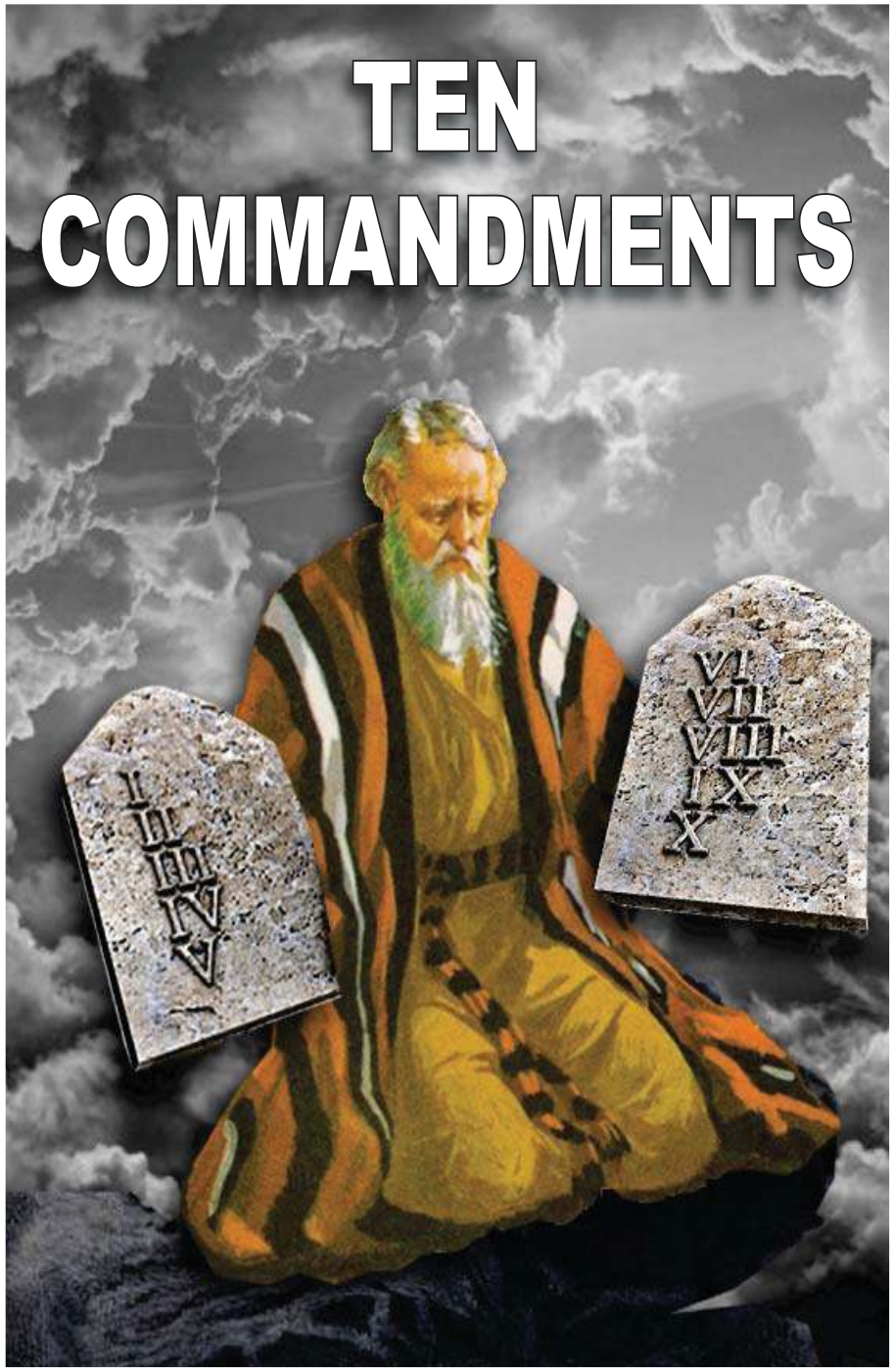

ADULT

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Vacation Bible School Lessons for ADULT
All Lessons Originally Written by Brother Clifford Hayes*(Deceased)*
with Limited Editing by Elder Mitchell Glasscock

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LESSON ONE

GOD PRESENTS HIS COMMANDMENTS

LESSON TEXT: EXODUS 19:3-9

AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS SERIES OF LESSONS

The giving of the Laws of God was a momentous occasion in the history of Israel and indeed in the lives of Christians as well. Some Christians, particularly those who are young or those who are uninformed, think that God's law consists entirely of The Ten Commandments. Actually, there are three sections of this great system, the Civil Law, the Ceremonial Law and the Moral Law.

The Civil Law consists of laws and statutes given to Moses which govern the children of Israel, both in their relationship to each other and also to the nation itself. While there are many sections of this Civil Law that are not a part of our present day laws, we are instructed by the bible to be subject to those who have civil authority over us and to obey the laws of our land which are not in conflict with the laws of God.

The Ceremonial Law was given to guide the children of Israel in their method of worship until the time when Christ would first come. This sacrificial law is what Christ fulfilled. Because of His sacrifices we no longer have to perform sacrifices, or have priests pray over scapegoats. The symbols and acts contained in the rituals were shadows of the coming Son of God. Since we have the substance of those shadows, we are not bound by the ritualistic part of the law.

