

## 14 – Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial Law (14 of 18) sermonaudio.com

*An Ethics Course (Ashland Sem)*

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**Bible Text:** Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4

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Word of prayer.

*Lord, thank you for giving us opportunity to study your word. We pray that by this hour and time together today, that you would strengthen us through the Spirit to walk as people of God, and we pray that you would help us to understand your will better that we would have the moral courage to do your will, and we ask, Father, especially as we study the whole realm of social ethics today that you would make your people light and salt in the midst of a world that is steadily decaying. And Lord, we pray these things would be done, the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ would be uplifted in the hearts and minds of men for it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

All right, we're still looking at the question of the unity of God's law and last week we covered most of the material there but I do think we need to say a little bit more about changes that have been brought about in the establishing of the new covenant. A natural question is: well, if we have a new covenant, then what's different? What's new about the covenantal arrangement that God has now made with men? Well, in the first place, we live now looking back upon the accomplishment of our redemption. We're no longer looking forward to it as the saints under the old covenant did, and because we're looking back upon the accomplishment of redemption, we have a much greater power to do good works, greater fullness of the Spirit poured out at Pentecost is ours. We have a firmer assurance that our sins are forgiven, we're not just anticipating that, it's accomplished. We have a stronger motive to live in a holy manner, grateful for the love that's been shown to us in Christ. A firmer assurance that sin can be overcome by the power of God. We have the example of Jesus' own love. So you'll find in the New Testament often appeal to the work of Christ and to the results of his work and the presence of the Spirit, the unity of the body of Christ, and other such matters are motivations in the New Testament for holiness, motivations which would not have been appropriate to the Old Testament situation. There certainly are changes, then, in the new covenant. We have greater power, firmer assurance, stronger motivation, and appeals in the covenantal document that we don't find in the Old Testament. But naturally the question is: is there any change in the believer's obligation as a result of this covenantal change? Has the new covenant brought a change in moral code? Have there been changes in obligation? And I'd like to take just a few moments to comment on that question at length.

The fundamental requirement of love is the same in both testaments. The Old Testament required that we love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves, Deuteronomy 6:5,

Leviticus 19:18, and Jesus summarizes the Christian's duty as precisely these two commandments and, of course, there are many Johannine parallels. John in his gospel and his letters over and over again stresses the idea that love means keeping God's commandments. So the fundamental requirement in both testaments is that of love. It's something that I think very sadly is overlooked by dispensationalists and thought that is tending toward dispensationalism. Love is the same requirement, the same fundamental basic requirement in both testaments.

Secondly, our obligation to keep the law, in general, presumptively, if you will, remains the same, remains intact. Matthew 5 as we explored it last week and as it's explored in my book points out that the presumption is that any law given by God is binding unless, of course, the New Testament says otherwise.

Okay, thirdly, while the whole law remains binding and the fundamental requirement of love is the same in both testaments, the application of the law of God is different in some respects. The application of God's law is different in some respects and to see that we must note, first of all, that there are cultural differences, and then, secondly, that there are redemptive differences.

There are cultural differences. The old covenant saw the application of God's law to a very specific cultural, civil situation, to a type of life that may not be ours today and we see changes in the application of the law coming about because of that. For instance, in the Old Testament a requirement was made that people put a railing around the roof of their house. Now in the Old Testament, a railing in the culture of the Old Testament, a railing was put around the roof of the house because on the roof of the house people did their formal entertaining, okay? So people would go up to the roof of the house and if there is no rail there, it would be very easy for people to stumble off and that would not be protecting human life. Therefore to say that we have to have railings around the roofs of our houses could, as a matter of fact, completely obscure the purpose of the law. If you have a sloped roof and you're not going to be tempted to be doing entertaining on it, there's very little likelihood that God is going to be displeased if you don't have a rail around it. But on the other hand, if you have icy weather and you don't have a railing on your steps, as people are coming up your steps and they're going to be slipping on the ice, one might think that that is precisely what the law would require of you.

Now they didn't have icy steps in Old Testament Israel, although they did have people stumbling off of rooftops and I think it would be singularly obscure, mentally speaking, for somebody to look upon that law and says, "Well, obviously we don't have to keep that law today because, you know, our situation is different." Or, "Well, if we have to keep the law, that means we have to keep it literally just like it says right here." Clearly God was illustrating by means of a specific example a fundamental moral duty that we protect the innocent lives of others, and that fundamental duty is expressed by means of a particular illustration. And so it is true that there are cultural differences. We must take the cultural illustrations of the Old Testament law and translate them into modern circumstances, okay?

The Old Testament law speaks about a man's accountability or a lack of accountability in terms of somebody who goes out chopping wood with a loose ax-head and if the man knows that the ax-head is loose and it flies off the handle and strikes somebody else, then he's responsible for the damage done, but if he doesn't know that the ax-head is loose, then his responsibility is diminished. Now again, it would take a rather obscure frame of mind to say that that law today applies only to flying ax-heads. I mean, can that not apply also to a man's knowledge if his car breaks not being functional? I mean, does it take a great, you know, leap of thought somehow to see that that illustration under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom the Holy Spirit gives, can be applied to other cultural circumstances, even those that would not have been appropriate in the day and age in which Israel was given the law?

So there are certainly cultural differences and I want to point out that these cultural differences were recognized in the Bible itself. You know, when the law is given during the wilderness wandering, it's couched in one form of language and illustration and when the law is repeated as people are getting ready to go into a stable situation in the land, you find the law expressed somewhat differently, you find the law expressed for city life somewhat different than the law expressed for agricultural farm life, okay? That is only natural. That isn't to say God's standards are different, it's simply to say that as the culture is different, the standards and the illustrations of the standards as they are applied are going to be correspondingly different. But now more importantly, there are redemptive difference as well in terms of the application of God's law. Remember what we're talking about here is not a change in the law but it's the change in the application of the law, a change from old covenant to new covenant brings some broader changes in the situation, redemptively speaking, in which we apply the law.

In general, the old covenant is related to the new as shadows related to reality, type to antitype. The reality had not yet come in the Old Testament. God's people in the old covenant knew Christ only through symbolic prophecies and types and ordinances, but now Christ has come and with him new covenant revelation gives us not restrictive shadows but gives us a clear knowledge of the Savior. Positively, then, Christ himself is revealed as the sufficient mediator, the sufficient sacrifice for men.

Secondly, unlike the old covenant, the new covenant community is not identified with a particular national order. The new covenant order, therefore, doesn't demand loyalty to the earthly kingdom of Israel. Positively, Christ is the king of a new international community which is advanced not by the power of the sword but rather by the preaching of the gospel.

