

First & Greatest Commandment



Jesus Christ Prison Ministry

P.O. Box 770
Lucerne Valley, CA 92356

PUBLISHER
Jesus Christ Prison Ministry
P.O. Box 770
Lucerne Valley, CA 92356

E-mail: ministry@icpm.com
Web Page: www.icpm.com



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“One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:35-39.

This text has confused the modern church for many years. To some, it indicates that Jesus is doing away with the Ten Commandments and implementing two new ones. A favorite expression is that the old law, the Ten Commandments, was written on stone and the two new commandments that Christ gave are to be written on the heart.

The problem with the Old/New theory is that it makes a liar out of Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday (Old Testament) and today (New Testament times) and forever (our day). Hebrews 13:8. How is a God who does not change, going to change His Eternal law of righteousness and plan of salvation? Did God goof? Did the all-knowing God not know that it was a mistake to give us the Ten Commandments? No! My God doesn't make mistakes.

When we take a closer look at this text, we find that it in **no way substitutes** new for old or two for ten. In fact, it is simply a **summation** of the Ten Commandments; “**All the law** and the prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:40. This does not say that the law and the prophets were hung, died and buried. It states that all the prophets and the law are an integral part of these two commandments.

nations that hated God kept attacking His people. What? You expect Him to just sit by while His children are molested, hurt and destroyed? Would you do that with your children if they were being attacked? I don't think so.

Let us never judge God any differently than we judge ourselves. You want justice, so does God. It is time to stop judging God and start believing in Him as a loving God to the righteous, and a vengeful, justice finding God to the wicked. You and I would have it no other way. We want justice! That is what love is all about. “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,...”. James 2:12.

Related Texts

Deuteronomy 6:24, 25

Deuteronomy 7:9-10

Deuteronomy 10:12, 13

Deuteronomy 11:1, 13, 22

Deuteronomy 13:3, 4

Deuteronomy 19:9

John 14:15

John 15:10

the first four of His Ten Commandments. That is why it is called the first and the greatest. By keeping the last six of the Ten Commandments, we learn how to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Without the Ten Commandments, the Covenant of Love, to teach us what love is, we would be bound by sin and death. Without the Ten Commandments, we would not know how to love. We were born into a sinful world. We are taught by the world the things of the world. We seek worldly standards. Without the Ten Commandments to lift our eyes from the ways of this world, we could never, on our own, learn love. True love comes from God. In love He gave the Ten Commandments to teach us how to love each other and Himself.

OK, OK, but isn't the Old Testament full of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" stuff? Yes and no. You see, if you read the Old Testament in truth, you will find that the "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" was only an allegory that helped to explain to the people what justice was. It was not a literal eye for eye; but simply to illustrate compensation.

Don't you want justice? If a man rapes your daughter, or kills your wife, steals your TV and car, don't you want justice? Should there not be some kind of retribution so the evildoer will learn not to hurt innocent people? That is all the "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" says. Read it for yourself in Exodus 21:22-27. By doing this you will understand that justice is what God is all about. Even in the New Testament.

Many claim that God is harsher in the Old Testament, and more loving in the New Testament. No He isn't. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Read Acts 5:1-11 – same God. The reason for so much bloodshed in the Old Testament is that there was no "police force" to control the sinfulness of man. So the

In Deuteronomy 7:9 we learn that the covenant, **the Ten Commandments, is the Covenant of Love**. In both the Old and New Testaments the Ten Commandments are love. When Jesus spoke about love to God and love to man in Matthew 22:35-40, He was not introducing a new law, but quoting an Old Testament summation of the Ten Commandments. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:5. Here in the Old Testament we have the message of the New Testament.

So what was new? Nothing! Simply put, the Jews had forgotten to love. They made the sacrifices more important than the Covenant of Love. They tried to work their way into heaven through **their own works**, rules and traditions. Remember Cain? Just as he tried to do his own thing: self-righteousness, so did the Jews. So it is with the "Christian" churches of the world today.

"He replied, 'Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written; 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me **in vain**; their teachings are but rules taught **by men**. *You have let go of the commands of God* and are holding on to the traditions of men.' And He said to them: 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God **in order to observe your own traditions**.'" Mark 7:6-9.

This text plainly shows that the Jews were not keeping the Ten Commandments. They were setting up their own rules and traditions. Jesus was attempting to throw out the trash of human wisdom and tradition and reveal the beauty and love of God's eternal Ten Commandments.

The Jews thought He was attempting to throw out everything. Jesus exclaimed, "But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do **exactly** what My Father has commanded Me." "If

you love Me, you will obey what I command.” “Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me.” “He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching.” John 14:31, 15, 21, 23, 24.

And where did this New Testament teaching of love come from? “Love the Lord your God and keep His requirements, His decrees, His laws and His commands always.” “So If you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today -- to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your **heart** and with all your **soul**...” “If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow -- to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to hold fast to Him--...” (Deuteronomy 11:1, 13, 22). The Old Testament is where the New Testament gets its teachings.

If a man tells his wife he loves her, and then refuses to do his responsibilities to her, where is the love? If a child says to her parents, “I love you”, then refuses to participate in the family order and routine, where is the love?

“The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery’, ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:9, 10. John makes it even clearer, “**This is love to God:** to obey His commands. And His commands are **not** burdensome.” 1 John 5:3. All of the New Testament is a summation of the Old Testament command: “These commandments (Ten Commandments) that I give you today are to be **upon your hearts.**” Deuteronomy 6:6. (This is from the Old Testament.)

When Jesus stated that all the law and the prophets hung on these two commands, He was stating a reality. All the Old and New

Testaments teach the Ten Commandments. They reveal the lives of real people, kingdoms and nations. Through these we see what happens to people, kingdoms and nations that obey or disobey the Covenant of Love. This covenant was given to Adam, passed down orally to Abraham and then written by God on stone and given to Moses so it could never be forgotten again. He has always required that it be written **in the heart** with love.

As you can see from the next illustration, love holds up everything. The only way we know what love is, is by looking into the law of God that gives freedom – James 1:25. When we put the law of God, His Ten Commandments, into our hearts – Psalm 119:11 – we understand what love is and we have the wisdom of God to live it. We show our love to God by keeping