In this series of lessons, we will be focusing on the Ten Commandments, which contain the Moral Law. This system of morality is as binding to us today as it was on the children of Israel the time it was given. These commandments will never be outdated for those who wish to live in communion with God and his fellow man. Many like to say we are no longer under the law since Christ fulfilled it; this is only partially true. The Moral Law deals with those things contained in the Ten Commandments and is still valid. If the Moral Law were fulfilled, we would be able to omit those things that are positive commandments and commit those which God would have us not do. If one does not thoroughly know scripture and does not use this knowledge when interpreting the Bible, then he risks interpreting it incorrectly.

There were two tablets of stone on which the commandments were written. One tablet dealt with the duties we owe to God and the second, the duties we owe our fellow man.

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shall speak unto the children of Israel.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord had commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

Key verse: Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

INTRODUCTION

At the time of our lesson, that part of God's law that we call the Moral Law and some of the Ceremonial Law had been in effect for centuries. Since the beginning, it had been a sin before God for one of His human creations to kill another. God destroyed the earth with water because the sins of His creation were repugnant to Him. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worshipped Jehovah as the only God of the universe by offering acceptable sacrifices unto Him. When God killed animals in the garden to clothe Adam and Eve the lesson was taught as to what that sacrifice would be.

Before the law was given on Sinai, Jethro, Moses' father-

in-law, observed the way the people were judged by Moses and inquired as to what he was doing. (Exodus 18:13-14). Moses replied in verse 16 that the people came to him with problems and,

> *"I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws."*

These are adequate scriptural evidences to support this writers belief that the Laws of God had been years in evolving to the point of time that this lesson is written. In years past, God had made individual covenants with the patriarchs of old in the persons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now the tribes of the sons of Jacob were gathered together and were about to be shaped into a nation under another covenant and under those same governing laws, formally given at this time by God.

THE COVENANT AT SINAI

The proposal that God made to the people of Israel was a theocratic covenant. God made all the provisions of the contract. Even though Moses was the spokesman between God and the people, there was to be no contract negotiation. The people had only to listen to the terms set forth by God and then say "yes" or "no." Their answer had to be a voluntary decision; in addition, obedience and reverence toward God and holiness were required of them.

We understand a fear of God to be different from the fear we have of a man or of a dangerous situation. Proverbs 9:10 tells us that *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* The fear we have of God is akin to a feeling of awe we have because of His power, His intelligence and His presence. Awareness of God and of His awesome attributes is intended to release us from our bondages. But as soon as we are released from captivity, God's love for us and our love for Him overcomes any terror of Him other than the dread of chastisement when we err. The fear that makes us aware of wisdom is put to rest by a love that casts out fear. (1 John 4:18).

On this occasion God is drawing Israel's attention to His awesome power by reminding them of how He delivered them from the hand of Egyptian bondage. In His message for Moses to take to the people, God rehearsed all that He had accomplished for them since their exodus from Egypt. God likens their deliverance as being borne *"on eagles wings."* On this subject John Gill writes: *"being swift of flight, and strong of wing, it* [the eagle] *will in a remarkable manner take its young upon it, and safely and swiftly convey it where it pleases."* This is a wonderful analogy as the eagle is superior to other birds both in its strength and in the size of its body. Their pectoral muscles, which gives its wings their power, are very strong and the eagle can carry its young on its back and wings. In like manner, God freed, protected and gave this young nation sustenance from Egypt to Sinai.

To us that know God, it should not be surprising that everything happened just as God said it would. When Moses was on this very mountain and saw the burning bush, God told him,

> *"… Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."* (Exodus 3:12).

True to His word, God had brought them to this place that he might make a covenant with them. What He presented to them was a conditional covenant. He told the people what He would do, but if he was to continue to be their God they must fulfill their part of the covenant.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

Peter informed his readers in 1 Peter 2:9 *"But ye are a chosen generation.".* God had made the plan in eternity whereby they could be counted among that generation. This plan of salvation was not offered to Peter's readers because of their faith, holiness and good works. The church, like Israel as a nation, was chosen above all others, because of the love of God, and for no other reason.

Peter continues, *"a royal priesthood,"* referring to the sixth verse of our lesson where the Israelites were called a kingdom of priests. The term "royal" denotes a kingly bloodline. It is difficult for this writer to think of himself as kingly, but my Lord is. Those of us in the church may not be kingly, but we are believers, and like Christ, are at once kings and priests. Israel, in a spiritual sense, was designed to be the same among the nations of the earth.

Then Peter labels his readers, *"a holy nation,"* identifying them in the same context as God named Israel as His chosen nation at that time. Here, Peter means that the church is sanctified by God as the true Israel of God. Those in the church have been sanctified by

the cleansing from sin through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus and are internally sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God.

Lastly, Peter calls God's own people *"a peculiar people"* as the Israelites are called a peculiar treasure in the lesson. These are the people to whom God bears a particular love. In both instances, they were chosen by Him to be a special people above all others.

In the latter portion of this verse Peter gives the reason that God has made us a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a peculiar people.

The sole reason for our existence as children of God, as members of a New Testament Church is to honor and praise Him who has *"called"* us, who has made a way for us to be delivered from the *"darkness"* (of the law and from sin) and be placed in His *"marvelous light"* (the church purchased by the blood of our Lord).

