



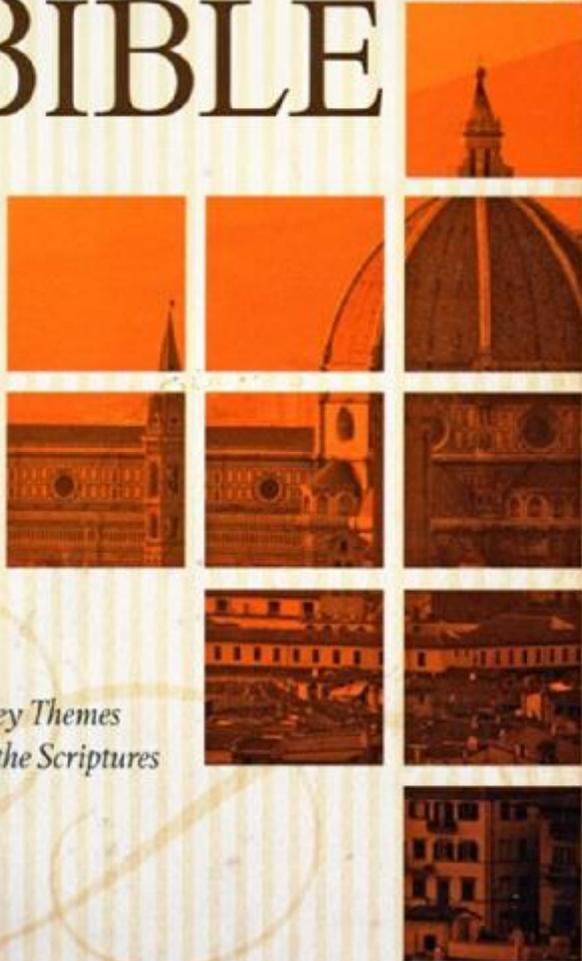
# The Great Themes of Scripture

## 3. Law. Regulating the Good Life

**Sunday, October 17, 2010  
10 to 10:50 am, in the Parlor  
Presenter: David Monyak**

*St. John in the Wilderness*

# MAKING SENSE *of the* BIBLE



*A Study of 10 Key Themes  
Traced Through the Scriptures*

H. H. Drake Williams III

## Reference

- **Making Sense of the Bible. A Study of 10 Key Themes Traced Through the Scriptures.** H.H. Drake Williams III, 2006. Chapter 5. “Law. Regulating the Good Life”

W. EUGENE MARCH



VOLUME 1  
**Great Themes  
of the Bible**

# Reference

- **Great Themes of the Bible, Volume 1,** W. Eugene March, 2007. Chapter 5 “Law”

# Great Themes of Scripture

- **October 3:** Covenant. God's Promises are Forever
- **October 10:** The Messiah. Unto Us a Child is Born
- **October 17:** Law. Regulating the Good Life
- **October 24:** Salvation. Amazing Grace!
- **October 31:** The People of God. A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation

Eternal, Almighty, and most gracious God: heaven is your throne, and earth is your footstool; holy and reverend is your name; you are praised by the angels of heaven, and in the gathering of your church on earth. Despite our unworthiness, you have invited us through our Mediator, Jesus Christ, to present ourselves and our prayers to you. Receive us graciously. Help us by your Spirit. Let us stand in awe of you. Put your law into our hearts, and write it on our minds. Let your word come to us in power, and help us receive it in love, with attentive, reverent, and teachable minds. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

From a Prayer by English Puritan Church Leader, Poet, Hymn-Writer and Theologian,  
Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

***This Week:***

**3: Law. Regulating the  
Good Life**

# The Law

If the Spirit of grace is absent, the law is present only to convict and kill.

—Saint Augustine.

It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me. But it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important.

—Martin Luther King Jr

A classical painting depicting Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a blue robe and a red sash. He is holding a large, rectangular stone tablet inscribed with Hebrew text, representing the Ten Commandments. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky. The title "Law in the Old Testament" is overlaid in large, bold, red letters.

