***What is Sin?***

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Traditional Christian terms and names are intentionally used throughout this lesson book to reach a larger scope of readers and help those who may be beginners in this knowledge learn with ease.

**What is Sin?**

The entirety of Scripture speaks of sin and the penalty of sin. Jesus came to preach how to live a righteous life, but He also came to sacrifice His life by taking our sins upon Himself so we could live. He paid the penalty for our sins and said “Sin no more”.

John 5:14  Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, Behold, you are made whole. Sin no more lest a worse thing come to you.

Matthew 26:28  For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

John 1:29  The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Let’s begin with this question: What is your definition of sin?

If you asked ten people this question, you will likely get ten different answers especially if you discuss what constitutes sin for each of you. Sin seems to evolve with the age in which we live as well as our country of origin.

Do you think it would differ from that of your grandparents?

What do you think God’s answer would be to this question? Do you think He would explain it one way to Adam and a different way to Abraham and yet a different way to His Son, Jesus, and if He were standing before us now, would He give us yet a different explanation for sin?

Hopefully you now see that sin varies according to each person’s understanding when there is no set of instructions to define sin.

James defines sin as “knowing good, but not doing good”.

James 4:17  Therefore to him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

How do we define “good” when it seems to differ among people? “Good” seems to vary with the societal issues of the day and age we’re living in. For instance, is it abortion or women’s rights? Is someone a terrorist or a freedom fighter?

Do we use our feelings and “good works” to determine our righteousness?

If sin is so important that Jesus would give His life for us, then shouldn’t we expect Scripture to provide a definition for sin? Shouldn’t there be a standard to not only define sin, but also the details to properly interpret that definition of sin?

He did and there is. It is called “The Law” in English or “The Torah” in Hebrew.

Paul tells us The Law provides knowledge of sin and the ability to recognize what encompasses sin.

Romans 3:20 because by the works of the Law none of all flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Let it not be said! But I did not know sin except through the law. For also I did not know lust except the law said, You shall not lust.

What is “The Law”? It is the first five books of the Tanakh (what most call the Old Testament). It consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Law is God’s instructions to us. He explains how to draw near to Him. To obey these instructions brings righteousness and to disobey is sin. It is through the instructions of The Law that we gain our knowledge of what sin is and what obedience is. This provides the set standard that everyone can follow.

Are these really laws? Are they simply suggestions? Are they just guidelines, but everyone can determine for themselves how to interpret each of them? In other words, “Sin is in the eye of the beholder”.

They are laws to follow, just as an earthly Father gives instructions to his son and expects him to be obedient. It is for his good and protection even though he may not fully understand why. He will understand more as he is obedient and grows up under the watchful eye of his Father and protector.

So, the simple answer is this:

If God said to “Do this”, then do it to honor and obey Him as you would your earthly Father.

If God said “Do not do that”, then don’t do it so you do not dishonor Him and be found a rebellious child.

Romans 6:16  Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to him whom you obey; whether it is of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness.

Deuteronomy 30:10-16  for you shall listen to the voice of Jehovah your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the Law, *and* if you turn to Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

For this commandment which I command you today *is* not hidden from you, neither is it far off.  It *is* not in Heaven, *that you should* say, Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and do it?  Nor *is* it beyond the sea, *that you should* say, Who shall go over the sea for us to the region beyond the sea, and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and do it?

But the Word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may do it.  Behold! I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil, in that I command you today to love Jehovah your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, so that you may live and multiply. And Jehovah your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it.

As we look at 1 John 3:4, how does John define sin?

1 John 3:4  Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.

What is lawlessness? It means absence of The Law or breaking The Law. From Paul’s definition, the absence of law is sin. According to these next verses, we should do His commandments.

Revelation 22:14  Blessed are they who do His commandments, that their authority will be over the Tree of Life, and they may enter in by the gates into the city.

Psalms 112:1  Praise Jehovah! Blessed is the man who fears Jehovah, who delights greatly in His Commandments.

Hosea 4:6  My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the Law of your God, I will also forget your sons, even I.

What would be the state of a household if children never had laws to obey? The same is true for the house of God.

