

8. And they answered together; all that the Lord hath spoken we will do - Thus accepting the Lord to be to them a God, and giving up themselves to be to him a people.

10. Sanctify the people - As Job before sent and sanctified his sons, Job i, 5. Sanctify them, that is, call them off from their worldly business, and call them to religious exercises, meditation and prayer, that they may receive the law from God's mouth with reverence and devotion. Two things particularly were prescribed as instances of their preparation. 1st, In token of cleansing of themselves from all sinful pollutions, they must wash their clothes. Not that God regards our clothes, but while they were washing their clothes, he would have them think of washing their souls by repentance. It becomes us to appear in clean clothes when we wait upon great men; so clean hearts are required in our attendance on the great God. 2ndly, In token of their devoting themselves entirely to religious exercises upon this occasion they must abstain even from lawful enjoyments during these three days, and not come at their wives.

11. In the sight of all the people - Though they should see no manner of similitude, yet they should see so much as would convince them, that God was among them of a truth. And so high was the top of Mount Sinai, that it is supposed not only the camp of Israel, but even the countries about might discern some extraordinary appearance of glory upon it.

12. Set bounds - Probably he drew a ditch round at the foot of the hill, which none were to pass upon pain of death. This was to intimate, 1st, That awful reverence which ought to possess the minds of all that worship God. 2ndly, The distance which worshippers were kept at under that dispensation, which we ought to take notice of, that we may the more value our privilege under the gospel, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x, 19.

13. When the trumpet soundeth long - Then let them take their places at the foot of the mount. Never was so great a congregation called together and preached to at once as this was here. No one man's voice could have reached so many, but the voice of God did.

16. Now at length is come that memorable day, in which Israel heard the voice of the Lord God speaking to them out of the midst of the fire and lived, Deut. iv, 33. Never was there such a sermon preached before or since, as this, which was here preached to the church in the wilderness. For, the preacher was God himself, ver. 17, The Lord descended in fire; and ver. 18. The Lord came down upon mount Sinai. The Shechinah, or glory of the Lord, appeared in the sight of all the people; he shined forth from mount Paran with ten thousand of his saints, attended with a multitude of the holy angels. Hence the law is said to be given by the disposition of angels, Acts vii, 53. He spake from mount Sinai, hung with a thick cloud, ver. 16, covered with smoke, ver. 18, and made to quake greatly. Now it was that the earth trembled at the presence of the Lord, and the mountains skipped like rams, Psalm cxiv, 4, 7, that Sinai itself, though rough and rocky, melted from before the Lord God of Israel, Jude v, 5. The congregation was called together by the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud, ver. 16, and waxing louder and louder, ver. 19. This was done by the ministry of the angels, and made all the people tremble. The introductions to the service were thunders and lightnings, ver. 16. These have natural causes; but the scripture directs us in a particular manner to take notice of the power of God, and his terror in them. Thunder is the voice of God, and lightning the fire of God, proper to engage both the learning senses of seeing and hearing.

## XX

All things being prepared for the solemn promulgation of the divine law, we have in this chapter,

I. The ten commandments as God himself spake them upon Mount Sinai, ver. 1-17.

II. The impressions made upon the people, thereby, ver. 18-21.

III. Some particular instructions which God gave to Moses, relating to his worship, ver. 22-26.

1. God spake all these words - The law of the ten commandments is a law of God's making; a law of his own speaking. God has many ways of speaking to the children of men by his spirit, conscience, providences; his voice in all which we ought carefully to attend to: but he never spake at any time upon any occasion so as he spake the ten commandments, which therefore we ought to hear with the more earnest heed. This law God had given to man before, it was written in his heart by nature; but sin had so defaced that writing, that it was necessary to revive the knowledge of it.

2. I am the Lord thy God - Herein, God asserts his own authority to enact this law; and proposeth himself as the sole object of that religious worship which is enjoined in the four first commandments. They are here bound to obedience.

1. Because God is the Lord, Jehovah, self-existent, independent, eternal, and the fountain of all being and power; therefore he has an incontestable right to command us.

