

# MY BIBLE SCHOOL

## LESSONS

### Exploring the Word of God

#### **Lesson #11: What the Bible Says About: "The Eternal Law of God"**

SCRIPTURE READING: EXODUS 19:10-24; 20:1-21 ROMANS 13:6-10

*Memory Verse: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15*

#### **1 - DOES GOD HAVE A GOVERNMENT?**

***Psalm 103:19: "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all."***

Our heavenly Father is the king and ruler of the universe (*Jeremiah 10:6-7*). The Father shares the rulership of the whole creation with Christ, His Son. Christ, the Word, is called "King of kings and Lord of lords" (*Revelation 19:11-16*). Jesus is the active agent in all divine human relations (*1 Corinthians 8:6*).

#### **2 - CAN THERE BE ANY GOVERNMENT WITHOUT LAW?**

Intelligent human beings cannot live together in peace without mutually accepted law. Belief in, and united, practice of good laws are the foundation of human society, the warp and woof of a happy and orderly society. If every man did as he pleased without respect to law, what would happen to peace, to morality, to public safety and decency?

#### **3 - UPON WHAT PRINCIPLE ARE THE LAWS OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT BASED?**

***Psalm 89:14: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before Thy face."***

Since the law is an expression of God's loving character, we would expect the Bible to describe the law in similar language. Here is Paul's New Testament appraisal of the Ten Commandments:

***Romans 7:12: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."***

***Romans 7:14: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."***

The book of Revelation gives us a picture of the redeemed saints praising God. Here are their words: just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints" (*Revelation 15:3*). Those who understand the character of God can testify that He is just and true in all His ways.

Since God is still "the governor among the nations" as well as of the unfallen universe, His laws are still binding upon all rational creatures. He it is who issues these laws (*Isaiah 33:22*). These laws are laws of love. And they are just. The law of God is for the happiness and well being of His creatures. Those who really love God desire to keep His laws (1 *John 5:3*).

#### **4 - WHAT CONSTITUTES THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT?**

##### **1. The law of Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17) is the unchanging, eternal, and moral law of God.**

Dwight L. Moody wrote in his book:

"Now men may cavil as much as they like about other parts of the Bible, but I have never met an honest man that found fault with the Ten Commandments. Infidels may mock the Lawgiver and reject Him who has delivered us from the curse of the law, but they can't help admitting that the commandments are right. . The people must be made to understand that the Ten Commandments are still binding, and that there is a penalty attached to their violation" (*Weighed and Wanting*, pp. 11, 16).

##### **2. God's law is eternal in its nature.**

***Psalm 111:7-8: "The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness."***

Concerning the fundamental law of the Ten Commandments, church leaders have said:

"The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments" (*Presbyterian Confession of Faith, "Shorter Catechism," question 41*).

"The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof" (*In the Westminster Confession, chapter 19, article 5*).

John Calvin: "We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law; for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable as the justice of God" (*Commentaries on the Gospels, Vol. 1, p. 277*).

"We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government" (*Baptist Manual, article 12*).

##### **3. The moral law was written on two tables of stone.**

On the first were the first four commandments, showing our duty to God. On the second were the last six commandments, showing our duty to our fellowman. Spurgeon said: "If you love God with all your heart, you must keep the first table; and if you love your neighbor as yourself, you must keep the second table" (*The Perpetuity of the Law, p.5*).

#### **5 - ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR ALL MEN IN ALL AGES?**

##### **1. The law was for man, from Adam to Moses.**

The Ten Commandments were in force from Adam's time down through the millenniums of time. This can be proved by the New Testament. Sin existed

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from the time of the fall of man, and sin is described by John as "the transgression of the law." Said the apostle:

**1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."**

Now there must have been law at the time of the Fall, because there was sin at the Fall. Says Paul, "Where no law is, there is no transgression" (*Romans* 4:15).

Adam could not have sinned if he had no knowledge of the moral law. Yet Adam did sin; for, as Paul said, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (*Romans* 5:12).

Not only did Adam sin by breaking the law, but Cain, his son, sinned too.

