

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2014: *Christ and His Law*
Lesson 1 “Laws *in Christ’s Day*”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 2:1–5; Heb. 10:28; Deut. 17:2–6; Lev. 1:1–9; Luke 14:1–6; James 2:8–12.

Memory Text

“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).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Roman Law
- III. Mosaic Law: Civic
- IV. Mosaic Law: Ceremonial
- V. Rabbinic Law
- VI. The Moral Law
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. Both Old and New Testaments are full of legal language. What is the purpose of that language and what does it tell us about God? What is the “larger view” of law in the Bible? (Quarter Introduction)
2. Like any analogy, the language of law court, statute and commandments has both strengths and weaknesses in describing the ways of God. What are some of those strengths and weaknesses? (Quarter Introduction)
3. According to the lesson author “Love rests on freedom and freedom rests on law.” He goes on to say, “The link between our loving God and the keeping of His commandments is stronger than we realize.” Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Why or why not? (Quarter Introduction)
4. Read Romans 2:14. What does the fact that Gentiles are able to “do instinctively the things of the law” imply about law? What does this tell us about God? (Sabbath afternoon)
5. The lesson states that “for the most part, Rome allowed vassal kingdoms to maintain their own customs, but all subjects were expected to obey imperial and senatorial

- laws.” Is health care today one of those things that should be controlled by federal law or should each state or community “maintain their own customs?” What about marriage law? Does the state or federal government have a civil interest in regulating marriage? If so, what is that interest? How should the church respond if state or federal government changes the rules on marriage? (Sunday’s lesson)
6. Read Matthew 26:59-61, Hebrews 10:28, and Deuteronomy 17:2-6. What important principle is seen here? What does this tell us about the biblical concepts of justice and fairness? (Monday’s lesson)
 7. Some of the civil laws in the early books of the Bible seem rather strange to us today. Considering God is the author of most of these laws, what does that tell us about God? (Monday’s lesson)
 8. Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 364-367. According to this passage, how should we relate to some of the strange civil and ceremonial laws in the Bible today? (Tuesday’s lesson)
 9. The Jews tried to ensure their obedience to God’s commandments by “placing a hedge around the Law” through oral additions and elaborations. Do we do similar things today? Are there better ways to ensure obedience than to “guard the edges” of God’s laws with additional safeguards? (Wednesday’s lesson)
 10. Read Matthew 19:16-19, Romans 13:8-10, and James 2:8-12. What do these verses say about the role that the Ten Commandments played in the lives of those who followed Christ in New Testament times? (Thursday’s lesson)
 11. Where do concepts of good and evil come from in societies that aren’t based on the Bible? What do nearly all civil laws have in common? (Friday’s lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And he was chided—even by some Christians who hadn’t worked it out too well yet, and they would say to Paul, “Aren’t you doing away with the law by your emphasis on trust?”

“No,” he said, Romans 3:31. “Faith does not abolish law. Faith establishes law, by putting it in its proper perspective.”

Next question: “What is the proper perspective? What is the over-all view, the larger view of all this?”

The answer is in Galatians 3, the text that was the basis of the Minneapolis General Conference discussion. Look at that, Galatians 3:19.

“Why then the law?” he was asked.

“It was added.” What law was added? Remember the debate at Minneapolis? Was it the Ten Commandments? Was it the ceremonial law? They had quite a disagreement. When we get to Galatians, I’ll bring the documents (some of which are not published at the present time). Did

you know that the President of the General Conference and a young physician—they wrote two books holding two opposite views on this matter? Elder Butler and Dr. Waggoner. I mean, how could a young physician talk to the General Conference President like that? It was very respectful! The introductions are very polite. But then they mince no words about their disagreement. So they went to Ellen White and said, “What law was added to be our guardian to bring us to Christ?”

“Why,” she says, “it was the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial law; all of it.” All law was added because of the emergency of sin.

But what is sin? Romans 14, “Sin is a lack of trust. A breach of trust.”

What is sin? 1 John 3:4, “Sin is rebelliousness.” Sin is a stubborn unwillingness to listen. Or in the book of James, sin is knowing to do what is right and not doing it. Doesn’t that perfectly describe the children of Israel when God brought them out of the land of Egypt? Was there trust?

Now, He gave them a chance, first. He said, “Let me be your God, and you be My people. Let’s trust each other. I can get you into Canaan. You won’t even have to fight.” And Ellen White observes, it was never God’s design that they fight their way into Canaan, any more than they fought their way out of Egypt. He would have fed them and clothed them. Did they get ill in the wilderness? Did they lack anything? Nothing. He said, “I’ll take you there, and the angel will clear the way before you. Yes, I’ll have to lay many of My sinful children to sleep until the resurrection, but let Me put the Canaanites to sleep and all those other people. Let Me do it. They are My children.” It’s hard for us to kill each other without getting angry while we do it. Let the Eternal God put His own children to sleep. It would be much better, wouldn’t it?

