

# **Dr. Tiberius Rata, Old Testament Theology,**

## **Session 5, God as Lawgiver**

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This is Dr. Tiberius Rata in his teaching on Old Testament Theology. This is session 5, God as Lawgiver.

Hello everybody. Today, we're going to talk about God as Lawgiver, and we're actually going to start with the New Testament because the New Testament indicates what the law was for and what was the purpose of the law. Peter, especially Paul, talks a lot about the purpose of the law in Romans when he talks about how the law revealed sinfulness and the nature of sin. But at the same time, it revealed the holiness of God, as Peter says in 1 Peter 1:16. So that's why the law, when we look at the law, we can't just think about regulations, you know, do's and don'ts.

So, the law is regulatory, but the law is also revelatory. So when we don't read Leviticus, we miss a part, a very important part of who God is, because God is holy, and he reveals himself as holy, especially in Leviticus. So, the law, again, was there to reveal sinfulness, to reveal the nature of sin, to reveal the holiness of God, to inhibit sin.

But ultimately, as Jesus said in Luke 24, it was to guide Israel to the Messiah. In Galatians 3:23, Paul writes, Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law in prison until the coming faith would be revealed. So then the law was our guardian or our pedagogos, or from where we have the word pedagogue, or some say teacher or tutor or guardian.

So, the law was our pedagogos until Christ came in order that we may be justified by faith. So, the law was meant to point us to Christ, and it does. But the truth is that the law had limitations.

And we see this clearly. Again, the author of Hebrews writes clearly that the law cannot perfect anyone in his or her relationship with God. If perfection had to be attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek rather than one named after the order of Aaron? So, Jesus could not have been a priest after the order of Aaron or Levi because he was not from that line.

So, he was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, as the author of Hebrews tells us. So again, there are limitations to the law. And the author of Hebrews again tells us the new covenant is superior to the Mosaic covenant.

So again, we looked the other day at the new covenant and how a lot of the promises in the new covenant are renewed from the Mosaic covenant. You know, the law is, there's no, it's not a different law. The difference is now that it's written in the heart through the Holy Spirit.

Forgiveness of sin existed in the old covenant. Well, it exists now in the new covenant, but what's superior is the person of Jesus. Jesus is the superior one.

Not just the mediator but also this better sacrifice. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. And then again, Hebrews 8:6, but as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old, as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises.

So why do we even bother with the law? Well, we have to go back in a sense to 2 Timothy 3 to look at what Paul says in the verse that we like to quote about Scripture. Old Scripture, 2 Timothy 3, 16. Old Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Well, if old Scripture does that, then the law has to do that as well. And do we have to ask then if the law teaches doctrine? And the answer is yes. The law teaches doctrine exactly as 2 Timothy says here.

It teaches all these things, and it is good for training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be competent and equipped for every good work. So, when we look at the law, we see that it teaches doctrine. For example, where do we learn that God is sovereign? We learn from the law.

Exodus 34 is a very well-known passage where God reveals himself to Moses. And we focus a lot on verses 6 and 7, which, again, God teaches us the doctrine there, that God is gracious and merciful in verses 6 and 7. But then, in verse 9, we read, If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiffened people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take your inheritance. The verses that teach us about God being gracious, well, first of all, he's holy and righteous.

And that's what we learn in Leviticus. Actually, the main theme in Leviticus is holiness. And where do we learn that God is holy? In the law.

How do we know that God is eternal from everlasting to everlasting? Well, before John tells us in 1 John, we learned that in Deuteronomy. We learned that God is a person in Genesis 1. We learned in Leviticus 26 the fact that he's all-powerful and wise -- Deuteronomy 10, Exodus 31.

As I said, God is sovereign. And again, God is gracious and merciful. In Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7, When the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generations.

But one of the most important things we learn from the Old Testament law regarding doctrine is that people's sin can be forgiven. This was done through the sacrificial system, which was a substitutionary sacrifice. The idea was that we deserved to die.

