

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 9, John 10 and the Law

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament Backgrounds. This is session 9, John 10, and the Law.

Well, in our last tape, we were trying to draw a sequence from kingship to the ancient Eastern practice of release, that is, cancellation of debts, to the scripture where God created an economic system that has theological implications of the first order.

We then went back from that to one of the most prolific and important royal titles, Shepherd, and we walked our way through the Old Testament material on that. What I have proposed in my own studies of this is that that shepherd imagery is essential to understanding the 10th chapter of John's Gospel. I'm sure you remember in the previous tape I had set the stage for John's Gospel in two ways.

One is by going back to John 1 and showing you that John's theological agenda is to show that Jesus is the Messiah, but that the Messiah is God incarnate. Two is that as the incarnate God who is the Messiah, he is able to perform healings of exceptional significance. He turns the ninth chapter over to that completely.

So, with that in mind, we're ready to take a look at John 10. I'm well aware this is Old Testament Backgrounds. What you might not be aware of is that the background of John 10 is the Old Testament.

And so, this passage has almost universally been interpreted as if it's sort of a homily that Jesus creates about himself as the shepherd and his people as sheep, and therefore, the various components of the story fit the pastoral imagery of sheep and shepherds. 30 years ago, I did my doctoral dissertation on this chapter, and when I did that 30 years ago, I was a voice crying in the wilderness for the current interpretation. I do confess to you a sense of vindication because 30 years later, my understanding of it has become more commonplace in the Middle East.

And so, what understanding is that? If you interpret this passage the way it was normally interpreted, it means that Jesus was teaching his audience primarily that I have come to provide salvation for you. And that would be a soteriological or salvific understanding of the passage. My understanding of the passage is that it is largely Christological.

Laying down his life for his sheep would mean nothing apart from who he is. So my understanding of the passage is that Jesus is revealing himself to be the shepherd

God of Israel. With that in mind, let me say an introductory thought, and then we'll look at the passage in John 10.

In the Old Testament, no one is ever called a shepherd as a title except God or this royal messianic figure that the scripture talks about. So I think Jesus knew that, and I think his audience was aware of it, that the shepherd imagery belongs to the God of Israel. So, with that in mind, let's take a look at John 10.

I won't read the whole chapter. It's a series of I am's. I am the door, he tells us in 7 and 8. And then in 11, he says, I am the good shepherd.

In the ancient Near East, half a dozen kings called themselves good shepherds. It's not a new term. In fact, in Egyptian circles, it was common for the pharaoh to refer to himself as the good shepherd.

So, it's not an unusual royal term. Jesus said, I am the good shepherd, and I know my own, and my own know me, even as the father knows me and I know the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep which are not of this fold.

I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice and become one flock. Well, I missed a verse: verse 12.

He says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He, who is a hireling and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and he leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and is not concerned about the sheep.

I am the good shepherd, so he repeats it. This is really significant because it gives us a beautiful picture of how biblical theology works.

What I see as a major thread throughout the entire Bible is the kingship of God as then revealed further in the kingship of Jesus Christ as the incarnate God. And this, I think, is a major theological theme that unites the scriptures. And so here in John 10 when Jesus says, I am the good shepherd, he does so in most interesting terms by saying to them, he says, he who is a hireling and not a shepherd, who is the owner, he beholds the wolf coming and he leaves the sheep and flees.

One of the things about the presentation of this as a bucolic sheep shepherd, green pastures kind of thing is that the imagery doesn't make any sense. So, let me walk through the various parts of the imagery to show you what I mean. He said he was a hireling, he saw the wolf coming, and he left the sheep.

Okay, we read this because you remember when we talked about vertical transference early on. Well, when we see the word wolf, we vertically transfer the

wolf we know about onto the pages of the scripture passage. Well, this is really interesting because it's the same species of animal, but it's not the same animal. The wolf that we know about from Europe and in America is a big animal, 60, 70 pounds, he's fully able to kill a human being, he's able to kill a buffalo.

