

Testament; for example, Numb. 15: 32, 33. Teachers can easily quote instances from their own knowledge of the evil effects of Sabbath-breaking.

### THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Sabbath at Sinai*,—Exodus 20: 1-17.

Our lesson includes the first four of the Ten Commandments—the first of the Two Tables—the commands that tell us specially of our duty to God. These Commandments were spoken by God Himself, and all the people heard and understood Him. The awful scenes accompanying the delivery of the Law are described in the previous chapter.

V. 2.—The principle implied in this Preface is that our relation to God as recipients of His mercies and benefits, gives Him a right to command and makes it our duty to obey. The special act mentioned with regard to the children of Israel is His bringing them out of Egypt; He redeemed, saved them; therefore they were bound to keep His commands. See Shorter Catechism, Ques. 44.

V. 3.—“*Before me*”—in my presence.

Vv. 4, 5.—“*Graven image*,” any image carved, or cut, or hewn. No kind of image, or likeness, or picture is to be made to be worshipped. The Lord Himself afterwards directed Moses to make certain “*likenesses*” but not to be worshipped.

V. 6.—Thousands of generations are to be objects of mercy.

V. 8.—*Remember*: this shows that the Sabbath already existed. The word *Sabbath* means rest.

#### LESSONS.

1. We are under infinite obligations to God, and hence we should observe all His commandments.

2. We should allow no object to come between us and God—for, to do so is idolatry. (No wonder that the Roman Catholic Catechisms omit the Second Commandment! The Greeks and Russians do not worship *graven* images, but they have sacred pictures to which they pay idolatrous homage.)

3. Observe from V. 6 how God's mercy exceeds His judgments. He visits the sins of impenitent parents on impenitent children till the third and fourth generations; but he shows mercy to thousands of generations of them that love Him.

4. God's name is taken in vain (1) when we do not live up to the profession of religion which we make; (2) when we swear (using God's name or titles) rashly without occasion; (3) when we swear falsely; (4) when we use God's name lightly. For these things we may escape punishment

from men, but God will not hold us guiltless.

5. We should carefully observe the Lord's day. In the Old Testament this was laid down as a *fundamental principle* of duty; and no sin, except, perhaps, idolatry, is threatened or visited with heavier punishment than Sabbath-breaking. The fourth commandment, like the other commandments, is of perpetual obligation. The Moral Law is eternal and immutable, and this is part of it. It is equally suited to all men in all places.

The Sabbath commenced in Eden, and was instituted for unfallen man. If it was needed *there*, much more is it required in a world of sin, toil, and sorrow.

Even the heathen nations have a notion of the peculiar sacredness of the seventh day, arising, no doubt, from dim traditions of the Rest of Paradise.

It is this primeval Sabbath that the Fourth Commandment includes in the Moral Law, and bids all to “remember.” This is not the *Jewish Sabbath*, any more than God is peculiarly the Jewish God. The Fourth is as much a command for all mankind as the Third.

6. All the members of the family—wife, children, servants, are to rest that day. Here we have *family religion* commanded.

#### DOCTRINE.

Observance of the Sabbath highly rewarded.—Isa. 56: 2, 4-7; Isa. 58: 13, 14.

### FOURTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Sabbath in Christ's time*,—Matt. 21: 1-13.

V. 1.—It was no theft to pluck the ears of grain in these circumstances. See Deut. 23: 24, 25.

V. 2.—The Pharisees were always on the look-out for breaches of the letter of the law, while they broke the spirit of it without the least scruple. They held Jesus responsible for His disciples. They wanted Him to check them. The plucking of the ears, and rubbing them between the hands to separate the grains from the ears, would be regarded by the Pharisees as *labour* on the Sabbath.

V. 3.—Jesus justifies His disciples by quoting David's example—1 Sam. 21: 3. The Jews held David to be a *pattern* of excellence.

V. 4.—*Shew-bread*—Twelve loaves laid in two rows on the golden table in the Holy place. The loaves were renewed every week, the priests eating the old. David received a batch of twelve loaves.

V. 5.—The priests were specially bound to observe the law, but they were authorized to “*profane*” the Sabbath, that is, to perform all the work that was necessary