

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**C0627 – July 26, 2006 – Ex 18-19 – The Ethics & Law Of The Kingdom**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In America today, the issue of law and ethics in government is usually cast in the Democratic vs. Republican ideology; the Democrats opting for more government, the Republicans opting for less government. Many perceive that more government translates into less freedom and less government translates into more freedom. While it may surprise many Christians, even those who adopt conservative political, legal, and ethical ideologies, more or less government is not the decisive issue in determining freedom. Unfortunately, many Christians have never thought through law, ethics, and freedom from a biblical perspective. The reason is that too many of us have been listening to what the world has to say about law, ethics, and freedom rather than what God says about law, ethics, and freedom. When we do that we have said in effect that the Bible is not sufficient and I must gain information about these areas from somewhere outside the Bible. But the Bible actually does say a lot about law, ethics and freedom and we ought to derive our ideology from the Bible and not from the world. The Bible does not teach that more government means less freedom. The Bible teaches that if the source of the law is God then there is more freedom and if the source of the law is Satan or man then there is less freedom. So, more or less government is not the issue at all.

So, tonight we will look at the law-ethics problem in the Kingdom of Satan and in the Kingdom of God. The contrast between law in the Kingdom of Satan and law in the Kingdom of God has been demonstrated in the course of the great historical events of the Exodus which were orchestrated by the gracious hand of YHWH. Here we see a Hebrew slave people in bondage for 400 years to the earthly powers of the Kingdom of Satan embodied in Egypt and Pharaoh. We saw that by grace through faith God delivered the people from the slavery of the Kingdom of Satan and introduced them to freedom in the Kingdom of God. We then see how He bore them on eagle's wings through the wilderness to Mt Sinai where He gives them the Law of the Kingdom of God.

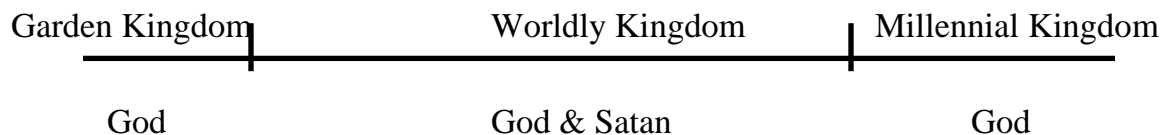
## II. ETHICS AND LAW

To truly appreciate God's revelation of His Law on Mt Sinai one must first grasp some of the problems of ethics and law. So, let's look at "the sources of ethics", "the forms of ethics", and "the relationship between law and ethics" in both the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God.

### A. Two Sources of Law and Ethics

There are two possible sources of law and ethics; (1) the Creator and (2) the creature. At the beginning of time God the Creator established His Garden Kingdom on earth and made Adam His representative king. At that time God was the sole source of law and ethics (Gen 1:28-29; 2:16-17). Adam's responsibility was to rule the Kingdom of God in accordance with His revealed law. However, Adam failed by transgressing the law (Gen 3:6ff). As a consequence Adam handed over the Kingdom of God to Satan so that it became the Kingdom of Satan (Matt 12:26). Instead of Adam, Satan became the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31). Jesus even recognized Satan's rule when he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5-6). In the future, Satan's Kingdom will be destroyed and God will once again establish His Kingdom on earth. God will make Christ, the second Adam, His representative King (Rev 11:15). Then God's will on earth will be done as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10).

So, when we speak of law and ethics in the Garden Kingdom and in the Millennial Kingdom God is the sole source of law and ethics. But during the time of the Worldly Kingdom (Rev 11:15) both God the Creator and Satan the creature are sources of law and ethics in the world.



#### 1. Sources of Law and Ethics in the Worldly Kingdom

I will assume the biblical teaching, that Satan is a creature and that he is the source of many false theories of law and ethics as well as the biblical teaching that man as a creature has a sinful flesh and therefore may originate false theories of law and ethics.

### **a. The Creature**

The basic problems for creatures generating laws and obeying them are three-fold. *First*, creatures are limited mentally, spiritually, and physically. *Second*, limited creatures are now subject to the effects of the fall having acquired a sin nature. *Third*, creatures are subject to Satanic influence and deception. These problems make creatures an inadequate source for laws and ethics. By way of example, let's assume that a creature suggests the following law: "One may do whatever he pleases unless it hurts someone." This all sounds well and good until one reflects upon the previous problems with creatures.

*First*, creatures are physically limited so that we cannot position ourselves at a place where we can observe all the results of a given action and see if our action hurts someone in another place. We are physically limited in space and time.

