

INTRODUCTION TO THE LAW

EXODUS 20

Before we get into the verse by verse analysis of chapter 20, it would be useful to understand the theology of the Ten Commandments, their purpose and relationship to and with the Israelites, and how the Mosaic Law relates to the believer in this dispensation. The concept of law in general also needs to be understood and properly related to history within a dispensational framework. There is massive confusion in this area today. This leads to many theological errors, but the most egregious error is it leads to faithplus works gospel presentations that are false gospels and therefore save no one.

In the Ancient Near East, two types of covenants and treaties existed: parity and suzerainty. The Parity Covenant was made between two equal parties entered into equally binding, identical obligations. That is not an issue in terms of the biblical covenants. A Suzerainty Covenant was made between a king and his subjects/vassals. In exchange for loyalty and obedience to the king, he promised to provide security and the listed covenantal benefits to his subjects. The Mosaic Law is basically a Suzerainty Covenant, but it doesn't exactly match up with the pagan format. Many people assume Moses simply followed the pagan Suzerainty Covenant format in existence at the time, but doesn't it seem more likely that God providentially guided the world into the covenant format He wanted to have in place for the covenants He wanted to make with Israel? God doesn't have to follow any manmade system of anything and He pro-

duced the covenant that He wanted to make with the Israelites. In other words, I wouldn't get hung up on the details of covenants in general; we need to understand the Mosaic Covenant on its own terms as biblical revelation concerning what took place at that time. The Ten Commandments do not comprise the entire Mosaic Law; they are only a small part of it and the rest of it was progressively revealed throughout the remainder of the Pentateuch to total 613 commandments and prohibitions.

The Suzerainty Covenant usually consisted of six elements although there is not a consensus concerning the exact format.

Preamble: identifies the parties to the covenant.

Prologue: identifies the relationship between the parties.

Stipulations: obligations on the part of the subject/vassal.

Witnesses.

Document: recording the covenant in writing.

Sanctions: blessings for obedience/curses for disobedience.¹

Preamble.

Historical Introduction/Prologue.

General principles for future conduct.

Specific stipulations.

Witnesses.

Curses and blessings.²

The thing that made the biblical covenants, including the Mosaic Covenant, stand out from all other covenants is the identification of the King entering into them. All other covenants were agreements between earthly kings and their subjects or between one human monarch and another. The Mosaic Covenant

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 439.

² John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus* (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH, 1986), 203.

was the product of the King of the universe entering into a fellowship arrangement with the people He created to be His. This covenant was a divine undertaking with ramifications for God's plan for history involving the Israelites. It does not contain human errors and misconceptions. It is perfect because it comes from the mind of our perfect God. To be sure, the people of the Mosaic Covenant were not perfect, but the Maker of the Covenant was and still is perfect.

There were also two forms or formats of law in effect at the time. One type was a form of case law called casuistic formulation. It is in the form of the familiar "if/then" conditional statement allowing for explanatory conditional elements to be identified and accounted for. They began with the conditional "if" followed by a "then" which stipulated action or conduct to be taken or the penalty to be enforced for disobedience usually written in the third person. A non-biblical example of this is Law 128 of the Code of Hammurabi concerning marriage which reads, "If a seignior [feudal lord] acquired a wife, but [if he] did not draw up the contracts for her, [then] that woman is no wife." The other type of law is called apodictic which simply consists of precepts or commands (imperatives) usually written in the second person and which are unconditional in nature. They are an emphatic declaration that something is either right or it is wrong and they do not contain conditional, qualifying elements although they may contain an explanation of the meaning of the command in more detail such as the second commandment which prohibits making an idol in Exodus 20:4 and is further explained in verses 5-6. Some instructions may contain both

types of formats such as Exodus 30:31-33 concerning the holy anointing oil that was not to be poured on person's body nor was it to be made outside of its holy use followed by a conditional command containing punishment for violating the statute.

The Mosaic Law has both types.³ Exodus 22:1 and Deuteronomy 24:7 are examples of casuistic law and the Ten Commandments are examples of apodictic law. For example, the first commandment is "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3).

