

KNOWING GOD, LOVING GOD AND LEARNING FROM HIS STATUTES

INTRODUCTION:

Here are two scriptures that say basically the same thing. One is in the OT and it is repeated by the apostle Paul in the NT.

Jer. 31:33-34 Sometimes a person will ask, “Do you know the Lord?” The Bible says that in the Kingdom of God all of the house of Israel going to know the Lord. Speaking of Christ’s millennial rule, God promised this to Israel through His prophet, Jeremiah.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts;* and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me,** from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

This scripture is repeated in Heb. 8:10-12:

“10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, '**Know the Lord,**' **for all shall know Me,** from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” NKJV

How will the house of Israel come to know their God? Only a few in Judea recognized Him when He visited them in the flesh two millennia ago. When He comes next, He said through Jeremiah that “... **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” and forgive them. And one result is “...they shall ALL know me.”**

Q#1: HOW does having God’s law in our minds and hearts enable us to **KNOW** Him?

1 John 5:3-4 Here’s another one.

3 For this is **the love of God**, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Q#2: HOW does keeping God’s commandments constitute **loving** Him?

Q3#: And after we answer these two questions, are there some ways we can **USE** the information?

SPS:

In the future, God will reveal a lot about Himself through His law – especially to the House of Israel, and then to the whole world as His Holy Mountain grows to fill it... It is important to us to remember that He does so now for Spiritual Israel – the Israel of God - as well.

How well do *you* know God, and do you seek to know Him in all the ways He provides? We need to know what those ways are and how to go about it. We should all want to know the Father and Christ in order to develop our relationship with them and to become like them.

Because Christ cleansed His Church of its sins by His sacrifice, He is living in each of God's converted people. We all need to know our master – *especially in our youth* - and one way that we can know God better is the same way God tells us that the House of Israel will learn in the Kingdom of God – by studying, practicing and internalizing God's law. Sadly, this is a valuable way that is rejected by most who profess Christ. They reject one of the most important things that God has provided.

Today, I would like to answer these three questions and point a way that we can use the information in our Bible study and in our lives. BTW, there's an article in the current LCN that covers some of this information...

Title: **KNOWING GOD, LOVING GOD AND LEARNING FROM... HIS STATUTES**

1: God's law reflects His character and priorities, and it has a specific organization.

When God set up the nation of Israel, He gave them everything they needed, including wise statutes and judgments based on the Ten Commandments. Unger's Bible Dictionary has a helpful commentary on the source of the Ten Commandments.

“The foundation and source of the moral law is God's character. ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery’ is the way the Ten Commandments are introduced. The Heb. name here used (Everlasting Eternal Almighty) intimates that the principles of law have their standing in the character of God. “I am...thou shall.” That is the connection. And

that is what makes the moral law so awful [awesome] in its unchangeable majesty. It is law because God is. It cannot be changed without changing the character of Jehovah Himself. Right is what it is, because God is what He is, and therefore it is as unchangeable as God” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Pg. 256-257, “Decalogue” 3rd Edition, 1966).

God’s commandments reflect his very character! They communicate what He defines as right and wrong, and God does not change.

Mal 3:5

"For I am the Lord, I do not change;

Heb 12:27

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Deut 6:1 The biblical organization of the law is “commandments, statutes and judgments

Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

Also, Deu. 5:31; 7:1; 8:11; 1Kings 8:58 and other scriptures.

Some reorganize it theologically as “moral law, civil law and ceremonial law”, and while that may have some uses, it is not God’s revelatory biblical organization. The statutes derive from the Ten Commandments, so the principles that the statutes contain further communicate God’s character regarding right and wrong.

The judgments implemented various aspects of the statutes on the local level in Israel. I might add that our Jewish friends have the Talmudic teaching that there are 613 commandments in the Pentateuch, but this includes the many sacrificial laws and Talmudic traditions along with commandments and statutes. Such traditional lists may be of interest, but we look to God’s word directly, as opposed to the rabbinical tradition. We aren’t trying to be Jewish, we just want to love God and to obey Him.

Summary #1

God’s divine law reflects His character and priorities. What we think is right and wrong describes us in important ways, and God’s law tells us His definition of right and wrong. It is organized as Commandments, Statutes and Judgments

Question #1 answer: Understanding and internalizing God's law – His overall teaching - enables us to know very important things about God. If His law is in your heart, it's personal!

2: The Two Great Commandments

Matt 22:35-40 Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment. "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him.