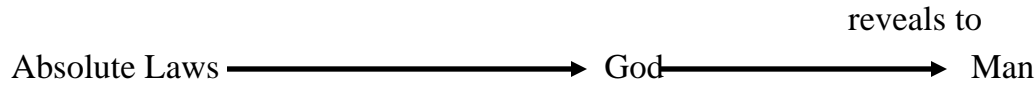
*Second*, creatures are mentally limited so that we have incomplete knowledge. How could we ever know all the consequences of a given action? How can we know that none of those consequences would hurt someone else?

*Third*, creatures are spiritually limited so that when we try to define right and wrong we actually step into the place of God. God made the world and therefore He is the only one who can determine right and wrong in His world. We can reflect on God's laws and live by them but we are in no position to construct laws. Even more problematic is the fact that now we are fallen and subject to the effects of the fall. As fallen we are unable to even do what we know is right (Rom 7:15). Therefore, how are we ever going to make laws that are right? The bottom line is that a creature's limitations, fallen sinful nature, and ease of deception make him an inadequate source for laws and ethics.

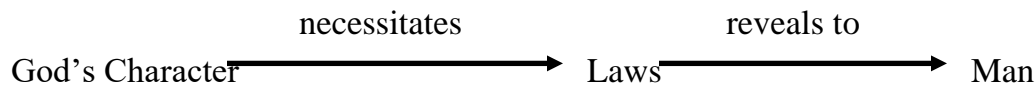
### **b. The Creator**

Sourcing law in the Creator God, however, solves all the problems created by limited, fallen creatures since He has no limitations. For example, since He is omnipresent He is able to personally witness all the consequences of any law on every creature in the universe. Since He is eternal He can see all these consequences simultaneously. He never has to wait to see what the results will be. In addition, since He is omniscient He already knows all the consequences of any law on all creatures in the universe. The bottom line is that He has created the universe in all its dimensions and complexities, therefore He is the only one qualified to determine what is right and wrong.

In claiming that God is the source of law and ethics we need to make sure we understand what that means. It does not mean that God chose to reveal to us a set of Absolute Laws that stand outside of and independent of Him.



Instead, God's own character is the source of law. Law then proceeds necessarily out of His character and is not an independently existing entity. In other words, something is not right or wrong in and of itself but something is right or wrong because God says it is. Graciously, God reveals this law to us.



Thus, something is right because it conforms with God's character and He says it is right and for no other reason.

## 2.     **Forms of Law and Ethics in the Worldly Kingdom**

### a.     **The Creature**

If laws and ethics are going to actually guide us through the chaotic world then the form they take must fit the real world. However, with the creature's limitations, fallen nature, and ease of deception it becomes apparent that when we construct laws they will inevitably not fit the real world. Therefore, our laws always have contradictions. This has resulted in the mass appendices to law in order to try to deal with such contradictions. Practically speaking, in one situation what may be right according to law doesn't work! For example, you get a phone call from your sister who is being attacked at home. The speed limit is 30 miles an hour. By the time you get there it will be too late and she may be dead. Driving 30mph may be right according to law but it may not work. In some situations neither choice is right! For example, an undercover agent may have to forge his identity in order to infiltrate a group of law-breakers and document their illegal activity. Should the agent break the law in order to expose the law-breakers? Even if we choose the "lesser" of two evils does that make it right? Such examples demonstrate that our laws don't conform to the real world and they are really not able to help us get through real life.

### b.     **The Creator**

These are real problems for Christians in the world but there are solutions. Since God is the source of law and ethics and He has graciously revealed law and ethics to us then it follows that the form of ethics has also been revealed. This helps us solve several ethical and legal problems.

*First*, how would you solve Abraham's ethical dilemma in Gen 22? In Gen 9 God said that it was wrong to murder because man is made in God's image. Then, in Gen 22 God told Abraham to murder his own son! This seems to be a direct contradiction and many scholars have noted it as a contradiction. However, in God's form of law, a law may be given with absolute authority but the law then depends on God for its continued authority! In other words, God may suspend the law at a later time. This is true with both physical and moral laws. If God decides to suspend what we call gravity so Peter can walk on water is He not free to do so? If God then decides to suspend the law against murder for a given situation is He not free to do so? The issue is that God imputed new meaning to the life of Isaac, saying that his life was sacrificial. Since God imputes meaning to all things there is no problem here. He is fully justified to suspend His own laws since both laws are somehow consistent with His own character. In such cases man is responsible to follow the most recent law which is exactly what Abraham did.

