

2. Blueprint for a Better World (3Q 2019—The Least of These)

Biblical material: Exod. 3:7, Matt. 22:37–40, Exod.22:21–23, Deut. 14:22–29, 26:1–11, Lev. 25:9–23, 19:18.

Quotes

- People make excuses for not keeping the law of God, which is proof how deeply they believe in the law. *C.S. Lewis*
- When the law of God is written on our hearts, our duty will be our delight. *Matthew Henry*
- As with all commandments, gratitude is a description of a successful mode of living. The thankful heart opens our eyes to a multitude of blessings that continually surround us. *James E. Faust*
- In the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. *Robert Louis Stevenson*
- The better life rests less on the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments and more on the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Golden Rule. *David Josiah Brewer*

Questions

Why does God set out all these rules as a blueprint for a better world? 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, especially in the way that we relate to one another? What is God's intent—to judge us or to help us?

Bible summary

Ex. 3:7 records God's concern over his people suffering in slavery in Egypt. Jesus summarizes the commandments as love for God and love for fellow human beings (Matt. 22:37–40). God warns his people against oppressing foreigners and mistreating widows and orphans (Ex. 22:21–23). In Deut. 14:22–29 God gives the rules for paying tithe—including having a feast with strong drink if too far from Jerusalem! Similar instructions regarding the payment of first-fruits are given in Deut. 26:1–11. In the Year of Jubilee everything is returned to the original owners etc. (Lev. 25:9–23). Everyone is to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:18).

Comment

We all want a better world! In fact, rulers and politicians down through the ages have been promising just that. In the texts for this study God lays out the rules for the way society is to work, along with religious requirements. Most important is the command to love one's neighbor. If this really did happen, most problems in society and legal conflicts would not happen.

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!*

Ellen White Comments

We have an individual accountability to God, an individual work which no one can do for us. It is to make the world better by precept, personal effort, and example. {Ev 495.2}

The Lord is acquainted with us individually. Everyone born into the world is given his or her work to do, for the purpose of making the world better, and in doing our God-appointed work, we make ourselves better; for in doing the work given us of God, we individually live out the law and the gospel. Each one has his sphere, and if the human agent makes God his counsellor, then there will be no working at cross purposes with God. He allots to everyone a place and a work, and if we individually submit ourselves to be worked by the Lord, however confused and tangled life may seem to our eyes, God has a purpose in it all, and the human machinery, obedient under the hand of divine wisdom, will accomplish the purposes of God. As in a well-disciplined army, every soldier has his allotted work in the great work of God. {MR926 35.1}

The working out of Satan's rule in contrast with the government of God has been presented to the whole universe. Satan's own works have condemned him. God's wisdom, His justice, and His goodness stand fully vindicated. It is seen that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the good of all the worlds that He has created. "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee." Psalm 145:10. The history of sin will stand to all eternity as a witness that with the existence of God's law is bound up the happiness of all the beings He has created. With all the facts of the great controversy in view, the whole universe, both loyal and rebellious, with one accord declare: "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.".... {DD 58-9}

If men would be obedient, they would understand the plan of God's government. The heavenly world would open its treasures of grace and glory for exploration. Human beings would be altogether different from what they are now; for by exploring the mines of truth, men would be ennobled. {ST, September 12, 1906 par. 2}