Jack London memorialized him with his gigantic teeth and his vicious personality. Well, nothing could be further removed from that wolf and the Palestinian wolf. The Palestinian wolf is a solitary animal and it maybe weighs 20 pounds.

It's a big animal. It's not even the size of a male coyote in America. So, it's a solitary animal, and so when Jesus said in this passage that when he sees the wolf coming, he flees, the audience of Jesus would no doubt have said, that is strange.

It would not be an exaggeration to say to you that a six-year-old Palestinian girl shepherding the flock would not run from a Palestinian wolf. The wolf would have seen the girl and turned around and ran in the other direction. It's not a vicious animal.

It doesn't run in packs, and it's not dangerous. So why would Jesus say that he sees the wolf coming and flees? Well, it's because the wolf isn't really a wolf any more than the good shepherd is really a shepherd.

There's another reason why this passage doesn't make sense. All these years, I have driven my wife to distraction because I love to watch animal shows on TV. Well, I'm here to tell you that I have a payoff for all those animal shows and all those times when they have irritated my wife because I can tell you about the nature of a canine.

When I watch these big cat shows, whether they're big cats or little cats, cats are interesting because when they are captured, they kill, and then they eat. Wolves or canines are not like that. They start eating before the poor animal is even dead.

As a matter of fact, the animal dies not because they kill it. It dies from shock. So, one of the strange things about a canine, however, is not only does he kill like that, but a canine, unlike a cat, will kill repeatedly for pleasure.

He will kill over and over just for pleasure. If the shepherd, who is a hireling, abandons the flock to the Palestinian wolf, who knows how many of those he would kill before he finished because he kills for the joy of killing. So that part makes little sense that he would abandon the sheep to the wolf because the wolf would kill all of them.

Jesus likens this bad shepherd to a hireling. Well, we know from the Law of Moses, and we'll be talking about the Law of Moses in the remainder of this hour, that

Moses has a law about shepherding. Shepherding was an important profession, and in that profession, he had a law.

Because human beings are human beings, they will do dishonest things. So, you had this potential possibility that the shepherd might want to sell the sheep on the market and then tell his owner, the owner of the sheep, that the sheep was killed by a wild animal. So, Moses created a law to deal with a situation like this in order to show his innocence. The shepherd must produce the ears and the feet, the hooves, of the sheep as proof that the animal was eaten and that he didn't just sell it.

Well, if the hireling in the imagery flees, he has no way of proving his innocence. So, when you look at the component parts of the good shepherd passage in John 10, literally none of it fits a pastoral setting. So, it's relatively clear that Jesus was using this symbolically so that the good shepherd was something else, the wolf was something else, the hireling was something else, and those are simply metaphors for another story.

So, what we can tell that's pretty obvious, I think all of us, is that the good shepherd is Jesus. He says so. I am the good shepherd.

Well, who's the wolf? That's not clear. The wolf can be Satan, or the wolf could be one of Herodian kings. More than likely, the hireling, Jesus, is referring to one of the Herodian kings.

So, what he's talking about is, I think, reasonably clear, if not certain, is that Jesus is saying, I am the real king. The pseudo-king is the king who will not protect his sheep and will instead abandon them. Now, I have the name of a very well-known Christian commentator who wrote a commentary on John.

And when I was writing my dissertation, he said nothing about what I just said to you. He read this as if it was a story about a shepherd and his sheep. I was gratified to hear that he was saying that.

I was also gratified to hear from one of my students who was doing doctoral work under this individual, that in his classroom, he mentioned to the contrary, that this is really about kingship, and that Jesus is really revealing himself as the God of Israel. Because in the Old Testament, the only shepherd title is of God. Now, as we look at the passage unfolding before our eyes, months later, there arose a division among the Jews because of these words.

And so, many of them were saying, he has a demon and is insane, why do you listen to him? Others were saying this is not the saying of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he? See how John takes us back to the previous chapter as an authentication of who Jesus is? Well, at that time, the Feast

of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon and the Jews therefore, gathered around him and were saying to him, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.

