

SESSION 6: LAWS, LISTS & LAND (PART 1)

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Exodus 20, 22-23; Leviticus 5, 8, 10, 14, 19-20, 25; Hebrews 9.

Summary of the Video: Module 1, Episode 6

In the next two sessions, we will be gathering together all the non-narrative material in the Pentateuch. This first session considers the laws, tabernacle and Levitical sacrifices.

Before entering in, we have to ask a big question. As Christians, how do we relate to the Old Testament law? For example, what do we do with the Ten Commandments? Andrew Wilson gives us four approaches that people (both religious and non-religious) have adopted through the years. The law might be considered above, beneath, behind, or within us. While there may be some, small element of truth to “above” and “behind” approaches, the NT strongly teaches the “within” understanding of how the law relates to Christians.

Christians have wrestled with the relationship between law and grace for centuries, but it is one of the most important tensions we need to figure out. What are we going to do with the “rules” in the Bible? They come in the Old and New Testament. Jesus, Paul, James, John, Peter, and Hebrews all have rules for Christians to follow. How do we handle them? Andrew Wilson’s hope in giving this introduction is that we might be able to walk people through this tension in simple terms. Ultimately, the New Testament says that the law is “within” the Christian for two reasons: 1) Jesus has fulfilled its commands and given us his righteousness and 2) because the Spirit lives within us so that we might internalize the law and keep it “naturally” as we walk in the Spirit.

Next, the video invites us to envision the Tabernacle. God provides Israel with a home for God to dwell in their midst; it’s an expression of his desire for fellowship with them. God gives his people instructions for how to construct the tent (Exodus 25-31) and then they do exactly what he instructs (Exodus 35-40).

Following the tabernacle, we enter the strange world of Levitical sacrifices. The first seven chapters of Leviticus describe five different types of sacrifices. Sacrifices weren’t all given in response to sin. Only two of the five sacrifices and offerings were for sin; the other three were simply to build the relationship with God through praise, thanks and fellowship. That different sacrifices accomplish different things paves the way for the diverse and all-encompassing way that Jesus’ sacrifice blesses us.

The video concludes by highlighting the distinction that must be made between the holy and common, the clean and the unclean (Leviticus 10:10). Andrew Wilson illuminates that there aren’t just two categories (holy/clean; common/unclean), but rather there are three (holy; common and unclean; common and clean). So much of Leviticus aims to distinguish various types of things into these categories. These distinctions in everyday life reinforce for God’s people the difference

between God (holy) and humanity (common). As you'll hopefully gather, these distinctions enrich our understanding of God and humanity.

For about ten minutes (20:50-31:35), Andrew Wilson breaks for Q&A. You might wish to skip this section if your time is short. Here are two questions that are asked during that session:

How do we navigate the fact that people in our churches hold different views about the role of the law in the Christian life? No view has “too much grace and not enough law.” Some views just have an incorrect view of grace, which minimizes it. You minimize grace if you don't see it as both transformative and forgiving. We teach people about the law so that they will improve their view of grace.

How do we teach people to “please God” without it becoming a burden of “law keeping”? Motive is key. If the picture of God that draws you is of a gracious God who has already redeemed you, then you will please him from fullness of love. If you picture God as never capable of being satisfied because he's so strict, demanding, and unloving, you will be burdened by worthless attempts to make him happy.

Terms You'll Need to Know:

Punchline—the main point or purpose of something; the place where everything comes together.

Martin Luther—Christian teacher who helped start the Protestant Reformation (early 1500s).

Hasidic Judaism—modern Jews who attempt to be faithful to Jewish Scripture.

Chronology—order of events.

Torah—the Hebrew word for “law” which broadly refers to the Pentateuch.

Active and Passive Obedience—Jesus obeyed God by not breaking the law (passive obedience) and he obeyed God by doing everything God wanted him to do, like being generous and loving (active obedience).

Unmerited—a way of saying that something cannot be earned or you don't deserve it.

