

Hermeneutics
Session 12
Law

Hermeneutics Outline

1. Introduction: What is hermeneutics and why should we care?
2. What is the Bible and how did we get it?
3. Why so many translations? And which is best?
4. What is the history of Hermeneutics?
5. What are the different hermeneutical approaches, and which is best?
6. What are the key principles of good hermeneutics?
7. NT Genres: Epistles
8. NT Genres: Gospels
9. NT Genres: Parables
10. OT Genres: Hebrew Historical Narrative
11. NT Genres: Acts
12. OT Genres: Law
13. OT Genres: Prophets
14. OT Genres: Psalms
15. OT Genres: Wisdom
16. NT Genres: Revelation
17. What are the tools we have available to us today to study the Bible?
18. Practicing Hermeneutics: Big Idea Study

Genres: OT Law

How do we properly understand and apply OT Law?

Summary Answer:

The Old Testament law was given specifically to the Hebrews in a specific historical context (the forming of the nation of Israel as His own people). They were coming out of about 400 years of slavery in the land of Egypt. No doubt there were some significant hurdles for creating a new nation (culturally, militarily, etc.) of people that would be His own people set-apart.

There are three main types of laws in the Old Testament. First, there were RITUAL LAWS given to setup the sacrificial system, highlighting the holiness of God and the sinfulness of people and foreshadowing the death of Jesus on the cross. Second, there were CIVIL LAWS given to the people of Israel providing the needed justice structure for a society. Third, there were MORAL LAWS (think Ten Commandments and those like them).

The Old Testament law was God's covenant with Old Testament Israel; it is not our covenant (as New Testament Christians) with God, for we are under the New Covenant. The Old Testament law is still God's Word to us (though not His command to us), for in it we see its role in our own history (the story of God redeeming a people for Himself). In it we also learn much about God's character and about His expectations for His people. The only commands in the Old Testament that are commands for us today as Christians are those that are re-instituted in the New Covenant (found in the New Testament).

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Outline:

- **What is OT Law?**
- **What are the hermeneutical challenges to the OT Law?**
- **What are some important hermeneutical rules for the OT Law?**
- **Practice: OT Law Passages**

What is OT Law?

Discussion Question:

1. What is Old Testament Law? How would you define it?
2. Consider the history of the Hebrew people: when did the law (through Moses) come to them? What was the historical context?
3. What would you say was God's purpose in giving them the law?

Different connotations of the word 'law' in Scripture:

1. Plural to refer to the 'laws' -those 600-plus specific commandments that the Israelites were expected to keep as evidence of their loyalty to God (Exodus 18:20)
2. In the singular to refer to all of these laws collectively (Matthew 5:18)
3. In the singular to refer to the pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) as the "Book of the Law" (Joshua 1:8)
4. In the singular by some writers in the NT to refer theologically to the entire OT religious system (1 Corinthians 9:20)
5. In the singular by some NT personages to refer to the OT law (in sense 2 above) as it was interpreted by the rabbis (Peter in Acts 10:28)

What is OT Law? What was the role of the law?

Discussion Questions:

1. Is there anywhere in the OT where it is taught that obedience to the law 'saves' them?
2. What was the role of the law for the OT Israelites?

Consider the two kind of OT law below and discuss:

1. What would you say is the difference between these two types of laws?
2. What do we learn about God and Christian living from these two passages?
3. If the law was not able to provide eternal life and true righteousness for God's Old Testament people, what were the benefits of the law?

Two important kinds of law in the OT worth noting:

APODICTIC LAW

(general, unqualified laws) - examples rather than exhaustive
Leviticus 19:9-14

CASUISTIC LAW

(case-by-case)
Deuteronomy 15:12-17

What are the hermeneutical challenges to OT Law?

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the exegetical (what does the text say?) challenges that we, as Christians today, face as we read the OT law?
2. What would you say are some of the challenges that we face when we, as Christians today, try to apply the law to our own lives?
3. What OT laws are we obligated to obey as Christians?

