

The Eternal Law of God

MEMORY TEXT: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

“[Christ] has bidden us love one another even as He has loved us. Religion is founded upon love to God, which also leads us to love one another. It is full of gratitude, humility, long-suffering. It is self-sacrificing, forbearing, merciful, and forgiving. It sanctifies the whole life and extends its influence over others.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 223.

Suggested Reading: Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 303-314. (At the bottom of this page)

Sunday February 5

1. THE CHANGELESS CREATOR

a. What must we realize about Christ’s relation to God’s moral law while He lived here on this earth as the Son of man? Matthew 5:17, 18.

Matthew 5:17-18 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. **18** For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

b. How particular were the Jewish leaders regarding the outward observance of the law? Matthew 23:23; Philippians 3:4.

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Philippians 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

“[The Jewish leaders] were zealous to maintain an appearance of holiness, but they neglected holiness of heart. While they were sticklers for the letter of the law, they were constantly violating its spirit. Their great need was that very change which Christ had been explaining to Nicodemus—a new moral birth, a cleansing from sin, and a renewing of knowledge and holiness.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 174.

c. What can we observe about Jesus’ trial that reveals that He was not a lawbreaker? Matthew 26:59, 60.

Matthew 26:59-60 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; **60** But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

“Neither the Saviour nor His followers broke the law of the Sabbath. Christ was a living representative of the law. No violation of its holy precepts was found in His life. Looking upon a nation of witnesses who were seeking occasion to condemn Him, He could say unchallenged, ‘Which of you convicteth Me of sin?’ John 8:46, R.V.”—*Ibid.*, p.287.

Monday February 6

2. THE LAW IN THE HEART OF JESUS

a. What was prepared for Jesus when He came to earth? Hebrews 10:5–10.

Hebrews 10:5-10 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: **6** In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. **7** Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. **8** Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; **9** Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. **10** By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

“It was not a chance, but a design that the world’s Redeemer should lay off His crown, lay aside His kingly robe, and come to our world as a man. He clothed His divinity with the garb of humanity, that He might stand at the head of the human family, His humanity mingled with the humanity of the race fallen because of Adam’s disobedience.”—*The Southern Work*, p. 85.

b. When we read the same passage in the Old Testament about Christ, what was prophesied to be in His heart? Psalm 40:6–8.

Psalm 40:6-8 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. **7** Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, **8** I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

“It was the transgression of the law that resulted in sin, sorrow, and death. Satan declared that he would prove to the worlds which God has created, and to the heavenly intelligences, that it was an impossibility to keep the law of God. When Adam yielded to the temptation of the enemy, and fell from his high and holy estate, Satan and his angels exulted. But from the throne of God a voice was heard speaking words of mysterious import. [Psalm 40:6–8 quoted.] When man fell, Christ announced His purpose of becoming man’s substitute and surety.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1901.

c. When we accept Christ into our heart, what are we accepting inseparably with Him? Psalm 119:70, 72, 77, 174.

Psalm 119:70, 72, 77, 174 Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law. **72** The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. **77** Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight. **174** I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord; and thy law is my delight.

“The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan’s ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service. The yoke of service Christ Himself has borne in humanity.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

Tuesday February 7

3. ACCORDING TO THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

a. When Jesus was explaining to the disciples that His life was living proof that He was the Messiah, what texts did He use? Luke 24:27, 44.

Luke 24:27, 44 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. **44** And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

“It was His purpose to enlighten their understanding and to fasten their faith upon the ‘sure word of prophecy.’ He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not merely because it was supported by His personal testimony, but because of the unquestionable evidence presented by the symbols and shadows of the typical law, and by the prophecies of the Old Testament. It was needful for the followers of Christ to have an intelligent faith, not only in their own behalf, but that they might carry the knowledge of Christ to the world. And as the very first step in imparting this knowledge, Jesus directed the disciples to ‘Moses and all the prophets.’ Such was the testimony given by the risen Saviour to the value and importance of the Old Testament Scriptures.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 349.

b. How did the disciples, as they were preaching the gospel message, prove that Jesus was the promised One? Acts 28:23.