OBEDIENCE

> *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, ..." Exodus 19:5a*

God gave Israel the conditions of the covenant He expected the nation to obey. We have already touched on God's next words in which He enumerated the benefits the people of the nation would receive by agreeing to the terms of God. It was now only left for Israel to respond. The decision must be voluntary on the part of the nation. Other than the implied withdrawal of those benefits listed in verses 5 and 6, God did not threaten Israel with the afflictions and desolation that would befall them later in their history. He tells them what He expects and requires of them - obedience. He asked that they obey and keep the laws He was about to give them. He insisted they obey not in lip service only, but in sincerity.

They were free to accept or reject God's proposal. Moses related the words of God to the elders and the elders to the people. Moses laid the words of God *"before their faces."* To this writer, this means that all the conditions of the covenant were laid before them; nothing was held back. He not only explained to them all that God had told him to relay, but he made it their choice whether they accepted the covenant on God's terms.

The people agreed to God's offer. There was no debate among them, no dissension and no counterproposals sent to God. They would obligate themselves to obey the voice of God and count it a great blessing to be made a kingdom of priests by Him. It is believed that at the time of their promise they were sincere, just as we are sincere when we make promises concerning our service to Him. Soon they were to forget the covenant and vows made at Sinai, just as we break our pledges we make when God is mighty in our lives.

REVERENCE

As stated previously, the giving of the law was a momentous occasion in the history of this fledging nation. Before the law could be given by God and received by Israel, the people must first rid their minds and bodies of all their worldly thoughts and needs and sanctify their minds and hearts on religious thoughts, meditation and prayer. As instructed, they washed their clothes, understanding that this act was a symbol of their need to wash their souls by repentance.

As a part of their reverence to God, a boundary was set around the mountain of God. Whatever was materially used as this boundary, it was to keep the people from touching it. When Moses was on this same mountain in Exodus 3, God told him, *"the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."* When the tabernacle and temple worship was instituted, only selected persons could enter into the holy of holies as this place signified the dwelling place of God. The ark of the covenant could only be moved by certain priests and then by staffs inserted through rings in its sides. Exodus 25:22, 2 Samuel 6:2, as well as other scriptures tell that the Lord of hosts dwelled between the cherubim on the mercy seat that covered the ark. When David was attempting to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the cart carrying it shook and Uzzah put his hands on the ark to prevent it falling. God being angered because an unspecified person touched the ark struck Uzzah dead. The tabernacle, temple and ark were holy places where God dwelled, just as was Mount Siani. There at that mountain, the people were not to ascend it, nor touch the borders of it. If they did they would be put to death.

Regardless of how much God loved Israel, He was still an inaccessible deity who looked upon the nation from a distance and whose judgments invoked fear among those worshippers. We ought to take notice of that inaccessibility and that distance, that we might more value our privilege of having *"boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."* Hebrews 10:19.

LESSON TWO

HONORING GOD

LESSON TEXT: EXODUS 20:1-7

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 20:1 And God spake all these words saying,

2 I am the Lord thy God, which has 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 anything 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 showing 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.

INTRODUCTION

The descendants of Jacob had left Egypt and had come to the foot of God's Holy mountain. The offer had been extended by God and had been voluntary and unanimously accepted by the new nation. The people and the mountain had been sanctified for the receiving of the law. As instructed by God, bounds had been erected that none of Israel could approach and touch the mountain. All was ready. God's Holy Law was ready to be formally presented.

Very little emphasis has been placed upon the preface to the Commandments found in the first two verses of the lesson. This preface reveals that God has the authority to enact these Laws on the people of Israel. Whatever awesome grandeur and majesty attended the delivery of the Law, it nevertheless, had its foundation in love. Not only was God's giving of the Commandments an act of love, but love was the basis upon which it was received by His people. This was the only way there could be harmony between a redeeming God and a redeemed people. It has been noted many times that the Commandments were written on two tablets. One tablet relates to the duty man owes God and the other to his relationship to his fellow man. In this study of these

Laws of God, there will have three divisions; those Commandments that honor God, those that we are commanded to do and those we are prohibited from doing.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"

The Egyptians, from whose culture the Hebrews had just come, were a polytheistic people, meaning they worshipped many gods. Moreover, Moses was to lead these people into the land of the Canaanites, who were also polytheistic. The purpose of this first commandment was to prevent Israel from remembering the gods left in Egypt or joining those worshipped in the promised land. This commandment, as well as the other nine, were to be perpetual laws, because Jehovah is the only true and living God. There are positive and negative duties affixed to this commandment. The positive duties intimated by this first commandment are briefly stated as follows.

Mankind shall choose, worship and serve Jehovah as his God, and Him only. God will tolerate no rival and none can contend with Him. This commandment requires from us an acknowledgment of Jehovah as the one and only true God, and none else.

These duties, demonstrate how absolutely reasonable this demand is and how foolish it would be to oppose it. This commandment implies that God is the only adequate object of our love and the only One able to satisfy the soul. It requires having a love for Him stronger than all other affections, and by this love one is enabled to believe in Him, trust in Him and hope in Him.

It requires that all those services and acts of worship which are rendered unto the true God be made with the utmost sincerity and devotion (implied in *the "before* Me.") This excludes negligence and hypocrisy in the service of God.

