

# INTRODUCTION

## LAW, JUSTICE, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Law is defined as rules given and enforced by authority. The law of God consists of his laws of nature for the world, and his moral laws for mankind. Moral laws are needed for us because we have knowledge of good and evil, and the free will to choose. And the consequences of those laws are as inexorable as are the laws of nature. Choosing good and rejecting evil means living righteously. And God's moral laws were given to promote righteousness. The Bible is filled with testimony of God's love of righteousness. Here is one from the Psalms: **"For the word of Jehovah is right, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice"** (Psalm 33:4-5). He loves righteousness because that is what makes all good things happen.

Because God gave us the power to choose, we are going to be judged by the choices we make. The final judgment will be at the end of the world, which Jesus spoke about: **"The Son of man will send forth his agents, and they will gather out of his kingdom all the stumbling-blocks, and those doing lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear"** (Matthew 13:41-43). Life in heaven will be good because it will be a world of righteousness, as Peter said: **"But we anticipate a new heavens and a new earth according to his promise, in which righteousness dwells"** (Second Peter 3:13).

In this dark world there are many things falsely promoted as righteous, some of which are very unrighteous. God in his Holy Bible has revealed to us what is true righteousness. One good summary of things that are righteous and unrighteous is in the book of Galatians. There Paul contrasts the evil works of the flesh—our animal lusts and impulses—with the fruit of the Spirit of God which guides the hearts of the righteous. Paul said, **"Now the works of the flesh are apparent, which are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strifes, jealousies, wraths, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envyings, murders, intoxications, revelings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, as I also did forewarn, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such things there is no law"** (Galatians 5:19-23).

Another good summary is the ten commandments of the law of Moses (see Exodus 20). However, the best summary of righteousness is what we call the sermon on the mount given by Jesus to his disciples (see Matthew 5-7). In that lengthy sermon he gave many lessons and commands about righteousness.

Now regarding justice. Righteousness is the application of God's will, and justice is the application of his laws. Therefore, justice is a part of righteousness. The application of the laws of men creates justice only when those laws are in harmony with the law of God. There

is great confusion these days about the meaning of justice because there are so many bad laws and bad decisions by judges. And those things defeat justice. True justice can only be understood by knowing God's laws and how to properly apply them. And that is best learned from knowledge of the word of God, the Holy Bible. Teaching about the moral law of God is the major purpose of this book.

## WORDS FOR AND ABOUT LAW

The most common words in the Bible that are used to refer to God's law are these: law, commandment, statute, and ordinance. Those words are used hundreds of times in the Bible, the most frequent of which are law and commandment. I did a search on the internet looking for information about the differences between those words. Here is the location of the website I found that was most relevant to what I was searching: <http://www.biblepages.web.surftown.se/ec03b.htm>. Below is a quotation from that site which seems to summarize best what the author concluded about the differences:

It is important to understand that many of the different Hebrew words which are behind the English translations "law", "testimonies", "commandments", "statutes", "decrees", "ordinances", "charges" and "judgements", were often used interchangeably, almost as synonyms. ... The KJ version, as well as others, have translated the Hebrew words in many different ways in different passages, without consistency. Thus, the seeming division of the things of the old covenant into such "categories" as "law", "testimonies", "commandments", "statutes", "decrees", "ordinances", "charges" and "judgments", is not a real one. Most bible versions use such words interchangeably, and are not consistent in their manner of translating the Hebrew words. Further: It appears that even in the Hebrew language, some of the words in question were at times used alternatively, interchangeably.

Therefore, do not become confused by attempting to find a clear difference in the meaning of those words. It is enough to understand they all refer to the general meaning of law.

Not only are many different words used to refer to law, but the word law is used in many different ways. Its use ranges from a narrow reference to individual commands, to a broad reference to all the teachings of justice and righteousness. That is especially true for how it is used in the New Testament. For example, in his writings Paul mentions the law of Moses, the law of commandments, the law of faith, the law of works, the law of God, the law of Christ, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, the law of righteousness, and the law of sin; all of that in addition to simply using the word law. He also mentioned a law in his body-parts that warred against the law of his mind. And James mentioned the law of liberty that disciples of Christ are to live by.

