

Were the

TEN COMMANDMENTS in Force Before Moses?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

THE WORLD is plagued with many times more troubles and evils today than when I was a boy. There was only a fraction of the crime. Divorces and broken homes were rare by comparison.

But today crime, revolt, riots, violence, wars — and the nuclear mass-destruction weapons — present the world with the supreme problem of human survival!

Why?

And what possible connection could that have with whether the Ten Commandments existed before Moses? Plenty!

There has to be a *cause* for every effect. Do we dare recognize the sobering fact that the world is bringing all these frightening conditions on itself?

The Very Basis of Life

There is a creation. Of necessity there has to be a Creator. And the Creator set in living motion invisible spiritual laws to *cause* human happiness, peace, and abundant well-being.

The cause of all human troubles, woes and evils? Man's rejection and transgression of those laws!

That overall invisible spiritual law is the way of giving, helping, serving, co-operating — the way of outgoing concern for others. That *way* produces all good. And that way of life is simply the way of the Ten Commandments.

Most people ignore that law — and live diametrically contrary to it. Yet some will say, "But I've been taught that the Ten Commandments were done away, abolished by Christ, and we don't have to obey God's law any more."

But when a law of God is actually in living motion like the invisible physical laws of gravity or inertia, it is something far more than a church ritual, to

be observed during one period and abolished in another. To argue that this inexorable spiritual law is abolished is like setting a religious doctrine that the laws of gravity and inertia are abolished — and telling people that they may freely leap off a high precipice or a tall building. But if they do, the law will exact its penalty.

All the harm — all the suffering — all the evils that have beset this world for six thousand years are the result of violating God's law!

Yet many have been erroneously taught that the Ten Commandments were merely a law devised by Moses, and given to the children of Israel — *and them only* — and that the Ten Commandments never existed until Moses. And, further, that they existed only until Christ.

The Paramount Question of Your Life

This is no mere, irrelevant theological or religious question. This is the very essence of your life — your home life, your social life, your business life. It even has an important connection with inheriting eternal life — or eternal death!

It's true that you cannot *earn* eternal life by obeying the commandments. But it's just as true that you can earn — and get paid — eternal death for unrepented transgression.

It's the very crux question behind world troubles today. Strange as it may seem, the Ten Commandments have been in full force and effect since human life has existed on this earth!

They constitute a spiritual law that is inexorable and eternal — a law that is love and the fulfilling of which is love — a law that was set in motion for our happiness to produce everything good which we have foolishly

denied ourselves. These Ten Commandments are entirely different and separate from the ritualistic law of Moses, which was just a code of *physical* laws, not spiritual laws.

Proof That Commandments Were in Force at Beginning

The Ten Commandments were first made known to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Why? Because that is the very law that he broke in the "original" sin. Every one of the Ten Commandments was then in full force and effect. It was sin to transgress any one of them between the time of Adam and Moses. You can read this in your own Bible.

When did this thing that we call "sin" start anyway? Did it start with Moses?

We read the answer in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and *death by sin*; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And in verse fourteen, "Death reigned from Adam to Moses."

"Sin is not imputed when there is no law," you read in the 13th verse. Yet sin was imputed, because death did reign from Adam to Moses. There must then have been a law from Adam's time.

What Is Sin?

Is there a Bible definition? Is there any place in the Bible where it says, "Sin is . . ." and then follows the definition?

The answer is in I John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the law."

Sin is the transgression of the law! Do you realize that God Almighty is not only the Creator of matter — solid matter, liquid matter and gaseous matter, as we know it — but God also is the Creator of force and of energy and

of every power and of every law — the laws of physics, the laws of chemistry, every law that is in motion and is energized? Do you realize that God Almighty also created a spiritual law? That spiritual law regulates your happiness.

Happiness Instead of Suffering

You want happiness. You want to be happy above all things. Everyone does. You want to lead a life that is comfortable, pleasing and pleasant. You would like to lead a life that is full and abundant and interesting — as a matter of fact, a little bit exciting all the way along — wouldn't you? And you want a life where everything is pleasant, where there are no pains or suffering.

You don't want a life of boredom. You don't want a life of sorrow, pain or suffering. You want a happy life, and you would love to feel well, jolly and joyful — happy all the time.

You could have a life like that. Everyone could.

This entire world could be like that — if we only understood the way!

God Almighty in His great love for humanity set a law in motion. That law was designed to produce just that kind of life for you.

But you're not living that way. You're breaking that law and that law has been breaking *you* a long time, because that's precisely what happens.

That law is *merely* love, and love is an outgoing concern, not an in-coming lust. It's the way of love. It's the way that love should be expressed — love toward God and love toward neighbor.