The wages of sin is death. That's not a New Testament development. That was from the beginning.

If you read the Psalms, that becomes very clear. But in Leviticus, when God gives a sacrificial system, when he establishes a sacrificial system, he makes sure that there is a substitute in place of us. There was an animal who was sacrificed.

Thus he shall do with the bull, Leviticus 4:20, as he did with the bull of the sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. So, forgiveness of sin is possible through substitutionary sacrifice. The problem with this is that it was temporary, and the high priest had to do this every year on Yom Kippur on the day of atonement.

Again, the author of Hebrews makes it clear that the Mosaic covenant was always supposed to be temporary in nature until Christ came and he became a sacrifice once and for all. So, Paul is right in 2 Timothy 3 when he says that the Old Testament, all scripture, teaches doctrine. Well, the law teaches doctrine.

But also, the scripture, Paul says, instructs in righteousness. This has to do with their relationship with one another. Love your neighbor is not a New Testament development.

A lot of people are confused about that. No, that actually starts in Leviticus 19, starting in verse 18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

So, when Jesus speaks those words, and when he's on earth, he's quoting Leviticus. So yes, the law instructs in righteousness and teaches us how to live our lives every day. But again, New Testament development is not a New Testament development.

Where do we learn that we should not covet? Well, the law teaches us. It's one of the Ten Commandments. Do not covet.

The apostle Paul talks about how our sinful nature always wants to have something that is not ours, and we covet some things that are our neighbors. But again, that's not a New Testament development. The law reveals that.

Where do we learn that we need to pay our pastors? It's actually not a New Testament development, either. It actually, the care for God's servants initiates, it's initiated in the law. When you brought some of the sacrifices, meal sacrifices, and meat sacrifices, the priests benefited from those; even though they were sacrifices given to God, the priests benefited from the meal itself.

I know some churches operate from this perspective of, you know, Lord, keep the pastor humble because we'll keep him poor. That's not a biblical concept. In the Bible, God's servants were always taken care of, and hopefully, our churches need to learn that too.

But then we need to ask ourselves, what about Christianity? Tiberius, I'm a Christian. You know, how should I view the law? Some people think, well, the law is this thing that's so high up there, I cannot reach it. And actually, I've heard people say, well, yeah, God gave the law and put it so high that people cannot reach it, and they go to Christ.

Well, that's a big misunderstanding. Actually, if we look in the scriptures, we learn that freedom from the law of Moses does not mean freedom from the demands of righteous living. Because a lot of times some people say, well, you know, I'm under grace, I'm not under the law.

And really, they're using that to justify their sinful behavior. But as I mentioned before, in another lecture, Jesus here on the Sermon on the Mount, he does not lower the bar, and he raises the bar. Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, whenever he says, you have heard that it was said, but I tell you, he never lowers the bar; he raises the bar.

You have heard that it was said, of all, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment, but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. You have heard that it was said, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn, but I say to you, do not take an oath at all.

You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you, do not resist. All these, Jesus makes it clear that the law and the Ten

Commandments, for example, were the minimum, minimum requirement. They were not up there for nobody.

No, they were very attainable. They were the minimum, minimum requirement. And being under a new covenant, really, actually, Jesus raises the bar.

He does not lower the bar. So, the law of Moses is not binding for the Christian in the sense that nobody will wait for you at the gates of heaven and ask you or some people say, to check for tattoos. Because in the law, you know, you're not supposed to get tattooed.

And I tell that to my students. Now, that's a whole lot of other subjects altogether as far as the wisdom of that and all those things. I'm not advocating for tattoos.

All I'm saying is that a tattoo will not prevent anybody from entering the kingdom of heaven. That's what I mean here: the law of Moses is not binding for Christians. You know, thankfully, we can go to lunch and eat bacon.

You know, again, you can question the wisdom of that. But again, nobody will go to heaven based on their dietary preferences. So, it is very important to understand that the law of Moses is not binding.