Romans 2:13  For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Psalms 37:29-31  The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Matthew 5:17-19  Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill.  For truly I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. Therefore whoever shall relax one of these commandments, the least, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.

To fulfill, means to fill up to the brim with knowledge and understanding. It does not mean to fill up and throw it away. Jesus came to live the Torah before us. To walk it out in His actions and words. He didn’t come to create a “Law of Love”, but rather, this is another term, an idiom, for The Law of God, The Torah, given at Mt. Sinai. The Law was never replaced by a man-made version of Love and then left for each person to define what that meant.

Let’s discuss the Ten Commandments. These represent the summary of all the instructions known as “The Law” or “The Torah”. These are recorded on the Stone tablets given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The details of how to interpret these ten summarized laws are further defined in the Torah. Exodus 20 begins with the ten summarized laws and then proceeds to provide the details of each. This is where we get the interpretation of those laws so we don’t each go our own way. This is the standard God will use for righteousness.

As an example, the Torah doesn’t just say, “Thou shalt not kill”, but defines what it means. In fact, the word “kill” is actually mistranslated. The Hebrew word refers to premeditated murder. It does not include accidental death, defending yourself against someone else intent on bodily harm, nor the judgement of the death penalty that a lawful court carries out against a murderer. So you see, God didn’t just leave it up to individuals to determine what this means.

These are the laws Jesus, Paul, and the disciples spoke of.

What follows is how they were spoken by God Himself directly to Moses to record. The Hebrew Scriptures maintain this for us.

Now, let’s read the Ten Commandments from The Torah.

**The Ten Commandments**

**Exodus 20:1-21**

And God spoke all these words, saying,

1. I *am* Jehovah your God, who has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
2. You shall have no other gods before Me.  You shall not make to yourselves any graven image, or any likeness of *anything* that *is* in the heavens above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth.  You shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them. For I Jehovah your God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons to the third and fourth *generation* of those that hate me, and showing mercy to thousands of those that love Me and keep My commandments.
3. You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain. For Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of Jehovah your God. You shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger within your gates. For *in* six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it.
5. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long upon the land which Jehovah your God gives you.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that *is* your neighbor's.

<Session Break: End of Part 1>

**The Law is Righteousness**

We have just seen The Law defined as the means by which we determine what sin is. It is our standard of identification.

“The Law” comes from the Hebrew term “Torah”. The Torah consists of the first five books of Scripture given directly by God to Moses to record for future generations. Christians frequently refer to this as being part of the Old Testament. The proper Hebrew term would be Tanakh.

The Old Testament is known as the Tanakh. It contains the original stories of creation and the giving of God’s instructions to His people on how they may draw near to Him. It also records what happened to them when they failed to obey all His instructions. We see the Covenant with Abraham culminate with the Covenant at Sinai, known as the Marriage Covenant which continues to be enforce throughout all subsequent generations of those in attendance that day. These instructions define how to be righteous before Him and therefore dwell with Him.

Now let’s look deeper into what “The Law” means from a Hebraic viewpoint since the Scriptures were written by Hebrews in the Hebrew language and Hebrew culture. The Tanakh is what they read and referenced. It consists of The Law, historical recordings, and the writings of the prophets. There was no Renewed Covenant Scriptures (erroneously called the New Testament) at that time. The Gospels and the letters/teachings of Paul and the other disciples were not considered part of “The Scriptures” at that time. Only later would they become part of the Bible and incorrectly referred to as the New Testament.

When Timothy wrote his letter, what did he mean by referencing “All Scripture”?

2 Timothy 3:16  All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Remember, the Tanakh (Old Testament) is “The Scriptures” used from the time Moses recorded them through the writings of the Prophets. This was read throughout the Synagogues up through the time of Jesus and many centuries afterward. What you know as the “New Testament” is the teaching letters Paul and the disciples sent throughout the assemblies to answer questions and explain or clarify existing doctrine. They did not create new doctrine or new laws.

Let’s look at righteousness from a Hebrew perspective.