Acts 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them

concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

“The Spirit of God accompanied the words that were spoken, and hearts were touched. The apostle’s appeal to Old Testament prophecies, and his declaration that these had been fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, carried conviction to many a soul longing for the advent of the promised Messiah. And the speaker’s words of assurance that the ‘glad tidings’ of salvation were for Jew and Gentile alike, brought hope and joy to those who had not been numbered among the children of Abraham according to the flesh.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 172, 173.

“In preaching to the Thessalonians, Paul appealed to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Christ in His ministry had opened the minds of His disciples to these prophecies; ‘beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.’ Luke 24:27. Peter in preaching Christ had produced his evidence from the Old Testament. Stephen had pursued the same course. And Paul also in his ministry appealed to the scriptures foretelling the birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. By the inspired testimony of Moses and the prophets he clearly proved the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah and showed that from the days of Adam it was the voice of Christ which had been speaking through patriarchs and prophets.”—*Ibid.*, pp.221, 222.

Wednesday February 8

4. LAW AND FAITH

a. Does placing our faith in Jesus as our personal Saviour do away with the law? Why or why not? Romans 3:31.

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

b. What blessing is pronounced upon commandment keepers? Revelation 22:14.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

“By transgressing God’s commandments a curse fell upon Adam and Eve, and they were deprived of all right to the tree of life. Christ died to save man, and yet preserve the honor of God’s law. He says ‘Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City.’ The Son of God here presents the doing of the commandments of God as the condition of a right to the tree of life. The transgression of God’s commandments deprived man of all right to the tree of life. Christ died, that by virtue of His blood, obedience to God’s law might make man worthy of the heavenly benediction, and grant him a right again to the tree of life.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 88.

“Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us, ‘You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.’ We all marched in and felt that we had a perfect right in the city.”—*Early Writings*, p. 17.

c. How does this show that God never changes? Hebrews 13:8.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

“Jesus will do great things for us, if we will faithfully perform our duty. We must yield our will to the will of God. We must honor the Lord by obeying all His commandments, even in what we term little things. The truth, like its divine Author, is unchangeable in its requirements, the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is not in harmony with the traditions of men, it does not conform to their opinions. The truth has ever brought a separation between God’s people and the world. But if our position in former years, as a peculiar people, was approved of God, how does He regard our present position? Have we gained in spirituality since we departed from our early simplicity?”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 25, 1882.

Thursday February 9

5. WRITTEN IN THE HEART

a. How is it possible to have the law of God in our life in the same way that Jesus had? Hebrews 10:16; 8:10.

Hebrews 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

“God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

b. What does God show us before we can even begin this heavenward journey? 1 John 4:19, 8.

1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

“The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known.”—*Ibid.*, p.22.

c. What is possible only after this love of God is in our hearts? John 14:15–17.

John 14:15-17 If ye love me, keep my commandments. **16** And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; **17** Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Friday February 10

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. How did Jesus maintain the character of God while living in humanity?**
- 2. How is the same character of Christ manifested in true believers?**
- 3. In order to truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, with what prophecies must we become thoroughly familiar?**
- 4. How is it possible that sinful human beings can have the right to the tree of life from which they were barred by sin?**
- 5. What is the only way that we can experience genuine obedience?**

Suggested Reading: Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 303-314.

