

The Law: Its Covenantal Framework

(Part 1)

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Outline

- Old Testament Covenantal Framework
- The Legal Basis For New Testament Ethics (part 2)

OT Background

Biblical laws do not occur in a vacuum
there is always a context

God's Laws emerged from and are a demonstration of his covenantal acts

Covenant Act = God's mighty acts by which he brought order out of chaos and made an individual/group his special people

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The Constitutional basis for obedience was never the law itself, but the covenantal act of God in history

Therefore, Biblical laws were pegged to an event

The Major Covenantal Acts/Events in Salvation History

The Creation	Gen 1-2
The Flood	Gen 6-9
The Call of Abraham	Gen 12-15;18
The Exodus from Egypt	Exo 19, 20
The Exile to & Return from Babylon	Mic 7:15-20; Isa 11:15,16; 43:16-19
The Cross Event	Matt 27:26-28

The laws that emerged from each covenantal act were an expansion, continuation and discontinuation of the laws that emerged from the previous covenantal act

Covenantal Act: The Creation

Laws that emerged - Gen 1:28-31; 2:15

1. Dress the garden
2. Reproduce
3. Sway dominion over the animal kingdom
4. Refrain from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil

Covenantal Act: The Flood

Gen 9:1-8

Laws that emerged

Continuation with Eden:

Reproduce
Eat plant food
Sway dominion
over the animal
kingdom

Discontinuation:

Additional element:

Eat animal food
bow as covenant
sign

Covenantal Act: The Exodus From Egypt

Characteristics:

1. The most elaborate system of law in OT
2. Demonstration of who God was, i.e., pegged to the person of Yahweh
3. No moral/ceremonial distinction
4. Indicative-imperative model
5. Torah- a guide, not a blue-print for every situation
6. Torah- document of election

Torah: A Demonstration of Who God Was (in a limited sense)

- The law of the Lord, Psa 119:1
- I am Yahweh who brought you out of the land of Egypt
[therefore] . . . Exo 20:1
- **Holiness Code: Leviticus 17-26**

“Because I the Lord your God is holy...”

no sex with close relatives	18:6
no sacrifice to Molech	18:21
leave edges of field for poor	19:9,10

Keep all my laws Lev.19:37; see also 11:44,45;19:2;
20:7, 26; 21:8,15; 22: 9,16, 32; 27,28

No Moral/Ceremonial Distinction

- The laws were all moral in that, not to obey God in whatever he said would be wrong and immoral
- Ancient peoples did not think within these moral/ceremonial/ritual/civil distinctions

Moral Commands in the “Ceremonial” Section of the OT

- Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, Lev 19:14
- Do not remove your neighbor’s boundary [marker], Deut 19:14
- One witness ought not to convict an accused person . . . two witnesses, Deut 19:15

Moral Commands in the “Ceremonial” Section of the OT

- Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman, Lev 18:7
- Do not have sexual relations with your son’s daughter or your daughter’s daughter, Lev 18:10
- Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord, Lev 19:18

Roy Gane, *The NIV Application Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) 306, 307.

“We should recognize that the Bible does not delineate categories such as those stated above. They are more recent analytical constructs. Biblical law does not even make the sharp distinctions between religious and secular categories to which we are accustomed. Since every aspect of life as the people of God came under his jurisdiction, laws belonging to what we would classify as the religious and secular domains often appear together. For example, the “religious laws of Exodus 22:20, 28a-30; 23:10 -19a appear in contexts primarily relating to secular life.”

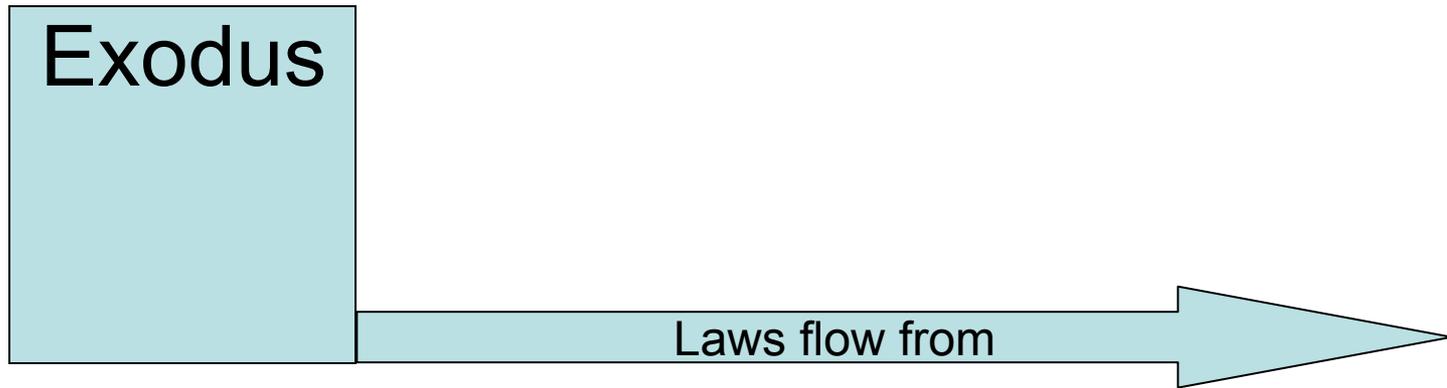
Indicative-Imperative Principle

- Laws obligatory based on the indicative/imperative principle

Indicative = What God has done (i.e. covenantal act)

