

In biblical, it's important to distinguish between a law (Hebrew: *torah* or *mishpat*) and a principle or ordinance (Hebrew: *chuqqah* or *piqqudim*). Though related, they are not the same.

A law is a direct, binding command from God—a moral or ceremonial obligation that must be followed.

A principle (or ordinance) refers to the detailed instructions or regulations that guide how the law is to be carried out.

This distinction helps us understand how God communicates both what He wants from us and how to fulfill it.

Biblical Example: The Passover

In Exodus 12, God commands the Israelites to observe the Passover—this is the law. But alongside the law, He gives very specific principles about how it should be observed.

“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you... On the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb...”

(Exodus 12:2-3)

The law is: “You shall keep the Passover.”

The principles include:

- It must be on the 14th day of the first month,
- A lamb without blemish must be selected and slaughtered,
- It must be roasted with fire,
- It must be eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

These details are not additional laws—they are regulations that guide the proper keeping of the one law.

“You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever.”

(Exodus 12:24)

Law and Principle Unified: Numbers 9:14

“You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native, for him who does any of these things.”
(Numbers 9:14)

This verse affirms that both the law and its principles applied to everyone—Israelite and foreigner alike. Obedience to God’s commands required attention not just to *what* was commanded, but *how* it was to be practiced.

Application in the New Covenant: The Law of Christ

In the New Testament, believers are no longer under the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:24-25), but under the Law of Christ, which is summarized in love.

“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”
(Galatians 5:14)

However, even love has principles—practical expressions that

define what true, godly love looks like.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude...”
(1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

These are principles of love—guidelines that show how to obey the law of Christ in daily life. Love is not left undefined; Scripture teaches us *how* to love.

Biblical Pattern: Precept Upon Precept

God often reveals His will progressively—through both laws and the principles that support them.

“And the word of the Lord will be to them: precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little...”
(Isaiah 28:13)

This verse reflects the pedagogical method of Scripture—God teaches us step by step, helping us build understanding over time.

Understanding the difference between law and principle deepens our walk with God. The law gives the command; the principles guide the application. From the Old Testament to the New, God has always desired not just external obedience, but thoughtful, informed, and wholehearted devotion.

Let us therefore study both the commandments of Christ and the principles that teach us how to live them out daily.

Come, Lord Jesus! - Revelation 22:20

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