What are some important hermeneutical rules for OT Law?

Six guidelines from — from "How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition"

1. Old Testament law is covenant.
2. The Old Testament is not our covenant.
3. Two kinds of Old-Covenant stipulations have clearly not been renewed in the New Covenant: Israelite civil laws and Israelite ritual laws.
4. Part of the Old Covenant is renewed in the New Covenant.
5. All of the Old Testament law is still the Word of God for us even though it is not still the command of God to us.
6. Only that which is explicitly renewed from the Old Testament law can be considered part of the New Testament 'law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2).

Discussion Question:

1. What is the significance of the Old Testament law as covenant? What was a covenant?
2. What does that mean that the Old Testament is not our Testament?
3. What are civil laws? What are ritual laws? Why have they not been renewed for us today?
4. What examples today do we have of contracts where part of it is renewed and part of it is not?
5. How is the the Old Testament still God's Word to us even though it is not the command of God to us?
6. What parts of the Old Covenant have been renewed for us in the New Covenant?

What are some important hermeneutical rules for OT Law?

Discuss briefly each of the below Dos and Don'ts (— from "How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition")

Summary Dos and Don'ts

1. Do see the Old Testament law as God's fully inspired word for you.
2. Don't see the Old Testament law as God's direct command to you.
3. Do see the Old Testament law as the basis for the old covenant, and therefore for Israel's history.
4. Don't see the Old Testament law as binding on Christians in the new covenant except where specifically renewed.
5. Do see God's justice, love, and high standards revealed in the Old Testament law.
6. Don't forget to see that God's mercy is made equal to the severity of the standards.
7. Do see the Old Testament law as a paradigm - providing examples for the full range of expected behavior.
8. Don't see the Old Testament law as complete. It is not technically comprehensive.
9. Do remember that the essence of the law (the Ten Commandments and the two chief laws) is repeated in the Prophets and renewed in the New Testament.
10. Don't expect the Old Testament law to be cited frequently by the Prophets or the New Testament. Legal citation was first introduced only in the Roman era, long after the Old Testament was complete
11. Do see the Old Testament law as a generous gift to Israel, bringing much blessing when obeyed.
12. Don't see the Old Testament law as a grouping of arbitrary, annoying regulations limiting people's freedom.

Practice: OT Law

Discussion Question:

1. Consider the food laws: read Leviticus 11:7. What are some reasons why you think God might have given the Israelites food laws?
2. Consider the laws regarding the shedding of blood: read Exodus 29:10-12. What are some of the reasons why you think God might have given the Israelites the laws regarding the shedding of blood?
3. Consider the unusual prohibitions: read Deuteronomy 14:21. What do you make of the unusual prohibitions? What could possibly be the reason for these?
4. If you read an OT law and you have no idea why God would have given it, what do you conclude?
5. Consider the laws giving blessing to those who keep them: read Deuteronomy 14:28-29. What do we learn about God from the laws giving blessing to those who keep them?

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There are three main types of laws in the Old Testament. First, there were ritual laws given to setup the sacrificial system, highlighting the holiness of God and the sinfulness of people and foreshadowing the death of Jesus on the cross. Second, there were civil laws given to the people of Israel providing the needed justice structure for a society. Third, there were moral laws (think Ten Commandments and those like them).

The Old Testament law was God's covenant with Old Testament Israel; it is not our covenant (as New Testament Christians) with God, for we are under the New Covenant. The Old Testament law is still God's Word to us (though not His command to us), for in it we see its role in our own history (the story of God redeeming a people for Himself). In it we also learn much about God's character and about His expectations for His people. The only commands in the Old Testament that are commands for us today as Christians are those that are re-instituted in the New Covenant (found in the New Testament).

Closing Questions

Questions:

1. What stood out to you most from this discussion?
2. Closing thoughts? Comments? Questions?

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