# Law in the Old Testament

# The Meaning of Law



# Meaning of Law

## Four Words for Law

- Four words commonly used to refer to “law” in the Old Testament:
  - 1. *mitzvah*, translated as “commandment.” Refers to specific obligations and instructions
  - 2. *dabar*, translated “word” or “commandment.” Also refers to specific obligations and instructions.
    - the Ten *Dabar*
  - 3. *hoq*, “statute” or “decree,” Refers to broader principles or policies.
  - 4. *mishpat*, translated “judgment.” Denotes ordinances and customs that have been given the status of law.

# Meaning of Law

## *torah*

- *torah*: the only Hebrew word that is regularly translated into English as “**law**.”
  - Means much more than the English word “**law**”
  - Rarely: a specific law or regulation
  - Usually: the *whole* of God’s guidance and instruction for God’s people
    - includes the history of God guiding, teaching and forming God’s people
    - The first five books of the Bible called **The Torah**

A painting depicting Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a blue robe and a red sash. He is holding a large, rectangular stone tablet with Hebrew text written on it. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky. The text is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters.

# A Treasured Possession of God's People

# A Treasured Possession

## What Other Nation is So Great

- In the Old Testament, the Law is greatly valued, the treasured possession of God's people.
- Deuteronomy 4:5-8 <sup>5</sup> [Moses speaking:] **See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>6</sup> Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." <sup>7</sup> What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? <sup>8</sup> And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (NIV)**

# A Great Possession

## The Commands of the Lord Are Radiant

- Psalm 19:7-11 <sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. <sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. <sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. <sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (NIV)

# A Great Possession

## Your Law is My Delight

- Psalm 119:174 (NIV): “I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.”
- 1 Maccabees 2:27 (NRSV): [Mattathias, initiating a revolt against Greek rule in Palestine]: “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!”

A painting of Moses, an elderly man with a long white beard, wearing a blue robe and a red sash. He is holding a large, rectangular stone tablet with Hebrew text written on it. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky. The text "Three Major Collections of Biblical Law" is overlaid in yellow.

# Three Major Collections of Biblical Law

# Major Law Collections

## Three Major Collections

- Three major collections of biblical law:
  - 1. **Book of the Covenant** (Exodus 20:22-23:33)
    - Includes **Ten Commandments**
  - 2. **Government of Israel Collection**  
(Deuteronomy 12-26)
  - 3. **Priestly Collection** (Leviticus)
    - Includes section called the **Holiness code** (Leviticus 17-26)

# Major Law Collections

## 1. Book of the Covenant

### ■ Book of the Covenant

- Found in Exodus 20:22—23:33
- Probably the oldest of the three collection of laws
- Includes the **Ten Commandments**

# Major Law Collections

## 1. Book of the Covenant

- Two different ways law are expressed in the **Book of the Covenant**:
  - 1. Direct prohibition (like in the Ten Commandments). Called “**apodictic**” or “**categorical**” style
    - “Thou shall not ...”
  - 2. Predominant form of regulation in the **Book of the Covenant** (and in other parts of the Bible as well) is in a “**casuistic**” or “**case law**” style
    - “When such and such happens, then ...” or, “If such and such, then . . .”, with formulas for restitution or reconciliation of the problem included.

# Major Law Collections

## 1. Book of the Covenant

- Examples of “casuistic” or “case law” style:
  - Exodus 21:18-19 <sup>18</sup> If men quarrel and one hits the other with a stone or with his fist and he does not die but is confined to bed, <sup>19</sup> the one who struck the blow will not be held responsible if the other gets up and walks around outside with his staff; however, he must pay the injured man for the loss of his time and see that he is completely healed. (NIV)
  - Exodus 21:33-34 <sup>33</sup> If a man uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, <sup>34</sup> the owner of the pit must pay for the loss; he must pay its owner, and the dead animal will be his. (NIV)