Thirdly, we can see that the new covenant puts into effect a written canon which is not going to be added to, at least until Christ returns, and so the former special office of prophecy has been fulfilled in Christ and his apostles as Christ is the mediator of the new covenant revelation. So we can see, then, that there have been crucial changes in the priestly, kingly and prophetic functions of the old covenant. Christ, you see, now comes and puts the priestly law out of gear by fulfilling it, becoming the reality which was foreshadowed. In a kingly way, Christ now rules somewhat differently than an Old

Testament king would have. And in a prophetic way, he has put an end to revelation that the old covenant saints had come to expect year by year or epoch by epoch.

This leads us, then, into a discussion of the threefold division in the law. Often enough, the law of God is thought of as being broken down into moral law, ceremonial law, and civil or as it's called in Puritan literature, judicial law. You'll find this threefold distinction discussed, for instance, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 19, and I'd like to give a short evaluation of this distinction and then illustrate it how we might make use of it today. Of course, the distinction is not found explicitly in the Bible. You'll not turn to any verse of the Bible that says that God's law is to be broken down into these three categories. The scripture more simply speaks simply of the law. The law. It is the law that is binding today and yet it is the law to which men were in bondage and from which they have now been freed and that has often confused people. You know, you read in the New Testament, it seems on one hand the New Testament gives this just ringing endorsement of the law, on the other hand you see the New Testament has this very negative attitude toward the law and the New Testament doesn't bother to say ceremonial law or judicial law or moral law. It just says the law and that has led some people to, I think, rather unfortunate theological extremes saying that since the New Testament doesn't use a label for a distinction, the distinction is illegitimate. Before you fall into that mindset, I would remind you of a few theological distinctions for which the New Testament has no label. The Trinity. The hypostatic union. Now if we are going to give up theological distinctions for lack of a New Testament label, I daresay we're giving up the heart of the Christian faith if we give up the Trinity and the hypostatic union.

So the fact that the New Testament speaks of law generally and not moral, ceremonial, civil or any number of other categories ought not to be of great concern to us. I think it's important to say, however, that the most basic changes that have been made in the new covenant with respect to the law are changes with respect to the whole law and not simply changes with respect to one part of the law. It is often the case when I have talked to people who want to take what I think is a smorgasbord approach to the Old Testament, you know, we're going to keep those things that make sense to us and we're going to throw out other things that don't make sense to us, they have a very easy way of saying, "Well, that, you see, is ceremonial, or that is civil, and what we're going to keep is the moral law." Okay, and what amounts to moral law? What defines something as moral law? "Well, something that makes sense to me." And nobody is so crass as to say that but in operational approach to the Old Testament, you have people saying, "We'll take this. We won't take this. We'll take this. We won't take this." And when you ask them why, then these labels are applied ex post facto, you know? "Well, we keep this because this is moral law, but that's ceremonial and that's civil law."

Well, think about that for a minute. We don't want to keep the civil law today, for instance, "Thou shalt not steal." One would think that's a rather basic civil law. It has to do with one's economic transactions within society. Most people want to say, "Oh no, that's moral law," and yet it clearly has a judicial or a civil cast to it. So when you start asking people questions as to why do you distinguish between moral, ceremonial and judicial in this way, I'm suggesting that it turns out that these labels are being applied ex

post facto, after the fact. After they've decided which laws they want to keep, then this label, this becomes a way of saying, "That's a law that I want to keep." But we need to have some concivial way of distinguishing between these three if we're going to use them at all. And before I get to that concivial way of distinguishing, what I want to say then is that whatever changes take place in the law of God, we need to be willing to say that the changes apply to the whole law, not just to some aspect of the law, some category of the law.

Okay, let's talk about some of these changes and show how there are changes in all aspects of the law. In respect to the ceremonial law, most of us can see rather clearly that there's been a change in terms of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, the cleansing regulations, the dietary standards of the Old Testament. These no longer literally apply, no longer are enforced in the same way that they would have been in the old covenant because Christ has brought in the reality that was foreshadowed by such laws. He's brought in the purity that these laws were speaking of.

There are changes as well in the moral law. A lot of people talk about the moral law as though there were no changes in it but, of course, there are changes in the moral law because that law is no longer a curse and threat to us because of Christ. Since our sins are forgiven and the Spirit dwells in us, the law is now in a greater sense a delight to the saint under the new covenant. We have a stronger motivation to holiness with respect to the moral law and because the new covenant has completed the canon, the moral law has been revealed once and for all. We no longer expect further revelation, we simply look to the Spirit to help us apply the revelation that has been given. All those things are different from the old covenant relationship to the moral law.

And of course, there are changes with respect to the civil and judicial law, changes of culture, as we've already seen. We no longer put rails around the roof of our house but we probably should put a fence around our backyard swimming pool to protect neighbor children from drowning. Okay, there are cultural differences and there are redemptive differences too. The civil law often enough was addressed to a situation that pertains simply to Canaan and to the situation in Canaan, the division of the land into tribal lots and to family plots. We have the cities of refuge, the Urim and Thummim and other such things in the Old Testament that no longer apply today. We no longer use the sword in holy war as Christians to defend the kingdom of God.

Okay, so there are changes in all three of these categories. Now I'm going to kind of turn another page over and say that there's continuity in all three categories as well, very important continuity. I think it would help if we see that this threefold distinction can be recast in the following way. One might think of moral law and restorative law, the moral law pertaining to our moral duties and those moral duties expressed either in summary form or in illustrative form. The restorative law doesn't deal with our moral duty but the way of being restored to God because of our violations of the moral law. And so the restorative law points to Christ in the way of salvation, and it distinguishes the community of redemption. It sets apart the community that has been saved.

Okay, now if you will, if you like this breakdown, if that will help you, what is called moral law and traditional distinction is what I would call a summary of the moral law, summary expressions of our duty. The illustrative law would be the judicial law. And then the restorative law would be the ceremonial law. Let's go over that again. What is called moral law often enough is taken as a summary of our moral duty. Judicial law becomes the illustration of our moral duty. Ceremonial law is the law of restoration pointing to Christ and directing the redeemed community.

Now let's see some continuities in these laws now. We have general precepts, first of all, our summary as I've called it in terms of the moral law. Let's see if we can think of an illustration of a general precept. "Thou shalt not kill." Okay, the sixth commandment. It doesn't give a lot of detail, does it? It doesn't tell you what amounts to murder, it simply tells you don't murder. Now is that general precept kept in the New Testament? Does the New Testament say we should not kill? Does it seem reasonable to you that the general precepts of the Old Testament are binding today? Good. I wasn't sure if you were just asleep or whether you were having dispensational doubts.

["Is there a difference?"]

I'm tempted to say amen but I'm not going to commit myself.

Okay, and then we have illustrations of our moral duty. Illustrations of the general precepts. Let me see, if we took as our general precept instead of the sixth commandment the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," we know that in Romans 13 Paul repeats that, "You shall not steal," that's part of the requirement of love, let's look at some illustrations in the Old Testament of what it means not to steal, certain case law applications. Do you know why we call this case law? It's the application of the law in a particular case, okay? So casuistic or case law.