**Genesis 4:6-7: "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."**

Abraham, long before Moses, knew God's law. Moses himself wrote:

**Genesis 26:5: "Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."**

However, it is true that the law of God did not exist in written form until Moses' time. Indeed, the written law was not necessary before Moses, Never forget that the race of people who lived immediately before and after the Flood were long-lived people. Adam lived 930 years. Methuselah lived 969 years and died just before the Flood. Noah could learn from Methuselah all that Adam had told him because Methuselah was more than 200 years old when Adam died. There was no need for written laws then.

God does not hold men accountable for sin when there is no law. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (*Romans* 5:13). It is not charged to man. But sin was charged to man from Adam to Moses even though there was no written law. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses" (*Romans* 5: 14). So they knew of the law. The expression in *Romans* 5: 13, "Until the law sin was in the world." means until the written law.

## 2. It was for men, from Moses to Christ.

In Moses' time, the law of God was written by the Lord Himself upon two tables of stone and delivered to Moses, who gave them to Israel.

**Deuteronomy 5:22: "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and He added no more. And He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me."**

The written law was then placed by Moses in the Holy Ark, which was housed in the most holy place of the sanctuary.

**Deuteronomy 10:4-5: "He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them unto me. And**

**I turned myself and came down from the mount and put the tables in the ark which I had made" (*Hebrews 9:3-4*).**

To this day, the Ten Commandment law is held in sacred regard by Jews and Christians alike. The 119th psalm is a great song of praise to God for the law of love. "O how love I Thy law!" said the psalmist: "It is my meditation all the day" (*Psalms 119:97*).

Isaiah regarded the law as basic in testing all religious teaching. "To the law and to the testimony," he said, "if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (*Isaiah 8:20*).

Solomon knew that it was not possible to please God while despising the law, so He wrote:

***Proverbs 28:9*: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."**

### **3. It was for Jesus, as the Son of man, and for men of His generation.**

Isaiah the gospel prophet declared that, when Christ came into the world, He would honor the law of God. Here are his words: "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (*Isaiah 42:21*).

The psalmist had predicted that Christ's attitude toward the law would be one of honor, love, and respect.

***Psalms 40:7-8*: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (*Hebrews 10:7*).**

Openly Christ declared to the people, "I have kept My Father's commandments" (*John 15: 10*). And He said, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (*John 15: 10*). Knowing that He was under suspicion as a teacher of new doctrines, Christ declared in His Sermon on the Mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law" (*Matthew 5:17-19*). Christ made it plain that He did not come to abolish the Ten Commandments, but to teach men how to keep them.

### **4. It was for men in the time of the apostles.**

We have already referred to Paul's appraisal of the law. It is holy, just, and good, he said. Moreover, Paul declared that faith established the law. It did not abolish it. The following text deals a deathblow to the doctrine of antinomianism (the doctrine that no moral law is necessary). It also shows that faith establishes the law.

***Romans 3:31*: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."**

The New Testament writers understood that the law was to be the standard in the judgment. Said James:

***James 2: 10-12*: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."**

John was even more emphatic than James. He said:

**1 John 2:4: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."**

Many sincere Christians are opposed to the law because they say that it frustrates the grace of God. They refer to Paul in order to support their views. But Peter said that Paul wrote "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3: 16).

Paul had no more right than any other human being to change or abolish the law of the living God. He testified publicly, in court, that he believed "all things which are written in the law" (Acts 24: 14). "We establish the law," said the apostle (Romans 3:31). That doesn't sound like destroying the law, does it? Paul was a great theologian. Only those who misunderstand him misrepresent and misinterpret his words.

## **5. It is for God's remnant people of the last days.**

Nothing is more clearly revealed in all the pages of Holy Writ than the solemn truth that God will have a people on earth, just before the second coming of Christ, who will uphold and obey His holy law. In spite of persecution and difficulties, they will stand in defense of God's truth.

**Revelation 12:17: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. "**

These people not only believe in the practice of the law of love, which is the law of Ten Commandments, but they also believe the gospel and have the faith of Jesus.

**Revelation 14:12-"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (verses 13-15).**

The question for each of us to ask is, Am I one of God's remnant people? If not, why not?

## **6 - WHY IS THERE GENERAL REBELLION AGAINST GOD'S HOLY LAW?**

**Romans 8:7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."**

Only by the new birth can the carnal mind and heart of man be changed. According to the new covenant promise (Ezekiel 36:26-27), God will write His law in our hearts (Hebrews 8: 10). But we must be willing. Are we?