Jesus and other men of the New Testament also used the word law to refer to all of the writings of the Old Testament, and not just the law of Moses. For example, Jesus said, **"But, that the word that is written in their law may be fulfilled, They hated me without cause"** (John 15:25). That was a passage from Psalm 69, not the law of Moses. Therefore, be careful to understand how the word law is used in any passage of scripture.

## USES OF WORDS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, and you need also to be aware that many words of Hebrew and Greek that were used in the Bible do not have the precise meaning they have in their English equivalents. For example, the word forever in English means everlasting and without end. However, in Hebrew and Greek their words for forever do not always have that kind of absolute meaning. They often mean simply a long time, or a lifetime, or as long as something exists, as in this passage about a bondman Paul sent back to his owner: **“For perhaps because of this he departed for an hour, so that thou might receive him back forever ...”** (Philemon 1:15).

Other examples of words in English Bible translations that vary somewhat from their common meaning are the words cattle and brass. In the Bible the word for cattle includes all domesticated animals, not just bulls and cows. It is equivalent to the word livestock, which is the more popular word today. And the word brass means any copper alloy, including bronze. Actually, the word bronze was coined in the eighteenth century to make a distinction between the kinds of copper alloy. And I suspect the reason they chose the word bronze for the common alloy used during Bible times was to discredit the word of God. For they could just as easily have called it brass, which is the word the early English translations used. The devil is **“the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience”** (Ephesians 2:2), and he uses them to create many subtle devices to undermine our faith in the Bible.

Other examples are the words Greek and world. In the Bible the word Greek is used only in the New Testament, and it usually means Gentile of whatever nationality. And the word world often meant the world they knew about, and not the entire globe. For example, when Paul told his Roman brothers, **“First, I indeed express thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world”** (Romans 1:8), that meant their known world. However, when John said, **“... the world passes away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides into the age”** (First John 2:15-17), that meant the entire physical realm.

Therefore, a major problem with translation (Bible and otherwise) is that there are not always exact English equivalents. Consequently, translators of the Bible must use words that may not have the exact same meaning as those of the Hebrew and Greek. There are many other words in the Bible whose precise meaning can only be learned by studying the ways the word is used in various passages. Dictionaries and even lexicons alone are not sufficient to learn their meaning. It is very important to recognize that fact.

Moreover, you need to remember that in our modern world word definitions are constantly changing. Which is another reason you need to be careful when you read the Bible, and make an effort to understand how a word is being used. Let not scoffers who seize upon such difficulties threaten your faith and discourage you from studying and learning from God’s holy word.

Remember also many words in the Bible are used figuratively. For example, the word know sometimes refers to sexual intimacy, as in this passage about Joseph: **“And he took his**

**wife, and knew her not until she brought forth her son, the firstborn. And he called his name JESUS**” (Matthew 1:24-25). The use of the word that way is commonly known as carnal knowledge. Less commonly understood is the expression “uncover nakedness,” which also refers to sexual intimacy, as the following passage indicates: **“And thou shall not take a wife in addition to her sister, to be a rival to her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time”** (Leviticus 18:18).

Another less understood expression is “cut off from the people,” which almost certainly means put to death, although not everyone agrees. Some say it means being exiled. However, the following example shows that it means being put to death: **“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death, for whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people”** (Exodus 31:14).

Another word that requires careful interpretation is the word evil. That word can refer to whatever is wrong or to whatever is harmful. Therefore, evil is not always wrong. America did much evil to the Nazis, but that evil was not wrong. Here is a passage in the Bible that uses the word both ways: **“Thus says Jehovah: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you. Return ye now everyone from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings”** (Jeremiah 18:11). The evil that Jehovah would frame against them was harm; the evil that he wanted them to return from was sin. Every dictionary includes those two meanings, but scoffers love to misapply them so they can accuse God falsely of doing that which is wrong. Be not misled by them.

