

Hope Channel presents

DISCOVERIES '08

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By Mark Finley

The Roman Empire, the United States and a Collapsing Society

Most people try to make their home a refuge from the stresses and strains of life out in the cold, hard world. They try to make it a place of love and safety. But futurists tell us the home is headed for some pretty dramatic changes. It's more than a matter of Ozzie and Harriet simply getting laptops. The real question is: How will family values survive in the 21st century? What will life be like in your home in the 21st century? Some of the trends sound like good news. Most futurists agree that people will actually spend much more time at home in the 21st century.

But there's troubling news about how easily unhealthy stuff can get into your home. Today there are more and more avenues for incoming material that's dangerous or immoral. We know how quickly a virus or a hoax can spread to millions on the internet. Even worse things can spread, too. Kids can access the most debasing kind of pornography on the internet. Disturbed individuals can try to get a family member's name and address through e-mail. Hate groups and bizarre cults find the internet a great way to spread their propaganda. Every wacko can now have a web site.

In the years ahead we'll watch high definition TV screens with images as sharp as glossy photographs. But what about the content, the messages that hit us so forcefully? If you flip on the TV, you don't see families anymore. Family life is *out*, sex and violence are *in*. One expert says our society "celebrates mayhem while simultaneously condemning it."

Different values compete for our attention, and our loyalty. Your kids are exposed to many different versions of right and wrong. So one very important part of protecting your family is helping them make good choices, helping them be able to sort out values. They need to see for themselves the difference between healthy and unhealthy, between moral and immoral.

Revelation 14:7 says: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come." God is about to judge the world. And He has a very clear Standard on which He bases judgments of right and wrong. **James 2:10-12**, speaking of the Ten Commandments, says we "will be judged by the law of liberty." God's law is the divine Standard in the judgment. It's the law of liberty because allowing God's grace to transform our hearts so we obey Him *frees* us from sin's bondage.

Note what **Revelation 11:19** says John saw up in heaven: "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple." John is showing us that the temple in heaven contains the ark of the covenant, which holds the Ten Commandments. The law of God is a transcript of God's character, a description of His will. It shows us clearly the difference between right and wrong.

This truth about God's law and judgment has been disappearing among Christians in recent years. Believers don't want to talk about it much. Many don't want to think about it at all. And part of the

reason we're struggling to protect our families is that we've turned away from God's law for so long. We only want to talk about the gospel—not realizing how judgment and law are part of the gospel. The whole point of Christ dying on the cross was to “justify” us in the judgment, to justify us before God's law.

But we've lost our sense of accountability before a holy God and the sense that He has a great Standard for behavior, something to measure our lives against. Here's how the Bible defines sin in **1 John 3:4**—“Sin is the transgression of the law.” Sin is violating heaven's code of conduct.

In **John 14:15** Jesus said, “If you LOVE Me, keep My commandments.” Love doesn't lead me to do what I please—it leads me to do what *He* pleases. **1 John 2:3, 4** adds these powerful words: “By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” When we're committed to Christ, when we truly know Him and surrender to Him, the natural response is to obey Him.

On a practical level, God's law works as a mirror to help us see specific problems in our lives, specific sins. In **Romans 7:7** Paul says: “I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” **Romans 3:20** adds, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” God's law reveals what sin is. It defines sin. We are not saved by the law. We are saved by grace. **Ephesians 2:8-9**, “By grace you have been saved through faith . . . not of works, lest any man should boast.” Salvation comes only through grace. But grace leads us to obedience, not disobedience. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” **Romans 6:14**. In this verse Paul declares you won't be dominated by sin—law breaking—because God's grace, His mercy to redeem you from your past guilt and His power working in your life, will enable you to obey God.

Grace and faith don't do away with God's law. **Romans 3:31** asks: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we *establish* the law.” So faith, far from doing away with God's commandments, leads us to keep them. In fact, Christ Himself said in **Matthew 5:17**, “Think not [in other words, don't even *think* it!] that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” If God had chosen to destroy His law and thus lower His Standard of righteousness, then Jesus need not have died on the Cross, for there would then have been no penalty to pay.