But they didn’t trust Him—didn’t trust Him on anything. And when they got to the river Jordan, they begged Moses to take them back to Egypt. What do you do with people who aren’t willing to listen and don’t trust you? Rebellious people. (1 John 3:4) Untrusting people (Romans 14). Don’t you have to do everything that is described in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy?

Well, there was one other thing God could have done. He could have said, “I think that surely none of My loyal angels would misunderstand Me if I let those noisy, troublesome, ungrateful, untrustworthy people go.” But instead of doing that, He went to work. All through these books; first He raised His voice. Then He even had to tell them how to be modest in worship, how to be reverent, how to do this, that and the other, in great detail. How He could be misunderstood as a fussy, arbitrary, even fuddy-duddy God, hardly One to be revered and respected, surely not One to be loved; but a God who desires the service of fear.

But the prophets came along and they didn’t misunderstand it that way, did they? How could Hosea, and Amos, and Micah, and David even, and Isaiah and Jeremiah understand as clearly as

they did? Apparently, though, it takes a little time. It took Saul (later Paul), quite some time to put it all together. And when he put it all together, he wrote in Galatians 3, “Let me tell you why God gave us all these things in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It was all added because we were such sinners, and so stubborn, and so noisy, and so ungrateful.”

The amazing thing is that instead of giving us up, God stooped to meet us where we are. He spoke a language we could understand. He led us no faster than we were able to follow. And He ran a grave risk of being misunderstood, in using such methods to get our attention and hold it long enough to tell us more of the truth about Himself. In that light, all of this material in the Old Testament is magnificent evidence of the truth about God. What a condescending, skillful, versatile Teacher He is! If that’s where the people were, that’s where He met them. That’s why He didn’t give the Sermon on the Mount on Sinai. They wouldn’t have respected it. They wouldn’t even have heard it. It took thunder and lightning. What a terrible thing though, that He had to say “stop the killing, and the stealing, and the lying, and the cheating.” But then in the tenth Commandment, He indicated how lofty His ideals were. He said, when I’ve really fulfilled My purposes for you, My children, you not only won’t do any of those things prohibited here; you won’t even want to. You’ll love and trust in the highest sense of freedom. That’s what I want. But only occasionally did He have a friend who really saw the truth.

And I maintain that’s where we are right now. And there’s a call to go back to the symbols and to the legal picture, to the limited, legal model of things which God indeed most graciously gave us.

But that was an emergency measure. It’s time for us to climb up the mountain to the mouth of the cave with Elijah, and to stand with Hosea, and Micah, and Amos, and David, and Paul, and realize that behind any and all methods, emergency methods that God has used for our sakes, there remains the one and only thing He has ever asked of His children, and that is trust. But His enemies have said He cannot be trusted. God has demonstrated the truth. Look what it cost Him! Look what He’s done to demonstrate that He can be trusted. Anybody who would go to those lengths can be trusted. But sometimes we get so involved in all the emergency measures; we forget what it is He really wants.

So the question today is, “Why, then, the whole legal model?” It was added because of lack of trust, because of rebelliousness. But let’s not be so caught up in the emergency measures that we forget that God’s intent is that ultimately we trust Him enough, even trust each other enough, and be trustworthy ourselves enough, to be safe for life to continue as it was in the beginning: perfect freedom, perfect security, perfect happiness; everybody trusting everybody else. Even God able to trust in us. If the whole plan of salvation and the blood of Christ do not lead us back to trust, they are of absolutely no avail. That’s my absolute conviction from reading all Sixty-six. And I see it in every one of the Books. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the

audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 - Leviticus, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

“Why then the law?” he wrote to the Galatians. “It was added because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19). It was designed to be our guardian, our protector, to bring us back to a right relationship with God. Correctly understood, God’s laws are no threat to our freedom. They were given solely for our best good; they all make good sense and deserve to be intelligently obeyed.

But as for those meaningless traditions that have nothing to do with the purposes of God, away with them! As Paul wrote to the Colossians: “Why... do you take the slightest notice of these purely human prohibitions— ‘Don’t touch this,’ ‘Don’t taste that,’ and ‘Don’t handle the other’? ‘This,’ ‘that,’ and ‘the other’ will all pass away after use! I know that these regulations look wise with their self-inspired efforts at piety, their policy of self-humbling, and their studied neglect of the body. But in actual practice they are of no moral value, but simply pamper the flesh” (Colossians 2:20–23, Phillips).

Worse than that, taught and obeyed in the name of Christianity, they present the Christian’s God as the arbitrary deity Satan has claimed him to be—and that is not good news.

What is it today that we Christians are trying to say about our God? Is it the truth? Is it really good news? Are we using the best ways of saying it? In spite of our best efforts, what are people actually hearing? Are there perhaps better ways to say it?