Soon after the encampment at Sinai, Moses was called up into the mountain to meet with God. Alone he climbed the steep and rugged path, and drew near to the cloud that marked the place of Jehovah's presence. Israel was now to be taken into a close and peculiar relation to the Most High—to be incorporated as a church and a nation under the government of God. The message to Moses for the people was: **(PP 303.1)**

“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. 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: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Exodus 19:4~6. **(PP 303.2)**

Moses returned to the camp, and having summoned the elders of Israel, he repeated to them the divine message. Their answer was, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” Exodus 19:8. Thus they entered into a solemn covenant with God, pledging themselves to accept Him as their ruler, by which they became, in a special sense, the subjects of His authority. **(PP 303.3)**

Again their leader ascended the mountain, and the Lord said unto him, “Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever.” Exodus 19:9. When they met with difficulties in the way, they were disposed to murmur against Moses and Aaron, and accuse them of leading the hosts of Israel from Egypt to destroy them. The Lord would honor Moses before them, that they might be led to confide in his instructions. **(PP 303.4)**

God purposed to make the occasion of speaking His law a scene of awful grandeur, in keeping with its exalted character. The people were to be impressed that everything connected with the service of God must be regarded with the greatest reverence. The Lord said to Moses, “Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let

them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.” Exodus 19:10, 11. During these intervening days all were to occupy the time in solemn preparation to appear before God. Their person and their clothing must be freed from impurity. And as Moses should point out their sins, they were to devote themselves to humiliation, fasting, and prayer, that their hearts might be cleansed from iniquity. **(PP 303.5)**

The preparations were made, according to the command; and in obedience to a further injunction, Moses directed that a barrier be placed about the mount, that neither man nor beast might intrude upon the sacred precinct. If any ventured so much as to touch it, the penalty was instant death. **(PP 304.1)**

On the morning of the third day, as the eyes of all the people were turned toward the mount, its summit was covered with a thick cloud, which grew more black and dense, sweeping downward until the entire mountain was wrapped in darkness and awful mystery. Then a sound as of a trumpet was heard, summoning the people to meet with God; and Moses led them forth to the base of the mountain. From the thick darkness flashed vivid lightnings, while peals of thunder echoed and re-echoed among the surrounding heights. “And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” Exodus 19:18. “The glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount”(Exodus 24:17) in the sight of the assembled multitude. And “the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder.” Exodus 19:19. So terrible were the tokens of Jehovah’s presence that the hosts of Israel shook with fear, and fell upon their faces before the Lord. Even Moses exclaimed, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” Hebrews 12:21. **(PP 304.2)**

And now the thunders ceased; the trumpet was no longer heard; the earth was still. There was a period of solemn silence, and then the voice of God was heard. Speaking out of the thick darkness that enshrouded Him, as He stood upon the mount, surrounded by a retinue of angels, the Lord made known His law. Moses, describing the scene, says: “The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words.” Deuteronomy 33:2, 3. **(PP 304.3)**

Jehovah revealed Himself, not alone in the awful majesty of the judge and lawgiver, but as the compassionate guardian of His people: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Exodus 20:2. He whom they had already known as their Guide and Deliverer, who had brought them forth from Egypt, making a way for them through the sea, and overthrowing Pharaoh and his hosts, who had thus shown Himself to be above all the gods of Egypt—He it was who now spoke His law. **(PP 305.1)**

The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be

held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” Luke 10:27. See also Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Leviticus 19:18. In the Ten Commandments these principles are carried out in detail, and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man. **(PP 305.2)**

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” Exodus 20:3-17. **(PP 305.3)**

Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god. **(PP 305.4)**

“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: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” Exodus 20:4~5. **(PP 305.5)**

The second commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. Many heathen nations claimed that their images were mere figures or symbols by which the Deity was worshiped, but God has declared such worship to be sin. The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man’s conception of God. The mind, turned away from the infinite perfection of Jehovah, would be attracted to the creature rather than to the Creator. And as his conceptions of God were lowered, so would man become degraded. **(PP 306.1)**

“I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” Exodus 20:5. The close and sacred relation of God to His people is represented under the figure of marriage. Idolatry being spiritual adultery, the displeasure of God against it is fitly called jealousy. **(PP 306.2)**

“Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.” Exodus 20:5. It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin. **(PP 306.3)**

“Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.” Exodus 20:6. In prohibiting the worship of false gods, the second commandment by implication enjoins the worship of the true God. And to those who are faithful in His

service, mercy is promised, not merely to the third and fourth generation as is the wrath threatened against those who hate Him, but to *thousands* of generations. **(PP 306.4)**

“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.” Exodus 20:7. **(PP 306.5)**

This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. “Holy and reverend is His name.” Psalm 111:9. All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character; and His holy name should be uttered with reverence and solemnity. **(PP 306.6)**

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8~11. **(PP 307.1)**

The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator’s work. Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh day signify by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man’s allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him. The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it contains the seal of God, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force. **(PP 307.2)**

God has given men six days wherein to labor, and He requires that their own work be done in the six working days. Acts of necessity and mercy are permitted on the Sabbath, the sick and suffering are at all times to be cared for; but unnecessary labor is to be strictly avoided. “Turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and ... honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure.” Isaiah 58:13. Nor does the prohibition end here. “Nor speaking thine own words,”(Isaiah 58:13) says the prophet. Those who discuss business matters or lay plans on the Sabbath are regarded by God as though engaged in the actual transaction of business. To keep the Sabbath holy, we should not even allow our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character. And the commandment includes all within our gates. The inmates of the house are to lay aside their worldly business during the sacred hours. All should unite to honor God by willing service upon His holy day. **(PP 307.3)**

“Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Exodus 20:12. **(PP 308.1)**

Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority. **(PP 308.2)**

This, says the apostle, “is the first commandment with promise.” Ephesians 6:2. To Israel, expecting soon to enter Canaan, it was a pledge to the obedient, of long life in that good land; but it has a wider meaning, including all the Israel of God, and promising eternal life upon the earth when it shall be freed from the curse of sin. **(PP 308.3)**

“Thou shalt not kill.” Exodus 20:13. **(PP 308.4)**

All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for “whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer”(1 John 3:15)); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment. **(PP 308.5)**

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Exodus 20:14. **(PP 308.6)**

This commandment forbids not only acts of impurity, but sensual thoughts and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them. Purity is demanded not only in the outward life but in the secret intents and emotions of the heart. Christ, who taught the far-reaching obligation of the law of God, declared the evil thought or look to be as truly sin as is the unlawful deed. **(PP 308.7)**

“Thou shalt not steal.” Exodus 20:15. **(PP 308.8)**

Both public and private sins are included in this prohibition. The eighth commandment condemns manstealing and slave dealing, and forbids wars of conquest. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of just debts or wages. It declares that every attempt to advantage oneself by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the books of heaven. **(PP 309.1)**

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Exodus 20:16. **(PP 309.2)**

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment. **(PP 309.3)**

“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.” Exodus 20:17. **(PP 309.4)**

The tenth commandment strikes at the very root of all sins, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful act. He who in obedience to God's law refrains from indulging even a sinful desire for that which belongs to another will not be guilty of an act of wrong toward his fellow creatures. **(PP 309.5)**

Such were the sacred precepts of the Decalogue, spoken amid thunder and flame, and with a wonderful display of the power and majesty of the great Lawgiver. God accompanied the proclamation of His law with exhibitions of His power and glory, that His people might never forget the scene, and that they might be impressed with profound veneration for the Author of the law, the Creator of heaven and earth. He would also show to all men the sacredness, the importance, and the permanence of His law. **(PP 309.6)**

The people of Israel were overwhelmed with terror. The awful power of God's utterances seemed more than their trembling hearts could bear. For as God's great rule of right was presented before them, they realized as never before the offensive character of sin, and their own guilt in the sight of a holy God. They shrank away from the mountain in fear and awe. The multitude cried out to Moses, “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Exodus 20:19-21. The leader answered, “Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.” Exodus 20:20. The people, however, remained at a distance, gazing in terror upon the scene, while Moses “drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.” Exodus 20:21. **(PP 309.7)**

