

WHY THE LAW WAS GIVEN AT SINAI

1. How does Nehemiah describe the giving of the law at Sinai?

“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: and madest known unto them Thy holy Sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses Thy servant.” **Nehemiah 9:13, 14.**

2. What is declared to be the chief advantage possessed by the Jews?

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: *chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*” **Romans 3:1, 2.**

NOTE — The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but He intended that it should be held by them as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. “Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow men;” and all are based upon the great fundamental principle of love. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” **Luke 10:27.** In the Ten Commandments these principles are carried out in detail, and are made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man.

3. Before the giving of the law at Sinai, what did Moses say when Jethro asked him concerning his judging the people?

“When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and *I do make them know the statutes of God, and His laws.*” **Exodus 18:16.**

4. What explanation did Moses give the rulers of Israel concerning the withholding of the manna on the seventh day in the wilderness of Sin, before they reached Sinai?

“And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, *Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. . . .* Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, *which is the Sabbath*, in it there shall be none.” **Exodus 16:23–26.**

5. When some went out to gather manna on the seventh day, what did the Lord say to Moses?

“And the Lord said unto Moses, *How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?*” **Verse 28.**

NOTE — It is evident therefore that the Sabbath and the law of God existed before the law was given at Sinai.

6. What question does Paul ask concerning the law?

“Wherefore then serveth the law?” **Galatians 3:19.**

NOTE — That is, of what use or service was the law announced at Sinai? What special purpose had God in view in giving it then?

7. What answer is given to this question?

“*It was added, because of transgressions*, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” **Same verse.**

NOTES — The Greek word here translated “added” is the same one that is translated “spoken” in **Hebrews 12:19.**

“The meaning is that *the law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what sin is.* It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was *to disclose the true nature of sin*; to deter men from committing it; to declare its penalty; *to convince men of it*, and thus to be ancillary to, and preparatory to, the work of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the law of God as given to apostate man, and this use of the law still exists.” *Dr. Albert Barnes, on Galatians 3:19.*

8. How is this same truth again expressed?

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. *But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by*

that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Romans 7:12, 13.

9. For what purpose did the law enter?

“Moreover the law entered, *that the offense might abound.*”
Romans 5:20.

NOTE.— By the giving of the law at Sinai, then, God designed, not to increase or multiply sin, but that men might, through a new revelation of Him and of His character and will, as expressed in a *plainly spoken and plainly written* law, the better see *the awful sinfulness of sin*, and thus *their utter helplessness and undone condition*: While in Egypt, surrounded as they were with idolatry and sin, and as the result of their long bondage and hard servitude, Israel even, the special people of God, had largely forgotten God and lost sight of His requirements. Until one realizes that he is a sinner, he cannot see his need of a Saviour from sin. Hence the entering, or republication, of the law to the world through Israel at Sinai.

10. By what is the knowledge of sin?

“*By the law is the knowledge of sin.*” **Romans 3:20.** See also **Romans 7:7.**

11. Under what condition is the written law good?

“But we know that the law is good, *if a man use it lawfully.*”
1Timothy 1:8.

12. And what is indicated as the lawful use of the law?

“Knowing this, that *the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*” **Verses 9, 10.**

NOTE — In other words, the lawful use of the written law is to show what sin is, and to convince sinners that they are sinners, and that they need a Saviour. God’s design, then, in giving the law at Sinai was to shut men up under sin, and thus lead them to Christ.

13. Who does Christ say need a physician?

“They that be whole need not a physician, but *they that are sick.*”

Matthew 9:12.

NOTE — Speaking of how to deal with those “who are not stricken of their sins,” and “have no deep conviction of guilt,” D. L. Moody in his “Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers,” says: “Just bring the law of God To bear on these, and show them themselves in their true light. . . . Don’t try to heal the wound before the hurt is felt. Don’t attempt to give the consolation of the gospel until your converts see that they have sinned—see it and feel it.”

14. Whom does Christ say He came to call to repentance?

“For I am not come to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance.” **Verse 13.**

15. What is the strength of sin?

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is *the law.*”

1Corinthians 15:56.

16. What are the wages of sin?

“For *the wages of sin is death*; but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” **Romans 6:23.**

17. Could a law which condemns men give them life?

“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for *if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*” **Galatians 3:21.**

18. What, therefore, was the purpose, or special design, of the giving of the law at Sinai?

“Wherefore *the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*, that we might be justified by faith.” **Verse 24.**

NOTES — “What is the law of God for? for us to keep in order to be saved by it?—Not at all. It is sent in order to show us that we cannot be saved by works, and to shut us up to be saved by grace. But if you make out that the law is altered so that a man can keep it, you have left him his old legal hope, and he is sure to cling to it. You need a perfect law that shuts man right up to hopelessness apart from Jesus, puts him into an iron cage, and

locks him up, and offers him no escape but by faith in Jesus; then he begins to cry, 'Lord, save me by grace, for I perceive that I cannot be saved by my own works.' This is how Paul describes it to the Galatians: 'The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' I say you have deprived the gospel of its ablest auxiliary when you set aside the law. You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring men to Christ. They will never accept grace till they tremble before a just and holy law. Therefore the law serves a most necessary and blessed purpose, and it must not be removed from its place." *"The Perpetuity of the Law of God," by C. H. Spurgeon, pages 10, 11.*

"And let it be observed that the law did not answer this end merely among the Jews, in the days of the apostles: it is just as necessary to the Gentiles, to the present hour. Nor do we find that true repentance takes place where the moral law is not preached and enforced. Those who preach only the gospel to sinners, at best only heal the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly." *Dr. Adam Clarke, on Romans 7:13 (edition 1860).*

Commenting on Galatians 3:23, Mr. Spurgeon, in his "Sermon Notes," CCXII, says: "Here we have a condensed history of the world before the coming of our Lord Jesus. . . . The history of each saved soul is a miniature likeness of the story of the ages." That is, in his experience, each individual that is saved is first in darkness; he then comes to Sinai and learns that he is a sinner; this leads him to Calvary for the pardon of his sins, and so to full and final salvation.