I believe that these are the most important questions facing us Christians today—for our own salvation and in order to fulfill our mission to the world. History warns that there is no justification for an easy confidence. There is a certain elusiveness about the Good News. It is not something that can be summarily stated and hammered home. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, pp. 32-33. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-04>

In recent years, several religious polls have included this query about the most important question people would like to ask God. The responses have ranged from requests for material things—especially instant health and instant wealth—to most thoughtful inquiries about God himself.

The questions the disciples asked often reflected their selfish concerns, such as which of them was the greatest. (See Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46-48) They were still arguing about this during their last supper with Jesus before he was crucified! (See Luke 22:24)

On an earlier occasion, two of them, who were brothers, had presumed to ask the Son of God if, in his coming kingdom, they could sit beside him in the most honored positions. They even brought their mother with them to intercede, to help persuade the Lord to give them the answer they wanted. (See Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28) The request was not granted, but the other disciples were angry with the two brothers. Not that they were above making such a request for themselves!

If you could have been with Jesus and his disciples that last night in the upper room, and you could have asked the Lord one question, what would it have been?

If Paul had been there, I wonder what question he might have asked. A few years later, in his epistle to believers in Galatia, he posed a question that would have been so appropriate for one of the disciples to raise that last night in the upper room. Paul's question was, "Why then the law?" (Galatians 3:19, NRSV)

Many of us have joined with Paul in considering this question. We love what Jesus said about freedom, friendship, love and trust. We also know from experience that none of these things can be commanded. Why, then, did God make so much use of law? Why would he order his children to love him and love each other—under threat of dire consequences if they failed to obey. Isn't this much more likely to produce trembling, sullen or even rebellious servants, rather than loyal and understanding friends? Why would God choose to run such risk?

Some of us also enjoy what Jesus said about speaking plainly and clearly. There is so much "dark speech" when people talk about God and salvation. But if God prefers simplicity and understanding, why did he tell Moses to establish such a complicated system of ceremonies and sacrifices, with all the strange symbols and figures of speech. Isn't all this mystery and pomp more likely to increase the distance between the Father and his children and make it more difficult for them to think and talk about him clearly? Why would God be willing to run this risk?

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul offers an answer to his own question. "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions." (Galatians 3:19, NRSV) This is the translation of the *New International* and the *New Revised Standard* versions.

But the Greek word translated "because of" can also mean "for the purpose of." So the *Good News Bible* says that the law was added "in order to show what wrongdoing is." And the *Revised English Bible* explains that "it was added to make wrongdoing a legal offense."

One thing seems clear. If God's people had not been misbehaving, there would have been no need for the added law. As was explained to young pastor Timothy, "laws are made, not for good people, but for lawbreakers and criminals, for the godless and sinful, for those who are not religious or spiritual, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the immoral, for sexual perverts, for kidnappers, for those who lie and give false testimony or who do anything else contrary to sound doctrine." (1 Timothy 1:9, 10, GNB)

Phillips translates, "The Law is not really meant for the good man, but for the man who has neither principles nor self-control."

God added the law because he knew we needed it. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, pp. 86-88. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter7.html>

Further Study with Ellen White

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood. {MH 131.1}

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. {DA 763.2}

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God. {GC 591.2}

We need to know for ourselves what voice we are heeding, whether it is the voice of the true and living God or the voice of the great apostate. . . . {Ev 598.2}

Christ Himself had given both the moral and the ceremonial law. He did not come to destroy confidence in His own instruction. It was because of His great reverence for the law and the prophets that He sought to break through the wall of traditional requirements which hemmed in the Jews. While He set aside their false interpretations of the law, He carefully guarded His disciples against yielding up the vital truths committed to the Hebrews. {DA 307.2}

From the creation the moral law was an essential part of God's divine plan, and was as unchangeable as Himself. The ceremonial law was to answer a particular purpose in Christ's plan for the salvation of the race. The typical system of sacrifices and offerings was established

that through these services the sinner might discern the great offering, Christ. But the Jews were so blinded by pride and sin that but few of them could see farther than the death of beasts as an atonement for sin; and when Christ, whom these offerings prefigured, came, they could not discern Him. (RH May 6, 1875). {6BC 1094.9}

From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God's law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued. Whether this be accomplished by casting aside the law altogether, or by rejecting one of its precepts, the result will be ultimately the same. He that offends "in one point," manifests contempt for the whole law; his influence and example are on the side of transgression; he becomes "guilty of all." James 2:10. {GC 582.1}

In seeking to cast contempt upon the divine statutes, Satan has perverted the doctrines of the Bible, and errors have thus become incorporated into the faith of thousands who profess to believe the Scriptures. The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of Jehovah, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition. {GC 582.2}

The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke 10:27. See also Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Leviticus 19:18. In the Ten Commandments these principles are carried out in detail, and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man. {PP 305.2}

The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10. {GC 467.1}