Deuteronomy 25:4. Moses writes, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain." There's an application of the eighth commandment. You are stealing from your ox if you muzzle him so that he can't gain his livelihood from the work that he does.

["What is that reference again?"]

Deuteronomy 25:4. So there is an application of the eighth commandment. Is that application binding today?

["A changed application of it."]

Well, we could...let's begin this way, is that law binding today? Is that law used in the New Testament?

["Yes."]

Okay, how do you know that?

["Paul applies it to those people deserving livelihood to the preaching of the gospel."]

That's right. He says doesn't the law tell you that you should not muzzle the ox? God doesn't care for oxen, does he? And I think the proper way to interpret that expression in the New Testament is God doesn't care merely for oxen. Do you think this law was given simply for oxen? God takes, if you will, the least illustration and if it applies with respect to the least, taking care of your ox, how much more does it apply to taking care of your minister, okay? So Paul does apply the law. It's a changed application from oxen to Christian minister but it's the law that's being applied.

Let's look at another illustration of how the eighth commandment applied in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 22:10. Oh, by the way, the New Testament reference here if you want it, is 1 Timothy 5:18. It's also 1 Corinthians 9 but 1 Timothy 5:18 is one place where Paul applies it. Okay, Deuteronomy 22:10.

["Deuteronomy, what?"]

22, verse 10. I'm sorry, I had that written in the wrong place in my notes. Let's look at Deuteronomy 24:14, "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates." Do not oppress a hired servant. The Septuagint translation of that is, "Do not defraud a hired servant." Do not oppress, do not defraud, same general idea. Let's ask ourselves is the eighth commandment as it applies to defrauding of our servants applicable today?

Turn to Mark 10:19 where Jesus is applying the law of God. Mark 10:19. He says to the rich young ruler, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother." That's rather amazing. Jesus is reading off part of the Decalogue and he adds something that's not in the Decalogue at all, "Do not defraud." The quotation is Deuteronomy 24:14 in the Septuagint, "Do not defraud your hired servants," which, of course, is very applicable in terms of the rich young ruler. The assumption is he probably had many servants, don't defraud them. That is an application of the eighth commandment and Jesus cites it as binding. So we see that the general precept is binding in the New Testament, we see the illustration of the precept are binding in the New Testament.

Now let's go to the restorative law now. Restorative law deals, first of all, with the way of salvation pointing to Christ, okay? And let me see, Leviticus 17:11 is an illustration of a restorative law, an instance we can look at. Leviticus 17:11, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." Okay, it seems necessary then that there be blood atonement if one is going to have restored life. Is that binding today?

Look at Hebrews, the ninth chapter, verses 22 to 24. Hebrews 9 at verse 22, the author there says, "And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." The author of Hebrews says it is necessary that Christ shed his blood and cleansed the things in the heavenly tabernacle, the true tabernacle of God. Why was it necessary? Because the Old Testament law said without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

Is that law binding today? You know, nobody should have difficulty with that in the evangelical church. Dispensational Calvinist, I don't care what your outlook, everybody believes in the gospel and that's what the Old Testament restorative law was, it was the gospel in figures. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. It was a pointing ahead, a foreshadowing of the personal work of Jesus Christ.

Okay, so we see that the restorative law is binding today. That sometimes confuses people because I would be the first one to say we aren't to make animal sacrifices and yet I hold that those laws of the Old Testament are binding, they were kept by Jesus Christ once and for all. Hebrews says it was necessary that Christ die, that he shed his blood to cleanse the things in the heavenly tabernacle, that his work was the fulfillment of what the Old Testament law was looking ahead to. And so that law certainly is binding today. No man dares approach God without a sacrificial victim. No man dares come to God without the blood of Christ covering his sins. No man can come to God except on God's terms of purity and those terms have been laid down for us in the Old Testament law, and praise God they've been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, not by a calf or a bull or something else, but rather God has given his adequate sacrifice and put an end to the sacrificial ritual day by day and year by year because of the fact that Jesus has done the work once and for all. But the work he did was in fulfillment, yes, in fulfillment of the Old Testament law, not an abrogation of the Old Testament law.

Then finally there are those restorative laws that deal with the Reformed community and let's look at some illustrations of those. Now we come to Deuteronomy 22:10 which I had out of place in my notes. Deuteronomy 22:10 told the community of the Old Testament, gave the following regulation, "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." There's an Old Testament law telling the redeemed community symbolically, "You are not to mix with the Gentiles roundabout you. Do not mix with the Gentiles. Do not put an ox and an ass together." Unequal farm animals are not to be brought together as symbolic of the fact that Jew and Gentile were not to be brought together.

Is that law binding today? Well, yes and no. It's not binding in the sense that it's wrong to farm with an ox and an ass together. Again, I don't know much about farming and it probably is bad technique, but I don't think there would be anything immoral in that technique. However, today we are to avoid unequal yoking and we see that in 2 Corinthians 6:14 where Paul says, "Be not unequally yoked together," speaking of those



who were in the church being bound with those who are outside the church. So the law of God in the Old Testament distinguishing the redeemed community and setting it apart from the world roundabout is still binding, it's just that the redeemed community has been redefined as the church rather than Israel.

1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul speaks of Christ our Passover lamb having been sacrificed for us, offered up for us. So we are keeping the Passover in Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, we not only see you shall not have the ox and the ass together, the unequal yoking, but you'll also find reference to coming out from among them, touching no unclean thing. Cleanliness standards of the Old Testament are binding, however they're binding in a different way today. The application of the law is different today and I think I have here another illustration that I think you'll find of help and I believe it comes from Leviticus 20. It's either Leviticus 20 or Leviticus 19. I can't quite decipher, we'll look and see.

Well, Leviticus 20:22 and 26 was the illustration I had down for the distinction between clean and unclean meats in the Old Testament, and in that particular context it's rather obvious that the distinction is made for the sake of symbolizing the distinction between Jew and Gentile today. And I guess I don't have the Old Testament reference written down. I'm surprised by that but in Jude 23 in the New Testament you will find an application of Old Testament cleanliness standards to the church where we read, "and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." The Old Testament law had, a ceremonial law dealt with garments spotted by the flesh either by perspiration in the priest's garment or by leprosy in the garment of those who had that affliction, and they were to avoid garments spotted by the flesh. And here you have the same language being used, we are to avoid garments spotted by the flesh today too but not in the literal sense of the Old Testament but rather in the moral essential sense of avoiding any contact with impurity or sin.

So we ask ourselves finally: do the restorative laws of the Old Testament apply to the community in its purity and its separation, it's being set apart applies? And the answer is, yes, they do. Okay, so I began by saying we can see there are obvious changes in the moral law, in the ceremonial law, and in the judicial law. There are obvious changes from old to new covenant, and yet as we look at them, we see there are obvious continuities as well. We see that, yes, the general precepts hold. Yes, the illustrations hold. Yes, the restorative laws applying to Christ in the way of redemption hold. And yes, the restorative laws applying to the separation of the redeemed community hold. So there is continuity as well as discontinuity and we must keep both of these things in mind when we think of the moral, ceremonial, judicial distinction in the law of God.

