

WAS MOSES THE LAWGIVER?

The book of Genesis and first several chapters of Exodus (before the Ten Commandments were thundered from Mount Sinai) show lucidly that God's law was in effect from the earliest days of human history. This fact is undeniable, and is so *easily* demonstrated that any high school student of average intelligence should be able to find references to every one of the Ten Commandments in biblical texts concerning human history *before* the giving of the law at Sinai.

Before we begin our search for clues that the Ten Commandments predated Moses, it is necessary that we define an often misunderstood (though conspicuous) little three-letter term—*sin*. Sin is defined by some as that which creates feelings of guilt. Others see the word as a label under which is listed activities such as card-playing, movie-going, and dancing. But how does the *Bible* define sin?

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for *sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4). There it is—the Bible's own definition of sin. Sin is the transgression, or violation, of God's law.

But what is meant by the phrase "the law"? Is this law an entirely new set of commandments given by Jesus? Or does "the law" include the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5?

Recall what James says about this subject: "For whosoever shall keep the whole *law*, and yet

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**In fact, the
commandments
predated the flood
of Noah's time by
centuries.**

**And this can
be proved beyond
the shadow
of any doubt!**

offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said [margin: "*that law which said*"], *Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill*"—two of the Ten Commandments! "Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a *transgressor of the law*" (James 2:11). Clearly, "that law" is none other than the law delivered by God from Mount Sinai; and to transgress it is to *sin* (1 John 3:4).

The words translated "sin" in the Old and New Testaments generally have the same, or similar, meanings. With the definition clearly in mind, let's see if we can find examples of sin during the time extending from the creation of Adam to just before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.

Paul writes, "Wherefore, as

by one man [Adam] *sin* entered into the world..." (Romans 5:12). Sin, the transgression of God's law, entered into the human world through the first man, Adam. God's law, therefore, *had to have been in existence at the time of Adam!*

Paul further states, "[S]in is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13). But *sin* was imputed to Adam. Therefore, there was a law in force in the very earliest days of human history. And, as we shall see, that law included all of the Ten Commandments.

The word *sin* is found in numerous scriptures that pertain to the time before the Decalogue was delivered to Israel. For example, concerning the wickedness of ancient Sodom, God says, "[T]heir *sin* is very grievous" (Genesis 18:20); and Peter mentions the Sodomites' "unlawful deeds" (2 Peter 2:8). Before the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, Pharaoh stated, "I have *sinned* this time...I and my people are wicked" (Exodus 9:27). A short time later Pharaoh "*sinned* yet more" (Exodus 9:34). And still later, he told Moses and Aaron, "I have *sinned* against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my *sin* this once..." (Exodus 10:16-17).

Many of the laws found in the so-called "law of Moses" are often thought to be unique to the time following Israel's departure from Egypt. But evidence indicates that many of those laws were already in existence. For example, tithing

and “clean and unclean” laws are among the many statutes and ordinances of the law given through Moses. Yet, we find that Noah, who lived on both sides of the Flood, knew the difference between clean and unclean animals (Genesis 7; 8:40), and both Abraham and Jacob paid tithes (Genesis 14:20; 28:22; Hebrews 7:5–9).

Now let us see irrefutable proof that all the Ten Commandments were in full force before the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai.

False Gods, Idolatry, Blasphemy

In the First Commandment of the Decalogue, God says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).

When, do you suppose, was the First Commandment violated for the first time by a human being? In the time of Moses? No! Believe it or not, the First Commandment was transgressed in the *Garden of Eden*—at the beginning of human history. Adam and Eve, though they conversed with God, walked with Him through the Garden, and sat at His feet as He personally instructed them, *put another “god” before the true God!*

How did it happen?

Paul explains, “[T]o whom ye yield yourselves to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (Romans 6:16). A person’s “god” is whatever he serves, obeys, and yields his will to; it is that which he allows to rule over him. If he obeys his own lusts, while ignoring God’s commandments, his own lustfulness becomes his god.

