

4

The Laws of Life



“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).



An Amazing Fact: According to *Guinness World Records*, Tommy Johns from Brisbane, Australia, holds the world record for the most arrests—nearly 3,000 for drunkenness and disorderly conduct!

We are all used to living under certain natural laws.

Take the law of gravity, for instance: What goes up must come down. It's a law we largely take for granted. But think about it. You heed the law of gravity every day—when you get out of bed, when you pour a glass of water or take a shower, when you play catch with your kid. In fact, the entire aircraft industry is built upon an understanding of and respect for the law of gravity.

Suppose, however, for some reason, God decided to abolish the law of gravity. There would be

instant, utter chaos. People would be unable to walk, rain would not fall, our entire planet would literally break apart. There would be nothing pulling down our atmosphere, so we would no longer have air to breathe and would not be able to survive. We need the law of gravity! It, along with God's other natural laws, is put in place for our own good.

What about God's moral laws? Are they just as essential to life? There are people who claim that we don't need God's moral law; even some Christians believe it was abolished as a result of Christ's death on the cross for us. Is there anything wrong with that claim? Let's find out ...





When you see a blank, look up the passage in your Bible and write in the missing word.

1. What is God’s moral law?

Exodus 24:12. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you _____ of _____, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.”

Deuteronomy 10:4. And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the _____, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me.

ANSWER: A moral law is a guide on how to live; it distinguishes between right and wrong. God’s moral law is summed up in the Ten Commandments, recorded in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

Jesus categorized the Ten Commandments into two parts: the first four commandments deal with one’s relationship to God; the last six deal with one’s relationship to other people. Jesus said, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40). (See also Romans 13:9.)

There are different types of laws in the Bible, like ceremonial laws, civil laws, and health laws. The moral law is often referred to in Scripture simply as “the law”; however, a more reliable way to determine which law the Bible is referring to is to understand the context, as well as knowing what the moral law is and does. (From now on, we’ll refer to the Ten Commandments as “God’s law.”)

2. To what does the Bible equate God's law?

Romans 7:12. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment _____ and _____ and _____.

Isaiah 5:16. The LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is _____ shall be hallowed in righteousness.

Deuteronomy 32:4. All His ways are _____, a God of truth and without injustice.

Luke 18:19. No one is _____ but One, that is, God.

ANSWER: God's law is His character in written form. Look at these other comparisons between God's character and His law:

Description

- Perfect
- Love
- Righteous
- Truth
- Pure
- Spiritual
- Eternal
- Unchangeable

God is:

- Matthew 5:48
- 1 John 4:8
- Exodus 9:27
- Deuteronomy 32:4
- 1 John 3:3
- 1 Corinthians 10:4
- Genesis 21:33
- Malachi 3:6

The Law is:

- Psalms 19:7
- Romans 13:10
- Psalms 119:172
- Psalms 119:142
- Psalms 19:8
- Romans 7:14
- Psalms 111:7, 8
- Luke 16:17

The Bible describes God in the same way as it describes His law. The Bible explains that "the Word was God" (John 1:1) and describes Jesus as "the Word [who] became flesh and dwelt among us" (v. 14).



3. What does God's law do?

Romans 7:7. *I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known _____ unless the law had said, "You shall not _____."*

Romans 3:20. *By the law is the _____ of sin.*

1 John 3:4. *Sin is _____.*

ANSWER: "The law" referred to in Romans 7:7 is the Ten Commandments, of which the tenth instructs, "You shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17). Thus, God's law identifies what sin is. Romans 4:15 states, "Where there is no law there is no transgression."

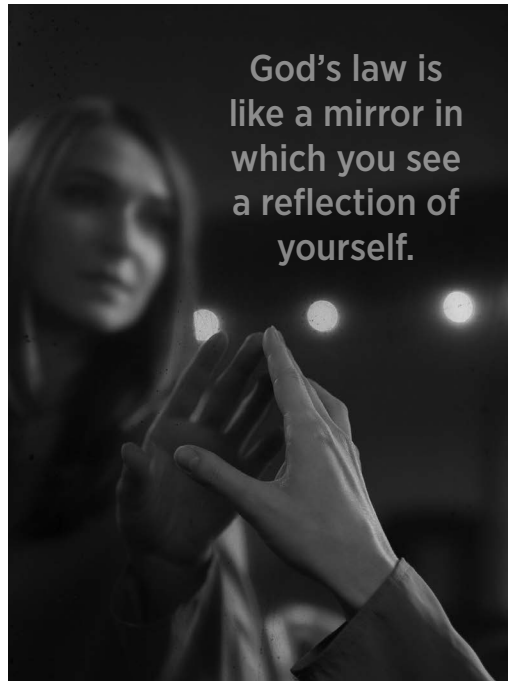
God's law is like a mirror in which you see a reflection of yourself. The Ten Commandments show us our own imperfections—and God's perfection. The law reveals to us who we truly are, sinners who have failed to obey it (7:15–20), which means we are lost (6:23). God's law shows us why we need Jesus Christ, the Savior (7:24, 25).