# Major Law Collections

## 2. Government of Israel Collection

- Deuteronomy 12-26
  - Gathered and became significant as a law “code” during the time of Judah's King Josiah (ca. 639-609 BC)
- Includes:
  - Stipulations limiting the power of kingship (Deut. 17:14—20)
  - Mandate for a central sanctuary (Deut 12:2-7)
  - Process for appeal to the Levitical priests and judges (17:8-13)
  - Recognition of the rise of the prophets and ways to judge their authenticity (13:1-5; 18:21-22)
  - Laws to curb the misuse and defilement of the land (20:19-20; 21:22-23; 22:9-10; 23:12-14)

# Major Law Collections

## 2. Government of Israel Collection

- Of special importance to this Book of the Law is the prohibition against idolatry of any kind:
  - Deuteronomy 12:29b-32. **But when you have driven them [conquered people] out and settled in their land, <sup>30</sup> ... be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.” <sup>31</sup> You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods. <sup>32</sup> See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it. (NIV)**

# Major Law Collections

## 3. Priestly Collection

- Constitutes the Book of Leviticus
- Deals with:
  - concerns of ritual propriety, such as the correct forms of sacrifice
  - the establishment and ordination of priests
  - Issues of what is clean and unclean and various purification rites, and
  - the regulation of sexual relations

# Major Law Collections

## 3. Priestly Collection

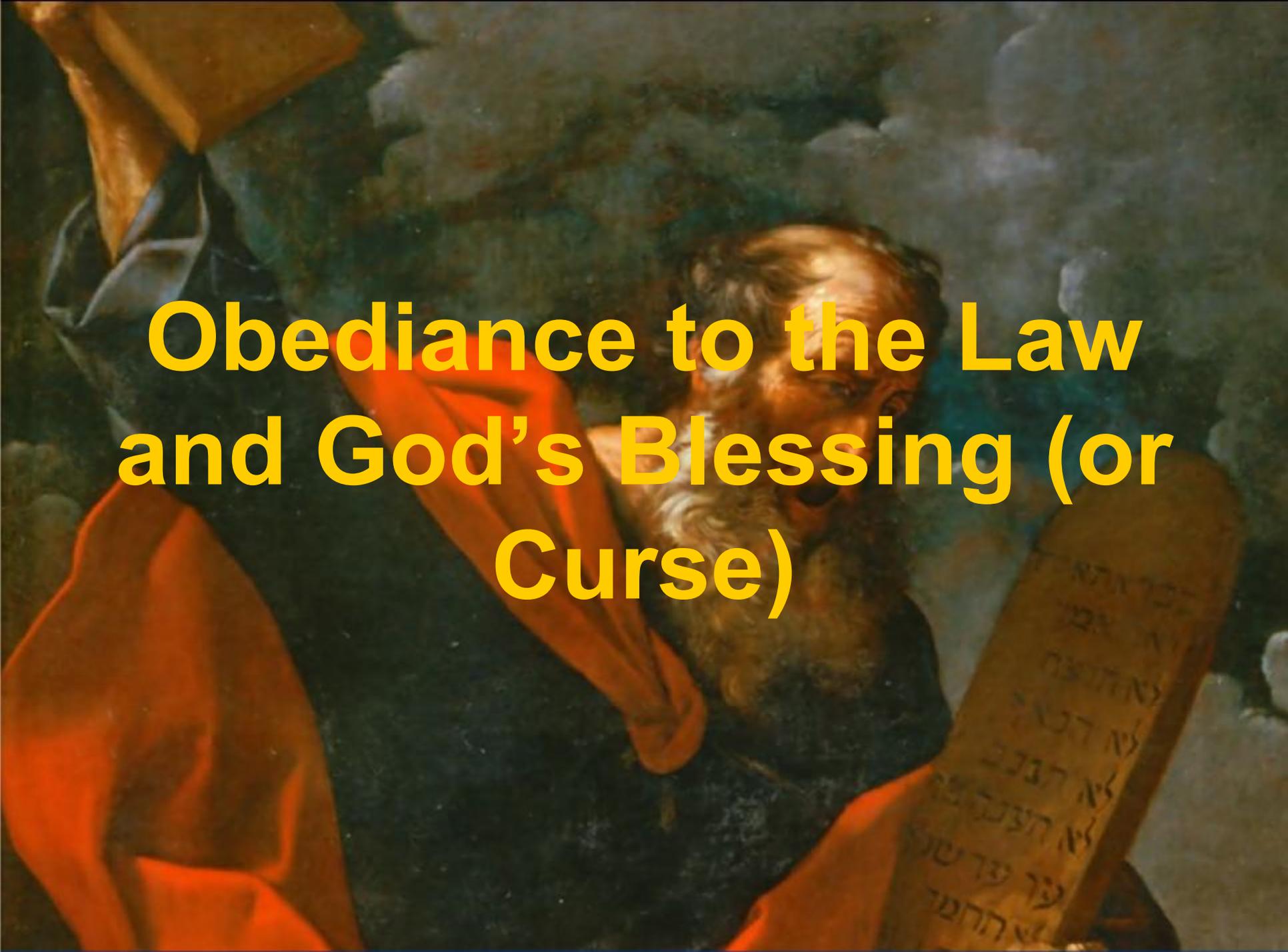
- Within this material is one section that scholars call the **“Holiness Code”** (chaps. 17-26) because of the repeated use of the term “holy”
  - Leviticus 21:6 <sup>6</sup> **They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the LORD by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy. (NIV)**
  - Leviticus 22:32 <sup>32</sup> **Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who makes you holy ... (NIV)**

