

Beginnings – ORIGIN *(Where did we come from?)*

- **Only Two Choices**
- **Realize the Significance**
- **Is it Faith or Science?**
 - LAB - Lookable, Accessible, Breakable
- **Guess at the Evidence**
- **Inspect the Evidence**
 - Universe = "Decay"
 - Age of the Earth = "Can't Say"
 - Origin of Life by Chance = "No Way"
 - Evolution of Species and Man = "Lacks Genes and Tweens"
- **No Compromise**

DON'T - Death, Orders of Creation, Names in genealogies, Ten Commandments refer to seven-day week

Intent of Life – LIFE *(Why are we here?)*

- **Love - GOD and MAN**
- **Increase - GROW**
- **Faithfulness - Time, Talent, Treasure**
- **Eternity – Past, Present, Future**

Authority – POWER *(Who's in charge?)* A God Who is:

- **Personal and Loving**
- **Omnipotent**
- **Wise and All-Knowing**
- **Everywhere and Eternal**
- **Righteous and Reliable**

Standards – RULES *(What are the rules?)* God's rules are:

- **Revealed supernaturally, not derived by reason**
- **Universal and apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time**
- **Loving**
- **Enforced**
- **Steadfast**

S - Steadfast

But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. Psalms 33:11

Before God created anything, His law was established and perfectly complete. He knew everything that needed to be in His Word before any of it was written. And unlike man's law, God's law is Steadfast and does not change. This is simply in keeping with God's character:

- He doesn't change
- He doesn't learn new things that change His opinion
- He doesn't feel political pressure to modify His standards to match the tastes of the current society (or as Voddie Baucham says, "God is not running for God")

The rules of the world are firmly established from before time through eternity.

We don't have to worry that God will change His mind and change the rules somewhere along the way. The writer of Psalm 119 recognizes this several times including verse 160 *"All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal."* Once you learn one of God's rules you can be confident it will be in place forever.

This is not true of other worldviews. Even religions that are based on written scripture have often added to the rules. This was the problem with the Jewish Pharisees in the Bible. They had added hundreds of new rules under the guise of "clarifying" what God said. Islamic clerics do this as well.

Roman Catholics and other cults such as Mormons and Christian Science actually add periodic "new revelations" to their rules. This allows them to adjust their doctrine to changing cultural pressures. But it doesn't provide any comfort to their followers to know that the rules could change in the future.

Those who trust in God know that men cannot revise His Word.

*For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; **the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.**" And this is the word that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:24-25*

What About Changes between the Old Testament and New Testament?

This is another of the topics that many folks smarter than I am can't agree on. We're already pointed out that God's laws are eternal, but as Christians today we don't live like Old Testament Jews. So what's different?

There are basically three schools of thought that I will warily oversimplify here:

1. Dispensational – Belief that God has given several stages of revelation called "dispensations" and that the rules are progressively more complete. This includes the belief that God has a separate plan for Israel than for the Church.
2. Covenant Theology – Belief that rules from the Old Testament continue to be valid unless repealed in the New Testament. The Church has existed from the beginning and Jewish believers are in the Church (the Church is now "Israel").

3. New Covenant Theology – Belief that rules from the Old Testament are no longer valid and that only rules established in the New Testament are valid. This is based primarily on the New Testament passages (particularly Hebrews 8-10) that talk of the old covenant of the law being replaced by the covenant of grace found in Christ.

I grew up in dispensational churches, I see some good points in New Covenant Theology, and I probably hold more to Covenant Theology. I don't want to say it's not important which you believe, yet I will say **it's not necessary to believe a particular one of these in order to follow the commands Jesus gave** (when in doubt, fall back to the Two Greatest Commandments and the Golden Rule). I believe there are godly men in all three schools of thought.

Below is a summary of my current thoughts on how I think God's rules are to be considered within the entire Bible.

There are two categories of law discussed in Scripture:

- **Moral law** includes the principles that specify right actions and attitudes in our relationship with God and men
 - All nations and people are judged on the basis of this law
- **Ceremonial law** includes the practices:
 - That illustrated the need for Christ before He came (blood sacrifices and offerings for sins)
 - That uniquely identified the nation of Israel as being separate from other peoples (circumcision, dietary, hygiene)

The New Testament does NOT specify that the moral law (right and wrong) is modified, but clearly indicates that it is still valid:

- All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17) Throughout the Sermon on the Mount he affirmed God's laws and even elevated the standard for obedience to include attitudes of the heart, not just actions.
- Law is required to know what sin is. We are saved from the "law" of sin = death, but the standard of righteousness is not changed (Romans 3:31).
- When the "law" is condemned, it is usually in context of refuting legalism or "works" salvation. Keeping the law is not the means of salvation, but rather we can be saved only by God's unmerited grace.

It is very important to look at the context of verses that talk about the burden of the law or how we are free from the law. In context they seem to me to be referring to either ceremonial law or to the concept of earning God's favor or salvation through keeping the law.

The New Testament does specify that ceremonial law is done away with:

- **No more need for sacrifices and sin offerings**

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. (Hebrews 7:27, also Hebrews 9:9-10 and Hebrews 10:8-14)

- **Dietary restrictions removed**

As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. (Romans 14:14a, also Col 2:16-17)

- **Circumcision not required**

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (Galatians 5:6, also 1 Corinthians 7:19)

Another helpful perspective is to think about this from the standpoint of our relationships (the focus of the two greatest commandments):

- **Our relationship with God** involves loving Him and pleasing Him and obeying Him and glorifying Him.

- The moral law is eternal - we are not to love idols or worship them or otherwise dishonor Him.
- The ceremonial law was a temporary way to please Him and to teach people the serious nature of sin. We now rely on the blood of Christ for our relationship with God, so the ceremonies are no longer required by God. As Paul taught in Galatians, if we believe that these ceremonies (such as circumcision) are still required by God then we're saying that Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient (e.g. Galatians 2:21).

- **Our relationships with people** involve moral law that fleshes out the concept of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

- The guidance of moral law is needed in order to love others rightly.
- Ceremonial law has little to do with relationships between people, so the passing of ceremonial law had no impact on the moral law dealing with our relationships to other people.

RULES Recap

The short answer to the question “what are the rules” is – the Bible. The acrostic RULES identifies some key characteristics of God’s Word. God’s truths and rules are:

Revealed

God supernaturally inspired and directed the writing of the Bible.

Universal

God’s rules apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time.

Loving

God gives us rules for our good because He loves us.

Enforced

God’s rules are enforced either now or at the judgment.

Steadfast

God’s rules are settled and are not subject to amendment by men. God is unchanging and His rules will not change.