Exodus 22:1 ¹"If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, [then] he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

Deuteronomy 24:7⁷"If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you.

Exodus 30:31–33 ³¹"You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. ³²[apodictic] 'It shall not be poured on anyone's body, nor shall you make *any* like it in the same proportions; it is holy, *and* it shall be holy to you. ³³[casuistic] '[if] Whoever shall mix *any* like it or [if] whoever puts any of it on a layman [then he] shall be cut off from his people.'"

In terms of divine authority, there is no difference between the two formats; it is merely the format in which they are presented that differs.

³ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus* (Winona Lakes, IN: BMH, 1986), 206-201. See also Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 85-93.

The concept of law is found throughout the Bible and there are several kinds of law identified in it. Context has to be considered when determining what law is in view in any particular Scripture.⁴

There is natural, inherent, or intrinsic law. This is law that is required because the character of God demands it. God said, “be holy, for I am holy” (Lv. 11:44). This law is binding on all people throughout time and across cultural, geopolitical, and religious lines. For example, the fact premeditated murder is wrong has been acknowledged from the beginning and all societies recognize that fact although some to lesser degrees than others. I will discuss this further in a moment.

There are governmental laws imposed upon society by man. Since man is inherently sinful, many laws are inherently sinful as well. Nevertheless, government by man is a system ordained by God to maintain order and we are subject to the governmental laws of our particular jurisdictions.

Romans 13:1 ¹Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Chafer understood the concept of law to encompass God's will revealed in any form. For example, God gave a command to Adam in the Garden which assumed the form of a law with proscribed punishment for violating it, but it is not specifically called a law nor is it specifically said to be a covenant although

⁴ See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 7:225-226.

many people, I think erroneously, call Genesis 2:15-17 the Adamic Covenant. It is presented in both casuistic and apodictic form.

Genesis 2:16–17 ¹⁶The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat [apodictic], for [if] in the day that you eat from it [then] you will surely die. [casuistic]”

There will be law in the Messianic Kingdom which I will refer to as Kingdom Law. Contrary to popular Christian theology, the Sermon on the Mount was presenting Kingdom Law. Ezekiel 40-48 refers to the Messianic Temple, the priesthood, and sacrifices, including sin and guilt offerings, which imply legal standards of law that have the potential to be violated therefore requiring restoration.

Ezekiel 46:20²⁰He said to me, “This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering ...

The Land Covenant specifically states Israel will be under a law system once they come to faith and are permanently regathered back into the land and the New Covenant says the law will be within them and written on their heart.

Deuteronomy 30:10 ¹⁰if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul [Land Covenant].

Jeremiah 31:33 ³³“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people [New Covenant].

In this dispensation, believers are under the Law of Christ. “This form of life-direction includes all the teachings of grace addressed to the Christian, who is not himself under law since grace has provided all the merit that could ever be

required (John 1:16; Rom. 5:1, 8:1, Col. 2:10). The saved one is 'inlawed to Christ' (1 Cor. 9:20-21, lit. rendering). The believer is not without law to govern his conduct when 'inlawed' to Christ"⁵ Under, ἔννομος, means being under obligation imposed by law; those who are in Christ are tied to the law or obligated to the law that flows from His teaching and commands, what we call the Law of Christ. It is incorrect to say there are no law type obligations for the believer in this dispensation. The difference is we operate under a grace relationship to the Law of Christ and not a legalistic relationship as was required under the Mosaic Law. I will explain the difference at the end of this lesson today.

1 Corinthians 9:21 ²¹ ... though not being without the law of God but under [ἔννομος] the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

Galatians 6:2 ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Romans 8:2 ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Then we have the law system that begins in the book of Exodus, the Mosaic Law. This system is a complete whole consisting of laws addressing three segments of Israelite life: laws pertaining to moral behavior, laws relating to civil society, and laws relating to Judaism. These various laws make up one law system that is not divisible. This concept is important because many Christians in this age think they are still under the moral law but nothing else. The Bible never makes any distinction between the three segments of the Mosaic law; therefore, to vio-

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 7:226.

late any one command was to violate them all. The Mosaic Law stands as a complete unit or it does not stand at all. The New Testament clearly reveals the Law was abolished.

