



The Relationship of God's Law to God's Story



How Does the OT use the Term “Law”?

- The word law (*torah*, תורה) comes from the Hebrew verb *ayah* (ירה), which means to throw something or to teach something
- Thus, the word law (*torah*) basically means “teaching” and can be used generally at times (e.g., Prov 3:1, “My son, do not forget my teaching [תורה]”)
- However, the term *torah* usually applies to the commands and requirements that are a part of the Mosaic Covenant given to Moses at Sinai

How Does the NT use the Term “Law”?

- The Greek word, *nomos* (νόμος), is the word the NT most often uses for Law, and it is often the chosen translation for the Greek OT
- Some NT texts use Law to refer to the Pentateuch in contrast to “the Prophets” (cf. Matt 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 1:45, etc.)
- Some NT texts use Law to refer broadly to OT Scripture (John 10:34; 1 Cor 14:21; Gal 4:21, etc.)
- Paul also seems to use Law as a generic principle (Rom 7:21; 8:2)
- Similar to the OT, the NT uses Law to MC stipulations (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16)

Defining our Terms

- Rejecting the Law/Gospel Distinction
- Law = God's commands and stipulations of that were given to Moses when He instituted the Mosaic/Sinaitic Covenant

Important Questions to Consider

- When did God give the Law?
- To whom did God give the Law?
- Why did God give the Law?
- How do *we* relate to the Law?



When did God give the Law?

The Law in Its Narrative Framework

“The laws of the Pentateuch have regularly been analyzed by themselves without much consideration to the narrative context in which they are embedded. Without denying the usefulness of attempts to systematize biblical regulations, there is also a need to read the laws contextually within their narrative and legal-literary frameworks.”

- Sprinkle, *Biblical Law and Its Relevance*, 49

The Law in Its Narrative Framework

- The Law is not a means of salvation
- The Law provides a literary stimulus to learn about the character of God
- The Law is inherently a part of the Sinaitic covenant, given as a help to Israel in performing their mediatorial role as a holy nation (cf. Exod 19:5-6)

To Whom was the Law Given?

- The Law was given to the geopolitical nation of Israel
- Gentiles were allowed not to follow certain laws (e.g., Exod 12:43-49)
- The Law provides the necessary insight into how Israel must live with a holy God in their midst



Why did God give the Law?

Law as Covenant Document

Exodus

Historical Prologue	Exod 19:1-4
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Preamble	Exod 19:5-6
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General Stipulations	Exod 20:3-17
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Specific Stipulations	Exod 21:1–23:19
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Provisions for Reading	Exod 24:4-7
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Blessings and Curses	Exod 23:20-23
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Law as Covenant Document

Preamble	Deut 1:1-5
Historical Prologue	Deut 1:6–4:49
General Stipulations	Deut 5:1–11:32
Specific Stipulations	Deut 12:1–26:19
Blessings and Curses	Deut 27:1–28:68
The Witnesses	Deut 30:19; 31:19; 32:1-43

Deuteronomy

Law as Covenant Document

- The Law clearly highlights the Decalogue as prominent in Israel's Law (cf. Exod 25:16; Exod 40:20)
- The Decalogue forms the general stipulations of the covenant
- The specific stipulations form contextual applications of those general stipulations

The Law and Creation

- The Decalogue uses language, descriptions, and theology from Genesis 1–3
- The Decalogue provides practical insight for living in light of God’s created design
- E.g., The Sabbath



Maintaining a Strict Geopolitical and Ethnic Identity

- Exod 19:5–6, “if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples”
- Deut 7:6, “The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth”
- Lev 20:26, “You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine”
- Laws against intermarriage, laws about clean/unclean (foods, etc.)

The Purpose of the Law According to Paul

- Romans 5:20, “Now the law came in to increase the trespass”
- Romans 7:7–25, esp. v. 10. The Law is “holy and righteous and good,” but because of sin, the Law brings about an increase of sin and death
- Romans 3:20, “Through the law comes knowledge of sin”
- Galatians 3:19, “[The law] was added because of transgressions”

“The purpose of the law, it seems, is to enclose all under sin and to increase transgression so that all will see that salvation is available only through faith in Christ” (Schreiner, *40 Questions*, 83)

Confirmation of Paul's Thought

- 2 Corinthians 3:7–18, “For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (v. 6)
- What about 1 Timothy 1:8–11?

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Summary: Purpose of the Law

- The Law was given to Israel to teach them how to live in light of the created order within a specific cultural context
- The Law was given to Israel to teach them about the character of God in ways that would not be possible without clear standards
- The Law was given to maintain Israel's geopolitical and ethnic identity, while functioning as Israel's constitution
- The Law was given to Israel to increase sin to teach Israel they were wicked and needed the Christ