

The True Blue Law of God

The Nature of the Law as an Expression of God's Faithfulness

In 1666, Sir Isaac Newton discovered that when pure white light passes through a prism, it separates into all the visible colors. A single wavelength comprises each color. Advertising specialists assiduously study how these wavelengths affect the human brain. Blue is the most popular color; they say it suggests security, authority, faithfulness, and dignity. Decorators often use blue in offices because people are more productive in blue rooms. We call it “true blue” for a reason!

All of this says that the color blue instills a sense of solemn loyalty and faithfulness. And interestingly, God may have written the Ten Commandments on a blue stone. Consider this: In the process of giving the commandments, we're told that “There was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone; and it was like the very heavens in its clarity” (Exodus 24:10). Then God says He will give Moses “tablets of stone, and the law” (vs. 12). The original language reads “tablets of *the* stone.” *The* stone! God stood on a beautiful, clear blue stone, from which He made the commandment tablets. He wrote His law on His own true, blue, foundation.

There's more!

More Blue

Read Ezekiel 1:22-28. The prophet sees a dazzling array of winged creatures with animal faces, whirling wheels, and finally a sapphire throne upon which sits “the glory of the Lord.” God sits on a sapphire throne!

In Numbers 15:39 God commanded the Israelites to have blue tassels on the corners of their garments, so that they could “look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined.” The blue tassels helped form God's accountability program for His children, reminding them of their commitment to Him.

Now notice the grand dame of the book of Revelation—the harlot of Babylon—dressed in “purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (Revelation 17:4). A colorful costume, to be sure! Do you notice any missing color? *Blue* is missing, perhaps because while she may be colorful, she is in no way, shape or form *true*. In fact, she is falseness and pretension personified.

Do you see a pattern?

Let's look more closely at how God's true-blue law fits into our worship experience.

The Sanctuary

In Exodus 25, God gave Moses detailed orders about worship. His six million people were to construct a portable tabernacle or sanctuary patterned after the vision of the sanctuary in heaven Moses had seen in the mountain (See Exodus 25:8-9 & 40). It had:

- An open courtyard sometimes called “the court,”
- An enclosed space called “the Holy Place” with several symbolic stations,
- And space within that space where the presence of God Himself shone out, “the Most Holy Place.”

Zooming in on the Most Holy Place, we see that:

- God told Moses to make an ark, or a large box, of acacia wood, plated in gold, to be placed there.
- Above the ark, a mercy seat of pure gold sat
- On each side of the mercy seat hovered holy angels, called cherubim.
- God instructed, “Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you” (Exodus 25:16, NIV).
- He would speak there, between the two angels.

So that most holy of Holy Places, where the Lord of all creation would appear, emanated out from above the true-blue law of God. God wanted a place from which He could communicate His will for the people. And His law, written on sapphire stone by the finger of God, took its place at the center of it all. Truly, the stability of the universe rests on that law.

In order to better understand how the law relates to us today, let’s look at its purpose, pertinence, and perpetuity.

The Purpose of the Law

Listen to the masterful summation of Paul: “The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The original word “tutor” can also be translated “child-conductor.” In Paul’s day, certain caretakers of children would escort the little ones to school to make sure that they didn’t stray off to play. Once the child-conductor arrived at the destination, they left the child under the care of the school. In the same way, the law guides us to Jesus. The law can’t make us righteous, but it can help us see our need of Jesus’ righteousness. It can guide us to Him and leave us there.

This doesn’t mean that once we come to Jesus, the law has no usefulness to us. Far from it! Even the followers of Jesus must be reminded of our need of a Savior. The Ten Commandments continually reveal the holiness of God to our sin-blighted perceptions.

Nor does it mean that God no longer requires obedience to the Ten Commandments. A careful distinction must be made here. While the law is not *saving*, it is *binding*. We don't receive from the law the *power* to obey, but we do receive from it the *command* to obey.

The Pertinence of the Law

There was another “law” given through Moses, sometimes called “the ceremonial law.” This law was also an expression of God’s character, but was time-limited and specific in its purpose. There were essentially three types of ceremonial laws: civil laws, health laws, and ritual laws.

Civil laws provided the foundation for the government of Israel, a theocracy (a government directly led by God). These laws regulated how to judge in legal matters and what penalties would apply for various crimes.

Health laws guided Israel in maintaining individual and collective health. Most of these laws had to do with diet and hygiene. They identified clean and unclean foods, prescribing cleansing methods for persons and even dwellings.

Ritual laws specified how the religious services were carried out. In rich symbolism, these laws pointed to the Messiah to come.

