

Glimpses of Our God Lesson 6 1Q 2012

God the Lawgiver

When you hear the title what images come to your mind?

Great peace have they who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble. PS 119:165

The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes. PS 19:7,8

Our God is beautiful – His character is beautiful – His law is beautiful!

Satan hates the beauty of God and His law of love and Satan works to pervert our understanding of God's law and thus God's character. We will explore this today!

SABBATH

Read entire day starting with first paragraph, "As Seventh-day Adventist..." thoughts?

Any questions?

Do you agree that the law, which is an expression of God's character? What about the phrase (If so, then because God doesn't change, the law – which reveals His character – shouldn't change either.)

Would you make the language a little stronger and say, the law *cannot* change? Why can the law not change? What are the possibilities?

- God enacted a law and only God can change it
- God's character is love and He constructed His universe to operate upon certain principles or laws and change would result in destruction of His universe and God would no longer be a God of love

What do you understand God's character to be?

Does a different concept of God's law alter the way we see His character?

When it comes to law – what are the types of law of which we know?

Natural and Enacted or Imposed –

I am going to throw out examples of various laws, you tell me into which category does it fit, natural or imposed:

- Natural law
 - Health – respiration, hydration, nutrition
 - Nature – thermodynamics, motion, friction, gravity
 - Love – circuit of giving life is built upon
 - Liberty – love only exists with freedom
 - Worship – by beholding we become changed
 - Genetics – life changes gene expression and we pass these changes to our offspring
- Enacted law
 - Ceremonial – washing of priest before service in OT
 - Health – must be 21 to drink
 - Safety - speed limits
 - Criminal – robbery, rape, murder and what punishment is allowed, proscribed
 - Tax – legal and illegal deductions
 - Marital law – who can marry whom

- Civil – cannot misrepresent someone in the media

What is the purpose of the natural laws?

What is the purpose of the enacted laws?

What is the problem when one breaks one of the natural laws?
What is the problem when one breaks one of the imposed laws?

Are there any natural laws that require imposition of penalties?

If we teach God's law requires He impose penalties what have we just done? We have changed God's unchangeable law from the natural law upon which He built the universe to an imposed law.

Another layer of rules:

- School dress code
- No chewing gum in class
- No TV on school nights
- No video games if grades are not B's or better
- Must brush your teeth each night before bed

What are the purpose of these type of rules?

Is there some other law that we haven't yet included?

What about the 10 Commandments? Where do they fit?

Were they always in existence? Or were they added later, after sin entered?

- The law was added so that the trespass might increase. Romans 5:20
- It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. Gal 3:19

Now let's reason together – were the laws God constructed His universe to operate upon added so that sin might increase? Or so that we might see sin more clearly? No!

So what law was added? All imposed law – sacrifices, circumcision, ceremonial law – AND the 10 Commandments!

One of the founders of our church saw it as I do:

- I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and **the moral code of ten commandments...** "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. {1SM 233, 234}

Notice the language “moral code of the 10 commandments”. God’s law of love, the principles upon which the universe was built was always in existence, but in the 10 Commandments God “codified” the principles of love uniquely for humanity’s need.

This codification of the law was not always in existence, while the law of love was always in existence.

Angels didn’t have sins pass down the generations, nor honor mother and father, nor need to avoid adultery, nor have problems with coveting another man’s wife. Yet, the angels did have the law of love, the principle upon which life was based.

- If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would

it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, **and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone.** And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

So, the 10 commandments are not “enacted” or “imposed” law, neither are they the natural law as they were added later. The 10 Commandments are a unique “codification” of the natural law designed for our need, but for what purpose?

First – as we read above to increase the ability to see sin, to diagnose accurately, to reveal our condition to us.

Secondly, as a hedge of protection to keep us safe from self destruction while God is working to rewrite our operating systems, minds/hearts, back into harmony with His character of love. In other words, God is working to put His law of love back into our hearts and minds. Jer 31:30 and Heb 8:10.

Third, they are also a promise of what our characters will look like when God finishes His way in us. We will not have other gods before Him. We will not make images and worship them. We will not take His name in vain....

So, as we review the different types of law – what do you understand the law to be in heaven before Lucifer rebelled?

Here is the historical Adventist perspective:

In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Psalm 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song.

