

The Laws of Moses (1450 – 1400 BCE)

Laws Against False Spiritualists

Laws Against Blasphemy

Laws Requiring Dedications

Laws Requiring Tithing

Special Instructions for Conquest

Law of the Sabbath

Readings: *Exodus 22:18, 28-30; 23:12,19; 31:12-17; 34:19-21, 26; 35:1-3; Leviticus 19:3, 23-26, 30-31; 20:6-8, 27; 23:1-3; 24:10-16, 23; 26:2; Numbers 15:32-36; Deuteronomy 5:11; 13:1-5; 14:22-29; 15:12-15, 19-23; 18:1-22; 26:1-15*

Reflections:

- The teaching against sorcerers and false prophets is very strong. It is interesting to think back to Balaam and how God still spoke to him and knew him. There are these exceptions to a cold interpretation of the Law that make you realize God is more flexible than his law to Israel would suggest.
- The teaching on the false, true and presumptuous prophets is also worth careful consideration. A false prophet may be able to do miracles or predict the future but their purpose is to lead a person away from God. This should challenge us to not simply see miracles as an instant validation of a person's teaching or mission. Scripture does not state that only God's prophets can only do miracles but false ones can as well. So we must not look at their power but at their fruit or outcomes. Are they leading individuals back to a greater love relationship with God that is rooted in humility and seeking to bring his grace into world, or are people leading away from God and his purposes?
- Some Christian commentators associate the true prophet section with the Messiah and the coming of Jesus. There were many true prophets that come to Israel well before Jesus appears and so there is no reason to assume that this section is about the Messiah.
- If a person's fruit is good and what they say comes true or reveals the truth, then we should trust it is from the Lord. If they lead individuals toward God but it doesn't come true, then they most likely have spoken presumptuously. We are not to be afraid of that person. There

is grace for people whose hearts are right but get hearing God wrong. This should give all of us confidence as we journey through the process of learning to hear how God speaks to us.

- When they judged a blasphemer they used the sign of placing their hands on that person. This was act symbolized a decision of judgment and not blessing. Again we see an externalized symbolic act is used to express an internal spiritual principle.
- The command to offer the first born to God aligns with offering God your best and with trusting him with everything you possess.
- At the end of the section on tithing we should note that it is not only the Levites who are cared for out of the tithe but also the fatherless (orphans) and the widows as well as the alien (any Gentile who is needy among them like Ruth from the story of Ruth). Here again we see God prioritize caring for the vulnerable in their community, even the Gentile poor. It shows God's heart and mercy, even for the Gentiles.
- The violation of the Sabbath ends in death. We can see why this was such a huge issue for the Jews. Yet, they missed the point. They were to prioritize God and their relationship with him, not just a blind observance of a staking a day of rest. They became obsessed with the Law rather than lovingly dependent on God. This is why Jesus will come and apparently break the traditions associated with keeping the Sabbath to expose their hearts (see Matthew 21:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5; John 5:1-15) and try to help them understand the purpose behind the Sabbath.