In other words, what Jesus did that was really not uncommon about how he functioned, is he would say something that could be understood in two different ways. It could be understood as a simple sheep-shepherd story, or it could be understood that Jesus was saying he's the Messiah because he's the shepherd Ezekiel preached about in chapter 34. Well, in the end, don't play games with us.

Tell us plainly, are you the Messiah? In verse 25, Jesus answered and said to them, I told you, but you did not believe the works that I do in my Father's name. These bear witness of me. When Jesus says, I told you, he has to be referring to what he said in the Good Shepherd story. When he said, I am the good shepherd, I was telling you I am the Messiah.

That seems to me to make a clear equivalent between the shepherd of Israel in the Old Testament, who is God, and Jesus as the Messiah, who is the shepherd of Israel now, who is God incarnate. Lastly, I will comment on this as I get ready to move beyond the New Testament. I think there is a sense in which John brings his gospel to his climax as a result of this story.

Because after Jesus said to them, you hear my voice but you do not know them, but I know my sheep, I give them eternal life in verse 28, they shall never perish, no one shall snatch them out of my hand. He goes on to say to them, I and the Father are one. That is exactly the message of Ezekiel 34.

The message of Ezekiel 34 is that the new David and Japheth are one and the same. I and the Father are one. I think this brings the theological goal of John to its climax because now Jesus has been revealed indisputably through all of these chapters to be not just the Messiah but the God incarnate.

From here on in, the rest of the book is somehow anticlimactic to the overall theological goal of proving that Jesus and God are one and the same. I would say to you, not because I'm going to talk about it at length, which I do in my class on this course, but because I just want to hear you say to me that the truths, I'm telling you about shepherding have implication for leadership of New Testament Christian leaders. No New Testament Christian leader is called a shepherd with the exception of Ephesians 4.11, when he says that God raised up some pastors, comma, teachers.

If so, that's the only place where any New Testament leader is called a shepherd. Shepherd is reserved for Jesus in the New Testament, I think, in the same way that shepherd is reserved for God in the Old Testament. So, what I would propose to you

is that the fact that the New Testament refers to its leaders on occasion or two as under-shepherds has implications for how the pastoral ministry is to be conducted.

So, what I would say to you is that the implications of this can be embodied in this simple statement: if Jesus is the good shepherd and we as pastors are the under-shepherds, then our role is similar to his role, and that is pastoral ministry is embodied in the same kind of terminology. Our role as under-shepherds is to provide and protect. That is the exact mission of Jesus, that is the exact mission of God, and I think as his representatives, then that is our role as well.

So, what I have done is tried to present one small snapshot picture of how a concept like God is king can course its way through the entirety of the New Testament. It's not an accident that when we get to the book of Revelation, John describes the rule of Jesus as he shepherds with a rod of iron. He still refers to Jesus as the king of Israel.

So, what I would propose to us as I leave this concept of backgrounds is, if you want to find something that makes the Bible come together, this is one of those things that can work. The concept of the kingship of God, the concept of the kingship of God in Jesus, the concept of the kingdom of God in under-shepherds creates a rubric that runs its way, I think, through much of the scriptures. So, with that having been said, I'm going to shift gears now with you and switch to where we're at in our note-taking now, which is a rather abrupt and dramatic shift from kingship to law.

Now, at first blush, that looks like a really dramatic shift. What I'm doing here is showing you how similar the law of Moses is to the law of Hammurabi. So, I'm showing you, they're certainly not copied documents, but there are a lot of fairly interesting similarities between these two laws.

Look at the capital offenses that we have in the law of Moses, and then you look at the capital offenses that we have in Hammurabi. What you'll see is something like this. About a third or maybe a fourth of them are the same.

But what you see is that in the code of Hammurabi, it makes Clint Eastwood look like a sissy. Steal a bottle of wine, death. Steal something, period, death.

Report false property, falsely reporting lost property, death. In other words, what the code of Hammurabi reveals is you killed people, you executed people for just about everything. Well, when we're looking at these two documents and comparing them, there are a number of things then that I would say to you.

