

CURBS AND MIRRORS: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



The Law has a three-fold use.




THE Bible reveals to us that God has given His law to us human beings for three reasons. The first is as a *curb*, or deterrent. That is, the Law serves warning on the ungodly of this world that sin is wrong, and will inevitably earn punishment. If such punishment is not administered by the God-given authorities in this world, then surely it will be meted out in the next world under God's direct judgment.

The First Use of the Law

1. Read Romans 1:28-32. *What threat does God's Law make against those who continue living in sin?*

2. Read I Corinthians 6:9-10. *What is the inevitable consequence of a lifestyle that flaunts God's holy Law?*

ICON KEY

-  Introduction
-  Important point
-  For further reading

The Second Use of the Law

The Second and widest use of God's Law is that it serves as a *mirror*. Just as a mirror reflects our image, so the mirror of God's Law gives us all a picture of ourselves when held up to the perfect and holy God.

3. Read I John 1:8. There are some people who claim that they are not guilty of any sins before God. *Whom are such people fooling?*

"LEARN FROM ME"

4. Read John 3:20. Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus why many of the Jewish leaders - who were supposed to be experts in the Law - didn't want to hear about what the Law really had to say. *Why is it unpleasant for a sinner to hear the Law?*

5. Look up Luke 5:4-8. When confronted with God's power and majesty, *what are we forced to say, with the Apostle Peter (v.8)?*

6. Read Luke 18:18-23. Here Jesus holds up the mirror of God's Law to the rich young man. The young man was certain he had led a good and upright life. *But what did the mirror of God's Law show to him?*

The Third Use of the Law

Some have gone too far and claimed that the Law always and only condemns. In this Third Use, we find that the Law always but not only condemns. Another use of God's Law is as a *guideline*, to instruct and inform the Christian. A believer who understands the great things God has done for him just naturally wants to show his gratitude to God. He desires to live his life as God wants him to, as a way of saying "thank-you" to God for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ. How can we find out the way God wishes us to live? Must we guess?

No, God has given us direction in His holy Law about how we may live so as to please Him. We will not want to choose ways of our own to show our love for Him, but will gladly and willingly follow His directions as to how we should live. We will take up this Third Use of the Law again later, in lesson 17.



The Law Fulfilled

God gave to His Old Testament people, the Jews, many laws which applied only to them. They were designed to set them apart from their heathen neighbors until the time when His promise of a Savior would be fulfilled. Ceremonial laws, like the shedding of blood sacrifices, were meant to point forward to the time when the promised Messiah would arrive.

7. Read John 1:29. Sheep and goats had been sacrificed on Jewish altars for centuries, foretelling the coming of the Messiah. *What did John the Baptist tell his disciples, the first time He saw Jesus?*

"LEARN FROM ME"

8. Look up Hebrews 7:26-27. *Who is the "High Priest" mentioned in this passage? What did He do that made the Old Testament blood sacrifices obsolete?*



In the last lesson, we learned that nobody can be justified ("declared righteous") by keeping any - or even *all!* - of the laws which God gave. By giving us forgiveness through faith in Christ, God has freed us from the need to keep the Law as a means of salvation. Nevertheless, the Law did serve an important and unique purpose for God's Old Testament people.

9. Read Galatians 3:23-25. Complete the following sentence: *For the people of the Old Testament, God's Law served as a...*

10. *According to verse 24, up until WHAT TIME in history was the Law to serve this function?*

11. God does not change. The Law does not change. But Jesus has now (through faith) brought us back together with God. *Therefore, according to verse 25, what are we no longer under?*

Since we are now children of God - by faith, without the deeds of the Law - we want to know what our Father's will is for our daily conduct. The Bible gives us ample instruction of how our God would have us live in order to reflect honor and glory on His name. But there are those who think we must still fulfill many of the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament - like worshipping on Saturday, and avoiding certain foods.

12. Read Colossians 2:16-17. First of all, *what does v. 17 say about the laws concerning special days on which to worship and about special foods to avoid? This passage refers to these things as...*

13. According to verse 17, *whose coming changed man's need for these reminders?*

14. Read Hebrews 10:9-10. Jesus took away the Old Testament law (the "first covenant," or agreement, with man). *What did Jesus do for the second covenant at the same time?*

"LEARN FROM ME"



-That "second covenant" is the Gospel - God's promise that we may be saved eternally, not through a keeping of the Law, but through trusting in Jesus as our Savior!

Now, while we are discussing the Law, would be a good time to read through Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew chapters five, six and seven. Please do so before you proceed.

Some people think that one may keep the Ten Commandments merely by not committing the *outward* acts of murder, adultery, theft, etc. Jesus' point in the Sermon on the Mount, however, is that God's Law goes much deeper than that.

15. Read Matthew 5:20. The Pharisees practiced a *very* strict outward keeping of the Law. But according to Jesus, *how must OUR righteousness compare to theirs if we are to be saved?*

16. The Fifth Commandment says that murder is a sin. *But what does I John 3:15 tell us?*

17. The Sixth Commandment says that adultery is a sin. *But what does Matthew 5:27-28 say?*

18. Read Matthew 22:34-40. Jesus gives a good summary of God's Law. *What are the two great commandments of the Law?*

19. Look up Ephesians 5:5. *What kind of lifestyle shows the world that a person does NOT have saving faith in his heart?*

20. Read Matthew 12:36. Some say that only DEEDS are sins. *But what does this passage tell us?*

21. Read Romans 3:20. Complete the sentence: "*No one can be _____
by the Law, but the Law gives each person a _____ of his sin.*"



22. Read on to Romans 3:21-24. When we read God's Law, we see that we deserve only His punishment. *What is the only way out?*

Additional Bible Readings



For additional Bible readings on the subjects discussed in this lesson, please refer to Exodus 19:16 through 20:19, and to Luke 2:8-14, and to Deuteronomy 5:1-22.