The law simply reveals we are sinners—it can't save us. But what the law CAN do is drive us into the arms of the Savior who does save. We see our weakness, our sin, and cry out, “Help!” That's how, as **Galatians 3:24** says, the law leads us to Christ. **Psalms 19:7** says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” But for many, the law no longer does that, for it has lost its power. Even some churches teach that God has no absolute standards and that His law is no longer relevant to contemporary needs. Some maintain God's law was done away with to make way for the Kingdom of Grace. But removing the Standard of right and wrong brings chaos. We're reaping lawlessness, immorality, and rebellion.

It's estimated that more than 35 million laws have been drafted by human beings to control behavior. But in just ten brief precepts, the Almighty formalized a code that covers all human conduct. And this code was meant to last—God's own finger carved it on tablets of stone! In fact, God's law has existed for all eternity. **Psalms 111:7-9** says, “All His precepts are sure. They stand fast forever and ever . . . He has commanded His covenant forever.” Long before Sinai, or even Adam and Eve, that unchangeable Standard of right had been the basis of heavenly government. Most angels abided by its precepts quite happily and were blessed. Satan and his co-conspirators tried to make up their own rules, resulting in a tragic conflict and their loss of paradise. When Adam and Eve broke God's trust in the Garden of Eden, their world crumbled at their feet.

In **Hebrews 8:10** God promises: “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their HEARTS; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” We can be transformed by God's grace—so transformed that we lovingly obey His law. Would you like to say, “Jesus, in a world of lawlessness, I long to keep Your law. Please change me from within.”

THE BIBLE SAYS

- Psalm 111:7-8** God's commandments are heaven's eternal code of conduct which stands fast forever.
- Romans 3:20** God's law, revealing sin, leads us to see our guilt and drives us to Jesus.
- Psalm 19:7** God's law is "perfect," a divine agency leading us to conversion.
- Psalm 19:11** In keeping His commandments there is great reward.
- Romans 6:14** We are not "under the law" as a means of salvation—salvation comes totally and always by grace. (Ephesians 2:8)
- Romans 6:15** Though we're not under the law, this does not give us liberty to break God's law.
- 1 John 2:4** In the Bible, SIN is literally and expressly defined as breaking God's law.
- James 2:10-12** God's Ten Commandments are like links in a chain: If we break one link, the whole chain is broken.
- Isaiah 59:1-2** Sin, or breaking God's law, leads to separation from God and eternal death. (Romans 6:23)
- Romans 3:31** When we are saved by faith, we *desire* to keep God's law. (Hebrews 10:7, John 8:29)
- John 14:15** Love always leads us to obey. Jesus said, "If you LOVE Me, KEEP My commandments.
- 1 John 5:3** "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."
- 1 John 2:4-5** "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."
- Hebrews 8:10, 10:16** In the new covenant, Jesus writes His law in our hearts.
- Psalm 40:8** He places within our hearts the desire to do His will.
- Proverbs 28:9** "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."
- Revelation 14:12** God's last-day people keep His commandments through faith.
- Revelation 12:17** His remnant, like the faithful through the ages, keep His law.

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#10 - The Roman Empire, the United States and a Collapsing Society

1. T Sin is defined in the Bible as breaking or transgressing the Law of God—living with a spirit
 F of lawlessness.

To check your answer, see 1 John 3:4.

2. We know God’s Law is still in effect, or there’d be no sin, no guilt, and no need of a Savior, for the Bible says that where there is no _____, there is no _____.

To check your answer, see Romans 4:15.

3. Those who teach Jesus abolished the Law when He came disregard His clear words: “Think NOT that I am come to _____ the Law. . . . I am _____ come to _____, but to fulfill.”

To check your answer, see Matthew 5:17.

4. The Bible uses strong language to say that anyone who claims to know God but does NOT keep His Commandments “is a _____, and the _____ is NOT in him.”

To check your answer, see 1 John 2:4.

5. Satan hates the Law of God—the Ten Commandments—but the Bible describes them in glowing terms, using adjectives like _____, _____, and _____.

To check your answer, see Psalm 19:7 and Romans 7:12.

6. No one can be saved by keeping the Law or anything else he does. “For by _____ are ye saved through _____” —it’s a GIFT of God through Jesus Christ.

To check your answer, see Ephesians 2:8 and Romans 6:23.

7. When Satan whispers in our ear, “You don’t have to keep the Commandments—all you need to do is love God,” we must remember that the Bible says, “This _____ the _____ of God, that we _____ His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous.”

To check your answer, see 1 John 5:3. Compare John 14:15.

A Thought for Today

1 John 2:3, 4, 5

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.