

LANDMARKS AND LANDMINES-PT4

(The Law of God – Part 1)

Good morning and welcome to another hour of the study of God's **holy** word. Today we're going to look at yet another Bible LANDMARK, and of course we'll also be looking at the LANDMINE the devil has used very successfully for hundreds of years to blow it up.

Today's LANDMARK has to do with the law of God, but before we begin, we need to determine what law is in question this morning.

First of all, I think it would be a good idea to define just what a law is and why we need law. According to the dictionary, a law is "a rule of action, or of conduct." And so, a law tells us what we must do, and what we must not do, how we must act, and how we must not act. It's quite obvious that if we had no law, bad people would commit all manner of crime without fear of punishment; and so we must have law.

A good law shows what's right and what's wrong, but the problem is, many times people can't agree about what's right and what's wrong. One person would have the law one way, and another, another way, and each one would have a desire to have a law to please himself. And since no man's judgment is good enough to make a law that would be just right in everything, and for everybody, we have to look elsewhere for that perfect law.

If you have faith in **the** God of heaven this morning, and believe that He is the only One that is capable of giving mankind a perfect law, then you would also know that He knows exactly what's right for us to do and how we should act, because a perfect law can only come from a perfect being.

Before we read what the Bible says about this subject, let's pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher this morning. [PRAYER]

King David was one of the holy men of old who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, as it says in **2 Peter 1:21**, and notice what he said in **Psalm 19:7, 8** "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony (and the testimony is still speaking about God's Law) the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." And then in verse eight it says, "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

So, if God has given us a perfect law, then He has also given us a perfect "rule of action, or of conduct"; and if we always obey it, we shall always do the right thing. Does this make since so far?

Now let me ask you question. Can a perfect law be made better by altering it? No, in fact, to alter such a law would make it imperfect, wouldn't it? If you alter that which is just right, you make it all wrong.

If a young student writes a word of ten letters on a blackboard, and spells it perfectly, but then erases or changes even one letter because he thinks he can improve upon it, it'll be spelled all wrong, won't it? Just so, if we change one commandment of the perfect law of God, it makes it imperfect, and therefore would no longer be the law of a perfect God.

Notice what the Bible says in **Psalm 89:34**. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

Doesn't Exodus 20 tell us that God spoke the 10 Commandments upon Mount Sinai, and made a covenant with His people to keep them? Yes! And so that law is something that "is gone out of His lips", isn't it? And

God says He won't alter it. This tells us that God has never made a law and afterwards changed it, because He's far too wise to make a mistake, or to make a law that needs altering, and has pledged that he won't do that.

Now, even though every law that God has made is perfect, and needs no altering, He did make some laws for man after he sinned, which were intended to last only till Christ should come and die upon the cross. These laws were not altered when Christ was crucified, but when He died, and they died also. They were given to point sinners forward to the death of Christ for forgiveness, and when he died they were no longer obligatory.

These laws required the killing of animals in sacrifice, which sacrifices were types, or emblems, or shadows of the death of Christ for sin. And so, if man had not sinned, these laws never would have been made.

But the 10 Commandment law, which is the main subject of our study today, was made for man before he sinned, and if he had not transgressed that law, he would have needed no Saviour to die for him, and consequently, no sacrifices would have been needed that pointed to Christ's death.

But, you might be thinking, wasn't the 10 Commandment law also given after man sinned since it went out of God's lips upon Mount Sinai? Well it's true, the 10 Commandments were spoken by God and written on tables of stone some 2500 years after Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden for sinning, but it's very clear that that law existed long before God spoke it upon the mount; it just wasn't written down, and we'll go into more detail about that in a minute.

But first of all we need to make sure we understand that God gave two distinct laws. This is very important, because there are people today that insist on keeping certain rituals and ceremonies that were associated with Old Testament sacrifices that were given after man sinned, and were to last only until Jesus died upon the cross.

A good example of this are the Jewish feast days, but the apostle Paul makes it clear in the book of Galatians that those who knowingly continue to observe these rituals have cut themselves off from God's grace. And so, you can see how important it is to understand what laws are still binding and which are not.

