

## THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS

– *SEPTEMBER 6. – MARK 12:28-44. –*

**"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." – Luke 10:27.**

ON THE question day when the Doctors of Divinity sought to entrap our Lord many questions were asked. A week ago we considered one. The final question constitutes today's Study. A Scribe, a man of more than average education, had heard the various questions propounded and had perceived how well our Lord had answered them. Then he essayed a question – quite probably in all sincerity, and not with a view to entrap Jesus. He asked, "What is the chief commandment of all?" – doubtless referring to the Decalogue. Jesus replied that the first, the chief, of all the commandments is, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One Lord; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the chief commandment."

Our Lord here made a quotation from the Old Testament. (Deuteronomy 6:4,5.) How wonderfully comprehensive the statement! Who today, hundreds of years afterwards, could more completely epitomize the great truth of this text? Heavenly Wisdom was manifested in its first statement. The same Heavenly Wisdom was manifested in our Lord's reference to it. He added nothing, because nothing could be added.

Moreover, we are daily seeing more clearly the force of this expression – Love. Love is the principal thing! Many in times gone by, according to the creeds professed, might have changed this statement to read that we should dread, fear, tremble; for the Almighty God of the Universe, we were told, had a great hell of

torture prepared from before man's creation, in which He purposed that the great majority of humanity should be eternally tormented. But that was in the creeds. The Bible stands out distinctly separate from all human creeds and superstitions, and tells us that God is Love, that He is the Father of Light and Mercy, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

The Bible, too, tells us of the Divine forgiveness, Divinely arranged for through the precious blood of Christ from before the foundation of the world. It tells us also that this forgiveness of sins is not merely for the Church, the Elect, the little handful now being called out from the world; but that eventually the Love of God will be manifested to all of His creatures, to the intent that, coming to a knowledge of that love in due time, they may renounce sin and accept the Divine provision – receiving in return under Messiah's Kingdom the great blessing of Restitution of mental, moral and physical perfection, lost through Father Adam's disobedience.

## **THE SECOND COMMANDMENT**

Jesus proceeded beyond the question, and declared that the Second Commandment stands related to the First; namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Again we stand all astonished with wonder at how much is stated in very few words. Many a volume is written that contains far less. No other religion than that of the Bible reveals such a God of mercy and compassion, as manifested by His loving provision for the welfare of His creatures. No other religion even hints at love in return. No other religion suggests so high a standard of dealing with our fellow men.

This Law of God, now nearly four thousand years old, was probably more or less made known through the Jews to other nations and peoples (Deuteronomy 4:6-8); but none of them grasped its true import. The closest approach [**R5521 : page 251**] to this sentiment is probably found in the writings of

Confucius, to the effect that one should not do to others what he would not have others do to him. But oh, what a contrast! One is merely a negative statement; the other is a positive one – "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Truly, there is something about the Law of God which stamps it as Divine. How beautiful the world would be, with all its thorns, thistles and difficulties, if men were only able and willing to live up to these two grand Laws – each man loving the Heavenly Father supremely, serving Him with every power and talent, and loving his neighbor as himself, seeking to serve that neighbor as he might have opportunity! That would be Paradise. Thank God, this is just what we are assured the world will yet be, when the Messianic Kingdom is established. **[R5522 : page 251]**

The Divine arrangement which provided the death of Christ as an offset for Adam's sin has also provided the Reign of Christ as the offset of the reign of Sin and Death. And the Divine promise assures us that ultimately all who love and desire righteousness and truth shall be blessed and perfected, and shall have everlasting life. It assures us also that the earth, God's footstool, will be made glorious, during the thousand years of Messiah's Reign; and that eventually all lovers of sin, refusing to make progress in righteousness, will be destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death. Thus will the happy Day be ushered in for which we have so long prayed: "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, even as it is done in Heaven." Then will be fulfilled the promise that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, and the whole earth be filled with the glory of God.

### **"NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM"**

The Scribe was impressed, and conceded the truth of Jesus' answer. He said, "Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is one God; and there is none other but Him; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and

with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou are not far from the Kingdom of God!" By this the Master meant that the Scribe was very near to the point where he might become one of His disciples – one of those waiting for the Kingdom, hoping for it, striving for it, preparing for it. It was such "Israelites indeed," in whom was no guile, that Jesus especially sought to gather from amongst the Jewish people, preparatory to throwing open to the Gentiles the door to Kingdom privileges. The Jews understood that at His coming Messiah would select a Kingdom class, to which would be granted Divine power. This is just what Jesus was doing. His words, His teachings, were drawing some and repelling others.

All the sincere, all the honest-hearted, are like this young Scribe – not far from the Kingdom. If their honesty, their sincerity, lead them to zeal to know and to do the will of the Father, then they will be blessed; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

### **"GOD LOOKETH ON THE HEART"**

The Temple at Jerusalem was still new, and money was needed for its maintenance, etc. The people were privileged to contribute, and apparently did so with willing hearts. However much misled by the traditions of the elders – otherwise the teachings of their forefathers – however confused they were by the misleadings of their blinded Doctors of Divinity, they had a desire to serve God and to worship Him. This was manifested by their readiness to bring their money and to cast it into the treasure boxes of the Temple, which stood near its doorway.

Jesus was sitting opposite these treasure boxes, and took note how all classes contributed – the rich of their abundance, the poor

of their penury. There came along a widow who put into the treasure box two mites – the smallest copper coins in circulation – each one worth about one-eighth of a cent. We need not assume that the poor widow put this in in an ostentatious manner; for the coins were too small to boast about. We shall assume that Jesus, by Divine power, knew the woman, her circumstances and the amount of her gift. He made it a text for a little sermon to the Apostles. He declared that yonder poor woman had made a larger contribution in the sight of God than had anybody else who had contributed. To their wonderment He explained that she had practically cast in all that she had – her living – while the others had merely contributed certain portions from their abundance – portions the loss of which they perhaps would not seriously feel.

This little incident shows us the Lord's appreciation of sacrifices and services. It is not the great things that any of us do, or attempt to do, that the Lord highly esteems. The very small affairs of our lives, the very small sacrifices, the very small self-denials, that in the world's sight would be nothing, in the Master's sight will be great, if they denote love, devotion and self-sacrifice to the Lord and His Cause.

Moreover, the Lord knew that the woman was giving money to an institution which was repudiating Him and which shortly would be destroyed because of being unworthy to continue. But whatever might be the condition of others, the Lord looked at the heart of this contributor and the motive for the gift – "She hath done what she could." For aught we know she became ultimately a disciple. It is of just such self-sacrificing material that the Lord makes disciples.