Now, again, it doesn't mean that it doesn't teach us who God is. And it doesn't teach us about the moral law of God, who, by the way, doesn't change. Adultery was a sin in the Old Testament.

And under the old covenant, adultery is still a sin. So, the moral law has not changed. But as far as being bound by the ceremonial law, by the civic law, that is not the case with us.

So, the Christian should not go back under the regulations of the Mosaic law. Isn't that what the Galatians were trying to do? Some of them were told, well, in order to be a Christian, you have to be circumcised first. So, there were some Jews who, even though were leading some to Christ, some pagans to Christ, some Gentiles to Christ, they wanted them to turn them into Jews first and then believers.

But the Apostle Paul says, no, don't believe anybody that says that Jesus plus circumcision equals being a believer. And if you look at the book of Hebrews, the people in the book of Hebrews did the same thing. They wanted to go back under the regulations of the Mosaic covenant.

And the author of Hebrews tells them, no, don't do that. There's a better and more superior covenant. You are under the new covenant.

The Christian is now under the law of Christ. Now, the law of Christ doesn't mean it's different from the old law in terms of its morality. Because, and we'll see this a little later, whatever we see in the Ten Commandments actually was there before the Ten Commandments were given, and they appear again in the New Testament.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3 that the problem is with the law, not with the spirit of the law. The problem was with the letter of the law. That's why he's trying to argue in 2 Corinthians 3 when he talks about the new covenant and Paul says, hey, I'm a minister of the new covenant.

And it's very important to understand the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. It says, the Lord is spirit, and where there is spirit of the Lord, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces beholding the glory of God, are being transformed into the image, into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord, who is the spirit. Earlier, he talks about the letter versus the spirit of the law. And he says in 2 Corinthians 3, 6 that, you know, God made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

Now, again, there are some people who misunderstand that and say, oh, see the letter of the law, you know, do away with it. Well, you wouldn't understand. We couldn't understand the spirit of the law if we didn't know what the letter of the law said.

A good example of not understanding this was the Pharisees, who were keeping the letter of the law but not the spirit of it. And then what happens, you just become a Pharisee or sometimes a legalist, because you really what happens, you put a fence around the law. And obviously, that is not good.

So, the problem here is not the law. The problem is the spiritless law. And that's what Paul is trying to argue.

Yes, the letter kills if you don't have the spirit of God. So that's why the spirit of the law needs to be emphasized. For example, even when we talk about the Ten Commandments, you can talk about the letter of the law.

For example, you shall not commit adultery. Well, if you keep the letter of the law, that doesn't mean you don't break the law, because according to Jesus, you have to keep the spirit of the law, too, because you can commit adultery with someone in your heart. So, it's not just keeping the letter.

You also have to keep the spirit of the law. In other words, the spirit of the law goes actually deeper. You have to treat a person with dignity and as a creator in the image of God.

The same thing with you shall not murder. Yeah, I can keep the letter of the law by not murdering someone, by not putting a knife into someone's back, but I can murder someone's reputation by lying about them or by speaking misinformation about them. That's basically, one is keeping the letter but not keeping the spirit of the law.

And that's why the spirit of the law goes actually deeper. That's why the spirit of the law needs to be emphasized over the letter of the law. So, the Hebrew word for law is Torah.

Sometimes, it's translated with a small L. Sometimes; it's translated with a big L talking about the law of God. Sometimes it's just instruction. It's just teaching.

So, it is important for us to define it. So, Torah doesn't need some divine standard of conduct for God's people. It's always very, very practical.

And sometimes, it has to do with sacrifices and offerings. In Leviticus, again, we have a whole system of offerings when people come before the Lord. Sometimes it's talking about Sabbaths and feasts.

And again, because Jesus died once and for all, for Christians, we do not have to keep these feasts as far as, you know, like the Jews kept them in the days of old. We can keep them if we want to. And it's OK to look at our calendar and to think about some of these things.

