

Mark 12:28-34 The GREAT COMMANDMENT

PRELIMS. Jesus is at the Temple for the **last** time. He is to be crucified. He has been '**accosted**' **3 times** already about various teachings - and He has answered them all admirably! Now He is **challenged** once again - but this time by a **serious** enquirer *Which commandment is the **most important** of all?* [28]

The MAN WHO ASKED the QUESTION

He was *one of the scribes*! That is **significant** in that scribes **worked** in the 'Church'. They wrote the Scriptures (or rather **copied**) them into writings for the people. They also **studied** the Scriptures and are sometimes called **lawyers** (for they studied the law)! They were **not** a **religious** party although many were Pharisees. A Scribe held an **office** and were very learned men and were held in great **respect**. They **preserved** the written law and were appealed to for confirmation of the law. They were called '**Rabbi**' (meaning 'My Master, my Teacher')! They eventually dressed themselves in long robes and looked for public acclaim among the people.

They made it their primary task to **interpret** and **expound** the law as the rule for daily life. The lack of details in the law were filled up with **their own views** which they '**added**' to the law of God. Eg *They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger* [Mat 23:4] They taught in synagogues and trained their pupils in their scribal lore. Because of their knowledge of the law, they were often called upon to judge in the courts. They therefore were an **important group** within the Jewish Sanhedrin. They were greedy and often took **advantage** of the **vulnerable** thus Jesus condemns them as those who *devour widow's houses* [40]!

It was one of these men who came up to Jesus. He had *heard them disputing with one another* [28]. He was **impressed** with how Jesus answered the various objections made against Him. He perceived that Jesus *answered them well* [28]. It seems he was **drawn to** Jesus not only by the way He answered but by the **truth** of what He said.

The QUESTION

As we said last week - the truth ‘sticks’ - especially if we do **not like** it! But it also sticks when we like it. It seems this scribe liked it! So being a student of the **law**, he made a **genuine** enquiry *Which commandment is the **most important** of all?*

Why did he ask this question? (a) Maybe he **knew** in his own heart that he **could not fully** keep the law of God, and that maybe if he could keep the most important one, then there would be hope for him! (b) On the other hand, maybe he was **completely confused** by the number of commands the scribes had **complied!** (c) Maybe he **discerned** the real **essence** of the gospel, for he said *You are **right**, Teacher. You have **truly** said that He is One, and there is **no other besides Him** [32]!* However much we may believe that this man was **in** the kingdom and a ‘saved’ man, and that *he answered wisely*, Jesus did **not** say he was in the kingdom, but only that he was **NOT FAR from the kingdom of God** [34]! Very solemn consideration!

This replies means that it is **NOT ENOUGH** to **KNOW** the gospel, or even to **UNDERSTAND** the gospel! It must **affect** us, so that we **put all our trust and confidence and hope** in the Lord! There must be **COMMITMENT** - loyalty is **not enough!** Many people are loyal - to a Church! They would never go anywhere else - that is their church. But **not** committed to it! It is **NOT EVERYTHING** to them!

Friends - Jesus must be the **King of everything** in our lives. Whatever we have to decide on, what Jesus said about it, **determines the answer!** **All our hope and confidence** for the **future** is **IN His hands!** It is complete and total 100% **trust** in the Lord - it is **not** simply **knowledge** about Him! Just as an **engineer** can know all about an **aircraft** yet be **afraid** to **fly** in it, so you can have excellent theology but never commit yourself to Christ!

Jesus said there is **ONLY ONE God**. That is clear. There are not several Gods. *You shall **love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength** [30]!* You cannot **fully/truly** love more than one person!

UNDIVIDED love is love for one person alone! Your love is not divided between various people. We are talking of **committed** love. It does **NOT MEAN** that you **cannot enjoy** something else but it does mean you cannot be **committed** to something else. *I am the Lord; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols* [Isa 42:8] God will **not share** His glory with another. The Xn will **NOT WANT** to share God's glory with anyone else!!

But God **has created beautiful** things for **OUR admiration!** Look: *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things* [Phil 4:8] So it **IS** perfectly legitimate to **enjoy** the good things in this world - but we must not give them our whole heart!

WHAT is it to LOVE GOD and be COMMITTED to GOD?

(a) It is to **put God first** in our lives! Jesus Christ must have the **pre-eminence!** *He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent* [Col 1:18] Everything is done **so that** He is first!

That does **not mean** we have to sit all day dreaming of God's love. We all have a **task** to **DO** for the Lord. We all have a **CALLING**. Putting God first, means we **APPLY the PRINCIPLES** of God's Word and will, to **all areas** of our lives. *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* [1 Cor 10:31] Whether we are in the **home**, or at **work**, or **relaxing**, the principles of God's Word applies to every area of our lives. The way we **raise our children** will be according to God's law. We don't give them what **they** want. We give them what is best. We **teach** them **long-term** thinking. *We don't cheat on our time-sheets at work. We are honest in all our dealings - if the **waiter hasn't charged** us for an item, we point it out when paying the bill!

(b) It is to **believe ALL** that is **revealed** about God in the Bible. Even the things that are difficult to understand. To believe it is to **accept** it as **true**. We may not understand because we are **not omniscient**. We **do** accept things as true which we do not understand

- electricity, magnetic fields, micro-chips, uncreated God, etc

The SECOND GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Now **why** did Jesus **add** the **second** greatest command without being asked? To demonstrate the **INSEPARABLE RELATIONSHIP** between loving God and loving people. You **CANNOT** love God **WITHOUT** loving people! But....you **can** love people **WITHOUT** loving God! The **difference** between the two ‘loves’ is: when you love people without God being **first** in your life, you **only** love them with a **limited love!** Ie, for **this world** only! When God is first in your life, you love people with **eternity** in view!

Now, the **outward manifestation** of both these ‘loves’ may appear **identical**. Eg, in **kindness**. A ‘man of the world’ may show great kindness to people in need. So might a true Xn. But a Xn will have the **motive** and **prayer** that the **goodness** of God would lead the person he gives to, to **repentance!** [Rom 2:4] The worldly man has no such prayer or motive. The kindness of the world is **limited!**

X’s reply teaches us that ‘Law and Love **ARE very compatible!**’ But Jesus said *On these **two commandments** (of love) depend **ALL the Law and the Prophets** [Mat 22:40] Jesus believed in the **unity** of the Old and New Testaments! Jesus also said: **Love is the fulfilling of the law** [Rom 13:10] If you truly love someone you will want to **do** what they ask!! Also Joshua warned the Israelites: *observe the **commandment** and the **law** that Moses the servant of the **LORD** commanded you, to **love the Lord your God** [Josh 22:5]**

One other lesson we can learn from Jesus’ reply: He told this man he was **not far from the kingdom of God** [34] That to me **suggests** that salvation, our coming to faith in Christ, is a **process!** It is **not at all** an **immediate** thing! God works over a period of time, on the heart, weaning it away from the world, creating a dissatisfaction with the pleasures of the world, teaching the mind about the **need** for a proper **atonement**, softening our hearts and making us **willing** to surrender our whole lives to Jesus Christ! **APP** Wherever you are this morning in relation to the kingdom of God, you are **welcome** to Jesus Christ!