

THE LAW

The Unfolding Revelation of Christ and His Church

Rev. Jules Grisham

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CREATION The Covenant of Works

Adam The Sign of the Covenant: the Tree of Life (eternal life)
The Promise: life in obeying, death in disobeying
The Blessing: bestowed to *'adam* as to the one made in the image of God:
 The dominion commission:
 SEED and LAND (numerical and geographical expansion)
Chief end: to glorify and enjoy God
The Probation: not eating the forbidden fruit
What Was Required: perfect obedience

FALL Judgment for Sin

Our first parents deceived: sin, shame & blame
Seeking to usurp God's authority, *'adam's* own dominion is usurped
Seeking to be Lord of creation, now lorded over by a creature (the Serpent)
The Curse: on the labor of SEED and LAND
Exile; pain, futility, and death
The Downward Spiral: from the garden, from the land, from the world!

REDEMPTION The Covenant of Grace

Adam The Sign of the Covenant: the Skins (substitution)
The Promise: the Seed of the Woman, the Son of *'Adam*
 who would restore fallen *'adam* and crush the head of the Serpent
What Was Required: trust in promise, rest in provision
Worship (substitution) and wait

Noah The Sign of the Covenant: the Rainbow (common grace AND substitution)
The Promise: Preservation until the Redemption and Restoration
What Was Required (1): Noah to build the ark (called and delivered thru the judgment)
The Blessing Reaffirmed
 The dominion commission (in a context of sin)
 SEED and LAND
What Was Required (2): trust in promise, rest in provision
Noahic laws (the administration of justice)
Worship (substitution) and wait

Abraham The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision (the male seed and the shed blood)
The Promise: Blessing through SEED and in LAND
What Was Required: (1) obedience (to go when & where called; re: Isaac)
The Blessing for Abraham: justified by faith
 The focus narrows first to 1 person, then to 1 family, then to 1 people
What Was Required (2): trust in promise, rest in provision
Covenant faithfulness in the form of righteousness
Worship (substitution re: Isaac) and wait (for the one like Melchizedek)

Galatians 3:13-14:

In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Moses

The Sign of the Covenant: Sabbath (rest)

The Promise: the Promised Land as a conditional possession

What Was Required (1): the Passover feast

The Blessing: God's great typological redemption and deliverance of Israel;

God's forging the people into a nation w/ the giving of the Law (Pentecost)

A nation forged in slavery, then retrained in the wilderness, becoming an army

Moses himself a type the Promised Seed to come (Mediator, Prophet, Law-Giver)

Deliverance through judgment; baptism in the Sea and in the cloud

Provision in the wilderness (water from the rock, bread from heaven)

The bronze serpent as a type of Christ!

What Was Required (2): trust in promise, rest in provision

Covenant faithfulness of the nation in the form of obedience to the Law

Worship (substitution: Passover) and wait w/ obedience (conditional aspect)

Numbers 21:4-9:

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

John 3:14-15:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Galatians 3:13-14:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" — so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Now then, up to this point, we've been tracing the unfolding promise of God concerning his great plan of redemption, as it becomes gradually clearer through types and shadows (1) of the Promised Seed to come and his character and mission, (2) of the final judgment and the deliverance of God's people, and (3) of their redemption and restoration by a substitute, who would (4) lead them into the *eschaton*, i.e., into the estate of glory, of life and blessing forever, the people of God in the place of God's blessing and presence, under the righteous rule of the God-Man. Amen!

But with the Mosaic covenant, for the first time, there is introduced an element of conditionality to God's promise – in this case connecting Israel's status in the Promised Land with their faithfulness to the terms of the covenant, as set forth in the body of words, commandments, rulings, and statutes that

comprise the Law, and the bulk of Exodus 20-Deuteronomy 34. Into the context of the covenant of grace, it reintroduces an echo of the covenant of works, whereby Israel in the land of promise can be seen as an echo of Adam in Eden, and their presence there like his tied to obedience, with a warning of judgment and exile in the event of disobedience. All which sets the stage for the Promised Seed who would actually fulfill the terms of the covenant and thus succeed where Adam and Israel (and all we) had failed.

Here's the question for us: the New Testament speaks of the Law being put aside, having been fulfilled and transformed by Christ.

We see that the NT speaks of the Law as a temporary guardian:

Galatians 3:24-26:

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Galatians 5:18:

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Paul uses the analogy of marriage to show how a person is released from a legal bond of marriage when one's spouse dies. In the same way, he argues that believers who have "died" with Christ, are thereby released from the requirements of Law – indeed, because Christ has fulfilled the requirements of the Law for us!

Romans 6:14:

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 7:4, 6:

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God... But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Romans 10:4:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

This is not to say that the Law is useless!

