

NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM

– MARK 12:28-34,38-44 – OCTOBER 7. –

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

IN OUR study of September 15th we considered our Lord's answer to the Pharisees and Herodians and Sadducees on the Tuesday preceding his crucifixion. The present lesson closely connects with that one. A Scribe and Doctor of the Law, noting with apparent sincerity the wisdom of our Lord's replies to the Pharisees and Sadducees, broached the question respecting the Law – quite a common one among the Jews – namely, which commandment is the first or chief, the most important. It will be remembered that on another occasion a Scribe asked the Lord a similar question, and our Lord drew from him the answer by inquiring, "What sayest thou?" In the present instance, however, Jesus answered the question directly, quoting from the summary of the ten commandments. (Deut. 6:4,5.) "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one, Jehovah, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength."

Our attention is called to a comment on this Scripture set forth in a Sunday School Teachers' Manual, as follows:

"This describes, designates, the God whom we are to love supremely. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the one absolute, self-existent, eternal God, and he alone. He is the Creator, Ruler, Preserver, Guide, Savior, Father, Source of all good. One of the best services science has done for religion is the completeness of the proof that there is but one God, by proving the unity of material, of force, of government throughout the known universe. The unity of moral law is another unassailable proof."

"No Unitarian can insist upon the absolute unity of God with more earnestness and emphasis than do the Trinitarians. We believe in one God, and only one. It would be a terrible thing if there were conflicting deities, some having one dominion and others another. There would be no peace, no safety, no exaltation [R3861 : page 300] of soul, no assurance of hope, no eternal heaven."

NEITHER UNITARIAN NOR TRINITARIAN

Trinitarians and Unitarians seem to have divided the truth between them so that neither one possesses it in the Scriptural sense. Unitarians, so far as the name belongs to a denomination, and judged by their public declarations, reject Jesus as the special son of God, who was with the Father before the world was, and who left his heavenly state to become a man, to accomplish the redemption of Adam and his race, and who having died for our sins has been raised from the dead by the Father's power, far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named, to participate in the divine nature and glory and honor. From the Unitarian standpoint, therefore, our Lord Jesus would appear to have been merely a good man and a noble example of good living. According to this view, our Lord is not divine, but human. We cannot accept this as the teaching of the Scripture.

We must hold to the contrary that he who was rich yet for our sakes became poor, not only experienced the humiliation but has since experienced still higher exaltation, so that as a result all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father also. While we cannot admit with the Trinitarians that this last expression would mean that the Father and the Son would be one in person, we claim that they are, nevertheless, one in purpose, in plan, in co-operation, in heart harmony – one in the same sense that the Master desired that all of his disciples might be one with the Father and with himself, praying, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in

me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." The Trinitarian view, while nearer the truth than the Unitarian, in some respects is, nevertheless, wide of the truth and very confusing both to head and to heart, and proportionately injurious to the cause of the Lord. As our Lord's quotation from the Law clearly states, "Jehovah God is one God" and not three Gods.

THE FATHER AND SON ONE IN SENTIMENT

The Son of God is not the Father but the Son, who "proceeded forth from the Father," who was the Beginning of the creation of God. (John 8:42; Rev. 3:14.) Nevertheless, even before he became man's ransom price his close association with the Father and his oneness of heart and purpose with him are clearly indicated in the Scriptures. We are assured that he was the "Word of God" – the logos, the expression, the channel of the Father's communication. We are assured that while the Father was *the* God above all others, the Son, the Logos, was *a* God above all others, next to the Father but subservient to the Father. We are assured that he was the Father's active agent in the entire work of creation, so that "by him were all things made that were made, and without him was not one thing made." (John 1:1-3.) His subserviency to the Father is testified to by himself, "The Father is greater than I," "The Father hath sent me," "As I hear I speak." (John 14:28; 20:21.) This subservience and dependence upon the Father not only was true of our Lord while he was in the flesh and before he was made flesh, but is distinctly asserted of him since his resurrection to glory, honor and immortality to divine nature.

