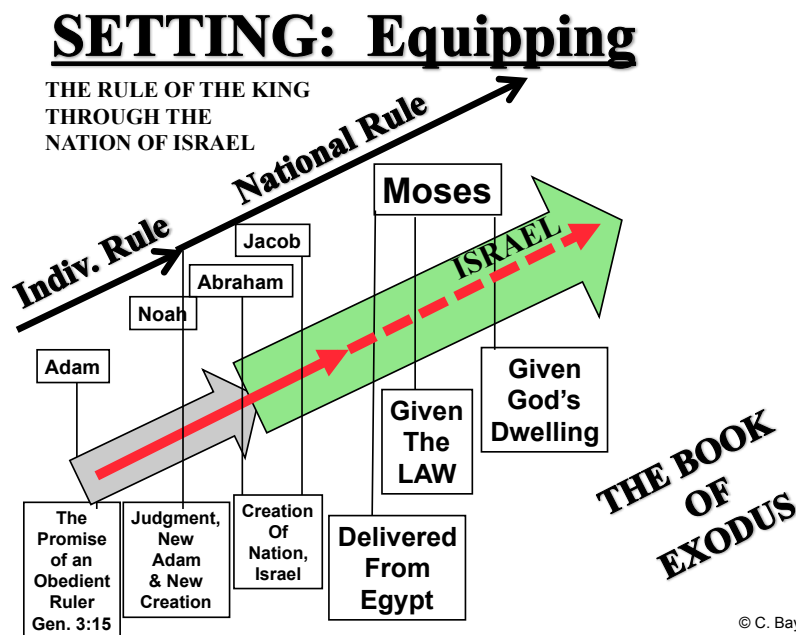


CHAPTER 13

THE LAW

The Equipping of Israel to Represent God



The Exodus Law: The Character of God Revealed (Exodus 19—24)

Now that YHWH has delivered His people, He will instruct them in how to represent Him. This will entail the instructions for holiness (the Mosaic Covenant), the holy preparation of the tabernacle and the priestly attendants. Without the Mosaic Covenant, God will not dwell with the people as they will not be holy.

The Relationship of Israel to YHWH at Sinai Exodus 19—24 and the Law

Israel was no different than the other nations, except where YHWH had equipped them to be unique. This was so that they might be national mediator to the nations (Abrahamic Covenant). The character of the people thought they could

obey, but their character will soon be seen as unable because they did not have the desire to obey.

But God had provided for a people who could not obey fully recognizing that they were imperfect and provided the sacrifices for them. It is very important to see that obedience is not keeping the perfection of the imperatives (“doing”) of the Law, but in responding to the whole Law for the provision of God. This included the sacrifices. By approaching God for His mercy, the Israelite became obedient by accessing the very character of God that enabled him to live. Thus it is very important to notice that the keeping of the Law was possible for an imperfect man as long as he accessed the sacrifices God had provided to forgive his sins and impute purity to him. However, note well that one could not achieve this perfection without the sacrifices which demonstrated his own admission he was not perfect and needed the mercy of God.

There was only One for whom the imperatives of the Law were written and that was Messiah. The perfection of the Law would identify Him alone. All the rest would come under His sacrifice. Jesus states precisely this in the Sermon on the Mount.

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18)

Following that statement He pointed out that only One had the right to enter the kingdom for only One had kept the Law completely.

"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same (*this is everyone but Jesus*), shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them* (*this is only Jesus*),¹ He shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

The Sacrifices Enabled Man to Escape the Judgment of God for His sin.

Obedience to the Law included the necessity for sacrifice. While the Law itself was perfect, the sacrifices allowed sinful man to participate without receiving a curse.

¹ At this point in the Sermon, Jesus is pointing out that He is the only One that meets this standard. Later on in the Sermon He will state that God will give this Righteousness, which will be seen in Him alone, to the one who asks (Matthew 7:7).

Innocent sin: The covenant defined the type of sin that would be covered by sacrifice. Normally these were sins that were not done in defiance of God (with or without knowledge), but were a product of the selfish frailty of man's flesh (e.g., treatment of brothers in a self-centered manner).

