

Why Did God Use Law?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | December 12, 2014



A theologian recently posed the following question to me:

What was the purpose of the “ceremonial law”? Why is it “changeable” (or “fulfill-able; what was “fulfilled)?

When White says “The Holy Spirit saw good not to impose the ceremonial law on the Gentile converts, and the mind of the apostles regarding this matter was as the mind of the Spirit of God,” (AA194),

that implies there was a time when it WAS imposed, with serious consequences for disobedience. How would your approach handle such situations? (I use this example as your EGW quote above specifically excludes the ceremonial). Sincere question, if you've the time.

Thank you for your sincere question, and one that is very reasonable, given how God HAS used imposed laws in human history, as you mention.

Keeping in mind all the previous Bible and EGW quotes about God's law being the law of love, the simple answer is - because sin damaged the mind of mankind such that we could no longer properly comprehend God and His law, thus He stepped in and communicated in a way they could comprehend, in order to protect and lead them back to Him and His design.

As Paul states:

"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" (1 Tim. 1:8-11, NIV).

Why? Because we needed a diagnostic instrument to inform us of the sick condition of our being, as Paul says elsewhere, we would not know what sin is if it wasn't for the law.

EGW puts it this way:

"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. — Patriarchs and Prophets, pg. 364

And EGW states explicitly that the law that God ADDED after sin included the 10 Commandments, which is the distilled written version of the Law of Love that was always in existence:

"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... "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking ESPECIALLY of the moral law. — 1st Selected Messages, pp. 233, 234

The Moral law of the 10 Commandments didn't exist in that form before humanity sinned - angels didn't have a law of sin passing down the generations, or honoring mother and father. And Sabbath didn't exist until this earth and sun were made. But the law of love, as described earlier, being an expression of God's character and the protocols upon which life is built, has always been in existence. The 10 Commandments were a codification of the law of love especially written for humanity in its fallen state.

Paul tells us in Hebrews 5-6 that the immature infants still on milk "are not acquainted with righteousness" and then he tells us what the elementary or infant formula is, which is not yet righteous:

"Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to

maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death..." Heb 6:1

Note, the focus on acts that lead to death (breaking the rules, law keeping) is not mature, it is childish and not righteous. We must grow up to the full stature of sons and daughters of God.

There are seven levels of understanding right and wrong (moral decision-making). Because God is love, God speaks to each person at their level of development, just as a parent speaks to their children in different ways at various stages of development. A parent explains things differently to a 3 year old than to a 30 year old. So does God.

The seven levels are:

1. Reward and punishment

The most basic level of understanding whether something is right or wrong is being rewarded for doing right and being punished for doing wrong. This is a slave mentality. This is ancient Israel as slaves in Egypt, doing what the master says in order to avoid punishment.

At stage one a ruler establishes his right to rule by displays of power and vengeance upon his enemies. He rules by threat of punishment and hope of reward. Mercy, or failure to punish, is seen as evidence of weakness, not morality, by stage one mentality. People at this level see a God of mercy as a marshmallow God and insist God use His power to torture and kill the unrepentant wicked.

God meets people where they are and with ancient Israel in Egypt He first established His credentials to rule Israel by acts of punishment upon the Egyptian gods, and by mighty, spectacular miracles demonstrating the Egyptian gods were not gods at all. "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (Deut. 29:6 NIV)

This is so primitive it doesn't even require a brain, the mind is completely sidelined. Animals, plants, bacteria can be conditioned to avoid painful stimuli and grow toward rewarding stimuli. This level of functioning is not worthy of human beings created in the image of God. It is Satan's goal to reduce us to "brute beasts, creatures of instinct" operating on level one.

2. Marketplace exchange

Level two morality is the quid pro quo, you do something for me in exchange for something of agreed value in return. This is ancient Israel at Sinai, "an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth". At this level, vengeance is a moral duty. People who do evil must be paid back with an equal amount of pain and suffering. To not return pain and suffering is considered immoral. This was also ancient Israel saying at Sinai, when the law was first read, "All the Lord has said, we will do."

3. Social conformity

At this stage right and wrong is determined by community consensus. This is the child who says, "Everyone else is doing it." Right is deemed right by the approval of peers.

This was ancient Israel when they wanted kings. All the other nations had kings, so it must be right and Israel demanded to have kings.

4. Law and order

At level four right and wrong is determined by a codified system of rules, impartial judges, imposed proscribed punishments, and respect for properly elected or otherwise constituted authority. Right is getting a proper pay or reward for good work, and proscribed and inflicted punishment for breaking the rules. Authority figures are rarely questioned, "He must be right, because he is the President, the Judge, the Pope, God, etc."

This was ancient Israel at the time of Christ - "we have a law!" they proclaimed, as they sought to stone Jesus for healing on the Sabbath.

This is much of our modern world, with its codified laws, courts, prosecutors, judges, juries, and imposed rules. Authority at this level rests in the coercive pressure of the state to bring punishment upon those who deviate from the established laws. At this level police agencies and law enforcers are required to monitor the population searching for breaches in the law in order to impose standardized penalties.

5. Love for others

Level five morality understands right is determined by doing what is in the best interest of others, realizing people have value in who they are irrespective of the rules. Right is determined, not by a checklist of rules, but by doing what is actually helpful and beneficial for another.

Jesus demonstrated this level of functioning when he touched lepers, spoke to women, socialized with tax collectors, and healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, operating at level four and below wanted to stone Him for breaking the law.

6. Principle based living

Level six morality understands the design protocols or principles upon which life is constructed to operate and intelligently chooses to live in harmony with them. It is not doing something because a rule says to do so, but because it is understood to actually work this way.

This was Jesus living out God's character of love in all He did, and the Apostles after Pentecost. It is understood at this level that God says what is right because it is right, because it is the way things actually are. It isn't right simply because God said it

7. Enlightened Friend of God

At level seven a person not only has love for God and others, not only understand God's design protocols for life, but also understands God's purposes and intelligently chooses to cooperate in fulfilling their role in His purposes.

Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:15 "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

Person's functioning at this level understand the truth about God's character of love, His nature and design for life, the origin of evil, the nature of sin, the weapons of Satan, the original purpose for the creation of humanity, the fall of humanity into sin, God's working through human history,

the purpose of the Cross, and the ultimate cleansing of the universe from sin. Jesus operated at this level, as will all those who are ready for translation when Jesus comes again.

Thus the NT church didn't put the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles, because they understood its purpose was a theater, with script, costumes, and stage designed to act out God's plan of salvation. As such, they understood there was no need for the continuation of the "little drama" now that Christ had come. But they still enjoined the principles of healthful living, because the laws of health were still operational.

Generally, in normal human development, one can only get their mind around one developmental level above the one they are currently operate at. Those operating at level four and below generally persecute and attack those operating at level six and seven, as demonstrated throughout history.

Christ wants to return for His Bride, but He doesn't want a child bride - He wants a mature bride, a people who have grown up to be like Him. This is my passion, to help people grow in God's grace to be like Him, so He will come and take us home!

Finally, those operating at level four and below are not trustworthy, because they require some external threat to do what is right. Only level five and above can be trusted, because those levels are where the law is written on the heart, when we actually love God and others, understand and value His methods and willingly participate in His purposes.