There are also great sins forbidden by this Commandment. Atheism or the denial of God or any of the characteristics that make God who He is in our lives is prohibited by this commandment.

Polytheism, or the worship of many gods is also prohibited by this commandment. It has already been stated that the Egyptians and the Canaanites practiced this form of worship. The Apostle Paul contended with this abomination most everywhere he preached.

Idolatry or the setting up of false and fictitious gods is spoken against in this commandment.

We can see in our present day that idolatry can take many forms. Anything in our lives (wealth, houses, cars, boats, or a person) can be put before God. Anything that comes between us and our sincere and devoted service to God has become a god to us and we are guilty of the practice of idolatry.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" Jesus said, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24). From the time of creation man has had within himself a need to worship. He recognizes there is a higher power, a power to which he is inferior. Also from the time of the fall, God taught the first family the method of worship that was pleasing to Him. However, without a physical body present, someone visible to the eye, man is prone to construct an object of worship. This is seen in the attempt to build the tower at Babel. But the second commandment strikes against this desire to bring some aids into the worship of God, material aids, things which can be perceived by the senses.

God, saying in the fifth verse that He is a "jealous God," strictly forbids any image that is worshipped. In the previous verse God had fully explained this commandment, naming those areas from which the images should not be taken. Pagan peoples who knew not God worshipped representations of those creatures from *"heaven above, the earth beneath and in the water under the earth."*

In the forbidding of these images, God, prohibits all other modes and means of worship not appointed by Him. Even forms of worship of the true God Himself, if they are contrary to or different from what the Lord has prescribed in His Word and which are directed by the apostolic writings are censured by this commandment. Of course, this includes corruptions of the true worship of God and all inclinations of heart toward superstition in the service of God.

There has been an attempt to adorn the simplicity of Divine worship. This is seen in the need for ritualism and of the erroneous applications applied to the ordinances of the Church. It also condemns a neglect of God's worship, the leaving undone of the service which God has commanded.

Just as God instructed Moses to set bounds around the mountain that the people not touch it, the Scriptures have set bounds for our worship, to which we must not add, and from which we must not take away. In the application of this principle, we need to distinguish sharply between that which is commanded and that which has been added by man. Anything which men seek to impose upon us as a part of divine worship, if it is not expressly required of us in the Scriptures – such as bowing the knee at the name of Jesus, crossing ourselves, etc. – is to be avoided.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

> *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."*

This commandment derives its meaning from the lessons taught in the two previous; the first instructing as to the position or rank where God must placed and the second concerns the manner in which God is to be worshipped (namely, according to His revealed will). This commandment declares that He is to be worshipped with the spirit which is in agreement with the dignity and solemnity that such a presence as His demands, that is, with the utmost sincerity, humility, and reverence.

The Name of the Lord our God means God Himself as He is made known individuals, including everything through which He has been pleased to reveal Himself. His Word, His titles, His attributes, His ordinances and His works are all involved in His name. The Name of God stands for His very nature and being, depicted in the scriptures as savior, defender, shepherd, wisdom and leader. There are many others but the list is so long it cannot be given here.

Sometimes the name of God is used without realizing we must have a proper purpose in its use. There are but two goals that can warrant use of any of His names, titles, or attributes: for His glory and for the edification of others and ourselves. Unless one's speech is purposely directed to the advancement of His Divine glory or of the benefit of those to whom are being spoken, there is no justification in having God's name upon one's lips. As stated in the latter portion of the seventh verse, God is very displeased when His name is mentioned to useless purpose.

The words *"in vain"* means three things: we must not use the name of God when lying, we must not renege or fail to perform any vow made to or before God and we must not use God's name lightly or irreverently.

God's Name is taken in vain when it is used without due consideration and reverence. That Name is not to be sported with and tossed to and fro upon every light tongue. The habit should be formed of solemnly

considering whose name it is which is about to be uttered. He is jealous of His honor, and He will dreadfully avenge Himself upon those who have slighted Him.

God's Name is used in vain when it is employed hypocritically, when we profess to be His people and are not. Israel, after forgetting the promises made at Sinai, was guilty of this sin. Isaiah makes reference of this sin in his prophecy of the downfall of Israel. The Hebrew people used the name of God, but did not obey the revelation contained in that name, and so violated this Third Commandment.

We are guilty of this sin when we perform holy duties lightly and mechanically, more from tradition than from love. Prayer without feeling is blasphemy. Speaking to God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him is but a mocking of Him and our reproach increases as we continue in this sin.

Perjury is forbidden by the commandment, as is the breaking of all vows made before God or in His holy name. All lying, cursing, swearing and irreverence toward those things or persons which are of God is a serious sin, *"For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain."*

LESSON THREE

THOU SHALT

LESSON TEXT: EXODUS 20:8-12

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:
10 but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, 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 seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.
12 Honor thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

INTRODUCTION

In the study of the fourth and fifth commandments is seen their relationship with the other commandments. The first commandment teaches that God should be worshipped and none other. The second instructs to worship Him directly and not through contrived means. The third commandment explains that God should be worshipped in sincerity. The fourth commandment completes the lessons and teaches the time God has prescribed that He should worshipped. The fifth commandment serves as the connecting link between the commandments directed toward God and those directed toward man.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"

The sabbath is the divinely instituted day of rest and worship, ordained by God for all men. The account of the creation relates that God accomplished all He set out to do in six days of labor. He surveyed His creation and judged it to be good. Then God, as an example to mankind, rested on the seventh day, thereby teaching two lessons. First, that it is honorable and right to work to accomplish those things that are our responsibility. Secondly, a day must be set aside for the rest and refreshment of our bodies and to worship and reverence our God.