*Second*, in this same story Abraham faced another dilemma. God had already promised that Isaac would be the child through whom his descendants would be named. If Isaac was killed without any offspring then how could God fulfill His promise? Abraham settled this dilemma by faith, knowing that God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:17-19). This shows that Abraham knew that the Creator God could intervene in his circumstances.

*Third*, this brings up a difficulty we've all experienced. What do you do when you know that following God's law will result in unhappiness or uselessness? For example, the apostles were warned not to speak in Jesus' name. But they refused saying they had to speak in Jesus' name in order to fulfill the great commission. Eventually most of them lost their lives for speaking in Jesus' name. It did not result in their personal happiness and when they were killed they were no longer useful. However, God was able to use even these injustices for the good (Rom 8:28) and the gospel has spread down the corridors of time to our country and our families so that we might believe and have eternal life. So, in instances where following God's law will result in unhappiness or uselessness we still have to follow God's law anyway trusting that He is able to take care of the results in any given situation. Fortunately, this state of affairs is not permanent. In

the Millennial Kingdom following God's law will always result in the most happiness and usefulness.

*Fourth*, another truth about God's ethics is that they are administered pedagogically. That is, God trains man as a father trains his son, giving him the most important objectives first and then, later, giving him higher objectives until the ultimate ideal is reached. This explains why God tolerated polygamy in the OT but not in the NT. God thought there were more important objectives that the human race had to master first before introducing monogamy. God knows which objectives are most important at each stage in history and He implements them at the right time every time. God has yet to reveal the highest moral objectives. That remains for the millennial kingdom. This should demonstrate that more law or more government is not evil. In the millennial kingdom there will be more law and more government than any period on earth. And yet, at the same time there will be more freedom for men than any population of humans has ever experienced. The reason is because the laws come from God who created this world. Therefore, He knows how freedom is achieved and it is achieved through His law. So, freedom is not doing as you want to do but doing what God says to do. Until you understand this most basic point you will be in a state of confusion and enslaving yourself even further.

*Fifth*, what do we do with the problem of "two evils"? Why is it that sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where we have no other choice but to choose the lesser of evils? For example, Rahab lied about the location of the spies in order to protect them and her own life. If she'd told the truth the Israelites would not have spared her and her family's life. Was Rahab's lie a sin? Well, I don't think you can say that a lie is not sin. Sin is sin. How do we solve this dilemma? First, it is possible that our previous sins lead to a situation in which we must choose the lesser of two evils, that is, sin is the only option. So, this would reconcile with the passage in the NT where it says God will not lead you into a situation in which there is no escape because if we lead ourselves into a situation then there may be no escape. God didn't promise a way of escape if He's not leading us into the situation. So, previous sins can lead to a situation in which no escape from sin is possible. This also works with the case of Abraham and Isaac because God did lead Abraham into that situation and thus He also provided a way of escape! So, if we have to choose the "lesser of two evils" we are experiencing the results of prior sin. God did not lead us down that path, we did.

### **3. Relationship of Law and Ethics in the Worldly Kingdom**

#### **a. The Creature**

In the Worldly Kingdom Satan has come up with three solutions to the relationship between law and ethics: (1) Positive Law Theory, (2) Social Good Theory, and (3) Natural Right Theory. We should note right off that if the law is not sourced in God then in reality it is lawlessness, wickedness and since we live in the Worldly Kingdom with Satan as the god of this world experiencing lawlessness is inevitable. The best we can hope for is that the laws of a government are built on the principles of biblical law. To the degree that they are we experience freedom and to the degree that they depart we experience slavery.

“Positive Law Theory” states that there is no higher standard by which laws may be judged as ethical or non-ethical. So, in this theory one cannot say that a law is “unjust”. All currently existing laws are ethical regardless of subjective opinions or feelings about the laws. Thus, Positive Law Theory states that the current set of laws is objective and expresses what is right and what is wrong. This theory is right in seeing that there must be an objective standard for all society in order to regulate human behavior and avoid chaos. However, “Positive Law Theory” has two major weaknesses. First, who decides the current set of laws? The laws will be determined by limited men with fallen natures subject to deception by Satan. Second, the current set of laws is continually evolving due to judicial supremacy and this means what may be “wrong” today can be declared “right” tomorrow. For example, “On March 23, 1933, Hitler was given power to alter and suspend articles in the German Constitution. Thereafter, whatever Hitler did was “legal” and, by the Positive Law concept, was also “right”.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Positive Law Theory is one of Satan’s deceptive failures that does not lead to freedom but to slavery.