How do you see righteousness defined in Scripture? Does it seem to point to the commandments?

Deuteronomy 6:25 And if we are careful to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as He has commanded us, it shall be our righteousness.

Psalms 119:172  My tongue shall speak Your Word, for all Your Commandments are righteousness.

John 16:8  And when that One comes, He will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment.

Matthew 6:33  But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

1 John 3:10  In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the Devil: everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God, also he who does not love his brother.

Read Psalms 9:8. David indicates God shall judge with righteousness. What is he referring to? What is God going to use as a standard to judge with righteousness?

Psalms 9:8  And He shall judge the world in righteousness; He shall judge the peoples in uprightness.

What is the linkage between sin, the commandments, righteousness, and judgment?

The Law (commandments) give us the definition of sin. To be obedient to His Law brings righteousness. Disobedience brings judgment.

Read Deuteronomy 4:8 and Acts 10:35. What does it say about nations?

Deuteronomy 4:8  And who is a great nation whose statutes and judgments *are so* righteous as all this Law which I set before you today?

Acts 10:35  but in every nation he who fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him.

How does this correlate with your nation? Do you see evidence of those nations who have tried to follow The Law of God as different from those nations who serve other gods?

**Obedience Brings Righteousness**

You now have determined that sin is defined by The Law. You have also seen “The Law”, but more accurately called “His Instructions”, leads us to righteousness. “Law” implies a negative, heavy-handed, and burdensome yoke. Is this true?

1John 5:3  For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.

These instructions are how we become righteous before Him. We do not define our own instructions. We use His instructions. We do not interpret His instructions. We let Scripture tell us the interpretation.

Psalms 119:104  Through Your Commandments I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

We “Do This” or “Don’t Do That” according to His instructions. This is what obedience is.

Romans 6:16 tells us obedience leads to righteousness and according to Proverbs 11:19, righteousness leads to life.

Romans 6:16  Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to him whom you obey; whether it is of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness.

Proverbs 11:19  So righteousness tends to life; but one pursuing evil, it is to his own death.

We will close this teaching by addressing another issue that is likely on your mind. The letters of Paul contain many verses that seemingly contradict what has been explained to you in this lesson. That contradiction, however is entirely in the misunderstanding of Hebraic terms, idioms, culture, and the people to whom he addressed. This has caused many to turn away. There is confusion over Written Law vs Oral Law, Law vs Grace, and even who the Pharisees and Gentiles are. Even Peter expressed how Paul’s teachings to the Gentiles were being twisted or perverted by those untaught and unstable. These were the Gentiles without the Hebraic background and understanding he was addressing. Please don’t reject His Torah by your false understanding of Grace.

2 Peter 3:15-16  And think of the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation (as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable pervert, as also they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction).

We likewise see the Prophet Habakkuk speak of a future time when the Torah and justice (His judgments) are not taught due to those who suppress and twist what is said due to their own misunderstanding.

Habakkuk 1:4 Therefore the law has become helpless, and justice does not always go forth. For the wicked entraps the righteous; therefore justice goes forth, being perverted.

This lesson began with the basics of “What is Sin?”. We learned that sin is defined by knowing The Law. The Law or Torah of our God is His instructions for us to follow. We learned The Law is called righteous. And finally, we learned obedience to these instructions is how we show our love towards God. Disobedience brings judgment.

Righteousness through faith in the work of Jesus’ shed blood as the Son of God to remove our past sins combined with the desire to walk after Him in obedience.

Romans 3:31  Do we then make the Law void through faith? Let it not be! But we establish the Law.

We finished by looking at the confusion brought upon the Gentiles by lacking the Hebrew heritage, culture, and language as Peter testifies to us. This is critical to your understanding. You can not separate The Law / The Torah from Jesus’ teachings. Anyone teaching only from the Gospels or letters of Paul is going to teach a false doctrine leading the sheep astray. Those living at the time of Jesus, knew not only The Torah, but also the entire Tanakh (the Old Testament), which includes the prophetical writings. This was a basis of everything Jesus and Paul taught.

It is impossible to understand and recognize sin without knowing The Law.