

The Commandments.

SEPTEMBER 4th.

EXODUS XX : 12-21.

Golden Text, Matthew 22 : 39, 40.

W 12. HONOUR. The word is very comprehensive. Applied to God, it means worship and consecration, Psalm 29 : 2, Prov. 3 : 9 ; to men, it implies respect, inward esteem, obedience and service. It recognizes the claims of superiors in age, rank, and attainments, and is one of the most powerful incentives to right-doing. It is inseparable from honesty and self-respect. *Father and Mother* are equal in authority and are equally entitled to the love and respect of their children, Ephes 6 : 1-3. The greatest solicitude of parents is for the welfare of their children, Gen. 44 : 29 ; their greatest grief when forsaken by them, 2 Sam. 18 : 33. *That thy days may be long*—a double reference, (1) to the possession by the Jews of the promised land, (2) to the reward in the heavenly Canaan of those who keep this law. The Chinese, conspicuous for reverence to parents and ancestry, are an instance of national longevity. V. 13. This is a law of nature early promulgated, Gen. 9 : 5, 6, and to which our Saviour gives a wide meaning, showing that anger is equally heinous in the sight of God, Matt. 5 : 21-22, see also 1 John 3 : 15. V. 14. Our Saviour puts the seventh commandment before the sixth, Mark 10 : 19 ; for our chastity should be as dear to us as our lives. He also classes the desire to sin in the same category with the commission of it, Matt 5 : 27-28. See S. Catechism 71-72. V. 15. *Stealing* is a despicable habit. Every thief is a liar, and every liar is a coward. It grows, and breeds other sins. It is equally theft to appropriate what does not belong to one's self and to withhold from another his due. False returns, short weights and measures are theft. The paid idler, as well as the master who keeps back his servants' wages, is a thief. What of the teacher and scholar who come unprepared to the Sabbath-school? *Are they honest?* What of those, who being able, refuse to give their money for religious purposes? Mal. 3 : 8-9. Stinginess does not pay, Prov. 11 : 24-25 V. 16: *False Witness* slanders, misrepresents, insinuates, when it cannot accuse: gossips, retails scandal, sneers and disparages. It is the creature of envy and makes men hypocrites, Matt. 7 : 1-5, see James 3 : 5-10. If we cannot speak good of our neighbour it is best to say nothing about him, Rom. 2 : 1. V. 17. *Covetousness* is the desire to get what does not belong to us, regardless of the means by which it may be obtained, and of the consequences to those from whom obtained, e. g. Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kings ch. 21 : and Uriah's wife, 2 Sam. ch. 12. Covetousness is born of discontent and leads to dishonesty. It is applied to the inordinate love of money, as in the case of *Achan*, Josh. 7 : 21 ; *Gehazi*, 2 Kings. 5 : 20-27 ; *Judas*, John 12 : 6, *Ananias* ; Acts 5 : 1. It is ranked with idolatry, Col. 3 : 5. Our Saviour specially warns us against it, Luke 12 : 15-21, V. 20. *Fear not*, they who trust in God have no cause for fear, Isa. 41 : 10-18, 1 John 4 : 18, Rev. 1 : 17.

Idolatry Punished.

SEPTEMBER 11th.

EXODUS XXXII 26-35

Golden Text, 1 John 5 : 21.

NOW quickly had they turned aside ! The echo of the words—"neither shall ye make unto you Gods of gold," ch 20 : 3, had scarcely died away among the rocks of Sinai, when, lo ! the Israelites were dancing and shouting before the golden calf ; made by Aaron, too ! Moses had gone up into the mount to receive his instructions for the government of the church and nation. He had been absent 40 days, ch. 24 : 18. Believing him to be lost or perished in the fire, the people became utterly demoralized. They had lost faith in God. In Aaron they had none. Read from v. 1. V. 26. *In the gate*—the entrance to the camp, where, as was the custom, Ruth 4 : 1, causes were heard and settled. *The Lord's side*. He does not say "on my side ;" unlike Aaron in this, he cared nothing for popularity. He stood as the ambassador of God. There may have been many who had not worshipped the golden calf, and for those who had, now was their opportunity. The ringleaders were to be punished, those who repented, to be spared. Vs. 27, 28. *Slay every man his brother*, i. e. the instigators of this crime, who stood out in rebellion ; no matter who they were. Nothing less would be a sufficient warning. Living under a theocracy, idolatry was high treason—punishable by death. *The children of Levi* who now distinguished themselves by loyalty, were for this reason selected as the special servants of the Lord, Num. 3 : 5-13. Their office, like that of elders and deacons, was to assist the priests. They had the keeping and administering of the law, Deut. 17 : 8-11. They had no share with the tribes in the land, were supported by tithes and paid tithes to the priests, Num. 18 : 21-28. 3,000 men—these elected themselves to destruction, for all had the offer of the amnesty, V. 26. This judgment is recorded for our warning, 1 Cor. 10 : 5-12. V. 29 *Consecrate*—prove yourselves worthy for the Lord's service. God requires a complete surrender of heart and mind to His will V. 30 *Atonement*—means "at-on-ment" reconciliation. There can be no atonement without *repentance*, therefore Moses first shows the people the heinousness of their sin and then intercedes for them. Rom 5 : 6-11. Vs. 31-32. This matchless prayer ! not a word of extenuation. *Blot me out*—as the names of those who died were scored out from the national register. What depth of affection for his brethren ! what sincerity ! It is only surpassed by Christ who *did* die for us, Rom. 5 : 8. Its only parallel, the words of Paul, Rom. 9-8. V. 33. The Lord's answer intimates that while the nation shall be spared, they would be reckoned with *individually*, Num. 15 : 30, 31. Vs. 34, 35. *Mine Angel*—The pillar of cloud and of fire. *Plagued*—punished, as He did in many ways, both before and after they entered Canaan ; and as He *will* punish all who sin wilfully, Heb. 10 : 26-29.