

## **Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship**

### ***Lesson Th224-7 Law Attempts to Balance Self***

Abesh lived in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and had a big family—five sons and three daughters. He and his wife, Ballaki, loved their children very much. But the children were children. They often fought with each other. They were slow to help their parents with the various tasks that were necessary to run a large family.

One day Abesh returned home from work to find Ballaki very frustrated. “You must do something with these children!” Ballaki demanded. “They had a big fight this afternoon.”

“What were they fighting about?” Abesh asked.

“They were fighting over their toys. One took the other’s toy and soon everyone was fighting. What’s worse, when I tried to get them to calm down, they would not listen to me!” Ballaki cried out of her great frustration.

Abesh called all of the children together and then spoke firmly to them.

“You should love and respect each other. But most importantly, you should love, respect, and obey your parents.” Abesh began. “Because you will not do these things out of love, I am going to make rules for the house. The first rule: You will respect and obey your parents. The second rule: You will respect each other.” Abesh continued to make a short list of rules for the children to obey.

Finally, Binoba, the eldest son spoke up and asked his father a question. “What will happen if we do not obey these rules?”

Abesh gave his son a firm look and then answered. “I love all of you. But you must learn to love and respect your parents and each other. If you disobey my rules, then you will be punished.”

This same story has played out for thousands of years in almost every language, tribe, and nation. We hope that people will treat each other well because of love and respect. We find, however, that the out-of-balance human nature almost always defaults to selfishness. Humankind is out of balance, and without intimate relationship with God, a person will always choose self-centeredness. This out-of-balance condition makes it very difficult to form societies. Even social groups as small as families are strained because of selfishness. Every society that is formed, quickly creates rules and laws to govern relationships within the society. Most of these laws are attempts to balance humankind’s selfishness.

Abraham’s great-grandson, Joseph, led the family into Egypt to escape a great famine. There were about 72 people in the family that moved to Egypt. Some 400 years later, the family had grown to “about 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children” (Ex 12:37). The Egyptian Pharaohs had enslaved the Jewish people, so God sent Moses to deliver them. God performed great miracles through Moses and finally he was able to lead the people out of Egypt. They then began the long journey back to the land that had been promised to Abraham.

Now the people had lived for hundreds of years under the harsh laws and rulers of Egypt. One would hope that, once free from their slavery, they would love and serve the God who had delivered them. They should have rejoiced for each other and treated each other with love and respect. That was not the case. The Jews were no different from any other descendant of Adam and Eve. Each had been born out-of-relationship with God, and thus out-of-balance. They were all born predisposed towards self. God knew this. And in order for the descendants of Abraham to form a society and nation, there had to be laws set in place to balance the selfish nature.

God led Moses and the people of Israel to Mount Sinai. Moses went up to the top of the mountain, where God appeared to him. He gave Moses the Ten Commandments, or laws. These became the core laws that would create a society and balance man's selfish nature.

The first four laws would govern man's relationship with God.

1. You shall have no other Gods but me.
2. You shall not make any idols or images to worship.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. You are to remember the Sabbath, or seventh day, to keep it holy.

The next six laws would form the foundation of human relationship, allowing a society to exist.

5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not commit murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not lie when being a witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet or desire your neighbor's house, his wife, his servants, his livestock, or any of his possessions (Ex 20:3-17).

These commandments were given by God as something the Israelites would understand and be able to live by. But in reality, no one is capable of obeying every law in every situation. The law is perhaps the single best item to attempt to balance mankind, but all too often, man's selfish nature is lifted above God's Law. A person would rather please himself than to please God. When a person breaks the law, they become guilty. We will discuss guilt in future lessons.

This lesson is **important** because it explains why God had to give laws to mankind. The giving of these laws was an attempt to provide man with a means of balancing his selfish nature.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that mankind's instinctive selfish nature cannot be balanced without restoring relationship with God.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did God give to Moses to help balance mankind's selfish nature? [Pause 5 seconds.]
  - A. If you said, "God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments," you are correct.
2. The first four commandments were laws regarding mankind's relationship with whom? [Pause]

A. If you said that the first four commandments established rules of relationship between man and God, you are correct.

3. The last six commandments were laws regarding mankind's relationship with whom? [Pause]

A. If you said that the last six commandments were laws regarding mankind's relationships with each other, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this lesson as many times as is necessary to learn this concept of laws. They were given to balance mankind's selfish nature, allowing for the creation of a society that would have a relationship to God. You should also memorize God's Ten Commandments. Here they are again:

1. You shall have no other Gods but me.
2. You shall not make any idols or images to worship.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. You are to remember the Sabbath, or seventh day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not commit murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not lie when being a witness against your neighbor.
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