This is how that would read,

- "I did not come to abolish the law, but to bring it to an end."
- That is a contradiction
- The statement that Jesus "did not come to abolish the law" supports the notion that the law, including its civil regulations, has abiding value subsequent to the advent of Christ.

The Law is not overthrown

Rom. 3:31

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. Do we nullify the law by this faith? On the contrary, we uphold the law.

- The law is holy and spiritual.
- Love is the fulfilling of the law.

We should ask,

Does the truth that "Jesus is Lord" find practical expression in modern civil law as well as every other area of existence?

The answer is yes.

Regardless of what time period we live in...

There is continued holiness and practical usage of all Scripture that God has breathed

APPROACH THREE

LAW OF GOD

Recapture all social and political institutions for Christ and create a Christian culture.

THEONOMY: CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONISM

- This movement gained notoriety in Christian circles in the 1970s and 1980s, though its strength as a movement appears to have waned.
- Seeks to establish "the law of God," including the Old Testament civil laws as the law of the modern state.

- Both the moral and the civil regulations of the Mosaic Law are directly applicable today
- Christians should work towards establishing a “theocratic state” in the world.
- Society, they believe, needs to be reconstructed through changing its laws so that modern legal codes are made to conform to the Mosaic civil laws as found in the Pentateuch, including the sanctions or penalties of those laws.

Strength: No debate: Aids one end times view

- No debate on what laws and codes should or should not be kept.
- If a person is an amillennialist usually associated with the preterist view of end times (everything was fulfilled in 70AD other than the 2nd coming and heaven).
 - – They believe we are in the kingdom age and we are to make this world into the image of what God has commanded.

The church is not a nation, and America is not the Promised Land.

Weaknesses: Sets aside the New Covenant

- With a change in covenant, there is necessarily a "change of law" and a “setting aside of the former commandment.”

This view, by denying that there has been change of law, has denied the newness of the New Covenant.

Weaknesses: Not Stated in the New Testament

- If the civil law were directly applicable to Christians as through this claim, one would expect them to show up in New Testament discussions of the Christian and the state. They do not!
- Paul discusses matters of civil obedience and the Ten Commandments in Romans 13 but makes no reference to the other laws given to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Weaknesses: Cultural and historical settings make certain laws inapplicable

- It fails to take into account the change in cultural and historical settings between Pentateuchal times and today that make certain laws inapplicable.

Examples

- Cities of Refuge, Year of Jubilee, debt slavery; fat-tailed sheep; flat-roofed houses, bride price and dowry, etc.
- Jesus' admonition to "[r]ender to Caesar that which is Caesar's" acknowledges there can be a change of "law" due to a change in historical circumstance.

Weaknesses: Potential of Tyranny

- In the past the attempts to tie church and state too closely – Calvin's Geneva with its persecution of Anabaptists, Spain during the Inquisition, Cromwell's Puritan Revolution in England with its persecution of Catholics – have not worked out well.
- Even just laws in the hands of fallible human administrators could be twisted into something unjust and oppressive.

Weaknesses: Penalties in Mosaic laws are not eternally abiding.

Contrary to this approach to the civil law, the New Testament does not indicate that the penalties in Mosaic laws are eternally abiding.

The New Testament applies the principle of the law to the Church apart from the original sanctions.

- In Paul's First epistle to the Corinthians
 - Adultery in the church.
 - When a man slept with his father's wife, Paul does not even hint that the law's death penalty should be applied, but directs that the individual should receive church discipline until he repented.
- Jesus allowed divorce in the case of adultery but made no suggestion that one should apply the death penalty for this offense, even though adultery was punishable by death in the Old Testament.

The New Testament appears to adjust the sanction due to the changed historical and theological situation.

APPROACH FOUR PRINCIPAL OF BIBLICAL LAW

Examine each law and determine the moral or religious principle that underpins it.

The law is now transformed through Christ.

- Whereas Christ "did not come to abolish the law... but to fulfill," the fulfillment of the law by Christ nevertheless has transformed the way in which we apply Old Testament laws.
 - These laws must be read in the light of the dawning of the new, eschatological age.
- **All ceremonial laws are fulfilled in Christ**
- **The Covenant of Grace transforms the civil and moral Mosaic laws**
- The penalty has been paid for the world
- The covenant changes it but also history and culture could change it
- No longer apply directly to the Christian in part because those laws were written for a particular historical-cultural setting that no longer exists.
- More significantly, in fulfilling the law, Christ brought us under a different theological setting of the new covenant.

Strength: Scripture Applies Principles To The Situation And Penalties

- Muzzle the Ox – Pay the Minister
 - 1 Corinthians: Paul takes a law from the book of Deuteronomy ("[d]o not muzzle an ox while he is threshing") and uses it to argue that Christian ministers should be supported economically.
- 2 or 3 witnesses for Church Authority
 - 2 Corinthians: in court cases, by analogy to a church conference. The common principle is that judgments need to be based on solid evidence.
- Ox and Donkey – unequally yoked
 - This law is among laws of inappropriate mixtures that teach Israel the concept of holiness or separation.
 - That principle applies by analogy to Christians who are to avoid certain kinds of relationships.
- Penalties for incest

- 2 Cor. Excommunication, not death
- In this cultural and covenantal setting, the morality of the law applies directly, but the sanction does not.
- Penalties for homosexuality
 - Paul reaffirms the morality of the prohibition in Leviticus, though he does not apply its earthly sanction: the death penalty.
 - Instead, Paul announces a heavenly sanction: Such persons will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Weakness – more of a caution

Weaknesses: Possibly too broad or subjective

- Goring of an ox
 - It only applies to oxen, but not other animals.
 - Some abstraction, i.e., it applies when one man's animal kills another man's animal.
 - Or, broad abstraction, i.e., it applies when one man's property damages another man's property.

Which Ones?

It does not give precise guidance as to which civil laws Christians ought to be seeking to enact in today's society. But there are principles in each one that can be applied

Conclusion:

John 1:17

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

- **Grace comes through Jesus**
- **Truth comes through Jesus**

The Mosaic civil laws taken as whole do not to apply today...

- ...in part because we are under the new covenant
- ...and in part because of the changed historical circumstances.

The Mosaic civil laws are not to be ignored as obsolete

- But neither are they to be ignored as completely obsolete as has been common among Christians, for (like all the Scripture) they are profitable for teaching and reproof.

The Mosaic civil laws reveal principles of justice that can apply personally and could apply to laws today.

2 Tim. 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

We are in the covenant of Grace

Matt 22:37-40

³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Let us be people of the Word

Let us be people of Truth

Let us be people of Grace