By this law, given at Sinai, the seventh day was to be a day of rest, in which no secular work was to be done. The day was to be wholly devoted to the worship of

God. The Israelites were ordered to "remember," by abstaining from all labor, business, and all pleasures and recreations that were lawful on other days. Instead, they were to spend their days in religious activity. No other law has this word "remember" attached to it, God perhaps thinking that this commandment would be more liable to be forgotten and neglected.

God also attached the word "remember" to this law because it was not the first time the people had heard it and He wished for them to remember the occasion and the blessing attached to this event. The first occurrence of the word "sabbath" is found in Exodus 16:23. The people had not yet reached their encampment at Sinai. When in the wilderness of Sin, God provided manna for them to eat. Moses instructed them that no manna would fall on the seventh day. They would need to gather a double portion on the sixth day. Moses said in the 23rd verse, "This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord:" He then told them to bake and boil that which they gathered. Eat a portion of it, and save the remainder until the next day.

Shortly afterwards, this law requiring the sabbath to be kept was given with the nine other commandments. This commandment was akin to the other laws. It was meant to be a ceaseless obligation. The lasting nature of this commandment is evidenced by the fact that it was given a place, not in the Ceremonial Law of Israel, which was to be done away with when Christ fulfilled its types. But it was given in the Moral Law, which was written by the finger of God Himself upon tables of stone, to signify its permanent nature.

The ninth verse reads, *"… six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work."* Some people take this as a commandment to work. However, this writer believes that this is not to be taken as a law, but as permission from God to provide for themselves and their families the things that are necessary for comfortable living. This is a favor and allowance of six days to use for their own profit and benefit. Of course, during those six days God expects His children to adhere to the conditions He set forth in the covenant He presented to them and to which they agreed. (See lesson one)

The tenth verse begins, "but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God:"

God only reserved one day out of seven for his service. The sabbath ought to be viewed as a great favor,

that God asked that they commit no more of their time than one day for His use. The rest they might spend as they pleased, as long as they did not indulge in sin. According to this law, on the sabbath there is to be a complete resting the whole day, not only from natural recreations and doing our own pleasure, but from all worldly employment.

Included in this commandment are instructions concerning who is to observe the sabbath. This command is not meant for the head of household only, but for everyone and every animal that that has contact with the family unit.

One final word; this commandment has been much abused by many of God's people. Even though we may not use our sabbath in our employment and vocations, Sunday is just another day in the week as far as shopping and entertainment is concerned. A number of years ago, a deacon and his wife, who were members of the church where I hold membership, were eating in a restaurant one Sunday. He observed to their waitress that she probably didn't like to work on Sunday. She answered that if the good church people didn't eat out so much on that day she wouldn't have to work. We should be careful that in our stumbling we don't cause others to stumble also.

Let us also see to it that we do not work or sit up so late on Saturday night that we transgress on the Lord's day by staying in bed late or making ourselves sleepy for the exercise of its holy duties.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor thy father and thy mother:"

The twelfth verse gives the fifth commandment of the ten, but as the apostle writes in Ephesians 6:2 it is the first commandment with promise. It is the beginning of those laws on the second tablet of stone that relate to the obligations we owe to our fellow man.

There are some noted men who have written well respected commentaries of the Bible who take the position that this commandment extends to those governmental officials who have rule or power over us. These learned men are much more of Bible scholars than this writer. However, it must be remembered that at the time God gave these commandments, He wanted no government at all. What He was setting up was a theocracy. It will be remembered that when Israel asked for a king, He was very upset with His chosen people. For our purposes in this lesson, only consider what the commandment actually says will be considered.

At other places in these lessons it has been noted that this commandment is a bridge between the Godward laws and those directed toward mankind. The love and care our parents have for us is typical, but not quite on the same plane, as those same qualities God extends to us. It is to our advantage that just as we have earthly, fleshly parents, we also have a heavenly, spiritual father who loves us with a greater love than they can. So, here is the connecting link between the two tablets of laws.

In regard to the duties of children to their parents, they are to love and reverence them, being fearful of offending them because of the respect they have for them. A genuine adoration should be the motivation for children, so that they refrain from whatever would grieve or offend their parents.

Children are to obey their parents. The scriptures tell that Jesus was subject unto His parents (Luke 2:51). *"Children obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord".* These are the words of Paul writing in Colossians 3:20. After David was anointed King of Israel by Samuel, he fulfilled the job his father had given him by tending his sheep (1 Sam. 16:19).

Our manner of speaking to our parents must be respectful and our gestures must express submission. Though Joseph was so highly exalted in Egypt, he "bowed himself with his face, to the ground" before his father (Gen. 48:12). Also note how king Solomon honored his mother when Bathsheba came before him to speak on behalf of David's son, Adonijah (1 Kings 2:19).

