

BIB103 OT1: Creation and Covenants

Unit 3b The Law and the Tabernacle

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The law, as we see in the Book of Exodus, is an important concept because God had to institute this as a result of the way that the people were behaving and for them to understand that he needed his moral law and code to be established in their nation so they would understand the specific principles that God wanted them to live by. The purpose of law really has five parts to it. And law, I think we all understand to some degree. We might think of the long arm of the law. We might think of having the police enforce something. Most of us probably associate it with driving at the speed limit or not. If you're driving your car, and I don't know about you, but as far as I'm concerned, if I'm driving on the road, even if I'm going at the speed limit or close to it and I see a police car, I'd immediately slow down. Why? Because I want to make sure I'm falling within the speed limit which is the law that's set up. Why is this speed limit set up? To create safety in the speed of travel that people have so that accidents are lessened. People have more response time for that.

And God had to do that to the children of Israel. He wanted them to know that he had his law set up so that they would know clearly what they should and should not do in relationship to God's heart and to God's character. So there's mainly five purposes that we see to the law. Now, remember, I just said it was added to the Abrahamic covenant because of what? The transgressions of the people. To intensify sin so that sin would not become a matter of transgression or breaking the law, that they really understood this wasn't just that you're not doing what you should do. You're sinning. You're transgressing. You're breaking the law. You're going 75 miles an hour on a 35-mile an hour speed limit. And you can see this even mentioned in the New Testament in Galatians 3:19. So we see that it was added.

The second thing we see is it was to bring men to Christ, Galatians again, chapter 3 in verse 24 though now, and that the law was there to let man realize that even as good as he could be, he could never fulfill every nuance and every jot and tittle, so to speak, of the law, that he would break the law, and that that's the way mankind is. No matter how good we try to be, we will never be able to be good enough to be accepted as sinless into heaven. We need Christ's gift and sacrifice of his shed blood for the redemption of our sins to be able to have a relationship with God.

We see thirdly that it shows the holiness of God. It allows us to see God's character spelled out in the laws and in the procedures in the laws that he wanted us to obey. It reflects his character, what's important to him, what his heart is all about.

It was, number four, to make a distinct people for God. The way that they live was completely different than the way that the Gentiles live. An example would be some of the dietary laws where they were told to not eat certain meats. Why? Because God didn't want them to eat bacon, for instance, they couldn't eat pork? No, because there were specific diseases that when the food wasn't handled properly, it would get a lot of people sick, and God wanted to protect his people from the illnesses that were contained by improper handling of the food or because of the nature of the way animals were treated and housed at the time. So he gave those laws to give that distinction for the people of God.

And then number five, it was to give regulations for a theocratic nation. Theocracy is a God-ruled nation. And this was a theocratic nation. This wasn't king-led at this point in time. This was led by God. He was the one that was the lawgiver. He was the one that directed them in the way that they should obey and live out their lives.

So there's some main characteristics about the Mosaic Law that we need to understand. We need to understand the Decalogue which means 10 words taken from Exodus 9:20-26, that section in there. And the Decalogue involved moral laws and statutes for the Israelites. And you'll see that again in that Exodus 19-20 passage. The spiritual basis of the covenant is given in two parts, two tablets of stone. Remember when Moses got those two tablets of stone? And even the way that God established that is pretty powerful when you realize that he wanted them to understand the magnitude of what was taking place. So what does he do? He calls Moses up to a mountain that's shrouded in fog, so to speak, by a cloud. They couldn't see what was going on in there. They were told not to even touch the base of the mountain, to stay away from it. He was bringing Moses up as if to say to the people, "This is really, really special and important and holy, and that's why I need this time." And then for God to cut the tablets out of the stone so that he could have them written by the hand of God to bring down to the children of Israel.

