

GOD FIRST – IN THE DECALOGUE.

– *EXOD. 20:1-11. – JULY 13, 1902. –*

**Golden Text: – "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."
– Luke 10:27.**

AFTER LEAVING ELIM, in our last lesson, the journey of the Israelites led to Mt. Sinai; but before reaching it their faith in the Lord was tested severely by a conflict with the Amalekites, a warlike tribe of the desert. Unused to military matters and encumbered with their families, flocks and herds, the men of Israel were forced to a conflict, and, strange to say, their leader, Moses, who some forty years previously had been a notable Egyptian general, did not attempt now to take charge of the battle, but entrusted it to Joshua, while he went to the top of a hill overlooking the field of battle, and there in the sight of the contending peoples, engaged in prayer with uplifted hands. It was here that Aaron, Moses' brother, and Hur, his brother-in-law (husband of Miriam), upheld the hands of Moses in prayer; because it was noticed that the Lord's special blessing attended the Israelites when Moses' hands were upheld. Thus Israel vanquished the foe, and thus it was demonstrated that it was the Lord who fought with Israel and conquered their enemies. No doubt Israel learned a lesson of faith in the Lord, and through Moses' example learned to trust, not in Moses, but in the Lord as their Leader. And the humble conduct of Aaron and Hur in this incident became the groundwork of a great lesson of helpfulness in the Lord's service – showing how assistance in the service is recognized of the Lord and such co-operation acceptable. So with spiritual Israelites. In all the trials and conflicts with our Adversary and his deluded followers, we are to learn distinctly the lesson that all our trust is to be in the Lord, our Leader, the antitype of Moses, Captain of our Salvation; who does not, in an earthly sense, actually lead us in the conflict, but is in the Mountain, in the Kingdom: his merit prevails for our blessing and succor, and all of his faithful servants in turn recognize themselves as merely co-operating with him.

Another incident worthy of notice occurred about this time: Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to meet him here, bringing Moses' family (Ex. 18); moreover, the Lord used this man for giving Moses some valuable suggestions respecting the government of the Israelites; and Moses was humble enough to receive such instruction as of the Lord, notwithstanding the fact that it came from an Ethiopian, one who was not of the seed of Abraham, and who did not join himself to them. Thus God sometimes even now uses outsiders to give suggestions and lessons to his covenant people; and wise is the man or woman humble enough to receive instruction from any quarter – when found to be in **[R3037 : page 203]** harmony with the divine will. The advice given to Moses, – that he should no longer attempt to be the law-giver for the people in all the minutiae of their affairs, but a sort of supreme judge, and Mediator between God and the people, was a wise suggestion, evidently from the Lord, by whomsoever given. So also was the next suggestion, that the people be organized according to their tribes and families, and that each tribe should thus have, in itself, its own proper servants and officers and judges for minor details. Of this arrangement some one has said, "This [arrangement] became the basis (Kalisch) of Alfred the Great's Saxon constitution, and thus the basis of the constitution of modern England and America" – a government of the people, by the people, through their own representatives.

THE GIVING OF THE LAW.

The transaction at Mt. Sinai was so arranged as deeply to impress all who were present. It was to be another lesson for the people respecting God, his right to control them and his will concerning them. Boundary marks were fixed around the mountain, which was declared holy because of the Lord's presence in it; a man or beast trespassing upon it was subject to death: meantime the mountain shook with earthquakes, and fire and smoke, thunders and lightnings, and trumpet-like sounds and voices manifested to the Israelites the importance of the event at hand. But if the Lord thus impressed them by the solemnity of their surroundings with the importance of the covenant which he was

about to make with them, his message to them, introducing the commandments, was very gracious and gentle. In this preamble he reminds them that he, the Lord, had brought them out of the land of Egypt: they had by this time gotten beyond any desire to return to Egypt; they were learning to trust in the Lord, to realize his care and protection and deliverance from enemies and from want.

Meantime, the people, in obedience to the Lord's direction, had purified themselves, their clothing and their camp; and, as directed, they were endeavoring to abstain from all impurities, as a prerequisite to their meeting with and entering into covenant relationship with the Lord of Hosts. The spiritual Israelite also has something analogous to this. First he must realize the justice of God and the greatness of God, and his own unworthiness and weaknesses; he must see something of the terrors of Sinai before he will be in the proper condition to receive the favors which our Lord desires to bestow. Properly, he too will seek to purge himself so far as possible from all filth of the flesh; properly also, he will seek a mediator, and as the Israelites said to Moses, so will he say to Christ, "Entreat the Lord for us, that we may speak to thee, and speak thou to him." We realize our need of a mediator through whom the Word of the Lord will come to us, and by whose merit and grace we shall be helped in satisfying the demands of the divine law.