The Apostle tells us that the Millennial Kingdom glory, honor and power are to be specially given to the Son by the Father, and that when the Son shall have finished that appointed work he will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, and the Father will be recognized as the "all in all" of the universe. (I Cor. 15:28.) Every utterance of the inspired Word of God is in full accord with

those which we have quoted. For instance, we have already referred to the statement that he and the Father are one, and have shown that he meant not oneness in respect to authority or person but oneness in respect to their plans, purposes and work, he having set aside his own will to do the Father's will. In the same manner he desires that all who would be recognized as his disciples, and by and by constitute his Bride, should lay aside their own wills and be fully submissive to the Father's will, and thus be in the fullest harmony with the Father and the Son, "That they all may be one in us." In accord with this view we have also the statement of our Lord, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:" that is, humanity being of earthly nature could not see a spirit being, as it is written, "There shall no man see me and live." (Exod. 33:20.) A perfect human being would be the best illustration of the Heavenly Father that it would be possible for mankind to see with the natural eye, and this they did see in our Lord Jesus, the Father's image in the flesh. For a further and complete analysis of this subject the reader is referred to MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. V.

HOW TO LOVE GOD PERFECTLY

The definition here given of the love due to our Creator is all comprehensive: our hearts, our affections, must all reverence and love him; our souls, our being, our bodies, must all be controlled by love for God; our **[R3862 : page 300]** minds must similarly recognize, reverence, appreciate and love the Lord, and our strength of mind or body must recognize him as worthy of every loving service we can render. Not only so, but our hearts, minds, etc., must not be divided in their love – the Lord must be first with us in every sense of the word. This means the full consecration of time, talent, influence, everything that we possess – it means a condition of heart that is unknown to the vast majority even of those who are justified by faith in the precious blood, and who have a measure of peace with God through our Lord Jesus. This fulness of love for the Father represents not the beginning of the

consecrated Christian's condition, but its fulness, its completeness. It represents not his attitude at the time he enters the school of Christ to learn of him, but the condition he must attain to before he can reach the mark or be ready for graduation to the heavenly condition.

FIRST REVERENCE – LATER LOVE

The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but is not the end of it. We cannot love God until we have become acquainted with him and ascertained the lovable qualities represented in him. Hence the importance of the knowledge everywhere pointed out in the Word of God. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." (John 17:3.) The fear or reverence of God is our first knowledge, and if we be rightly exercised thereby the Lord will reveal himself to us more and more as the one appointed to be the Way, the Truth, the Life – no man cometh unto the Father except by him. Many lessons are to be learned respecting the power and greatness and wisdom and justice of our God before we are able to **[R3862 : page 301]** understand and appreciate the "love of God which passeth all understanding."

If we were all perfect as Adam was perfect we would have little difficulty in appreciating the divine character, because the perfect man was created in the divine image and would therefore readily appreciate all the divine qualities and attributes; but born in sin, shapen in iniquity, we are all more or less fallen from that perfection and must learn to know our God. As already suggested, our fallen conditions permit us to learn of his wisdom, justice and power quicker than to learn of his love. Indeed God's love has not yet been manifested to the world in general. Only to a comparatively small number is God's love manifested at all, and it is seen by them only with the eye of faith. The Apostle declares, "Herein was manifested the love of God toward us, because that

God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." – John 4:9.

How few realize the need of this sacrifice! Such only can appreciate the love that was back of it and manifested through it. The great majority are blind to these things, and must wait for their appreciation of the love of God until the glorious time foretold in the prophecies, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise and chase all the darkness and sin away, when there shall be no more curse resting upon the world of mankind, when Satan shall be bound and the knowledge of the Lord be caused to fill the whole earth – then, as one of the chief elements of the glory of God, will be clearly seen by all mankind the love of God which passeth all understanding. Thank God that we are so highly favored that the eyes of our understanding are opening to this great love of God in advance of the world's blessing and enlightenment! Nevertheless, to the most enlightened this appreciation of the divine character as the God of love came gradually, little by little, as we came to understand the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan, and have come to appreciate the love that prompted that plan and is outworking it and guaranteeing its consummation to be glorious.

KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO LOVE

In proportion as we discern the perfection of the divine character, in the same proportion are we able to love the Lord with all our hearts, all our minds, all our beings, all our strength. The Christian who attains to this in his heart has surely reached the mark expressed by this command – the first command, the principal command. The Lord may permit him to be tried, tested and proved along the line of this love and to demonstrate a fixity of love, but all the time he was thus being tested he is at this standard of the divine law. There is a distinction, however, to be made between the heart standard by which the Lord is judging the

Church and the fleshly standard by which the same persons might be judged of others. Because of the weakness of the flesh, the heart love for the Lord might at times not be fully and clearly expressed so that it would be apparent to all mankind. The world, which judges only by the flesh, knoweth us not. It is a consolation to our hearts that the Father realizes our love and devotion, and is judging us not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, the heart, the intention, the new mind. And in proportion as we realize the imperfections of our flesh and our inability to show the loving devotion of our hearts and minds, being and strength, we should have compassion and sympathy with our fellow members who similarly more or less imperfectly manifest in their flesh the devotion of heart which they have professed. As the Lord waits patiently for us to develop the fruits of the Spirit, the graces of the Spirit, in our lives, so it behooves us to wait patiently upon the fellow-members of the body as they seek also to become renewed in thought and word and deed, sanctified wholly to the Master and his use.

"THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF"

Lest this Doctor of the Law should misapprehend, the Lord quoted from Leviticus 19:18 the statement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and this he designated as also of primary importance and second only to the previous statement of love to God. As stated elsewhere, on these two commands hang all the Law and the prophets. In other words, the keeping of these two would touch upon, cover and include every item of the divine law. As spiritual Israelites, therefore, it is appropriate that we notice this as well as the other command. Indeed we hear the Apostle John as the mouthpiece of the Lord declaring, "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" – I John 4:20.

It is well that we keep this test clearly before our hearts lest we deceive ourselves. Love, the greatest attribute in the world, stands related to all the other things in the universe. While God should be first in our hearts and affections, nevertheless our love for God is more difficult to measure than is our love for man. Love is opposed to selfishness and does not even "seek her own" rights, although it may be necessary that love be restrained and ruled at times by justice and wisdom. What a grand lesson on all that is implied in the word love is furnished us by the Lord through the Apostle in I Corinthians, 13th chapter. There we are not only shown what elements of conduct are loving, but what elements are contrary to love – which elements of our characters should be cultivated and which should be restrained, subdued, mortified.

Our Lord's questioner was evidently sincere. He perceived not only the wisdom of the Lord's reply to those who were seeking to catch him, but now he had a grand illustration of that wisdom when applied conscientiously to the most important of all doctrines – the most important features of the divine law. His reply was, "Of a truth, Master, thou hast well said, for there is but one God and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than whole burnt offering and sacrifices." Jesus, beholding his candor, gave him an encouraging word, which should have been of great assistance to him, saying, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

One sincerely recognizing the truths just enunciated must surely have been of honest heart, and hence of the kind whom the Lord would be pleased to have enter the Kingdom class by full acceptance of him as their Redeemer and by a full consecration of their **[R3862 : page 302]** every power and talent to his service. This would be the practical outworking of this great commandment, fulness of love for God that would lead to endeavors to serve and please him in every possible manner, and

their love for fellow men that would have delight in telling the good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. We read that after that no man durst ask Jesus any question. This was possibly because his ministries and teachings as divinely intended had reached their fulfilment, accomplishment, or possibly it may signify that all classes of his religious opponents held the Master in such awe and respect that they feared to attempt further questioning, which could only result disastrously to themselves, showing their own deficiencies and making him the more prominent as the great Teacher.

