Law, Statutes, & Judgments

Summary

"The law was nailed to the cross" is one of the most common teachings in modern Christianity — and, this article argues, one of the most mistaken. It starts by showing the Bible actually names three different categories of law.

- Three categories distinguished: the Ten Commandments (moral law), statutes (additional commands building on the Commandments, such as the annual Holy Days and dietary law), and judgments (case law applying the Commandments to civil situations).
- Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council's four requirements for Gentile converts read as evidence that statutes and judgments remained binding, not merely the Ten Commandments.
- A direct case against the "law was nailed to the cross" teaching.
- The New Covenant presented as writing the same law on the heart, rather than abolishing it.

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Many today do not realize that the Bible is a book about law. Many believe and insist that Yah'shua the Messiah came to do away with the law of His Father, by doing away with the "law", and establishing only grace and promises!

There are many references in the Bible to the commandments, but you can also read a lot about the Statutes and Judgments. Then there are the ceremonial rituals and offerings. Most people assume that the Ten Commandments did not even exist until Yahweh gave them to Moses on tablets of stone. They think they are simply part of the ritualistic Law of Moses.

To begin to understand the truth about Yahweh's law, we must first accept the established fact that Yahweh's law existed long before Moses and Mount Sinai! In fact Yahweh's law existed LONG BEFORE ADAM AND EVE!

The Bible reveals that Yahweh IS love *(1 John 4:8),* and that love, as defined in Scripture, is actually keeping Yahweh's law *(1 John 5:3).* Before the creation of the universe, Yahweh and the Spiritual aspect of Yahweh that became the Word existed in perfect harmony *(John 1:1; 8:28-29; 10:30)*. These lived in agreement with each other *(Amos 3:3)* - submitting to the ETERNAL LAW of love. But there was also government in existence! Yahweh the Father was in charge! The Spiritual aspect of Yahweh; the Word, that later became Yah'shua the Messiah, was submissive to the Father *(John 14:28).*

As far as man's history is concerned, Yahweh's law existed and was binding from CREATION. This law is only summed up in the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments show us how to love Yahweh and the last six show us how to love each other *(Matt. 22:36-40).*

But these Ten Commandments were not something new or original with Moses. To that point, they simply had not been written out in codified form as Yahweh then did for the Israelites.

Notice the example of Abraham: "Because that Abraham OBEYED MY VOICE, and KEPT MY CHARGE, MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, AND MY LAWS" *(Gen. 26:5)*. This was LONG BEFORE Mount Sinai! Yah'shua the Messiah did not do away with His Father's law - He magnified it *(Matt.5)*! He also stated when asked how we are to obtain eternal life: "If thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" *(Matt. 19:17).*

Do you believe David when he said all of Yahweh's commandments are SURE and that they LAST FOREVER? Or do you believe Yah'shua the Messiah when He instructed us to keep the commandments?

Sad to say, many people do not.

So we see that Abraham was commended for obeying Yahweh's commandments and keeping the statutes and laws. What was this referring to?

Webster's dictionary defines "statute" as, "an established rule or law". Yahweh's statutes usually command or forbid certain things, in ADDITION to the Ten Commandments. Gesenius' Lexicon says this about statutes: "An appointed law, a statute, an ordinance...used of the laws of nature *[as prescribed by Yahweh]*...a custom observed as though it were law". Yahweh's statutes are BASED UPON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

But what about the judgments? Judgments are binding DECISIONS made by *(Yahweh appointed)* judges BASED ON Yahweh's PREVIOUSLY REVEALED LAW. These decisions are used to settle similar future disputes and to render a sentence or verdict.

Yahweh gave statutes and judgments for the general well-being of the people - for the protection of everyone's legal rights. They are all based on the principles of love toward Yahweh and love toward each other. Here, summed up, is the applicable difference between all of these terms: In general, the Ten Commandments apply to individual conduct, the statutes apply to national and/or the congregations conduct (collectively, the "called out ones" within the House of Israel), and the judgments apply to decisions rendered according to the principles of the Ten Commandments and the Statutes.

It should be clear that Yahweh's law of love was very much in effect prior to the establishment of His covenant with Israel. So why did Yahweh reveal His commands and laws to Israel? During their captivity *(in bondage to an idol-worshipping nation),* Israel had lost much of their knowledge of Yahweh's ways. In Exodus 16:28, Yahweh said: "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" Again, this was said before the nation ever reached Mount Sinai! Yahweh had to reveal His law to them AGAIN, before entering into His covenant with them - because they had lost it!

"And Yahweh said unto Moses, How long REFUSE YE TO KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY LAWS? See, for that Yahweh hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day" *(Exodus 16:28-30).* Yahweh reminded them that the Sabbath was holy time. They had lost this knowledge that had been established long ago *(Gen. 2:1,3).*

Why is this such an important point? Because there are many that believe the commandments and the law were instituted at Mount Sinai and were part of the OLD COVENANT. And, the reasoning goes, once the New Covenant arrived, there no longer was a need to obey Yahweh's commandments. The fact is, the dissolving of the Old Covenant COULD NOT DESTROY WHAT IT DID NOT BRING INTO EXISTENCE!