The first law that was given is our rule of conduct, or our duty toward God and each other. It's a rule by which we can tell what actions are right and what are wrong, and for this reason we call it the moral law, or the 10 Commandment law.

By this law we learn what actions are sinful; because the apostle John tells us in **1 John 3:4**, that "Sin is the transgression (or the violation) of that law." And so we can see then, that if man had not sinned, he would have kept this law.

But the other law was given to man because he was a sinner; that is, because he had transgressed the first law, or the moral law of right and wrong. This second law we call the ritual, or the ceremonial law, because it consisted of rites and ceremonies associated with animal sacrifices by which the believing, penitent sinner might obtain forgiveness of sins.

And so, if mankind had not broken God's moral law of 10 Commandments, they never would have been obliged to perform these rites and ceremonies. They never would have been commanded to take an innocent animal from the flock, and offer it as a sacrifice. And since Jesus died to set us free from the penalty of breaking the first law, we are no longer under obligation to keep the second; in fact, to do so is to imply that Christ's sacrifice is not sufficient. And if we come to that conclusion we're in big trouble.

And so we can see that during Old Testament times, the person that offered these sacrifices was virtually acknowledging himself worthy of death for his sins, but at the same time he was expressing his faith in Christ, the Lamb of God, who would one day come and die for those sins, and really for the sins of the whole world.

Now, when we read in **Colossians 2:14** of Christ “blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”, we know that the law that required those sacrifices for sin, is the second law that was meant, not the first. Because God never gave man anything that was contrary to him till he had done contrary to the moral law, or the first law God gave.

Also the reason we know that the blotting out of this handwriting was the second was because it clearly says **handwriting**. When a person uses handwriting, they use the hand, but the Bible tells us that when God wrote the ten commandments on stone He did it – not with his hand – but with His finger.

When we read the word law in the New Testament, sometimes the first law is meant, and sometimes the second, and we can always tell which is meant by what’s said about it. For instance, when Jesus said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law”, as He said in **Matthew 5:18**, we know that He meant the first law, or the moral law of 10 Commandments. Because it will always be wrong to worship idols, to lie, to steal, to kill, to commit adultery, and so forth. And besides, the reason God wrote the 10 Commandment law on tables of stone is to show that it’s to endure forever, just as stone endures.

And here’s another thing; a jot is the smallest letter in the Hebrew language, which was the language of the Jews, and a tittle is a tiny little mark that distinguishes some of their letters from others. By the use of this expression Jesus teaches us at least two things:

- #1, the smallest particle of the law could not pass away.
- And # 2, He was talking about a written law; and not only written, but one that was written in the Hebrew language.

And so, this written law, as we’ll see in a few minutes, is the same as the unwritten law that the Patriarchs were aware of before Mount Sinai — the same as the 10 Commandments that were written with the finger of God. And Jesus said no part of it could pass away until this current heaven and earth are no more.

But getting back to my other point about the two laws: when the apostle Paul, in **Hebrews 9:10**, speaks of a law having a shadow of good things to come, which stood only in meat and drink offerings, and carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of reformation, (or till Christ, the better sacrifice was offered), we know He means the second law, or the ceremonial law; do you see?

Again, when **James 2:10** pronounces every person guilty who does not keep the whole law, he speaks of the moral law, first of all because he quotes two of the 10 Commandments in the very next verse! And secondly, James wrote this long after the crucifixion of Christ, and you can’t be guilty of breaking a law that was abolished when Jesus died on the cross!

It was also the first law Jesus referred in **Matthew 5:17**, when He said, “I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill.” And Jesus did fulfill the moral law by always perfectly obeying it; that’s why He can be our Savior.

By crediting His perfect obedience to our delinquent account, we receive His life, and that’s a life that never ends! **John 3:16** proves that point. Christ’s fulfilling of the law didn’t do away with it, or destroy it as many

people today suppose, but rather it means that if we have faith in His perfect obedience to that first law, it cancels out our disobedience to that same law, and makes the second law unnecessary.

And so, every ceremony in the OT that was associated with animal sacrifice is no longer required; in fact to do so is to reject the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf.