What do we find them doing, though? And again, this is what happens. So often, when we don't have the thumb right there, when we don't have the authority right there, our tendency sometimes reveals again the sinful flesh that we have. And they lost faith in God. They lost faith in what was going on. What did they revert to? The same things they had come from that they knew were wrong with the Egyptian nation even. They took the gold that they had, they melted it down using Aaron as the leader, the brother of Moses, the man that saw the plagues and was part of Pharaoh's court as he saw the things take place when Moses presented it, and what happens? They make these two calves. They're idols for them to worship, for them to follow after. The God of eternity they reject in place of two golden calves,

lifeless, made of their own hands, fashioned and crafted with their own craftsmen, not the God of eternity. But do we not still see that in our own culture and in our own hearts? How many times do we place other things that we trust in and rely in instead of the God of the universe? We rely in these manmade, so to speak, elements of things that we think we can control, and yet we are so limited in our control of the events around us and the courses of our life without God.

So Moses is up there. He gets the two tablets. We see that the Mosaic Law is being established there. The first four commands (there was 10 commands that were given) emphasized man's responsibility to God and what he should be doing in relationship to God. The second six commands are based on the first group, but they emphasized man's relationship to man. So four, man's relationship to God as "Thou shall have no other gods before us." And then the second section there, the six, is our relationship to each other, not to covet what our neighbor has. So you see that God again understood that. And what I love about that is when you go again and even into the New Testament, what does God say? That the greatest commandments are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and your might, and to love your neighbor as yourself. And you see again a tie-in, a cool tie-in between the 10 commandments and even God's ultimate command that's been given to us.

Another aspect of the Mosaic Law that we see is that this book of the covenant was the central altar which became the outward symbol of the covenant. When you see the altar that we're going to be looking at a little bit later on when we look at the tabernacle, this was a central part of things, just like the law was a central aspect of the lifestyle and the direction that the Israelites had as they lived their daily life. And you'll see that, by the way, in Exodus 21:1-24. And then we see generally the law, that central altar that becomes that outward covenant, the law as scattered through Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy is really divided into three parts. The moral law which is presumed on the character of God, those things that reflect the heart of God, the character of God. The moral law. You see secondly the judicial and social laws. Those are the things that govern human relations. We're going to see a lot of this as we look at these other books of the Bible that I just mentioned in the Pentateuch. And then the third thing we see is the ceremonial laws. And that was the things that involved offerings and feasts, why we did them, how we did them, the different aspects of that. And the law was an important part of their daily life, as we see. The law was something that they were encouraged to, not just to take it the way they wanted to, but they were demanded. Not just encouraged; demanded to be obedient to what that said.

So the tabernacle. We talk about the law. We talk how we see God there. Now we talk about the tabernacle. And the tabernacle had many different pieces of furniture within it. The ark was the central aspect of it, but there was a lot of other pieces to it, all of which were done for a specific purpose and a reason. God doesn't just do things and throw things in there because he can't think of something else to do. God is a specific God of order and design. Now, I'll have to admit that there have been times that as I look and now get into this part of Exodus, it can become daunting, like "Why all this?" And one specific theme I think that we can grasp is we see that God always has a plan. He's always got a reason that he even looks at the tiniest of details to try to figure things out.

Now, I would consider myself a person that likes to make sure I have my details in order. But I'm human still, so even my best laid plans, things can happen. Such as a trip. You plan for a trip. You make your checklist. You pack your bags up. You get your food together you might be taking. You make sure if you're flying, you have your plane tickets or your e-passes, or make sure things are downloaded, that you have your photo ID. You have all those things and you go through it and you get in your car or you fly in your plane, and unbeknownst to us, something happens. Somebody gets sick. Uncontrollable situation. You get a flat tire. Uncontrollable. The details that we realize our limitations as humans. God is limitless. God has it all in control and all laid out. And he has a very specific purpose in every aspect of the tabernacle.