Yes?

["If the nucleus of that commandment in Deuteronomy 23 of being unequally yoked was to prevent cruelty to animals because the ox would tend to work the donkey to death, would you say it is then binding? It's still in that form."]

Yeah, if that is, in fact, the purpose of the law.

["My own thinking on that is that God is not commanding agricultural efficiency, what he's doing is commanding agricultural mercy, the amount of hours you till the field no matter how efficient or inefficient if it's damaging God's creation, and some of the commentators seem to think than ox would pull the life right out of an ass."]

Well, that may be and it's just simply a matter of biblical and factual research that would answer that question. My own tendency is to think that that law was given only as a symbolic gesture about the fact, to indicate that Israelites and Gentiles were not to be yoked together because it's given in a list of laws that have that same function: don't mingle seed, you don't mingle cloth, you don't mingle farm animals, you don't mingle clean and unclean meats. So my tendency is to think exegetically it has a symbolic function rather than the, if you will, the mercy for the animals, but if that is true, then that is something that we have to take account of and I simply have not taken account of it as yet.

["I think I detect a distinction between your hermeneutical principle at this point and Rushdoony's, in that you're saying that the ox and the ass binding is not specifically, we're not bound to that today necessarily. I'm wondering where your hermeneutic differs with Rushdoony who I think would say it is binding, and furthermore he still holds, as I perceive him, not in today's reading necessarily, elsewhere in his book, to hybridization laws, for example."]

Yeah, I think the difference would be not in the hermeneutical principle but in the application of the hermeneutical principle and let me illustrate in terms of what Dr. T. and I were just discussing. Let's say that he's done his homework on that point and lo and behold the Bible does have in the law about not yoking ox and ass together a concern for the well-being of the animals involved, okay, and I haven't discovered that as yet. That wouldn't prove that there's a difference in terms of underlying principles of exegesis, in fact, if anything it would, the very way that we carry on our conversation would prove that we share hermeneutical principles because he knows how to convince Bahnsen. He says, "Now look, we follow these principles we come down to this conclusion and you've overlooked this, that and the other, you haven't done your homework completely." And I'd say, "But Rushdoony, that my difference on these points is not one of underlying hermeneutical principle, not that that's impossible, but I mean, I don't see that that is the fundamental difference, the difference is that I don't believe on some points," just as I am sure in all charity and grace he would say toward me, that I haven't done my homework and I don't think he's done his homework on some of these points. In other words, where Rushdoony...I'll give you an illustration. He tends to think that we ought to keep the dietary standards of the Old Testament. I also know because I'm a personal friend of Mr. Rushdoony's and we have gone speaking various places together that when pork or other things are put before him, he eats it without qualms and he doesn't say anything about it. And so, you know, that's strange to me because it seems as if it's an immoral sort of thing to do. One ought to charitably say, "Well, I can't really partake, you know, in this meal."

But he doesn't do that. He feels that, you know, it's for your good not to eat these things for your health and consequently we do well to keep these laws to the degree we can.

Now to my way of thinking, that's an exegetical question. Does the Old Testament present the dietary laws as a matter of health? As a matter of fact, you'll never find them connected in any way with the sixth commandment, that because you're going to protect human life, you're not going to eat these dangerous things. And we all know, of course, you get trichinosis from pork and all that, but if that were the problem, the Old Testament law would have been don't eat uncured pork. You know, it would be don't eat pork that hasn't been properly treated in some way rather than don't eat pork at all. Rather, the Old Testament presents the dietary standards in terms of a distinction drawn between Israel and the nations, "Because I have drawn a separation between you and the Gentiles, you are to make a separation between clean and unclean meats."

Okay, now you come to Acts 10 which is a crucial passage in my disagreement with Mr. Rushdoony on this particular point, and in Acts 10, Peter is told that he can preach the gospel to the Gentiles and incorporate them into the church in terms of a sheet of unclean meats lowered from heaven and God telling him to rise up and eat them. And when Peter says, "I've never eaten anything unclean," God says, "Don't call unclean what I have cleansed." Now to my way of thinking, that is very strong exegetical grounds for believing the Old Testament symbolic law about dietary standards has now been superseded by a distinction drawn between the church and the world. We can go ahead and eat pork, I mean, Jesus says it's not a sin to a man, that defiles him, after all, and Mark parenthetically says, "in so saying he made all meats clean." The New Testament indicates that all meats are now clean in terms of their use by God's people but we are still not to be unequally yoked with the unbeliever, we are not to touch any unclean thing as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6, and so my difference with Rushdoony would be an application of our exegetical or hermeneutical standards rather than a difference in hermeneutical standards themselves.

Am I making much sense? It's kind of like, you know, two umpires have a disagreement on a call, let's say in baseball. They may share the same rules of baseball but they saw it different. You know, one guy thought that it hit the line, after all, and the other guy said, no, it was on the outside of the line. Okay, and that isn't a difference in principle, it's a difference in actual observation and at this point I simply would say that Mr. Rushdoony and I observe the Bible differently as to what it says about the dietary standards. But he knows how he could convince me if he's going to, and I know how I would convince him. At this point, God hasn't given us the time and association long enough to be able to work out that difference but, I mean, we know in principle where it would go if we had the time to discuss it.

Yeah.

["An illustration of that would be, would it not, that even though circumcision has been demonstrated in hospital cases to be more hygienic usually than uncircumcision, you

would say a believer is still free in this case even though circumcision has been demonstrated to be more hygienic?"]

Let's put it, maybe this would be a good way of putting it. Let's say you have Christian parents come to you and they say, "We've just, you know, had this birth in our family and we have this infant boy. Are we under moral obligation to circumcise him?" Okay, and the pastor should say, first of all, "If you mean in terms of the Old Testament law about circumcision are you under obligation, no, you're not. Your obligation is to baptize the child." Now we won't get into the controversy whether you believe in infant baptism but, I mean, if you hold to that continuity. But even if you don't, you would still say, no, you don't have to circumcise, you have to wait until the child reaches, you know, a point where he makes profession of faith and then you baptize because you have to grant that baptism in some sense replaces circumcision as Colossians 2 makes that clear, we are now circumcised with the circumcision of Christ being buried with him in baptism. So in some way baptism replaces circumcision, whether it applies to infants or not, I won't discuss. So you would want to say, "No, you're not under moral obligation in terms of the Old Testament law, however, there is another law in the Old Testament that says you shall not kill. Ever. There is another law in the Old Testament that says you shall not kill and the full implications of not killing have to do with taking care of one's health as well and doing everything that's conducive to health." Now it has been demonstrated....that circumcision is better, you know, hygienically than non-circumcision and therefore if these studies are true, then you're under obligation from the standpoint of the sixth commandment to have your child circumcised.

