



## ORDER IN THE UNIVERSE

### Quest Lesson A-5

The Problem: Many today feel that laws are unnecessarily restrictive. They argue that, if only there were not so many laws, people would not want to break them. We are sometimes told that one of the reasons that youth want to break the law is that it exists. If laws in regard to some things could be abolished, the urge to do those things would vanish.

Such an argument implies that order in society would be better served if laws in regard to certain matters were not enacted and enforced. Law is thought to be a restriction of liberty. Of course, no-one would argue that all of the laws passed by legislators throughout history have been for the best good of society. But is the basic premise true, that the existence of law encourages lawlessness? Or is the desire to live without law characteristic of man in his fallen condition? For example, if the laws in regard to drug use were abolished, would that drastically reduce people's desire to use drugs? Or are there other more fundamental reasons for people's drug use?

There are some Christians who see no need for the ten commandments. They insist that this code of laws was given for ancient Israel, but it no longer applies today. Is that what the Bible teaches, or are the ten commandments still functional for Christians?

Why did God give laws in the first place? Is law an important feature of our universe, and of the world in which we live? If so, why? Would it have been better for God simply to allow His created beings to do their own thing, without interference by established authority?

What does the Bible say about law? Are our lives to be governed by laws which God has enacted?

#### Objectives

First, let us consider the existence of law in nature.

Second, we will look for the basic principles of God's law for mankind.

Third, we address the question: How are those basic principles applied in specific laws given by God.

Fourth, can any of God's laws be changed?

Fifth, we will consider the questions: Are the ten commandments still binding upon Christians? Can they be obeyed?

#### I. Law and Order in Nature

Science and revelation establish the fact that all nature is governed by fixed laws. Ask an astronomer and he will explain some of the unvarying laws which control the movements of the heavenly bodies. Ask a biologist, a zoologist, a chemist, or a physicist and you will hear of complex scientific principles that function in nature with certainty and regularity. Who was responsible for these natural laws? The reason for them is obvious. Without them there would be anarchy in the natural world, and the continuance of meaningful existence would be impossible.

#### The Word

1. What does God say about the fixed order of the heavenly bodies? Jeremiah 31:35-36; Psalm 8:3; 136:7-9; Job 26:7.

2. What order in nature renders it possible for man to survive physically? Genesis 8:22; (compare Genesis 1:11-12)
3. What reproductive principle was established by God? Genesis 1:24-25.
4. Why are the mighty oceans of earth confined within limits? Job 26:10; 38:8, 11; Psalm 33:7.
5. The circulation and function of the blood was discovered by William Harvey in 1615. What does the Bible teach? Leviticus 17:14.

Explanation: Divine revelation supports the testimony of science that nature is governed by fixed laws. The Bible reveals, what science could not, that these laws were established by God.

Relevance: How grateful we should be for law and order in nature. Without it our lives would not be sustainable. God created an orderly universe for the happiness and safety of those who inhabit it. Law in nature is an evidence of the wonderful love of God.

## II. The Principles of God's Law for Mankind

Why does God have a law? What is its value for mankind? What are the basic principles which the law is intended to establish?

The Word

6. What characteristics of God does His law reflect? Psalm 19:7-11; 119:140-144.
7. What is the most basic principle behind all that God commands. Matthew 22:35-40; (compare Deuteronomy 6:5-6; Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:10.
8. What name does James give to God's law? James 1:25; 2:12.
9. What is the alternative of obedience to God's law? 1 John 3:3-8,
10. What is the inevitable result of lawlessness? Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 6:23.

Explanation: Perfect love, holiness, and truthfulness are the basic principles which have led God to give the universe and mankind a law as the standard of conduct. God created mankind in perfect conformity to these principles. God knew that

as long as man remained in fellowship with Himself, these principles would rule in his life, and he would have wisdom and happiness. God also knew that, as soon as man chose to turn away from Him and the principles of love, purity and truth, he would be cut off from the source of life and happiness, and would begin to deteriorate spiritually, morally, intellectually and physically. James speaks of God's law as "the perfect law of liberty" because true liberty is not freedom from law, but total commitment to the Lord and the righteous principles of His government.

Relevance: Here is the basis of happiness and peace of mind. Our potential as characters and personalities can only be truly realized as we enter into fellowship with the God who created us. Such fellowship always results in commitment to the holy principles of His law. Then love, purity, holiness, truthfulness become the ruling principles in our lives.

## III. Specific Laws Given by God

How are the principles of love, holiness and truth applied in the specific commands which God has given us?

The Word

11. How is love for God demonstrated by obedience to the first four of the ten commandments? Exodus 20:1-11.
12. How is love for mankind reflected in the last six of the ten commandments? Exodus 20:12-17.
13. How did Jesus explain the deeply spiritual meaning of God's law? Matthew 5:20-22, 27-28, 44-48.
14. Why did the Lord give Israel ceremonial laws in addition to the moral law of ten commandments? Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 4:20, 26, 3] (last part of each verse); Hebrews 8:3-6.