Now, there's several different pieces of furniture in the tabernacle and we're going to see them in a few different parts of Exodus. So as we look at that, you're going to start in Exodus 25. At verses 10-22 we see the Ark of the Covenant. Then we see the table of showbread which is in Exodus 25:23-30. And then we see the golden lampstand which is in Exodus 25:31-40. We see the altar of the burnt offering in Exodus 27:1-8. We see the altar of incense in Exodus 30:1-10. And lastly, we see the bronze laver in Exodus 30:17-21. Six different, distinctive pieces of furniture in the tabernacle that we want to be aware of.

Now, the tabernacle itself is discussed from chapter 25 of Exodus all the way through chapter 40. Some introductory thoughts about the tabernacle now that we've laid out the pieces of furniture. And we'll share a little bit more about what they are. And again, this will be an assignment that we'll give as well for you to be able to understand those pieces a little bit more intricately. It's a fascinating study as you understand what they're all about and why God has them. The Scriptures devote more space to the description of the tabernacle and the temple with all of its furnishings than to any other single subject. Did you catch that? The Scriptures devote more space to the description of the tabernacle and temple

with all its furnishings than to any other single subject in Scripture. That shows us that God put a lot of importance on this that we can sometimes think of as underlying rather than a prevalent theme in the word of God. Seven times we find reference to God's charge to Moses that he should make all things according to the pattern which was shown. Seven times Moses followed the pattern that God set.

When I was a young boy, my grandpa was big into models and he could make these amazing model boats, ships that had the ropes that went down, the little people. Man, as a young child, I was fascinated by that, begging my grandpa to let me make a model. And I'll never forget he finally bought me my own model airplane. The picture on the outside was cool. This fighter jet with the guy sitting inside and flak explosions around it. And I thought, "Wow." And I opened the box, and unbeknownst to me, all I saw was a bunch of plastic pieces stuck together and I didn't realize I had to twist them off and the decals weren't on it. And the glue. Now, I will have to say my grandpa, in his wisdom, chose to not give me some superglue but gave me the Elmer's Glue type. Otherwise my fingers would still be stuck together today. And I took that model, and in my anxiousness and in my hurriedness and wanting to get it done, I broke off part of a wing. And as I even got the pieces together, it wasn't right. Then I started putting it all together, Elmer's Glue here. The guy in the cockpit kind of cockeyed rather than straight ahead. And it was a mess. And I remember going to my grandpa with my goopy, gloppy, broken-up model when he did such a phenomenal job, and said, "Grandpa," and I was crying, "I don't know what to do." And Grandpa, in his patience, took a warm washcloth and took all the glops of glue and restraightened things out and lined it all up and got the decals the way it was, and the guy in the cockpit. And, wow, it looked so much more like the picture on the box.

And God takes our lives and the things that we do that are such a mess, and he straightens them out and he has that pattern or that plan. If I would have been patient like my grandpa said, if I would have taken my time to twist as many times as he told me, to take the wing off and the parts off, if I would have been patient with how much glue, if I would have just listened to the pattern that he laid out and followed the instructions in there, things would have been fine. And if we follow God's pattern, we'll be fine. And he says seven times to Moses, "Here's the pattern I have laid out for you when it comes to the way that you put the tabernacle together." And you'll see that in these different passages here for your own benefit or look up later, we'll find that the seven times are Exodus 25:9, Exodus 26:30, Exodus 27:8, and then we also see Numbers 8:4, Acts 7:44, and Hebrews 8:5 all talk about God's pattern, his plan that he has for us.

Number two, when it comes to just some introductory thoughts, the tabernacle was designed to be symbolic and typical of spiritual truth. Hebrews 9:23-28. It was the symbol of God's dwelling place, the site where God met his people between the cherubim. Now, the cherubim were crafted out of gold and they had their wings that were covered out. And they were actually on top of the Ark of the Covenant as a sign of a protector or the holiness aspect of God. It was a key to the tabernacle that it was Christ, that this tabernacle was representative again of Christ. We see that in John 1:14. We see Hebrews 8:1-2 and Hebrews 9:11 and verses 23-24. And we also see in Revelation 21:3 that he was among us, that he is among us. That was the concept of the ark that in the midst, it was the center of camp, that he's among us, he's here with us, so that we know that and have confidence in that. God has spoken in symbols many different times and it's up to us really to learn the language of the symbols that God uses.