But we don't have to. Again, we are no longer mandated by the old covenant. But for example, at Passover, when we celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection, it would be a great disservice to our people if we don't teach them about the Passover in the Old Testament in Exodus 12, because that's where it originated.

And people need to understand what the Passover means when Paul says, well, Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us. So, it is very important. It's very important to use the Old Testament to teach the New Testament.

We have Sabbaths and feasts and clean and unclean regulations. And again, what was clean and unclean under the law doesn't, as far as ceremonial law, it's not the same for us. I grew up in a very legalistic church.

And it was interesting because our church kept some of the regulations of the law still. And I was like, why? Because we didn't keep it all. We only kept some, which was very strange.

Well, of course, one of them was, you know, you don't do certain things on Sunday. You know, you don't play soccer, you don't play golf. And so I missed a lot of rounds of golf because I obeyed that.

But the sad part is that I was 32 when I realized how legalistic I was and how I was brought up. Another law that our church kept, which was strange now that I think about it, is when someone, a lady, would give birth to a child, they would have to stay home for four to six weeks because the law said that. Like, why? We are not under that law anymore.

And it's just such a strange thing that we just cherry-picked certain laws that we still kept. I still, to this day, don't understand that. But it's very important now that I think about it.

So, I know what we did wrong. But again, we are not under the law. We're not under the ceremonial law.

Again, Passover and consecration of the firstborn. I already mentioned Exodus 12. Again, we don't have to give our children to the Lord like they did then.

You know, the firstborn, the one who opened the womb, was holy to the Lord. Well, no, but we give all our children to the Lord. We do baby dedication, and we dedicate them to the Lord.

But again, we don't do it as part of the law. And we don't have to pay five shekels to redeem them back. When the Bible also speaks about the Torah, sometimes it refers to the whole book of Deuteronomy.

And again, when we look at Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy serves a very important part in the Old Testament corpus because the prophets, especially, referred back to the book of Deuteronomy a lot when they talked about the law and the regulations. So, the Torah serves as a broad reference to the book of Deuteronomy. Again, it refers to it as the law, the book of the law, the book of the law of Moses.

When Jesus talks about that, he mentions the Book of the Law of Moses, the Law of Moses, and the Book of the Law of God. You have that in Joshua. Second Kings talks about the law of the Lord.

So, in the historical books and in the prophets, a lot of times, that designation refers to the book of Deuteronomy. Sometimes, Torah refers to the entire Pentateuch, to



the first five books of Moses, as Ezra mentions in Ezra. Again, one of my favorite verses in scripture about Ezra, for Ezra has set his heart to study the law of the Lord.

Well, he didn't just study the book of Deuteronomy. He studied the entire Pentateuch and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. And then sometimes it's translated, Torah is translated, just instruction to designate the will of God concerning human conduct in general. Again, we have that in Genesis 26, and we have that in Exodus 12.

But when we take the laws, and we separate them, there are actually two types of law. Scholars divide them up into two. Casuistic, it's what we call case law.

They're used even today. Then apodictic, primarily the Ten Commandments, are apodictic. The apodictic laws, the ones that we know best, because again, they refer to the Ten Commandments, usually in the second person, begin with a command: you shall or you shall not.

They're principles. They're principles, you know, you shall not honor your father, for example, honor your father or do not murder, do not steal, so forth and so on. So, general commands don't give you a qualification, and they don't say you should not do this because of this.

They're just commands. Then, the consequences of non-observance are usually not stated. It doesn't say what's going to happen if you, for example, create a graven image and worship it.

Casuistic law usually begins with if, then. Most of the legal sections are casuistic. They're case studies, usually in the third person.

Hey, if your ox, you know, gores someone, you know, again, it's a hypothetical situation, but it's also very specific. If the ox gores someone before, well, then you shall kill the ox. But again, it's based on other cases.

