

92. Q. What is the Old Covenant or Mosaic System commonly designated in the apostolic writings?
93. Q. What were the successive institutions of worship under the Jewish Dispensation?
94. Q. When did the Jewish Dispensation end?
95. Q. On what grounds were the faithful souls of the Jewish Dispensation accepted with God?

Lesson Thirty-Four THE DECALOGUE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:1-7; Matt. 19:16-22, 22:34-39.

Scripture to Memorize: "And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

96. Q. What is meant by the Decalogue?
- A. By the Decalogue is meant the Ten Commandments.
97. Q. What is the First Commandment?
- A. It is: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exo. 20:3. Literally, before my face. This does not mean. Thou shalt put me above all other gods, as modern sophists have tried to make it appear to mean. It means, rather, Thou shalt not worship any other gods, or, Thou shalt have no other gods but Me. Cf. Deut. 6:13, 14—"Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God, and him shalt thou serve . . . Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples that are round about you." This command was directly against polytheism; and, indirectly against infidelity, heresy, materialism, skepticism, etc. Cf. Acts 14:15—"that ye

should turn from these vain things unto a living God." Eph. 4:6—"one God and Father of all." Acts 17:24—"the God that made the world and all things therein," etc.

98. Q. What is the Second Commandment?

A. It is: "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image."

Exo. 20:4-6. This is a prohibition of image worship and idolatry; and, indirectly, of such sins as superstition, witchcraft, necromancy, and occultism (consorting with fortune-tellers and spirit mediums); of sacrilege (profanation of holy things); and of simony (using spiritual things for commercial ends). Cf. 1 John 5:21—"My little children, guard yourselves from idols."

99. Q. What is the Third Commandment?

A. It is: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain."

Exo. 20:7. This is directed against swearing, blasphemy, cursing, breaking of religious vows, derision of religion, irreverence, perjury, etc. Cf. Matt. 5:34, the words of Jesus, "Swear not at all." Jas. 5:12—"but above all things, my brethren, swear not," etc.

100. Q. What is the Fourth Commandment?

A. It is: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Exo. 20:8-11. This command is not re-enacted in the New Testament, for the obvious reason that Christians have, from apostolic times, kept the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. The observance of the first day of the week was instituted and authorized by the apostles themselves, who were guided into all the truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), as soon as the gospel was first proclaimed as fact and the first local churches were established. See Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10. Under the old dispensation, the seventh day was set aside as the Sabbath, instead of the

first, second, third, etc., day of the week, because that was the "day" on which God rested at the conclusion of His creative activity (Exo. 20:11). Moreover, the Sabbath itself was designed to be a memorial of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 5:15) and would therefore have no significance for Gentiles. We as Christians keep the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as a memorial of the resurrection of Jesus, which occurred on that day (Mark 16:9). Hence there is neither command nor precedent in the apostolic writings for Christians to keep the Jewish Sabbath. The Lord's Day is intended to be essentially a day of Christian worship, benevolence and service. We profane it exceedingly when we spend it in intemperance or debauchery, or in extravagant games, sports, amusements, revelings, and such like.

101. Q. What is the Fifth Commandment?

A. It is: "Honor thy father and thy mother."

Exo. 20:12. This is directed against disrespect, irreverence, disobedience, etc., on the part of children towards their parents. Cf. Eph. 6:1—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Cf. Eph. 6:4—"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord."

102. Q. What is the Sixth Commandment?

A. The Sixth Commandment is: "Thou shalt not kill."

(1) Exo. 20:13. This is directed against the taking of human life in any form, such as homicide, suicide, infanticide, abortion, etc. How about "birth control," i. e., contraception? Is it the taking of incipient life? (2) This command does not apply of course in matters wherein we act as instruments of the state, as, for instance, in war, in the execution of criminals, or in protecting life from unjust attack; for we are commanded to "be in subjection to the higher powers," i. e., our civil rulers. See Rom. 13:1-7.

(3) This command is directed also against hatred, for, we are told, "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15); and against envy, quarreling, abusive words, imprecations, slander, scandalmongering, seduction, or any other practice that tends to destroy spiritual life. Cf. Rom. 13:9, 10—"Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet," etc.