Presumptuous sin (defiant sin): This was sin that was done in a rejection of the covenant provision; or in rebellion against the God of the covenant or any of the institutions that represented the covenant (prophet, ordinances, disrespect for same). In other words, treating the provisions of the covenant as common (not as belonging to God) were presumptuous and were met with death (no sacrifices were available for defiant sin only death).

The presumptuous sin was horrendous. It involved treating any of the holy things as common. So treating any of the Anointed Ones as common or any of the sacrifices, tabernacle, etc., would be death on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Thus the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath (treated it as common) was stoned (Numbers 15:32-36). Eli's sons were to be put to death because they had slept with the women who attended the tabernacle (treated the tabernacle as common), but Eli would not do it (1 Samuel 2:22).

In the New Testament, the sin with the high hand (presumptuous sin) occurs as well. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira treated an apostle as common when they lied to him and they died. In 1 Corinthians 11 the people there were struck with death ("weak, sickly and some sleep") due to treating the table of the Lord as common. In Hebrews 10:26, the believing Jews are warned not to forsake the gathering of the body of Christ to go to Israel. They would thus forsake Christ (the Anointed One) and commit the presumptuous sin ("sin willfully"). There was no sacrifice for this sin and was death based on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. ²⁶ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Hebrews 10:25-28)

Summary: The Law was possible to live under its criteria since sacrifices were available and to be used to allow man to relate to a perfect God. The Law established, however, a perfect standard, which could only be met by someone with the exact desires of God. Thus man was confronted with his inability to please this God adequately through his own works. The Law exposed their selfishness (The

Adamic self was totally inward, while the provisions of the covenant were sourced from God's character of gracious giving). Thus man, even in doing good deeds ended up glorifying himself (Romans 7:7).

The 10 words (The Ten Commandments): Exodus 19

The first four commandments were vertical toward God. It was from seeing this self-revealing God that man would be in awe of His gracious character and would desire to imitate Him. Man's response must be only that YHWH was beyond Him in holiness and separation and was by no means similar to man and his character. However, it would be by watching the character of God revealed, that man would know how to represent His character. It was only in the self-revelation of God that man would know Him for any human observation would not perceive the reality of God's character.

The last six commandments expressed opportunities for man to represent YHWH as a reflection of, and provision by, God's character. As such, he should be looking for opportunities (as YHWH was) to express this sacrificial love. Since YHWH had provided him the opportunity, his only glory was to give YHWH glory for allowing him to be beneficial as he imitated YHWH by giving what YHWH had given him.

"You shall have no other Gods before Me"

- YHWH to be the only God.
- Worship of other gods would be a worship of oneself since other gods would be created by man's human wisdom. Only the God of Israel had the ability to create and establish Man.

God is the self-revealing God of the Scriptures. To give any credibility to any other god is a violation of this commandment. Today, pagans, and sometimes even believers, say that "we all worship the same God" or "there is a common good in every religion". Note that there is no "good" except that which is done for the sake of the only God and His Son, Jesus Christ. To admit to anything else is to be "ashamed" of the uniqueness of this God and will be met with Jesus being "ashamed" of that person before the Father in heaven. It is no less than a presumptuous sin, a sin that met with the death penalty under the Law. For this, there was no sacrifice.

Frequently, I am confronted with the phrase that there is some "good" in every religion or we all "worship the same God." It is necessary to note several things. First of all there is no common morality to all mankind that is not sourced in this God and His Son alone. Some may say that all religions respect their brothers and reject murder. Yet that is not true. For instance,

Muslims have killed Christians and Jews, but do not call that it murder, but instead call it holy war. Babies are killed in the womb in America, but that is not called murder, but instead it is called care for the woman. Thus murder, and who is one's brother, varies throughout religions.

Yet it must be noted that Biblical Christianity has a moral code that is not made up of principles but is simply the character of a unique God and His Son, Jesus Christ. One can be humanly perceived as extremely moral but if he rejects Jesus Christ, he is ultimately immoral and without hope. The greatest sin in Christianity is not even on the moral chart of the unbeliever. That is, very simply, the rejection of Jesus Christ. It can be noticed in any venue today as people swear casually by His Name, or God's Name with their "Oh my G..." A statement such as this is a sin so grievous as to be met with stoning in the Old Testament and no less serious today even though the punishment is not present.

Mark 8:32: For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

"You shall not make for yourself an idol . . ."²

- YHWH only known through Self-revelation
- To vary from the self-revelation of YHWH was to live in death since one would be operating on human wisdom that always led to self-glorification.