“Social Good Theory” states that law is subject to a higher standard and that standard is determined by what is best for the society. Thus, in this theory it is possible to have “unjust law”. There are several problems with the Social Good Theory. First, who decides what is best for society? If it is an elite class of individuals who weigh the problems and come to a conclusion, are they not still limited? Do they not still have fallen sinful natures? Are they not subject to deception? Second, if the whole society votes on what would be best are they still not limited? Do they not still have fallen sinful natures? Are they not all subject to deception? So, the basic flaw in “Social Good Theory” is that man is not basically good. Third, man is limited so, for example, how could the collective wisdom of society be able to know all the affects of a given law on society, whether it will be good or bad? Even collective human wisdom does not reach omniscience. Fourth, it is easy to see that since all men have a fallen sinful nature that 51% of society may be wrong on what is best for the society. Fifth, the Social Good

Theory overemphasizes collective society, while underemphasizing the individual.<sup>ii</sup> Therefore, Social Good Theory is another of Satan's deceptive failures that does not lead to freedom but to slavery.

"Natural Right Theory" advocates disagree in the details but all agree that law is subject to the higher standard and that standard is what man is as man. Thus, in this theory it is possible to have "unjust law" if it treats men immorally. The problem with Natural Right Theory is that it is vague. Who tells us who man is as man? The very fact that men disagree as to what man is and what kind of treatment would be moral or immoral demonstrates this problem. Therefore, Natural Right Theory is another of Satan's deceptive failures that does not lead to freedom but to slavery.

### **b. The Creator**

If Positive Law Theory, Social Good Theory, and Natural Right Theory are unable to explain the relationship between law and ethics then what is the Creator God's solution. God's solution involves elements of all three. First, God's solution agrees with Positive Law Theory that law and ethics are objective and inseparable. However, God's solution differs from Positive Law Theory in an important facet. Positive Law Theory states that something is right because the law says so but in reality something is right because it conforms to God's character which is perfect and unchanging. God may implement different sets of laws at different times in history but all such laws conform to His character (e.g. Law of Moses and Law of Christ). The reason God implements different sets of laws at different times in history is because God teaches man about His character pedagogically, as a father teaches a son. Second, God's solution agrees with the Social Good Theory that law should be for the good of society. However, God's solution disagrees with the Social Good Theory because the good of society is not a standard outside of God to which His laws must be measured. God's laws come from His own character and always promote what is best for the society. Lastly, God's solution agrees with Natural Right Theory in that law should answer to the needs of man as man. However, only God truly knows what mans needs are because only God is omniscient (all-knowing). Therefore, God has graciously revealed through law what man made in His image truly needs.

## **III. CONCLUSIONS**

The world says law and ethics are sourced in the creature, that man is the only valid source of law. However, all creatures have mental, spiritual and physical limitations,



fallen sinful natures and are subject to deception. Therefore, creatures are an inadequate source for law and ethics. History has demonstrated that when man makes the laws oppression, slavery, and bondage are the inevitable result. However, this does not mean law is intrinsically evil or should be done away with so that every man does what is right in his own eyes. In the Mosaic Law God overcomes all the weaknesses of creature law providing an objective standard of law rooted in His immutably good character. His law always meets the individual needs of man as man made in the image of God. At the same time His law also is what is best for the collective society. While the Mosaic Law was for the nation of Israel and not for the Church it nevertheless can provide principles upon which laws that provide freedom are based. When this happens freedom is the natural result. As such, many Post-millennialists have recognized this and seized the Mosaic Law as a model for law and ethics in the world today. While Post-millennialism may be wrong about the timing of Christ's coming in relation to the millennium they have nevertheless seen an important principle in God's word. Law is not wrong, nor is BIG government. What is wrong is when limited, fallen creatures make the laws. We struggle today in the Worldly Kingdom run by Satan, "the god of this world", but we long for and look for the time when the "kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ" (Rev 11:15) and God institutes His perfect law, executed with perfect justice with the result that freedom prevails from sea to sea. The best we can hope for in this Worldly Kingdom is that the laws of America are based on divine revelation. Unfortunately, Positive Law Theory coupled with Social Darwinism has shot a flaming arrow in the heart of a once Christian base and with it our freedoms are turning into ashes.

---

<sup>i</sup> Charles Clough, *Dawn of the Kingdom*, (Lubbock Bible Church, 1974), 65.

<sup>ii</sup> This is the problem of 'The One and the Many'. See Rousas Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* for the historical attempts made by philosophers to answer this problem and how only the Triune God answers this dilemma.

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)