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# Soteriology

## Law

No meaningful study of the doctrine of salvation could be undertaken without careful consideration and understanding of the doctrines of Law and Grace. The two great divisions of the Word of God are just those — Law and Grace.

Dr. M. R. DeHaan in his book *Law or Grace?* identified three common errors in Christianity relating to the Law of God. They are:

- **Legalism** — the teaching that men are saved through keeping the Law — see: Acts 15:1,11; Romans 3:28.
- **Antinomianism** — the idea that men may live their lives however they wish, for salvation is all of grace — see: Romans 6:1; James 2:24.
- **Galatianism** — the error that men are saved by grace, but then kept by obeying the Law — see: Galatians 3:1,3,10.

# **LAW**

## **I. THE “LAW” DEFINED**

A law is an unchangeable, unalterable truth. It is something that always applies, because it is rooted in divine principles.

The Law of God (as given through Moses, Exodus 19:2,3) is the eternal and unchangeable rule of God’s moral government.

### **A. THE LAW OF GOD IS THE LAW OF MOSES:**

See: Luke 2:22-24 22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; 23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) 24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

The two terms of the law of Moses and the law of the Lord are used interchangeably. The law was given by Moses (John 1:17a). In its entirety, the Law contained 613 commandments.

According to Romans 7:14a, the Law is spiritual. This means it is not a Code of Hammurabi; it is not a Bill of Rights; it is not a human document in any sense — it is the absolute Word of the Living God.

Exodus 31:18 “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God”.

## **B. THE LAW OF MOSES CONSISTS OF THREE SECTIONS:**

### **1. The Commandments — Exodus 20:1-17.**

This is the moral or CONSCIENCE Law. (This law was already written in the hearts and consciences of men — [Romans 2:15](#) “Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;”)”

**2. The Judgments — Exodus 21–24, and primarily Deuteronomy.** This is the CIVIL law — hygiene, human relationships, crimes and punishments, etc.

### **3. The Ordinances — Exodus 24–31, and primarily Leviticus.**

This is the CEREMONIAL law — offerings, the priesthood, feasts, sabbaths, etc.

## **C. THE PERIOD OF LAW WAS OF LIMITED DURATION:**

The dispensation of the Law of God had a definite beginning and a definite ending in relation to its PURPOSE.

### **1. With Israel, The Mosaic Covenant Was Conditional.**

Note the word “if” in Exodus 19:5a. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.”

## **2. The Law Was Added To Existing Revelation At Mt. Sinai.**

Galatians 3:19 says the law was added to what God had already declared to men. See: Romans 5:13,20. It did not supersede what God had previously given to man.

## **3. The Law Was To Extend For A Definite Period.**

Note again in Galatians 3:19 the word “till.” <sup>19</sup> Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;

See: John 1:17.

## **D. THE LAW OF GOD IS PERFECT:**

“The law of the LORD is perfect...” — Psalm 19:7.

According to Romans 7:12, the Law of God is:

### **1. Holy.**

It is a declaration (in a human dimension) of God’s holiness.

“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”

— Psalm 22:3.

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” — I Peter 1:15,16.

## **2. Just.**

God is a just God (John 5:30). Unlike many of man’s laws today, there is no unjust demand to be found in any law of God.

## **3. Good.**

God’s Law is beneficial. It promises good success — Joshua 1:8. See also: Proverbs 4:2; I Timothy 1:8a.

If you want to know God’s standard or measure of perfection, look at His Law! The Law of the Lord is perfect, but it will not make any man perfect!

# **II. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW**

When we speak of the purpose of the Law, we actually refer to God’s purpose in giving His Law to man, for the Law itself is eternal. There are four main reasons why God gave the Law to man:

## **A. TO DEFINE SIN:**

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I HAD NOT KNOWN SIN, BUT BY THE LAW: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” — Romans 7:7.

“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, THAT IT MIGHT APPEAR SIN, working death in me by that which is good; that sin BY THE COMMANDMENT might become exceeding sinful” — Romans 7:13.

The Law was added to reveal sin as a transgression. See: Romans 3:20b; 4:15; 5:13; Galatians 3:19a; I John 3:4.

### **B. TO DECLARE GUILT:**

Although the Law was given specifically to Israel, it was a testimony to the

whole world that even a privileged nation could not be saved by works.

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become GUILTY before God” — Romans 3:19.

### **C. TO DRIVE US TO CHRIST:**

The Law brings the sinner to the realization of his guilt and the futility of salvation by works — to the place of calling upon the Name of the Lord.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster TO BRING US UNTO CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith” — Galatians 3:24.

“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” — Hebrews 7:19.

#### **D. TO DIRECT SOCIETY:**

As noted above, the Law has a purpose for man individually. It also has a place in human society, forming a holy basis for civil and criminal laws that enable man to govern himself.

“But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” — I Timothy 1:8-10.

The purpose of was to place before man God’s absolute standard of righteousness and holiness, and to legally settle the fact that he is indeed a sinner.

The Law was never meant to save anyone — it was a way of life, not a way to life!

Old Testament saints were not saved by keeping the commandments (an impossibility). They were saved by faith in the promises of God — which the ceremonial Law foreshadowed. See: Hebrews 11:13,39. The fact that the Law cannot save anyone is not a weakness of the Law, but a weakness of the flesh (man himself). The problem is with man — Romans 8:3a.

“The Law commands, But gives me neither feet nor hands!”

### **III. THE LAW AND EVANGELISM**

Understanding the purpose and intent of the Law provides an effective tool for a soul winner. When Paul preached to the Jews (who knew the Law), he began with the known (Abraham and Hebrew history), pointed out the broken Law, then preached Christ — e.g., Acts 13:14-40. When he preached to the heathen, Paul began with creation (because God’s Law is written on man’s conscience — Romans 2:14-16), then Christ — e.g., Acts 17:18-31; 14:14-17.

A lot of what passes off for evangelism today is basically a “self-improvement” gospel. Before a man can be saved, he must see his lost condition before a holy God. The Law is God’s way of showing him this, and how lost he really is. The Commandments will lead a soul to the conclusion of Romans 3:10,23.

The way that the Lord Jesus Christ dealt with the rich, young ruler provides a great soul winning model — Matthew 19:16-22;



Luke 18:18-24. Christ first challenged the man with those commandments pertaining to his relationship with man. After the young man responded with “all these things have I kept from my youth up,” the Lord zeroed in on the real issue — money was his god; he had broken the very first commandment! The Law produces conviction. The following example can be used with James 2:10.

<i>“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”</i>	<b>I</b>	Have you loved <i>“the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind”</i> ALL your days?
<i>“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...”</i>	<b>II</b>	Have you ever concocted a god of your own IMAGination?
<i>“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.”</i>	<b>III</b>	Have you ever prayed a meaningless prayer? ( <i>Matthew 6:7.</i> )
<i>“Honour thy father and thy mother”</i>	<b>V</b>	Have you always honored and obeyed your parents?
<i>“Thou shalt not kill.”</i>	<b>VI</b>	Have you ever been very angry with someone? ( <i>Matthew 5:21,22.</i> )
<i>“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”</i>	<b>VII</b>	Have you ever lusted after a woman? ( <i>Matthew 5:28.</i> )
<i>“Thou shalt not steal.”</i>	<b>VIII</b>	Have you ever stolen from someone? ( <i>Malachi 3:8.</i> )
<i>“Thou shalt not bear false witness...”</i>	<b>IX</b>	Have you ever told a lie?
<i>“Thou shalt not covet...”</i>	<b>X</b>	Have you ever wanted something that is not yours? Have you gone into deep debt just to get something?