

# 9. Doing the Deal (The Laws)

## Introduction

Three defining narratives in Exodus:

1. Miraculous rescue from Egypt
2. Returning of the presence of God
3. Commissioning as God's agents

Imagine... a new community being set up.

The Law is God's gift to his people to show:

1. **how to live in community**
2. **how to worship God**
3. **how to relate to other cultures**

## 1. What is the Law?

The phrase 'The Law' can mean different things: first five books of the Bible, 600+ specific commands, the O.T. (Old Testament) religious system, etc.

There are three kinds of 'law' in the O.T.

- a) *civil laws* – penalties for crimes
- b) *ritual laws* – how to worship
- c) *ethical laws* – that relate to loving God and neighbour.

But does it apply to Christians?

## 2. Christians and O.T. Law

The good news is that we are not expected to keep the O.T. Law because our relationship with God is under a new covenant (deal or contract).

**Activity:** Read Matthew 5:18. So what did Jesus mean by this then?

2. The O.T. Law is a covenant – a contract between two parties.

We need to know the story because it is God's story and also our story.

3. The Old Testament is not our Testament (Covenant) ((Deal or Contract)).

The loyalty is the same, the way we show that loyalty has changed.

4. Two kinds of Old Testament laws were not renewed in the new covenant.
  - a) *civil laws* – penalties for crimes
  - b) *ritual laws* – how to worship

Note: The O.T. Law cannot be changed. It is still the law for that covenant (testament) ((deal or contract)). Jesus fulfilled it. ☺

5. Part of the O.T. Law is renewed in the New Testament (Covenant) ((Deal or Contract))
  - c) *ethical laws* – that relate to loving God and neighbour.

This means that many ethical laws are still applicable to us: e.g. ten commandments, and two greatest commandments.

6. All the O.T. Law is still the word of God.

Commands that God want us to know but are not directed at us.

**Activity:** Read Deuteronomy 22:8. Why is it important for us to know this? What does it tell you about God?

## 3. The Role of the Law in Israel

- The Law was *not* (as some Christians suggest) a means for salvation.
- The Law was God's gift to let the people know how to love and serve him and each other.
- The people delighted in the law.
- When people failed to live up to the law, God provided the means for forgiveness.
- The law was never intended to be exhaustive but to provide guidelines on behaviour and attitude.

**Activity:** Read the following sections of the law: Are they **civil**, **ritual** or **ethical**? What do they tell us about God? How are they a **blessing**? Leviticus 19:9, Deuteronomy 15:12-15, Exodus 21:27, Leviticus 11:7, Exodus 29:10-12, Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 14:28-29.

So, do you see how this moral, civil and religious framework was considered a blessing for which the Israelites were extremely grateful?

## How should we read the law?

1. Remind yourself that this is God's word for you but not his direct command to you.
2. The Law is only binding where it has been renewed in the New Testament/Covenant.
3. Look out for God's mercy, justice, love and high standards in the law.
4. Recognise that the law is not intended to be comprehensive but guidelines.