4. Can God's law be amended or repealed?

Psalms 89:34. *My covenant I will not _____, nor _____ the word that has gone out of My lips.*

Psalms 111:7, 8. *All His precepts are sure. They stand fast _____ and _____.*

ANSWER: You have already learned that God and His law are eternal and unchangeable. Therefore, God's law will never be—nor has it ever been—amended or repealed. Interestingly, in the Bible, earthly kings made laws that they later wanted to change but could not (Esther 8:3–8; Daniel 6:12–15). If the laws of weak, vacillating kings were unchangeable, do you think that the law of God can be altered? (See "The Difference Between the Old and New Covenants" at the end of this lesson.)



God's law is like a mirror in which you see a reflection of yourself.

5. Should born-again Christians keep the Ten Commandments?

John 14:15. *If you love Me, _____ My commandments.*

1 John 2:3. *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we _____ His commandments.*

Romans 2:13. *For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the _____ of the law will be justified.*

ANSWER: While the Ten Commandments were written in stone for the children of Israel, the Bible records the existence of God's law *before* He gave the two tablets to Moses on Mount Sinai. For instance, to Adam and Eve's firstborn, Cain, God warned, "Sin lies at the door" (Genesis 4:7). You can't know what sin is without God's law. In fact, since God's law is eternal, it had to exist *before* being given to the Jews. God's law is not only for a particular people group but for all creation.

According to the Bible, Christians, above all people, have bound themselves to God's law through their love for and belief in Christ, the living transcript of the law. (See also Romans 2:28, 29.)



6. But doesn't living under grace through faith make keeping God's law non-essential?

Romans 6:15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? _____!*

Romans 3:31. *Do we then make void the law through faith? _____!*
On the contrary, we establish the law.

ANSWER: Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). One purpose for Jesus' life on the earth was to keep the Ten Commandments as an example for us (John 15:10; 1 Peter 2:21).

Furthermore, if Jesus could have simply abolished the law, then why did He take the trouble to sacrifice Himself in order to satisfy its claims? “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Christ died for your sins to pay your debt for breaking His law—but that somehow gives you license to break His law? As the apostle Paul said in Romans, such a concept is preposterous. Perhaps the better question is: Why would a Christian, a follower of Christ, *not* want to live by His law?

Those who choose salvation through Christ’s grace through faith “establish”—uphold or sustain—God’s law (Romans 3:31). Christ “condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3, 4).

7. Was there a law in the Bible that was abolished?

Ephesians 2:14, 15. He ... [has] _____ in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances.

Colossians 2:13, 14. He has ... _____ the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has _____ it _____ of the way, having nailed it to the cross.



ANSWER: Yes. These verses are often mistaken to refer to the moral law, but this is where context is crucial. It was the ceremonial—not the moral—law that was abolished at Christ’s crucifixion. The ceremonial law was a part of the old covenant, “ordinances” (Colossians 2:14 KJV) given by God to Moses that regulated a priesthood and sacrificial system. You can read about this system in such passages as Leviticus 1–10, which detail how the ceremonies were to be performed in a temple.

This ceremonial law “[served as] the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5); “it was symbolic” (9:9) of Christ, the actual “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). All the animals sacrificed in the Jewish sanctuary service were a “copy and shadow,” whose purpose was to point people’s minds to the true Sacrifice to come, Jesus (Hebrews 9:12; 10:12). That’s why once Christ was “nailed ... to the cross” and breathed His last, fulfilling His sacrificial mission, “the veil of the temple [in Jerusalem] was torn in two” (Matthew 27:51), signifying the abolishment of the sacrificial system. (We’ll learn more about this temple and system in lesson 6.)

8. Who is the devil’s special target in the last days?

Revelation 12:17. *The dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the _____ of _____ and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Revelation 14:12. *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the _____ of _____ and the faith of Jesus.*



ANSWER: Satan’s target in these last days is anyone who obeys God’s law. In God’s final message of warning to the world, the last verse of the three angels’ messages pinpoints this same characteristic in God’s people. The Ten Commandments are far from obsolete; they are the central focus of the end-time battle between Christ and the devil!

Christ prophesied that in the last days, “Lawlessness will abound” (Matthew 24:12). All the world is now giving itself up to sin, but God’s people are distinguished by their enduring obedience to His law (Philippians 2:15). Though the devil batters them mercilessly, they will not give up their allegiance to their Savior. God’s law matters now more than ever!