2. He was their God; a God in covenant with them; their God by their own consent.

3. He had brought them out of the land of Egypt - Therefore they were bound in gratitude to obey him, because he had brought them out of a grievous slavery into a glorious liberty. By redeeming them, he acquired a farther right to rule them; they owed their service to him, to whom they owed their freedom. And thus, Christ, having rescued us out of the bondage of sin, is entitled to the best service we can do him. The four first commandments, concern our duty to God (commonly called the first-table.) It was fit those should be put first, because man had a Maker to love before he had a neighbour to love, and justice and charity are then only acceptable to God when they flow from the principles of piety.

3. The first commandment is concerning the object of our worship, Jehovah, and him only, Thou shalt have no other gods before me - The Egyptians, and other neighbouring nations, had many gods, creatures of their own fancy. This law was pre-fixed because of that transgression; and Jehovah being the God of Israel, they must entirely cleave to him, and no other, either of their own invention, or borrowed from their neighbours. The sin against this commandment, which we are most in danger of, is giving that glory to any creature which is due to God only. Pride makes a God of ourselves, covetousness makes a God of money, sensuality makes a God of the belly. Whatever is loved, feared, delighted in, or depended on, more than God, that we make a God of. This prohibition includes a precept which is the foundation of the whole law, that we take the Lord for our God, accept him for ours, adore him with humble reverence, and set our affections entirely upon him. There is a reason intimated in the last words before me. It intimates,

1. That we cannot have any other God but he will know it.
2. That it is a sin that dares him to his face, which he cannot, will not, overlook. The second commandment is concerning the ordinances of worship, or the way in which God will be worshipped, which it is fit himself should appoint. Here is,
  1. The prohibition; we are forbidden to worship even the true God by images, ver. 4, 5. First, The Jews (at least after the captivity) thought themselves forbidden by this to make any image or picture whatsoever. It is certain it forbids making any image of God, for to whom can we liken him? Isaiah xl, 18, 25. It also forbids us to make images of God in our fancies, as if he were a man as we are. Our religious worship must be governed by the power of faith, not by the power of imagination. Secondly, They must not bow down to them - Shew any sign of honour to them, much less serve them by sacrifice, or any other act of religious worship. When they paid their devotion to the true God, they must not have any image before them for the directing, exciting, or assisting their devotion. Though the worship was designed to terminate in God, it would not please him if it came to him through an image. The best and most ancient lawgivers among the Heathen forbad the setting up of images in their temples. It was forbidden in Rome by Numa a Pagan prince, yet commanded in Rome by the Pope, a Christian bishop. The use of images in the church of Rome, at this day, is so plainly contrary to the letter of this command, that in all their catechisms, which they put into the hand of the people, they leave out this commandment, joining the reason of it to the first, and so the third commandment they call the second, the fourth the third, &c. only to make up the number ten, they divide the tenth into two. For I the Lord Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God, especially in things of this nature. It intimates the care he has of his own institutions, his displeasure against idolaters, and that he resents every thing in his worship that looks like, or leads to, idolatry: visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation - Severely punishing. Nor is it an unrighteous thing with God if the parents died in their iniquity, and the children tread in their steps, when God comes, by his judgments, to reckon with them, to bring into the account the idolatries their fathers were guilty of. Keeping mercy for thousands of persons, thousands of generations, of them that love me and keep my commandments - This intimates, that the second commandment, though in the letter of it is only a prohibition of false worship, yet includes a precept of worshipping God in all those ordinances which he hath instituted. As the first commandment requires the inward worship of love, desire, joy, hope, so this the outward worship of prayer and praise, and solemn attendance on his word. This mercy shall extend to thousands, much further than the wrath threatened to those that hate him, for that reaches but to the third or fourth generation.
7. The third commandment is concerning the manner of our worship; Where we have,
  1. A strict prohibition. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain - Supposing that, having taken Jehovah for their God, they would make mention