The Apostle Paul tells us what sin is in Romans 7:7, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" People think that the law is all wrong, that it's sin. Paul continues, "God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." In other words, by the law is the *knowledge* of sin, as Paul had said previously in Romans 3:20.

The law gives you the knowledge of what sin is. It directs you and guides you as to what you ought to do.

What Is the Law?

You don't know what is right and what is wrong except as God reveals.

Paul would not have known what sin was if the law had not told him. Human nature will not teach you. Human nature is evil. As Paul says, in Romans 7:7, "I had not known lust," that is, he wouldn't have known that lust was evil or wrong; he didn't have such instinctive knowledge, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The law that said, "Thou shalt not covet," taught the Apostle Paul that coveting is wrong — harmful — sin. And that is the tenth commandment. So the law that taught that principle is the Ten Commandments!

In Romans 7:12, Paul says that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." That isn't what you have been taught today, is it? Many people have been reared in the belief that the law is unholy, that it is altogether wrong, and that Christ had to do away with it.

In verse 14 of Romans 7, the Apostle Paul says, "For we know that the law is spiritual." *The law is spiritual.*

Paul said he was *carnal*. He was fleshly and material. So are you. So am I. But the law is a spiritual principle, and it regulates your happiness — a spiritual matter.

The Original Sin

Every one of the Ten Commandments was in existence during the time of Adam. It was sin to break any one of them prior to the time of the law of Moses. The law of Moses, we know, didn't come until the time of Moses — 430 years after the time of Abraham. But the spiritual law has been in existence from Adam!

The original human sin is recorded in Genesis, beginning with chapter 2, verse 15: "And the Eternal took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. And the Eternal God *commanded* the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat."

God gave him permission. God is Supreme Ruler. He is Lord — Master. God is giving the orders. He is teaching. The man didn't know. The man had to be told. He had to be taught and instructed. Here is the instruction — the command, and a sentence. No-

tice: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." That is, to take to yourself the authority to produce the *knowledge* of what is good and what is evil — to decide what *you* think is right and what is wrong, will result in death.

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). God was preaching the Gospel to the man. There it is! The very fact that God said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof . . ." shows that the man *was allowed* to do it, that the man was a free moral agent, that the man himself had to make the choice. God designed that you and I *choose* whether we will obey His law, or not.

Animals don't make a choice. Animals have instinct.

God ordained that you and I must make a choice. And if we choose the right way to live, according to that law which God set in motion to produce happiness and contentment and a full, thrilling, enjoyable life, we can have it. But if we're going to choose to live the other way, if we are going to take to ourselves to decide what is right, if we are going to do what is right in our own eyes — *there is no other way* that is right but God's law — and we shall automatically choose to transgress God's law — *we're going to have suffering, sorrows and curses*. That's what mankind has always done.

The First Lie

To continue:

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Eternal God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, *lest ye die*. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall *not surely die*" (Gen. 3:1-4).

"You shall not surely die" — *there* was the first lie that we have any historic record of. It was not told by a man, but by the devil. "You will not surely

die." "You're an immortal soul." Or, "You have an immortal soul that won't die." That's what the devil said.

Continuing: "For God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and *ye shall be as gods*, knowing good and evil."

In other words, it is the prerogative of God to determine what is right — and what is wrong. Why? Because God created and put in living motion the spiritual law that is the way that is good — that produces good — and the transgression of which automatically produces evil results. To create and put into living action can only be done by the Creator. But for any but God to decide — to assume the knowledge of what is good and what is evil — is to assume and arrogate to himself the prerogative of God — to elevate himself to be as God! Satan tempted the first humans to intellectual vanity — to produce the *knowledge* of what is good or evil by their own minds.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food" — she used her own judgment and didn't obey the law of God — she used her own human reason — "...the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" — the first human sin!

The Commandments Broken

Analyze exactly what happened. God is the One we obey. Do you realize that's one of the definitions of God? Whoever you obey is your god. Whatever you *serve* is your god. It might be your automobile. Maybe it's an idol. Whatever it is, that's your god.

Adam and Eve had another god in place of the true God — they obeyed Satan — they broke the first commandment. They dishonored their only parent. How? In Luke 3:38 Adam is called the "son of God," because God created him. Adam was the son of God by a direct creation. Adam was not God's son by begetting or birth.

Adam not only dishonored his only parent, but he also broke the tenth commandment. There was *lust* when the woman saw that it was good for

food and desired to make one wise; vanity, egotism and pride entered into her heart.

Lust is what usually causes a person to have an inordinate desire to have something that is not legal. Lust causes you to steal, and Adam and Eve broke the eighth commandment by stealing what was not theirs.