Of such, Paul writes, “Whose end is destruction, *whose god is their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:19).

Now, with this in mind, let’s go to the book of Genesis and see how our first parents submitted to the dominion of another god.

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:1–6).

The “serpent,” who was Satan the devil, first appealed to Eve’s as yet undiscovered sense of self-importance and latent desire to exalt self: “[Y]our eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods....” Next, he appealed to lust: “[T]he tree was *good for food*, and...*pleasant to the eyes*...” Finally, he appealed to vanity: “...and a tree to be desired *to make one wise*.”

Adam and Eve obeyed their own lusts; thus, their lusts became a god to them. They submitted to the devil, as have their descendants; thus, the devil is called “the *god of this world*” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

We can see, then, that the progenitors of all humankind violated the First Commandment. They put other things ahead of God. But Adam and Eve were not the only ones to commit this sin.

Their firstborn, Cain, also committed this sin by putting his feelings of jealousy and resentment ahead of God’s will. When the offering of his brother Abel was accepted of God, but his was not, Cain grew bitter toward his brother (Genesis 4:3–5). Notice God’s response to Cain’s behavior: “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” (verses 6–7).

But Cain did *not* rule over sin. “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (verse 8). Thus, Cain compounded his sin—adding the sin of *murder* to his previous sin. Rather than rule his negative emotions, Cain submitted to his feelings of anger, resentment, bitterness, and hatred. His own raging passions *ruled* over him, becoming his *god*.

Now, go to Genesis 35, and see how the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4–6) was violated in the pre-Mosaic world. “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make

there an altar unto God....Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, *Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments....And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand*" (Genesis 35:1-4).

The strange gods were "in their hand"—they were *idols*, or hand-made objects of worship. Jacob commanded his people to *cleanse* themselves by putting these objects away. If the use of idols had not been wrong in those days, as some have suggested, then why would Jacob command his household to put their idols away? Clearly, idolatry was a violation of God's law.

In the book of Joshua we see further testimony that the sin of idolatry was extant in the ancient world. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood [the river—apparently the Euphrates] in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: *and they served other gods*" (Joshua 24:2). God, through Joshua, goes on to tell the Israelites, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and *put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [river], and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve*" (verses 14-15).

If the ancients served *other* gods, they did not serve the true God. They were guilty of violating both the First and Second Commandments.

We also have clear proof that

the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!" (Exodus 20:7)—was in full force before the time of Moses.

In Leviticus 18, God warns Israel of several sins and abominations that had defiled the nations, and affirms: "For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were *before* you, and the land is defiled" (verse 27). Notice, the men of these nations had committed these abominations *before* the time of Moses!

By reading the preceding verses we can discover *which* abominations had been committed in the pre-Mosaic era, resulting in defilement of the land. Beginning with verse 6, and reading through the entire chapter, we find laws prohibiting all types of adulterous relationships, including incest, homosexuality, and bestiality. God says, "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you" (verse 24).

But sexual perversions were not the only sins that had defiled the nations of the pre-Mosaic period. Notice verse 21: "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire of Molech [practice of child sacrifice], *neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.*" Violation of the Third Commandment was among the *abominations* commonly committed by the nations.

Murder, Adultery, Dishonoring Parents

When Adam disobeyed God, he *dishonored* his Spiritual Parent, therefore breaking the

Fifth Commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

In Genesis 9, we find another violation of the Fifth Commandment. Noah, after having had too much wine, "was uncovered within his tent. And Ham...saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without...And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew that his younger son had done unto him" (verses 21,22,24). Noah, angered by the *dishonor* shown by his younger son, declared a curse upon him (verse 25).

As mentioned previously, Cain *murdered* his brother Abel (Genesis 4), therefore violating the Sixth Commandment. For this sin, God pronounced a curse on Cain: "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand" (verse 11).