But a greater lesson is included in this type. In this still larger view Moses typified Christ Jesus the Head, and the Church, his body, complete; in this larger view Israel typifies so many of the world of mankind as are desirous of entering covenant relationship with God; in this larger view the fire and smoke and voices and trumpets and earthquakes of Mt. Sinai represent the great time of trouble and manifestations of divine power which are to come in the end of this Gospel age to convince the world of its need of the Lord's help and to make the world ready to enter into the New Covenant. In this larger view the three days of purification, setting bounds about the Mount, etc., represent the period of this Gospel age from the first advent down to the glorification of the Church – typified in the going up of Moses

into the mountain, to be the representative of the people, to receive the Lord's Law and to bring it down to the people. Thus counting the matter according to the days of the week, – a thousand years to each day, – our Lord's first advent occurred early on the fifth day; – the fifth day has passed, the sixth day has passed, and we are now in the early morning of the seventh or "Millennial" day; and it is in this third day "early in the morning" that the antitypical Moses [Christ and the Church] is to ascend into the mountain, Kingdom of the Lord. It is in this third day, and very shortly now we believe, that the great and terrible manifestations of divine dignity and majesty are to be made known to the world in general.

This is in full accord with the statement of the Apostle referring to this time, and to this same type. (Heb. 12:22-29.) For some time the Lord has been dealing with the world with a view to the bringing in of this New Covenant. Two (thousand year) days ago we approached the mountain, the Kingdom of God; there God, through the antitype of Moses, began to mark out the bounds of the Kingdom class, who might and who might not approach, come into the Kingdom. From that time the proclamation of purification has been made, the people being commanded to cleanse themselves; or, as the Apostle again says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained" – Christ. – Acts 17:30,31.

The instruction to purify and to get ready has been more or less heard and more or less heeded throughout the world; and now, shortly, we may expect the marshaling of the people as described in Ex. 19:17-20, so graphically described by the Apostle as picturing the events with which the present age is to close: "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." He explains that in the great changes now at hand the transformation will be a complete one, which will thoroughly shake out and remove everything in connection with the civil, religious and social affairs of man that is not in harmony with the laws of the

Kingdom – the Millennial Kingdom. Only the faithful who shall constitute the Kingdom-class shall stand the shaking of this time. – Heb. 12:26-28. [R3038 : page 204]

THE FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS.

The law delivered to Moses was upon two tables of stone. Although not so specified, it is a generally accepted opinion that the first four commandments were upon one stone and the remaining six upon the other. This would make about an even division as respects the matter; but more particularly it divides as between the duties of Israel toward God and toward men. Although the Decalogue (the law in ten commandments) was given to fleshly Israel and not to spiritual Israel, nevertheless, the latter may learn from it some very valuable lessons respecting the divine will. God does not address the house of Sons as he addresses the house of servants, – ours are not commands as to what we shall not do; ours is one command respecting our duty toward God, and it is so comprehensive that it takes in all that was said to Israel in the ten commandments, and as we shall presently see, much more.

(1) "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The thought is not that they were prohibited from having other gods before Jehovah, in the sense of superiority, implying that they might have some gods on an equality with or inferior to him. Rather, the thought is that they should have no other gods in his presence – that so long as they recognized Jehovah as their God, none others were to be recognized in any sense or degree.

(2) The Second Commandment is an elaboration of the first, lest the people might say, 'We will have no other gods, but we will make for us images to represent our one God so that they may help the mind through the eye. But the Lord prohibits this, and we can readily see the wisdom of the prohibition. Many Christian people have felt that they could pray before pictures of the Lord or while looking at a crucifix, better than without such an aid: indeed we know that Greek and Roman Catholics throughout the world (nearly three times as numerous as

those termed Protestants) continually use images, pictures, beads, etc., as reminders and helps to the mind and faith; but we believe that the effect has been seriously injurious; the tendency downward rather than upward, and that this, to some extent, accounts for the fact that the races using images, etc., are inferior to those not using them, but practicing the higher and purer worship of God which recognizes no intermediary, no crucifix, no image, no picture, but communes directly with the Lord.