The minds of the people, blinded and debased by slavery and heathenism, were not prepared to appreciate fully the far-reaching principles of God's ten precepts. That the obligations of the Decalogue might be more fully understood and enforced, additional precepts were given, illustrating and applying the principles of the Ten Commandments. These laws were called “judgments”, both because they were framed in infinite wisdom and equity and because the magistrates were to give judgment according to them. Unlike the Ten Commandments, they were delivered privately to Moses, who was to communicate them to the people. **(PP 310.1)**

The first of these laws related to servants. In ancient times criminals were sometimes sold into slavery by the judges; in some cases, debtors were sold by their creditors; and poverty even led persons to sell themselves or their children. But a Hebrew could not be sold as a slave for life. His term of service was limited to six years; on the seventh he was to be set at liberty. Manstealing, deliberate murder, and rebellion against parental authority were to be punished with death. The holding of slaves not of Israelitish birth was permitted, but their life and person were strictly guarded. The murderer of a slave was to be punished; an injury inflicted upon one by his master, though no more than the loss of a tooth, entitled him to his freedom. **(PP 310.2)**

The Israelites had lately been servants themselves, and now that they were to have servants under them, they were to beware of indulging the spirit of cruelty and exaction from which they had suffered under their Egyptian taskmasters. The memory of their own bitter servitude should enable them to put themselves in the servant's place, leading them to be kind and compassionate, to deal with others as they would wish to be dealt with. **(PP 310.3)**

The rights of widows and orphans were especially guarded, and a tender regard for their helpless condition was enjoined. "If thou afflict them in any wise," the Lord declared, "and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Exodus 22:23, 24. Aliens who united themselves with Israel were to be protected from wrong or oppression. "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Exodus 23:9. **(PP 310.4)**

The taking of usury from the poor was forbidden. A poor man's raiment or blanket taken as a pledge, must be restored to him at nightfall. He who was guilty of theft was required to restore double. Respect for magistrates and rulers was enjoined, and judges were warned against perverting judgment, aiding a false cause, or receiving bribes. Calumny and slander were prohibited, and acts of kindness enjoined, even toward personal enemies. **(PP 311.1)**

Again the people were reminded of the sacred obligation of the Sabbath. Yearly feasts were appointed, at which all the men of the nation were to assemble before the Lord, bringing to Him their offerings of gratitude and the first fruits of His bounties. The object of all these regulations was stated: they proceeded from no exercise of mere arbitrary sovereignty; all were given for the good of Israel. The Lord said, "Ye shall be holy men unto Me"(Exodus 23:9)—worthy to be acknowledged by a holy God. **(PP 311.2)**

These laws were to be recorded by Moses, and carefully treasured as the foundation of the national law, and, with the ten precepts which they were given to illustrate, the condition of the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. **(PP 311.3)**

The message was now given them from Jehovah: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware

of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him. But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.” Exodus 23:20-22. During all the wanderings of Israel, Christ, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, was their Leader. While there were types pointing to a Saviour to come, there was also a present Saviour, who gave commands to Moses for the people, and who was set forth before them as the only channel of blessing. **(PP 311.4)**

Upon descending from the mountain, “Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Exodus 24. This pledge, together with the words of the Lord which it bound them to obey, was written by Moses in a book. **(PP 311.5)**

Then followed the ratification of the covenant. An altar was built at the foot of the mountain, and beside it twelve pillars were set up, “according to the twelve tribes of Israel,”(Exodus 24:4) as a testimony to their acceptance of the covenant. Sacrifices were then presented by young men chosen for the service. **(PP 312.1)**

Having sprinkled the altar with the blood of the offerings, Moses “took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people.” Exodus 24:7. Thus the conditions of the covenant were solemnly repeated, and all were at liberty to choose whether or not they would comply with them. They had at the first promised to obey the voice of God; but they had since heard His law proclaimed; and its principles had been particularized, that they might know how much this covenant involved. Again the people answered with one accord, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” “When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood, ... and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” Hebrews 9:19, 20. **(PP 312.2)**