The Old Testament has a much smaller number of capital offenses than the New Testament. There are 282 laws in the Code of Hammurabi. There are 611, or 613 because the rabbis have counted them differently, laws in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament has about two and a third the number of laws as Hammurabi, yet Hammurabi has four times as many capital offenses. This tells us that the code of Moses, even though it's larger, has a much smaller number of capital offenses. Secondly, when we try to compare the code of Hammurabi with the law of Moses, we can learn that the code of Moses is largely religious law.

People are not executed because they steal; they're executed because stealing is a sin. In the Code of Hammurabi, it's civil law.

It's not a law of the state. It's the law of the state. So that's another important distinction between how the law that God gave to Moses works and how the law that Hammurabi wrote works.

Hammurabi's law is civil law. The code of Moses is clearly a religious law. Third, there is an important comparison between the philosophy of these two law codes.

The law code shares an interesting identical situation. It's called in Numbers 5, the law of jealousy. Hammurabi has an identical law.

The law of jealousy is this situation. If a man suspects that his wife has been sexually unfaithful, then he wants to make an accusation. And so, both of these law codes have an identical law that deals with this issue of sexual unfaithfulness.

In the Code of Hammurabi, a woman is accused of that. Her husband brings her before the priest. The priests bind her hand and foot, and they throw her in the river.

If she survives, she is innocent. However, the theology of Hammurabi's law was that the river is a god. So, if the god swallows her up, she is guilty.

Whereas if the god doesn't swallow her up, she is innocent. That is, in effect, trial by ordeal. She is, in a certain sense, presumed to be guilty unless she can prove she's innocent.

She has to survive the ordeal to prove her innocence. Now, interestingly enough, there is a theology to Hammurabi's code of law, but it presumes she's guilty unless she can show her innocence. In the Code of Moses, here's how the law worked.

If a husband believed that she had been unfaithful, he brought her into the presence of the priest, and there in the tabernacle, Numbers 5, the temple wasn't built yet, there in the tabernacle she swears an oath to her innocence. Then the priest takes some of the ground, some of the sediment, from the floor of the tabernacle, he puts it in water, she swears her innocence, she drinks the bowl with the water, and then he puts the sediment in it, and if nothing happens to her, she's innocent. If, however,

it depends on whether we read it literally or not, but if her thigh swells up, then she's guilty.

Now, when you compare those two laws, it's utterly fascinating to me because the code of Moses, in essence, suggests that she's innocent until proven guilty. In other words, she drinks of the sediment that's holy, and if nothing happens to her, which would be normal, she's innocent. There's no trial by ordeal.

She is presumed innocent unless God shows that she is guilty. It's a fascinating analysis of these two law codes because it demonstrates to us that they have different presuppositions, namely, in one, you're innocent until proven guilty, and in the other, you're guilty until proven innocent. I have a section in my class notes, aren't you glad that you have this available to you, in which I compare similar ideas in the two law codes.

It's very interesting to see how similar they are. It reminds us that God gave his revelation within culture, not above culture, and that has real implications on what God chooses to give. So, look at this list of similarities I have between these two codes, a fair amount of fairly impressive similarities.

So, we're going to talk about further implications of this, but here, by the way, is a picture of Hammurabi before the deity Shamash, and Shamash is giving him perhaps a stylus of some kind, I'm not sure what it is, but here is the upper portion of the stela that is the Code of Hammurabi. The Code of Hammurabi is taller than me, it's about six foot. So here we have, that's what we have before us here.

So, I thought it would be time to tell you about the various law codes that we have in the ancient Near East. To this day, the oldest law code that we have is by Ur-Nammu, which is Sumerian, and it goes back to 2100 BC. The next oldest law code we have is by Lippit-Ishtar.

He was perhaps king of Isen, and it's Sumerian as well, but then in 1800, we have a law code written, of course, on behalf of a king, but we don't know what king that was. So, it's called Eshnunna because that's the city in which it was found. The last of those great law codes is Hammurabi, about 1750, of which there are many copies, one major stela, and numerous tablets reaching down in later periods, the most famous of those law codes.