And there's something else the obedience of Jesus accomplishes; it makes it possible for us, through the power of His Spirit abiding in us, to live a life of victory over sin ourselves! That's part of the "GOOD NEWS"! The obedience of Jesus justifies us when we accept Him as our Savior, and the power of the indwelling Christ through the Spirit sanctifies us, or enables us then, to live a life of perfect obedience just as Jesus did.

Perhaps we'll talk more about this at a future time, because the devil also has a LANDMINE that blows up the truth about God's LANDMARK of power to stop sinning. But we'll have to leave this subject right here for now.

Let's take a look now at the fact that the 10 Commandment Law was given long before God spoke it upon Mount Sinai. The book of Genesis gives a brief history of events during Old Testament times beginning with the creation of this world, and extending over a period of more than two thousand years.

During this time there lived some men who were approved of God, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, and Jacob, and others. These men the Lord called righteous because they did right; that's what righteousness is—that's what it means! And so, in order to be righteous, there had to be some kind of standard by which to judge between right and wrong. And we've already learned that that's why the 10 Commandments were given, it's our rule of conduct.

But besides these righteous men, there were also many wicked men in those times, like Cain, who killed his brother, and God sent dreadful judgments upon him and his decedents for their sins.

At another time He sent a flood of water upon the earth, and destroyed all but eight people.

He also rained fire and brimstone on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and burned them up with all their inhabitants, with the exception of Lot and his two daughters and his wife who became a pillar of salt.

Now, all this becomes interesting when you consider that the 10 Commandment law was not written **anywhere** in the book of Genesis. There was no rule of conduct written down for men to live by; and yet they knew the difference between right and wrong and were said to be either righteous or wicked.

And so, it's reasonable to conclude that God revealed to men what was right and what was wrong before the law was spoken and written upon Mount Sinai. Both the righteous and the wicked men I mentioned earlier **must have been taught** of God about what actions were right and wrong, otherwise He would have been totally unfair to punish some and reward others.

In fact, the Bible testifies that they had the law of God, although it is not written in the history of their day. Notice what it says in **Genesis 26:4, 5**. "And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" And they were blessed, weren't they? Because it was through the seed of Abraham that Christ descended. And then verse 5 says, "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

It would have been impossible for Abraham to keep a law before that law was made known to him. And so we know that God had a law, and righteous men kept it, though there is no record that the law itself was written down during their lifetime.

On the other hand, those wicked men who were destroyed by flood and by flames, broke the law, and had to have been sinners in the sight of God. And how could they be sinners and receive punishment without a law? Because **Romans 4:15** says, “Where there is no law, there is no transgression.” And so, it’s obvious that there was a law before it was written on tables of stone. I don’t know how anyone can dispute that fact!

Thus we can see clearly that the law of God existed during those early days, that good men kept it, and bad men broke it. And wherever we can find a whole law which God has given at any time, such as when the law was given upon Mount Sinai, we can be confident that it’s the same law which all righteous men kept before that time; because God doesn’t change, and therefore His perfect rule of right and wrong cannot change. Not in the past, not now, and not in the future!!

Now, before we move on, let’s look at one more proof that the 10 Commandment Law existed before it was given upon Mount Sinai.

In the book of Exodus, we’re given the history of the Israelites as they came out of Egypt. And in the first 15 chapters we don’t find the law mentioned at all, but when we come to chapter 16, we find it spoken of but not written. After the Lord brought His people out of Egypt, He chose to prove them to see if they would obey Him. That’s what it says in **Chapter 16:4**.

And if you read the whole chapter carefully, you’ll find that God chose to test His people by seeing if they would keep the Sabbath. By the way, this test of loyalty took place a whole month before the law was spoken from Mount Sinai.

And when we read the 10 Commandments in **Exodus 20**, we notice that the seventh day Sabbath is the fourth in the list of 10. And so we know without a doubt that the Law of God existed before it was spoken from the Mount and written on stone tablets by the finger of God.

This test upon the Sabbath, you’ll recall, had to do with the manna that God provided for the Israelites to eat in the desert. They were to gather a certain amount of it every day because it would spoil if they gathered too much, but on the sixth day, they were to gather twice as much and it would keep, because on the seventh day Sabbath there wouldn’t be any. Thus the Israelites were taught to rest from their labor of six days and rest on the seventh.