## THE MASCULINITY OF THE BIBLE

Also in order to understand the Bible you must recognize its masculine character. To help you do that I compared a few simple statistics in the New Testament from seven different Bible versions: The King James Version (KJV), the Revised Standard version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the New English Translation (NET), and my own A Conservative Version (ACV). Depending upon the version, there are about 4200 to 6000 uses of the following gender specific pronouns: he, him, she, and her. In all seven versions the masculine words outrank the feminine ones more than 9 to 1.

In the KJV, the RSV, the NIV, and the NKJV there are from about 1100 to over 1400 uses of the words, man, men, woman, and women, depending upon the version. Their respective male/female percentage ratios are 90/10, 87/13, 85/15, and 86/14. In the pro-feminist NRSV and NET there are 667 and 868 of those words, respectively, with their percentage ratios being 75/25 and 80/20. The ACV has almost 2100 of those words with a percentage ratio of 91/9. For all seven of the versions there are about 500 uses of the words, son, sons, daughter, daughters. In all of them 93 to 94 percent are son or sons.

There are roughly between 350 and 450 uses of the gender specific nouns brother and sister (singular and plural), including the archaic word brethren (which means brothers). In the ACV, the KJV, the RSV, the NIV, and the NKJV the masculine words comprise 93 to 94

percent of the total. For both of the pro-feminist versions (NRSV and NET) the percentages are 70/30. The large difference in their percentages compared with the other five versions was caused primarily by their translators inserting the phrase “brothers and sisters,” where the original Greek text has only brothers.

The figures for gender specific words with the smallest differences are those for parents. There are commonly about 500 uses of the words, father, fathers, mother, mothers. In all seven versions 81 to 84 percent of those words are father or fathers. Although the gender difference with these words is less than any of the other comparisons I made, nevertheless, the use of the paternal words still outranks the use of maternal ones by five to one.

There are situations recorded in the Bible when statistical comparisons cannot be made because women simply were not counted. For example, we read of two occasions in the New Testament when Jesus fed thousands of men from only a handful of food; one group consisted of five thousand, and another of four thousand: “**And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children**” (Mat 14:21); “**And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children**” (Mat 15:38). Notice that only the men were counted; the women and children were excluded from the count.

That is typical of the Holy Spirit who guided the hearts of the righteous men whose lives are recorded in the Bible, and of the prophets who wrote the words in it. Indeed, the statistics in favor of the masculine could be much greater. For often Greek adjectives in the New Testament are given without an associated noun. And as William D. Mounce wrote in his book, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, “In this case you must use your common sense to translate properly.” When a New Testament writer left out the associated noun of an adjective, it seems clear that he knew the context of the word would make obvious what the noun should be. Consider, for example, the English word saint which is translated from a Greek adjective meaning holy or sanctified. If he was writing about women, and the word holy is feminine, then it is clear he meant holy or sanctified women. But in most cases the English word saint is more correctly translated holy or sanctified men because it is almost always masculine plural. Nevertheless, every other English translation I know about uses words to conceal the masculine character of the Bible.

I translated the Conservative Version to try to preserve as much of that original masculine character as possible. I used historic English, which made that easier. Hence, words such as man and men can refer to males only or to both genders; the context reveals which is the case. For example, Jesus answered one temptation of the devil with these words: “**It is written, Man will not live on bread alone, but on every word coming out through the mouth of God**” (Matthew 4:4). He was clearly referring to mankind. In contrast, the words woman and women refer only to females. And the Bible nowhere contains such expressions as “he or she,” “him or her.” God has never recognized the equality of women with men. The fact that words such as men and sons can refer to both genders should be remembered as you read the Bible. Otherwise, you will be misled or confused. Such a warning was completely unnecessary before the rise of the women’s rebellion called feminism. That satanic

movement has contributed greatly to the perversion of the English language, as well as spawning a host of other evils.

## LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Part One of this book I give what the Old Testament says about law. There is very little in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, that is specifically about law. In fact the word itself appears only once in the entire book. However, the book of Genesis does describe how God interacted with mankind, and with certain groups and individuals based upon what may be called the universal laws of righteousness, or the common law of God. That law consists of those ways of righteousness he expects for all mankind, such as not committing murder or theft. I also say a few things about the obedience of the men he chose to begin a special people for himself; namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (later called Israel).