The Gospel Church has a still higher thought than was given to the Jews on this subject. Our Master's words suggest that even fathers and mothers and wives and children might intrude upon our love and devotion and take the place of the Lord in our affections; and that this must not be permitted by any who would be of the elect. In comparison we must love less than God all other beings, so that the first strength of our love and devotion may be given to our Creator. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength." This would also include the thought that wealth, or self or ambition must not be permitted to take the chief place in those who would be the Lord's. Many seem to be in danger along these lines. We cannot read their hearts, but the vast majority not only of the world, but of those who profess devotion to the Lord, are bowing themselves down to idols of wealth, social ambition, personal ambition, etc., and serving these with all the strength and time and means and knowledge which they have consecrated to the Lord. We are not saying a word against the procuring of "things needful" in a manner "honest in the sight of all men;" we refer to something beyond this, – the attempt to lay up riches, honor, etc., with the time and knowledge and talents consecrated to the Lord. Is not this idol worship from the standpoint of the New Covenant?

The Lord announces himself as a jealous God who wants all of our affections, all of our confidence, our entire trust. He wants that we should be so fully in accord with him that his will shall be supreme in all the affairs of life. This is not to be considered selfishness on the part of the Almighty; because this, under his overruling providences, means to his creatures the largest amount of happiness, the largest amount of

success in the duties and affairs of the present life, and the largest amount of preparation for the blessings which the Lord has prepared for and promised to those who love him.

The declaration that the Lord will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate him, and show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments, does not represent anger, bitterness, resentment, selfishness; – rather these words express the law of nature, under which in wisdom God has placed humanity. Every one who uses his mind and his talents in accord with the Lord's will, brings a blessing not only upon himself but extends, in a natural way, that blessing to his children and theirs. On the contrary, those who live contrary to the Lord, who mind earthly things, become more and more "earthly", "sensual," "devilish," and surely transmit these groveling and deficient tendencies to their children, influencing and injuring them unto the third and fourth generation, in a perfectly natural manner.

The Apostle points out to us that this is the secret of the extreme degradation that we see about us in various parts of the world today. There was a start to all this degradation. Of course the original start to degradation and sin was in the disobedience of father Adam, and in the death-sentence upon him. But in proportion as people since have disregarded the Lord's will and arrangement and laws, so far as they knew them, in the same proportion have they injured and degraded themselves and their posterity. The Apostle's words are, "When they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, **[R3038 : page 205]** to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and

worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator." – Rom. 1:21-31.

It has been suggested that the original of vs. 6 might be rendered a thousand generations, and that this would imply a continuation of present conditions of imperfection and need for divine mercy for a period of at least 20,000 years, instead of one thousand – the Millennium. We disagree with such an interpretation entirely, suggesting that in a very proper sense of the word every child is *generated*, and hence might not improperly be spoken of as a generation. This is in accord with the translation given in the common version which we approve.

The command to the Israelite that he should not take God's name in vain, did not signify that he should not name the name of the Lord, yet going to an extreme in the matter the Israelites avoided the covenant name of God, – Jehovah. The expression, "in vain," evidently signified lightly, frivolously or in any other than a sacred or reverential manner. No such command is needed by the "new creature in Christ." How could he willingly or intentionally speak lightly or irreverently of his Heavenly Father, after being begotten of the holy spirit? To have a will to speak otherwise than reverently would be sure indication that he had not been begotten of the holy spirit; – that he was a bastard and not a son. However there is a sense in which we may well take a lesson from this command to Israel, a sense in which it is applicable to spiritual as well as natural Israel. As a people Israel had taken God's name, – they had professed themselves to be God's people, under his guidance and leadership; it was their duty to see to it that this should not be a vain, empty, or meaningless covenant, or agreement; that it should be carried out to the full. So with us spiritual Israelities, we have entered into a covenant with God; we have named the name of the Lord upon us, calling ourselves his people, claiming him as our Father, and confessing Jesus as our Redeemer. It is proper for us to remember that this solemn profession or obligation or covenant is not a vain, frivolous matter; that it should be entered into with solemnity, and with full

appreciation of its importance and of our responsibilities under it. The Lord will not hold us guiltless, if, having taken his name upon us and receiving his benediction as his children, we then either sin wilfully or in any degree reflect dishonor upon him whose name we bear.

"REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY."