# Major Law Collections

## 3. Priestly Collection

### ■ “Holiness Code”

- Holy = to be different, set apart
- Emphasis is the need for Israel to “holy,” set apart
  - It was important for the people of Israel to be clearly distinguishable from the peoples among whom they lived.
- Aim of laws:
  - cultic purity,
  - family purity,
  - singleness of devotion to God

A dramatic painting of Moses holding the stone tablets. He is depicted with a long white beard, wearing a blue robe and a red cloak. He is looking upwards with a surprised or awe-struck expression. The background is dark and cloudy, with a bright light emanating from the tablets. The text is overlaid in yellow.

# Obedience to the Law and God's Blessing (or Curse)

# Obedience and Blessing

## Blessings and Curses

- The Law in the Old Testament provided relatively clear standards for God's people to follow.
- If they kept the commands, they would receive blessing; if they disobeyed, they would be cursed:
  - Blessings: **Deuteronomy 28:1-13**
  - Curses: **Deuteronomy 28:14-68**

# Obedience and Blessing

## Blessings

- Deuteronomy 28:1-6 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. <sup>2</sup> All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: <sup>3</sup> You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. <sup>4</sup> The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock – the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. <sup>5</sup> Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. <sup>6</sup> You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out ... (NIV)

# Obedience and Blessing

## Curses

- Deuteronomy 28:14-68 <sup>14</sup> Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them. <sup>15</sup> However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: <sup>16</sup> You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. <sup>17</sup> Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. <sup>18</sup> The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. <sup>19</sup> You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. (NIV)

# Obedience and Blessing

## Blessings

- Joshua 1:7-8 **Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (NIV)**

# Obedience and Blessing

## Curses

- King Manasseh of Judah (~690 – 642 BC) did many evil things in the sight of the Lord:
  - built idols on the high places surrounding the nation,
  - built altars to false gods in the Temple
  - practiced soothsaying and augury, activities specifically condemned by God's Law

# Obedience and Blessing

## Curses

- 50 years later Judah was exiled into Babylon because, the Israelites believed, of the evil of King Manasseh:
  - **2 Kings 24:3-4<sup>3</sup> Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done,<sup>4</sup> including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive. (NIV)**

A dramatic painting of Moses, with a long white beard and a blue robe, holding the Ten Commandments. He is looking upwards with a solemn expression. The background is a dark, cloudy sky. The text is overlaid in the center in a bold, yellow font.