Arrangements were now to be made for the full establishment of the chosen nation under Jehovah as their king. Moses had received the command, “Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord.” Exodus 24:1, 2. While the people worshiped at its foot, these chosen men were called up into the mount. The seventy elders were to assist Moses in the government of Israel, and God put upon them His Spirit, and honored them with a view of His power and greatness. “And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.” Exodus 24:10. They did not behold the Deity, but they saw the glory of His presence. Before this they could not have endured such a scene; but the exhibition of God’s power had awed them to repentance; they had been contemplating His glory, purity, and mercy, until they could approach nearer to Him who was the subject of their meditations. **(PP 312.3)**

Moses and “his minister Joshua”(Exodus 24:13) were now summoned to meet with God. And as they were to be some time absent, the leader appointed Aaron and Hur, assisted by the elders, to act in his stead. “And Moses went up into the mount, and a

cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai.” Exodus 24:15, 16. For six days the cloud covered the mountain as a token of God’s special presence; yet there was no revelation of Himself or communication of His will. During this time Moses remained in waiting for a summons to the presence chamber of the Most High. He had been directed, “Come up to Me into the mount, and be there,” (Exodus 24:12) and though his patience and obedience were tested, he did not grow weary of watching, or forsake his post. This period of waiting was to him a time of preparation, of close self-examination. Even this favored servant of God could not at once approach into His presence and endure the exhibitions of His glory. Six days must be employed in devoting himself to God by searching of heart, meditation, and prayer before he could be prepared for direct communication with his Maker. **(PP 313.1)**

Upon the seventh day, which was the Sabbath, Moses was called up into the cloud. The thick cloud opened in the sight of all Israel, and the glory of the Lord broke forth like devouring fire. “And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.” Exodus 24:18. The forty days’ tarry in the mount did not include the six days of preparation. During the six days Joshua was with Moses, and together they ate of the manna and drank of “the brook that descended out of the mount.” But Joshua did not enter with Moses into the cloud. He remained without, and continued to eat and drink daily while awaiting the return of Moses, but Moses fasted during the entire forty days. **(PP 313.2)**

During his stay in the mount, Moses received directions for the building of a sanctuary in which the divine presence would be specially manifested. “Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8), was the command of God. For the third time the observance of the Sabbath was enjoined. “It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever,” the Lord declared, “that ye may know that I am Jehovah that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you.... Whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.” Exodus 31:17, 13, 14. Directions had just been given for the immediate erection of the tabernacle for the service of God; and now the people might conclude, because the object had in view was the glory of God, and also because of their great need of a place of worship, that they would be justified in working at the building upon the Sabbath. To guard them from this error, the warning was given. Even the sacredness and urgency of that special work for God must not lead them to infringe upon His holy rest day. **(PP 313.3)**

Henceforth the people were to be honored with the abiding presence of their King. “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God,” “and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory” (Exodus 29:45, 43), was the assurance given to Moses. As the symbol of God’s authority and the embodiment of His will, there was delivered to Moses a copy of the Decalogue engraved by the finger of God Himself upon two tables of stone (Deuteronomy 9:10; Exodus 32:15, 16), to be sacredly enshrined in the sanctuary, which, when made, was to be the visible center of the nation’s worship. **(PP 314.1)**

From a race of slaves the Israelites had been exalted above all peoples to be the peculiar treasure of the King of kings. God had separated them from the world, that He might commit to them a sacred trust. He had made them the depositaries of His law, and He purposed, through them, to preserve among men the knowledge of Himself. Thus the light of heaven was to shine out to a world enshrouded in darkness, and a voice was to be heard appealing to all peoples to turn from their idolatry to serve the living God. If the Israelites would be true to their trust, they would become a power in the world. God would be their defense, and He would exalt them above all other nations. His light and truth would be revealed through them, and they would stand forth under His wise and holy rule as an example of the superiority of His worship over every form of idolatry. **(PP 314.2)**