

Exodus 20:1-21 (KJV)

¹ And God spake all these words, saying, ² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; ⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. ⁷ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. ⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹ For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. ¹² Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. ¹³ Thou shalt not kill. ¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery. ¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal. ¹⁶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. ¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. ¹⁸ And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off. ¹⁹ And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. ²⁰ And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. ²¹ And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

Laws That Govern A Nation

OUTLINE

- (1) A Right Relationship with God (v1-11)
- (2) A Right Relationship with Fellow Men (v12-17)
- (3) A Right Attitude – God's Fear (v18-21)

INTRODUCTION

The nation of Israel is specially created by God to reflect His ways to the nations of the world. It was God's way of reaching out to the nations of the world scattered throughout the earth after He confounded man's language at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11).

Genesis 11:1, 4-9 (KJV) ¹ And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech... ⁴ And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. ⁶ And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. ⁷ Go to, let us go down, and there **confound their language**, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸ **So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth:** and they left off to build the city. ⁹ Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

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Fallen men left on their own, left to their depraved mind to provide their own guidance is the recipe for disaster. God created the nation of Israel so that He will show by real life example how men, made in the image and likeness of God, ought to live, that will bring honour and glory to their Maker.

Out of the family of Jacob, came the nation of Israel. Egypt was the incubating ground to bring forth the nation.

Genesis 46:1-4 (KJV) ¹ *And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.* ² *And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.* ³ *And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:* ⁴ *I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.*

When Israel left Egypt, there were a multitude. How will Israel be made a great nation? It is by the good laws that God will give them that will bring stability and prosperity to their nation.

Deuteronomy 4:5-9 (KJV) ⁵ *Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.* ⁶ *Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.* ⁷ *For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?* ⁸ ***And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*** ⁹ *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;*

The nation of Israel has been entrusted as custodians of God's laws. These are the universal laws that govern the behaviour and life of all mankind.

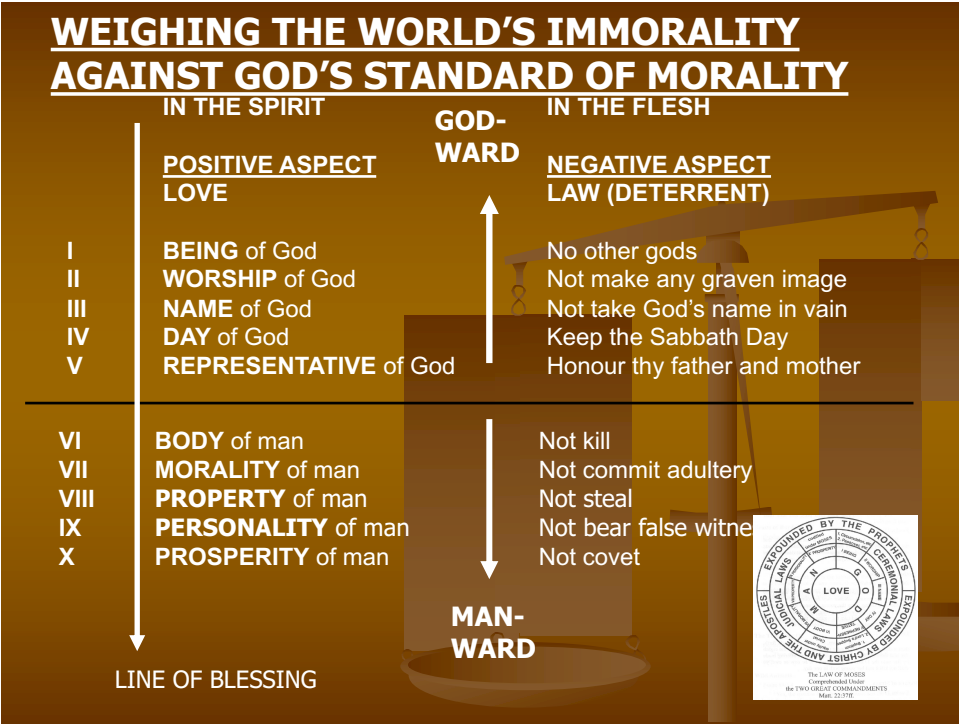
The admission of God as the Giver of the laws that govern all mankind is well acknowledged by Cicero in *De Republica*.

