

Intro: As many of you are aware, I am currently going through study for a Master's degree in Law. I have borrowed from my work there so that we can take a close look here at defining our terms. Let's take a look at this together.

I. What are laws? What kinds of laws exist?

Laws are restrictions which apply either absolutely, such as the laws of thermodynamics, or conditionally, such as the law prohibiting murder - which stipulates blessings for those who obey, and curses for those who disobey. Conditional law is still universally applicable, but the universal application is that of the choice to obey or rebel. Just as you cannot escape the confines of the laws of thermodynamics, so too there is no third option to the law against murder.

Conditional laws are ... mimicked by humanity as we follow our nature imparted to us by God. He set laws, so we do as well. God is a God of order. Our laws are not universal in many ways, but still qualify as universally applicable. You either obey the laws which apply to you, or you do not. You have no third option.

II. Why do laws exist?

Laws exist then to place a marker on order - they are the difference between order and chaos. God's laws in the natural world, absolute laws, allow atoms to hold together and make it so that actions create repeatable results. His ... conditional laws, make it so that societal actions also have predictable outcomes and consequences. The purpose of the law is to hold creation together. If two plus two did not always equal four, math would be pointless and that whole sphere would cease to exist. In much the same way, sin always equals death.

III. How do you judge between 'good laws' and 'bad laws'?

Good laws are enforced. To lay out a law and then to leave it unenforced makes it pointless. Why? Prov 3:11-12 tells us that discipline is a form of love. It is done for our benefit. It may not be fun, but "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11). If it is not enforced, it has no purpose. After all, the purpose of law is a demarcation of order. Good laws are also enforceable. If a law is unenforced or unenforceable, it fails to fulfil this purpose and thus cannot be properly described as a law. (ex. A law requiring everyone to have an IQ of 150 or above; or a law that says you must always think nice thoughts.)

Good laws are universally applicable. If one man is subject to a law, but another is not, this creates injustice. Why? Rom 2:11-12 tells us succinctly what the rest of scripture says at great length; God does not play favorites. Neither should we.

Good laws must be made known. To judge someone for violating standards that were hidden is unjust. Why? “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Jas 4:17. And again, God says He is angry with those who “hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18), that is to say, those who know the truth but do not obey. Who knows the truth? All men. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). How do all men know the truth? “for God hath shewed *it* unto them” (Rom 1:19). If that isn’t clear enough, read verses twenty through thirty two.

Good laws must promote good. Why? Because good laws come from a position of rightful authority. God is the ultimate authority, thus the laws of lesser origins are based upon His sufferance. A law which violates His dictates is not a good law, because He defines good. See Acts 4:19, and 5:29. In much the same way, all ordinances must come from those who have the authority to make such restrictions and requirements.

Challenge: God tells us to respect the ordinances of men, 1 Pet 2:13-15. He also tells us to respect His law above the laws of men, Acts 4:19. Understanding when laws are just and unjust is necessary to our walk as Christians.

IV. The Plumbline

- A. The Gospel is the grand story of man’s fall from grace, (Rom 3:23) God’s offer of redemption (John 3:16), and our subsequent renewal (2 Cor 5:17). Finally, we end the story with a return to grace, and to a perfected state (Rev 22:3).
- B. If the Gospel proscribes a great arc, first swinging away from perfection, and later returning to perfection, then what lays along the straight line of perfection? If sin is aberrant, and sinners are deviant, then what is the standard from which they deviate? Yes, that standard is perfection. (Gen 1:31)
- C. In a sense, creation is God’s masterpiece. We recognize it with every sweet breath, with every sunrise and sunset. We ourselves are formed masterpieces of God. Yet we have smudged His good work (Rom 5:12)
- D. Just as all that God made is actively maintained through His constant attention (Rev 4:11), so too what man has made, sin, is actively maintained through our continuing insistence of rebellion (Ps 7:11).
- E. The ‘plumbline’, as it were, has never changed. It also isn’t missing. The reason we can recognize that there is something wrong here is because we still see the shadow of what is right. We automatically compare what is to what should be because all of creation remains elastic - drawn out of form perhaps, but longing to return to its natural state, which is to say, perfection. (Rom 8:22)

Challenge: Looking at the grand story of redemption is certainly inspiring as a Christian, but looking at the law of God is often more beneficial since it is a glimpse into God unblemished nature. That is not to say that the law should become a condemning factor in your life once again, but rather that it is a picture of perfection - a window into God’s character. (Ps 119:7,15)

