

# FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

## NATURAL LAW

Text: Ecclesiastes 7:29

Introduction:

1. Lesson One discussed the nature and function of human government.
2. According to the Bible, the function of government is to maintain societal order that promotes peace and liberty (Romans 13:1-7).
3. Lesson Two explored the concept of "Nature's God" – the self-evident Creator who rules the world.
4. Since God exists as Creator and Ruler, His law is applicable to, beneficial for, and incumbent upon all people.
5. Often, this idea was referred to as "Natural Law."
6. Is the American system of government based upon Bible principles?
7. This study will investigate what the Bible teaches, and what the Founders believed, about Natural Law.

### I. The Definition of Natural Law

- A. The Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero was intently studied and highly respected by many of America's founding fathers.
  1. Cicero was able to see through the flaws in the thinking of men like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.
  2. He became an important influence on Western philosophy and on men studied by the Founders – John Locke, Montesquieu, and William Blackstone.
- B. Cicero defined Natural Law as "true law" – "right conduct" in harmony with the Supreme Creator of the world.
- C. In other words, Natural Law is the Creator's design and order of all things in the Creation, including His will for man.
- D. Thus, Natural Law is:
  1. **Rational** – able to be discovered and understood by the reason of man (given him by God)
  2. **Universal** – applicable to all men everywhere
  3. **Eternal** – true for all men at any time
- E. "True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions. ...And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times, and there will be one master and ruler, that is God, over us all, for he is the author of this law, its promulgator, and its enforcing judge." - Cicero
- F. The implications are vital:
  1. A rational God
  2. A reasonable law
  3. A reachable justice

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- II. The Bible and Natural Law
  - A. What Cicero "discovered" was nothing new, for it had been taught in Scripture from the beginning.
  - B. The concept of Natural Law is basic Bible doctrine!
  - C. God exists (Psalm 14:1; 19:1).
  - D. God created the universe (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; John 1:1-3).
  - E. God created man:
    - 1. In His image (Genesis 1:26-27; Acts 17:28-29)
    - 2. With eternity in his heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11 – ASV)
  - F. Thus, man should seek God (Acts 14:17; 17:27; Romans 1:21).
  - G. Using reason, he can know God and His will (Isaiah 1:18; Acts 17:11; 26:25; cf. 1 Kings 18:21).
  - H. By living in harmony with God's will, one may enjoy the "abundant life" (John 10:4, 9-10; Ecclesiastes 12:13).
  - I. As a result, he will seek justice for his neighbor (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31).
  - J. The concept of Natural Law is summed up in the Greatest Commands:
    - 1. Love God with all the heart (Matthew 22:35-38).
    - 2. Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39-40).
  - K. Any law that violates the law of God is sinful against Heaven and detrimental to humanity (cf. Romans 13:1ff).
- III. The Founders and Natural Law
  - A. While the Founders understood the principles of Natural Law, most of them recognized that these were actually Bible values.
  - B. In 1781, during the Revolutionary War, congress passed a resolution for the Bible to be printed in America and recommended it to all citizens.
  - C. John Adams stated: "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity. I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God."
  - D. John Dickinson, General and signer of the Constitution, declared: "[Governments] could not give the rights essential to happiness... We claim them from a higher source: from the King of kings, and Lord of all the earth."
  - E. George Washington wrote: "While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian."
  - F. John Adams: "Suppose a nation in some distant Region should take the Bible for their only law Book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience, to temperance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward Almighty God ... What a Eutopia, what a Paradise would this region be."

Conclusion: The Founding Fathers believed that the Bible was necessary for establishing a civil and prosperous society.