As far as the children are able and their parents have needs, children are to provide for their parents in their old age. This is properly honoring their father and mother. Children have an obligation to their parents to make their declining years as comfortable as the parents made their formative years. We are fond of quoting Proverbs 22:6, *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* Many parents that heeded the admonition contained in that scripture have children that are better Christians and citizens as a result. Children with parents that realized their obligations to them, likewise, should remember the words of God in Leviticus 19:32, *"Thou shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord."*

LESSON FOUR

THOU SHALT NOT

LESSON TEXT: EXODUS 20:13-17

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bearfalse witness against thy neighbor.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's

INTRODUCTION

By way of introduction, some of the remarks that can be made for one of these commandments can apply to all. These five in general and the sixth, seventh and eighth in particular are commonly viewed by most of mankind as the "biggies." While breaking these commandments are certainly heinous, in Gods eyes they are no greater sins than the others. It is a terrible act to take the life of another or to be unfaithful to marriage vows. However, in the sight of God, are these sins greater than rejecting Jehovah as the only God and the giver of all good gifts and graces?

In the first four commandments, have been seen how God protected the glory that was due Him. In the fifth was noted a bridge between the duties owed God and the obligations to humanity. In the second five, we are to observe how God provides for the security and wellbeing of men. God does this (1) for the protection of man's person *("thou shalt not kill");* (2) for the sanctity and good of his family *("thou shalt not commit adultery");* (3) for the safety of his estate and substance *("thou shalt not steal")* and (4) for his reputation or good name *("thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.")* Finally, as a strong protection for man, acting as a hedge encompassing the entire law, God not only prohibits outward crimes, but also inward stirrings of evil in thoughts and emotions *("thou shalt not covet").* It is the first of these regulations which specifically relates to neighbors that shall now be considered: *"Thou shalt not kill."*

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not kill"

This sixth Commandment

prohibits that uncivilized and inhuman sin of murder, which is the first crime recorded in scripture after the fall of Adam and Eve. Cain's resentment and enmity drove him to slay Abel because his brother's works were righteous while his own were evil (1 John 3:12). But this commandment is not restricted to forbidding the actual crime of killing another human being. It also prohibits all the causes of murder, such as rash anger and hatred, slanders, revenge, and whatever else may put in jeopardy the safety of another person. When Jesus was preaching the Sermon on the Mount, He expanded on this commandment and said, *"That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment".*

A proper interpretation of this commandment would read, "you shall not commit murder." The point needs to be made here that every killing of a man is not murder. It is not so in the execution of justice, when the court sentences a murderer to death, for that judge is given lawful authority to put capital offenders to death. *"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed"* (Gen. 9:6). This verse records God's order to the magistrate. Nor is a person shedding blood in a lawful war chargeable with murder. It is lawful to take up arms against an invader and to recover what has been unjustly taken away. Neither is it murder when people defend his life and property or the lives and property of their families. This commandment does not speak to the accidental taking of a life. Provisions were made for such an occurrence (see Deuteronomy 19:4-6).

As mentioned previously, this commandment not only forbids the actual act of taking another's life, but likewise all causes and occasions leading to it. Principally such causes and occasions include envy, jealousy and anger. Cain first enviously brooded at the success of his brother's sacrifice. His brooding quickly turned to anger *(And Cain was very wroth)* prompting him to murder his brother. So, unjust and excessive anger and envy, if it be allowed to lie festering in the heart, will turn into the poison of a hatred that cannot be appeased.

This commandment not only condemns murder but also abortion, suicide and assisted suicide. Genesis 1:26-27 informs that man was created in the image of the Creator. Murder is profane because it is taking the life of someone made in the image of God.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not commit adultery"

After God made Adam, He said that man would need a companion. After Eve was formed from Adam's rib, he said, *"This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.... Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh"* (Genesis 2:23-24). Thus was marriage ordained and approved by God. The family is the foundation of human society. The virtues of purity are the basis of the domestic relationship in the home. The teaching of children concerning truth, morality, love of God and love of man begins in the home. Nothing is more necessary for a proper social order. The relationship upon which all others are afterward based should be jealously protected against every form of attack.

This commandment is designed to guard the sanctity of the home, for strictly speaking, adultery is a sin which none but a married person can commit. But since the One giving the law is pure and holy, He requires us to depart from all uncleanness, which includes all acts of a sexual nature performed outside of marriage. The marriage relationship between a man and woman is to be pure and symbolizes the covenant relationship between God and Israel and between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-23). How God regards sins of uncleanness has been made clear by many passages in His Word. This sin, even on the part of an unmarried man, is called *"great wickedness, and sin against God" (Gen.* 39:9). How much more inexcusable and intolerable is it on the part of a married person who has taken his marriage vows in the name of God? Perjury is then added to the sin of adultery.

Man is not excused if he refrains from the actual physical act. Jesus addresses adultery in Matthew 5:27-28 saying that a lustful heart is guilty of adultery. Later in Matthew 15:19, Jesus teaches that the heart is the source of all the violations of this commandment.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not steal"

God has ordained that men should earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and with that portion which he must thus honestly obtain, be satisfied. The basis from which theft results is dissatisfaction with the portion God has allotted resulting in coveting after that which He has granted to

others. Therefore, many are led to resort to the use of force or fraud to gain possession of that to which they have no right. Theft, in general, is an unjust taking or keeping to ourselves what lawfully belongs to another. He is a thief who withholds what ought to be in his neighbor's possession just as much as one who takes his neighbor's property.