The fourth commandment designates the seventh day of the week for rest, not only for the head of the family but for every member of it, including servants and cattle and visitors. It was made the duty of the head of the family to see to it that this divine command was carried out in his home, for the blessing of himself as well as for the comfort and good of those under his care. The new law, Love, the basis of the New Covenant into which we spiritual Israelites, as the "house of sons," have entered, has no command respecting the seventh day of the week, nor indeed respecting any day. If it was good that the Israelites should rest, would it not be good also that we should rest one day in the seven? Yes, surely; on general principles it is advisable that all men observe such a rule of physical rest from toil one day in seven. Is there any reason why we should object to the seventh day of the week for such a rest? None whatever so far as the Christian is concerned.

Being left without a specific law on the subject, he is at liberty to make such arrangements for his rest as will be most profitable to him under the general law of Love. Being without a specific law on the subject Christian people, desiring to have one day of seven for worship, gradually fixed upon the first day of the week as being the one which to them would have the largest meaning, because of its being the Memorial of the Lord's resurrection, and hence, the Memorial of the Christian's joy and faith and hope with respect to the eternal life promised through our Redeemer. Do you consider the choice of the first day of the week a good one? We **[R3039 : page 205]** certainly are glad that throughout the civilized lands the first day of the week is so observed; we are glad, too, that it is not observed according to the Jewish law, merely as a day of physical rest, but rather that it is much

used by Christians as a day of fellowship of spirit and growth in grace, knowledge and love.

But why did the Lord not put in the law of the New Covenant some mention respecting some day of the week, first, seventh or some other day? We answer because the entire law is a "Law of Liberty," – designed to test by its liberty those to whom it is given. It leaves each one unfettered that he may the more abundantly show the kind and extent of his devotion to the Lord. Instead of demanding one day of the seven the Law of Love really controls, regulates our entire time; seven days in the week we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; and seven days of the week we are to love our neighbor as ourselves; and seven days in the week we are to rest also – rest from our own works – rest by faith in the finished work of Christ – rest in the love of God – rest in the peace of God which passeth all understanding, ruling in our hearts continually. The seventh day commanded to the Jew as his rest day, while it was beneficial to him, was also typical: it typified the Christians' rest of faith, this heart relationship to the Lord, in which, as children of God, all such may continually rejoice – every day and every night. So the Apostle explains the matter (Heb. 4:4-11), declaring further that there is a still larger rest remaining; namely, the eternal life condition to be entered into on the great seventh day, – the Millennial age.

Some have suggested that in the expression "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" the word *remember* implies that the Sabbath day had been previously instituted and commanded; and that this was merely a reminder of it. From this we dissent. There was no law given previous to Israel's arrival at Sinai; there was no mention of the keeping of a Sabbath previous to Israel's arrival [**R3039 : page 206**] at the wilderness of Sin of which Mt. Sinai is the center. It was instituted in connection with the giving of the manna. (Exod. 16:23.) We are not to read into the Lord's Word what is not there. The words of the text signify that Israel should be careful continually to remember this injunction put upon them, respecting the seventh day, and that

thenceforth it should be kept holy, sacred, free from work, as unto the Lord. All this is implied further in the declaration of the 11th verse respecting God's having rested on the seventh day; and the explanation is that similarly, now, in the giving of the law, God was blessing the seventh day and honoring it as a reminder of the six days of creation, and the seventh day in which God rested from creative work.

We have heretofore explained why the days of creation should not be understood as literal days of twenty-four hours each, but as larger days of seven thousand years each; and this subject we hope to treat still more at length (D.V.) in *Millennial Dawn*, Vol. 6. We merely note here, that the seventh day which God observed was one of these larger days of seven thousand years; and that it began just after the creation of our first parents and that since then God has rested from any creative work, and has merely permitted, as far as earth is concerned, that things already created should take their course; – many of them a downward course, as in the case of man in his fall from primeval perfection into sin and death. The Apostle explains that God is still resting, and waiting for something, – leaving a further work for the Lord Jesus to do, – the work of redemption and restitution. The redemptive work he has already accomplished; the restitution work he will begin as soon as the election of his Church – the "bride," the "Lamb's wife" is accomplished. Meantime God rests, leaving the matter in the hands of him whom he hath ordained to be "Lord of all," and to whom he has decreed all things shall be subject, for the purposes of restitution, – so far as possible. And as God is thus resting and leaving the matter in the hands of Christ, so all who come to a knowledge of the truth, to a knowledge of God's plan, are to rest similarly, – leaving the case in the hands of our glorious Redeemer and seeking so far as we may be able, not to direct him, not to do the work for him, but to co-operate with him in the work which he is now doing in selecting the Church; and by and by, to co-operate as he has promised we may, in the work of blessing and restoring all the families of the earth who will hear his voice and become obedient to his law.

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