An "idol" is any representation of God that is not from His revelation. Thus, if one states that "God is . . ." or "God has revealed . . ." and this is not the case, then one is worshipping a god of their imagination. God is a self-revealing God and anything other than the Scriptures is an idol.

Ephesians 5:5: For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Note here that Paul is speaking of pagans who have a system derived from human wisdom (imagination) and thus he labels their covetousness, which is the source of their system, as idolatry (worshipping a god of their imagination).

² Refer to 1 John 5:21 where John warns believers to "keep yourselves from idols". Idols in Johannine terms are anything that falsely represents God (false teachings) particularly as they result in straying from the Word (Jesus Christ), the only Image of God.

1 John 5:21: Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

In 1 John the issue is that the Jews have proclaimed that there is another avenue to God, one apart from Jesus Christ. John is claiming that any revelation apart from Jesus Christ is idolatry.

“You shall not take the Name of YHWH thy God in vain”

- YHWH’s Name shall not be used except as designated by Scripture in its place of honor. It is not simply the casual use of His Name but assigning deeds or purposes to YHWH that is not specifically designated in His self-revelation.
- Identification as a representative of This God was a great privilege, and thus His Name would be used only in that purpose with the great worship which was to be between honored representative and His Great Beneficial God.

Today the phrases which include the Names of God are not only prolific among pagans but also, sad to say, among believers. ANY casual (not revealed as regarding God’s holiness) use of the multiple Names of or references to God are violations of this Law and were given a death sentence in Israel.³

Using God’s Name or His authorization to anything that He has not authorized is a violation of this Law. When one says, “God has led them” when He has not or “God’s will is . . .” when He has not revealed that to them violates this.⁴

“Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”

- YHWH to be worshipped uniquely through His Self-revealed designated days, and means.

³ Today this is fairly frequent, even in the pulpit. Any casual or “throw-off” use of God’s name is a serious violation. Frequently one hears the following: “Bless G-d,” “L-rd have mercy,” “Help me L-rd,” “Thank you J-s-s,” “Oh my G-d,” “Oh my L-rd,” “G-d,” “Oh my L-rd”. These have been used by the men who hold some of the most respected pulpit positions in evangelical America. What it does is bring God down to be used as something common by these people, essentially raising themselves up and making God under their feet for their use as something worthless or common. Using any Deity, angel, or their appointed prophets or apostles, in humor, casually, or in less than a respectful manner also fits this category.

⁴ Frequently one hears this used to authorize building programs, sermons, etc. Another one that is used without authorization is “the call”. If one has not been called, but uses this then they are in violation.

- The uniqueness of YHWH would be seen in the unique differences that He Himself declared that He was to be worshipped.

The Sabbath Day (and year and year of Jubilee) were days and years set apart by God so that He would be selectively worshipped apart from the regular toils of one's days. It pictured a future Kingdom when mercy would be totally effective. One thus enters His Sabbath rest when He trusts Christ, but awaits the realization of it in the Kingdom.

The Sabbath Day (or year) was a unique mark of Judaism and the Law. It was a unique Day that God would provide totally for man apart from their harvesting or reaping. It identified Israel as unique to the other nations. It was a particular part of the Law and is not applicable to the church during this time of Israel's being set aside. It will be re-celebrated in the Kingdom.⁵

“Honor your father and your mother that your days may be prolonged in the land which YHWH your God gives you.”

- Parents to be honored as representatives of YHWH. God would judge those who did not honor their parents with death (Ex. 21:17, Deut. 21:18-21). In addition the rebellion against parents would indicate a rebellion against the authority of God, and thus ultimately exile would occur as a judgment.
- To dishonor one's established authority was to identify self-interest against the interest of the parents in rebellion.
- The honor of parents was a specific opportunity for a man to show His love for YHWH as YHWH had specifically assigned them to act on His authority.

In America today this parental authority and respect for such has been dismissed to a great extent. Yet in the Scripture parental authority has always been something that was to be held to a degree even to the parents' death. So much so, that in 1 Timothy, children who do not take care of their aging parents are considered worse than unbelievers (1 Timothy 5:8).

“Thou shalt not murder”⁶

⁵ Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath. The Sabbath has always been sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday and will always be.