And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love. {DA 20.1}

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even **now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself.** No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but **ministers to some other life**. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has **its ministry**. Every tree and shrub and leaf **pours forth** that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud. {DA 20.2}

The **angels of glory find their joy in giving**,--giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know. {DA 21.1}

But turning from all lesser representations, we behold **God in Jesus**. Looking unto Jesus we see that **it is the glory of our God to give**. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. **In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: **through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all**; through

the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the **circuit of beneficence** is complete, ***representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.*** {DA 21.2}

In heaven itself this law was broken. Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore **he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation.** With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. **Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men.** He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, **Satan caused them to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving.** Thus he drew men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world. {DA 21.3}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened.** To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work **only one Being in all the universe could do.** Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

What law was broken in heaven? It was not the 10 Commandments that Lucifer broke. They did not yet exist. Where did this law originate?

What caused it to be broken?

What is the law of life for the universe?

What does this mean? Does it mean life is constructed to exist only in harmony with this principle of giving?

What do we learn of God's character when we see the law in this way?

What happens to how we see God's character if we change the law to an imposed law? Do we see God differently?

- If we see God's law as the law of love we see God working to heal His creation from the destruction that breaking the law brings
- If we see God's law as imposed we see God working to create a means whereby He doesn't have to execute the sinner, so we set up a system in which God is working against Himself. On the one hand He is working to justly punish law breaking, on the other hand He is working to divert the punishment away from law breakers to His innocent Son. What some call the most unjust act in the universe.

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph, "So, right from..." very well said, the written law was never a means of salvation, it was a diagnostic instrument to diagnose and expose our terminal state and lead us to Christ for healing!

The lesson asks us to read Romans 7:8-13, let's start with verse 7 and go through 13. I am going to read from my paraphrase:

^{7:7} What shall we say then? Is the law evil and selfish because it increases the amount of evil and selfishness we see? Absolutely not! For I would not have known what evil and selfishness looks like if it wasn't for the diagnostic efficacy of the law. I would not have realized

that coveting was evil and selfish if the law didn't say, "Don't covet." ⁸ But selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the law is only a diagnostic instrument and not a remedy, magnified every covetous desire within me. For apart from the diagnostic ability of the law, sin is unrecognizable. ⁹ Once I thought I was healthy and free from the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness, but then the commandment examined me, exposed how utterly infected I was and diagnosed me as terminal. ¹⁰ I discovered that the very commandment given only to diagnose my condition, I had unwittingly attempted to use as a cure and thus my condition only worsened. ¹¹ For selfishness, taking advantage of the fact that the commandment could only diagnose and not cure, deceived me into thinking I could be cured by working to keep the commandments, but instead my terminal state only worsened. ¹² So understand this, the law diagnoses perfectly, and the commandment is the standard of what is right and good, set apart by God, to reveal what is evil and destructive.

7:13 Did the law, which did good by diagnosing what was wrong with me, become the source of my terminal condition? Of course not! It only exposed what was already in me so that I could recognize how totally decayed, putrid and near death I was, so that through the lens of the commandment I might become utterly disgusted with evil and selfishness and long for a cure.

Thoughts?

Read last paragraph, "In a sense..." thoughts?

What is the problem with sinners? Is it that they have violated God's law, or is it that they are out of harmony with God's law?

- An analogy, the law of gravity – if you purposely jump off a building, or get thrown off by another, or get tricked

- into stepping of, or slip off accidentally – does it change the way you are treated by gravity?
- Does God’s law treat us differently if we violate it knowingly or ignorantly?
 - When Eve was deceived, tricked into breaking God’s law, was she treated differently by the law, than Adam who broke the law knowingly?
 - If a person is tricked into taking LSD and another person takes it knowingly will the LSD work differently in each of them or do the same thing?
 - If God’s law is the natural law upon which He built the universe it is a constant and functions constantly, thus breeches result in the same consequence regardless of how it is broken. But if God’s law is imposed, then we can take into consideration whether someone was tricked or not and modify the consequences.
 - What about every human born since Adam? A newborn baby? Has a new born baby chosen to violate God’s law? Is that newborn baby in harmony with God’s law?
 - Imagine HIV infected man and woman have a child born HIV infected, what did the child do wrong? Nothing, but doesn’t the child still have a terminal condition, which if unremedied will kill it?
 - This is our condition, we are born in sin conceived in iniquity, Ps 51:5, we are born terminal.
 - If you had a loved one on top of a building suicidal, and they are going to jump, and you had time, would you put one of those air mattress things to catch them? What if they slipped or were pushed?
 - If you had a grandchild born HIV infected, would you condemn the child and sentence it to death, or would you, as you were able, seek a remedy and a cure?
 - When man fell into sin, what did God do? He immediately began interceding to hold the ravages of sin at bay while implementing His plan to heal and restore mankind back to His original design!
 - God is always for us – it is Satan, evil men, and sin itself that is against us.