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*". Jesus was quoting Himself as quoted by Moses in **Deu. 6:5** and **Lev. 19:18**.

Deut 6:4

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Lev 19:4

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

How do "all the law and the Prophets" hang on these two commandments?...

Jesus certainly was not saying that these two commandments negate the Ten. For instance, we cannot love God with all our hearts if we worship idols and take His name in vain. And we cannot love our neighbor as ourselves if we steal from them or lie to them.

The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with how we love God and are summarized by "the first and great commandment" - that we should love God with all our being.

1. The Eternal is our God...
2. No idolatry
3. Don't take God's name in vain.
4. Keep the Sabbath holy

The next six commandments have to do with the love of our fellow man and are summarized by "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

5. Honor your Father and Mother
6. Do not murder
7. No adultery
8. No theft
9. No lying
10. Do not covet

It's a good idea to learn these "long form" when you're young...

It is interesting that the fifth commandment, "Honor your Father and Mother..." (Ex. 20:12), which has to do with our relationship with our physical parents, transitions us between the love of our heavenly Father and the love of mankind. The 10th commandment is "Thou shalt not covet. Paul said that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5), which circles us back to the first commandment.

The **two great commandments** are expressed by the **Ten Commandments**. Then the **statutes** derive – or descend – from the Ten Commandments, and generally speaking, the **judgments** implement the principles in the statutes locally in Israel. The law is God's government – which is His *applied love*. Generally speaking, **the prophets** were God's voice to the people. God instructed the prophets to communicate Israel's transgression of the law (sins), His calls for repentance from their sins and His reminders to Israel of the agreed-upon consequences of breaking their covenant with Him. They also communicated God's promise of His coming government, which is the Kingdom of God, saying, for instance, "For out of Zion shall go forth... **the law (torah – His complete instruction)**, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3). God's government, which is based laws that express His character, will spread throughout the world in the prophesied Kingdom.

Summary #2

So we can see why Jesus said, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." It all derives from God's governmental law, which derives from love for God and love for mankind. In the OT, the word, "law" is usually translated from the Hebrew word, "torah" often refers to the first five books of the Bible... In its broad meaning, torah means "instruction" and God uses His law not only as instruction on how to love but also to teach us about Himself.

3. Did you know that the apostle Paul affirmed the use of the statutes for the gentile Churches?...

Deu. 25:4 Here's a statute...

You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. (Explain – cutting up and threshing the grain stalks into wheat and chaff)

1 Cor. 9:9-11 Do you need to own an ox in order to obey this statute?... No, but the apostle Paul applied a principle in the statutes when he taught the gentile Church in Corinth, Greece.

For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' **Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?** For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?"

Paul was saying that while this statute required kindness to a working animal, its primary purpose was a spiritual lesson for the Church. You did not have to own an ox in order to obey it. Note that he wrote, *"Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written..."* Paul was telling the gentile brethren in Corinth - and us today - that the Church can and should learn much from the statutes.

2 Tim 3:14-15 Paul also affirmed in his instruction to Timothy the validity and importance to the Church of the law and the prophets.

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that **from childhood** you have known the Holy Scriptures, **which are able to make you (1) wise for salvation (2) through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

The NT does not do away with the OT.

Each of you is a lot like Timothy in that you have the great advantage of learning about God's law from your youth. When Paul wrote "the Holy Scriptures," he was referring the Old Testament canon, since the New Testament canon did not exist when Timothy was a child. Paul wanted Timothy to remember that while his salvation comes through his faith in Christ, God's commandments, statutes and judgments would give him valuable understanding and spiritual growth. ...wise for salvation / aiding in his life and ministry

V 16-17 Paul continued

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

While we can learn from all of the scriptures, **the judgments** generally applied to the ancient nation of Israel under the national covenant made at Sinai, and were implemented as civil laws. That covenant ended with Christ's death, and historically, the application of the judgments in Judea ended with the destruction of the remaining Jewish state by the Romans. As an example, the Church in the apostles' day and now advocates the commandment requiring fidelity in marriage, but not the judgment requiring stoning for adultery.

Summary #3

We should all remember that in addition to defining sin, God's divine law provides us with the valuable doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that is necessary to do all the good works He has for us. It's not just a prohibitive thing, it's positive, creative and useful. So, Instead of asking "Do I have to keep the statutes, we should be asking "How can I keep the statutes and learn from them." More on that shortly.