⁶ A word should be said here regarding the objection to capital punishment when this is quoted as “thou shalt not kill”. First of all, the word used here (only once in Exodus) is used only in the case of murder or manslaughter (unjust taking of life). Secondly, if one simply read Exodus, in 21:12-17, only one chapter further, there are listed multiple reasons why men are to be executed. Thus it is clear that

- Life preserved as men are the representatives of YHWH (YHWH the sole delegator of life. He alone gives and He alone takes).
- Murder was a judgment from one's own perspective of self-righteousness. Man was to always attempt to reconcile his differences in light of YHWH's gift of righteousness.
- The opportunity to look out for one's brother's life at the cost of his own life was the greatest of the gifts man could express. To bring forth life in YHWH would be the greatest sacrifice. Thus a man would give up his own life to see one have life in YHWH (as Jesus did).

“Thou shalt not commit adultery”

- Adultery was the violation of God's provision of Genesis 2:24, one man, one woman, for life in the covenant of marriage. Any operation outside of that, in heart, or deed, was a violation of God's unique gift to each man and woman in the partner He had given them. Adultery is considered a violation of the covenant, which is for life. The combination of this with the heart requirement of keeping the Law was what Jesus described in Matthew (5:27-28).
- Marriage was authorized as the particular means in which man could express the one-way love of God to another as a symbolic representation on earth. Marriage was the only parallel which matched God's commitment to Israel (Gen. 22) in an oath and of Christ's love for the church. To express an interest for another outside of that unique revealed form was adultery (divorce, remarriage, pre-marital, extra-marital or other relationships outside of a one-man, one-woman marriage).
- Man was to use the opportunity of marriage (as well as women) to provide as YHWH had provided and look out for her at his own sacrifice. Man was to rejoice with his brother (or sister) in the gift of his spouse, as opposed to envy or coveting.

“Thou shalt not steal”

- Personal property to be regarded as having been given by YHWH unique and exclusive choice and not to be taken by others.
- Man was to rejoice in the gifts that YHWH had uniquely given to his brother. To steal would be to oppose YHWH's sovereign right.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”

- Other Israelites were to be honored and their best interest desired above one's own.

those who advocate elimination of capital punishment on the basis of this verse do not have basis in this text.

- To lie was to look out for one's own benefit above the neighbor's. Thus one would tell the truth regarding one's neighbor so as to look out for his neighbor's best interests.

“You shall not covet”

- Individual identity with respect to YHWH to be preserved in YHWH's giving of gifts.
- To covet was the essential problem with man in all of the commandments, for he sought to have glory for himself, instead of God, and for himself instead of his neighbor. Thus Paul identifies even his righteousness under the Law as being done for his own glory (Romans 7).

Sanctification/Salvation under the Mosaic Law.

By and large the Mosaic Law was sanctificational. While man did approach God through the sacrifices that were essentially traced back to Genesis 3:15, they also established his “walking” relationship with God. Salvation was always through the promise that was unilateral. Sanctification was through the Law and the sacrifices would provide man's constant relationship. Note in the following that the “Law” includes the sacrifices and the experience of the mercy of God through them.

Life: The ability to represent God (Lev. 18:5)

Law only able to impart temporary life, as man could obey Law so also he could be experience life, but not gain life. Life was representing God, and as long as he did such (for God's glory) he had life. When he failed, he walked in death. Sanctificationally, he could never attain a status of continual life (cf. Romans 7).⁷ He must turn to the sacrifices for his shortcomings in order to achieve a mercy that would allow him to continue in a walk of life. But it was only through those sacrifices that he would walk with God. And these sacrifices could never ultimately and continually keep him in a relationship. These would be replaced by the once for all sacrifice that establishes the relationship of the believer forever.

⁷ This should be emphatically noted that this is not referring to eternal security, which the Old Testament believer had as well as the New Testament believer. This is only referring to the practical outworking of his ability to represent God. The difference is, that in the New Testament, one represents God by walking in his imputed righteousness, which does achieve sanctification with God, though the believer still sins (Romans 6).

Salvation: By faith in the promise of Genesis 3:15

As seen in its expression in each generation (Passover Lamb, etc.), Abraham was the pattern of faith for all to follow as he believed in the provision of God through the promise of The Seed (Genesis 3:15, 15:6).

