

**SUMMARY:** Natural moral law is the conscience God placed in mankind when Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. All mankind, irrespective of the particular covenant in effect at the time, will be responsible at judgment day for having obeyed the natural moral laws. People living today with no opportunity to hear of Christ will probably be judged thru Christ solely by God's natural moral laws

### **NAMES USED FOR NATURAL MORAL LAW**

Natural moral law is a term coined to describe a group of laws placed in all men, even if they have not heard the scriptures. The term "natural moral law" is not found in the scriptures. Terms in scripture for natural moral law are:

1. Conscience Acts 23:1, Rom. 13:5, 2:15
2. Law written on the heart Romans 2:15
3. Instinct Romans 2:14
4. Nature I Cor. 11:14-15, Rom 12:26-27

### **IS ADULT CONSCIENCE A GOOD GUIDE TO NATURAL MORAL LAW?**

The pure & undefiled conscience of a baby probably reflects the natural moral laws of God perfectly. The conscience of an individual adult person is not necessarily a god barometer of God's natural moral laws, because:

1. Repeated sins against any law (natural or otherwise) will sear your conscience against guilt feelings, and
2. Some societies (or subgroups in a society) choose to accept sinful conduct as normal. Homosexual conduct, nudity, and denominationalism are accepted by some groups without guilt and taught to their children as being pleasing to God. Each of these are specifically listed as sins in the Bible.

### **GIVING OF NATURAL MORAL LAW & FIRST SIN AGAINST NATURAL MORAL LAW**

Adam and Eve were apparently not created with the natural moral laws in place:

Gen. 2:9 God planted the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden.

Gen. 2:17 Adam was instructed not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Gen. 2:25 Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed of it.

Gen. 3:6 Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Gen. 3:7 Their eyes were opened. They then knew that they were naked and made clothes for themselves.

# **TOPICAL STUDIES**

## **NATURAL MORAL LAW**

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Therefore the natural moral law or knowledge of good and evil was given to man in the Garden of Eden. Its creation is not dependent upon the society that you live in, it was placed in the first man and woman.

### **SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF NATURAL MORAL LAW**

The following examples are sins which are indicated as being naturally obvious to mankind, in addition to being stated as a sin in the Bible:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Gen. 3:7         | Public nakedness is shameful.   |
| Rom. 1:19-20     | God is evident to all mankind from the creation around us (also Psalms 19:1-2)  |
| I Cor. 11:14-15  | Nature tells you that long hair is a dishonor for man.  |
| Rom. 1:24        | Lust  |
| Rom. 1:26-27, 32 | Homosexual conduct  |
| Rom. 29-31       | Unrighteousness, Wickedness, Greed, Malice, Full of Envy, Murder, Strife, Deceit, Gossip, Slander, Haters of God, Insolent, Arrogant, Boastful, Inventors of evil, Disobedient to parents, Without understanding, Untrustworthy, Unloving, Unmerciful |
| Matt. 19:8-9     | No marriage to a second spouse unless first marriage dissolved for adultery of your first spouse (stated as a "law from the beginning")   |

### **POSSIBLE REQUIREMENTS FOR A THING NOT STATED IN NATURAL MORAL LAW TO BE CONSIDERED A PART OF THE NATURAL MORAL LAW**

There are no scriptural teachings on this subject. The following or other considerations can be of speculative interest.

1. Does not conflict with God's written laws.
2. Be an accepted practice by "good moral people" in most civilizations.

### **EXAMPLES OF NATURAL MORAL LAW OUTSIDE THE SCRIPTURES**

The following are suggested by James D. Bales in *The Law In the Heart* beginning on page 70. Only items not listed above are included: Adultery, avarice, balance, backbiters, bribery, unchastity, covenant with rascals, covenant breakers (Rom. 1:31), covetousness, drunkenness, extortion, false witness, attacks on family, flattery, fraud, gluttony, ingratitude, hypocrisy, haughty, idolatry, immorality, injustice, lawlessness, immodesty, revilers, selfishness, suicide, stealing, uncleanness, whisperers, and without natural affection. The list is included for interest to the reader and does not imply acceptance of any doctrines taught by Mr. Bales.

### **WHO WILL BE JUDGED SOLELY BY NATURAL MORAL LAW?**

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If some people might be judged solely by the natural moral law, what happens to make a person responsible to all the other laws of Christianity. Some criteria for determining full or increased responsible to the laws of Christ could be:

1. You have heard about Jesus.
2. You are literate
3. Have read a Bible
4. You own a Bible
5. You are Catholic
6. You are a member of a denomination
7. You are a baptized member of the Church of Christ

It may be interesting to speculate about whether literacy or having seen a Bible once increases your responsibility to obey the plan of salvation as a theoretical point. However, anyone who gets to the point of reading an article such as this will typically own several Bibles and have had substantial opportunity to obey the scriptures. For this reason, they should expect little or no latitude on judgment day for refusing to follow the scriptural plan of salvation.

### **MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS:**

1. CAN A PERSON WHO HAS NEVER HEARD OF CHRIST BE SAVED THRU THE NATURAL MORAL LAW? Romans 2:14-16 says that Gentiles outside the law will be judged thru Christ Jesus. Paul makes that statement in the present tense during the Christian Dispensation.
2. WHY HAVE A NATURAL MORAL LAW? For all men to be reasonably judged, they must have all been subject to a law. The natural moral law placed in all mankind provides that means when Christians fail in their duty to take the gospel to all the world.

Revelation 7:9 relates that a great multitude from every nation, all tribes and peoples and tongues will stand before the throne in white robes. Surely this teaches that they are all saved. If Christians do not do their duty and take the word to all tribes, peoples, and tongues then God must have another mechanism (i.e. natural moral law) to allow them to be saved.

3. WHY CHRIST IF PEOPLE CAN BE SAVED WITHOUT EVER HEARING ABOUT CHRIST?
  - a. Because Christ was in the eternal plan of God.

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b. The ability to obey the written instructions in the Christian Dispensation is easier than following natural moral law in a heathen society.

#### 4. WAS NATURAL MORAL LAW FULLY IMPLANTED IN MAN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN?

If natural moral law has been changed since the Garden of Eden, the scriptures do not tell us. When civilization was restarted after the flood, it would have been a logical time for God to strengthen (if not diversify) the implantation of the natural moral laws. It would be logical to assume that the natural moral law in man before the flood was not sufficiently strong enough to keep the civilization pleasing to God.

#### 5. WAS LYDIA LIVING A LIFE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD UNDER NATURAL MORAL LAW?

Acts 16:14 states that Lydia of Thyatira was a worshiper of God. It is pure speculation as to what this means, however, it could mean that she had been living a life acceptable to God under Natural Moral Law. Her response upon learning the Gospel was to be baptized. She could be an example of a person who had never heard of Jesus and could have been saved thru Jesus Christ according to natural moral law (Romans 2:14).