James 2:10 ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

Ephesians 2:14–15 ¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace*,

Here's what it looks like when theologians attempt to apply part of the Law to believers in this dispensation and disregard part of it. "... [!]† [the Mosaic Law] contained some elements which were permanent and unchanging and others that were *temporary*. As a law of obedience its permanent features are set forth in the Decalogue [Ten Commandments] ... On the other hand, many of the statues and ordinances of the law were clearly temporary, either because they were intended for Israel only (e.g., the annual feasts, the sabbatical year, the year of jubilee) or represented a relatively low standard of morality, which was suited to a people under age (e.g., the ordinances regarding slavery and the punishment of crimes of violence) and characterized by hardness of heart (e.g., polygamy and divorce)."⁶ He represents theologians who adhere to the moral law and do away with the civil and ceremonial law, but that can't be done.

⁶ Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy & the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1947), 40

The Lord revealed a very succinct summary of the Mosaic Law condensing it down to two: love God and love people.

Matthew 22:36–40 ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”
³⁷And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’”
³⁸“This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”
⁴⁰“On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Because of the similarities in format of the Mosaic Law to ancient pagan covenants and the formulation of ancient law systems, skeptics, including some theologians, claim the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments, was simply based on those pagan systems in the area at that time in history. There are a couple of problems with this. First, the moral codes governing life have existed from the beginning. God placed the knowledge of them in people from the beginning of creation, or at least from the time of the Fall. Since the beginning, every human being has known God and since the Fall everyone has had an innate understanding of God’s moral law impressed upon their conscience. This is part of what was referred to earlier as natural, inherent, or intrinsic law. Paul wrote about this situation in Romans.

Romans 1:19–20 ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 2:14–15 ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

In other words, people instinctively know the moral law of God apart from any recorded law codes; therefore, it is unsurprising that people everywhere across societies and cultures might have some laws that overlap with the moral dictates of the Mosaic Law and the Ten Commandments. This remains true even though they desperately try to suppress their knowledge of Him and the moral responsibility that attaches to created beings by virtue of the fact they are created by God. The fact that every person has God's moral code inherently internalized, however, does not mean Moses copied those things and put them in the Law based on pagan views of the moral law. Further, this line of thinking cannot explain the commandments that apply to God and prohibit idolatry; they could not have originated in any Babylonian or Canaanite pagan societies because they were thoroughly pagan and worshiped gods made with hands while suppressing their knowledge of the Creator God.

Secondly, this line of thought apparently presumes the triune God played no role in working through Moses to reveal and record the Mosaic Law and it is instead all simply the product of the human mind. This is another aspect of the overt denial of the divine revelation and inspiration of the Scriptures.

This rebellious mindset manifests in several forms. One theory claims that Moses, or since skeptics cannot allow Moses to be the author, other writers of the Pentateuch, copied the code of Hammurabi and other ancient law codes of the time period. Another view claims they copied some of the Law from the

Canaanites who, in turn, got their law from the Babylonians. They assign this to the time period of the Judges, which is, of course, later than the time in question in Exodus so this argument also serves to deny the continuity of Exodus as well as denying Moses was the author. Another problem with this view is not much is known about Canaanite law because there haven't been many archaeological discoveries that contained written Canaanite law. This theory is also grasping at straws in order to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures. Another theory simply assumes that similar people of similar backgrounds are going to end up with similar laws and societal codes of conduct. What the skeptics disregard is this is due to the fact that God has always placed the knowledge of the moral law within the hearts of people—whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not, and whether they realize it or not. This is yet another attempt to deny the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. It only makes sense that people across varying cultures and geographical locations would have similar laws against violations of the moral code God placed within the conscience. You should recognize this rationalistic pattern because we've been discussing it throughout our study of this book. Skeptics simply will not accept the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Instead, they want to believe the Word of God is the product of the mind of man.