**The Law Will  
Ultimately Be Fulfilled  
by New Hearts**

# New Hearts

## The Promise of New Hearts

- Israel's history is filled with examples of the people's refusing to follow it.
- Nonetheless, the Old Testament contains promises that God's people will eventually fulfill the Law, despite their past.

# New Hearts

## The Promise of New Hearts

- Deuteronomy 30:6-10 <sup>6</sup> The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. (NIV)
- Ezekiel 11:19-20 <sup>19</sup> I [the LORD] will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. <sup>20</sup> Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. (NIV).

# New Hearts

## The Promise of New Hearts

- Jeremiah 31:31-33 <sup>31</sup> “The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and **write it on their hearts**. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (NIV)



# Law in the New Testament



# The Law in the Gospels

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus and the Law

- The Gospel present Jesus both as:
  - An faithful observer of *torah*
  - A critic of some of the ways that the law was observed

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Observer of *Torah*

- *On the one hand*, Jesus:
  - Regularly went to the synagogue on the Sabbath:
    - Luke 4:16 <sup>16</sup> **He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. (NIV)**
  - Taught in the synagogue and in the temple:
    - Mark 1:21 <sup>21</sup> **They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. (NIV)**
    - Mark 14:48-49 <sup>48</sup> **“Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? <sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me.” (NIV)**

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Observer of *Torah*

- Jesus:
  - Attended the major feasts in Jerusalem, paid the half-shekel temple tax (Matt. 17:24-25):
    - Matthew 17:24-25 <sup>24</sup> **After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma [temple] tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" <sup>25</sup> "Yes, he does," he replied... (NIV)**
  - Wore the prescribed edge (Numbers 15:38-41) on his robe:
    - Matthew 9:20 <sup>20</sup> **Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. (NIV)**

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Observer of *Torah*

- Jesus:
  - Jesus referred to the Ten Commandments positively (Matt. 19:18-19)
    - Matthew 19:16-19 <sup>16</sup> Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” <sup>17</sup> “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” <sup>18</sup> “Which ones?” the man inquired. Jesus replied, “‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, <sup>19</sup> honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” (NIV)

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Observer of *Torah*

- Jesus indeed declared he had come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law:
  - Matthew 5:17-18 <sup>17</sup> [Jesus speaking:] **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”**  
(NIV)

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Critic of the Law

- *On the other hand*, Jesus:
  - Criticized some of the hypocritical ways that observance of the law was conducted.
  - Ignored the limitations placed on social relationships with people labeled “tax collectors and sinners”
  - Challenged some traditional understandings of the law, such as the observance of the Sabbath, and the commandments on murder and adultery.

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Critic of the Law

- *Example: Jesus and the Sabbath.* In Matthew 12-1-12:
  - Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Law by having the disciples pick heads of grain on the Sabbath.
  - Later, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand, arguing from scripture that it was always “**lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**”

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Critic of the Law

- *Example:* Jesus and the Commandment on murder:
  - Matthew 5:21-22 <sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (NIV)

# Law in the Gospels

## Jesus, Critic of the Law

- *Example: Jesus and the Commandment on Adultery:*
  - Matthew 5:27-28, 31-32 <sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup>But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” ... <sup>31</sup> “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup>But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.” (NIV).



# The Law in Paul's Letters

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- Paul's views on the Law are complex and have defied consensus among scholars and readers.
- In part, this is because Paul was writing pastoral letters to church congregations, letters addressing particular problems in that congregation, and not a systemic theology.

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- *On the one hand:*
- Paul says the law is good:
  - Romans 7:12 <sup>12</sup> **So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good (NIV)**
- He affirms the Law of God was part of Israel's great heritage:
  - Romans 9:2-8 <sup>4</sup> ... **the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. <sup>5</sup> Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. (NIV)**

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- Paul says the Law correctly condemns sin:
  - Romans 2:13 <sup>13</sup> ... it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (NIV)
  - Romans 3:20 <sup>20</sup> ... through the law we become conscious of sin. (NIV)

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- Paul affirms the Commandments:
  - Romans 13:9-10 <sup>9</sup> The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”  
<sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to its neighbor. (NIV)
  - Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother” ... <sup>3</sup> “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” (NIV)
  - 1 Corinthians 7:19 <sup>19</sup> Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. (NIV)

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- *On the other hand:*
- Paul sometimes suggests the law is a burden that enslaves people and leads them away from God rather than to God.

