

## THE KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS.

### "I AM THAT I AM."

"I AM the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Ex. 20:2, 3.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Matt. 4:10.

"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Mark 12:29, 30.

When Moses, at the command of the Lord, said to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go," Pharaoh, in rebellion, said: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Ex. 5:1, 2.

If, in reverence, Pharaoh had asked, in an honesty inquiry: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" his question would have been respected by the Lord. For when the Lord first appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, and sent him into Egypt for the deliverance of the people, provision was made for the answer of just such a question. For Moses said to Him: "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?" Ex. 3:13.

This supposed question, "What is His name?" is only, in different form, Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord?" And, in expectation of the asking of that question, "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." And "thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Verse 14.

It is true that Pharaoh did not know the Lord. But that, of itself, was not against him: for that is the condition of every man, at first. Pharaoh's mistake was in exalting himself upon his ignorance, and supposing that he knew enough without God, and in refusing to receive the knowledge of Him. For, equally with any other man in the world, Pharaoh could have received the knowledge of God. For God had sent into Egypt, for all who were there, the revelation of himself: "I AM THAT I AM."

This expression, "I AM THAT I AM," is the revelation of God. It reveals Him in His self-existence—"I AM;" and in His character—"I AM THAT I AM"—I AM THAT WHICH I AM—I AM WHAT I AM. "This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Ex. 3:15.

In believing in God it is not enough to believe in the self-existent One. He is more than that—He is more than existence: He is character. And in believing in Him it is not

enough to believe that He is: we must believe WHAT He is. As it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe *that He is*, and that He is *a rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him."

His name embraces both these thoughts. And His name is not known unless these two thoughts—self-existence and character—are known. As to existence, His name is "I AM;" and as to character, "I am what I am."

What is He, then, in this which He is? What is His name as to character? This question is answered in full by the Lord himself. He has revealed not only that He is, but He has revealed what He is; and this in order that all men may know Him; may know His name in its fullness, and as it is in truth. For again He said to Moses: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. . . . And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. Ex. 33:19; 34:5.

And in proclaiming this His name, "the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Ex. 34:6, 7.

This is what He is. When He said, "I AM THAT I AM. . . . This is my name forever," this is what He said. And when He passed by before Moses and proclaimed this, His name, He only said in more words what He said at the first, "I AM THAT I AM. . . . This is my name forever."

The words, "The Lord, The Lord God," express self-existence, as do the words "I AM." All the rest of the words of that glorious name express His character, as do the words, "I AM THAT [THAT WHICH, or WHAT] I AM."

And what a Person is thus revealed!

"Merciful," full of mercy, which is the disposition to treat persons, even offenders, better than they deserve. The disposition is the very heart's core of the person. And He is full of the disposition, it is His very nature, to treat all the people of this world, forever, better than they deserve. For this is His name; and His name is but expressive of His nature; for His character is but himself. Then it is himself to treat all people better than they deserve. And He takes pleasure in those who hope in this, His disposition to treat them better than they deserve.

It is man's natural disposition to treat offenders just as they deserve; to get back at them; to render evil for evil; to "teach them a lesson." And this disposition is so natural to man, it is so entirely his own, that it is difficult for him to conceive that it is really God's disposition to treat him better than he deserves. Men think that God wishes to treat

them as they deserve. They think of Him as if He were waiting for an opportunity to treat them fully, and in vengeance, as they deserve. Thus they are afraid that He will; and so are afraid of Him.

But such is not God; such is not the God revealed in the Bible. He is merciful—full of the disposition to treat offenders better than they deserve. It is His very nature to do so; and He never can do otherwise; for, in order to do otherwise, He would have to cease to be what He is, and would therefore have to cease to be God.

But that is only one item of His glorious name.

"Gracious;" extending favor to all people, everywhere, and forever. And this is what He is; and He cannot be anything else; for He cannot cease to be. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

"Long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." And this long-suffering is especially that none shall perish; because He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Accordingly, "the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." And since His name is long-suffering, and since His long-suffering is salvation, His name, then, is Salvation. This is what He *is*, and He cannot be anything else.

"Keeping mercy for thousands." And this is not simply thousands of individuals, but thousands of generations; for it is written: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." Deut. 7:9.

"Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Note that it is not written, "I *will* forgive;" but, He is "forgiving." It is not stated even in the form of a promise, as if it were, "I will forgive;" it is stated in the form of a present actuality: He is "*forgiving* iniquity and transgression and sin." Note also that this is not merely what He is DOING, but it is what He IS, in His very nature and character. To be everlastingly forgiving is His very essence, and He cannot be anything else; for He is God.

"And before whom no man is clear of guilt." Our common translation of this clause is very poor, in making the Lord say that He "will by no means clear the guilty," when every thought of the Bible, from the fall of man to the end, is that He DOES clear the guilty; that He longs to save all; for all are guilty. For "what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may *become guilty* before God. . . . *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" Rom. 3:19, 21-23.

The true sense is given in the German translation: "Before whom no man is guiltless." And the Vulgate (Latin translation) expresses the thought that "no person is innocent by, or of, himself" before God.

This is His name. And it is written, "My people shall know my name." Isa. 52:6. And this is known in Christ; for when He came into the world in man's stead, He said, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Only thus can the name of God be known. To know His name is to know Him. Therefore, only thus can He be known, as it is written: "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Matt. 11:27.

The knowledge of God is obtained only by *revelation*; and Jesus Christ is the only revelation of God. To know the name of God; to know God as thus revealed; to worship Him according to this revelation; to have Him, and Him alone, as God, loving Him with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind, and all the strength,—this, and this alone, is the true keeping of the First Commandment.

But when He is thus known,—known as He is revealed,—whosoever thus knows Him never wishes any other god, and so, delightedly, keeps the First Commandment.

And so, whereas without Christ the First Commandment speaks in the stern voice of reproof and condemnation, yet in Christ it is turned into the blessed and glorious promise *fulfilled*, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;" "Out of Egypt have I called my son;" "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

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