As believers in this dispensation, most Christians tend to disregard the Mosaic Law because it is revealed in the Old Testament and they don't think it is relevant for this age so they know little about it and what they do know is incor-

rect. The problem primarily flows from a lack of knowledge concerning dispensational distinctions and many pastors and theologians still impose the Mosaic Law on people which can only lead to confusion and doubt about the status of one's justification salvation. People don't recognize the unbiblical nature of imposing the Law in this age because they aren't educated about these dispensational distinctions and they blur the lines between dispensations. In terms of understanding the Bible and God's relationship with Israel, it is important to understand the nature and purpose of the law.

The Bible identifies a number of purposes for the imposition of the Law.

The Mosaic Law revealed the holiness of God.

Leviticus 19:2 ²"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

1 Peter 1:15–16 ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

In the context of giving the Israelites the Law, God revealed to them they were to be holy because He is holy. The Israelites were His representatives to the world and they needed to act like it. Today, we are His representatives to the world and that command is equally applicable to our lives in this dispensation. The Israelites couldn't live up to this command and we can't perfectly live up to it either, but that's why experiential sanctification is a process and not an accomplished experiential fact at a moment in time. It is an accomplished fact in terms of our position in the Holy One, Christ Jesus, but we won't realize that positional

perfection until we receive our glorified bodies and no longer possess our sin nature.

The Mosaic Law revealed the sinfulness of Man.

Galatians 3:19 ¹⁹Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

The Mosaic Law provided a means through which the Israelites could know the will of God for them as His people. It was not about saving them because they were already a redeemed people of God; it was about maintaining fellowship with God when it was broken due to the commission of personal sins. This Scripture clearly reveals the finite nature of the Mosaic Law; it was done away when the Seed came and died on the cross.

This concept gets a little difficult to explain because Israel was a redeemed nation populated by people some of whom were believers and some of whom were not believers. The Mosaic Law provided the format for insuring the nation kept its relationship with God intact and for providing a means whereby the believing people of the nation could be in fellowship with God. The Law itself did not save anyone; faith was the means by which they were saved.

That doesn't mean the Mosaic Law can't serve the purpose of revealing sin today to unbelievers. I know a man who was a very gifted athlete and student in his youth, an unbeliever, on his way to becoming a medical doctor. He was pretty full of himself and decided he would perfectly obey the Ten Commandments for thirty days just to prove he could do it, but he couldn't. He

failed. As a result, he was so shocked he recognized his inability and his sin and placed his faith in Christ Jesus, abandoned his medical studies, went to seminary, and he is now an outstanding pastor and church planter who has started a Free Grace seminary that is experiencing tremendous growth.

For us, the Law of Christ serves the same purpose. We have boundaries and transgressing those boundaries can result in the loss of fellowship that requires restoration.

The Mosaic Law identified the death dealing nature of sin.

Romans 7:7–13 ⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” ⁸But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

The Law is not sin; the Law is good. Sin has always been present but knowledge of this standard arouses sin all the more. People become aware of just how sinful they are in the sight of the Law Giver. Somehow the sin nature uses the Law which is good to exhibit its true nature which is opposed to God and His Law.

The Mosaic Law set the standard for approaching God.

Psalms 24:3–5 ³Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has

not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully. ⁵He shall receive a blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Psalms 119:9–11 ⁹How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word. ¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. ¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

The Israelites maintained fellowship with God by means of obeying the Mosaic Law. Those who obeyed the Law were considered righteous; conversely, transgressing the Law was sin. When they failed by means of transgressing the Law, they could restore fellowship by performing the proper sacrifices and procedures. We do the same thing in this dispensation by means of 1 John 1:9.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus reveal the Mosaic Law as it pertains to the various offerings. The offerings presented to receive forgiveness for temporal sins and restoration to fellowship are among them. The offerings of thanksgiving were offered in the spirit of grateful, ongoing fellowship.

The Mosaic Law was a tutor to lead the Israelites to Christ.

