



Understanding the Law Books of the Old Testament

DAY 24

Genre means what kind or style of text is the text you are looking at.

We are already familiar with genre. Think of Netflix: drama, action, comedy, documentary. That's genre!

So you know, specific genres use particular storytelling techniques, which matters to how the story is told and what it means.

As you become more serious students of the Bible and want more and more not just to read it to get through it, but to understand it, this concept will be really important.

“The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is — what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used.”

C.S. Lewis



The books in the Bible are actually organized by genre.

- Law
- History/writings
- Wisdom/poetry
- Prophecy

Law

First five books of the Bible:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

These books also contain some history, poetry, and even a little bit of prophecy, but the main genre that defines them is law.

How the Bible is organized

1

Old Testament Law is a covenant made with ethnic Israel. This is not our covenant.

That doesn't mean we throw it out. All scripture is God-breathed. We look to it to shape our theology, our understanding of who God is, and how, since the garden, he has been actively working toward reconciling the world to himself in Jesus. But we don't look to it to govern the pragmatics of how we live in the world and relate to God.

2

Recognize major categories of Law:

- Covenant/moral Law (10 commandments)
- Civil Law: Cultural consecration (how Israel was to be different)
- Ritual Law: Priestly code/cultic law (how worship was to happen)

3

Ask "What principle did this law reveal about God's character in its original setting, and how would that principle apply to my setting?"

4

Interpret everything through the lens of Jesus.

Examples:

- **Moral Law.** Do not confine God to an imagination of him that you can grasp.



Exodus 22:4 "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below."

- **Civil Law.** If we are not concerned about building parapets around the roof of our houses (Deut 22:8), we should nonetheless delight in a God who cared that houseguests not fall off a (usually flat) roof with which they were unfamiliar; and therefore God's people were taught to build their houses with that sort of love for neighbor in mind. Fee & Stuart; How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth



Deuteronomy 22:8 "When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof."

- **Priestly Law.** These were prohibited not because the actions are inherently immoral, but because they reflected the way priests of other religions worshiped their gods. The idea here is not that these things are inherently wrong, but that the God of Israel is unlike any other god.



Leviticus 10:6 "Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the Lord will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the Israelites, may mourn for those the Lord has destroyed by fire."

What is your one takeaway from this session?