So is the problem with sinners who have violated the law, or the problem with our condition of being out of harmony with the law which results in its violation and that only worsens the problem?

MONDAY

Read first two paragraphs, “As soon as we talk...” thoughts?

Is it true God’s law has always been in existence?

Is it true God’s law has always been codified as the 10 Commandments?

We have already read the 10 Commandments were added later, because of a need. Consider it this way –

Is it true that since God created earth the law of gravity has been at work on planet earth? When Isaac Newton finally wrote it down – did that then create the law of gravity? No! It was always in existence, but not in the form of equations written on paper.

The 10 Commandments are like that, they put in writing what was always in existence as part of the law of love, but do it in a way particularly designed for the need of sinful humanity.

Read next paragraph, “Genesis 1 and 2...” thoughts?

Really? Do you really need to write down somewhere that if you love your brother you won’t murder him, in order to know that murder is not loving?

What about this – if you have a 10 year old little brother and you love him, will you give him cigarettes, alcohol and cocaine? Would it be sin to do this?

How could we possibly know this would be sin? It isn't written in the 10 Commandments anywhere is it?

How do we know such an act is sinful if it isn't written in the 10 Commandment?

Did Cain really need the 10 Commandments to know murder is a violation of the law of love?

If you murdered someone, would you really need to have a law tell you it was wrong?

What about in times when the law says it is right to kill another human being? What happens to a person when they take the life of another human? Can they do this without consequence to themselves?

- A police officer shoots and kills an armed suspect – is there a consequence to the police officer?
- A homeowner shoots and kills a home invader – is there a consequence?
- A soldier shoots and kills an enemy combatant, is there a consequence to the soldier?

Is there something inherent in our design that convicts us it is wrong to kill another human? Or did it only become wrong once it was written on stone?

Is killing another wrong because God says it, or does God say don't do it because it is wrong – and by wrong we mean it violates God's design for life, and thus the killer gets damaged by the act.

What about if they are killing for God? What about in the OT times, David killed many people in defense of God, yet was not allowed to build the Temple because he was a man of blood. What does this mean? Just his history? Or do such actions affect the heart and mind?

It is abnormal to kill another person. We are wired to be aversive to this. We are created to love others. And we are not at peace when we kill. We have to be conditioned to do it.

Read sixth paragraph, “When Abraham lied....” Thoughts?

What do you think about their conclusion?

If the reason God rebuked Abimelech was because He held the same standard as the Decalogue, then why did Abraham have 3 concubines, Jacob 2 wives and 2 concubines, David 5 wives, Solomon 700 wives etc. yet we don't find God rebuking them like he did Abimelech? If the reason is that God is holding them to the same standard of the 10 Commandments before it was given, then shouldn't He be consistent?

I think God rebuked Abimelech because Sarah was the one through whom the promised child was to come, from Sarah and Abraham, not Sarah and Abimelech. Thus, Sarah had to go back to Abraham to fulfill this purpose, not because of some statement regarding the 10 Commandments existing before it was given.

Read last paragraph, “Clearly, the idea that there was no law until Sinai makes no sense in light of so much of what the Bible teaches about life before Sinai.”

Yes there was law before Sinai – but in what form?

Was there the written codification of God's law before Sinai? No! Was the law of life, the law upon which God constructed life to operate in existence before Sinai? Yes.

So with all this in mind what do you understand Paul to be saying in Romans 5:12-14:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—**for before the law was**

given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

Paul is saying that when Adam sinned by breaking the command of God, his nature was changed from one operating upon God's design of love, and now was infected with fear and selfishness, a terminal state. And all humans born of Adam are infected with that same terminal condition, thus deviations from God's design reign, i.e. sin before the written law was given at Sinai. And since life is built to operate on God's design principles death was reigning as all were out of harmony with how God designed things to run, even in those who were dying did not choose to be that way by breaking a specific command of God as Adam did.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Contrary..." thoughts?

Can you give some examples to demonstrate how the Hebrew religion has always been a religion of grace?

