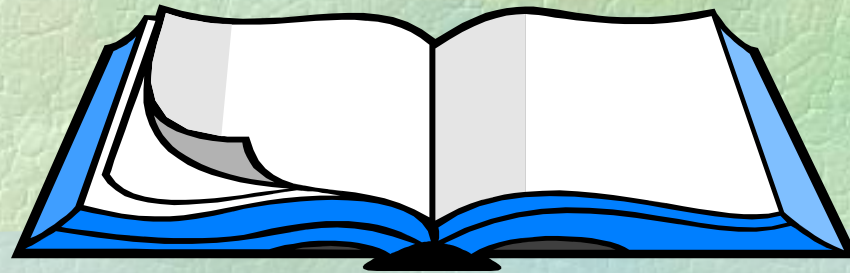


How To Read The Bible



For All Its Worth!

Goals For This Class

- To give a basic approach to understanding the biblical text
- To examine historical methods of interpretation
- To consider other methods of interpretation
- To promote unity of shared understanding
- To relate elders' views on interpretation

Not Goals For This Class

- To ensure everybody believes what I do
- To ensure everybody believes the same thing
- To debate controversial passages of scripture
- To negate or endorse any particular interpretative approach
- To confuse, frustrate, or agitate truthseekers

The Law:



A Tale of Two Covenants

Moral Law Preceded Law of Moses

- Basic moral teachings
- Some cultural principles
- Cain knew he had sinned (Gen. 4:13)
- Levirate marriage preceded Moses' law (Gen. 38:8)

Old Testament Law

- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- 613 commandments
- Referred to collectively as “Book of the Law” (Josh. 1:8)

Purpose of Old Testament Law

- Provided foundation for new Israelite nation
- Showed man the true nature of sin
- The law condemns us
- The law tells us that God is a moral being
- The law leads us to Jesus for salvation

The Role of the Law in Israel

- Apodictic Law
 - Do or do not....
- Casuistic Law
 - Case-by-case

Example of Apodictic Law

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyards a second time or pick up grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord.

Lev. 19:9-14 (NIV)

Example of Casuistic Law

If a fellow Hebrew, a man or woman, is sold to you and he serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today. But if your servant says to you, “I do not want to leave you,” because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your maidservant.

Deut. 15:12-17 (NIV)

Old Testament vs Other Ancient Law

- Laws of Eshnunna - circa 1800 BC
- Law of Hammurabi - circa 1726 BC
- Different punishment for slave vs nobility
- Different punishment for men vs women
- Old Testament represents higher ethical standard

Old Testament Law as Benefit to Israel

- Food laws (Lev. 11:7)
- Blood laws (Ex. 29:10-12)
- Unusual prohibitions (Deut. 14:21)
- Laws giving blessings (Deut. 14:28-29)

The Letter vs the Spirit of the Law

One day some Pharisees came to test Jesus:

“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” they asked.

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

The Letter vs the Spirit of the Law

“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses *command* that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

Jesus replied, “Moses *permitted* you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.”

Matt. 19:3-8 (NIV)

Interpreting Old Testament Law

- See O.T. law as God's inspired word *for* you
- See O.T. law as basis for Old Covenant and Israel's history
- See God's justice, love, and high standards in O.T. law
- Don't see O.T. law as God's command *to* you
- Don't see O.T. law as binding on Christians except where renewed
- Also see God's mercy is made equal to the severity of standards

Interpreting Old Testament Law

- See O.T law as a paradigm of example
- Remember that the essence of the law is repeated by prophets and in the N.T.
- See O.T. law as a generous gift to Israel bringing blessings when obeyed
- Don't see O.T. law as comprehensive
- Don't expect all O.T. law to be cited by prophets or N.T.
- Don't see O.T. law as arbitrary regulations limiting people's freedom

Christians and Old Testament Law

- Old Testament Law is a covenant
- The Old Testament is not our testament.
- Some stipulations in Old Covenant are not renewed in New Covenant
- Some of Old Covenant is renewed in New Covenant
- Old Testament Law is still the Word of God for us, even though not His commands to us
- Only that which is explicitly renewed from Old Testament can be considered part of New Testament

Is The New Testament A Christian Law?

“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.

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.

Is The New Testament A Christian Law?

“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.

No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,”
declares the Lord.

Is The New Testament A Christian Law?

“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34



What Is The Great Difference Between The Two Covenants?

- Old covenant was honored from legal compulsion
- New covenant is honored from the heart
- New Testament contrasts Law and Gospel
- New covenant rarely referred to as “law”
- New Testament bears no resemblance to legal code
- New Testament emphasizes attitudes over behavior (Matt. 5:27-28)

The Law vs The Gospel

- Legal systems emphasize outer man
- Legal systems focus on law
- Legal systems emphasize the letter
- Legal systems condemn
- N.T. emphasizes inner man
- N.T focuses on grace
- N.T. emphasizes spirit
- N.T. shows mercy

The Law vs The Gospel

- Legal systems proof-text
- Legal systems look at man's record
- Legal systems focus on the system
- N.T. should be read in context
- N.T. looks at Christ
- N.T. focuses on Jesus

Summary of Old vs New Covenants

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Rom. 7:6 (NIV)

Questions or Comments?



Next Week:

Understanding Prophecy