

**The Church of God, International
Bible Correspondence Course**

LESSON 5

**The Law
and the Christian**

How is a person to know the difference between right and wrong? This is not a very hard question; it just is not often asked. We all have a generalized idea of right and wrong, but rarely give a thought as to where the idea comes from or what authority lies behind it. Who says that stealing is wrong while honoring your parents is right? The Ten Commandments, of course, but why should we follow them? Weren't they abolished along with the rest of the Old Testament law?

This question is not trivial. Many believe that the Old Testament, with all its laws, is "done away." It is, they tell us, like a road map to get from Texas to California. When you get to California, you don't need the road map any longer. The Ten Commandments were fine for their day, they say, but they passed away with the Old Covenant.

Is that true? Why then did God hand down the law in the first place? If we can do without it now, why could Israel not have done without it as well? Any law that can be abolished probably was not necessary in the first place. When congress repeals a law, it is usually because it did not work.

In this lesson, we will examine our assumptions about biblical law to see if they are true. We will search out the reason why the law was given and what God expected it to accomplish.

To do the lesson, first read the indicated passages in your Bible, taking care to notice the context of the passage. You may want to read as much as a chapter before and after some references to be sure you have a feeling for the passage. Take your time and mark what you think is important.

When you have done this, then answer the questions in the course, writing your answer in your notebook after the number of the question. This is a good time to add marginal notes to your own Bible as you go. When you have written your own answers, then study our comments on each section, correcting your answers if you feel it is necessary. It is a good idea to leave several blank lines in your notebook between answers. This will leave room for corrections and comments when you get the cassette tape. *Do not send your answers to us.* Keep them in your notebook for future reference.

WHY THE LAW?

Psalm 119

1. If a young man wanted to live a clean life, to what standard might he look? (verse 9)
2. To what end might a man memorize portions of Scripture? (verse 11)
3. How many synonyms for law (or kinds of law) can you find in this chapter? Make a list of them, and leave a space for definition of them later.
4. Where did the Psalmist customarily go for advice and counsel? (verse 24)
5. Can sin, lying for example, become a way of life? (verse 29)
6. Is there an alternate way of life? What is it called? (verses 30-33)
7. Is there a way to achieve liberty? What is it? (verse 45)
8. What is the relationship between "going astray" and being afflicted? (verses 67,71)
9. To what end might God afflict or chastise a man? (verse 71; see also Hebrews 12:6-11)
10. Can a man depend on God's commandments to steer him right? (verse 86)
11. How long can God's Word be expected to last? (verse 89)
12. How might a man become wiser than his enemies? (verse 98)

Note: It should be plain by now that the law of God in all of its parts is a rich source of wisdom and knowledge. Why would God abolish something that was designed to convey basic wisdom? How could such a law become obsolete? Can we say that modern man has no need of all the things the Psalmist received from the law?

13. Many people consider the law of God to be a burden. Why did the Psalmist say that these words were as sweet as honey to him? (verses 103,104)
14. When a man walks in darkness, how can he find light for his way? (verse 105)
15. Would men ever attempt to make void the law of God? (verse 126)
16. What is there to divide right from wrong? Is there a "false way"? (verse 128)
17. How long will God's law last? (verses 142-144,152,160)

Note: Many of the Psalms are laid out in couplets. A couplet is two parallel statements that say the same thing in different ways. Coupled this way, "thy righteousness" is synonymous with "thy law." We will also see righteousness defined as "all thy commandments."

18. What is the biblical basis of "righteousness"? (verse 172) Make a special note of this, because it will be important when we come to several New Testament passages.

Deuteronomy 5:1-33

19. Who was it that wrote the Ten Commandments? What was His name?
20. Did the people make any promises to God relative to the law?
21. Did God think they would be able to fulfill their promise? (verses 28,29)
22. What did God say would be the result of Israel keeping the law? (verses 29,33)
23. Is there any reason to believe that the results of keeping these commandments would be any different today?