The many laws of Moses were given after his people, the sons of Israel, had multiplied greatly. Those laws were given while the people were in the wilderness on their way to their promised land. And they are recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. I quote the laws from those books, and I present them in the exact order they appear. The only organization I give to them is to add descriptive headings to each of them. Many of the laws about certain topics are grouped together, such as those about offerings, the tabernacle, and sins of sex. Therefore, I gave them a general heading, with subheadings for each specific law within the group.

However, there were a few occasions when an entirely different kind of law was inserted within a group. For example, in the middle of the lengthy list of commands describing how to construct the tabernacle, a law about taking a census was inserted. In cases like that I enclosed the subheading of that law in parentheses to show it was not related to the main heading, but was like an aside.

There are many statutes and ordinances in the law of Moses. The number of which has been estimated, the most common being 613. Nevertheless, I have little faith in such attempts. An article in the internet encyclopedia Wikipedia admits there are many difficulties attempting to make such a count (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613\\_mitzvot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/613_mitzvot)).

In that article the author said, "Rabbis who attempted to compile a list of the 613 commandments faced a number of difficulties, being:

- Which statements were to be counted as commandments? Every command by God to any individual? Only commandments to the entire people of Israel?
- Would an order from God be counted as a commandment, for the purposes of such a list, if it could only be complied with in one place and time? Or, would such an order only count as a commandment if it could - at least in theory - be followed at all times? (The latter is the view of Maimonides.)
- How does one count commandments in a single verse which offers multiple prohibitions? Should each prohibition count as a single commandment, or does the entire set count as one commandment?

“In *Torah Min Hashamayim* (‘Heavenly Torah’), Conservative Judaism’s Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes:

Judah ibn Bal’am denigrates those who number the mitzvot [from a Hebrew word meaning commandments], and who attempt ‘to force their count to equal 613.’ In his opinion, this is impossible, for if we were to count all of the mitzvot, including those that were temporary commandments and those that were intended to endure, the number would be far greater than 613. ‘And if we confined ourselves only to those that endure, we would find fewer than this number.’ (*Behinat Hamitzvot* Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Gutmann, Breslau, 1928, p.26).

“Despite these misgivings, the idea that there are 613 commandments became accepted as normative in the Jewish community. Today, even among those who do not literally accept this count as accurate, it is still a common practice to refer to the total system of commandments within the Torah as the ‘613 commandments.’”

I need to mention that the Jews include the book of Genesis with the other four books in what they call the Torah, meaning law. However, only one of their laws is contained in that book, and it was repeated in Leviticus. That was the command of circumcision for Abraham and all his offspring. Nevertheless, another one of those 613 comes from the book of Genesis, but it was never a commandment. It is based upon this passage: “**Therefore the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, to this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew of the hip**” (Genesis 32:32).

After the book of Deuteronomy virtually all other references to laws in the Old Testament are simply descriptions of whether or not the people were obeying them. Many of the references are statements from God and his prophets urging obedience. David did add some things to the worship at the temple, but they are not considered laws from God. Moses alone was the lawgiver sent by God for the old covenant. I also add some brief summaries of Old Testament history among the listing of the laws because the Bible text mixes history with the commands. And I occasionally insert some short comments about the laws.

## THE LAW OF MOSES ANALYZED

In Part Two of this book I organize those laws into topics. The topics selected are based upon my own judgment about one way to classify the many laws of Moses. I also offer comments and suggestions about the usefulness of those laws for modern times. The topics are listed in both tables of contents. I gave no specific organization to the listing, although I placed Jehovah first, followed by those that I thought were things most associated with him. I also added relevant comments at the end of some of the topics about how those things may relate to the new covenant of Christ.

## LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In Part Three of this book I quote those passages of the New Testament that either mention law or are relevant to law. In addition I make many comments and interpretations about

some of those passages. The New Testament contains a wealth of information about laws: about what their true purpose is, and about how God wants them applied.