Galatians 3:23–24 ²³But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

The Law was a protective barrier around the Israelites in order to keep them from the paganism of the people who surrounded them. That didn't work out so well, but that wasn't the fault of God nor was it the fault of the Law; that was the result of sinful souls in rebellion against God. The concept of a tutor in that time concerned placing one's son in the custody of a trusted slave who protected

the son from harm, disciplined him, and provided him with moral training. The tutors were not teaching them in an academic sense; they delivered them to the school for that task. They protected and disciplined them.

The Mosaic Law was a unifying factor for establishing the nation.

Exodus 19:5–6 ⁵‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

Deuteronomy 4:5–8 ⁵“See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. ⁶“So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ ⁷“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? ⁸“Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”

The Law set Israel apart from all the other nations and that served to keep them from mingling with them and becoming corrupted or absorbed to the point of nonexistence. That wasn't only a factor at the time of the establishment of Israel as a nation, it has been an operative factor in the preservation of the Jewish people since that time. This has been successful to varying degrees, but the fact is they have clung to the Mosaic Law and no matter the persecution they have faced, they have refused to abandon it. History testifies to the willingness of the seriously orthodox Jew to submit to death rather than abandon the Mosaic Law.

Their mission was to reveal Yahweh to the nations and arouse their jealousy and their curiosity so they might seek after God themselves. Due to God's

dealing with Israel beginning with the Patriarchs, but greatly intensified during the Exodus saga, the world took notice of this God of the Israelites. They were to be holy which would serve as an example to the world so they could see what holiness looked like. They were to be a nation of priests serving as mediators between God and humanity. The Mosaic Law itself served to set them apart as different from all the other nations.

The Mosaic Law provided the framework for worshipping Yahweh.

Exodus 25:8–9 ⁸“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹“According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct *it*.

Leviticus 23:1–2 ¹The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these:

Apart from the special revelation of God, they would not have known how to worship Him in the way He wanted them to worship Him. The Mosaic Law provided this framework for the place of worship and the procedures for worship. It identified the feasts, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the various sabbaths including the last day of the week.

The Mosaic Law was the test for inclusion in the theocracy. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 promised blessing for obedience to the Mosaic Law which would result in the maintenance of and participation in the theocracy. Conversely, disobedience to and rebellion against God and the Mosaic Law would result in temporal discipline imposed in ever increasing levels for continual rebellion culminating in expulsion from the land and the dissolution of the theocracy.

Leviticus 26:3, 11-12 ³If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, ... ¹¹Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. ¹²I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

Leviticus 26:14–15, 33 ¹⁴But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, ¹⁵if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, *and* so break My covenant, ... ³³You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.

Deuteronomy 28 expresses the same truth.

In the dispensation of grace, legalism is a deadly malady that leads people away from the truth expressed by Christ Jesus in word and on the cross. There is something about the heart of fallen man that makes him think he can prove to God he is good enough. At the same time, the fallen heart rejects the free grace gift offered completely without any work or effort of any kind on the part of the unsaved person.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament make it very clear people are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

Old Testament:

Genesis 15:6⁶Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Isaiah 55:1–2 ¹“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. ²“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance.

New Testament:

Romans 11:6 ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

Ephesians 2:8–9 ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Revelation 22:17 ¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

What does it look like when people who call themselves Christians in this dispensation mix the Mosaic Law with grace? The primary problem is that doctrine defeats grace and nullifies the gospel of grace. The worst-case scenario comes from those who are Theonomists or Christian Reconstructionists. When these theologians refer to the law, they are referring to the Mosaic Law, and their intention is to impose the Mosaic Law on societies around the world thereby bringing in the Kingdom of God. That's a very silly premise, but these people are serious about it. “[T]he Bible presents mankind with a God-mandated set of social, economic, educational, political, and legal principles that God expects His people to use as permanent blueprints for the total reconstruction of every society on earth.... Dispensationalists have in the past been ethically explicit, denying God's revealed law in the New Covenant era. They have been self-conscious theological antinomians. They have argued for decades that a person can be saved eternally by accepting Jesus as Savior but not as Lord, a radically antinomian and widely accepted opinion ... God's authority over mankind is manifested ethically by His law, and it is manifested judicially by His law's sanc-

tions.... If God does not direct Christians through His law, then only mysticism, antinomian intuition, and inner voices remain to provide uniquely 'Christian' guidance.... This hostility to Old Testament law is also why dispensationalism has always had an unstated working alliance with modern humanism: they both share an antinomian theology that seeks to 'liberate' man and the State from the restraints of God's revealed law and its sanctions."⁷ This could go on and on and the big problem is it inevitably leads to a false gospel of faith plus works.