Sanctification: The Law and the Sacrifices

The Israelite would keep the Law from a desire to please and glorify God (to keep them as a self-justifying work was sin) and participate in the sacrifices for the mercy of God.

Purpose of the Law

The reader must view the Law as it plays its part in the Biblical Story. The Law comes in to represent the Character of God and as such condemns man. He is delivered through the sacrifices that anticipate the ultimate sacrifice through which he will receive the imputation of righteousness for his walk with God.

Revealed sin fully: In Romans 5 it is clear regarding the full condemnation of man's character through the means of the Law.

Revealed righteousness: The Law revealed the character of God and the character of man. By doing so, man was condemned, not just for his deeds but for his very character. The need for righteousness (the character of God) was clear and the forgiveness of sins necessary. In the Law it was portrayed only as future, represented by the partial, symbolic, anticipatory (as a schoolmaster, tutor according to Galatians 4).

Indicator of God's holiness: In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5--7), Jesus explains this concept indicating that no one will enter the kingdom without the perfection of God's character. In Matthew 5:18-20, He explains that anyone who breaks one of the least of the commandments will not enter the kingdom. Only 100% perfection is allowed as the image of God. Only Christ is the perfect Man.

Condemner of the Adamic self: In Romans 2—3, Paul deals with the Jew under the Law and shows that the Jew not only did not keep the Law but explained that he was keeping it because of his relationship to Abraham in the flesh. This, Paul says, is a clear indication of the depraved character. The Jew had found a way around the perfection required of the Law, which wasn't really a way, but showed how his depraved mind could justify itself, thus condemning the very character of God.

Means for priesthood: The Law provided the means for the blessing and/or cursing of the nation under covenant (Ex. 19:5-8). Israel would receive both but would ultimately be cursed for her sin and rebellion. Only when Christ took the curse (Galatians 3) could Israel be delivered through trust in Him.

The Law and Terms Used for Its Concepts

The Flesh (Philippians 3):

The flesh was “self-interest” or self-glorification or very simply attempts to please God through one’s works or personal righteousness. It was opposed to the glorification of God through serving God’s interest. Under the Mosaic Law man would demonstrate that not only did he commit evil deeds, but he would modify what the word said (God’s interest) so as to show his own greedy interests as God’s interests (cf. Romans 2). This is also what James states in 1:13-16 where he begins, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God” (James 1:13a) and continues to point out that what man is claiming is from God is actually just his own self-centeredness which he is claiming is “good.”

Slavery (Romans 6):

Slavery was the description of man under the Law. He could never become righteous sanctificationally, since he was always condemned and righteousness was not granted through the Law. Thus he would attempt to be good (obey the Law) but God’s holiness always exceeded his own attempts (cf. Romans 7). The alternative is under the New Covenant, where righteousness was provided fully, imputed through Christ. Under this declaration man became a son. Righteousness was no longer proven by man’s works (since it could not be under the Law) and now is only proven in Christ.

Purity (1 John 3:1ff.):

Purity was never received through any of the Old Testament rituals. It was imputed symbolically only. Thus in the New Testament purity is only imputed through Christ’s imputation. Defilement moved from the unclean, and made the clean unclean. Only God could make the unclean clean. Thus, while man could ‘keep’ himself pure (avoid the defilement of sin) he could not purify himself, except through belief in imputed purity through Christ (cf. Titus).

Righteousness (Rom. 3--4, John 5, 1 John 3).

Full and real righteousness, unknown except by anticipation⁸ in the Old Testament comes to N.T. believers through faith in Christ, who then receive imputed righteousness.

Repentance:

This is the “turn” from one’s own perception/direction to an understanding/direction based on God’s revelation. Thus it is primarily used for Israel to ‘return’ back to covenant relationship having discovered that they were not perceiving that relationship based on revelation. Thus, repentance will be asked of Israel by God because they do not realize they are apart from God and need to “turn”.

⁸ This is not to say that the O.T. believers did not have righteousness on their account. Abraham most certainly did (Genesis 15:6). However, while righteousness was on his account, it was not fully realized until Christ died and imputed fully what was given previously (cf. Romans 3:25), where God “passed over” the sins previously committed. This indicates that God took the anticipatory as valid until the fullness of His Son’s sacrifice came.