Jesus said the devil "was a murderer *from the beginning*" (John 8:44). From the beginning—*long before Moses*—the devil was a *murderer*, a transgressor of God's law. The sin of murder was imputed to the devil apparently from the time he duped Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, an act with *deadly* consequences (see Genesis 2:17)—proving that a *law* against murder was in existence even at that time.

Now we come to the Seventh Commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). The word *adultery* refers primarily to extramarital sexual relations, but by association includes all forms of sexual impurity and perversity. These, as

we have seen, were among the "abominations" that had defiled the nations *before* the time of Moses (Leviticus 18).

Sexual perversity was rampant in ancient Sodom. After two angels (who appeared as men) entered the house of Lot (located in Sodom), "the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so *wickedly*" (Genesis 19:4-7).

The Sodomite perverts wanted to appease their sick sexual appetites by committing abominable acts with the two strangers. Read the rest of the chapter, and see God's views on the "rights" of practicing homosexuals and other sexual deviants. God *destroyed them all* in a miraculous fire—like a miniature *Gehenna!*

It was God, not man, who created the institution of marriage. And it was He who created the laws of marriage. Marital unfaithfulness, fornication, homosexuality, and all forms of sexual perversity are violations of the Seventh Commandment—all are *adultery*; all *break one of the Ten Commandments*.

Jesus confirms that a marriage law has been in existence since the very beginning of human history.

"The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a

man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. *What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

"They say unto Him, Why, did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: *but from the beginning it was not so*" (Matthew 19:3-8).

It is clear, then, that God's laws of marriage, including a law against adultery, existed in the very beginning. And there is yet more proof that the Seventh Commandment was in force before the time of Moses.

In Genesis 20, we find Abraham and Sarah sojourning in a place called Gerar. Abraham, fearing for his own life, told Abimelech, king of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister; so the king sent for Sarah, to take her as his wife or concubine.

Notice what happened: "But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; *for she is a man's wife*" (verse 3). Sexual relations with another man's wife is *adultery*. Abimelech was about to commit this sin with Sarah before God intervened.

Continuing the account: "But Abimelech had not come

near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation [margin: "an innocent people"]? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from *sinning against me*: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (verses 4-6).

Remember, *sin* is defined as "the transgression of the law." In the above account, God prevents Abimelech from touching Sarah, and says that such an act would be *sin!* We see plainly, then, that there was a law against adultery—and this was *centuries* before the time of Moses.

The story of Joseph supplies further proof that the Seventh Commandment was in force before the Sinai Covenant.

Joseph was a servant in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. "And it came to pass...that his master's wife [Potiphar's wife] cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this *great wickedness*, and *sin against God?*" (Genesis 39:7-9).

Joseph lived long before the time of Moses. Again, we see

proof positive that God's law existed in the days of the Patriarchs—many years previous to the Sinai Covenant.

Stealing, Lying, Covetousness

Jacob, in settling on wages he was to receive from his father-in-law Laban, proposed to go through Laban's flocks and herds and remove the speckled, spotted, and discolored animals, and take them for his own. "[E]very one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep," Jacob said, "that shall be counted *stolen* with me" (Genesis 30:33).

Obviously, Jacob recognized that one who steals is deserving of punishment. Jacob, then, acknowledged the validity of the Eighth Commandment—"Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

But the sin of stealing long pre-dates the time of Jacob. In the Garden of Eden, God said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

But, as we know, Adam and Eve *did* eat of the forbidden fruit. They took what was not rightfully theirs—they *stole!*

They also violated the Tenth Commandment—"Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17)—by *lusting* for what was not rightfully theirs.

The Ninth Commandment—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20:16)—was violated when Satan the devil lied to Eve. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every

tree of the garden?" the devil asked. "And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, *Ye shall not surely die*" (Genesis 3:3-4).

