

# Were the TEN COMMANDMENTS in force before Moses?

**Here is the startling answer in response to questions  
asked by thousands of our readers!**

by Herbert W. Armstrong

**T**HE NEWS today is nearly all bad. There's a reason why! Not only do we have war, fear of war, and much strife between *nations*, but we also have competition and strife *in business*. We have quarrels leading to divorces *in the home*. We have a growing, younger generation—nervous by blowing off steam and getting into all sorts of troubles that we call "*juvenile delinquency*."

What's the matter with us anyway? Are we *afraid* to stop and look this situation in the face? Do we dare recognize the **FACT** that we're bringing all this fear and worry, this heartache, this suffering, this frustrating emptiness on ourselves?

There is a reason. But are you afraid to hear it? Will you deny the true reason?

## The Basis of Life

If you find the **TRUTH**—that God Almighty, the Creator, set in motion invisible, **SPIRITUAL LAWS** for our happiness and for our good, and that **ALL** our woes and troubles are the **DIRECT RESULT** of our rejection and transgression of those laws—you'll probably say, "But I've been taught that those laws were abolished by Christ!" Or, "Why, that's a religious and theological question that I know nothing about. It has nothing to do with my practical, down-to-earth, everyday life anyway."

You're *wrong!* It has **EVERYTHING** to do with your everyday life. It has *everything* to do with all the bad news we hear and read about every day. It has *everything* to do with the fact that you are *restless* and *discontented*, that you're not as happy as you want to be, and would like to be. It has *everything* to do with today's chaotic world conditions,

with social unrest, with the troubles that you probably are having *in your own home!*

You've probably heard that the ten commandments were done away. You've been taught that the ten commandments either are the same as, or a part of, the ritualistic law of Moses, and that they didn't even **EXIST** until Moses, and that they lasted **ONLY UNTIL CHRIST!**

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'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**; 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?

People have numerous **IDEAS** about what sin is. In Hollywood, years ago, I saw in a number of newsstands, a book titled *How to Sin in Hollywood*. Visitors from all over the world would come to Hollywood and would buy that book.

Actually, the book was quite harmless. When you bought it, it just gave you the names of restaurants and similar places. Most of them were eating places without any entertainment.

There wasn't necessarily anything that pointed really to sin, but sin always seems to be the forbidden fruit that is most glamorous and that would be most desirable if only some unfair God had **NOT** denied it to us. That seems to be what human beings think of sin.

*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 1 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 pleasing and pleasant. You would like to lead a life that is just 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. 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.

### We Were Born Ignorant

Do you realize that when you were born *you didn't know one thing*? Do you realize that *you were not born with instinct* like the dumb brutes? Dumb brutes don't have to "know." They

don't have to be taught a law to know what to do; they don't have to learn about a law that they can receive in their minds and that will show them what to do to be happy, and what not to do to avoid suffering. Animals are just dumb brutes equipped with instinct. They live as the Eternal Creator designed.

But you and I are made AFTER *God's image*. We were put here as free moral agents for the purpose of *producing character*—holy, righteous, spiritual character. God is REPRODUCING HIMSELF, and He's given us a *mind* like He Himself has, except our minds are very limited. Our minds are fallible, God's is infallible and unlimited—that's the ONLY difference.

### What Is the Law?

You don't KNOW what is right and what is wrong without its being revealed. Paul would *not* have *known* what sin was if the law had not told him. Human nature will not teach you. Human nature has evil in it. As Paul says, "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 what was 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, 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 sin is recorded in Genesis, beginning with chapter 2, verse 15: "And the Eternal took the man and put him in 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. 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. Notice: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," a MIXTURE of good *and* evil, "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!"

"The wages of sin is death." 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 or not 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*, we're going to have suffering, sorrows and curses—that's what we've elected to do.

### 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 in the midst of the garden, God had said, Ye shall NOT eat of it nor touch it LEST YOU 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 you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and *you shall be as gods* knowing good and evil."

In other words, the devil said that God knows better; God has been lying to you—that's what he wanted the woman to believe.

"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 it was pleasant to the eyes, and the tree was 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 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 were actually broken in that very first sin.

### How Did Cain Sin?

Consider their first son. Genesis 4, beginning with verse 6. "And the Eternal had 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 his brother, Abel; and it came to pass that when they were in the field Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and *slew him.*"

He was a MURDERER. *Sin* did lie at the door.

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.

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. "And Joshua said unto the people, Thus saith the Eternal God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father 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 18:3, 21, 27. "After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein you dwelt SHALL YOU 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 YOU NOT DO, NEITHER shall you walk in their ordinances. . . . And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire of 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 Eternal said unto Moses"—this was 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 may 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 that 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, verse 25, Moses said, "Eat that today, for today IS a Sabbath unto the Eternal, today you shall not find it in the fields. Six days you 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. (Write for our free booklet, "Has Time 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 that *the Eternal hath given you the Sabbath*. Therefore, He giveth you on the sixth the bread of two days. Abide ye every man in his place and 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 Fifth Commandment

Now turn to Genesis 9:21. "And he (Noah) drank 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 they laid it upon both their shoulders and went backward and they 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 saw 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 he 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 into my hand, there is none greater in his 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: "Everyone that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and brown among the sheep shall be counted AS 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 toward the south country and he dwelt in Kadesh and Shur and he journeyed to Gerar and Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' And Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent and he 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 didest this in the integrity of thine 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 coveting? Notice Genesis 6:1-3, 5: "And it came to pass when men began to multiply upon 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 whom they chose." "God saw 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 in His heart."

Coveting was a sin even in those days! There it is. Every one of the ten commandments was in existence from the creation. It was sin to break any one of them between the time of Adam and Moses. What are *you* going to do about it?