So the structure of the tabernacle had three main aspects to it. There was The Outer Court with its one entrance that was called the gate. You'll find that in Exodus 27:16. And then they have The Holy Place with its one entrance, and that was called the door. And that was Exodus 26:36. We'll share that with you. And then the last one was The Holy of Holies with its one entrance that was called the veil. And that's in Exodus 26:31. Now, the holy of holies is a very interesting part of the tabernacle. Its dimensions were 10 by 10 by 10 cubits or a cube. And the ladder of the holy of holies in the temple was built by Solomon. It was also a cube. So later on, when the tabernacle, which would travel around with them, and they had a permanent location of the temple, that space too was the same dimensions.

The heavenly city is described as being four squares. Again, the cube. You'll see that in Revelation 21:16. I guess God likes the cube idea. The significance of the cube among the Hebrews is interesting to note. A symbol of perfection. Every side of a cube is a perfect square, and each of the six sides is exactly equal to each other. The infinitely perfect God is to dwell in the holy of holies. The structures should be symbolic of that perfection. In Ephesians 3:18, we see the breadth and the length and the depth and the height of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Again, that concept of a cube that's there. It's interesting to see again the word pictures and the patterns that God uses as he puts stuff together.

In the New Testament, there's two different records that denote the temple. The one, *hieron*, meaning the entire temple precincts, the temple grounds with its many buildings, while the other, *naos*, was used only of the sanctuary itself, the holy of holies. In every instance in the New Testament where the expression temple is used of believers, the Greek word in which it refers to is referred to out of the holy of holies. Wow. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16, and Ephesians 2:21. Isn't that powerful that he uses that same word in the New Testament, a holy of holies that only the high priests could go

to? That was where God himself said his presence was at, knowing that we as children of God, if we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit resides in us, that we have God in us to direct us and guide us. That is an amazing thought to consider as you look at the tie-in with the tabernacle and the temple.

Now, badger skin, which was kind of a drab exterior, really has beauty on the inside even though the outside might look drab. The external structure was certainly not a thing of beauty when it comes to the tabernacle. Jesus Christ, through the eyes of sinful men, was not seen in his beauty. “Is he not the carpenter’s son?” they said. They didn’t recognize who he was. Only those who fellowshiped inside by means of the blood atonement appreciated the beauty. Looking at the skins, no one would dream of the wealth and beauty that was contained inside. Only when one enters in does one understand the beauty and the wealth that’s there. Brass furnishings around the outside, which is a symbol and sign of judgment. And gold furnishings were on the inside, which is a sign of deity.

There’s seven different articles of furnishings that are in the tabernacle. We talked about six of them already. And you’ll find this in chapters 25 through 27. The first one is the brazen altar of sacrifice. Now, this was the largest piece of furniture in the tabernacle. The size indicates its importance, primacy of atonement. And the only way for a sinful man to approach the holy God is through what? His atoning sacrifice, the cross of Christ. Now, brass speaks of judgment. We just said that. The brass serpent, if you remember that, was the cause of the curse and it was judged on the pole that was there. Deuteronomy 28:23. Judgments for the disobedience. “And thy heaven that is above thy head shall be as brass,” the Bible says. Isaiah 60:17. Millennium. “For brass will I bring gold. Judgment shall give place to glory.” Revelation 1:15. Christ is examining the church there. People are going to find brass as if they were burned in a furnace. And then Psalm 107:16 talk about it. Judgment. Brass. See the compilation there as we think about that brazen altar of the sacrifice.

