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Written By The Finger of God

EXODUS 31:18

Introduction

1. You and I are presently living in an age of moral relativism.
2. Moral relativism is the belief that we are free to make up our own rules, according to our own personal preferences.
3. People who hold to this philosophy believe that law is not something that comes from God, but something that we come up with on our own.
4. James Patterson and Peter Kim co-authored a book over 20 years ago titled, *The Day America Told The Truth*, in which they said we are living in a time when there is “absolutely no moral consensus at all . . . Everyone is making up their own personal moral codes — their own Ten Commandments.”
5. They conducted a number of surveys to determine the rules by which people are presently living — here a few they discovered:
 - I don’t see the point in observing the Sabbath;
 - I will steal from those who won’t really miss it;
 - I will lie when it suits me, so long as it doesn’t cause any real damage;
 - I will cheat on my spouse—after all, given the chance, he or she will do the same;
 - I will procrastinate at work and do absolute nothing about one full day in every five.¹
6. In their book, Mr. Patterson and Mr. Kim pointed to a report by the Princeton Religion Research Center from September 2001 which found that “while church attendance and Bible reading had increased, morality declined at the same time.”

¹ James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told the Truth* (New York: Plume, 1992), 201.

7. The report's explanation for why this would be true was that "people don't know the God of the Bible and therefore don't recognize the authority of His law.
8. Starting tonight, and continuing for several weeks, I would like for us to spend our time learning more about the God of the Bible and His law, specifically the Ten Commandments.
9. Tonight, I would like for us to begin our study by looking at these commandments, their origination and utilization throughout the Scriptures.

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I. God's Moral Law

A. FIRST SEEN IN THE GARDEN

1. Adam and Eve were ruled by the basic principles of the Ten Commandments — love for God and love for one another.
2. They were obligated to . . .
 - a. honor one another (Genesis 2:24)

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24, NASB95)

- b. preserve life (Genesis 2:16-17)

"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16–17, NASB95)

- c. tell the truth (Genesis 3:11-13)

"And He [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree,

and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.””

(Genesis 3:11–13, NASB95)

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3. In their first sin, Adam and Eve managed to violate nearly all of God’s basic rules:
 - a. Taking the forbidden fruit was a theft, initiated by a covetous desire, based upon a lie by the serpent about God’s character.
 - b. Eating the fruit dishonored God.
 - c. The act of eating the fruit was also the equivalent of murder because death ultimately spread to all mankind (cf. Romans 5:12).

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—”

(Romans 5:12, NASB95)

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B. THROUGHOUT THE BOOK OF GENESIS

1. In the Genesis account, we find a number of God’s people breaking His law.
2. Noah’s son, Ham, was cursed for dishonoring his father (Genesis 9:18-25).
3. Cain was condemned for murdering his brother (Genesis 4:10-12).
4. Rachel was guilty of stealing (Genesis 31:19-32).
5. Abraham lied about his wife Sarah (Genesis 20:2).
6. Lot’s wife was covetous (Genesis 19:26).
7. Though the law was yet to be written by God on the tablets of stone, God had already written it in their hearts (Romans 2:14-15).

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“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, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,” (Romans 2:14–15, NASB95)

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C. DISPLAYED IN EGYPT AND THE EXODUS

1. In the time leading up to and including Israel’s exodus from Egypt, we have clear examples of the violation of the commandments which God will give to His people at Mt. Sinai.
2. The ten plagues which God visited upon Pharaoh and Egypt were a direct punishment for the nation’s idolatry which violated the first and second commandments (Exodus 20:3,4).

“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.” (Exodus 20:3–4, NASB95)

3. The burning bush had taught Moses to honor God’s name (Exodus 3:4-6).

“Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (Exodus 3:5, NASB95)

4. In providing the Israelites with manna to eat, six days out of seven, God revealed the Sabbath principle of the fourth commandment.
5. Those who failed to obey His instructions suffered for their disobedience (Exodus 16).
6. The point in all of this is that God’s law was in effect in a number of ways long before the Israelites ever reached Mount Sinai.

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D. WHAT ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

1. We might consider them a fresh copy of His law, a republication.

2. It was at Mount Sinai that these laws were finally codified, compiled into an orderly collection.
3. In these commandments we see the unchangeable character of God.

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II. The Law of Christ

A. IS THE LAW STILL BINDING TODAY?

1. Do the Ten Commandments have any abiding relevance in today's culture for those of us who are Christians?
2. The answer is yes — God's standard has not changed any more than His character has changed.
3. Some deny that God's law is still in effect today.
4. This is based upon the way that many read the Bible:
 - a. The apostle John wrote, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17, NASB95)
 - b. The apostle Paul wrote:

"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14, NASB95)

"But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."
(Galatians 3:25, NASB95)

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5. However, there are other New Testament passages which indicate that the law is still in effect:

"to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law." (1 Corinthians 9:21, NASB95)

"But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of

a letter of the Law to fail.” (Luke 16:17, NASB95)

6. The New Testament speaks of the law in several different ways.
7. The reason this is true is because there are several different kinds of law.

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B. THREE TYPES OF LAW

1. The ceremonial law
 - a. Regulations for celebrating various religious festivals (e.g., Unleavened Bread, Feast of the Harvest and Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:14-16)).
 - b. Regulations for worshiping God in His sanctuary (Exodus 25-30).
(Included laws for clean and unclean foods, instructions for ritual purity, guidelines for the conduct of priests, especially the instructions for offering sacrifices — simply put, the whole sacrificial system)
 - c. This law is no longer in effect. It has been abolished.
 - 1) All of its regulations pointed forward to Jesus Christ.
 - 2) Of these O. T. Ceremonies, the apostle Paul wrote “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:17, ESV).
 - 3) Christ’s offering of Himself as the once-for-all atonement for sin means that no further sacrifice is needed.
 - 4) To continue following the old ceremonies would be to deny the sufficiency of our Lord’s work on the cross.

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2. The civil law
 - a. Laws that governed Israel as a nation under God.
 - b. Included guidelines for waging war, restrictions on land use, regulations for debt, and penalties for specific violations of Israel’s legal code.

- c. This law has also expired.
 - 1) The church is not a state (Israel was a theocracy).
 - 2) While we do have a King (Christ), His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).
 - 3) While there are in these laws principles useful for governing of nations today, God's people are no longer bound by their specific regulations.

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- 3. The moral law
 - a. Summarized in the Ten Commandments.
 - b. The righteous and external standard for our relationship with God and others.
 - c. The New Testament does not declare an end to God's moral law as the standard for our lives.
 - d. Jesus is the same God who revealed His law to Moses.
 - e. The law expresses the character of the Son as well as the Father.

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- f. Notice what Jesus says in His Sermon on the Mount:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:17–18, NASB95)

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19, NASB95)

Conclusion

1. Over the next few weeks we will be looking at what God's word has to say about His law.
2. Tonight, it is important that we each recognize God has a standard of righteousness which each of us will never reach.

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3. Long ago the prophet Isaiah wrote,

“For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.”

(Isaiah 64:6)

4. It was the apostle Paul who said, “for all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
5. However, if you look on both sides of that verse you find something truly encouraging:

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“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe . . . being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:21-22, 24).

6. Wouldn't you like to have that righteousness in your life?
7. You can. Paul said that it is God's gift to us through His grace, made possible through the redemption that is found in Jesus Christ.
8. Will you come to Him tonight?