Watch Video

Watch Module 1, Episode 6 (1hr 13 minutes).

Pentateuch

- I. Overview of the Pentateuch
- II. Primeval History (Gen 1-11)
- III. Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50)
- IV. Exodus Narrative (Ex 1-15)
- V. Wilderness Narrative (Ex 16-19, 24, 32-34; Num 11-25; Deut 1-4)
- VI. Laws, Lists & Land at Sinai (Ex 20-23, 25-31, 35-40; Lev 1-27; Num 1-10, 26-36; Deut 5-28)**
- VII. The Punchline of the Pentateuch (Deut 29-34)

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What Do We Do With Law?

- What do we do with the ten commandments?
 - Keep all ten of them, because “the law is holy, righteous and good”?
 - Keep none of them, because “we are not under law, but under grace”?
 - Keep nine of them, but not the one about the Sabbath?
- At a street level, I think there are four ways of engaging with the OT law
 - The Law as above us. The Law is from God, and it is holy and righteous, and therefore it should be followed by everyone who loves God. All of it. This is the approach in Hasidic Judaism and devout Islam
 - The problem is: you can’t keep it. Even the ten commandments: “no other gods but me”? “Do not covet”?
 - The Law as beneath us. In this view, the Law is a bad thing, and we should reject its authority over our lives, because we have a far better ethical standard these days. This is the view of modern secularism
 - The problem is: on whose authority do you reject the Law? (And in any case, most British people agree with what Jesus said was the essence of the commandments. **JON SNOW STORY**)
 - The Law as behind us. God’s people used to be under the Law, but then Jesus came, and now we’re under grace. God used to expect people to live up to his rules if he was to love them, but not any more
 - The problem is: God is a God of grace in the Old Testament. Law comes after redemption, and there are commands and instructions in the New Testament. Divine initiative (grace) → commands (law)
 - The Law as within us, by the Spirit, when we become disciples. Jesus fulfilled the law, and when the Holy Spirit came, he changed our hearts and caused us to love, like Jesus, and hence fulfil the law
 - This is the promise of the prophets (Deut 30; Jer 31; Ezek 36), and is variously confirmed by Jesus (Matt 7:12; 22:35-40) and Paul (Rom 8:1-4; 13:8-10)

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The Tabernacle (Exodus 25-31, 35-40)

THE TABERNACLE TENT

The entire tent was 45 feet (13.7 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15-29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26-30).

The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1-14).

The veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns woven with fine twined linen and embroidered with cherubim (Ex. 26:31-33). It hung on four golden pillars.

The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1-5; 37:25-29)

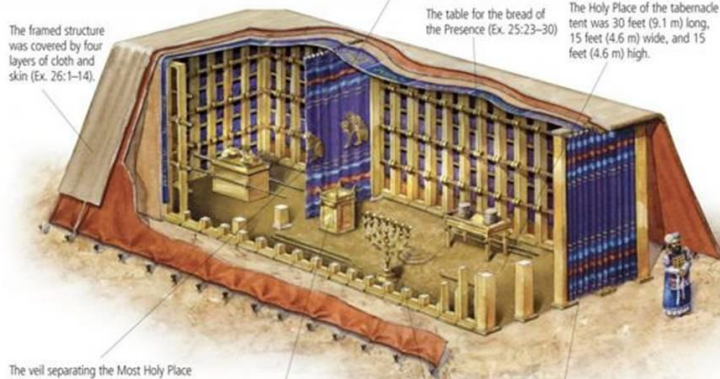
The golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40; 37:17-24)

The Most Holy Place was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance). The high priest could enter only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (see note on Heb. 9:7).

The table for the bread of the Presence (Ex. 25:23-30)

The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high.

The veil that formed the entrance to the tabernacle was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it. It was suspended on five golden pillars (Ex. 26:36-37).