And then we see that there were four horns on this altar. What were they for? For the binding of the sacrifice to the altar. So when they’d put the animal on there, they would literally bind it, use that horn to tie a leg on there so that it couldn’t move. Psalm 118:27. It’s a symbol of power and strength, the horns are. The Lord would have sung this hymn, Psalm 113-118, with his disciples before leaving the upper room Passover meal to talk and incorporate. That’s a part of the verses on the horns that would indicate that power. And again, Jesus Christ has ultimate power. And even as he was heading towards his sacrifice, he still was the one of authority because his death, that man thought he was in control of, led to our redemption. So that’s the brazen altar.

Then you see secondly the laver. Now, this contained the water for the cleansing of those who ministered in the sanctuary. The laver, lavatory, a place of washing. You'll still hear people today talk about a lavatory where you go wash your hands. You clean up. After the brazen altar, cleansing is necessary. After the sacrifice was made, cleansing was necessary. The hands had to be washed. The feet had to be washed. They represented our conduct, the hands. The feet our walk, our lifestyle. They symbolize spiritual renewal, that washing. Ephesians 5:26. And there's others that just remind us of that aspect of the cleansing of Jesus Christ that we can tie that into as well, how the sacrifice that was made now gives us complete cleansing in Jesus Christ. We're free from any of the ramifications of our sin because of his sacrifice that was made.

The third piece we want to talk about is the lampstand. Now there's spiritual illumination. No natural light was in the tabernacle. No windows. No light that was carried in by the priest. Jesus said this in John 8:12. "I am the light of the world." Revelation 1:12-13. Out of one central shaft comes the arms. Christ in the midst of his people. The priest functions in the light of Christ's presence. Can you imagine that? You had the sacrifice. You wash your hands. That light, that representation, as they needed illumination in there with all the walls closed and the ceiling that was closed there. The constant reminder that Jesus is the only light. He's the only source for us. Again, a beautiful tie-in, goes back to what did we talk about? God has a pattern. He has a plan. He has a purpose. He doesn't just throw things in there for us to understand that.

The fourth piece of furniture that we see is the table of showbread. Now, sustenance is necessary for the spiritual life. Now, if you live in America, we frequently will talk about being starving when we have food. And there are certainly parts of the world that don't have daily food at times. But when you're hungry and you get to enjoy just some kind of food, it's amazing how even food that isn't our favorite tastes so good. Why? It's nourishing us. But God gives us the best. It's sustenance for the spiritual life as the tie-in with that table of showbread. It's life in the presence of God. There were 12 loaves that were there, and there was new bread that was placed there every Sabbath, which was the seventh day. 1 Corinthians 10:17 and John 6 talk about fellowship, communion, bread of life. Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Thy words were found and I did eat them." So we see that that was there, those bread, that picture that's there for us.

And then we see the fifth piece of furniture, the golden altar of incense. It talks about prayer. Psalm 141:2, Luke 1:10, Revelation 5:8 and 8:4. Fire could only come from the brazen altar. Prayer rests upon the atonement. We're not to go to God otherwise. The cross is the means of kindling devotion and

praise. I am not going to recognize the amazing God I have unless I have a relationship with that God. My relationship with my parents is always going to be different than anybody else's because they're my parents. He's your God if you have a relationship with him. And there's a sweetness and a specialness that will always be there for that. And the opportunity to talk one on one, especially the older you get, the more you appreciate your parents to be able to have that conversation. And our God, God the Father, Abba, he loves us and wants to hear from us, but we don't have that unless we have that relationship with him.

Again, we go back to the four horns when we think about this altar of incense. Power. 2 Samuel 22:3 and Daniel 8:6-7. Power of the ram with two horns. "When the horns were broken, there was no power in the ram," that passage says. Power in the altar. Not in the incense, but power of Christ to lift and sustain the prayers. He is our intercessor. The medieval hunters, when you think back to that time, they would display their horns. Why? It's victory over prey. Even today, men that I know that are hunters, they'll place those horns in a place of prominence as a reminder of a trophy that they won, of something that they've killed that had prominence and strength and dominion that they were able to capture, to kill, to be able to show dominion over in those situations. That's that golden altar of incense.

