

Framework of Bible Ordinances

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God has revealed Himself generally through His creation, through human conscience, and personally through His Son Jesus Christ. Christians accept the truth of Scripture (The Holy Bible), as the divinely inspired objective guide in all matters pertaining to Christian faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). Bible believing Christians do not “pick and choose which parts” of the Bible to believe and practice. Rather, we understand the Bible within a theological framework of biblical ordinances. There are four types of ordinances, or laws, in Scripture. They are Creation Ordinances, Civil Laws, Ceremonial Laws, and Moral Laws. Some laws may fall into more than one category.

A Creation Ordinance is something that God instituted before the giving of the Mosaic Law. Most of these are found in the first two chapters of Genesis. They include procreation after kind (which precludes evolution), sanctity of life, stewardship of the earth, gender distinctions, and marriage. The laws are inherent in creation and are therefore continuing.

A Civil Law is a law that was binding under the theocratic government of Israel. The theocracy was in effect from the giving of the law around 1445 BC until the time of Israel’s rejection of God as King about 400 years later (1 Samuel 8:5-7). Examples of civil laws include specific penalties for specific offenses. We do not live in the theocracy, and these laws are therefore not binding today.

A Ceremonial Law is a law that was binding until the ceremonial system was fulfilled completely by Jesus Christ, at His Ascension. One example is the Levitical sacrifices, which taught that all sin was a grave sin against God, and required blood atonement (Leviticus 17:11). New Testament Scriptures which clearly teach that Jesus Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law in all its aspects include Matthew 5:17, Romans 10:4, Hebrews 7:12, and Hebrews 10:1-7. This is why Christians do not observe ceremonial law.

A Moral Law is a law of abiding principles for holy living. Such principles are found in both the Old and New Testament. God’s people of all ages are called to be holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16). Jesus Christ fulfilled the moral law by virtue of His sinlessness (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 4:15). Yet we are still commanded to keep the moral law. Nobody can keep it perfectly, and what this does is demonstrates our need for a Savior (Matthew 5:48; James 2:10; Galatians 3:24; Romans 6:23).

To summarize, Creation Ordinances and Moral Laws, in addition to direct New Testament commands, are binding upon Christians today. Civil Laws and Ceremonial Laws are not binding upon Christians today. There are some laws that are both civil laws and moral laws. These are binding.

Framework of Biblical Ordinances, Quiz

What kind of law is it? And is it binding on Christians today?

(Creation Ordinance (1), Civil Law (2), Ceremonial Law (3), Moral Law (4))

****A few of these fall into more than one category.*

1. One-man, One-woman marriage (Gen 2:24)
2. Tithing of Income (Deut 14:22-29)
3. Sabbath Observance (Lev 23:3)
4. Capital Punishment (Lev 20)
5. Right to life for the unborn (Gen 1:26-27, 9:6-7)
6. Laws forbidding occult practice (Acts 13:8-10)
7. Law forbidding tattoos (Lev 19:28)
8. Inheritance laws (Num 27:1-7)
9. Laws forbidding sodomy (1 Cor 6:9-11)
10. Animal blood sacrifices (Lev 1-7)
11. Laws concerning blood issues (Lev 15)
12. You shall not covet (1 Tim 6:10)
13. You shall not steal (Luke 3:12-14)
14. Jubilee year (Lev 25)
15. Stewardship of the earth (Gen 1:28)
16. Support of widows (James 1:27)
17. Love for God (Mark 12:29-30)
18. Love for neighbor (Mark 12:31)
19. Dietary laws (Lev 11)
20. Keeping of vows (Matt 5:33-37)