Four of the Ten Commandments were broken in the original sin.

And in other ways *every one* of the Ten Commandments was actually broken in that very first sin.

How Did Cain Sin?

Consider their first son. Genesis 4, beginning with verse 6: "And the Eternal said unto Cain [their elder son], Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well." God said, "shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

Notice what sin was in those days — in the days of Cain! "Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and *slew him*."

And the Eternal said unto Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" And he replied, "I know not." He lied and broke another one of the commandments. That was sin, too.

He was a murderer. Sin did lie at the door.

Cain broke the sixth and the ninth commandments. Every one of these commandments was known from creation, because God had revealed them to Adam. He thus revealed them to mankind at that time. But humanity has rejected them.

Idolatry Committed Before Abraham

Notice Joshua 24:2 (RSV), "And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nachor; and *they served other gods*.' " " "Idolatry was a sin in the days before Abraham and that was 430 years before the law of Moses!

Now turn to Genesis 35:1-4: "And

God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the *strange gods* that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob *all the strange gods which were in their hand*."

They could hold these gods in their hands. Notice: "And all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem." It was a sin to worship idols and they had idol gods in their own hands.

The Third Commandment

Notice the third commandment in Leviticus 19:3, 21, 27. "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do." Here's the instruction of God to the Israelites in the time of Moses, but it was sin to break that third commandment before Moses!

"And after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, *shall ye not do*: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances . . . And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, *neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God*: I am the Eternal."

There's profanity, or profaning the name of God. Now the 27th verse: "For *all these abominations* have the men of the land *done*, which were *before you*" — before this generation during which the law of Moses came.

In previous generations prior to the law of Moses, "All these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled." It was sin. One of the sins was to profane the name of God. Therefore, profanity — taking the name of God in vain — was a sin before Moses.

The Fourth Commandment Observed

Coming to the fourth commandment in Exodus 16:4, "Then the Eter-

nal said unto Moses" — this was two weeks before they came to Mount Sinai and before the law of Moses was given or before they ever knew there would be a law of Moses — "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, *whether they will walk in my law, or no.*"

Here is God's law. He was going to see whether the people would obey it *before* the law of Moses was given — *weeks before* they even came to Mount Sinai, where the law of Moses was added.

Verse 5, "And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

Now notice verse 22: "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much."

Verse 23: Moses said to the people, "This is that which the Eternal hath said, Tomorrow is *the rest of the holy sabbath* unto the Eternal."

Then on the following day, verses 25-27, Moses said, "Eat that today; for *today is a sabbath* unto the Eternal, today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on *the seventh day, which is the sabbath*, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the sabbath for to gather, and they found none!"

God was showing them by miracles from heaven which day was the seventh day. Time had not been lost.

Some of them thought it didn't make any difference. They would wait to go out on the following day — on the Sabbath — but there was none! Did that make any difference? "And the Eternal said unto Moses, *how long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?* See, for that the Eternal hath given you the sabbath, therefore, he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place

on the seventh day. So *the people rested on the seventh day*" (verses 28-30).

That was weeks before they came to Mount Sinai — before the law of Moses! It was the law of God at that time.

The Other Commandments

Now turn to Genesis 9:21. "And he [Noah] drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness."

Continuing: "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his [Ham's] younger son [Canaan] had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Eternal God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:21-26).

Dishonoring a parent was a sin, and a curse was pronounced in those days.

And now notice the seventh commandment against adultery. Genesis 39:7-9, "And it came to pass after these things, that his [Joseph's] master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph." This occurred when Joseph was in Egypt, long, long before the law of Moses. "And she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, *and sin against God?*"

Adultery was sin — hundreds of years before the physical law of Moses.

Now we come to the eighth commandment, against stealing, in Genesis

30, verse 33: "Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted *stolen with me.*" This is Jacob and his experience with Laban. Stealing was a sin.

We come to the ninth commandment about lying: Genesis 20, the first nine verses: "And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister; and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah." He was going to take her as his wife. He would have committed adultery with her, but God sent an angel to him in a dream to warn him. "Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart." The king, remember, heard Abraham say of Sarah, "She's my sister." "And also I" — God says — "*withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.*"

Abraham was lying. It would also have been a sin to commit adultery. Of course, Sarah was Abraham's half sister but, nevertheless, the *intent* was all wrong. It was a lie.

What about covering? Notice Genesis 6:1-3, 5-6: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. . . . God saw that the wickedness" — sin — "of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Eternal that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Coveting was a sin even in those days!

There it is. Every one of the Ten Commandments was in existence from creation. It was sin to break any of them between the time of Adam and Moses. What are you going to do about it?