The sin of theft is as old as recorded history. In a manner of speaking, the first sin committed by the human species entailed theft: Eve took of (stole) the forbidden fruit. So, too, the first recorded sin against God's commandments by an Israelite after they entered the land of Canaan was that of theft: Achan desired *"the accursed thing"* and stole it from among the spoils (Joshua 7:21). In like manner, the first sin which defiled the primitive Christian church was theft: Ananias and Sapphira *"kept back part of the price"* (Acts 5:2).

The highest form of this sin occurs when it is committed against God, which is sacrilege. In Malachi 3:8, God through His prophet writes, *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me."* But there are other ways in which this sin may be committed besides that of refusing to financially support God's cause on earth. God is robbed when we withhold from Him the glory which is His due. We are spiritual thieves when we claim for ourselves the honor and praise which belong to Him alone. Another way in which we rob God is by an unfaithful discharge of our stewardship. That which God has committed to us is just as betrayed by our mismanagement as if we interfered with another person's trust or plundered our neighbor's goods.

There are many types of theft. The ones that most readily come to mind are those that are common in everyday society: robbing banks, car theft, shoplifting, breaking and entering and burglary. Lying advertisements are also a breach of this commandment. Tradesmen are guilty when they misrepresent their goods. It is also theft when a merchant deliberately gives short weight or short change to their customers. Profiteering is yet another form of theft. The Apostle Paul admonishes *"that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter"* (1 Thessalonians 4:6). The failure to pay debts incurred in procuring necessities is theft. A man is a thief in the sight of God who transfers property to his wife just before he becomes bankrupt. So also is any person who has become bankrupt and later on prospers financially and fails to pay his creditors in full guilty of theft.

There are some things we can do to aid in avoiding the sins prohibited and in the performance of those duties taught by this eighth commandment. We must engage in honest labor, strive against the spirit of selfishness and give every man and God their rightful due.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor"

This ninth commandment forbids all false and injurious speech concerning our neighbor. Take these words simply at their face value and they prohibit only the crime of perjury or the giving of false testimony in a court of law. But as with the previous commandments, much more is implied and taught than is specifically stated. In its widest application, this commandment deals with the regulation of our speech, which is one of the distinguishing gifts and blessings that God has bestowed upon man. One's speech reveals the inward nature of the speaker. Scripture teaches that *"death and life are in the power of the tongue"* (Proverbs 18:21), that *"a wholesome tongue is a tree of life"* (Proverbs 15:4), and that an unbridled tongue is *"an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"* (James 3:8).

Showing that our words are not to be uttered lightly or thoughtlessly, our Lord Jesus said, *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"* (Matthew 12: 36-37).

The positive form of this ninth commandment is found in these words: *"Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor,"* (Zechariah 8:16). The worst form of lying is when someone maliciously invents a falsehood to damage the reputation of another. The prohibition of bearing false witness against my neighbor equally forbids me to bear false witness about myself. Such false witness occurs when I pose as being holier than I am or I pretend to be more humble or more "anything else" than is actually the case.

Understand that a lie, properly speaking, consists of three elements or ingredients: speaking what is not true; deliberately doing so; and doing so with an intent to deceive. Every falsehood is not a lie. We may be misinformed or deceived and sin-

cerely think we are stating facts, and consequently have no design of misleading others.

A respect for the truth should be constantly placed before youth. They should be taught that lying is the beginning point of all vice and corruption. Equally important is that those who have charge of the young, particularly parents, should set before the children a personal example or truthfulness and honesty.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not covet"

That which is prohibited here is an eagerness for or an unlawful lusting after what belongs to another. The tenth commandment strikes at the root of the previous four laws. Those commands unquestionably forbid all acts of doing that which will be an injury to a neighbor. This commandment forbids all undue desire of having that which belongs to another and that which will be a gratification to oneself. It takes little thought to see that the genesis of violating these preceding laws lies within the breaking of this law.

Covet, by definition, means to have an inordinate desire for something. God does not frown on those who have a desire to further themselves and to provide a measure of comfort for their families. But God does scowl when those desirous looks are directed at things that are the property of others. It doesn't matter if those desires are unsuccessful. Just as Jesus interpreted the commandment concerning adultery, if the wish is in the heart, that person is guilty of breaking the tenth commandment.

CONCLUSION

There are two things which are indispensable to the Christian's life: first, a clear knowledge of duty, and second, a conscientious practice of duty corresponding to his knowledge. Although there may be knowledge without practice, there cannot possibly be practice of God's will without knowledge. It also holds true that we can have no well-grounded hope of eternal salvation without obedience. So, we can have no sure rule of obedience without knowledge. Therefore, that we might be informed of what we ought to do and of what we ought to avoid, it has pleased God to prescribe for us laws for the revising of our actions. In the Ten Commandments we have a summary of the same.

God made us, created us; it is only fitting that He has made rules for us.

LESSON FIVE

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT: LOVE

LESSON TEXT: MATTHEW 22:34-40

LESSON TEXT

Matthew 22:34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. **35** Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, **36** Master, which is the great commandment in the law? **37** Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. **38** This is the first and great commandment. **39** And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. **40** On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

INTRODUCTION

The past four lessons have been devoted to the letter of the law. In these commandments were found some "Thou shalts" and some "Thou shalt nots." There were positive commandments with negative connotations and there were positive commandments with negative implications. In all these commandments, God had given the young nation of Israel specific instructions as to what they must or must not do in order to be in compliance with the covenant He had extended to them.

