



March 15, 2009

Universal Laws

Sociologists, social psychologists and others study the phenomenon of morality in the family of man. We find that throughout history there have been certain principles that have been part of every culture. The origins of morality are unknown to the social scientists who search for clues as to the ultimate beginnings of such ideas. As we turn our attention to the Bible we find that there are certain conditions or universal laws that have been part of the design for life that God put in place at creation. Most of the time when we think of the Bible we think in terms of the Old and New Testaments and most folks are more familiar with the New than with the Old. Jesus has been a part of our culture, history and traditions for over 2,000 years and has become a staple in Western thought. When it comes to the Old Testament one may think of the Ten Commandments and Moses as the Law Giver. One might be familiar with the 23rd psalm as this is commonly used, particularly at funerals. But this is only part of the whole story. The scriptures tell of another period of time when God dealt with the heads of households, or patriarchs, revealing himself and his will to them. Abraham was one of these as was Jacob and his twelve sons who became the founders of the tribes of Israel. When the Hebrews are enslaved by the Egyptians and later delivered, the focus of the narrative is on the nation of Israel and the events that lead up to the coming of Christ into the world. The narrative however might lead us to wonder about the other nations, those that are not part of the covenant that God made with Abraham. We have to look very carefully to see what is happening at this time and to understand how God deals with all of these nations. God does not ignore the existence of other nations nor does he condone evil. We may not understand the details of how God dealt with the world but we know that it was possible for others to know about God. Melchizedek, perhaps one of the most misunderstood characters to appear in the Old Testament, was a king and priest of God (**Gen 14.18**) and was faithful to God in that he blessed Abraham. Balaam was a mercenary prophet and spiritualist who knew who God was although he did not respect the nature

of God. When called upon to curse the children of Israel for a price, he gave lip service to his refusal but attempted to do what he was asked to perform (**Num 22-24**). Peter tells us that Balaam was intent on the reward of unrighteousness (**2 Pet 2.15**) and eventually paid the price for his folly (**Num 31.8,16**). As we stand back and try to understand the nature of the world and the way in which God dealt with individuals we find information in the scriptures that tell us about the state of man and God. We find that there was indeed a time when God revealed himself to all of mankind, partly through the nature of creation itself, but man chose not to “*retain*” God in the mind (**Rom 1.20-25**). We find that God has never been far from man and could be found by those who diligently searched for him (**Acts 17.27**). We find that in the absence of the Law of Moses, which was a precursor to prepare the way for Christ, the Gentile world remained under the patriarchal law, elements of which were also part of the Law of Moses. This is conveyed in Paul’s statement to the Romans when he writes, “*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another...*” (**Rom 2.15-16**). We can identify some conditions common to both dispensations that continued for the Gentile world until Christ came into the world and have been restated as applicable in our day and time. These universal laws, which we will discuss over the next few weeks deal with marriage, fornication, murder and the eating of blood. These conditions also appear in some of the laws and codes of ancient cultures. Interestingly, violating these universal laws are associated with cultures that have shown a relatively chaotic history and unstable social order.

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