["Yes, I'm asking for your response."]

Well, my response would be that we are, if we're under obligation it is obligation via the sixth commandment, not obligation via the commandment that requires circumcision. That sounds very strange to some people.

["Yes, but I'm asking your response, is there a sixth commandment bind at that time?"]

That's a factual question and I happen to believe that you ought to have your child circumcised.

["Because of the sixth commandment?"]

Because of the sixth commandment. Okay, here's a law in the Old Testament that says, you know, you must circumcise. Okay, here's another law that says you shall not kill, okay? The full implications have to do with anything having to do with promoting health and well-being. If somebody says, "Do we have to circumcise our child," meaning do we have to keep the law of circumcision, the answer is no. Do we have to circumcise our child? The answer could still be, yes, because you shall not do anything that's detrimental to the health and well-being of your child. And so if we are under obligation to circumcise our children and it's not because of the law of circumcision, it's because of the general law about not killing.

And again, about the dietary standards. I have friends who keep the dietary standards of the Old Testament and every time we discuss it, they keep bringing up it is better for your health, and I'm not convinced of the factual variance of that argument as yet, although generally, I mean, I don't have any grief with it but, I mean, overall there's just something missing in that argumentation and I won't get into it. But if it is true, if it is true that we should not eat shrimp or pork, for instance, it is because we shouldn't be killing our bodies, not because the Old Testament says don't eat shrimp or pork, because when the Old Testament says don't eat shrimp or pork, it has to do with separating yourself from the Gentiles. The purpose of those laws was ceremonial rather than health but if you can prove that it is for my health not to eat those things then, of course, I'm under obligation. Just like I believe I'm under obligation not to smoke, if I take seriously, you know, just about every objective study says about the effect of smoking, or at least, let's say, smoking on a regular basis or something. I mean, I want it to be as detailed and as specific as I can on these things, but whatever the obligation is factually about health is binding because of the sixth commandment and not because of these other laws of the Old Testament.

["I'd just like to take that one step further. In the case of circumcision and, in fact, let me just stay with circumcision, if a person has believed that the clinical evidence is so overwhelming in favor of circumcision in that case, is he technically sinning if he does not have his male circumcised?"]

Sure he is.

["And if a person were convinced about the clinical evidence in the case of tobacco, then, then it would also follow?"]

Sure.

["So it's a question of doing our homework as to the healthfulness and hygienicness of this"]

That's right. Remember we had that other angle with a triangle, the factual situational angle that has to be taken to a head. You can't apply the law unless you know the situation to which it is being applied.

["And it's exactly here, wouldn't you agree, that a pastor has to be extremely careful because has he really done his clinical homework? He's done his biblical work maybe but has he done his biblical or clinical work, let's say, on tobacco?"]

Yeah, and the church in the past has, an interesting thing has happened. I mean, we all know that back in the 1920s and '30s most fundamental churches were teaching that it was a sign of worldliness if a person smoked, okay? Now my tendency is to think that back then people who preached against smoking were preaching against smoking for the wrong reasons. They were preaching against smoking because it was worldly, it looked

like you were a part of the world. Of course, wearing a business suit is worldly too, isn't it? And if you know the sins of Wall Street, one would tend to think maybe the sins of worldly wearing of business suits might be even worse, and the sin of smoking, after all, which is simply a way the world, you know, relaxes, but back then the preaching against worldliness, I think, was probably inappropriate, it was legalistic in the sense that it went beyond the law of God, it went beyond God's law and lay standards on the conscience that were not true.

Now in this day and age, we could also preach against smoking if we are convinced of the factual merits of that and drew all the proper distinctions and so forth, but even though what was being said even 50 years ago was right, it was right for the wrong reasons, or it was wrong although formerly it was right. There are different ways of putting it but you all get my point that it turns out that now there is medical evidence to support the fact that we shouldn't smoke but nobody was preaching then because of the sixth commandment, or if they were it was only a belief but it was mainly in terms of, you know, we don't dance, and we don't smoke, and we don't chew, and we don't go with the girls that do, you know, because it was worldly, and now it's because it's for the sake of our better health. If you're convinced that smoking is detrimental to your health, or let's say regular smoking is detrimental to your health, then I believe that you're under moral obligation to abstain.

Yes.

["Wouldn't there be, I'm noticing that there might be a difference in hermeneutic in the sense of not seeing the New Testament update, for instance, all meats are clean, wouldn't that involve a hermeneutical...?"]

No, I would tend that that would involve an observational difference. You know, it's like one umpire says, "Now look, don't you see the chalk on the ball? It obviously hit the line." The other guy, you know, hadn't noticed that. And in one sense, while I don't want to say Mr. Rushdoony hasn't read those verses, what I want to say is you haven't really, you know, taken the significance of those verses into account. I mean, there it is, the chalk is on the ball, I mean, you know that one counts in this way. Jesus says all meats are clean. If all meats are clean, that means you can eat pork, you can eat shrimp.

Now I don't want to say that there can't be a hermeneutical difference, all I want to say is there's no evidence of a hermeneutical difference just because we've come to a factual conclusion that's different. It just may be that we're observing different verses and interpreting them differently but there's no principle by which we interpret them differently, it just so happens we've interpreted them differently.

["You're saying that the Old Testament verses, in the Old Testament verses what is important is not at all the externals of hybridization or meat per se, it's the implications."]

It's the symbolic value that if you draw a distinction in your seed, in your animals, in your cloth, in your meat, that that will help you draw the distinction when it comes to who your daughter is going to marry.

["And because it's the implications, you do have the same hermeneutic, where at the externals your position and Rushdoony's would be a different hermenutic."]

Yes, he would say that we keep literally the outward externals today because they were not arbitrary in the Old Testament, they served our health as well as teaching us about separation and I'm just not convinced that in the Old Testament that's ever presented as a motivation for keeping the law.

["And at the same time you're not saying any of those ceremonial laws are unhygienic, in fact, you're saying they are hygienic."]

I don't know.

["You don't have to make that statement either way."]

No, I don't. I certainly don't want to believe that God gave laws that were detrimental to people's health but whether they were positively conducive to people's health, I'm not sure.

["Okay. The way I've said it in class repeatedly is none of the ceremonial laws that I've been able to discern are unhygienic. None of them are..."]

Contra-health. Okay, I agree with that. Yeah, I don't think we'd expect God to give us laws that work against our well-being, but now whether he gave us laws that are positively for the sake of avoiding trichinosis and all that, all right, I just don't see the evidence.

["I think I would tend to agree with you in the sense that if it was unhygienic, it would seem that would become more of a universal law like a Noahic law. There would be maybe the universal. Of course, there he's giving meats to eat and it doesn't make any restrictions."]

