

# Why 10 Commandments?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 31, 2009



*I'm in controversy about the difference between the law of God and the Natural Law or the Ten commandments and the Natural law, which you have talked about in the past.*

*Can you in a simple way explain the difference between them. I believe the ten commandments were in Heaven before sin and that sin is the transgression of the ten commandments. Am I wrong?*

*T from Australia*

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You are not alone in your assessment.

For years I concluded, as you have done, that the 10 Commandments were in existence prior to sin. Many argue this because they say if there was no law there could be no breach of the law and thus no sin. And this general idea is correct, there could be no breach of the law if no law existed, but the mistake is made by believing the eternal law in heaven is the 10 Commandments. Let's step back and explain the difference between natural law and the 10 Commandment law.

Natural Laws are principles upon which life and the universe operate. For instance gravity is a natural law. When we transgress natural law there is no need for an imposed punishment, because the penalty is inherent. If you jump off a bridge, then God does not need to send an angel to break your legs when you hit the ground below.

The second law of thermodynamics is a natural law which states that things will decay if you don't continually put energy in to keep order. For instance, walk away from your home and do nothing to it for 40 years and what will happen over time? It will decay.

There are many natural laws, like the laws of health, nutrition, and respiration. If you have a rule that your child is not to smoke, the rule would be based on natural law. This is because smoking is a violation of the laws of health and poisons the system leading over time to disease and death. However, your child might not appreciate the long term consequences of violating health laws, so as a loving parent you might choose to put in an imposed consequence to try and teach them to avoid smoking. You may ground them, remove privileges, or spank. Such imposed penalties are not the true reason a child should avoid smoking. They are stop-gap measures used to help a child learn that smoking is harmful until they grow up and understand the real reason not to smoke – smoking violates the laws of health and results in death.

With this in mind, let's return to God's law. God's law is the Law of Love. It is the principle of giving that all life in the universe is designed to operate upon. Violations naturally result in damage to mind, character, body and ultimately leads to death unless remedied. Sinful mankind did not comprehend this reality, so God stepped in with a stop-gap measure to help us in two ways. First, the 10 Commandments were added, because we needed them to help diagnose how sick we are. And second, they were added to protect us from ourselves and lead us to Christ. Just like a parental rule not to smoke protects the child from harming themselves, the 10 Commandments were "distilled" out of the Law of Love to protect us.

Examine the 10 Commandments for a moment and think through whether the evidence supports the idea they were always in existence. There was a time, in the past before the earth was created, when just God and the angels existed. Job 38:7 tells us the angels sang together at the creation of the earth. The second commandment speaks of problems being passed down through the generations (hereditary weaknesses that result from sin). Did angels, who don't procreate, need such a law? The fourth commandment (Sabbath) is based on the rotation of this planet upon its axis as it orbits around the sun that didn't exist until this world's fourth day of creation week. Was there a Sabbath in heaven before this earth was created? I have not found any inspired source indicating so. Next, regarding the fifth commandment to honor mother and father; did the angels need this directive? What about the seventh commandment to not commit adultery, did angels need this prohibition? This evidence upholds the view that the Commandments are a special distillation of the great Law of Love and written especially for the needs of the fallen human race.

Similarly, Paul says that the Commandments were added to help us see sin more clearly (Romans 5:20, 7:7,8) and that they were added after sin (Gal 3:19). The following is an excerpt from my book, ***'Could It Be This Simple?'*** describing why they were added:

"The written law (Ten Commandments) is like an MRI (an imaging study) of the soul: It reveals the defects. If an MRI scanner revealed a tumor in your lung, what would you do? Go to your physician. And after you had gone to the physician and been healed, would you worry about

having been examined by the MRI? Do you need to destroy the MRI? Of course not. In fact, you might want to repeat the MRI procedure to confirm that the tumor is gone.

This is how God's written law works. It reveals the defects in our mind. When we recognize these defects, we go to the heavenly Physician to be healed. After we have been healed, the written law doesn't need to be destroyed; in fact, when it examines us, it finds no defects because we are in harmony with it. And having been healed, we no longer need the written law. This is the essence of what Paul tells Timothy:

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1Tim 1:8-11).

In our metaphor of an MRI, it might read like this:

We know that the MRI is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the MRI is made not for healthy people but for those who are sick and diseased, the suffering, the ill, and all those who are dying, and all activities that are contrary to the principles of healthy living that conform to the model of health that the blessed God has entrusted to me.

Jesus helps us understand that the written law was added and based off the eternal law of love when he said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)."

One Christian writer came to the same conclusion I have and wrote the following:

"If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses." {PP 364}

"I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments." {1SM 233.1}

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). In this Scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and cause us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." {1MR 130.2}

Thanks again for your question.