Psalms 19:7-14

24. Can the law play any role in converting a person?

Note: We all know the law cannot justify a man or grant salvation. But conversion is merely a change. The question here is whether the law can effect change in man's life. Note in this passage the use of parallelism. Verses 7, 8, and 9 are couplets--that is, two statements coupled together which make the same point in different words with parallel sentence structure.

25. In this passage are listed several different results from keeping the law of Jehovah in one of its forms or another. See how many of these results you can list.

26. Considering the purpose of the law in all of its forms (laws, commandments, statutes, judgments), can you think of any reason why it should be abolished? Can you think of any reason why it should be considered obsolete?

27. Are there any different levels of sin suggested here?

Note: It is true that if you have broken one commandment you are guilty of all, but it runs counter to reason to suppose that all sins are the same. The word *presumptuous* from the Hebrew means arrogant, proud, or insolent. Not all sin is committed in this spirit--some are committed in ignorance or weakness. If there is a "great transgression" (verse 13), then there must be transgressions that are not so great.

Matthew 22:34-40

28. What is the first great commandment?

29. What is the second great commandment?

30. What is the relationship of these two great commandments to the rest of the law?

Note: In saying that "all the law" hangs on these two great laws, Jesus established the basis of the law. The law is rooted in the love of God and the love of neighbor. It grows out of the way things are--out of nature. There is human nature and there is a divine nature. Part of the law teaches man how to love his neighbor, while the rest teaches him how to love God.

31. Could a law rooted in the nature of things be readily abolished?

Leviticus 7:22-25

32. What possible reason could God have had for prohibiting the eating of fat?

33. Was there any discipline connected with this law?

34. When we eat fat, do we in any way harm God?

Note: God did not bother to tell the Israelites that eating fat would clog their arteries. They would have asked, "Lord, what is an artery?" He simply told them not to eat it and warned of discipline if they did. It is not dissimilar to some parental warnings to children--"Because I told you so," comes to mind.

This law serves as a good illustration of the idea behind law in general. Many people tacitly accept an "arbitrary God" theory--that is to say that God arbitrarily made this act wrong and that act right. They assume that an act is not intrinsically wrong, but is wrong merely because "God said so." This theory allows that God could just as easily have said, "Thou shalt commit adultery," and we all could have had a lot more fun.

But what if it is the other way around? What if the reason God said an act is wrong is because it really is wrong? It is wrong because it hurts someone. It is wrong to eat fat, not because it shortens God's life, but because it shortens yours.

Many assume that the law came into existence with Moses and ended with Jesus Christ. Is that true?

THE LAW BEFORE MOSES

Genesis 4:1-12

35. What is sin? (I John 3:4)
 36. Did Cain commit sin? Was there then a law?
 37. Was there a law regulating offerings?
 38. What was done with the fat of the offering? Was it eaten?
 39. Was it a sin to commit murder?
 40. Can there be transgression without law? (Romans 4:15)
 41. Was sin imputed to Cain?
 42. Can sin be imputed when there is no law? (Romans 5:12-14)
 43. Was there a law against whatever they were doing in Sodom and Gomorrah? (Genesis 18:20)
 44. Was there a law in Abraham's day against taking another man's wife? (Genesis 20:1-9)
 45. Was adultery a sin in Joseph's day? (Genesis 39:1-9)
 46. Was there a complete set of known laws in Abraham's day? (Genesis 26:5)
 47. Did the law of God, then, exist before Moses?
- Why then do men call it the law of Moses? What role does Moses play in all this?

