

Is the Law the first 5 books of the Old Testament or all of the Old Testament?

The Law is the entire Old Testament. This is especially true to Jesus and to Paul whom argued the application of law and grace and if anyone has the right to define law, it would be a person that was intimately familiar with it from the Jewish view.

Holman Bible Dictionary states: LAW, TEN COMMANDMENTS, TORAH Law refers both to the **revelation of the will of God in the Old Testament** and to the later elaboration on the law referred to as the "traditions of the elders" in the New Testament (for example, Mark 7:5).

Law is one of the primary concepts in the Bible. The specific translation of the term law is varied. It may be used for a commandment, a word, a decree, a judgment, a custom, or a prohibition. The first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch) are known as books of the Law because they are based on the commandments which God revealed to Moses.

The Hebrew term most frequently translated "law" in the Old Testament is torah, used more than 200 times. The central idea of torah is that of instruction received from a superior authority on how to live. **Torah in the Old Testament came to mean the way of life for faithful Israelites. The Torah is more than just "laws"; it includes the story of God's dealing with humankind and with Israel.**

The concept of torah is closely linked to that of covenant in the Old Testament. The covenant agreement between God and His people at Mount Sinai provided the foundation for all of Israel's laws. God, the deliverer of the Israelites from Egypt, set forth His instructions for His people. They were to obey God's laws because of what He had done for them in saving them from Egypt (Ex. 20:2). The laws found in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, and Leviticus cover all areas of community life. The Torah is a gift of God to His people. Obeying the Torah would result in His blessing (Ex. 19:5,6). Following the Law would provide for the health and wholeness of the covenant community. The Ten Commandments are a summary of the Law (Ex. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21).

Later development in Israel's history gave an expanded meaning to torah. **By New Testament times torah meant not only the Old Testament Scriptures (the written Law), but also the oral law (unwritten law) of Israel as well.** The religious leaders developed in applying the written Law to new life situations. This oral law is sometimes referred to as "the tradition of the elders" in the New Testament (compare Matt. 15:2; Mark 7:5; Gal. 1:14).

Two kinds of laws can be found in the Old Testament. First are broad categorical laws which set forth general principles. These laws do not specify how they are to be enforced or what penalties are to be invoked. The Ten Commandments are representative of this kind of law. They are basic policy statements for life in a covenant community with God.

Second are case laws. These laws often begin with an "if" or a "when," usually deal with very specific situations. Many times they indicate a punishment for breaking the law (e.g., Ex. 21:2,3,4; 22:1,2,4,5,25).

The Ten Commandments are prohibitions (except for Commandments 4 and 5 in Ex. 20:8-11,12). These ten laws define negatively the heart of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The first four Commandments are related to one's relationship with God. The next six Commandments have to do with human relationships. It is important to note that right relationships with others follow being rightly related to God. Being rightly related to God compels one towards right relationships to one's neighbors. Here one can see the wonderful balance that is maintained in the Law. Duties to God and to other human beings are not separated.

The Ten Commandments were not given only for the Hebrew people but are abiding laws for all people. Some of the laws of the Bible seem to apply only to specific times, places, and persons, but the Ten Commandments have an abiding quality about them. They convey duties for everyone and reveal to

us the basic morality required by God. While the Ten Commandments have universal validity, they are truly significant only when persons are committed to the God behind them. What makes the Ten Commandments unique is the character of the God who gave them. Without God, the Commandments lose their distinctiveness.

Jesus certainly knew the Law and often referred to it. It is possible to say that Jesus was both a critic of the Law and a supporter of it. He was critical of the law of one means "the tradition of the elders" or the oral laws that had grown up around the written Law. The enemies of Jesus frequently accused Him of violating the Law. It is clear that keeping the letter of the Law had become more important to some of the Jews than the purpose behind the Law.

On several occasions Jesus set His own teachings over against those of the elders (Matt. 5:21-6:34). The Pharisees accused Jesus and His disciples of not following the law with regard to "unclean" things (Matt. 15:1-20), and they accused Him of eating with tax-gatherers and sinners (Matt. 9:11). Jesus' greatest conflict came over the sabbath. He rejected their interpretation of the sabbath Law and said that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath (Matt. 12:8); that the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath (Mark 2:27); and He taught that it was permissible to do good on the sabbath (Mark 3:4).

Jesus inaugurated a new era in which the Law as understood by the Jews of His day would no longer be the guiding principle for the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16). Nevertheless, Jesus claimed not to have come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17-20). That is, Jesus moved the understanding of the Law from its external, legalistic meaning to its spiritual one. Moving from outward observance to inward motivation and intention is Jesus' concern (Matt. 5:21,22,27,28). He pushes the Law out to its ultimate meaning (thus filling it full). In this sense Jesus affirmed the heart and the spirit of the Law. He moved to a deeper level of meaning, to the spirit behind the Law which God had intended from the beginning.