Galatians 5:14:

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Romans 13:8-10:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

But what then are we to do with the large portions of the Old Testament that set forth the Law? Just ignore it? But...

2 Timothy 3:16-17:

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

Matthew 5:17-20:

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. 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. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Last week, Jeremy spoke of **the three uses of the Law**:

1. To drive us to Christ (as it reveals the holy standard of God to which we cannot ourselves attain)
2. To serve as the basis and foundation for our civil law
3. To serve, not as the way of salvation for the lost, but as the way of life for the saved

To this we must now speak of **the three types of the Law** (*Torah*) and its commandments (*mitzvot*):

1. **The Moral Law**: summarily comprehended in the *devarim* ("words") of the Ten Commandments, these are the principles for sustaining communion with God and one another.
2. **The Civil Law**: mostly in the form of "rules" (or rulings, judgments, *mishpatim*), these are applications of the principles of the moral law given by God for the nation of Israel in the land of Israel, with an eye toward the horizontal dimension, i.e., of sustaining communion with one another.
3. **The Ceremonial Law**: mostly in the form of "statutes" (*chuqqim*), these are applications of the principles of the moral law given by God for the nation of Israel until the coming of the Christ, with an eye toward the vertical dimension, i.e., of sustaining communion with God.

The Moral Law:

What is the greatest commandment? To love God and love neighbor. (**Matt. 22:37-40**)

These are unfolded in the two tables of the Ten Commandments, the first focusing on how to express and show this love for God (through obedience to his commandments given in the first table of the Law, i.e., commandments 1-4), and the second focusing on how to express and show this love for one another (through obedience to his commandments given in the second table of the Law, i.e., commandments 5-10). (Though I'll add that another way to divide the Ten Commandments is into the first three being directed to God, and the last seven being directed to one another; the fourth commandment, calling us to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy," is a pivot commandment, entailing elements of both verticality and horizontality.)

The moral law has not gone away and is still binding. God's grace to us in Jesus frees us from the condemnation and dominion of sin, not from the demands of obedience and righteousness! The moral law defines and demands righteousness. (SEE HANDOUT)

The rest of the law consists in applications of the moral law, given to the people in a series of increments through the course of their 40 years in the wilderness, which sets forth concrete details and applications for what living out these principles of the moral law will look like in the land.

The Ceremonial Law has been fulfilled by Christ and is thereby abrogated. There is no longer any need of sacrifices, and Jesus has broken down the walls of separation which the ceremonial laws were all about upkeeping. So all of these laws no longer apply, and are of interest to us only in what they reveal about God, Christ, and us. They were statutes that were to be observed until Christ fulfilled and accomplished and abolished the very need of them.

The Civil Law expired with the political entity of theocratic nation-state of Israel, and no longer applies except in terms of general equity, that is, in terms of principles of justice. These were specific rules for sustaining communion in the context of that land before Jesus came and before the Spirit was given. But the principles of equity are to be considered in our own laws of the land.

Now we have the Spirit (Pentecost), who helps us to apply the principles in a dynamic way to the situations in which we find ourselves.

This is a pretty good template. Sounds good!

But how to know which is which? I mean, the Westminster Confession affirms that, as we've said, the moral law is still binding; the ceremonial law was abrogated by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the civil law expired with the nation and state of Israel/Judah, save for the general equity thereof. This sounds very promising indeed, and it would be great if Scripture made it so easy to distinguish between the types of laws!

And while it's true – and actually extremely interesting and significant – that the manner in which the Law is given in Exodus through the course of the book follows this very pattern: moving from the giving of the moral law in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20), to mostly civil law in the Covenant Code (Ex. 20-23), to ceremonial law in the instructions for setting up the tabernacle and the priesthood (Ex. 25-31). Nevertheless, when one turns to, say, Leviticus 19, one encounters a confusing tangle of laws in which the great summary of the moral law (“you shall love your neighbor as yourself”) is set alongside statutes and rulings concerning not cutting one's beard or mixing different types of fabric, without distinction. What are we to make of that? If we are going to assert that a given statute is “ceremonial,” we need to have a sound exegetical basis for so declaring. Otherwise, we run the risk of a tautology, by which we say that the law no longer applies because ... well, because we no longer observe it. And why don't we observe it? Because it no longer applies! We need a more robust interpretive hermeneutic than this.

One of the criteria for recognizing the presence of moral law is to discern a distinction between righteous and unrighteous thought or activity, which is always binding in all situations, vs. a marker of ceremonial law as keeping the boundary between clean and unclean. While all unrighteousness is uncleanness, not all uncleanness is unrighteousness.