The sixth thing, which isn't necessarily a piece of furniture, but it's very significant, is the veil. That's Christ's flesh. Hebrews 10:20. It's not just another curtain. Matthew 27:50-51. It was done supernaturally. Hebrews 10:20. The cross of Christ is the only ground of access. It's the only thing that can take away the barrier. His life bars access to God but also allows access to God. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the one place that could only be entered by the high priest was the holy of holies. That veil separated it. The high priest actually had to have a garment on that had bells on the bottom of it and had to have a rope wrapped around his ankle, so that the bells would indicate they could hear that he was still alive because it was vital, necessary that he went into the holy of holies completely in communion with God and have had his sins forgiven of him, had gone through all the steps that he was supposed to. And if not, God took his life. When Jesus died on the cross, amongst other things like earthquakes and the dead rising, he split the veil in half. Why? We no longer needed to have anything between us and God. Christ had paid the price for us and our sins.

The last piece we want to talk about is the Ark of the Covenant. Now, the Ark of the Covenant, a part of that was the mercy seat and the cherubim. There are three arks that are listed in the Bible. There is Noah's Ark, there is Moses', and then there's the tabernacle. All of which indicate safety and salvation. There's a double piece aspect here which comprises the ark and the mercy seat with the two cherubim

that are there. There were acacia trees that they were the ones where they got the wood for this. And it was the only tree which grows to any size in the deserts through which they had passed. And they needed something more substantial because of what they were making here. It won't rot, which was important. And it was an appropriate symbol of humanity. The incorruptible wood, there's no sin with the holy one of God. And just like humanity, we rot and our flesh will fail us. But God, there is perfection. The acacia wood, perfect picture with not rotting at all. While acacia boards gave form and dimension to the ark, the appearance was all gold. There was union of two natures that you see in this: perfect humanity and undiminished deity. Unmixed but fully united, where man could come in this point to be able to experience the presence of God and where now we as humans, when we accept the free gift of salvation, we have God inhabit us. What a beautiful, wonderful picture. Again, it ties in, we go back to he had a pattern and a plan and a purpose. Romans 3:23. God, be merciful to us as we are seated as a sinner before him. Luke 18:13.

A few things that were placed inside of the ark that are important for us to note that he talked about. One of them was the tables and law that were laid in there that have been given to Moses. There's Aaron's rod that budded. There's the golden pot that had the manna that was part of the food that was fed when they were in the wilderness. The judgment seat or the mercy seat. We're a nation of sinners that can never stand before the uncovered law. All claims against us are true, but if not for the sacrifice of Christ, we would be held responsible for each of those. Interestingly, in the tabernacle, there was a piece of furniture missing. There was no chair in the tabernacle. You can see that in Hebrews 10:11-14, 8:1. The priest's work was never finished. Therefore, they never sat. But Christ, after making one sacrifice for our sins, forever sat down at the right hand of God. That's an incredible thing to consider.

The tabernacle, the pieces, the processes, what he established, and the tie-in to, again, part of the redemption story. The last parts of Exodus really kind of wrap up a few things that are important, but we're not going to spend time, at this time at least, to go over chapters 28 to 30. It deals with the priesthood, Aaron's sons, the dress they were supposed to wear, their sacrifices, the Sabbath that's talked about in chapter 31, how that was a sign of the Mosaic covenant. And then chapters 32 to 34, we're back to a common theme, the sin of Israel. Building of the tabernacle and the Shekinah glory are in chapters 35 to 40. And that wraps up the Book of Exodus. So much in here. And I encourage you yourself to read and dig in and to explore the riches of the Book of Exodus yourself.