103. Q. What is the Seventh Commandment?

A. It is: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Exo. 20:14. This is directed against adultery (illicit sexual intercourse between married persons, thus breaking the marriage vows); against fornication (illicit sexual intercourse between unmarried persons, or between one who is married and one who is unmarried); against sex perversion, sex abuse, sodomy, lasciviousness, lewdness, and all forms of sexual and social impurity. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:18—"Flee fornication." 1 Cor. 5:9—"have no company with fornicators." Cf. Rom. 1:26-27; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:9-10, etc.

104. Q. What is the Eighth Commandment?

A. It is: "Thou shalt not steal."

Exo. 20:15. This is directed against robbery, theft, extortion, fraud, usury, etc. Cf. Eph. 4:28—"Let him that stole steal no more."

105. Q. What is the Ninth Commandment?

A. It is: "Thou shalt not bear false witness."

Exo. 20:16. This command is directed against lying, railing, hypocrisy, detraction, calumny, false suspicion, and, in general, all sins by which the honor or character of our neighbor is injured. Cf. Col. 3:9—"lie not one to another." Eph. 4:25—"Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor."

106. Q. What is the Tenth Commandment?

A. It is: "Thou shalt not covet."

Exo. 20:17. Covetousness is the most universal of all sins, yet seldom realized or admitted by the individual. The sins of envy and jealousy usually have their root in covetousness. This command is directed, therefore, against love of worldly goods, stinginess, God-robbery (Mal. 3:7-10), jealousy, envy, discontent, etc. The implication of the command is that we should be content with what we possess, and should not be envious of what belongs to others. Eph. 5:3—"covetousness, let it not even be named among you." Luke 12:15—here Jesus says: "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Cf. Col. 3:5, 1 Cor. 5:11, Rom. 13:9-10, etc.

107. Q. What are the two greatest Commandments of the Law?

A. They are: the Command that we should love God wholeheartedly, and the Command that we should love our neighbors as ourselves.

(1) Deut. 6:4-5, Lev. 19:17-18, Matt. 22:35-40, "And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." (2) These two Commandments, although not themselves included in the Decalogue, embrace within their scope, inferentially at least, all our obligations to God and all our obligations to our fellow-men. For this reason they are said to be the two greatest Commandments of the Law.

108. Q. Are the Ten Commandments binding upon

Christians, i. e., upon God's children under the New Covenant?

A. They are all, with but one exception, binding upon Christians.

109. Q. Why are they binding upon Christians?

A. They are binding upon Christians because they have been re-enacted, with but one exception, in the New Testament.

110. Q. Which one of the Ten Commandments has not been re-enacted in the New Testament and is therefore not binding upon Christians?

A. The Fourth Commandment, i. e., the Commandment to keep the Sabbath, has not been re-enacted in the New Testament, and is therefore not binding upon Christians.

(This is fully explained under Question 100.)

111. Q. How were the Ten Commandments first revealed to the Hebrew people?

A. The words of the Ten Commandments were spoken by Jehovah Himself to the children of Israel at Sinai.

Exo., chs. 19-20. The people were first required to wash their clothes, to sanctify themselves, in short, to make all necessary preparations to meet with God Almighty Himself. Two days were spent in ceremonies of purification and preparation for this sublime event. Then on the third day Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and while the whole assembly stood at the foot of Sinai, God Himself descended to the summit of the holy mountain, in the midst of fire, with thunderings, lightnings, and the sound of a great trumpet. Exo. 19:18—"And mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked

greatly." Then at length, while the people were greatly moved with awe, God spoke out of the midst of the fire, in such manner as to be heard by all the people, the sublime words of the Decalogue (Exo. 20:1-17). After the Decalogue was concluded, the people retired from the foot of the mountain, and requested that God henceforth communicate His words to them through Moses. This request was granted. The Ten Commandments were later written on two tablets of stone, which were delivered to the Israelites through Moses, to serve as their Fundamental Law. See Exo. 31:18, 32:1-20, 34:1-9, 34:27-35.

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON THIRTY-FOUR

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