- Eye for an eye – stopped people from killing for minor offenses
- Cities of refuge
- Judicial system required two witnesses to agree on every point and the Sanhedrin was 72 of the best lawyers for the defense of the accused while the offended had to prosecute on their own
- Gleaning in the fields
- Jubilees – land and slaves freed and returned to family owners
- Accommodations for the poor in temple service

- Sacrificial system designed to teach God's love – His self sacrifice to take our condition upon Himself to cure us and bring us back into unity with Himself.

Anything in the OT that makes it hard to see grace?

- The hard heartedness of the people, and their need for God to meet them where they were.

Read last paragraph, "Why, though, such..." well said and what about today? Do we teach the principles of the law, or do we get side tracked on the rules?

What can we do to protect against getting side tracked?

Take focus off self and onto God and others! How can we bless another, uplift another, help another.

If your neighbor is in need and you are thinking of helping him, but it is Sabbath, what do you do? If you are thinking about your neighbor you help, if you are thinking about yourself you don't because you must obey the law.

Jesus pointed this out as the Jews would help an ox out of the ditch on Sabbath but didn't want a man healed on Sabbath because Christ could easily heal him any other day of the week. In other words the healings Christ did on Sabbath were not emergency, life or death healings. They were treating chronic medical conditions, which could have easily waited until sundown!

Why didn't Christ wait until after Sabbath to heal them? What is the lesson here? Are we today only to help our neighbors if it is an emergency? Or should we rake the lawn of the elderly couple on Sabbath?

Should we purposely dedicate a certain number of hours each Sabbath to go out and do public service WORK, to minister

and help others, but for which we will not receive pay? Would this be keeping or breaking the Sabbath?

What would happen to the name of Christ in Chattanooga, if a group of Sabbath keepers starting committing 4 hours each Sabbath to works of community service and ministry? Work for our neighbors and community? Would this uplift or tear down the name of Christ? Would it be in harmony with the Sabbath law or break it?

Here is what one of the founders of the SDA church thought about Sabbath keeping:

The demands upon God are even greater upon the Sabbath than upon other days. His people then leave their usual employment, and spend the time in meditation and worship. They ask more favors of Him on the Sabbath than upon other days. They demand His special attention. They crave His choicest blessings. God does not wait for the Sabbath to pass before He grants these requests. Heaven's work never ceases, and **men should never rest from doing good.** The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. **The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day;** but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and **devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.** The work of Christ in healing the sick was in perfect accord with the law. It honored the Sabbath. {DA 207.2}

Thoughts? Should we do good deeds, work, on the Sabbath intended to bless and help our community and neighbors?

THURSDAY

Read top paragraph, "From the start..." thoughts?

Much truth in this paragraph, harmony with God's design, His law does protect against ravages of sin.

Is it possible to be a "law keeper" while breaking the law and thus being damaged by sin?

Can one keep the Sabbath, observe it in such a way as they don't do any work, only do religious activities, but harden their hearts and kill their Savior?

So the law can be perverted in practice to, rather than protect, injure and hurt.

Any examples of this?

Read bottom green section? Do you see the questions through the two lenses of natural law or imposed law?

If one uses the lens of Roman Imperial Imposed law then these questions make some sort of sense – but if one sees through the lens of God's natural law – these questions are nonsense.

It would be like saying respiration without exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide would lead to what? Or Exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide without breathing would lead to what?

You cannot exchange these gases without respiration, without breathing. Likewise love is the law and keeping the law is love. Unless you view love as one thing and God's law as something He imposed later.

FRIDAY

Read top three paragraphs – well said, what are the points to note?

There is no negative in God's law – why? Because it is the design for life, the law of life, it restores or heals. It is a promise of life eternal.

And this law operates only in an atmosphere of freedom, coercion and threat are only part of Satan's government because they destroy love and giving. Thus, what can we know about various theologies? Any theology which suggest God, in order to be just, must inflict pain, suffering and death presents God as using coercive tactics, which violate His own character and thus such ideas are false.

The actual transformation of our hearts and minds is done by the work of the Holy Spirit within us when we trust God!

And it is in this experience we are freed from fear, insecurity, anxiety, which lead us to all the “save self” behaviors that damage and destroy.

Read and discuss Questions 3.

TUESDAY

Any questions about Sabbath before Sinai?

Created in Eden, practiced in desert before Sinai, see Exodus 16.

Was the Sabbath needed in heaven before sin? Why or why not?

What is the purpose of the Sabbath?