

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 20:1-17

LESSON 61 - Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 20:1-17

¹ And God spake all these words, saying,
² I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:
⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;
⁶ And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
⁷ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
⁸ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:
¹⁰ But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in* *it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:
¹¹ For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all

BIBLE REFERENCES:

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- II "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
- III "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
- IV "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
- V "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
- VI "Thou shalt not kill.
- VII "Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- VIII "Thou shalt not steal.
- IX "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
- X "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet their neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

NOTES:

The above arrangement of Exodus 20:3-17, is a division of this familiar portion of Scripture into the several parts constituting the Ten Commandments: "And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone" (Deuteronomy 4:12, 13).

The Commandments Written by the Finger of God

While "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," yet here is a portion which God Himself wrote: "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). And so important was the giving of these Ten Commandments that it was attended with lightning, thunder, the sound of a trumpet, and smoke and fire, which caused Moses and the Children of Israel to tremble, as we learned

that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

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¹⁵ Thou shalt not steal.

¹⁶ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

¹⁷ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

in the previous lesson. And these Ten Commandments were the Covenant which Israel had solemnly entered into with God when they said, "all that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). Also these Ten Commandments are prefaced with these words: "And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, as we have learned, typifies the experience of justification. This preface, therefore, implies that the keeping of the commandments of God constitute the Covenant which a man enters into with God when he is justified. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2).

The Commandments the Essence of the Law

These Ten Commandments -- or Law of God -- constitute far more than just a part of the Law given by God through Moses upon Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are the very essence of the Law itself, the fundamentals, which are expanded and expounded by the civil and ceremonial laws given throughout the books of Moses and taught by the prophets.

In the Ten Commandments, as expanded and expounded in the Word of God, are found every phase of life which confronts a man of God in his daily walk, "and in keeping of them there is great reward." Keep these Ten Commandments, and you will "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." What a wonderful thought! that these few, brief, concise words, so plain and simple as to commend themselves to every man's conscience, are the sum and substance of all God's Law. That, no doubt, is why the Ten Commandments were given first, above all other laws, upon Mount Sinai.

And God gave these Commandments not only to the Israelites but to all mankind. He gave them, not as just a high ideal for men to admire but as a rule of life for men to obey. And this is plainly taught throughout both the Old and New Testaments. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). And he who is guilty of breaking this Law is guilty of sin and its inevitable consequences of eternal punishment, "For sin is the transgression of the law", (I John 3:4). And again in Paul's writings we read, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Romans 2:12).

God's Judgments and Mercy Revealed in the Law

Thus God's holy Law reveals His judgments, as were disclosed in the lightning, the thunder, the trumpet, and the smoke and fire at Sinai before which Israel trembled. But we shall never cease to praise His name that He also is a God of mercy. For this reason there is a way of escape for the man guilty of breaking His Law. And every son of Adam, from the first transgression in the Garden of Eden on down, is guilty of breaking His Law. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). When, therefore, God led the Israelites out of Egypt, He provided for them the paschal lamb whose blood was sprinkled upon the lintels and doorposts of their dwellings; and God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." John the Baptist revealed the significance of that paschal lamb there on the banks of Jordan, as he pointed to that lone Figure approaching him, and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Thus all the sacrifices of the tabernacle service set up in the wilderness pointed to the Son of God Who "is come to seek and to save that, which was lost." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his

own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3, 4).

It is thus obvious that God led the Israelites to Mount Sinai for the express purpose that He might give them His Law and that they might walk in it. And this they agreed to do when they said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." But "all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:18, 19). Thus the Israelites drew back from God and woefully failed of God's high calling. They transgressed His laws and broke their covenant with God, and were finally rejected of the LORD. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

The Law Written upon the Heart

In Jeremiah's time, when the Israelites seemed hopelessly backslidden, the LORD, speaking through the prophet, said, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, . . . But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33). And the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, quotes these words (**Hebrews 8:8-10** ⁸ For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: ⁹ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:), and interprets this New Covenant as the Gospel ushered into the world by the Lord Jesus Christ, at which time the Old Covenant made at Mount Sinai was done away with (**Hebrews 8:13** ¹³ In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.). And furthermore the apostle explains that the law of God is written in the heart at the experience of sanctification: "Then said he [Jesus Christ], Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [covenant], that he may establish the second [covenant]. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:9, 10). "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). And as was explained in the previous lesson, the will of God is revealed in His law. When, therefore, one is sanctified wholly, the inbred nature of sin is destroyed (Romans 6:6), and God's law is written upon the heart. And it then becomes much easier to keep His law.

When God brought the Israelites up to Mount Sinai, He would have sanctified them and have written His law upon their hearts, but they drew back and failed of His high calling. But we now are living under the New Covenant when the Law is no longer written upon tables of stone, but upon the heart. "I beseech you

therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good; and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12: 1, 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What was the first portion of the Law to be given at Sinai?
2. How do the Ten Commandments compare with the other portions of the Law?
3. Into what three classes do the laws of the Old Testament naturally fall to distinguish them according to their kind?
4. In which one of these classes do the Ten Commandments belong?
5. How are the first four commandments distinguished from the last six?
6. What two great commandments did Jesus give upon which He said "hang all the law and the prophets"?
7. Why did the Israelites fail in keeping the commandments of God?
8. What provision did God make for the keeping of His Law?
9. What form did this provision take in Old Testament times?
10. What form did this provision take in New Testament times?