Imperative = The required human response

Covenantal Act

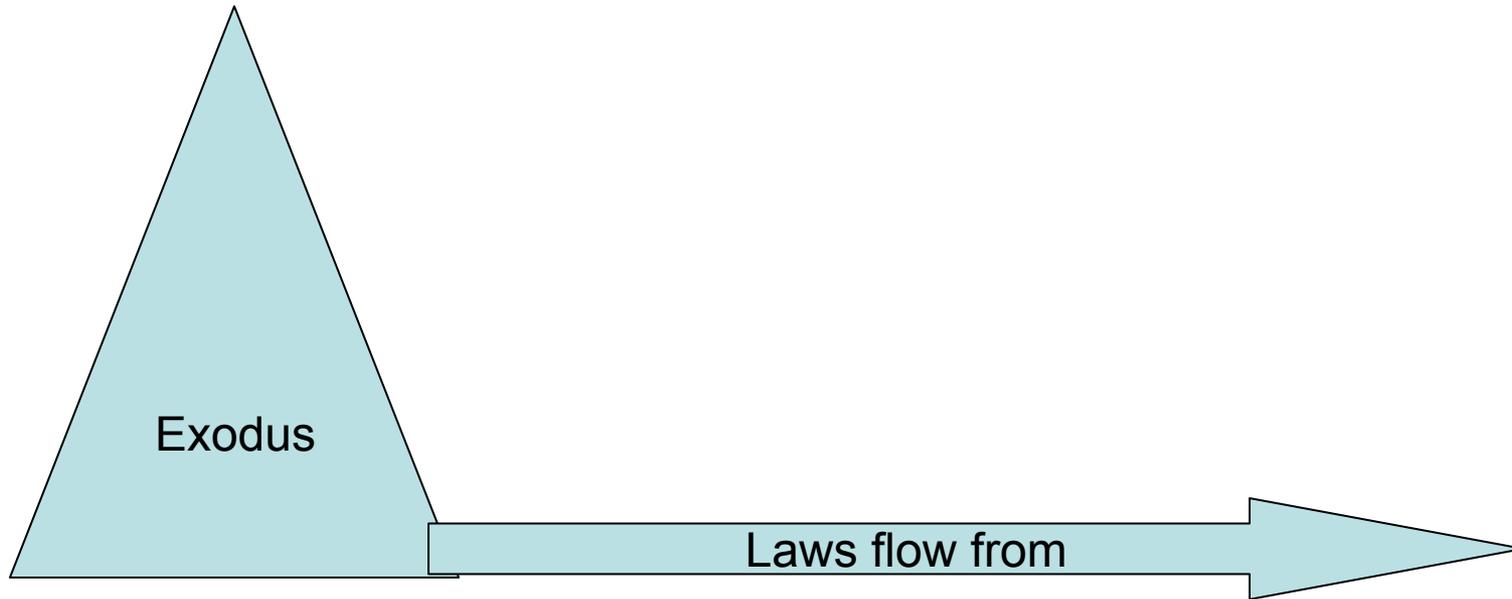


Indicative/Imperative

- Note how the following commands are based on what God did for Israel.
 - The Decalogue- Exo 20:1, 2; Deut 5:1-6
 - Be kind to strangers- Exo 23:9
 - Keep the weekly Sabbath- Deut 5:15; Exo 20:1,2
 - Redeem the first born
 - Pay tithe
 - Refrain from oppressing the aliens
 - Repent towards God
- Exo 13:3-16; Lev 23:41-43; Isa 2; 43; Amos 2:9-10; 3:1-2

Exodus: Basis of Obedience

Exodus represented salvation for Israel



Israel's worship was an act of recounting the mighty acts of God in their history

Psa 66:1-6; 71:15-17; 76; 78; 105; 106; 107; See also, Deut 11:7,8; 6:20-24; 7:7-11; 10:17-19; 27:9

The principle is, God first does something for us before he asks us to do anything for Him

All His commands are based on his prior mighty acts of grace. Grace always precedes law

Torah as Guide

Torah was not intended to stipulate every minute course of action. It was intended to be a general guide.

- Violator of Sabbath- no stipulation: Num 15:32-36
- The centralization of the Passover: Exo 12:7, 46;
Deut 16:5-8
- The re-wording of the Decalogue: Exo 20:1-17; Deut 5-21; Exo 34:
10-28
- The *Ummin Thummin* that communicated the direct voice of God ([Exodus 28:30](#); [Leviticus 8:8](#); ([Numbers 27:21](#))).

Torah as Document of Election

- Document of election means that instrument which served to set Israel apart as the chosen of Yahweh. This function of Torah underlined its ethical demands. Exo 19:1-6; Deut 5:15; Eph 2:13-14; 2Cor 3
- Therefore, law and covenant used interchangeable throughout the OT
Exo 34:28; 2 Kings 22: 8; 23: 2, 3; Psa 78:10;
Isa 24:5, 6

God chose Israel and designated them as His special people. He therefore gave them an entity to symbolize their special status. That entity was the Torah (law).