Okay. I'd like to look at in the last few moments of this first hour the approach of Dr. Kline to the question of the Old Testament law being binding today, and the first thing we need to talk about is whether the Old Testament is canonical for us today. Are both the old covenant document, is it the case that the old covenant document is canonical as well as the new covenant document being canonical for us? If you're having trouble getting this into the outline of your notes, what we're looking at is one major attempt to contradict what I have been teaching here in the last two weeks and since it's the one that's taken the most seriously among covenantal scholars, which is the general theological slant by which I approach this, through which I approach this, I think we can look at Kline with some profit.

Okay, Dr. Kline does not believe that the old covenant document is canonical for the new covenant saint. He doesn't believe the Old Testament is the canon of the New Testament church and he argues this in his book, "The Structure of Biblical Authority." And I'm not persuaded by his argumentation. Covenants in scripture typically presuppose and incorporate within themselves the provisions of earlier covenants, that is, I believe that the presumption in scripture is that of continuity. There is the growth from one covenant to another by way of expanding the covenant rather than contradicting the covenant. If you will, what we have here is progressive revelation. You have one covenant expanded, expanded, and so on until we finally get to the reality of the new covenant and so typically covenants presuppose and incorporate provisions of earlier covenants. So the story of the Abrahamic covenant, for instance, functions as a historical prologue in the Mosaic covenant, doesn't it? And the promises of the Abrahamic covenant are reaffirmed in the Mosaic context. Why did God hear the struggles and the complaints of his people? Because he remembered his covenant with Abraham. Why did God call them out of Egypt? Why did the exodus take place? That he might fulfill the promise to Abraham to put his people in the land. So it does seem that later covenants presuppose earlier covenants, okay?

Secondly, so this is contrary to Kline's general approach where when we come to the New Testament, what we have is a covenant for God's people of the New Testament but it doesn't, the New Testament saint doesn't have obligation to the old covenant document and that is contrary to the general way the Bible works. Moreover, there is something rather anomalous about a document which is authoritative, authoritative today according to Kline, yet not canonical. You see, all of a sudden you begin to see this trouble when Kline says, "Now I don't believe the Old Testament is canonical. It's not canon for us but it is authoritative." And if you've read Kline, you know that what he goes on to do is he says it's authoritative with respect to its faith norms, what the Old Testament teaches about faith is authoritative today, and with respect to the life norms of the Old Testament, it is authoritative in personal life norms, what the Old Testament has to say about our personal morality is authoritative today. How about community life norms? Well, right here Kline says this is the heart of a covenant document, the community life norms. Not the faith norms. Not the personal life norms. But the community life norms are the heart of a covenant, and what he means to say then when he is saying that the Old Testament is not canonical, is that the community life norms of the Old Testament are not binding today but the Old Testament is authoritative outside of those areas.

Well, I mean, if he wants to define his terms in this way, he's free to define his terms in this way but is that the way the Bible looks at it? Does the Bible say the community life norms are not binding today, that remains the question. You know, by using this elaborate language of canon in a very strict, well, not strict because, as a matter of fact, I think it's wrong, I think in a very specialized way, using a very specialized notion of canon when Dr. Kline argues that the Old Testament is not canonical, he's really saying in the long run what he wants to say in his conclusion, and that's that the community life norms are not binding.



I think there is something rather odd, though, in claiming that something is authoritative but not canonical. What is a canon? A canon is an authoritative measuring rod, isn't it, by which you measure. You know, it's the standard. Well, how could something be authoritative but not the standard? I mean, this is an unusual use of theological vocabulary at best, and I think it probably is defining canon in a very narrow way that is somewhat distorting. Moreover, to say that the Old Testament is not canonical but is authoritative is not really to solve any problem, is it? It's not to solve any problem as to which laws are binding today on the covenant community. It's just as difficult to apply an authoritative non-canonical document as it is to apply an authoritative canonical document because the difficulty is in finding the authoritative application today. And if you're having trouble following what I've said here, let me put it to you in just a drop. Very simply all I'm saying is we're just arguing about the use of this word "canon." That's all this argument amounts to is a verbal dispute over the word "canon."

We both say the Old Testament is authoritative so he has a problem, doesn't he? How do you apply this authoritative non-canonical document that we call the Old Testament? For me the problem is how do you apply this authoritative canonical document? Both of us have got the problem of applying an authoritative document today and whether you call it canonical or non-canonical seems to me rather to the side of the main issue.

Let's look further at the distinction that Kline wants to draw between faith norms and life norms. In "The Structure of Biblical Authority," pages 101 and following, Kline argues that the community faith norms of the old covenant are still binding while the community life norms have been abrogated, and I'd like to say along with my former ethics instructor at Westminster Seminary, John Frame, that I do not find either the distinction or the assertion cogent. Scripture draws no such distinction between faith norms and life norms and you'd almost expected me to have said that from my previous lectures, wouldn't you? The idea that you have faith over here, then life over here is just simply unbiblical. No such thing as faith apart from life or life apart from faith. Faith is seen just in the way you live your life and life is given to the Christian precisely in terms of his faith and so I don't see this distinction as a cogent distinction, and I certainly don't think the assertion that we have to follow the life, we have to follow the faith norms but not the life norms can be defended biblically either.

There's one other way in which Dr. Kline argues that the Old Testament law is not binding when it comes to the social standards of the Old Testament and that doesn't have to do with this canon and faith norms/life norms, rather in terms of his [unintelligible] of intrusion. Dr. Kline has another line of argumentation that says that the Old Testament presents an ethic of intrusion to us. He says that God's dealings with men vary between periods of longsuffering and periods of judgment. The periods of longsuffering are periods of common grace where God gives good things to his enemies. The periods of judgment anticipate the day of final judgment in the Old Testament.

Okay, now these two modes of divine activity, longsuffering common grace and judgment, generate two different sorts of ethical principles in the Bible. The divine longsuffering generates the ethic of love, the divine judgment generates commandments

incompatible with the love ethic, the slaughter of the Canaanites, the stoning of blasphemers etc. Okay, the ethic of judgment makes man an agent of God's judgment. It represents the intrusion of the principles of the last judgment into the present time. He believes that God has intruded into the Old Testament the principles of the final judgment. Now since we live in an age of common grace today, common grace is set over against the principle of final judgment. This is a period of longsuffering rather than a period of judgment and therefore the principles of final judgment that were intruded into the Old Testament period cannot be binding today because we live under an age of common grace.

I have some difficulty with this, as you might expect. In the first place, we have to ask is it factually true that the Old Testament standards were intrusions of the principles of final judgment. Well, no, as a matter of fact, they were not because on the day of final judgment there's not going to be any distinction drawn between people who are blasphemers and need to be executed and people who are simply liars and have to be executed. On the final day of judgment, liars and blasphemers will be cast into the second death, to the lake of fire. In the Old Testament, only blasphemers were put to death, not liars, and consequently the principles of the final judgment were not being applied in the Old Testament and so I'm saying just at the most fundamental level, the Old Testament was not an intrusive ethic.