Jesus Christ says the devil "is a *liar*, and the father of it" (John 8:44). By lying, the devil led Eve into committing an act that invoked the death sentence. Therefore, the Satan's lie was *against* the woman, and was a false witness against God, for he was calling God a liar.

Clearly, God's law was already in force when Adam opened his eyes for the first time. Few will deny that *a* law—a moral law of some type—was in force at that time, but many will deny that all of the Ten Commandments were in full force.

Virtually every professing Christian readily agrees that serving false gods, idolatry, lying, and covetousness are *sins*, and are transgressions of God's law. Almost everyone believes that *nine* of the Ten Commandments are, and always have been, in full force!

But what about the Fourth Commandment—the one not mentioned in the above paragraph? Was the command to keep holy the Sabbath day in force in the time of Adam? Did Abraham keep the Sabbath? Did Noah observe the seventh day?

The Fourth Commandment

As we have seen, at least nine of the Ten Commandments were in force before they were spoken

by God at Sinai. But is there any evidence that a Sabbath law was in effect before the giving of the law at Sinai?

Carefully notice the following passages:

Exodus 16:4-5: "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no."

Exodus 16:22-23: "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning."

Exodus 16:25-29: "And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath unto the Lord: today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my *commandments* and my *laws*? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

Some will argue that all the above references to the Sabbath pertain to the time of Moses and,

therefore, cannot be used to prove the existence of a pre-Sinai Sabbath. Yes, it is true that the above scriptures pertain to the time of Moses, but they also pertain to a time *preceding* the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. God had the children of Israel keeping His Sabbath *before they reached Sinai!*

The Fourth Commandment, as given from Sinai, reads: “Remember the Sabbath day....” The fact that they were to *remember* the Sabbath indicates that it had already been revealed to them, and suggests that it had been known long before the time of Moses.

As we have seen, the Sabbath was established immediately after the creation of the first man, and has from that time served as a memorial of the week of Creation: “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work...For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:9–11).

Now compare the above with the Creation account: “Thus the heavens and the earth

were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the *seventh day* from all His work which He had made. And God *blessed* the seventh day, and *sanctified* it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:1–3).

Jesus Christ said “the Sabbath was *made for man*” (Mark 2:27). Who made the Sabbath? As we read in the above passage, God made it! He made it, He sanctified and blessed it, *for man*—AT CREATION WEEK!

So the Sabbath, which was made for man, goes all the way back to the beginning of human history. But was it observed by God-fearing men in the pre-Mosaic world?

In Genesis 26:5, God says, “Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my *commandments*, my *statutes*, and my *laws*.” Is it not obvious *which* commandments, statutes, and laws Abraham kept? Since Abraham was a commandment-keeper, and since the Sabbath was established at Creation, can we not logically conclude that Abraham kept the Sabbath?

Noah was a “preacher of *righteousness*” (2 Peter 2:5); Lot

is called a “*righteous man*” who “vexed his *righteous* soul from day to day” (verse 7); and Abel is called “*righteous Abel*” (Matthew 23:35). Notice that these patriarchs are called *righteous men*. What does it mean to be “righteous”?

Psalms 119:172 says, “for all thy *commandments* are *righteousness*.” A man who has been declared righteous on the basis of faith—as were the patriarchs named above—will certainly endeavor to follow the path of righteousness as set forth in the *Ten Commandments*.

In light of all we have seen, is there any reason to believe that Abraham, Noah, Abel, and others who lived in pre-Mosaic times did not keep the Sabbath? In truth, there is every reason to believe they *did* keep holy the seventh day.

The heading at the beginning of this article asks, “Was Moses the Lawgiver?” The answer is no, he was not. God revealed His law to Israel *through* Moses, but it was *His* law! And, as we have clearly seen, every one of the Ten Commandments was in full force *before* the time of Moses. Therefore, since Moses did not bring God’s laws into existence, Moses’ passing from the scene could not do away with them! □