Through the years, after periods of apostasy and periods of revival, the religious hierarchy and the impious sects of Israel had perverted the law much the same as the legislature and courts have perverted the Constitution of this country. If Israel had ever recognized that the law had a spirit, that spirit had long been forgotten. Jesus came, not to destroy the law as many feared, *"but to fulfill"* (Matthew 5:17). Not only was the ceremonial law fulfilled in Him, but also through Him the spirit of the law was brought back into focus that man might be blessed. The spirit of the law is contained in one word – Love

TWO COMMANDS, ONE LOVE

In Matthew 22:15-46, the scriptures tell of a series of attempts by the religious establishment to trap Jesus into making statements that would incriminate him with the Roman authorities or discredit him before his followers. In

verses 23-33, Jesus succeeds in putting *"the Sadducees to silence"* by his keen knowledge of the commandments of God. In verses 34-40, an expert lawyer from the Pharisee party tries to test him again: *"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*" This was another attempt on the part of the leaders of the various sects of Judaism to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people by exposing Him to be a very ignorant man both in knowledge of the law and in the ways of God.

It was a trick question, but Jesus' answer was pure genius. First, instead of quoting one of the Ten Commandments, as the Pharisees might have expected, he quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5. Next, He added a second as a companion commandment, this time taken from Leviticus 19:18. In these, He indicated that a genuine love for God involves seeing people as God sees them. It also involves viewing all people, without exception, as objects of his unconditional love. Therefore, these two commandments as given by Jesus cannot be separated. They are, this writer believes, like repentance and faith, inseparable. We love God because He first loved us and it stands to reason that we must love our neighbor because God loves him also.

The command to love others is basic to our identification as followers of Jesus. Circumcision was a sign that a man was of the family of Abraham. The sign that the young nation followed Moses was keeping the commandments. The sign that the early Christians followed John the Baptist was baptism. The sign that we follow Jesus is that we love others. In 1 John 3:14 that beloved apostle wrote, "We *know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."* John proves the great love of God for His creation when he writes *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10).

In His answer, Jesus condensed the Moral Law from ten to two, love to God and love to our neighbor. Thus, He effectively divided the law into its original two tablets. The command of Christ is to love. These commandments do not originate with Christ, but He put the great emphasis on these two passages from Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

They are so important that He even says that not only the Law, but also the teaching of the Prophets, hang by these two commands.

Commandments from God are to govern our relationship with Him and with our fellow man. It is by these two commandments that the others can be adhered to and obeyed from the heart. The sum and substance of the law is love. The law as given at Sinai was based in love. The prophet's foremost message to a wayward nation was love for and obedience to God. The prophet's message to the people of that time and to future generations was the love of God in the sending of His son. Herein is the basis of love. Jesus uses different words to say the same thing in Matthew 7:12.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Also note that 1 John 4:19 teaches that we love God because He first loved us.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 which says, *"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thine soul, and with all thy might."*

What part of us is to love God? All of us. Heart, soul, and mind do not mean we separate ourselves into different pieces, and love God with them. We are to love God with all that is within us, through our thinking, through our decisions, through our motive. Again, we are to love Him with all of who we are. We are to love Him without holding anything back because that is the way He loved us. He didn't even hold back his only Son from us.

TO LOVE PEOPLE IS THE MANIFESTATION OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD

Through the centuries, God has been trying to get us to love both Him and one another. Such was the intent of the Law of Moses and the message of the prophets. Love fulfills the purpose of God's laws. In Romans 13:8-10, Paul states that in love the law is fulfilled. Often we find it difficult to love others completely, especially those who are obviously different from us. The reason is because to a large part, we cherish our individuality and we naturally initiate relationships with those whom we share common interests, age, or faith. We often don't appreciate our responsibility or brotherhood with all of humanity.

To open our hearts to God will free our spirit to worship God, but we need also to open our hearts to our neighbor. It's a free choice, but it is God's will. To

keep the first half of the Great Commandment without keeping the second part is intrinsically impossible. Hear the words of the beloved apostle, John:

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." 1 John 4:20-21.

God requires "heart" religion as well as "head" religion. He desires his love to us to be conveyed through us to our neighbors. The essence of Christianity is expressed in that short statement from Jesus: love God, and love your neighbor.

Jesus states that these two commandments condense the message of the Old Testament commandments and are the pattern for our Christian lives. We ought to obey them, not out of a sense of duty but out of desire to please God.

To fully love God we need first, to appreciate and experience God's love in our lives. Second, we need to demonstrate or convey his love to others, even strangers and enemies.

PERFECT LOVE

In Paul's great essay in I Corinthians 13, he enumerates all the qualities of love. He tells us things that love is and is not and in relating them, he is describing the love that God has for us – perfect love. Like the other standards that God sets for us, we can only aspire to attain this love. Even though we can try with all our being, with our carnal flesh we can only know a part of that perfect love in our relationship with God and with others. However, in the tenth verse Paul says, *"when that which is perfect is come,"* when Jesus returns, we will be able to experience that perfect love that God has extended to us.

The words at the close of the second commandment, *"… shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."*, make it crystal clear that the only obedience which God accepts is that which proceeds from an affectionate heart.