9. Are people saved by keeping the law?

Ephesians 2:8, 9. For by _____ you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the _____ of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.



ANSWER: No one is saved by keeping God's law. You are saved not by what you do but by what Christ has done for you through His miracle-working grace.

10. Can a person be saved *without* keeping God's law?

Matthew 19:17. If you want to enter into life, _____ the commandments.

Revelation 22:14. Blessed are those who _____ His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Leviticus 18:5. You shall therefore _____ My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them.

ANSWER: The Bible says that those who are saved will be commandment-keepers—not that people are saved by commandment-keeping. Obedience to God's law is not the author of our salvation; it is the outcome of being saved. When we understand the heartbreak and suffering that Jesus experienced on the cross because of the sins which we committed, we never want to break Christ's law again. Love is our motivator (Romans 13:10; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; 1 John 4:19).

Recall that this process is exactly what happens when we receive the everlasting gospel. Allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our character (2 Corinthians 3:18) and being reborn in Christ's sinless image (1 Corinthians 15:49), we will not break God's law. Only through the love and power of God are we able to keep the law.

James 2:18 says, "I will show you my faith by my works." Your obedience is the evidence of your faith in salvation by God's grace. In fact,

this is the exact description of God's last-day people in Revelation 14:12: They show "the faith of Jesus" by "[keeping] the commandments of God."

11. What is the outcome of keeping God's law?

John 15:11. *These things I have spoken to you, ... that your _____ may be full.*

Proverbs 29:18. _____ is he who keeps the law.

Psalm 119:165. *Great _____ have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.*

Deuteronomy 6:24. *And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our _____ always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.*

ANSWER: Happiness, joy, and peace come to those who obey God's law. Like the world's natural laws, God's moral law is put in place "for our good always," that we "may have life, and ... have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). No wonder King David said that God's commands are more desirable than gold (Psalm 19:10).

12. Do you desire to have a loving relationship with Jesus that will lead you to be one of His obedient children?

Answer: _____





Old
Covenant

New
Covenant

Lesson 4 Supplemental Material

The Difference Between the Old and New Covenants

In the book of Hebrews, the concept of two important covenants is introduced. The old covenant is described as faulty (Hebrews 8:7) and “obsolete” (v. 13) and has been replaced with “a better covenant” (v. 6)—the “new covenant” (v. 8). There are Christians who believe that this repealed old covenant is the Ten Commandments. But is it?

Right off the bat, we can know that the old covenant is not referring to the Ten Commandments because God’s moral law “is perfect” (Psalm 19:7) and lasts forever (111:7, 8). A covenant is an agreement, a pact of conditions and promises, between two parties. God and the children of Israel made a covenant together. God laid out the following condition and promise: “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people” (Exodus 19:5). In response, the children of Israel promised, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do” (v. 8).

But they had made an agreement that they were incapable of upholding; they could not obey God’s voice—His Word, His law—on their own. As Hebrews 8:8 says, the fault was “with them,” the party of the children of Israel, not with God or His law. This is the old covenant: It was faulty because of the people, not because of God’s faultless, eternal, and unchanging law. Since the condition was not met and the people’s promise not kept, the covenant was nullified.

So God proposed a new covenant: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (v. 10). Clearly, the new covenant isn’t a new law of God. As the verse states, it’s God’s same laws. The difference lies in who fulfills the conditions and promises.

The old covenant was based on the people’s weak, unreliable word; the new covenant “was established on better promises” (v. 6), God’s words, which “shall not return to [Him] void” (Isaiah 55:11). What God promises, He will do (Numbers 23:19). And God says, “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 11:19, 20).

Through the indwelling of Christ in your heart, you are able to obey God’s law. This new covenant is the everlasting gospel.



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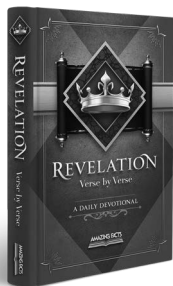
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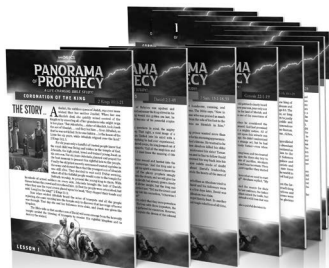


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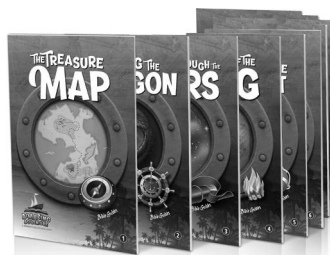
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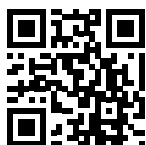
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Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 14:6–12

