

## 6. God the Lawgiver (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

**Biblical material:** Heb. 12:21; Rom. 7:8–13; Job 24:14, 15; Exod. 16:4–30; Heb. 8:10, 10:16; Rom. 13:8–10; Is. 33:22.

### Quotes

- When the law of God is written on our hearts, our duty will be our delight. *Matthew Henry*
- The divine law, as seen by the Christian, exhibits liberty, gives liberty, is liberty. *Robert Johnstone*
- The needle of the law must precede the thread of the gospel. *C.H. Spurgeon*
- People make excuses for not keeping the law of God, which is proof how deeply they believe in the law. *C.S. Lewis*
- In the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. *Robert Louis Stevenson*
- The law discovers the disease. The gospel gives the remedy. *Martin Luther*

### Questions

Why does God give the law? If it is a natural expression of his character, why does he need to spell it out? Who is the law for? Is there an arbitrary punishment for breaking the law, or does this bring a natural consequence? How does the law help us? What is God's intent—to condemn us or to save us?

### Bible summary

Is. 33:22 tells us the Lord is our Lawgiver. The giving of the law was accompanied by fear (Heb. 12:21). Law that was meant to bring life brought death, though the law is holy and good (Rom. 7:8-13). People think they can break the law when no one can see them (Job 24:14, 15)—revealing the way we operate! The manna that came from heaven was to be used according to God's instructions (see Exod. 16:4-30). However what God wanted was not mere observance of specific commands, but an attitude of mind (Heb. 8:10, 10:16). If you love you fulfill the law (Rom. 13:8).

### Comment

God gives the law for clarity—so that we outlaws can know where we're going wrong. It is not as a way of salvation, or to crush us, but to establish the true character of God and the nature of his universe. This is the way it is. Good is good; evil is evil; and as we become remade in God's image, the more we agree with him on the intrinsic nature of good and evil.

In the words of George E. Fifield, "Satan has always said that God's law was arbitrary and unjust, and his government tyrannical. By this means he seeks to justify his secession from that government, and his attempt to exalt his own throne above the stars of God... Notwithstanding Satan's cavils, the law is a divine revelation of infinite, unchanging love..."

Our appreciation for God's moral laws should be the same as for his physical laws. We see how the laws of the universe operate. We recognize we can "defy" the law of gravity, but it will be to our detriment! The same is true of all of God's laws—which

are there to provide order and protection, not to impose some arbitrary divine whim. We should be glad for God's laws of order that prevent everything descending into chaos.

Jesus defines the greatest "law" as loving God—totally and absolutely. This then leads to our loving everyone else, for God is love and does just that himself. (Matt 22:37, 38). Thus growing into love will be a consequence of knowing and being with God—it is an inescapable result. This is what Paul describes as Christ living in me—not that we lose our individuality or responsibility, but that like Christ we do not live for ourselves. Our responsibility is to hear the truth about God, and help others recognize the winsome character of God. We are called to teach the truth in love, and *grow up!*

## **Comment 2**

"God's law is descriptive. God describes the way those in harmony with Him will live and the natural consequences that occur when we refuse His ways or behave destructively. God's justice requires that men shall have the light of truth that through being won to love and trust Him they will accept the forgiveness and healing that breaks the chain of natural consequences that leads to ruin and death. Instead of punishing sin to show that it is sinful, God attempts to protect sinners from the full consequences of sin that they might have opportunity to know Him for who He is and so be won to trust Him. Instead of feeling that sin is an offence to his authority and sovereignty, God feels pained that His children would destroy themselves for lack of responding to a right knowledge of Him. His wrath as described in Romans 1 and Hosea 11 is giving up in loving disappointment those who refuse to receive Him, letting them go to the horrible natural cause-effect consequences of a life apart from Him. The hopeful candidate for salvation naturally becomes preoccupied with 'how can I better understand the One who so loves that my love and trust may be strengthened in the God who will save all who trust Him.'" *Glenn Ruminson*

## **Ellen White Comments**

Evil originated with the rebellion of Lucifer. It was brought into heaven when he refused allegiance to God's law. Satan was the first lawbreaker. {RH June 4, 1901 }

In the councils of heaven it was decided that principles must be acted upon which would not at once destroy Satan's power, for it was His purpose to place things upon an eternal basis of security. Time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his government. The heavenly universe must see the principles which Satan declared were superior to God's principles, worked out. God's order must be contrasted with the new order after Satan's devising. The corrupting principles of Satan's rule must be revealed. The principles of righteousness expressed in God's law must be demonstrated as unchangeable, eternal, perfect. {18MR 361 }

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.... The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. {PP 68-69. }