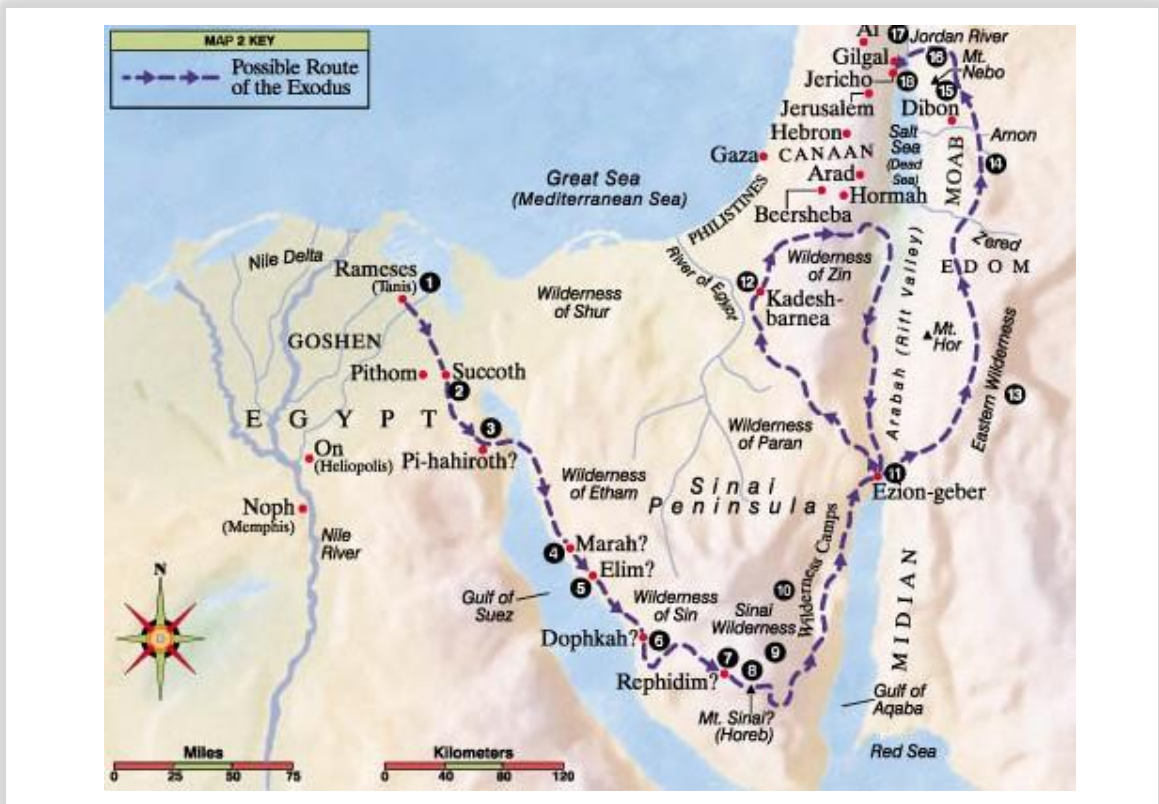
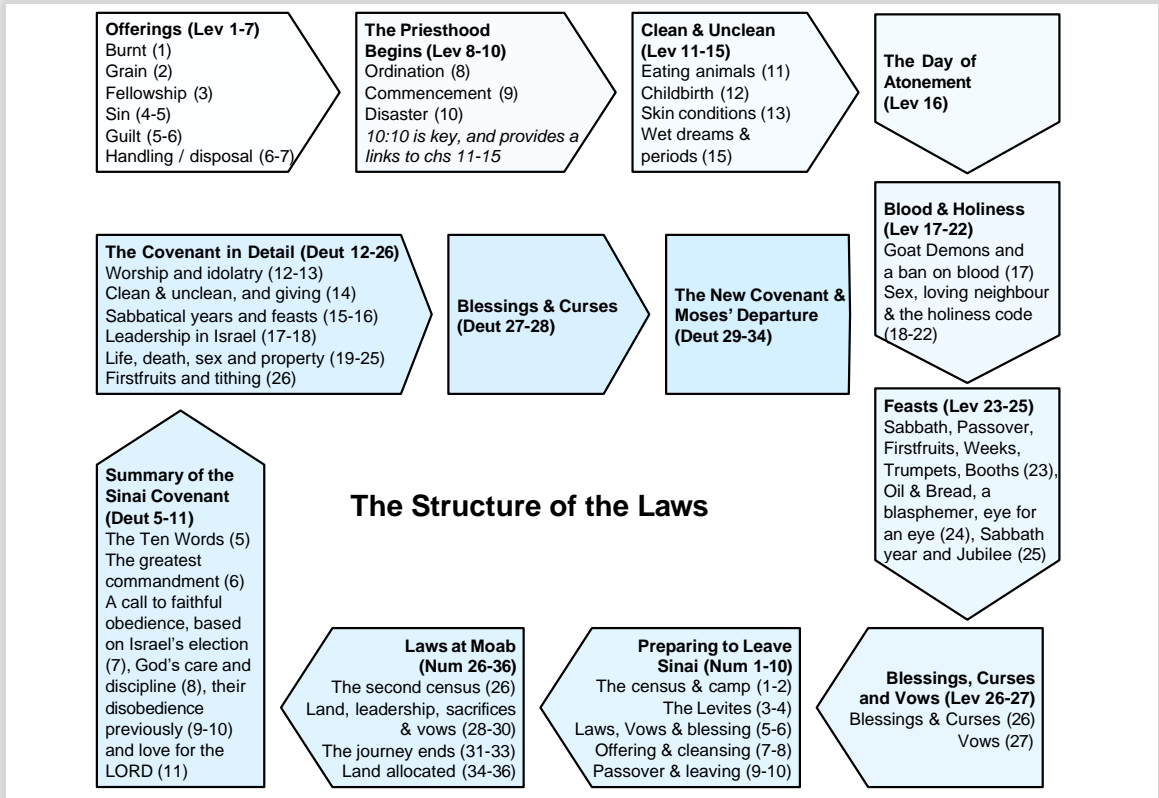