“There is indeed a true law, right reason, conformable to nature, diffused among all, unchanging, eternal, which, by commanding, urges to duty; by prohibiting, deters from fraud: not in vain commanding or prohibiting the good, though by neither moving the wicked. This law cannot be abrogated, nor may anything be withdrawn from it; it is in the power of no senate or people to set us free from it; nor is there to be sought any extraneous teacher or interpreter of it. It shall not be one law at Rome, another at Athens; one now, another at some future time; but one law, alike eternal and unchangeable, shall bind all nations and through all time; and one shall be the common teacher, as it were, and governor of all – God, who is Himself the Author, the Administrator, and Enactor of this law.” – *Cicero in De Republica*

The laws of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments govern the relationship between men and God, and between men and men. When these laws are adhered to, there is order in that nation and it prospers. When a people obeys God's law, they are right with God, this is a righteous nation. And God blesses such a nation!

Proverbs 14:34 *Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*

There is universal law that governs man in his relationship to the universe and with other man that is perfect and holds true all the time. The articulation of it was done by God Himself in Exodus 20.



Nations of the world since time immemorial who has the backbone of their laws based on God's laws finds peace and order in their society. Nevertheless, the laws of God cannot save a nation from their sins but exposes their sinfulness. The word "sin" means "missing the mark of God's standard or law".

Ultimately, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, from the loins of the nation of Israel, to bear the sins of the world. So that all who will come to Jesus Christ will find forgiveness of sins and be granted eternal life in heaven. This is the purpose of God creating the nation of Israel!

(1) A Right Relationship With God

¹ And God spake all these words, saying, ² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. ⁷ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. ⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Firstly, man is commanded to worship no other gods except the LORD, his God. Secondly, man is commanded to refrain from making images for worship. Thirdly, man is commanded honour the LORD's Name! Fourthly, man is commanded to set aside a day for the worship of God. This is the basic relationship that man is to establish with his Maker.

Israel, by keeping these laws, will point the nations of the world to worship the LORD God of Israel.

A right relationship with God will bring God's blessing to the nation. The nation is to worship the One living and true God, the LORD God of Israel.

⁵ *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...*

We often think that jealousy is a bad trait, something that is not a fruit of the spirit. When the Old Testament speaks of a jealous God, it is God's way of expressing His love for His children. This is a declaration of God's unfailing love for Israel.

God will not ever tolerate anything that will damage or distort that love relationship, based on the unilateral covenant relationship He made with Abraham (Gen. 15:12-21). Anyone that undermines or distorts the relationship will face the wrath of God.

... visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

God is jealous of sharing His glory with another.

Jill said well, "**visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children**; meaning chiefly, if not solely, the iniquity of idolatry; which being such an insult on his honour, "crimen laesae majestatis", is treated by him as high treason is among men; not only he punishes the authors and perpetrators of it in their own persons, which is meant by "visiting", but upon their children also, which are parts of themselves; and whatsoever is inflicted on them is the same as on themselves, and is an addition to, and a sensible aggravation of their punishment; and especially these are visited in such a manner, when they tread in their father's steps, and fill

up the measure of their iniquity. So the Targum of Jonathan, "visiting the iniquity of ungodly fathers on rebellious children"

He further commented well, "**unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me**; as all idolaters must be thought to do, whatsoever love and affection they may pretend to God, by worshipping idols before him, besides him, along with him, or him in them: "the third and fourth generation" are mentioned, because sometimes parents lived to see these, and so with their eyes beheld the punishment inflicted upon their posterity for their sins, which must be distressing to them; or, however, these being but small removes from them, might impress their minds and affect them, to think what their sins would bring upon their descendants, who would quickly come after them, and share in the sad effects of their iniquities, and so be a means to deter them from them."

(2) A Right Relationship with Fellow Men

¹² Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. ¹³ Thou shalt not kill. ¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery. ¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal. ¹⁶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. ¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

The first relationship that establishes a man is his relationship with his parents. He is to give honour to them. Our own parents, the giver of life to us. The beginning of human relationship begins with a biblical understanding of human authority. This is given so that there will be orderliness in God's created world.

Keeping the fifth is foundational to keeping the rest of the commandments. Steve Cole observed well, "If we truly honour our parents, we will not disgrace their name by becoming a murderer, by being unfaithful to our marriage vows, by stealing, by lying, or by the greed and discontent underlying covetousness. The keeping of the Fifth Commandment also works back toward the first four. If we are rebellious and disrespectful toward our parents who gave us life and sustenance, we will also probably be rebellious and disrespectful toward the Lord God, our Creator and Sustainer. Disrespect toward parents and God will also carry over into disrespect for all authority, and thus will result in a breakdown of law and order, leading to a disintegration of the very basis for civilized society. Thus, the keeping of the Fifth Commandment is not some outmoded, quaint idea to be set aside without consequence."