4: The Statutes Applied Today – some examples

The apostle Paul gave to the gentile Church in Corinth, Greece the example of not muzzling an ox as the application of a statute to people who were spiritual Israelites, but not part of physical Israel. Here are two additional examples of statutes that show the character of God.

Lev 19:35-36 In an application of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," Israel was instructed...

You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt"

Notice that God then stamps this law with His name, "*I am the LORD your God.*"

A *hin* is a liquid measure of roughly 2 gallons.

An *ephah* is a dry measure of roughly 1 bushel.

A dishonest hin or ephah defrauds the other person of all of their just measure. It violates the commandment "Thou shalt not steal."

Do you have an "honest *hin*" and an honest *ephah*? Must you own a *hin* or an *ephah* to obey this statute?

Our God is a God of truth and Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). His truth sanctifies us, and the deception of dishonesty and the greed and covetousness that theft comes from is completely alien to Him. So God forbids theft and deception in all its forms, and this statute derives from the commandments that say, “You shall not steal” and “You shall not bear false witness” (Ex. 20:15-16). Our God is a God of giving – not getting - and of love and truth.

We can see an important aspect of God’s character – a principle - in this statute. So how can we apply the principle of this in our lives? What does an “honest *hin*” look like today? It means that we observe honesty in all our dealings with others – not just in weights and measures. Do we give people what they bargained for – or they shorted somehow?

A Dishonest *Ephah* or *Hin*

What does a dishonest *hin* or *ephah* look like in our day? Some examples:

- How well do you measure out your labor? If we are on the job for eight hours, then we should give our employer the full eight hours of work he or she paying for – not only six hours’ worth. Give full value to people – God is that way, *and, in addition, it’s just good business*. If we don’t give full value for what we are paid for, we may be taking pay that we don’t deserve.
- Happily, many employers are very pleased to have our members working for them, because they have learned that the same person that is careful to keep the Sabbath commandment is also careful to give an honest day’s work for the pay.
- Have you ever had someone to work with that represented that they did good work, but in fact the quality was deficient?...

Those are just two examples, and, since you know the biblical principle, and you can think of others on your own. Our God is a God of quality, truth and giving.

Lev 19:9-10 Here is another statute we can learn from.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: *I am the Lord your God*.

Do you have to be a farmer to learn from this one? No, you don’t. This one also expresses God’s character – let’s see.

Story about the French vineyard...

There is minimal gain from gleaning one's own field...

An owner who goes to the trouble and expense of having his own field or vineyard gleaned spends a lot of labor for minimal gain. He is at the point of diminishing returns, but he doesn't want anyone else to have the fruits. That's greed!

The gleaning statute provides for the poor – those who have no resources but their own labor – and makes it possible for them to spend their labor productively getting necessary food.

In ancient Israel, God made the gleaning laws, not only to benefit the poor, but *also to keep the landowner from greed. God built fairness and honesty into His statutes – not greed. Everyone benefitted!*

How about the application of the gleaning statute in modern times? So what does a person who gleans his own fields look like today? Here's one way. Perhaps you have seen people whose business philosophy is, *"In any transaction, leave nothing on the table, not even the varnish."*.....

Summary #4

We should be looking at the statutes and finding God's character and priorities in them, and then seeking to apply the principles they contain in our lives. We already keep many of them. And I should mention that we are already keeping dozens of them – or should be – such as tithing - and many are incorporated into modern law in one form or another.

If you would like more study the statutes, they are found mostly in the following chapters: Ex. 20 – 24; Lev. 16 – 27; Num. 18 – 19, 27 – 36; and Deut. 12 – 2

5: Sacrificial Laws – a brief point

Please remember that the chapters containing Statutes also contain many of the ritual laws, sacrificial laws and purification laws, which don't apply to us today because of Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

Heb. 7: 26-27

26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as

those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for **this He did once for all** when He offered up Himself.

Summary #5

The New Testament explains that we do not need for sacrifices to be offered up for our sins because of Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Today, even the orthodox Jews in Israel don't offer sacrifices, because they don't have a sanctified priesthood to do it. That's because for them or anyone else to offer them, it would be the sin of presumption.

6. In the Old Testament and New Testament, God talks a lot about what is in our hearts relative to the Law. Let's do a quick study on a few of those scriptures. Generally, when we see "from the heart" in the Bible, it is using the heart generally as the center of the will. What is your will?...

Example of my daughters cleaning their room...

If you want to be right, OBEY GOD – He's always right. But God wants our obedience to be OUR WILL to do it... Obedience is an act of will. Here's obedience: You want something, someone in authority wants something else. You must CHOOSE to subordinate your will to that authority...

