

THE PENTATEUCH II: EXODUS

WEEK 5

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On the place of the law in the narrative run of the Pentateuch, Waltke observes:

From the creation to the destruction of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea and Israel's survival in the wilderness, the author enthralls his readers with action and conflict. The readers are carried along by the smooth-flowing narrative to the feet of Mount Sinai (Horeb) but are then unexpectedly dumped into an incomprehensible heap of case laws and curtain measurements. It is like reading Moby Dick, a thrilling narrative interrupted by a taxonomy of whale species. (Waltke 2007, 445)

What could be some reasons for this abrupt shift?

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The law is not one-size-fits-all:

- ① Moral Law-the portions of the law that concern fundamental ethical matters, independent of the nation of Israel (e.g. Decalogue)
- ② Dietary Law-the portions of the law concerning what one eats (e.g. clean foods, calf in milk restrictions)
- ③ Civil Law-the portions of the law special to the theocratic arrangement God has established.
- ④ Case Law- This is a form of civil law that is linked to very specific cases. (E.g. Daughters of Zelophehad, Egyptian blasphemer)
- ⑤ Ceremonial Law-the portions of the law concerning the cultus.

These will become more prominent as we dig deeper into the Pentateuch in the next two classes.

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For the Christian, the Law is vexing. Here are some tensions that arise when reading it:

- We believe that our God is the Jewish God. Our God gave these laws, but we clearly don't follow all of them.
- There is an elaborate cultic system with sacred spaces, rites, and persons. Jesus is our sacrifice foreshadowed by the cultus. Why didn't God start with that?
- There are numerous features offensive to modern readers: blood sacrifice, slavery, regular and at times strange differentiation between men and women.

As Christians, the New Testament must heavily inform our understanding of the law. Fortunately, there is an abundance of commentary within the New Testament on what to do with the law.

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The following is a loaded statement. What may we gather from this?

Matt 5:17-20— “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. 19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

What may we gather from this?

- Jesus is not anti-law, even if he tended to antagonize its “guardians.”
- He makes the astonishing claim that HE will fulfill the law!
- This is among if not the strongest statements Jesus makes regarding the authority of Scripture.
- Somehow, living *in accordance with* the Law is valuable even on a NT economy.
- In order to enter the Kingdom of heaven, you must either follow the Law perfectly or get your righteousness somewhere else (Plan A vs. Plan B)
- Without jumping too far ahead, he fulfills the law by (i) truly living the Law (Gal 4:4, Heb 4:15); (2) typologically fulfilling some of the most consequential features of sacrificial system (Heb 7-9); (3) providing the means (the Spirit) to genuinely act in line with God’s law (cf. Num 11:29, Rom 8:1-4); (4) becoming both death and life for us (cf. Deut 30:15-6).

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Here are a couple more tidbits from Jesus:

- ① Mark 7:18,19 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)
- ② Matthew 22:37-40 NIV Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Cf. Gal 5:6)

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We could go all night with Paul. Here are some key passages:

ROM 7:12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

ROM 5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

ROM 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

GAL 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

GAL 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

GAL 3:24-5 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

GAL 4:4-6 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

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Paul and Jesus aren't the only ones to comment on the Law:

- Acts 15:1,6-11—At the Jerusalem council, Peter argues against the Judaizers that the Holy Spirit demonstrates salvation
- Acts 15:13-21—At the Jerusalem council, James agrees with Peter and offers suggestions that will make table fellowship easier between Jews and Gentiles.
- James 1:25, 2:8, “Law of Liberty” and “Royal Law”

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As a general rule, the law stands out among its ANE counterparts in being extraordinarily gracious.

There is unusual amount of attention to paid to taking care of anyone who is at some disadvantage:

- slaves
- poor
- foreigners
- blind/deaf
- women (general)
- women (taken in battle)

Some cultural factors for understanding laws regarding women:

- Women are (generally) physically weaker than men which makes a big difference in agricultural societies
- Childbirth and pregnancy (let alone rearing) was a far more continuous process in the ancient world
- Women were often spared in battle, rather than slaughtered among the men.
- Women were also vulnerable in the fields: men could take advantage of them.
- Unattached women (unmarried? divorce? widowed?) are likely to be destitute

These won't explain everything but having these in mind soften the blow some.

Some cultural factors for understanding laws regarding slaves:

- Slavery in Israel was nothing like antebellum slavery in the US (chattel slavery) (cf. Ex 21:5)
- Closer to indentured servitude: provide food, shelter, care, but not paid.
- Fatal beatings were punishable by death (Cf. 21:18 and 20)
- Slave trafficking is punishable by death (21:6); someone may only sell themselves into slavery.
- Israelites are freed every seven years (21:2)

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The instructions on the tabernacle get rather repetitive.

26:30 ... according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain.

25:40 See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

27:8 ... as it was shown to you in the mountain, so they shall make it.

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There is equal repetition in construction, notwithstanding the fact that the construction reads almost identical to instruction.

- (39:1,5,7,21, 26, 29, 31) . . . just as the Lord had commanded Moses. (7×!)
- (39:43) And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the Lord had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them.
- (40:19,21,23, 25) . . . just as the Lord had commanded Moses. (4×!)

What's the big deal?

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This section of Exodus is brutally detailed and seems beside the point. He liberated them—why all this?! The answer emerges from a more fundamental question: *Why did God bring out Israel?*

- ① Israel was in anguish and under slavery (2:23).
- ② Victor Hamilton (2011, xxii) argues that it was “to fulfill the covenant he has made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of which Genesis speaks” Ex 2:24 supports this.
- ③ God wants to dwell among them!

Exodus 29:44-46 (NIV) So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt *so that I might dwell among them*. I am the LORD their God.

That God desires to dwell among them serves as a key to unlock much of the specificity and symbolism.

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There is a structural similarity to Eden, Sinai and the tabernacle:

	Eden	Tabernacle	Sinai
Center	Two Trees	Most Holy Place	Top of the Mountain
		Only Aaron	Only Moses
Inner Ring	Garden	Holy Place	Partial Ascension
		Only Priests	Only Elders, Leaders
Outer Ring	Beyond the Garden	Courtyard	Around Mountain
		Israelites	Israelites

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Most importantly, the tabernacle serves as an type (“shadow”) of the true dwelling place of God in heaven.

Hebrews 8:4-5—Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

More on this in Leviticus class! ;)

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