So, the code that Moses brings onto the scene is really late in the game. Moses' law code is around 1450, which means it's 300-plus years after Hammurabi, late in the game. So, as we look at these, we can see that there are limits to what the code of Hammurabi can do.

And so those limits, I think, are threefold. Both documents could be said to be religious documents. Hammurabi, for example, pictures himself as receiving his code from the deity Shammash.

But Hammurabi's code would be hard-pressed for us to describe as moral. It is brutal and violent, so it is unlikely that we would be able to understand it. Unlike in dramatic fashions, it is unlike the code of Moses, which could be classified as very kind compared to the standards of its era.

Secondly, the code of Moses is different from the code of Hammurabi in that the code of Hammurabi is a case law. Every paragraph begins with the phrase, Shuma avilum, if a man does such and such. That's called case law because Hammurabi is dealing with individual cases of case law situations.

We now think that Hammurabi did not write a law code at all. Most scholars today seem to think that what we call the Code of Hammurabi is simply a listing of 282 decisions that Hammurabi made. And it really isn't a law code.

The code of Moses does have some case law, but it's not very much. Moses' law has a fancy name to it. It's called apodictic.

An apodictic law is propositional law. It's law that's characterized by command. You shall not or you shall.

Well, interestingly enough, we have virtually no law in the ancient Near East that is propositional law. The laws in the ancient Near East are case laws. The law of Moses is largely propositional, making ethical statements about what's right and what's wrong in advance of any violation that might occur.

That means the law of Moses is once again more ethical since its statements in advance of the crime explain the law of Moses. So let me tell you the first two. The code of Hammurabi may be religious, but it's not always moral.

Secondly, the code of Hammurabi is exclusively case law, whereas Moses is mostly apodictic or propositional law.

Third, the code of Hammurabi is stratified at its very core. He has four different groups.

You don't really need to remember these, but there is a hierarchy to your status in society. At the top of the list was the avilum. Below the avilum was a lesser social category called the muskeinum.

Below that was a third category, vardum, which was for slaves. And the fourth category was for women, women were really in the lowest of the classes since they had no inherent rights. So what it tells us is, in the code of Hammurabi, the law for a crime done by an avilum, a free male who owns land, has a different punishment for the crime than if it was a slave or if it was a woman.

So, the Code of Hammurabi is dealing with a culture that was radically class-divided. The code in Israel was dramatically different in the sense that in Israel, everybody was an equal partner in the covenant. And the code of Hammurabi was a very different one.

Everyone was a brother if they were males, and if the woman was involved, then it was a sister. So, this allows me to turn my attention to a phenomena about law that is not always visible. And I'm just going to scoot up here so that you can see what I have in mind on this.

When we started this out, we were talking about a comparison of the law of Moses and the code of Hammurabi. So what I want to do is to show you how, when you understand this properly, law in the Hebrew Bible has its anchor and foundation in kingship. I live in a culture like you do, which has lots of laws.

But it's not the law that's given to us by kings. It's a law that the leaders of our country created, and subsequent leaders have created more laws. And in some cases, all of us in a democracy have ratified that law by approving it.

In the ancient world, they saw law as the gift of the gods. Hammurabi is pictured as receiving the law from Shamash. In the Hebrew Bible, the same is true.

Law is a subject area that belongs in the provenance of kingship. So, what I would like to do is to ask you, if you have your Bibles, to turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 17. In Deuteronomy 17, we have a passage which sits in what I would call the Constitution of Israel.

In other words, in this Constitution of Israel, we have laws stretching from Deuteronomy 16 all the way through chapter 17 that deal with the leadership of Israel, judges and administrators, kings and Levites, and prophets. So, in these chapters that stretch from 16 through 18, we have laws on behalf of four major constitutional categories. They are judges, kings, Levites, and prophets.

This is a national constitution. These are the basic government offices that will run the country. I would like you to see how similar this can be to the world of Israel.

So, the Israelites had Levites or priests. Well, their neighbors had priests. The Israelites had prophets.

Well, their neighbors didn't have prophets, but they had religious functionaries. The Israelites had judges. Well, their neighbors had judges.

