

This is because the **Law** is filled with such “*commandments and precepts.*” As such, there is an emphasis many times on these “*commandments*” and the teaching of the commandments which are to be practiced and obeyed. Thus the **Law** is normally referring to what God has commanded people to **do** and is often linked with words like, “*keep, do and obey.*” There are at least 613 commandments in the Torah, and these are summarized in 10 commandments given on the two tablets of stone to Moses on Mount Sinai. The first tablet contained 4 laws dealing with man’s relationship to God, the second tablet contained 6 laws dealing with man’s relationship to his neighbor. The **two tables of the Law** are summarized by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22...

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 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.**" 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' 40 "**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**" NASB

Thus, Jesus summarized “*the whole Law and the Prophets,*” (terms referring to the entire Old Testament), under the **two tables of the Law**. To love God and love your neighbor was the Messiah’s interpretation of the entire **Law** and Prophets. This is a profound and simple commentary from God Himself on the *meaning* of the Old Testament **Law**. Christian, you will do well to memorize these verses and understand that the **Law** is fulfilled in and through God’s Love, expressed toward Him first, and then to our neighbor.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and **if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

This idea then, is a helpful principle in *understanding* and *applying* the **Law** as a New Testament Christian. If it is not an expression of true biblical love, then it is most likely being misapplied. The general nature of the Law is love, because it is God’s Law, and His nature is love.

The Law is an expression of the character and nature of God

Because the Law is an expression of God’s will and desire for mankind, it flows out of the very nature of God Himself. *The very nature of God’s Law is entirely consistent with God’s nature* for God, who is goodness and truth, would never command what violates His nature.

Romans 7:12 - 12 So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** NASB

Deuteronomy 4:8 – 8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments **as righteous as this whole law** which I am setting before you today? NASB

Nehemiah 9:13 - 13 "Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai, And didst speak with them from heaven; **Thou didst give to them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.** NASB

Because the Law is an expression of true moral virtue as it reflects God’s character and nature, it therefore gives very specific definition to what sin is, or what violates God’s nature. Therefore the Law gives us clear insight into the nature of sin, making us conscious of sin.

Romans 3:19-20 - 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; **for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.** NASB

Romans 7:7-8 - 7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, **I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."** NASB

Because the Law also categorizes different types of sin, sin against God, and various types of sin against people, it also helps us to see the severity of certain types of sin. *Much of the Civil Law is very moral in nature* and with the penal sanctions there are penalties attached to certain crimes, even as severe as death. There are also provisions made for restitutions to be made in many cases to the offended party. This helps us to see what kinds of sins are more severe than others, by the severity of the penalty or restitution that must be made. In this also we see clearly what the perfect measure of justice is for criminal activity.

Leviticus 24:19-21 - 19 'And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: 20 **fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him.** 21 'Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. NASB

Exodus 22:1-4 - 22 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, **there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.** 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, **he shall pay double.** NASB

Because the Law is an expression of God's holy and perfect character, people cannot not fully obey it. People have a natural inability to obey God's Law because they are sinners by nature and therefore transgress God's Law and sin.

Romans 3:23 - 23 for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** NASB

Romans 5:12 - 12 Therefore, **just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned** NASB

Now as redemptive history has progressed, God has placed the Law in history to show people's sinfulness very clearly and their guilt before God because of their many sins. The Law shows us in very specific terms exactly where and how we transgress God's nature and this makes our guilt crystal clear.

Romans 5:19-21 - 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. 20 And **the Law came in that the transgression might increase;** but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. NASB

Romans 7:13 - 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be!

Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. NASB

At this point we should also mention the very negative and accusatory language of the New Testament in regard to God's Law. The Law is many times in the New Testament seen as that *"which brings about wrath, kills us and condemns us, holds us in bondage, is our enmity between us and God, is the power of sin, a certificate of debt against us and hostile to us, that which is weak, useless and obsolete."*

Romans 4:15 - 15 for **the Law brings about wrath,** but where there is no law, neither is there violation. NASB

Romans 7:9-12 - 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;** 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, **taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.** NASB

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law;** 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Galatians 4:3-5 - 3 So also we, while we were children, were **held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.** 4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. NASB