Christian Theonomists are a fringe element of Christianity—or are they? They only differ in degree with what many pastors and theologians also believe and teach to this day. Many of these people are Calvinist in their theology, Reformed and Covenant, but Arminians and Roman Catholics also impose the Law on people in this dispensation in order to be saved. For Calvinists, this is largely tied in with their unbiblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and it leads to a Lordship salvation, faith plus works gospel. For Arminians, it is tied into their belief that justification may be lost due to sin or unfaithfulness.

Berkhof, famous Reformed theologian, wrote, "The law is a rule of life for believers, reminding them of their duties and leading them in the way of life and salvation. This third use of the law is denied by the Antinomians."⁸

Reformed Baptist Augustus Strong wrote, "To sum up the doctrine of Christian freedom as opposed to Antinomianism, we may say that Christ does not

⁷ Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997), 6, 11, 16, 17.

⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (1938; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 614.

free us, as the Antinomian believes, from the law as a rule of life.... Only as a system of penalty and a method of salvation is the law abolished in Christ's death."⁹ Strong apparently believed the law was a method of salvation that was only abolished when Christ died.

Allis, well known Reformed theologian, exhibited a total lack of understanding of both law and grace under the heading, "The Law and Gospel—Christian Obedience." "The New Testament makes it clear that the Mosaic law contains and combines two elements, both of which are of the utmost importance: (1) The law is primarily a declaration of the will of God for man's *obedience*. As such it demands and requires absolute and entire conformity. 'By ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy' states both the nature and the extent of the conformity demanded and the reason for it. So regarded, it is a covenant of works. The reward for obedience is life; the penalty for disobedience is death. (2) The law is a declaration of the will of God for man's salvation. As such it manifests God's love and grace in providing a way of escape from the guilt and penalty of failure to keep the law perfectly. The priest and the altar make it possible for sinful man to obtain mercy from a righteous God. In this respect the law is an impressive declaration of the covenant of grace...."¹⁰ He went on to waffle on this just a little bit, but that only served to make his position even more confusing. He later acknowledged the Mosaic Law was "ephemeral and purely national,"

⁹ Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 875, 876.

¹⁰ Oswald Allis, *Prophecy & the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1947), 39-40, 41.

but in the quote above, he connected it with Christian obedience and even salvation. Which is it? Is it short lived and only for Israel, or is it for the church as well? This kind of contradictory thinking can do nothing but lead well-meaning Christian people away from the truth when the truth is all they are seeking from a famous theologian they think they can trust. That's what misunderstanding the Law can do.

The primary problem with all this mistaken theology concerning the Law is the confusion between God's moral law which is unchanging and always in effect, and the Mosaic Law which came later and was temporary. Strong exhibited that thought when he said, "That since the law is a transcript of the holiness of God, its demands as a moral rule are unchanging."¹¹ What he fails to understand is the moral law of God was prior to and transcends the Mosaic Law continuing on after it was abolished. We can acknowledge God's moral law without placing ourselves under the legalistic bondage of the Mosaic Law.

I know trying to understand law and grace is difficult since we are not under the Mosaic Law but we are under the Law of Christ. Let me present a way of understanding this that I think is simple and will help you come to grips with this issue.

The simplest way I can explain the difference between a legalistic system of law and grace oriented systems of law is this: Under a legalistic system of law we are to do in order to be blessed, but under a grace oriented system of law

¹¹ Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 875.

we are blessed, therefore, we are to do because we already possess the blessings and we do in gratitude for the blessings we have already received and which cannot be forfeited. Under a legalistic law system, if you fail to do, you will not be blessed. Under a grace oriented law system, you are blessed whether you ever do or not.