Clean your dorm... vs Time for supper...

Example of a young man telling a young lady... "I loooooove you" – But, then he says he doesn't like the way she looks, talks, thinks, her interests.... She thinks, "Maybe not this guy..."

We can't say that we love God if we don't like who He is...

Ex 20:4-6 Loving God and keeping His commandments are strongly linked in the scriptures...

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, **to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**

Many such scriptures in Deuteronomy...

Josh 22:5

But take careful heed **to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God**, to walk in all His ways, **to keep His commandments**, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with **all your heart** and with all your soul [nephesh].

1 John 2:3-4 In the NT...

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 5:1-3 It is still the same in the NT...

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.** And His commandments are not burdensome.

If our wills are converted, then doing God's will – obeying his definition of right and wrong – we're just doing our own thing. One way to look at conversion is having OUR thing... being just like GOD's thing. What a wonderful state to be in!
We can see why the Church warns about personal willfulness....

When we WANT to keep God's law – honor our parents – keep the Sabbath holy – then our characters are like God's... Or they are - to the extent that we want to.

A brief recap – the two great commandments:

If we are to be love like God, we must obey the first and greatest commandment – and that's why God gave it.

Deut 6:5 Translated from Hebrew

5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart [*labab* - courage, emotion], with all your soul [*nephesh* – your body], and with all your strength [*meod* - vehemence – force].

Mark 12:30-31 Translated from Hebrew to Greek to English

30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart [*cardia* – feelings, emotions], with all your soul [*psuche* – spirit in man, life force], with all your mind [*dianonia* – thoughts, mental faculties], and with all your strength [*ischus* – forcefulness].¹ This is the

first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Why none greater? God is love. If we do these things with our whole hearts, then we love with our whole being... and we become like Him.

1 John 4:16 "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. **God is love...**" If we love God with all our wills and all our beings, then we will be like Him – LOVE with our whole beings. That's really something wonderful to aspire to. And it's God's Spirit that makes it happen –whether working WITH you now as young people, or working IN you later as baptized adults.

Summary #6: *One way to think of conversion is... the extent to which our wills are converted so that we choose like God... God is love, and He commands us to love Him as He loves us – with all our beings. So, to answer **Question #2**, God's divine law reflects His character, and if we desire His law and want to internalize it, we are saying that we love God's character and nature and desire to be like Him.*

7: So concerning **Question #3** mentioned earlier, how can we **USE** this information so that we can know God better?

A great way to benefit from the study of the statutes is to look for the character of God in them and discern how it applies to our lives today. They're profitable, and some, like just weights and measures, are wisely incorporated into our modern laws. They make us better employees and more Christ-like. They are there for our GOOD!

Luke 6:38 **In this scripture, Jesus tells us how God's character is expressed in how He measures things. Here's God keeping one of His own statutes.**

Give, and it will be given to you: *good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over* will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Sound familiar? This is God's way of applying "A just ephah and a just hin"... Giving is part of His character.

Summary #7: *To answer Question 3#, we can learn about God and His way of life by keeping His law, and desiring for our character to become like His. The principles contained in God's divine law reflect His character, and we need to know how many ways we can apply God's law and character in our lives.*

CONCLUSION

Those who **(1) know God and (2) love God** don't ask "How much of God's law do I HAVE to keep?" We ask "How much of God's law CAN I keep?" That's because the principles contained in God's divine law reflect His character, and we want to know how many ways we can apply God's law and character in our lives. A wise King Solomon said in Eccl. 12:1, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth." I might follow up on that with, "**Get to know** your Creator in the days of your youth." One good way is through His law.

And looking for God's character in His statutes – and applying it in our lives – is a good way for us to love God more and to "know the Lord."

Christian Living Class
Texas Teen Camp 7-12-19
DBW

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Jer. 31:33-34

1 John 5:3-4

Mal 3:5

Heb 12:27

Deut 6:1

Matt 22:35-40

Deut 6:4

Lev 19:4

Deu. 25:4

1 Cor. 9:9-11

2 Tim 3:14-15

V 16-17

Lev 19:35-36

Lev 19:9-10

Ex. 20 – 24; Lev. 16 – 27; Num. 18 – 19, 27 – 36; and Deut. 12 – 2

Heb. 7: 26-27

Ex 20:4-6

Josh 22:5

1 John 2:3-4

1 John 5:1-3

Deut 6:5

Mark 12:30-31

1 John 4:16

Luke 6:38