God programmed kings for Israel just like their neighbors. But look at the difference of kingship between Israel and its neighbors. In Deuteronomy 17, God says this in chapter 17, verse 14.

You see, what I'm going to react against is a misunderstanding of 1 Samuel 8. You remember in 1 Samuel 8, the Israelites come to Samuel, and they say, give to us a king like all the other nations. And Samuel is really upset about the request. God himself says they have sinned, but God says to answer their request and give them a king.

Now it would follow by the rules of logic. I did have a logic class in college. That was a long time ago.

By the rules of logic, it can't be sinful because God told him to do it. So, we will come back to that passage 1 Samuel 8, but when we do, I want to make the point that kingship is just an office. It's neither moral nor ethical.

It's neither moral nor immoral. It's just an office. It's how the office functions that makes it moral or immoral.

So, the people asked in 1 Samuel 8, give us a king like all the other nations. God said they have sinned, but give them a king. So what God was agreeing to was the office, but not like all the other nations.

So that's important background for Deuteronomy 17 verse 14. When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me, God says to them, you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses. All right? So that's important. This is mathematically, Deuteronomy 17 is 400 years before 1 Samuel 8. 1 Samuel 8 when they ask for a king, is not asking for something that has never existed before.

They're simply asking for what God promised in Deuteronomy 17. So, when you ask for a king, like all the other nations, God says you must choose, let me read it again, verse 15, whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your brethren. All right? In verse 15 of Deuteronomy 17, you don't choose the king, God chooses the king from one of your brethren.

Notice with me the egalitarian nature of this request. Your king is not above you, he is one of you. It's crucial to see the terminology, choose a brother to be king.

We all know cases now in American history where presidents have forgotten that they were chosen by the people, and they assume for themselves a special status. Well, you see, God's methodology for Israel is that the king is not above you. He is a brother. The Lord will choose him and he is your brother.

Secondly, he says you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. That isn't the second one, that's just the first one. He must be a brother. The second one is he must not multiply horses.

Now, I'm sure in an audience the size of this audience for this class, there are people who just don't understand immediately why he must not multiply horses. The answer is that the horse is a metaphor for something: the horse is a metaphor for military power. And so, when the text says that he must not multiply horses, it's just saying he must not be a militarist.

First thing, he must be a man God chooses from your brothers. Second thing, he must not be a militarist, he must not multiply horses. Third, he must not multiply wives.

Well, in effect, multiplying wives is a metaphor as well. It's a metaphor not so much for building a harem as it is for the ancient practice that when you married a woman from another culture or another country, it was a way of creating a military alliance. It seems strange to us, but back then, everybody did it.

When you made an alliance, in, I suppose, every case, the alliance was made official by marrying the daughter of your covenant partner. We all, of course, know Solomon did this on a massive scale. So, he must not multiply wives, which means he must not make international alliances.

Then, lastly, he says he must not multiply silver and gold. He says he must not multiply the king. Well, that, too, is a metaphor.

What it means is that the king must not be a materialist. So, as we look at the four negatives, he must not be a foreigner, he must not be a militarist, he must not be an internationalist, and he must not be a materialist. Those are the four things that made him like all the other nations around Israel.

Guess who violated all four of these? Solomon, or at least the last three in spades. So, what does it mean for Israel to have a king? Well, it's something like this. In verse 18, it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by carefully observing all the statutes, all the words of this law and these statutes. That his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right or the left in order that he and his sons may continue long in the kingdom in the midst of Israel. This is an amazing document, friends, because what it's telling us is that what makes the Israelite king, in God's eyes, is his faithfulness to the law.

He must make copies of the law that God gave to Moses. God revealed his holy law to Moses, and it is the responsibility of every Israelite king to make copies of that law and to see to it that that law becomes the law of the land. Now, this isn't exactly the law and order that we have in mind here because, as we said, this is largely religious law.

But I think it makes a point of monumental importance because it reminds us of the way in which God related to Israel through law-keeping. God revealed the law to Moses. I personally believe Moses was the first king of Israel.