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- The law, weakened by its “connection” to our sinful natures, is powerless to lead us to God. Only the Spirit of God within us can lead us to God:
  - Romans 8:3, 5-8 <sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man ... <sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (NIV)

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- The law reminds us we are sinners – but it cannot stop us from being sinners, so the law only makes us feel wretched:
  - Romans 7:14,18-24 **<sup>14</sup> We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. <sup>18</sup> I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. <sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (NIV)**

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- Following Paul, Saint Augustine suggested:
  - **“The law was given, in order to convert a great into a little man — to show that you have no power of your own for righteousness and might thus, poor, needy, and destitute, flee to grace.”**

# Law in Paul's Letters

## Paul and the Law

- The greatest problem Paul had with the law was his concern that people might think they could become “righteousness” or “justified” before God simply by keeping the law (= through “works”)
  - Paul was convinced that justification before God was possible only through faith in Jesus Christ (Roman 5).
  - There can be no righteousness by any human effort, even the keeping of the law.



# The Law in Acts

# The Law in Acts

## Christian Jews and the Law

- The book of Acts tells us many early Christians ascribed a high value to observing the Law.
- Many Christian Jews:
  - continued to function as priests (Acts 6:7),
  - practice circumcision (Acts 11:2-3),
  - attend Jewish festivals (Acts 20:16),
  - participate in temple ceremonies and sacrifices (Acts 2:46; 3:10; 21:23-26).
  - continue to observe food regulations (Acts 10:9-16).
- The church in Jerusalem was particularly law observant, and were concerned when they learned Paul was relaxing requirements for Gentile converts

# The Law in Acts

## Gentile Converts and the Law

- Acts 21:17-25 <sup>17</sup> When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. <sup>18</sup> The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. <sup>20</sup> When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. <sup>21</sup> They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. <sup>22</sup> What shall we do? (NIV)

# The Law in Acts

## Gentile Converts and the Law

- There were lengthy debates among church elders: do Gentile converts need to keep the Law like the Jews?
- A Church council was held in Jerusalem (the only church council mentioned in the Bible) and James, leader of the Church in Jerusalem, a Christian Jew, and the brother of Jesus, announced the decision:

# The Law in Acts

## Gentile Converts and the Law

- Acts 15:13-20 <sup>13</sup> When they finished, James spoke up: “Brothers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup> Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. <sup>15</sup> The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:
  - <sup>16</sup> ‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, <sup>17</sup> that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ <sup>18</sup> that have been known for ages.
- <sup>19</sup> “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. <sup>20</sup> Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. (NIV)



# Conclusion

# Conclusion

## *Torah*

- *Torah*, the law, remains a rich source of guidance on how we should live our lives:
  - There is still much to be learned about the way a society might be ordered to serve the well-being of all.
  - While many of the particular rules found in the Law may no longer apply to a modern, urban society
    - (An ox wandering through our neighborhood and falling in a ditch, or goring a neighbor is no longer common ...),
  - Caring for one another, making certain that we do not injure others, directly or indirectly, remains very important.

# Conclusion

## *Torah*

- Paul reminded us:
  - Observing the law cannot justify us before God.
  - If we try to justify ourselves before God only by observing the law, we will fail, and grow wretched.
- But through Jesus' sacrifice, we are now God's adopted children, and if we let the Spirit of God live in us, writing the law upon our hearts, we will become walking examples of the law: **“a letter from Christ, ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts”** (2 Corinthians 3:3 NIV)



***Next Time (October 24):***  
**4. Salvation. Amazing  
Grace!**