The Ten Commandments, which Yahweh gave in written form to Moses on Mount Sinai, were not new. Only the CODIFIED FORM in which Yahweh wrote them was new.

The Old Covenant was a marriage agreement in which Israel promised to obey the Eternal Yahweh *(Elohim),* in consideration of Yahweh's promised blessings of health, wealth and spiritual well-being. Yahweh promised to provide and protect those who chose obedience to His ways. "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: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" *(Exodus 19:5,6).*

Centuries later, after Israel had repeatedly broken the covenant, many verses such as Jeremiah 3:14 restate that this was a marriage covenant: "Turn, O backsliding children, saith Yahweh; for I AM MARRIED TO YOU:"

It is most interesting to note here, that Yahweh devoted only twelve chapters of the Bible to the first 2,000 years of human history - that's all it took for Him to zero in on one man, ABRAHAM! The remainder of the Bible relates to THAT MAN AND HIS DESCENDANTS and to the rest of mankind only as their lives become involved with those who spring from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This does not imply that Yahweh's plan ignores the majority of mankind; the Bible shows He is working on His plan of salvation FOR ALL MEN *(1 Tim. 2:1-5),* but through a line of descent - or spiritual adoption - from Abraham, the father of the faithful, through to Yah'shua the Messiah *(Gal. 3:16).*

At Mount Sinai, Israel promised to obey Yahweh: "And all the people answered together, and said, ALL THAT Yahweh HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO" *(Exodus 19:8).* Yahweh then revealed what they were to do to obey Him, in Exodus 20:1-17.

Yahweh revealed additional laws and applications of the Ten Commandments in the form of civil statutes and judgments detailed in chapters 20-23 of Exodus, and instructed Moses to write them down in a "book of the covenant" *(Exodus 24:4,7).* The covenant was sealed and ratified with blood *(Exodus 24:6),* and Israel agreed formally to obey, and be subject to this covenant.

The Old Covenant was not a set of laws that were to be omitted upon institution of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was a MARRIAGE AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND Yahweh! The statutes enlarge upon and show us how to apply the Ten Commandments. The statutes regarding the holy days for example, magnify the fourth commandment, which is, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" *(Exodus 20:8).*

Those that obey by keeping the Sabbath holy and by keeping the annual festivals by spending this time in physical rest *(from employment and conducting commerce)* and through spiritual refreshment *(by sharing the truth of Yahweh's Word as revealed by His Holy Spirit),* receive the special blessings of spiritual

fellowship with the true God and the wonderful knowledge of His overall plan of salvation for all mankind.

Other statutes such as Exodus 22:16,19, specify how to keep the seventh commandment which forbids adultery. All of the statutes, in some way set out how we are to keep Yahweh's spiritual law as codified in the Ten Commandments. Judgments, on the other hand, are binding decisions BASED on Yahweh's law.

Time sequence is very important as we proceed through some of these verses. When Moses delivered the statutes and judgments, there was no mention of sacrifices connected with them. There is ONLY ONE SACRIFICE mentioned in the "book of the covenant", and Yahweh called it, "MY SACRIFICE" *(Exodus 23:18)*! This was the Passover sacrifice instituted in Exodus 12:1-13, and it was repeated in the covenant made at Sinai.

The Passover then foreshadowed the sacrifice of Yah'shua the Messiah and was a REMINDER OF SIN to teach people the need of the coming Messiah - the true Passover Lamb - to be sacrificed many centuries later *(John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7)*. It began BEFORE the covenant was ratified and is the ONLY sacrifice that continued into New Covenant times *(only with the newly substituted symbols of unleavened bread and wine).* We are commanded to keep it FOREVER!

The ceremonial sacrificial offerings were temporary and not binding today. The "book of the covenant" did not contain the laws of burnt offerings, sacrifices or washings. These were added later, after Mount Sinai. Any sacrificial offerings added BEFORE the ceremonial rituals were all either VOLUNTARY OR CUSTOMARY!

"And he *[Moses]* sent YOUNG MEN of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto Yahweh" *(Exodus 24:5)*. Notice they were young men, because the priesthood was NOT YET ESTABLISHED! In fact Yahweh did not command any of these sacrifices originally; "For I spake NOT unto your fathers, NOR COMMANDED THEM in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, CONCERNING BURNT OFFERINGS OR SACRIFICES: But this thing commanded I them, saying, OBEY MY VOICE, and I will be your God...that it may be well with you" (Jer. 7:22,23).