For example, eating oysters is not allowed in the context of the Old Covenant community, because it renders the one eating them unclean. But now, the context of the New Covenant community, we can eat oysters. What has changed? Obviously, it's not a matter of righteousness vs. unrighteousness, but only of clean vs. unclean. What has changed in the transition from the Old to the New is that the laws whose

purpose was to keep the wall between clean and unclean have been fulfilled and abrogated in Christ, who has torn down the ancient wall of hostility between Jew and gentile.

Moreover, another category and marker of ceremonial law are those statutes whose purpose was to keep the wall between us and God (holy vs. profane); this wall has been breached and felled by the work of Christ as well, and the veil of the Temple is now open to us. We have access to God the Father through Jesus Christ in a manner that in the Old Covenant we dared not assume or approach.

So where laws are focused on retaining the walls between God and us on the one side of the covenant community – the wall of holiness, separating holy things from profane things – and between us and the wider world at the other boundary of the covenant community – the wall of cleanness, separating clean things and people from unclean – these are evidence of ceremonial laws which are now abrogated. But we must keep in mind that even if the clean-unclean dimension is removed from a law, there may still remain other dimensions.

We've already mentioned the eating of oysters. Let's now discuss oysters and incest. Eating oysters and engaging in incest were each condemned in the Old Covenant as rendering the person doing it unclean. Insofar as Christ has come, this consideration is no longer operative in the life of believers. That distinction, and those laws about maintaining that distinction, have been abrogated and are no more. But whereas we can eat oysters in the New Covenant, we certainly cannot engage in incest. This is because eating oysters is not in itself unrighteous, but was intended to keep the people of Israel separated from their neighbors until the coming of the Christ. Now that Christ has come, there is no reason for a law whose whole purpose was to keep a separation that has now been done away with in light of the coming of the Spirit.

The ban on incest, however, was not simply a matter of clean and unclean, though it was surely that. Even removing consideration of clean vs. unclean boundaries, incest is still unrighteous in God's sight. Indeed, it is an abomination. The law against incest, though it is "Old Testament law" is not abrogated because it is a matter of righteousness vs. unrighteousness, which is always the mark of the moral law, and is forever binding in that regard.

How does one recognize whether it's merely a clean vs. unclean law, and thus no longer binding, vs. a righteous vs. unrighteous one, and still thus binding? Part of the answer is that when we look at Scripture, we can see that there are certain sins which draw down God's wrath and judgment, not just in the context of the covenant community (i.e., for breaches of cleanness or holiness), but anywhere and everywhere. These "polluting" sins that bring God's wrath come in four categories: sins that egregiously breach communion with God (idolatry), sins that egregiously breach communion within households (sexual immorality), sins that egregiously breach communion among and between households (injustice and bloodshed), and sins that egregiously degrade, diminish, and destroy the created order. Thus, sins that bring down the wrath of God against the world are unrighteous and are not to be done anywhere at any time. Here are the signs and markers of the moral law.

In summary, the four categories of sin that bring down God's judgment for being unrighteous:

1. With God (IDOLATRY)
2. Within Households (IMMORALITY)
3. Across Households (INJUSTICE)
4. With the Created Order (DEGRADATION)

One further aspect to discuss in regard to deepening our understanding of the assorted laws we encounter is the Old Testament is to consider that in addition to asking questions as to clean vs. unclean and holy vs. profane (the stuff of ceremonial law), and the questions of righteousness vs. unrighteousness (the stuff of moral law), we need to recognize a wisdom dimension of the law as well. That is, we must further consider the wise vs. unwise aspect of obeying or disobeying a given law.

For example, we have seen how the sinfulness of eating oysters in the Old Testament did not have to do with any inhering unrighteousness in the act of eating an oyster in itself, but in the fact that doing so would be disobeying God's command not to do so, as it would render one unclean. But because Christ has broken down the wall of cleanness and uncleanness, all those laws whose singular purpose was to keep separate that which is clean from that which is unclean, are now abrogated. In other words, the prohibition on eating oysters was a ceremonial statute involving prospective uncleanness, not a moral law commandment involving unrighteousness. However, though we are now permitted to eat oysters, as doing so entails neither uncleanness nor unrighteousness, it may be unwise to do so, for reasons of health and assorted environmental factors.

One more example should suffice. We also spoke of the loaded matter of incest. Obviously, engaging in such behavior is not only a matter of uncleanness and unrighteousness, but it is also unwise, when we consider the adverse health effects that flow from it.

So at this point, we've established a somewhat robust approach for examining each law in the Torah, line by line and verse by verse, in which we determine whether and to what extent the purpose and/or benefit of each given law is ceremonial (entailing questions of clean vs. unclean, holy vs. profane) and/or moral (entailing questions of righteousness vs. unrighteousness) and/or a matter of wisdom (involving questions of it being wise vs. unwise).