Jesus obeyed the laws of Moses as long as he lived on this earth, and he commanded all Jews to obey them. However, he had many conflicts with the Jewish leaders about the law. For example, they interpreted some of the laws too strictly, but Jesus obeyed them as God intended. Consequently, they often accused Jesus of breaking the law, breaking it the way they wanted the law obeyed. One of the most common complaints they had against him was how he observed the sabbath day. For example, he often healed the infirmed on the sabbath, and the Jews condemned him because of it. However, he gave them examples of how they all cared for their animals on the sabbath, which always silenced them, but they condemned him anyway. When sinners hate someone they are not deterred by truth and reason.

Jesus opposed the excessive strictness of some of their practices, which went beyond what was taught in the law of Moses. However, he commanded more strictness about some things than were taught in the law. For example, he said, **“Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, that every man who looks on a woman to crave her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”** (Matthew 5:27-28). Hence, his conflicts with the leaders of the Jews were often about the law. Moreover, they had added many of their own traditions to the laws of Moses, and they accused him whenever he violated them. Those conflicts about the law and their traditions were a major cause of their hostility toward him.

After Jesus was taken from the earth, and his church was established, the law of Moses began to be phased out. That is clearly stated by the author of the book of Hebrews, who wrote much about law. For when he was contrasting the new covenant from Jesus Christ with the old covenant from Moses, he said, **“In saying, New, he has made the first old. And what is becoming old and obsolete is near disappearance”** (Hebrews 8:13). God finally abolished the old law system of Moses entirely by the Roman army that destroyed the temple and scattered the Jews abroad. He did it that way because the Jews rejected his new covenant, and would not give up the law of Moses voluntarily.

Paul in his letters to the Roman and the Galatian churches wrote much about the law. And in them he showed the great superiority of the new covenant of Christ. Indeed, Paul showed how the law of the old covenant was actually a curse that Jesus freed them from. What God has always wanted is absolute faith and trust in him, and obedience to his righteousness. And even the best legal systems do not guarantee that.

Sinners need legal systems because they are not internally motivated for righteousness. In contrast, righteous men do not need legal systems, because they want to do right. All they need is knowledge and understanding about how. Therefore, freedom is most effective with them, because they are worthy of it, and will use it to be productive for good. Freedom for sinners just allows them to sin even more. Consequently, they need the walls and chains of legal systems to restrain them.

## LAW AFTER CHRIST

In the last Part of this book I describe the application of God's law to mankind after the establishment of the church and the end of the law of Moses. I first show from the teachings of the New Testament how Jesus Christ redeemed from condemnation all who believe in him. It was by the sacrifice of his sinless life that God gave him the right to redeem us.

I then describe the new covenant that God made through Jesus. It is a covenant based upon faith not works of law. Since we all violate the laws of God's righteousness, we all become guilty and are condemned to suffer punishment with the devil and the other adversaries of God. When we believe in Jesus, and commit our lives to him, he redeems us from that condemnation, and we become freed from legalism with God. That is the new covenant.

After that I describe how we all have the dual nature of flesh and spirit. And those two parts of us are frequently in conflict. Our flesh has been corrupted and is condemned to perish. And because our flesh is corrupt it is a frequent source of temptation to us that we must struggle to resist as long as we want to remain sons of God.

I then describe the kind of spirit and attitude that Christ expects us to have as his disciples. I contrast being too loose with his commandments with being too strict. And I use the example from his sermon on the mount about going the second mile. I also use the example of church worship to illustrate the balanced approach of "entering the narrow gate" that we should have.

After that I describe who were the people of God before the coming of Christ and the new covenant. And I show how the old covenant of the law of Moses is no longer in effect. I also show how Judaism is a false religion, not supported by the word of God, and it is a yoke upon the necks of all who strive to follow it.

Then I give some comments about the relevance of the laws of God (as described in the Bible) for all nations. I explain how Satan is now the ruler of the world, but it is still possible for a Christian people to create a nation of God whenever an opportunity arises. And I give a few suggestions about how such a nation should be created.

The book ends with some words of encouragement about keeping the laws of God.