of his name, this command gives a caution not to mention it in vain, and it is still as needful as ever. We take God's name in vain, First, By hypocrisy, making profession of God's name, but not living up to that profession. Secondly, By covenant breaking. If we make promises to God, and perform not to the Lord our vows, we take his name in vain. Thirdly, By rash swearing, mentioning the name of God, or any of his attributes, in the form of an oath, without any just occasion for it, but to no purpose, or to no good purpose. Fourthly, By false-swearing, which some think is chiefly intended in the letter of the commandment. Fifthly, By using the name of God lightly and carelessly. The profanation of the form of devotion is forbidden, as well as the profanation of the forms of swearing; as also, the profanation of any of those things whereby God makes himself known. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless - Magistrates that punish other offenses, may not think themselves concerned to take notice of this; but God, who is jealous for his honour, will not connive at it. The sinner may perhaps hold himself guiltless, and think there is no harm in it; to obviate which suggestion, the threatening is thus expressed, God will not hold him guiltless - But more is implied, that God will himself be the avenger of those that take his name in vain; and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

8. The fourth commandment concerns the time of worship; God is to be served and honoured daily; but one day in seven is to be particularly dedicated to his honour, and spent in his service. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy; in it thou shalt do no manner of work - It is taken for granted that the sabbath was instituted before. We read of God's blessing and sanctifying a seventh day from the beginning, Gen. ii, 3, so that this was not the enacting of a new law, but the reviving of an old law. 1st. They are told what is the day, they must observe, a seventh after six days labour, whether this was the seventh by computation from the first seventh, or from the day of their coming out of Egypt, or both, is not certain. A late pious Writer seems to prove, That the sabbath was changed, when Israel came out of Egypt; which change continued till our Lord rose again: But that then the Original Sabbath was restored. And he makes it highly probable, at least, That the sabbath we observe, is the seventh day from the creation. 2ndly, How it must be observed;

1. As a day of rest; they were to do no manner of work on this day, in their worldly business.
2. As a holy day, set apart to the honour of the holy God, and to be spent in holy exercises. God, by his blessing it, had made it holy; they, by solemn blessing him, must keep it holy, and not alienate it to any other purpose than that for which the difference between it and other days was instituted. 3rdly, Who must observe it? Thou and thy son and thy daughter - The wife is not mentioned, because she is supposed to be one with the husband, and present with him, and if he sanctify the sabbath, it is taken for granted she will join with him; but the rest of the family is instanced in it, children and servants must keep it according to their age and capacity. In this, as in other instances of religion, it is expected that masters of families should take care, not only to serve the Lord themselves, but that their houses also should serve him. Even the proselyted strangers must observe a difference between this day and other days, which, if it laid some

restraint upon them then, yet proved a happy indication of God's gracious design, to bring the Gentiles into the church. By the sanctification of the sabbath, the Jews declared that they worshipped the God that made the world, and so distinguished themselves from all other nations, who worshipped gods which they themselves made. God has given us an example of rest after six days work; he rested the seventh day - Took a complacency in himself, and rejoiced in the work of his hand, to teach us on that day, to take a complacency in him, and to give him the glory of his works. The sabbath begun in the finishing of the work of creation; so will the everlasting sabbath in the finishing of the work of providence and redemption; and we observe the weekly sabbath in expectation of that, as well as in remembrance of the former, in both conforming ourselves to him we worship. He hath himself blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it. He hath put an honour upon it; it is holy to the Lord, and honourable; and he hath put blessings into it which he hath encouraged us to expect from him in the religious observation of that day. Let us not profane, dishonour, and level that with common time, which God's blessing hath thus dignified and distinguished.