Paul explains that these temporary rituals were "added because of transgressions" *(Gal. 3:19)*. The keeping of these ritualistic laws required much work, as we can see from Leviticus 1-7. That is why it became known as the "works of the law". These temporary sacrifices were to last only until "the seed should come to whom the promise was made" *(Gal. 3:19).* Paul explains this as, "wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to the Messiah" *(Gal. 3:24).*

The offering of sacrifices in the Old Covenant demanded the need for the priesthood to act on behalf of men in relation to Yahweh *(Heb. 5:1).* They were REMINDERS of sin. For example, in those days certain sins required that you sacrifice a bull. Obviously, if you continually sinned and sacrificed a bull each time,

this would, after a while, deeply affect your source of income and livelihood. This was an effective way to drive the point of the message home!

Once the blood of the Messiah had been offered to cleanse us of sin once and for all, it was needless to offer physical sacrifices. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” *(Heb. 7:12; 6:20; 7:11,21).* The fact that Yahweh allowed the physical temple to be destroyed in A.D. 70, reinforces its symbolic destruction at the time of the Messiah’s crucifixion, and shows us that there is no longer a need for it. Today, the Congregation, is made up of Spirit-begotten sons of Yahweh, each of whom are TEMPLES OF Yahweh *(1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16)*.

“Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O Yahweh. He taketh away the first that HE MAY ESTABLISH THE SECOND” *(Heb. 10:8,9).*

On several occasions the Bible discusses the law of Moses, but in such instances it is never referring to the Ten Commandments. Yahweh GAVE the statutes and judgments to Moses in order that he could DELIVER them to the Israelites, whereas Yahweh SPOKE the Ten Commandments and caused them to be “carved in stone” as symbolic of the eternal nature of Yahweh’s law. Yet we read in Luke 2:22,39 that the “law of Moses” is called the “law of Yahweh”. This is because Yahweh is the GIVER OF ALL LAW.

When Yah’shua the Messiah defined the two great commandments in the law in Matthew 22, He quoted out of the “book of the law” *(Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5)*, which we are told to REMEMBER. Then why are we told in Acts 15 that the Gentile converts do not have to observe the law, except for four points? The answer is cleared up in Acts 21:21. The law called into question involved circumcision and other customs, which were instituted long before the law of Moses. The spiritual intent is not done away today - just like the Ten Commandments, it is still in force, but like the Passover, the manner of circumcision has been changed. It is now of the heart *(Rom. 2:29).*

This controversy did not involve the spiritual intent of the civil law of Moses, but the ceremonial ADDITIONS to it. These scriptures are not suggesting that adultery or murder is okay now! The Ten Commandments are not being questioned or done away with here. The four points mentioned in the controversy were originally part of the civil law; but they were also added to the ceremonial law to prevent certain pagan customs from being practiced by

the ancient Israelites.

The Gentiles had until then, eaten their sacrifices with blood. They strangled their animals, presented them to their idols and committed fornication as part of their religious ceremonies. So the four points mentioned in Acts 15 had to be specifically declared *(by the Apostles)* to be STILL IN FORCE. They remained in effect and were binding AFTER the abolition of the physical sacrifices and washings.

The civil laws regulating tithing, clean and unclean meats, sexual cleanliness, the weekly and annual Sabbaths, for example, are ALL STILL IN EFFECT for the New Covenant Congregation because they define what sin is.

What about the principle of "an eye for an eye" or a "tooth for a tooth"? This was covered in the civil law of Moses which is still in effect. These statutes were set up to regulate one human society, with all of its faults, in a fair and just manner. The whole point of such instructions is concerned with the context of just recompense or payment for the injury caused; an "eye-value" for an eye, and a "tooth-value" for a tooth.

These principles are still very much in force, and we are also meant to keep them in their spiritual intent. Moses delivered these principles in the strictness of the letter because the congregation of Israel did not yet have His Holy Spirit as we do today - our HELPER.

When we fully understand that Yahweh's spiritual and ETERNAL laws are what brings peace and happiness - that they are the WAY to life that reflects Yahweh's character, we can then understand why the Messiah said He came to MAGNIFY THE LAW *(Matt. 5).*

Yahweh's laws regulate human life, and disobedience to them has produced all unhappiness, disease, war, violence, suffering and death this world has experienced since Adam and Eve.

Yahweh's spiritual law, the Ten Commandments, including His statutes (instructions on how to carry out the law) were set in motion for the benefit of mankind from creation, whether man acknowledges this or not. They are as much in force *(if not more so because they have been declared to be ETERNAL)* as all of the known laws *(also Yahweh-given)* of physics and chemistry.

Yahweh's law is inexorable and it is an eternal reflection of His character. Yahweh's character WILL NEVER CHANGE *(Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).* Yahweh's spiritual law, including the Ten commandments, will never be done away with.

As Paul wrote: "Wherefore the LAW IS HOLY, AND THE COMMANDMENT HOLY, AND JUST, AND GOOD. For we know that the LAW IS SPIRITUAL..." *(Rom. 7:12-14).*

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