And usually, you have commentary on the law, why you should do this or why you shouldn't do it. Sometimes, the consequences for non-observance are given there as well. An example we have in Deuteronomy 15 verses 7 and 8. Again, we mentioned this when we talked about Ruth.

If among you one of your brothers should become poor in any of your towns within your land, the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he may be. Take care lest there be any unworthy thought in your heart. And you say the seventh year, the seventh year is near, and your eye looks grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing.

Then he cried to the Lord against you and you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him. Because of this, the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake, for there will never cease to be poor in the land.

So you see how much more explanation there is about this one law. Again, very, very important. So, how should we understand the Old Testament and the Mosaic Law? First of all, we need to understand that Moses perceived obedience to the laws of the Mosaic Covenant not as a way of precondition to salvation, but as a grateful response to those who had already been saved.

Because sometimes we think like that, oh, the people in the Old Testament, they had to do these things to be saved. No, nobody was saved in the Old Testament by doing these things apart from faith. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

There are no two ways of salvation. So, it is very important to understand that these were people of God chosen by God, and because of that, they were asked to keep these commandments. They were not keeping the commandments to become the people of God.

And Exodus 19, we mentioned earlier in another lecture how God designates his people as *segula*, as a treasured possession. And that's why God is making a covenant with them. He's not making a covenant and giving them the laws so they can become his *segula*, his treasured possessions.

So therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine and you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. And then the preamble to the Ten Commandments, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

So, it doesn't say, you will become my people. I will become your God. No, it says, I am the Lord your God.

So, this is very important to understand. Obedience to the law was not given to be perceived as a duty by one party or another but as an expression of covenant relationship. The people of Israel were in a covenant relationship with the Creator God, with the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.

And as part of that covenant relationship, they were to keep these laws. One cannot understand Old Testament law apart from an intimate covenant relationship between Yahweh and His chosen people. So, a lot of people read the laws, oh, do this, don't do this.

Well, rather than reading it as a list of do's and don'ts, how much would our lives change if we read it as a love letter from God to us? Again, we are in an intimate relationship with Him. Read it as a love letter. Rather than a list of do's and don'ts. Things would change dramatically, wouldn't they? Obedience to the law, again, was not a precondition for salvation but a precondition to Israel's fulfillment of the mission to which she has been called.

Obedience to the law was also a precondition to her own blessings. Yes, obedience to the law brought blessing. And disobedience to the law brought curses.

Again, there are clear passages in both Leviticus and Deuteronomy 28, which is probably the best-known passage about that. In Deuteronomy 8, you have blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. A whole chapter dedicated to just those.

But yes, the Old Testament covenant people were given blessings for obeying and keeping the old covenant law. Now, sometimes we are tempted to do that too and to say, okay, Lord, I'm going to do this and then I expect you to do this. Well, again, we're not under the Mosaic covenant anymore.

We are under the new covenant. And actually, we get a lot of grace and mercy. And some people say, well, God is a God of second chances.

Well, I don't know about you, but I think he's the God of second chances. And he also always gives us chance after chance and grace upon grace. Another way to properly understand the Old Testament, the Mosaic law, is that God's revelation of the law needs to be perceived as a supreme and unique privilege.

It needs to be seen as a clear contrast to the nations who worshipped the gods of wood and stone and subsequently could not hear, see, or speak. Again, God, throughout the Old Testament, is teaching them that he is the true God. And the other gods of the nations are just, and they're nothing.

Psalms 115 is a key Psalm that speaks to this. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see.

They have ears but do not hear and noses but do not smell. They have hands but do not feel feet but do not walk, and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them, and so do all who trust in them.

O Israel, trust in the Lord. Why? Because he's the only, the only true God. So true obedience to the law was to be perceived as an external expression of an inward disposition of faith in God and covenant love towards him.

Again, it was not keeping the law so that we love God. No, we love God, and because of that, we keep his commandments. I think Jesus said something very similar.