Explanation: The ten commandments are an application of God's Characteristics. He is a God of infinite love (1 John 4:8), and He wishes that this great principle should rule in our lives. Each of the ten commandments applies the principle of love to God and love to man. If you truly love God, you will not serve or worship other gods. Your best service will be for our one God. You will not speak His name irreverently or blasphemously. You will want to worship Him on the day He has appointed.

If you love God you will love your fellow human beings and will refrain from any attitude or act towards them which would cause harm, sorrow or tragedy. Jesus made it clear that our attitudes of heart and mind are the basis of the things we do. God does not want mere outward conformity. He wants the principle of love to be reigning in our minds.

God gave a sanctuary with its many services and sacrifices to Israel so that they would be constantly reminded of the coming Messiah who would die for their sin. Jesus was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Hebrews chapters 7-10 explain how every animal sacrifice in the Israelite sanctuary service represented and foreshadowed the death of Jesus Christ for our sins. Thus the ceremonial law was to be a constant reminder of God's love. (Compare John 3:16).

Relevance: Since God's 'specific laws are an outworking of the principle of love, our greatest happiness is to be found in keeping them.

#### IV. Can Any of God's Laws Be Changed?

Does God ever cease to be love? "God is love" (1 John 4:8) is an everlasting principle because God exists everlastingly. Then wouldn't we expect that there will always be divine laws for His universe that apply the principle of love? How could God be love and yet condone bitterness and hatred in His created beings? How could God be love and yet overlook selfishness, theft, immorality? It stands to reason that what God is in nature and character determines the eternal, unchanging nature of the moral principles of His government.

#### The Word

15. How long do God's works and His laws endure? Psalm 111: 7-10; (compare Psalm 119:44, 142, 144).
16. How enduring did Jesus say His law would be? Matthew 5:17-19.
17. What ministry replaced the ceremonial laws and services which had been given to ancient Israel? Hebrews 7:12 - 8:6.

Explanation: The great eternal moral principles expressed in the ten commandments can never be changed. If God's law could have been changed, it would not have been necessary for Jesus to die. The law could have been altered so that eternal death would not be the result of disobedience. Jesus said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things...?" (Luke 24:26 It was necessary for Him to die because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and He was identified with sin and sinners so that we could be forgiven (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 15:3).

The ceremonial laws and services which God gave ancient Israel were intended to illustrate the death of Jesus, and His heavenly ministry after His resurrection. When Christ's death had occurred and His heavenly High Priestly ministry had begun, the earthly ministry and sacrifices were superseded. Now the shadow, or the analogy, had met its reality.

Relevance: God's moral law is eternal. The ceremonial laws were intended to exist only until the Cross.

#### V. Does God Expect Christians to Keep the Ten Commandments?

Since the sacred principles of God's law are eternal, we should not be surprised to discover that Christians are expected to live by them. What does the New Testament teach?

#### The Word

18. What does faith in Jesus Christ do for our relationship to His law? Romans 3:31; 6:18; 8:3-4; 10:8.
19. What function do the ten commandments fulfill for the Christian? Romans 7:7, 12, 14; 3:20.
20. How can we be quite sure that Christ expects us to obey the ten commandments? James 2:10-12.
21. By what means is it possible for us to obey God's law? 1 John 5:1-5.

Explanation: Faith establishes the law of God in our hearts. See also Hebrews 8:10). Law-keeping is not the means of salvation, but the result. When we love Jesus and He gives us the free gift of salvation in the new birth experience, His will (or law) is written on our hearts. Now we do not serve Him to earn His love. We obey Him in everything because we have His love already. Law-keeping that results from a relationship with Jesus is not legalism. It is what Paul calls righteousness by faith. (See Romans 10:6-10; 8:3-4). The holy principle of Jove now rules in our hearts, and we do what God asks because we love Him and we love our fellow human beings.

Relevance: Do you love Jesus enough to obey His law (John 74:15)? He was the God who accompanied ancient Israel and gave the ten commandments (1 Corinthians 10:4). Accepting His will for your life is not a sacrifice. It is a pleasure because you love Him. If that means that some things in your life have to be changed, that is for your greatest happiness, because following Jesus is always for our best good. He will provide the daily power for you to serve Him. He never asks anything of us that we cannot do in His strength. Invite Him into your heart right now and allow Him to live out His life through you (Galatians 2:20). Then you will have love, holiness, and truth as the ruling principles of your life.

Are you willing to make this commitment. just now?

#### Review Questions

1. True or False
  - a. Nature is not governed by law. ii) Love is the basis of God's rulership.
  - b. You are saved because you keep the ten commandments.
  - c. Because you are saved you are released from the obligation of keeping the ten commandments.
2. Discuss: Before the Cross mankind was saved by law-keeping. Now we are saved by grace. Is that true or false? What evidence could you give for your answer?