Jesus: The Mightiest Act and New Covenant

- Jesus fulfilled or recapitulated all the major themes and personalities of the OT
- He is:

New Creation:	Lk 1:35
New Exodus:	Lk 9:30
New Exile:	Phil 2:6-8; Gal 3:10-13 // Deut 27:26
New Moses:	Matt 1-3; 5-7
New Adam:	Rom 5
New David:	John 13:18 // Psa 41:9
New Elisha:	John 6:9-13 // 2Kings 4:42-44
New Israel:	Matt 2:15; John 15:1 // Isa 5:1-7
New Covenant:	Matt 27:28
<u>New Torah:</u>	Matt 5:17-18; John 5:39; Rom 10:4

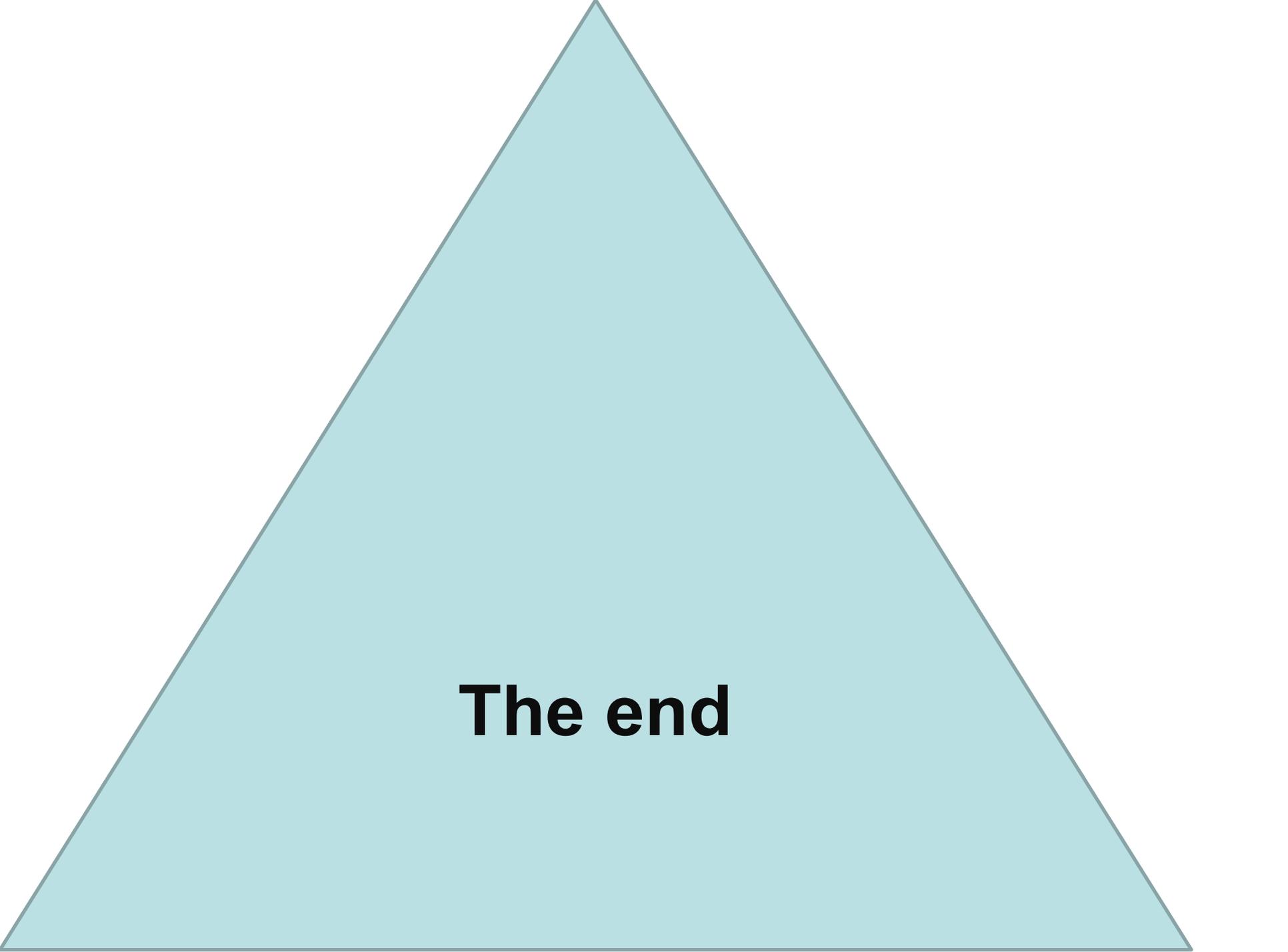
Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1915), 315

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster.

In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption— the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers (emphasis supplied).

- As laws emerged from, and were colored by the previous mighty acts of God, so likewise laws emerged from and are shaped by the final and mightiest act of God— the Christ event.

[Continues in Part 2]



The end