Secondly, I think you can account for the Old Testament standards without looking to the final judgment as the justification for the way God was operating then. What we can say is justice demanded in sociopolitical or temporal affairs the following penal sanctions, that this was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, this was just the appropriate thing to do, that when blood guiltiness is upon a murderer, he is to die, when blood guiltiness is upon an adulterer, he is to die and it didn't have to do with the intrusion of God's principles of final judgment.

So one, it is factually incorrect, and two, it is theologically superfluous to appeal to this intrusion idea. Secondly in terms of the overall criticism, thirdly then, the idea of contrasting intrusion with common grace and saying that the law given to Israel was in principle intrusive law, intrusion of principles in the final judgment, suggests then that Israel was not living under God's common grace. But what are the obvious illustrations of common grace in the Bible? God's sunshine and rain upon the wicked and the just, the righteous and the unrighteous. Is that to say that God did not give sunshine and rain to both the wicked and the righteous in the Old Testament? It's rather hard to believe that common grace didn't apply in Old Testament Israel and therefore this fundamental contrast is mistaken, I think, in Kline's working as well.

Moreover and this is the fourth and last thing I'll say before we break, in the Old Testament Israel had to deal not simply with matters anticipating the final judgment but Israel had to answer problems of social justice in a preconsummation period, that is, there was still the question what do you do with these, what do you do with murderers, what do you do with rapists? Those were questions Israel had to answer and therefore it would be wrong to think that Israel was simply addressing matters of consummation justice. Israel

was also addressing sociopolitical matters of preconsummation justice, and if Israel was doing that, then we can take our model from Israel as to what we should do with thieves, murderers and rapists as well as the rest, and consequently, I don't find at any point that Dr. Kline's approach either by means of his notion of the canon, his distinction between life norms and faith norms, or his distinction between intrusion and common grace, accomplishes what he wants to accomplish and that is proving that the Old Testament social standards are not binding today.

Okay, let's take a five minute break.

Okay, we have one more problem area with respect to the unity of the law to deal with and, as I said before class, this is of particular interest to some members of our class anyway, the question of polygamy.

Okay, we've been arguing, we've been arguing that there is a basic continuity between Old and New Testaments with respect to our moral standards. I, last week, talked about the alleged difference in the matter of divorce, the legislation with respect to divorce, and I trust that if you're not convinced, you at least see the prima facie cogency of arguing that there is continuity on the standards with respect to divorce. We've given plenty of biblical evidence both general and inductive for the continuity between Old and New Testaments. We've discussed the threefold division of the law and how there is continuity and discontinuity, and we've looked at the challenge of Dr. Kline to the thesis of a general unity between Old and New Testament standards. The last thing I want to look at, then, is the challenge that arises from the claim that polygamy, the attitude toward polygamy in the Old and New Testaments is different, and I'm going to begin by looking at John Murray's treatment of this question of polygamy and then evaluating it.

John Murray asked the question: is there one coherent and consistent ethic set forth in the Bible or is there rather an antithesis of reversal and abrogation between the Old and New Testaments with respect to marital affairs, polygamy and divorce? Have the canons of sanctioned conduct changed? Is there a contrast between Old Testament criteria and New Testament criteria on these points? He observes that polygamy and divorce were practiced in the Old Testament without overt disapprobation and polygamy and divorce were practiced by some of the Old Testament's most illustrious saints. There is no pronouncement of condemnation on them, no open censure of them. There is no disciplinary judgment either civil or ecclesiastical against them. There is no explicitly revealed provision against it. There is no prohibition given against it. And indeed, it would appear that polygamy is given as a civil right in the Mosaic law because in Deuteronomy 21 and Exodus 21 we find provisions for what is to be done in a polygamous situation with respect to the children of those various marriages, or of the polygamous marriage, I don't know how else to put it.

Now Murray argues that polygamy is basically wrong, that is was inherently wrong under the Old Testament because it was a violation of the creation ordinance, it was contrary to God's revealed will from the beginning and therefore was inconsistent with the standards of holy living that always was under the judgment of God. So Murray wants to say it was

basically wrong and consequently polygamy and divorce were permitted in the Old Testament which is to say tolerated, very much to say they were permitted, they were allowed but they were not legitimate, they were not sanctioned. Permitted but not legitimate.

["Can you define what you mean by legitimate?"]

God did not sanction such behavior, divorce and polygamy, but he did permit it, that is, it was under his judgment but he showed forbearance not approval. If something is legitimate, then God could approve it, but God doesn't approve of it. It's not legitimate, it's simply a matter of his forbearance that he allowed it.

[unintelligible]

And what God did is he put up with something that he doesn't approve of. God permitted or tolerated something he didn't approve of.

Murray asked the question: how could God allow his people to practice a violation of his preceptive will? How could God allow his people to practice a violation of his preceptive will? Murray does not answer that question. I find it interesting that he raises the question, he sees the problem but he doesn't answer it. No reconciliation is given.

["Could you repeat the question?"]

How could God allow his people to practice a violation of his preceptive will? If it really was something he didn't approve of, how could God forbear it? How could God tolerate something that he didn't approve of?

Well, Murray does go on to say that because of perversity, the Israelites were permitted to do something. Perversity grants permission to do something. The perversity of their hearts granted them permission to divorce and have polygamous affairs. Due to the human hardness, the original canons of the creation order were not applied in practice and this principle of allowing the hardness of human hearts to mitigate the creation standards of God in practice holds for divorce, says Murray, and can be applied as well to polygamy, that is, he looks at Jesus speaking about divorce where Jesus says, "For the hardness of their hearts, Moses permitted them to put away their wives." He says now if that principle applies for divorce, then we can use the same principle with respect to polygamy. And I might in the margin ask parenthetically, "Then can you go on and apply it and apply it and apply it and apply it?" I mean, where do you stop once you say God was tolerating something he didn't approve of? Then you can apply it to polygamy. Then you can apply it to something else. I have real difficulties with this.

Murray seems to think we have a pattern for resolving difficulties in terms of the difference between Old and New Testaments but the pattern is really a pattern of ethical evolution. Again, I told you last week, Murray is not an ethical evolutionist but at this point he talks like one for he says that the Old Testament, you see, sees the hardness of

the Israelite heart and therefore mitigates God's standard, only forbids so much, but in terms of the New Testament, there's a development so God is prohibiting much more because under the New Testament God returns to his created standards. But isn't that, in fact, the whole principle of ethical evolution that we get stronger and stronger standards, if you will, a development of ethical standards as time goes along.