The ceremonial laws were temporary applications of timeless principles. The principles of order and hygiene still apply, but their expressions have changed with circumstances. Think of this in terms of state laws. California once had a law that no more than 3000 sheep could be herded down Hollywood Boulevard at any one time. Obviously, we don't need that law today—not in this form, anyway. The law was a temporary application of the timeless principle: “Thou shalt not obstruct traffic.”

During the time of the great Apostle Paul, a group of new believers developed a theory that God still required obedience to all the ceremonial laws, including circumcision. A desire for superiority led to this adding to God’s requirements. Recognizing this spiritual pride, Paul said, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters” (Galatians 5:6). He said that the ceremonial law was nailed to the cross (See Colossians 2:14) meaning that it died with Jesus. The difference is it didn't rise again!

The Perpetuity of the Law

In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus said He did *not* come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. “The law” in the broadest sense refers to the Old Testament, but in the most specific sense to the Ten Commandments. Jesus came in fulfillment of Old Testament symbolism and prophecy. He also came to fulfill, or live before us, the Ten Commandments. Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, the final Word, the realization of the hopes and dreams of those who looked for God’s Messiah.

According to the psalmist, God’s “covenant,” or law, cannot be broken or altered (See Psalm 89:34). This is because it is founded upon His own character, and He Himself will never change

(See Hebrews 13:8). Since “God is love” (1 John 4:16), we can know that God’s law flows forth from a heart of love. The Ten Commandments are simply love, codified. They are not only *directive*, but *descriptive*. They tell us of the heart of God, and ultimately of reality itself.

James said that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all,” James 2:10. This shows that the law is not simply a series of disconnected rules, but a cohesive whole, each part of which can be traced to its source in the law of love.

The strongest proof that Jesus didn’t change the law is found in the cross. He died on Calvary because the law could not be changed. It could only be fulfilled, and Jesus fulfilled its penalty by offering up His life.

Far from doing away with the Ten Commandments, Jesus deepened their application: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment,” (Matthew 5: 21-22). Not only was behavioral obedience required, but cognitive and emotional obedience! Jesus applied the law to our thoughts and feelings.

Jesus Applies the Law to the Heart	
You have heard it said. . .	But I say. . .
You shall not murder	You shall not harbor, nor express, selfish anger
You shall not commit adultery	You shall not have sexual fantasies

Can Christians expect to transgress the law? Well, yes and no. While none of us can claim to be *flawless*, we can claim to be *followers*. If we are followers of Jesus, we will not willingly, repeatedly engage in known sin.

He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 1 John 2:4-5

God wants to see His love perfected in us. This is not legalism, but growth. God has promised to give us a new heart, and put His Spirit within us. He will take away the hardness of our hearts and make them soft. Then the same divine finger that wrote on tablets made of sapphire—one of the hardest minerals—will write His law on those heart-tablets. He says, “and I will *cause you* to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:27). God alone can cause us to live in keeping with His Law of love.

A businessman well known for his ruthlessness once announced to writer Mark Twain, “Before I die I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb Mount Sinai and read the Ten Commandments aloud at the top.”

“I have a better idea,” replied Twain. “You could stay in Boston and keep them.”ⁱ

True believers “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Revelation 14:4). Let’s follow Him, even in the desperate and dangerous times ahead. The line between good and evil will become more distinct. Working diabolically through human beings, Satan will again express his hatred for Christ. Notice that those who “keep the commandments of God” (Revelation 14:12) provoke his rage. Obedience to God is an incalculable blessing and yet a significant risk! Let’s take this risk for the sake of the One who died for us.

The Takeaway

Our study began with the finger of God writing on sapphire stone. It ends with the finger of God writing His law upon our hearts. Will you say “Yes!” to Him? Will you take the risks and accept the blessings He has for you?

Quiz

1. People are more productive in what color rooms? _____
2. Ezekiel saw God on a sapphire _____.
3. The three compartments of the sanctuary were called the court, the Holy Place, and the _____.
4. The word “tutor” from Galatians 3:24 can be translated _____.
5. While the law is not saving, it is _____.
6. We don’t receive from the law the power to obey, but we do receive the _____ to obey.
7. Three categories of ceremonial laws may be called: civil laws, health laws, and _____ laws.
8. The law is a transcript of God’s character of _____.

ⁱ Moody Bible Institute's Today in the Word, September, 1991, p. 32.

Answer Key

1. Blue
2. Throne
3. Most Holy Place
4. Child-conductor
5. Binding
6. Command
7. Ritual
8. Love