But what about the civil law? We have noted how the Confession notes that the juridical laws of the Old Testament expired with the nation and state of Israel, but for the "general equity" thereof. How can we discern, as it were, the kernel of general equity from the husk of long-expired state (or tribal law) from ancient Israel? The beginning of the answer may consist in this – and it is our hypothesis: that in the Old Testament civil laws, God applies moral law principles to existing institutions, which may or may not themselves be intended as permanent features of covenant life.

In short, God applies his prescription to the context of our description! The institutions of our world are always imperfect, always deformed to a greater or lesser extent by sin, and God speaks the wise moral principles of righteousness into that darkness and deformity, with the effect that those institutions are reformed and gradually transformed. The change we see in history over the millennia, the long but indubitable improvement we see in human society, is not so much – as is usually imagined – a growth in moral improvement of individuals, but a gradual but inexorable healing of social and cultural institutions, a process which remains radically incomplete and is continually being threatened and subverted by abiding human sinfulness.

What changes are our corporate ideas concerning what is and what is not permitted, and the social institutions that give expression to these ideas, which restrain, redirect, reorient, and shape our individual lives as we find our fit in these systems, conforming to a greater or lesser degree. And the way that the principles of the moral law have changed the world are not simply by standing as a set of rules of personal behavior, in abstraction from forms of social pressure and coercion, but by the tenacity of those who've held to them, gradually taking deep root, undermining what oppose those ideas and

undergirding an entire new array of institution-shaping ideas. The civil law in the Old Testament is a picture of this process, where God applies principles of moral law into the mess and muck of fallen institutions and the sinful practices of fallen people.

For example, in the Old Testament, God addresses slavery, polygamy, and divorce, among innumerable other topics, applying timeless principles of moral law to reform and ultimately transform those very institutions. Moving for just a moment to a very high altitude, we can see this process in effect over the long course of redemption history, in the gradual – indeed, the slow but inexorable – transformation of various institutions of human life. We see the tectonic effects over the course of millennia, of the long influence and shaping of the church, reforming society, nudging its institutions, as those blessed beyond measure (though often insensible of the extent of their blessedness and of their debt to the church for their enjoyment of the same), who live in long-gospelized societies have seen the epochal transformation, first, of the domain of political life, from a context in which most of us were subjects serving fearfully under the authority of emperors, to what many of us now enjoy, being citizens of democratic republics with rights and a voice in our own governance; second, of the domain of economic life, from a context in which most of us were slaves laboring under the authority of masters, to what we now enjoy as employees with rights laboring for employers; and third, of the domain of familial life, from a context in which women called their husbands “Lord” and they and their children lived under the authority of the paterfamilias, to what we now enjoy as partners and co-heirs of life.

The coming of the Kingdom is not and never was about quick political revolution, entailing the immediate abolition of political hierarchies, slavery, or polygamy, but a slow transformation of the entire world from the bottom up, involving the transformation that comes from countless transformed lives living in accordance with God’s word. A leavening. And the disciples of Christ are that leaven.

Amen!

SUMMARY TEMPLATE FOR OBEYING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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With an eye towards your own obedience,

DON'T FORGET, **NEGLECT**, or **IGNORE** the duty to obey,

NOR REFUSE to obey,

NOR brazenly disobey,

BUT REMEMBER the duty to obey,

AND OBEY

First order duties

Negative

Negative

Negative

Affirmative

Affirmative

and with an eye towards the obedience of others,

DON'T FORGET, **NEGLECT**, or **IGNORE** the duty,

NOR REFUSE the duty,

NOR brazenly disobey the duty,

BUT REMEMBER the duty

to encourage, exhort, equip, and enable others,

not only that they themselves obey, and not disobey,

but that they do likewise for yet others;

AND OBEY

by thus **ENCOURAGING** and **EXHORTING**,

and **EQUIPPING** and **ENABLING** others;

Second order duties

Negative

Negative

Negative

Affirmative

Affirmative

and with an eye towards defending the rights of yourself and others,

DON'T FORGET, **NEGLECT**, or **IGNORE** the duty,

NOR REFUSE the duty,

NOR brazenly disobey the duty,

BUT REMEMBER the duty

to defend your own right, and the right of others,

to obey, and to not be compelled or coerced to disobey;

AND OBEY

by thus **DEFENDING** your own right, and the right of others;

Third order duties

Negative

Negative

Negative

Affirmative

Affirmative

and for each of these orders of duty:

not only according to the letter of the law,

but according to the spirit of the law,

wholly, and **wholeheartedly**,

glorifying and enjoying God in this way;

Civil standard

Moral standard

because God has commanded it,

because it's **for your own benefit**,

and **for the direct and indirect benefit of others.**

(Word)

(Self)

(World)

Normative perspective

Existential perspective

Situational perspective