

# Lesson Ten

The teachings of the Bible can be grouped into two broad categories, Gospel and Law. Much of the material we have covered so far has concentrated on Jesus and his work of saving us from our sins. That is the Gospel. The Gospel is what the Holy Spirit uses to create faith in our hearts. In the next four lessons, we will look more closely at the other category of Bible teachings, the Law. In this lesson we will look at what the Law is and what part it plays in God's plan of salvation.

## What is the Law?

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel had three types of law given to them from the Lord. The first type was civil law. This type of law was established to maintain order in society by telling the people of Israel how to interact with one another. An example of this type of law is found in *Ex 21:33-34*, where God instructs his people that, “If a man uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit must pay for the loss; he must pay its owner, and the dead animal will be his.” These laws were designed for the nation of Israel. Therefore, these laws are not applicable to us today.

The second type of law given to the people of Israel was ceremonial law. What was ceremonial law?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>Deuteronomy 16:1-4</i> “Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning.”</p>	<p>Ceremonial laws regulated the worship life of the Israelites. By having a well-defined worship life, the ceremonial laws were intended to keep the Israelites from adopting pagan rituals.</p>

**God says:****From this we know:**

*Deuteronomy 29:17* “You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.”

*Hebrews 10:1-4* “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

*Colossians 2:16* “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ”

*Matthew 5:17* “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

*1 John 4:10* “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

*Hebrews 10:10* “...we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Ceremonial laws pointed ahead to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of all people.

The ceremonial laws were fulfilled when Jesus Christ was sacrificed for our sins on the cross. Since they have been fulfilled, these laws do not apply to us today.

**God says:****From this we know:**

*Colossians 2:13b, 14* “He (God) forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

The third type of law given to the people of Israel was the moral law. This is the type of law that is referred to when speaking of “Law and Gospel”. Unlike the other types of law, the moral law has existed from the beginning of the world and it applies to all people, not just the Israelites. It expresses God's will for people. This is what we will focus on for the rest of the lesson.

How did God give us the Law (moral law)?

**God says:****From this we know:**

*Romans 2:14-15* “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”

God put the Law into the heart of man at Creation. Adam and Eve knew God's will perfectly. After Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the perfect knowledge of God's will. However, each of us still has a conscience that reminds us of God's moral laws to some extent.

*Deuteronomy 10:4* “The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me.”

Eventually, God had Moses write down his will.

## Why has God given us the Law?

God says:	From this we know:
<p><i>1 Timothy 1:8-10</i> “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurors—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.”</p> <p><i>Psalm 33:12a</i> “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD”</p>	<p>God gave us the Law to act as a curb on wickedness. Nations that observe the moral law of God will be blessed by the results of following God's instructions, but this effect is not as important as the spiritual effects of the Law.</p>
<p><i>Romans 3:19-20</i> “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”</p>	<p>God gave us the Law to act as a mirror, which shows us our sins. Once we know that we cannot live the perfect life God demands, we realize our need for a savior. We are ready to hear the good news of the Gospel.</p>
<p><i>John 14:15</i> “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”</p> <p><i>Galatians 3:11</i> “Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”</p> <p><i>Psalm 119:9</i> “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.”</p>	<p>God gave us the Law as a guide to show us how to thank him for all he has given us. When we live our lives by following the moral law to the best of our ability, it demonstrates our love for God.</p> <p>Christians realize that they cannot perfectly keep the Law, so they do not try to keep it as a way to earn salvation. They trust that Jesus has already saved them from sin by keeping God's law for us and by dying on the cross for our sins.</p>

In this lesson we have looked briefly at God's moral law and how it applies to Christians today. In the next three lessons we will look in detail at the most famous expression of God's moral law, the Ten Commandments.

All Bible passages are from the New International Version.