Because some people say, well, you know, if you're in love with God, you know, there are no rules, you know, I have freedom. No, Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Think about a marriage relationship.

You can't say to your wife, okay, we love each other; there are no rules. Yeah, there are rules, and you had better learn them early in your marriage if you want to live a happy married life. So, the laws are to be viewed holistically.

All life is under the authority of the divine sovereign. Now, Old Testament scholar Chris Wright divided the law into five: criminal law, civic law, family law, cultic law, and compassionate law.

Now, I know some don't like the division, but I think it's very useful when you divide the law just so we can understand different things that, thankfully, we are not under the civic law anymore. For example, in the Old Testament law, they had some really harsh laws. You could have taken your disobedient son to the gate of the city and be stoned to death.

Well, you know what, if that law had been passed, nobody would have been alive anymore. Now, I'm glad, it doesn't seem like they ever carried it out. And I'm just glad that we're not under the law, that law, and I'm glad that we're not carrying that today because, again, none of us would be here today.

But again, what Jesus talks about is compassionate law, for example, the poor you'll always have with you. Well, Jesus again quotes the book of Leviticus when he talks about that, and that has not changed. Again, the moral law has not changed.

The ceremonial law has changed. We don't have to go Sunday to church and bring our little lamb to be sacrificed for our sin. Why? Because Christ became the sacrifice once and for all.

So again, one of the biggest misconceptions is that the law was incomprehensible and unachievable. But when we look carefully, we see that the laws were both comprehensible and achievable. And if you didn't meet the requirements, if you missed the mark, so to speak, if you failed to obey the law, there were provisions for forgiveness.

And even those sins that were willful, some people say, well, in the Bible, you only have sacrifices for sins that were inadvertent. No, actually, willful and unwillful sins; they are both provided for in the law. So, God provided the means for forgiveness because he knew our limitations as human beings.

So, our New Testament believers are required to live according to some or all of the Mosaic law. That is the greatest question that sometimes we are asked in Old Testament class. And of course, some students want to know about the different laws that were back then.

For example, the laws of tattooing are very famous and popular today. Again, you have to look at why the people of the nations were doing those tattoos and they were carving themselves to mourn the death of someone or to worship another God. So, the motivation of the heart is important.

But what people need to remember is that tattoos are permanent. And sometimes, you know, I want to get a haircut in a style. Well, next month I can change it.

Well, you cannot do that to tattoos. So, there's a permanence to it that people might want to consider before tattooing themselves. So again, I'm going to say this clearly: your salvation is not dependent on that.

So, what part of the Mosaic law do we still need to obey? Is the Mosaic covenant an operational standard that should govern a New Testament believer's life? Well, again, we get to continuity and discontinuity. What is continued in the New Covenant, and what is not? Because again, as we said about the New Covenant, some laws are brand new, some are renewed, and some in the New Testament are not there anymore. For example, we said about the ceremonial law that we don't have to make a sacrifice because the sacrifice was made once and for all.

But the moral law is still there. Again, adultery in the Old Covenant has not changed in the New Covenant, making it okay. It's still adultery, even though we are trying to sanitize it and call it an affair or we try to call it something else.

Premarital sex is the sanitized version today; it's called fornication, and it's still a sin. Sin, sex before marriage, outside of marriage, is a sin. Homosexuality, in the Old Covenant it was a sin. In the New Covenant, it is a sin.

Romans is clear about that, 1 Corinthians 6 is clear about that, and the book of Jude is clear about that. So, the moral law has not changed. Again, if anything, remember that Jesus raises the bar; he does not lower the bar.

But there are some scholars who want to approach these from a different perspective, and there are a few solutions to the relationship of the Old Testament law to the believer. I'm going to mention five options here, five different approaches. The first one is the theonomic reformed approach. This is from David Gordon's critique of theonomy.