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The Levitical Sacrifices (Lev 1-7)

	Purpose	Offering described and explained	Handling, eating and disposal
Burnt Offering	Praise, and requests	Lev 1	Lev 6:8-13
Grain Offering	Pleasing aroma (often accompanies another offering)	Lev 2	Lev 6:14-23
Peace Offering	Fellowship with Yahweh	Lev 3	Lev 7:11-36
Sin Offering	Atonement / purification for unintentional sins	Lev 4:1-5:13	Lev 6:24-30
Guilt Offering	Atonement / compensation for unintentional sins	Lev 5:14-6:7	Lev 7:1-10

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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. Which of the four approaches to the law have you tended to believe? Have you been challenged to change your view? What benefit might there be for you to hold the "within" view?

2. What would be the most common approach to "God's law" in your church? How about in your culture? If they have chosen one of the poor approaches, how does this wrong view hinder them?

3. What do we learn about God from the Tabernacle and Levitical Laws?

4. Leviticus urges us to consider God's people as "holy", and the New Testament frequently makes the same case (e.g. 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:9-12). Describe what it would look and feel like to be "holy" (in the good, New Testament sense) in your culture.

Meditation on Scripture

Exodus 25:22

Leviticus 19:2

Leviticus 10:10

Hebrews 9:23-24

Putting This Session into Practice

Andrew Wilson makes the case that though we should be grateful that Christ has fulfilled the law (and we therefore don't have to follow the clean/unclean rules), it was still quite helpful. It constantly reinforced the holiness of God and the set-apart-ness of his people. We have very few physical, tangible reminders of this distinction as Christians. One way the Bible continues to commend to us is in our body postures in prayer and worship. For this week, let's remind ourselves of the holiness of God and our call to be a holy people by praying and worshipping on our knees each day.