

How to Read Your Bible – Wednesdays at 6:30p

Topic: #5 How to Read Torah

Torah:

(a) *Instruction* (root meaning) - picture of an outstretched arm pointing something out or showing the way to go (Genesis 46:28; Job 6:24; Isaiah 2:3; Psalm 1:1-4; Psalm 32:8-9; Other psalms: 25:8,12; 27:11; 86:11; 119:33)

(b) *Any commandment* (sg - Ex 18:20) or all the commandments (pl -) - usually referring specifically to those contained in the writings of Moses (Primarily: Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy) cf. Matt 5:17

(c) *The Writings of Moses* (as a whole) - the Pentateuch (Gen, Ex, Lev, Num, Deut) - cf. Matt 5:18

First Question: how does Jesus read the Torah (Law of Moses) and how does he understand its place and relationship to his life?

1. **Born** & raised under the covenant of Israel - Luke 2:22, 41; Galatians 5:4-5
2. **Teaches** and Practices Torah (more strictly than scribes) - Matt 5:17-20 (v.21-22, v.27-28, v.31-32, etc), Matt 8:4 (cleansing leper), Luke 22:15 (eat passover)
3. **Distinguishes** the “traditions” from the “law” - Matthew 15:3-4,7,10-11,19-20
4. **Interprets** the Law in broader more comprehensive understanding of God’s will and character - Matt 12:1-14; 23:23-24
5. **Keeps** in perspective the great purpose of all commandments: Love for God and for your neighbor - Matthew 22:34-40

What to Know When Reading The Torah

#1 Context of the Torah is the Narrative of Israel’s Redemption from Egypt

- Why are the Laws given in narrative and why is this important? (Ex 19-20)

#2 The Torah is a Covenant

- A covenant establishes a relationship either through
 - (1) a binding promise (gift of inheritance - Genesis/Abraham) or
 - (2) a binding agreement (loyalty contract - Exodus/Moses)
- The “old covenant” is the covenant between God and Israel - Ex 24:3-8
- An “overlord” / “servant” model - promises by overlord and stipulations for servant
- Within the agreement are God’s promises and commandments for Israel
- Cf. Exodus 20:1-6

#3 The Old Covenant Laws (Torah) ONLY DIRECTLY APPLY to the nation of Israel.

The Torah is not an agreement with the NT Church nor with any other nations.

- 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

#4 The NT Church is under a “New Covenant” which Jesus Christ instituted with the Lord’s Supper and with a “New Commandment”

- Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Hebrews 8-10 quotes this more in depth)
- Luke 22:19-20 Institution of the Lord’s Supper (new covenant)
- John 13:31-35 Love one another

5. The Torah commandments only apply to us according to the Spirit of God under Jesus’ teaching

- All the commandments of the OT have the Spirit of God in them.
- According to the “Letter” of the Law they are to be kept outwardly by the nation of Israel.
- According to the Spirit of God these commandments are to be kept inwardly by the people of God through faith in love.
- Jesus teaches us how the commandments apply according to the Spirit of the Gospel, not the Letter of the Law (Scribes and Pharisees) *

* Imagine that The LORD became the God of USA (which he is not)

How does God stipulate the Laws and how do we enforce/keep them?

(1) for Nation and (2) for Christians - For Example “Going to Church”/Giving Tithe Law

THEREFORE, When Reading the Torah, ask the following questions: (See Lev 19)

First of all: How does this fit into and serve the purpose of the narrative of Israel?

Second: What does this teach me about the OT relationship of God and His People

Third: What does this teach me about God’s character

Fourth: Does this teach me about Jesus’ fulfillment of the Law? (**more on this below)

Lastly: What does this teach me about God’s character, Jesus Christ, and God’s relationship with His people (me) in the NT?

Be Aware that the Torah Commands will fall into one of three categories:

I. Moral Laws (Ex 20 - 10 comm)

II. Civil Laws (Deut 15:2 - slaves)

II. Ritual Laws (Ex 29 - priests)

** The Torah is a shadow, Jesus is the substance (Colossians 2:16-17)

(200 Level: The Connection between Leviticus and The Book of Hebrews)

Assignment for Next Time:

Topic: #6 How to Read Prophecy

Read: Micah (time permitting also: Habakkuk, Joel)

Getting More Out of Your Reading

- 1) Have a place and a plan
- 2) Skim headings to get a content awareness for the surrounding text
- 3) Try to read a specific chunk / whole book in one sitting & reread

What to Know Before Reading the Prophets

Here is a quote from “How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth” (ch 10):

To understand what God would say to us through these inspired books, we must first have a clear understanding as to the role and function of the prophet in Israel. Four items must be emphasized:

1. *The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.* We explained in the preceding chapter how Israel’s law constituted a covenant between God and his people, modeled after the ancient suzerainty treaties and thus containing both stipulations and sanctions. God’s covenant with Israel, therefore, contains not only regulations and statutes for them to keep but describes the sorts of sanctions that accompany the law: the sorts of blessings his people will receive if they keep the law, and the sorts of punishments (“curses”) that God will necessarily mete out if they do not. Thus God does not merely give Israel his law, but he enforces it.

This is where the prophets come in. God announced the enforcement (positive or negative) of his law through them, so that the events of blessing or cursing would be clearly understood by his people. Moses was the mediator for God’s law when God first announced it and thus is a paradigm (model) for the prophets. They are God’s mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if his law is kept, blessing will result; but if not, punishment will ensue.

The kinds of blessings that will come to Israel for faithfulness to the covenant are found in three Old Testament passages (Lev 26:14 – 38; Deut 4:32 – 40; Deut 28:1 – 14). But these blessings are announced with a warning: If Israel does *not* obey God’s law, the blessings will cease. The sorts of curses (punishments) that Israel could expect if they violated the law are found especially in three places (Lev 26:14 – 39; Deut 4:15 – 28; and throughout Deut 28:15 – 32:42).

Therefore, one must always bear in mind that the prophets did not invent the blessings or curses they announced. They may have worded these blessings and curses in novel, captivating ways, as they were inspired to do so. But they pronounced *God’s* word, not their own. Through them God announced his intention to enforce the covenant, for benefit or for harm — depending on the faithfulness of Israel — but always on the basis of and in accordance with the categories of blessing and cursing already contained in the Leviticus and Deuteronomy passages noted above. If you will take the trouble to read these chapters from the Pentateuch with care, you will be rewarded with a much better understanding of why the prophets said the things that they did.

Resources:

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Fee-Stuart (ch 10)

“How To Read” Bible Project Videos: [The Prophets](#)