Deuteronomy 31:22-27

48. Who wrote the words of the law into a book?
49. Who actually wrote the Ten Commandments? (Exodus 31:18; see also Exodus 32:16)
50. Is there another term for the Law of Moses? (Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:1)
51. Did the "Law of Jehovah" involve ceremonies? (I Chronicles 16:40)
52. Did the Law of Moses involve ceremonies? (II Chronicles 30:16)

Note: The "Law of Moses" and "the Law of Jehovah" are for all practical purposes synonyms. The law that Moses wrote in the book was the law that Jehovah gave him. All Moses did was to codify existing law and to convey the specific application of those laws to the community of Israel. The "Law of Moses," then refers to that particular codification or organization of the law that was done under Moses' administration.

Romans 5:12-14

53. Who was the one man by whom sin entered the world?
54. What is sin? (I John 3:4)
55. When did this happen?
56. What law or rule was broken?
57. What causes death to "pass upon" all men?
58. When Paul uses the phrase, "until the law," to what time period is he referring?
59. What causes or allows "death to reign"?
60. We know there was sin before Moses, because Adam sinned. Were there other kinds of sin?
61. Can death pass upon a man when sin is not imputed?
62. Can sin be imputed to man when there is no law?
63. Can we say then that there was a full blown set of laws in existence long before

Moses came on the scene?

64. Why should we conclude that those laws were very different from the laws given to Moses?

Note: As long as we are in Romans and reading Paul, it might be useful to examine what he has to say about the purpose of the law. According to Peter, Paul has written some things that are hard to be understood (II Peter 3:16), so be forewarned and read Paul carefully and without jumping to conclusions.

Romans 3:19-31

65. Who, according to Paul, is "under the law"? (verse 19)

66. To whom does the law speak?

67. Why does the law speak?

68. Who, on the whole, is affected by the speaking of the law?

69. Would you say, then, that it is only the Jews who are under the law, or is the whole world in that condition?

70. Is it possible to be justified by the deeds of the law?

71. What is the purpose of the law, if not justification? (verse 20)

72. What does Paul mean by "the righteousness of God"? (verse 21. Compare the first clause of verse 21 with the first clause of verse 20 keeping parallelism in mind.)

73. How is the "righteousness of God" achieved? (verse 22)

74. How is "justification" achieved? (verse 24)

75. What is the relationship between "the righteousness of God" and "justification"?

76. Do you find a working definition of "justification" in this passage? (see especially verse 25)

77. What role does the law play in justification?

78. Was there a different mode of justification for Gentiles from that of Jews?

79. Since the law is not efficacious for justification, is the law then made void or done away? (verse 31)

Note: A working definition of justification is "the remission of sins that are past." If you can keep this definition in mind as you read Paul's epistles, you will have gone a long way in clearing up the confusion Peter noted. Also bear in mind that Paul's conflict with Judaizers was with those who taught that the law was instrumental in justification. It was not a question of whether they should keep the law, but whether the law justified them or made them righteous before God

. Romans 4:1-15

80. Was there a different means of justification in the Old Testament from the new?

81. Was Abraham made righteous (justified) by the deeds of the law?

82. Can justification ever be something that God owes us because we have carried out certain works? Was it so for Abraham?

83. What is involved in "imputing righteousness? (verses 6,7)

84. Did circumcision play any role in Abraham's justification? Was it efficacious or even conditional to his justification?

85. Why did God make it a point to justify Abraham before circumcision? (verses 11,12)

Galatians 2:11-21

86. According to Paul, what did the "Jews by nature" know about the means of justification? (verses 15,16)

87. Did anyone think that there was one method of justification for Jews and another for gentiles?

88. Could either Jew or Gentile be justified by the works of the law?

89. Was there ever a time when one could be justified by the works of the law? If so, then why did Christ need to die? (See also Galatians 3:21.)

Note: The argument is not over the law as a revelation of the right way to live, but over whether you can justify yourself by your own efforts at keeping the law. One could not do it then, one could not do it during the Old Covenant, and one cannot do it now. The law is to reveal the difference between right and wrong. It can do nothing more. The law condemns us when we break it, and can do nothing to make things right when they have gone wrong.

In the next lesson: a closer examination of the law.

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