Quote, theonomy wishes to see every nation confirm its civil practices to those revealed in the Mosaic legislation. Theonomy does not wish merely to return to a biblical ethic or a Judeo-Christian ethic, but to the ethic of the Sinai Covenant. So this approach, basically under this approach, if you just take the Old Testament law and put it in the constitution of any nation, you should be fine.

That's what, again, theos, nomos, the law of God. Old Testament laws continue to be morally binding under this approach unless they are rescinded or modified by future revelation. Again, they're not saying that you should bring sacrifices anymore because, obviously, those are rescinded under the New Covenant.

Old Testament laws provide a divine standard by which to judge all existing social law codes. The best way to correct various social evils is through dependence on regeneration, re-education, and gradual legal reform. Now, this sounds very good.

Is it practical? Can we do it? Can you impose the law on secular people? Now, if you think about Roman law and even the system of laws in the United States, some of which are based on biblical law, there's no doubt. But in a lot of ways, we have moved away from the Bible and from the ethics and morality of the law. Also, the problem is, or some would say, we're trying to impose scripture on people who are unregenerate.

You cannot do that. Again, you basically go back to pharisaism. You can have the letter of the law, but if the spirit of the law is not there, if the heart is not changed, then what good is it? The second approach is the reformed approach.

This approach starts with the idea that there are two covenants: the covenant of work, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. There are two administrations: law and grace. The law contains the gospel, and the gospel contains the law.

So, the moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments and was supplemented by the ceremonial and judicial laws. The ceremonial laws apply the first four commandments to the context of Israel's existence as a nation. And in that context, that's true.

The law basically was Israel's constitution. They didn't know how to exist as a nation until then. The laws were abrogated at the coming of Christ, having been nailed to the cross.

What do we do with the judicial laws? The judicial laws applied the last six commandments to the context of Israel's existence as a nation, and they have also been abrogated. The moral law, quote from Willem VanGemen here, received further clarification in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ rather than serving as

the end of the law. So, in a sense, the reformed approach and the first economic approach are fairly similar but obviously more nuanced here.

The modified Lutheran approach proposed by Doug Moo, a former professor at Trinity and now at Wheaton, says that the Mosaic law is abrogated in Christ and no longer, quote, directly applicable to believers who live in the new era. The moral content of the Mosaic law is applicable to New Testament believers when it is clearly repeated in the New Testament teaching. For example, some would say the tithing law from the Old Testament and from Malachi is never repeated in the New Testament.

All we are told in the New Testament is that we should give sacrificially and cheerfully. But sometimes we use that as an excuse to always think, hey, less than 10%, even though that you never had that or it doesn't seem that it's clearly rescinded in the New Testament. New Testament believers should read the Mosaic law as a witness to the fulfillment of God's plan in Christ.

The fourth approach is the dispensational approach, where, again, in the reformed approach, continuity is emphasized. In the dispensation approach, discontinuity is emphasized. The law, the Mosaic law, had a fourfold purpose: a demonstration of God's graciousness, a provision for approaching God, a provision for worship, and to govern the theocracy.

Again, Israel was a theocracy. They were not a democracy. They were not a monarchy.

They were a theocracy at the beginning. The Mosaic law was given to expose sin and to serve as a tutor, again, to lead people to Christ. Jesus does not abolish the Old Testament scriptures but brings them to fulfillment, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount.

Christ is the goal and determination of the Mosaic law. Jeremiah 31, remember, when God gives the new covenant, not like the covenant I made with them when I took them by the hand. So that's what dispensationalists emphasize: discontinuity, while reformed theologians emphasize the continuity between the two.

The last approach is Walter Kaiser's moderating approach. Walter Kaiser, the great Old Testament scholar, tries to mediate these two positions and tries to mediate between the reformed and the dispensational approach. So, he champions a future for ethnic Israel but sees various points of continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament between Israel and the church.

Definitely, the church does not replace Israel. Christ is the goal or purposeful conclusion of the Mosaic law. The law appoints the believer to the Messiah and he accepts a threefold division of the Mosaic law.