12. We have here the laws of the second table, as they are commonly called; the six last commandments which concern our duty to ourselves, and one another, and are a comment upon the second great commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. As religion towards God is, an essential branch of universal righteousness, so righteousness towards men is an essential branch of true religion: godliness and honesty must go together. The fifth commandment is concerning the duties we owe to our relations; that of children to their parents is only instanced in, honour thy father and thy mother, which includes,

1. an inward esteem of them, outwardly expressed upon all occasions in our carriage towards them; fear them, Lev. xix, 3, give them reverence, Heb. xii, 9. The contrary to this is mocking at them or despising them,
2. Obedience to their lawful commands; so it is expounded, Eph. vi, 1-3. Children obey your parents; come when they call you, go where they send you, do what they bid you, do not what they forbid you; and this cheerfully, and from a principle of love. Though you have said you will not, yet afterwards repent and obey.
3. Submission to their rebukes, instructions and corrections, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.
4. Disposing of themselves with the advice, direction and consent of parents, not alienating their property, but with their approbation.
5. endeavouring in every thing to be the comfort of their parents, and to make their old age easy to them; maintaining them if they stand in need of support. That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee - This promise, (which is often literally fulfilled) is expounded in a more general sense Eph. vi, 3. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayst live long on the earth - Those that in conscience towards God keep this and other of God's commandments, may be sure it shall be well with them, and they shall live as long on the earth as infinite wisdom sees good for, them, and what they may

seem to be cut short of on earth, shall be abundantly made up in eternal life, the heavenly Canaan which God will give them.

13. Thou shalt not kill - Thou shalt not do any thing hurtful to the health, or life of thy own body, or any other's. This doth not forbid our own necessary defense, or the magistrates putting offenders to death; but it forbids all malice and hatred to any, for he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and all revenge arising therefrom; likewise anger and hurt said or done, or aimed to be done in a passion; of this our saviour expounds this commandment, Matt. v, 22.

14. Thou shalt not commit adultery - This commandment forbids all acts of uncleanness, with all those desires, which produce those acts and war against the soul.

15. Thou shalt not steal - This command forbids us to rob ourselves of what we have, by sinful spending, or of the use and comfort of it by sinful sparing; and to rob others by invading our neighbour's rights, taking his goods, or house, or field, forcibly or clandestinely, over-reaching in bargains, not restoring what is borrowed or found, with-holding just debts, rents or wages; and, which is worst of all, to rob the public in the coin or revenue, or that which is dedicated to the service of religion.

16. Thou shalt not bear false witness - This forbids,

1. Speaking falsely in any matter, lying, equivocating, and any way devising and designing to deceive our neighbour.
2. Speaking unjustly against our neighbour, to the prejudice of his reputation; And
3. (which is the highest offense of both these kinds put together) Bearing false witness against him, laying to his charge things that he knows not, either upon oath, by which the third commandment, the sixth or eighth, as well as this, are broken, or in common converse, slandering, backbiting, tale-bearing, aggravating what is done amiss, and any way endeavouring to raise our own reputation upon the ruin of our neighbour's.

17. Thou shalt not covet - The foregoing commands implicitly forbid all desire of doing that which will be an injury to our neighbour, this forbids all inordinate desire of having that which will be a gratification to ourselves. O that such a man's house were mine! such a man's wife mine! such a man's estate mine! This is certainly the language of discontent at our own lot, and envy at our neighbour's, and these are the sins principally forbidden here. God give us all to see our face in the glass of this law, and to lay our hearts under the government of it!

18. They removed and stood afar off - Before God began to speak, they were thrusting forward to gaze, but now they were effectually cured of their presumption, and taught to keep their distance.

19. Speak thou with us - Hereby they obliged themselves to acquiesce in the mediation of Moses, they themselves nominating him as a fit person to deal between them and God, and promising to hearken to him as to God's messenger.

20. Fear not - That is, Think not that this thunder and fire is, designed to consume you. No; it was intended, (1.) To prove them, to try how they could like dealing with God immediately, without a mediator, and so to convince them how admirably well God had chosen for them in putting Moses into that office. Ever since Adam fled upon hearing God's voice in the garden, sinful man could not bear either to speak to God, or hear from him immediately. (2.) To keep them to their duty, and prevent their sinning against God. We must not fear with amazement; but we must always have in our minds a reverence of God's majesty, a dread of his displeasure, and an obedient regard to his sovereign authority.