Society today lives in rebellion against God's law. Everyone acknowledges that it is a good law, but few people want to obey it. In America, thousands of homes break up every year in the divorce courts. Crime costs billions of dollars annually. Hundreds of murders take place every month. And many of these dastardly crimes are committed by youth. According to a committee of prominent jurists and statesmen, crime will carry the nation on to anarchy unless it is checked soon.

Some ministers and professed Christians oppose the law of God. If they fight the Ten Commandments, what can we expect of the people? Jesus said that

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if a man broke one of God's commandments and then taught others to do the same, he would be called least in the kingdom (*Matthew 5: 19*). It is serious enough to disobey God, but nothing is more displeasing to the Lawgiver than leading others into rebellion. The false doctrine that men are not obligated to obey the Ten Commandments has weakened the forces of morality in the world and opened the floodgates of vice and crime. When rebellion reaches its limit, God will intervene.

***Psalm 119:126:* "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law."**

Those who have despised God's law have miscalculated His character. They will discover, in the final day of judgment, that He is a God of justice as well as mercy. Here are the words that He speaks to the despisers of His kingdom and His law:

***Matthew 7:21-23:* "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father which is in heaven. Many Will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."**

### **7 - WHAT PROMISE IS HELD OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE OBEDIENT?**

***Psalm 119:165:* "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them."**

The Christian who has a correct knowledge of God will love Him and His law. He will find peace in loving obedience. Isaiah declares that this peace and righteousness that all obedient followers of Jehovah enjoy is like "the waves of the sea."

***Isaiah 48:18:* "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."**

The test of discipleship is in obedience. The greatest honor and tribute we can pay to Christ is to willingly consent to the writing of His law of love upon the fleshly tablets of our hearts. Will you consent to this work of grace? Remember, Christ saves us from sin, and "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 *John 3:4*). Salvation then means deliverance from lawbreaking and the restoration of the human heart to the moral likeness of God. Jesus will do this for you if you consent. Will you not say with Christ, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (*Psalm 40:8*)?

The next chapter reveals how grace makes possible obedience to God's commandments. It is a source of great encouragement. In it we will see the power of the grace of Christ and what it can do for our lives.

### **Brief Review Questions**

**Can there be any government without law?**

**What is the basic moral law which God gave to mankind?**

**Why do people dislike God's law?**

## THE ETERNAL LAW OF GOD SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

"Professor Edwards A. Park, in setting forth the current religious perils, ably says: 'One source of danger is the neglect of the pulpit to enforce the divine law. In former days the pulpit was an echo of the voice of conscience. . . Our most illustrious preachers gave a wonderful majesty to their discourses by following the example of the Master, and giving prominence to the law, its precepts, and its threatenings. They repeated the two great maxims, that the law is a transcript of the divine perfections, and that a man who does not love the law does not love the gospel; for the law, as well as the gospel, is a mirror reflecting the true character of God. This peril leads to another, that of underrating the evil of sin, the extent of it, the demerit of it. In proportion to the rightfulness of the commandment is the wrongfulness of disobeying it . . .

" 'Affiliated to the dangers already named is the danger of underestimating the justice of God. The tendency of the modern pulpit is to strain out the divine justice from the divine benevolence, to sink benevolence into a sentiment rather than exalt it into a principle. The new theological prism puts asunder what God has joined together. Is the divine law a good or an evil? It is a good. Then justice is good; for it is a disposition to execute the law. From the habit of underrating the divine law and justice, the extent and demerit of human disobedience, men easily slide into the habit of underestimating the grace which has provided an atonement for sin.' Thus the gospel loses its value and importance in the minds of men, and soon they are ready practically to cast aside the Bible itself.

"Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law, and men are henceforth free from its requirements. There are some who represent it as a grievous yoke, and in contrast to the bondage of the law they present the liberty to be enjoyed under the gospel.

"But not so did prophets and apostles regard the holy law of God. . .

