

## **Why do we bother with the Old Testament law?**

### **While waiting to begin...**

1. What's your favourite part of the Old Testament? Why?
2. How have you found studying the book of Leviticus?
3. Compare some OT and NT passages. What do we learn?
  - Leviticus 10:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 11:27-30
  - Deuteronomy 25:4 and 1 Corinthians 9:6-9

### **Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 19**

*Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

1. God gave Adam a law, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his descendants to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience. He promised life if Adam kept the law and threatened death if he broke it. Moreover, he endowed Adam with power and ability to keep that law.

2. This law, after Adam fell, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness and, as such, was given by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments written on two stone tablets. The first four commandments contain our duty to God, the other six our duty to man.

3. In addition to this law, commonly called the moral law, God was pleased to give the people of Israel—as the church under age—ceremonial laws, which contained several typological ordinances. These ordinances consisted partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits, and partly of various instructions of moral duties. All these ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the new testament.

### **The Bible's view of the O.T. Law**

#### **God's gift to Adam**

God's Law in Eden:

- the creator is also life's regulator
- commands and prohibitions, Gen 1:26-27, 2:17

In the form of a "covenant":

- rules = obedience
- promise = life for obedience
- warning = death for disobedience
- called covenant of "works" or of "life"

Outside of Eden / after the Fall:

- codified & written in Mosaic law, esp. 10 Commandments (Exodus 20, 34:1)
- = love God & neighbour (Matt. 22:37-40)
- the "perfect law" does not change (James 1:25)
- Parallel: the fact of sickness doesn't change statements about good health
- Example: Cain knew about true worship and murder (Gen. 4)

#### **Traditional division of OT law into moral, ceremonial and judicial/civil**

Ceremonial laws (esp. Ex, Lev, Num, & reviewed in Deut)

- like "tutors/guardians/trustees" for under-age children, Galatians 4:1-3
- "types" or pointers to the Gospel of grace with God-given spiritual significance
  - Sacrifices → Christ's work
  - Cleansing rituals → Christ's benefits
  - Moral duties e.g. food laws → God's Church must be distinct, 1 Cor. 5:7, 2 Cor. 6:17
- Means of grace then...
- No longer: Hebrews 8:13, 10:1, 10:18

4. To the people of Israel, as a civil entity, he also gave various judicial laws which expired at the time their State expired. Therefore, these judicial laws place no obligation upon anyone now, except as they embody general principles of justice.

5. The moral law binds all people at all times to obedience, both those who are justified and those who are not. The obligation to obey the moral law is not only because of its content, but also because of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel, Christ in no way dissolves this obligation, but greatly strengthens it.

6. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works by which they are justified or condemned, nevertheless the law is of great use to them as well as to others. By informing them—as a rule of life—both of the will of God and of their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. It also reveals to them the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives. Therefore, when they examine themselves in the light of the law, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of their sin, together with a clearer view of their need of Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful to the regenerate because, by forbidding sin, it restrains their corruptions. By its threats it shows them what their sins deserve, and, although they are free from the curse threatened in the law, it shows the afflictions that they may expect because of them in this life. The promises of the law likewise show to the regenerate God's approval of obedience and the blessings they may expect as they obey the law, although these blessings are not due to them by the law as a covenant of works. Therefore, the fact that a man does good rather than evil because the law encourages good and discourages evil is no evidence that the man is under the law rather than under grace.

7. These uses of the law do not conflict with the grace of the gospel, but are in complete harmony with it; for it is the Spirit of Christ who subdues and enables the will of man to do freely and cheerfully those things which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires.

Judicial/civil laws (esp. in Exodus 21-23)

- not binding since end of OT Jewish nation
- can teach us general principles of justice, e.g. preachers and oxen! 1 Cor. 9:8-10

Moral law: continues to bind both Xn and non-believer

- Jesus "fulfils" the law =
  - his personal obedience, Matt 4:1-11
  - deepens & expounds, Matt 5:17,38,39
  - none of it passes away, Matt. 5:17-18
- Why? Same holy God & we are in the same relation to him: his subjects
- Why? the law is an unchanging whole (James 2:10,11 and the broken plate...)
- E.g. Ephesians 6:2, Romans 3:31

**How does the Christian "uphold the law" (Romans 3:31)**

NOT as a covenant of works. Obedience cannot justify.

Disobedience cannot condemn (the Christian).

- Galatians 2:16, 3:13, Romans 6:14

1<sup>st</sup> use of the Law: a rule of life

- It tells us what God loves/hates

2<sup>nd</sup> use of the Law: a signpost to Christ

- A personal tutor in every believer's experience... like OT law was to Israel
- Reveals our sins, convicts our consciences, points to Christ

3<sup>rd</sup> use of the Law: a restraint for sin

- Commands can restrain corruption... & remind us of the punishment our sins deserve... & the pains and Fatherly displeasure which sin brings... & His pleasure in our obedience, e.g. Eph 6:2-3/Ex. 20:12

**Grace/gospel are not opposed to Law (but to Legalism)**

- Need a Saviour not because of a problem with God's Law, but because of us
- \*\* the Spirit enables hearty obedience,
- Ezek. 36:27, Jer. 31:33