

Universal Laws

Theories abound regarding the origins of morality in the family of man. Historically there are certain principles that have manifested in similar ways as central components of every culture in the world. Morality and the idea of being moral is one of these. The origins of morality are unknown to those who search for clues to their ultimate beginnings, and is sometimes viewed as an evolutionary development that emerges in social constructs over time. Moral laws or ideas are thought to have persisted because they worked to preserve cultural traditions stabilizing and protecting society. Ancient cultures that lost sight of these moral principles governing the behavior of it's citizenry were often at the end of their societal life cycle and some vanish almost overnight without explanation. The rise of cultures from agrarian based societies to affluence is marked by expanded opportunities, surplus leisure time, increasing decadence, rejection of traditional values and abandonment of previously held roles and responsibilities in various segments of the respective culture. The great empires of the past demonstrate this cycle of work, growth, wealth and decay. As one culture passes and another replaces it's dominance on the world stage, consistent patterns of moral behavior can be identified along with sanctions and judgments against negative actions and ideas. Where did these come from? That's the question that puzzles researchers.

Ideas about the Bible revolve around the most well known stories and events in the scriptures. The Old Testament, the New Testament, the Ten Commandments, the 23rd Psalm, Job, Jesus and his miracles, are fairly well known to many people including non-believers. Over the years, since the last scriptures were recorded, social, scientific and technological advancements have created a feeling of enlightenment leading to consideration of the Bible as just another mythological system reflecting the ideas of it's culture of origin. It's a relic of the past and as time moves on in some areas of the world is regarded as less accurate, less important and less essential to our life and times. From the perspective that the Bible is an inspired record of how God created and interacted with humans over the ages we can identify the common origins of ideas that comprise the foundations of morality. These ideas can be found in the earliest part of the biblical narrative at a time when God was known to all people.

A general idea about the Bible is that it contains stories that were written and preserved by the Hebrew culture. Although the Hebrews and their descendants are responsible for the majority of the writing we find that there are gentiles, such as Luke, who were inspired to record portions of the revelation. A limited perspective that the Bible is a product of Jewish culture disregards the reality contained in the book. In the beginning there were two people who began the human race. They become a family that then populates the entire world. The Bible records the earliest times and how God exercised authority over all people. As we examine the record we find evidence of moral laws and the fact that others outside the family of Abraham knew who God was. All of this points to God as the originator of morality in the minds of humans. Examples of this include ...

Warnings and sanctions against murder are found in the story of Cain and Abel (**Gen 4**).

Abimilech received a warning from God after taking Sarah, Abraham's wife into his house (**Gen 20.1-7**).

Melchizedek, perhaps one of the most enigmatic characters in the Old Testament, was king of Salem, a Jebusite city, and a priest of God (**Gen 14.18**) who blessed Abraham and is referred to in the book of Hebrews as a type of Christ.

Balaam, a mercenary prophet of Mesopotamia, was hired by Balak to curse Israel as they passed through Moab. Balaam knew God, and although he was warned by the Lord he attempted to do this but was only permitted to speak the words God gave him (**Num 22-24**). Peter states 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**).

Job wasn't a Hebrew or descendant of Abraham, but he and his friends knew God and feared him as can be seen throughout the narrative in the book of **Job**.

Jonah was sent to warn Nineveh that God was going to destroy them if they didn't repent. Later the prophet **Nahum** described God's judgment against the Assyrians which was fulfilled.

David's life was troubled after committing adultery and conspiring to have Bathsheba's husband Uriah killed (**2 Sam 11-12**).

Paul the apostle condemned incest in his rebuke of the Corinthians for accepting and applauding the fact that one of them had taken his father's wife, which Paul noted, not even the Gentiles approved of (**1 Cor 5.1-5**).

We might think of the Bible as a product of Hebrew culture and is limited to that society but the Bible reveals that God was known to other nations at one time although they transformed that knowledge into myth. Paul speaks of the time when God revealed himself to all mankind, but people chose not to "*retain*" God in their minds (**Rom 1.20-25**). Paul told the Athenian philosophers that God has never been far from man and could be found by those who diligently searched for him (**Acts 17.27**). From the earliest period of biblical history, known as the Patriarchal dispensation, during which God spoke to the heads of households, we find evidence of some of the earliest conditions defined by the Lord by which humans were to live. These translated into the moral laws governing cultures throughout time and continue today.

This shows that morality wasn't a development of evolution, or the hallmark of advanced cultures. It's evidence that they originated with God who placed limits on the activities of humans. Limitations designed to guard us from harmful actions, practices and their consequences physically, socially and spiritually. God observed that man's thought was evil continually (**Gen 6.5, 8.21**) which is evident in the description of the state of the world at the time of Noah (**Gen 6.11-12**). Moral codes appearing in every society around the world, mirror similar standards of conduct, formulate similar ideas of right and wrong, differ from the natural inclinations of humans and point to a common origin - God. These also mirror spiritual truths and sanctify things that God wishes us to respect.

As we look carefully at the Bible we find conditions put in place by God as part of His design for human life. We can identify three universal laws that remain in place today and are in force for all of humanity. In the next few lessons, we'll discuss these universal laws, their

application in our lives and their spiritual significance in our relationship with God as well as their relevance to His promise to send Christ into the world to save us.