"KEEP YOURSELF FROM IDOLS"

Quite a good many of the Lord's earnest followers realize the danger which besets us all of rendering too much love and homage to an earthly creature, and thus to some extent robbing God of what is his due. This seems to be the Apostle's thought in the above expression. He had no thought of Christian people becoming worshipers of sticks and stones, but he did appreciate the fact that the human heart may consecrate itself to serve wealth or fame; and some of the Lord's people, keeping themselves from such idols, are in danger of putting too large a proportion of their love upon wife or husband, parent or child, brother or sister, and thus idolizing them and bringing an earthborn [R3863 : page 302] cloud between their hearts and the Heavenly Father. It is well to be on guard and to remember that, however much we may love others, the Lord must have all our hearts in the sense that he would be first and chief, and that if it were necessary every earthly tie might be broken, however tender, rather than the tie that binds our hearts to the Lord.

When in such fear, when realizing ourselves in such danger, let us remember that there would be two ways of correcting the difficulty: the one would be by breaking off some of our love for earthly objects and conditions, the other by increasing our love for

the heavenly. It surely would be in line with the divine arrangement that we should be discriminating as respects our loves for earthly things, to discern whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good repute, and discouraging all others as unworthy of us as New Creatures in Christ. This would not, of course, mean that we should hate anybody, though it might mean that we would properly be separated from some whose influence would be to the contrary of these divinely appointed guides and sentiments. With our earthly love all centered upon good and noble persons, and especially appreciating these because of their relationship to that which is perfect, to the Lord and his standards, we should then measure the love for these with the love for the Father, and determine that the love for God must be cultivated more and more, until it shall far outreach and outweigh any earthly love, however precious. From this standpoint we would love our dear ones of earth no less, but the heavenly Father proportionately so much more. This we may be sure would be the right attitude which the Lord would most approve.

KEPT FOR THE MASTER'S USE

This thought is presented in a poem quoted by Miss Havergill in her work entitled, "Kept for the Master's Use."

"I tremble when I think
How much I love him; but I turn away
From thinking of it, just to love him more; –
Indeed, I fear, too much."

"Dear Eleanor,
Do you love him as much as Christ loves us?
Let your lips answer me."

"Why ask me, dear?"

Our hearts are finite, Christ is infinite."

"Then till you reach the standard of that love,
Let neither fears nor well-meant warning voice
Distress you with 'too much.' For he hath said
How much – and who shall dare to change his measure –
That ye should love as I have loved you.
O sweet command, that goes so far beyond
The mightiest impulse of the tenderest heart!
A bare permission had been much; but he
Who knows our yearnings and our fearfulness,
Chose graciously to *bid* us do the thing
That makes our earthly happiness,
A limit that we need not fear to pass,
Because we cannot. Oh, the breadth and length,
And depth and height of love that passeth knowledge!
Yet Jesus said, 'As I have loved you.'

"O, Beatrice, I long to feel the sunshine
That this should bring; but there are other words
Which fall in chill eclipse. 'Tis written 'Keep
Yourselves from idols.' How shall I obey?"

"Oh, not by loving less, but loving more.
It is not that we love our precious ones
Too much, but God too little. As the lamp
A miner bears upon his shadowed brow
Is only dazzling in the grimy dark,
And has no glare against the summer sky,
So, set the tiny torch of our best love
In the great sunshine of the love of God,
And, though full fed and fanned, it casts no shade
And dazzles not, o'erflowed with mightier light."

"BEWARE OF THE SCRIBES."

His opportunities for teaching his apostles were rapidly passing, and our Lord, sitting in or near the Temple, said to them, "Beware of the Scribes, which love to go in long robes and to receive salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the chief places at feasts: which devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive the greater condemnation."

