

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 20 :1-17

LESSON 61 **Junior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14).

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 that in them *is*, and rested the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Before the Mountain that Smoked

The hour when God is to speak to Israel has come. Huge billows of smoke are rolling from the mountain that trembles and shakes with the majesty of the presence of God. Lightning flashes through the dark cloud; and the sound of a trumpet, clear and loud, calls the people near to hear the words of the Most High.

Never before nor since was there such a sermon, when God Himself came down to talk to a congregation. They had seen the works of His hands, but never had they seen such a manifestation of His presence. The Lord spoke from the top of the mountain and called Moses and Aaron to come up. All the people heard the voice of God, although they saw no Form.

God began by saying, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." We would surely think the Israelites knew that, but they forgot so quickly that God had to keep reminding them that He was their Lord. They were His people because of covenants He had made with their race as far back as Abraham.

God really wanted His people to obey Him because they loved Him; but He also wanted them to see how powerful He was, so they would be afraid to disobey Him; hence the great rumblings and the fire and smoke.

The words that the Lord spoke in the ears of all the people are known as the Ten Commandments, or the Law (Deuteronomy 4:13 - **Deuteronomy 4:13** ¹³ 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). However, there was more to the Law than the Ten Commandments, as we shall learn later in this lesson.

No Other Gods

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That was the first commandment God gave, and was very important. The Children of Israel were to go into a land where the people worshiped all kinds of idols and false gods, and the Lord was warning them that they absolutely must not take on the customs of the land. He told them He was a jealous God, and would have no others before Him.

The Israelites had seen what became of the imaginary gods of the Egyptians, and how useless it had been to worship them. When the plagues came upon the land of Egypt, their gods had been powerless. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile River, but it was turned to blood and was unfit for use for a time. One of their gods was supposed to come to earth in the form of a cow, but when God sent disease upon the animals, even the "holy" cows died. They worshiped the sun god, but when God sent darkness upon the land for three days, their god could not even give them lights in their houses. One would think the Children of Israel would have realized the foolishness of such worship, but in their hearts was a desire to turn to something they considered easier than the true religion; so God had to warn them, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In spite of all this, we shall find that the Law

seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

¹² Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

¹³ Thou shalt not kill.

¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery.

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.

was no sooner given than they molded a golden calf to worship. They were truly an ungrateful people.

The Drawing Back of Israel

When the Children of Israel heard God speak to them from the mountain, they drew back. They were afraid, and told Moses to go up and let God speak to him alone, because they were sure they would die if He spoke to them. If they had been without sin they would not have been afraid of the Lord. The sinner fears the judgment of God, but when his sins are forgiven he loves God; and the only fear he has is that he will displease Him.

The Knowledge of Right and Wrong

The people knew before the Law was given what was right and what was wrong. The first lies told in the Garden of Eden got Adam and Eve into serious trouble, so they knew it was wrong to lie. Adam and Eve also knew that God wanted first place in their heart, and wanted their obedience; because as soon as they disobeyed Him, they went and hid themselves. That murder was wrong, was realized by Cain when he slew his brother Abel way back in the beginning of time, because he ran away to avoid punishment.

The Law a Picture

But now, we might say, God was drawing a picture for the people; He was putting down His rules of conduct in a form they could see with their eyes. Perhaps their sins would become so great that they would not hear the voice of conscience*; then they would have the written Law on the tables of stone to remind them of God's will.

Jesus taught that love was the fulfilling of the Law. If we love God as we should, and have no other gods before Him, that love will govern our actions. If we love God with all our heart, we will love our neighbor; and if we love our neighbor, we will not steal from him, we will not tell lies about him nor to him, nor will we want what belongs to him. And when that love is in our heart we cannot hate anyone, and, of course, will not kill him.

Saved through Faith

But a person could not keep the Law in his own strength then, nor can he now. Paul said: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16). It was faith in Christ, even in the time of Moses, that saved people and gave them power to obey the Law. When the first man sinned, a Messiah was promised Who would redeem him (Genesis 3:15 - **Genesis 3:15** ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel). Abraham also had received the promise of the Savior: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). The Israelites were saved by looking forward in faith to the shed Blood of Jesus.

The "Better" Dispensation

Some people believe that the Law was given only to the Israelites, but what God gave them was to the end that eventually it might be given to "all families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3). Therefore "unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). We said that the people knew before the Ten Commandments were given what was morally right and wrong, and the principles there embodied continued after Christ had "fulfilled" the Law. In the Book of Hebrews we find Paul comparing at great length the dispensation under the Law and that under grace, after Jesus came. The keyword of that Book is "better." We might compare the period of the Law to the moon that gives us light at night, but which fades into insignificance when day dawns and the sun rises. If the moon is still in the sky in the morning, we can see it if we look directly at it; but the

QUESTIONS

- 1 Where was the Law given? Why?
- 2 Who heard God speak?
- 3 Why did the people draw back?
- 4 Name the Ten Commandments.
- 5 How is the new dispensation greater than the old?
- 6 How are we saved?

light of the moon has no effect in the more brilliant, or "better" sunlight.

Just so when we come to Christ and let His Blood wash away our sins, the grace He gives us to live for Him is so great that we do not have to worry about keeping the Law. The Law was given to tell sinners what is right and wrong; but the Christian who has Christ in his life, has the Spirit in him that will more than keep the letter of the Law (I Timothy 1:9 - **1 Timothy 1:9** ⁹ Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers).

The scribes and Pharisees in the time of Jesus were very particular about keeping the form of the Law, but Jesus told those who wanted to be His followers, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). It was the Christian spirit on the inside that Jesus emphasized. The Law said, "Thou shalt not kill," so the Pharisees were careful not to commit murder; but Jesus said that if anyone hated his brother he was just as guilty before God as if he had killed him. Unless a person is saved he cannot refrain from hatred; but Jesus takes out, at conversion, that spirit of hatred, and plants His love there. In the same way Jesus took the other commandments and showed them that the motive behind the act was just as bad as if they had broken the Law that said "Thou shalt not covet," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," etc. (See Matthew 5).

Approved of God

A Christian wants to know the mind of God, and he studies the entire Bible diligently, in order to live to please Him. When a person is saved he is not free from the danger of backsliding; and if he never studied the Word of God, he would soon let Satan lead him back into sin. We must ever study to know the will of God, that we can be workmen who need not be ashamed (II Timothy 2:15 - **2 Timothy 2:15** ¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

The Old Testament Sacrifices

Jesus said: "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). All the blood that had been shed in sacrifices, all the temple ceremonies that the Israelites observed as part of the Law, pointed in one way or another to the time when Jesus would come and shed His Blood for our salvation. All this was an example of spiritual things, a pattern of heavenly things to come.

When Jesus died on Calvary He had fulfilled all the sacrificial laws, and there was no more need for the Jews to keep them. We learned that Jesus was our Paschal Lamb (Lesson 56), and it was not necessary for the Jews to kill and eat the lamb at Passover after He shed His Blood. Those who do observe the Passover today are wasting their time, because God is not pleased with their ceremonies, which do not even fulfill to the letter the Old Testament commands.

We shall learn much in future lessons about the tabernacle worship and the sacrifices and ceremonies that pointed to Jesus, all of which He fulfilled in His life, death, and ascension.