Jesus did not give us a new law. When Jesus was asked which commandment is the greatest, He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind," (Matt. 22:36,37). Jesus said the second commandment is like the first, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:39). Then He said, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:40). Incredibly, Jesus summed up the whole Law and the teaching of the prophets with these two commandments. Behind all of the Law had stood these two great principles of love for God and neighbor. It is important for us to remember that love can never be adequately portrayed in rules or in teachings. It can be seen in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. The commandments to love had been there all along; Jesus simply emphasized them in a way that would forever change how we should look at them.

Paul had a lifelong struggle with the Law. **By the term "law," Paul meant the Law of God as contained in the Old Testament.** He also spoke of a kind of natural law which existed in human beings (Rom. 7:23,25). The "law of sin" meant conduct determined by sin. Paul also used law in this sense when he referred to the "law of faith"--that is, conduct determined by faith in God (Rom. 3:27-28).

Paul's attitude toward the Mosaic Law can be summarized under several main points. First of all, he recognized that the Law had been given for a good purpose; it was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12,14; 1 Tim. 1:8). The demands of the Law were not evil, but had the effect of pointing out the sin of human beings (Rom. 7:7). Because of man's sinfulness, the Law became a curse instead of a blessing (Gal. 3:10-13).

Second, Paul believed the Law was given for a good purpose, but it could not save (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:20). If persons were to become children of God, it would be by means other than keeping the Law. The third theme we find in Paul is that Christ freed us from the requirements of the Law by His death and resurrection (Rom. 8:3,4). Therefore, Christ has become the end of the Law for Christians (Rom. 10:4), and it is faith that saves and not Law (Eph. 2:8,9).

Paul, like Jesus, saw the Law fulfilled in the command to love (Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5:13). Only with the aid of the Spirit of God can we meet the requirement to love which fulfills the Law (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8). Paul saw the Law as no longer to be viewed legalistically. Nevertheless, it is still the revelation of God, and it helps us to understand the nature of our life in Christ (Rom. 8:3; 13:8-10; Gal. 3:24).

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The Bible Background Commentary of the New Testament, Craig S. Keener, states: "Torah" (the Hebrew word behind the Greek word Translated "law") means literally "instruction" and "teaching", Not just regulations. It was **also used** as a title for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, the books of Moses) and **sometimes for the whole Old Testament**. This commentary uses the translation "law" because it is familiar to readers of most translations; even though **the English term's semantic range is much narrower than the Jewish concept**. "

Jesus said in one place that he came to fulfill not only the Law of Moses but also the Psalms and the Prophets.

Matthew 5: 17-19 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus refers to the Law or the Prophets here and includes both under the term "Law" later in the passage. It seems that he is lumping the Law of Moses and the Prophets into the term Law.

Matthew 22: 36-40 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

It seems again that Jesus is lumping the "Whole Law" and the prophets together.

Matthew 23: 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

The entire Old Testament testifies of the law of "justice and mercy and faithfulness". Not just the first 5 books of the "Law of Moses" as Jesus was careful to refer to in one case.

Luke 16: 16-17 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

Again, the appearance of lumping the Law and the Prophets under the term Law.

Luke 24: 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Jesus states very clearly what he has come to fulfill. Law of Moses, Prophets, and Psalms are the stated list of parts of the Old Testament. He came to fulfill everything written in these, correct? As stated above, he also said that he came to fulfill the Law as well. Thus, it is not uncommon even for Jesus to speak of the entire Old Testament as the Law. When he meant the Law of Moses he stated it very specifically. When he speaks of the entire Old Testament, he refers to it with detailed descriptions of three parts of the Old Testament and in other places as simply, the law.

John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

John 1:45 Phillip found[^] Nathanael and said[^] to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

John 7:19 "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

John 7:23 "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath that the Law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?"

John 7:49 "But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed."

John 8:5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

John 8:17 17 "Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true.

It seems pretty clear to me that if they want to talk about the Law of Moses they are very specific about stating it so there is no question. A general reference to Law encompasses the whole Old Testament.

The next two cases demonstrate that the Law is not just the first 5 books as well.

John 10:34-36 Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Psalms 82: 6 I said, "You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High.

John 12: 34 The multitude therefore answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

In both cases the Jews were referring to the Law. The verses that they refer to are not found in the first 5 books of the Old Testament. This proves from the mouth of the people that the common understanding is that the Law is the whole Old Testament.

Psalm 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Therefore, I will stand on my earlier statement that the Law is the entire Old Testament. I hope this helps you to see why I referred to the Law as the whole Old Testament and not just the first 5 books. Even if you still do not agree at least I hope you can see that my reference is not without probable merit.

The point that I did not get to make due to the discussion of what is Law (I forgot what I was talking about: another shortcoming of ADD), is that the new covenant could not take effect until the death of the covenant giver, Jesus. It was very important for Jesus to die so that we could rejoice in his death, which brought us grace, and his resurrection, which brought us hope of eternal life. In a sense, the Law did not become fulfilled by Jesus until his death so the law was in effect up until the end of the four gospels.

Hebrews 8:13-9:1 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.

Hebrews 9: 14-18 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.

Jesus fulfilled all of the law from Genesis to his death when he said "IT IS FINISHED"!