"The claim that Christ by His death abolished His Father's law is without foundation. Had it been possible for the law to be changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died to save man from the penalty of sin. The death of Christ, so far from abolishing the law, proves that it is immutable. The Son of God came to 'magnify the law, and make it honorable' (Isaiah 42:21). He said: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law'; 'till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law' (Matthew 5:17, 18). And concerning Himself He declares: 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within My heart' (Psalm 40:8). The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author." -*Great Controversy*, 465-467

## THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTENDOM

The foundation of every Christian religion is the Ten Commandments. This is shown in the writings and doctrinal statements of the churches and their founders. No denomination would dare deny the authority of this moral law. Anarchy and crime would reign if they did so. Here are but a few of many statements which could be cited:

**Southern Baptist:** "We cannot conceive of an age when the moral government of the universe shall be changed, because we cannot conceive of God becoming different morally from what He is now and ever has been. . . This Law of God is holy as He Himself is holy. . . It is a universal law . . . The Law of God is just and cannot be unjust—its justice is universal. . . It is more than just; it is gracious. . . It results in welfare, in happiness, in blessedness. . . The Law of God is full of the love of God." O. C. S. Wallace, *What Baptists Believe, Southern Baptist Sunday School Workers' Training Course*, pp. 80-83, 1934, *Southern Baptists Convention*.

**Methodist:** "The moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the Prophets, He [Christ] did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. . . Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other." *John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," Discourse 5, in Works of John Wesley, Vol. 5, pp. 311-312.*

**Lutheran:** "God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. We should, therefore, fear His anger, and do nothing against such commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them. We should, therefore, love and trust in Him, and gladly obey His commandments." *Martin Luther, Founder of the Lutheran Church, Luther's Small Catechism, in Phillip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, Vol. 3, p. 77.*

**Reformed:** "We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law: for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable, as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and *uniform.*" *John Calvin, founder of the Reformed Church, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, 1949 ed., Vol. 1, p. 277, comment on Matthew 5: 17, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

**Congregationalist:** "Through the atonement of Christ more honor is done to the law, and consequently the law is more established, than if the law had been literally executed, and all mankind had been condemned."—*Jonathan Edwards (Congregationalist), Works [writings] of Jonathan Edwards, 1842 ed., Vol. 3, p. 369. page 10*

**Presbyterian:** "The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel in any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation." *Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 21, "Of the Law of God," sees. 5,6.*

**Episcopalian:** "We must understand that the Ten Commandments are just as binding upon Christian people as they were upon the Children of Israel. The moral law is a part of the natural law of the universe. . . Just as a natural law broken in the material world brings it inevitable consequences, so the moral law broken brings its inevitable consequences in the spiritual and mental worlds.

"The Lord Jesus knew this. He knew it much better than anyone else who ever lived. Therefore He built His Gospel upon a firm foundation of moral law, knowing that such a foundation can never be upset. .

"Christ's teaching goes beyond the Ten Commandments, but does not thereby make the commandments of non-effect. Quite the contrary! Christianity strengthens the authority of the commandments." *The Episcopal Church Sunday School Magazine, June-July, 1943, Vol. 105, No. 6, pp. 183-184.*

**Moody Bible Institute:** "We have already seen that, unlike the ceremonial and civil codes which were given to Israel as the chosen people and holy nation, the moral law is intended for all mankind, and it has never been abrogated nor repealed." *William C. Procter, Moody Bible Institute Monthly, December, 1933.*

**Interdenominational:** "The basic laws of morality, and particularly the Ten Commandments, remain until the end of time as the moral and spiritual foundation upon which the New Testament religion is *built.*" *The Snowden-Douglass Sunday School Lessons for 1946, p. 279.*

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"These laws are what we might call universal. . . These Ten Commandments are the codification of what governs man's moral nature; and they are right, and true, and abiding in every age for every race." *Peloubet's Select Notes, for the International Sunday School Lesson for January 20, 1946, p. 35.*

"While God remains God, His moral law will be binding upon all who would have any part in His life. God's moral law is eternal; it is an expression of His very being. As such it can no more be abrogated than can God Himself." *Editorial, 'are Christians to Keep the Law?' The Sunday School Times.*

"The law shows me what God demands of me, but what I cannot do by myself. It shows me what I am and that I am lost. It points me to Christ in order that by grace I can be what I cannot be under law." *Alan Redpath, "Law and Gospel," The New Century Leader, July 1958.*