God revealed the law to Moses, gave it to him, and Moses wrote it down. All subsequent kings were to make copies of the law. But whether it was the law that Moses wrote or whether it was the copies of the law, please note that the way in which God, who is the king of Israel, related to his people was through law.

How many times in the book of Deuteronomy do we see God tell the Israelites to be careful to keep the law? The whole law. There are people who have misunderstood the place of law and lawkeeping, and they seem to have somehow come up with the conclusion that lawkeeping is legalism and legalism is a bad thing. What I would like to remind you in the class is law keeping in ancient Israel was the written stipulations of the covenant.

Whether you know it or not, in America when you become a citizen, you agree to be a person who keeps the law. We have many laws in this country. As a matter of fact, we have far more laws than God gave to Moses, numerically.

As a citizen of the state of America, you either keep the law or you'll pay the punishment. Well, law in the ancient world was even more important because it was religious law and it was the sign of the covenant. So, what I would like to ask you to see with me is that you cannot in the Old Testament or the New Testament relate to God independently of law.

Law is good and holy and perfect because that's exactly what Paul said it was in Romans. So, what we see unfolding in the biblical tradition is that God the King inspired law to be written. As a matter of fact, what I would suggest to you is way

back in Genesis 1 and 2, before there was any official nation to give law to, God gave law to the first couple.

He gave law to them that said, you shall work or keep the garden. You shall take care of the garden. It is your responsibility.

He gave them a law to be fruitful and multiply and fill up the land. That would be the garden. And he gave him a law that said, you must not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So, what I think is one of my more important points, and I can't take time to develop it because we're already moving our way along. So, what I would suggest to those of us who are from the Christian tradition is law keeping is inseparably related to God as the King. God the King is the one who gives law to his subjects, whether that is God the King over Israel in the Old Testament or Jesus the King in the New Testament.

Almost no one seems to know that if you do it on a proportional basis, Jesus gave more laws in the New Testament than Moses did in the Old Testament. There are over 200 laws in the New Testament, even though the New Testament is only about a third or a fourth the size of the Old Testament. Moses gave 600.

If you do the math, there are more laws in the New Covenant than there are in the First Covenant, proportionally. So, what I would suggest to all of us is to be reminded that when you see the word law, you should see a word in front of it. So I see the word law.

That's a really bad English script. I blame it on somebody else. There's the English word law.

If you want to think biblically, then what you have to do is put a word in front of it, because it is God who is the giver of law. Law is inseparable from the covenant, and so when God made a covenant with Israel through the leadership of Moses, he gave the law, and the King's responsibility in Israel was embodied dramatically in making a copy of the Mosaic Law for every successive king. So, in my way of thinking, this should affect even how we think about law in the New Testament.

We're used to talking about we're not under the law; we're under grace. We're not under the Mosaic Law, but we have always been under grace. It's a false contrast between law and grace.

Law is what you do when you think about God. When you love God and commit to him, you keep his law. So, what Paul seems to be reacting against in books like

Galatians and Romans, in my judgment, is largely, maybe not exclusively, but is largely salvation by keeping the law.

Well, we don't get salvation because we keep the law. We keep the law because we have experienced salvation. It is men and women who enter into the covenant that we find the means by which we keep the law.

So, as I close up this lecture, what I will then tell you once again is that the concept that we're tagging onto is the concept of kingship, and kingship is inextricably related to the law. So, I think this calls for some serious re-evaluation when we get into the New Testament. For Jesus himself said this: if you love me, keep my commandments.

The great king, the Lord Jesus, told his disciples that the way we relate to him is by doing what he told us. Now, in the next lecture, we're going to shift gears fairly dramatically, and we're going to leave, more specifically, this concept of kingship and move on. But I hope I can leave a powerful taste in your mouth about the supreme importance of the subject of kingship in giving cohesion to the Bible as its whole.

So, we will shift pages here shortly and turn our attention in the next section of our class to a new subject area. Thank you.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament Backgrounds. This is session 9, John 10, and the Law.