

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-19 God's Law: God Gives the Law

The school teacher was very frustrated. The behavior of the students in her class was becoming worse and worse. She found that she had to correct them over and over. One day the entire class became noisy and unruly. It was very hard for her to teach. "What is wrong with you students? Do you not know how to behave in class?" She shouted at them in anger. All of the children were shocked at her raised voice and became very quiet. They looked at each other with surprise. Their teacher had never raised her voice like that before. Finally, one student raised his hand. "Yes, what is it?" The teacher snapped at him.

"You have never told us how to behave in class," he said with a meek voice. The teacher thought for a moment. She had expected all of the children to know what the right behavior in her class was. But she had never told them what she expected, nor had she set any rules of behavior. Each child was behaving as they wanted.

Now Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden. He had set for them only one rule: "Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2:17). Their relationship with God balanced their desires for selfish behavior. But when they disobeyed God and the relationship was broken, there was nothing to balance their selfishness. This imbalance affected the lives of their children and all of their descendants.

It is hard for selfish people to be in relationship with those around them. The reason is that each person behaves according to their own self-interest. Throughout history, governments have created laws to try to restrict selfish behavior and thus allow societies to function. Humankind attempts to balance self with laws. Often, these laws are obeyed only if an officer is there to enforce them. Human self-interest often wins out over laws issued by humans. Such laws are never a perfect solution. Only relationship with God can balance a person's self.

Now the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. God raised up Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and back to the Promised Land. God had promised it to Abraham, the founder of their race. About 70 descendants of Abraham had entered Egypt. Moses, however, led more than two million descendants of Abraham out of Egypt 400 years later. These Israelites were no different than everyone else. Each of them had sinned and thus were separated from God. Since they were out of balance, each person lived according to his own self-interest. No nation, society, or community can survive this way. So, God led Moses and the Israelites into the desert to Mount Sinai.

Moses went up onto the mountain and there God came and spoke to him. The Lord instructed Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people." So, Moses had the people prepare themselves. On the morning of the third day, there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the

people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain” (Ex 19:10-11, 16-17). Moses then went up into the smoke and onto the mountain to meet with God.

And God spoke these words: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” This is the first commandment and it deals specifically with our relationship with God.

God then issued another command in regard to relationship with him. “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.”

The third command also deals with relationship with God. “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.”

The fourth command finalized the rules of relationship with God. “Remember the seventh day by keeping it holy.”

The first four commands of God clearly deal with a person’s relationship with God. These laws are just as valid today as they were on the day that God gave them to Moses. Whereas the first four laws govern our relationship with God, the next six laws govern our relationship with each other.

The fifth command was to, “Honor your father and your mother.” The sixth command said, “You shall not murder.” The seventh command is, “You shall not commit adultery.” The eighth command is, “You shall not steal.” The ninth command is, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” And the tenth command is “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, his wife, his servants, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to him.” These commands establish the rules of behavior that create society and please God (Ex 20:1-17).

The family is the basic level of society and God established two direct commands defining family relationships. “Honor your parents” and “honor your spouse by not committing adultery.” The next layer of society is made of those that are not part of your family, but who live near you. “Do not covet or lust after that which belongs to your neighbor.” “Do not lie in testimony in regard to your neighbor.” These two allow people to live together in local community. Finally, God established two laws governing all society, from the family, to the neighbors and community, and to the nation. These are universal to all of humankind. “You will not murder; you will not steal.”

All ten of these commandments were given so that society could exist. They define the rules of relationship with God and each other. All ten of these commandments were designed by God to balance the selfish nature of humanity.

This lesson is **important** because it shows that people cannot balance their selfish nature on their own.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments to counter humanity's selfish nature. He thus established basic rules for relationship—first with God, and then with each other.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. How many of the Ten Commandments deal with a person's relationship with God? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said that first four commandments govern relationship with God, you are correct.

2. How many of the Ten Commandments address relationship within the family? [Pause]

A. If you said, "Two of the commandments—honor your parents and do not commit adultery—address family relationships," you are correct.

3. Why was it necessary for God to give the Israelites the Ten Commandments? [Pause]

A. If you said, "Humanity's relationship with God was broken and 'self' needed something to balance it," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch it at least three more times until you can repeat the Ten Commandments. Here are the Ten Commandments simplified:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make images to worship.
3. You shall not misuse the name of God.
4. You shall keep the seventh day holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not testify falsely.
10. You shall not lust after your neighbor's possessions or spouse.

Find someone and discuss with them the concept that God gave us instructions on how to have good relationships. He did this because our relationship with God is broken, and thus humanity is instinctively selfish.