Our Lord did not say that all of the Scribes, all of the learned Doctors of the Law, had the disreputable qualities he reproved. More properly we might understand him to mean: You have been taught to honor and respect the learned Scribes or teachers of your nation, but take heed to those of them who have the characteristics I have just denounced. They are far from the Kingdom condition; their selfishness is manifest in the ways I have enumerated, and proportionately they are lacking in the traits which would have the Father's approval either under the letter or the spirit of the Law.

We might make two applications of this lesson to our own times: one would be that we are not necessarily to reverence and follow Doctors of Divinity, but are to be discriminating in regard to the respect we have for them and their teachings. We are not to think that those who manifest a self-seeking spirit, the highest place in the Conference, who boast of their learning, whose special adorning is not of the meek and quiet spirit, but of the long robes of profession, who love to receive recognition in public places and to be called Rabbi, Reverend, etc., and to be made very prominent before the people; these should not be regarded as **[R3863 : page 303]** proper exemplars or patterns. Rather we should look away from such, realizing that the Lord despises not only the proud but the selfish, and shows his favors to the humble and to the lowly. Another lesson for us would come still closer home to every reader of this journal.

In Spiritual Israel those who are instructed in the true knowledge of the Lord's Word should be overcomers of the spirit of the world, the spirit of selfishness. If any such find in themselves any of these enumerated characteristics which the Lord condemns, he should flee from the sin as he would from a contagious disease. For instance, if he finds himself greatly influenced by the opinion of others respecting his clothing, if he finds in himself a self-seeking spirit, a selfish disposition to grasp the best for himself on all occasions, and love of public praise and of recognition, titles, etc., let such beware. Whether he has a greater or less degree of earthly learning, or a greater or less degree of heavenly learning, he is in a dangerous condition if he has the selfish tendencies which the Lord here enumerates. Especially is he in need of divine grace to help him out of the horrible pit of selfishness if he finds himself so devoid of love as to be willing to take the goods of others without proper recompense, whether they be widows' houses or what not. The more one knows, the more of a Scribe he is, the greater will be his condemnation if the characteristics here set forth by our Lord are his.

GREAT AND SMALL GIFTS TO GOD

We have seen the kind of love for God and man which the divine Law stipulates; we have seen how some of the most prominent of those professing to be teachers of the divine Law come far short of the divine standard, as in the case of the Scribe in the illustration just given. Our Lord next presented his teachings from still another standpoint: he would show his disciples that they must not measure the divine approval along earthly lines, but must remember that the Lord looketh on the heart; that many who are esteemed amongst men are an abomination in his sight, and some not esteemed amongst men are his jewels. He pointed out the poor widow who had just cast two mites into the treasury of the Temple, and he declared that her gift, although insignificant from the human standpoint, was greater in God's sight than many of the

larger gifts, because she had given of her penury. Others had given from their abundance what they would little miss: she out of her nothing had given that which would cause her considerable self-denial. Here, then, is the Lord's appreciation and estimate of our sacrifices in response to our love for him. Whoever loves another will seek to serve him and be willing to render service at an expense that would be proportionate to his love.

The wealthy can give liberally and be blest in giving, but the poor are to remember that the Lord highly esteems the spirit of their hearts when they desire to serve him and his cause. Their humble efforts are appreciated by the Lord even though man might despise them and consider them insignificant. Our Lord's judgment was that the poor widow had cast in more than they all from the standpoint of divine appreciation. What a thought is here for every one of us: however small our talents, however few, however limited are our opportunities for service, our offerings are not despised, but on the contrary are credited proportionately to the real spirit of sacrifice prompting them. What an encouragement is this to all who have the right spirit of love for the Lord and desire to be his self-sacrificing followers. The Scribe with much ado and outward show of reverence and love for God got the reward which he sought – the approval of his neighbors or those of them who were deceived by his various, pious mannerisms. This poor widow, however, unnoticed and disesteemed of the multitude, would be sure to have the Father's blessing and favor and love; and her procedure mentioned favorably constitutes encouragement to ourselves and to all who desire to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.