Remember, Chris Wright divided it into five. Kaiser accepts the threefold division, moral law, civil law, ceremonial law. We don't need to obey the civil or the ceremonial law, but we're still under the moral law.

That has not changed. Jesus talks about the weightier matters of the law, and Kaiser says that the weightier matters of the law refer to the moral aspects of the Mosaic law, which the Lord has set above the civil and ceremonial aspects of the law. Again, that's his interpretation.

Obviously, Jesus doesn't clarify what he means when he talks about the weightier matters of the law. When the new covenant promises to place God's law in the heart of those who participate in that covenant, it is the Mosaic law in particular that is placed in the heart. It's not a different law.

Nowhere does it say that it is a different law. Kaiser is a very interesting ladder of abstraction when it comes to how to interpret it for our time today. For example, again, we mentioned the following: Why should we pay our ministers? Is that a biblical concept? And the answer is yes.

So, he would end up with a general principle, but it starts in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy, it says, do not muzzle the ox while he treads. Now that's then used in the New Testament situation in Paul when he's talking about, you know, the minister should be paid, and he says, I never took money.

But again, the principle, when you look at those, you look at the specifics, that gives the principle in the end, giving engenders gentleness and graciousness in humans. And the ancient situation was to feed those who work for you. The current situation is to pay those who minister the word of God to you.

A lot of times when you're not paid a whole lot, you're always told, well, it's a ministry. It's a ministry, as though ministry should always be voluntary. Some reject the division of the law that Kaiser accepts.

And I would say I would accept as well. I think there is wisdom in seeing the law in three ways because it clearly shows that, yeah, obviously, we do not have to listen to the civil laws, or we're not under the civil law anymore or under the ceremonial law anymore because Christ died once and for all. But again, nowhere do I see in the New Testament the moral law being changed because God doesn't change.



His moral law doesn't change. So even though if some people don't like to divide it up and see it holistically, we can still see it holistically even though we divide it up as long as we understand what we mean by that. The Old Testament law was presented as a holistic, non-negotiable document.

But my favorite chart is this. It's from Walter Kaiser's *Toward an Old Testament Ethic*, *Towards Old Testament Ethics*, where he shows that the Ten Commandments were not late-breaking news for the Israelites. When God said, you shall not have other gods before me, you shall not make yourself a graven image. That was not late-breaking news.

They didn't say, oh, wow, we didn't know we could do that. When God told them, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, honor your father and your mother, the Israelites were not, oh, those are new things. No, if you look in Scripture, there is pre-Mosaic evidence of all of those.

All of those things are mentioned earlier in the book of Genesis. Yeah, you cannot covet is not a new development in the law. And they appear again in the New Testament.

I would say the only one that some people suggest that does not appear in the New Testament is the fourth law, the Sabbath. There's still some controversy regarding that. So again, how do we determine the law's applicability to the New Testament believer? What I would say is, again, think about this, that all laws are theological.

So, we should read the Old Testament and always ask, what does the text teach me about God? Because even though he might not be regulatory, it is revelatory and teaches us who God is, that he's the sovereign, holy God, he's righteous, holy, just, but he is gracious and merciful, but he must punish sin. Also, whenever we read the law, we have to remember that the Old Testament law is part of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel. It is closely associated to Israel as a nation, closely associated to them entering the promised land.

The Mosaic covenant is no longer a functional covenant. Again, we are under the new covenant, which is superior, with better promises, better promises because of Christ, and better sacrifice. We are not saved because of the blood of goats and bulls and calves but because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

So, it's definitely a superior covenant. I like this quote by Doug Moore, and I'm going to close with this. The entire Mosaic law comes to fulfillment in Christ.

And this fulfillment means that this law is no longer a direct and immediate source or judge of the conduct of God's people. Christian behavior is now guided directly by the law of Christ.

This is Dr. Tiberius Ratta in his teaching on Old Testament Theology. This is session 5, God as Lawgiver.