Now, why do you suppose God selected the Sabbath commandment as a test of obedience? Well, it was because none of the other nine commandments were better calculated to prove their love to Him.

It’s easy to understand why the other nine commandments were given, because they’re self-evident. In other words, we can easily see why it’s wrong to disrespect our parents, to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, to lie, and to worship objects we can make with our own hands, but when it comes to the day of rest, most people consider it just one day in seven! There seems to be nothing moral or immoral about it either way!

And so they think, “one day is as good as another, and I’ll just choose the day that’s most convenient for me to rest and go to church.” And of course, that would be Sunday. The problem is, there’s no commandment that tells them so.

When you think about it, this test on the Sabbath wasn't all that difficult for Israel to comply with, was it? In fact, it was probably the easiest test God could have given them in order to prove their love and loyalty. But you know, as simple as the test was, there were still some who disobeyed. There were still some that wanted to do what they wanted to do on the Sabbath day, and their true motives were on display for all to see when they disregarded what God expressly commanded them not to do. We won't take the time to read Exodus 16 now; you can do that on your own when you have the time, but do read it.

In this story you'll see the wisdom, and the mercy of God in choosing the Sabbath to prove his ancient people **before** allowing them to inherit the promised land of Canaan.

And think about this for a minute: if God proved His people anciently upon the Sabbath commandment before He brought them into the promised land, could it be that the last generation might be tested the same way, and upon the same point, before giving them the promised inheritance of the heavenly Canaan?

Many times throughout the Bible we find that history repeats itself over and over again, and God has a good reason for this, and it's because mankind keeps making the same mistakes. And it's no different with the Sabbath: people in the past forgot it, and people have forgetting it today.

Why is it that the fourth commandment is the only one of the 10 that begins with the word "REMEMBER"? Could it be that God knew His people near the end of time would forget what He asked them to do, just like His people did anciently?

And there's something else we can learn from our study this morning, and it's this; the Sabbath commandment is the first one of the 10 revealed in the Bible as being a part of the law of God. And so, it tells us something of the importance of this particular commandment, doesn't it?

Are you beginning to see the top of the devil's LANDMINE sticking up out of the dirt? Let's brush a little more of that dirt off.

I want you to think this through with me for a minute. God came down to earth in flaming fire, and from the top of a mountain that trembled and shook at hHis presence, spoke forth the moral rules of His government to the assembled thousands who stood at a distance gazing upon this scene of awful grandeur.

Then God engraved this law with his own finger on tables of stone, and ordered them to be placed in a golden ark prepared expressly for their reception, and deposited them in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary, guarding them on each side by holy angels and with the visible glory of God, the symbol of the divine presence above it.

What an awesome thing for God to do, and He wouldn't have done it unless He wanted to place great emphasis upon every point of that law.

And yet, there are people today who know all this sacred history, and still say that the law was abolished, and consequently that we are under no obligation to keep it. And still others say that nine of the commandments should still be kept, but the fourth one has been changed, so that the first day of the week is now the Sabbath instead of the seventh. And they come to this conclusion without one single Bible verse that tells them so. Isn't that amazing to you? Not one single verse!

Isn't changing the seventh-day Sabbath to the first day of the week altering God's perfect law? And doesn't **James 2:10** say that if we break one commandment, we're guilty of breaking them all? Where does this idea come from, that sinful men could take it upon themselves to alter God's perfect law?

Well, we don't have time to go into it in any depth about that today, but the change to the law of God has been brought about over the past 17 or 18 hundred years by the power the apostle John labeled the "anti-christ!"

In **Daniel 7:25**, we have a prophecy of a power that should arise upon the earth, and "speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws."

And so the question is, what laws would be changed, and whose? This can't be speaking of the laws of earthly governments; because it's nothing strange for one power to change the laws of another whenever one could bring the other under its dominion. And so, it's not human laws of any kind.

Daniel 7:25 says, the "times and laws" in question were such as this power should only **think** to change, but not really be able to change. And since we've already concluded that God's laws cannot be changed, they have to be the laws of the same Being to whom the saints belong that this verse is talking about, the ones who are worn out by this power; namely, the laws of the Most High.