Now Murray says the fact of progressive revelation and the fact of progressive redemptive history relieves some of the tension here. With a greater degree of revelation in the New Testament, you get a greater degree of judgment, a greater severity of judgment, and thus polygamy comes under greater punitive sanction in the New Testament with its fuller revelation than was originally true in the Old Testament. Moreover, says Murray, the Holy Spirit now works more fully and efficaciously in the hearts of God's people and therefore takes away the hardness of heart that is characteristic of the Old Testament situation, and therefore brings greater condemnation to the canons of behavior that God intended from the very beginning.

Murray's conclusion, then, is that there is basic agreement, there is basic agreement between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He says the standards are the same but there is a difference in the toleration of the practice. We have the same standards but we have a different toleration in practice.

Okay, so does everybody basically understand what Murray is saying?

Yes?

["I do but how can you say it's a standard if it's tolerated?"]

That's what I want to know. I find some unnecessary concessions to this continuity here and I see, secondly, a dangerous principle, unanswerable problems that come from saying that God has a standard, that's one thing, but he tolerates the contrary in practice. There's a rather intolerable theological tension here because the Bible tells us God is such holiness that he cannot even look upon the evil of men. So I find it hard to believe that God would have one standard to propagate a standard for some other kind of practice, and I also think that it is unnecessary to concede discontinuity in the way that Murray has.

Now you already know from my previous argument that I don't believe discontinuity with respect to divorce holds, okay? So it's unnecessary to concede that exegesis. And since I've already talked about divorce, what I'll do today is simply talk about polygamy and give you a different approach to the question. I want to argue, one, that polygamy was forbidden from the very beginning. Genesis 2:23-24 tells us there is to be one man, one wife in permanent marital union. That is the creation ordinance and we know that's what God meant from the beginning because Christ says that's what it meant from the beginning.

So there can be no question but that polygamy was forbidden in the Old Testament. Moreover, when polygamy is introduced in the Bible, it is mentioned in context of disapprobation. Polygamy first appears in Genesis 4:23, introduced outside the covenant line by the wicked Canite civilization. Abraham and Jacob contracted multiple marriages in less than honorable ways, under less than honorable circumstances, and with less than honorable motives, and the Bible tells us that the polygamous marriages of Abraham and Jacob had abusive effects. Genesis 16:21 and 29 show us the terrible effects of those polygamous marriages. So if you just look at the history of polygamy in the Bible, you see it's mentioned in context of disapprobation, introduced by the Canite civilization bringing abusive effects within the covenantal line.

Thirdly, polygamy, I believe, is very likely forbidden in the Mosaic law at Leviticus 18:18. Now I'll tell you a little interesting sideline to this, that this exegesis of Leviticus 18:18 was made clear to me by John Murray's book, that Murray in his appendix on Leviticus 18 is the one who pointed out that very likely we have a prohibition of polygamy. My translation reads, "And thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to be a rival to her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time." In the Hebrew it is "you shall not take a wife to a wife," or technically a woman to a woman. Murray points out that is likely a prohibition of polygamy, you shall not add one wife to another wife. Okay, the Greek word for "woman" and "wife, gune," is where we get the expression polygamy, polygune, which means "many wives." The Bible says you shall not add one wife to a wife to vex her throughout her days.

So polygamy is forbidden from the beginning, it's introduced historically in context of disapprobation and it's forbidden in the Mosaic law, and it's clearly regulated by the Mosaic law. Exodus 21:9-10, Deuteronomy 21:15-17 put regulations upon polygamy so that if people violate the first law that you shouldn't have multiple wives to begin with, they should at least put a curb upon the ill effects of that.

Fourthly, I'd point out that it's true that there is no penal redress for polygamy in the Old Testament. There is no penal redress for polygamy but remember there's no penal redress for covetousness either but that didn't make covetousness right, it simply meant that God reserved judgment until the final day for covetousness. The fact that there is no penal redress for polygamy does not in any way sanction it.

Secondly, not second, this is my subpoint under number four, there is no penal redress for polygamy in the New Testament either. When you read the New Testament, you will not find any penal redress. In fact, in new cultures, polygamists entered the church apparently and the only prohibition you find is that a polygamist could not become a leader in the church, a polygamist could not be an elder in the church, could not be a pastor of a church. It is required of bishops or of elders that they be the husband of one wife, okay? So the New Testament would not allow a polygamist to be a leader in the church but the assumption is that the polygamist was in the church as a member in good and regular standing, a person who you might have chosen to be an elder in your church if it weren't for the fact that Paul says, "No, a man who is to be a leader must be the husband of one

wife." And so what I'm saying is there is no penal redress for polygamy in the New Testament either.

Okay, let me review what I've said. Polygamy was forbidden from the beginning, it was introduced historically in context of disapprobation, it was forbidden in the Mosaic law, and there's no penal redress for it in the New Testament either, even as there is no penal redress for other sins in the Old Testament. And then, fifthly, I want to look at the reasons for the supposedly lax attitude toward polygamy in the Old Testament. These reasons are very questionable. People say, "The Old Testament had a lax attitude toward polygamy." And you say, "Well, why do you say that?" One, they says, because there is no open censure of it. Well, there are other sins in the Old Testament for which there is no open censure. Did you know that Lot committed incest with his daughters? Rather terrible crime. Do you know the Bible doesn't say one word against it? It simply mentions the fact. Are we to conclude, therefore, that God approved of the incestuous union of Lot with his daughters? No. I mean, the fact that there's no open censure doesn't mean that it's somehow approved. Or somebody says, "Well, it still had a lax attitude toward polygamy." Why do you say that? "Well, because there was no penal discipline for it." Well, there wasn't penal discipline for many sins in the Old Testament. That doesn't prove anything. "Well, there's no prohibition of polygamy in the Old Testament." Well, I think there was and according to Jesus' own words, Genesis, the second chapter, prohibited polygamy and if we are to believe Murray's exegesis of Leviticus 18:18, the law itself prohibited polygamy so that doesn't hold. Somebody says then, "Well, there was a lax attitude because polygamy was a civil right in the Old Testament." The Bible doesn't say polygamy was a civil right, the Bible regulates the abusive effects of polygamy, the things that would flow from the violation of God's order for marriage were regulated to prevent further wrongs. The fact that God is preventing further wrongs doesn't mean that he's approving of the first wrong. Then finally the argument is, "But the outstanding saints of the Old Testament were polygamists." And in answer to that, I think we have to say the outstanding saints of the Old Testament contracted polygamous relations in context of disapprobation. You certainly don't see the Bible presenting this as somehow the ideal marriage. You know, look at this home, isn't this great the way Sarah and Hagar can't get along?

You see, the Bible never presents the outstanding saints as living up to their sainthood by having multiple wives and so the reasons that are often offered for a lax attitude, an alleged lax attitude toward polygamy in the Old Testament are very questionable and I don't see any of these reasons as being cogent. And so my conclusion is that polygamy is, one, better than free love. Do you realize that most people in the evangelical church wouldn't like me to say that but it's got to be said. Polygamy is better than simply what we have in our culture today, people just bed-hopping. Polygamy does establish a covenantal order.