DL Moody observed well, "We can see if their home life is all right, they are almost sure to fulfil the law both in regard to God and man. Parents stand in the place of God to their children in a great many ways until the children arrive at years of discretion. If the children are true to their parents, it will be easier for them to be true to God. He used the human relationship as a symbol of our relationship to Him both by creation and by grace. God is our Father in heaven. We are His offspring.

On the other hand, if they have not learned to be obedient and respectful at home, they are likely to have little respect for the law of the land. It is all in the heart; and the heart is prepared at home for good or bad conduct outside. The tree grows the way the twig is bent.

"Honour thy father and thy mother." That word "honour" means more than mere obedience — a child may obey through fear. It means love and affection, gratitude, respect. We are told that in the east the words "father" and "mother" include those who are "superiors in age, wisdom and in civil or religious station," so that when the Jews were taught to honor their

father and mother it included all who were placed over them in these relations as well as their parents. Isn't there a crying need for that same feeling today? The lawlessness of the present time is a natural consequence of the growing absence of a feeling of respect for those in authority."

This sixth commandment is the shortest statement in the table of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). Written exactly in both text! Just two words – the negative particle, a negation as a statement of fact.

Calvin said well, "The sum of this Commandment is, that we should not unjustly do violence to anyone. In order, however, that God may the better restrain us from all injury of others, He propounds one particular form of it, from which men's natural sense is abhorrent; for we all detest murder, so as to recoil from those who hands are polluted with blood, as if they carried contagion with them."

Calvin explained unjust violence as forbidden by the law; capital punishment, legitimate warfare, self-defense, and similar acts are not forbidden.

Our Lord Jesus summarized the law for us when He said in **Matthew 22:36-40 (KJV)** ³⁶ *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* ³⁷ *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* ³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.* ³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* ⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Rushdoony said well in "The Institutes of Biblical Law" – "The law asks two things of a man, obedience and enforcement. To obey a law means in effect to enforce it in one's own life and in one's community. God's law is not a private matter. It is not for us to obey personally simply because we like it, meanwhile leaving other men to follow whatever law they choose. The law is valid for us because it is valid for all; to obey it means to accept a universe order as binding on us and upon all men. Obedience therefore requires that we seek a total enforcement of the law."

As we read this commandment, we are to understand that law and order are the responsibilities of all good men without exception. Injuries to our fellow men, or to our enemies, which are not subject to civil or criminal action, are still our responsibilities.

For example, our police power involves action against backbiting and tale-bearing. It also requires that we, in love to our neighbour, have a regard to their property as well as his reputation, to avoid injury to it.

The purpose of the 7th commandment is to protect marriage. This commandment is built upon the premise of biblical marriage. It is a law governing its violation. Extra-marital relationships are condemned.

Deuteronomy 22:22 (KJV) ²² *If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.*

Deuteronomy 22:28-29 (KJV) ²⁸ *If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;* ²⁹ *Then the man that lay with her shall*

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give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

In the beginning, God made marriage as a bond of the most intimate fellowship of love between one man and one woman. The two become one flesh. Such is God's declaration in Genesis 2:24 quoted by Paul in Ephesians 5:31.

31 *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.* Eph 5:31 (KJV)

Marriage persons share one life, an intimacy not just in physical union but an oneness of being. Marriage is a relationship for life. This is built into the institution: one man and one woman become one flesh. Since marriage is a union effected by God, man neither may nor can "put asunder". Only God may and only God can, divide what He has joined. God does this in death.

(3) A Right Attitude – God's Fear (v18-21)

¹⁸ *And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.* ¹⁹ *And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* ²⁰ *And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.* ²¹ *And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.*

God's fear may be in the hearts of God's people that they may sin not! The commandments expose the wickedness of the heart. Man is able to weigh his actions in the light of God's laws and thus shows his sins. He is exposed and ought to feel ashamed!

This is what the law does! It exposes the offender. Causes him to see his sinfulness.

Romans 3:1-31 *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just. What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus*

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Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

The law shows our sinfulness. It leads us to Jesus Christ, who justifies us by His sacrifices for sins on the cross on our behalf. Hallelujah!

CONCLUSION

- (1) A Right Relationship with God (v1-11)
- (2) A Right Relationship with Fellow Men (v12-17)
- (3) A Right Attitude – God’s Fear (v18-21)

Amen.