This power Daniel speaks of has expunged the second commandment of the 10 to make way for the adoration of images, and then divided the tenth commandment into two parts so there would still be ten.

And when you consider the 10 Commandment law as a whole, there's only one of those 10 precepts that deal with time, and that's number four. The seventh-day Sabbath is a 24 hour period that God has blessed and sanctified, according to **Genesis 2:2, 3**. And by the way, the seventh-day was blessed and set apart about 2500 years before there was a Jewish nation; and so it can't be a Jewish Sabbath, as many Christians believe today.

This anti-christ power that has thought to change the Sabbath has taken hold of the fourth commandment, torn it from it's place in the minds of the multitudes, and erected a rival institution called Sunday sacredness in its place! But we'll have to wait till next time to bring this point out more fully, because our time today is just about gone.

But dear friends, the fourth commandment still tells the truth, as well as the other nine. It teaches that God made the world in six days, and rested on the seventh. This was true the day after man was created, and it's still true today! This truth cannot change any more than the truth about killing, and stealing, and coveting can change; do you see?

According to **Romans 1:25**, those who break any one of the 10 commandments have changed the truth of God into a lie, therefore, those who do this are worshiping the changer of "times and laws" rather than the One who does not change, and whose law is the truth.

And by working six days and resting on the seventh, we testify to this truth, because it takes seven days to bear this testimony by our actions—or by our conduct.

The seven-day week was made expressly for this one purpose! Because there's absolutely no logical reason for a seven-day week except for the fact that God created the world and everything on it in six days and rested on the seventh. There are no heavenly bodies in space whereby we can calculate a 7-day week like we can with the month and the year. There is no 7-day cycle in Nature from which this could have been derived!

We have a seven-day week simply because that's the way God ordained it from creation. And we have a seventh-day Sabbath simply because God created for six days and rested the seventh. And He wants the creatures that He created to remember that, and by remembering, remember Him.

Now turn with me please to **Hebrews 4** and we'll look at one more thing before we close: (**Verses 4-11**). "For he (God) spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: (so the Jews entered not in because of their unbelief and the ones who are still to enter in are Christians.) Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

When we read this in context, these verses clearly speak of the seventh-day Sabbath rest, which carries over to **the spiritual rest of grace**. In other words, when we come to understand that we can't work our way to heaven by our own good works, or keep the Sabbath day holy without first becoming holy ourselves, by abiding in Christ, then we will succeed where Israel failed. Unless we become spiritual beings by partaking of the divine nature, as it says in **2 Peter 1:4**, we will never enter into God's rest.

Friends, it's clear from these verses that there is still a rest that remains to the people of God today, a rest that Israel failed to realize, and it's the same spiritual rest, on the same literal day that existed from the beginning of creation—Because, as we've already seen, God's law has not changed from that time to this. **This is a Bible LANDMARK!** And as long as we follow it, we will be worshipping the God who Himself rested from all His work after creating this world and everything on it, giving us an example that we should follow in His steps, even as Jesus did while He lived among men.

If Jesus kept the Sabbath and said that a jot or tittle of it would not pass away until heaven and earth passed away, don't you think we should keep it, too? It seems ridiculous to even ask such an obvious question, doesn't it? Since there is no other day mentioned in God's word for us to keep holy, don't you think it's important to do what the commandment says?

The 10 Commandments aren't 10 suggestions, are they? No! They are 10 rules of conduct by which to live, and I hope you'll seriously consider these things this morning and do what is right no matter what anybody else thinks or says.

Next time we'll go into more detail about the devil's LANDMINE regarding this subject, and expose those he is using today in an effort to blow up this LANDMARK TRUTH about the law of God, and specifically an issue that will bring the great controversy between Christ and Satan to a climax in these last days just before the Lord returns.

Believe me my dear friends, it won't be much longer before human probation closes and the final scenes of earth's history are interrupted by the coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven, and it's my prayer this morning that you will be faithful to the truth that the Holy Spirit has revealed to you today – let's pray. [PRAYER]