



2nd Quarter 2014 - Christ and His Law

Lesson 1: Laws in Christ's Day

From the lesson introduction:

““From the very beginning of the great controversy in Heaven, it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 582. Why? Because the law, as the foundation of God's government, expresses the moral integrity of the cosmos, and to overthrow that law would be to overthrow the moral order of the creation itself. Morality, though, means the ability to choose right or wrong, good or evil—and the only way for the universe to be moral, to allow the potential for good or evil, for right or wrong, would be for it to have a law that defines them.

“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet,’ ” (*Rom. 7:7*). Our universe is moral because God created free beings answerable to His law. If there were no law against coveting, there would be no sin of covetousness. Indeed, God created humans as creatures who can love. Love, though, can't exist without freedom, moral freedom. And moral freedom can't exist without law, moral law. Love rests on freedom, and freedom rests on law.

Hence, the topic for our quarter: Christ and His law. We will study the law, especially the question of why so many Christians—misunderstanding the relationship between law and grace—have fallen in the trap of denying the continued validity of the Ten Commandments and thus, unwittingly, have helped in the attempt to “overthrow” it. The Bible, though, is clear: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ” (*1 John 5:3*). The link between our loving God and keeping His commandments is stronger than we realize, until we realize that we can love God because we live in a universe where love can exist. And it can exist because the universe is moral, and that morality is based, at least for us as created beings, on God's moral law—the subject we will now pursue.”

Wheels should already be turning in our minds as to which lens the author views Christ's Law. Natural? or, Imposed? Frankly, we should make this determination whenever we read, hear, or, discuss any spiritual topic.

My first thought after reading the intro was: If Satan's purpose has, from the beginning, been to overthrow the Law of God, then he must have, also, viewed the Law as an imposed law, and not a natural one.

My second thought after reading the intro was the following quote [special thanks to Tim's photographic memory for the reference]:



But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8. {MB 109.2}

SABBATH

“In New Testament times, a person could use the common word for “law” (nomos in Greek, lex in Latin, and Torah in Hebrew). In doing so, he or she could mean any one of the many laws. Often, the only example of the exact law depends on what law we are talking about. *So, as we study this quarter, we will always need to remember what subject we are dealing with in order to understand best what law is being discussed.*

This week’s lesson studies the different laws that worked in the community during the time of Christ and the early church. We will study these different laws to help us to understand God’s moral law, the Ten Commandments.” emphasis added.

We, absolutely, need to remember what law is being discussed.

SUNDAY – ROMAN LAW

The author correctly states that Rome’s legal system is used as a model for many modern legal systems. Why do societies need legal systems? Why do they need governments? Isn’t it because most of mankind cannot *self-govern*? Will we have a court system in Heaven? Will we have judges in Heaven? Will we have attorneys in Heaven? Trick question. So, if societies need to *impose* law on their citizens, who are unable to self-govern, then can’t we consider that Earthly governments were a necessity to check the results of sin [living out of harmony with God’s natural Law, e.g. “lawlessness”]?

In the last paragraph: “Many things taking place in the New Testament, from the death of Jesus to the imprisonment of Paul, make much better sense when we understand whatever we can about the environment of their times.” How does our knowledge of Roman Law help us make sense of the death of Jesus?? Who demanded Jesus’ death? Rome, or Israel? When confronted with their choice, what did the Jews publically declare?? What does Jesus’ death show us about imposed law? What does it show us about natural law??

MONDAY – MOSAIC LAW: CIVIC

Mid-2nd paragraph: “When God originally gave the laws to Moses, He envisioned a state where



He would be the head and the people would enforce His legal mandates.” Really?? Was not God’s actual purpose for Israel to reveal HIM to the rest of humanity??

How did Jesus deal with civic Mosaic Law?? Paying taxes? Stoning adulterers? Levirate marriage [widows marry her late husband’s brother]? Divorces? Did He comply with the imposed law of the time or try to reveal something of the natural design protocols He created life to operate within??

We are invited to read: Matt 26:59-61, Heb 10:28, & Deut. 17:2-6, which basically tells us that someone could be stoned to death on the testimony of two or more witnesses. The lesson asks us: “What does this tell us about biblical concepts of justice and fairness?? Thoughts??

Ps. 72:4. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor.

Ps. 82:3. Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Isa. 41: 2,3. “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. Note: Re-quoted by Christ, himself [see Matt. 12: 18,20].

Zech. 7:9. “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion Everyone to his brother.

What do these texts tell us about Biblical concepts of justice and fairness??

The pink section at the bottom of Monday’s lesson references Deut 21 for examples of some of God’s laws and “Considering who the Author is of these laws, what should this tell us about how we must learn to trust the Lord in all things, especially those things we don’t fully understand?” What do the expansion of the Ten Commandments, known as the Mosaic Laws, and the Ten Commandments themselves, really tell us about their Author?? What does Nature tell us about its “Author”?

Consider this:

“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}”

Does this give us any perspective?? The Ten Commandments were 3rd in God’s major attempts to preserve mankind’s knowledge of Himself, and they were so perverted that He eventually needed to come to Earth in the person of Jesus. Consider the state of mind of someone actually needing “Thou shalt not murder.” carved in stone, yet who would murder God, himself, for healing on the Sabbath.

Are we going to worship the Ten Commandments or the God who, condescended in great Love and patience to give them when they were most needed? Make NO mistake. We are not saying the Ten Commandments were ONLY for the Israelites, and are no longer binding. I am just wondering when we are going to grow up and get to know their Author.

TUESDAY – MOSAIC LAW: CEREMONIAL

We covered this extensively in the 4th quarter of 2013. I would encourage you to review on our web site: comeandreason.com. There are some wonderful insights on the Sanctuary service and the ceremonial laws, as well as indications how this was perverted by the Jews and Christians also.

WEDNESDAY – RABBINIC LAW

The lesson correctly states that Christ had to deal with the additional laws the Jewish rabbis [aka church leadership] interpreted from the Mosaic laws, and asks us what we can learn from how He dealt with the “church leadership”? Any thoughts??

Matt. 23: 1-36. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe,[a] that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ 8 But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ,[b] and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. 13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in



yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.[c] 15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. 16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' 17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies[d] the gold? 18 And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' 19 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? 20 Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. 21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells[e] in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.[f] 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? 34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation

THURSDAY – THE MORAL LAW.

This is the memory text from Sabbath's lesson: "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves" (Romans 2:14, NASB) Keep this in mind.

Is there any "Moral Law" in Heaven?



“The Ten Commandments provide Israel with the moral framework for maintaining it [their relationship with God]. The metaphor that the Bible uses to express this relationship is covenant. While the metaphor comes from the sphere of international law, it is wrong to understand the commandments merely as a summary of Israel’s obligations toward God. . . . Israel’s obedience to the commandments was not a matter of submission to the divine will as much as it was a response to love.” —Leslie J. Hoppe, “Ten Commandments,” Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 1285.

This is an interesting take on things, especially the last sentence. It’s almost like the author is suggesting that if one allows the Love of God to transform them, then they will resemble the “Ten Commandments”.

Never forget that when Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment, he answered: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”