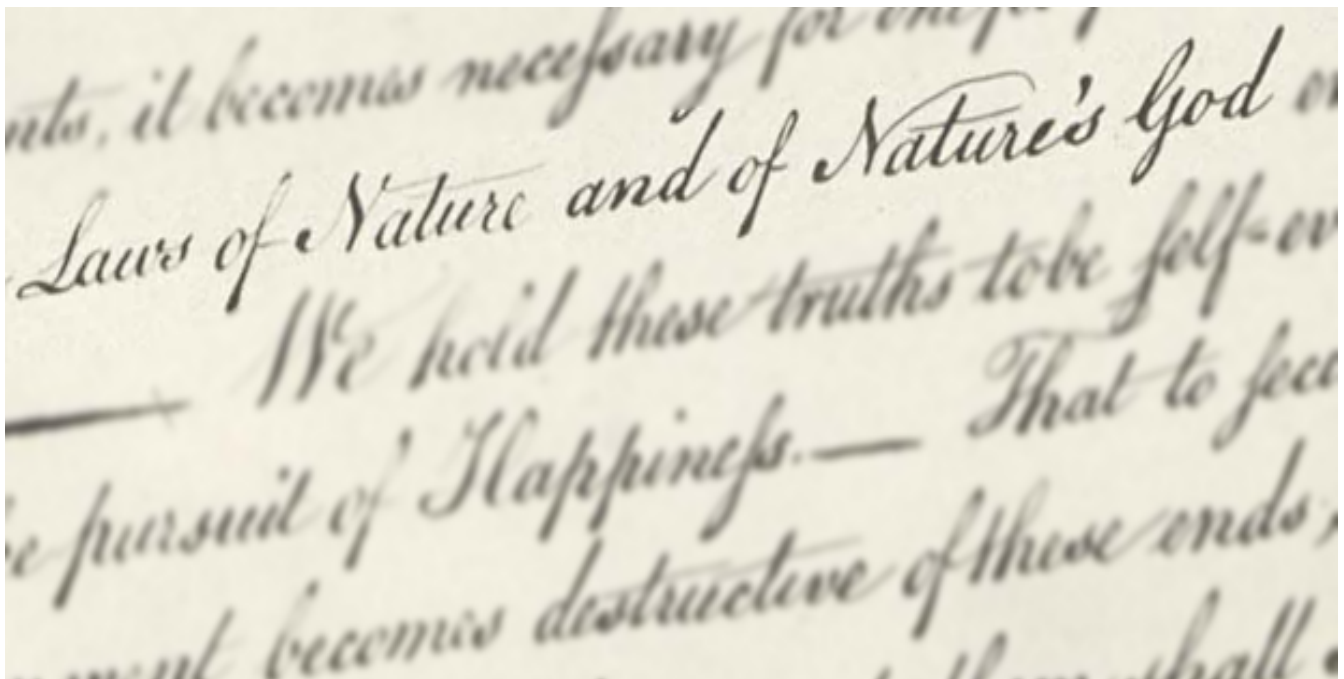
V. Christ came as a sacrifice, but also as an example of what 'Adam' should have been. (1 Cor 11:1)

- A. 'Second Adam' never sinned. (Heb 4:15)
- B. In fact, he never even did anything bad. (1 Pet 2:21-22)
- C. Christ didn't just refrain from doing bad, He did good everywhere He went. We too should do righteously. (1 Pet 2:23-25)
- D. Christ did nothing of Himself, (John 5:30) everything He did was plugged into the power of God (John 15:5).

Final Challenge: Don't let the example of Christ's life be overshadowed and forgotten by the impact of His death. This is not to belittle the death of Christ, but rather to remind you that it is the death that makes it possible for you to follow His example in life. The life that is in you is Christ Jesus. (Col 3:4)

Close: The law was in place in the garden, before the fall of man. It's purpose is not simply to condemn the evil doer, but rather it is to provide the obedient follower of God with a framework of good. It is a pattern which helps us to understand God's character, and shows us where we can freely utilize the creative nature which God designed as our framework. Further, meditation on the law assists us in keeping us from perils, pitfalls we might have missed otherwise, Joshua 1:8, Ps 1.

Final Song: [I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.](#)



Scriptures:

- I. What are laws? What kinds of laws exist?**
- II. Why do laws exist?**
- III. How do you judge between 'good laws' and 'bad laws'?**

Prov 3:11-12 (Heb 12:11). Rom 2:11-12

Jas 4:17. (Rom 1:18). (Rom 1:19-32).. See Acts 4:19, and 5:29.

Challenge: 1 Pet 2:13-15. Acts 4:19.

IV. The Plumbline

- A. (Rom 3:23) (John 3:16), (2 Cor 5:17). (Rev 22:3).
- B. (Gen 1:31)
- C. (Rom 5:12)
- D. (Rev 4:11), (Ps 7:11).
- E. (Rom 8:22)

Challenge: (Ps 119:7,15)

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- A. (Heb 4:15)
- B. (1 Pet 2:21-22)
- C. (1 Pet 2:23-25)
- D. (John 5:30) (John 15:5).

Final Challenge: (Col 3:4)

Close: Joshua 1:8, Ps 1.

Final Song: [I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.](#)